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The Wounded Bricoleur: Adversity, Artifice and the Becoming of Street-Involved Youth in London, Ontario, Canada

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Graduate Program in Anthropology
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy
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THE WOUNDED BRICOLEUR: ADVERSITY, ARTIFICE AND THE BECOMING OF STREET-INVOLVED YOUTH IN LONDON, ONTARIO, CANADA

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By

Mark Stewart <u>Dolson</u>

Graduate Program in Anthropology

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
Western University
London, Ontario, Canada**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

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entitled:

The Wounded Bricoleur: Adversity, Artifice and the Becoming of Street-Involved Youth in London, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

This is an ethnography of the everyday lives of street-involved youth in London, Ontario, Canada. Fieldwork was conducted throughout downtown London over the course of one year. I argue that the subjective experience of my informants, all of whom are "participants" in Ontario's workfare programme, Ontario Works (OW), has been riven by some form of existential trauma (i.e., problems with anxiety and depression due to difficult personal histories of abandonment, substance abuse, etc.), which has led to an alternative process of *being* and *becoming* at odds with the hegemonic moral economy of the province of Ontario—specifically its rules and regulations regarding the provision of OW. This hegemonic moral economy is based on neoliberal regulatory logics of self-development, self-sufficiency and self-entrepreneurialism, which seeks to domesticate the "economic potentialities" of the self. In reaction, the alternative process of being and becoming of my informants can be characterised by: 1) a tactical posture of *débrouillardise* ("social manipulation" with partial accommodation) regarding everyday life; and, 2) an approach to healing as a broadly conceived and processual *existential project*; a precarious project wherein the focus is on the reconciliation of one's past with one's present through a *creative enterprise of becoming* (existential transformation through poetry, drawing and performing as raconteurs), and not on simply "overcoming obstacles" (lack of skills, motivation), or overcoming impediments of the self (addiction, psychiatric disorders, etc.) that may block one from reaching OW's *rehabilitative* goal of acquiring a base-level of cultural capital (skills, training, education). As such, my informants get by day to day as *wounded bricoleurs*. Left little room to maneuver the "disconnect of becomings" between state and self, they are forced to creatively re-invent their lives in the face of haunting and destructive personal histories. The dissertation closes with a re-conceived understanding of agency regarding the possibility "to act rationally" according to one's own "self-interest". I argue that my informants' agentive capacity is marked by the contradictory striations of "zones of awkward engagement": the refractory lines of disconnection between the moral imperatives of the state and the existential imperatives to heal and "make do".

Keywords:

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Life, really, is like a series of lines—continuous, discontinuous, terminus and co-terminus. What a simile. It's so simple. Well, seemingly so anyway. Now, you may ask, how can life be *like* a series of lines? Can we reduce life, being, and existential movement to a seemingly simple trope? Lines? The answer, interestingly enough, is both yes and no. Let me put it like this: lines are not always straight and they are not always linear. They can be dotted; they can be punctuated with dashes and dots; they can form spirals and vortices. And they can be long or short, compressed or expanded; they can rise and fall softly as undulations, or sharply as peaks and valleys. As well, lines can form loops, they can fold back on themselves in intricate and not-so-intricate involutions, and they can even form dancing fractals in their a-structural and chaotic irregularity. Lastly, I suppose, lines can also be broken, incomplete, and eventually fade out leaving only a weakened trace—leading, possibly, to nowhere. Their endings might even efface their own beginnings.

Linearity, as might be apparent, is *not* what I am interested in here. What I am interested in (along with Ingold 2007, 2011) are *connections*, *bundles* and *skeins of lines*: lines through lines, lines over lines, criss-crossings, networks, knots, and dense ravels—of lines. A linkage-metaphor that runs *line-like* (pun intended) through this dissertation is that of the multiplicity of lines of everyday life (intersubjectivity depicted graphically is ostensibly like a series of intricate entanglements); especially the way *we* compose lines, and, inversely, how lines in many cases compose *us*. As such, then, I am interested in how lines connect everything to everything: the social to the material, the material to the social; becomings to intentionalities, and intentionalities to becomings, and so on.

It sounds odd, I know. But when you think about it, life as lived in its sweep, rush and flow is always already paradoxically *bounded* and, at the same time, *freed* (to an extent) by lines: the lines that connect our movements to each other and to the land, cityscapes, and even our seemingly closed *scapes of interiority* (processes which include dreaming, waking, thinking, wishing, aching, dreading and other internal dialogues with ourselves) that we navigate and negotiate daily. Lines connect conceptual and existential processes of movement (literal and figurative) between ourselves and the social, material and biological things (animal, vegetable, elemental) that have co-evolved with us humans since time immemorial (think of the geographer Torsten Hägerstrand's "principles of togetherness").

In our daily entanglements, lines are what constrain us (they enable the conditions of possibility to "perceive" and "know" in a delicate ontological and epistemological two-step) within and through the historically tangled skeins of language, culture, morality, political life, sociality, value, etc. And yet lines also afford us the possibilities and opportunities for escape through the movements (fast or slow, with or without direction and magnitude) of being and becoming (for lack of a better term, a form of existential mobility, a kind of self-kinesis). Lines, in those cases where we can briefly evade their defining contours by edging out between them—*in medias res*—allow us to *transform* through creativity into something else. Deleuze and Guattari put it:

> A line of becoming is not defined by the points it connects, or by the points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes between points, it comes up through the middle, it runs…transversally to the localizable relation to distant contiguous points. A point is always a point of origin. But a line of becoming has neither beginning nor end…it has only a middle…A becoming is always in the middle: one can only get it by the middle. A becoming is neither one nor two, nor the relation of the two; it is the in-between, the…line of flight…running perpendicular to both (1987: 323).

For my informants (all of whom have been homeless at some point during the past two years, are on welfare, and are currently experiencing varying forms of addiction, as well as diagnosed and undiagnosed mental illness), lines and their entanglements are what connect them to the greater social and cultural structures that orient them and make their everyday interactions possible and intelligible. They also render their "freedoms" (read: *creative* freedoms) possible by allowing them to squeeze between and through the lines that constrain them. Sadly, though, lines (however faint and ghostly they may seem in their trailings) also seem to make their lives difficult by connecting them with painful and traumatic pasts; pasts characterised by mountainous topographies of memories, black and exhaustive. Pasts that many of my informants are trying desperately to escape from— daily. Whether robust and apparent or trace-like and slight in their effects and affects, lines are the "silver chord" which run through our socio-embodied being-in-the-world: the *connection tangle[1]* if you will, through the sets of relations that are, whether agonistic or not, both constitutive and constituting of *us* (the street, the sounds of the city, the movement of trees by the gentle suasions of the wind, the ground, the…"undulations of snow or sand, the song of the sand or the creaking of the ice, the tactile qualities of both") (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 421). Lines and their bundles, connection tangles, skeins, or what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call *haecceities* are not *what* we perceive, but rather what we perceive *with* (Ingold 2011), and I would add, what we perceive *through*.

Let me now take a few lines (again, pun intended) to settle some debts of gratitude. First and foremost, I would like to thank Regna Darnell, my dissertation supervisor (but also a great teacher and a friend), for her constant stream of enthusiasm

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[1] There are no dividing lines here, only multiplicities as I see it; and, as per Deleuze and Guattari 1987 points of multiplicity can inhere in and constitute a single point, they're not perforce opposed to the one, the singular.

and hope—even when I thought I was fresh out of these sometimes hard-to-come-by

commodities. Regna was always there for me, especially when I thought I had reached

the nadir of my frustrations with setting up a viable community-based field-project. I

thank Regna, too, for her masterful knowledge of social theory (the breadth of which is

astounding), and her willingness to seriously consider even the most seemingly

unorthodox philosophies as heuristics in getting a better fix on socio-cultural contexts.

Social theories, after all, are toolkits, and, as such "are good to think *with*" and *through*

(sort of like animals to Lévi-Strauss' totemic thinking). I also must thank her for her

wealth of teaching, advising and editorial experience. And though I feared it many a

time, her fierce editorial blue pen forced me to clarify aspects of my writing, making it—

so I hope—all-the-better. Really, though, if it wasn't for Regna, I don't think I would

have seriously considered Deleuze and Guattari's works—interestingly, the two theorists

whose ideas partly form the conceptual and epistemological latticework of this

dissertation.

Special thanks goes to my external examiners, Dr. Michael Jackson of the Harvard

Divinity School, Harvard University, and Dr. Veronica Schild of both the Department of

Political Science and The Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism, Western

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suggestions have made not only the dissertation but, hopefully, my future publications on

the topic that much sounder.

I would also like to thank Dr. Cheryl Forchuk of the Faculty of Nursing for

providing me the opportunity to join her on-going project, *Youth Matters in London:*

Mental Health, Addiction and Homelessness. I am grateful that she allowed me to take

on the ethnographic component of the study—it afforded such a great opportunity to meet new and interesting people, and to have a project upon which to base my dissertation. I still find it interesting and surprising that all it took was a fortuitous email, and voila— "the rest is history" as they say. After having gone through several failed projects (sadly due to lack of family housing in remote places for the most part, as well as the expense of rent that not even my extremely generous doctoral scholarship from the Canadian government would cover), there was a point in my doctoral studies where I thought I would never finish—*ever*. The early part of my time at Western was spent travelling and plying my ethnographic wares in attempts to set up projects working with the Saami (or Sámi) neo-shamans of Finnmark County, Norway (Tromsø), to better understand processes of tradition and the "ways of seeing" it accords to those looking for a new form of national identity in rapidly changing economies and modernities; or looking at the socio-political, economic and existential effects of self-government for the new regional ethnic government of Nunatsiavut in northern, sub-arctic Labrador (Makkovik); or, focusing on the dialectic of heritage, history, and their "use and abuse" (see Nietzsche's *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*, 1873). After having to piece back together my confidence and my motivation to start completely over again in the third year of my degree, my motto at this very low point—perhaps my lowest—was that "[t]he best-laid schemes o' mice an' men gang aft a-gley, an' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain for promised joy" (from Robert Burns' *To a Mouse*, 1785: 76). Luckily, half-way through my fourth year, it was Cheryl's willingness to allow to me to join the project almost mid-stream that enabled me to see my degree to its completion.

I would also like to thank my committee for their willingness to stick with me through thick and thin. Over the past four and half years, I've greatly appreciated and

this short. That seemingly accidental complicity we understand as *love* is something that, to the both of us, remains ineffable and lasting. It's as mysterious as it is apparent. In the endless sea-change that is our life, I say simply, "to the future". And with this, we can both feel that old expression curl softly to our lips, "*per ardura ad astra*"—man o' man, here we go again. To Poppy, our daughter, all I will say is this: thank you for being the most beautiful and intelligent child I've ever met. A cliché, yes; but a cliché worth perpetuating. Your life never ever ceases to amaze me, whether it's learning a new concept or impressing Mummy and Dada with your ability to remember such detail about things—an ability as astounding as it is inexplicable. You'll soon have a little brother to cause mischief with, and I look forward to every second of it.

On a more solemn note, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of Leslie William James Dolson, Franklin Philips, John Gehman, and James Anthony Rankin. The first, my father: someone who experienced a great and long life, but sadly experienced directly the devastating effects (both psychological and social) of the Second World War and the Nazis. The second, my wise and learned maternal uncle: a man whose life was cut far too short by such a grim and ruthless stalker (cancer). The third, an inspiring and intellectually imposing teacher whose classes in anthropology captivated me from the start: I never had the chance to say good-bye properly (though I suppose we never do). The fourth, my childhood best friend: a great pal with whom I spent many memorable moments skateboarding, fishing for crayfish, and getting into trouble (you left too soon, man—too soon). All of you will be greatly missed. The "presence" of your absences reverberate quietly—and in strange and unanticipated ways—throughout the ideas presented in this dissertation. Rest well.

ENTRÉE—The Silver Chord

What the world demands of poor people they did to the utmost of their ability; his father brought breakfast for the minor officials at the bank, his mother sacrificed herself to the underwear of strangers, his sister ran back and forth behind the counter at the request of the customers; but for anything more than this they did not have the strength.

F. Kafka 1996: 40

Perhaps the fundamental distinction between irony and satire, in the largest sense of each, is simply that irony deals with the absurd, whereas satire treats the ridiculous. The absurd may be taken to symbolize the incurable and chimerical hoax of things, while the ridiculous may be accepted as standing for life's corrigible deformities. This means that while the manners of men are the domain of the satirist, the morals of the universe are the preserve of the ironist.

M. Gurewitch 1957: 11

The world in itself is not reasonable, that is all that can be said. But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart. The absurd depends as much on man as on the world. For the moment it is all that links them together.

A. Camus 1955: 21

How clear everything becomes when you can look from the darkness of a dungeon.

U. Eco 2007: 404

This is an ethnography about the everyday lives of street-involved youth (i.e., those actively engaged in "street culture", but not necessarily experiencing current homelessness in its partial or absolute forms—Richardson 2011, personal communication) in downtown London, Ontario, Canada. As a textual mode of representation (as cultural and textual invention) of the description of difference, ethnographic writing, following Marcus and Fischer's (1986) decades-old clarion call

should centre on following the prescription of anthropology and ethnography as a

"cultural critique[2]"—that is, on the broader social, political, historical and philosophical

implications of fieldwork and the social entanglements which inhere in its methods and

processes. I have attempted to heed this clarion call by focusing on my informants'

struggles, their sorrows, and their ways of muddling through life in the context of a

capitalist political economy guided and driven by neoliberal policies and prescriptions.

However, following Stewart's (1996) reappraisal of anthropology and

ethnography as "cultural critique", I approach culture, much as she does, as a "wild,

politicized oscillation between one thing and another and the very image of "system"

itself slips out of the grasp of all those quick assumptions that associated it with things

like order, unity, (ancient, timeless) tradition, coherence, and singularity. Culture and

the socialites and psychologies it orients are messy, messy things, characterised by over

and under-determinations of semiotic, tactile and emotional densities, textures and

intensities" 1996:26). To this end, cultural critique means questioning our own

exegetical feats; it means "displacing the rigid discipline of 'subject' and 'object' that

sets Us apart and leaves Them inert and without agency. It would mean displacing the

---

[2] According to Marcus and Fischer (1986), but also the originating work of many
anthropologists such as Boas, Mead, Benedict, Sapir, and Parsons, the notion of "cultural
critique" refers to the fundamental contributions of ethnography as a comparative study of
cultural processes wherein fieldworkers insist upon the relation between the production of
knowledge and its diverse social contexts and grounds. Culture and sociality, with its norms of
truth and reality should be seen as artificial arrangements, amenable to analysis and comparison
with other possible ways of life (Clifford 1981). As well, culture is a contested reality, with
multiple interpretations (there are no grand and historically continuous meta-narratives),
wherein multiple interpretations are possible by those who occupy differential locations of
power. This critique, however, also applies to the methods of inquiry directed at evaluating
cultural and social practices. The crux of cultural critique is to bring to light alternative ways of
living, and also to de-situate and disturb hegemonic ideas of the social status quo and cultural
self-satisfaction (namely the middle-class life of liberal societies which modern industrialised
capitalism has produced (Marcus and Fischer 1986). At its base, the task of ethnographic
cultural critique is to unearth the variety of modes of accommodation and resistance by
individuals and groups in a shared social order (ibid).

premature urge to classify, code, contextualize, and name long enough to imagine something of the texture and density of spaces of desire that proliferate in Othered spaces" (Stewart 1996: 26).

Culture, sociality, me, you, them, us, here, there: these cannot inhere in some semiotic object to be analysed, rendered and abstracted ("represented") as "data". No, quite the contrary: to "use" culture, to let culture "use us", to be social, to be intersubjective is an *interpreted space* in and of itself (Stewart 1996)—it is what Wojtyła calls "participation" or the communal action created when "together with others" (selves, to Wojtyła, are "revealed" in action or inter-personal praxis; that is, they are not given, but emergent, immanent) (1969: 261-262); and, as such, this space is characterised by the irregular movements between densities, shrinkages, contractions, contestations, imaginings, re-imaginings, expansions, and gaps between sign and referent, events and their shifting meanings (Stewart 1996).

My interpretive focus tacks between my informants' personal life histories, revealing their tactical positions of making do—or what Halperin refers to as the "overall pattern of multiple livelihood strategies" (1990: 5), and their orientations toward an ambiguous and darkly looming past and future in a particular political and economic climate. A climate that favours productive, methodological individualism over the collective benefit and aid of universal social programmes aimed at helping those in need get through difficulties in the least stigmatising way. Put more generally, my focus will be on my informants' *existential predicaments—socially, politically and economically framed and temporally bound*.

My research has been informed from the beginning by what Jackson (1998, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2011, 2012) has called "existential anthropology[3]". I do not use the term "existential" in an unadulterated form which, like existential philosophy, emphasises the fate of the *individual*, cast into an absurd world not of his/her choosing and set upon a project wherein he/she must assume freedom and responsibility for him/herself and his/her fellow human beings (Jackson 2005). Quite the contrary, the existential anthropology expounded herein approaches human *being* and individuality as processes caught within a constitutive and constituting *dialectical* relation with social, cultural, political, economic, and moral forces—as I see it, a shimmering "silver chord" (borrowing the term from Western metaphysical literature and East Indian mysticism) runs through ourselves and the socially-engendered and enacted values ("structuring structures") that orient us dialectically and inflect meaning in our everyday lives. As such, I see the binary opposition between "structure" and "agency" (Bourgois and Shonberg 2009) as being far too sharp to capture what it was that I witnessed intersubjectively on the ground everyday.

The historical sociologist Norbert Elias (1998) called these dialectical relations and the subjectivities and historical structures they produced and re-produced, "figurations". All of us are caught within figurations: the figuration of the family, the workplace, the university, and, at a greater level, society. We could, perhaps, refer to "figurations" as "*fractal* dialectical relations"—possibly a more apt term as these

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[3] There are other approaches in anthropology that could be labelled "existential" as well. For instance, Desjarlais (1997, 2003), calls his approach "critical phenomenology", while Kleinman (1998, 2006) calls his approach a phenomenology of "local moral worlds". The precursor to these stances towards the study of how various social, moral, political, economic, and religious forces affect the individual might be found in Turner and Bruner's, *The Anthropology of Experience* (1986).

relations "structure" and "reproduce" on multiple levels and scales, through and between the self, the other, and the values which mark us relationally differential.

There is no individual without society, and there is no society without a group of individuals—we act upon each other, while at the same time we are all acted upon by the world (Jackson 1989). Our being, our very sociality, is locked fast within a "dance of figurations" (a dialectical dance that is reactionary and responsive, and with a choreography that permits much improvisation) as it were; circles within circles, curved lines within curved lines, ever shrinking, ever widening. A dance-line of multiplicities wherein its step-work is not derivative of itself or the other, for they both are *one* and the *same*, spinning on. And, as we will see further on, multiplicities in modern anthropology are the order of the day. Multiplicities goad binaries and convince them of their insecurities; they make their totalising mark diminutive and unstable. Self and other become an outmoded "differential" calculus of subjectivity, replaced by involutions, curves, lines in and out, co-becomings (reflexivities, too), and self-others within other-selves. As Viveiros de Castro and Goldman have said quite recently, we need to move beyond the staid and durable *a priori* categories and representations Kant erected and maintained in anthropological thinking, and see the multiplicities in things; to see the collapse between self/other, and understand how "…everything divides itself in itself and multiplies itself *through the other*…or as some would say, above all. Us and them? Who?" (2012: 425, my emphasis).

Following this insight, then, existential anthropology centres on the dynamic relationship between the world in which we are born and the world we have had a hand in making. As such, the project of existential anthropology, and the purview of its approach that afforded me a "way of seeing" things, must disengage its project from

others that are related (existentialist philosophy, phenomenological psychiatry and psychology, discursive psychology, etc.) by emphasising the autonomy of individuality and the processes of self-actualisation all at the expense of the specific social, cultural, political, and economic milieu in which, as Jackson (1998) states, "such existential imperatives" unfold. Insofar as intersubjectivity, then, delimits the horizon upon which my project is oriented, emphasis will be placed on the inter-relations between individuals whose relationships unfold in a certain social, cultural, political and economic context. Since intersubjectivity is unavoidably ambiguous (Jackson 1998), an anthropology that makes intersubjectivity its central focus must forgo any search for ahistorical, determinate or mechanically causal knowledge—after all, humans are unpredictable and complicated creatures. Its project, then, must describe the skein-like web, as scattered and inchoate as it may be, of human interaction and relations: social relations in which competing needs are in constant tension with different modes of consciousness and the interpretive frames they afford. These interpretive frames are in constant revision and adjustment as people navigate, negotiate and contest their social environments.

More specifically, then, this dissertation will outline the shifting dynamic between the *individual and society, subjectivity and sociality*: between fears, hopes, desires, and pain, and the greater social, moral, political and economic structures that subtend and play a part in determining their meaning and orientation/re-orientation to the world. Human experience is always already the negotiated and protean assemblage of different sets of interpenetrating and mutually-conditioning forces: *subjectivity*[4], or

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[4] I follow Biehl, Good and Kleinman in their approach to subjectivity as both an empirical reality *and* an analytic category (2007: 5).

the ensemble of modes of embodiment, perception, emotion, desire, and fear that animates and orients people in historically-contingent settings (Biehl *et al.* 2007); and, the *social, cultural and linguistic formations* that shape, organise, and create the very conditions of possibility for those modes of perception, language, emotion and desire (Ahearn 1999, 2001; Ortner 2005, 2006). I have chosen to centre on subjectivity here rather than "identity" insofar as subjectivity indexes those emergent processes and patterns of historically situated ways of perceiving and engaging with the world. "Identity", by contrast, implies solipsistic individual agency *qua* self-ascription, and therefore treats descriptors such as demographic profile, personal history or psychological disposition/temperament as innate, acultural, and asocial (read: "naturalistic") categories free from the discursive negotiations, contestations and constructions of modernity (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009).

Such an approach to subjectivity, I believe, will develop more precise and more integrative understandings of what it means to be *a person*: to live an oftentimes precarious life, and to live through, in and by distinctive temporalities (Desjarlais 2003). As such, I naturally reject Lévi-Strauss' dismissal of phenomenology and existentialism where he levied the charge that what obtains in their complementary approaches is an "indulgent attitude towards the illusions of subjectivity". He furthers his dismissal by claiming that both approaches tend toward "[t]he raising of personal preoccupations to the dignity of philosophical problems is far too likely to lead to a sort of shop-girl metaphysics…". He concludes by claiming that "[i]nstead of doing away with metaphysics, phenomenology and existentialism introduced two methods of providing it with alibis" (1955: 58).

Insofar as I disagree with Lévi-Strauss' call that "to reach reality one has to first reject experience, and then subsequently to reintegrate it into an objective synthesis devoid of any sentimentality" (1955: 58), I see subjectivity and lived experience (as well as "sentimentality", emotion, feeling, etc.) as unbreakable fetters in which any hope to break loose from them, much like the albatross hung round the neck of Coleridge's mariner, is a task sought in vain. We cannot see past or outside ourselves perceptively and perspectivally; and we cannot dislodge our meaningful connection to the world (the *ontological interchange* as it were) in order to arrive at a more distanced understanding of it[5]. We view the world always already through a looking-glass

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[5] Perhaps the great irony here is that like Lévi-Strauss' position that in order to reach reality we need to "reject experience, and then subsequently reintegrate it into an objective synthesis devoid of sentimentality", it was Edmund Hüsserl, the first philosopher to develop the phenomenological approach in continental philosophy, who thought—through what he called the phenomenological reduction and *epoché*—one could reach an objective understanding of the contents of consciousness through holding certain contents (i.e., an image, a thought, a feeling, a number or set of numbers, etc.) of thought in abeyance (through the suspension of judgment), disconnected from their experiential attachments to the world and the suspended webs of meaning that, in essence, imbue them with meaning and intelligibility. The goal of the reduction and *epoché* was to reach an understanding of phenomena as they present themselves in their unadulterated originality to consciousness—stripped of the alloys of meaning, judgment and the external world (Hüsserl's "pure consciousness"). As far as I understand them, the reduction and *epoché* are fruitless cognitive feats inasmuch as it is impossible to disentangle the objects of thought from the meanings attributed to them in any cultural system. And, as Merleau-Ponty realised later in his career (before his untimely death), the reduction and *epoché* create what I would call an "ontological circuit breaker" in the lived flow of experience between ourselves-in-the-world. As such, the reduction and *epoché* introduce a sharp binary between subject and object, direct experience and the *post-hoc* reflective and reflexive description thereof. This was a philosophical task that Merleau-Ponty was at pains to avoid in his last works; this task took him away from phenomenology and toward the notion of the "flesh of the world" or "the concrete emblem of a general manner of being" (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 147) wherein primacy was given to our bodily involvement with the world. It was in Merleau-Ponty's last work, *The Visible and the Invisible* where he stated that "the problems posed in *Phenomenology of Perception* are insoluble because I start there from the 'consciousness-object distinction' (1968: 200). The suspension of the world concomitant with the reduction and *epoché*, then, would render people—temporarily—*acultural* and *atheoretical*, displacing us from the *gestalt* of perceptual lived actuality. Culture, sociality, education, history and experience create and shape the various "lenses" through which we perceive, interpret and act upon the world. As Merleau-Ponty came to understand, it was only those artists *qua* phenomenologists with special talent (such as Cézanne and his peculiar approach to

darkly—darkly imbued with the weight of our histories, emotions, sentiments, and the values that orient the meanings we impute to the world around us. Following Merleau-Ponty, "we are condemned to meaning…" (2002: xxii), and therefore cannot tear through the moorings that hold us fast to the world both in and around us.

Naturally, then, by centering on the concept of "the person", subjectivity and intersubjectivity throughout my work, the idea of the "personality" does come in to play; however, much like Sapir, I understand the concept of the personality not as a "mysterious entity resisting the historically given culture", but rather as a "distinctive configuration of experience which tends always to form a psychologically significant unit and which, as it accretes more and more symbols to itself, creates finally that cultural microcosm of which official "culture" is little more than a metaphorically and mechanically expanded copy" (1949: 203).

Following Ahearn (1999, 2001), Biehl *et al.* (2007) and Ortner (2006), by attending to subjectivity and intersubjectivity *ethnographically* as it is mediated by various social and cultural structures, and through which economic, political, psychological, and linguistic registers are refracted, we can experience and encounter those situations in which people *live their lives*—in the sweep, flow and hermeneutic volatility of everyday life. To probe processes of intersubjectivity ethnographically, informed by the greater project of an existential anthropology, then, is to engage with

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painting human attributes and other scenes rent from their emotional valences, see Mathews 2006)—perhaps owing to an underlying mental illness such as psychosis—who are able to temporarily cast aside culture to reach a temporarily pre-theoretical, almost pre-cultural interpretation of experience ("to the things themselves"), free from socially-oriented, conditioned value and meaning. In the end phenomenology, to Merleau-Ponty (and others like one of his major influences, Martin Heidegger), meant taking a stance of wonder and amazement at one's experience of the world; it was thus a commitment to an almost poetic description of the immediacy of lived experience and its many actualities.

the particularities of peoples' lives as they develop in a given social, cultural, political,

economic and moral context—in my case a one year time frame in downtown London,

Ontario, Canada. The particularities of peoples' lives, though, are enacted and lived in

a state of constant flux, and undergo changes of different orders, always already bearing

the differential impress of the social structures, moral conventions, and knowledges

which guide and constrain them[6]. As Elias (1998) states, "…human beings are

interdependent, and can only be understood as such: their lives develop in and are

significantly shaped by the social figurations they form with each other". He continues

and explains that that "…the processes occurring in such figurations have dynamics of

their own—dynamics in which individual motives and intentions play a part, but cannot

be reduced to those motives or intentions alone" (131).

The task of the anthropologist is, much like Benjamin's (1978) approach to

language[7], *mutatis muntandis,* to *translate* through tacking back and forth theoretically

and ethnographically between social macro-structures and the particularities of

individual biography, which are only ever partially revealed through intersubjectivty.

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[6] The idea of constraint is important when thinking about sociality. For Heidegger (1962: 174), "throwness" (*Geworfenheit*) is meant to intimate the facticity or constraint of being: we are thrown into a particular historical, social, cultural, religious, political, economic and linguistic context—obviously not by our own choosing. Therefore, these greater macro-social, epistemic and moral-ethical structures orient us in particular, oftentimes unconscious ways—there is no unalloyed and alienated self. Insofar as "language speaks us" (as per Heidegger's understanding), there are certain aspects of experience that are beyond our agentive capacities to press the stamp of "pure will" onto them; and, as such, in some cases, "structures speak us". With respect to language alone, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is similar to the idea of throwness inasmuch as language is not only a tool for communication and the conveyance of ideas, it also shapes ideas and reality by introducing epistemic limits of what can be easily thought, imagined and conveyed. The positioning of throwness and the limits of language, and social, cultural, political, and moral context create the conditions of possibility for selves, bodies, and consciousness (Desjarlais 1997).

[7] As Benjamin stated: "The translation of the language of things into that of man is not only a translation of the mute into the sonic; it is also the translation of the nameless into a name. It is therefore the translation of an imperfect language into a more perfect one, and cannot but add something to it, namely knowledge" (1978: 325).

Oftentimes the positioning or orienting effect—the "thrownness" of our existential

predicament in a particular social context—of social macro-structures does not manifest

themselves consciously in everyday experience. Rather, they may reside in the realm of

the unconscious—in the half-light of awareness. As such, these social macro-structures

may remain occult or mute, slipping out of reflection, reflexivity and expression at

unexpected times. It is to the particularities of individual experience that an

ethnographer of subjectivity should attend in order to understand how social-macro

structures and the experience thereof may translate into subjective, experiential

knowledge.

Following Viveiros de Castro and Goldman (2012), I see anthropology (modern,

and theoretically sophisticated anthropology, that is) as an intellectual enterprise that is

dedicated to taking seriously the question of how to account and understand the many

perspectives of the Other—*in the sense of opinions on things, but also in the sense of*

things experienced. Such a perspectivist approach does not mean restricting ourselves

to other "visions" and perspectives of the world—a singular, universal world as it were

that is the object of multiple opinions. Some of which correspond with ours, some of

which do not. A truly *perspectivist* approach means opening ourselves up to *other*

worlds of experience and the transformative capacity of the imagination.

I understand this idea of translation as involving a more nuanced optics of the

various ways in which the greater cultural field or political economy (in my case, late

capitalism)—through its conditioning and configuration of phenomenological

possibility through the internalisation of values, mores, expectations, conventions and

the limits of knowing and experiencing—echoes and resonates through the lifeworlds[8]

of my informants. Of importance as well are the idiosyncratic and differential ways the

experience of one's political economic context is *imagined*, *registered* and *given*

culturally-inflected meaning in reflexivity, language and corporeality. Such an

approach parallels Bourdieu's notion of the habitus[9]. The habitus can be understood as

the dispositions, practices, and "ways of seeing the world" acquired through life

experience and the internalization of the social structures (values, mores, expectations,

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[8] A construct of Hüsserl, later taken up by Schutz (1967) and Schutz and Luckman (1973) the lifeworld is the unquestioned, practical, historically-rooted and pre-theoretical and familiar world of everydayness (Desjarlais and Throop 2011).

[9] Bourdieu's project, at least in his earlier works, seems at points unable to avoid the allure and pull of objectivism *qua* structuralism, only insofar as the individual—in the dialectic constitutive and constituting push and pull between individual and society—gets short shrift whilst social factors ("structuring structures") are afforded more analytic and theoretical weight. In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), Bourdieu states: "…the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the pre-condition for all objectification and apperception: and the objective coordination of practices and the sharing of a world-view could be founded on the perfect impersonality and interchangeability of singular practices and views" (1977: 86). He continues: "Since the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his [*sic*] group or class, each *individual system of dispositions* may be seen as a *structural variant* of all the other group or class habitus, expressing the difference between trajectories and positions inside and outside the class" (ibid.). The crux of Bourdieu's argument is: "'Personal' style, the particular stamp marking all the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works, is never more than a *deviation* in relation to the *style* of a period or class so that it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity—like Phidias, who, according to Hegel, had to "manner"—but also by the difference which makes the whole "manner"(ibid., original emphasis). In a more humble attempt to avoid the rocky epistemological crags between the Scylla and Charybdis of objectivism and subjectivism, my approach centres on the individual set within an all subtending socio-cultural matrix—never effacing the all-encompassing influence of the social from the individual. As Willis states, "Agents' intentions do not proceed from themselves, but are bound up in the complex way in which structures are inhabited through "cultural forms". But culture and agency do have real scope and creativity and can never be specified in advance. They have to be attended to for themselves, not only to understand how they "work" but also, more unexpectedly, for how something called "structure" might work. The question of "levels" and their relation is not one of direct determination, of causal billiard balls, but one of the surprising, unintended, ironic ways in which one set of rules and objectives—its own *fullness* of life—nevertheless has effects for another. The relation of these things should be seen not as the province of positivistic "laws", nor as the free play of voluntarism, but as a contradictory field only of "tendencies" (1981: 202, original emphasis).

ways of comportment) of a particular, cultural, political, and economic context. It must

be said, though, that one's habitus starts and stops with the body (it exists neither before

or beyond it), and therefore, since the body is the site of the reproduction of social and

cultural structures, habitus cannot extend beyond human activity (Ingold 2000).

Habitus and the experience thereof is differential owing to the class of the person, and

the amount of cultural/social capital they have or are capable of amassing. The habitus,

then, is a distinctive way to approach the problematic between "the individual" and

"society", and the myriad epistemological traps of both objectivism (in Bourdieu's case,

Lévi-Straussian structuralism) and subjectivism (again, in Bourdieu's case, Schutzian

social-phenomenology) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Translation, then, involves a nuanced focus on selves as shifting, fluid and

multiple coordinates of movement (cf. Delueuze and Guattari 1987) in the differential

spaces (i.e., smooth versus striated—as will be discussed throughout this dissertation)

of the *textus* between the individual and society.

As stated convincingly by Desjarlais, anthropologists must put stress

>…on the political because of the need to bridge phenomenological approaches and considerations of political economy. As it is, many politically attuned studies of social life neglect the finer questions of human agency and subjectivity, while many "experience near" approaches are bereft of serious analyses of the political and economic forces that contribute to the apparent reality or nearness of experience (1997: 25).

He continues by explaining that, as anthropologists, our ethnographies need to

stress not necessarily *what* people feel and know of pain, joy or illness, but *how* they do

so. "Studies of the latter", he continues, "are necessary, especially ones that

convincingly link modalities of sensation, perception, and subjectivity to pervasive

political arrangements and forms of economic production and consumption". "Such

work", he further explains, "can offer insights into how political, economic, biological, and cultural forces intersect in constituting a person's or a group's lifeworld, as well as to address the perennial critique that phenomenological approaches tend to neglect broader social and political dynamics in accounting for subjective realities" (1997: 25).

Adding to Desjarlais' sentiment, Crapanzano (2011) explains that unlike traditional phenomenological approaches[10]—which are concerned solely with the subject's consciousness—his particular approach, and I take this as my own as well, insists on the role of the ethnographer's *engagement* with the informant in his/her informed construction of the informant's experience. He cautions, though, that "[h]owever empathetic, however, intuitive the researcher's construction is, it can never achieve the goal he or she sets, for the mind, the subjective experience, of the other always remains opaque" (Crapanzano 2011: 6). In essence, my project bears some similarity to Williams' (1977: 121-122), particularly his approach to individuals'

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[10] It was my Masters thesis supervisor at McGill University/Douglas Memorial Hospital, Dr. Ellen Corin (an anthropologist and practicing psychoanalyst who had completed some of her training at the Hüsserl Archives, Leuven, Belgium), who would repeatedly remind me that in anthropology (or the social sciences in general), there can never be a direct "phenomenological approach" to ethnographic research—it is only ever a "phenomenologically-*inspired*" approach. A critical and sophisticated understanding of phenomenology reveals that phenomenology in the philosophical sense—that is, as Hüsserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty or Sartre, for instance envisioned it—involved self-reflective and reflexive analysis of the contents of one's consciousness and one's place in the world (particularly for the latter three). Phenomenological ontology qua "fundamental ontology" (as Heidegger [1962] envisioned it) is about questioning Being with a capital "B". Anything related to the particulars of individual experience was not the domain of ontology writ large, but was "ontic" in origin—it was the domain of particular "things", like chairs, trees, or individuals, and therefore of no relevance to the greater phenomenological question of Being. "Beings (*Seinde*) are particular things apprehended through the range of human activities and dispositions; a hammer, a tree, a melody, the past, nature and God are all beings in the relevant sense. Being (*Sein*) refers to the manner in which things "appear" or are apprehended, the horizon against which they emerge as the things they are. Central to Heidegger's argument is the claim that the concept of Being is intrinsically indeterminate from the perspective of traditional philosophy and science (Michelman 2008: 251). As I see it, any phenomenology as it was intended in the true continental philosophical sense, is always already an auto-phenomenology or self-phenomenology. In its application to ethnography one has to, *mutatis mutandi*, shift its orientation from self to other. As such, it is no longer truly phenomenology, but only phenomenologically-inspired.

"structures of feeling" in social contexts wherein certain alternative cultural formations ("residual" and "emergent") co-exist with more hegemonic structures. That is, the way in which culture, ideology and identity—in and through specific historical contexts of power, inequality, and commodification (Ortner 2005)—form a fluid experiential alloy in the constitution and re-constitution of subjectivity.

A caveat before continuing: conducting ethnographic fieldwork with a group such as street-oriented youth (the age of my informants ranged from 17 to 23 years old)[11] forced me to change tack with respect to the dialectical ratio between questioning and listening—an approach that would have differed greatly had I conducted ethnographic research primarily with adults. In many cases, I found that questions regarding the political and economic climate in which my informants (as well as myself) found themselves were either avoided or answered curtly with self-distancing statements such as, "I'm anti-government, I don't give a shit about politics or the government"; or, "I'm an anarchist, I'm not concerned with the government". The influence of the political and economic climate on my informants was profound, however, and I chose more often than not to just listen to them talk, whether it was gathered around with a group of people, or during our many informal life-history interviews, rather than ask directly (you ask a simple and direct question, you oftentimes get a simple, direct and uninformative answer).

The ethnographic crucible for anthropologists (some anyways) is not necessarily what ratio or proportion individual experience ("agency") and structure (socio-cultural, political and economic) is given in relation to each other (Marcus

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[11] "Street-oriented" means that the youth in question may not necessarily be homeless, yet they do spend a considerable amount of time on the streets—in this case, in downtown London, Ontario.

1986)—in terms of analytic weight (i.e., whether the objective is to focus more so on social structure than lived experience or vice versa)—but to articulate and breathe life into the relationship between macro-structure and experience through *ethnographic representation*—that is, the skill of articulating this relationship of half-taming the excesses of life, sociality and meaning through writing. Of course, translation and representation are only partial as the ethnographer can only ever hope to gain punctuated pulses and waves of insight gleaned through dialogically-oriented participant observation (any claim to a "true" or "full" representation decontaminated of "meaning", to me, is scientist hubris). As such, access to the experience of the other is almost always by way of an *experiential synecdoche*—wherein the parts of information gleaned from our relationships can represent only certain aspects of the rhythms of the lived experience of our informants in their convoluted, shifting and "unfinalised" (cf. Bahktin 1984) "wholes". I will now turn to an overview of the broader political economy in which both my informants and I made our way.

For my informants, everyday life is a difficult and, sometimes, anxiety-provoking enterprise. While most of them were housed during the timeframe of my fieldwork, all of them had prior experience with homelessness and had moved in and out and between various shelters, missions, and friends' homes. Inasmuch as they were housed at the time of my fieldwork, my informants may be referred to as "street-involved". Though they did have apartments throughout the city—usually located in the downtown core, sometimes only blocks from where I live—their "home-base" was around the intersection of Dundas and Richmond Street (the centre of downtown).

The central thesis of this dissertation is that, owing to my informants' experience with various forms of hardship, misfortune, almost absolute poverty, and,

most importantly, *loss* (loss of loved ones early on in their lives, loss of opportunity, loss of innocence, loss of hope, and, in some cases, loss of a will-to-be), they *struggle* existentially and financially in their current social environment, dominated as it is by the political economy of late capitalism. Through their daily struggles they meet head on with *a limit, a disconnect*. The lifeworlds my informants inhabit and live through are marked by a very specific temporality and way of being-in-the-world, one that is characterised by loss, a fear of the past, and anxieties about the present and future. The greater social, political and economic milieu in which they exist both *enables* and *constrains* the conditions of possibility for their relations—relations to themselves, others, and the larger world around them. Situating Abu-Lughod's (1991) "ethnographies of the particular" within the frame of an existential anthropology, I centre here on the specificity, situatedness and bounds of the circumstances and detailed histories of individuals and their relationships (insofar as I was afforded access to them) as crucial in the constitution and re-constitution of experience (Abu-Lughod 1991).

Aligning with Abu-Lughod's clarion call for a method for "writing against culture", or strategies for centring on particularities instead of fictional ethnographic consistencies, homogeneities, and generalisations, my project here seeks to focus on the *specificities of circumstance, situation and event*[12]. Abu-Lughod (1991) succinctly explains that "individuals are confronted with choices, struggle with others, make conflicting statements, argue about points of view on the same events, undergo ups and downs in various relationships", and how they confront "changes in their circumstances

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[12] To Jackson an "event" should be understood as the interplay of the singular and the shared, the public and the private, and the fluid relations between personal "reasons" and impersonal "causes" in the constitution, interpretation and action of events (Jackson 2005: xxvi).

and desires, face new pressures, and fail to predict what will happen to them or those around them" (1991: 154).

Taking the aforesaid into consideration, then, I will provide detailed personal histories of four of my informants as they were recounted to me at various points throughout my fieldwork period. The personal histories will serve as the *mise en scène* for my description of daily life at the Youth Action Centre (a drop in shelter for homeless and street-involved youth) and other points of intersubjective intersection throughout the downtown core of London.

Based on my fieldwork, then, I argue that the subjective experiences of my informants have led—in most cases—to a re-orientation to time and its subjective experience, including the emotional resonance and valences that subtend this experience. This re-orientation led, I believe, to a fundamental shift in the ontological framework of experience (the very nature of being and subjectivity), as well as the broader metaphysical canopy under which my informants understood and acted upon the world, i.e., how they enacted their identities, formed their interpretations, solved their problems, and carried out their day-to-day lives. Ultimately, this re-orientation to time and experience led my informants to a joining in and association with an alternative modality of being and "becoming[13]" at odds with the dominant political and

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[13] I follow Deleuze (1986, 1995, 1997) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) in their conceptualisation of becoming. "Becoming isn't part of history" they relay to us. "[H]istory amounts only the set of preconditions, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become", that is, *to create something new* (Deleuze 1995: 171, my emphasis). In my field context, becoming was related to being a *bricoleur*—fashioning new things from old or seemingly static resources.

moral economy[14] of the province, based on neoliberal logics and technologies of methodological individualism. Somewhat similar to the moral economy Bourgois and Schonberg took part in during the fieldwork based on their photo-ethnography *Righteous Dopefiend* (2009), those who frequented the YAC formed a moral community, too. Though addiction was part of the mortar of cohesion that kept this community together, their common experiences of abandonment, anxiety, depression, and haunting memories tempered this moral cohesion greatly. As such, the stuff of exchange, tendered in an unstable economy of immediacy for my informants was not necessarily physical (with the concomitant emotional associations)—like in Mauss' (1990) description of the "total social phenomena" of gifts in non-market economies— but rather *emotional*. "Gifts", then, came as emotional reinforcement, support, and encouragement (a hug, a shoulder to cry on, "standing up for one's boy", getting one's back"; however, drugs [free "tokes", "hits", or "toots"] were also given freely as gifts) meant to strengthen solidarity through tough times—especially when being "screwed over" by one's OW caseworker.

Borrowing the term from Tsing (2005), we can frame this articulation of becomings as one of the shifting contact points between "zones of awkward engagement"—those points of interconnection and misunderstanding wherein words, actions and moralities "mean something different across a divide even as people agree to speak", or in my case, "participate and *partially* agree" to the terms, expectations and requirements of Ontario's work fare programme, Ontario Works. This dominant moral economy is driven by various logics and technologies of regulation which seek to

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[14] What I mean by "moral economy" is the processual interaction between moral (morality certainly has its own internal economy), social, cultural, political and economic beliefs and activities.

domesticate, through various *strategies*—in De Certeau's (1984) sense of the term—the

"economic potentialities" of the self, rooted as they are in neoliberal philosophies of

"forward progress", "self-sufficiency", "employability" and "self-enterprisation", i.e., a

mode of becoming that is driven by the spirit of what I term the *entrepreneurial*

rhetorics of self-making.

The existential sequelae of participation in an alternative modality of being and

becoming, then, are manifold and complex, both at the individual and collective levels.

As a result of the temporal re-orientation owing to a mode of being-in-the-world or a

habitus that has become partially destabilised[15], riven by the oblique fractures of

existential trauma, I will illustrate the various ways my informants are ensconced in a

highly characteristic trajectory of being and becoming (Deleuze 1995, 1997; Deleuze

and Guattari 1986, 1987): one that is at sharp odds with the state (in this case, more

specifically, the province and its rules and regulations regarding the administration and

provision of Ontario Works—welfare). This modality of being and becoming is

characterised by a dynamic and tempered posture of *tactics of survival* or

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[15] In *Pascalian Meditations*, Bourdieu (2000) acknowledges individual differences in the ability to form an integrated habitus. This is in sharp contrast to his argument in *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977), where he explained that "…the habitus could be considered as a subjective but not individual system of internalized structures, schemes of perception, conception and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the pre-condition for all objectification and apperception: and the objective coordination of practices and the sharing of a world-view could be founded on the perfect impersonality and interchangeability of singular practices and views" (1977: 86). He continues: "Since the history of the individual is never anything other than a certain specification of the collective history of his [*sic*] group or class, each *individual system of dispositions* may be seen as a *structural variant* of all the other group or class habitus, expressing the difference between trajectories and positions inside and outside the class" (ibid.). And, here's the crux of Bourdieu's argument: "'Personal' style, the particular stamp marking all the products of the same habitus, whether practices or works, is never more than a *deviation* in relation to the *style* of a period or class so that it relates back to the common style not only by its conformity—like Phidias, who, according to Hegel, had to "manner"—but also by the difference which makes the whole "manner"(ibid., original emphasis).

débrouillardise[16] regarding everyday subsistence; and an approach to *healing and health* as a broadly conceived existential project, which focuses on the *reconciliation* (Nietzsche 1968, 2001) of one's past with one's present (and makes sense and meaning of the loss each of my informants felt deeply) through a *creative enterprise* (i.e., telling stories marked by the inflections of the "raconteur", *viz.* hyperbole and fabulation; writing poetry, being a *raconteur*, spoken word, and performing them), and not on simply *overcoming* obstacles (like skills acquisition, education, or motivation), or overcoming the impediments of the self (like substance abuse or psychiatric disorders, diagnosed or undiagnosed) that may block one from reaching financial independence, security, and self-sufficiency.

The capacity of what I will call the *wounded bricoleur*, borrowing the concept from Levi-Strauss (1966), characterises my informants' orientation and modality of being and becoming in a political and moral economy that, instead of emphasising social welfare, assistance, and compassion, put an extreme emphasis on self-sufficiency, individuality, and, most importantly, *employability*. Left with little room to manoeuvre, this disconnect of becomings forced my informants to be improvisational, inventive, and pragmatic about their lives, choices, decisions, and orientations to the future, both in terms of their everyday subsistence and their approaches to their own existential health as reconciliation between past and present. Inasmuch as this is the

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[16] *Débrouillardise* is a French concept that embodies practices of social manipulation ranging from accommodation, resistance, cunning, ways of "making out", and ways of "making do" in difficult situations (Reed-Danahay 1993). *Débrouillardise*—quite similar to the Greek word *mētis* ("cunning") as per De Certeau's (1984) use—is much more fine-grained and nuanced in its meaning, and must be compared to acts of straight resistance which, following Reed-Danay (1993), are too simplistic, and do not account for the ways in which disenfranchised populations actually borrow from and make strategic use of the resources of the state in acts of partial accommodation.

daily state of affairs for my informants, they are masters of *situational irony*, an ironic "condition of affairs" or "outcome of events" (Muecke 1969: 42). At the intersection of becomings or "zones of awkward engagement" (Tsing 2005), my informants are the "ironizers" in the situation of the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making and the neoliberal logics and technologies that underwrite them.

In terms of what we may call "conceptual cartographics", I will provide a conceptual (read: textual) map for how this dissertation is laid out—in terms of its empirical and theoretical topographies. As I see it, this work—and the research that brought it to fruition—lies at the crossroads between *ethnography*[17] and *critical theory*. In Bakhtin's sense, then, the content is "double-voiced": that is, it can be interpreted in *two ways—its meanings inhere in a kind of doubleness*. For the first, I see this dissertation as the *textual representation of the dialogues between myself and my informants* as they emerged and unfurled in various contexts, whether engaged live in face-to-face contexts or in the silent dialogue between myself and my fieldnotes and memories.

Second, I see it as a sustained and engaged conversation *between myself and the philosophers (many of whom are continental, but others not) and social theorists featured herein*. In true hermeneutic style, I "conversed" with the texts of various philosophers and theorists throughout the ethnographic engagement with my interlocutors—and following it—in an attempt to frame (and be framed by) the social, psychological and existential phenomena I experienced. I suppose we could call the

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[17] That is, the textual/literary representation of the emergent products of the loose set of practices anthropologists refer to as "fieldwork", i.e., participant-observation, talking to informants through conversation (and the usual recording thereof), telling them stories, and listening to their stories, taking part in activities with them, misunderstanding them and occasionally understanding them.

acknowledgement of the theoretical framings of empirical phenomena throughout this

dissertation the process of *critical heuristics*—the process of discovery and

understanding whereby one comes to interpret the phenomena under consideration by

tacking back and forth constantly between empirical experience and a theoretical optic.

As I write this, I realise how akin this process is to Martin Heidegger's (1962)

hermeneutic circle: by acknowledging the influence of my theoretical "fore-structures"

of understanding, I can proceed—always provisionally—to a preliminary understanding

of things. Before continuing, let me be blunt about one thing: I am not a philosopher,

and so my readings of the philosophies featured herein are not philosophical readings.

They are anthropological ones.

The crux, then, of outlining the *doubleness of meanings* here is to acknowledge

the process of thought: its densities and sparsities; its thicknesses and thinnesses. Much

like Heidegger, I see thinking as following along pathways (open and clear, light and

dark) and I would like to show where it is that I am going—the "lines of thought" as it

were—involved in attempting to limn the agonistic production of the subjectivities

(between structure and the agencies it affords, and the temporalities of becoming that

frame them) of my informants, and the "thick*est*" description and representation

thereof. Keeping this in mind, some of the concepts and terminologies featured herein

are difficult and, sometimes, quite abstract; however, this is not an exercise in being

abstract for the sake of being abstract—a variant of the Latin, *Ars gratia artis*, "art for

art's sake". No, there is a conceptual purpose to the featured abstraction. As Viveiros

de Castro and Goldman explain, following Isabelle Stengers, "it is very often necessary

to use difficult words so that they resist capture, so that they cannot be pronounced

freely, with impunity, by the bosses, by the powers that be, by the political, the

mediatic, or academic cardinalate. And yet this is never guaranteed once and for all"
(2012: 426).

The first chapter of this dissertation sets the theme and tells the story of the
overall social, economic and political context in which my informants get by and make
do. As such, I consider the social and political climate in which new changes (ranging
from ideological to administrative) were brought about to Ontario's welfare system.
The objective of this chapter is to outline the series of "snakes and ladders" that my
informants have to navigate daily. I discuss the idea of neoliberalism—and its
philosophies and policies—and how it came to re-frame the administration and
provision of Ontario Works (welfare, social assistance) in Ontario. I explain the
political and ideological impetus (both local and global to an extent) for espousing
neoliberal philosophies and policies, and how they precipitated—over the course of
various political tide changes—the shift from welfare to *workfare-style* programmes. I
also limn how the conservative provincial government charged with effecting the sea-
change in the administration and provision of social assistance, partnered with private
enterprise to make Ontario Works a government/private enterprise conflation. The
chapter concludes with a consideration of the effect of neoliberal philosophies and
polices on human subjectivity, particularly as it relates to those receiving an income
from state-supported programmes such as welfare.

The second chapter provides background context for my field "site".
Descriptions are given of where my field research took place; I also broach the
discussion of the difficulties of conducting ethnographic research, not just one in one's
own city, but one's own neighbourhood. A brief critique of the traditional focus of
sociocultural anthropology is offered—that is, conducting fieldwork "far away" in

"another place"—and I make a case for why conducting fieldwork in one's own context (whether this be a city, neighbourhood, village, etc.) is equally as important and challenging. I argue that "otherness" is everywhere (even in one's own backyard), and so should, when possible, be engaged anthropologically.

The third chapter is the first of a conceptual "diptych" hinging together a critique of "methodology" in ethnographic fieldwork. For this chapter I draw on ethnographic situations, and explain that methodology as a prescription to "act" and "do" in a research situation can more often than not lead to a sterile understanding of how sociality unfolds in ethnographic fieldwork. I broach the problematic of "reflexivity" in familiar fieldwork contexts here, and argue forcefully for its dialogic re-framing—one that considers seriously the role of emotion and reciprocity in the co-production of ethnographic knowledges. As such, I make the case, following the likes of George Devereux and Johannes Fabian that it is *epistemology—what* we know, *how* we know, and *why* we know intersubjectively, reciprocally—and not *methodology* that is of prime importance in and through the ethnographic enterprise (particularly with respect to the process of "objectivity").

The fourth chapter, conceptually hinged to the previous one, considers epistemological issues from a purely theoretical perspective. I focus here on analysis of "context" in fieldwork, and its influence on the co-production of knowledges. I draw upon Bakhtin and his notion of the "chronotope" in order to flesh out the connection between meaning and context. I augment this notion by considering the role of emotion and the body as contextual features in knowledge co-production. Toward the end of the chapter, I tackle the problematic of "objectivity" in fieldwork and provide a provisional epistemological antidote in Keats' notion of "negative capability".

The fifth chapter presents the life histories of four of my informants: Zane, Mitch, Esther and Chris. Their life histories were taken at various points throughout my fieldwork, and were mostly recorded via my digital recorder—though many aspects of their histories were taken down in my fieldnote book, on my iPhone, or committed to memory. The transcriptions featured are direct and unedited. As such, I attempt to retain textually the emphases, stutters, repetitions, pauses (represented through the use of ellipses) and the gaps and uncertainties of talk about potent topics like trauma (both physical and existential), abandonment, suicide, drug use, poverty, illness, love and hate.

The sixth chapter centres on the various ways my informants get by in their day-to-day lives. It features ethnographic illustrations of conversations about daily survival, the clever artifice involved in getting around some of the employment rules and regulations of the Ontario Works programme, and the various ways my informants piece together (*qua wounded bricoleurs*) ways of making do from the available bits and pieces of practical knowledge and system opportunities.

The seventh chapter introduces an in-depth treatment of the notion of becoming and how it relates to my informants' lives. By way of Deleuze and Guattari, as well as Nietzsche, I re-frame my informants' relation to the state as one marked by a "disconnect of becomings". I describe the orthogonal, competing agendas of my informants and the state, and suggest that the process of *becoming* for my informants is a broadly conceived *existential project*; a precarious project wherein the focus is on the reconciliation of one's past with one's present through a creative enterprise of becoming (existential transformation through poetry, drawing and performing as raconteurs), and not on simply "overcoming obstacles" (lack of skills, motivation), or

overcoming impediments of the self (addiction, psychiatric disorders, etc.) that may block one from reaching OW's programmatic and rehabilitative goal of acquiring a base-level of cultural capital (skills, training, education). The attainment of the "right" cultural capital, from the state/private enterprise perspective, it is hoped, will lead Ontario Works "participants" to employment (regardless of its quality or duration). This is a desired economic end-point, from the perspective of OW administration, that will ultimately lead to the easing of costs associated with social assistance expenditures.

The dissertation closes with a broadly conceived re-evaluation of individual agency *qua* subjectivity and action, specifically related to the everyday experience of my informants. My analysis is tethered to the central idea that the experience of loss, failure, and existential trauma has affected my informants on a deep and penetrating level; as such, their very "will"—their ability to act, to decide, to choose—bears the dysrythmic *tonalities of the ghostly*, *the haunted*. It is characterised by a haunting presence; an almost spectral looming of past experiences that refuse to dissipate, to break up, or to fade when rushed up against the emerging horizon of the present and future. As J. M. Coetzee wrote, sometimes people "…are wracked by a conflict between a self-protected urge to block off a painful past and a blind gripping for something, they do not know what, that has been lost" (2002: 25). As such, then, my informants' everyday experiences were characterised by a degree of ambiguity, contradiction, and inconsistency. This quality of the ghostly, the haunted, arises for both social scientists and others who are at pains to articulate, name and breathe the life of the word into experiences that overflow, escape, and leak through all attempts at phenomenological arrest. Not all experience is *nameable*.

Not all experience is phenomenologically commensurate with our working concepts and metaphors to bring them forcefully within the blurred orbit of conscious understanding and subsequent articulation in narration. These, one could say, are those experiences that are truly violent, and are thus beyond the domestication of the mind and its "categories"—as Kant called them—of the understanding. These wild, feral experiences, then, are what I would call the ineffable; to the extent that they are truly beyond the reach and persuasion of the word, they too exist as *idola*: phantom-like insubstantial, and spectral traces, images and reverberations of historically-rooted experience.

In the face of over-powering loss, and the haunting and ghost-like quality with which it imbued my informants' everyday lives, I argue against any naïve theoretical approach that conceives of human action and subjectivity as driven by a rational, calculated, and directed reaching toward one's own best interests. Contra such a position, the narrative thread of this dissertation argues that action and subjectivity need to be understood as dynamically enmeshed with the social structures, moralities, and orientations that both enable and limit their very conditions of possibility.

I ask the reader to consider the following quote on the experience of human temporality (as opposed to the punctuated points of measured, progressive and teleological time) from W. G. Sebald's novel *Austerlitz* (2001). The passage's simplicity and elegance evoke with great fidelity of feeling and resonance the lived, haunted actualities (the lines of time, being and becoming) of my informants.

> A clock has always struck me as something ridiculous, a thoroughly mendacious object, perhaps because I have always resisted the power of time out of some internal compulsion…in the hope, as I now think…that time will not pass away, has not passed away, that I can turn back and go behind it, and there I shall find everything as it once was, or more precisely I shall find that all moments of time

have co-existed simultaneously, in which case none of what history tells us would be true, past events have not yet occurred but are waiting to do so as the moment when we think of them (101).

Photograph #1: "Vortices of Time".

Note:

In accordance with the ethical approval for this research, all of my informants—as well as all staff—have been given pseudonyms; and, in some cases, gender identities have been altered. All of the photographs featured throughout this dissertation were taken by myself. The drawings and poems featured herein have been used with the kind permission of their authors/creators.

CHAPTER 1—Of Snakes and Ladders: *La Mise En Scène*

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.

K. Marx 1978: 595

A man is the history of his breaths and thoughts, acts, atoms and wounds, love indifference and dislike, also of his race and nation, the soil that fed him and his forbears, the stones and sands of his familiar places, long-silenced battles and struggles of conscience, of the smiles of girls and the slow utterance of old women, of accidents and the gradual action of inexorable law, of all this and something else, too: a single flame which in every way obeys the laws that pertain to fire itself, and yet is lit and put

out from one moment to the next, and can never be relumed in the whole waste of time to come.

<div align="right">A. S. Byatt 1990: 9</div>

In all willing it is absolutely a question of commanding and obeying, on the basis, as I have said, already, of a social structure composed of many 'souls'…

<div align="right">F. Nietzsche 1973: 31</div>

In 1995, Mike Harris' Progressive Conservative government was elected in Ontario, and pushed through their radical neo-liberal platform. Ever since, the conceptualisation, administration and provision of welfare or social assistance has been in a constant state of flux (Lightman et al. 2006). The *modus operandi* of the Harris government was to bring about a "Common Sense Revolution" (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005). The revolution manifested itself in a raft of new rules and regulations, business practices, and technologies, as well as new funding and service delivery models of provincial programmes (Lightman et al. 2006)—all of which were backed by neo-liberal philosophies and steeped in the rhetoric of "deregulationist" (Peck 2001) economic logics.

The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) was the key-stone of the Canadian welfare state that had existed for some thirty years prior to the permissive federalism and concomitant provincial restructuring set in motion by the Liberal Party in 1995, but pushed further by the Harris government. CAP, passed in parliament in 1966, was driven by the then-emerging ideological spirit of Post World War II era nation building and Keynesianism. And, as such, Canada had set forth on a "massive centralisation of responsibility for income security" (Banting 1987: 63).

During its thirty years of existence, CAP extended welfare to those deemed by the Canadian state to be "in need" and codified the existing system of cost-transfer payments (Herd 2002). The funding of CAP was on a 50/50 basis with Ottawa, for which it matched—dollar for dollar—what the provinces invested in social policy. The stipulation was that CAP required recipients to look for work; and, when found, they were to accept any job they were physically capable of doing; however, mandatory work programmes were ineligible for federal cost-shared support (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005; Little and Marks 2010).

According to Herd (2002), despite some initial experimentation in other provinces such as Alberta and Quebec, workfare-style reforms were largely prevented from taking form in Ontario. By the time the Harris government took office—driven as it was by a neoliberal agenda that has been slowly gaining attractive force since the crisis of "stagflation" in the early 1970's (Fanelli and Thomas 2011)—Ontario had downloaded increased responsibilities to municipalities. This charged municipalities with the task and the "freedom" to design "local solutions" to socio-economic problems. The shifting of responsibilities from provincial to municipal governments reflected federal strategy at the time of "downloading". This new reality was reflected in the replacement of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) by the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) in 1996—which represented a sea change in the history of Canadian social policy (Lightman et al. 2006; Battle and Torjman 1995).

It was through the collapse of federal payments for a range of social programmes into one "block grant" that the CHST completely undermined the national standards of CAP. The outcome was two-fold: 1) provincial leaders traded more power for fewer dollars; and, 2) federal involvement was reduced to a minimum in terms of

responsibility and cost. Thus, federal contributions had shifted to a lesser, fixed amount (Herd 2002). As a result, the provincial incentive to provide more funding into social programmes was removed, which multiplied the effect of federal cutbacks (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005). The loss of national standards under the CHST, combined with the promise of greater provincial freedom and flexibility, created the conditions of possibility for compulsory local "workfare" programmes (Lightman et al. 2006; Little and Marks 2010). This also led to the disqualification of certain groups (i.e., those who were already receiving assistance from other provincial sources, such as the Ontario Student Assistance Programme [OSAP]) (Herd 2002).

As well, Ontario's neoliberal agenda, countenanced without hesitation by the Harris government, served as the ideological matrix in which to foster and push the transition from welfare to "workfare". The government held fast to social policy strategies directed toward fiscal restraint, trade policies designed to promote competitiveness and capital mobility, and labour relations that would promote "the individualization of economic risks" (Fanelli and Thomas 2011: 143).

The Harris government's purported "Common Sense Revolution", then, introduced two changes that would impact those already receiving social assistance: 1) the Ontario Works (OW) programme, which led to a sharp transition from social welfare (i.e., public money for the "deserving poor") to an increasingly employment-focused workfare system; and, 2) the adoption of a zero-tolerance policy for putative welfare fraud (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005; Lightman 2006; Little and Marks 2010).

At its core, OW is a compulsory work-first programme, much like Wisconsin Works (upon which OW was based, Herd 2002), that centres on rapidly attaching

"participants" (note the change in language as per the Ontario Works Policy Directive [2008]) to available local jobs (Lightman et al. 2008). Work-fare or work-incentive programmes tie welfare benefits to employability (Little 1998). As such, the imperative is for participants to find work (regardless of low wages and regardless of whether the wages are less than what a participant earns on OW); however, there are oftentimes set-backs that render participants' ability to find employment problematic. The Youth Team Manager at OW explained to me in an email that:

> Each individuals [*sic*] circumstances vary so much that we understand that some participants may require our support for an extended length of time, as they have a number of barriers to sustainable employment. Examples of these would be sole support parents with small children who are not yet school aged – the parent is deferred (or not required to participate) until the child is school aged. We hope that they would participate voluntarily in terms of job searching or working towards a grade 12 diploma – but it doesn't always happen. Other's [*sic*] have long term illness or ill health that defers them from participating/job searching – but they are not ill enough to qualify for ODSP [Ontario Disability Support Programme]. We have some participants who by all accounts look job-ready (have an employment goal, their grade 12, recent labour force attachment, a good resume, present well…) but despite being all this [*sic*] end up being in receipt of OW for more than a year or so… often there is a barrier that we are not aware of and so we attempt to learn more about what is limiting their ability to secure employment. Having said all that, the average OW participant receives OW for a period of 24 months (as per the most recent participant profile of 2011). Newcomers to Canada who have language barriers tend to be higher than the general average while 18 -21 year olds have a lower average amount of time on OW. The length of time seems to rise with the participant's age (personal communication, May 2012).

The introduction of OW brought with it a number of wide-ranging changes in administration and provision—from the reduction of caseloads (some 500, 000 people left the welfare rolls in 1995) to dramatic cuts to social assistance rates. Able-bodied recipients of social assistance (including single mothers) who were receiving the maximum allowance had their cheques reduced by 22% (Herd 200; Herd and Lightman 2005; Little and Marks 2010)—plunging this population even further into poverty.

Accompanying this 22% cut were reductions to shelter payments, elimination of earnings exceptions, and increasing prevalence of the rhetorics of self-development through workfare programmes.

Jenny, a former welfare recipient who visits the YAC with a city-funded street-outreach team, told me that she remembers what it was like when her cheques were cut. She said that a single person on OW prior to 1995 received just under $800.00 (for living expenses, excluding rent). After 1995, though, her cheques were cut to $500.00 in total. She explained that by providing individuals (without dependents) around $500.00 per month, the province locks people into poverty in that their only choice for accommodation is in low-income areas that are often unsafe. After rent, OW participants are only left with around $200.00 per month to buy food, clothing, and other necessities.

The restructuring and reconceptualization of welfare in Canada has resulted from a very narrow political debate and a largely unchallenged "supply-side" economic orthodoxy (i.e., reducing government regulation as well as income and capital gains taxes) (Herd 2002). A philosophical shift concomitant with this economic restructuring locates the causes of poverty in the individual behaviours of the poor, rather than in larger social, cultural, political and economic structures (Herd 2002). This is echoed by Desjarlais (1997) when he refers to the "culture" of neoliberal-driven capitalism and its shift away from the welfare state in North America. He explains that this shift away from providing social programmes to the poor, that is, a shift away from an entitlement to health-care, food, clothing, and decent housing is rooted in a neo-Victorian assumption that "poor-folk" are to be held responsible for their own poverty and moral turpitude—and are thus in need of moral reform.

To this end, the "remoralization of poverty"—and this is reflected in OW's mandate by way of "rehabilitating" individuals through economic guidance to become employ-able—focuses attention on changing, or attempting to change, the poor as individuals rather than reconfiguring and reconstructing the economic and political system that is responsible for generating impoverishment and social inequalities (Desjarlais 1997; Lyon-Callo 2004). Lyon-Callo (2003, 2004) opines that the societal result of the socio-cultural (read: hegemonic) naturalisation of poverty and social inequality in the individual is to no longer make society "well" through the development of collective resistance strategies against poverty, social exclusion and injustice, but rather to "normalize" the poverty, homelessness and social inequalities of individuals through the moral rhetoric of powerful morally discursive practices—those aimed at situating the causes and remedies of poverty in the individual.

The centripetal impact of these morally discursive practices is that poor individuals get caught up in a process of "self-blame", and that being poor, homeless, or difficult to employ is the result of a social pathology rooted in deviancy (Bourgois and Schonberg 2009; Lyon-Callo 2003, 2004). This excessive individualism, therefore, has led to an understanding that providing assistance to the poor can only lead to a pathological and self-perpetuating condition of "dependency" (Lyon-Callo 2004). As such, social assistance in the form of welfare, housing, programmes aimed at eliminating food insecurity, etc., at its worst, would decrease the poor's drive to become self-reliant individuals who are able to compete in the global economy (Lyon-Callo 2004).

Welfare states were founded on principles of universality, needs-based eligibility, rights and entitlements. Thus, welfare was once thought of as a socio-

financial safety-net designed to help those in need. The Harris government, through a process referred to as "social policy by stealth" (Little 1998: 150), slowly eroded the foundation of universal programmes that were to benefit all citizens. Unpopular "minority" programmes (such as Ontario's low-income housing programme) were slashed, and then the government made appeals to the private sector to pick up the slack. Hand in hand with this "social policy by stealth" was a more insidious "gradualist strategy" that slowly and effectively underfunded mainstream welfare programmes, using subterfuge to claim that these programmes were far too expensive to fund. The denouement was that Ontario's universal welfare programme was replaced by targeted policies, such as work-fare programmes, that both benefit and stigmatise only the "needy" (Little 1998).

Workfare, then, represents a discursive shift from an "entitlement-based" universal regime to an exclusive and targeted work-based regime; it thus reflects a new political consensus based on market-based selectivity, social contracts, rights and responsibilities (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005). One glance at the first two pages of the Ontario Works Policy Directives (2010) reveals the new emphasis on the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making:

Legislative Authority:

The Ontario works Act, 1997 ("the Act") and related regulations provide the legislative framework for the provision of employment assistance and financial assistance to help people in temporary financial need.
The Act establishes a program that:
-Recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
-Provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
-Effectively serves people needing assistance; and
-Is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Types of Assistance:

All Ontario Works delivery agents must provide employment assistance and basic financial assistance.

Employment assistance:

Employment services play a critical role in helping individuals prepare for, connect with, and remain in the labour market. Ontario works employment assistance helps people to become and stay employed, and includes activities such as:
-Job search support services;
-Employment information sessions;
-Community participation (i.e., activities that allow people to contribute to the community and improve their employability);
-Employment placement and job retention services;
-Supports for self-employment development;
-Referral to basic education;
-Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program;
-Literacy and job-specific skills training; and
-Screening for substance abuse and referral to assessment and treatment if necessary (sites participating in this activity must be approved by the Director of Ontario Works)
The appropriate mix of employment assistance activities depends on the experience, skills, circumstances and needs of individual applicants or participants and the realities of the local labour market. The amount of time a participant needs to engage in activities designed to help him or her increase employability and obtain sustainable employment will vary (Ontario Works Policy Directives 2008: 1-2).

Ontario Works: A Neoliberal Agenda

Another change ushered in by the Harris government in 1995 was the shift to "managerialism" or "new public management" in the administration and provision of social assistance. A "Common Purpose Procurement" (CPP) agreement was struck between the provincial government and Andersen Consulting (a private enterprise consulting company), called the "Business Transformation Project" (BTP). The BTP, driven by a mandate to cut costs, sought to reconfigure social assistance programmes (OW), targeting the introduction of new business practices and various technologies to support them (Herd and Lightman 2005).

The BTP significantly altered the landscape of public/private partnerships in Ontario, and accorded the private sector the ability to become deeply enmeshed in what were—prior to the BTP—understood as completely core government functions (Herd and Lightman 2005). For the first time in the history of the province, private firms now acquired a direct and unmediated interest in the economic workings of the province. Under the new CPP agreements private sector firms would pay some or all up-front project costs in exchange for a share of the anticipated cost-savings. In Ontario's current OW system, the majority of private sector cost-savings derive from restricting and reducing OW caseloads (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005).

This restriction and reduction of caseloads is achieved through constant local and provincial policing of participants. The downloading of responsibility for the provision of social assistance funds from the federal to the provincial levels has led to increased pressure to reduce standards and eligibility criteria even further (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005). The result of this pressure has led to the reduction of social assistance services and the tightening of eligibility criteria (Herd 2002). To this end, the BTP introduced two stages to social assistance eligibility: a telephone pre-screening mechanism called the Interactive Voice Response (IVR). IVR allows routine information such as income to be updated regularly. Participants have to provide a monthly income report, regardless of whether their status has changed. The change-over to an automated system makes it extremely difficult for participants who lack access to a phone (Herd 2002); as well, it introduces a level of inaccessibility to the system in that it becomes incredibly difficult to speak with an actual person through the IVR system.

The second stage consists of a Consolidated Verification Report (CVR). The CVR provides a highly rigorous and on-going review of each and every aspect of a participant's case history. As I witnessed first-hand—over and over again, in fact—in my fieldwork, if one of my informants' financial documents (i.e., pay stubs, income reports, extra earnings statements) were missing or incomplete, or paperwork was not in order, they often were issued a warning of impending disqualification from OW (usually within two-weeks). In some cases, particularly where one of my informants had a lenient or understanding OW worker, cheques would be "placed on hold" until the requisite documentation was submitted. The IVR and CVR are further instances of late capitalist societies moving toward what Deleuze (1995) called "control societies".

Control, from Deleuze's perspective, is achieved through instant communication (via technology), continuous control and assessment through on-going educational training and monitoring. As envisioned by Deleuze, "In a control-based system nothing's left alone for long…one can of course see how each kind of society corresponds to a particular kind of machine—with simple mechanical machines corresponding to sovereign societies, thermodynamic machines to disciplinary societies, cybernetic machines and computers to control societies". He goes on to point out that "…the machines don't explain anything, you have to analyse the collective apparatuses of which the machines are just one component. Compared with the approaching forms of ceaseless control in open sites, we may come to see the harshest confinement as part of a wonderful happy past " (1995: 175).

With the aforementioned BTP and its accompanying assessment and surveillance technologies of the IVR and CVR, the state's imperative is to create what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) call population "resonation"—a resonation between all

aspects of the underclass which have become completely dependent on its services. By doing this, the state can more easily manage and regulate this population. The driving force of this control is to reduce caseloads so as to cut costs and increase profits. Deleuze and Guattari explain:

> [The state]…is a phenomenon of interconsistency. It makes points resonate together, points that are not necessarily already town-poles but very diverse points of order, geographic, ethnic, linguistic, moral, economic, technological particularities. It makes the town resonate with the countryside. It operates by stratification; in other words, it forms a vertical, hierarchized aggregate that spans the horizontal lines in a dimension of depth. In retaining given elements, it necessarily cuts off their relations with other elements, which become exterior, it inhibits, slows down, or controls those relations; if the State is a circuit of its own, it is an internal circuit dependent primarily upon resonance, it is a zone of recurrence that isolates itself from the remainder of the network, even if in order to do so it must exert even stricter controls over its relations with that remainder (1980: 433).

That "political" decisions about who should be eligible for welfare are no longer questions of public policy—openly debated in Parliament—but, now, rather, stem from the administrative and regulatory practices of micro-management of unaccountable private-sector contractors (they are now "business decisions") has precipitated the all-out disappearance of the idea of "need" from the parlance of welfare eligibility (Herd 2002; Herd and Lightman 2005).

When I went to conduct interviews in the local OW office downtown, I was directed to the manager of the "Youth Team" for OW (one of the twelve teams directed to "special populations", i.e., those populations who possess potentially "problematic" lifestyles such as "the homeless", "the addicted", "street-involved youth", etc.). While I sat in the waiting room waiting for our first scheduled interview appointment, I witnessed first-hand how the intake process works at OW. Sitting in the first line of available waiting room chairs in what seemed to be to be a very dark waiting room, I

noticed how each participant or would-be particpant was under the watchful eye of two security guards sitting at the large desk that flanked the block of waiting room chairs.

Feeling slightly uncomfortable about this (and trying very hard to not overhear two women openly talk about personal issues with their boyfriends, all while attended by the pang of aggressive perfume suffusing itself around me in covert dialogue), I took my fieldnote book out and jotted down some notes. I saw that potential recipients (those who do not have access to a home or cell phone) are required to call in for an initial intake interview before they are able to speak with a representative—this, as it seemed to me, was a strategy to effect a measure of distance between the state and the individual. A row of booths without partitions were set up for potential participants to call in, leaving no privacy between callers. What I found strange was that the row of booths was only around one metre in front of the block of waiting room chairs. As such, I heard most of a conversation between a middle-aged man and his OW worker.

I learned later through the literature that once potential recipients are screened and assessed for eligibility, they have to schedule a two-hour intake interview with a caseworker to determine final eligibility. The information each potential recipient must bring with them for their in-person intake interview consists of:

-**Birth verification**: documentation for all applicants and participants and beneficiaries
-**Martial status**: any legal documents pertaining to a divorce or separation
-**Support**: where applicable, a Declaration of Support and Maintenance
-**Immigration status**: documents relating to immigration for all applicants and participants and dependents
-**Income**: eligibility for potential sources of income must be discussed and assignment forms completed where appropriate
-**Property**: copies of deeds and or mortgages for any property owned by the applicant or participant or beneficiaries including principal residence
-**Debts**: verification of all debts over $500.00
-**Documentation to indicate pursuit of assistance through ODSP**: Ontario Disabilities Support Programme
-**Social Insurance Number**: for applicant and spouse

-**Health card numbers**: for all beneficiaries
-**Sponsorship or Breakdown of Sponsorship**: for sponsored immigrants
-**Back accounts**: verification of bank account information including account numbers and locations (s) for the year preceding application. Any and all changes to accounts must also be verified
-**Receivables**: details of monies owed to the applicant must be declared monthly
-**Year and make of vehicles**: if participant owns any
-**Funds held in trust**
-**Room/boarder information**
-**Accommodations**: lease/rental agreements must be verified and documented
-**Assets and Real Property must be declared**: no applicant can hold any asset over $5000.00 or they will not be approved for OW (list taken from Herd and Lightman 2005:11).

During my field interview, the manager of the Youth Team explained that the requirements of OW are very stringent; if a recipient does not follow through with the requirement for documentation, he or she faces the possibility of getting cut from OW, and losing their access to funds entirely (Youth Team manager, personal communication 2012). She conceded that the submission of paperwork can be incredibly difficult for street-involved and homeless youth to manage—they often lose or misplace important paperwork. Personal experience at the YAC confirmed that this was an issue insofar as some of my informants either were getting their OW cheques withheld for weeks at a time, or they were cut off from OW for not handing in requested paperwork.

The central goal, then, of the government of Ontario, backed by private-sector interests, is to instil a work ethic in OW participants through the rules, regulations and requirements of OW as a workfare programme. Those who do not abide by the province's project of domestication and regulation are oftentimes seen as potential welfare fraudsters. The Youth Team manager relayed to me that OW administrators are dealing with an increasing rate of OW "generational dependency" (which is currently at

70-80% wherein at least two generations are dependent, personal communication).

Within neoliberal rhetorical strategies of fiscal restraint, the government of Ontario—by

way of its OW programme—claims to be doing tax payers a favour by thoroughly

vetting potential OW participants and regularly monitoring and regulating current

participants so as to reduce case loads as a cost-savings measure (Little and Marks

2010).

With legislative changes backing the interests of the private sector firms

responsible for administering OW, the poor no longer seem to be merely poor anymore.

They appear, in the eyes of the private-sector-backed government, to be morally

suspicious, and unwilling to re-orient themselves according to the philosophies and

policies of neoliberalism that foster complete self-reliance and increasing attachment to

the workforce (Little and Marks 2010).   This disconnect between the expectations of

the state, private enterprise, and the needs of the poor can be highly problematic—

especially for those in receipt of OW.

The ideological shift precipitated by neoliberal political philosophies and socio-

economic policies has, unfortunately, led to a ballooning of the category of the

"undeserving" and morally suspect poor (Little 1998; Chunn and Gavigan 2004). Since

the Harris government ushered in drastic social assistance reforms in 1995, potential

applicants, or those already in receipt of OW, are considered thoroughly undeserving

(Chunn and Gavigan 2004; Little 1998). Those who do receive OW are approached as

temporary participants only; and, as such they must demonstrate constantly their

motivation to work (through searching for work and participating in workshops geared

toward skills acquisition, development and augmentation) for the little assistance they

receive (Chunn and Gavigan 2004).

In the Footsteps of Homo *Œconomicus*

Classic liberalism centred on exchange or what Adam Smith referred to as mankind's "propensity to barter, truck and exchange one thing for another" (1986: 18). Such an economic approach, then, naturalised the market place as a system characterised by its own rationality and interest; its own efficiency maintained a superior efficiency as a distributor of goods and services. The marketplace, then, created a space of autonomy that needed to be removed from the state; and this was done through the unconditional right to private property (Read 2009).

To this end, then, classic liberalism makes exchange the general basis of the market, and therefore of society in general. By contrast, neoliberalism extends the process of making economic activity a general matrix of social and political relations; however, its central focus is not exchange, but competition (Read 2009). Further, neoliberalism—particularly American neoliberalism (see Foucault 1979)—seeks to extend the rationality of the market in terms of its modes of analysis, as well as the decision-making criteria it employs to areas which are "not exclusively or not primarily economic": the family unit, the birth rate, crime, and judicial policy (Foucault 1979: 323).

The development, "motion" and "friction" (see Tsing 2005) of the global economy, characterised by the intensification of international economic exchange, represents one of the key challenges to welfare states (Esping-Anderson 1996; Held et al. 1999). The economic imperative, under neoliberal re-framings of the market, is for all countries to open their economies (driven by the exigency of articulating capitalist universals with local connections in order to make possible interconnected global

capital and commodity chains [Tsing 2005]) so as to extend their reaches, and become

economically attractive to international investment through the creation of flexible

labour markets (Lightman et al. 2008). The engine, as it were, driving the reach of

neoliberal capitalism is through the culturally effacing mechanisms of what Dufour

(2008: 160) has called "desymbolization". Desymbolization in global neoliberal re-

framings of the market is a "liberal" phenomenon; however, in Dufour's sense,

"liberal" describes the condition of a people who are liberated from all ties with value

of any form (i.e., moral, cultural, social). The purpose of desymbolization, then, is to

eradicate the moral and cultural basis of market exchange at the local level; and, as

such, desymbolization—in its intent globally, and not its actual function at the local

level which is always locally defined and interpreted—works as a levelling mechanism.

The ensuing social problematic, though, is that this imperative to compete in the

globalised economy, and its desymbolizing intentions, exerts a very powerful

influence—the friction and ensuing "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities

of interconnection across difference" (Tsing 2005: 4)—over the policy choices

available at the local level for welfare state reforms. This increases the economic

restructuring, and, in some cases retrenchment, (Lightman et al. 2008) of government

prioritisation and spending in welfare states. In Canada, more specifically in Ontario,

there is growing evidence that the increasing numbers of "welfare poor" are the losers

under the neoliberal globalisation agenda (Lightman et al. 2008).

At its simplest, neoliberalism is both a political philosophy and a social policy

developed in the context of the capitalist economic downturn that started in the early

1970's (Fanelli and Thomas 2011). The central elements of neoliberalism as a political

philosophy are: 1) the market is better than the state at distributing "public" resources;

and, 2) the call for a return to a "primitive form of individualism": an individualism which is "competitive", "possessive" and understood in terms of the doctrine of "consumer sovereignty" (Fanelli and Thomas 2011). As such, neoliberalism is based on claims to both economic efficiency and "ethical" self-responsibility (Ong 2006). To this end, then, neoliberalism is much more than just a political philosophy and a social policy: it is a prescription for imagining and re-imaging the world (Lyon-Callo 2004).

The core recipe of neoliberalism is movement away from government-funded social entitlement programmes towards an increasing reliance on private charity through faith-based interventions, philanthropy and volunteerism (Peck 2001). As well, proponents of neoliberalism exalt the virtues of entrepreneurialism and social atomism, relentless street-level policing of public disorder, and, lastly, a fidelity to private sector led development (Peck 2001). A prime example mentioned earlier is the case of "The Business Transformation Project" that led to the private sector-backed reconfiguration in the administration and provision of OW.

Neoliberalism, then, is a theory of political and economic practices intimating that human well-being can best be achieved and advanced by freeing or liberating individual entrepreneurial imperatives and skills within an institutional framework characterised by very strong private property rights (in Marx's sense wherein private property means those who own the means of production), free markets, and the mechanism which underwrites free markets and free trade (Harvey 2005). Following Goldsmith (1995: 634) , though, it must be clarified that neoliberalism ("the neoliberal paradigm" as he refers to it) can never be *at odds with the state*, only insofar as it needs the government—not a passive, but a capable and active government—to create a space within which the profit motive and pricing mecahisms can work.

The role of the state, then, is to create and preserve an institutional framework commensurate with such practices (Harvey 2005). The watchwords for neoliberalism typically are "deregulation", "privatisation", "withdrawal", and "reform" particularly as regards the state provision of social services oriented toward the greater population of nation-state (Lyon-Callo 2004; Harvey 2005). As a socio-political and economic process, neoliberalism seeks to rearrange—oftentimes destructively and systematically—divisions of labour, and the myriad ways people relate to each other, their landscapes, their ideas, their emotions, and the greater world in which they find themselves immersed (Harvey 2005). The crux of this rearrangement, then, is the production of individuals (self-inspecting and morally-uncertain docile bodies) who are supple, insecure, and open to all vicissitudes of the market (Dufour 2008). All costs under this rearrangement are then socialised and profits privatised (Fanelli and Thomas 2011).

Ong explains that neoliberalism is a new mode of "political optimization" based on a "bio-political mode of governance" (2006: 3); and, as such, neoliberalism as a socio-political process reconfigures relationships—at a broader socio-cultural level—between governing and the governed, power and knowledge, and other processes such as sovereignty and territoriality. Because of its capacity to rearrange relationships at multiple levels and on multiple scales—the outcome of which appears natural or inevitable, again Marx's idea of "celestialisation"—Ong (2006) argues that neoliberalism is a means through which relationships are sometimes drastically re-oriented. The result is the production of new kinds of relationship between government and knowledge through which governing activities (read: political activities) are recast as non-political and non-ideological problems that need technical, economic

solutions—usually based in the logics of the free market. Indeed, Ong (2006) tells us that neoliberalism as a technology of government is considered profoundly active in its modalities of rationalising (or re-rationalising) governing and self-governing—its sole purpose being to "optimise" one's pursuit of rational, unfettered, economic self-interest.

In *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations of Citizenship and Sovereignty*, Ong (2006) explains that as a logic of governing technology, neoliberalism is an historical process that unevenly articulates situated political constellations (it is a disjointed process and engages with economies at the local level, despite the seemingly universalised, "globally homogenous" or acultural tags politicians and economists attach to it through rhetorical handling) . A long-term ethnographic perspective (spanning years in China in Ong's case) reveals specific alignments of market rationality, sovereignty, and citizenship that mutually constitute distinctive milieus of labour and life. It also offers the possibility to understand the complexities of the rationalities and logics of exclusion, or the ways that groups are excluded from neoliberal calculations and choices. Ong informs us that "Neoliberal rationality informs [and orients] action by many regimes and furnishes the concepts that inform the government of free individuals who are then induced to self-manage according to market principles of discipline, efficiency and competitiveness" (Ong 2006: 4).

Yoking together the concepts of neoliberalism and states of exception, Ong's project is to re-conceptualise the "exception"—a departure in policy that can be deployed to include or exclude. One of the outcomes of neoliberalism as exception is a "remoralising" of economic action through new forms and norms of social and biological inclusion and exclusion. These uneven processes of inclusion and exclusion have led to political decisions that have abandoned certain marginalised and

disenfranchised groups, thus placing them outside the role and scope of political normativity.

As a process of exception based on the inclusion and exclusion of certain groups, neoliberalism applies to two specific forms of "optimising technologies". On the one hand, technologies of subjectivity—which rely on an array of knowledge and expert systems to induce self-animation and self-government so that citizens can optimise choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions (Ong 2006). Such techniques of optimisation consist of the adherence to health regimes, acquisition of skills, development of entrepreneurial ventures, and other techniques of self-engineering and capital accumulation (ibid)—all of which reflects clearly the imperatives of OW as originally envisioned by the Harris government.

On the other hand, technologies of subjection are those technologies that inform and orient political strategies to differentially regulate and manage populations for optimal productivity, increasingly through spatial practices that engage market forces. Such regulations include the "fortressisation of urban space", the control of travel, and the recruitment of certain kinds of actors to growth hubs (Ong 2006: 6). Owing to both technologies of subjectivity and subjection, the elements that come together to create citizenship—rights, entitlements, territoriality, a nation—are becoming disarticulated and are re-articulated with forces set in motion by "the market". Individuals who do not have "tradable competence" or potential are devalued, and thus vulnerable to exclusionary practices (Ong 2006).

In a project similar to Ong's, Dean (1998) investigates how specific government programmes attempt to constitute a connection between certain political objectives, social goals, and economic requirements. This project also explores the ethical conduct

of individuals or groups in neoliberal contexts, and how the unemployed are to be governed and how they are to govern themselves. Dean (1998) explains that government becomes "ethical" to the extent that it is concerned with the conduct of individuals and groups; most especially in the way they conduct, regulate and manage themselves through the internalisation of moral norms and values (and their emotional valences) of what it means to be a "healthy", "productive and "contributing' member of society.

In the context of Ontario, government (along with the private sector) has become "ethical" in the context of implementing OW's suite of rules and regulations regarding inclusion and exclusion criteria for becoming a participant. Dean's project, Foucauldian in its purview, analyses regimes of government to the extent that they concern the direction and self-direction of conduct of those who exercise authority and those over whom authority is exercised. Practices governing the unemployed can be regarded as "governmental-ethical" practices (Dean 91: 1998). Political approaches to unemployment concern "the ethical capacities and orientations of the unemployed [which] are central because it is only through these that it is possible to prevent long-term welfare-dependency and its consequences" (Dean 1998:100).

In line with the idea of entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making Dean explains that the imperative of government, in this case the government of Ontario, is "to prevent the formation of such an underclass ["the undeserving poor"]…governmental-ethical practices oblige the unemployed to work upon themselves so that they may be ready and able to work when opportunities are available" (Dean 1998: 101). The public policy objective, then, is to devise a range of institutional conditions and governmental means through which the "active subject" could be formed and maintained; and, by

extension, could form and maintain him/herself through the internalisation of moral norms and their emotional resonance . This new modality of government "rolls back" through a "dispersal" of the state's governance and redistributive functions (Sharma and Gupta 2006: 22) the responsibilities of the state (through processes of privatisation), and transfers the operations of government to non-state entities. Ultimately, though, this new modality of government creates mechanisms that re-centre discipline and "responsibilization", thus precipitating the devolution of risk onto the "enterprise" of the individual (Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

According to Dean (1998), the institutional conditions and governmental means through which the neoliberal agenda is administered to populations works through a very specific conceptualisation of how individuals are supposed to relate to themselves. It is this self-relation, the internalised Foucauldian panopticon as it were, configured by and through neoliberal logics, upon which the state acts as a project of normalisation, naturalisation and "empowerment" (Ferguson and Gupta 2002; Dean 1994). As such, neoliberalism is not just a manner of governing states or economies; it is also a set of practices tethered tightly to the government of the individual—to a certain way of living, relating and becoming (Read 2009).

The configuration of the self through becoming (really, a moral prescription for living), then, introduces neoliberalism as a form of "governmentality" (Foucault 1979) or what Dean (2010: 11) calls "reflexive government ". It is a manner or mentality in which people learn to govern and regulate themselves (self-govern) through the shaping and cultivation of their own becoming—through the operative terms of investment and competition; through the channelling of interests and desires, rather than rights and obligations (Read 2009). This enterprisation and responsibilisation of the self—how

individuals judged and evaluated themselves and their lives, how they sought to control,

master, steer, save and improve themselves—is, ultimately, an ethical enterprise in the

Foucauldian sense (Miller and Rose 2008).

Power, in this form of governmentality or reflexive-government, is *rhizomatic*.

It is ghostly, emergent, and immanent—it never coincides perfectly with itself or its

objects. It crops up sometimes silently, sometimes loudly. It fragments, recedes,

surges forth, offers freedom, and then envelops subjects and subjectivities (through

diaphanous mechanisms), not from a single centre, but from multiple centres. This is

the kind of power that is "…productive of meanings, of interventions, of entities, of

processes, of objects, of written traces and of lives" (Miller and Rose 2008: 9).

Through a very distinctive mode of becoming, then, citizens are to become active

"entrepreneur[s] of the self":

> The relation to the self is one in which the individual is to become—under the
> pastoral state—the proprietor and marketer of his or her skills, qualifications,
> and even physical and psychological attributes. This is one version of what it
> might mean to be an active economic citizen or jobseeker. Here, the jobseeker
> is opposed to the individual rendered dependent by the old passive system of
> unemployment benefit. To be an active citizen is to take an active role in the
> management and presentation of the self, to undertake a systematic approach to
> the search for a job, and, ultimately, if possible, to participate in the labour
> force. If this last is not possible, the job-seeker as active citizen participates in
> activities that enhance his or her prospects of entering or returning to paid work,
> while at the same time remaining bound to social networks and engaging in
> practices that overcome those attributes (fatalism, boredom, loss of self-esteem)
> which constitute the 'risk of dependency' (Dean 1994: 98, my emphasis).

In those contexts where workfare has replaced welfare, "participants" are to

become active agents of their own destiny as far as the labour market is concerned

(Dean 1998). Under the guidance of state-provided and regulated pastoral expertise, the

imperative is for the unemployed citizen to become an active "entrepreneur" of his or

her own self. And, as such, he or she must be ready and able to avail him or herself of

opportunities as the labour market, social provision, education and social networks may

provide—thus quelling the looming risk and threat of social assistance "dependency"

(Dean 1998: 98).

CHAPTER 2—Pirouetting (Ethnographically) Through Familiarity

He who comes from a distant country can lie with impunity…

French proverb

…He [*sic*] who does not, simply *cannot.*

My response

I carried out fieldwork between April of 2011 and April of 2012, in various contexts throughout a neighbourhood, called the "core" or the "centre", in downtown London, Ontario, Canada—a mid-sized Canadian city with a population of approximately 400, 000 people. The "core" is a middle-class neighbourhood which directly borders the central business district (CBD) of downtown London. It is characterised by the highest proportion of 19th century homes in the city—most are made of distinct yellow brick, quarried from the nearby town of St. Mary's (Historic Woodfield Association 2007). Due to its positioning alongside the CBD of the city, as well as in close proximity to East Village[18] (separated by the socio-economic meridian point of London, Adelaide Street), the "core" has a higher frequency (compared to other neighbourhoods in the city) of crime—particularly break-and-enters, vandalism, and street-fights (usually between inebriated youth during the spring and summer months). There is also a fairly high level of drug-trafficking; a number of "crack houses" are

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[18] The east end, in general, has been stigmatized as a "low-class" neighbourhood with a high proportion of OW (welfare) recipients, low-income housing blocks, gang violence, and much higher crime rate. The east end is usually referred to colloquially as "EOA" (east of Adelaide). Adelaide Street, which runs North/South, serves as a socio-economic boundary-point between east and west London. A look at real estate prices is telling inasmuch by just crossing Adelaide Street from the west to the east side (a matter of metres), prices drop significantly—sometimes $60, 000 less for a similar sized house and lot found on the west side.

located throughout the neighbourhood, as well as two methadone clinics which service

those attempting to wean themselves off of "pills", "oxies" (Oxycontin™), "percs"

(Percocet™), and crystal-meth (methamphetamine). As well, according to the latest

Ontario Works social research and planning report, of the 11, 000 households

participating in Ontario Works, the majority lived in the postal code areas

corresponding to planning districts located east of Adelaide Street (2011: 1).

Photograph #2: Downtown London Alleyway (near the YAC).

What made my fieldwork distinct yet problematic was the fact that it took place

within my own neighbourhood/community. Although I observed interaction in various

contexts throughout my neighbourhood, my day-to-day focus was on two different

locations (to be specified in more detail below) of a youth drop in centre called the

Youth Action Centre[19] (YAC)—commonly referred to as "the YAC". I also spent quite

a bit of time walking with the youth with whom I engaged daily through downtown

London streets; going to the Central Branch of the London Public library with them on

most evenings; walking to and from Victoria Park (with its central location in the city),

or sometimes walking and talking while making our way through various stores and

bookshops.

To supplement my fieldwork, I was afforded the opportunity to sit in on a local

community mental health organisation's[20] weekly concurrent disorders group therapy

sessions (a combination of "confessionals" and group psychotherapy). I sat in on these

sessions for a total of four months, and learned a great deal as to how youth struggle

along with mental illness and addiction issues. This provided great insight into the

daily dynamics of hardship, struggle and survival on the street. It also enabled me to

listen exclusively to young people's illness narratives, and the various narrative

interpretations and explanations for turning to substance abuse. After the second

month, I was often asked to offer my own interpretations of group attendee's existential

predicaments. Though I have absolutely no training in counselling or psychotherapy,

members still sought my opinion (purely in the capacity of someone who just listened

carefully and respectfully to their stories) on certain issues in their lives.

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[19] Part way through my fieldwork, the YAC changed locations—which I will discuss in detail below.

[20] I sat in on the "Concurrent Disorders" sessions at WOTCH (Western Ontario's Therapeutic Community Hostel) from May through September 2011. These sessions took place at WOTCH's main branch, which was located down the street from my apartment. I chose to stop my participation in the weekly sessions after one of the group members—a fellow diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia—kept singling me out and questioning my credentials and my intent for participating. This certain fellow had a history of extremely violent episodes with local law enforcement.

After many repeated attempts—owing to lack of response to my queries,
followed by delayed responses, and, in turn, delays in setting up meetings with
Provincial Government representatives—I was able to conduct limited observations and
interviews in the main London office of Ontario Works, one Provincial Government
administrative office which deals with administrating, processing and monitoring
recipients and potential recipients of provincial social assistance.

What makes my fieldwork experience distinct from many other students of
anthropology (especially colleagues in my home department) is that I turned my
ethnographically-wrought analytic lens *inward* in order to describe not only my own
city, but my own neighbourhood. In essence, my approach to ethnographic fieldwork
might be understood as "auto-anthropology" (Strathern 1987), "parallel cultural
analysis" (Hastrup 1987), or a version of "native" or "indigenous" ethnography
(Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Narayan 1993; Clifford 1997ba).

The Youth Action Centre (YAC) and Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU)

One of the only drop-in centres in the city devoted strictly to street-oriented
youth[21], the YAC is one of three main services[22] offered through a non-governmental

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[21] There is one other drop-in centre in the city of London called *Streetscape*; however, only a
few of the youth who frequented the YC went to *Streetscape* as well. This was due to the fact
that *Streetscape* was a fraction of the size, and therefore catered to fewer youth. As well, the
potential for conflict between those who made use of *Streetscape's* services and staff was quite
high. The reason for this, according to many of my informants, was that the staff at *Streetscape*
were also street youth given the opportunity to volunteer their time through Mission Services
(the organisation which operates *Streetscape*). Another key difference between the YAC and
Streetscape is that the latter, a service offered through Mission Services of London (another
NGO which provides shelter, health and daily living services to homeless men), offers a safe

organisation (NGO), called Youth Opportunities Unlimited (you.on.ca). Formed in

1982, YOU has assisted youth under the age of 24 in the London and Middlesex

County regions to foster their capacity for self-development. Through the provision of

transition, career and enterprise services at its two locations (in both downtown London

and nearby Strathroy, Ontario), YOU's mandate is to equip youth who make use of

their services with the training, skills development, community supports and referrals

(health, career, academic) to develop their potential to lead more positive lives

(you.on.ca). YOU's mission is to augment the potential of youth through skills

improvement, which, it is hoped, will lead to self-efficacy, empowerment, and,

ultimately, employment (you.on.ca).

According to YOU's website, the NGO serves some 5000 youth per year,

though it is impossible to track down any statistics as to how many youth are actually

on the street at any one time in London. As I came to learn, this population constituted

a statistical "moving target" inasmuch as most of youth associated with "the street"

(whether these youth have their own apartments, lived at friends' houses, or in

homeless shelters), were highly mobile, and therefore nomadic[23] on a regular basis.

YOU, a client-centred environment, respects and enforces the confidentiality of

its clients, as all staff strive to do in their daily interactions with youth. The

community-based focus of YOU also means a central value is to be locally-driven. As

such, YOU's funders span the gamut, including large companies and corporations

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place to eat and associate with friends, but offers no other extended services to youth—such as counselling, laundry, showers, personal supplies, career and enterprise services.

[22] The other two services are career/academic (i.e., GED preparation) and enterprise/job training services—both of which are offered on-site through career counsellors who oftentimes make their appointments with youth during drop-in centre hours.

[23] Quite a few youth would move between cities (on either a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis like Kitchener, Toronto, Edmonton, Winnipeg, and Vancouver).

(some of which are based in the U.S.), provincial and federal government, private charitable groups, charitable funding distribution organisations, and endowment management foundations[24]. According to the director and staff at the YAC, the major source of funding comes from the United Way of London Middlesex County.

The YAC, open daily during early mornings, afternoons and evenings[25], is a youth drop in centre that caters specifically to street-oriented, at risk (for homelessness, addiction or mental illness) youth from 16 up to the age of 24 years. The YAC first opened in 1993 in downtown London with a mandate to offer street youth a safe place to eat and associate with friends.

The YAC also offers out-reach services, wherein staff will walk through the downtown core, tracking down homeless youths who live on the street in order to provide them with basic necessities like water, outer-wear, and information on other available services throughout the city; informal one-on-one counselling for youth undergoing mental health-crises, or for those who just need someone to talk to, housing supports and community referrals, Counterpoint Needle Exchange (a programme for the safe and discrete exchange of drug-related needles), the provision of safe-sex information, male and female condoms, washrooms, showers, a laundry facility, access to music via MP3's on a computer (which lacked internet access), board-games, and various personal care products, such as socks, toques, tooth-brushes, soap, shampoo,

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[24] The complete list of YOU funders is as follows: The Western Fair District, The Ontario Trillium Society, The Municipality of London, Ontario, the provincial and federal governments, The May Court Club of London, The Jack and Barbara Hay Foundation, The Forever Legacy Foundation, Libro Financial Group, The Home Depot Canada Foundation, The Business Help Centre of London-Middlesex, The Sifton Family Foundation, London Community Foundation, Westminster College, Schneider Electric, Anderson Corporate Foundation, The Milton and Verna Good Foundation, and Enterprise Holdings.
[25] The Regular hours of operation for the YAC are Mondays through Saturdays, from 3:00pm to 7:00pm.

skin-lotion, and diapers for those youth with infants. On the 15th of every month, the

YAC provides a food-bank, consisting of donated, non-perishable food items, such as

packaged/boxed and canned goods. There is also an on-going clothing donation area

(usually a designated table), where youth are able to take what items they need, whether

it be winter wear such as winter jackets, shoes, pants, or shirts.

On any given day there were usually two to three staff on duty at the YAC. The

staff, who are mostly trained in social work, social service work, nursing or sociology,

usually are females—though there are two males who work a few times a week. As I

noticed from my day-to-day interactions, the staff would sit down with youth and talk

informally with them, offering help with homework, advice about relationships, or just

talking about movies, politics, or what one's day was like. During my fieldwork one

volunteer, a male in his late 40's, would devote one to two days a week to come to the

YAC and assist with either cooking meals, talking with youth, or helping me unclog the

toilet—which had a tendency to become clogged at least a few times a night at the first

YAC location.

Staff at the YAC were always complemented by two students from the local

community college. These students were at the YAC to fulfil their community service

hours, a mandatory component for students earning a social services diploma. These

students, acting in the capacity of *de-facto* staff, would usually shadow regular staff,

help prepare and serve dinner, provide informal counselling, direct youth to appropriate

housing and community supports and services, and talk with youth about day-to-day

affairs.

On Monday evenings, either a public health nurse or a nurse practitioner would

come to the YAC for two to three hours. These nurses would sit with the youth before

and after dinner, and were available for private health consultations in a nearby office. Often, one of the public health nurses would bring some form of quiz regarding sexual health, mental health or physical health—and the obvious interconnections between them—along with prizes to hand out to participating youth. More often than not, youth would include the nurses in conversations ranging from religion to metaphysics to movies.

Every Tuesday evening at the original YAC location, two or three medical students from The University of Western Ontario Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry would volunteer to cook and serve dinner. Much like the nurses, the youth would include the medical students on their conversations about various things. On most other nights, staff were responsible for cooking and serving dinner; however, volunteers from the Toronto Dominion Bank would come at least once a week to serve a pre-made meal to the youth.

The original YAC location was a quarter of a block down from a very busy intersection of the downtown core. The front door of the YOU building in which the YAC was located was largely unmarked (giving it a very anonymous feel from the street), save for a very small YOU sign to the right of the front door. The YAC itself was located downstairs in the basement of the building, and had its own glass front door which was usually locked until 3:00 pm, littered with various flyers taped to the corners of the door and somehow preventing a direct line of sight into the YAC itself.

While I did not receive a formal tour of the original YAC until some months into my fieldwork, for the first few weeks, I would, upon arrival, take a few minutes to familiarise myself with the layout. Since most staff knew quite early on who I was and what my purpose was there, my explorations never posed a problem.

Inside the front door of the YAC, there was an office to the immediate left—

shared by various YAC staff, as well as the occasional YOU employment councillor.

A few metres down was the main office, with two desks where most of the staff

would congregate at several points during the evenings. Beside this office was the

storage room, where various supplies were kept ranging from loaves of bread, coffee,

sugar (very much in demand at the YAC, and always a point of heavy contention

when supplies were low) to diapers, socks, hats, and other personal care products.

There was also a large freezer located in the storage room, where frozen foods

were stored. Beside the storage room was another smaller room with another door

leading into the YOU seminar room. This room was used to conduct interviews related

to the Youth Matters project, as well as for informal counselling sessions. This seminar

room had another door which led into the reticulum of hallways and offices in the

basement—which were rented out to agencies not associated with the YAC or YOU.

Adjacent to this room was

Photograph #3: Inside the former YAC (stitched panorama).

The kitchen, consisting of a refrigerator (usually stocked with cheap lunch meat, salad dressing, occasionally juice, pre-chopped vegetables, and other condiments), stove, sink, and multiple cupboards was located directly in front of the large wooden table. Along this wall the same wall of the kitchen, was a room with a shower; and still further down was the washroom and laundry area.

Directly behind the dining area was another rather large room, separated by a wall (with glass panels to allow staff a full view of what went on in the room), which featured two leather couches, various chairs, a very old piano, large recycling receptacles, a mural painted by youth who formerly had frequented the YAC, and an old Apple computer—used only to play MP3s (the internet had been disabled prior to my arrival due to many male youth attempting to download pornography and music illegally).

Starting Over

Roughly in the middle of my fieldwork (September 2011), YOU had been

receiving quite a bit of press in the local newspapers—specifically *The Metro* and *The*

London Free Press. The increasing attention by the media was because of a new

project YOU had initiated to integrate youth services and housing at a central location.

The project sought to locate YOU services, the YAC, alternative education and health

care services, along with transition housing (in the form of apartments) in one

building—instead of being scattered throughout the city.

The issue revolved around the escalating costs of "The Cornerstone" building

YOU purchased in 2007. Though the cost of the building itself was $2.5 million

(Maimona and De Bono 2011), the total projected cost of the project as of 2008 was

$4.1 million, which then escalated to $6.1 million as of fall/winter 2011

(cornerstone.ca; Mullins 2011). The increased project cost was to cover renovations,

retro-fittings and upgrades to the dilapidated 10, 058 square metre building.

The purpose of the project—through the purchase of the three-story

"Cornerstone" building, originally a hotel built in 1879—was to provide a suite of

holistic, on-site services for street-oriented youth. The total suite of services is to

include: alternative education, health care, apprenticeship training, skills development,

counselling, mentorship, employment opportunities, a youth-run Café with a retail store

(which will be the public portion of a job training operation for youth), and two floors

of affordable transition housing (up to 1 year) for youth (for a total of 28 studio,

bachelor and communal living apartments) (cornerstone.ca).

Photograph #4: The new YAC "Cornerstone Building".

Other renovations and building upgrades include fitting large solar power panels on the roof, geothermal heating and cooling, grey-water collection, a rooftop garden, and a glass-enclosed boardroom to be rented out to various agencies in the city for board-meetings. The spirit driving the move to the new building was to integrate services into one location so that street-oriented at-risk youth could feel safe making use of services under one roof, instead of having to utilize separate services throughout the city—some located quite far from the downtown core, and therefore not accessible on foot.

As of September 2011, the total project cost for the "Cornerstone" building had increased to a total of just over $6 million—$2.2 million over budget (Mullins 2011; Maimona and De Bono 2011). With the grand opening nearly a year past its projected deadline, critics were levelling charges that the project was extravagant (Maimona and

De Bono 2011). City counsellors had issues with the expense of installing an elevator for the three-story building, the construction of the glass-enclosed "sky-view" boardroom on the roof, and the eco-friendly roof garden. They charged that fitting the building with these features, along with other heritage features—inspired by the original blue-prints for the building—were "opulent" and thus unaffordable (Maimona and De Bono 2011).

YOU's executive director Steve Cordes' rejoinder to city counsellors' criticism was that even though the project has run over budget, the "Cornerstone" building should be seen as an "investment" and not an "expenditure" (Maimona and De Bono 2011). Cordes reasoned that the renovation of the building would revitalise part of the downtown by re-creating a heritage aesthetic of the building's façade, as well as bring new residents to the downtown core. According to Maimona and De Bono (2011), YOU still needs to raise an extra $500, 000 to cover the costs of the unforeseen construction set-backs. By the time I started fieldwork at the "Cornerstone" building in November of 2011, construction and renovation of some of the apartments and the alternative education space were still under way.

Upon arrival at the YAC's new location, I was really surprised by how open, airy and light it was. For some reason, it did not feel like a place for teenagers and those in their early 20's to hang out. The colour of the walls was a very noticeable bright and light blue, quite a contrast to the dark red walls in the old YAC. As I walked through the door on that dark November afternoon, I noticed a sign that said "YAC closed until tomorrow". I decided to go in anyway, to see if I could recognise any staff. Sure enough, I saw the director, along with two other staff frantically moving boxes

around. A new staff member, Craig, approached me and asked if I could help cut up

some boxes, and take some others to the dumpster outside—I obliged.

The biggest difference was how large the new space was—it seemed vast

compared to the close quarters of the old place. The ceilings must have been at least 2

full metres higher; and the exposed yellow clay brick, along with the exposed piping

and ventilation system gave the space the feel of a sophisticated art gallery. As I

walked into the main area, I noticed that there were two brand new black leather

couches, along with what looked like 20 chairs placed all around the perimeter of the

room. As I looked around, I started to notice familiar things: there was the computer,

pushed against the west wall; the table that I became so familiar with was behind two

large pillars, seemingly dwarfed by the vast ceilings.

As Craig and I started to cut up boxes, I asked him what some of the big

differences were between the old and the new YAC. "Well, to start", he said, "we've

got a proper restaurant-quality kitchen in the back—here, I'll show you". As I went

with him, I couldn't believe what I saw: it was a massive kitchen with all of the latest

high-quality equipment like stainless steel stoves, sinks, ranges, etc. "Wow, the YAC

has really gone all out, eh" I said as we both headed back to cutting up cardboard.

After I finished carting multiple boxes stuffed with cardboard, Gene, one of the

other staff members, asked if I could help her upstairs with a bookshelf. She then asked

if I wanted a tour of the space upstairs, including the new boardroom. "Sure", I said,

"let's get to it". As we ascended the three flights of stairs, I was told that only two of

the apartments were ready for youth to move in, because the others were still being

worked on. Once inside one of the communal apartments, which was to house four

roommates, I was surprised[26]—it was a big, clean and bright space. Similar to a

university residence, it looked perfect for someone wanting to get off the streets, or get

into a safer, cleaner apartment.

Once back downstairs, Gene showed me the new laundry facilities—featuring a

brand-new washer and dryer—the male and female washrooms, both equipped with

multiple toilets, urinals and showers; and also the new storage room, office spaces, and

counterpoint room. The major complaint by both Gene, Craig, Jenny, and Lois—who

were all sitting around the large wooden table now, taking a rest from moving boxes

and setting up computers—was that all of the offices, including the counterpoint room,

had glass walls and doors. Insofar as confidentiality is of the utmost importance at the

YAC, the rub was that anyone sitting around the table, or sitting on the couches or

chairs, or even just standing around and hanging out, could see what was going on in

the offices and counterpoint room. It was weeks after this conversation that it was

decided to add frosting to a portion of the glass in the counterpoint room and certain

offices, to ensure at least a minimum of anonymity.   As time progressed, more and

more youth moved into finished apartments; however, as I write this most of the

services—including alternative education and health care—remain unavailable.

Fieldwork Turned Inside Out or Outside In?

"The field" is an enduring metaphor and ideal construct (Clifford 1990) for

anthropologists insofar as it is—more often than not—associated with far-away sites

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[26] I caught myself in a moment of assumption and judgment, quickly holding myself in through
a reflexive jolt. I had assumed that since these apartments are for low income teens that they
would be small, dark and/or cramped for space.

where anthropologists conduct their ethnographic research (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). As such, "the field", as traditionally conceived, can be understood as a place and process characterised by spatial practices of travel and dwelling (Clifford 1997b). Traditionally associated with non-urban sites, research in "the field" has long been—as an engrained, tacit and pre-theoretical disciplinary assumption—associated with a physical displacement in order to confront an "Other" both in time (Fabian 1983) and space (Fabian 1983; Berger 1993; Visweswaran 1994; Clifford 1997a; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Passaro 1997; Weston 1997).

Coevalness (in the temporal sense) notwithstanding (see Fabian 1983), ethnographic propinquity in a spatial sense, so it seems, often precludes the official and sanctioned stamp of "true", tradition-bound ethnographic fieldwork. Some may be quite hesitant to affix the label of "true" ethnographic fieldwork to the experience of those researchers who conduct fieldwork on the North American (still whether it be Native or non-Native North America) home-front inasmuch as this kind of fieldwork is usually not associated with any kind of physically, psychologically or existentially *destabilising* "rite of passage" (something I will argue strongly against later on)—i.e., having to learn another, oftentimes difficult language "in the field"; having to "rough it" in the wilderness, or having to share crowded very crowded sleeping quarters; getting oneself into sticky, perhaps scary, situations with "natives"; or, even having to spend many hours travelling in rickety old vehicles on treacherous roads leading to remote locations. As well, many traditional ethnographers may hold fast to the idea that ethnography ("self-ethnography", see Devereux 1967) an anthropology that centres

ethnographically in urban, North American contexts is nothing more than sociology subject to the Epimenides Paradox[27].

A resistant binary opposition in traditionally conceived ethnographic research has constituted the field as ideal-type and non-field as its antipode. This binary is rooted in the traditional injunction to leave home, and, through travel, encounter/create constructions and representations of otherness arising from colonial, race, class and gender-based definitions of centre/periphery or cosmopolitan/local (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Narayan 1993; Clifford 1997). Thus, going or travelling to "the field" has come to stand for a *process* and *production* of socio-cultural dissociation, movement and difference, an "ethnographic *fugue*" as it were. Through this process of "distancing", "displacement", and "travel" (Clifford 1997b) ethnographic knowledges[28] are thought to be produced. Interestingly enough, as Clifford (1997a), Gupta and Ferguson (1997), Pessaro (1997) and Weston (1997) show, there is still a pervasive tendency for anthropologists to perpetuate the epistemic rootedness of anthropological knowledge in *distance and displacement*—what Passaro (1997) has called an "epistemology of distance".

As had been traditionally constructed, the process of distancing and travel typically orients anthropologists to non-North American (or non- European), non-urban, agrarian sites that may even connote a sense of "wilderness" (however cultivated),

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[27] From Devereux: "It simply makes a legitimate distinction between that Epimenides who, as a Cretan, lies and the 'same-not-same' Epimenides who, as an expert on Crete, truthfully states that all Cretans are liars (at all times). However, the theory of types necessarily implies both the awareness of 'Epimenides the Cretan' and the self-awareness of 'Epimenides the expert on Crete'… (1967: 15).

[28] Epistemologically speaking, more "valid" knowledges.

stasis[29] (historically, and with respect to the natives, physically or intersubjectively) or, at the very least, an affinity of "nearness" to nature and the natural (to wit: non-industrialised). The non-field, by contrast, had been typically understood—as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) remind us—as encompassing urbanised and industrialised sites. These spaces were usually thought to be *contaminated* with the dense underflows of de-exoticised quotidian knowledges[30] in which the anthropologist, in many though not all cases was far too enmeshed to render them objects of the ethnographic gaze. Such locations as labs, clinics, industrial spaces, businesses, homeless shelters or hospitals located in either North America or Europe were not usually been conceptualised as traditional ethnographic fieldsites[31]. This was so only inasmuch as they constituted the non-isolated interconnections and mundane complexities of modernity and modernisation (i.e., characterised by a sense of rootlessness and mobility [see Clifford 1988; 1997b], and technologisation), and not any form of authentic, exoticised sense of "nature" (Hannerz 1986), "tradition" or "the wild" associated with distance. Hannerz (1986) argued against the continued othering of the Other by an obsession with distance

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[29] The path-breaking work of Wolf (1982) ironically contested the notion of non-European people as "people without histories". Wolf's (1982) analysis showed the cross-cutting, densely interconnected, and mutually implicating dialectical nature of European and non-European peoples in the active progress and construction of both European and non-European histories. Appadurai (1990; 1996), with his versatile notions of "metonymic freezing" and "scapes" ("ethnoscapes", "technoscapes", "financescapes", "mediascapes" and "ideoscapes"), problematised the idea of "locality" and its associated concepts of certainty, identity and consistency; or any sort of lingering "boundedness" of geographically-delimited cultures. Clifford (1997a), too, has shown that those who have been the traditional focus of ethnographic investigation have been both travellers and dwellers, oriented by various complex routes between cultures. Fieldsites, then, have always already been characterised by cross-cutting externalities and non-local ex-centricities; however, the normative idea of proper fieldwork taking place "far away" is still persistent among many contemporary socio-cultural anthropologists.

[30] Knowledges which inhere in such un-exotic practices as grocery shopping, walking to the mailbox, or strolling around one's neighbourhood.

[31] Though this has changed quite drastically over the past few decades, in part as disciplines other than anthropology have taken up the ethnographic project.

and travel. Perhaps he thought that turning the ethnographic gaze inward would prove, for some anthropologists (perhaps the structuralists?), to be far too un-exotic and maybe even too "hot to handle[32]" in an epistemological sense. Implicit, then, in the process of ethnographic dissociation or "defamiliarization", is that social and cultural difference—and, by extension, comparison and critique (see Marcus and Fischer 1986)—can only be constructed, encountered and experienced by going and dwelling *elsewhere* (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

Since my fieldwork took place in my own community (I walked for about ten minutes to get to the YAC), the process of fieldwork I engaged in thoroughly problematised the conventional binary between field and non-field. This lived-reality was similar to Karen Brown's as depicted in her ethnography, *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (1991/2010). Much like my own field experience, Brown recalls: "I was no more than a few miles from my home in lower Manhattan, but I felt as if I had taken a wrong turn, slipped through a crack between worlds, and emerged on the mains street of a tropical city" (2010: 1). Though my main "site" was in my neighbourhood, a short ten minute walk led me to a different world, replete with a distinct form of language ("street", i.e., each sentence had a least one swear word) and sociality.

As reiterated by Gupta and Fergusson, and echoed throughout Sanjek's (1990) edited volume on the process of writing, interpreting and using fieldnotes, doing

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[32] This is a play on Lévi-Strauss' (1966; 1976) theoretical distinction between: 1) "cold" societies—those wherein history is subordinate to system or tradition, and where closed mythological patterns bare their impress upon the thought of the *bricoleur* at every cognitive turn; congealing history and progress to a slow, closed march on an existential *Möbius* strip wrought purely from nature (1966); and, 2) "hot" societies—those wherein progress and change are open and seemingly limitless, and based on the differential between castes and classes (1976: 29).

ethnographic fieldwork typically involves a separation between "home" and "field",

which manifests itself in two anthropological contrasts: 1) the site where life is

observed, constituted, and collected; and 2) the site where analysis of said life is

conducted and the ethnography is written up in its final form (though it should be noted

that many anthropologists do write sections of their ethnographic texts while still in the

field). What problematised my experience of the field/home contrast was that my

fieldwork was carried out in my own neighbourhood, unlike many who centre on

similar research themes (see Desjarlais [1997], Glasser and Bridgman [1999], Hopper

[2003], and Lyon-Callo [2003, 2004]).

Along with Michel De Certeau and Luce Girard, Pierre Mayol conducted long-

term ethnographic field-research based on participant-observation in his own

neighbourhood of Lyons, Paris—called Croix-Rousse (De Certeau *et al.* 1998).

Though De Certeau and Girard were from different neighbourhoods in Paris, Mayol had

grown up and lived in the neighbourhood which became the focus of the second volume

of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, entitled, *Living and Cooking* (1998). Unlike Mayol,

though, I did not grow up in the neighbourhood wherein I conducted fieldwork[33]. I

grew up in the West end of the city, approximately 10 kms away; however, growing up,

I always had a certain fondness for the downtown core neighbourhood—probably

because of its high proportion of 19th century homes made from distinct yellow brick.

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[33] I only moved to my current neighbourhood many years later after having lived in Montreal and Toronto.

Much like Mayol's (1998) experience with fieldwork[34], mine actively decoupled the traditional binary of field/home. At various points during my fieldwork, I would be on a nightly walk with my wife and daughter (and in this capacity, I would not obviously be in the mind-set of conducting fieldwork) in our neighbourhood (called "Historic Woodfield"); however, more often than not we would run into one of my project informants. I found that often, we would engage in conversation based on what we would normally talk about while at the YAC or walking downtown.

Such occurrences would invariably set my wife ill at ease—primarily insofar as the street youth with whom I would engage with everyday have very high levels of undiagnosed and therefore untreated mental illnesses[35]. As I later came to learn, some of the youth whom I came to know quite well at the YAC, actually lived in bachelor apartments just a few streets over from our own apartment. Luckily, I was able to elude or evade certain youth who decided to follow me home. A couple of times I had to out-right lie about where I lived—in order to maintain what I saw as a necessary distance between myself and my informants. After repeated attempts by Jordan—a youth of around seventeen who admitted to having an extremely devious streak and who often thought of "crazy" and "unspeakable" things to do to people—to learn more about my family and my living arrangements, she followed me one night, coming within less than a hundred metres of our apartment.

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[34] For Mayol (De Certeau *et al.* 1998), the difficulty was to separate his personal roots with other families in the neighbourhood. As such, Mayol chose not to focus on the personalities—and the relationships between them—of the families he knew and worked with.

[35] What worried my wife most, perhaps, was the high frequency of aggressive behaviour. I was only the object of aggressive behaviour a few times, but I had to learn very quickly how to diffuse potential conflicts non-aggressively.

Thinking quickly, I told her that I lived several blocks north, and that it was a fairly long walk—further than she was willing to commit to. I could see at that point she was huffing and puffing[36] from our brisk 20 minute walk from the YAC. As I started to walk away, calculating in my head where a safe place would be to turn around and walk home, Jordan informed me that she lived at the intersection of Princess and William Street. Pretending to be unfazed by this new knowledge that she lived only one street over from me (even though I was worried to an extent that she lived too close for comfort), and quelling any visible irony via facial expression, I said simply, "interesting—that's a really, really nice neighbourhood—it's pretty quiet too, eh"? As Jordan slowly turned away (with a slightly quizzical look on her face), she started to head right past my apartment, and kept walking, at which point I breathed a sigh of relief (and kept walking, myself, in the opposite direction).

Photograph #5: Princess Avenue in Historic Woodfield.

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[36] Jordan is an extremely tall (some 200 cms in height) and large person, who used to play football when she was enrolled in secondary school.

Since I would usually write up my fieldnotes and analysis at home, my experience of any sort of *distinction* between home and field became so blurred that it was non-existent—whether I was writing or observing and participating, I was in the field all the time! In fact, I couldn't get away from it even if I tried. The "hierarchy of purity" of fieldsites that Gupta and Ferguson (1997) describe in no way characterises the critical experience and mapping of difference I partook of in my own neighbourhood. In fact, my ethnographic experience collapses every rung of the so-called "hierarchy of purity"—a hierarchy that Gupta and Ferguson (1997) explain guides most anthropologists to choose fieldsites that are more "not home" and therefore strange and distant for "appropriate" fieldwork.

The "Otherness" of my own city and the street youth who reside in it came out in such relief to me, that the unmarked category, or as Deleuze and Guattari (1980) and Deleuze (1995) refer to as the model of the "majority" (i.e., the average Caucasian European or North American city-dweller, usually male and older, but not always so) through time, understandings and mis-understandings, became quite exoticised to me. My "anthropological habitus", following Clifford (2005: 41-42), forced me to constantly mutter to myself, usually *sotte vocce*: "what else is there"? And, in curt response to the generalising suasion (read: pull) of the routinised grind of familiarity in one's own neighbourhood, "not so fast"! My fieldwork, then, positioned me alongside street youth of my own city, my own neighbourhood, such that the imperative of long-term ethnographic field research was—once again—brought to life: "[i]t looks obliquely at all collective arrangements, distant or nearby. It makes the familiar strange, the exotic quotidian" (Clifford 2: 1986). This ethnographic imperative is

achieved through the daily investigation of and participation in what Malinowski called

the "imponderabilia of actual life" (1953: 22).

Because of this experience, much like in Gupta and Ferguson (1997), I think it

is highly productive and intellectually profitable to cut against the deep grains of

tradition, and call for a more democratic gesture (Berger 1993) of inclusion in which *all*

sites are treated equally as "fields" worthy of academically-respectable ethnographic

fieldwork. I follow Marcus (1986) very closely here on the contemporary status of

anthropology and the economies of concern in terms of ethnographic representation:

> Global homogenization is more credible than ever before, and though the
> challenge to discover and represent cultural diversity is strong, doing so in terms
> of spatio-temporal cultural preserves of otherness seems outmoded. Rather, the
> strongest forms of difference are now defined within our own capitalist cultural
> realm, gender and lifestyle constructs being two prominent fields of
> representation for exploring difference. The Samoan or Trobriand Islander,
> juxtaposed to us, is no longer as convincing or believable a figure for an
> alternative way of being as he was once in a less saliently perceived world order
> of interpenetrating common concerns. What is more, linked to the perception of
> the declining significance of the primitive is the notion that anthropology is
> losing its *raison d'etre*. It is unfortunate, and certainly an artefact of current
> intellectual moods, both that strong essence running counter to perceptions of
> homogenization is ignored for lack of interest, and that anthropology has been
> received in such a limited way, associated more with its exotic subject matter
> than with its distinctive mode of understanding reality (1986: 169).

Marcus expands by explaining that with the onset of critical hermeneutics and

the changing demographics of anthropologists toward including and recognising

"bicultural" and "hybrid' identities among themselves has helped legitimise the

perspective that the exploration of affinities between the ethnographer and his/her

informants is legitimate as well as a powerful and interesting way to motivate a

research project (1998: 15).

Driving the point home even further, as most anthropologists understand[37], the supposed boundary, however shifting and illusory between "the field" and whatever it is that constitutes the non-field (and the process of writing fieldnotes that happens somewhere between this blurred distinction), *leaks* constantly (Clifford 1990), and tends toward the most indiscreet porosity. It undergoes a process (sometimes quick, sometimes slow) of social and epistemological[38] boundary-haemorrhaging. In my case in particular, the fieldnotes I took at times that I initially thought were intervals between "leakage points" actually *travelled* fluidly between points, all within—strictly speaking—the geographic coordinates of "the field". I never left the field, and neither did my note taking.

To this end, the non-field (if there was one) to me became, literally, a mind-set; a cognitive space insofar as even my place of residence was situated in the midst of "the field". As such, at points (and there were many of them), I found that the "field" exercised a form of "epistemic suzerain power" over me as if it were some form of feudal overlord. My field engagements had a constant and profound influence on my thought (even when I was "supposed" to be taking a break from either writing fieldnotes or thinking about them); and so, oftentimes, I was left with very little room for any form of respite. Quite a few times I would force myself to do something different on the computer—say, browsing the internet—when I would look out my office window only to see one of the youth with whom I regularly engage stroll by.

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[37] Especially those conducting ethnographic fieldwork as "native" anthropologists in their "home regions"—cities, towns, neighbourhoods.

[38] I say epistemological, too, insofar as when does an ethnographer draw the line between knowledge production (the validity, implications, and value thereof) based on experience drawn from "the field" and the "non-field"?

This folding in of the field in upon itself into my own purported non-field domain was made even more complicated when, around eight months into my fieldwork, I noticed that my informants started to add me as a friend on the social media website, Facebook™. My logic in accepting these friend-requests was to just "observe" what my informants were saying to each other through Facebook™. I was already doubly implicated in the unfolding of their lives after having gotten to know some of my informants quite well during the time I had been spending at the YAC. I say doubly implicated in that I got to know some youth at the YAC in the capacity of a "fieldworker", meaning that they were eager to help me to understand some of the processes I had explained to them interested me; however, I also go to know quite a few of them as personal friends. And, so, I would find that on many occasions throughout my fieldwork (and after, too), I would receive messages from informants through Facebook™ asking for advice about certain things in their lives.

My point in mentioning these experiences here is to show how problematic the distinction is between "field" and "non-field". Now, the problematic nature of this distinction primarily obtains for those who conduct their fieldwork on the "home front" of where they live and work. For myself and others who do conduct fieldwork "at home", it seems that the relation between "field" and "non-field" was characterised by multiple contact points. Each contact point served to connect each experience to the next; each supplying feeling, life, and meaning to the other in a complicated and tightly woven experiential skein. To this end, then, borrowing the phrase from James Clifford (1997a), and slightly modifying it, "the field" can be limned as a series of routes within routes (crossing over each other, enfolded, imbricated, and tying each other together)—tracings, lines and pathways linking up the field as a total or totalising experience,

marked by an enduring level of intensity or series of intensities. The field, then, was a matrix of experience(s), a series of lines (cf. Ingold 2011)—as mentioned above, but maybe strings or threads are a better metaphor here—that cross over each other, get tangled, untangled, tied in knots, sometimes get cut and subsequently re-tied, and sometimes become frayed.

At its simplest, though, "the field" as I experienced it was a set of interactions, *dialogic* in nature and subject to inexorable shift. It was in my neighbourhood, but particularly in the YAC (as a place of congregation, a micro "contact zone" [see Clifford 1997b], or a dialogic *orientation* based on the interaction of several different chronotopes—as I will explain and argue later on), wherein these strings and threads of dialogue were tied and untied, loosened, frayed, etc.   In the next chapter, I will turn to a more theoretical treatment of my understanding of the phenomenology of the field and social relations—and the knowledges tied up, caught and freed within the constantly moving strings of experience.

It is to Mayol (1998) that I owe the definition of a "neighbourhood" that sits flush with my own experience:

> The neighbourhood appears as the domain in which the space-time relationship is the most favourable for a dweller who moves from place to place on foot [or through the movements of dialogue, thought], starting from his or her home. Therefore, it is that piece of the city that a limit crosses distinguishing private from public space: it is the result of a walk [or, in my case, talking, too], of a succession of steps on a road, conveyed little by little through the organic link to one's lodgings (10)

He continues,

> [T]he neighbourhood can be called an outgrowth of the abode; for the dweller, it amounts to the sum of all trajectories [again, dialogic, epistemic, physical] inaugurated from the dwelling place. It is less an urban surface, transparent for everyone or statistically measurable, than the possibility offered everyone to

inscribe the city a multitude of trajectories whose hard core permanently remains the private sphere (Mayol 1998: 11).

My intentions with this chapter have not been to subvert ethnographic orthodoxies, quite far from it. Nor are my intentions to de-exocticise socio-cultural anthropology, but rather to illuminate those seemingly half-shaded areas of ethnographic research which take place in non-traditional field-contexts such as North America (whether native or non-native) or Europe (again, whether native or non-native). By shedding at least a small swath (regardless of how fractured this small swath might be) of light onto what seems like an area half-hidden by the *chiaroscuro* of tradition-bound ethnographic orthodoxies, I want to re-examine what anthropology (not necessarily as an academic discipline, but as *a way of life* or *style of thinking* means to me.

That anthropology is an intellectual commitment to *Otherness* has never been a question for me; however, an anthropology mired in an unquestioned tethering to difference *qua distance* as the only legitimate or sanctioned form of Otherness is, I believe, in need of more flexible and broadened horizons.   Whether it be in our own backyards or in exotic faraway places, the primary task of contemporary anthropology is to consider seriously the complexities and contradictions of life-experienced in all of its shifting and differential shades (and not in its separated component parts or a "precipitate", but as in experiential "solution", as Williams [1977] would have stated emphatically) as it all unfolds within and through the lives of individual people. As such, when considering the cultural worlds of those we study, I find it more fruitful to set about understanding the *commonalties* between people rather than supposed *differences*—differences are a given in many cases, commonalties are not. For in

commonalities we are better able to get at what the notion of being-in-the-world together means, as well as how cultural worlds are constructed and re-constructed.

As such, I prefer to think about social phenomena, culture in a broad sense, as "speaking in multiple voices" (see Corin and Bibeau 2006)—from the perspective of multiple individuals, located outside the self. Of keen interest to me, then, is not necessarily the Otherness of *distance*, but the Otherness of the *Other* (the face of Otherness) in its closeness to what Emmanuel Levinas (1979) called the Self-Same, or myself.

Difference, then, need not be framed, conceptualised and acted on as a physical difference engaged with and brought into focus through the movement away from one's own context. The difference I engaged with daily was no less different because I was seeing it unfold in my own neighbourhood. Insofar as many of the youth with whom I engaged came from similar class backgrounds, similar familial contexts, and, for some, even came from the same neighbourhoods, my education, age, and current class nonetheless posed a profound gap between myself and "them". Our existential locations and orientations differed so profoundly that they precipitated and maintained this gap—the gap between self and other. As such, the particular manner, style and mode of experience of everydayness marked and inflected my informants' experience of our shared neighbourhood with remarkable, yet no less intelligible, Otherness—an Otherness based on a physical propinquity, yet based also on a sometimes fathomless, though not non-negotiable, existential distance.

In the next chapter, I will turn to some of the complexities involved in conducting fieldwork on "one's own turf", especially the implications for processes such as initial impressions of fieldwork, the day-to-day experience in my field context,

knowledge production and the legitimacy of "native anthropology", and the struggle

with reflexivity. Gupta and Ferguson's (1997) clarion call to redefine the fieldwork

"trademark", not with a time-honoured commitment to the *local*, but with an

attentiveness to social, cultural and political *location* (which, to me, connotes a

potential for *shift* in the dynamics of locatedness—perhaps exposing the *routes* [see

Clifford 1997b] that we stumble on, across and through while doing fieldwork) made

me re-conceptualise how I related and still relate to my informants. As Gupta and

Ferguson state, "[there needs to be a] willingness to work self-consciously at shifting or

realigning our own location while building epistemological and political links with

other locations" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 5).

I take these locations that they speak of to be the vastly different existential

locations and orientations of those with whom I engaged with in my own

neighbourhood. Through my own experience, then, with what can be understood as the

dislocations of home through "home-work" (Visweswaran 1994), and the internal

tacking back and forth between the folds and convolutions of routes within routes, I

agree with what D'Amico-Samuels has said of contemporary 21st century ethnographic

fieldwork in that "*the field is everywhere*" (1991:83, my emphasis).

CHAPTER 3—Of Anthropologists and Mirrors: What Do We See?

To understand society is in a sense to transcend it, for though our theoretical concepts help us understand empirical phenomena they are themselves not empirical phenomena but *ideas* of such phenomena. If culture consists of ideas people have about their world, an anthropological theory is *our* conceptual and abstract rendering of *their* conceptual and abstract rendering of their world.

G. Obeyesekere 1981: 10

G:(Interviewer): Homans called this 'the familiar chaos of daily life'
E (Norbert Elias): Yes, daily and not daily.
G: Don't you like the words 'familiar chaos'?
E: No, he means something quite different. One must clearly say that what seems most familiar to us covers our ignorance, so the question is not whether this is a chaos, but whether or not we are aware of our own not-knowing.
G: So, actually, it is not a chaos, but an unfamiliar order
E: It is unfamiliar and it is not a chaos. Quite. But in any case, unless we are able to make that which seems most familiar to us completely unfamiliar, we shall never able to find our way in it.

N. Elias 1998: 144

Unless we are able to hold our own symbols responsible for the reality we create with them, our notions of symbols and of culture in general will remain subject to the 'masking' by which our invention conceals its effects.

R. Wagner 1981: 144

After having waited at least six weeks to get my "approval to work with vulnerable populations" application granted by the London Police Department, I was finally able to start fieldwork in earnest. On a fairly warm day in April of 2011 I first started to build my relationship with downtown, the YAC, and the youth who made use of its services.

As I walked downtown, I was awash in memories that came flooding back, unexpectedly. Proust's *souvenir involontaire* ("involuntary memory"), in all of its wild, intrusive force, marked me dazed as its temporary captive. Images rushed with intensity against my eyes of when I used to come downtown regularly to skateboard on weekends; I was around 14 or 15. Walking down Queen's Street, seeing familiar landmarks, and all those spaces that we used to make use of in unintended ways (like using the concrete benches outside of the London Life building as a place to do "grinds", "kick-flips" and "tail-slides") reconnected me with lazy autumn Saturdays in the early 1990's. Those were the days when I used to come down by bus with a group of five or six friends to navigate the streets and alleyways on our boards—always leery that a police officer would intercept us and ask for our ID (as commonly happened).

Photograph #6: Alleyway beside the YAC.

As I crossed Queens and got back on to Richmond, I remembered vividly when at least 15 of us (a larger than usual group) had been bombing down the street, fast and

without limit: we were expanding and contracting along the road—we took up the whole space—seemingly at random, almost like a rag-tag flock of birds moving this way and that. Each of us on our boards, overtop four sets of speeding-fast wheels, accompanied by the rush and whirl of urethane against pavement. We were headed to a parking garage to re-enact a scene from the movie Police Academy 4: Citizen's on Patrol[39].

A police paddy wagon had come out of nowhere (marking the moment with intense situational irony), and pulled up right in front of us—to try and stop us. While most of us scattered and made a run for it, five or six were intercepted—with the assistance of two security guards—and thrown in the back of the paddy wagon for questioning. There was no time to hang around; the imperative was to run, and get hell out of there—fast. None of us wanted to stick around lest we get a customary lecture by a police officer, along with the traditional $60.00 ticket. Those were the days, in the early 1990's, when skateboarding was literally "a crime". To be seen with a skateboard (and the typical accoutrements of baggy pants, hats, and brightly coloured t-shirts) marked one as a danger to public safety downtown.

As I walked along, Proustian memories suddenly giving way to the demands of street/body/curb navigation (I had already accidentally bumped the shoulder of an elderly woman since I was caught in my dazed reverie), I was searching anxiously, desperately for commonalities in experience that I might have with the street kids I was soon going to meet.

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[39] The scene we wanted to re-create was when a group of skateboarders in the aforementioned movie skate down the main driveway from the top to the bottom of a parking garage at very high speed.

Nearing the corner of Dundas and Richmond, I feel a constraining sense of apprehension: memories in abeyance, now I'm thrown into the present in its stark immediacy. This is, after all, the corner where people were known to get stabbed, beaten up, or robbed—*all* the time. I cross Richmond and pull a right on Dundas, edging and inching my way through an unyielding group of really loud hip-hop oriented teenagers. I can hear bongo-drums behind me. "She's a fucking bitch, man, don't you get down on that ass—". Snippets of conversation. "Where's it at, bro"? It's not to me, luckily. I walk on. As I stared ahead at the McDonalds on the corner (the infamous place where dealers and "pimps" hang out, waiting for "clients"), all I could mutter to myself was "oh shit, here we go".

 I'm brushing past teen mothers with what look to be five-year-olds half-asleep in their damaged strollers, people who appear to be of First Nations descent, and people who look "down and out" waiting for the bus in the thick crush of activity, I'm confronted by a middle-aged man with long, dark hair. He's looking as if he'd slept in a dumpster: "Got any change? Spare some change, sir"?, he says in a gravelly, alcohol-inflected tone. "Ah, no, actually"—pointing quickly to my chest where my wallet is, but why I do this I don't know—"I don't, man, sorry about th…—"fuck off!". My curt greeting was followed up with some incomprehensible muttering. "Oh well, whatever", I say to myself. "Thick skin, man, thick skin—seriously. Looks like I'm going to have to get used to this". I press on.

As I approach the front door of the YAC through funnel-like white-blue clouds of cigarette-infused pot-smoke, I feel myself cough lightly (almost obviously as if to make a statement) as I navigate my way through; but then I realise something: As I walked through the crowd of people just behind me, I *judged* them—and pretty harshly,

too. But why? What's the point? Sure it's because they're poor—I think. I never

grew up with money though, so what's with the tone? Sure it's because they're

congregated around each other, swearing and hitting each other—some of them looking

like dim-wits. But where is this coming from? My *opinions*, my *judgments*? I don't

know them. I don't know *any* of these people at all. What I do know is a *type*, though.

A "kind" or type of person that I've heard about before (you know, they're depicted in

movies, literature, magazines, on the 'net), but haven't really engaged with—ever.

Before I know it, I've got my hand on the front door—"this must be it"—and I'm

walking past the huge punched-out hole in the wall, and down the stairs in to the

basement. "Shit, what if something happens down here? How the hell am I gonna get

out"? I thought. "There's only one way in and one way out, and it's through the door

I'm just about to enter". Without any hesitation or moment of pause, I just go through

and say "hi" to the first staff member I see.

After a few minutes of introductions, and making sure to sign a volunteer

commitment form, I find I'm getting buffeted about back and forth—probably because

I'm in the food-bank line up, and it's getting bigger by the minute. Feeling really

awkward, I sit down, look around, and realise that it's pretty much only males in their

late teens and early 20's at this table. But I'm thirty-five. Some of the girls are

crowded over by the phone; one with a stroller and what looks to be to be a four month

old little kid (boy? girl? I can't tell). Her friend is pregnant—really pregnant; but she's

also got "meth-face[40]". "Jesus". I can't help it. "Why the hell would you be doing

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[40] Those who use the drug called "crystal-meth" have a characteristic dermatological pattern
(dark red pustules that look not unlike chicken-pox) on the skin and arms usually referred to as
"meth-face". Apparently—and this is something I heard many times--once the drug gets into
your body, it has to come out somewhere, so it seeps out of the skin on the face and arms.

crystal-meth if you're bloody pregnant" I thought to myself—obviously not yet understanding the psychological, social and structural dynamics involved in addiction and the choices it hinders and affords.   "Watch my shit". She throws a white paper bag with what looks to be a prescription stick from a pharmacy on it. "Me", I ask? "Just make sure no one takes it—I need it". "Uh, yeah, sure, what—". "It's methadone"— barks a kid with bad acne in front of me. "What the *fuck*"—and that's all I can mutter to myself, *sotto voce*. "What the *fuck*".

"Move, bro". "Uh, sorry"? Some kid with sun glasses on and a pit-bull tattoo on his neck kicks my chair. "Move, bro".   He kicks the chair—again. "Yeah, sure, man". I nudge my chair inwards a little, and take out my field note book for some comfort—this might actually be a little harder than I thought. Maybe just a little. After a few seconds of looking over the same blank-page, I feel that I have to put myself out there. I can't—I just take a few notes, but my handwriting is incomprehensible. I can only get the date down. Making a quick sweep of those sitting at the table, I take a risk—and for me, the way I'm feeling right now—*a big risk*: "You guys like metal"? The larger kid with the shaved head (whose name I find out later is "Biggie", nods and says: "yeah, Metallica's pretty epic. I like some Megadeth, too". "Ah well", I said, "it looks Iike I'm home after all these years". Though I still don't quite know what I meant by that last remark, I think those around me understood. "Hey, my name's Mark, actually. I'm here to do some research on street youth downtown. We'll get to that later, though, what do you guys think of Iron Maiden and stuff like that"?

After about three hours of talking about heavy metal in all of its forms I realised I had made contact. Since I've loved heavy metal since I was 11 years old, this passion gave me perhaps the fastest and most natural "in" with the people around the table that

day. Near the end of the night, as my conversation with Biggie, Star Warz, Curly and Dreadz shifted from mainstream metal to extreme metal—an area wherein I have a very firm knowledge base—I noticed that a fairly quiet guy with a hat and a beard at the far end of the table kept glancing over. He didn't give any more signals than that. I decided to point to him and say, "hey, are you into metal, too"? I was starting to feeling more and more confident.

He looked up from his drawing and said, "oh yeah, I love metal of all kinds—black, folk, death, power and thrash". "Holy shit, me, too", I said excitedly. Now that's weird. "Who are you listening to these days", I said. "Oh, right, Amon Amarth, Blind Guardian, Suidakra, stuff like that". "Wow, I did ever come to the right place"! I said kicking my backpack under the table. I actually just downloaded the new Blind Guardian a few weeks ago—what do you think? "Well" he said, "I haven't had much of a chance to listen to it, but I like what I heard—it's really melodic". "Yeah, totally" I replied. "Hansi Kürsch still has a great, powerful voice, and he's in his mid 40's—realise that"! "What? Mid 40's?—I had no idea he was that old". "Yep, but that's great, though", I said. I admire people like that who carry on with their art, regardless of social norms, expectations or stuff like that". "Oh, anyways, man, my name's Mark"—"I'm Zane" he said, looking with slight downcast eyes to his drawing. "So", I said, "are you staff here (and I asked this question since he looked around my age), or"—"no, I come here everyday to eat and stuff; I'm an elite artist, actually". "Elite—uh? What do you mean"? "Yeah, I tend to carefully draw really dark things; not *gory*, just dark—as if the very abyss itself is influencing my art". "That's cool", I said. "The abyss"? "Yeah, that's my philosophy on life: the abyss is the plane where dark and light intermingle, but don't' necessarily merge or cross—they exist, and they influence

us, our actions". "Ah, very interesting", I replied. "I'll have to ask you more about this philosophy—which sounds like a trademark existentialism—when I know you better"! "Ha—indeed, indeed; it's very, very personal, and means a lot to me. An existentialism it is". I then laughed in return, and asked to see some of his work that he had in a stack beside him.

Immediately after this interaction, I remember sitting back in my seat, looking around the dark red walls of the YAC, covered both with drawings and photographs of former "YACers", intaking the very distinct smell—a mixture of a musty basement and the lingering trace of the previous night's dinner—and thinking: "this could be a lot more comfortable than I thought. I can't believe I'm actually—no, finally—doing fieldwork. Real fieldwork. So *what* if it's ten minutes from where I live—*its worlds away*. At this precise point, I faced one of those ethnographic turning points anthropologists experience once they've made a break-through with one or more of their "informants".

What made this experience quite startling to me was the speed at which this break-through took place. Within a few hours I had found several "informants", informants, with whom I had clicked instantly, right off the bat. And meeting Zane changed my idea of what it meant to do fieldwork, how I related to the street youth at the YAC, and how I viewed myself, and my own socio-cultural and existential location in relation to these things.

Within a few weeks, I had made contacts with almost all of regulars in the YAC—some fifteen people. At this point I settled into a fairly comfortable daily routine of just "hanging out". What made my field site "perfect" in a way was that I did not have to engage in any form of artifice or subterfuge about my own personality, as

sometimes happens when ethnographers enter a field in which they have very little in common with their "informants". Quite the contrary, I was able to continue with my preferred clothing style: hiking boots, jeans, and a black heavy-metal t-shirt.

On those days where there was no one to share a conversation based on heavy-metal, I would naturally turn to skateboarding—an activity that many of the youth partook in. Since I had been skateboarding since the age of eleven—carrying through to the age of twenty-four—I have a very in-depth and detailed knowledge of "skating", running the gamut from professional skateboarders, to tricks, to skate-videos, and the industry in general. As time wore on in the YAC, I found that either heavy-metal or skateboarding were the "ultra-rich" (Labov 1984: 37) topics in which to broach a conversation either with friends I had made (we could return to these, as Labov [1984] pointed out, over and over again without exhausting interest), or new youth that I had never seen before. What I did notice, though, was that I was starting to swear—*a lot*.

Regardless of all of these surface commonalities, though, on any given day at the YAC I still felt the looming spectre of Otherness gently touch—and make apparent—the almost opaque and shifting space of difference that I was convinced was shrinking and becoming more and more diaphanous with each passing day. Little did I know at that point that reflexivity is a constantly expanding and contracting affair, wherein knowledges are produced via orientations. Orientations *to people* and their orientations *to me*; and the crossings and miss-crossings that occur there between. Though I thought I was "Mark"—the guy who loved metal, skated at one point, and made people laugh— I clearly was *not* to everyone.

Owing to the *deictic*[41] nature of selfhood, in the YAC my "ontological" status as a person was subject to what anthropological linguist Michael Silverstein (1976) refers to as a "shifter"—a term that was originally used to describe words, such as deictic words, that "shift" reference [i.e., from "me", to "you", to "him" to "he"], all depending on spatio-temporal context—I became a "shifter" (applying the term of a generalised notion of selfhood) inasmuch as I was a different person to different people. As we *all* are. As all *words* are. This is what Bakhitn understood as the *heteroglossic*[42] nature of all language.

During my interactions with people at the YAC and throughout the downtown spaces affording our conversations movement (dialogic as well as physical), I experienced, through my position as ethnographer, as knowledge producer, constructor, and representer, that I was being afforded access to many different kinds of knowledge. However, I was also implicated in and with the co-production of these knowledges. As such, my position vis-à-vis my interlocutors, my situatedness in terms of their interpretations and expectations of me, mine of theirs, along with my physical placement in relation to them, and theirs in terms of me, all inflected the knowledges I was seeking to participate in and observe contingent on the shifting and elusive

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[41] I use this term to express the idea that the self's orientation is purely dependent on the interactive, intersubjective and material context in which it participates. In linguistics, words are understood to be deictic if their connotative (semantic) meaning is thought to be rigid, but their denotational meaning is contingent upon context: time and space. Such words as "I", "he", "she", "there", "here", are deictic.

[42] There is never just one language that one speaks (nor is there every just one self), but many languages—which are specific points of view on the world (Bakhtin 1981). Heteroglossia is the result of social forces (centrifugal forces) which bring about the stratification of language. Heteroglossia, then, points to the various "locations" of languages and their corresponding standpoints in social experience. The centrifugal conditions at play in languages inflect all words with meanings that change from context to context—the meaning of a single word uttered at a specific moment in time, will differ at another moment in time owing to myriad factors—physiology, weather, one's interlocutor, the immediate context, etc.

positionality of selves (Ryang 1997) in the constellation of shared experience—or

intersubjectivity.

Reflexive Intermezzos at Dawn

Even more important than the countertransference determinants which the behavioural
scientist brings into the observational situation are reactions insidiously foisted upon
him by his subjects, which he then unwittingly implements in terms of his personality
makeup. Precisely because he professes to have a self-policing mind, even when he
functions as a participant observer, he may fail to realize that his subjects force him into
the procrustean bed of an ascribed status, chosen in accordance with their own needs. If
the participant observer then feels that he must accept this status, he has a plausible
reality-excuse for not scrutinizing the unconscious gratifications he may derive from it
and will therefore play what H. Deutsch (1926) calls 'complementary role'.

G. Devereux 1967: 234

A brief aside in the form of a note on usage, a caveat perhaps: following

Crapanzano (1977) and Fabian (2001), I argue that autobiography is a *condition* of any

critical and reflexive approach to ethnographic writing and representation *qua*

invention. Insofar as any knowledges that are worth working for must be undergirded

and mediated by and through *experience*, ethnography and autobiography are

oftentimes difficult to separate. Subjectivity, after all, directly informs the production

and inventive representation of knowledges. As Fabian claims, "ethno-graphy is

connected to (auto)bio-graphy" (2001: 12). To this end, then, I firmly believe that my

own history, experience and disposition (my *existential stance* if you will) needs to be

considered critically so as to explore how exactly I was able to relate and not relate to

my informants.

Thus, throughout this dissertation there will be brief flashes and pulsations of

my own background—serving as a *reflexive qualifier* (or series thereof). To situate the

discussion of reflexivity to follow, I proffer a recounting of my own historically and experientially-moored and mediated perspective and the pursuant difficulties involved (the blindnesses it causes, the means of sight it affords) when conducting fieldwork within my own country, province, city, and, more specifically, neighbourhood.

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"But that's all I can be—a 'halfie'", I thought to myself. "That's got to be it". It's 4:52 am. "What *am* I"? "What is *my* self? What is my *anthropological* self"? I'm not ontologising for the heck of it here. I sit up, tipsy with fatigue, as I find any purchase that I had gained on my bed lessening each second as my daughter claims more and more of "my" space as "hers". She shifts again—a foot in my face. Now, a knee. I sit up. My wife's fast asleep. "What am I to *them*? To my informants? "How do they view, understand me"? I pondered through the half-light of the bedroom. In some cases, like in Zane's, I grew up in the same neighbourhood (in northwest London), though at different times—I was long gone when he moved there (he's 12 years younger than me). Since my experience of fieldwork really did unsettle the boundary between self and other (Abu-Lughod 1991), I was quite often confused as to what my position was, let alone how much it shifted in relation to the people I was hanging out with daily.

As Abu-Lughod (1991) has argued, for "halfies" (people whose national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, parentage, or living in the same neighbourhood as one's informants), the Other is in certain ways the self, and, as such, there is a looming danger associated with native anthropologists with

identification, and the pursuant "slide into subjectivity" (Abu-Lughod 1991: 141).

Though I did come from the same country, the same province, and even, in some cases,

the same neighbourhoods as my informants, there were marked differences in the

construction, interpretation and experience of the world—our respective "existential

locations". I never quite stood fully outside my informants' worlds, yet I never fully

stood within them either—I flitted across an emergent, immanent, and co-constructed

boundary constantly. As such, I would question my position often, sometimes while

engaged in conversation, sometimes at 4:42 am: what *am* I, what are the implications

for this? Though uneasy about my own positionality, I arrived at the fact that I was a

particular kind of halfie: I shared, in some cases, many things in common with my

informants; however, in many instances, my relations were marked by a series of

inescapable divergences: my class, my education, and my potential to orient myself

toward a different class horizon by way of my education. I suppose, then, that I was

both inside and outside the problematic of existential distance.

My *self*, my personhood, the very foundations for my "point(s) of view", formed

and form the *very condition for any knowledge claims* I negotiated (however partial or

half-shaded) with and through my collaborations. My "point(s) of view", though, was

not a *detriment to understanding* (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). Says Hans-Georg

Gadamer:

> [The demand that] in understanding history [or any other aspect of social
> phenomena] one must leave one's own concepts aside and think only in the
> concepts of the epoch one is trying to understand…is a naïve illusion. The
> naïveté of this claim does not consist in the fact that it remains unfulfilled
> because the interpreter does not sufficiently attain the ideal of leaving himself
> aside…*to want to avoid one's own concepts in interpretation is not only
> impossible but a manifest contradiction* (1975: 396, my emphasis).

As well, his teacher and mentor, Martin Heidegger:

> When something is understood but is still veiled, it becomes unveiled by an act of appropriation, and this is always done *under the guidance of a point of view, which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted* (1962: 191, my emphasis).

So, what is my "point of view"? What enabled the formation of "my concepts"? I can only access these in part; but however partial, they affected the way I understood my informants: I was born in London, Ontario in the mid 1970's, an only child. My upbringing could be characterised as that of a lower-middle class household. At an early age I became interested in non-conformist modes of expression and activity (during the 1980's), and so was naturally drawn to skateboarding and heavy-metal. Later, I became more interested in poetry, and particularly in Continental European philosophies which dealt with human experience—hence my on-going interest in existentialism, phenomenology (though I am highly critical of this approach), and literatures which deal with the "human condition", particularly with a melancholy bent—such as F. Dostoevsky, W. G. Sebald, M. Bulgákov, N. V. Gogol, M. Laurence, and E. T. A. Hoffman.

And, so, my interests were—and still are—reflected in the friends I chose to keep company with. As an only child, it was never difficult for me to obtain those material things associated with my interests: skateboards and the associated equipment, etc. Emotionally, my childhood could be characterised by periods of lengthy rockiness, as my parents—mostly likely owing to their vastly divergent religious and political orientations—would often engage in continual verbal, though never physical, altercations. I understood instability at an emotional level (I felt it), but never physically as we lived together as a family—despite constant threats of one parent

leaving the other. The age difference between all of us—that between my mother and father was 21 years; and that between my father and myself was 50; and that between my mother and maternal grandmother (who lived with us) was 46 years—sometimes seemed to consume any possible commonalities that might have emerged between us. Uncertainty was, I suppose, a common though paradoxical "guiding theme" in my upbringing. This most likely manifested itself in the seemingly mild insecurities that permeated life and relations throughout my childhood and teenaged years.

Uncertainty, perhaps, is the most defining characteristic of the youth that I came to know while doing my fieldwork. Quite possibly, my deep experiences with uncertainty and emotional instability growing up allowed me to edge closer to understanding the experience of my informants, but I still understood this "feeling" of uncertainty in a very different way. Inasmuch as hope was a resource in scarce supply (in essence, constantly fading out of reach for many of them) among the youth I engaged with regularly, I found that their stories were marked by a sense of loss and lack of orientation to anything remotely hopeful, though sometimes punctuated by brief pulses of brightness. Even when we have something in common with someone, experience has an odd tendency to make those commonalities stand for an unquestionably "shared perspective". It is only through reflexive awareness that experience takes on a strangely parallax[43] quality. In my case, even though I did in fact have many things in common with my informants, there were still great divergences in experience—divergences that were quite difficult to bridge regardless of whether I liked the same music as someone, or grew up in the same neighbourhood.

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[43] Depending upon one's "existential location", experience can take on a remarkably different tone or quality, even though one is reflecting on, considering, and experiencing the same event, phenomena, etc.

My maternal grandmother, Rosemond Phillips (*nee* Martin) served as a fixed lode-star throughout my childhood; and, indeed, well into my adult life. Since my grandmother took education very seriously, she took on the task of tutoring me in math, reading, etc., when I showed a distinct lack of interest in these subjects throughout my days at public school. Though she had to put off her university career until she was in her early 80's, she earned a degree in History from The University of Western Ontario. Since neither of my parents went to university, my grandmother served as a source of motivation and inspiration for me to attend post-secondary school.

After a very rocky academic experience through public school and secondary school, I too ended up attending The University of Western Ontario where I completed an honours bachelor of arts degree in Anthropology (though I first started in History). I then went on to earn a Master of Arts degree in Medical Anthropology at McGill University. I ultimately returned to London, and took a job as a "clinical" ethnographer for the Department of Paediatrics and then the Centre for Studies in Family Medicine at The Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry at Western. Only years after (trailing a very uneven path) did I eventually come to the realisation that pursing further graduate work was what I needed to do.

My point in selectively recounting aspects of my background here is to expose the sharp contours of my experience that differ from those with whom I engaged daily in my fieldwork. This "cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1973) is thus a social relation (or set of properties which enable the conditions of possibility for such a relation) within a dynamic system of exchange which includes accumulated knowledge (cultural and social) that confers status and power on the possessor. It is a form of "cultural wealth" (Bourdieu 1973: 488) accumulated and bequeathed by previous generations, and passed

on to those endowed with the means through which to appropriate it themselves. Thus, as I see it, differentiation in social experience (and the structure of distribution of cultural capital) is never about clear-cut differences that are of equal standing, but entails claims to knowledge, authenticity and authority based on fault lines of power and inequality (Bourdieu 1973: 488). This differentiation is such that those with "authority[44]" possess the requisite "code" of cultural transmission (or "instruments of appropriation", even though as Bourdieu says, these instruments are "theoretically offered to everyone" [1973: 488]) which makes it possible for them to decipher and appropriate "symbolic goods". As such, my education and the orientation (directing me toward financial horizons that are unattainable and unimaginable to most of my informants) through the capital that it afforded me, served as a marked point of distinction between myself and my informants.

Even though I minimise the cultural capital I seemingly possess when engaged with my informants, it still serves as background signal, positioning me differently in orientation to them. And, even though, much like the classic Americanist anthropologist, Paul Radin, I am leery of some academics insofar as they are, to me, too 'dependent upon the establishment' (Diamond 1981: 75, quoted in Darnell 2001: 137), I am *still* marked with difference—in relation to my informants—owing to the years I have spent in school (and the various valences and cathexes that have oriented me toward this project). Like Radin, I view anthropology more as a way of life and not necessarily strictly as a "career" or "specialized discipline" (ibid). Regardless, though, of how I view my own locatedness within the academic enterprise, I am *still* an

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[44] That is, the authority of the ruling classes who make social hierarchies appear as if they were based upon the hierarchy of "gifts, "merits" or "skills" established and ratified by the sanctions of educational institutions.

academic, and they (my informants) are *still* poverty-stricken, disenfranchised youth, who, at this moment, lack the necessary means to accumulate and profit from (through the market of distinctions, hierarchies, credentials, and desires) post-secondary education.

Upon reflection, another marker of distinction between myself and my informants was love. Their lifeworlds, as I came to understand them, and become involved in them—to an extent—were, oftentimes, bereft of parental love. As I tried to negotiate this difference, the limit I came up against, when thinking of what my life would have been like without parental love, was absolute.

Insofar as my parents and my grandmother—the three individuals who were responsible for my upbringing—showed me constant and unconditional love and respect, my understanding of my informants sometimes failed when imagining what it must be like to live without a mother, without a father, to be abandoned by both, or to be raised in an environment where constant moves between foster homes were the norm. But, even though my position in relation to theirs was suffused with difference by way of a specific form of cultural capital and a childhood experience filled with parental love, this never precluded—for this would be an intersubjective impossibility—the shared project of emergent, immanent co-created reflexivities, and the potentially volatile meanings which inhere in them. And it is to this that I must acknowledge that countertransference[45] (see Devereux 1967) and its *a priori* and often imperceptible reach—and those distortions between conscious awareness or insight and

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[45] "Countertransference is the sum total of those distortions in the psychoanalyst's [or anthropologist's] perception of, and reaction to his patient [or informant] which cause him to respond to his patient as though he were an early imago and to act in the analytic situation in terms of his own—usually infantile—unconscious needs, wishes and fantasies (Devereux 1967: 42).

the penumbral region of the unconscious, and the haemorrhaging pulses that sometimes occur between them—could very well have played a role in what and why I chose to represent ethnographically what I did. However, much like the task of ethnographic representation, the task of insight (i.e., managing the adversity and anxieties of the wilderness that is the boundary between self and other), the task of countertransference and its receipt are incomplete.

Photograph #7: Another Downtown Alleyway Behind the YAC.

CHAPTER 4—Epistemologies, Reciprocations I: Field Situations

"What *method* have you adopted for this research"? A delicate question. For isn't it the method, the path to knowledge, that has always also led us away, led us astray, by fraud and artifice?

L Irigary 1985: 150

Abstract knowledge of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, of great books and foreign languages, will not help you reach an understanding of others unless you *share in their lives as a fellow human being, with tact and sensitivity, care and concern.*

M. Jackson 2011: 5

Unfortunately, even the best methodology can, unconsciously and abusively, be used primarily as an ataractic—as an anxiety-numbing device—and, when so used, produces scientific (?) "results" which smell of the morgue and are almost irrelevant in terms of living reality.

G. Devereaux 1967: 97

Late August. And what a terrible day, too. It's raining again, and I'm completely soaked. The water from my pants has actually leached its way down my leg and into my socks. Every step I take is marked with a delayed and noticeable "squish, squish, squish". And I'm supposed to sit down there today for, what, 5 hours? As I make my way down the stairs I realise that I don't really feel like doing this today. I'm not sure why as I think to myself, "can I just get out of this somehow"? It gets tough sometimes; some days are boring as hell, while others are fine. It's just an off day, I suppose. But I think the rain makes it worse for some reason.

The smell of downtown doesn't make things any better either—all that cigarette and pot smoke with bus exhaust; and, somehow, the rain just amplifies the smell down here. Reluctantly, I make my way down Dundas. There's Kiz and Blake—"what's up,

you guys heading down"? "What's up, bro, maybe later—see ya". I open the door and walk reluctantly down the stairs, "squish, squish, squish" and all.

Today's a little different than most days at the YAC at least. It's supposed to be a "peer support" group where kids get together and talk about some of their difficulties in getting by. When I get down into the main room, though, there's barely anyone there, save for two pizza boxes and some pop. Though I'm pretty hungry, I'm not going to take any food just in case someone else needs a slice. Everyone always asks me, "dude, how 'come you never eat—what's up, you don't like the food or something"? "Nah", I usually reply. "I'd feel like shit if someone came in late and saw that there was nothing to eat, only to find me eating the last piece of pizza, bun, or whatever, you know"? So I just leave things alone; and, besides, I'm lucky enough to live nearby, so it's not a problem".

Carly, one of the staff members, is usually just walking back and forth between her office and the fridge, making sure there's enough to drink; Ziggy's walking back to the front door to let some people in after what sounded like a quiet rap on the glass front door. I look down and check my iPhone to see if my wife's e-mailed me about our daughter's new shoes that are supposed to come by FedEx in the mail today—nothing. For some reason, I'm conscious of that damned smell again. Musty basement. Socks. Old meat or something—it clings to my clothes and my backpack. I can still smell it when I get home, and when I leave for day-care in the mornings to drop my daughter off. I look up and realise that Carly disappeared. I don't see Ziggy either. That's weird. Where did everyone go? I look at my watch, and it says 2:10. The YAC doesn't officially open for kids until 3:00—but I thought that since this was "peer

support" that there'd be more people down here. This is my first one, though, so I'm really not sure what to expect.

After I check my weather app, I see that Carly and Ziggy are walking with a girl (she's a bit overweight, looks like she's sweating a lot) that I'd never seen before—she's crying about something, though. They sit her down right next to me, and then sit across from her. "Are you o.k." Ziggy asked. "Fuck, no". "What a fucking bitch, I can't believe this fucking happened". Jen—a woman about my age, with quite a bit of experience working at the homeless shelter—comes and sits down adjacent to me. "You wanna talk about it"? "She fucking didn't take her meds again, and she punched me in the fucking face, then threw me down the stairs—fuck". "What happened, Steph", I hear Ziggy say mutedly. "When I tried to get up from the floor, she fucking told me that I'm a worthless piece of shit, and that she never wanted me in the first place—fucking *bitch*".

I finally realise that Steph's talking about her mother. "She then started to hit me again, and saying all this shit about how I'm fat and useless and worth nothing"—she's really crying now. Not knowing what to do, I just say: "you say she forgot to take her meds"? "Yeah, she never does that, but she ran out of money and needed to conserve them, so she just didn't take them". "But she's usually not like this"? I ask. "Well, sometimes"—Steph said. "I just came from the fucking emergency room, and she was there saying how fat and stupid I am, and then she—fucking—she said, as I wanted to get out of there, she said that she loved me and that she didn't mean this".

I look up and see that Steph's extremely upset. Carly and Ziggy look on, faces concerned. I find myself starting to cry—"what the hell am I doing"? I shout at myself. "Dude, what are you doing? Stop! Stop! You're a"—it's too late, they saw, damn.

Everyone. This is a bit much right now, and all I want to do is get the hell out of here. But I stay put, even though Carly's staring right at me. "Jesus Christ", I say to myself—this is awkward in the truest sense of the word! "You know, I have a feeling she really didn't mean to do this, Steph—I'm sorry, I don't even know you, but from what you're telling me, I have a feeling this is because of her illness, and not her true feelings about you". "I hope you're right". "She didn't take her meds, Steph", says Jen. "It's not your fault; it's not your fault". "What did she do exactly"? I ask. "She fucking hit me three times in the face—look". My eyes trail slowly from the hospital-issued I. D. bracelet to her face—shadowed by a slight bruise under her eye. "Shit, you really got hit, eh" I said weakly. "She's going to try and talk to me soon, I know it". "Well, it sounds as if you need a break from your mum—seriously". "Look", I say uncomfortably, "I shouldn't ask, but how old are you—I'm just thinking about places to stay in the city, there are age requirements". My thought trails, then stalls. I feel only that screaming rage-induced silence that you experience when anger rushes you up against the limits of language. "This isn't fair, this isn't fair"—and that's all I can say to myself.

At this point, I'm barely conscious of the time—I don't care. It's so obvious that I'm upset by this. The staff aren't visibly upset, though they look concerned (I chalk it up to their experience with this sort of thing). They're probably used to this. I'm not. I feel a tear get caught in the corner of my eye. Similar to that feeling when you're caught red-handed in doing something you shouldn't have, I just let it go. She sees it—I'm past embarrassment. I just sit there looking down, not knowing where to look. The silence seems vacuous. "Thanks". Turning my head to the right a bit— "thanks for listening to me", she says. Her countenance changed ever so slightly. "Uh,

oh yeah, sure—I'm Mark by the way". "I'm here doing research". "Why did I say that" I say to myself. "Oh", she replied, "I'm Steph". "Are you going to be alright? Really"?, I said, trying to recover from the mistake I just thought I made. "Yeah, I think so, I just need to be away from her for a little while". "I'll help you find somewhere for toni—". Cutting Jen off, Steph just replies, "no, no, I'll just stay at Amy's house. She can't find me there".

The next day I saw Steph during the YAC's regular hours. "Thanks again for talking to me yesterday". "No problem—are you o.k., did you pass a good night". "Yeah, I went back to my mum's right away. She's fine now". Approaching the limit of my understanding, I could only muster, "That's good, is she doing well herself now, though"? "Oh yeah, she said she's sorry, and that she didn't mean it". "Oh, o.k.". We talk about other things.

*   *   *

At that point I realised that, even though I found it fairly difficult to relate to Steph, the fact that she saw me crying in reaction to her story made her realise that I understood her outwardly manifest pain. There was a common ground established that day. When Carly looked at me, too, and saw my eyes flooded with tears I could tell by the look on her face that, even though I was there to do fieldwork, I *understood* (however limited this understanding was). I came up against many limits that day. It was only later when I had the chance to scribble everything down in my fieldbook that I realised Steph, maybe Carly and I, shared something that day.

There I was sitting in my black pants, black button up shirt with the top button done up (which I rarely ever wore in such a fashion), not knowing where to look. Later that day when I was playing chess with Jordan, I heard Russ say, "dude, you look like a fucking Russian chess-player dude or something". "Yeah, maybe I look Russian, but I ain't smart, dude—if only". From Steph's perspective, though, I did look different. Maybe uptight, but, obviously, much older than she, and dressed more formally.

Did my tears, reluctant as I was to show them, make Steph understand that, even though I was literally twice her age, I tried to understand—however partial that understanding was—her situation? Did this contribute to the reflexivity of the "moment", i.e., that intimate instance of *recognition* between ourselves? Did this recognition facilitate a deeper understanding of the moment for me, too? Perhaps. Or did it pose as an instance where, though reflexivity, historically and culturally-set limits of understanding are breached, set aside—allowing us to connect with someone seemingly quite distant from us in terms of existential location?

Since reflexivity is the key to re-examining the subject/object relation inherent in ethnographic fieldwork (Darnell 2001), it would seem best to find a means through which to, at least temporarily, dissolve the binary afforded through a reflexive gaze, thus dis-enabling the opposition between me and you and making it an "us and "we"— reflexivity as a shared, *intersubjective* project. And, when we think of Marcus and Fisher's (1986) distinction between reflexivity as merely directing attention back upon the conditions of knowledge of the individual ethnographer, and reflexivities for cultural critique that emerge from the contestations and competitions of various socially-based discourses, the latter seems much amenable to conceptualisation as a shared enterprise.

Hervik (1994) understands that reflexivity may, in some instances, provide the connection between shared experience and a more general understanding of culture. He cautions, as I did above, that shared experience does not imply *identical experience* with one's informants or informants—an existential impossibility. "[Shared social experience]…simply implies", Hervik tells us, "that we attend to similar categorical conventions and practical [and I must add emotional] tasks" (1994: 78). Following suit, he explains that one potential outcome of shared experience is *shared reasoning*—a process, he states, borders on the concept of reflexivity. "…I do not see reflexivity", he explains, "exclusively as a matter of investigating the position of the author and the production of texts." "Rather", he continues, "it is part of the intersubjective context of the [*sic*] fieldwork. Reflexivity that bends back on the individual cannot be separated clearly from reflexivity of the group" (1994: 79). Hervik fleshes this idea of "group reflexivity" out by stating that "…the concept of reflexivity may provide the connection between shared social experience and a more general understanding of culture. Shared social experience does not imply identical experience: this is impossible". He continues by clarifying that in group or shared reflexivity, "…we attend to similar categorical conventions and practical tasks. The awareness of living in a common world encourages sameness [to an extent] and fosters an image of shared social experience" (1994: 79).

Reflexivity, then, as opposed to reflectivity, does not involve an attentive feat of self-isolation and subsequent examination. On the contrary, the dialectical process of reflexivity draws the self—through the gravitational/dialogic/corporeal pull of alterity into the orbit of the Other (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984; Hastrup 1993). After all, as Clifford (2003) reminds us, the space of social and cultural representation is populated by

"differently situated authorities, producers, not simply conduits, of self-reflexive 'cultural' knowledge" (2003: 28).

Reflexivity, then, is what I understand to be a variant of self-knowledge; however, reflexivity *qua* self-knowledge is a form of dialogue-based, social and intersubjective knowledge: it is a "dialogic competence" comprised by the confrontation (interpellation) and engagement of the self with the other, rather than a monologic state that is constituted by the confrontation of the self with the self (Jopling 2000; Dolson 2005). Further to this, it must be added that reflexivity *qua* self-knowledge involves more than the introjection of the views that others happen to have about our personality and positionality in relation to them; it also involves knowing what effects one's desires, actions, character traits and historic experience have upon one's own desires, actions and traits (Jopling 2000: 17). As Jopling brings this into focus for us, he explains that the

> …concept of self-knowing is indissolubly tied to the nature of dialogic encounter, and the epistemic and moral responsibility it entails. Outside of the context of a shared form of life, and the linguistic community and the face-to-face interaction it affords, there is, properly speaking, no self-knowing. Not only does dialogue open the self to itself by opening it to the other person; it is by means of reflective [and reflexive] dialogue that persons are "talked into" knowing who [and what] they are. Interlocution is a constitutive feature of self-knowing (Jopling 2000: 157).

In the ethnographic vignette I limned above, this shared understanding took place between two or three people and transcended the limits of our respective backgrounds. Class, education, age, notions of "proper" mother-child relations, and typical gender roles (i.e., that I questioned myself when I "let go" and just cried, even if I was ashamed for a moment) are examples of those means of and for interpretation that are afforded through processes of reflexivity.

Holding these means of and for interpretation, or what Kenneth Burke called "terministic screens"[46] in abeyance does not necessarily mean that they are negative aspects of one's biographical/existential constitution that must be discarded in the reach for "clearer" ethnographic understanding. On the contrary, it was my own experience—filtered through my own lenses of interpretation and understanding—of Steph's predicament that evoked such a powerful and resonating emotional response. Had I not viewed this event through the moral categories I did, then I may not have experienced the potent emotions that I did. Had I been more "objective" (an impossibility), I might have just *observed* her, rather than *engaged* with her narrative and the signs on her body. It was through crying and Steph's (and, possibly Carly's) recognition of this emotional expression that served as some form of epistemic vehicle for me to gain a different understanding of the event that took place.

It was, then, through that shared, emotionally-grounded experience that we were able to reach what Hans-Georg Gadamer has called *horizontverschmelzung* ("the fusion of horizons") (1975: 306)—a key process in his hermeneutics. Though Gadamer conceptualised a "fusion of horizons" as a dialectical act of understanding that takes place when undergoing an exegesis of historical texts, we can re-frame his concept here in a dialogical and corporeal context. As such, our prejudices are active and positive

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[46] A terministic screen is a particular, culturally-sedimented lens (or series of lenses) of symbols through which we apprehend, interpret, understand and act upon reality. This idea came out of Burke's particular approach to language, which he called *logological analysis*. This was his version of the "dialectics of language"—the study of words, language as the *symbolic systems* in which they are enmeshed and enmesh (our ways of seeing and, quite literally, ourselves). To this end, Burke construes language as a "species of action" and not an "instrument of definition" (1989). Terministic screens, then, are the choices of certain terms or words—as opposed to others—in naming and constructing our world; essentially, it is *metaphysics of language*. Language is action, not passive naming or mere definition. The terms we choose to name and construct our reality serve as filters, providing us the "optic" parameters for how we perceive the form and content of reality.

markers of difference through which to interpret events as they unfold before us, wherein we are mutually implicated in their unfolding, as in dialogue. Says Gadamer, "…a hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see" (1975: 306).

When two different perspectives or, as Gadamer conceptualises them, *horizons* fuse, understanding takes place.

> We define the concept of "situation" by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "horizon". The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point (1975: 302)

By understanding the limits of perspective through our terministic screens or prejudices, we can co-establish meaning as a partial, provisional and emergent (and therefore always provisional, never coincident) property (see Tedlock and Mannheim 1995). And it is through dialogue (in Gadamer's context, dialogue between an interpreter and an historical text, in the form of a "question and answer" dialectic—see Gadamer 1975: 576) that the fusion of horizon takes place through emergence. My insights, my understandings (however partial, shifting and provisional) were reducible to my subjective biases. My point of view, my existential position, fused—in the case above, but also in every other case of engagement—with the horizon and Otherness of my informants. And, therefore, my position was *never* a mere projection of my subjectivity (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007).

Emergence here is understood more or less *dialogically*; and, as Mannheim and Tedlock (1995) and Tedlock (1995) explain, the notion of emergence is central to our understanding of how culture, sociality and language are patterned through the

interaction of individuals without being reducible to them. To me, whether it be

Mannheim and Tedlock (1995), Tedlock (1995), Gadamer (1975), or Burke (1966), the

emergence of meaning takes place through language, which, as Bakhtin said famously,

"lies on the border between oneself and another. The word [as such] in language is half

someone else's" (1981: 293). Though I agree wholeheartedly that language is the

prime vehicle for meaning in any intersubjective context, and therefore that it enables

the conditions of possibility for the emergence of meaning; however, what I see as an

interesting elision from the aforementioned approaches is the role of corporeality in

serving as another means of conveying meaning.

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"O.K.", I said. "Are you up for it". "Yeah, yeah, of course—I never go back on

my promises to allies". He's eating something that looks like a mish-mash of pie, cake,

maple syrup and crushed cookies. Interesting. "You know", Zane says with his mouth

full, "maple syrup is a crazy hot commodity here; sugar, too". "That shit disappears

without a trace". "Really"? "Oh yeah, man, think about it, where are these people

going to get sugar from? If they live on the street or at the Sally, there's no way they'll

get any of that stuff". "Juice, too". "Oh man, that's understandable". "Yeah, well, if

you're on OW, they give you shite to live on, so we've gotta make the best of what they

offer here—even if it's shit sometimes".

"Well, it's 3:30 now, anytime you're ready"—

He's looking down at his folder. He leafs through some of the drawings inside,

then slowly and delicately takes out a piece—it looks like it's a stylised bird with

mechanical features. "Uh, I don't want to get anything on this one. Remember last week someone spilled some salad-dressing or something, and stuck my hand in it, and then got it on"—he goes back into his folder and quickly tugs out another piece—"this one, remember"? "Oh crap, that's unfortunate; yeah, this place can be a little messy sometimes, actually". He quietly sets to work, adding a few pencil strokes to the bird's head. "I'm a little nervous, actually", I think to myself. Even though I've known Zane for about six months now, I've never interviewed him. And I know that the last time he was interviewed it was back in Romania just after his dad left him there. He had a breakdown after his dad's girlfriend blamed her stillbirth on the fact that Zane wouldn't leave and get his own place. But how could he? His dad promised that he'd be back in a few months, yet left him for almost two years. Zane had nowhere to go. His dad's girlfriend used to lock him out of the house at night, leaving him to wander through the frigid streets of Bihor during winter—alone, with no food.

He said his jaw locked and he couldn't speak, couldn't move. This was just after he said he screamed at his dad's girlfriend for hitting him and beating him senseless, all the while "fucking with him". The doctors at the state hospital tried to get through to him, but to no avail apparently. After a few days in hospital, he came to, started talking again, eating, and was able to get some sleep. He realised that—dad or no dad—he had to come back to Canada. Pick up where he left off before his mum died. He was only 17 at the time.

I couldn't help but think that Zane's reluctance to doing the interview— yesterday Zane said that he'd do right at 3:00 sharp, and that he was really looking forward to it—had something to do with memories of being at that psychiatric hospital in Romania. It's hard to say. "It's 4:15 now, dude, and the only thing is, since my

wife's in Norway for the week I have to pick up P. at day-care, so I'll have to jet at around 5:30. We can do this another day if you want, it's really no problem for me at all". "No, no, it's fine today, I want to do it today—so your wife's in Norway? That's cool. What for"? "A conference. Yeah, it's an archaeology conference, so I think she'll be pretty lonely since she's a biological anthropologist". "Ah, right". He's looking down again, and starting to add more strokes to the bird's head. He puts the pencil down, and then presses his coffee cup to his lips—takes a drink. "Alrighty, Mark, let's do it". "Are you sure"? "Yeah". "O.K., and remember, this is going to be a really, really superficial way of just getting some background context". "As we both know, trying to get this on the digital recorder while walking down Dundas, Richmond or Wellington will end up messing things up". "Oh yeah, no, it's cool, man—don't worry so much". "Ah, o.k.".

I pull out my silver Sony digital recorder and discreetly put it on the table in front of us. "Is it recording"? he said. "Nope, not yet; I've gotta really figure out how to work this bloody thing—there, I've got it" (it had been recording for a little while before—unbeknownst to both of us).

A few minutes into the life interview, Ziggy comes up to us and asks us to move somewhere else as there's a confidentiality issue. She tells me that the other people around the table might not want to be recorded. I concede, even though I had asked everyone at the table if they were o.k. with the fact that some of their voices would be caught on the recorder—they were fine with it. I asked if there was a better, perhaps, quieter place to do the interview.

We ended up in Jen's office. There were colourful tapestries all over the walls, blocking the windows that opened out to the main hallway. There were kid's toys and

colouring books all over, too. Interesting little pictures as well—a famous one, with the

New York construction workers sitting on an I-beam at least one hundred metres up,

legs dangling over. There's another one picture—black and white. It looks like

London. I think it was taken from the top of a building downtown. I can't help but

smell what seems to be incense of some sort.

As Zane settles down into the chair across from me, I become highly aware of

my body, my clothing, and my positioning in my own chair. "Shit", I say to myself—"I

feel like some counsellor or something sitting here like this". "O.K", he says. "Yeah,

sorry, one sec—let me get this thing back on track". I feel so conspicuous right now.

Even though Zane claimed to be twenty three (I later found out that he is 26), and not

that much younger than me, I feel really old right now. What is going on? I felt so

much better, more at ease, out there with everyone else. My body stiffens. Zane's

looking extremely stiff in his chair. He doesn't know where to put his arms. He starts

to fidget. Meanwhile, I don't know what the hell to do with my legs. If I cross them, I

feel too formal. If I kick them up on the table, it'll look like I'm trying too hard. I

awkwardly force my feet into a pigeon-toed position.

I'm really flustered by this new space, because it's creating an atmosphere of

formality: a smallish office; Zane in one chair a metre in front of me; myself in another;

and the damned recorder—about as conspicuous as a flashing red beacon in the night.

"Do you wanna get rid of this thing"? I say, pointing with annoyance to the digital

recorder. "No, not at all, I want you to document this, as much as you can, I want a

copy for myself". "O.K., pressing record". The light's flashing. Zane backs himself

up in his chair even more. I look at some of the questions I had prepared, then realised

something. "Uh, Zane, to hell with this garbage". "Wha—". I tear up my prompts,

somehow over- emphasising through my crumpling action my displeasure with this new context; and how holding my little white sheet with words on it contributed to the almost "clinical" feel of this "interview". "Sorry, forget it". "Uh, o.k.—you sure"? says Zane looking quizzical. "Yeah, man, forget it". "You know what? Let's just open this up: tell me about stuff. About yourself. No direction, no questions[47]. I don't care where you start, I don't care where you end. Just go, and we'll see where we end up". "Yeah, o.k.". "Yeah, man, it's better this way". I shift my chair to the side, so it's no longer directly in front of his. "So, what do you think about the new Suidarka album"? "It's my favourite, actually—that album defines my life".

We spend the next two and a half hours talking about video-games, heavy-metal, Italian restaurants in Romania, his philosophy of light and dark, how he was molested by an elderly man in Bihor, how his mum used to draw amazingly life-like fashion drawings with pen, and how he dreams of his dad. He misses his dad—plain and simple. He dreams of loss, tearing, ripping, and silence. He's not coming back. Or is he? Zane doesn't know. I can only help by saying, "go on, dude, go on—what happened next".

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[47] Following Briggs (1986), I, too, worried about the fact that I may be controlling the interview, and that this may enable some form of "communicative hegemony" (90). In the end, I wanted to avoid the power traps created through more standard, uncritical and positivistic approaches that invest the interviewer with the power to control the interview by coming up with pre-formed questions, based on pre-conceived notions of how the interviewer thinks the interview should be, and what direction it should follow. Another issue with traditional interviews (structured or unstructured) is that they are intent on amassing as much information as possible on a given topic, and thus foreground the referential content of surface forms to the neglect and detriment of the constantly created and re-created webs of meaning ("ultra-rich" topics as Labov [1984: 37] referred to them) on which the interviewee constantly draws and re-draws. Traditional interviews also privilege and impose explicit presuppositions that are purely academically-driven (detached from the "local moral worlds" [cf. Kleinman 2006], and thus are oftentimes outside the limits of the interviewee's awareness (Briggs fi1986; Quinn 2005).

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It's humid and raining—again. I make my way downstairs to the YAC, and find myself talking to Mitch. After about an hour or so, I move to a different spot at the main table. I pick up another crossword puzzle, and say "what's up" to Mitch. He looks up reluctantly, and says, "yerself"? "I'm pretty good, I guess—the weather could be better, though, eh? "Yep". After 15 or 20 minutes, we start to talk about my fieldwork and my reason for being in the YAC. Mitch starts to get a little more talkative: "You seem like a good guy, to me". "Yeah, I hope so". "No, really, you do" said Mitch in his typically subdued and serious conveyance. "Well, just let me know when you want to start". "Yeah, of course, just let me have some coffee first".

After about a week of conducting these free-form "life-history" interviews, I'm starting to get used to how to approach people here. It's strange, though, inasmuch as I've known some of these kids for over six months, seeing them and talking with them for hours just about everyday, yet I still feel that this is adding a new, perhaps more intimate, dimension to my relationships. It makes sense, though: they think of me as "Mark", the dude who loves to talk about heavy-metal, philosophy or skateboarding. The guy who wears metal shirts and jokes around quite a lot. But, all of a sudden, as soon as you take one of these kids from the big table in the centre of the room, and place them in an office with two chairs facing one another, the dynamic changes— *drastically*. Mitch is scribbling something down. "What, uh, what is that, man"? "Uh, I'm just writing down some of my answers". "But"— "No, yeah, I know, we're just talking about whatever, but I want to get this stuff down so I can keep it—I don't have anything like this. Not many people ask me about my life, and what is meaningful to

me, so I wanna keep something like this. I'm just going to write some stuff down".
"No problem, man. No problem at all".

As Mitch was concentrating on writing out what seemed to be key points of experience in his life, I remembered what Charlotte Linde (1993) wrote about the cultural framing of American life histories and narratives. She argued that the life story is a taken-for-granted "interpretive device"; and, as such, a discursive category (the notion that we even "have" a life story to "share" with others) furnished by American culture. Through and through, we are moral beings, and in order to live in a social world—with a sense of feeling comfortable as a good, consistent and stable person—individuals feel the need (shot through with varying degrees and understandings of morality) to have a coherent, acceptable and ever-revised "story". And this is what Mitch was doing—sorting through, erasing, chronicling, and getting ready to share.

Dan walks by and doesn't say anything—as usual. He definitely doesn't like me. Was it because I knew a little bit about William James? I think when I was talking to him about Sartre, he got pretty mad. *He* wants to be the one who knows that stuff. He's the philosopher. He's the theorist. Not me. What the hell do I know, anyways? I've never done "time". I've never been in a drunk tank. I've never been on the street—I've never *lived* on the street. I've never let my faith force me to renounce all of my belongings, and go on a hitch-hiking quest across Canada. Not even close. And I'm sure my poetry isn't as "authentic" as his. How can it be. I don't do drugs. I don't drink. I don't let my mind wander into anarchic territories. After all, I *must* be a typical bourgeoisie. "Looks can be deceiving" I sometimes mutter to myself when Dan talks in generalisations.

"All you students", he directs himself to me and some med students one afternoon. "You all look so different than us". "How so", says a girl who's name I never learned. "I don't know, you just dress differently—*nicely*. But it's more than that; it's your eyes. I can tell you're different 'cause your eyes are always clear—you just look "with it". "Hah, o.k." comes a reply, I don't see from where. "Yeah, unlike us" Dan continues. "We're either too tired, too anxious or"—"fucken baked, buddeh"! Yells German from across the room. There's quite a bit of laughter. I join in, knowing full well the irony of the moment.

"Hey, Dan, what's up"? "Oh, not too much", he says curtly. "Reading anything interesting lately"? "Yeah, I've let Anna Karenina go for a little while. I've picked up Hegel again, but I'm just not getting into German Idealism. It's so complex". "Yeah, I know". "But, anyways" he says while finding security in his forked-beard, "I'm working on a new theory of humour, and the social expectations of and for humour". "Oh, that's cool—that's quite the undertaking, though, eh"? "For sure, but it's going pretty well". He takes out a care-worn notebook with the smallest handwriting I think I've ever seen. Every millimetre of the page is taken up with writing. "See, humour equalises things; it levels out social situations. It also makes the uncomfortable comfortable—but in different ways". "Yeah, I can see that". "But I'm still working out the details" he says while scratching his sun-burnt forehead—he's going bald, and at 21. "Well, there is another German philosopher/sociologist who you might be interested in, actually". "Oh yeah", he says, disinterestedly, voice trailing off, eyes moving to his notebook. He's getting strange again. Some days he talks some days he doesn't.

The pattern: every time I mention something about philosophy, he seems to get a bit—not edgy, but disinterested. I'm the university guy, though. I've gotta keep my mouth shut. I understand now, though. It's too late at this instant—I gotta finish. "Well, there's this German, a phenomenologist—he know what this is—named Helmuth Plessner". "Yeah". A reluctant reply. A reluctant facial expression— downcast eyes, fingers searching over the surface of his notebook. "Yeah, he wrote a book called *On Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behaviour*". "It sounds like it could be right up your alley". "Yeah" he says with an almost hangdog look—and he's not making eye contact. This is the last time I'm doing this. Next time, I'm just going to nod, say "that's cool" and keep my mouth shut. "I'll check it out". "Yeah, it's at the UWO library—you can check it out". "Yeah, I sometimes go up there". "O.K." He gets up and leaves for more coffee.

I check my iPhone so as not to make it look like I'm waiting for Mitch. Nothing. I look over. He's looking at me expectantly. "You ready" I say. "Yeah, yeah." I've been watching you, actually. Waiting to see what you'd do. I was asking myself: is this guy interested in doing this? Does he want to talk to me? I can tell that you're interested just by the way you're talking, and the way you keep looking over here at me. You're into it. And that's cool. Like it's honest, you know? I've been watching you the whole time, even before I started writing. I can tell that you really wanna talk to me. That's important. It's real, you know". I can feel my armpits starting to sweat. For some reason, this is the moment where it all becomes worth it. The ethnography. Feeling awkward. Sometimes not knowing what to do or say—it happens. I'm lost. "Yeah, man, let's do it". Mitch extends his arm out with a fist. I do the same—we rap each other's knuckles. Suddenly I feel real down here. My age, my

status, everything, all in the relational vacuum of this moment, all disappear and become utterly meaningless. He leads the way into the counterpoint needle exchange office: this is where we're having our talk.

As we get going, I let Mitch talk us in the direction he wants to go. He was shaking at first—the sheet, on which he wrote some key aspects of his life that he wanted to talk about, was vibrating, jerkily though ever so slightly. Once he started to talk about his mother, though, things changed. She has cancer. It's disappearing, but she had it before. Rather than make this purely one-sided, I ask if it's o.k. for me to share something. I talk about my uncle Frank. I tell Mitch that he got cancer, too, and that it doesn't look good. It's spread throughout his body. "Yeah", says Mitch—"so you know". "Yeah". His face is looking a bit pained, but his body seems more comfortable—oddly. An hour later, we move on to other things: his time in jail; the fact that he was caught for armed robbery; how his father died in an ATV accident; how he felt threatened in "the pen" at 18 years old. He told me, reluctantly, at first about a game of cards with a twenty-five year old in for manslaughter. We later talked about questions of fear, honesty and a willingness to let go and be scared even when pride gets in your way. An hour and half later, we're finished—I press stop on the digital recorder. As I get up, Mitch stands as well (looking pained a little), and says "thanks, Mark. I appreciate it. You're a good guy, and I'm glad we did this". "Hey, no problem, Mitch. No problem. I'll be around for a while, so anytime you wanna talk about anything, I'll be at the table in there". I feel relieved. "Cool" he says. I open the door, and we're back into the rush of the YAC.

CHAPTER 5—Epistemologies, Reciprocations II: Theoretical Treatments

If a sparrow comes before his window, it is not enough that the poet regard the sparrow with something of a tolerant, half-amused liberality; feeling pleasantly and generously disposed to the sparrow is *not* active sympathy. He must not only *become* that sparrow, but he must *work with it*; and there must be an *Einfühlung*, as it were, as well as an *Einfüllung*, so that he can "take part in its existence and pick about the Gravel". By such an imaginative and sympathetic *Einfühlung*, the poet will grasp the truth of the creature as the analytical mind may not.

W. J. Bate 1939: 44

It was only after I started to write my field notes that I fully realised that this idea, this process of reflexivity, of experience, is *shared and volatile*—it never takes place in a vacuum. And it is not only shared, but it happens in a specific context at a specific time, with specific people. But oftentimes it is the recognition of the Other's recognition of ourselves that makes us reflexive. As overly-convoluted as this last sentence may seem, my encounters with people like Steph, Zane and Mitch made me realise that each of these people—through my recognition of their engagements and experience with me—forced me to recognise something about myself. And it was through my ruminations on reflexivity and self-knowledge that I began to think about the ontology of Otherness: how is it conceptualised, how is it known? Surely there are aspects that are *unknowable*—especially through typically positivist means.

In practice, then, while I was conducting my fieldwork, these aforementioned questions arose less in the frame of methodological than ultimately epistemological concerns. Day in and day out, "objectivity" was never a concerning problem since its reach and scope were impossible in a situation like mine: the relation between knower and known is complicated by the fact that, unlike observation in physical science

(which is one way, wherein observer and observed are marked by an asymmetrical relation), ethnography involves "reciprocal activity and interexperience" (Jackson 1989: 3). Objectivity, then, kept running against a limit in my fieldwork, and that limit was the shared and mutually implicated realm of intersubjectivity. I certainly find most sociological and psychological "explanations" of behaviour (not experience) through supposedly "objective" means uninteresting and intersubjectively unsophisticated—particularly those that equate objectivity with an attitude of emotional disengagement, distance (emotional and cognitive) and moral and ethical indifference (Rosaldo 1989).

By extension, along with Devereux (1967), I see methodologies which purport to decrease or eliminate any emotional influence, bias or the anxieties (read: uncertainties) that arise in the overlap between the "knower" and the "known", as clever sleights of the methodological (and, ultimately, epistemological) hand—those, perhaps, that can be listed under what Devereux called "heuristic artifice" (1967: xvii). After all, as Devereux noted many years ago: "[a]ny effective behavioral science methodology must treat these disturbances as the most significant and characteristic data of behavioural science research", and that we "[m]ust use the subjectivity inherent in all observation as the royal road to an authentic, rather than fictitious, objectivity"—an objectivity "[w]hich must be defined in terms of what is really possible, rather than what 'should be'" (1967: xvii). For Devereux, behavioural scientific methodologies served as epistemological anxiolytics (agents to tame the undomesticated and feral nature of the social realties we describe) in that they attempt to quell the anxieties aroused by reciprocities between observer and subject.

To Crapanzano (2004), these explanations are usually "just-so" stories that seem to perpetuate ideological formations by offering parsimonious or simple explanations

when we are confronted head on with the morally confusing, puzzling, and potentially ineffable. As I argued above regarding the problematics of reflexivity, Crapanzano reminds us that "as engaged social actors, we probably can never be good epistemologists". He continues, "but we are capable at times, in moments of reflection, of disengaging ourselves enough to observe our actions and expressions from a critical perspective that meets stricter epistemological standards than those of the quotidian and may even occasionally serve as a corrective to our presumptions" (2004: 6). He continues, "such moments, however, should also be treated cautiously, with irony, indeed with a diligent scepticism. They are never as removed from our social engagements and commitments as we'd like to pretend".

Crapanzano concludes that he has "come to prefer the puzzlement generated by the montage to the complacency offered by the easy explanation" (2004: 6). Paul Radin in his *Method and Theory in Ethnology* (1933) said that insofar as "we are part of the cultural facts we are describing", scientific objectivity "was unattainable"—since historical facts consist of "imponderabilia rather than permanency and durability" (Radin 1933: 11-12). Ultimately, through my ruminations on reflexivity, I came to reject a simplistic and scientistic form of objectivity in social science—as I pretty much always had (long-term fieldwork just provided a more direct reason to understand this rejection). Any view or perspective is always already tethered to the adamantine moorings of our subjectivity; this is as much a social and cultural production as a psychological production (you cannot really disentangle the two). Owing to this epistemic state of affairs, then, any attempt at a purely detached and valueless "objective" view of the world is simply unattainable. We can imagine—through feats of creativity—what it must be like to view the world and other people from a detached

and objective standpoint; however, we cannot mistake *imaginings* for neutral, demonstrable and irrefutable truth (what philosophers refer to as "apodictic" truth). In reality, we cannot step outside ourselves; we cannot hold the world in abeyance, and step into a clearer, detached, objective epistemic space—as the Cartesians thought/think, along with certain phenomenologists influenced by the early Hüsserl[48] (who was a Cartesian through and through).

Echoing the sentiment above, then, says Nietzsche, with his typically firm stride: "Against positivism, which halts at phenomena—'there are only facts'—I would say, no: facts is [*sic*] precisely what there is not, only interpretations. We cannot establish any fact 'in itself': perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing". He continues, "[i]nsofar as the word knowledge has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is interpretable otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings" (1968: 267).

As it relates to ethnographic representation *qua* invention, Fabian (1971, 2001) understands that an epistemologically sophisticated (i.e., "postmodern" but not to nihilistic proportions) objectivity[49] lies neither in the logical consistency of a certain

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[48] Whose notions of the phenomenological reduction and *epoché* sought to hold the world in abeyance, allowing the phenomenologists to view the world or images of thought from a "judgment-free" position.

[49] Objectivity to Fabian (2001) is an epistemological—and I would say ontological—problem and *not* a methodological one. Following Bateson and Bateson (1987), I, too, feel that there is no clear line between epistemology and ontology, only inasmuch as "what *is* is identical for all human purposes with what can be known" (19) (see also Bird-David 1999). Current anthropological research seems to muddle epistemological/ontological issues with methodological ones regarding the status, process and representation of "objectivity" (Fabian 2001). As it relates to fieldwork and the presentation thereof—ethnography—anthropologists' central concern should not be with methodology, as echoed by both Marcus (1986) and Fabian (2001). Methodology, typically, has been the concern of formalist sociology and derivative disciplines employing quasi-sociological conceptual and methodological thematics, most notably business studies, cultural geography, and qualitative-oriented approaches to political and also health science. For anthropologists, who have been much more critical of methods and

theoretical approach, nor in the givenness of data, but in the foundation—*Bergründung*,

as he states, i.e., the logical and rhetorical foundation of something—of human

intersubjectivity as communicative and performative *action*.   And, to this end,

"objectivity" obtains in entering a context of communicative interaction through

language[50], performance and shared temporality in their various forms—dialogic,

corporeal, and other trans-linguistic (yet highly symbolic in and of themselves) modes

of communication such as the importance of silence.

   As Fabian claims, his conception of objectivity is rooted in *subjectivity*. This

form of objectivity, then, is not really "objectivity" as such, but a form of

objectification, though, sadly, Fabian (2001) shies away from providing us with a

concrete definition. He says in a footnote that they are "those things that can become

the objects of—in the case we are discussing here—ethnographic description" (2001:

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their application and representational import (at least since the 1960's) in the representation of
fieldwork, a concern with methodology only weakens the rhetorical and suggestive power of
ethnography
 as a genre; and, as such, generalisation in the economies of ethnographic representation, though
still a classic problem, lies more so in the evocative powers of ethnography than with a quasi-
scientific concern with methodology and methods (see Marcus 1986; Clifford and Marcus
1986; Clifford 1981, 1983, 1988; Fabian 2001; Geertz 2002).
[50] Fabian's (2001) attack on positivistic-oriented approaches to "objectivity" centres, too, on
vision (and therefore "observation" *qua* "observation") as a primary concern with knowledge
production and the validity thereof. "Vision" Fabian explains "requires distance from its
objects; the eye maintains its "purity" as long as it is not in close contact with "foreign objects".
"Visualism" he continues, "by instituting distance as that which enables us to know, and purity
or immateriality as that which characterizes true knowledge production, aimed to remove all
other senses and thereby the body from knowledge production…(2001: 30). From the
seventeenth century onwards (especially with Descartes and other Enlightenment philosophers),
vision has been exalted as the *sin qua non* of "valid" and "reliable" empirical knowledge
production and validity; however, an epistemologically and ontologically sophisticated
anthropology approaches participant-observation with great caution—inasmuch as the
deconstruction of Western hegemonies (thanks to philosophers such as Heidegger, Derrida,
Layotard, Deleuze and Levinas, just to name a few; and, in the realm of anthropology, the
deconstruction of Western meta-narratives, epistemologies and ontologies that have been
commonplace since the 1970's) have enabled great advances in terms of critical stances and
positionalities regarding various and multiple knowledges and approaches to reality, especially
in the realm of shared knowledge production in fieldwork, and its co-construction and
representation in an ethnographic format.

208). More helpfully, Obeyesekere (1981) provides a simple and concrete definition of objectification in an ethnographic context. Objectification, to him "is the expression (projection and externalisation) of private emotions [socially configured and given meaning] in a public idiom" (77). This public idiom or means through which to articulate expression, in the case of my fieldwork context, was dynamic and involved various aspects of communication: storytelling (written and performed), poetry, and drawing.

A focus on objectification, then replaces a crude empiricism and visualism with a conception of intersubjectivity as an actual *sharing* of content that results in the co-production, co-creation and constant transformation of knowledge (Fabian 2001). By dint of this process, then, knowledge is tantamount to *poēsis* (Fabian 2001): a "making", a "fabrication" (Arendt 1958: 143) between people, in a space opened up through communication. As such, the binary between knower and known collapses insofar as there is no "inside" and "outside" of knowledge, only an in-between.

To this end, there is no power differential between knower and known if knowledge production exists in a continually protean and *transformative* state *between* two people (*dialectical* in the original Platonic sense), when we make contact and reach out toward the other (and the other reciprocates). Not only is knowledge (and meaning) emergent, it exists in a state of *in-betweeness*, in what Buber (1958) called the *Ich-Du* relation ("I-You", "I-Thou") where no objectification of the other exists, only what is created in-between. Fieldworkers—*inter alia*—are never "neutral" when they make contact with informants; knowledge is grounded in some form of emotion. As Heidegger (1962) says, "mood assails us"—we are always in a mood no matter what we do—and this applies to engaging in dialogue with the Other.

Mood does not arise from within, though, but from togetherness, the being with (*mitsein*) of being-in-the-world with the Other, in a shared world (*mitwelt*). Ridding ourselves, then, of the "passivity" associated with a differential between active knower (subject) and a passive known (object), the relation of *betweeness* between two subjects (inter-subjectivity) is *active*. Taking things one step further, Bate (1939), drawing on the poetry and poetic epistemology (I would argue that it is almost a form of proto-phenomenology) of Keats explains that truth inheres in a special intensity of interactive co-production; however, this production does not involve a subject and object, as postitivism traditionally has conceived it.

> This intensity, this peculiar force at work within the object (the self), this almost dynamic expression of identity and truth, is intuitively and almost physically felt by the sympathetic, characterless poet: for the poet *is* the object, and the force at work within the object is also at work with him. It was the physical intensity of the phrase "sea-shouldering whales" which cause[d] it to give Keats such delight on his first reading of the *Faerie Queene*: "He *hoisted* himself up", said Clarke, "and looked burly and dominant, as he said 'What an image that is— *sea-shouldering whales*"! And Keats, entering into the image, doubtless felt the press upon his shoulders the weight of the parting billows (1939: 60).

Here, Bate is talking about Keats' approach to knowledge production. For Keats, in order to know something, you had to *become it* (knowledge is becoming, a creative becoming); you had to pierce the sphere of oppositional identities enabling *alterity* (otherness) and *ipseity* (self-hood, usually pre-reflexive self-hood) to envelop and partition subjects from objects, and therefore let the swell and haemorrhage of communion efface all boundaries between self and other. For Keats, to know something, one must become lost within it.

> What shocks the virtuous Philosopher, delights the camelion [*sic*] Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste of the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity—*he is continually in, for*—and filling some other Body—The Sun, The Moon, the Sea,

and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures….When I am in a room with People if ever I am free from speculating on creations of my own brain, then not myself goes home to myself; but the identity of everyone in the room begins to press upon me that I am in a very little time an[ni]hlated—not only among Men, it would be the same of Nursery children (1958: 227-228, my emphasis).

Keats' view bears striking similarity to Benjamin's experiential approach to "feeling". In essence, both views are a form of "phenomenal ekstasis" (ἐκ-στασις, i.e., "to stand outside or beside one's self" in relation to the other). In a passage from *One-Way Street* entitled "To the Public: Please Protect and Preserve these New Plantings", Benjamin states that

> [i]f the theory is correct that feeling is not located in the head, that we sentiently experience a window, a cloud, a tree not in our brains but, rather, in the place where we see it, then we are, in looking at our beloved, too, *outside ourselves*. But in a torment of tension and ravishment (1979: 52, my emphasis).

Through the passion of engagement, the energy of interaction through a form of phenomenal ekstasis ("the quickened pulse of commitment" as Keats conceives it), the self blends and leaks out into the space of the other, wherein knowledge can be co-created, shared, and, ultimately, transformed—*actively and creatively through a form of co-resonance and receptivity to the echoes of difference.* Accepting the role of passivity as an appropriate stance leads us inevitably to overlook the role of "passion" in our research. Passion, Fabian (2001) reminds us, is understood as a drive, but also should be understood as suffering, a condition of knowledge, and, he claims, objectivity.

Each time I engaged in a conversation with my informants, listened to their poetry, watched them draw, heard their stories, I was moved by a form of passion, swept away by the interactions themselves—distance was forgotten: I was carried off

by heated conversations about metal, movies, books, philosophy; I got angry at the injustice of some of their stories, and, red-faced, I continued listening, or asked them to continue, or, as in the case with Steph outlined above, let my passions carry me closer to a shared understanding. As such, through shared reflexivities, through intersubjective understanding, we were able to co-create knowledges through creative resonance.

In considering how these aforementioned knowledges are co-created and shared, as my fieldwork progressed I became more and more engrossed by the *very conditions* (ontological, epistemological) for shared knowledge production and transformation. How did this dialectic of experience, expression and understanding (communication) come about? What were its conditions of possibility with my informants in the larger context of the surroundings of my fieldsite: downtown, the YAC, etc.?

Below I will consider briefly the work of Mikhail Bakhtin regarding the processual intersubjective, material and immaterial (atmospheric) conditions of communication, and the co-created knowledges that emerge thereby. Specifically I will consider how his notion of the chronotope can serve as a framing device for enabling the very conditions of possibility for communication as intersubjective knowledge co-production, transformation and understanding.

Chronotopic Contingencies

The very being of man (both external and internal) is the *deepest communion*. *To be* means to *communicate*. Absolute death (non-being) is the state of being unheard, unrecognized, unremembered (Ippolit). To be means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal sovereign territory, he is wholly and always on the boundary; looking inside himself, he *looks into the eyes of another* or *with the eyes of another*.

M. M. Bakhtin 1984b: 287

Communication with the other can be transcendent only as a dangerous life, a fine risk to be run.

E. Levinas 1978: 120

Because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning, and we cannot do or say anything without its requiring a name in history.

M. Merleau-Ponty 2002: xxii

Experiences with my informants in the YAC were oriented and framed by not only by intersubjective circumstances, but also physical or material circumstances, too: the size of the room in which the engagements took place; who was there; the atmosphere of the YAC; whether there was food or coffee around; the atmosphere of the day (marked and inflected by too much heat, cold, rain, snow, etc.); the direct role of the state in my interactions, the emotional states inflected thereby (i.e., did someone just have their Ontario Works cheque cut or withheld; was someone asked to submit paperwork to their Ontario Works case worker that they could not possibly obtain—like a lost paystub, or an income tax for that was never filled out)?

Rather than giving short shrift to the material conditions in and through which dialogue takes places, the chronotope (literally "time/space") places direct emphasis on the *what*, *where* and *when* of human intersubjective engagement.

> What counts for us is the fact that it [the chronotope] expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as a fourth dimension of space). We understand the chronotope as a formally constitutive category of literature…in the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole (Bakhtin 1981: 84).

To Bakhtin, then, the chronotope is a literary device that instantiates the interconnection between spatial and temporal relationships in literature[51]. Accordingly, it is the chronotope, notes Bakhtin that defines *literary genre*—so, as examples, we have the treatment of time and space in various plot types of Greek romance, Greek epic, European folklore, detective novels, murder mysteries, etc. The crux of the chronotope concept is that it is an *organising principle or a thematic point of crystallisation*, not just for the novel, but for the entire world (Todorov 1984). The chronotope explains how narrative events transpire, and how they are ultimately configured and affected by the differential between spatial and temporal parameters (Todorov 1984).

More specifically, chronotopicity is the means through which time and space materialise and coalesce around a narrative and thematic centre[52] for the purposes of

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[51] According to Morson and Emerson (1990), Bakhtin's works must be read two ways (they are *double-voiced*), by way of what could be called a double-hermeneutic: since he was considered a person of interest by the Russian authorities (due to his tendency to write against the doctrine of Socialist Realism—see Holquist 1990), it was in his best interest to carry on writing about the topics that most interested him, notably relations between self/other and the dialogism which subtended the relationship, in a rather inconspicuous form, i.e., almost masking his philosophical critiques by couching them as literary critiques. One can extract notions of the chronotope, heteroglossia and other such "literary devices", and apply them directly to lived sociality.

[52] For example, certain philosophical themes, topics of social or cultural interest, ideas of whatever sort, or even ideas about memory.

representation *qua* invention. Metaphorically, we could understand the chronotope as a "dialogic loom" of sorts where all of the various narrative threads (the warp of one character's position within the weft of another) of the novel are woven together to form a highly diverse and colourful narrative tapestry. Quite simply, the chronotope is a device for the *representation of events*.

> The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative…It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events. [And], thus, the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a centre for concretizing representation, as a force giving body…(Bakhtin 1981: 250).

He continues, adding more complexity to that which inheres in the chronotope

> Most important in all this is the weaving of historical and socio-public events together with the personal and even deeply private side of life, with the secrets of the boudoir; the interweaving of petty, private intrigues with political and financial intrigues, the interpenetration of state with boudoir secrets, of historical sequences with the everyday and biographical sequences. Here the graphically visible markers of historical time as well as of biographical time and everyday time are concentrated and condensed (1981: 247).

And it is to this conceptualisation of the chronotope and its workings that my dissertation and the research question are tightly hinged: according to which logics of practice do the street youth of downtown London (those, more particularly, who frequent the YAC as its own chronotope) get by and make do? And how are these logics of practice shared, engaged with and experienced morally, corporeally, and temporally?

In my case, each interaction, each engagement was formed from the crossing of various chronotopes in physical space and experiential time. As Holquist reminds us, a chronotope must be a chronotope *of* someone, *for* someone, or *about* someone—it is always of, for, or about some person in a particularly material situation. As such, a

chronotope is, really, a particular "situation" for someone (Holquist 1990), and is marked by a certain time and a certain place, and the differential experience thereof— the *differential experience* of a chronotope, a "situation" is key. "Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (Bakhtin 1981: 252).

Adding to this, each situation we enter is marked by a particular social activity between self and other(s), and thus bears the impress of a particular lived time/space continuum. As Morson and Emerson (1990) explain, the chronotopic framing of events differs markedly in different social activities: for example, the spatial organisation and the hum of the assembly line, the rhythms of agricultural labour, and the slow or punctuated pace of parlour conversation.

In dialogue, time and space categories play a central role in cognition; however, these categories are never transcendent or general; they are always already local and situated, inflected with the presence of people, galvanised by emotion, oriented by the practicalities of communication. Time and space, then, are shaping tools by which the potentially infinite variety of the world is domesticated for intersubjective experience, or brought within the twin orbits of the self and other (via their mutual categories of recognition), and thus moulded into respective forms. The site at which the moulding occurs is deeply situated and localised. Architectonics as the way parts and wholes of narrative, space, time, and self/other fit and unfit together (the "forms" that situatedness assumes), is tightly connected to the notion of the chronotope (Bakhtin 1990; Holquist 1990; Morson and Emerson 1990).

Taking it one step further, then, the chronotope of human engagement—with its four elements of time, its value; and space, and its value—defines the conditions of possibility for *meaning*. Invoking the early Bakhtin (1993), who was influenced heavily by Einstein, time, space and their experience are never just "temporal" or "spatial" in and of themselves, phlebotomized of the blood of meaning and worth. On the contrary, they are *axiological*. Precisely because they have values attached to them, they are inherently moral and ethical, axiological (Morson and Emerson 1990). Perception, then, is never unalloyed, but mediated by values regarding what is good or bad. Existence therefore, as the early Bakhtin (1993) conceptualised it, is a *project or a deed*—wherein one must constantly make judgements and evaluations of situations.

Holquist (1990), Morson and Emerson (1990) centre our understanding, inasmuch as meaning entails evaluation, and chronotopes define the parameters of *value*. The ethnographic vignettes provided above clearly reveal the evaluative nature of the communication between myself and my informants. This very evaluative nature of our chronotopes, their crossings and shifts (and the positionalities of myself and my informants, and the various borders they enabled us to flit across), that afforded the possibility and capacity for shared reflexivities, and the knowledges these reflexivities produced.

But, in terms of the *specificity of interaction*, the rhythm and pace of social activities in a situation, what exactly happens within the fusing(s) of space/time, and the framing this process provides? What occurs in the production of meaning, evaluation, and the ways people are oriented to each other—like iron filings under a page being directed by a magnet underneath? Regardless of the material, physical and dialogic circumstances involved in communicating that Bakhtin considers, what about the role

of the *body*? He mentions the fact that physiology plays a role in the mutli-dimensional and differential way language is used, even within speech communities, but what about trans-linguistic aspects of communication like the subtle and not-so-subtle role of *silence*? Though Bakthin does in fact mention the role of the body in Rabelais' work, particularly what he calls "the material body principle" (1984a: 18) its associations are not with the individual biological body or bodies as the chronotopic condition of possibility for communication, expression and interpretation, but more with the body as a collective, social process[53]—particularly as it is involved in the images and representations of humour in Renaissance grotesque folk humour (particularly Rabelais' work).

<p style="text-align:center">*　　*　　*</p>

Framing the problem of communication *anthropologically* adds ballast to Bakhtin's theorising, and builds on the foresaid elisions. Following Bruner and Turner (1986), intersubjectivity may be said to consist of three parts, which are sometimes marked by a profound tension: 1) *reality* (what is out there); 2) *experience* (how that reality presents itself to consciousness); and, 3) *expressions or communication* (how individual experience is framed and articulated). This can be expanded by what Laing (1967) said about the problematic aporia between experience and expression:

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[53] Rather, Bakhtin's focus on the body in the Rabelais book centres on the material body in grotesque realism (particularly folk culture), that is the deeply positive bodily element associated with exaggerated, hyperbolised images of food, drink, bodily processes (fertility, sexuality, excretion, etc.). This is not the body of the individual, but the body of "ancestral body of mankind" (Bakhtin 1984a: 367)—the social, cultural and comic body in its pleasure, pain and awkwardness.

> We can see other people's behaviour, but not their experience…The other person's behaviour is an experience of mine. My behaviour is an experience of the other. The task of social phenomenology is to relate my experience of the other's behaviour to the other's experience of my behaviour. Its study is the relation between experience and experience: its true field is inter-experience (15).

He continues:

> I see you, and you see me. I experience you, and you experience me. I see your behaviour. You see my behaviour. But I do not and never have and never will see your *experience* of me. Just as you cannot 'see' my experience of you. My experience of you is not 'inside' me. It is simply you, as I experience you. And I do not experience you inside me. Similarly, I take it that you do not experience me as inside you (15).

As Bruner (1986) points out, in the spirit of Dilthey, experience structures expressions in that we understand, as Laing noted above, other people and their expressions on the basis of our own experience and self-understanding. But expressions also structure experience—their relationship is dialectical, engaging the prevailing socio-cultural, moral, economic, and political discourses of an historical era—such as the dominant ideology of a particular political economy. More specifically the family, media, literature, art, music, and, especially the internet, contain, define, and provide the very conditions of possibility for inner experience.

On a cautionary note, though, that there is oftentimes a gap—with which I became familiar through daily interactions with my informants—between experience and its articulation as expression. Some experiences are ineffable as such, inarticulable, or inchoate—they reside and inhere in the silences of speech and the body. "Silence stands in opposition to every voice, weak or strong, ordinary or unique, prosaic or poetic. The basic opposition between voice and silence matters here because suffering, like pain, with which it so often intermingles, exists in part beyond language" (Morris 1997: 27).

Silence, then, can and did—in the context of my informants—become a sign for something unknowable, resting in that shifting half-light of self-understanding. To this end, an experience is not just upsetting, worrisome or unspeakable, but quite possibly *inaccessible to understanding* (Morris 1997). At points throughout my fieldwork, my informants attempted to give "speech" to silence; yet this always met a limit (real or imagined), and that limit was expression, conveyance through dialogue. The persistent pain of confusion, loss, or violence, silence had the ability to move slowly, fog-like or strike out quickly like a blow, rendering attempts to communicate futile, resulting in either crestfallen, downward glances, or the flush-red wash of tears. Either way, silence had the magnitude of force to overflow abilities to think through talk. Moreover, some experiences that are chronotopically contingent, are not "storyable", perhaps, because we lack the performative and narrative resources; or, quite simply, we may lack the vocabulary necessary for description (Bruner 1986).

The chronotope of the YAC, the busy, snowy, cold street, the dark alley way strewn with garbage, and the quiet bookstore, each with its specific social configurations of *reality*, *experience* and *expression (through loud comments, silences, laughs, cries, the calm of indifference, the corporeal arrests of anger)*—and the tensions and gaps there between—oriented myself and my informants toward the emergence of *intersubjective meaning*, and toward the sometimes hermeneutic volatility inherent in this emergence.

Bodies, Emotions and Affects

Merleau-Ponty, in his work *Phenomenology of Perception* (2002), explains that "[e]xperience discloses beneath objective space in which the body eventually finds its place, a primitive spatiality of which experience is merely the outer covering and which merges with the body's very being". Merleau-Ponty continues: "to be a body, is to be tied to a certain world…our body is not primarily in space: *it is of it*" (2002: 171, my emphasis). Taking into consideration the fact that, according to Merleau-Ponty (2002) our body is of space as much as it is in it, we can re-frame Bakhtin's notion of the chronotope not only to include dialogicity in the unfolding, containment and conditions of meaning production, "communication", but *corporeality* or the "bodilyness" of communication as well.

Consider, then:

[Dialogue notwithstanding], I perceive the other as a piece of behaviour, for example I perceive the grief or the anger of the other in his conduct, in his face or his hands, without recourse to any 'inner' experience of suffering or anger, and because grief and anger are variations of belonging to the world, *undivided between the body and consciousness, and equally applicable to the other's conduct, visible in his phenomenal body*, as in my own conduct as it is presented to me. But then, the behaviour of another, and even his words, are not that other. The grief and anger of another have never quite the same significance for him as they have for me. For him, these situations are lived through, for me they are displayed…Although his consciousness and mine, working through our respective situations, may contrive to produce a common situation in which they can communicate, it is nevertheless from the subjectivity of each of us that each one projects this 'one and only' world (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 415, my emphasis).

Engagement with an interlocutor is not always purely dialogic; or, if we can broaden our understanding of dialogue to include corporeality, then communication is not always *linguistic*—it can, in many cases, be trans-linguistic, as in the case of the

silences of speech and communication referred to above. Through the marked silences, gestures, agitations, furrows, caresses, jerks, tears, embraces, withdrawals, extensions, and other utterances, conveyances or communications of the body meaning, evaluation, and understanding/misunderstanding are underwritten; this is where the knots of narrative (bodily and verbal) are "tied and untied" as Bakhtin would have put it.

Whether it was Steph in her dolorous anger, Dan in his reticent insecurities, Zane in his enclosing uncertainty, or Mitch in his approving extensions, each of these interactions were suffused through and through with both dialogicity and corporeality: *talk and gesture; words and movement*. And when words brushed against a cold limit—the unspeakable—as in Steph's case, a focus on the emotional topography (see Hastrup 2010) of the moment offered a different modality of knowledge to supersede that afforded through verbal dialogue alone.   So, then, both dialogue and corporeality, and the various chronotopic horizons and limits they set, contributed to the shared reflexivities, "our knowledges", of myself and my informants.

Allaine Cerwonka and Liisa Malkki (2007), in *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*, suggest that we view the body and affect as a hermeneutic recourse (although I disagree with how they conceptualise affect[54]). They

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[54] Following Massumi (1995), I understand affect as an inherently ironic corporeal or physiological response to a certain experience. It is not to be confused with emotion or feeling in that the former is a social display of feeling, which is personal and biographical. Affect, then, is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. It cannot be fully realized and articulated in language, because affect is always prior to and/or outside consciousness. Affect is the modality of preparing the body for action in a given circumstance by adding a quantitative dimension of intensity to the quality of experience (Shouse 2012). Massumi commented that a truly affective response was noted in a small group of German children who, in a psychological experiment, were shown a short video of a man making a snowman atop a roof, whereupon it started to melt in the afternoon sun. The clip was shown in various forms: a factual form with sound, another without any sound, and accompanied by very emotional and sad music. The children apparently were most aroused— "measured" by skin conductance—by the factual form; however, the "sad" and emotional

argue that the body is a vehicle through, by and on which ethnographically valid

meanings are negotiated and co-constructed: it provides in- and out-sights through

which to gain partial understandings of the shared-emotional lives of ourselves and our

informants in the immediacy of the lived-moment. Echoing this, Csordas (1990; 1994)

has argued that embodiment as "the existential ground of culture and self" should open

vistas of analytic focus on the "being-in-the-world" of body-self and other, described in

all of its lived "existential immediacy". To Csordas (1994), though, this immediacy is

subject to a double hermeneutic: 1) not as a synchronic moment of the ethnographic

present but as a temporally/historically informed sensory presence and engagement;

and, 2) not as unmediated in the sense of some form of "pre-cultural" universalism, but

in the sense of a pre-objective reservoir of meaning, enabled, enacted and performed

through intersubjective engagement of concern and attunement (Heidegger 1962). And,

when we share genuine moments of understanding/misunderstanding through emotional

investment (based on concern and attunement) with our informants over the long term,

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scenes were rated afterwards as the most pleasant, as Massumi says, "the sadder the better" (1995: 84). The factual version (no music) elicited the highest level of arousal and made the least long-lasting impression. The children, it turns out, were physiologically-split: factuality made their skin resistance fall. The original non-verbal version elicited the greatest response from their skin. Galvanic skin response measures autonomic reaction. From the tone of the report [written by the scientists who conducted the study], it seems that the researchers were a bit taken aback by the results. They contented themselves with observing that the difference between sadness and happiness is not all that it's cracked up to be, and worry that the difference between children and adults was also not all that it was cracked up to be…Their only positive conclusion was the primacy of the affective in image reception. Accepting and expanding upon that, it could be noted that the primacy of the affective is marked by a gap between content and effect: it would appear that the strength of duration of an image's effect is not logically connected to the content in any straightforward way…What is meant here by the content of the image is its indexing to conventional meanings in an intersubjective context, its socio-linguistic qualification. This indexing fixes the quality of the image; the strength of duration of the image's effect could be called its intensity. What comes out here is that there is no correspondence or conformity between quality and intensity. If there is a relation, it is of another nature" (1995: 84-85).

we are provided with the possibility to enter into what Schutz referred to as the

fellowship and union of the "we-relation" (1971: 17).

Similarly, Cerwonka and Malkki (2007) argue that by paying attention to one's

body—and, of course, our informants' bodies, whether they be silent, withdrawn, calm,

agitated, performing, drawing, etc., as will be discussed below—and one's emotional

investment in a particular field situation, we can reach more subtle and nuanced

understandings, as well as deeper reflexivities than by centring on dialogue alone. The

inclusion of the body and emotions (fears, anxieties, joys, etc.) in our analyses can be

used as existential leavens to inform how we understand the situations, people,

communities and interactions that coalesce into the lifeworlds ethnographers enter

(Devereaux 1967; Davies 2010; Jackson 2010).

Such an approach may also be understood as an anthropology of "bodily

affect"—granting epistemological status to how informants, the chrontopic

contingencies in which our communication is framed, actually *affect* (through shared

reflexivity) the ethnographer, much like Steph's volatile psychological state when I first

met her, or the awkward conversation I had outlined above with Dan. Bypassing the

"strategic" communication of the ethnographer—that is, the communication that aims at

an informant's system of representations, such as verbal, voluntary and intentional

communication—I feel it is important to grant epistemological status to involuntary and

non-intentional communication (Favret-Saada 1990, 2012). And it is precisely in and

through such forms of communication that we need to "give an epistemological status

to those phenomena of blindness, deafness, and stupidity of the ethnographer, as normal

consequences of being "caught up" in a process of intercommunication" (Favret-Saada

1990: 197).

To do so may assist in circumventing the oxymoronic trap of "participant-observation"; it could allow the ethnographer to be affected (sometimes overcome by the "intensities" of seemingly meaningless stimuli) by his/her informants and their dense styles and networks of communication, therefore granting epistemological primacy (in some cases, though not all) to non-intentional and non-representational communication (Favret-Saada 2012). This is what Tallon, in reference to Levinas' philosophy, called "affective intentionality[55]" (1989: 208). Favret-Saada explains that "[i]t" can be seen that for an ethnographer to accept being affected does not imply that he [sic] identifies with the native point of view, or that he takes advantage of the experience of fieldwork to tickle his narcissism". She continues, "[t]o accept being affected…supposes that one takes the risk of seeing one's ethnographic project vanish" (1990: 195).

As the receptor of affects, the body as hermeneutic resource can facilitate sounder understandings (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007), as well as informing us of the changing, shifting investments and vantage points of fieldwork. Through what may be referred to as the "optics of the body", more ethical research can be produced as a way of gaining another level of information about our informants (Cerwonka and Malkki 2007). By way of dialogicity and corporeality (and a consideration of their potential

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[55] To Tallon, representational intentionality was that which Hüsserl sought in his phenomenology. It is a mode of consciousness that seeks to transform experience into ideas and images within consciousness by achieving information through thinking, "the mastery over being" ("knowledge is power"), and through conceptualization (Tallon 207-208). Ultimately, to Tallon (1989), through representational intentionality "otherness arises from consciousness" (206). Inversely, for Levinas, "affective intentionality" affords the reversal of Hüsserl's intentionality: consciousness, for Levinas, arises from otherness. Tallon tells us, then (echoing Fevret-Saada's understanding), that affective intentionality "is not to be simplistically equated with feeling along but means both receptive and responsive consciousness; it means being able to be affected and to respond; it corresponds to what we might call the heart rather than the head" (1989: 208).

silences in communication or expression), then, I sought insight into the various logics

of practice used by my informants in their day-to-day lives, as recounted, enacted and

performed at the YAC and throughout our walks downtown. As such, zooming my

theoretical lens out and framing my epistemological musings in a broader scope, my

overall imperative with this project has been, though the dialogic and corporeal

encounters in the YAC and on the street, to gain a better fix on the emergence of

intersubjectivity in the day-to-day lives of my informants.

On Poetic Truths and Negative Capability

Partial access to these aforementioned points of interest was afforded through

the chronotopic contingency of all of the stories I listened to, shared, and was

implicated in. Ethnographic truths, then, are not available and confirmable as verifiable

empirical sets of data that the ethnographer discovers, uncovers, and verifies through

the correspondence between epistemological frames: do her "truths" match up against

what is really happening? Is she lying to me? Telling the truth? Did all of those things

"really" happen to her, or is she just exaggerating? Did he really experience such

hardships, or is he just a "storyteller"?

Taking my objection to "objectivity" into consideration, then, and also keeping

in mind the forms of interaction through which knowledges are produced—through

expression: dialogicity, corporeality, silence—the approach to truth that best "fits" my

fieldwork context is what I think of as *poetic truth or truths*. The poet John Keats

called the ability to approach and deal with situations that yield ambiguous, partial and

inchoate truths "negative capability": "that is, when a man [*sic*] is capable of being in

uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason (1958: 1).

Poetic truth, as such, is glimpsed only *intuitively*, and can never be seen and known with the clarity and accuracy sufficient to satisfy the exacting demand of what Keats calls the "logical faculty". "Poetic truth", as he wrote, yields "a glimpsing of a fine, isolated verisimilitude caught from the penetralium of mystery; as such, one who employs negative capability remains content with half-truths and half-knowledge" (1958: 227-228). Keats' notion of negative capability sits flush with Clifford's claim that ethnographies are "true fictions" (1986: 6). That is, ethnographies themselves are fictions insofar as the truths featured and discussed in them (cultural and historical) are always already only *partial and emergent*; and, as such, they are based on systematic and contestable *exclusions* (Clifford 1986). Adding ballast to the point, as Geertz (1973) stated years ago, ethnographies are second and third order interpretations (only "natives" make first-order interpretations). They are, thus, fictions; fictions, in the sense that they are "something made," "something fashioned"—the original meaning *offictio*—not that they are false, unfactual, or merely "as if" thought experiments. Yet these fictions rest on the creative degree to which an ethnographer is able to clarify what goes on in the field, to reduce the puzzlement, and to which unfamiliar acts emerging out of unknown backgrounds naturally give rise (Geertz 1973). As stated already, the ethnographer seeking an "appraisal" (Geertz's term, not mine—I do not like the term "verification" and neither does he) of social and cultural phenomena understands that description hinges on the fleeting edges of the partiality and emergent-nature of truths.

The notion of poetic truth or negative capability, then, affords the tools to make reality play at its limits, to (re)make one's world view, and those of others, along with one's

lifeworld dance, fuse, and depart; to make them bend, groan and shout out in protest. As

Darnell says, "that articulation of disciplinary and biographical—*Weltanschauung* and

Lebenswelt—is the crux of the matter, the rationale for turning to poetry as a method of

doing anthropology" (1991: 267).

So as to dissolve the epistemic binary between knower and known—as outlined in

the discussion above on Fabian's approach to intersubjectivity as a form of objectivity or

objectification—I have attempted to capture the immediacy of *presence*, *shared being* and

experience by writing in a form of "real time", *first-person present* (save the Coda wherein

I shift temporalities, and write in the *past tense* in order to inflect the closing of the

dissertation with a sense of reflection). Though my fieldwork was primarily dialogically-

oriented, the writing of an ethnographic text is always problematic insofar as the

representational text (*qua* a feat of cultural *invention*, cf. Wagner 1981) should not—in

most cases—be that of a literal dialogue (Clifford 1983). To this end, then, representing

discursive complexity and its on-going negotiations and misunderstandings ultimately calls

for some form of "condensation" of dialogic and non-dialogic experience into textual,

ethnographic form—one that, by default (owing to limits of space) simplifies the

representation of "complex and multi-vocal processes" (Clifford 1983: 135). Taking into

consideration the production and enactment of experience, expression and understanding—

via the chronotopic contingency of all of my dialogic and non-dialogic interactions with my

informants—I wanted, as best I could, to do away with the representational encapsulations

of subject and object by attempting to limit the schematic boundedness of what Vološinov

(1973) calls "reported[56]" and "reporting" speech.

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[56] Reported speech can be understood as that "…regarded by the speaker as an utterance
belonging to someone else, an utterance that was originally totally independent, complete in its
construction…". Vološinov continues by stating that "…it is from this independent existence
that reported speech is transposed into an authorial context while retaining its own referential

Reported speech, in my case, is what happened *interactively* with my informants, what I was able to capture through memory, fieldnotes in my notebook and my iPhone, and what I was able to capture on my digital recorder. Reporting speech, then, is the style or composition of this ethnography, how it is arranged, thought through and written—via the *first person present*. In terms of representation throughout this text, Vološinov's "pictoral style" of reporting speech pervades. As Morson and Emerson explain, "[the pictoral style]…strives to break down or obliterate the boundaries between reported and reporting speech, the better to allow maximal dialogic interaction. The stylistic profile of speech will be emphasized, so as to call attention to what style betrays about individual or social attitudes" (1990: 165).

Regardless of my intentions and feats of reflexivity, "ethnographers" Bourgois and Schonberg tell us "…are conduits for power because they carry messages through different words and across class and cultural divides…" (2009: 13). As such, interpretive or textual violence pervades all ethnographic texts (save those that are not collaborative ethnographic endeavours) insofar as they are the constructions of a single anthropologist. The dynamic

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content and at least the rudiments of its own linguistic integrity, its original constructional independence. The author's utterance, in incorporating the other utterance, brings into play syntactic, stylistic, and compositional norms for its partial assimilation—that is, its adaptation to the syntactic, compositional and stylistic design of the author's utterance, while preserving (if only in rudimentary form) the initial autonomy (in syntactic, compositional and stylistic terms) of the reported utterance, which otherwise could not be grasped in full" (1973: 116). A personal bugbear is how many anthropologists uncritically employ Bakhtin's term "polyphony" when speaking of "multi-voiced" ethnographies—ethnographies that attempt to let the Other's voice make its way through the text with minimal authorial control. The way Bakhtin (1984b) understood the term, though, has nothing to do with the actual multiplicity of the real and independent voices of people—those of distinct, individuals. Polyphony to Bakhtin was a *creative orientation and approach* to writing the novel; and meant—particularly in the case of Dostoevsky, Dante and Shakespeare—the ability for one author to think in "multiple consciousnesses". It was the author's very distinct ability to split and partition his own consciousness off, and literally think and write as if he were a totally different person(s). Well trained actors have this ability to "become" someone else, literally thinking through a different consciousness.

between reported and reporting speech may suffuse any given text, but the ratio between them can never reflect fully an unadulterated version of the lived-actuality of the moment of shared-knowledge creation between two or more people (in its over- and under-determinations, its excesses and its affective, emotional, tactile and imagined limits).

We should remember what Basso and Selby said many years ago, that "[n]o matter how closely the ethnographer's theory follows upon native representations (and for certain purposes one can argue the closer the better), it is not isomorphic with them; it is not native reality" (1976: 4). They continue, "[f]or at some point—actually, at many, many points—the ethnographer must step back, turn analyst, and, using concepts and principles alien to the culture he [*sic*] is studying, perform an act of interpretation". "In doing so", they point out, "he [*sic*] translates a collection of native representations from one system of meaning (theirs) into another (his own), thereby transforming them into a new and wholly distinct representation". They conclude by stating that "[t]his representation—the ethnographer's theory—is inevitably a second order representation; it is a representation of representations" (1976: 4).

Any ethnographic text, then, is a *synecdochic reduction* of perhaps one year's worth of experience: the product of all ethnographies are mere parts of the complex wholes of the lived-actualities of the fieldwork experience. The dynamic flow of that experience must be redacted, truncated and simplified for it to be readable and of interest to other anthropologists, or anyone else for that matter. As such, reporting speech is inherently violent. Violence, in this textual context, denotes a form of centrifugal and sometimes aggressive control of others (or, at least, an attempt to establish such control), and it demands submission of the "data" to a privileged approach (Maranda 1995). This form of violence typically occurs during what Tedlock (1983) called "armchair dialogues", or what

Crapanzano (1992) called "shadow dialogues": listening, sorting through, arranging, puzzling, and questioning transcribed interview material in the silence of our offices, studies, desks, etc. The point is that we are "conversing" with interlocutors who are absent; they are present, only in textual form. Interpretive violence emerges when the partners in the primary dialogue become mere textual figures—unable to respond with a human voice—in the new ethnographic dialogue that bypasses them (Crapanzano 1992: 196).

A case in point: I choose what my informants said; I choose the sequence it appears in the text, and I choose, ultimately, how what my informants said will be interpreted. I made sure to always share my interpretations with my informants; and they always gave me positive feedback—when they seemed interested. They added points that, to them, were in need of developing, or they clarified what they thought were "facts" I might have misinterpreted. Over the course of my fieldwork, though, I felt that my informants were somewhat disinterested because, to them, all I was doing was a purely academic (and therefore uninteresting) exercise in a social scientific analysis of their lives—something without any real or practical consequences.

Interpretive violence in certain forms in the ethnographic enterprise (the dialogics of fieldwork, the writing of texts, and the uneven economies of representation) is an inevitable outcome for the anthropologist[57]. The balancing of potentially interpretively violent tendencies (and the discursive strategies employed to achieve this balance), to me, is as much an ethical and moral enterprise as it is an aesthetic one. And I have attempted herein to balance—as much as possible, and to whatever extent possible—through the reported/reporting speech dialectic, the voices of my informants and their engagement with and alongside my own.

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[57] The "titration" of voice is difficult to gauge in those cases where the anthropologist is the sole author, and where she/he is working with a community that seems disinterested in the representational aspects of the ethnographic enterprise.

CHAPTER 6—Tough Places: "We're Not Really Living, We're *Surviving*"

Zane

Rigorance Infold

Rosebud I bear as Winter's heir, the throne of hell frozen
awaits my decent, and I rise to clave for the fallen land,
where the decadence and paral scrapes of once ripened
life call forth a new age.

Did she love me? Does she care? Somnolance gashes
within as the acres and mounds of white walled oblivion fair,
unlatched not by reason, never motivated; my emotions toiled
and trampled, but my will being god, the one, true.

Evermore after, even in the end, a rosebud I laced, a crest into
place, thrown into the shallowing steam, and feeling the burdens
and past rage ripple a dying breath, under a new moon, awakening
me after Earth's demise, at the riverbed's calm, where I am born.

(Zane, summer 2010)

As Zane and I shuffle through the labyrinthine maze of sky-high bookshelves, I feel like I'm immured in a tomb of books. After gazing up and all around me at the seemingly endless piles upon piles, I realise that we're not talking at all—we're just moving slowly through the crowded aisles of books upon books, looking at wherever our respective sets of eyes take us. We're in City Lights Bookshop. It's about 3:00pm, and we're both waiting for the YAC to open in a couple of hours.

"See anything interesting"? "Yeah, there's tonnes of stuff here", as Zane comes back from a brief reverie while looking at *Dungeons and Dragons* books. "Now this is a classic"! He pulls a ragged and dog-eared paperback down from a shelf at eye-level. It's got that familiar, fairly generic fantasy novel-type cover. There's a male and a

female. The male is in a physical position that seems to somehow dominate the female—she's kneeling while he's looking out to other vistas that we can see, holding his giant sword for protection. There's what looks to be an elf or a gnome in the background, too. I'm lost for a moment. That penetrating scent of old books has me ensnared

Once we push our way through more aisles, books falling from the shelves as I brush past, I notice a book on Freud, then Jung, then another one on Freud. "So, when you lived in the homeless shelter, did you ever have any—". "What"? He says expectantly. I pause. "How can I put this in a way that—". "What"? "Did you ever have any *good* times"? "Oh, yeah—quite a few, actually. Since there was a bunch of us in one room, we were all able to actually get along pretty good". "Did you mark off these times with anything; you know, to remember them"? "Oh yeah", he said looking up. "As you've seen, I'd mostly write my stories, or draw. I have a lot of good pieces from those days. And, remember, after my dad left me in Ro [Romania], I decided to come back to Canada on my own".

We continue talking as we make our way back to the central aisle. "Well, it looks like it's close to three". "Oh yeah" he says—"I need to eat something, actually. I haven't eaten all day". We walk down Richmond Street. It's busy, cold and grey. As we get to the YAC, Zane pulls out his portfolio—a black plastic folder wherein he keeps some of his writings and drawings. He hands me a written piece. "You can keep this, actually". "Really? Thanks, man—I appreciate it". It's called "The Black Waltz". Zane writes fantasy stories, and he's got a few of them in the works.

I remember one night, Zane spent two and a half hours telling me about the characters in his latest work. He painstakingly went through a list of about fifteen of

them, explaining their individual psychologies in detail. He then went on to explain

their relationships, both sexual and platonic. At points, I had to hide my yawns in the

crook of my arm as I pretended to cough. I was getting tired, and each time I looked at

Zane it seemed as if he was just getting started. I got caught, and had to explain myself.

"Oh, am I boring you"? "No, no, no", I said. "I'm just starting to crash, it's getting

late—it's almost 7:00". "Can you actually bring me in what you've written so far, I'd

like to actually contextualise what you've told me by reading it for myself at my own

pace". "Oh yeah, of course"! A few days later, I had a copy of the twelve or so pages

Zane had written. The detail was astounding. But he had only finished up to chapter

three. He said he kept getting side-tracked by video-games.

        As Zane told me many times, he spent two hundred and ten days at the

Salvation Army's Centre of Hope. The days weren't all bad; but of course, there were

dark times. He says he's got suicidal depression. A quick look at his arms reveals the

many rust-red tracks and traces of the knife he uses to make himself "feel" when he's in

a deep depression. Sometimes it gets bad, he tells me; sometimes he's okay. Zane's

been through a lot. A few years after his mum died (she died of cancer when he was

fourteen), his dad abandoned him. And Zane has no idea if he's still alive—it's been

more than two years since he last talked to him. In the wake of his mum's death, he

was pretty much left with *nothing*—no family, no one, I'm told. Zane explains that all

he was stuck with was a drunk for a dad. And a sister who fought constantly with her

father. She left for Malaysia and started her own family. She's got a good job teaching

English; and she's happy. Zane hasn't seen her in years, and almost each time I see him

he reveals that he misses her greatly. Having dropped out of high school in grade ten,

he feels that he can't work; he feels it would be pointless. "I've had too much trauma",

he says. "I've dealt with too much shit in my life—I've been taken advantage of". "I

know pain. I know it too well." he would often say during our conversations. "Not like

most of these kids here, who still have parents, still have family around—I've got

nothing. *Nothing; and it fucking hurts sometimes*".

During our series of conversations over the course of a year, I learned the

complexities of Zane's story. Much like the life experience of my informants at the

YAC, Zane had a tough past and led a difficult life because of it. Growing up in West

London, the son of Romanian immigrants, he oftentimes explains to me how he chooses

not to remember much of his childhood. Isolated, shy and emotional are words he often

chooses to characterise his sense of self, his way of relating to people—although, as he

says, "I'm the most isolated person in the world, sometimes by choice, sometimes not".

During one informal life-history interview, he explains how his troubles in life

started in school—a place that always made him feel uncomfortable.

> **Mark:** How was school?
> **Zane:** I tried to do as much work as I could, but that never got me anywhere. I never dropped out, though. I was smart enough not to drop out right away, just wanted to do something else, like hands-on work.
> **Mark:** O.K.
> **Zane:** So I literally wasted my years growing up, um, you know, I got to know a few good people here and there, but education-wise, I just (sigh) I just fooled around with my time.
> **Mark:** So, so…
> **Zane:** Fooled around with my own life, really.
> **Mark:** So, when did you decide you were done with high-school
> **Zane:** Uh, I decided that, well, I had that mentality in grade 10, I didn't do anything about it, though, and I let it come crashing down as it did. And, um, those were hard times, you know? I just felt like I wanted the world to be at bay, though I had to go there everyday and get judged. I was always feeling tested and that, sometimes, I would feel god-awful for not being able to catch up, with, you know, like the mentality and knowledge of the students that were, you know, surrounding me everyday.
> **Mark:** Yeah, I understand.

Zane: Yeah, so I felt horrible sometimes. Especially not knowing the answer, so I would build up this anger towards myself that I've, you know, kept to this day, and it didn't help out much, you know, when my mother passed away, when I was, was, fourteen, actually.

Mark: Yeah, sorry to, sorry…

Zane: No, you know, it's okay.

Mark: Sucks to hear…

Zane: Funny story, yeah, my sister, she's German. Had a different father, same mother, um, my father raised her. They never got along. She would always have to be free. So, weekends, she would go out, and I was small, and my father and her would get into huge fights and whatnot, and smack her, and whatnot, and it was such a bad atmosphere, and that contributed gravely towards this, um, utter mass that was building up inside me.

Mark: So, it was coinciding?

Zane: Yeah, it was coinciding. It was surprising that it didn't erupt, it just kept building worse and worse. I'd rather be fanned off than…than it would just keep building inside.

Mark: So, do you think their relationship devolved or got worse after your mum passed away?

Zane: Well, I'll tell you what—if got worse because, for some odd reason, my dad, would, uh, blame my sister for being my mother's downfall. Rather, 'cause my mother would cry, she didn't know where her daughter was, sometimes, you know, things parents do sometimes.

Mark: Yeah, of course.

Zane: I was just like, all I wanted was peace, really. I wasn't a trouble maker or whatnot. As you can tell, I'm not really a bad person, I've never, I still don't have a criminal record. I've never gotten into drugs, besides smoking the occasional, the occasional pot. But I never buy it.

His mother's death was a turning-point in Zane's life and contributed in no small measure to his inability to deal with people, and, ultimately, the degradation of his sense of well-being. During our many interviews, he explained to me how attached to his mother he was, and how her death from brain cancer was devastating beyond words.

To cope with the loss, Zane's father would drink. Zane would oftentimes come home from school to find him drunk, eager to either pick a fight or start what Zane explained, as "obscure conversations". Contributing to family tensions, Zane explained that shortly after the death of his mother his half-sister moved out. She decided to go

travelling to Germany where her biological father lived. After having stayed there for a while, she took a job teaching English in Malaysia—where she now lives, and is married with two kids.

In the years after Zane's mother's death, his father dated various women through websites on the internet—all "failed attempts" as Zane called them. After having gotten to know one woman from Romania over the course of a year, Zane told me that his father had a plan: for Zane to accompany him to Romania and live with his new love girlfriend. The details, according to Zane, were for both of them to live with his father's new girlfriend for a year, and then move back to Canada so Zane's father could pick up his original job working as an apartment building manager. They had ended up flying to Romania. Zane said that he was very excited to return to his country of birth; however, life was difficult there. They ended up staying at Zane's father's girlfriend's villa, but she was out of work at the time and needed money.

Because of her situation, Zane's father had to return to Canada to continue working as an apartment building manager. After his father left, Zane tells me that he felt abandoned. He was dropped off in a country he could barely relate to—he barely knew the language and had no friends, no support network. He was staying with a woman he did not know; he had no schooling and no money. Zane's father would call every week, always promising to come back—but he never did. And he didn't return for two years. To make matters, worse, from Zane's perspective, before his father left to go back to Canada, he got his new girlfriend pregnant. He never told Zane, though. Then, one day, his father's girlfriend decided to tell Zane the news. Zane said he didn't handle the situation very well—at all. While he made deliberate elisions in his

narrative as to what he did exactly (the extent of his reaction), he explained that his

father's girlfriend ended up having a miscarriage—for which Zane was blamed.

> **Zane:** I went into this suicidal bit [*sic*] of rage for some reason, I can't explain
> it. And god-forbid I ever do that again. It was just so much built up at once that
> I got blamed for, the still-life death of her child. I would sit there at home on a
> computer all day, and uh, she would just blame me for the way I acted. I
> panicked. I cried. I didn't know what was going on, or why my dad left me,
> and about this new child. My mother had died, you've gotta understand. My
> sister, who I didn't see for a long, long time. My friends were half-way across
> the country [world?], my life was just fucking ruined.
> **Mark:** Yeah, and now you've got this woman blaming you…
> **Zane:** Blaming me…I kept having this ideal: you know, that if we were to come
> back here (to Canada), we would just move, we would take our stuff with us,
> like, uh, from the old apartment. I lost a lot of things, I'll admit to you. I lost a
> very nice place. But I guess I deserved to lose it. I didn't do anything to, uh,
> maintain it. Most of the stuff was just given to me. It was my dad working; he
> would pay.
> **Mark:** So, your dad eventually ended up coming back then…
> **Zane:** Yeah, he came back after a total of two and a half years., We stayed there
> (Romania) for a total of five years.
> **Mark:** So, he's essentially gone half the time you were there.
> **Zane:** Yeah, half the time I was there. You know, I was waiting, and it drove
> her mad, too. Every weekend, he would promise to come back. And she would
> be like, curse this bastard son, this, you know, she would call me the devil, she
> would call me the anti-christ, she would call me Mephisto. She beat me up.
> She beat me up, okay? I kid you not, she grabbed me by the neck and choked
> the life out of me. And, I'm not going to hit a woman. I won't. I have to be
> pushed pretty damn far; and even then, hitting a woman. I'll, I'll fucking hit
> myself afterwards, you know?

Trying to adapt to the situation, Zane told me how he had to take several jobs to

just make rent and buy food. He would run away some nights, he told me. He found

his father's girlfriend unbearable and overbearing. On the nights that he would run

away, he would usually return early in the morning. Each time, though, he would come

back to find that his father's girlfriend had locked him out. He said that he would beg

and beg to be let in, though she never conceded. The worst, Zane told me, was when

this happened during the winter—when the temperature would drop below minus 10.

He would knock at her door for hours, on his knees, crying to be let in, and she would

never answer. Finally, Zane said, that after so much physical and mental abuse he was

not able to handle the stress and anxiety.

> **Zane:** I was desperate, I had despair.
> **Mark:** Totally.
> **Zane:** You know.
> **Mark:** Yeah, so what you would she do? Would you do?
> **Zane:** This one time, it was so bad, that um, you know, she abused me verbally, so much that three separate times I got paralysed. Like my will just died, and I got paralysed from my head to my feet.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Zane:** I got the shakes, like my foot, like a fit of rage. Like it would just start kinda like that.
> **Mark:** Right, right.
> **Zane:** And then my whole body just starts shaking, and goes, uh, numb.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Zane:** My hands clasp, my eyes shut, my mouth, I can't move, um, and you'll have to excuse me, but I'm authentically using this word, um, my vocabulary went retarded for a while. Like, I, I, I, couldn't um, you know, use normal words.
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Zane:** Mumblings would come out.
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Zane:** I would start talking slower and, um, whatnot, and it was horrible. You know, my will just died. I was weak. Words, physically, made me give up.
> **Mark:** Words, what do you mean?
> **Zane:** Her words, yeah, yeah, her words. Yeah. I was in the hospital for quite a while.
> **Mark:** There or here?
> **Zane:** There, and it was not fun.
> **Mark:** What had happened? How did you end up there? If you don't mind me asking.
> **Zane:** I had to take pills and whatnot. I was, was, paralysed. They brought me in, when I, when I, when I, she even panicked, when, I, my dad yelled at her. He said, 'what the hell did you do to my son'. He came home one night, found out I was in the hospital, I still could…ahh…I don't know what the hell was going on, I haven't talked to him in a year and a half, just because, I, I, I don't know where he is. And, I'm still praying. I don't want to, uh, put it the wrong way, uh, I don't want to label, god as being male or female, or what I find to be a stupid way of portraying him as just, he could be a man with a beard, but, I don't know. But I do believe in a higher power, and the maker, something good out there that's really helped me get through and overcome these grave and just dangerous situations.

Zane continued with his narrative, telling me about how he had to move several times while living in Romania: once with a friend across the road; once with a group of Gypsies; once with an elderly man who, as Zane claimed, had tried to molest him on several occasions. Eventually, and ironically, Zane ended up moving back in with his father's girlfriend.

After five years of feeling deracinated, displaced, and depressed, Zane earned enough Euros to move back to Canada by himself. Turning the tables, he left his father behind in Romania—a tough decision, but Zane tells me it was for the best. Having come back to Canada with no family around, Zane resorted to couch-surfing between friends' houses. Unable to find work, Zane's only recourse, as he told me many times, was to go to the "Sally" (i.e., the Salvation Army's Centre of Hope—a large homeless shelter located on the outskirts of downtown London). As he would often say, on purpose, with others in ear-shot: "I had to stay at the Sally for a total of two-hundred and ten days—that's the most, I think, *anyone down here* (i.e., the YAC) *has ever stayed at a place like that*".

The last time Zane spoke with his father was almost two years ago. His father had called Zane's friend's cell-phone to see how his son was getting along in Canada. After having passed the phone over to Zane, his friend took the phone back and reprimanded Zane's father for abandoning him on many occasions. Zane's father hung up in anger—and they have lost contact ever since.

Regardless of what happens in the future, Zane vows never to go back to the Sally. He is currently living in a rented house with two other room-mates: Dan, and Chris—though Chris is couch-surfing at the moment as he is unable to afford rent—he refuses to go on OW since he thinks it's too much of a hassle because of the regulation.

Their living situation is precarious, because the owner of the house has threatened to sell the property on several occasions. If this happens, Zane, Dan, and Chris will have nowhere to live. As of April 2012, they are all currently at the same residence. Zane, and Dan derive their income solely from Ontario Works. As Zane would frequently say, "it's enough to cover rent, but it's near shite to survive on".

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Mitch

Who could really give a fuck?

Don't start me on the politics, crooked yet we follow it,
Money starving hunger that will never quit, stay legit,
Keep you[r] mind true and only to yourself,
Never power over health, never greed over wealth
Well for most of us we keep on playing this monopoly,
Gamble with life in today's society,
there's gotta be, another way, but who am i to say,
I battle with the heavens each and every single day,
Our world is twisted, but it's also full of wishes,
Play your cards right and your rags went to riches,
Live the life you always wanted cause were so ambient,
Or destructive in nature, were aggressive and vicious,
Cause life can be a bitch, look at the world that we living in,
People keep on giving in, tempt others to sin again,
Make you disbelieve in him, our minds corrupt,
When we stress about life but who could really give a fuck.

Take a good look at humanity, six billion entities,
All different views, all confused by insanity,
Lose imagination you refuse possibilities,
Border line minds that are trapped by the sanity,
A new age of realization,
better mankind for the whole civilization.
Not just one person, or by a group that is uncertain,
Switch it up cause the system is just not working,
Ha...its either you or me,
Put yourself in my shoes, I choose to be,
For the power of freewill, and reader of speech,

To the coward who needs will, a leader to teach
Cause intelligence, used wrong we are childish,
We have a chance, so let us make a wild wish,
And I hope we don't self destructed,
Trying to better ourselves, but who could really give a fuck.

When you['re] all fucked, you'll be looking for a savior,
Praying to god that we will save mother nature,
Create the hell and we will deal with it,
But everybody is man enough, who gives a shit,
See the evil in me, and you wouldn't believe,
What my eyes have seen, cause your minds in disbelief,
No law everything is up for taken,
No morals or honor, Holiness is vacant,
People being tortured and killed, willing to steal,
Being slaves and raped, freewill concealed,
Being eaten by cannibals, who enjoy a meal,
Dead or alive, gotta survive, can you feel,
How the fuck I felt, being just a kid,
And seeing this shit, dreaming this shit, believe this shit,
Go ahead tell me that I'm fucked up,
I'm the first to admit it but who could really give a fuck.

(Mitch, summer 2011)

When I first met Mitch, back about ten months ago, he didn't say much. "Hey, what's up" I'd say. "Not too much, man—how 'bout you"? "Ah, nothing, same old same old, you know, keep'n goin'". I felt that he was somehow suspicious of me. By that time, though, I had long since put away my fieldnote book, opting to take notes on my iPhone (it was less overt, and my typing always was mistaken for "texting"), or to take out my notebook briefly to jot down a few things only during "washroom breaks"[58]. For the first few months, we never really said much. Whether the group

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[58] Much like Brown (2010), in those situations where I couldn't digitally record conversations I would come home and reconstruct in writing conversations that I had had with my informants. I would use my own mnemonic techniques based around the cadence of voices I remember, as well as accompanying powerful images. These served as "condensation points" wherein I could reconstruct a record of "what happened" by moving backwards and forwards between

conversations was on music, religion, psychiatry, humour, or "life", I would always make sure to try and include Mitch in the conversation. He would say a few things, then go back to his daily Sudoku or listening to his iPod—drumming on the table. "I like math and numbers better than words; it feels more comfortable to me" he would say whenever I asked him about Sudoku puzzles. "I spent a lot of time working on these, so I just got used to 'em".

What marked Mitch off from the others was a pervasive sense of seriousness that found its way into most of his facial expressions. He rarely laughed, unlike some of the others. Mitch always sat quietly, eyes transfixed on his Sudoku—reaching every few minutes for his coffee. "I need this shit", he'd say sometimes, while going up to get yet another cup.

Even though there's a fourteen year difference between us, Mitch was never afraid to try and give me advice about certain things—whether it was with cross-words, chess, or just life in general. One day Jordan proposed that we play chess. "Come on, man" she said. "Just play, and I'll beat you". "Then you can play me again—and get beaten again". I feigned stupidity, and claimed to not know how to play. "Yeah, I've never played; well, truthfully, I haven't played since was around 10—and, as you can, see that was some time ago. My uncle Frank actually bought me an electronic chess set, and I used to love it. Then I gave it up—for some reason".

I remember Mitch sitting beside us one night, looking questionably at my moves. "Uh, Mark, I can teach you how to play chess better if you want. It don't matter, it's all about strategy. You just need to practice, or get taught some good

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writing and remembered cadences and images. These produced, to me, accurate though selective accounts of conversations I had had early that night (Brown 2010: 12).

moves". "Yeah", I said. "As you can see, Jordan is beating the pants off me 'cause I don't have any strategy apparently—damn"!

Much like his friend Zane (they had stayed at the Sally together), Mitch had a life characterised by a high degree of what one could call *existential turbulence*. As we sat in the counter-point room one night (the telephone ring punctuating sharply our conversation every now and then), he told me about his life. He started off saying that his mother had married his brother's father at a really young age. Tragically, he died in a snowmobile accident at the age of twenty-five. He was a good man; he had a job; he had his life straightened out—but it was cut short. Sometime later, his mother married Mitch's father. He was a drunk and did heroin all the time—and he was abusive, really abusive I'm told. He didn't work; and he used to hit, lash out when he'd get drunk and stoned. He was a wife beater. Mitch says he never saw it. He was way too young, he tells me. But his brothers did, though. They're eight and nine years older than Mitch, respectively. Mitch tells me the only recourse his mother had from the abuse was to run away, so she did. And she took the kids with her. Coming from a small rural community, she moved to Strathroy with only $300.00 in her pocket.

They didn't have very much to begin with, Mitch tells me. In fact, they had nothing at all. All four of them slept on one mattress for three months, until they found a bigger place. Mitch explains to me that he loves his mother: she's a smart woman, and she always gave Mitch attention. She always gave his brothers attention and love. He says that it is because of his mother that he has "a passionate touch for the female's perspective". After around half an hour of talking for the first interview, Mitch tells me that he had a tough time in school—a *really* tough time

Mitch: I, uh, had troubles during school. Uh, I was, uh, picked on a lot. The

odd cast (*sic*), and that really made me hate education in a way.

Mark: Yeah.

Mitch: Yeah, yeah. I used to always go home, and I'd cry to my mom. And my mom would say, look, it will get better, they're just kids. Kids will do that.

Mark: Kids can sometimes be little pricks, though.

Mitch: Oh yeah they can. Yeah, they're just learning, they're adapting themselves, you know, ego, anything. And, um, yeah, as I got older, I always said I was the outcast, but, I, uh, put my perspective into, uh, why, because as a kid, I always used to, um, I got conscious [*sic*] to understand myself, to understand why I'm here. I was always conscious about other people and someone else. I was always curious why I can't manipulate it, or control it, or get a vision how…

Mark: Yeah, of how that other person experiences things.

Mitch: Yeah! …and I became focused on other people, instead of myself. I would sit back and ogserve (*sic*), just to see if, ah, I would always do this as a kid. I would learn that there was an action, and they would give it to me. Then it would be my turn for a reaction, and, at the same time, I would act back…You'd see that as a reaction—that's how society works.

Mark: Yeah, yeah, in a social way: always a back and forth…

Mitch: Right. Probably around, I would say, seven or eight I went into a deep depression.

Mark: That young?

Mitch: Yeah, that young.

Mark: Shit.

Mitch: Yeah. Uh, I tried to commit suicide. Had it always in my mind for about ten years. I would wake up. I wouldn't want to live. I would hope that I would die in my sleep.

Mark: I'm really sorry to hear that, dude. I'm sorry.

Mitch: That's, that's okay. Just, I had the attention, but I didn't understand. All these thoughts were coming into my head, and I couldn't really focus. So, it's like a conscience [*sic*] that can't withhold the information. You know, I tried it, I tried it, I tried it, I didn't like it. I've almost died plenty of times in my life…

Mark: Really.

Mitch: Yeah. Accidents, yeah. There's a reason why I'm still here. As I got older, I've learned that it's foolish to try and give up your life.

Around the age of thirteen or fourteen Mitch realised suicide wasn't the answer; however, around the same time he got into drugs and alcohol. He recounted that he started to hang around a crowd that had access to a lot of hard drugs. So he started doing weed, coke, oxys, and drinking a lot of alcohol. He said it was the easiest way to

get away from education. He hated it because it reminded him of getting picked on.

Drugs were a way to get away from this; a way to escape.

He just wanted to have a good time and move forward. And since he was

focused on having a good time, he only earned one credit for grade nine—he just never

showed up for class. It was the same for grade ten. He got kicked out of school and

eventually turned to living on the streets to be closer to his crowd. Anxiety, though,

pursued him doggedly throughout this period of his life, and still continues to do so.

The knowledge he gained from the streets wasn't all bad, I was told. It was

positive *and* negative: he learned from the street kids about their situations, about life in

general—its ups and downs. And because of this, he learned the necessary skills for

survival. Survival on the streets. He did a lot of bad stuff, and it's this stuff that he

doesn't want to go back to.

> **Mitch:** So, yeah, I eventually got out of that [living on the streets], I went to jail.
> **Mark:** Okay.
> **Mitch:** I was under the influence yet again, and I was trying to get food, money, smokes, drug money.
> **Mark:** So what happened? If you don't mind me asking.
> **Mitch:** Yeah, I did armed robbery. I went into a 7-11 with a, uh, a knife, and tried to get them to open up the cash register. And, uh, the guy just laughed at me. And kinda provoked me.
> **Mark:** Oh man.
> **Mitch:** Yeah, and I was high at the time. Yeah, I guess that's something you might not want to do.
> **Mark:** No, no, so what happened?
> **Mitch:** Yeah, so I jumped over the counter. He backed up, he backed up, and I just remember looking at the cash register and looking at all the buttons. And I was totally high. And I was like, no, no. The first thing I did was turned around and grabbed all the smokes, and I was thinking about getting food. And then someone pulled up into the gas station. And I just hopped over the counter and hoofed it.
> **Mark:** So you just took off without anything?
> **Mitch**: With smokes—that's it. I remember looking at the bread and grabbing it on the way out, but buddy was already pumping his gas.
> **Mark:** Right

Mitch: You know, so I remember running down the street. I curved into an alley way. I changed up all my clothes. Um, started running, uh, I was about 10 metres away from the park, and I went to throw my bag into a dumpster, and buddy pumping his gas pulled right beside me.

Mark: Shit.

Mitch: And he chased me down. And, he, uh, held me down and waited for the cops.

Mark: Man.

Mitch: Yeah, it was stupid, though.

Mark: So then they busted you.

Mitch: Mmm-hmm, Yeah. I did four months for that in Exeter. Um, you know, I got clean.

Mark: Did you get clean while you were there?

Mitch: Yep.

Mark: Did you want to talk about that experience—being there?

Mitch: Uh, yeah, it was very…aggravating, should I say.

Mark: Really?

Mitch: Yeah, um, I had, I was shaking constantly inside, the pressure of being in jail and being isolated was enough, but having, uh, I was pill sick at the time, so it wasn't good.

Mark: So, at Exeter, does each inmate get his own room? Or, you, you said it was isolating there.

Mitch: Yeah, it is, but you bunk up with four other people—there are four people to a cell.

Mark: Shite, is that a good or a bad thing?

Mitch: Uh, it depends. Sometimes it's good, it all depends. In some, they have two people—depends if the range is overflowing or not. What I mean by isolating is that, you, you, you get released at 7:00 on to a range, but you can't leave that range. And, you know, you go out for an hour of park time, but you can't go nowhere. You just run around out there, you play.

Mark: Is it just an open yard? Fenced in?

Mitch: Uh yeah, it's a, it's a square of concrete more or less—it's small, and that's what I mean by isolating. I remember going up to a guy, I was watching him play poker.

Mark: Right.

Mitch: You know, he turned to me, he was twenty-five, he's doing, or no, he's twenty-three or twenty-four, and he's doing twenty-five to life at that time. He, uh, did something wrong, you know, accidentally killed him. He didn't mean to.

Mark: Right.

Mitch: Yeah, he's serving his time right now. And, you know, he saw me, and he's like, are you scared boy? And I was like, I'm not going to lie to you. Yeah, I'm nervous. You know, first time in jail. I'm on a range with a lot of people—bigger people who have done pen-time.

Mark: Yeah.

Mitch: Yeah, and he was like, well, you shouldn't be. And I looked at him weird.

Mark: Like, what are you talking about?
Mitch: Yeah, yeah. And he said, you know what? We're all human. My heart's beating the same as yours. We're all here to do time. So, I got outta jail. Went back to Strath, relapsed on oxys. Saw all my buddies sitting there hanging out, and I just thought about it and thought it was a waste. I got clean, it was just, I spent so much money on it, wasted my life. My time, my effort, so why do it?

Mitch ended up moving to London, but he said he had nowhere to go once he arrived. He stayed at the Sally for four months, and stayed clean—even though he was tempted to use drugs again. "Everything is available at the Sally; all you have to do is ask, and you can get it". He says that there are lots of fights, lots of junkies, and then you've got people who are trying to live their lives. He explained to me that what really scared him about the Sally was that you can see sixty-year-old men there doing the same thing over and over again. Through the aspect of Mitch's eyes, I could tell he meant it (it was real for him) when he told me that he didn't want to end up like "that" when he's sixty.

The tenor of our conversation shifted noticeably as soon as I asked Mitch something about his mother. She's got cancer—again. She had ovarian cancer a few years ago. The doctors did chemo along with surgery, and were able to get rid of 99.9% of it. It came back. The doctors say she's only got eighteen months to live. You can tell this weighs on Mitch unbearably.   The second treatment, Mitch tells me, won't be as powerful. "Scientists never know everything", he says. "Doctors can only know so much". I agree. I tell him about my Uncle Franklin. He has bladder cancer, and the doctors said he had six months—it's been a year, and, at that point, he was still alive. We then talk about death for five or ten minutes. I also recount the story of my father dying. Mitch listened intently. Sadly, at his age, he knows tragedy. He seems to know it intimately.

His mum was living in a women's shelter up until a little while ago; but she's got her own place now in Woodstock. It's still not London, though. Mitch, eyes downcast, tells me that each time he talks to her he gets emotional—he cries. He wants to let her know how much he cares about her, how much she means to him. Sometimes it gets awkward, though, and she tells him to stop. He can't, because that's how he feels. This seems to create tensions where there shouldn't be any. He talks to his mom whenever he can; or he contacts her through Facebook.

Mitch relays a few times during our conversations that he just wants to help people—that's what he wants to do. He wants to *understand* people. Understand them enough to help them out—with addictions, life problems, etc. And, as I suspect, it is through understanding people and their problems that Mitch wants to edge closer to an understanding of himself. The problem, though, is that Mitch still battles addiction himself, whether it its alcohol or soft and hard drugs. As he struggles with this, he's currently living on his own in a low-rent apartment building near downtown, right where any kind of drug you want is readily available. Though he struggles each day, he has goals—whether they're reachable or not, he's got them. Ultimately, he wants to get off of drugs completely, get a job and start saving money. He currently derives all of his income from Ontario Works.

<p align="center">*   *   *</p>

Esther

Untitled

Why would I want to rectify the fact that he petrifies me to the state run to the state run
by the guy that's trying to control me
Some think that I'm trying to find excuses to ignore it
But the truth of the matter can be found so let's explore it; it was long ago found, they
just ignored it

It started out as friends discovering the ends of the sidewalk that bends the line
between, and extends for the world
We offend when we step on the grass, they get crass, give us looks
I never asked for this path

Stumbled upon a well of violence, just vaguely aware of silence as he pulled the bucket
his hand, cupped and supped upon
Malice from a man-made chalice of flesh, and I guess we all
Probably know what happened next

But my voice being dim with a rasp as I gasped out for help
Failed in finding the aid as I prayed that he'd leave me alive
As I cried and my heart died inside
But guess what I am here and I have survived

Round 2 put me in a room for judicial review
And the few peer supports around me said it was well overdue
But the crew that was sent to make sure justice went down
Were employed by a guy that lets aggressors stick around

So don't sound so surprised when I rise in a way
That precludes those whose moods include the right to intrude
Upon me, just to see what I've already said
I have paved roads through memories that I wish would stay dead

(Esther, autumn 2011—spoken word, recounted for me on the back of a cross-word
puzzle)

      Like Zane and Mitch, Esther has led a life mired in tragedy. At just twenty-one,

it seems that she's dealt with more trauma pain than most people will in their entire

lives. I met Esther in June of 2011—down in the YAC. She was carrying a guitar. She

had just come back from busking. As we got talking, I realise that she's pretty

intelligent and has a sophisticated understanding of the way society works. Although

hesitant to tell me too much about her family, we did talk quite a bit about sociology,

feminism, and a little bit about her troubles. She walks with a cane. She's also hard of

hearing, and so needs to see people's lips when they talk.

She would repeatedly ask me to stop twisting my beard (something I apparently

do quite often) as my hand obscures my mouth and chin—making it hard for her to read

my lips. After the first couple of hours talking to Esther, I find that she's interested in

many things: helping others, playing music, reading about sociology and feminism, and

her friend's daughter Carmen. As I got to know her, Esther and I would often play

scrabble together, along with Jordan. Our conversations would last all night sometimes,

bouncing back and forth between social issues, First Nations politics (she says she's

"part First Nations"), and morality in general. Invariably, we would all get lost for a

few hours in talking about hypothetical situations conjured up by Jordan. Only then

would I realise that I had been beaten at Scrabble—again.

I first interviewed Esther outside the YAC in one of the hallways connecting the

myriad other offices in the brightly lit basement. The hallways were small, so I just sat

directly across from her—which was a comfortable arrangement for both of us. She

had expressed interest in doing an informal life-history interview; however, she

cautioned me that she wanted a clear escape route just in case she had a flash-back. The

day we agreed to talk for the first time (recorded digitally), she wanted me to tell two

female staff members that we were going to be doing a life-history interview, and that

there was a chance that she could have a panic-attack or flash-back. She just wanted

someone to run to just in case the memories became too over-powering for her. I was

fine with this plan. When we started, I remember being highly conscious of my body language, knowing that she might have a flash-back, and that she had been sexually assaulted by males before. The imperative was to be as unimposing and non-threatening as possible. I also knew that Esther was gay, and that she didn't often speak with males while down in the YAC.

When Esther began her story, I was taken aback by many of the experiences she recounted. Sitting there as we were, accompanied only by the dull and persistent hum of the two-floor elevator in the background, I spent nearly three hours listening intently to her story.

Mark: Well, just tell me about your life—it's artificial, I know, but it's still useful.
Esther: The first time I ran away was when I was 6.
Mark: Really?
Esther: Yeah. Some people run away at that age for like 20 min, you know, just down the street. I ran away to a friend's house for two weeks.
Mark: Really? at 6?
Esther: My step-father hit me over the head with a wooden cutting…I asked for seconds I think at the table. And he picked up a wooden cutting board, and cracked me over the head with it. And, uh, I, uh, went out cold. That was the first time I was knocked out unconscious. This ended up happening a lot in my life, 'cause my step-father was physically abusive.
Mark: O.K.
Esther: So, yeah, the first time I ran away was when I was six years old to my friends for two weeks. I don't know if CAS (Children's Aid Society) was called, 'cause I was six. Yeah, so, I started running away after that. Um, my step father was continually abusive, my mother, pretty much every single time, he started to get that way, like a conflict began, she would get in her vehicle and drive away. Um, if it was happening when she came back, she would go away again. When I was older, I tried to talk to her about it, she would always say I wasn't there, like, or she was drunk, or she would say, oh, that's how he was raised.
Mark: Come on, oh…come on.
Esther: That's the way she deals with it…Um, biggest case of denial I've seen in my life. Um, so that was when I was six, basically the same thing when I was seven
Esther: My step father also had this obsession with making me throw up, which is really fucked up. But, um, yeah…and I started getting, really getting into school, which was a safe place for me, I loved, loved to read, hide places.

Esther went on about how her biological father had raised her and her sister well. He made sure they ate well, and never went hungry. When she moved in with her mother, though, she said that kids would eat first, and that the rule was for kids to never leave the table hungry. In contrast, Esther says that her mother and her step-dad have a lot of money. In her mother's house adults eat first, then the boys, and then the girls. The girls get smaller portions than the boys, and girls aren't allowed to have seconds.

As we press on, the theme of food (and food insecurity) becomes prevalent in her story. I got the sense that food was scarce in her mother's household. Esther claims to have gotten her first job at eight-years-old—it was a paper-route. She said that her mother and her step-father were going out all the time, leaving the kids hungry. She thought it was normal for her to try and put food on the table herself; however, she said that the more food she bought, the less would be there. For some reason, her mother stopped buying food for the kids altogether. Eating for Esther and her sister—just eighteen months younger—was uncertain; they never knew when they'd eat next. When food was available, Esther and her sister would eat by themselves as her mother and step-father would eat out constantly with friends. Later on in the conversation, while we were talking about her hometown as a brief aside Esther brought up her childhood.

> **Esther:** The summer between age eight and nine, wasn't safe at home. I used to sneak out and walk around, an hour or two hours, then come back to see if things are ok. In Grade four or grade five, I actually tried to commit suicide 'cause I got really, really depressed. Um, could imagine why.
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Esther:** But the weird thing, I tried to hang myself with a skipping rope from the, uh, from the football net thing
> **Mark:** Right, right.
> **Esther:** Um, I guess it was supposed to be a soccer net thing, anyways, um…
> **Mark:** Yeah, the big…

Esther: At school at recess.
Mark: At recess?
Esther: Yeah, in school. And, uh, all they did was, they, like, cut me down or whatever, and, they didn't even send me home and call my parents or anything, they just. They didn't, as a school, it would have been, call somebody as an obligation, but they didn't…
Mark: Not even a nurse?

Esther explained that since the town where she went to school was small, everyone knew everyone; and this created an atmosphere where apparently no one at the school sought to question Esther's parents about her behaviour. She continued by saying that she would come to school with bruises on her arms and sometimes her face, yet no one called Children's Aid, or even seemed to look into the matter at a deeper level.

At a different point during my time at the YAC, Esther had told me about getting sexually assaulted, her pregnancy and miscarriage. Sitting around the main table—which had only three or four other youth sitting at the other end—Esther told me another story, in hushed tones about how this came about:

> **Esther:** I snuck out one night, and was walking along the river (in her hometown), and ended up getting sexually assaulted. And that fucked me up pretty bad. And I was getting flash backs and stuff like that. I had no idea, I didn't know what flash-backs were.
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Esther:** So I was getting really bad nightmares, too, so I couldn't sleep, um…
> **Mark:** How old were you?
> **Esther:** Eleven. So, um, I was so desperate to get sleep, that I would try anything, find anything, you know, I'd seen my step-father passed out drunk before, or, whatever, so I picked up a bottle and I drank till I passed out: dreamless sleep. Magic, right? So that's all I needed, till I passed out every single night, still I passed out.
> But, I needed more and more alcohol, and, there's only so much alcohol that you can steal before their gonna find out.
> **Mark:** Oh, yeah…
> **Esther:** So, this was just a means, to, to get sleep.
> **Mark:** Yeah. Wow.
> **Esther:** So I basically became an alcoholic at age 11.
> **Mark:** Right.

Esther: And it's weird 'cause I swore that I would never drink 'cause of what he did, right…

Mark: Well, you were backed into a corner, you had no other choice

Esther: Well, I didn't feel like I had other choices. So, yeah, I needed to find another place to find alcohol, so I started hanging out with people who would give me alcohol, because, they…thought it was hilarious to get a little kid drunk, and I needed alcohol, so it worked, and I got free booze, and I continued to hang out with them, and, I was…like, by grade four I was reading Shakespeare, cause I was so into books, and that was my escape that way, so um, so I could actually manage on an intellectual level, to hang out with eighteen, nineteen, twenty-four year olds, you know, um…and, so I did, um and, I, you know, so I'm still going to school full time, baby sitting on the side too. Yep, I was nannying, uh, there was actually a fifth kid came when I was thirteen. I started doing drugs, too, people said that drinking will make me feel better.

Mark: What kind of stuff were you doing? You don't have to tell me.

Esther: I mean, I mean, I started smoking just because, I mean, people were passing around, whatever, but, at one point I started smoking weed and I didn't like it at all, cause it made my flashbacks even worse, I just got really paranoid

Mark: Yeah, yeah, I can see.

Esther: I mean, some people have negative reactions to it. I did E (ecstacy) for a while…Yeah, good life decisions!

Mark: Well…

Esther: I know, I know. I'm just saying that, I'm not saying it's my fault or anything.

Mark: Yeah.

Esther: I'm just saying it's interesting. I was still drinking at age thirteen, and, and someone drugged my drink one night, and, uh, I got, I got pregnant, which fucked me up. Um…and I miscarried at four and a half months because my step-father dragged me up two and a half-flights of stairs. But I didn't tell my parents any of this, you know, they didn't know. But I thought my step-father suspected, like, you're that old, you're probably going through some female shit.

Continuing her story, Esther had met an older girl (six and a half years her senior) when she was twelve years old. She told me that they had dated for quite some time, and had become engaged. Shortly thereafter, Esther's fiancé ended up getting killed in a car accident with a transport truck. Feeling devoid of hope, Esther tried to commit suicide again—she had slit both of her wrists and tried to jump off of the dam near her mother's house. Her neighbour had caught her, and forced her into the car. Upon returning Esther home, her mother apparently exclaimed in front of the

neighbour: "can't you do anything right"? When I asked Esther about this, she looked

at me calmly and said: "no, she meant, 'can't you do anything right' in terms of, you

can't even kill yourself right"?

Within a few weeks after her second suicide attempt, Esther was introduced to

the mental health care system of Ontario. Shuffled back and forth between Kincardine

and Owen Sound, she ended up at a crisis centre near her hometown. She had stayed

there for two weeks, and was diagnosed with depression. After she was discharged, she

moved into an all-female group home in London. This was both a good and bad

experience for Esther: she was able to establish trust and independence; however, at the

same time, she was battling chronic pain throughout her body, and ended up becoming

addicted to prescription pain medication (Percocets). After her prescription ran out, she

then found a friend who would supplied her with oxycontin pills. As her addiction

continued, it became quite obvious to those who cared for her at her group home. And

because of the zero-tolerance policy of the group home where she had been living for

almost eight months, she was kicked out. With nowhere to go, Esther turned to the

Salvation Army's Centre of Hope. She entered the detox programme at the Salvation

Army, but to no avail.

I remember a very cold evening during the following December when Esther

and I were making our way down Dundas Street—through cold winds and flurries. We

were walking to the bus-stop. Crossing the corner of Richmond and Dundas Streets,

she told me that she had been baby-sitting her ex-lover's little girl, Carmen. She was

quite sick at the time, and was proving to be quite the handful for Esther. I asked where

Carmen's mother was, and Esther explained that she needed time off from working

three jobs. As we quickly made our way past the library downtown, Esther said that

she still struggles with addiction. She said that at one point, she had even started "doing lines" in front of Carmen. I looked at her questionably, and said that doing that probably wasn't a good idea. She then replied that she had finally—after being on a three-month waiting list—managed to get on the "A-team" (the addictions team) at Ontario Works office. She said that her worker was okay, but still not super understanding. The "A-team" as I was told, is a team of social workers at OW that closely manage clients' addictions, tailoring employment programmes, schedules and weekly and monthly progress meetings to clients' needs.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Chris

"Fuck this, fuck that, fuck everybody—you know"?

<p style="text-align:center">(Chris, just about every day)</p>

Chris is a real character. Loud, obnoxious, and always willing to include others—quite unwillingly, too—in his conversations. When we met for the first time in June of 2011, though, he was quite reserved and quiet. The one thing we did share was a fondness for the Swedish death-metal band "At the Gates". I remember talking for quite some time about their drummer, Adrian Erlandsson. Chris went on for what seemed to be an eternity about Erlandsson's other band, located in Britain, called Cradle of Filth—admittedly his favourite band (and, as it turns out, my least-favourite band).

Chris was infamous for spitting parts of his teeth on the table after having eaten a meal. And as I got to know him more, it was obvious that he had extreme tooth-decay. One day, after having spit out two large pieces of tooth onto the table, I asked Chris if I could take a look in his mouth. He obliged quite willingly and opened up his mouth, prying back his lips. He showed me that it was his back molar that was the problem. And from what I saw, it was cracked in half: one side of the tooth was black, and the pulp-cavity was exposed. He said it used to hurt him a lot, but that the pain has since died down. Concerned, I asked if he was going to see a dentist anytime soon. He was reply was typical: "Whatever, fuck it—*I don't care*". I then explained to him that sometimes tooth trauma can lead to an abscess; and that in rare cases this could lead to hospitalisation, or, worse yet, death. He said he was aware and didn't want to worry about it. I then made a point to press him about this each and every time I spoke with him—roughly three to four times a week.

After three months of getting to know Chris, he agreed to let me conduct some life-history interviews. The day we did our first interview, I decided to bring in a British heavy-metal magazine called *Terrorizer* for him to look at. As he flipped through, clearly looking for any photos of females, he said, "fuck it, I can't really concentrate on too many things, you know! Let's just get 'er done".

Chris says he was born in Dublin, Ireland. He and his family emigrated from Ireland to Canada when he was six years old. He said it was because of the war between the IRA and what he called "The Guardian".

> **Chris:** Born in Dublin Ireland, immigrated here when I was six, because of the war that was going on with the IRA and the Guardian. You know, who's right with the Protestants and the Catholics, and all that other bullshit. I was born and raised Roman Catholic.
> **Mark:** O.K.

Chris: So we were going more with the Catholic side of things, instead of the Protestant way of things. Um, yeah, we immigrated here 'cause all that fighting was going on. And, from a really young age, I was exposed to, um, you know, uh, death being one of them, and uh, violence breaking out on the streets everyday.

Mark: Yeah, well, you told me that story about the kid in your kindergarten class.

Chris: Yeah, yeah. That little, yeah, there's a kid Thomas who I had in my kindergarten class. And he was like the first buddy I had in school. And, uh, everyday, the IRA would come to your door step, escort you down the street to school, so you got…that, I mean, school was only a stone's throw away. It was only three or four blocks away.

Mark: But they still needed to escort you?

Chris: Still needed to, right. Um, yeah, and then I remember, just this big flash followed by a minor explosion. Um, all this chaos erupting, and I remember just being picked up and being placed behind a tactical vehicle. And this went on for probably five to eight minutes, but it seemed like forever. And I remember when it all cleared, there was a woman who got hit or whatever. There was a guy who got hit, but the woman who got hit, the woman was alright. And there's that little buddy Thomas on the street, and I, and I mean, he was just full of holes. And that was the end of that.

Mark: And you saw that?

Chris: And I saw that.

Mark: So, was it a grenade?

Chris: No, it was an RPG had launched, and, uh, and then I remember not long after that, maybe a month or two after that, my aunt and uncle had a baby. Um, and, an RPG went right through the nursery, um, you know, killed my cousin, killed them, too, and so there was nothing left after that, that was, uh, yeah, so we came over here.

He continues his story by telling me that his family had moved just outside of Kitchener, in a rural area. His parents got divorced shortly after having settled into their new house. His mother was nineteen, and his dad was twenty-three. His dad was the family provider, while his mother became what Chris called an "alcoholic cocaine junky". Because of her problem with addiction, Chris relays to me that he hated his mother. This was mostly because she was never able to provide for Chris and his sister. He explains to me that he developed his own addictions—which apparently ranged at one point from heroin to cocaine to weed to alcohol—because of his mother. She would, as Chris says, do lines of cocaine in front of him and his sister all the time.

As he recounted:

Chris: I remember four o'clock came around, and she's trying to clear all the cigarette butts and coke off the table, and put all the empties back before my dad came back. Came home, and realised what the fuck she did all day. Uh, hell, uh, yeah, even if I wanted a sandwich or whatever, you know, uh…I remember even hesitating to ask her, and a couple of hours goes by, and you know, you've gotta do it. And I remember pulling on my mum's arm or her hair, trying to wake her up, and she's got one eye cracked open. Yer getting, I had pans launched at me. I've been hit in the head with a fucken lamp. Beaten. Dragged down stairs. I was locked in my room half the time, whatever, and you know those child-proof safety locks?
Mark: Yeah?
Chris: She put one on the outside of the bedroom door, and even if I could grab the thing and twist the bloody bastard right open, right, but yeah, I remember that always waiting for my dad to come home, and if I had to piss or shit, it was as in the corner of my own bedroom.
Mark: No way.
Chris: Yep, no matter how hard you bang, screamed or bashed, mum ain't even conscious enough to open the door.
Mark: Right, 'cause she's…
Chris: That was just everyday life for me was, and came to Canada, divorce, and after that, you know, we came to London, you know, my mum divorced my dad, and we moved to London, and she started to clean up her act. She quit the blow, she moved to Fanshawe, you know, got some schooling done. Then she got a job at TD (Toronto Dominion Bank), and a couple of other jobs. And she finally landed a job at some logistics company. She's been stick'n it ever since. But, yeah, she still drinks like a son of a bitch!
Chris: She's a functioning alcoholic…and that's where I get it from. People are always like, wow, you drink so much. She's like me, too. She can drink and drink and drink, and still be able to do her job. And she's still, she's down to about four bottles of wine a night. But, yeah, the divorce was a little hard to take.
Mark: How old were you?
Chris: Eight. It was literally three months after we got back to Canada.

After Chris explains that he became hooked on weed at the age of ten, he tells

me that his mother kicked him out of the house just four years later at age fourteen.

After that point, he explains, he's lived a life on the streets—and it has been quite some

time. He claims that just after he was kicked out of the house he had turned to a local

prostitute who put him up for a while until he was taken in by a local street gang.

Chris: Like, I mean, you're kicked out at fourteen years old. So, you're looking at all these bigger, older guys who are in gangs and stuff like that. So it becomes impressionable, and they'll sit there, and like, how 'bout we take you in. But what they really want is a little puppet to do their shit, right?
Mark: Of course.
Chris: So I got caught up sell'n everything from heroin, crack cocaine, even, uh… part of a prostitution ring by the time I was fifteen.
Mark: Really?
Chris: Yep.
Mark: So, you were in what— Grade nine?
Chris: Yep, grade nine.
Mark: Holy shit.
Chris: I mean, yeah, it was good! I was makin like $3000.00 a day profit! But, I mean, you know, there's some people I was involved with or whatever that, they ain't even here anymore… Half of them are all buried up by Kipps Lane.
Mark: Right, right.
Chris: A lot of them are in jail. I got a buddy of mine who was sixteen. He got caught for the same thing, and by the time he was seventeen he got a life sentence or whatever. He's doing whatever, and he's doing twenty-five to life. But since he's a youth, he's doing fifteen.
Mark: So, how did you escape going to jail?
Chris: I don't know. I was smart or whatever…uh…I don't know.
Mark: Just luck of the draw, you mean?
Chris: Just luck, yeah, I mean, I got bit for it a couple of times. I mean, the first ever hefty charge I had where I had to go to juvenile detention was because of firing shots, gunshots back at the cops. I didn't know what was goin' on! I was just, I just seen this big paddywagon and a riot squad coming up to the house, right, and I tell everybody. So I'm hanging out the window shoot'n back at the cops.
Mark: (laughing). So what happened then?
Chris: (laughing). They, um, um, uh, um, they, uh…arrested me. Uh, and I went to court. They were wondering why the hell a fourteen, fifteen year-old kid's doing this shit, so it was the first time I went to jail. And I, I mean, if you're firing shots back at the cops, they ain't no, hey, it's the first time. We're not going to give you a slap on the wrist. No, I got a year and a half.
Mark: At juvenile detention?
Chris: Yep, I got a year and a half. Then I got out for good behaviour: time served, two for one. I got out in like, uh, uh, eight months.
Mark: So, if you don't mind me asking— What, what was your experience like? Where did you go?
Chris: Yeah, no. I went to Bluewater. I don't know. It didn't phase me. Like, whatever…It's definitely easier going when you're a youth. I mean, it's better than an adult facility.
Mark: Really?
Chris: Oh yeah, I've been in almost every institution, prison in southwestern Ontario, besides the pen (Kingston Penitentiary).
Mark: Right.

Chris: I've been to Maplehurst, Bellhaven, I've even been shipped off to Calgary in Federal prison for federal charges. When you go to the pen, they give you your property bag and a body bag, 'cause chances are, you ain't getin out. Even when I was in Maplehurst—they dub it Jamaica-hurst because of all the Jamaicans. I remember we were out on the yard, and there are three-hundred Jamaicans and about three-hundred…four-hundred Spanish guys. And they're fighting in the field, and the police didn't give warning shots or nothin. And the cops just starting firing, firing shots at whoever the hell was closest to 'em. That was a scary experience.
Mark: Yeah, I bet.
Chris: It doesn't matter where I go in life, I'm always getting shot at! Hopefully, surprisingly, I've only been hit once, and let's keep it that way (laughing). Thank god I've only been hit once. And I wasn't even going to the hospital. So, 'cause, I didn't want cops asking questions, so I just branded myself, you know, hot poker or whatever (makes hissing noise) on the side of my leg. Yeah, that was, well, if my ancestors did, I can do it…Fifteen years old, I was clinically pronounced dead twice because of heroin, um…
Mark: So, you did the hard stuff then?
Chris: Yep, and the weird way, it was the more hard stuff going to the lighter things.
Mark: Uh huh. Yeah, because usually it's the reverse, right?
Chris: Mmmhmmm.

After describing to me that he had effortlessly transitioned from an addiction to heroin, crack-cocaine, and ecstasy, to weed, and then to alcohol, Chris shifts his story to and tells me that when he was eighteen he got engaged to a much younger girl. As he relays, she ended up dead from drinking and doing way too many drugs. A couple of years after her death, he got married to a fifteen-year-old—his deceased fiancé's best friend. The relationship ended in divorce by the time Chris was twenty. Around the time that Chris met his wife, he became actively involved in the Waterloo, Ontario music scene. He says he became the singer of a band called Aborted Fetus. The band, apparently, was offered several record contracts. Sadly, as Chris recounts, they never followed up on any of the contracts since they were too high to pursue anything at that time. Chris goes on to tell me about his frequent troubles with depression and alcohol abuse. He also said that he suffers from other mental illnesses, many of them very

severe—though he never seemed to suffer from anything I was familiar with. When asked if had ever sought treatment, he replied, "no, they've never been confirmed. I actually shouldn't get them confirmed 'cause they might lock me in a loony bin and throw away the key". He says that he frequently hears the voice of his dead fiancé; she tells me to do violent things that she otherwise would never have done herself.

At another point during my time in the YAC, Chris had told me a brief story about his memories of Ireland. He had told me that he and his family had gone back to visit several times during the last ten years; however, I was unable to understand when exactly this story was from in terms of Chris' overall personal history. He told me about the social welfare system in Ireland; and how, because of the IRA and "the gaurdy", things are in a permanent state of chaos—especially when financial resources for families are quite scarce.

> **Chris:** There's literally families living in the rubble of their houses, they're like gypsies.
> **Mark:** Like Irish travellers?
> **Chris:** Yeah, there's people all over. And, literally, what's beginning to happen is that you've got little small towns and like little small communities of tents and trailers and stuff happening in the wilderness, the countryside.
> **Mark:** But, where else?
> **Chris:** The cops are coming in and saying, hey, you can't be here, laudy, daudy, da, where are these people gonna go? They don't care! They're the fucking guardy, the guardy don't care, as long as they get their pay-cheque from the government, they don't give a shit!
> **Mark:** Yeah?
> **Chris:** I've even seen people, or whatever, going there, they, uh, you know, people, will have, they'll rob for meat.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Chris:** From a grocery store.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Chris:** 'Cause they can't afford dinner, so they gotta steal shit.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Chris:** I have seen the guardy on the street, not even question that, rip fucken, this meat outta this young lad's hands or whatever, blow him and his fucken mate away.
> **Mark:** Really.

Chris: Right in the head.
Mark: Hmmmm…
Chris: Fucken pile 'em on the street. And, so, the guardy, they're the government, federal police. The IRA are just basically a resistance group. Uh, you know, uh, the media, the world media dubbed the IRA as being the bad guy.

During later conversations with Chris, he told me about his continuing troubles with the law, and how his parole officer is constantly after him. He said that jail time was imminent—for a crime involving drugs and supposedly setting the "old mill on fire in Stratford (Ontario)". Even though Chris never went to jail during the time I was at the YAC, he did frequently attend meal-time under the influence of marijuana—which he would share with his roommates, Zane and Dan. As I was to learn, Zane and Dan allow Chris to stay with them free of charge. Chris tells me that he refuses to apply for OW; yet he refuses to find a job, too (a situation that I will flesh out in more detail below).

My aim in this chapter was to provide detailed background context for those informants with whom I engaged with regularly, and with whom I established a fairly high degree of trust. Through description of their life histories and lifeworlds, the crux of this chapter was to illustrate why I see my informants as being *wounded*. My task was to limn the worlds of subjective experience my informants navigate and negotiate daily, and how their intra-psychic tension contributes greatly to their social positions in their everyday lives: positions characterised more often than not by indifference, disinterest, and contradiction. In the next chapter, my task will be to illustrate why I view my informants as being expert *bicoleurs* in a system they seem at points to be indifferent to.

CHAPTER 7—*Ars Inveniendi*

The son of two giants and yet the foster-brother of Odin, Loki embodies the ambiguous and darkening relationship between the gods and the giants. He is dynamic and unpredictable and because of that he is both the catalyst in many of the myths and the most fascinating character in the entire mythology. Without the exciting, unstable, flawed character of Loki ["for he excelled all men in the art of cunning"], there could be no change in the fixed order of things, no quickening pulse…

K. Crossly-Holland 1980: xxix

Dr. Ian Malcolm: No, I'm, I'm simply saying that life…uh, *finds a way*.

Jurassic Park 1993

"So, if you guys don't mind me asking" I asked, "how do you get by day to day"? I sat there, with Luca in front of me, Zane sitting beside me. Tiger was sitting on the other side of me, and Jordan sitting beside Luca. Over the many months I had already been at the YAC I had kept hearing how people were getting cut off of OW, and how they were forced into a very precarious position—no money, sometimes for a month or two on end, no food, and no motivation to press on.

Zane seems depressed today. He got "cut off" of OW—again. He says that it has been around once every couple of months since the spring. Because of this, his cheques are delayed by weeks. Since he's got nothing to eat at home, he's forced to come to the YAC to eat a day's worth of food in the late afternoon and evening. He says his OW worker keeps harping on him about his citizenship papers. Even though he's showed her both of his passports, Romanian and Canadian, she still needs to

register his social insurance number. But he lost the card months ago, and he can't afford to get it replaced right now. As he has said in many other conversations, he wants to get off of OW and get on ODSP so he can have to time to write, draw, and play video games. He needs to rest, heal, and re-think where he's at in his life. As it stands, he thinks working is not a possibility right now since his life is characterised by too much anxiety.

When I ask him what he does when he's cut off from OW, he says that he's got to resort to the network of food banks around the city—it's the only way he can get food. Tiger chimes in, and tells me she does the same, there's no choice in the matter. The food bank at the YAC is "okay" they both say; however, it's only available once every month, and if your bus is late, and you get in after 3:00 pm, you're out of luck. "All the food is gone after 10 minutes—there's only shitty things left, like condiments" says Todd who just sat down. Tiger expands and says that food banks throughout the city are okay, but they have a limit on how many times you're allowed to use them: "only twice a month" she says. "And if you go back more than that, they kick you out".

As I learned quite quickly, when you've been cut off of OW, and you have no money to buy food, your options are slim. There's also a limit on what you can take from a food bank, too, so it's a very difficult position to be in. Zane tells me that sometimes he goes whole days without eating—and it makes him depressed. He'll eat as much as he can when he gets to the YAC, but that's all dependent on how many people are there, and if there's enough food left for seconds or thirds during dinner time.

Jordan and Rick tell me that when their cheques are either cut or withheld, they have to resort to stealing food to get by. Though they've never been caught yet, they

say that you can never steal enough to have a decent meal—only bits and pieces, usually candy or chocolate bars.

As more people join in on the conversation, its focus naturally shifts, and I start to listen to what it is that people are spending their OW cheques on once they receive them. Zane, Dan, and some of the other males spend their money on groceries right away; however, having just under two hundred dollars to get by for a whole month doesn't afford many options—especially for buying quality food. Most people are forced to buy cheap food that is obviously low in nutrition: hotdogs, pre-packaged hamburgers, Kraft-dinner, and bread. Kraft dinner seems to be the most popular, though, since I'm told it's fast, easy to make, and cheap. Zane tells me he eats it for breakfast, lunch and dinner—sometimes for weeks on end.

I ask Luca what she usually does with her OW money. She's quiet at first. Zane had snapped at her the day before for commenting on one of his drawings. He said to me later, he was having a bad day. Since Zane's sitting beside me, I understand why she's been reluctant to speak. She talks, though, and tells me that she spends most of her money on drugs: pot, usually, but sometimes other, harder stuff. She says her boyfriend is a total junky; he injects crushed up oxy's a lot, and whenever she comes home to see him getting high, she wants to as well. He won't let her, though. She says that since he's ten years older, he feels that he needs to look out for her. I ask her about doing drugs, and she candidly tells me that since she's only nineteen, she wants to live her life; she wants to relax and just experience the world, and see what it has to offer. She seems not to care about consequences—at least for now. After a moment, it's just her and I talking—other people have gotten up to get food.

Now that we have some temporary privacy, I ask her about her background, and what it was like growing up. Hesitant at first, she tells me that her mother died of cancer a while ago—when she was just seven—and that her dad couldn't handle things, so he committed suicide eight years later. I fall silent, and say that I'm sorry to hear that. Nonplussed, she tells me that it's okay, and that she just gets by alright. After a long pause involving both of us concentrating on our newly acquired crosswords, she picks up where we left off moments before about getting by and making ends meet.

She tells me that she's "hooked" a few times, and that it's a great way to get extra income. She goes on to describe that the first time she had done it: she was picked up by a couple. She made a little over two hundred dollars in just one night, and it was really good money. The second time she went out, though, she was picked up by a creepy guy who insisted on going back to his place. She says that she had made the mistake of getting in his car before settling on the details. And that as he started to drive away, she was the most scared she'd ever been in her life.

Luckily, though, she tells me that after driving away from the corner where the guy had picked her up, they were immediately pulled over by the police. Though she spent the night in jail, she said that she was so glad she didn't have to go back to that guy's place. I express my concern, and say that safety must be a constant issue when going out hooking. She says that it is, but that she's not going to do it for a while as she wants to get away from it. She then tells me that just the week before she had been approached downtown by the fellow she had been with previously (along with his wife), and that he wanted to spend another night with her—alone this time. She tells me that she had declined this time, and that although both he and his wife were very nice, she just didn't want to be with him alone.

As we continue our conversation, she then tells me about how she never bothers to look for jobs, even though it's OW's mandate to do so. She says that she's to report to her OW worker once a month, and present the results of her job searches. I ask her if she commits a lot of time to do this, but her reply is a simple "no". She usually just hands something in that she had came up with the night before. It doesn't seem to be a problem for her. She says that maybe it's because she's got a good OW worker. We then talk about the ways she and her boyfriend get around the issue of having next to no money to get by on. "We steal cheese, actually" she says with a smile on her face. She continues by explaining that she and her boyfriend go to the Covent Garden Market downtown, and steal the most expensive cheeses from the front counter. They then sell what they can on the corner of Richmond and Dundas, usually making around ten dollars a block. They keep what they can't sell. Although she said that this money should go to food, it usually goes to drugs instead. I then learn later on that Luca has a daughter exactly the same age as my daughter. She doesn't get to see her daughter very often, though, as she's with the Children's Aid Society.

As Brad comes to the table, Luca gets up for a smoke—she asks if I can watch her stuff while she's gone. Brad tells me that he's got a friend who's not at the YAC tonight, but whose family is totally "fucking the system over". His friend's parents sent their son and daughter out to get on OW in order to supplement the family's income. I learned that both of his parents are on ODSP, and that it is easier to send the children out to collect OW than it is for them to get a job. The parents supposedly coach their kids and tell them to explain that they have recently been kicked out, and that they've got no other place to go to for fear of continued abuse during the intake call (Interactive Voice Response, IVR) and intake interview (Consolidated Verification Report, CVR).

According to Brad, this is a pretty common tactic, and that some families can generate around three thousand dollars per month by pooling incomes.

Scout adds that OW provides him a means to buy pot and *occasionally* food. He explains that smoking pot regularly keeps him on an even keel, and that without it he freaks out easily. When I ask him how he goes about affording it, he tells me that he spends all of his money on it, and that he resorts to food banks and his mother for food. He went on to say that he gets his mother's boyfriend to write him fake rent receipts for fifty bucks a pop. Receipts are made out for four hundred and fifty dollars, and list a fake address. This keeps his OW worker at bay, and allows him to spend his personal needs allowance, just over two hundred dollars per month, on pot. He says he's never been caught, and his system works perfectly. He usually cycles between living with his mom and her boyfriend. Sometimes, when his mom's boyfriend gets too violent, he'll stay either at the Sally or at a friend's house.

Martin and Starwarz add to the conversation by telling me that they usually do break and enters, stealing video game systems, stereos, DVDs, CDS, and computers. They then sell them off at the pawn shop downtown for pretty good money. They tell me that you can generate a lot of income quickly that way, plus there's the thrill of stealing. Starwarz says he's been to jail for it, though, and has stopped doing it recently. Martin says that he's got a few valuable items, like his acoustic bass-guitar, and that he'll pawn it off for food money. He says he then buys it back when his OW cheque comes in.

On another night, I had the chance to interview Chad very briefly. The interview ended abruptly as he fell to silence, and wanted to leave. Perhaps one of the

more difficult conversations I had, I needed to constantly negotiate the silence as Chad

was extremely hesitant to talk to me—even though we had known each other for six

months at that point. Our conversation focused on issues related to subsistence and

getting by financially.

> **Mark:** So, if I may ask, how are you making ends meet right now?
> **Chad:** Welfare.
> **Mark:** O.K.
> **Chad:** For the longest time I didn't have enough to eat 'cause people at the YAC might start shit with me, so I ended up stealing a lot.
> **Mark:** Where you able to get by doing that?
> **Chad:** Hardly.
> **Mark:** Is OW enough for you to get by?
> **Chad:** No.
> **Mark:** O.K.….so what does it cover for you?
> **Chad:** Rent, and what I ever I need for that month. I can't buy food with that money 'cause I need money for other things…and the food banks feed me for a couple of days.
> **Mark:** So when you say other things, what are you spending it on—if I may ask, you don't have to answer if you don't want to.
> **Chad:** Anything from cat litter to, you know…whatever I need for my place.
> **Mark:** So, sort of like housing essentials and stuff like that.
> **Chad:** Yeah, I, I, I…you know, I buy pot and stuff, too. I'm not going to deny that.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Chad:** But it's just not enough to get you right through the month.

A week later, I had the opportunity to interview Jordan about her current

situation regarding subsistence and getting by. Though the interview was interrupted

numerous times—by staff, and other youth, as well as a film crew who were filming a

documentary on site—we were able to have a brief discussion about her approach to

finances and OW.

> **Jordan:** So I get five ninety two, four hundred for rent [four hundred comes out of the five ninety two for rent].
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Jordan:** But if I don't get rent, I only get 200 saved
> **Mark:** 400 for rent?
> **Jordan:** Yeah.
> **Mark:** That doesn't leave you with very much left over.

Jordan: 192.
Mark: That's it.
Jordan: Yes.
Mark: To get you through the month?
Jordan: Yes.
Mark: To buy food.
Jordan: 60 for food.
Mark: Pffffff—
Jordan: And then on top of that I put money in my bank accounts, 50.
Mark: Right.
Jordan: So that's one ten.
Mark: For school?
Jordan: What do you mean for school?
Mark: Well, you said before that you were saving, that you've got a plan to save for school.
Jordan: For school, for school yeah.
Mark: Yeah.
Jordan: Fifty a month, uh, twenty five in my savings, I don't know why the bank keeps putting money in my other savings account, I specifically told them I don't want that to happen.
Mark: Right.
Jordan: So fifty goes to into my mutual funds and my, um, one is, one is an RRSP.
Mark: Yep.
Jordan: Which I have. And then one is, uh, some savings account where you can only put five thousand a year in.
Mark: Yeah, a tax free savings account.
Jordan: Yeah, which I can take my money out at any time.
Mark: Yeah.
Jordan: So much easier than an RRSP, I hate RRSP's. Now that I'm 18 I have to find a job, so I have to search for work, stay in school.
Mark: My biggest problem is, it's that…
Jordan: We take advantage of it so much, I mean, we, we ask for 169…you say, I want a winter jacket, give me that hundred bucks, and with winter boots, a hundred and sixty nine.
Mark: Right.
Jordan: They'll give you a hundred and sixty nine dollars a month—if you ask for one thing a month [personal care allowance, winter jacket allowance, that must be applied for through one's OW worker].
Mark: Right.
Jordan: You could get, take a hundred and sixty nine.
Mark: Mmmmhmmm.
Jordan: That's free money.
Mark: Right.
Jordan: And times it by five, you got like, you got like, you got enough to buy yourself a computer.
Mark: Yeah.

Jordan: That's how I got my computer.

Mark: Is it?

Jordan: Yeah.

Mark: Ho, ho…man. So you just said to them, I need…

Jordan: On top of that I saved like twenty bucks, forty bucks, like I didn't have money for, I didn't spend money for hygiene projects, products.

Mark: Right.

Jordan: Like, I had shampoo.

Mark: Right.

Jordan: I, I, I, didn't really have deodorant until like two months in.

Mark: Right.

Jordan: Kinda sucked.

Mark: Ha! (laughing).

Jordan: For people around me (laughing).

Mark: Ha! Yeah.

Jordan: I mean, like, I mean like, I limit my money spending so I got that computer. I mean, like, like people are like how did you get that computer It's 'cause I didn't go out and do drugs or go and smoke pot or drink!

Mark: But the other thing is, is that you were saving it and not spending it on things that OW thinks that you're spending it on, like hygiene products…

Jordan: And I got myself a computer which is perfect so I can write essays, and, everything.

Mark: How long did it take you to save up for the computer?

Jordan: Uh…from April, no May til January.

Mark: Okay…

Jordan: So, June, July, August—

Mark: Quite some time.

Jordan: Like eight months.

Mark: Considerable.

Jordan: Yeah, to save up for a laptop that cost me like five hundred dollars in store.

Mark: Man, but you got it, though.

Jordan: But I mean, there's so many ways to get money, and so many ways to save.

Mark: Yeah.

Jordan: People do not want to use these resources to get it in, or, or—

Mark: Resources such as?

Jordan: Get that hundred sixty nine dollars, get yourself whatever you need, and then save the rest. You don't need to be, I don't know, I don't know…how the hell…I just don't' understand how people like Dan can spend all of their money on pot or drink it away in the first couple of days of getting their money.

Jordan continues to talk about how she often tricks the system by using OW money in creative ways. OW allots a certain amount of money to all participants for various necessities, some of which are seasonally dependent (such as a winter coat,

boots, or school supplies, books, school registration fees, as well as personal care products). Participants must apply for these funds, and if they are successful in receiving them the funds are allotted in addition to their regular monthly cheque.

Seeing the ability to apply for funds as a "resource", Jordan is puzzled as to why more people weren't availing themselves of this approach. When I had ask her after we shut the digital recorder off how exactly she went about this (using this "resource"), she claims that her personal OW worker never asks for receipts, and therefore all she needs to do is apply for the money. And, when she receives it, she saves it. However, she did acknowledge that other youths who make use of the YAC have OW workers who are much more strict, and that these youths might not be able to "get away" with this as their workers would ask for receipts. We then discuss how Dan's worker is apparently very lenient, while on the other hand Zane's worker is overly strict, cutting him off once very few months.

After our short interview, I began to ponder the resource she was talking about, and how her OW worker had never asked her for receipts yet would still approve Jordan's application for necessities. Zane's worker is vastly different insofar he is forced to bring in paper work a few times a month; and, in cases where he can't submit the requisite paper work, his cheques are withheld or he gets "cut". Nadasdy (2003) described the state as a loose set of parts, whose interaction or articulation is oftentimes contradictory and inconsistent—especially with respect to the supposed coordination of government projects, initiatives, policies, etc. As Jordan recounted, I couldn't help but think how inconsistent the administration and provision of OW was in the case of several of my informants.

In my fieldnote book and in the notes taken on my iPhone, I have written down many examples of youths telling me that the experience of OW depends on how "good your case worker is". "If you have a bad case worker, you're pretty much fucked, but if you have a good one, you're lucky". Zane, Bill and Tiger each told me on separate occasions that if you have a bad OW worker there are literally "eight hundred ways to get cut off OW". They used to tell me jokingly that each bad OW worker has an actual official manual about ways to cut their participants off".

During my meeting with the manager of Youth Services at OW mentioned earlier, I was told that there are very strict guidelines (including the hideously complex *Ontario Works Act*, 1995) that each OW case worker must adhere to; however, each case is different, and this is where following the letter of the law regarding guidelines gets tricky. The reality is that interpretations of the OW Act vary from case worker to case worker. She then told me that the "provincial government" (nothing was said about Accenture Corporation and its partnership with the government) is highly regulated and rigorous about their audits of OW central offices, and that the central office in downtown London gets audited and inspected regularly each month. Regardless of how regimented the state (in this case it is the provincial government teamed with the private enterprise charged with the task of OW administration and provision) is in implementing legislature regarding the rules and regulations of administration and provision of OW, interpretation is a human enterprise, and is usually fraught with inconsistencies and contradictions.

Whether highly organised and efficient, or inconsistent and contradictory, states, and in this case, the provincial government through OW, employ what De Certeau (1984) called "strategies". And strategies are deployed to enable, maintain and extend

states' reach of "place" over the populations residing within their limits of governance.

Strategies, tethered tightly to various modalities of power (social, political, economic,

epistemic), are enacted and set forth against a temporality that is constantly resistant

and receding. De Certeau expands:

> …a strategy [is] the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible
> when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific
> institution) can be isolated from an "environment". A strategy assumes a place
> that can be circumscribed as proper (*propre*) and thus serve as a basis for
> generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries,
> "clienteles", "targets" or "objects" of research). Political, economic, and
> scientific rationality has been constructed on a strategic model (1984: xix).

When De Certeau speaks of "place", he is referring to physical place, epistemic

place, moral place, and ethical place—the emplacement of everyday sociality.

Strategies, then, by delimiting certain spaces—physical, epistemic, moral, ethical—and

controlling the interactions that unfold and take place within them claim a "victory" of

space over time. Space dominates over temporality for the strategist.

By contrast, though inter-linked, is De Certeau's obverse concept of the "tactic".

A tactic to De Certeau is a "weapon of the weak"; it is a calculus that cannot count on a

"proper" (i.e., "a spatial or institutional localization") delimited place insofar as it lacks

any access to a proper space. De Certeau explains:

> The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the
> other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being
> able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize
> on its advantages, prepare its extensions, and secure independence with respect
> to circumstances (1984: xix).

He continues and explains that

> Whatever it [the tactician] wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate
> events in order to turn them into "opportunities". The weak must continually
> turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious
> moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements…the
> intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a

discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is seized (De Certeau 1984: xix).

To the extent that many everyday practices are tactical in nature, they fall into the realm of "clever tricks" of the weak over the strong, and knowing the many ways in which to "make do", create or get away with things: the use of a "hunter's cunning", manoeuvres, discoveries, etc. This way of operating was called *mētis* by the ancient Greeks, and translates to "cunning", "wisdom", "skill", or "craft". We might even call tactics a *rhetorics of practice* in that my informants, as wounded *bricoleurs*, use a form of cunning—whether intentional or not—to create openings in a seemingly closed system, all the while convincing paradoxically both system proponents and themselves that: 1) they should "play" the system owing to their pasts (it is morally justified through strife and hardship that they should get a "break", and so given some "slack"); and, 2) the system unwittingly opens and creates its own spaces for clever usage and manipulation.

Inasmuch as strategies produce, tabulate and impose regulatory power over certain places falling within their range, tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these strategies (De Certeau 1984) through subtle manipulations of time—seizing the moment, "now", and not "later", "reacting" instead of "calculating". And, as such, strategies postulate a place that can be measured, organised, regulated and delimited as its own, and thus serve as a base from and through which relations with an exteriority— that which poses a target or a threat—can be managed (De Certeau 1984). Strategies thus work on the dynamic principle of containment and organisation.

In the context of my fieldwork, OW deployed various strategies to hold fast and to regulate its participants. As they affected my informants directly, these strategies

included The Interactive Voice Response, (IVR) and intake interview (Consolidated

Verification Report, CVR), for managing case intake and eligibility, marking out rigid

criteria for inclusion and exclusion, all without the possibility of speaking with an

actual person (which decreases ambiguity in the system by limiting the chance for

people to question or contest certain criteria when calling OW for the very first time);

the rules and regulations each participant must follow regarding presenting the proper

identification, adhering to paperwork requests, and submitting paperwork on time—lest

participants be cut from receiving their monthly cheques, or, at the very least, have their

cheques withheld. Other forms of strategy that I heard about while at the YAC

included the rule that participants are not able to leave the province for more than four

days without a valid reason and written permission from an OW caseworker. If they do

leave without notifying their caseworker, their cheques are automatically cut or

withheld, forcing participants to either wait for weeks, or re-negotiate their application.

Regardless of the system variability and inconsistencies of OW outlined above,

each participant must submit proof of jobs that he/she has applied for, receipts for any

purchase made with "special funds" (save those cases, such as Jordan's, where a

particularly lenient OW case worker is involved), and proof of any supplemental

income generated, even if that income is a gift from a family member (the amount of

the supplemental income will then be deducted dollar for dollar off of their next OW

cheque) (OW Youth Services manager, personal communication 2012).

Referring to the tactical stance of those practicing the "art of the weak", De

Certeau explains further that, in contrast to strategies, tactics take place in isolated

actions and moments. As such, tacticians must accept the chance offerings of the

moment, and, as he says, they must "vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular

conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers" (1984: 37)—tactics

poach them, and, to this end, they are a "guileful ruse". "Strategies", De Certeau

(1984) reiterates, "pin their hopes on the resistance that the establishment of a place

offers to the erosion of time; tactics on a clever utilization of time, of the opportunities

it presents and also the pay that it introduces into the foundations of power" (38-39).

The art of the tactic, then, much like the *débrouillardise*[59] (a French folk-

concept understood as "resourcefulness", "clever social manipulation", both of which to

the user may be understood as fully justified and honest) employed by rural farmers in

France as described ethnographically by Reed-Danahay (1993), comprises not just

simple resistance to state strategies, but skilful approaches to "making do", "making

out", "getting by", subtle resistance, and even the various forms of *partial*

accommodation. It is an ad hoc stance of selective and partial use *and* resistance. This

art of the tactic or *débrouillardise* expresses the ability to manipulate or outwit not only

people but also *ideas* (Reed-Danahay 1993).

The various tactics employed by my informants were as multiform as they were

complex. Such tactics related to either outsmarting the system by using OW funds to

make purchases said funds were not intended for, such as using one's entire OW cheque

to buy a month's worth of pot (as in Scout's case); or applying for and using "special

funds" designated for seasonal items or personal hygiene for computers (as in Jordan's

case); or, in the case of Brad's friend's family, pooling ODSP and OW resources

together so as to increase the family's income substantially. Through various

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[59] According to Reed-Danahay, *débrouiller* translates literally to "disentangle oneself", and is related to notions about being clear about things. The word *brouillard* translates to fog or mist, and *brouiller* can translate as "to cloud over" or "to mix up". As such, *débrouiller* means, metaphorically, "to get out of the fog or to see clearly" (1993: 224).

mechanisms, all backed by a fair degree of chance and social manipulation, these individuals are able to cleverly use the system to their own ends. It must be emphasised, though, that not *all* of my informants, or even all of the youth who made use of the YAC, employed tactics against OW.

A different kind of tactic was employed, though, by people like Zane, Tiger or Luca, who—to the best of my knowledge and experience—did not use OW funds for unintended things, but were also forced to employ a certain kind of *resourcefulness* (in terms of subsistence) due to having very little money for food. Whether it was stealing cheese from a fairly high-end market, and then re-selling it on a corner populated with drug-addicts and pushers; or having to pace oneself in the staggered use of food banks when one's OW cheque ran out halfway through the month, these tactics—though subtended and conditioned by the strategies of the state—weren't grounded so much in *mētis* as they were a form of *bricolage*[60]: the clever use of limited and available knowledge, materials, or resources so as to maintain or further one's condition—in this case, one's ability to subsist and survive.

The relationship, then, between tactics and strategies is not oppositional, but *dialectical*: the relations between them become more contradictory than confrontational (Buchanan 2000). Buchanan (2000) states that as practices, strategies and tactics have ceased to communicate with each other, each providing and furnishing the limit of its

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[60] "The Bricoleur is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer, he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project" (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 17). As Deleuze and Guattari state, the bricoleur is defined by "the possession of a stock of materials or of rules of thumb that are fairly extensive, though more or less a hodgepodge—multiple and at the same time limited; the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns or configurations; and as a consequence, an indifference toward the act of producing and toward the product, toward the set of instruments to be used and toward the over-all result to be achieved" (1977: 7).

own possibility against the other. As "situational logics" (Buchanan 2000), the tactics employed by my informants served as a reminder of the very partiality and porosity of OW in its administration and provision, and the regulatory practices that sought to underwrite its management.

Insofar as the very objective and imperative of the state is the colonisation and domestication of zones of protection (places), its task is to render places (physical, economic, social, moral, individual, epistemic) predictable through management, control, and regulation; however, in the loose and tactical space of everyday experience, tactical orientations to the state and everyday life oftentimes lay bare and belie the strategic operatives, imperatives and targets of OW.

The tactics of my informants bore the impress of the ironical, as will become more clear in the section that follows. Through tactics, irony rises to the fore, especially (as in the case of my informants) in situations of unequal power, and when competing discourses, interests, and cultures or sub-cultures clash (Fernandez and Taylor-Huber 2001). Engaged in the lock-and-bind of an on-going situational irony, my informants' position was shot through with oppositions: there was a constant questioning of established categories of inclusion and exclusion, and my informants as "ironizers", comprised that group who has been detrimentally categorised according to a tremendous shift and sea-change in the provincial political climate (Fernandez and Huber 2001: 9). To this end, through the ironic stances afforded by various tactics, my informants were bound to contest through the irony of situation the inadequacy of such politically suffused boundaries and categories. Perhaps the greatest irony, though, for a work-fare based programme such as OW, is how my informants approach its strict mandate to develop or foster marketable skills, become employable, and then enter the

labour market. I now turn to how some of my informants' stances toward the prospects of work and employability is inherently ironic, thus doing the opposite—albeit in multiform ways—of what OW's regulations prescribe.

Day In, Day Out at the YAC

That familiar steely blue-grey hue to the sky makes me feel cold—as it always does this time of year. It's mid-November, and I'm downtown again. My feet negotiate sometimes unwillingly with the undulating interlocked brick on Richmond Street. As I pass some of the smaller bookshops on the right-hand side, I always think to myself how on earth they're able to stay in business—there's never anyone in them, besides staff. As I turn my head a little, startled by the sharp pierce of a car horn, I can see the tips of the oat-meal coloured office dividers on the second floor of the OW building. It's only a block or so away from the YAC.

Once I reach the corner of Richmond and King, I can see Chris, Zane and Mitch out in front of the YAC. Mitch is having a smoke, while Zane leans against one of the door-frames leading into the YAC. They can't see me as I'm a block away. Every so often, Zane moves forward, adjusts his backpack, and then leans back against the door-frame. He's got a black toque on today; it matches the rest of his deliberately chosen colour palate—always dark grey or black. It looks like he's listening intently to Mitch. I can see Chris moving back and forth, with his short, over-sized and worn out jeans fluttering and rippling flag-like in the cold November wind. The buildings make the cold worse—they just channel the wind, creating a powerful wind-tunnel. And on days like this, you can really feel it.

Zane sees me, finally. Mitch and Chris give a cursory acknowledgement, and make their way inside. "Mark the archivist! How's it going, man"? Zane has called me the "archivist" for quite some time. He says I've got a strange ability to remember album titles, song titles, dates of album releases, etc. To Zane, this is tantamount to *archiving*—though I don't quite see the connection, I go with it. Knowledge of heavy metal is important to him. And, it seems for the most part our conversations are broached with some reference to heavy-metal. "Hey, man, how are things"? "Good" Zane says. "I'm caught between peace and a mild depression, today I guess". "Are you okay, though"? I ask. He nods in a cursory fashion (he probably doesn't want to talk about it right now). I change tack and go on to say how cold it is outside, and suggest that we walk in; but, as I quickly reference my watch to see what time it is, I realise that we're twenty minutes early. Chris and Mitch are already inside the lobby.

Once in the lobby, Zane and I make our way past ten to fifteen people sitting on the floor. I notice Tiger's here. Zane and I walk up and exchange some small talk with her—I haven't seen her in weeks. The last time Tiger and I talked, we set about completing one of the routine cross-word puzzles together. We finished it in record time. Though it's not explicit, there's a silent competition between us to see who can finish first. She usually always wins. As we get talking, she tells me that she's dropped out of school *again*—she just can't "take the people there". I understand, or at least try to. I ask Tiger what happened. She explains that she was late handing in her media assignment, and that she didn't bother with her in-class presentation.

Time in the experience of anxiety and depression seems to slow and cloud fog-like around the pace of life and its relativities—the world, the self, the other, danger, violence, and threat become absolute. Time, under the controlling internal and social

economies of anxiety and depression, slows any social transaction to the point of threat, and ultimately, becomes a *binary in a vacuum*. It renders all shades of grey and the ambiguous beauty and comfort can they accord into the sharp over-exposure of an abrupt either/or. Choice, decision and the will seem ensnared, all the while the spontaneities of life seem moot, pointless and absurd. This makes possibility (to do anything) slow to a halt—its only concession, time that is, is to twist and groan one into some sort of a submission. In Tiger's case, I could see that movement is difficult, perhaps even excruciating; and that the very possibility of attending class, let alone getting up in front of people to give a presentation, is almost unthinkable.

As I lean against the wall, I hear a shriek in front of me—heads turn quickly to the source. I see that Steph has just come in, and she looks really agitated. Her face is beet-red. Her boyfriend is here, too. He's getting up in her face. They were clearly having an argument outside, and decided to import all of the details into the main foyer here. "Fuck off" she yells at him as she brushes past Zane, Tiger and myself. She's heading for the front door of the YAC—but it's closed. And from the looks of it, the staff are in a meeting elsewhere. Her boyfriend quickly follows her, and I hear him mutter "bitch" under his breath. Steph hides behind the wall a little, so I can't quite see what's happening. He boyfriend tails her. After telling her boyfriend to fuck off a few more times, Steph continues to say "never, *ever* say or do that to me again"! "I don't deserve to be treated like that—do you fucking hear me"! I want to grab my iPhone out to surreptitiously take notes as I oftentimes do; however, I'm caught off guard by the actions that quickly follow.

Livid with anger, Steph shoves her boyfriend into the wall behind them; this is followed by a verbal ejaculation of "do not fucking ever talk to me like that again"!

Her boyfriend replies with a cheap shot—he tells her to keep her pants up, and to stop spreading her legs for every dude she meets. Not quite letting him finish, Steph parries, only this time physically: she punches him in the side of the face. Not once, but three times in quick succession. At this point, I decide it's for the best to turn around and try and change the topic of conversation with Tiger and Zane. I ask if they know where any of the staff are as I can't see through the far windows leading into the YAC. After looking around, they both shrug their shoulders—they have no idea either.

Feeling myself in a very awkward position, my thoughts stumble against an ethical limit—do I try and stop them? Her boyfriend is clearly hurt. His face has gone from pink to a blanched reddish-white. She hit him hard, and he's clearly embarrassed. "Fucking bitch. You're about as easy as your fucking mom". He then tells her that he thinks she's a loser, just like her mother does. I feel bad for Steph—considering what she went through a few months back (with her mother beating her). Enraged by the comment, she lunges, mutters something unintelligible and gets her boyfriend in a headlock. She then manages to elbow him in the side of the head. Barely able to slip out another expletive, he stumbles, and forces out a laugh—he's pretending it doesn't hurt, even though I know he's in pain. Steph grabs him by the hair, and then pummels his head into the wall three times. His hat gets kicked away. I can hear screams of someone—a girl—yelling "fucking stop it guys, there's kids here"! Transfixed by what happened, I realise that there are two younger mothers here with toddlers. The kids are crying. "Shit". I say under my breath. I turn to Zane and Tiger, muttering "kids shouldn't be around this shit—seriously".

Crying, Steph retreats to her friends in the corner of the foyer; her boyfriend makes fast for outside. Dale (who I don't know too well) comes up to me, and says,

"well, you're staff, why didn't you stop 'em"? My countenance changes; my face

drops. I tell Dale that I'm an anthropologist doing research, and that I'm here to hang

out and get to know people. "What, you mean we're your lab-rats or some shit like

that"? "No, not at all, man. I'm just here to hang out and get a feel for how things are

for you guys". "For what—school or some shit"? "Yeah, it's for school". Referring to

Steph's boyfriend, he says "well, he got his ass kicked, eh"? We then talk about what

happened, all the while questioning where the staff were during the altercation. Finally,

Jenny, a staff member, opens the front door—it's ten after three. I let everyone in

ahead while I hang back and scramble to take some notes on my iPhone.

As I slowly make my way in, I see the two Fanshawe College social services

placement students, and ask one of them where the staff had been. I tell Mona that

there had been a fight. She tells me that all the staff were on the top of the building—in

the new "Skyroom"—for a staff meeting. As I describe the fight to Mona, I realise that

it's probably for the best to explain what happened to one of the senior staff. I'm not

familiar with the protocol here, and I'm still feeling bad for not having stopped the

fight. After wrapping up my conversation with Mona, I make my way over to Jenny.

As I ask to speak with her in her office, she interjects and explains that she already

knows what happened, and that the police have been called—she doesn't know whether

Kyle will press charges. At the very end of the night, I'm called on as a witness and

have to give a detailed account of what happened to a police officer. As I learn part

way through the report, the officer is familiar with Steph. I don't ask anything more.

*   *   *

I Can't!

As I get settled in at the main table it feels like it's a fairly typical night at the YAC—which is nice given what just happened with the fight. Zane, Tiger and I, along with Sarah and her eight-month-old daughter, Rey, are quietly doing our respective cross-word puzzles. Mitch is off by himself, bopping his head to the beat of whatever he's listening to on his iPod. His eyes are red and glassy again. I wave and give acknowledgement. He looks up, and takes his earphones out. I apologize for interrupting him. His eyes seem pained, almost confused. He says "no problem", then puts his headphones back on and starts to drum on the table staring downwards.

Jenny heads back to the office with Ziggy and Michel inside—when the YAC is busy like this, they usually retreat there to catch up on paper work and talk. As the clock edges closer to four o'clock, I see that Nicky, the employment counsellor, is heading down the hallway into the main foyer. She makes her way through the front door and sits in front of me. She takes out some paperwork, and greets everyone else at the table.

As part of the "career services" offered through Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU), a career counsellor makes her (they're all female) services available every Tuesday afternoon from four o'clock through seven. The "career services" section of YOU's website states:

> We can also help you plan for a career and explore your education, training and apprenticeship options. Come to a workshop or meet with an Employment Counselor. We have training for Health and Safety, Service Excellence and Safe Food Handling. We offer paid training in woodworking, kitchen production, environmental recycling or retail services. If you are thinking about obtaining your high school diploma, we have our own GED preparation program. We can also help you land an apprenticeship in the trades (you.on.ca).

The site continues, further on:

> Meet with one of our Employment Counsellors and explorer options for the future. Our counsellors will help you decide on training you might need and provide you with resources and referrals to other services. They will help you deal positively with whatever barriers exist between you and career success. Our Employment Counsellors also work alongside our Job Developers who will meet and work with you. A team will help and support you attaining the goals your created and ensuring you have all the support you need to excel (you.on.ca).

Reflecting OW's imperative for its participants to find work and render oftentimes broken or undomesticated lives employable, YOU indeed offers a range of opportunities for street youth to avail themselves of when facing the usual pressures from OW to find employment. Such an imperative is echoed regularly by YOU staff each night they sit with youth around the main table in the YAC. As Nicky settles into her seat for the night, I notice that people are getting up for dinner early tonight. It's usually a fairly lengthy process—sometimes the dinner lines are long, and serving can be an interesting affair (especially when people start to complain loudly about what's being served). On nights like tonight, several volunteers from Oakridge Secondary school (my *alma mater*) come in to serve food to youth.

The dinner trolley is rolled out, and people jump in the winding dinner line. More often than not, most people who I got to know only eat one large meal a day, and it's always offered through the YAC. As I see that most people have gotten up to get food, I ask Nicky more about her position. She tells me that she comes in once a week during drop in hours; her purpose is to be available for career counselling. I ask if she usually gets "much business". She tells me that she usually doesn't, and that Tuesday nights are usually really quiet for her. She then goes on to tell me that she also tries to set up one-on-one appointments with youth; however, they usually don't show up for appointments.

Nicky usually searches job listings with her clients, and then directs and encourages them to apply for positions that match their current skill sets. Though it is difficult to get some youth to actually follow through and apply, there are some cases where youth are successful in finding employment—even if it's temporary. From my own experience at the YAC, it seems that most youth, when they do find work, maintain their jobs for short bursts of time—saving up for something needed. At which point, they'll quit and move on (like financial nomads), either looking for more work, or going back on OW. The process, for some anyway, seems cyclical—tacking back and forth between temporarily feasible opportunities.

Nicky goes on to tell me that she had an appointment with someone this evening, but she thinks they'll be a "no-show". She says she's going to try and give a presentation about job skills, interviews and etiquette later on. Plates clank, cutlery drops, and the din of muddled voices at the table gets a little louder: I then realise that most people are back at the table eating. I get up to use the washroom, and to take a few notes on my iPhone. On my way back, I briefly talk to Stella. She says that she was uncertain about what to write on the dinner board for tonight as the new chef they hired was serving roast duck along with a "fancy sauce". I ask why she was hesitant. She says that the food sounds almost too fancy, and that it might not appeal to the youth. As I quickly look behind me at the table, everyone seems to be enjoying their meals. Before I head to my seat, I say that it's definitely not an issue—at least for tonight.

Once I return to my chair, I can see a board game on the corner of the table at the far end. I ask Jordan what it is—the box is torn and careworn. "It's Scrabble", she says in her typical sarcastic insouciance—looking at me as if I've never seen a board

game before. I then ask if she wants to have a game when she's finished eating. She's

in; and so is Esther. Zane's just about finished; and he's not going for seconds today—

he's full. I ask him if he's up for a game, but he comes back at me with a curt statement

about being too hard on himself. Board games, apparently, make him feel too

pressured, too anxious. I leave it. He then says that he'll help me out when I need it.

He takes out his folder with his drawings, and sets to work.

As we settle in to our game, I realise that I hadn't played Scrabble since I was

about six or seven years old—with my mum. I'm getting bowled over. Jordan points

out the obvious, and through my failed attempt at subterfuge—by changing the topic,

that is—she points out that I've only been using three letter words up to this point.

"Okay, okay, it's been a while" I say. "Come, man—aren't you doing a Ph.D.? Don't

you know any big words"? "Funny, you're funny" I say looking through narrowed

eyes.

Nicky comes back to the table after having been in the staff office while people

were eating. Esther gets up to talk with someone in the office, unofficially putting our

game of Scrabble on hold. Jordan pulls out her smartphone and starts texting. Looking

quizzical, I peer at Jordan. She explains that she's just checking something until Esther

gets back. This switching back and forth between "activities" is quite common in the

YAC as people come and go from the table all the time—getting up for various things:

talking to friends who have just come in; going for smoke breaks; or, in some cases,

"shooting up" or "hit'n" in the bathroom.

Settling back in, Nicky asks if anyone's interested in talking about employment

since she's got time. No one seems interested as they don't even stop to break their

conversations. She then says that if anyone's interested she can hold an informal

workshop about application procedures, interviewing etiquette, and clothing expectations. No replies.

Trying to help Nicky out I then ask Zane what he thinks about working. He says nothing, and continues drawing. Chris chimes in and loudly, "what the fuck is the point? There's no fucking point"! I then ask what he means. I follow this up quickly with an overly optimistic "you know, it's never too late for stuff like this—it's never too late". Chris' rejoinder is flat and simple, "oh fuck yeah, it's too late—I've fucked my life up. I'm fucked, and that's that". Nicky looks unfazed. I try and edge out a "well…", but it's quickly countered by Chris' loud commentary on his life: he's failed miserably at everything, and so why would he risk applying for a job when he knows it's going to end in failure. He jeers, looking at Nicky: "the fuck's the point"? Zane nods quietly in agreement.

Samantha, a girl who I'm not very familiar with, interjects by saying that OW's rules for looking for a fulltime job is "fucking crazy"—"it's a fulltime fucking job *looking* for a job, it's stupid. A lot of us don't have the time to do this". She complains by saying that she's got other things to worry about in her life; other things that are more important than looking for a job. Feeling a bit unsure inasmuch as I don't really know Samantha, I ask lightly, "like what ? What other things?—if you don't mind me asking". Nonplussed, she explains that she's got her son to look after; and also her abusive boyfriend—she's scared shitless that he'll find her. She's also got troubles with her parents. She doesn't continue, so I stop asking questions.

Trying to help out Nicky—though I think she's followed the conversations enough to let things go tonight—I turn to Zane again and ask him what he thinks. Nicky reaches into a large binder and pulls out a small stack of papers. She explains

that they're "personality tests" for employers. Dan gets up from his seat, and says he'll take one and then sits back at the far end of the table. No one else seems interested.

Without looking up from his drawing—a stylised hand reaching up from a grave holding an equally stylised heart, dripping with blood—Zane says in his typical manner, teeth clenched: "I can't work", I can't"! "I know better" I think to myself. "Can I ask you guys about this in more detail—maybe at the other end of the table? Maybe you and Chris"? Since Zane and I are fairly good friends at this point, I feel I can get away with being forthright. "Fine". "Yeah, whatever" I get as a delayed response from Chris. Zane, Chris and I move to the very far end of the table where no one else is sitting, Zane moving slow and tense (almost hunched), jaw clenched in his usual way. I pull out my digital recorder, and set it in front of us. I see that my game of Scrabble has been abandoned completely. Maybe I'll pick it up tomorrow. Chris then explains that he doesn't deserve a job. If he enters the workforce, he says that it'll end in failure. He says he's always felt that way.

> **Chris:** It's from the choices I've made, the choices that I've made, um, you know, I'm not happy with it. You know, people, some of my closer friends will say, what you really need is happiness, get yourself out of this rut. If I was truly happy, then I would probably commit suicide, 'cause I wouldn't know how to adjust to it. As long as I've known I've never truly felt happiness. There's been times where I was happy, but it always tragically ends up doing downhill.

I then change tack, and ask him obliquely about *time*, how he conceives the future, and what the future actually mean to him. He explains:

> **Chris:** The future, uh, eh, um, a dream! You know! Something that you want to achieve, but I don't know if it's actually gonna be quite…you know, I mean, some people really focus, and they say it's really important to focus on the future, which, hey, I, I agree.
> **Mark:** Yeah.
> **Chris:** But for me, what makes me comfortable, is, I don't even know what the fuck's gonna happen tomorrow.
> **Mark:** Right.

Chris: I don't care what happens to tomorrow.

Mark: Okay…

Chris: I'm just one of those people that—*now*. You know, like, I have ideas of what I want in the future, but that's the future. I'm not worried about that, you know, work on that slowly and surely, don't go insane over trying to do it. I've seen some people, I mean, going to school, drivin themselves mad, mad in school, drivin themselves…I mean, I could plan for school, next week, but whatever. I don't care what happens a long time down the road right now, cause I mean, hell, I could plan what I want to do, and work, and work, and work, and work…

Mark: Right.

Chris: But one little event could change that. Like, drastically, or small. You know? It could be anything from, hey, I ran outta money to go, to go to school, and then I'll have to put this on hold for a little while. Or, you know, god forbid, a car accident, and I'm killed. Or I'm killed on the way home or whatever. Or you know, I could get drunk or depressed—which I've been known to do—and I kill myself. You know, god forbid that ever happens, but it's always, it's always a factor—it could happen. You never know, right?

He goes on to explain that if you don't have a fixed address, it's impossible to find work. Chris isn't on OW at this point in time—he's staying with Zane, sleeping on the couch, so he doesn't have to worry about rent. I ask Chris if he wants to get on OW, if being on OW would make things easier while he tried to find work.

Chris: I disagree with people on OW. Yeah, then I can get on OW. You can claim street allowance, but it's minimal—two-sixty. But where's two hundred and sixty bucks going to get you? If I had two hundred and sixty bucks coming to me with no real reason for it, the, I might just spend it on drugs or whatever, and go down that road again…But, yeah, you have to work your ass off to get a job, and I mean, for the amount you're getting, I'd rather not be on it at all.

Zane's quiet, perhaps waiting for his turn—he's still working on his drawing; he's ensconced. I probe a little further, and ask Chris more about OW. He says that he'd rather not go on OW at all if he can help it. "When people are on OW, they have to look for work". If you find work, even if it's a shit job with low pay—he explains—and you actually get work, you get cut off from OW. He then goes on to say that it's bullshit in that you can't really survive while on OW, but at the same time if you're

earning minimum wage working a part time job, you still can't get by. "I'd rather not go on it [OW], I think it's bullshit".

Ironically, Chris then comments on the typical life-trajectory or way of "becoming" in our current political economy: "You're supposed to want to work; you're not going to get anywhere in life if you don't. People should go out and work; and those who can should at least try". He goes on to explain that his sister is currently "using the system". He claims that she purposely got pregnant at a young age to claim assistance. Gesturing behind us (to where everyone else is gathered), he says "this stuff" happens here all the time.

I then ask Chris if he thinks OW is useful at all. Even though there's a lot of abuse, he explains, he eventually wants to get on it to use it as a stepping stone—at some point in his life. He says it's a horrible thing to rely on, and the way things are today there's no guarantee if you're even going to get your cheque every month. I then realise how powerful neoliberal discourses are, even among "street youth". Even though there's a disconnect between what Chris thinks he "should" do and what he's currently doing, I feel that there's a powerfully *moralising* tenor to neoliberal discourses: people ought to be fully self-sufficient, no matter what their predicament is. To have to claim assistance is a negative thing; it's "a horrible thing" as Chris relayed. This internalisation of neoliberal discourse seems to contribute to many of my informants' sense of existential displacement. Much like Hegel's "master/slave" dialectic", my informants have indeed come to associate closely and intimately with the powerful state discourses circulating around and within them; however, this internalisation comes up against the cold-front of hyper-reflexivity wherein many of my informants—Chris included—question constantly their emplacement in the discursive

lattice-work which orients and dis-orients them. The relationship seems to be characterised by a mutual push-and-pull of internal and external discourses. Such a discursive push-and-pull leads, ultimately, to a contradictive subjectivity (one veering constantly toward some form of displacement between self and social environment); or, perhaps more apt, a "torn habitus".

He goes on to tell me that his other roommate, Dan, is one of the exceptional cases where he refuses to find work. After having been on OW for the greater part of a year, Chris explains that Dan doesn't want to work—he's fine with collecting his cheque. Chris then states that Dan's approach to OW is that he'll look for work when he gets cut off. But from Chris' perspective, that probably won't happen anytime soon.

Chris then decides to get up and get more food. It looks like they've actually got enough food for "thirds" tonight. Since I know Zane a little better than Chris, and since I know he's a very articulate and insightful person, I take a more oblique approach to asking him questions. We briefly talk about how Zane wants to get off of OW and on to ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Pension). I then ask him about the services the YAC offers, and if they help him out.

> **Mark:** Do you feel that the YAC helps you out in your day-to-day affairs?
> **Zane:** Oh, there's no doubt. There are a few issues that it does tackle. Obviously, there are so many things inside me that have built up over the years—experiences and whatnot. Experiences that have contributed towards this barricade as I call it. That's not going to be too easy to break down. It helps me temporarily get over certain feelings that I don't have or talk about a situation that I don't discuss in general. But, in the long run, I'm the only one who will be able to help myself out
> **Mark:** Do you think your way or style of life is similar to others?
> **Zane:** No, I would call myself an extreme isolationist.
> **Mark:** Did you just come up with that?
> **Zane:** Yeah, I've explained why I've become so isolated to you before. Mentally, it's more of myself against myself. There's part of me that just doesn't want to succeed. The part that fights against the core of light. So, you

know, I've actually had quite a few problems in the past, and if medication is needed momentarily, then that's not so bad.
Mark: So, as we spoke about it a couple of weeks ago, did you have that appointment yet [to get assessed for ODSP eligibility].
Zane: I did. I did.

Zane continues about how his application for ODSP requires a list of all the physicians he has seen throughout his life. He says it's crucial for him to obtain this proof, but he can't as he can't remember all of the doctors he's visited in the past. He says that the last time he saw a doctor was in Romania. After probing further, Zane explains that perhaps the biggest hurdle in all of this—and the main reason he gets cut off of OW once every few months is because of his citizenship papers and his missing social insurance number (which was lost long ago).

> **Zane:** three times, full body paralysis, extreme mental abuse, waiting for citizenship, can't get my social insurance number. I'm not able to work…the past build up what I am today, as it does for all of us. The past for me, it's something I refuse to let go of. It still torments me, but. So these things, are they negative things? Yeah, like being abandoned, having my sister move away. I've gotten over my mother's death, you can't do anything about it, it's cancer…The future to me is about as bleak as my chosen colour-scheme if you will [his favourite colours are grey and black]. The near future…every second that you're awake, like, not time, but life goes on, the sun changes, the moon changes, time is just the gradual de-degression of everything. Everything that's created is given a sort of span of life. How the near future works is that we're on the conveyer belt of life, and we're headed down it. Whereas for the future, it's just something we've made up, and that we're momentarily headed toward.

Zane starts to look despondent at this point, so I decide to shift the conversation by asking him about the drawing that he's currently working on. He tells me that the title is "Forsaken Origin" (illustration #1). There's a hand holding a heart dripping with blood—the hand is thrusting itself from the grave. It's clear, to me, what this picture is about.

"What is the inspiration for this particular piece", I ask Zane. "Life, Mark. Life" he says looking downcast. Beside and beneath the heart is a disarticulated eye, floating in space. Before I can ask what this represents—if anything—Zane continues with his narrative:

> **Zane:** Drawing latched onto further, um, loosened my grasp on reality. It had gotten so bad, I didn't know what to do. I had no one to talk to. I've never been good at conversations, fully explaining myself, a stepping stone toward my innermost depression. I didn't have self-confidence either. I gotta work on that, that, that's my major flaw. That's my identity, and music, too.
> **Mark:** It sounds like it's a huge part of it, and for me as well.

I find that our conversation jumped quickly from drawing to heavy-metal, and then to writing, and Zane's philosophies thereof.

> **Zane**: Music, for the most part, is split into two main categories: the melodic part, strings a certain thing in my heart, brings out emotions. Like a certain song will spawn love or loss for me. There's some that even to this day, that make me shed a tear.
> **Mark:** Yeah, yeah.
> **Zane:** And others, and this is where metal comes in for the most part, the second category: unresolved rage. Instead of making me feel bad, as you, you hear, brutal death [metal] does, no it's not true. Some of them [pointing to other people at the table] will say, you listen to that crap? It's so angry, doesn't it make you angry? For the most part, it doesn't. It fuels my rage, it does the opposite. Because I can't find any way to let out my inner-most feelings, my compressed emotions rather, my anger that builds up and has built up, music is a great for it to do that for me.
> **Mark:** So it serves a cathartic purpose.
> **Zane:** Cathartic! Exactly! Just like flushes down the negative flux.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Zane:** It honestly does play a bigger role than I give it.
> **Mark:** Yeah, yeah.

Zane then explains to me that music, in some sense, represents an inner spark, or at least reinforces, an inner spark. As he said, this spark or glow makes up the core of his inner soul—it gives him the will to live on. He then reveals that writing, along with music, is a key aspect of how he understands himself and his identity. He tells me that it was through playing video games regularly that he was able to build up an

appreciation of words, their meanings, and their uses. "Gaming made me intrigued to

learn certain words; and it was writing that heightened my love for poetry". He

continues:

> **Zane:** Like I said, I'm not able to express myself as well as I could with words. I'll admit to this day, I'm not good with speech. I'm not good with speech. That's what I lack; that's what people see I lack. However, because my speech isn't fully 100% operational, that I can describe the way I feel sometimes, I feel the need to write. And write about different things: fantasy, different characters in life.
> **Mark:** Right.
> I've written so many diverse poems, stories through these days that I can't even begin to tell you. Throughout the years I've written certain poems…poems are like drawings to me: I can never make the same one again.
> **Mark:** Are there any recurring characters or themes that are central to your poems?
> **Zane:** No, uh, poems and music tie the knot nowadays that I've sort of gotten into Viking [metal], medieval folklore, mystic island, raven, calming dark battle, dominance of the wild woods sort of theme, you know?
> **Mark:** Okay…
> **Zane:** I'll create my own characters if I have to just to make them sound, that sound original and are good. Yeah, they tie hand in hand [music and writing]. That and gaming, too. RPGS [Role Playing Games] and whatnot, the will to power, all these things make up my inner-most interests.
> **Mark:** Definitely no recurring characters or themes, though?
> **Zane:** Uh, no. Besides, that theme that I've already mentioned. I like diversity. And I'll prove that I've written about love, written about sadness, written about people that I've known, written about magic, beings, dragons, songs, songs that I've made up, about jives, beats, and stupid situations, and comedy that I've made up literally I've written about a lot of stuff. But I've always gone under the radar, too. I don't know how to handle too many eyes upon me.
> **Mark:** Right, right.
> **Zane:** I'm not a fan of anxiety that builds up against my will because I'm unmediated.
> **Mark:** Do you think, then, that by getting medicated, that will put you on the right track?
> **Zane:** No, no. I'm a very, neutrality. Desolation, the greys among us, the neutral plane. I'm a very open minded character, I can believe anything can happen. I don't believe in either good or bad. Uh, good can come to bad, bad can come to good. It's all about opinion.
> **Mark:** Right, right.
> **Zane:** I've always held it out. I can't see into the future, but I want to take care of myself. I want to be more financially fit. I recognise my flaws and it helps to talk to people who are interested in helping me find out what's wrong with me.

Mark: The way to get money in your pocket, in your eyes, at this moment, then, is to…
Zane: It's, uh, disability. That's the only way right now. I can't deal with bosses or people. I know myself, I get anxiety.
Mark: Right.
Zane: I think I shouldn't suffer or deny myself certain things. I think I should help myself out.
Mark: Right.
Zane: Will is the strongest thing man has. And I have a very strong will. I think the maker brings out the good will power, more so than I have control over me. Maybe people cave into darkness because it's easier, right?

Intrigued by Zane's use of the words "will" and "power", and thinking of how it relates to his experiences with loss and personal failure I ask him to explain what he meant by them. Tying in the conceptual themes between music, writing and video games, Zane describes to me his idea of "the rise to power" and how it relates to his life in general.

Mark: How would you define the rise to power?
Zane: The rise to power, well, now that I play RPGs, I got hooked on Final Fantasy, it's, it's eventually, you know, I got better at it, through various systems. I got a PlayStation right now, but when I got Final Fantasy seven, which was my first one of the series, mind you, it's also hailed the greatest RPG of our time. It's not my favourite of the bunch, but, yeah. Levelling up, just, uh, I noticed that you'd fight the same foes over and over, right?
Mark: Right.
Zane: And, it just, the more you, the more you fought, the more money you got, which was, literally impossible, as, as an everyday thing, you know?
Mark: Right, right.
Zane: So, the more money you got [in the game], the more health you got, the more strength you got. It's just that power to dominate things that would, uh, previously kill you, you know?
Mark: Right.
Zane: You rise to power. You rise, and it was all about revenge. Cause you, you, you grew so powerful that they stood no chance. And that was just what made my day. It keeps you hooked, I guess.

Zane and I wrapped up our conversation that night at around six thirty—just before I was called to give the police officer my account of what happened with Steph.

Zane concludes that he's always felt like an outcast in society, too shy and riddled with

untreated problems to fit in. From a spiritual perspective, Zane reasons that he has

always striven toward the need to *not* fit in. When I return from giving my account to

the police officer, Zane picks up where we left off by saying that he's always liked

originality. And, as I've gathered over our many conversations, originality to Zane is a

mode of being-in-the-world; a mode of relating to others and the self—it's a

perspective. This is why he has such an emotional connection to extreme heavy-

metal—because of its originality. And I agree—completely. "I've always liked

originality", Zane concluded. "It's so damned rare and hard to find".

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The next day I manage to catch up with Esther. Our last in-depth conversation

(the previous week) was about the distinction between ethics and morality. We talk

about how morality was a system of conduct to one's self and the world based on the

orientations of personal character. As I looked at my fieldnotes much later on, I had

written that we both agreed that morality includes the "what is good/bad, right/wrong

for me at a specific moment in time. Ethics, on the other hand, as I had written, stands

for the social system in which morals are applied; they're standards or codes of

behaviour expected by the group to which an individual belongs.

Broaching our conversation with the distinction we made between morality and

ethics, led to a perfect segue about morality, ethics, society and Ontario Works. Our

conversation eventually led to a discussion about her own situation with Ontario Works.

As we continue, we make a space for ourselves at the corner of the large table

accompanied by my digital recorder. Setting her cane beside her, and constantly

shaking her juice bottle in between frequent sips, Esther describes her situation. From

Esther's perspective, OW's rules are *inflexible*:

> **Esther:** You seek employment. They'll support you up until high school. You have to live within their box. You are agreeing to go into the working class if you are agreeing to be on Ontario Works, because they're not going to support you in seeking higher education than high school—that's not their mandate. As soon as you're employable, you find work. It doesn't matter if that's not what you want to do, you just find work. Unfortunately, there's not enough supports there for it to be long term [meaning one's receipt of OW], especially in London.
> **Mark:** Right.
> **Esther:** Which is insanely so conservative it makes me want to cry. Oh my god, ah…
> **Mark:** Well, every time I'm here [in the YAC], you've got all these people who are always telling me about how they're getting cut off [from OW].
> **Esther:** Oh, absolutely. Well, you have to follow certain rules. And people [here] aren't used to following certain rules. And there's paper work that gets lost, and you don't have communication with your worker—it fails. And they don't really care about your life situation. I mean, maybe if you get a really good worker, they'll care. But, typically, they don't care. Which doesn't help you pursue further things. They support you to finish your high school, but then you're supposed to get a job.
> **Mark:** But, what if you can't?
> **Esther:** You seek employment.
> **Mark:** That's one of their mandates, right? We'll give you this money, if you agree to seek employment…. So, have you been cut off more times?
> **Esther:** Oh, yeah, a few.
> **Mark:** For what?
> **Esther:** Oh, not having proper documentation. Another issue is that they rely entirely on snail mail. Most people don't keep residences that long. My vertigo meds, cause I have Meniere's disease—which, probably don't know what that is—but it's like…
> **Mark:** No, no…
> **Esther:** Like something where your, your, like something in your, your, in your inner ear doesn't function properly.
> **Mark:** Okay.
> **Esther:** Like the filters or things. So I get really bad vertigo, and I'm going deaf and all these things.
> **Mark:** Okay.
> **Esther:** Yeah, which is scary. Which is why I told you not to speak with your hand in front of your mouth (laughing loudly) [previous conversation]. Cause I read lips most of the time. So my vertigo meds aren't covered by OW.
> **Mark:** What?
> **Esther:** They're not addictive. You can't sell them, and you can't get high from they. But they're not covered.

Mark: Are they expensive?

Esther: Yeah, they're sixty bucks a month!

Mark: *sighs* So you've gotta take money from what OW gives you to go to that, and that could go to groceries or whatever.

Esther: Yes, yes.

Mark: Oh that sucks. That's not good. So, ODSP isn't an option?

Esther: I've considered it a couple of times. I just feel like, like, I'm a capable person, you know. So, for me, it feels weird going on ODSP.

Mark: …as I understand it, you have to present clearly with an issue to be assessed by a physician.

Esther: Oh, oh, I'm going deaf! I have PTSD. I have multiple mental health disorders. And I have mobility issues.

Mark: So you can, you, you, meet the requirements?

Esther: Absolutely. And, like, I've been tempted to, I mean, it's so much more money. You get like eight hundred bucks a month!

Mark: Do you?

Esther: Yeah!

Mark: Well, see, that's more like it. That's a lot. That's twice as much [as OW]. Is your rent included in that eight hundred bucks? Or is that eight hundred on top of rent?

Esther: I don't know. I just know it's a lot more than Ontario Works. And it's not going to go away [it's not temporary like OW], like… And I mean, if you have a job that money's not going anywhere, whereas with OW you have to reapply [if you do find a job], blah, blah, blah, blah. Cause I think if you get cut off OW you have to wait like six months to get back on…

The moralising and normalising undercurrents of neoliberalism are quite strong, as evidenced in the excerpt above. Even though she explains clearly that she has physical and psychological problems, Esther still sees herself as a capable person; and, because of this, taking an income from ODSP seems wrong—as if it's unacceptable morally. There is also a theme of progress in the excerpt above. I get the sense that for Esther being "working class" or having a "working class" job is going against this idea of upward mobility and constant progress that is instilled in most of us from an early age.

Between frequent interruptions—people greeting both of us, people being loud, as well as a constant stream of offers to play chess or foosball—Esther and I continue our conversation talking about how, in some instances, OW forces its participants to

choose between shelter, food and safety. She explains that if you are given very little to begin with you are faced with difficult choices as to where you can afford to live. This, ultimately, limits one's safety, and how much one can spend on food. She also says that OW limits self-development in terms of education in that their mandate—as described above—is to render people *employable*. As such, OW will assist participants in completing high school; however, once a participant has completed high school, he/she is forced to look for work—oftentimes very low paid work, which means that they are forced to stay on OW (OW will make substantial deductions if participants find work).

When I ask Esther if she is actively looking for work at the moment, she tells me again that she been admitted to what is called the "A-team" (addictions team) through OW—after months and months of being placed on wait-list. Based on my interview with the leader of the Youth Team at OW mentioned earlier, there are twelve OW teams in total, ranging from teams devoted to teenage mothers to those devoted to shelter-based populations, to those with experiencing problems with addiction.

Esther continues on and says that the addictions team helps those on it to achieve sobriety; and that this process of achieving sobriety counts as participation in finding employment. Being part of the A-team allows Esther to "work on herself"; however, Esther tells me that there is always an employment part, and once counsellors deem your addiction "beaten" or "controlled", you must find work. Esther explains her current situation with respect to subsistence, and the rationale of legitimacy she attaches to it:

> **Esther:** Like right now, um, I do a lot of volunteer work right now, and, uh, I would not be able to survive doing just volunteer work if I wasn't on Ontario Works, right?

Mark: Right.

Esther: The way I see it, is, is that, a lot of the volunteer work I do should be paid, a paid position. But there's no funding for it. But, the government is paying me. So really, I see myself as a government employee right now. Government paid.

Mark: There you go.

Esther: I'm not paid very well (laughs), cause I'm only getting paid like a little under four hundred dollars a month.

Mark: Right

Esther: And realistically if I was working thirty five, forty hours a week—which I volunteer—I would be making way more than that! Um, yeah…

Mark: So before you were saying that OW gives you enough to survive but not to get by…

Esther: OW sustains you.

Mark: Yeah, they, they sustain you.

Esther: Yeah. There's a difference between survival and living.

Mark: Right.

Esther: Because survival you just get your basic needs. And, it's funny, you, you get rent and something they call basic needs, and that's the money you have.

Mark: Yeah.

Esther: So it was only meant to cover your basic needs.

Mark: Right.

Esther: Which doesn't help you pursue further things. Like they don't, they support you to finish your high school, like, your, supposed to get a job…

As a point of justification for her inability to find meaningful, stable work, Esther explains that her volunteer work is compensated through her social assistance provided by OW. A justificatory tactic indeed, it is an effective moral explanation for her receipt of OW. My brief conversation with Esther ends with an interesting statement wherein she claims emphatically that, when dealing with participants, OW workers cannot divorce "the personal from the economic". She says that a lot of the time "you have to sacrifice food, shelter and safety in order to progress. No one wants to sacrifice those things"! For OW, she tells me, there's a theoretical point of view and a practical one. People sometimes need to work on themselves, their own inner goals and means to well-being, instead of constantly being forced to embark on a project of employability. "You can't divorce social issues and money. You can't divorce people,

and you basically need to be a social worker to work at OW (even though most of them do not have this training). There are so many people who get cut off. You just get a notice in the mail, and that's it. That's it, you get cut off".

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Around a month later, I had a chance to talk to Chad about his ideas about working, employment and the future. Reticent as he was in our previous conversation, I could see that Chad was quite visibly distraught—he expressed frustration in not being able to find a job, a situation possibly connected to having a criminal record. Our conversation revolved around job credentials, the inherent unfairness of living in a competitive society, and Chad's seemingly paradoxical employment predicament.

Claiming to have more experience than most professional web-site developers, Chad's story was fraught with contradictions and logical inconsistencies—nonetheless, he communicated strongly something about his stance toward employment specifically, and society in general. After telling me he had spent a full month in a federal jail—for committing a "federal crime" that involved hacking into the federal government's mainframe computer system—Chad tells me about his experience with searching for a job. The conversation ends quickly, and I then decide to run down the street to McDonalds to purchase a gift-certificate for Chad—it is compensation for allowing me to record our talk.

> **Mark:** So, how has it [looking for a job] been going?
> **Chad:** I can't even find a job, I've spent so long looking, I can't even get a frick'n interview.
> **Mark:** No?
> **Chad:** Nothing.

Mark: So, what do you think is holding you back from that?

Chad: Something in my resume. That's all I know…Like I don't have my GED. But even without it, you know, like, I should be able to get something with a grade ten education.

Mark: Well [as he had told me before], you've got ten credits? How many do you need for a GED?

Chad: Oh, I probably have enough now for a GED, to get one, but I probably have to get all of my ID replaced, eh…

Mark: Did you lose it?

Chad: Yep. I have to get it replaced. I also have, you know, whatever programmes to get prepared for it. And it's just, it's just gonna be frustrating. I just don't know why I can't get a single interview.

Mark: How many jobs have you applied for?

Chad: Since I was in Windsor [he had just moved to London one year prior to our interview], there must have been at least four hundred resumes handed out.

Mark: Holy.

Chad: Sometimes I had to use a Children's Aid extension for work, and sometimes where I had everything I needed. There has to be some way out there for people to get a job, and none of this temp shit either, I need steady employment.

Mark: Yeah. Have you thought about the YES programme here [which offers one thousand two hundred dollars over a five week period]?

Chad: Yeah, but that's not employment. That's, that's temporary payment at best…but yeah, I need a job. Even if I can find part-time work as a web-designer that pays more than OW then I'll be fine. But you know what the worst part is? I'm more certified than any web-designer out there. You know, any other web-designer out there will carry this big book reference of different technical stuff, but I would only have to look at that once or twice while doing a whole web site.

Mark: Yeah.

Chad: Yeah, and that's what bothers me, you know? I need the education in order to get the job…that's what's making this economy fail, because people need to apply and get accepted, and then they fail, but that's not the way this world should be run. I've been running around for so many years trying to find a single job, and I can't do that anymore. And I still don't have the right clothes to do an interview. Don't know how to pass an interview. I still have a lot of interviews to get through first.

Mark: They have a career specialist who works here, which, which helps people prepare for interviews and stuff like that.

Chad: Honestly, I don't know if I want to get a job 'cause I'd rather just do the web-designer thing. But I need to have all that registered first, and I'm trying to do the OW self-employment programme, but you need to be accepted for that. But you need to do an interview to see whether you're right for the programme, which is ridiculous.

Mark: Right.

Chad: That's the one reason why people aren't getting jobs right now. It's the only reason. That's the reason people can't get homes right now. It's because

they want the best, you know? I think it's retarded, and I think it's the only reason it'll make this economy sink is because people can't get jobs.

Mark: Right.

Chad: Maybe we should have a three or five strike system, you know? You get fired, but if it's not completely your fault, three, four, five times, then you, then maybe you have to re-apply. Maybe you have to find somewhere that's willing to hire you at that point. I mean, I guess I could go on Kijiji [classifieds website] saying that I'm a web-designer looking for work.

Mark: And this is something I'm assuming that you're good at?

Chad: Yes, I'm very proficient in it. I could make a site look just like Facebook. The problem is it would take me a very long time 'cause I'm a one man web-designer.

Mark: Yeah.

Chad: Facebook has leagues of people working for them, but I have the ability to make something look just like Facebook. It would be, you know, I, I, I, I would probably have to look up some things online, but, uh, when it comes right down to it, I would have the website made, just like any person who works in these big office buildings [pointing behind us] could make. I'm sick of going the route of jobs. I'm sick of trying to find a job. It's probably going to end up in failure anyways. I want a job where someone comes up and says "here's your job"—that's exactly what we need in this world.

Mark: Oh, sort of like a whole re-conceptualisation…

Chad: I think that we don't need resumes or interviews. An application is fine, but that's it. And if you don't have experience, if it says zero, then you shouldn't get judged by that 'cause there corporations are getting away with wanting the bigger, better person. And that's what's killing the economy.

Mark: Yeah. Well, do you have any ideas, then, of getting around this problem of being able to find work. I mean, it's a shitty predicament to be in to tell you the truth.

Chad: Well, the ID that I do have has, takes the effort of the whole government, but by the time I'm forty maybe I'll be able to get a job, and that's not going to work. I just, you know, I need to find a couple of people who have a business or whatever, and are willing to pay five hundred a month to set up and run a website. It's not expensive, but it's enough to keep me going. I can live off of a thousand a month easily.

Mark: Yeah. But would you be able to keep OW at the same time?

Chad: No. I would dump OW actually…but no, I would not stay on OW.

Mark: You would kiss it goodbye? Is it too much of a pain?

Chad: Yes.

Mark: Uh…

Chad: Especially since I've already, I've already, if I already have a job, there's no point in keeping it. All it does is keep my medications free. And that's that. If I'm making a thousand dollars a month I can afford the medication.

Mark: Ah, are they expensive? The medications?

Chad: I, I, heard they're only thirteen dollars.

Mark: Okay.

Chad: Mmmmhmm…

Mark: But, before you were on OW [as he told me before] you said you were on the Children's Aid version of that…

Chad: Uh, when I came to London, I, I, it got cut off. So, when I was at the Salvation Army, I, I, I didn't have a fixed address.

Mark: So…so, you need a fixed address? Had you a fixed address, would you have been able to stay on?

Chad: Mmmmhmm…

Mark: For how long?

Chad: Til I was twenty-one. But I would have been better off starting a web-designer career.

Mark: Mmmmhmm. Yeah. Now, when you say that, do you, do you have a portfolio or anything?

Chad: No, 'cause I don't really have a computer. And, I don't, like, I, I, I can't just make my own website, cause, one, like, I, ethically, I don't like to make a website for my own, for, like, if I'm going to make my own website, on my own accord.

Mark: Right.

Chad: I want it to be unique, and something that people want to use. To me, that's difficult. I, I, I, I have to yet come up with that one idea. Like I had an idea for, like, a website about weed, but I can't put that in a portfolio of course.

Mark: Yeah, uh…So, do you have previous websites from the past? That you've designed?

Chad: Well, it takes a lot to build a website, let's put it that way.

Mark: Yeah, totally.

Chad: Um, I, I, I do, where they went, uh, it, uh, also takes a lot of money to host a website as well. It does, 'cause you have to pay. I don't mind, I've never been able to put up my own website with my own web, my own domain, um, um, so I never, like I've, I've , I've, toyed around a little bit with design things.

Mark: O.K.

Chad: I need a portfolio. But again, once I get a computer, I guess I could start on that. I still have to think of one thing. A think to use as a portfolio website.

Mark: So, do you think this is the only thing you're willing to do for employment?

Chad: Yeah.

Mark: Yeah? Is there anything else you're willing to do?

Chad: No.

Mark: No? But what about the YES programme?

Chad: I don't know. Unless they say once you've finished it, this is where you're working. Then I don't think they can guarantee anything. I need to do the web-designer thing to be honest. I just need a fricken computer. I just need a good computer. Not one of those shitty-ass netbook computer things.

Much like Zane and Chris, Chad also expressed a fear of failure regarding the

attainment of employment. His rigid fixation on a seemingly unattainable goal (due

clearly to the lack of appropriate experience) of becoming a web-designer was

interesting in that he suggested several times that he was going to give up trying to find any sort of work unrelated to being a web-designer. Though the conversation was short, I was able to gather that Chad, like many of the others, expressed a persistent fear of failure regarding the attainment of employment. For Chad, if the employment wasn't centred around his supposed comfort area (web design), there wasn't much point—so it seemed—in even bothering.

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Before I turn to the distinctive modes of *becoming*—and their intricacies and implications—of some of my informants, particularly as they relate to the mode of becoming prescribed and imposed by OW and the government of Ontario, I want to take a brief aside to draw an ethnographic parallel between my work and others.

Writing about poverty, time, and alternative modes of subsistence in the introduction to their edited volume, *Lilies of the field: Marginal people who live for the moment*, Day *et al.* (1999) talk about the "anti-economic" stances of their informants' attitudes towards time, person-hood and community—especially in terms of the mainstream political economies in which their informants live. Going against the grain of mainstream political economies, then, the informants' lives described in Day *et al.'s* (1999) volume lived—for the most part—in poverty, and therefore at the margins of society.

Rather than displace themselves from their trajectories of becoming, these people shun the idea of espousing mainstream notions of work, productivity and long-term economic planning—much like Chris, Zane, Esther and Chad—and opt for

alternative modes of subsistence. For Day *et al.'s* (1999) informants, very much like my own, their socially marginal positions are seemingly *inverted*. They make frequent attempts to crack the integument of the oppressive and anxiety-provoking world around them through various tactics aimed at striving for a sense of autonomy, well-being, and order in their lives.

Day *et al.* (1999) find it adequate to state that, since their informants' achievements are at odds with the longer term temporal orientation of their more mainstream consociates, they thus live in *opposition* to the mainstream. And, it follows, then, that much like the ethnographic foci of Day *et al.'s* edited volume, my informants, in various ways, comprise an *oppositional culture* living strictly for the moment. I will return to this distinct way or mode of becoming and being-in-the-world in the section below; however, for the moment I want to address one more ethnographic parallel.

Paul Willis, in his *Learning to Labor: How working class kids get working class jobs* (1981), sought to understand ethnographically the dynamics of labour in capitalist society, as well as how it was felt and lived as a "cultural experience" (Marcus 1986). As Stanley Arnowitz (1981) states in the preface, *Learning to Labor* helps us achieve a more nuanced understanding of how social relations are characterised by political and economic domination. The book, a major work in political economy studies, is illustrative of the fact that people are never *filled* with ideology as a container is with water. On the contrary, *people reproduce and reinvent themselves*—and this goes as much for the oppositional culture or counterculture that Willis engaged with as it does for my informants—in an oppositional and antagonistic relation to the prevailing culture and its social and ideological practices (Arnowitz 1981).

Willis himself explains the goal of *Learning to Labor*:

Its part in the development of "Reproduction" theory has been to add a qualitative dimension to the exposure of liberal and social democratic programme in education. Statistics show clearly the massively uneven scope of provision and educational outcomes between the classes; but, as we have seen, this can be explained in manner which leaves the logic of the original approach still intact: it's the fault of working class kids and their families. *Learning to Labor* added two things: first, that it is exactly the group of kids—those who are the target of a reformist, liberal approach, and who most need to be recruited to the new opportunities if education is to justify its role—who most actively and vociferously reject education. Second, it helps to suggest that far from being "ignorant", "anachronistic", "pathological", and in need of eradication, such cultural responses may in certain important respects be in advance of the understanding of the liberal agencies. "The lads'" culture, for instance, is involved in making its own realistic bets about its best chances in a class society and about how best to approach an impoverished future in manual work (1981: 205).

Through what Willis called a "cultural ethnography", he was able to depict ethnographically the varied rhythms of lived ironies of his school-boy informants. The very cultural form created through resistance to dominant class indoctrination in the school where Willis carried out his fieldwork became the adaptive means through which the boys he engaged with daily achieved accommodation to working class factory life (Marcus 1986). The similarities between Willis' project and my own are apparent: all of my informants have a special contempt for education; and, as such appear as an "oppositional" or "counter-culture" group.

Like the young lads Willis' engaged with, my informants have been the "target" of reformist strategies, set about to re-engineer idleness and the risk of dependency on Ontario Works into productive employability. My informants' "culture" if you will, or as I prefer to conceptualise it, their alternative *moral economy*, centres on how they can make realistic bets and ideas about their best chances in a neoliberal-oriented political economy. As well, through this differential moral economy, they seek out how best to

approach a highly uncertain future by rationalising, justifying and attempting to come to grips with their tumultuous pasts.

Perhaps an interesting aspect of Willis' work to develop further—in the small scale and limited context of my own ethnography—is that he largely overlooked the problem and process of *variation* in the school-boys' experience of being part of an oppositional culture. According to Marcus (1986), Willis was more interested in the givens of nonconformism, and thus understood this as the very core of working class consciousness and culture. Though it could be argued that my informants are nonconformists, too, what marks their experience different from Willis' lads is the source of their nonconformism—loss, poverty, and the torn habitus that ensues, and not just class-revolt.

Here, the future and the past are temporal "imaginaries" that seem to exist for my informants on a precariously sliding scale. This scale tips back and forth, and is marked by a drastically punctuated rhythm—at one moment some of my informants, like Zane, are optimistic about the future, especially in his quest to get on ODSP so as to give himself the space he needs to re-think his position. At another moment, Zane, along with Esther, Jordan, Chris or Mitch among many others, are dogged by and mired in a hostile and suffocating past, unable to see through its enveloping fog. I will now turn to the problems of process and variation of becoming, especially as it relates to my informants' existential predicaments—as they are framed by and come up against the imposed limits and moral limits of becoming the state *qua* OW.

CHAPTER 8—Social Realities are Composed of Lines: Many, Many Lines…

The line that the centre of gravity must describe was, to be sure, very simple, and was, he felt, in most cases a straight line. In cases where that line is not straight, it appears that the law of curvature is at least of the first or, at best, of the second rank, and additionally in this latter case only elliptical. This form of movement of the human body's extremities is natural, because of the joints, and therefore would require no great skill on the part of the puppeteer to approximate it. But viewed another way, this line is something very mysterious. For it is nothing other than the path to the soul of the dancer, and Herr C. doubted that it could be proven otherwise that through this line the puppeteer placed himself in the centre of gravity of the marionette; this is to say, in other words, that the puppeteer danced.

<div style="text-align: right">H. Von Kleist 1810: 23</div>

We are defined by the lines we choose to cross or to be confined by.

<div style="text-align: right">A. S. Byatt 1990: 467</div>

In this chapter, I will outline the various modalities of becoming my informants are engaged in, and how these modalities serve as a socio-moral eddy against the progressive flow of the becoming of the state and its practices and technologies. I will draw upon detailed ethnographic description and interview content, buttressed by analytic and interpretive commentary. At the onset, though, let me provide a conceptualisation of what becoming is, and how it relates to my informants' lives.

Lines determine lines. What could such a seemingly strange and ambiguous statement mean? What lines? How? From the perspective of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), lines compose not only social reality, but all reality that is lived, whether human, animal, or geological. We constitute and are constituted by *lines*. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) tell us that "lines of flight" determine and enable the existence of

"molar lines"—lines of rigid segmentarity, those that constitute and effect social, political and economic categories, divisions and hierarchies. Molar or segmentary lines form a socially constituted aggregate, and thus position us, define us, and can set us on a certain trajectory of becoming[61]. These lines are infused with the supposedly unthinkable, the unreflective and unreflexive. They create "naturalised", "taken-for-granted" discourses that constitute and perpetuate ideas about society that fly below the radar of consciousness. Molar lines can function as unquestioned, dogmatic images of thought; and, as such, present themselves as rigid, assumed and historically *unchanging* (i.e., they are "celestialised" as Marx once put it). These lines are usually discursive in nature, positioning subjects through various forms of discursive subjection and subjectification[62].

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[61] As I see it, Deleuze's molar lines have a "positioning" effect similar to the way Althusser (1971) understood Ideological State Apparatuses (ISA) to *interpellate* or to hail or call forth citizens to situate themselves according to the necessities of the greater Repressive State Apparatus (RSA). To Althusser, RSAs are part of the *public* domain: the government or the state, whereas, working hand-in-hand with the imperatives of RSAs, ISAs are part of the *private* domain: the church, the family and schools. Like molar lines, RSAs and ISAs position people according to ideological imperatives, such as productivity, docility, fear, the will to desire the products of the proletariat's own labour, even though the ownership of private property (i.e., the means of production) are always out of reach.

[62] Bakhtin in the 1920's, preceding Deleuze and Guattari by decades, understood the positioning nature of the various social discourses that circulate in any given society as an agonistic relationship between what he called authoritative discourse and inwardly persuasive discourse—roughly analogous to Deleuze and Guattari's molar and molecular lines. For Bakhtin (1981), authoritative discourse was characterised by centripetal socio-cultural forces. At their most extreme, these produced privileged language that enters our verbal repertoire unaltered and unalloyed by other discourses. These discourses, according to Bakhtin work as historically sedimented words which circulate *a priori* to contemporary discourse—they were "already acknowledged in the past" (1981: 342). Authoritative discourses are univocal and circulate within a field of power that works literally from the top down. As such, these discourses are impervious to any sort of influence or compromise to their authoritative integrity. By contrast, internally persuasive discourse is, according to Bakhtin, the reformulation of discourse, language, or words, which bears the impress of an individual or group's idiosyncratic infection, accent, gestures, modifications and agencies. The internally persuasive word is wrought from the process of dialogicity and interanimation; as such, internally persuasive discourse is productive and dynamic, and is reflected in everyday talk (whether between people, or an internal dialogue with the self). According to Bakhtin (1981), self-hood, or what he calls

Molar lines, or lines of segmentarity, then, are the lines of the *state*, i.e., we are

positioned and set on certain trajectories of becoming by the work of prevailing and

preponderant socio-cultural, political and economic forces. Such forces are linguistic in

and of themselves, including the various fora through which language circulates, i.e.,

the project of education, work, politics, leisure, all of life—all of which are subtended

by the greater political economy of late capitalism, dominated and infused by neoliberal

logics of individualism and self-sufficiency. In contrast to molar lines are *molecular*

lines: lines made of potentially revolutionary fluxes, pulses, and dislocations; lines that

squeeze past and through molar lines; they bisect them, transect them, and criss-cross

them. To Deleuze (1995), molecular lines enable the conditions of possibility of

potentially revolutionary becomings and micro-becomings.

May (2005) claims that late capitalist societies are defined by molar lines,

including the social, political and economic possibilities they open up and close off.

Molar lines effect their presence through *territorialisation*: these lines close off and

effect difference through their ability to create binaries—either/or, male/female,

well/sick, rich/poor, powerful/weak, etc. Territorialisation as a molar process thus

marks out territories, capturing them and sealing them against what they are *not*—they

are exclusionary. Territories marked off by territorialisation thus have a particular

identity. But the marking out of territories is a necessity insofar as we *need* the stability

of identity and difference marked off by the comfort of binaries: language needs to

ascribe meaning through the making of distinctions, the muting of discordance and

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"human coming-to-consciousness", is produced by the dialectical interplay and/or tension
between authoritative discourse (centripetal forces) and inwardly persuasive discourse
(centrifugal forces).

confusion (as much as possible to avoid mis or non-communication), the rendering of difference and sameness through identity, through naming, through categorisation, through inclusion and exclusion. Without processes of territorialisation, then, the world would be nothing but chaos, nothing but incommunicable pure difference (May 2005).

To Deleuze and Guattari (1987), molecular lines are *ahistorical*: they have a different process of coming into being, a different rhythm than history. History to Deleuze is *official* history, a state-sponsored history: it is the history we are all taught to tell ourselves. This is the history of our names, our families, our jobs; it is the project of nation building (May 2005). Running beneath the criss-crossing and convolutions of molar lines are what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) call "lines of flight[63]". As a form of "escape", a line of flight is a means through which to undercut and cut through, against or across something—a molar aggregate. Lines of flight *qua* lines move along paths; they lead to a "somewhere" and never dwell on the spot, but edge out along several paths of movement (Ingold 2007).

Late capitalist societies are social fields that experience *leakage* on all sides— things escape through various configurations or skeins of molar lines on all sides

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[63] Everyday instances of lines of flight include the following: using aspects of, say, a city—such as benches, railings, stairs, etc.—as surfaces upon which to skateboard, BMX bike or rollerblade. The line of flight is using these "objects of the city" in unintended, unofficial and oftentimes illegal ways. Children's use of toys is another common example of a line of flight. Toy companies often intend children to use the toys they create in specific ways (these "ways" are created through research, often using lab-based activities where children are observed, or through the use of focus groups with parents, etc.); however, if one watches a child interact with a toy, he/she will almost always use it in idiosyncratic, and highly creative—and, therefore— unintended, ways. The deterritorialisations of city-dwelling animals when they "move into" spaces unintended for their habitation—like raccoons in attic spaces, etc.—is another prime example of an animal line of flight. It should be noted, too, that there is a striking resemblance between De Certeau's notion of "tactics" and Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "lines of flight" (although the latter, to me, are more diverse and apply to a wider array of social and psychological phenomena). Likewise, De Certeau's notion of "strategies" is very similar to Deleuze and Guattari's "molar lines".

(Deleuze 2006). Lines of flight (molecular in origin) are to Deleuze and Guattari (1987) what *come first* in society: far from being located outside the social field, lines of flight constitute society's very conditions of possibility. "We think any society", Deleuze (1995) says, "is defined not so much by its contradictions as by its lines of flight, it flees all over the place, and it's very interesting to try and follow the lines of flight taking shape at some particular moment or other" (171).

Lines of flight disperse along feral, undomesticated, trajectories—they are creative in their marking out of different spaces and speeds of *becoming*. Becoming, via lines of flight, is the becoming of pure difference, of deterritorialisation; the explosion of molar aggregates and of segmentarity. Deterritorialisation works hand in hand with territorialisation (one could say they are dialectical) in constituting social, cultural, political, economic, and moral realities (the constituted and constituting push and pull of sociality). The deterritorialisation of territories provides the various and differential resources for effacing, redrawing and reconceptualising social, political, economic, and moral boundaries. They make for a possibility of escaping a particular territory for another one—deterritorialisations create territories, and create spaces of becoming within existing territories and states (Deleuze and Guattari 1980; May 2005). The state and capitalism, then, are constituted by the intersection and criss-crossing of molar and molecular lines, which flow through the disparate growth and recession of territorialisations and deterritorialisations. As Deleuze and Parnet explain:

> In any case, the…lines are immanent, caught up in another. We have as many tangled lines as a hand. We are complicated in a different way from a hand. What we call by different names—schizoanalysis, micro-politics, pragmatics, diagrammatism, rhizomatics, cartography—has no other object than the study of these lines, in groups or in individuals (1987: 125).

The dialectic between territorialisation and deterritorialisation (the imposition of lines upon lines [Ingold 2007]) is not as schematic as it may appear for the state may use both in its imperative to colonise and re-colonise "state" space—"striated space" as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to it. Individuals, too, many make use of the means for territorialisation as well as deterritorialisation, so the relation between the two spatial, conceptual and experiential processes are anything but binary or structured.

Becoming Through Lines of Flight

What I mean to say is that, in its mysterious power, *becoming* leaves no island upon which we can set foot in order to arrive at a definition or a judgment in its regard. With its waves it covers all that we might be tempted to set over against it. It knows neither subjects nor objects. It has neither distinct parts, nor direction, nor beginning, nor end. It is neither reversible nor irreversible. It is universal and impersonal. It becomes chaotic. And yet, it is quite close to us, so close that it constitutes the very base of our life. We would almost like to say that it is the synonym of life in the broadest sense of the word.

E. Minkowski 1970: 18

The nature of infinity is this: That every thing has its Own Vortex; and when once a traveller thro [*sic*] Eternity. [*sic*] Has passed that vortex, he perceives it roll backward behind His path, like a globe itself infolding; like a sun: Or like a human form, a friend with whom he lived benevolent.

W. Blake: 1978: 21-27

I comprehend, for without transformation men become wolves on any slight occasion.

G. G. B. Byron 1969: 221

January 2. Photographed, smiling by flash. Got out of bed and remained confidently on hind legs half an hour. Almost my height. (On sheet inserted into book)… In the presence of myself and Zina, the dog (if, indeed, one may use this designation) swore obscenely at Prof. Preobrazhensky.
January 6. (Partly in pencil, partly in violet ink) Today, after his tail dropped off, he enunciated with utmost clarity the word "saloon". The recording machine is working. The devil knows what is going on. I am totally bewildered. Professor no longer

receives patients. From 5 P.M. the examination room, where this creature is walking about, resounds with definitely vulgar oaths and the words, "another double".
January 7. He says many words: "cabby", "no room", "evening paper", "the best present for children", and all the oaths and obscenities that exist in the Russian language. His appearance is strange. The fur remains only on his head, chin and chest. The rest of his body is bald, with flabby skin. In the genital area—a maturing man. The skull has grown considerably larger. The forehead is low and slanting.

M. Bulgákov 1925: 58-59

To Deleuze and Guattari (1980) and Deleuze (1995), occurrences of becoming (whether micro or macro) are achieved through molecular lines, lines of flight through which a person, a process, a thing, state, is deterritorialised. Becoming, it must be stated, is not part of history, though it is not atemporal. History conceived as such amounts only to the set of preconditions, categories and segmentations, however recent, that one leaves behind in order to "become", that is, to *transform*, to create *something new* (Deleuze 1995). "[A] becoming is not imaginary", Deleuze continues, " any more than a voyage is real. It is becoming that turns the most negligible of trajectories, or even a fixed mobility, into a voyage; and it is the trajectory that turns the imaginary into a becoming" (1997: 65). Transformation, creation and voyage, then, are always already held fast in a dialectical dance, and as such there is no real subject of becoming, except as a deterritorialised variable of the majority (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Therefore, molar lines, segmentary lines are both a *necessary and sufficient* condition for the establishment of molecular lines of flight and escape. For all intents and purposes, they are mutually implicated and mutually self-constituting; and, without one the other fails to exist.

To this end, there is also no medium through which to become except as a deterritorialised variable of a minority. Insofar as becoming is a molecular project, to

borrow Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) language, all becoming is a *becoming-minoritarian*. "When we say majority", assert Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 291), "we are referring not to a greater relative quantity but to the determination of a state or standard in relation to which larger quantities, as well as the smallest, can be said to be minoritarian: white-man, adult-male, etc. Majority implies a state of domination, not the reverse" (1987: 291).

In my case, the project of becoming involves those struggles—both individual and collective—to come to terms with events and intolerable conditions. Becoming means attempting (through whatever means one has it his/her disposal) to shake free from oppressive social determinants, categories, definitions, and their pursuant social positionings (Biehl and Locke 2010)—though sometimes, social reproduction or discursive replication limits not just the down-trodden but all of us, to a closed system of unintended repetition (of course this depends on the level of reflexivity or hyper-reflexivity one can engage oneself in through which one's habitus can become apparently, or at least partially so). Through the process of becoming, then, one can attempt to attain a different existential stage through which life, recreated, reimagined and, essentially, re-lived, is immanent and open to new trajectories and relations (Biehl and Locke 2010).

How does becoming come about, then? How does one *become*? For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), we can be thrown into becoming by anything at all through the most unexpected or the most insignificant things. However, one does not deviate from the majority unless there is "a little detail that starts to swell and carries you off" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 292). And one is carried away through lines of flight. A line of flight through which to become, though, is not defined by any points that it

connects with, or by any points that compose it. It comes up through the middle—it surges through molar aggregates—and runs perpendicular, much like a rhizome. As such, a line of becoming has neither a beginning nor an end—it only has a middle (Deleuze and Guattari 1980). But, regardless of its ontology of *in medias res*, the "in betweeness" of becoming is a motion by which the line frees itself from the point, rendering points indiscernible and blurred. As such, then, the nature of becoming is to destabilise one's position among the molar lines and aggregates which constitute it, hold it in place as it were, and to seek out cracks, splits, or points of intersection through which to escape, to create, to transform.

Becoming as an escaping or transformation through lines of flight is an anti-memory (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). "Memories always have a reterritorialization function" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 294). Rather than existing as an indeterminate form or cloud, a vector of deterritorialisation (through which to become) is directly engaged with the molecular levels of society—it furnishes a space through which to edge out between molar lines. The more deterritorialised it is, the stronger the contact between the two—one feeds, like a positive feedback loop, into the other and vice versa: "it is deterritorialisation that makes the aggregate of the molecular components 'hold together'" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 294).

Let us turn now to some ethnographic examples of how my informants engaged in the molecular project of becoming.

The Raconteur—The Will to Power Through Reinvention and Improvisation

Chris' case is interesting in that, unlike many of the people I conversed with daily at the YAC, he never partook in any activities related to writing short stories, poetry, or playing music—as people oftentimes did, whether it was a guitar someone had brought in, or playing the old piano in the backroom at the old YAC—writing, or drawing.

Chris' stance towards becoming was not dissimilar to that of others whose stories I listened to in that the "truth", for Chris, among others, was something to approach loosely, creatively, and as if it were improvisational. In fact, many of the people I spoke with regularly at the YAC—and these, for the most part, were males— would employ hyperbole and fabulation to a great extent in their stories. This was a tactic used to afford a more stable, credible position ("street-cred") within the social framework of the YAC.

More specifically, though, for Chris, stories were a means through which to re-create a potentially unfair and harsh past, thus rendering the present fluid, dynamic, and open to new possibilities. There were many occasions where Chris would be in the throes of narrating a rather loud story, which, invariably, would result in eye-rolls and occasional guffaws from those sitting nearby. When this would happen, I would sit back and listen carefully to Chris' "tall tales". In one of the life history interviews we conducted, Chris revealed many inconsistencies in his story about immigrating to Canada from Ireland (explaining to me at the end that he had a Canadian passport,

getting ages and dates mixed up as to when exactly he immigrated here with his family, etc.).

Whether it was providing loose descriptions regarding how he managed to burn down half of Stratford, living with prostitutes as a fifteen-year old runaway, and making over $3000.00 a day in profit from selling hard drugs, attending juvenile correctional institutions which don't exist, having shoot outs with police swat-teams that were never documented in the local newspaper, or singing and playing guitar for a death-metal band that never existed[64], I soon came to realise that Chris was quite skilled in the art of *fabulation* or the "tall tale".

Jordan, too, had a tendency to invent "truths" and tell tall tales. On one very slow night in December, I caught Jordan in a lie and called her out on it. She had told me that her roommate, another Ph.D. student in a different department, had been talking about me and my research to Jordan. Surprised by this, I asked what her roommate was saying. Jordan, refusing to make eye contact, pulled out her smart phone and started texting, in an apparent ruse to deflect. I pressed on, and was able to get Jordan to admit that she had lied. She then told me minutes later that she was a very "devious" person, and that she "bends the truth" all the time. When I asked her why she thinks she does this, her response was a curt, "don't know—I just do". She agreed to let me record our conversation with my digital recorder—though the conversation was shortly interrupted.

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[64] Insofar as I have been passionately interested in heavy metal since I was eleven years old, I am very familiar with local extreme metal bands. As well, I have a suite of resources—such as various comprehensive online music encyclopaedias—which did not feature any band called "Aborted Fetus"—Chris' putative death-metal band.

She continued, and told me that quite a few things she had told me were untrue, such as creating her own business with a partner making open-sourced goods, such as tractors and other farm equipment; getting in fights with people and dominating them; and certain grades she said she had achieved when she was in school.

> **Jordan:** Look, Mark, I'll admit, I've fucked with your mind a couple of times (laughing). I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, but I'll admit—I've totally done it, and you didn't even know.
> **Mark:** (Laughing) Oh boy, no you didn't—nice try, though. I'm sorry, but I can smell bullshit three miles away. And, I'll admit, I smelled it coming from you quite some time ago!
> **Jordan:** (Laughing) No you didn't, you couldn't have. I said some things about wanting to go into anthropology which weren't true—I'm sorry.
> **Mark:** (Laughing) No, really, I knew. I could totally tell. That's fine, though.

When I asked what lying "did" for her she explained that "fucking with people's heads" was something that made her feel that she could be "aggressive with people" without physically hurting them. She explained very briefly that because her father had died at a very young age (when she was six years old), and because she disliked her mother (since her mother "preferred" her brother over herself), she has felt spiteful towards people since she was very young. Since she didn't like being physically aggressive with people, "fucking with people's heads" provided her with a non-aggressive means to attempt to "control" social situations that she quite possibly felt were beyond her ability to influence. I continued to ask about her about her past, but because of the look of discomfort on her face the conversation naturally shifted to something else.

During my time doing fieldwork downtown and at the YAC, I became very familiar with this tendency to function as a *raconteur*—to use hyperbole and fabulation and its implication for the "truth" of people's stories. Some of the males would invent stories about seemingly contrived and outlandish pasts: Clark told me a lengthy story

one time about how he had joined the "Canadian Marines" (which do not exist) at seventeen. One night Jakey told me that he used to go to a lot of university parties when he was just thirteen years old, often getting into fights with football players. He told me that he would usually win these fights, and that he would then "swindle money" ("hundreds of dollars" as he claimed) out of the students he had just beaten. He then told me of his many sexual exploits with third and fourth year university students—all while he was just barely fourteen years old.

One night, Jakey's friend, Scout told me a detailed story of his first "kill". He explained to me in vivid detail how he had been fishing along the Thames River one morning when he was six or seven-years old—he was not able to remember exactly how old he was. As he cast his line into the water, he noticed a homeless man had come up to him and asked him for some money. Wanting to get away, Scout recounted that he tried to move along the river but the homeless man pursed him. Worried about his persistence, Scout said that he had yanked his fishing line out of the water quickly so that he could pack up and go home; however, in doing so, his fishing hook had "caught the jugular" of the homeless man, creating a deep and wide incision. He apparently died a few minutes later. Scout said that he had panicked, and rolled the lifeless body of the homeless man into the water. After he had made sure the body had sunk to the bottom of the river, he said he made a run for it. Straight-faced, the others around the table that afternoon didn't flinch as Scout told his story, making me wonder if they either believed Scout, or if they were used to his tall tales. When he had gotten up to have a smoke outside, I had asked Dean if he believed anything Scout said. His only reply was that Scout had had a tough life, and that maybe some of it was true, maybe some of it wasn't—and that was the extent of his reasoning.

On another evening, a group of us—including two young mothers—were talking about the responsibilities of caring for young children. Following several stories from the young mothers about the hardships of living at group homes with young infants, Scout, in his typical indifferent manner, said that he had had a son once, but he had accidentally killed him a few months ago. He claimed that one morning his son had come to him and complained about being hungry. Having nothing in the apartment but peanut butter, Scout conveyed that he had no choice but to give his son a peanut butter sandwich. Awash in insouciance, Scout said that his son had gone into anaphylactic shock within seconds, and later died the following evening at the hospital. In reaction, I was only able to emit a muted "really…" through squinted eyes and pursed lips—my disbelief conspicuous. Unfazed, Scout then turned and asked me if there was any sugar for his coffee.

A *prima facie* explanation might go something like this: the kids who frequent the YAC employ hyperbole because they are probably suffering from some form of mental illness, and therefore cannot help themselves from telling untruths. While this may be true in a few cases, a more careful look at the situation might reveal something quite different. Following Goffman (1959), the dramaturgical metaphor of "front performances[65]" as it relates to "impression management" sits flush with what some of my informants were attempting to achieve. Says Goffman, "Sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from them a

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[65] As Goffman (1954:22) states, "front" performances are those that regularly function in a general and fixed way to define a certain situation for those who observe the performance. Front, in this sense, refers to the "expressive equipment" of a standard form intentionally employed by an individual during his/her performance—in this case, the equipment is the use of hyperbole.

specific response" (1959: 6). Goffman adds, "[s]ometimes he [*sic*] will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require[s] this kind of expression and not because of any particular response (other than vague acceptance or approval) that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression" (ibid).

To this end, then, my informants were skilled artisans in the craft of impression management. Much like Labov *et al.'s* (1968) study of African-American and Puerto Rican English vernacular, lying, embellishment and hyperbole (as aspects of the various speech-genres he analysed) served a necessary social and psychological purpose: it allowed speakers, in Labov *et al.'s* case (as in mine), "…to triumph with words when other routes to successes are barred—a safe arena in which to exercise and practice aggressivemess [*sic*]" (1968: 116). To this end, then, "toughness" was an "opposing" value (opposing in relation to middle-class norms of non-street related individuals) in both my own and Labov *et al.'s* findings (1968: 218). I interpret this tendency to be a result of various levels of disenfranchisement, whether self-imposed, or the result of various circumstances: the break-down of the family, a death in the family, addiction, mental health issues, lack of opportunities, etc. As a result, the social location of some of my informants in relation to the state is highly precarious. As it happens, much like Zane, Scout was one of the people in the YAC who was constantly getting cut off of OW—facing delays in his monthly cheques and having to appeal terminations.

The argument could be made that the art of fabulation is a distinct form of *speech genre*. Bakhtin characterised genre as a distinction between types of utterance. And, utterance, to Bakhtin, is inseparable from the contextualising linkages between "thematic content, style, and compositional structure" (1986: 60) such that they are

equally determined by the particular context in which they arise. "Each separate utterance", he says, "is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*" (Bakhtin 1986: 60, original emphasis).

My treatment of speech genre here rests on the *intertextual* (Briggs and Bauman 2009) use of language regarding the function, effect, content, tone, truth-value and manner of the contexts of language use. I see speech genre as being interrelated with broader social and cultural phenomena, such as institutions of social relations and the shifting fields of power (at the economic, political and ideological levels) which subtend them. It could be said that in a very loose sense, those particular informants— and their audiences—who engaged in fabulation formed a distinct "speech community": a group "…sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety" (Hymes 1972: 54).

More specifically then, building on Bakhtin's aforementioned definition, we can further define speech genre "as the organising factor in the speech economy of a community" (Briggs and Bauman 2009: 219) or more generally as a form of speech event (Hymes 1972)—in this case, some of my informants' particular approach to telling stories, can be understood as a locally constituted, context-specific *way of speaking*. As such, fabulation as a genre of speaking in my field context pertains, as Briggs and Bauman assert, "crucially to negotiations of identity and power—by invoking a particular genre [in my case, what I would call simply *fabulation* or what Briggs and Bauman call "the tall tale"], producers of discourse assert (tacitly or explicitly) that they possess the authority needed to decontextualize discourse that

bears…historical and social connections and to recontextualize it in the current discursive setting" (2009: 226).

At the level of dialogic interaction, the genre of fabulation or the "tall tale" takes advantage of a gap in intertextuality: it involves a "transformational process" in discourse reception wherein any intertextual gap is attempted—in some cases—to be minimised. In the many dialogues I engaged in, there was a point where an apparent gap (in terms of "believability") appeared between the discourse of my informants and the generic framing of their story (Briggs and Bauman 2009). As Briggs and Bauman (2009) explain, those skilled in the genre of fabulation or the tall tale exploit this intertextual gap (between discourse and genre), and use it as a "creative tool" to achieve certain ends—in this case, the semblance of power.

As a result of a variety of social, existential and financial circumstances—as intimated above through a specific form of speech genre—all of my informants are dependent on the state (OW) for their financial well-being. The state (*qua* OW), owing to its private-sector driven restructuring—especially in the administration and provision of OW—sees (and has seen historically) as its imperative the task of domesticating the oftentimes undomesticatable, the undeserving, the "wild", i.e., those street-involved and homeless youth who are dependent on OW. And this imperative dictates that participants must adhere to the state's moral-regulatory project to become employable and productive. And, even if the low wage job that a participant may have the desire to find pays less than OW, or puts his/her medical coverage (or those select drugs that are

covered by OW) in jeopardy, the imperative is still to leave OW[66] and enter the job market—even if this means that one has to sacrifice, as Esther said, "food, shelter and safety".

In trying to meet the state's objective to cut and reduce OW caseloads, participants are actively engaged to espouse and be positioned discursively by the *entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making* by submitting evidence of job searches, applications and/or evidence of skills acquisition and education to their OW caseworkers. Understood as such, then, segmentary lines or molar lines produce and are produced by *moralising discourses*; and these moralising discourses configure—or at least attempt to—what it means to be a "proper", "good", and "independent" citizen. As Vološinov reminds us, "the ruling class strives to impart a supraclass, eternal character to the ideological sign [the discursive nature of molar, segmentary lines], to extinguish or drive inward the struggle between social value judgements which occurs in, to make the sign uniaccentual" (1973: 23). This process of extinguishing or driving inward any competing discourses occurs ("centrifugal", "inwardly persuasive"), as Bakhtin said many years ago, through the "centripetal force" of a "unitary and centralized language" (1981: 270).

Like the grand moralising discourses of nation-building from the 19th century onward, the *entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making*, grounded firmly in a neoliberal ideological matrix, discursively orients individuals forward, fixated on the *telos* of self-sufficiency, productivity and progress (sometimes masked within ideologies of individual "empowerment"). And, those who comprise the "underclass" who have no

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[66] Insofar as the private sector company, Accenture, now in charge of OW administration and provision has as their prime cost-cutting objective to cut costs through the reduction and limitation of case-loads.

choice but to rely on OW's financial support, yet who find it difficult to abide by their regulatory mandate—face a tenuous financial existence, no doubt exacerbated by pre-existing issues of loss, confusion, addiction, and, in some cases, mental illness.

In Bourdieu's last major theoretical work, *Pascalian Meditations* (2000), he refers to an individual's habitus as "the can-be which tends to produce practices objectively adjusted to the possibilities, in particular by orienting the perception and evaluation of the possibilities inscribed in the present situation". In an earlier chapter in the same book, he discusses those instances where this "can-be" of the habitus breaks down, and becomes disconnected from the orienting and evaluative function of an individual's investment in a particular political economy or "social-field". This investment and the various unconscious valences it has for individuals is referred to by Bourdieu (1977) as *illusio*[67].

What of those instances where, as per the footnote below, one's commitment or investment to a given "field", one's *illusio*, works its way through consciousness, and, essentially, falls out of synchrony with the "can-be" and the production of practices adjusted to possibilities of the habitus? Bourdieu (2000) calls this tendency a failure of "anticipation", meaning it's a failure of an individual to project themselves into future

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[67] To Bourdieu, "*Illusio*" is "understood as [the] immediate adherence to the necessity of a field is all the less likely to appear consciousness because it is in a sense removed from discussion: as the fundamental belief in the value of the stakes of the dispute and in the presuppositions inscribed in the very fact of disputing, it is the unexamined condition of the dispute…*Illusio* does not belong to the order of explicit principles, theses that are put forward and defended, but of action, routine, things that are done, and that are done because they are things that one does and that have always been done that way. All those who are involved in the fields, whether champions of orthodoxy or heterodoxy, share a tacit adherence to the same *doxa* which makes their competition possible and assigns its limits (the heretic remains a believer who preaches a return to purer forms of faith). He concludes by asserting that "[p]articipants have ultimately no answer to questions about the reasons for their membership in the game, *their visceral commitment to it; and the principles which may be invoked in such a case are merely post festum rationalizations intended to justify an unjustifiable investment, to themselves as much as to others* (Bourdieu 2000: 102 my emphases).

possibilities and situations provided by a particular social field. To this end, when such

a disconnect between habitus and social field occurs a disorder of engagement ensues

which leads to what Bourdieu has called a "destabilised habitus".

He explains:

Habitus is not necessarily adapted to its situation nor necessarily coherent. It has degrees of 'crystallization' of the status occupied. Thus, it can be observed that to contradictory positions, which tend to exert structural 'double binds' on their occupants, there often correspond destabilised habitus, torn by contradiction and internal division, generating suffering. Moreover, even if dispositions may waste away or weaken through lack of use (linked, in particular, to a change in social position or condition), or as a result of heightened consciousness associated with an effort of action…*there is an inertia (or hysteresis) of habitus which have a spontaneous tendency (based in biology) to perpetuate structures corresponding to their conditions of production. As a result, it can happen that, in what might be called the Don Quixote effect, dispositions are out of line with the field and with the 'collective expectations' which are constitutive of its normality* (2000: 160, my emphases).

This inertia, then, has seemingly led many of my informants to become over-

reflexive about their positions, leading them to want to extract themselves—based on a

detailed knowledge of how they "are and "act" in social situations, usually always

anxiety provoking—from the greater political economy in which they are set, or to

escape via lines of flight through various and idiosyncratic modes of becoming. These

modes of becoming, like Bourdieu's quote above, create the conditions of possibility or

enable "dispositions that are out of line with the field and with the 'collective

expectations' which are constitutive of its normality", i.e., the ideological structures of

neoliberalism which emphasise a rigid sense of individualism and its concomitant

expectation of self-sufficiency. Those who may be grappling with a destabilised

habitus, yet who must rely on the state for financial sustenance experience an extremely

contradictory social location: to abide the rules of the state, in this case OW, and, at the

same time, to turn back on to the self, and develop it in a way that is meaningful to the individual, so as to attain a sense of well-being.

Placed in what others might view as an untenable position (enmeshed in a moving grid of Deleuze's segmentary molar lines), one of the options my informants availed themselves of in order to experience some form of control in their lives was to inflect their stories with varying degrees of what I myself saw (and imposed) as *hyperbole*. Hyperbole, in the moral economy of street youth, as I came to understand it, is tantamount to a form of *social power*. And social power, in whatever form, stabilises people (or can provide the semblance thereof), and provides a firm yet temporary location for them amongst their peers. This is why, as mentioned above, some of my informants—in the capacity of raconteurs—were so skilled in the crafts of impression management.

Interestingly, though, within the moral economy or "culture" of youth at the YAC, my informants would rarely—if ever—"call each other out" as liars while telling stories. Unless asked directly (i.e., "was that guy making that stuff up"?), they would take each others' stories at face-value (or so it seemed)—quite possibly owing to the fact that either they knew everyone exaggerated; or, that their exaggerations *were reality* for them. Regardless of whether it happened or not, the bringing forth of a story or the act of telling (inflected by hyperbole) it very well could have been *the* truth, a different reality.

The hyperbole of the raconteur, in essence, served as a line of flight through which to become *other, to taste power*—however meagre and ephemeral this social power might be. Conceived as such, then, lying serves a purpose: as a form of action, it does social *work, and it gets work done*. It builds and fosters "street cred" in the

raconteurs who exaggerate or embellish their stories. The use of hyperbole as I see it is an attempt *par excellence* at moral posturing through rhetorical tactics and self-positionings within already established criteria for what counts as "legitimate", "credible", and "justifiable" in a given "interpretive community" (cf. Darnell 2008, 2011)[68].

As a rhetorical tactic, the use of hyperbole re-positions individuals. It allows them to retrodictively re-author and re-manage a past that, even though rough and marked with difficulties and pain, may to the individual be mundane and free of those experiences that can make him or her really "stand out" from his or her peers. The necessity of lying, then, is paramount to some of my informants; and thus may be understood as a form of capital to circulate and tender in order to maintain or to heighten one's position. This process I will call, borrowing the term from Nietzsche, a form of *the will to power*.

A controversial concept, Nietzsche's will to power has served as grist for hotly contested interpretations ranging from those which claim it is strictly a metaphysical theory, to those that claim it as a psychological principle related to existential growth and becoming. Aligning myself with the latter, I see the will to power as a means through which "to impose upon becoming the character of becoming—that is the supreme will to power" (Nietzsche 1968: 330). As Nietzsche explains, "to redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it'—that alone should I call redemption…All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful

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[68] The amalgamation of stories, the commonalities of experience, and shared values—of what is "worth living for" and "striving for"—constitute an interpretive or moral community.

accident—until the creative will says to it, 'But thus I will it; thus shall I will it'"

(Nietzsche 1958: 251-3).

The project, then, for Chris, Jakey, Jordan and Scout, may very well be one of a will to power—to creatively will and overcome themselves in their limitations through the re-creation and re-imagining of their pasts. By taking a line of flight between molar points, the molecular, using Deleuze and Guattari's language, is afforded through a becoming *other*. And this is achieved through the creation and tendering of the capital of hardship or tribulation—based on trauma, suffering, and the extremity of one's life experiences. As I observed, heard, and participated in them, dialogues in the YAC were almost always marked by a reach for extremity in that the more extreme a person's story and experiences, the more *authentically* they came across as a person "of the street". Those whose experiences were deemed less extreme were, in some cases, seen as less worthy of respect. This tendency was evidenced in both Zane's and Esther's narratives, as they oftentimes commented on how extreme their pasts were. Zane would say over and over, "I stayed at the Sally for two hundred and ten days—I don't know anyone down here who has ever done that", or "most kids down here don't know pain, I know pain. Most of these kids down here have it easy compared to me". Or, as Esther would say regarding the recounting of her many traumatic and extreme experiences, "now that really fucked me up", "that's rare, I don't know anyone who has gone through that"!

At the end of one of my longer conversations with Mitch, I asked him what he wanted to do with his life once things are back on track. He response was simply "I'm a drummer, I love to drum". I asked how long he had been drumming for. He replied, curiously, "uh, well, uh…not long". I then asked how long, and he said "well, I've only

ever played a drum set once". Finding his answer quite interesting, I pursued

respectfully and asked what it was about drumming that he liked. He said that he loved

music so much that it took him to a different place. As it happens, drumming was his

favourite part of music; however, instead of stating that he wanted to *become a*

drummer, he said that he *was* a drummer—even though, as he claimed, he had only

ever played drums once.

Over the course of the year that I knew Mitch, each time I saw him he would be

sitting—usually by himself—listening to his iPod and drumming on the table (hands

raised, hitting invisible cymbals and tom-toms, feet moving on the ground, pounding an

invisible bass-drum), as if in a trance. To Mitch, possibly taking a line of flight—

through a creative fantasy about being a drummer, and reworking a past that did not

include any real experience developing the skill to be an "actual drummer"—he *already*

was a drummer. He opened up a space—through a creative line of flight—for himself

in which to become something other than what he "actually" was. When our

conversation about drumming wrapped up, he said that once he gets his life together, he

wants to buy a drum set and commit his life exclusively to drumming. When Mitch

was talking, he was quite passionate about his goal; however, I still was grappling with

the fact that he spoke so seriously and passionately about something that he had only

tried once.

To recapitulate, then, hyperbole and fabulation (the art of the *raconteur*)

possibly affords a line of flight toward a distinctive mode of becoming—the

refashioning of one's past pushed by the spirit of the will to power to reconcile one's

past. As a mode of becoming other, then, it creates the conditions of possibility to edge

out and squeeze between the rigid molar aggregate of OW's moral regulatory apparatus

by according a semblance or a modicum of power (the very real power of "street cred")—a form of social power that would orient my informants positively yet temporarily in the moral economy of the street. In a way, then, the will to power as becoming served as somewhat of a corrective for the negative effects and affects of a destabilised or torn habitus.

By way of the persepectivist (cf. Viveiros de Castro and Goldman 2012) argument mentioned at the outset of the dissertation, I cannot leave out the fact that through the will to power (in the creation of social power via becoming) entire worlds can be brought forth, opened—regardless of their "veridical" nature, from the standpoint of the anthropologist—and shared. For some of my informants who seemed to deftly employ the art of the raconteur—like, Jakey, Chris, or Scout—those worlds quite possibly may have been very *real* for them at the time of their recounting (as well as before and after through the continuum of experience). From their perspective, then, truth is not an issue. The charge of *embellishment*, *hyperbole*, or *exaggeration* is an imposition (a phenomenological one) on their lifeworlds by myself, the anthropologist.

This tendency is a very difficult one for anthropologists to mitigate, and it raises its ugly head again and again when re-framing one's past fieldwork experiences. Are my informants lying to me, or are they actually articulating some form of subjective truth and reality that I am hesitant or resistant to accept? Regardless of this acknowledged tendency to become the "final arbiter of truth via fieldwork", the worlds—no matter how "far fetched" or "out there" they may seem to me or anyone else—most likely *were reality* for my informants, marked by a very tangible and real truth of experience at the time of their telling. The process of becoming creates the processual entry point to different worlds—regardless of their seemingly inaccessible

nature to the ethnographer. To this end, though Mitch—who from my initially un-reflexive position was not what I would consider a drummer—according to his own subjective truth, he *was* a drummer. He was a drummer who was in the process of getting better and better through his own form of practice—air-drums. He was *becoming*-drummer.

Becoming, Creativity and Health

For Zane, Esther, Mitch and Dan, writing was another way to re-imagine and re-frame past experiences. For Zane, the combination of drawing, writing, music and gaming offered him a series of polyvalent lines of flight to escape his current predicament. Writing and drawing offered Zane several trajectories through which to create or re-create himself anew. Music offered Zane a medium through which to reach a plane of catharsis: "It fuels my rage, it does the opposite. Because I can't find any way to let out my inner-most feelings, my compressed emotions, rather, my anger that builds up and has built up, music is a great for it to do that for me". Drawing has a similar effect. He explains:

> **Zane:** Drawing latched onto further, um, loosened my grasp on reality. It had gotten so bad, I didn't know what to do. I had no one to talk to. I've never been good at conversations, fully explaining myself, a stepping stone toward my innermost depression. I didn't have self-confidence either. I gotta work on that, that's my major flaw. That's my identity, and music, too.

After having gotten to know Zane over the course of a year, I observed him produce various drawings, in a variety of styles, and using a number of different themes. These ranged from the grotesque, featuring complicated characters rising from the earth, reaching to overcome what lays beneath; to fairly graphic depictions of

Zane's suicide, replete with diagrammatic orientations indicating the weapon used, its

position in relation to his body, the environmental surround in which the act was carried

out, and the responses (speech balloons) from characters who happened upon the body.

I would ask Zane about suicide sometimes, and his response was always the same: "I'd

never do it; but I have such black thoughts, black feelings, that it's important for me to

get them out on paper".

Other drawings would depict cartoonish characters from different planets, in a

variety of comic circumstances: aliens having drunk too much beer, stumbling around

an environment without gravity, and other similar contexts. Recurring themes were

black holes or vacuums in the sky, skulls, skeletons, ravens, and other variations of

typical symbols associated with a youthful oppositional stance: pentagrams, up-side-

down crosses, and blood. Two examples of Zane's artwork (illustration #2 and #3) are

below (drawn under the pen-name "Goat Greywaste". The Celtic text in the first

drawing translates to "an open mouth often catches a closed fist").

For Mark Δ
Your Bud,

Zane once told me that he aspired to become a professional artist, possibly getting commissioned one day to draw album covers for heavy metal bands. His favourite album covers, those that would inspire him to draw, were usually eerie, grotesque or surreal in some way. We would often search online—via my iPhone— along with Chris, and sometimes Dan, for death metal album covers which utilised Zane's favourite colour palate: grey and black. As an exercise in looking at things I already appreciated, it revealed more clues about Zane's lifeworld. As *per* my fieldnotes, Zane would oftentimes say "I love the theme of things rising out of the abyss", and this *movement* was the subject of many of his own drawings.

Drawing, as I saw just about everyday at the YAC, took Zane *elsewhere*; it allowed him to imagine the unimaginable, to articulate what he thought he could not through direct speech, and to create worlds that were dramatically other to the one he lived in day to day. A major form of his communication with me was actually through drawing. Some evenings, we would sit there surrounded by three or four others, and not say anything for hours. He would, every so often, stop drawing, inspect his piece, and then present it to me. I would then comment briefly, explaining that I liked where he was taking it. He would nod, and quietly continue. In terms of communication— and the way events, experience, and memories were crystallised and condensed through drawing and writing—I see a parallel here with what T. S. Eliot called "objective correlatives". "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative' Eliot says. "In other words" he goes on, "a set of objects, situation, a chain of events, which shall be a formula of that particular emotion: such that when the external facts, which must terminate in a sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (1960: 124-125).

As a very brief aside (and situating things within a broader, chronotopic frame), the crux of ethnography of communication, according to Hymes is "…concerned with the situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right" (1962: 16). More specifically, it was to centre on a "general theory of the interaction of language and social life must encompass the multiple relations between linguistic means and social meaning. The relations within a particular community or personal repertoire are an empirical problem, calling for a mode of description that is jointly ethnographic and linguistic" (1986: 39). In order to sit flush with my informants' approach to communication aside from language, alternative "modalities" or "channels" (Hymes 1964: 13; Sherzer and Darnell 1972: 550-551) of communication need to be considered as well. In the context of my fieldwork, alternative modalities or channels of speech acts included drawing, poetry, writing, performing (singing, spoken word). These modes were not always, perforce, face-to-face in their expressions; however, they are nevertheless inherently dialogic in that there is always an intended respondent.

Much like drawing, *writing* was an escape for Zane, Esther, Mitch, and Dan[69]— all of whom would write poems or stories wherein they would either articulate their personal experiences with pain, sadness, confusion, or they would write from a perspective radically *other* than their own. This creative reach toward otherness in whatever form was a way to re-create a position, a stance, a perspective so as to both reconcile one's experiences and to detach oneself from the present—a temporary existential deracination as it were. Creativity here cannot be understood as simply a

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[69] Dan would talk about writing and the peace it afforded him quite a bit over the time I got to know him, though I only saw a few of his pieces.

"competent response to anticipated outcomes", but rather it should be reframed as a punctuated process of *controlled volatility*, one that touches on the unexpected and the recognisable as well as the novelty of newness and anticipation (Hastrup 2007: 200). As well, creativity, as an improvisational social and cultural process of emergence—and therefore an inherently communicative one, marked by lines of temporal connectivity and disjuncture—produces and reproduces cultural forms through intersubjective and environmental engagement instead of merely replicating and transmitting them (Ingold and Hallam 2007). As I see it, creativity in its various forms does not simply "tell" or "narrate" experiences; it is a vehicle through which to organise and produce certain forms of experience rendered into an aesthetic form.

The process of creativity overall, then, could be likened as well to Benjamin's notion of "profane illumination". Like the surrealist poets and artists (particularly Breton and Nadja) that Benjamin wrote of in his piece *Surrealism: The last snapshot of the European intelligentsia*, my informants sought to "…bring the immense forces of 'atmosphere' [good or bad, sorrowful or happy] concealed in these things [mundane, everyday experiences] to the point of explosion [and transformation]" (1978: 182). A profane illumination, as a type of "conjuring that initiates", is a form of apprehension, one that attempts to negotiate the densities of experience and the sensuous knowledges these densities can afford.

Creativity as a form of profane illumination is a "discerning moment" (Gordon 2008) in that it aims at a reach (epistemically, existentially), however weak or temporary, at a new, hidden and different experience buried beneath the "visibilities" of mundane everydayness. The sensuous knowledges a profane illumination reaches toward, then, *do things*; they are action: "[t]o experience a profane illumination is to

experience a [*sic*] something to be done: talking to a wolf; replacing your fearful self and the invisible fathers; protecting your child from what is waiting for her; living with, loving and dispatching a ghost. Sensuous knowledge always involves knowing and doing" (Gordon 2008).   As Adorno says, the profane illumination describes "when thought presses close to its object, as if through touching, smelling, tasting, it wanted to transform itself" (quoted in Taussig 1991: 150).

A passionate writer, Zane's love was fantasy—writing about various characters, both male and female, undergoing quests, always marked by a certain complexity of character and plot development. Sometimes, when Zane would tell me about a new character, I couldn't help but notice the change in his countenance: he could go on for an hour straight, lost in his own characterological machinations. The specification of details for most of his characters was impressive, including specifics such as hair colour, height, body size, weapons of choice, psychological disposition, and their place in the social web of relations he had created. "Wow", I would say many times, "you've got character development down to a science"!

Writing for Esther was marked by a different tone and objective. Spoken word was her expressive medium of choice. She would sometimes write her pieces first, and then perform them for me. At other times, she would recount—from memory—what she had written in the past. I was always impressed as to how much detail she could remember, especially the rhyming patterns and the intricacies of the various characters she would perform and embody. I would watch Esther carefully while she was performing. As she got going, she would stare off at a fixed point in front of her—a point I assumed, held her focus, and allowed her to remember what she had written before—and become very animated while she spoke. She would inflect her speech with

a hip-hop tone and style: her hands would move to the rhythm of her words, turning and slicing the air with each syllable. Her head would turn slightly with certain words, embodying their meaning and emphases; stressing a syllable here, stressing another there, set in motion and force through her body.

At one point during one of her performances, I mistakenly interrupted her—as I wanted to make a point of clarification—yet she didn't notice my *faux pas* inasmuch as she was ensconced in her narration, possibly freeing herself temporarily from the heavy topic of her father that had come up on conversation earlier. Esther's spoken word performances were usually tightly tethered to themes and experiences of loss, rape, solitude, escape, and suicide; but there were also strains of hope interspersed with the more tragic tenor.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Untitled

I wanna sink both feet into the sorrow, let it come up to my knees. Stop thinking about tomorrow. So Cold the shiver is starting to shatter my bones, I crowd surf for heat but I still feel so alone.

Hard as stone my heart is beating precious metal to my head, finger scraping barrel bottom think'n I can't stop until I am dead. But you stopped me, finger stopped in the end 'til it bled. Saved me from sadness and I'm never forgetting what you said.

You're not a quitter drop the gun and grab some paper, let your pain flow in ink and not blood. Save that for later. You think'n that you ain't nothing but just look what you can do. It's worth quite a bit despite it being for so few.

So in lieu of diving deep into the dreadful, hold back your shoulders and you ain't dead, so stop askin, just go 'head and wait your turn. You've got so much to do, still got lessons to learn.

You'll save lives, talk'n about the times you've wanted to die. Folks will open up and trust enough to break down and cry out. They're scared and never felt prepared to feel all this pain. And it seems plain they'll never be cheerful again.

And it hurts, yeah it burns, that's why you're askin for death. But there are so many more beautiful things in the world that'll take your breath. And I guess what I'm saying is in the end it's your decision. Just make sure you're informed so that you make it with precision

> (*Esther*: performed for me on an evening in November, written on the back of a crumpled cross-word puzzle one night)

"To write" Deleuze (1997) says, "is certainly not to impose a form (of expression) on the matter of lived experience. Literature rather moves in the direction of the ill-formed or the incomplete…writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete, always in the midst of being formed". He continues, stating that writing is a "...process, that is, as passage of Life that traverses both the liveable and the lived. Writing is inseparable from *becoming*: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes-molecule to the point of becoming-imperceptible" (1997: 1). Deleuze relays that "to become is not to attain a form (identification, imitation, Mimesis) but to find the zone of proximity, indiscernibility, or indifferentiation where one can no longer be distinguished from a woman, an animal, or a molecule—neither imprecise nor general, but unforeseen and nonpreexistent, singularized out of a population rather than determined in a form" (1997:1).

As such, to Deleuze (1997) the line of flight through which to *become* via writing opens up a space, distinct from the world of lived actuality in its temporal signatures, its very ontological status. Writing thus provides an escape from the molar aggregates of formalisation and categorisation which constitute our mundane worlds of

daily tasks. Writing can give these worlds form, meaning, a direction, a rhythm. Quite simply, through writing (and I would argue, drawing, too), different worlds of ontological possibility are opened up, created and proffered. Whether the writing of a story, the drawing of a picture, or through spoken word performance, the world of the past is unmade, refashioned, and re-made.

Morris (1997) adds to our understanding of writing—or creativity—as becoming by pointing out that writing helps create and to uncreate *suffering*. It is through "moral community"—a moral community of sufferers in my fieldwork context—that suffering can be *expressed, conveyed and compared*. Writers, then, do much more than describe or simply represent affliction. They can permit a revaluation of suffering that is, perhaps, impossible through other techniques of empathy; they can help mobilise will and passion to attempt to reconcile, and quite possibly, change their situations (Morris 1997).

The planes of experience, if we can conceive of them as such, are fragmented and fractured in stories like Zane's or Mitch's or Esther's. Experience, relations, and orientations are shot through with anxieties, "flashbacks", "tortured and torturing pasts", insecurities, inadequacies, and fears. Thus, valences are tilted, bent, erased; cathexes are imputed elsewhere—toward different scenes, characters, imaginings, plots, etc. The newly created vistas and horizons against which different worlds are set and brought to life occur in a process similar to Rimbaud's "*la voyant*[70]"—deranging the

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[70] As Rimbaud waxes: "The first study for the man who wishes to be a poet is his own self-knowledge, entire; he seeks his soul, he inspects it, he tempts it, apprehends it…I say that it is necessary to be a *voyant*, to make oneself a *voyant*. The Poet makes himself a *voyant* through a long, immense and reasoned deranging of all his senses. All the forms of love, of suffering, of madness; he tries to find himself, he exhausts in himself all the poisons, to keep only their quintessences. Unutterable torture in which he needs all his faith, all his superhuman strength,

world of previous experience, and casting it forth with a new physiognomy, a new look, feel, taste, expression. As it occurred many times in the YAC, these new worlds of experience—of the becomings of otherness—were brought to life through the derangements of everyday experience, and expressed as fabulations, tall tales. Deleuze, following Bergson, reminds us that "there is no literature without fabulation; and fabulation, "the fabulating function" does not consist in simply projecting an ego, it stretches out, grasps and attains the visions of Otherness, and in doing so it raises itself and obtains new becomings and powers (1997: 3).

The themes that arose from reading and listening to Zane's, Mitch's, and Esther's stories (among many others[71]) makes me think that they were engaged in some form of project: an *existential project* (both individual and collective) to reconcile the past with the present; to find meaning, peace, and well-being in their lives before moving on. Yet this form of existential project seemed to hold the future at bay, only insofar as it represented an almost meaningless potential since the present was still marked by a very high degree of uncertainty, suffering, and ambiguity.

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in which he becomes among all men the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed one, —and the supreme Savant! A—for he arrives at the unknown! Since he has cultivated his soul, already rich, more than anyone else! He arrives at the unknown, and although, crazed, he would end up by losing the understanding of his visions he has seen them! Let him die in his leaping through unheard-of and unnameable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin on the horizons where the other collapsed" (Rimbaud 1973: 8-9).

[71] One of the drawbacks to being a male in his 30's doing fieldwork in this context is that some people, including young females (for understandable reasons) were loath to engage in conversation; and, if people were willing to speak, they were—at times—quite reticent. Again, considering what some of these youth have been through in terms of hardship and tribulation, this is quite understandable.

Philosophical Mind

Some days it's kinda hard not being a prick,
My boiling points built up it tilts and tips,
Every time I try to get a grip I grab and slip,
Get mad and the same time sad as shit,
So I'm going all out into all I spit,
Till my body and my soul has split,
Till my fire is no longer lit,
Gives up expires and quits,
Burns out cause of all this shit,
It's a hit or miss gamble that I'm willing to take,
This situation is a make or break,
The true moment of truth,
I rest all of faith in fate,
Please God bless me when I reach the heavenly gate,
My philosophy maybe a gift of wisdom,
But I'm cursed in my current position,
First off I'm coping with stress,
Even worst I'm broke and depressed,
For what it's worth all the loss of rest,
I've got enough problems buried deep inside my skull,
Can't sleep so I toss and turn,
I'm up all hours keep pacing up and down the hall,
It's madness got me bouncing off them fucking walls.

To tell the truth my destinies [*sic*] still in questioning,
Long after I have carried my legacy,
Will it bring out the best of me,
I'm anxious just watching the time,
In the end will it kill my philosophical mind,
Got freedom? you ain't fucking free,
Need money so you slave forty hours a week,
They got your name in the system til your body rots it,
It's a shame your existence is a fucking product,
Who to blame but yourself cause your ego bought it,
Have you dreaming over wealth cause you know you want it,
Selling out your inner self yeah you've fucking pawned it,
So be proud of your image everyday you pawn it,
For the ones who possess they always have to plunder,
From the ones without possessions just to keep them under,
And they love it when we struggle fighting one another,
Cause we scared when we fight when we're out numbered,
Stand alone and we're weak if there's no others,
But when together then we might defeat the bigger numbers…

(*Mitch*: October 2011, written in the YAC)

Suffering as they do from anxiety, depression, PTSD, and addiction, perhaps the most marked form and source of distress was *loss or the search for something seemingly unattainable--wholeness*. The loss that accompanies abandonment, the loss of opportunity, the loss of a childhood, the loss of innocence, but, perhaps, most importantly, the loss of *love*. Inasmuch as human existence is relational, and relations define its constitution and perpetuation, life is, at times (and especially for my informants), continually *at risk*. Following Jackson (2005), our being is conditional and contingent on our intersubjectivity, on our interactions with others and the world we inhabit (corporeal, dialogic, social, imaginary). Yet at the same time we are involved in a never-ending struggle to sustain and augment our being in relation to the being of others—as well as the being and non-being of the physical world that subtends us (Jackson 2005).

When one's being is marred by loss and the constant threat thereof—as evidenced in the life-history excepts and written pieces featured above—one could say that my informants were suffering from a form of what Laing (1969) called *ontological insecurity* and Binswanger (1963) called *disequilibrium*. For Laing, ontological insecurity is an existential position and is marked by an absence of what he called *ontological security*. To possess ontological security means that one can encounter the hazards of life, social, ethical, spiritual and biological from a centrally firm position, never questioning the boundaries of their own and others' realities, identities, and temporalities (Laing 1969).

Binswanger (1963), in similar form to Laing, claims that man/woman's anthropological proportion was specified by a *vertical axis* which corresponds to self-

realization and to the actuality of *Dasein*[72] in psychological and empirical terms, and a

horizontal axis which corresponds to being-with-the-other. Man/woman's

Verstiegenheit ("wandering beyond a limit", often translated as "extravagance") results

in a marked disproportion of the dialectical relation between self-fulfilment (existential

height, moving upwards to reach one's own most possibility [*Eigentlichkeit*]) and

world-fulfilment (existential breadth, moving outwards to reach more developed

relations with others). And this disproportion leads ultimately to existential volatility,

anxiety and uncanniness*".* (Binswanger 1963: 346-349).

Whether seen from Laing's or Binswanger's perspectives, my informants,

owing various existential traumas, faced tremendous difficulties in their relations with

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[72] *Dasein*, in German literally translates to 'here-being/there-being'. It is to be understood as
the kind of being that each one of us is. Roughly, it is a term that designates human existence.
According to Polt, "*Dasein* denotes that being from whom Being itself is at issue, from whom
Being is in question. For the most part, in Heidegger, this being is us, the human being,
although *Dasein* is not equivalent to human beings; Heidegger insists that *Dasein* is not an
anthropological, psychological, or biological concept. We can think of *Dasein* as a condition
into which human beings enter, either individually or collectively, at a historical juncture when
Being becomes an issue for them…" (xii, 1999). It must be pointed out that Binswanger's view
of *Dasein* differs from Heidegger's. "Binswanger's understanding of *Dasein* and its existential
composition can be said to be a 'modification' of Heidegger's. This modification, I believe, is
necessary for the discipline of phenomenological psychiatry, insofar as it deals with individuals
and their lifeworlds. This being said, Heidegger's ontology is limited to human 'being' in
general. His analysis centres on the question of human being and its implications for further
understanding the ontological basis of the human condition. By contrast, Binswanger's
approach focuses on the ontic level of analysis; he is more interested *in particular entities*
(individual patients). Needleman (1963) claims that Binswanger's approach exceeds the ontic
level of analysis in that what he seeks to gain is knowledge, not just of particular entities, but of
what makes the particular experience of an individual possible. One of the main characteristics
which makes Binswanger's analysis of *Dasein* a modification of Heidegger's is his approach to
the care structure. To Heidegger, it seems that care (being-in-the-world) is an invariable,
universal structure of Dasein. As such, it is invariable in that all individual differences are to be
viewed as falling within the strictly defined *a priori* rule of the interrelation of the existentials
which constitute the care structure. Binswanger, on the other hand approaches the concept of
care as an 'existential *a priori*', or what Needleman aptly titles the 'meaning-matrix' of *Dasein*.
Care as an ontic structure, to Binswagner, differs between individual to individual—it is an
idiographic feature".

others, to themselves, and to the future. It would oftentimes strike me as curious why

Zane would always explain to me that he was unable to communicate through speech

(ironic inasmuch as I found him to be an excellent verbal communicator), yet drawing

and writing afforded him the *freedom* to communicate and express himself without

hold, without anxiety, without imposed self-constraint.

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Tidespire

A wasted shade, a looming high, a vertigo without a rise, seven hews in crystal snow, bestowed to galvanize rainbows,
A sigh of elden oak and bream, a wounded trust in broken dream, patience given, father time, closing spaces, pantomime,
Whispers handed in bouquet, to memory and thoughts un-weighed, of ages long and beauty gone, before the storm, before the calm,
Isolation ten fold paved, felony for ravens slaved, the labyrinth without a door, my somnolence clears nevermore,
A rest for eras damned and sought, I sold the visions that I bought, for everything must all remain, without self, without a name,
To lurk in light, stray soil asunder, to burn inside, and crave for thunder, watching as you lie in wake, waiting for the walls to break, some strengths you gain, while others fail, in dissonance, while worlds bewail.

<div align="right">(*Zane*: July 19th, 2011)</div>

Literature for Deleuze (1997) is a processual enterprise that leads to a form of

health; I would go so far as to say a form of *existential health*. To this end, the writer is

not necessarily a patient but more so a *physician*—the physician of him/herself and the

world. "The world is a set of symptoms whose illness merges with man" says Deleuze

(1997: 3). The writer *qua* physician "possesses an irresistible and delicate health that

stems from what he has seen and heard of things too big for him, too strong for him,
suffocating things whose passage exhausts him, while nonetheless giving him the
becomings that a *dominant and substantial health would render impossible*" (1997: 3,
my emphasis)—this is textually embodied in Esther's, Mitch's and Zane's pieces
above. Since writing is a process likened to a journey, Deleuze explains that "[t]he
writer returns from what he has seen and heard with bloodshot eyes and pierced
eardrums" (1997: 3).

If writing is a process, "a becoming", that leads (in some cases, though not all)
to existential health, then it might be plausible to say that the transformations writing or
creativity may afford can be the possibility to *contain* suffering—to an extent. For
Levinas (1998), suffering is a given in consciousness. Like the lived experience of
colour, emotion, or the physicality of touch, suffering obtains in a certain content, a
"psychological content"; however, as Levinas points out, this content is for the most
part, "unassumable". This "unassumablity" results not from the excessive intensity of a
sensation, or the quantification of pain that crosses a certain standardised threshold; on
the contrary, pain "…results from an excess, a 'too much' which is inscribed in a
sensorial content, penetrating as suffering the dimensions of meaning which seem to be
opened and grafted on to it" (1998: 156).

Levinas continues, and explains that

> For the Kantian 'I think—which is capable of reuniting and embracing the most
> heterogeneous and disparate givens into order and meaning under its *a priori*
> forms—it is as if suffering were not only a *given* refractory to synthesis, but the
> *way* in which the refusal opposed to the assembling of givens into a meaningful
> whole is opposed to it: suffering is at once what disturbs order and the
> disturbance itself. It is not only the consciousness of rejection or a symptom of
> rejection, but this rejection itself: a backwards consciousness, 'operating' not as
> 'grasp' but as revulsion (1998: 156, original emphases).

Insofar as suffering results from an excess that overflows any and all categories

of the understanding, and insofar as suffering disturbs the lived order of everydayness,

for Levinas (1998) suffering *qua* suffering is *useless*—it is pointless, and, as such,

represents pure passivity. "The passivity of suffering" continues Levinas, "is more

profoundly passive than the receptivity of our senses, which is already the activity of

welcome, and straight away becomes perception". "In suffering", he goes on,

"sensibility is a vulnerability, more passive than receptivity; it is an ordeal more passive

than experience" (1998: 157). Levinas directs us to the fact that in its pure passivity,

suffering is pointless.

> There are the 'pain-illnesses' where the integration of other psychological states does not bring any relief but where, on the contrary, anxiety and distress add to the cruelty of the hurt. But one can go further—and doubtless arrive at the essential facts of pure pain—by evoking the 'pain-illnesses' of beings who are psychically deprived, backward, handicapped, in their relational life and in their relationships with the Other, relationships where suffering, without losing anything of its savage malignancy, no longer covers up the totality of the mental and comes across novel lights and new horizons. These horizons none the less remain closed to the mentally deficient, except that in their 'pure pain' they are projected into them to expose them to me, raising the fundamental ethical problem which pain poses 'for nothing'…For pure suffering, which is intrinsically meaningless and condemned to itself without exit, a beyond takes shape in the inter-human (1998: 158).

That suffering and pain are, for Levinas, useless and meaningless is something

with which I must disagree: suffering for my informants is not useless and not

meaningless. It provides the very existential ground for all meaning, understanding and

subjectivity in their lives, as painful and unbearable as it may be sometimes. In their

day-to-day lives, then, suffering colours all aspects of daily comportment: the past

colours and imbues the present with certain shades of possibility and potential, and

therefore we might say that for my informants, their day-to-day experience is marked

by what may be called a certain "logics of suffering" wherein suffering provides the

conditions of possibility for the ability to act: both on oneself and the world. A "logics of suffering", then, can serve as a form of experiential heuristic: a way of discovering, acting, learning, and figuring—through the trials and errors of life—how best to act or not act upon and in certain contexts. But the key to a "logics of suffering" is in and through the reconciliation of the past with an ambiguous and fluid present. Situating this within the frame of writing and creativity writ large, I turn to the problem of reconciliation.

Time and Health: Overcoming (*Economic*) Versus Reconciliation (*Existential*)

As Deleuze understands it, writing is a form of becoming, and as a form of becoming, its occurrence accords a form of health—an existential health. For Esther, Zane, Mitch and the others, this kind of existential health leads not necessarily to a lasting "peace", "comfort" or manageable "well-being", but rather to a form of provisional *acceptance* and *reconciliation* of life. For Nietzsche (one of Deleuze's main intellectual inspirations), to live life, to accept it, and to seek reconciliation with it was to live one's life *with style*. And to live one's life with style was to live as if one were a *literary character*—as if out of a novel.

To live life as a literary character, then, is to strive for creative ways (it is, in and of itself, a project of becoming) to invent and identify oneself with all one's actions *historically*, to accept them, and to build one's life from them. Such a task means that through *creative becoming*, a person comes to see that literally no aspect of his/her character and deeds could be what it is without the reconciliation of every other aspect

of his/her historically-rooted character and deeds[73]—this is tantamount to a "unity"

among one's soul, memories, desires, fears, etc. (Pippin 2010). To attain "unity"

(which in itself is an existential impossibility) among one's memories, desires, fears,

etc., is a creative process marked by an inventive and conciliatory stance as one re-

orients through various means one's history towards an uncertain present and future.

"Health as literature, as writing, consists in inventing a people who are missing.

It is the task of the fabulating function to invent a people" (Deleuze 1997: 4). For my

informants, it seems as if they viewed themselves and their identities as "missing" in

some ways, effaced by overpoweringly traumatic pasts, in search of some way to re-

inscribe or re-invent themselves. To be able to do this, though, they have to reconcile

their pasts with the present. As I saw it, this was a constant and difficult task, a

struggle.

Bringing specificity to this notion of reconciliation, then, through writing,

invention, and improvisation, and the existential health it may accord, Nietzsche

explains the implications of a broader understanding of health, especially in relation to

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[73] This concept of the reconciliation of one's deeds dovetails tightly with Nietzsche's overarching thematic of his entire philosophy, the *Ewige Wiederkehr* "eternal recurrence" or "eternal return". This thematic was, perhaps, most comprehensively laid out in § 341, *The Greatest Weight*: "What if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust! Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, "Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?" would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal" (273)?

the more generalised, regulated and "normal" conception of health as defined by the

medical community[74] —one that defines health as the state of being free from illness,

disease or injury. But what about the possibility of "illness" informing, orienting and

enriching one's understanding of life and the solutions to its problems?

Before I continue, let me explain that this "normal" conception of health sharply

differentiates "illness" from "health". It must be recognised that illness should not be

defined by the contrast with a notion of health which is in turn derived from the

establishment of standard values (Gadamer 1996). As Gadamer explains, there are a

multitude of marginal factors that cannot, under any circumstance, be measured; and

that the results that derive from what can be measured lose their significance by

comparison. As he states, "[t]he picture of the individual which is constructed on the

basis of standard values is an extremely precarious and unreliable one" (1996: 160).).

It is precarious and unreliable insofar as such an individual exists merely as a Weberian

"ideal type", a hypothetical possibility comprised of attributes common to most cases of

a particular aspect of social life—in this case, health. Real people, on the other hand,

are complicated and ambiguous, and so rendering illness and health into mutually

exclusive binaries is nothing but problematic. And for my informants, nothing was

more problematic than the distinction between illness and health in their everyday lives.

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[74] As per Steadman's Concise Medical Dictionary for the Health Professions (1997), the entry for *health* is: "the state of the organism when it functions optimally without essence of disease or abnormality" (382); or, "a state characterized by anatomical, physiological, and psychological integrity, ability to perform personally valued family, work and community roles" (382-383). One need not parse the aforesaid definitions long before it becomes apparent that health is a state that an individual has or possesses, and, therefore, becomes something that one can lose[74]. The former definition clearly bespeaks an individualistic philosophic orientation in that the focus of health as a state is on the *organism*; it says nothing of the broader processes (social, political, ecological, etc.) in which all organisms are in a constant state of negotiation. And, so, too, the latter definition intimates a reductionist and individualist perspective in that it centres on the "anatomical, physiological, and psychological integrity" of an individual, and his/her ability to perform "personally valued" roles.

We now return to Nietzsche's understanding of the multiplicity of *healths* (their irreducibility to any externally imposed norms) and the incredibly unique and subjective natures thereof, especially as they relate broadly to our social lives outside the body.

> §120: The popular medical formulation of morality that goes back to Ariston of Chios [a pupil of Zeno, the founder of Stoicism], "virtue is the health of the soul," would have to be changed to become useful, at least to read: "*your* virtue is the health of *your* soul." For there is no health as such, and all attempts to define a thing that way have been wretched failures. Even the determination of what is healthy for your *body* depends on your goal, your horizon, your energies, your impulses, your errors, and above all on the ideals and phantasms of your soul. Thus there are innumerable *healths* of the body; and the more we allow the unique and incomparable to raise its head again, and the more we abjure the dogma of the "equality of men," the more must the concept of a *normal* health, along with a normal diet and the normal course of an illness, be abandoned by medical men. Only then would the time have come to reflect on the health and illness of the *soul*, and to find the peculiar virtue of each man in the health of his soul. In one person, of course, this health could look like its opposite in another person. Finally, the great question would still remain whether we can really dispense with illness—even for the sake of our virtue—and whether our thirst for knowledge and self-knowledge in particular does not require the sick soul as much as the healthy, and whether, in brief, the will to health alone, is not a prejudice, cowardice, and perhaps a bit of very subtle barbarism and backwardness (2001: 116-117 both original and my own emphases).

Nietzsche's reflective practice on "the will to health" must occur *in and through time; especially through the turbulence and special logics of pain, suffering, failure, subversions, and those things not normally associated with "health" as "the freedom of illness and disease".* It is a form of *becoming* after all; an emergent, temporalised line of flight both outward (socially) and inward (experientially) at the same time, and thus an opening onto something new, *something transformative*. This is a modality of becoming that strikes past and through regular, medically-regulated conceptions of health, illness, disease, addiction, mental health, and well-being. It is *ateleological* in that reconciliation involves an oftentimes contradictory, back-and-forth processes.

By contrast, the "becoming employable" imperative of OW administration and management, through its constant emphasis on the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making is pointedly teleological in two senses: 1) participants are urged to develop, augment and act on their skill-sets in order to become employable; and, 2) once participants are able to seek employment, case-workers are then able to reduce their caseloads—therefore reducing administrative costs, management, and, ultimately, provincial budget costs.

This form of becoming, then, occurs—as I heard over and over by so many of my informants—in a measured, linear time frame, under the surveillance of the state: each month, OW workers expect results, proof and an indication that their participants have been searching for employment. When the proof is lacking, or there is no proof, the participant is in jeopardy of being cut, or having their cheque delayed.

Even in special instances like Esther's, where she was, after many months, able to get on the "A-team" (addictions team) at OW, weekly and monthly meetings still revolve around her ability to overcome a lack of skills through acquisition and development, or to overcome a lack of motivation by striving toward the goal of employability. From the perspective of OW administrators and managers, participants' well-being or *existential health* is secondary to their *ability* to become employable and enter the labour market. *Ability*, then, and not existential health or well-being of whatever shade, is the focus of OW administration and management. As Esther said to me many times throughout my fieldwork, "they [OW caseworkers] don't care about the personal, they care about *economics*". This sentiment sits flush with the agenda of the new Conservative federal government. This agenda was expressed quite simply during Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's comment on the federal government's new approach to

Employment Insurance where he stated curtly that in his government's eyes, there is "no such thing as a bad job".

While certain caseworkers may indeed be very compassionate people, armed with degrees in social work, the broader political-economic and moral regulatory apparatus that sets policies in motion sets their target the elimination of welfare fraud, dependency, and intolerance of unproductivity. The rigid policing thereof, then, is a potent *moral statement*: there is no in between or grayscale here; and when there is, one is subject to bureaucratic tactics of moral alignment.

As per the government's new Canada Action Plan, the political and economic imperative is to *create jobs*. This translates into a numbers game for monthly jobs statistics regarding how many new jobs have been created. What these numbers do not reflect is: 1) that most of these new jobs are part-time only; and, 2) many of these jobs in fact pay lower than what OW participants receive monthly. Lastly, the government's objective is to create numbers for statistics that show *progressive job growth*, not to place OW participants—or anyone else on the labour market for that matter—within *meaningful jobs* that not only provide a source of income, but a sense of accomplishment, self-worth, and dignity.

It is understandable that any project through which to attain well-being may be approached from OW caseworkers and administrators as self-indulgent, and, therefore proscribed—resulting, as has been made clear, in the potential of getting cut off. As I was told in my meeting with the OW manager of Youth Services, the logic behind this perspective is to urge to find employment (or go back to school) within a reasonable time-frame so as to find self-worth, purpose and to establish state-prescribed goals. Though I was not able to record our interview, I was able to take notes. The manager

of Youth Services had cited examples of generational OW dependency and lack of motivation as prime reasons to get youth off of OW quickly and into jobs—even though, realistically, this is not always possible, given the sheer diversity of predicaments youth, especially street youth, find themselves in.

OW's moral-economical mandate is an attempt, through the prescribed amassing of the requisite social and cultural capital, to provide and assist participants to foster or build on skills that everyone must obtain in order to become employ-able. If employ-ability is tantamount to the acquisition of skills, then it follows that "health" (more like an "economic health")—an economic abstraction, better conceptualised as the *rehabilitation* of economic ability or potentiality (primarily through sanctioned channels of "self-help")—from the perspective of OW, is to attain training, education and qualifications freely and in an unimpeded way so as to become employ-*able*, and, ultimately, get off of OW.

To attain *ability,* to become able through rehabilitation (read: self-help) is a *regulatory and moral process*, and participants may encounter many setbacks; however, attaining skills, education, and the instillation of motivation are the means through which one *becomes able*. To this end, then, *in-ability*—caused by lack of skills, lack of education, lack of motivation—obstructs the capacity to reach toward the goal of employ-ability, and therefore runs counter to state imperatives. Set within the state's linear and segmented temporality of "becoming employable", we can now re-formulate the state's conception of ability more precisely (and, by extension, "economic health" as the rehabilitation of ability) as one of *the overcoming and management of obstacles*; *the overcoming and management of the self* in its forward, progressive, and inexorable movement toward becoming productively and economically *able*.

But does this modality of becoming able (*qua moral prescription*) through the *overcoming* of obstacles come up against the limit of different, perhaps, alternative conceptions of health, such as the existential form of health mentioned above? And what of its special modality of becoming through various forms of creation and transformation: writing, drawing, performing, fabulating, being a raconteur, etc.—all which would almost certainly be deemed as counter-productive in the eyes of OW's administrators and key decision-makers? Are the concepts of ability as the overcoming and management of obstacles and the self, and the notion of existential reconciliation as health incommensurable? Do these respective modalities of becoming unfold, open up or occur by means of radically different, contrasting temporalities? I believe that they do—radically so.

Consider the lengthy quote below from W. G. Sebald's last novel, *Austerlitz* (2001). Jacques Austerlitz, an architect, is in search of his past; more particularly in search of any traces left by his father, who had passed away at a Nazi concentration camp when Austerlitz was a child. Memory, and I would argue, *temporality* writ large, are the key themes of the work, and feature the way in which archives, architecture, intersubjectivity and individual experience entomb and entrap memory.

> Time, said Austerlitz in the observation room in Greenwich, was by far the most artificial of all our inventions, and in being bound to the planet turning on its own axis was no less arbitrary than would be, say, a calculation based on the growth of trees or the duration required for a piece of limestone to disintegrate, quite apart from the fact that the solar day which we take as our guideline does not provide any precise measurement, so that in order to reckon time we have to devise an imaginary, average sun which has an invariable speed of movement and does not incline towards the equator in its orbit. If Newton thought, said Austerlitz, pointing through the window and down to the curve of the water around the Isle of Dogs glistening in the last of the daylight, if Newton really thought that time was a river like the Thames, then where is its source and into what sea does it finally flow? Every river, as we know, must have banks on both sides, so where, seen in those terms, where are the banks of time? What

would be this river's qualities, qualities perhaps corresponding to those of water, which is fluid, rather heavy, and translucent? In what way do objects immersed in time differ from those left untouched by it? Why do we show the hours of light and darkness in the same circle? Why does time stand eternally still and motionless in one place, and rush headlong by in another? Could we not claim, said Austerlitz, that time itself has been nonconcurrent over the centuries and the millennia? Is it not so long ago, after all,that it began spreading out over everything? *And is not human life in many parts of the earth governed to this day less by time than by the weather, and thus by an unquantifiable dimension which disregards linear regularity, does not progress constantly forward but moves in eddies, is marked by episodes of congestion and irruption, recurs in ever-changing form, and evolves in no one knows what direction*? Even in a metropolis ruled by time like London, said Austerlitz, it is still possible to be outside time, a state of affairs which until recently was almost as common in backward and forgotten areas of our own country as it used to be in the undiscovered continents overseas. *The dead are outside time, the dying and all the sick at home or in hospitals, and they are not the only ones, for a certain degree of personal misfortune is enough to cut us off from the past and the future* (Sebald 2001: 100-101, my emphases).

When Austerlitz questions, "*And is not human life in many parts of the earth governed to this day less by time than by the weather, and thus by an unquantifiable dimension which disregards linear regularity, does not progress constantly forward but moves in eddies, is marked by episodes of congestion and irruption, recurs in ever-changing form, and evolves in no one knows what direction*"? In a sense, he is capturing the essence of *becoming*—becoming as the project of existential health as reconciliation—as it occurs and is lived precariously day-to-day by my informants at the YAC.

Time from OW administrators' and caseworkers' perspectives, the perspective of the state, is manageable, quantifiable, ordered—and, as they hope and anticipate, linear and schematic. However, contra this approach to temporality and the experience thereof, the everyday actualities of my informants are markedly different. This difference lies in an alternative ontology of temporality wherein the ultimate nature of

time, its experience, its effects, its force, and its movements are set to the willy-nilly

rhythms and pacings of becoming through creativity and existential transformation (and

the health that it affords through reconciliation of one's past and present). But what can

we make of this antithetical relation of temporalities?

Deleuze and Guattari once again come to our assistance by furnishing us with a

suite of conceptual tools designed for thinking obliquely through hegemonic concepts

and constructs. In the particular case of OW and the expectation of caseworkers, "time"

and its experience might be likened to a constantly moving flow, forward-facing, and

set to the regimented cadence of an ever-developing, ever-changing, and ever-

progressing *evolution*—as quantifiable as it is discrete.

I want to make the argument here that in taking a line of flight, a modality of

becoming through creativity and transformation (writing, drawing, performing,

fabulating), my informants are engaged in an existential project of becoming—one that

orients them toward a version of health *qua* existential reconciliation, and not one of

economic health wherein the imperative is to simply overcome and manage obstacles

on the way to becoming economically able and productive. I am not claiming that in

some cases this does not happen. Based on my fieldwork experiences, I am claiming

that for the most part health ("getting by", "existing", "surviving" and "being creative"

to my informants) and the attainment thereof was a rocky, contradictory, and willy-nilly

project of existential reconciliation, an appeasement of the past with the imperatives

and exigencies of the present. To this end, the form of temporality in which this form

of becoming occurs and opens up, can be said to be the individuation of what Deleuze

and Guattari (1987) call a *haecceity*.

Quoting Deleuze and Guattari at length, because they explain their own convoluted concepts best themselves:

> A body is not defined by the form that determines it nor as a determinate substance or subject nor by the organs it possesses or the functions it fulfils. On the plane of consistency, a body is defined only by a longitude and latitude: in other words the sum total of the material elements belonging to it under given relations of movement and rest, speed and slowness (longitude)…There is a mode of individuation very different from that of a person, subject, thing or substance. We reserve the name haecceity for it. A season, a winter, a summer, an hour, a date have perfect individuality lacking nothing, even though this individuality is different from that of a thing or a subject. *They are haecceities in the sense that they consist entirely of relations of movement and rest between molecules or particles, capacities to affect and be affected* (1980: 261, my emphasis).

They explain more specifically that each one of us is a haecceity; *we* are haecceities, and haecceities are *us*:

> We must avoid an oversimplified conciliation, as though there were on the one hand formed subjects of the thing or person type, and on the other hand spatiotemporal coordinates of the haecceity type. For you will yield nothing to haecceities unless you realize that that is what you are, and that you are nothing but that…You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, a life (regardless of its duration)—a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity)…It should not be thought that a haecceity consists simply of a décor or backdrop that situates subjects, or of appendages that hold things and people to the ground. It is the entire assemblage that is defined by a longitude and latitude, by speeds and affects, independently of forms and subjects which belong do another plane. It is the wolf itself, and the horse, and the child that cease to be subjects to become events, in assemblages that are inseparable form an hour, a season, an atmosphere, an air, a life (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 262-263).

A haecceity stands for the encompassing contexutalisations (its interconnections, mutual implications, connections and entanglements) and conditions of the *being* or ultimate nature of time, experience, material objects, climate, temperature, me, you, everything—everything that *is* comes into being through *connection*, through the tangled skein-like lines of a haecceity. The notion of haecceity is similar to the geographer Torsten Hägerstrand's "principle of togetherness": a mode

of interconnected becoming wherein becomings form interconnected lines of dense

meshworks (Ingold 2011).

> Togetherness is not just resting together. It is also movement and encounter.
> By using such very general terms we would be able to look upon Nature and
> Society under one perspective because what is all the time resting, moving and
> encountering is not just humans or natural items in between them but humans,
> plants, animals and things at once. I like to think of any bounded area as a set of
> "populations" made up of "individuals" who describe continuous trajectories
> through time—a kind of ballet—from the point in space/time when they come
> into being unto the point where they become transformed…Seen from within
> one could think of the tips of trajectories as sometimes being pushed forward by
> forces behind and besides and sometimes having eyes looking around and arms
> reaching out, at every moment asking "what shall I do next"? If things are seen
> in this perspective we need not look upon Nature and Society as universes apart.
> Humans and their society is just a pattern in the big tapestry of Nature which
> history is weaving (Hägerstrand 1976: 332).

Deleuze and Guattari expand on this process of interconnected becomings:

> The street enters into composition with the horse, just as the dying rat enters into
> composition with the air, and the beast and the full moon enter into composition
> with each other….Climate, wind, season, hour are not of another nature than the
> things, animals, or people that populate them, follow them, sleep and awaken
> within them. This should be read without pause: the animal-stalks-at-five-
> o'clock. This becoming-evening, becoming-night of an animal, blood nuptuals.
> Five o'clock is this animal! This animal is this place! "The thin dog is running
> in the road, this dog is the road", cries Virginia Woolf. That is how we need to
> feel. Spatiotemporal relations, determinations, are not predicates of the thing
> but dimensions of multiplicities….Haecceity, fog, glare. A haecceity has
> neither beginning nor end, origin nor destination; it is always in the middle. It is
> not made of points, only of lines. It is a rhizome[75] (Deleuze and Guattari 1987:
> 263).

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[75] In a word, the rhizome, as I see it, is a way of approaching, ontologising and
"epistemologising" the interconnectedness of reality (connecting, unconnecting and
reconnecting), and, as such might best be understood in the spirit of an optics of the E′ (E-
prime—a modern sub-set of the English language wherein the verb "to be" is entirely
eliminated. Such an approach to writing and speaking eliminates issues of identity and
predication common to general linguistics), wherein the verb "to be" in all of its incarnations
(For example, "be", "being", "is", "am", "are", "was", and "were") is rent asunder and laid bare
for what it "is"—that which maintains fixity, identity and the predication of being in terms of a
logics of either/or, true/false, up/down, right/wrong, this/that, me/you, him/her.
Countermanding the reign of the arborescent structure of State philosophy, then, Delueze and
Guattari remark that "[t]he tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance". They
continue through an explanation that "[t]he tree imposes the verb 'to be', but the fabric of the
rhizome is conjunction, 'and…and…and...'". "This conjunction", they claim, "carries enough

The pacing of becoming within haecceities follows in a fractal, sometimes turbulent, non-linear course or orbit. In the particular case of my informants and their everyday experience, I would say the pacing of a haecceity is *force* without *direction*[76]. As such, then, we can contrast two different forms of pacing regarding the binary between the becomings of employ-*ability* and existential health as reconciliation discussed above: 1) employ-ability as becoming able or the overcoming of obstacles both in one's self and in one's life, driven by the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making; and, 2) existential health as a creative and transformative becoming, which takes place through a line of flight, occurring within the temporality of a haecceity. Let me now discuss the motion or pacing particular to each form of becoming.

With regard to the former, the *pacing* of the becoming of existential health as reconciliation is marked, as I see it, by what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call "speed", while the former is marked by "movement". Movement is the pacing of the state; and, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980) opine, one of the fundamental tasks of the state is to *striate* the space over which it reigns, to attempt to appropriate and colonise the *smooth*

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force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'"; and thus, the rhizome can "move between things, establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings" (1987: 25, original emphasis).

[76] Building on Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) distinction, we can borrow two terms from contemporary physics, and claim that the movement of the state is heavily vectorial; while the pacing of a haecceity is scalar. Drawn as they are from physics, I use these terms only metaphorically, and apply them to the intersubjective contexts in which my informants move about in their day-to-day contexts. Scalar movement, then, connotes a quantity (such as time or temperature) having *only magnitude, and no direction*. By contrast, vectorial movement, or, put differently, the mode of becoming, of "health", which inheres in the state-sanctioned entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making, of overcoming the self, is a quantity that *has direction as well as magnitude*—especially with respect to the determination of the position of one point in space (this could be the "spatial topography" of self-development, i.e., acquisition of sanctioned credentials) relative to another, usually understood as an end-point of some sort (this could be understood as a state-sanctioned goal of "employment").

spaces (those spaces in which lines of flight occur, ricochet and re-direct themselves, the spaces of creative and transformative becomings) for its own designs.

Through molar aggregates the imperative of the state is to domesticate any form of feral sociality, or that which can obstruct the objectives of any form of state project, in my case a state/private-enterprise backed collaboration, whether it be political, economic, ideological, epistemological (what is sanctioned to be thought, to be understood as possible in terms of knowing). This domestication occurs through constant and inexorable reterritorialisations (but also deterritorialisations, too, for the state itself makes use of alternative, counter-intuitive tactics), and the spatial and conceptual dynamics related thereto. "Movement is extensive…movement designates the relative character of a body considered as "one", and which goes from point to point" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 381). It is a movement directed toward a goal, regardless of how many re-directions and points of curvature, inflection or reflection this movement may encounter on its trajectory—and it is a trajectory *par excellence*.

Speed is the motion of becoming, and, as I argue, occurs in a haecceity; it is the pacing of becoming of the line of flight, the creative becoming of health as existential reconciliation through literature, writing, or creativity in general. Conceived as such, then, *speed* as per Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) counter-intuitive conception, is tantamount to *immobility*—it is an intensive and "stationary process". Speed, then, "constitutes the absolute character of a body [and not the relative character] whose irreducible parts (atoms) occupy or fill a smooth space in the manner of a vortex, with the possibility of springing up at any point. (It is therefore not surprising that reference has been made to spiritual voyages effected without relative movement, but in intensity, in one place…") (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 381). As an instance of a

deterritorialisation, speed as the pacing of a haecceity, of the line of flight and the creative becoming of existential health as reconciliation through literature or creativity, erupts, explodes, manifests itself, and vanishes, only to recur again in a different place, a different way—it follows no law, no *nomos* (body of law). Like the mythical hydra, these deterritorialisations recur through growth, redirection, destruction and possibility.

For the state, and OW in particular, the pacing of progress is one of *movement*, completely relative in its Einsteinian conception. It needs points of relation or standards (social, political, economic, moral) in which to judge the force and direction of its own movement—through the constant tacking back and forth of perspectives (parallax) between different points and trajectories that gauge its position and velocity relative to another point. In the case of my informants, this was an anticipated and imposed and regimented *movement* through the overcoming of the objects and self-hindrances to ability, employ-ability. Points of relativity (standards, economic imperatives, targets for productivity, whether they be set by the private or public sectors) are everywhere, and are contained and underwritten by the neoliberal logics and technologies of the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making.

Speed, then, in contrast, simply "occurs" or "opens up" insofar as the intensities of becoming of my informants and their pacings within a haecceity flow back on themselves, toward themselves, and within themselves—it is much like a wave lapping and folding in against itself as it unfurls, flowing out, in upon itself, and creating a vortex of involutions in its recurrences. In terms of the mode of becoming, that of existential health as reconciliation through creativity, that takes place within a haecceity, insofar as it is scalar and thus has no direction but magnitude and force, the existential imperative is to *guard and protect*—as Delueze and Guattari (1987) say, as if on a

spiritual journey involving no actual movement—through *being stationary*.

Following Laing (1969) once more, it is vital for those experiencing any form of ontological insecurity to guard or preserve themselves. By dint of their existential task, then, for those suffering from such afflictions as depression and anxiety—such as my informants—it could be said that the everyday imperative may be found in the Greek concept of φρουρέω (*phroureō*), used for the first time in the New Testament. *Phroureō* translates to "protect by guarding, or to keep watch and guard to preserve oneself for the attainment of something". In the case of my informants, this "guarding or watching over" concerns the maintenance, preservation and attainment of *existential health*—which occurs or opens up through the becomings of creativity, afforded through lines of flight which occur in the stationary speeds (scalar) of a haecceity.

In my fieldwork context, then, the two forms of becoming ("ability through the overcoming of obstacles" vs. "existential health as reconciliation") and their respective temporalities were engaged in an *agonistic*[77] relationship: my informants were constantly struggling to get by financially and existentially in their everyday lives. Whether it was getting cut off from OW or the threat thereof, their particular becomings, through various creative enterprises (health through reconciliation), were held in a perilous, precarious position. Squeezing through the molar lines of the state (the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making, ability as overcoming), my informants took lines of flight through which to attain a semblance of peace, understanding and presence, however ephemeral or precarious this experience was.

It must be cautioned that the relationship between modes or styles of becoming

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[77] Agonistic (based on the Greek word *agōnisma*) meaning a relationship characterised not so much by a mutual antagonism, but by a constant struggle and provocation—as if between two wrestlers (cf. Foucault 2000).

(those of the state and my informants) *was anything but binary*: there were leakages on all sides. The state, which is anything but a homogenous entity, is made up of sometimes disjointed associations (Nadasdy 2003), all given the semblance of order and homogeneity through ideological and rhetorical tactics. Since there are *people* (and not machines) running state programmes, the interpretation of "rules" is always subject to a certain degree of ambiguity and interpretive volatility. I had heard of many stories of partial accommodation and what seemed to be collusion on the part of OW case-workers and their "participants". These case-workers were often referred to as "really, really, nice and understanding".

The "oppositional" stance of my informants was also fragmentary, and subject to differences in interpretation of OW guidelines and interactions with OW case-workers. As with De Certeau's notion of "tactics", the practices of my informants were never *purely oppositional*. *Débrouillardise* or *partial accommodation* was the order of the day, wherein my informants would use certain OW rules to their advantage; or they would comply with certain aspects of OW's regulations—such as handing in "job search" results without any real intention of actually finding a job.

The objective of this chapter, then, was to illustrate how, through lines of flight, my informants were able to escape the segmentary and molar lines of the state. Through the becomings afforded through various creative enterprises (writing, drawing, performing, fabulating), people like Zane, Esther, Dan, Mitch, Jordan, Chris, or Scout were able to embark on a project of some form of existential reconciliation, a form of health. The lines of flight which enabled this form of becoming were both enabled and hindered by the state and its lines of segmentarity, its understanding of becoming, and the temporality through which this mode of becoming was to occur. There was thus an

agonism between becomings, the notions of ability and health that they provide access to, and the temporalities wherein they occur in, open up and move through[78]. Health, then, was a very convoluted issue in my fieldwork context, inasmuch as it involved a willy-nilly dialectic (albeit an indirect or wobbly one) between the subject and the state; between *existential imperatives* and *economic outcomes*. Health as process, as becoming, was as much of a creative project as it was a temporal project, and worked through the "logics of suffering". As such, existential health as reconciliation involved far more complex and involved processes than simply "overcoming" one's problems, deficiencies, addictions, or illnesses; or, building or establishing a set of skills and obtaining employment.

The existential project of the "soul", as Nietzsche would have said, of reaching toward health through reconciliation by means of the becomings of creativity was as much a subjective, intersubjective, and social process as it was *political and economic*. Again, the whole interaction between my informants and the state was a "figuration", as per Elias (1998), and was both mutually constitutive and constituting. The limits of the state enabled the "freedoms" (lines of flight, becomings) and "constraints" of my informants—the implications were interconnected and mutual.

Another way to conceive the disconnect, as I see it, with OW's teleological project of becoming as a forward-oriented "overcoming" and my informants' project of "reconciliation" is rooted in the notion of *desire*—but not a Freudian desire of "a lack" of something like a sexualised relationship or object, or even a Lacanian form of desire

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[78] Rather than view this agonism as essentially negative, marked by the absence of something, we can think of it as positive, only insofar as this interaction of temporalities (between the "movement" of the state and the "speed" of my informants) produces subjectivity and society—as if they were caught on a mutually constituting/constitutive *Möbius* strip.

as a remainder of demand and need. In this case I view desire, since I think it fits my

context, from a Deleuzian perspective as a process synonymous with socio-political and

economic *entropy*. As such, entropy is precipitated by the process of "schizophrenia"

(not the illness but the socio-political process of becoming "Other" to capitalism).

> To Deleuze,
>
> [D]esire includes no lack; it is also not a natural given. Desire is wholly a part
> of a functioning heterogenous assemblage [the coming together of various
> socio-economic and political systems, subjectivities and temporalities, and
> relations—feudalism, to Deleuze, is an example of an assemblage, and, by
> logical extension, capitalism would be, too.]. It is a process, as opposed to a
> structure or a genesis. It is an affect, as opposed to a feeling. It is a haecceity—
> the individual singularity of a day, a season, a life. As opposed to a subjectivity,
> it is an event, not a person or a thing. Above all, it implies the constitution of a
> field of immanence or a body-without-organs, which is only defined by zones of
> intensity, thresholds, degrees and fluxes (1997: 132).

Desire, then, is another way to think of the absolute limit of a system (Deleuze

and Guattari 1983), in this case, the political economy of capitalism. Desire is the flux,

sweep and flow in which the social is suspended (held in abeyance) and must, at all

costs, differentiate itself by the power of its organization—capitalism (Deleuze and

Guattari 1983). Social, political, economic and moral norms, through molar,

segmentary lines, must do anything possible to hold this form of "desire" at bay. The

social system as opposed to desire *qua* absolute limit represents the *relative* limit: it is

what ceases to exist and perpetuate itself if the absolute limit is transgressed. Desire,

then, is the exterior limit of capitalism; it represents a feral, wild and untameable

element to the system. As such, desire needs to be held in check (to be domesticated)

and ordered at all times, lest "capitalism be crushed" (Buchanan 2000). As Buchanan

explains, "in order to manage the threat posed by the absolute limit the social system

has to find a means of internalizing it, domesticating it into a serviceable interior limit"

(2000: 28). Deleuze and Guattari expand:

> Oedipus[79] is this displaced or internalized limit where desire lets itself be caught. The Oedipal triangle is the personal and private territoriality that corresponds to all of capitalism's efforts at social reterritorialization. Oedipus was always the displaced limit for every social formation, since it is the displaced represented of desire (1983: 266).

Health as existential reconciliation is, I imagine, to the state (i.e., OW, its administrators and caseworkers), a form of desire in that it is untamed, unpredictable, and *lawless*[80]; it is anti-structural and rhizomatic—it can take several forms, rise up from any point in the system, and cut through and across (it deterritorialises any and every attempt at reterritorialisation) the temporalities of becoming of the state (OW), and its project of employ-ability made possible through the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making.

Now, if we consider what Georges Canguillhem—Michel Foucault's doctoral advisor—said about health and its refiguration, we can understand that "health is a margin for the inconstancies of the environment" (1991: 197). However, I would modify this statement, and claim that "the inconstancies of the environment" should not, as in Canguillhem's case, imply strictly the *physical environment* (as per Kurt Goldstein whose understanding of health as the dialectic between individual and

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[79] Oedipus to Deleuze and Guattari is the prime mechanism for state colonization and domestication of individuals. Say Deleuze and Guattari (1983): "It [Oedipus] is our intimate colonial formation that corresponds to the form of social sovereignty. We are all little colonies and it is Oedipus that colonizes us. When the family ceases to be a unit of production and reproduction, when the conjunction finds in the family the meaning of a simple unit of consumption, it is father-mother that we consume. In the aggregate of departure there is the boss, the foreman, the priest, the tax collector, the cop, the soldier, the worker, all the machines of territorialities, all the social images of our society; but in the aggregate of destination, in the end, there is no longer anyone but daddy, mommy, and me, the despotic sign inherited by daddy, the residual territoriality assumed by mommy, and the divided, split castrated ego" (265).

[80] For it is "counter-productive" in that its orientation is self-directed, set according to the pacing of a haecceity, and has, in my cases at least, creativity *qua* healing as its *telos*).

physical environment influenced Canguillhem), but should be augmented to include the economic environment, the social environment, the political environment, the "existential environment", and, in my particular case, the modes of becoming and temporalities that these environments both prescribed ("movement", and the directedness of "overcoming obstacles and oneself) and proscribed (the "speed" of staying put, of being stationary, and of guarding, protecting and preserving oneself— *phroureō*).

Truth, A Reply: On Storied Truths, Socialities and their Pluralities

Storytelling—and here I include writing, drawing, performing, and acting as a raconteur—is a fundamental quality of our everyday lives (Richardson 1991). Stories allow people to communicate what is significant in their lives, and how and why things matter to them (Rosaldo 1986). As such, stories can sometimes concern events as experienced and suffered through by people; and, to this end, they allow the audience to infer something about what it feels like to live in a storied world (Garro and Mattingly 2000). As well, stories are usually not just about things (experiences), they also do something, they get things done—they *are* social action.

In my fieldwork context, the telling of stories, the drawing of pictures, and the writing of stories and their performance, were attempts to moralise the events recounted (Garro and Mattingly 2000); and each of my informants sought to convince me— through various rhetorical effects and tactics of moral suasion—to see their particular and respective realities in very particular ways. As Rosaldo (1986) points out, stories "often reveal more about what can make life worth living than about how it is routinely

lived"; and, as Garro and Mattingly explain, "this very focus on the singular can reveal what is worth risk and struggle, what situations matter enough that actors are "in suspense" about what will happen next" (2000: 12).

As it relates to temporality, Ingold reminds us that "in storytelling, past occurrences are drawn into present experience. The lived present, however, is not set off from the past of the story. Rather, past and present are continuous" (2011: 161). To tell a story, then, is to *relate*—through and in narrative, whether this narrative is oral or pictorial—the occurrences of the past (fantastical, imagined, exaggerated or real). Through this relation the past is brought to life in the vivid (and creative) present of listeners. To Ingold (2011), though, the meaning of "relation" is not to be taken literally: it is not a connection between predetermined entities (i.e., from one point to another with points of choice along the way), but a retracing of a path—of lines— through the variable terrain of lived experience and actuality. From this perspective, then, it would be argued that my informants were caught in a "storied sociality" (Stewart 1996: 9) marked by inconclusive ambiguities, over-determinations, under-determinations, and dense significations.

The stories (in their various "channels" and "modalities") my informants told to me, to others and to themselves, were rhetorical resources drawn upon in order to moralise and re-moralise their existential predicaments in order to re-enfranchise themselves—no matter how jury-rigged or improvised this process of re-enfranchisement was. The more I reflected on the process of storytelling in the chronotope of the YAC, the more I realised that stories created and narrated in this context served as an interpretive vehicle through which to marshal and mobilise *experiential capital*. As was doubtless the case for many of my informants, through the

currency of experiential capital they were able to tender their experience, justify it and legitimise it. For Benjamin (1968), the crux of storytelling is that it affords the opportunity to tender one's experience so that it may be used, as "currency" *qua* wisdom, counsel, or, in my case, experiential capital, by "an-*other*" in the economy of *intersubjectivity*. Stories afforded in some ways a narrative medium to experience and re-experience through the detachment of inner desires and projects into a more public medium by means of performance (Cruikshank 1998).

Borrowing from Obeyesekere (1981), my informants' stories offered a means through which to transform and manipulate symbolically the pain, ambiguity, and suffering of *loss*—all of which are personal symbols, however inchoate, insofar as they are related to the life experience of the individual—into public and culturally-embedded symbols, i.e., stories with familiar form (tragedies, comedies, extreme stories, etc.), drawings (a form of "visual story", all made possible and intelligible by making use of symbols furnished by culture, i.e., "dark" symbols like blood, forests, ravens, grave yards, pentagrams, etc.), or performances based on stories (spoken word, hyperbole and fabulations set within reason of what the raconteur may think will afford him/her experiential capital), all set in "motion" according to the various logics of suffering, genre and *emplotment* (defined below).

Rearticulating experience from the past in a new light, via becomings through lines of flight, *the* past—which for many of my informants was the site of antipathy, defensiveness, and violence—could be re-imagined as a site of possibility, openness and reconciliation (Jackson 2007). Hannah Arendt furthers this sentiment:

> Compared with the reality which comes from being seen and heard, even the greatest forces of intimate life—the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delights of the senses—lead to an uncertain, shadowy kind of

existence unless and until they are *transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance.* The most current of such actions occurs in storytelling and generally in artistic transposition of individual experience (1958: 50, my emphasis).

Expanding on the *purpose* of storytelling, Jackson (2002) opines that power relations between the public and private realms imply by default a politics of experience. While storytelling as a process may help us reconcile differing fields of experience that belong to us as private articulations of experience, but belong to others also as dialogic productions, peoples' stories oftentimes exaggerate differences, or provoke discordance. For Jackson (2002) following Arendt, then, the process of storytelling as a *narrative imperative*—that is, as I have argued earlier, always already chronotopically contingent—is both a strategy to transform and transmit private experience into public meaning and an existential struggle to sustain a sense of control in the face of disempowering and destabilising social, political and economic circumstances. Zweig's (1974) perspective sits flush with both Arendt's and Jackson's, in that, for him, whether they are "invented" or "real", stories beckon us out of the visible, providing alternative lives, and different modes of possibility. In stories, the world is mediated by the word (Stewart 1996); fact moves into the chiaroscuro space of interpretation where imagination and "the real" disclose their inadequacies and form a pact to enter one another—through the narrative conflations of creativity and expression.

For my informants, storytelling was a form of coping strategy, a becoming, a way to escape, a line of flight—in its various multiplicities of form—that involved making words stand for the world; and then, by manipulating them, changing one's experience of the world (Jackson 2002). Through the construction and articulation of

stories, people can contrive, retrieve and restore a sense of viability to their relations with others. And it is through the construction of stories that my informants were able to redress a bias toward autonomy when it was lost, or in peril of being lost; it allowed them to re-affirm themselves through the experience uncertainty, ambiguity and loss (Jackson 2002).

As I understood it in its everyday contexts and contents at the YAC, storytelling was an *event* and a collective means for transmitting memory and socio-cultural mores—it was a mode of justification of experience, and therefore a form of *moral orienteering and positioning* (Dolson 2009). Following Benjamin (1968), storytelling in my context was a means through which a group was able to cohere through social, cultural and moral means by way of imaginative involvement with the collective processes of listening and telling.

Thinking about the many stories that were told to me during my time at the YAC, I was forced to reflect on whether or not people were telling me the "truth" in their narratives. Whether it was Chris or Jakey (the *raconteurs*) with their tall tales, or Scout with his seemingly obvious fabulations, the very nature and status of the "truth" became a problematic affair for me on a daily basis. As Barbre *et al.* (1989) explain, when talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, they forget, exaggerate, get confused, and sometimes get things plain wrong; however, regardless of the convention, if we think of stories as idioms of tribulation, or part of the "logics of suffering", which afford escape from oppressive conditions through lines of flight, they indeed do reveal truths—*the truths of experience*.

As Barbre *et al.* reiterate as experience, "these truths don't reveal the past 'as it actually was', aspiring to a standard of objectivity". They continue, "[these truths] give us instead the truths of our experiences…unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the

truths of narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident" (1989: 261). Barbre *et al.'s* (1989) clarion call is to come to understand stories and the truths they proffer only through *interpretation*, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and to the worldviews that inform and orient them. It has been my imperative, then, to do away with generalisation and "positivistic" or "scientistic" approaches to my informants' stories and experiences. As Barbre *et al.* (1989) assert, backing my imperative, generalisation without attention to the truths of experience in all of its raw and polyvalent dynamism would be *absolutely fruitless*.

In my fieldwork context, then, there were *no* singular truths to be reached toward and obtained. Instead, there were *a multiplicity of truths*—as dynamic as they were unstable. The plurality of truths, and the underlying conditions—from subjective to social—for their creation enabled the very possibility for the telling of these stories, the forms of genre (that of the "traumatic story", the "crazy story", the "sad story", etc.) through which they were told, created or performed, and the complex web of relationships that actually produced them. It was through the reconceptualisation of truth as a plurality that was I able to understand what it was that was being communicated to myself and others (Barbre *et al.* 1989).

The plurality of truths, then, oriented me toward the very basis of *meaning* and its articulation through stories. This occurred, as I experienced it, through what White (1978) has called "emplotment". Emplotment provides the meaning of a story by identifying the *kind* of story that has been told. White suggests, speaking of historians, that "[i]f, in the course of narrating his story, the historian provides it with the plot structure of a Tragedy, he has "explained" it in one way; if he has structured it as a Comedy, he has "explained" it in another way. Emplotment is the way by which a

sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story *of a particular kind*" (White 1978: 7, my emphasis).

Most of the "kinds" of stories I was told centred on "explanations", "justification", "moralisations", and "refigurations" of experience—they allowed the *raconteur* to situate his/her past experiences within a new interpretive frame. This new interpretive frame allowed him/her to convey what was most important to them: loss, failure, lack of esteem and confidence, fear, anxiety, the extremity of life's situations, "what could have been". Though the mechanisms of fabulation (*qua* raconteur), my informants were able to recount a version of a "heroic" or "triumphant" story wherein they were the protagonists or victims of extremity—as psychological a mechanism as it is political insofar as these "heroic" stories positioned (or attempted to) and oriented my informants among their street peers and myself, affording them the semblance of power *qua* "street cred".

The sentiment mentioned above is echoed by Cruikshank (2000), who explained that *meanings* never inhere in a story; they are created (and I would add, co-created) in the everyday situations in which they are recounted, enacted or performed. For De Certeau (1984), the stories of everyday experience traverse and organise places (physical, moral, experiential); they select and link them together, and proffer them for telling. Hill (2005) approaches narratives in a similar manner in that they are not necessarily "about" some "content", but about how people make public those hidden or covert *ways* and *modalities* in which people organise their worlds.

Barbre *et al.* (1989) in their reconceptualisation of truth problematise the positivistic notions of reliability and validity. In my fieldwork context, both of these concepts in their more positivistic guises were problematic and came across as bug-

bears in my day-to-day interactions. Following Darnell (2011), though, I was able to

approach reliability according to a different, alternative epistemology—as that which is

assured by the *repetition* of stories, and by acknowledging their sources and routes of

transmission. I approached validity in a similar fashion: as that which was assured

through my own history—over the course of a year—of listening to the stories I heard,

and the *consistency* of their retellings as well as the consistency and corroboration of

the retellings of other's stories from different people (i.e., Zane's stories were always

confirmed by Chris through conversations, and vice-versa). Regardless of the

possibility for fabulation, invention, and seeming improvisation, peoples' stories were

always consistent in their tellings and re-tellings.

Taking all that has been said regarding truth into consideration, I would like to

make a claim that, according to Burke's idiosyncratic notion of irony (*mutatis mutandi*,

of course), the stories told by my informants were inherently *ironic*. If we substitute

Burke's notion of "terms" (things) for the *events* told to me in stories, when we can

think of the situation thus:

> Irony arises when one tries, by the interaction of terms upon on another, to
> produce a development which uses all the terms. Hence, from the standpoint of
> this total form (this "perspective of perspectives"), none of the participating
> "sub-perspectives" can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong.
> They are all voices, or personalities, or positions [or events recounted],
> integrally affecting one another (1941: 432).

He continues by explaining the relation between terms (or in our case, the *events*

of a story):

> But insofar as terms are thus encouraged to participate in an orderly
> parliamentary development, the dialectic of this participation produces (in the
> observer who considers the whole from the standpoint of the participation of all
> the terms rather than from the standpoint of any one participant) a "resultant
> certainty" of a different quality, necessarily ironic, since it requires that all the
> sub-certainties be considered as neither true or false, but *contributory* (as when

we think of the resultant certainty or "perspective of perspectives" as a noun, and to think of all the contributory voices as necessary modifiers of that noun) (1941: 433).

Thus, if we can think of the elements of my informants' stories—whether true, false, exaggerated, left out, forgotten, suppressed, mis-remembered, fabulated, etc.—as forming an experiential whole, we can resist the synecdochic tendency to reduce a whole to its parts, and to subsequently seek the "verifiability", "reliability" and "validity" thereof. In doing so, then, we can, as stated above so eloquently by Burke, approach the elements of peoples' stories as experiential wholes wherein *something*, some truth, some condition or ground of existence is being expressed and communicated—in all of its partiality. And this something, which is ultimately "ironic" to Burke, is *experience*: imagined, created, anticipated, and lived/re-lived through the recounting of stories. That the "resultant certainty" of the elements of a story (and the multiple truths which may inhere in their tellings), form a whole—and are ironic in their shapings and re-shapings—means that they are neither true nor false in and of themselves, but for all intents and purposes, *contributory* (Burke 1941). They contribute to the greater whole of experience in which, regardless of the separability of their parts, represent the *truths of experience*, and the conditions of possibility and *impossibility* which enable them to be experienced, imagined, told, and shared. As Lambek explains, irony—following Burke's usage of the term—is not only a way of interpreting others or a rhetorical means of representing oneself to others. It is also a way to understand ourselves and the larger "existential situation" (Lambek 2001: 7) in which we go about our day-to-day lives.

CODA—Life: Pitch, Yaw, Roll…and Contradiction

There are things that happen and leave no discernible trace, are not spoken or written of, though it would be very wrong to say that subsequent events go on indifferently, all the same, as though such things had never been.

A. S. Byatt 1990: 508

Think of the wonderful circles in which our whole being moves and from which we cannot escape no matter how we try. The circler circles in these circles.

E. T. A. W. Hoffmann 1999: 59

Ah, what is going to happen to me, what will be my fate? The hard thing is that I am in such uncertainty, that I have no future, that I cannot even foresee what will become of me. It's frightening, just looking back. There's such grief everywhere that my heart is torn in two at the memory alone.

F. Dostoyevsky 1846: 10

It was like a scene right out of a movie. There we were, all ten of us: Zane, Nick, Dave, Jordan, Blake, Kiv, Mitch, Chris, Scout, and myself. We were plodding along as a rag-tag group right down Dundas Street—slow, dark, almost baleful. It was a cold February evening, about 7:15. Steam was rising reluctantly from sewer caps, persuaded by the bitter wind. It was weaving and drifting between our legs as we made our way along the street like slow cuts, scissor-like as if through smoke. We must have looked menacing: we took up almost the entire sidewalk as we swept our way past parked cars, parking metres, darkened shops, and the odd person who dashed out of our way.

It was only when we stopped at the corner of Clarence and Dundas—to wait for the light—that I realised I was unquestionably part of this group of street kids whom I spoke with almost everyday at the YAC. At this point, my status was not questioned anymore; I was just "one of them". We were headed for the library: our usual point of departure, separation. They went their way (up to the computers on the second floor to check their Facebook and email accounts—and then on to the apartments or shelters where they currently live), and I went mine (home to my family).

Jordan, Mitch, Kiv, and Blake were planning to have a drink at Zane's place later that night. I kept my distance—on purpose. I remained silent as they figured out the details of when to go—these are the times when it is wise for a fieldworker (especially in my context) to keep at least some distance. Getting too close to one's informants—especially in this case—can have serious consequences[81]. As it turned out, they were going to have a full night of drinking, smoking weed and playing video games. As we approached the Galleria—the old mall through which to access the new Central Branch of the London Public Library—I could not help but think how this night felt different. Perhaps it was because I knew I would have to wrap up my conversations with these guys soon—in the next couple of months. I really could not help but think how fast time has gone by.

I realised that it had almost been a year since I first met most of these guys. Some of the times were tough, admittedly. Some were worrisome; but, for the most part they were great. I never really thought I would be accepted as a member of a group of street youth, much less in my own city, even more surprisingly in my own

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[81] As noted in the *Entrée*, I was followed home one night by Jordan. And, as well, there were other times throughout the course of my time at the YAC where I felt her trying more and more forcefully to find out as much detail about my personal life and my family.

neighbourhood. But, such unexpected turns in life are often the most interesting ones—they pop up out of nowhere and make us think or re-think our situations. They force us to change our understandings and conceptualisations of certain issues. It has been a destabilising experience, and I have seen and heard of things I never thought I would. Because of this, I have felt a rather profound shift in how I approach certain local issues politically and emotionally. The daily crises, the heart-breaks, the upset, the confusion, the frustration, and the communion of those who use the YAC on a daily basis made me more understanding of street youths' plight in London: as poor people, as abandoned people, as people living on the constantly fluid boundary between hope and despair.

As we made our way into the main foyer of the library, I felt a strange sense of melancholy wash over me, slow then fast. As I give everyone the customary departure knuckle-tap, I said "see you guys tomorrow, have a good night". When the phatic sentiment is returned, Zane turned back as if to mention something he forgot to say. He gave me a big hug, and, while patting my back forcefully said, "Mark, I no longer consider you as just an ally; I consider you *a true friend* now—and that is a big deal to me". Shocked, I return the force of the hug, and stagger out an awkward "Zane, seriously, I feel exactly the same. You realise it's been almost a year since we first met"? After expressing great surprise at what I had just said, he grinned widely (a rarity), and told me that he genuinely appreciated our nightly conversations about "life, metal and whatever else pops up".

Photograph #8: The Entrance to the Downtown Public Library.

I felt a welling up of joy and elation in my chest (followed by the slowed pace relief and release of acceptance), but also of sorrow in that given the requirements for my upcoming convocation, I knew I would have to steal myself away soon in order to write the dissertation; to re-create, and re-animate the experiences I have shared thus far with Zane and the others. As we departed, Zane gave me a harder-than-usual knuckle-crunch, and told me that he'd see me the next day. I smiled awkwardly, covering up a grimace from the pain in the knuckle of my right hand. I said the same, and turned away—out of the library, for home. During my ten-minute walk home, I felt great; I felt great that I was able to reach out to at least *one* of my informants on a deep, personal level: a level of *true friendship*. This is not to say that I did not become friends with my other informants. I was able to become friends with Esther, with Mitch, and many others; however, the level of meaning, and the depth of friendship was different with Zane—perhaps this is because we had so much in common, from growing up in the same neighbourhood, to liking similar music.

Establishing such bonds with one's informants is, sadly, something that those

who engage in more superficial or instrumental forms of ethnographic fieldwork cannot seem to understand—or at least have a more limited understanding. Not only from a "methodological" standpoint, but from an *ethical* one, too. Listening to stories, experiencing the ups and downs of life, discovering new things together, feeling happy, angry, sad, ambivalent—just "being *there*" and "being *for*" one's informants: these are all of a piece when engaging in long term, in-depth fieldwork where you step, edge and sometimes fall into and through another's lifeworld.

For those conducting long term fieldwork, "the ethical" always creeps toward and against a *limit*—the limit of *imposed distance* (the distance of "research") lest harm be done to one's research "subject(s)"; the limit of implicit "objectivity", when, if breached, the integrity of the research slides into messy and ambiguous anecdote, "just stories" (but is this not how life and experience just are?). This limit, as lived in everyday experiences in the fieldwork context, inheres in the lifeworlds of those with whom we "make contact"; those who let us in their lives, who trust us, who—through time, effort, fights, joys, gifts, misunderstandings, and sometimes hurt feelings— *become our friends*.

Ethics in this sense is a *process* (see Cerwonka and Malkki 2007), albeit an uneven one; however, I find that ethics, as I came to understand the term more clearly throughout my fascinating conversations with Esther, is far too distant, too clinical a term to index what actually happened during my own day-to-day experiences with my informants. To this end, ethics, to me—*as a concept, a set of standards*—haemorrhages, breaks apart, and dissolves into a more *complex experience*: one rooted in the "local phenomenologies" moored in what Kleinman (1998) called "local moral worlds". The local moral worlds of my informants involved what was *at stake* for them morally and

existentially; and their everyday experience was characterised by a constant shift

between what felt right, good, bad, or neutral at a specific moment. Each moment bore

the mark of the limitations of the state (OW) insofar as my informants' very life-blood,

their possibilities for sustenance and substance, depended on their OW cheque, and the

myriad rules governing its accessibility.

For Kleinman, all experience is shot through with the inflections and refractions

of morality, or perhaps more accurately, *moralities*. He informs us that

> Experience is moral, as I define it, because it is the medium of engagement in
> everyday life in which things are at stake and in which ordinary people are
> deeply engaged stake-holders who have important things to lose, to gain, and to
> preserve. Among the things that order the course of the moral processes…are
> dangers, dangers that are perceived to exist in the world and that represent
> serious threats to other things that are at stake as well. The dangers of social
> experience are multifarious. They occupy our attention because they can
> threaten our categories, our relationships, our projects, even our survival (1998:
> 362).

While Kleinman and I part company regarding his use of the term "stake-holder"

(I dislike it very much inasmuch as it connotes a relation of distance, and has financial

connotations i.e., a stake-holder "invests" in something or has "interests" in something),

I do agree that experience is moral in that life in all of its contexts (as per Bakhtin) is

evaluative—to put it awkwardly, it bears the impress of "the ought" at every twist and

turn. As such, moral processes—those which involve what is at stake, what counts as

important, what is in need of preservation, and what we fear—are all "ordered" by

danger, and the anxieties thereof.

What was at stake for my informants, at least as I saw it, was the ability

preserve their security in the face of daily assaults; to maintain a sense of well-being, to

guard themselves from the anxieties of their past, with its endless creep into the present.

The daily project for my informants was as much a moral as an existential one; its point

of orientation was the preservation, guarding and maintenance—the *phroureō*—of a sense of health or well-being through reconciliation. When this moral and existential project of health as *phroureō* became constrained by social, political and economic factors—as with the rigid limitations, regulations and rules of OW—beyond reasonable limits, they were not afforded much room for possibility; possibility for action, choice, or the "freedoms" thereof that afford the possibility of a range of choices in the first place.

The molar, segmentary lines that enveloped them, oriented them according to modes of becoming foreign to them, set the conditions for my informants to take various lines of flight ("molecular") between the spaces and "movements" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) of the state; slipping through and between the lines of constraint and regulation. These molecular lines of flight enabled a very distinct form of *becoming* to occur, to open up—the becoming "creative" through literature, performance, writing, and fabulation.

Becoming to my informants was a becoming *Other* in multiform, differential ways. And this becoming opened out on to a form of health that enabled them to maintain and guard themselves from what they thought were moral and existential threats and dangers. Though orthogonal to the imposed and teleological becomings of the state through the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making, becoming creative, for my informants, was set according to the inclusive and highly contextualising temporality of a haecceity. This was marked by the "speed" or scalar openings of an existential health oriented toward *phroureō*—preservation, maintenance, healing.

Motion Squared (^{2})?

In his paper entitled *Motion squared: a second look at the concept of social navigation* (2009), Henrik Vigh explains that social navigation involves motion within motion (to wit, "motion squared"): navigation forces us to consider the relation between the environment in which people move, and how the environment itself moves them—buffeting them along a pre-figured course. Vigh (2009) points out that once we become aware that social navigation involves motion squared (motion within motion), we are able to understand better that peoples' movement in their social environs is constantly attuned and adjusted to the emergent opening and unfolding of shifting social structures, as well as the effect these structures have on social positions, locations and trajectories. The pitch, yaw and roll of life, of social existence. Motion(s) within motion(s). *Circles within circles*.

Such an approach to social navigation, then, contains both the assessments of the dangers and the conditions of possibility for one's present position in a social environment, and the process of figuring, plotting and formulating potential routes (becomings) into a highly ambiguous, uncertain, and protean future (Vigh 2009). What I like about the idea of social navigation is that it infuses an element of dynamism into the interaction between individual and society: individuals are slippery and ambiguous in their daily interactions, yet so are social environments. Social environments move with and act upon people, and yet people move with, act upon and shape their environments, too: it is a dynamic co-movement or dialectic between *figure and ground* (Vigh 2009). For Bourdieu's habitus, it seems that the social, cultural, economic, political and moral processes which structure the dispositions ("structuring structures")

of individuals were conceptualised as fairly static and monolithic: as structures, they provide a firm social bed-rock upon which the habitus could be configured and altered according to situation and context. When an individual shifts between social structures—through migration, a change in class, etc.—only then could his/her durable habitus experience a lag, slippage or destabilisation.

Throughout the preceding pages, I have tried to infuse an element of social and existential dynamism to the interaction between individual and society in the form of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming*. Much like Vigh's idea of social navigation, I pointed out that the state is rarely monolithic and static. On the contrary, it is constantly moving, adjusting itself, and employing its own "tactics" along with its strategies and lines of segmentation to keep abreast of the ever-changing movement of OW participants.

This conception of social navigation bears kinship with Jackson's (1998) notion of "manoeuvring" wherein, through a cybernetic perspective, individuals are seen to be constantly striving for balance and control in their lives. Existence, then, to Jackson (1998) is a matter of balance and equilibrium. But, he cautions, "by balance I do not mean static equilibrium, harmony or homeostasis. I mean to imply an on-going dialectic in which persons vie and strategize in order to avoid nullification as well as to achieve some sense of governing their own fate" (1998: 18-19). This vying and strategizing in order to avoid nullification as well as to achieve some sense of governing their own fate" was the moral and existential project of my informants. Bateson's (1972) concept of "flexibility" may also be applied in this context for it meant to index a sense of "uncommitted potentiality for change" (497); this idea, as it pertains to my informants, is rooted in "…the flexibility and "preadaptation necessary

for unpredictable change" (495) in the constituting and constitutive articulation and contact between one's social world and the social environment.

Vigh (2009) points out that this form of navigation, motion, manoeuvring, flexibility, or, as I represented it, "becoming", is both socially *immediate* (as in the case of my informants' use of tactics, *mētis*, and *débrouillardise*) and—I would say morally and existentially—*imagined*. It is in the space between the two (immediacy and imagination) that people make do and muddle through their lives. Sometimes winning, sometimes losing, sometimes neither winning or losing, but just getting by day-by-day.

Health *qua* existential health as reconciliation, opened up through molecular lines of flight, set according to the pacing and "speed" or a haecceity, was a creative process of *imagining and re-imagining*—of creating other selves, other worlds, other possibilities, other narratives, other stories, with alternate, open-ended *denouements*. Whereas the state in the capacity of OW (enacted through caseworkers) wants its participants to become employ-able and productive, where the clear *telos*, the clear end point is not health per se, but *ability*. But, in case of my informants, this may not ever be a realisable, possible goal—given their experiences with trauma, loss and the constant, regressive slide and slip of failure. Many of them view themselves as currently broken individuals in need of protection and guarding from the very assaults that OW wishes to expose them to—a competitive, gainful sociality. Whether used as an excuse or not, my informants' histories were poisonous, and hindered them extremely in their relations with others.

Selfhood, to my informants, as was made apparent through direct and indirect conversations, was an *unfinished project*—"unfinalizable" as Bakhtin (1963) would have said—meaning that selfhood is ever-oriented toward an open and emerging

horizon of possibilities—closing off, and meeting the limit or boundary of its own ambit only when we die biologically and existentially. The self is part of a process of *constant becoming*; it is *rhizomatic*, and thus finds—through ricochet, reaction, invention, improvisation—new social, moral and existential possibilities and orientations for keeping, preserving, and maintaining what is at stake.

People are Complicated

Oftentimes, when social forces become oppressive and constrain people's movements, especially in the context of my informants' lives, subjectivity and the "motivations" and "influences" that constitute it and shape it become a tricky thing. As the existentialists argue, most notably Sartre (1943), our existence is not characterised by a teleological orientation and striving toward self-realisation, insight, or "authenticity". On the contrary, I would countermand such a conceptualisation, following Jackson (2005), that most human action (agentive capacity) is less a product of intellectual deliberation and conscious choice—and this is against any form of "rational choice" theory—than a matter of an on-going, continual, and, ultimately opportunistic change of course.

As Jackson (2005) points out, agency and action involve a "cybernetic" toggling between alternatives that may or may not assure more or less satisfactory solutions to the constantly shifting and moving situations at hand. That life, as Jackson conceives it, is a matter of on-going and continual opportunistic changes of course sits flush with the experiences of my informants, wherein each struggle was saturated with existential and moral dilemmas. When Mitch explained to me that he had become clean since his time

in jail, I believed that he genuinely felt the need to change, the thrust to do something that would not hold him back or cause him trouble. To be honest, I was shocked to hear that within a month of our first life history interview, Mitch had been consumed by his addiction to cocaine, alcohol and other drugs. As was told to me many a time, he had fallen in love with Tiger quite some time ago. He had built up the courage to tell her his feelings; yet they were not returned—it was a case of unrequited love. Pressured to find a job, and lacking the motivation to search, he reverted to the very lifeway he told me he had turned his back on. As of the writing of this dissertation, Mitch is still battling his addiction.

Esther, too, continues her cyclical relationship (or what I see as a cyclical relationship) with addiction—even in the face of strong personal "will" to understand her situation and, with the help of the OW addictions team (A-team), to "overcome her addiction". In the wake of the loss of a lover, she had disappeared from the YAC during my last few months there. The last time I saw her she was in a bad way: glassy-eyed, confused and reticent, she began our last conversation in sign-language—no doubt a potential signal for her withdrawal of the self from the other, to get away, to rest, to understand, to cope. She had told me her lover, along with her lover's daughter—with whom Esther had had a very good relationship—had left for Ireland. Faced with the potential of never seeing her again, Esther looked crushed and ragged. Lacking a contact number, e-mail or Facebook contact I am still unable to check in with her to see how Esther is coming along. I leave it to chance to see if we will cross paths in the future.

Zane, in his struggle of becoming to get away from a destructive and poisonous past, was faced with many alternatives; however, even in choosing the alternative that

he thought would best afford him the peace he so desired, his actions were, at best, ambiguous, and many times highly contradictory. At least a few times a week I would bring up Zane's quest to get off of OW and apply for ODSP. Reluctantly, he would explain to me that he had made an appointment with his OW worker to actually see a physician at the Intercommunity Health Centre downtown. Such a visit to a physician would enable Zane to receive a formal diagnosis for his self-assessed suicidal depression and anxiety. It would also enable him, upon receipt of a formal diagnosis, to have his physician fill out the requisite application forms for ODSP. If Zane was indeed found to have *bona fide* (i.e., state stipulated) psychiatric symptoms, then he would be entitled to an ODSP pension, and could then live the life he had said he wanted to on many occasions: without the pressure from his OW worker to find a job; without having to submit the seemingly endless amounts of paperwork; and with more money to survive on and get by, Zane could focus his energies on drawing, writing, and getting away from his past. Just about each day I saw Zane, he would tell me that he was that much closer to "getting the fuck off of OW, and on to ODSP".

The reality of the situation, though, was that Zane would set up appointments with a physician at the Intercommunity Health Centre, using his OW worker as a liaison (who backed him on his quest to get off of OW and on to ODSP), but would never attend them. He constantly cited explanations like, "I just couldn't do it today, I just couldn't bring myself to go"; or, "I need someone to be with me at all times when I'm downtown nowadays—it's getting *that* bad—and I didn't have anyone to go with, so I missed *another* appointment". No doubt scared that he might not meet the requirements of ODSP in terms of being diagnosed with a viable (or medically sanctioned) psychiatric illness, Zane's contradictory experience is consistent with the

procrastinations brought on by a very real fear—*the rejection by the medical establishment that Zane actually had a bona fide, biologically-rooted mental illness*. From the standpoint of Zane's local moral world, he was doing the *right thing* by getting off of OW. It was a practical objective, too, in that it just did not pay enough to eat. However, in Zane's case no matter how meaningful his moral or existential enterprise was, his actions, his very agency in terms of making choices, was contradictory and counterproductive—from my perspective.

Jordan, too. She would always tell me that she wanted to go to university either for business, law or political science. That she had not yet finished high school was definitely problematic, but she showed—what I thought—was quite a lot motivation to finish and get her diploma. On two separate occasions, she told me that she had enrolled in correspondence (distance) studies classes, and was taking social science classes (sociology and anthropology). Upon completion of these classes (she needed four more credits to receive her high school diploma), she would be eligible to apply for university. I thought this was an easily attainable, straightforward goal. It wasn't. Choices for Jordan, for all of my informants, were anything but "logical", "straightforward", or "black and white". Each time she had enrolled in the classes, Jordan would complain of "burning out" part way through. On several occasions, I helped her with her homework, and clarified concepts as best I could. However, several weeks later she would come into the YAC explaining that she had quit—and she did this twice. Each time I would ask why she quit, her invariable response was often: "I don't know. I don't know. Self-sabotage maybe"?

As I argued in the previous chapter, existential health as *reconciliation* and not *overcoming* might be a contradictory and counter-productive enterprise in and of itself.

Since it occurs in what I described as a haecceity, the experience of reconciliation might be circular, it might be jagged and backwards, only with blips and pulses of well-being, or, in some cases, reconciliation might never lead to a *full* understanding of one's existential predicament. But, regardless, this does not guarantee non-contradictory, and biologically or financially advantageous health behaviours and choices, such as: "I am never doing drugs again"; or, "I am going to take some time off, understand myself, and then get a job and earn money to support myself"; or, "I am homeless right now, and I need a place to stay—I'll stop spending time with my abusive boyfriend, and stay with my parents until I get back on my own two feet". With a lifeworld marked by instability, uncertainty, anxiety, depression, a lack of a decent income and possibly a safe place to stay, planning long-range just does not work: the resources required to invest in setting long-term goals are, in most cases, unavailable and stripped away from the pangs of necessity and impatience.

The Improbable Case of Mr. Tchernychevsky

What is rational action theory? And how does it relate to subjectivity and the capacity to act, to decide, to choose? Another name for it is "rational egoism" or "individualistic finalism" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), and its proponents state that human action and motivation are determined by a conscious and calculated aiming at explicitly posed goals—a person aims and orients him/herself toward these goals, and strives toward them. It requires an anticipated adjustment of one's orientation to said goals, along with the necessities and probabilities that are inscribed or weighed against the attainment of the goal. Another way to look at it is from Dostoevsky's perspective,

wherein he thought rational egoism was a "…personal principle, the principle of isolation, of intense self-preservation, of self-solicitousness, of the self-determination of one's own ego, of opposing this ego to all of nature and all other people as a separate, autonomous principle completely equal and equivalent to everything outside of itself" (1955: 21).

As such, from the perspective of rational choice theory, "behaviour" or "motivation" is driven by nothing but informed calculations of one's own interests, and then subsequently orienting these interests toward a goal—and then, ultimately, achieving that goal, if at all possible. From an economic, psychological or even a political scientific perspective, rational egoism or action theory is thought to be "scientific" (read: objective) insofar as it expressed a "natural law" of how people invariably act according to what they think are their own best interests (Scanlan 2002).

In a curious novel by N. G. Tchernychevsky, called *What can be done? A romance* (1863), one finds a very systematic and philosophically sound outline (perhaps one of the first) of "rational egoism" or "rational action" theory, even though this book is a work of fiction. The main characters in the book are necessitated by their own nature to act as they do in a variety of contexts; and their choices are always already governed and oriented by their own seemingly rational and calculated interests. Scanlan (2002) explains that *What can be done? A Romance* features a complicated moral patchwork wherein the characters' imperatives range from calculating their "real" interests, to educating themselves, to freeing themselves of personal hindrances or setbacks, to being active and energetic in pursuing ones interests, to working for whatever social changes are needed to promote said interests, to being wary of distracting and paralysing emotions, and, ultimately, to putting off immediate

gratification for future gains. The crux of the novel, then, is that the characters are "rational" in a relentless way about making choices and decisions—guided by clear, reasoned interests—on their respective routes to their goals.

The problem with such a conception of human action lies between perception and reality. Through ignorance, irrationality, or the constraint of one's circumstances, I may *perceive* my best interests or needs to be different from what they really are (Scanlan 2002)—but how are we really to judge this, especially through the complexities and shifting depths of the habitus? From the perspective of rational action theory, the task of the state through social reform and restructuring (which has already happening, but still continues to occur in many different forms) is *to make perceptions of interests coincide with genuine interests*, and thus to arrange society such that genuine interests—free from cloudy delusions—can be promoted (Scanlan 2002).

Once people have been "educated" and re-oriented to know what their real interests are and how best to achieve them, and once society has been restructured to allow their achievement, the "natural law" of rational choice will underwrite that people can and will act rationally to promote them (Scanlan 2002). To me, this is a clear example of a causal deterministic theory that characterises human "behaviour" as ultimately *predictable* under certain circumstances. As I understand it, this is the very basis of the "methodological individualism" which undergirds modern, Western capitalist societies driven by the logics and technologies of neoliberalism. Dostoevsky's nameless character ("the underground man") from *Notes from Underground* (1994) has something to say about this:

> Man, always and everywhere, whoever he might be, has loved to act as he wants, and not at all as reason and advantage command him to; and one can want even against one's own advantage…One's own voluntary, free wanting, one's own

caprice, even the wildest, one's own fancy, though inflamed sometimes to the point of madness—all this is that same, omitted, most advantageous, which does not fall under any classification and by which all systems and theories are constantly flying to the devil (Dostoevsky 1994: 25).

The underground man reminds us, too, that rational action theory poses more questions about being human than it does to answer them. He countermands rational action theory, and poses a difficult question to its proponents:

> What are we to do with the millions of facts showing that people knowingly, that is, fully aware of their real advantage, have put it aside and rushed off onto another road, a risk, a chance, not forced to do so by anyone or anything, but just as if they simply did not want the indicated road, and stubbornly, wilfully burst onto another one, difficult, absurd, trying to find it practically in the dark (Dostoevsky 1994: 20).

Rational action theory or rational choice theory, as Dostoevsky's underground man is at pains to point out as morally wrong, imagines nothing but reason and rationality as the basic drives of human experience: all people are fully "aware" of what their choices are, and thus choices and decisions are merely something to align with those goals. They are things to be realised and then acted upon, striven toward. Rational choice theory, then, recognises, really, nothing but the "rational responses" to potential or actual opportunities of an individual who is, as Bourdieu states, "both indeterminate and interchangeable" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 123).

Contextualising and interweaving what has been featured above in the context of my fieldwork, it is plausible that the logic of the state in the capacity of OW is based on a basic and misunderstood conception of human "behaviour" and "motivation": rational action theory. As I have argued throughout this dissertation, it is through the state's distinctive and imposed mode of becoming (that is, becoming *able*), achieved through segmentary, molar lines, and set in motion according to the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making, wherein individuals are to orient themselves towards explicit

goals of employment, overcoming along the way any form of personal or social

"hindrance" or "setback".

Once one has "overcome" him/herself or any obstacle blocking his/her path,

he/she is supposed to reach out toward the goal in a calculated, rational way—and

achieve it, or at least attempt to do so. When this schema of human behaviour breaks

down or fails to occur, the individual, as I heard many times, is either cut from OW,

declared in need of a psychological/psychiatric consultation, or, monitored for fear of

OW dependency. This conceptualisation of human action is in the state's best interests,

however, in that it keeps individuals "in check" and "productive". In those cases where

an individual needs to apply for OW, all approved participants are regulated and

oriented ("rehabilitated") toward a the *dual goal* of: 1) employ-ability through

attainment of some form of economic health or recognition thereof; and 2) the reduction

of caseloads in order to decrease spending in the state/private sector partnership.

What of history, though? What of subjectivity? What about the complex

interplay between sociality, social structures, and other people (cf. Elias' notion of

"figurations")? Surely "behaviour" and "motivation" cannot simply be a matter of

someone making a decision about a choice, then following through with an action—all

according to a very simple teleology of motivation and achievement. What rational

action theory misses is a sophisticated approach to human existence as thoroughly

historical, social, and emotional. Let Bourdieu round out the picture for us:

> Human action is not an instantaneous reaction to immediate stimuli, and the
> slightest "reaction" of an individual to another is pregnant with the whole
> history of these persons and of their relationship. To explain this, I could
> mention the chapter of Mimesis entitled "The Brown Stocking", in which Erich
> Auerbach (1953) evokes a passage of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, and
> the representations or, better, repercussions that a minor external event triggers
> in Mrs. Ramsay's consciousness. This event, trying on a stocking, is but a point

of departure which, though it is not wholly fortuitous, takes value only through the indirect reactions it sets off. *One sees well, in this case, that knowledge of stimuli does not enable us to understand much of the resonances and echoes they elicit unless one has some idea of the habitus that selects and amplifies them with the whole history with which it is itself pregnant* (1992: 124, my emphasis).

For Bourdieu, in order to make sense of "action" one must situate the orientation to the action in a much wider, historical—and I would say existential—frame. As Merleau-Ponty said famously that "we are condemned to meaning"; and so, each orientation to a particular action, goal, choice or decision will be saturated and drenched with the trails of meaning, and the affective and emotional valences which connect and resonate through a particular meaning as it circulates through one's lifeworld. We would be remiss to forget that with meaning comes value and morality, and that the relationship between moral values and practice is incredibly dynamic and fluid. Values are constantly changing and adapting *through actual choices and practices*, while they also inform and shape choices and practices (Howell 1997).

In Mattingly's (2010) recent discussion of moral willing, she explains that "willing", "becoming", and moral orientation are not simply a matter and product of rational choice or clear decision-making. All choices in life, including decisions are made in an historical (personal and social) context, and in an *emotional state*—we rarely make decisions that are purely emotionless. Making a choice or making a decision about a certain goal (whether it was where to sleep on a certain night, to not do drugs, to seek treatment, or to go back to one's abusive boyfriend), especially for my informants, was rarely if ever a matter of "willing" something to be, setting oneself on a course, and, through clear, rational thinking, striving toward a certain goal.

As "emotional work", "willing" toward a specific goal, as Mattingly (2010) tells

us, has much more to do with a conscious learning to shift attention from one way of thinking to another, to re-orient oneself, and, ultimately, to re-imagine one's position toward a certain goal. This is a much more "processual" approach, and sits quite flush with my approach to health, healing and well-being as an existential reconciliation through "becoming" creative. And, following this line thinking (in resonance with my own approach expounded in this dissertation), *willing*, to Mattingly (2010), is becoming in that an individual has to re-orient (i.e., transform) him/herself and engage in internal struggles over how to come to a new sense of themselves and their lifeworlds.

Employing a narrative approach not unlike my own, Mattingly's (2010) clarion call is that in order to understand "willing", "behaviour" and "motivation" (*experience* to me), we must situate human action and agency within an encompassing narrative frame—one that subtends the lifeworld of individuals *and their social relations* in their existential ambiguity and complexity. Following Alasdair MacIntyre, Mattingly (2010) argues that particular actions always derive their origins from larger wholes; and that action must be connected to these larger narrative contexts from which any particular act derives its meaning and intelligibility.

Mattingly furthers our understanding: "I want to build from this notion of willing as orientation rather than "acted-upon-moment-of-choice" by considering willing as a narrative act". "If willing involves", she goes on, "in many situations, the task of reorientation, any specific moral choosing is understandable as part of a past and future, from which this particular moment derives its (moral) meaning". "That is", she explains, "it becomes understandable as connected to an orientation that is part of a story—one that has its own history (say, falling in love with this particular, somehow unsuitable, man) and its own wished-for future (falling out of love with this man)"

(Mattingly 2010: 59). Mattingly concludes, "obviously, such a history that surrounds such re-orientation might be embedded within all kinds of larger social and personal narrative histories" (2010: 59).

As such, there is no single, correct narrative in which an action must be understood in order for it to have meaning. Mattingly (2010) claims that action cannot be reduced and isolated to a meaningful "unit" disconnected from any larger narrative frame—whether this narrative frame is personal or social (micro, i.e., friends, family, peer group; or macro, i.e., greater cultural narratives). In order to get a fix on how people characterise their intentions, orient themselves toward particular goals, and make choices and decisions, Mattingly (2010) urges us to focus more nuanced attention to our informants' *existential predicaments* (and the differing scales of narrative frames—personal/social—that constitute and are constituted by them), or, what she calls, following Kleinman (1998), understanding what is "at stake" and "what really matters" for people. Taking Mattingly's approach to agency seriously, then, we can de-situate mainstream understandings of agency, and re-situate the very idea of "intentionality" as a *thoroughly relative concept*; and, as such, it may be better understood *relationally* rather than as the a "product" or "expression" of an autonomous ("possessive") individual (Lambek 2001: 13).

Circles Within Circles: The Magnetism of a Black Orbit

Up to this point I have been trying to condense the major thematics of this dissertation into an idea, a conception, an orientation that will inform a more nuanced theory of *agency* and *action* (as they are emergent in sociocultural and linguistic

practices, as well as constrained by these practices, Ahearn [1999, 2001])—whether this

agency or action concerns getting by and making do (*débrouillardise*), the becomings

of existential health, or, in choice, decision-making and willing in general. For my

informants, agency and action were always problematic affairs.

Many times I saw first-hand how a decision to better one's life ended up in a

messy slide into contradiction and what appeared to be existential stasis.   How did this

happen? And why did it happen time and again with my informants? The gloss

"people are complex" works to a degree; however, it also begs a nagging question: "yes,

this is nice, but *how*"? That, as social creatures we both constitute society and are

constituted by it, brings *some* relief of understanding—we are all the product of an

ever-shifting dynamic between interiority and exteriority. For Zane, Mitch, Esther,

Jordan, or any of the others, decisions, choices and action were never easy,

straightforward things, each decision, each action, each choice bearing the tense mark

of the social and individual.

Even if actions are, as Mattingly (2010) explained above, situated within and

oriented by overlapping smaller and larger narrative spheres or circles if you will, what

happens if those narratives themselves are conflicting and contradictory? Or, if they are

interpreted or perceived as conflicting or contradictory? This conflict and contradiction

might have its source in the confusion, ambiguity and lasting pain of loss.

Again, as outlined throughout this dissertation, the pain and suffering of loss felt

by my informants was a truly polyvalent experience: it had multiple dimensions,

multiple effects and affects, yet the one commonality of experience was that it led to a

looming, spectral sense and feeling that the past was something to *escape, to flee, to run*

as fast as one could—regardless of its fog-like creep and parry at every confrontation or

line of flight away from it. It would not be too far off to say that, for most of my informants, the past was violent, poison-like and destructive in its *persistence*.

The following metaphorical passage from Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1998), is apt in this context: "[t]he rings of Saturn consist of ice crystals and probably meteorite particles describing circular orbits around the planet's equator. In all likelihood these are fragments of a former moon that was too close to the planet and was destroyed by its tidal effect (→ Roche limit)" (Sebald 1998: iv). Caught within the ghostly motion of *circles within circles (orbits, and the circularity of lines that create them),* then, could my informants be caught within the spinning magnetism of slow and possibly destructive memories? Are they in danger of being pulled into the orbit (much like a spinning singularity or black hole) of their own pasts, constantly verging on their exhaustive black limits (existentially, socially, etc.)? Would reaching or negotiating these limits lead to a potential dissolution or severe compromise of the self *qua* anxiety, fear, failure, hopelessness? This could possibly be so. And if it is, it would seem likely that on an experiential level my informants' histories have left their ghostly traces in the present.

In one of our last electronic correspondences (June 2012), Zane had outlined what he sees as a seemingly darkened, solitary and bleak orientation to the future—a future underwritten in acquiescence to the enclosures of a restrictive past. And though he has recently decided to take medication for his depression and anxiety, he explains that this in no way has changed the absolute (though maybe relative) colour or tenor of his lifeworld, his existence.

> **Zane**: I'll end by saying this: though I was against medication, I'll accept what little it's doing just to hopelessly buy more time I don't need. I'm eternal. Eternally walking the wastelands of the Abyss, a guardian, the joke. That's all

my purpose in life has been, all it will be. I have no future, I don't care to work, to have a family; there's little I care about, and that's all that little I'm good at and good for. I'm the manicurist of karma's hands, and although I'll die on the inside so many bleak, and countless times before my carnal remains either turn acinder or join the blissful rot of the earth, I'll enjoy all I can enjoy, inside my one man parade of apocalyptic damnation. If I'm odd, there's odder people out there, if that's a good thing, I'll be silent. And if enjoying my space to myself is such a crime, take me away and call the firing squad, the being alone is all I am, its all that defines me, and I crave it like the roots of an ageless tree crave sustenance.

Another Ghost Story? Come On, Do Ghosts Really Exist Around Here?

There has never been a scholar who really, and as a scholar, deals with ghosts. A traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts—nor all that could be called the virtual space of spectrality.

J. Derrida 1994: 11

Under the names of vampire, were-wolf, man-wolf, night-mare, night-demon—in the Illyrian tongue, *oupires*, or leeches; in modern Greek *broucolaques*, and in our common tongue ghosts, each country having its own peculiar designation—the superstitious of the ancient and modern world, of Chalden and Babylonia, Persia, Egypt, and Syria, of Illyria, Poland, Turkey, Servia [sic], Germany, England, Central Africa, New England, and the islands of Malay and Polynesian archipelagos, *designate the spirits which leave the tomb, generally in the night, to torment the living*.

G. E. Stetson 1896: 1

The everyday experience of my informants seemed to me as it were ghost-like,

where they were followed by the shadow of darkening past that creeps into the present

in unexpected and unsettling ways. Like Sebald's metaphor above, their day-to-day

strivings seem like a slow moving ring of scattered and fragmented pieces of a former

life skirting round a magnetic core of black memories. If this is so, then how can we

conceptualise the role of the individual, the social, and history in such a metaphorical

frame that ascribes presence to a ghostly absence (i.e., painful memories)? How can it

all come together?

Insofar as power relations that characterise any historically embedded society are never as clear as the names we give them imply, experience is oftentimes an ambiguous affair—especially the way power affects us, from top to bottom, from out of nowhere, from the side, wherever (Gordon 2008). As we have seen, the disconnect of becomings, and the differential forms of power that enable them, move them along, or interrupt them—regulatory, segmentary, molar, controlling for OW via the entrepreneurial rhetorics of self-making; tactics, *débrouillardise*, via molecular lines of flight, existential health as creative becoming, via idioms of tribulation—results, for my informants, in an unfinished, oftentimes contradictory experience of selfhood. This experience can be positive and productive i.e., in terms of the "creativity" it seems to force out, enabling people to reconcile through creativity their predicaments, or negative and destructive, i.e., when OW cheques are cut, people are forced—regardless of the tactics they employ to make do—into situations where they might starve. In such situations, they might get sick, they might end back up in an abusive relationship, or they might end up hating themselves even more than they already do (as sadly was the case for many of my informants).

This everyday experience corresponds to what Gordon (2008) has called "complex personhood". "Complex personhood" means that all people remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others. Daily life is tantamount to moving and shifting through *various densities and undulations of experience,* always already mediated by too many things. This is a reality wherein each day and its challenges, its troubles, and its sweet victories are never commensurate with another. Complex personhood means that people suffer

graciously and selfishly; they get stuck in the symptoms of their troubles, and also seek to transform themselves (Gordon 2008). Complex personhood, then, means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward—in my specific fieldwork context, this was a reaching toward a moving target of *existential health through reconciliation*.

Ghost-like and spectral, complex personhood is a project that is defined by the presence of an absence (Gordon 2008). This absence captures perfectly the paradox of experience (in my field context, the paradox of memory and its effects and affects on agency and action), in tracking through time and across those existential, social, cultural and historical forces which make their mark by being there and not being there. These forces, characterised by a dialectic between presence and absence, force us to reconsider our predicaments.

To this end, my informants are *haunted by a ghostly influence—one that marks their sociality as spectral-like and ambiguous*. In a few words, my informants are indeed haunted by some form of *imago*, ghastly and meticulous in its sweep; rigorous in its sharp ability to re-domesticate experience. Sociality, for my informants, is indexed by the ever-shifting and diaphanous contours of what once was (*absence*) and will be again (it seems) through future action or in-action (*presence*). This haunting is both *positive* and *negative*[82], then, for it proffers the "cure" for my informants' own existential predicaments; it enables the very possibility of *creation*—it is the motivating

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[82] In a way, it is a paradox, a *pharmakon (*φάρμακον): both a sacrament, a remedy, but, so, too, a poison, a polluting and noxious influence.

force for reconciliation, for some kind of health, through creative becomings.

However, at the same time it is also limits and scales down possibilities, through the

confrontation of memory, the chains of anxiety, and the slow and throbbing ache of

failure.

Gordon describes the process of social haunting thus: "[i]n haunting, organized

[social and personal] forces and systemic structures that appear removed from us make

their impact felt in everyday life in a way that confounds our analytic separations and

confounds the social separations themselves". In terms of manifestation, haunting is

"…often a case of inarticulate experiences, of symptoms and screen memories, of

spiralling affects, of more than one story at a time, of the traffic in domains of

experience that are anything but transparent and referential" (25).

Gordon continues,

> If haunting describes how that which appears to be not there is often a seething
> presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities, the
> ghost is just the sign, or the empirical essence if you like that tells you a
> haunting is taking place…the ghost or apparition is one form by which
> something lost, or barely visible, or seemingly not there to our supposedly well-
> trained eyes, makes itself known or apparent to us, in its own way, of course.
> The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of
> knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us
> affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the
> structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge,
> but as a *transformative recognition* (2008: 8).

Agency, as I see it, in this context "expands ironically into an immensity of

experiential relation and detail behind us, so that what we collect in moving forward in

our moments and actions is a ghostly vision of its precedence called "past" or "memory"

(Wagner 2005: 235). Agentive hauntings, then, took place regularly in and through my

informants' lifeworlds. Hauntings connected and intimated disparate experiences (from

the oneiric to the veridical), and often made them resonate with a dull-grey, precarious tenor—of what was and could very well be still.

As Benjamin once said of the connecting power of the ghostly, the haunted: "[t]here, too, are crossroads where ghostly signals flash from the traffic, and inconceivable analogies and connections between events are the order of the day" (1978: 183). Following this sentiment, action, subjectivity, and "the will" were underwritten by the ghost-like "logics of suffering" wherein memory made its black absence present—constantly. It became an index of subjectivity and, for almost all of my informants, served as part of a moral discourse through which to legitimate or de-legitimate (and, in some cases, even constitute) their selfhood and relations with others (Lambek and Antze 1996). The moral function of memory in this case seems to compel my informants to confront what they are, and what they wish so desperately to leave behind (Kirmayer 1997). The central post, though, around which the moral function of memory finds itself tethered leads my informants to a seemingly endless relationship with memory *qua* repetition. Unlike Constantine Constantius's (Kierkegaard's pseudonym in his work *Repetition*, 1964) young and crestfallen interlocutor, memory for my informants does not accord the possibility of "freedom". Its looming presence was felt in dreams and the silent sorrows of waking, the cold reality of getting by day-to-day with little to no money, making a decision (with their sometimes internally contested and contradictory denouements) about where to live, who to love, or how to better or not better one's position in life. Memory *qua*

repetition, in Kierkegaard's sense, is a *transformative movement*, and means to constantly "seek or to attack again[83]" (Stack 1966: 119).

The transformative recognition Gordon speaks of above could correspond to the lines of flight my informants had to take to open up the creativities and transformations concomitant with becoming, and the reconciliation and existential health it temporarily affords. At any rate, though, following Benjamin, we can understand that for my informants, "the past carries with it a temporal index by which it is referred to redemption" (Benjamin 1968: 254); yet this redemption is not on the grand scale of historical-material as in Benjamin's case, it is existential.

If the "touch of the ghostly", then, indexes some form of existential anxiety and depression—rooted in the past crammed into the present—in the face of an overwhelming set of expectations and regulations, we can understand that through this form of suffering, irony (in this case, the self-irony of contradiction) rises to the surface (Lambek 2001). Irony, as the self-irony experienced by some of my informants, runs up, along with agency, against many internal and external constraints. These constraints, like the ghostly effects *and* affects of spectral traces mentioned above, "…are [the] external ones of fate and circumstance and internal ones of ignorance, confusion, and contradiction. External and internal constraints on knowledge force us to [only sometimes] speak with an assurance we do not have. Irony is a recognition of this fact" (Lambek 2001: 5). Irony to Lambek, then, situating the trope within a broader and shifting existential frame "centres on such recognition of the fundamental undecidability of agency and intention in (internal) psychological and (external)

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[83] I must state that the processes of becoming experienced by my informants is markedly different from Kierkegaard's notion of becoming: that is, becoming as a "transition to a condition which once existed" (Stack 1966: 119).

historico-material contexts…We think of irony as a stance that gives ambiguity, perspective, plurality, contradiction, and uncertainty their due" (Lambek 2001: 3).

The implications of this dilemma of haunting and the touch of the ghostly are vast, and not easily dealt with on an analytic level. The haunting of my informants resulted in a complex interplay between personal history, social, cultural and political-economic forces, neoliberal ideology, and the refractory skein of "lines" that this interplay ineluctably produced. My informants (though not all of them, of course), who, it could be said, form a growing "underclass" (see Dean 1998), are on an existential course of becoming directly at odds with the political economy of the government/private enterprise conflation of Ontario Works. The logics and technologies of neoliberalism favour those self-reliant individuals who value, above all else, the idea that well-being can best be sought and advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills (found in the attainment of higher education, and the constant striving toward skill acquisition and upgrading—*ability*) within an institutional framework and apparatus characterised by very strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade (Harvey 2005).

Here*, personal freedoms* (conceived materially, as the freedoms that a stable, generous income can afford) are irreconcilable with the realities and lived actualities of my informants. As conceived hegemonically from the mainstream, "rights", "personal freedoms", and the "things" (usually material) they afford are indeed available to many (those who are able, and those who are willing), but there are some for whom these things mean *nothing, the meanings are ascribed alternatively, differently*. "The disadvantage" here as Ignatieff tells us, " is that many essential requirements of a decent life—love, respect, solidarity with others—cannot be sensibly justified as

necessary for personal freedom". He continues, "I don't need to be loved in order to be free; I need to be loved to be at peace with myself and to be able to love in return. A theory of the human good cannot, I think, be premised on the *absolute priority of liberty*" (1984: 15, my emphasis). In our current socio-political and economic climate, dominated as it is by neoliberal logics and technologies, it is this "market society" that leaves it up to *us and only us*—alone, isolated, and oriented toward a "bright future"— to find work, an occupation, capable of satisfying all of our needs and the sense of purpose and meaning these needs create (Ignatieff 1984: 15).

For those who are able to afford higher education, for those invested with the motivations to learn, to succeed, to be "free", to amass the requisite social and cultural capital to exchange in our "market society" for "freedom", "an income", "security", "control over one's life", for these people, life may be something to be seized, built up, fostered, cultivated, and *lived*. But what of those, who, for whatever reason, are not able to partake freely in this quest for social and cultural capital? To be "free", to attain liberty, to move about the political economy with confidence? What of those who lack the sanctioned capital to tender in any market system? What of those who want to better their lives, but lack the existential, social, or financial resources to do so? What of those who are able to reconcile their existential predicaments and want to get off of social assistance, but cannot lest the only job they are qualified for (for lack of education, lack of opportunity, having a criminal record) pays lower than the monthly cheques social assistance provides? Facing pressure from caseworkers to accept any paying job because it is a paying job places many people in a financially and, ultimately, an existentially untenable position.

What, then, of my informants? What of the case of the wounded *bricoleur*?
Are my informants, then, "cursed" in a sense with the semi-penetrating gaze of
regulation, of monitoring by a seemingly distrustful state/private enterprise partnership?
A state/private enterprise partnership that has increasing profit margins and cost cutting
measures as its imperative, all at the expense of social welfare, of compassion, of
helping those in need of assistance—whether it be through alternative understandings of
health, or even just helping someone find meaning in their life. Will such a
state/private enterprise partnership always unquestionably exalt the individual at the
expense of the social? Is it possible to precipitate change—real change—in such a
seemingly anti-revolutionary ("lumpen" in Marx's term) society wherein people are
more concerned with acting on the desires created by omnipresent corporations (i.e.,
buying GPS's for their cars, buying the latest Ipad so they can "discover" the latest
technology, or buying into different, expensive ways to placate oneself through new
forms of entertainment, like 3D TV's, etc.)? As well, since neo-conservatism is
sweeping the world over—in different guises, through different political regimes—with
proposed and seemingly brutal austerity measures, which translate into cut after cut to
social programmes that were intended to support and benefit people, what then? How
can an individual, a community, change this new socio-political, economic and moral
status quo?

The Harris government brought with it sweeping social, political and moral
changes in the province of Ontario when it took office in 1995. Since then, OW has
implemented a publicly condoned social institution through which municipal and
provincial—not to mention national inasmuch as provinces like Alberta, British
Columbia and others have taken on a similar approach—governments segregate and

monitor "undesirable peoples in a state of despondency and complacency" (Desjarlais 1997: 241).

Building on what was said in the paragraph above, the catch is that the disconnect in becomings, the "zones of awkward engagement" (Tsing 2005) seems highly untenable, both for the province and for people like Mitch, Zane, Esther, Chris, and the others. The goals, then, of the province—and many others, too, from policy administrators to government officials to those in the general population—would wish are not necessarily possible or even wanted by those such as Mitch, Zane, Esther and Chris. As I saw it everyday, there were good reasons for these people to take the stance of *phroureō* and guard and protect themselves from their perceived daily assaults. These efforts, through muddling along in life, accorded them—in some cases—the best means possible to live, given their concerns and circumstances (Desjarlais 1997).

Following Desjarlais (1997), more durable, lasting (read: "gainful") mainstream labours, or more intensive bureaucratic involvement often precipitates *more* distress in my informants' lives, therefore sometimes disrupting the intricate balance they seek to find each passing day. Since there are such strong and positive moral connotations given to "action", "productivity", "self-sufficiency", and "self-making", it is incredibly difficult for some (like politicians, legislators, or policy-makers) to understand that these ideals might not be, as Desjarlais (1997: 241) says, "the best medicine" for everybody.

Because of this, it is easy to condemn those who do not and might not ever live up to these ideals, backed as they are by modern neoliberal philosophies and expectations. It seems easier to devise therapeutic agendas that work to actively "mould" people into world rather than to rethink, act and combat the structural

everyday discursive and ideological violences (those centripetal rhetorical forces that link poverty to neoliberalism and transnational capital) that re-centre poverty *qua* pathology deviancy in the individual, *un*-able body (Lyon-Callo 2003, 2004). As well, structural discursive and ideological violences have a tremendously homogenising tendency, and, as such, the poor, the homeless, and the mentally ill are oftentimes painted as being of a particular demographic profile; however, those who are poor, mentally ill and homeless are anything but a homogenous group, and are therefore highly disparate and diverse (culturally, ethnically, socially, and in terms of gender identity and sexual orientations)—cutting across any sort of demographic profile (Forchuk *et al*. 2007). Keeping structural discursive and ideological violences in mind, as well as the diversity of people these violences affect, one of the simplest and most effective ways to attempt to combat poverty, homelessness and mental illness is through shifts in policy; shifts that call for caring community approaches; those that provide adequate housing, income supports (Forchuk *et al.* 2006), and, I would add, those that call for programmes aimed at eliminating food-insecurity.

However, policy formation is always marked by transverse power differentials, and these power differentials are social and cultural in origin. As Kingfisher (2007) explains, policy is not simply a "response" to already constituted needs, but rather it is the interpretation of needs—which must be seen as legitimate, and then must be amenable to being translated into administrable form. Power struggles characterise the various processes by and through the interpretation (or, as Kingfisher says, "the constructing") of policy, as different constituents compete to have their imperatives validated (2007: 91). It is through these struggles, though, that political participants draw on what is culturally available to think and make sense with. Kingfisher, in a

sobering tone, explains that "the processes and products of policy formation are thus cultural constructions that draw on and serve to reproduce, modify, or contest particular cultural formations and power relationships". "As part of the maintenance of and reproduction of culture", she goes on, "…policy is a fundamental component of how we "do" culture, certainly in contemporary industrialized societies" (2007: 91). The various social, cultural, moral, economic and political mechanisms associated with "neoliberal" restructurings both increase the numbers of the poor (Kingfisher 2007) and "difficult to employ" and render them more visible to a public for whom they represent "a condensed version of all that is sick and disordered about the present society" (Hopper 2003: 63). Policy formation, then, is in every way as much a moral enterprise as it is a political one.

Following Desjarlais (1997) once more, I argue that since the neoliberal-based ideological agenda of "productivity", "ability" and "self-help"—and the various policies that aim to underwrite these cultural and moral categories of "the good person"—can be at odds with what keeps people relatively sane and out of hospitals, the engineers and administrators of mental health care and public policy would be very wise to hold their assumptions and values about "sociality" and "intersubjectivity" in a neoliberal and modern capitalist society in abeyance. As such, it would do them well to understand—as best they can—in true phenomenological fashion the sensibilities, lived-actualities, and alternative *beings* and *becomings* of those they are authorised to care for. As Desjarlais states, "[i]f they were to take such a phenomenology far enough, they would probably find that the circumstances of life can lead people to live, talk, think, and use money in terms of a logic and ethics [highly] different from their own". He goes on to explain that policy administrators *"… might also hit upon the*

discomforting idea…that a society's provision for rationality, truth, sincerity,

responsibility, and agency [beings and becomings] can be rooted in political concerns

(1997: 241, my emphasis).

Since the answer to this socio-political, economic and moral dilemma is difficult

to proffer, I will end here with a whimsical yet sobering quote from Dr.Suess'

children's story *The Lorax* (1971). Escaping humans' incessant greed and

inexhaustible lust for new horizons of capital and its profitable development and

expansion, Dr. Suess' Lorax has left only a pile of rubble behind in his forest of Trufula

trees once teeming with life; and atop this pile of rubble is a mysterious sign.

And all that the Lorax left here in this mess
was a small pile of rocks, with one word…
"UNLESS".
Whatever *that* meant, well, I just couldn't guess…
"But now", says the Once-ler,
"Now that *you're* here,
The word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.

UNLESS someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better".
"It's not" (1971: 41-42).

COMMENTARY ABOUT FIELDWORK AT THE YAC: By Zane

The first time I met Mark D was one fateful day, he decided to come to the Youth Action Center. He was a man with a decent sized beard, and because of such, I thought he was staff, or rather, staff in training…boy was I wrong.

Sitting where I usually sit (last seat near the fridge side), I noticed he'd began a chat about metal music with [Starwarz]; who neither struck me nor surely Mark as that big a metal enthusiast. As the convo carried, I recognized words of bands I've heard and wanted to jump in some how, but Mark D seemed focused on carrying the convo and I found way to intrude…not until Mark, turning his head made way to me.

I'm unsure exactly as to the ground we began our chat on, but ever since we've had common ground via metal music and its influence in our lives, be it from the same or different reasons.

As I slowly got to know Mark, and him, a bit about me, I learned he came down here as a Homelessness Researcher for the post part, jotting notes about certain people, reactions and generally what goes down at the YAC on a daily basis. As well, it was cool to learn that Mark was a metal archivist and moderator [contributer/writer] for a seemingly good metal web-site.

Having very bad anxiety and depression, I don't fully trust those around me, myself, but I have the tendency to pick up on one's aura, and very few people pass. Mark D. seemed to be calm and cool, and he was indeed. Some days I would come down just to chat with him; which somedays grew quite epic. I have to thank the man for his generosity, supplying me with demos and CDs alike that he had copies of; simply because I've liked everything I've received, and thus, even with a small or simple act, he gained my respect. In due time, I showed him some of my works—drawings, and eventually poems….and I'm still unsure how he took to them.

When I was later asked to partake in an interview for Mark's study, I was slightly skeptic, not wanting personal information to leak out, but eventually, I decided to join; on the condition that I was the first to be studied. Turning tides…He explained to me what the project was about, and that it was ongoing,…which sounded good to me.

All in all…I hope I got to tell another interested individual about my not-so-easy-going life; especially the suicidal depression that looms over me still since a countless age, that I hope one day I'll be rid of. I'll surely unveil more of my mist-shrouded memories in the interviews to come, until then, I'll enjoy our metal-tacular chats.

Written by Goatt Greywaste
-2011-

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APPENDIX:

Office of Research Ethics

The University of Western Ontario
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Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: ~~[redacted]~~	**Review Level:** Expedited
Review Number: 16734	**Revision Number:** 1
Review Date: April 28, 2010	**Approved Local # of Participants:** 350

Protocol Title: Youth Matters in London: mental health, addiction and homelessness.

Department and Institution: Nursing, University of Western Ontario

Sponsor: CIHR-CANADIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH RESEARCH

Ethics Approval Date: May 26, 2010	**Expiry Date:** March 31, 2014

Documents Reviewed and Approved: Revised Health Social Justice Service Use instrument, addition of the Vocational Time Line Follow Back Instrument, Revised Youth Participant Letter of information & consent form dated April 30/10, revised Service Providers Letter of information & consent form dated April 30/10 & Revised Family Letter of information & consent form dated April 30/10

Documents Received for Information:

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Health Sciences Research Involving Human Subjects (HSREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the Health Canada/ICH Good Clinical Practice Practices: Consolidated Guidelines; and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has reviewed and granted approval to the above referenced revision(s) or amendment(s) on the approval date noted above. The membership of this REB also complies with the membership requirements for REB's as defined in Division 5 of the Food and Drug Regulations.

The ethics approval for this study shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the HSREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the HSREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of monitor, telephone number). Expedited review of minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered. Subjects must receive a copy of the signed information/consent documentation.
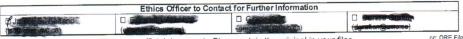
Investigators must promptly also report to the HSREB:
a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to this office for approval.

Members of the HSREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the HSREB.

Chair of HSREB: ~~[redacted]~~
FDA Ref. #: IRB 00000940

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information			
☑ James Sutherland	☐ ~~[redacted]~~	☐ ~~[redacted]~~	☐ ~~[redacted]~~

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

cc: ORE File

UWO HSREB Ethics Approval - Revision
V.2008-07-01 (rptApprovalNoticeHSREB_REV)

16734

Page 1 of 1

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Research

Western

Principal Investigator: ~~Dr. Cheryl Forchuk~~
Review Number: 16734
Review Level: Delegated
Approved Local Adult Participants: 350
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: Youth Matters in London: mental health, addiction and homelessness.
Department & Institution: Nursing, University of Western Ontario
Sponsor: Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Ethics Approval Date: August 26, 2011　　　　**Expiry Date:** March 31, 2014
Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Letter of Information & Consent	Digitally recorded interviews	2011/06/06

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Health Sciences Research Involving Human Subjects (HSREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the Health Canada/ICH Good Clinical Practice Practices: Consolidated Guidelines; and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has reviewed and granted approval to the above referenced revision(s) or amendment(s) on the approval date noted above. The membership of this REB also complies with the membership requirements for REB's as defined in Division 5 of the Food and Drug Regulations.

The ethics approval for this study shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the HSREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information. If you require an updated approval notice prior to that time you must request it using the UWO Updated Approval Request Form.

Members of the HSREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the HSREB.

The Chair of the HSREB is Dr. Joseph Gilbert. The UWO HSREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000940.

Signature

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

X ~~[name]~~	~~[name]~~	~~[name]~~
~~[email]~~	~~[email]~~	~~[email]~~

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

AUTHORIZATIONS AND CONSENTS

I authorize the London Police Service to examine my background in order to determine my suitability for working with vulnerable individuals. This examination will include a criminal record check and a search of all available police records, and, on the basis of such investigation the London Police Service will indicate "relevant information" or "no relevant information" and the existence or non-existence of a criminal record. I understand police contacts will be evaluated based on the nature of the contact. I acknowledge and understand that the London Police Service is not making a recommendation for or against my suitability for employment or volunteering. This determination shall be the sole responsibility of the employer or volunteer agency requiring this police records check to be done.

Further, it is understood that the results of this background check will only be released back to myself.

Applicant's Signature: ~~[signature]~~ Date: ~~[date]~~

This consent shall remain in effect for a period of 90 days from this date.

I consent to a search being made in the automated criminal records retrieval system maintained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to determine if I have been convicted of, and been granted a pardon, for any of the sexual offences that are listed in the schedule to the Criminal Records Act. I understand that, as a result of giving this consent, if the response indicates a possible match for one of the sexual offences listed in the schedule to the Criminal Records Act in respect of which a pardon was granted or issued, I will be notified to attend for fingerprinting for either confirmation or exclusion. I understand, if it is determined that I am the person for which a pardon was granted, that record may be provided by the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to the Solicitor General of Canada, who may then disclose all or part of the information contained in that record to the police service.

Applicant's Signature: ~~[signature]~~ Date: ~~[date]~~
(18 years or older)

This consent shall remain in effect for a period of 90 days from this date.

		PAID BY:	
		Cash ☐	Visa ☑
Information verified by: ~~[signature]~~	~~[text]~~	Debit ☐	M/C ☐
Signature	MAR 1 7 2011	Cheque ☐	Amex ☐

For Police use only

CPIC Check Completed ☑   Local Record Check Completed ☑   Occurrence Check ☑

This is to certify that as of *(date)* ~~[date]~~   yy   mm   dd   a search based on the above name and birthdate reveals that the applicant:

☐ DOES have information on file that may be relevant to the position noted on this form.

☑ DOES NOT have information on file that may be relevant to the position noted on this form.

☐ DOES have a criminal record with the London Police Service - See attached document.

☑ DOES NOT have a criminal record with the London Police Service.

☐ DOES have a criminal record in the RCMP National Repository for Criminal Records in Canada. *If this box is marked, the applicant may purchase a copy of this record for an additional fee.*

☑ DOES NOT have a criminal record in the RCMP National Repository for Criminal Records in Canada.

☐ Response(s) have not been received from all police agencies in relation to previous addresses.

Records Screening Operator: ~~[signature]~~

ANY MODIFICATION TO THIS FORM IS A CRIMINAL OFFENCE AND IS PUNISHABLE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA.

Individual Form RC1
(LP716B Page 2)
2008/07/29

VITÆ

EDUCATION:

Ph.D., Socio-cultural Anthropology. **Western University**, Department of Anthropology. Dissertation title: *The Wounded Bricoleur: Adversity, Artifice and the Becoming of Street-Involved Youth in London, Ontario, Canada.* Advisor: Dr. Regna Darnell.

Ph.D. student at the **University of Toronto**, Dalla Lana School of Public Health (Social Science and Health Stream), from September 2006 to June 2007. **Programme transfer to Department of Anthropology at Western University** (September 2007).

Master of Arts (Thesis on Dean's Honour List, one of 11 students university wide) Medical Anthropology, August 2003 (Degree conferred February 2004). **McGill University**, Departments of Anthropology and Social Studies of Medicine (Department of Medicine). Master's thesis title: *Expanding the epistemological horizons of insight in psychosis: Toward a phenomenological and anthropological reframing.* Thesis advisor: Dr. Ellen Corin. Committee Members: Drs. Allan Young and Lawrence Kirmayer.

Honours Bachelor of Arts (Dean's Honour List), Anthropology, June 2001. **Western University**, London, Ontario, Canada. Honours thesis: *Phenomenology, Psychiatry and Anthropology.*

RECENT ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT/TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

2012	Grader for Anthropology 4400E (001): Anthropological Thought. Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. Duties: grading final papers.
2011	Grader for Anthropology 1025F (001/002): Introduction to Sociocultural Anthropology. Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. Duties: grading mid-term exams for two sections of the course; analysing mid-term essays for plagiarism.
2011-Ongoing	Research Assistant for the *Youth Matters in London: Mental Health, Addiction and Homelessness*. Duties: Carrying out ethnographic research; writing academic papers; and attending conferences.

2006/07	Research Assistant for the Centre for Studies in Family Medicine, Department of Medicine, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, The University of Western Ontario. Assigned projects: designing a culturally-appropriate remote First Nations elementary school-based diabetes primary prevention curriculum project. Responsible for designing all aspects of project/grant proposal, i.e., writing letter of intent and full grant proposal; establishing and creating contacts with all partner First Nations; and putting together the research team. Project title: *Implementing elementary school-based diabetes primary prevention curricula in remote First Nations communities: Determining effectiveness and overcoming issues of sustainability*. As of December 2006, currently assisting with running the Canadian First Nations Diabetes Clinical Management Evaluation Study (CIRCLE)—a National diabetes chart audit study in 20 First Nations communities across Canada.
2004/06	Applied clinical anthropologist/research assistant (ethnographic observations, conducting interviews, focus groups, and data analysis and interpretation) for the Department of Paediatrics, Faculty of Medicine, Children's Hospital of Western Ontario (London Health Sciences Centre, Victoria Hospital Campus, The University of Western Ontario affiliate). Assigned to the clinical project: *Exploring technical skill acquisition in a paediatric emergency department: A qualitative analysis*. *Final manuscript(s) based on research findings is in process.
2003	Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 206B: Environmental and Ecological Anthropology. McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Duties: Coordinating and running weekly tutorial sessions; weekly office hours.
2002	Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 209A: The Anthropology of Religion. McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Duties: Coordinating and running major exam/essay preparation and review; exam preparation tutorials; weekly office hours.
2002	Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 331B: An Anthropological Approaches to Ancient Egyptian Civilization. McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Coordinating exam preparation sessions; creating exams; weekly office hours.
2001	Teaching Assistant, Anthropology 202A: Comparative Cultures. McGill University, Montréal, Québec, Canada. Duties: lecture (*The epistemology of witchcraft and sorcery among the Azande*); coordinating, preparing for and running weekly tutorial sessions ("mini-lectures" of 40-50 people); exam preparation sessions; weekly office hours.

PUBLICATIONS:

2012	Forchuk, C., Richardson, J., Laverty, K., Bryant, M., Rudnick, A., Csiernik, R., Edwards, B., Fisman, S., Mitchell, B., Connoy, M., Dolson, M. S. & Kelly, C. Service preferences of homeless youth with mental Illness: Housing first, treatment first, or both together. Book Chapter in *Youth Homelessness*. York University Press/Homeless Hub. IN PRESS.
2012	Forchuk, C., Richardson, J., Laverty, K., Csiernik, R., Edwards, B., Fisman, S., Godin, M., Mitchell, B., Norman, R., Rudnick, A., Conroy, M., Dolson, M. S., Kelly, C. Youth Matters in London, Ontario: Exploring Services Preferences

for Youth who are Homeless. *National Housing Research Committee Newsletter* (NHRC). Pp. 1-2.

2012   Dolson, M.S. Reflections *through* reflexivity: why my collaborative research project in arctic Labrador did not work. *Collaborative Anthropologies*. IN PRESS (slotted for issue #6, 2013).

2010   Dolson, M. S. On the Possibility of a Synergy Between Indigenous Knowledges of Health and Healing and Western Biomedicine: Toward a Phenomenological Understanding. *Platforum* Volume 11 (2010), pp. 38-50 (12).

2009   Dolson, M. S. On Benjamin's Temporality of Crisis, Foucault's Subjugated Knowledges, and their Import in Theorising Revitalisation Movements: A Critical Theoretical Examination. *Anthropological Notebooks* 15(3): 43-64

2008   Dolson, M.S. Book review for: *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork,* by Cerwonka, Allaine & Malkki, Liisa. *Anthropologica: Journal of the Canadian Anthropology Society,* 51(2): 442-443.

2006   Dolson, M. S. & Naqshbandi, M. Review of Canadian Aboriginal Literature and Funding: Current Status, Gaps and Strategies. *Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative: Health Canada and Canadian Institutes for Health Research Report.* Pp. 1-35.

2005   Dolson, M. S. The Role of Dialogue, Otherness and the Construction of Insight in Psychosis: Toward a Socio-Dialogic Model. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 36 (1): 75-112.

2000   Dolson, M.S. *De Profundis*: Unmasking the Clinical Pathological and Socio-cultural Aspects of Leprosy. *Totem*: *The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*, Vol 8: 22-40.

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS:

2012   Dolson, M. S. *On Existential Trauma: Initial Ethnographic Findings*. Presented at the Youth Matters Conference (academics, policy makers, community members, social service workers, and other stakeholders). April 25th, Radisson Hotel Conference Services, London, Ontario, Canada.

ACADEMIC AWARDS:

2011-2012   Awarded the Ontario Graduate Student Scholarship (OGS) ($15, 000 for one academic year).

2007-2010   Awarded the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council's (SSHRC) Doctoral *Canada Graduate Scholarship* ($35, 000 CAN per year for three years + Paid Parental Leave [an additional $12, 000]). Award number: 767-2007-2079.

2007-2010   Awarded the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Western Ontario Entrance Award ($7000).

2007	Awarded an Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) ($15, 000 per term). *Declined* in favour of the SSHRC CGS award.
2003/2004	Received the Millennium scholarship ($3000.00) from OSAP (Ontario Student Assistance Program—while enrolled in the faculty of science as a "special year").
2001/2003	Received stipend of $5500 CAN from Dr. Ellen Corin to aid with Masters thesis research (Provided from *Fonds pour la Formation de Chercheurs et l'Aide à la Recherche,* FCAR grant).

DEPARTMENTAL SERVICE:

2011- Current	Member of the Western Anthropology Graduate Society
2010-2011	Department Representative (Anthropology) for the Society of Graduate Students (SOGS), at Western University.
2007 - Current	Registered graduate student member of the Anthropology Society at Western University.
1998-2001	Registered member (executive committee) of the Anthropology Society (Faculty of Social Sciences) at Western University. Dr. Andrew Nelson, Faculty sponsor.

MEMBERSHIPS AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANISATIONS:

-Canadian Anthropology Society (CASCA)

-American Anthropological Association (AAA)

-Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA)