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A Semiotic Phenomenology of Homelessness and the Precarious Community: A Matter of Boundary

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A Semiotic Phenomenology of Homelessness and the Precarious Community:

A Matter of Boundary

by

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DEDICATION

It seems an obvious choice, and sometimes those are the best. This is dedicated to the number of men and women I've met who make home in streets, on park benches, under bridges, and on sidewalks. They are not the "sad shapes" of a dream lost of deferred. They are us, and we tell our stories together, if from different locations. I am grateful beyond measure for the time they took to talk with me, and to listen.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

My dissertation focuses on the articulation of the concepts of precarity —i.e., temporary,

affective, creative, immaterial and insecure labor—and community in an overheating system. My

site of inquiry is homelessness broadly, but more specifically the labor of panhandling and the

identity of "the panhandler." I recognize that primary theorizations of precarity have located it as

a problem of labor and economy. Others have looked at it from the sociological domain. My work

looks at precarity as diffuse across social, political, and communal systems, but primarily as an

effect of the problem of overheating as it manifests at varying levels of scale. Narrowing the

global vision of such instability and insecurity to a local landscape—to streets, corners, traffic, the

people who occupy infrastructural liminal zones and whose lives are precariously bound to the

forces of speed and heat—reveals the critical nature of elemental metaphors. That is to say, if we

might accept the thesis that we are in an epoch in which speed and time subsumes space and

place, and if speed is another way of talking about heat, about intensities, then communication in

the over-sped, overheated system is in dire straights. Precarity, I argue, is not causally linked to

the breakdown in economy or the breakdown in affiliative bonds or networks—it does not

precede or presage these shutdowns. Rather it *is* the shutdown. Precarity may now be viewed as

the management and organization of social, political, affective, and communal bonds around

economic and affiliative insecurities. I use ethnographic data from institutional meetings, and

conversations with the key stakeholders at varying levels of scale, as well as textual analyses of

local policies, news coverage, and public responses to those texts in order to understand how

precarious communicative conditions affect the structuration of community and politics.

PREFACE

      This project grew out of outrage—it was an ordinary encounter, a small blip on the news radar that shifted my way of seeing. In November of 2011, *Tampa Bay Times* announced that Tampa had passed a panhandling ban. The ordinance had been proposed but not passed the prior year, but following a local election and subsequent change in city council composition, the ordinance passed (Tampa City Council, July 18, 2013). I worked my way backward to the law's preceding safety vest ordinance, which required those who labor in roadways, on sidewalks and medians by panhandling or street vending, to wear a safety vest. The author opened with this line, "Panhandlers all over town are breaking out in bright new colors" (Wilmath, March 23, 2010). It read like a fashion editorial. The glibness of it unsettled me. The reporter interviewed a local Home Depot employee, and found that the safety vests had been flying off the shelves—a strange little boon for local franchises.

      Tampa had seen a recent influx of folks after the city of St. Petersburg and Hillsborough County had banned panhandling and street vending. The medians were busy places. I imagined at that moment an aerial view—Tampa seen from above, awash in these bright swaths of color, marking zones of what is often perceived as a labor of destitution—selling water, palm roses, handmade crafts, newspapers, begging—the labor of those who will soon be written out of those places by local policy with the 2011 panhandling ban. I read the coverage of the safety vest ordinance with the knowledge of the future ban present in mind.

I started to think about what community is—about what the word itself evokes, what it guards, what it reveals and conceals. The questions unfolded in this way: What *is* it? Is there an *it* at all? How do *I* experience community? Can *I* experience it as something translatable? What does it mean to say "I" experience community? Is community a feeling? A sense of self and other in place and time? A commonality? Something shared?

And if so, what is it that we are sharing?

And as I dug into that trajectory of thought, I began to recall the literature on community I'd read, which often spoke of *a* community, a thing to build and work for. Perhaps this word, "community," feels good at best, and is meaningless at worst. Or is that the worst? Maybe meaningless is the starting point. So this work picks up with this series of questions, but I couldn't even address those questions until I approached who I was here, in my particular spatial location, with my history, my relationships, my knowledge of and concurrent blindness to the particularity of where I live.

And I wondered if I began in my particular place, what I would see. So below I begin with a neighborhood. It is the neighborhood in which I have lived since 2002. Three houses, one area, but it is a neighborhood just north of downtown Tampa, where the bulk of services for those living homeless are located. Its proximity to downtown gives it a sort of liminal character. Restaurants, cafes, pubs, bars, and shops have claimed real estate along the major corridors that create its boundaries. On the other hand, the industrial legacy still has a stronghold, and auto body shops, used car lots, and specialty skill shops both break up and contribute to the "edgy, hip" vibe of the neighborhood. Add to that the various shelters for those living transitionally that grow in number as you head south toward downtown, and you have a neighborhood at the cross section of community's gaps, seams, and ruptures. This work benefits tremendously from my

location here, where I make home daily in relationship with the people, the houses, the streets, intersections, corners, buildings, businesses and institutions that populate its boundaries. And so I begin there, with a view of this particular place, in this particular moment.

INTRODUCTION

KNOWING OUR*SELVES* IN SPACE, PLACE, AND TIME
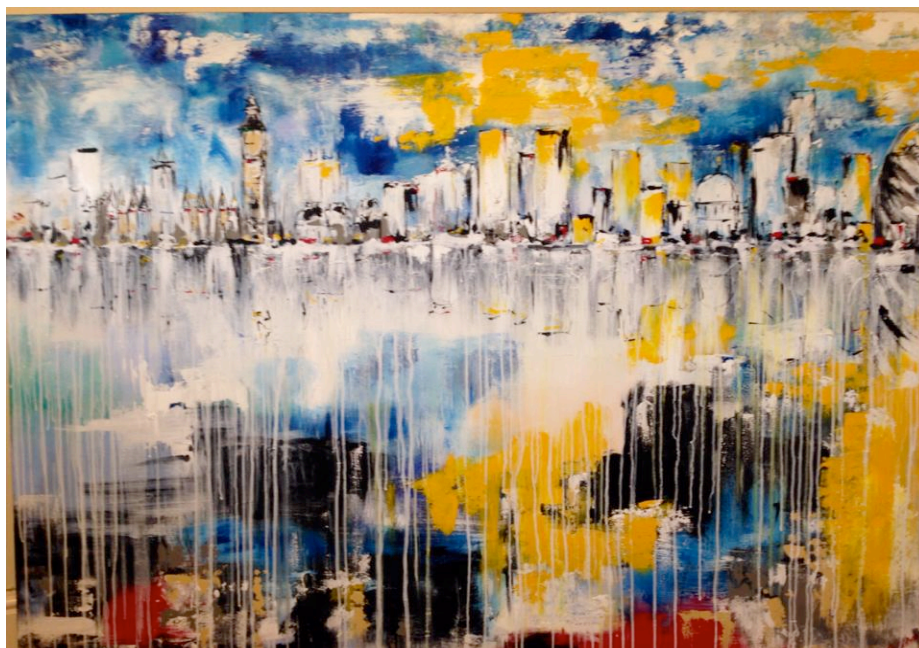
Figure 1: "The High Life," Laura Adams Wilson, 2014. Reprinted with permission from the artist.

Let us see a city reduced to its colors, a way of seeing so the texture of the city is a series

of brush strokes or smears of paint on canvas. Or we might see it through aerial photos and grids,

climate maps, maps of futures and pasts, maps of development paths, roadways that extend out

of one time and into another. They make our sense of place from the echoes of people that once

were, and make *city* a thing for people who've yet to arrive. The *people* in this view are emptied

of stories, of lived complexities, of human failures. They, along with the architecture, the

roadways, the sidewalks and houses, the curbs and stoplights, the green spaces, the brown

spaces, the seams of place, are color points. They strike the eye. The movement is tied up in our distance from the view. Right down in the thick of it, we wouldn't feel it. But in our capacity for distance, when we aerialize, spatialize, lift ourselves up and over, when we move out, backward and forward, but without the traction of the present, we are moved pastorally. The movement is nostalgic, or aesthetic, but without the mud and concrete that drags us each into contact with the other, is it meaningful?

The Mud and Concrete: Place, Time, Self, Other

So narrow in, find a corner. An intersection. A building you know. When you were seventeen, you swung on the flagpole rope, out over the scum-pond at the public library. A first date, with the first person you fell in love with. You know that building by story.

Move to your neighborhood, the dry cleaner down the street from where you live, from where you made home for ten years. The sign is a sign pointing to another time, its cursive script an anachronism, a time when this place was quite a different place, but the echoes remain.

Further west, down the street toward your house. See your neighbor in her front yard, her green running shoes. You know those well. She has run by your house for seven years—the slap-thud signals to you that it's 9:30. You should no longer be in your bathrobe.

You see the man on Highland and Minnehaha Avenues, in the heat of the day, gardening the lot where he began to build his house in 2007, right before the bubble burst. He is stooped over, pulling weeds, wearing nothing but his underwear and flip-flops, the graying cotton sagging at his backside.

Now, walk away from these familiarities—these signifiers of home. Walk toward the urban corridor, toward two heavily trafficked roadways. On the northeast corner, you see a

woman, a man, and three children. You have seen this family all over town. The children do their homework in the shade of the spare trees that hug the intersections. You watched the woman's pregnancy, her belly distending as the pregnancy progressed. You saw the emergence of the stroller, the new baby tucked inside. You wondered, in spite of yourself how the hell they'd gone and had another baby. And you hated the judgment in that question even as you asked it—a reflex that tells you so much more about you than about them.

Then recall the moment where your capacity to make sense of this place was ruptured: that transcendent moment when you see a man riding bareback on a white horse down Busch Boulevard. His tangled gray hair streams out behind him. This man, too, is familiar. You've seen him dancing in intersections of major thoroughfares for years. He's a neighborhood staple. He's on a *white horse. Where, for Christ's sake, did he get a horse*?! He rides down the sidewalk, no shirt, no shoes, cut off denim shorts, leaning down close to the mane. He is the no-man's man, and he is no *man* in this place. You discover later that he is a performance artist, known for his "dance-walking" performances along Florida Avenue. He dances for tips. "Your $1 donation is helpful," you read on his LinkedIn page, which hasn't been updated since late in 2012 (https://www.linkedin.com/in/michaelthesheikmckinney). He is linked *in* to the community digitally, but his place on the streets is a different thing. The vest marks him. He is known as "The Dancing Tampa Panhandler" (Vstromma 2010).

The comments on videos of him indicate that he signifies for many a joyful freedom in poverty, a happy caricature of the mythological hobo, free from the fetters of employment, taxes—he brings character to the neighborhood. For you, he's a placial coordinate. But you don't *know* him. He's a caricature for you. You see, for you, he's just an awesome story.

Figure 2: Mike "The Sheik" McKinney Performing "Dance Walking"

He disappears, hasn't made an appearance since maybe 2013, and you wonder casually

what happened, but only as the recognition of *not* thinking about him. His absence comes to you

as an absence of thought, not sight. You haven't seen him—but more importantly, you haven't

thought him. You read that recently Mike McKinney passed away this June. His Facebook

eulogy reads:

> RIP Mike McKinney. If you live in Tampa most likely you've seen Mike dancing on the side of the road somewhere on Florida Avenue looking homeless listening to his headphones or singing. He sadly has passed away. #RIP #LocalCelebrity FYI: Michael was not a bum nor homeless. This is just what he enjoyed doing. (July, 2015).

The sadness you feel isn't for the man you know and miss. You never knew him. Rather it is the

sense of the life you didn't know, and the unsettling of the place you knew through his presence

there, and the permanence of his absence.

You know yourself by proxy. You are not this man, nor the neighbor with the sagging

underwear, nor any member of that family on the side of the road. You are not the people you

meet. You have an interior life that you know apart from but always in contact with these color

points. Your sense of the city and of your place within it takes shape as a movement through

others' stories, through the stories that haunt the architectural city, the institutional city. Your

sense of the city is both proprietary and alien. Your sense of belonging is fleeting. It emerges in

the familiar moments, and then disappears when the faces you know disappear. *You,* as subject,

as citizen, as person, as self, are an abutment against the other. You are a movement across, and

a retraction behind, a boundary. You are also a *flaneur,* an expert at roundness, ever shifting with

each encounter, each momentary relationship. You cut through the smooth space of relationship,

the liquidity of the self-other flow, believing in your discreteness, in the fact of the *I*, the me, the

self-apart. But the self *is a part*, a part of something much larger.[1]

Self/Other, Us/Them, Body/World: Dialectic Tensions, Impossible Dialectics

As I draw out in the following chapters, this dissertation centralizes the self/other

dialectic as the primary boundary for understanding community, and in particular for

understanding community as an idea and a phenomenon that erupts along a faultline between self

and other. Moreover, I turn toward those of us who live homeless, and thus make life directly

and daily within that fault-line. With the aim to understand self and other as a tension that

operates at multiple levels of scale, I discuss the self as an ecological moment, an emergence

within, not simply social, economic and political contexts, but environmental contexts. In brief,

though the focus is on human communication and community, discourse emerges in space, place

and time, and requires a biological and ecological context in which to emerge. That is, it emits

from a body. It also points back to the body, and requires a particular and languageable

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[1] I am alluding to: 1) Garnet Butchart's careful word play in "The Exclusive Community" (2011) in which he teases out the relationship between individual and community, in which the subject-member is always fractured within the whole: apart and a part, and 2) Rancière's *Dis-Agreement: Politics and Philosophy* (14, 1999), in which he writes, "Politics is the sphere of activity of a common that can only ever be contentious, the relationship between parts that are only parties and credentials or entitlements whose sum never equals the whole." There is no whole public sphere in which the parts become anything other than parts without parts—a community and a public always fractured.

consciousness, a generative "I" who communicates and sees itself. *I* can say *I* am not *that*, not *you,* and so the architectural—if ephemeral—project of identity making begins. I situate the self ecologically because, as Ronald Day points out (2004), *community* is not essentially and exclusively *human,* and the human community is an emergent quality of a system with reaches far beyond language. The self is the abutment of the body with the world, by which consciousness of a self emerges in language.

I will develop these thoughts further in the following chapters, but I want to take care to introduce a way of thinking the dialectic tensions I draw out in this dissertation. I take up boundaries in this work precisely because there is a pull between self and other, body and world, us and them. Dialectic tension operates across and along a boundary. Boundary opens the trajectory for inquiry into not just homelessness, but my broader consideration of community, precarity and overheating communal systems in an "Age of Precarity" (Ivencheva, 2015). From the vantage of the ecological self,[2] the concept of heat, that is, more broadly, a thermodynamic rendering of communicative, scalable dialectics of self/other, us/them, body/world, can be approached phenomenologically, both as it's experienced and for its metaphorical capacities to explain human communicative systems. The link between community and immunity is well established by key community thinkers, and I attend to it in this way, but then bring it into

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[2] Work has been done in the field of deep ecology on the concept of the ecological self, and I find a resonance with that work, which draws heavily (and explicitly) on Buddhist philosophies of the self, the ego, and the concept of co-arising. That is to say, the egoic self is a fracture from the whole of the world. An ecological view of the self views the self as an emergent process, and one that can be attended to with an aim toward resisting the individuating tendencies of neoliberalism. Most importantly, the commitment to seeing the self in an ecological context expands one's sense of the limits of community. Community is not the human community, but global, natural, animal, even universal and galactic communities. However, I appropriate the term for these purposes, focusing on human communication, and with an eye toward understanding the exclusionary and inclusionary dialectic that calls the very term, *community,* into question.

conversation with how that relationship plays out in overheating systems. Biomedically, elevated temperature prompts an immune response. Biopolitically, might it do the same? The importance of heat exchange and the regulatory systems of the body (the body of the individual or the body of the People, which is comprised of and regulates through law many bodies, or the global body) warrant our attention, particularly during a time of global warming, in which our precariousness as a species is not an abstract concern. But what does that look like at the local scale? Right here, on the streets we know?

This dissertation asks that question, and begins with the place I call home. Home is not, of course, the 1100-square-foot tract home built in the 1920s in which I live, nor is it the geographic boundary of Tampa. Home is the set of relationships I have built over the near fifteen years I have made a life here. I have had children here. I have understood a particular complex of job, marriage, friendship and neighborhood here—it is not definitive, certainly. What it is, you see, is an invitation to understanding that any given life unfolds along the imbrications of multiple times, multiple places. Here, in Tampa, I have engaged in work that brings me into contact with lives I fear, love, embrace, and avoid—more often than not, all at once. Perhaps this is the struggle of compassion—it *requires* struggle. It requires opening to the other and all that that encounter entails. Compassion is not a comfortable word. It is not any more warm and cozy than "community," as I'll discuss in the following chapters. Suffering (*passas*) with (*cum*). This is compassion. *Passas* is the past tense of *pation,* which brings another complexity to the word. *Pation*: to wait. Suffering with requires the struggle of suffering and of waiting with the suffering. I use the phrase "compassionate politics" in the following work. I also quote a reader's comments from the local paper, in which she appropriates the term "compassion fatigue." Given

the frequency with which that term is used, and the failure of meaning in its usage, I will attend

to it with care.

The Question of "Community"

I must be clear: the phenomenon under scrutiny is not *the homeless* nor *the panhandler* as

an externality, as the outsider, the exception and the exterior threat to the possibility of

community, but rather that marked body, its symbolic presence as a call to examine community

itself. What do we mean when we say *community*? What is invoked? Who is included, and who

is excluded? My site of inquiry is a social figure tat is inarguably a signifier of who is "excluded"

from the invocation of community—*the homeless*. Policy measures and social responses to the

presence of *the homeless* (in particular those who live visibly homeless) reveal a great deal about

the structure, function, and fluidity of *community*. I take up *community* neither as a thing to

which we can point, nor as something we desire, work for and build, nor as a nostalgic drive

toward a dream of the past, but as a guiding logic and an idea that rests upon dialectic thinking.

That is, the idea of community is thoroughly bound up in the dialectic of inclusion and

exclusion—a dialectic that plays out in the relationship between the concepts of community and

public. The articulation of the two becomes particularly relevant when the distinctions between

public and private enter the domain of political and social constructions of homelessness, and *the*

homeless. For example, particular metaphorical strains emerge, and with them, the stories of

political legitimacy and belonging (discussed in chapter 1). A *New York Times* piece detailing

LA's ban on public food sharing included this telling quote from a "resident": "They are living in

my bushes and they are living in my next door neighbor's crawl spaces. We have a neighborhood

which now seems like a mental ward" (Nagourney, 11/25/2013). Now we begin to imagine that

some of *us belong* here. What emerges is a sense of public that is exclusionary, that works counter to the notions of inclusion the term "community" evokes (but does not *in*voke). This is *our* public. *Our* park. *Our* sidewalk. That bench. *I* belong there. But the *I* is not a secure place. The concept of the *our,* of an interior composed of those who *belong*—a concept drawn out in the tension between public and community—writes the *I* out in the very moment that it writes it *in,* and so I must unfold that tension as an entrée into understanding the means by which community emerges along the lines of interior/exterior and inclusion/exclusion.

The work, then, is the effort to see into, between, and through a concept that on one hand offers comfort in its promise of belonging, and on the other holds our collective imagination hostage: community, and in particular that question: what it means to say we *are* a community, that there is a *we* that comprises *a* community, a community with edges, borders, closures… and openings.

The following inquiry takes up community as an embodied process, as one we sense— and with all the vagaries that come with the senses. I argue that community can be viewed as an extension of the body's regulatory system. It is indeed a regulatory system, in that every open system is regulatory. Every open system requires contagion, contamination, and infection in order to adapt, and so I unfold the relationship between the communal corpus and immune responses, in particular those related to law and its manifestation in policy and discipline of the communal corpus. The interface of law and community in this particular historical moment, which, as I develop further in the following chapters, is described as an age of social, economic, and communal anxiety and insecurity, finds a fruitful theoretical foundation in precarity scholarship.

Precarity

Later in this dissertation, I will complexify the meaning of precarity, but we might best understand it from a communication standpoint as a particular (re)organization of time, relationships and labor in such a way as to amplify and structure those things around one's sense of economic and social insecurity. My concern in this dissertation is how precarious labor conditions and one's sense of a vague, but persistent threat—*or* persistent possibility (both/and)—manifests in the relationships, the being-with of community. As I'll develop further, precarity requires complex theorizing. It is not simply threat and anxiety, but rather an orientation toward one's place in the world that calls to present awareness one's instability. I argue for an understanding of precarity as a means of organizing economy and the social and public life that puts and then keeps the anchors of self-making and political subjectivity in play.

I argue further that the concept of *precarity* describes a particularly potent terrain at the constitutive periphery of community, given the absolute vulnerability of, not simply the bodies and lives that inhabit the social category "the homeless," but also the very possibility of *community* itself in a risk society that is culturally, ecologically, economically, politically and socially *insecure*. I will note briefly that the concept of "threat" is often used in precarity scholarship, but I am careful with this word, as I am with "anxiety," because both, when taken up as an orientation in the world, run the risk of singularizing the dailiness of human life in ways with which I am not comfortable. I don't believe this is merely a matter of word choice. Truth be told, many do not feel "threatened" or "anxious" as they make their way into and through their daily existence. If insecurity hovers, it does so as a shadow or a ghost that only faintly appears in one's peripheral vision. Moreover, as I consider the lives of those who experience not just an existential threat, but an embodied threat as they make their lives in the streets and in shelters, it

seems a grave reduction to claim the experience of anxiety in a way that totalizes or universalizes the myriad ways in which anxiety is felt.

That said, the precarization—that is, the structuring of bodies, labor, and human relationships by way of amplifying insecurity—of the communal corpus, and of the political subject in the West, is generalizable in theory, but it is one that is experienced differently, contextually, and individually. Precarization is the felt experience of global economic, political, and social systems in the oversped, overheated global age, and so I turn to the phenomenon of overheating in order to understand the consequences for community in a precarious, overheating system.

Thermodynamic Imaginings

The third and fourth chapters are concerned with thermodynamic systems in overheating spaces. Chapter three is a phenomenology of overheating, describing and interpreting the experience of overheating in the lived context of a street space in Tampa. I narrow in to one particular intersection in order to describe the experience of liminality in urban spaces. I leverage heat as a metaphorical framing of communicative possibilities, but also quite literally. Following the line of thinking from chapters one and two, I discuss heat as an intensity, a boundary crossing that occurs at the threshold between body and world. Building on the immunity paradigm I discuss in chapter one, I look at heat as one regulatory system within the communal body. I argue that overheating has consequences that warrant specific attention from communication scholars, because overheating has an impact on human communicative systems.

Chapter four points toward a thermodynamic model of communication. I rough in the components of such a model with an aim of broadening the scope of the project and pointing to a

way of thinking through the dynamics of communication and community as partial and adaptive. The entirety of this dissertation is process oriented in that its intent is to unfold and view community, precarity and overheating as processes rather than as states of being or as phenomena that can be understood as actualized and then empirically studied as such. This chapter is consistent with that orientation in that its primary motivation is to point toward a reimagining of communication models (which presume that communication is both possible and actualized). Moreover, I am *pointing toward* rather than creating a model because such a project rests upon emergent processes, processes, which, as I write this, are still unfolding. This chapter builds on the phenomenological inquiry in chapter three, and inevitably seeks, inasmuch as the processes the model illuminates are emergent, to view the model itself as an emergent process, one that isn't static, one in which the meanings and discoveries are always recursive and always in play. Thus it begins in the same place as the prior three chapters: what are we are seeing? What are the patterns? What are the surprises? It is a beginning, and one very much in keeping with the process and project of the work.

Structure and Rationale

This dissertation is an inquiry into concepts that are often presupposed as an object of analysis or as properties within a system: community, precarity, and overheating. As such, it is always process oriented. The phenomena I describe are not constants, not states of being, but unfolding processes. What do I mean by processes versus a state of being? Again, by approaching them as processes, through questions of meaning which evidence within the sign systems of culture (or perhaps culture as a sign system), perhaps I can ask the questions that bear out in the moments and relationships I describe. What does it mean to be here with another? How

do we hear and see the means by which we care for and wound another? They are simple

questions, but they are deceptively simple. I don't wish to begin with the answers and then work

my way back toward the questions. Rather, start with the questions, knowing that they may be

the wrong questions. Knowing that questions emerge with wisdom—that is, the wisdom of *not*

knowing.

As such, I write the following chapters with the intent of keeping those tensions in play in

the writing itself. If the conceptual relationships are both troubled and troubling, then the means

by which I approach them should not move too quickly toward a reduction, lest I lose the

complexity of the dialectics along the way. That is the key in theorizing dialectics, isn't it? One

must keep both/and alive in one's theoretical approach. And so, ethnographic moments trip into

analytic moments, which trip into reflective moments. The moments I describe are not

exceptional moments. They are mundane, and likely familiar. I think it is crucial, given the

reflexive aim of this work, one that looks out into individual experiences between people across

social locations in order to look back at the idea of community from lived experience, to attend

to the everyday. Exceptional moments, moments that call our attention for their sensational

qualities, threaten to obfuscate the reflective capacities of everyday life. It is in the banal

lifeworld, in our daily making of home and relationship where the questions of meaning emerge

under the radar. Perhaps they build, unchecked, until a small rupture happens. I confess I

struggle in this work to remain open to the questions as they find me, and at the same time, with

a keen desire to *make change.* The everyday also bears scrutiny here because I am not writing

from the tower office, quill in hand as I sit in thoughtful repose, chin on hand. I am writing this

from the mud and concrete. I am writing this in the seemingly contentious zone between

philosophy and action. Hence, I think it fair to say this, while certainly a philosophical

intervention, is a deeply engaged philosophy, one that grows out of the lived, everyday machinations of being human and in community. And I also confess that I suffer from the plague of American optimism, the ebullient and sometimes arrogant desire to charge forth and fix it all. But beneath the desire—and here enters the reason I approach the problematic from philosophy: because it opens a space for reflection—what is the "it" I wish to fix?

Since this is a work about boundary, that which comes into being only in its crossing, the writing follows suit. The boundaries between theory and lived experience are only drawn once they have been crossed, and even then only as a trace. I *live here.* I make home here every day, and I retool myself here in response to those I encounter. I write this work in that spirit, with a joint and at times agonistic commitment to *building a more responsive, compassionate community* (as you will see when I discuss the work I've done with local agencies), and keeping alive the question of what *it* is we're building, and if there is anything to build at all.

With the concept of boundary and the various dialectic relationships brought into being through boundary-crossings, I organize the dissertation as three movements. The word "movement" is a careful choice of word here, as it suggests the boundary crossing. Compositionally, I organize this at three different levels of scale: community, precarity as it manifests globally and locally, and overheating systems. Alternately, I view these as communicative intensities, because intensities are experiential shifts, movements in time and space. Community, precarization (that is, the operationalizing of precarity), and heat are the experience of a boundary crossing. The boundaries are convergences or articulations of self and other (community), us and them (precaritzation), and body and world (heat exchange). Thus, while I situate my inquiry within the topic of homelessness, I am concerned, not with the experience of "the Other," but with how the Other emerges experientially, in our sense of a self,

in movement, in the crossing of a boundary between body and world, between the interiority of self and the exteriority of those two points of origin, body and world.[3]

Method and Rationale: Semiotic Phenomenology

I struggled mightily to find a method that would allow me to approach this work in such a way that the method itself would reveal the related phenomena I wish to understand. I note the struggle because I understood rather quickly that the host of qualitative research methods—semi-structured or informal interviews, surveys, various forms of coding, etc.—were not in keeping with the spirit of the inquiry. The various disciplinary avenues of inquiry (e.g., sociology, social work, anthropology) have produced important and rigorous work on homelessness and panhandling. However, because my concern is with what homelessness and the social category of "the homeless" reveals about the idea of community in the current political, economic, social and environmental moment, I needed an approach that would allow for both uncovering the terms in play, *and* would attend to the ways in which what is on one hand conceptual and discursive, is on the other embodied. I don't treat the experiences and moments I describe lightly—these are indeed people's lives, lived at the very ruptures of community. They warrant great care, and I attend to them from a place of earnest emotional response. The people I have encountered along the way are people I will likely never see again. Their absence as I write this is palpable. It is a present absence. I cannot tell their stories, nor do I attempt to. Rather, I tell the story of *us* as best I can from my limited vantage point. I go *home.* Often times, they cannot. The knowledge of our differential positions in life weighs heavily. What I have to offer here is not insight into the condition of homelessness, but instead I can illuminate where the idea of *us* and

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[3] I am referring to Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception,* whose work provides the key inspiration for my exploration of boundary.

we falls apart in the very moment it manifests. And so, the ethnographic descriptions in this work are aimed at that: the gaps and seams of community.

The title of this dissertation indicates my method of approach. Semiotic phenomenology is the method for the discipline of communicology, that is, the study of the "human science of communication" (Lanigan 1992). Isaac Catt (2014) offers a succinct distinction between social science of communication and the human science of communication when he explains that communicology is concerned with the "cultural-semiotic constraints on embodied phenomenological experiences" rather than the product of those experiences: the message. That is, the phenomenon at once shapes and then is shaped by and in language, but the relationship must be teased out along those lines, and again, in the everyday moments that arise between us in and through the senses and language. Thus, semiotic phenomenology, following the rich phenomenological lineage from Husserl to Merleau-Ponty, does not reduce experience to data, but rather looks at the iterative, recursive process of perception and experience as three-fold: "capta (that which is taken in perception) in acta (interpretive practices of discourse) perpetually at the roots of data (that which is given in expression)" (Catt 2014, p. 128). Richard Lanigan (1992, 1988) explains the method of semiotic phenomenology as three fold:

1) Description: "Thematizing the…SIGN(S)" interpreting, reducing and describing it/them.

2) Reduction: "Abstracting the…SIGNIFIER" by interpreting, reducing and describing it.

3) Interpretation: "Explicating the…SIGNIFIED" by interpreting, reducing and describing it.[4]

I believe a commitment to teasing out the dimensions, distinctions and relationships between what is given, taken, and "done, or created as evidence," and a method that provides a means with which to do so offers an added complexity to current work on the related problematics I've identified here. Rather than presuming that we can understand *homelessness* as its own data set, one complete and self-evident as a generalizable condition by way of the particular experience of homelessness, I approach the phenomenon of homelessness as one that emerges in the context of community, precarity and the overheated spaces, places, and relationships in and through which one navigates daily.

Contextualizing Theory, Theorizing Context

What follows is messy. I may be audacious when I say I believe it should be. When theory enters the terrain of marginalized existence, of people whose lives are conscripted to a zone of abjection, whose presence in a place is often met with fear, anger, revulsion, or perhaps worse, not met at all, it seems perhaps theory should be messy, complex, dynamic, and always humbly offered. The researcher, the scholar, the theorist, can only be open, listening, waiting for the emergence of knowledge/s from the vast expanse of human experience and thought that erupts in and among the margins, or along the invisible razor wire, the one that divides a community imaginary into margins and center. To that end, I begin with what I hope is a fruitful trepidation, an awareness that this spare effort at understanding cannot effect the sort of

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[4] I adapted Lanigan's chart, "Communicology: The Theory and Method of Semiotic Phenomenology" (2010).

"community" change to which I am deeply committed. Yet perhaps a more complex rendering of community through a theoretical framework that describes the immediate state of crisis in the current political economy will locate me precisely where I need to be: embodied in my engagement with theory, and theorizing as an embodied human being who is in continual relationship with the stories, the people, the lives I seek to theorize. The complexity of community informs the way I structure this dissertation, and the seam between theory and lived context is critical for understanding. I draw on ethnographic data from my observations of how a community organizes around the relationships between the people who comprise community, and the means by which community is structured by infrastructural and institutional spaces. I also examine public discourse (policies, news coverage, and reader feedback) about "the homeless," a social figure and lived body experience of the signs and codes that constitute it, in order to look back at how and perhaps whether community is experienced in a precarious political, economic, and social time.

And so, this work is a convergence of theories at precisely this juncture: the collusion between and collision of community's exterior and interior. I will look at the epiphytes atop that articulation—an ecologist's metaphor I think appropriate for this context. When seeking an understanding of community as process and system, or "concept" and "phenomenon" (Butchart 2010, 21), and when seeking to do so through a site of inquiry that requires great care and a conscious attention to flows of power that manifest not only in discourse but in the lived experience of community, delimiting the theoretical terrain proves daunting—everything truly is relevant. I acknowledge that such terrain in this dissertation is broad. This is a maiden voyage, but I sail forth with the conviction that both the convergences and the gaps they produce warrant attention and care. The following chapters ask of their readers to see homelessness as a

phenomenon that invites this reflexive turn, both forward and back toward an understanding of community, precarity and heat as communicative boundaries.   Moreover, the means by which they are organized calls us to attend, not through what we think we know, but through the opening of what we don't.

CHAPTER ONE:

THE (IM)POSSIBLE COMMUNITY

The question we must take up is, what is the experience of *community*? How do we

experience it? What is *it* that we experience? The experience of community is the experience of a

boundary crossing. We meet the other and become aware of a self as a negation. It is an

experience that calls the self into our awareness, as we reach toward the other with our available

senses. And community is an experience that occurs both before and in language, and so also

before us. What do I mean by this? I mean that it precedes any self-awareness. The *cum* is

prerequisite for the self.[5] And language both draws us together and splits us apart. We enter "the

language of this world" as a "body subject who by speaking becomes an object self" (Catt 2011,

123). We hear someone speak, and know it is not our own voice. We feel the touch of the other's

voice, its sonority, its timbre, its edges and gaps. And we speak, crossing the body boundary into

the world, reaching out toward the other. We see the body of the other and sense the limits of our

own. We smell the other, perhaps the smoke on another's skin and clothing. Perhaps we smell

the layers of sweat, perfume, one's shoes (and perhaps the excretory business of feet in shoes),

the complex layers of scent that then begin to shape a story of where this person has been. If we

touch the other, we feel the heat that emanates from one's flesh, or the coolness of one's palms,

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[5] Clearly, the philosophical perspectives on self and other are vast and come from diverse
traditions. Freud and Lacan remain ever present, of course. Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger are the
primary influences here.

the ridged callouses at the joint between the fingers and the pads of the palm. And perhaps we

perform a reflexive turn—become aware of our bodies as the other might experience our flesh.

We experience our own bodies with another as both a negative point of contact (I am not that),

and in relationship with another (I meet you, and through our togetherness know that I am not

that). And so we experience community in our bodies, through our bodies, in our senses,

between self and other. We are also of a larger communal body that operates on the seam of us

and them, to which I'll return later in this chapter in my discussion of Roberto Esposito's theory

of the immunity paradigm. [6] Yet if I am to talk of the embodiment of community as a

generalizable theme, one that occurs as a boundary crossing, it is also useful to look at the

particular ways it manifests in lived experience, "on the ground," so to speak, as we meet each

other.

Below I offer a loose model of the tensions I describe and the recursions between them.

Of course such representations are reductions, but I think it beneficial to have a

graphic orientation toward the dialectic tensions[7] of community.

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[6] Alphonso Lingis writes in *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common,* "To enter
into conversation with another is to lay down one's arms and one's defenses; to throw open the
gates of one's own positions; to expose oneself to the other, the outsider; and to lay oneself open
to surprises, contestation, and inculpation. It is to risk what one found or produced in
common…To enter into conversation is to struggle against the noise, the interference…" (87).
This idea of *ex*position is, the exposing of the self, the dislocation of the body.
[7] In a recent review of Frederic Jameson's *Valences of the Postmodern.* It would seem that
Jameson's perspective there would further enrich and help make sense of the metalevel tensions I
discuss in this dissertation. The reviewer writes, "Such an effectively post-political imaginary of
the present – whatever one makes of the rhetoric – goes hand in hand with
postmodern spectrality, "which promises nothing tangible in return; on which you cannot
build: what cannot even be counted on to materialize when you want it to."
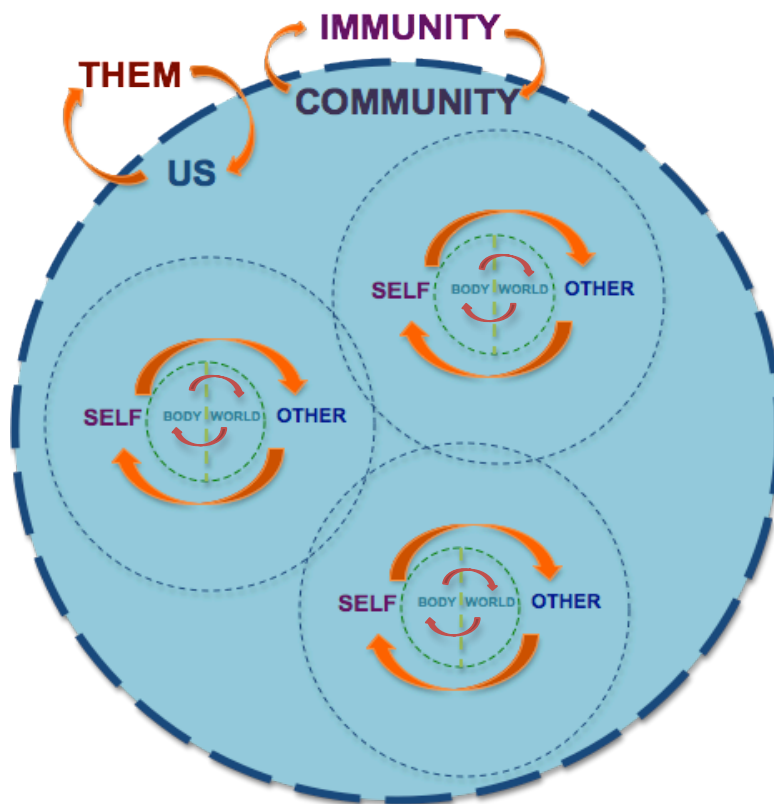
Figure 3: Model of Dialectic Tensions of Community

Each level of scale is recursive both within and across the levels. Above, I place body and world at the most intimate level of scale. While *world* is vast, and *body* far-reaching beyond the individual, I locate the tension in the most intimate sphere because here is the point from which our formulations of self/other and us/them extend and retreat. All boundaries are permeable, all relationships recursive. The relationship between body and world is the originary site of home, of dwelling. As I do with the above representation, I begin there, but I think the recursions are important to note, and so the following discussion continually turns back upon itself.

The theoretical project here requires a map of the discourse. I will offer, then, a way of defining the terms specific to the project, but with an eye toward the complexity of meanings and manifestations each contains and implies. My site of inquiry is homelessness, so I will begin by

first, setting the discursive terrain and clarifying how the term "homelessness" is framed at a national level. I then lay out the local policy landscape in Tampa. In the succeeding sections, I explore the concepts of home and the uncanny, from which I move into the relationship between home, body and community. I then discuss the relationship between community and immunity, and then close with an eye toward the precarious community. You will note that, appropriately, given the biopolitical underpinnings for my theoretical exploration of community, the body is ever present in this discussion. Both for its importance in thinking community, and for its relevance in drawing together the three major movements in this dissertation, the body is central to the totality of this work. And so we begin, where body meets world, and world instantiates through body: home.

It is important to note that homelessness is defined at a federal level, and that the federal definition is used to inform local and state policies. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012) outlines the four-part definition that was updated in 2012 and remains the working categorization for the national definition. The new definition includes four broad categories of homelessness:

- People who are living in a place not meant for human habitation, in emergency shelter, in transitional housing, or are exiting an institution where they temporarily resided. The only significant change from existing practice is that people will be considered homeless if they are exiting an institution where they resided for up to 90 days (it was previously 30 days), and were in shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering that institution.
- People who are losing their primary nighttime residence, which may include a motel or hotel or a doubled up situation, within 14 days and lack resources or support networks to remain in housing. HUD had previously allowed people who were being displaced within 7 days to be considered homeless. The proposed regulation also describes specific documentation requirements for this category.
- Families with children or unaccompanied youth who are unstably housed and likely to continue in that state. This is a new category of homelessness, and it applies to families with children or unaccompanied youth who have not had a lease or ownership interest in a housing unit in the last 60 or more days, have had two or

more moves in the last 60 days, and who are likely to continue to be unstably housed because of disability or multiple barriers to employment.
• People who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, have no other residence, and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. This category is similar to the current practice regarding people who are fleeing domestic violence.

(Accessed 2015, June 19)

The meaning of "homelessness" invites a continual reflection, a turning back upon the meaning even as it is adopted, adapted, and leveraged at all scales—State, state, local, community, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. A State-level definition of something intimately tied and embodied within: a local context; a geographic, topographic, and temporal landscape; and in the dailiness of human life (these are not separate categories, of course) is troubling, to say the least. Within the United States, homelessness is a phenomenon that varies rather dramatically from urban to rural settings, from East to West, from North to South, from county to county, community to community, person to person. It is important to create policy that recognizes the local scale. Moreover The National Coalition for the Homeless offers three compatible dimensions of homelessness: chronic, transitional, and episodic homelessness.

The Tampa-Hillsborough Homeless Initiative's recent report on the local state of affairs answers the question, "What Causes Homelessness?" with this: "Plain and simple, homelessness happens when a person is unable to afford to pay for a place to live or their current home is unsafe or unstable." Here we see *home* emerge co-constitutively with safety and stability, but I think the phenomenological tradition offers a way into and perhaps out of this gridlock of meaning. I turn to it not as an abstraction of what is immediate and dire—this is not a glib response to the immediate and dire conditions of those who make their lives in public spaces, who live without the comfort of a distinctive "home." Rather, I want to point to perceptual

openings through a methodological and theoretical point of inquiry. Perhaps there is a more complex relationship that requires our attention.

It means we make "home" as we must, and there are differential capacities to make home that are tied to and guided by institutional responses. Do you rent? Do you own? Do you couch surf? Home now is an alienating envelopment, itself a haunting of some impossible wholeness. That is, home separates us even as it binds us, body to world. Even as I write this, I am leading myself further away from the idea of at-homeness, a fruitful excurses in which I uncover the arresting dualism of home and home*less*. And still, if part of what drives me in this inquiry is the need at all scales to complexify the discourse through which experiences are framed—and indeed it is—then I can only drift away from the comfortable dualism of home and homeless into an unfamiliar terrain, one I am surprised by even as I write this.

Community, Home, Space, and Place

Often, when we say "community," it stands in for a concept still deeper, or more intimate, but one that is ultimately tied to community. Home and community are bound up together. We may talk about feeling "at home" in a "community." What is it we mean when we say such a thing? That the context in which we make home is familiar? Perhaps that such a community asks little of us, is free from contention or stress? Home and at-homeness, place and space, community—these are slippery terms. They defy easy encapsulation. They have energic qualities, processual understandings, and there is a glissade that makes distinction a difficult project. They gain meaning beyond the rational capacities, but they are constrained by them. They both occupy language and are occupied by it—that is, home, place, community underlie the language one employs to describe an *itness* to them, and they are of a human way of being in the

world. At the same time, they cannot be relegated to the ephemera, and so language is the only means by which we see into them and sustain them. They are the outgrowths and the nourishment of human consciousness, much like the banyan tree, in which the "roots" and the "tree" are visibly inseparable, the whole system is revealed to the observer, roots extending from the branches to feed back into the subterranean roots, from which the trunk emerges.

Home and At-homeness

Like community, and perhaps even place, *home* has an emotional resonance, or at the very least, it is an evocation. One does not *feel* home as an address generally, one does not *feel* home as a structure, one does not *feel* home as solely spatially and/or temporally bound, though one's orientation to the temporal and spatial components of home may provide the form from meaning is made through and emerges in language.

I asked a few of my undergraduate classes several years ago what home meant to them, and I've continued to ask family members, friends, strangers at bars and cafes since then. I'll offer a selection of representative responses here: "Home is where I feel like I can be myself."; "It's wherever my family and friends are."; "It's where I don't have to wear clothes."; "It's THE place I want to be."; "It is peace"; "Home is love"; "It's where I feel most comfortable."; "It's where the people I love are."; "Home is tranquility. Peace. It's where I can sleep easy." That's a pithy sampling, but of the well over 80 people I've asked, I don't have record of many attaching home exclusively to an architectural project, to their specific address, their apartment or house. A few have answered, "It's the home I grew up in," but when I ask, "Would that still be home if a different family lived there?" they pause. Some have answered yes. "That's the only home I've ever known. That's where all my memories of childhood happened," was one reply. Another

response was, "Well, no. Not unless we could stage a takeover and do what we always did there."

There are some common threads in these responses. First, there is the sense that home provides the shelter for the self to emerge—words such as "true" and "authentic" come into play, but I will bracket the discussion of authenticity with a note that the "ecological self" is emergent, and thus always both "authentic" in its navigations and responses to the communicative context, but is also always in flux, so authenticity is the authenticity of the mutability and adaptability of the self. And so, for these purposes, I will constrain this idea to the self that is not perceived by others in its homely performances. As one respondent notes, "It's where I don't have to wear clothes."

I think in this case that home becomes like Gaston Bachelard's (1964) shell—the at-once barrier and negotiation between the naked animal body and the environment. The shell/home is not separate from the exterior, but provides a medium for the merger of the naked body with the extra-bodily environs. The shell/home emanates from the body, indeed from the body's being in the world. Bachelard cites the mollusk's credo and reveals the dwelling and building connection in its elegance: "One must live to build one's house, and not build one's house to live in" (106). The building is always occurring through the being. Home, the shell, is an ecological liminality, the membrane that grows from and gathers the naked body with the world beyond but in such a way as to provide a permeable barrier. The thing about permeability, though, is that, while it indicates the openness of the membrane, it also points to closures. *Home* is both the opening to and the retreat from the public. And the retreat from the public keeps hold of a germinal seed— the private is only private because there is a public and visa versa. The idea of "homeless" grows increasingly complex because it would seem to be an inversion of "home," and yet one makes

home as they go. Perhaps it is more fitting to think of "homing" instead of "home" as a place. I am home means much more than "I am in place."

Home is also what we carry—the things that anchor us to what is familiar. More accurately, the familiar things we carry also point to how we make home. They are signifiers of the ongoingness of home-making. I am taking care to tease this out because the term "homeless" is not only inaccurate, but frames a way of thinking into the problematic that creates a false binary and a false sense that some of us are homed, and others not. The implications for this are not to be overlooked. If one is "homeless," they are outside the condition of dwelling that is most basic to us all. That is, they are delegitimized at the originary site of being in the world. Below, I address the local and national policies that reveal the consequences of that binary thinking.

However, before I move to that discussion, I want to note that another common thread is the perception of home as defined by relationships. These are distinct from community relationships, which I will explore shortly, in that they are most often conceived as family ties and are perceived as belonging to a private space. These are not relationships that are common, but are proper to us. They belong to us. Home, in this sense, is constituted by and constitutes the sense of the familial and familiar self, the one that knows itself only proximally through the others who have co-created the story of the self—parents, siblings, grandparents—dangerous and/or nourishing. This is the location of the originary self-story, the foundation for the activity of self-making. The at-homeness emerges here as a narrative energy. Perhaps cartographic, the at-homeness is a way of being with and in the tension between the particular and the group, the particular in the group, but the particular defined only because of its inextricability with the group. The idea of *at-homeness* is situated in the tension *between* the particular and the group, and the particular can only be such in the context of its background noise, to appropriate Lingis's

reading of Serres (1994). Such a sense of homeness, such a comfort, the exercise of the particular voice in its at-homeness, requires the enfolding accretion toward oneness with the group in order to define the voice as particular.

I pointed above to familial and familiar relationships, not because they are a universal component of home, but because the patterns of responses revealed the limits of our imagination. This is a matter of perception. Our capacity to think about "home" is bound to a perceived bifurcation between private relationships and public life. Home is the concealment of that which is the requisite component for one's legitimized presence in the public. One's affective bonds and one's sense that they must be nourished as distinct and protected from community work doubly to both provide a sense of an interior home in which one is free, and then to secure those bonds against threat, and so freedom and security become conceptually bound even as they each negate the other. The need to secure the freedom of the home against a threat ensures that neither freedom nor security are experienced as such, but are felt always with the other present. I wonder how this shifts when one's home is made always in public view, with the membrane of home not simply permeable, but diaphanous, when the interiorization of *homing* takes place where it should not.

Jack has lived better than seven months on the streets. We meet at a dog park near his encampment. He has a small, once-white dog named Diamond. Diamond is the reason we have met. He needs to find a home for her, because he is homeless and can't take care of a dog. As he talks about finding her a home, his chin keeps buckling, and his eyes water. He moved here for a lover, but that didn't work out. The lover found a still fiercer love of meth, and Jack, who had been three years clean, fell hard in love as well. The lover kicked the habit, got a job, moved to Kentucky. Jack hit bottom. He prefers not to sleep in a shelter most nights if the weather permits,

because he says he feels safer on the streets. But then he tells me that one night last summer, as he set up his sleeping bag under an overpass, he heard footsteps, someone running, fast. He turned and saw a figure running toward him, He couldn't make sense of the image at first. The shadow of a large body, an arm raised, something long extending from the hand. As the figure drew closer, he perceived that this figure was running toward him specifically. Headlights from a truck moving in the opposite direction from the figure illuminated the scene more clearly. A large man, wielding a stick of some sort. Jack tells me the man howled as he got closer, but Jack couldn't move, couldn't realize the threat. The truck passed Jack and stopped. The driver honked his horn as he pulled the truck to a stop. The man running toward Jack stopped. Jack recounts that they made eye contact—he was that close. Then he turned and ran. Jack makes home in a sleeping bag. That is the container for his body. The interior of his life is turned outward. If I can, as I do later in this chapter, point to policy measures as indicators of the tension between security, freedom, and threat, a moment such as this reveals one way it manifests in a particular life.

What Jack's story conveys, however, is not evidence of the experience of living homeless. Rather, what we might glean from Jack's story is the particular relationship, the embodiment of body, home and world. Jack makes home nightly in such a way that the interior of the body making home, the retreat into an interior space, is revealed as a permeable, and threatened space. That is, Jack's sense of an existential threat—which is the condition of biological life—lives immediately and in the body when one sleeps on the street. Beyond my sense of outrage and my impulse to send letters or raise hell, leveraging my belonging in the community, I was also compelled by the way in which the threat emerged for Jack in his description of the moment. He couldn't perceive the threat, couldn't see what was in front of

him. It simply didn't make sense. Jack was bedding down—going through the habits and performances of home. The disruption of that experience is telling. Home is not the house, but the concept of an interior space, a private space of dwelling finds its architectural expression in the house, and the structure of houses emerges from that distinction between public and private.

House and Home

If home is not the house, it is the house that haunts the Western imaginary as the space in which home gains form. Such initiatives as Housing First, incremental housing, transitional housing, and rapid rehousing gain significance in this way. Gaston Bachelard explores the corners, the drawers, the hidden spaces of the house in which home as self, as intimacy, take shape. Bachelard's house looms in the imagination as a waking dreamscape, a memory of spaces at once alien and familiar, terrifying and comforting. Anthony Vidler (1992), too, talks about home in this regard, at once an un-homing through the architectural project of dwelling—home contains what is both most familiar and most strange. Vidler, in discussing the uncanny, reminds us that the uncanny is not what is simply "sinister, disturbing, suspect, strange" (p. 23), but is more complexly the relationship between *heimlich* as the familiar, what belongs at home, the sense of home as familiar, its double meaning as that which is hidden, secret, kept away from the public, and the *unheimlich,* the double meanings of which are the negation of the former two (p. 25). The *unheimlich* is both that which is not homely, not unfamiliar, a haunting sense of what doesn't belong, and also that which is displaces and reveals the hidden, the secret, the concealed. Home "conceals" the secrets of the body, the secrets of the family, the secrets of the self. Vidler's genealogy of the uncanny, one he traces by way of Freud's struggle to define the term, is particularly useful for understanding the relationship between public and private, and the

paradoxical tensions that seed the curious matter of homelessness as a discursive terrain, and as a communal tension. If I may look at the uncanny beyond the house, and beyond the psychoanalytic tradition, the public and private cross-germination bears a different kind of urgency when one makes home in the streets.

The house and its place in the Western cultural imaginary is also, though, what is not common. One retreats behind its doors and windows and walls. If it contains hauntings and traces, if it conceals what must not be seen by the public eye—that is, the secret of one's dwelling, the secret of the animal body in its bare survival—if it is the built artifact of one's dwelling in the world, but is also the space from which one enters the public, then the house is relevant to discussions of homelessness precisely because it signifies one's capacity to secret away the body. I return to my prior point, that "home" is a membrane. When one makes home in the streets, *building* offers no or limited retreat from the "public eye," as is the case with those who make encampments every night. Now, as Heidegger so famously says, "To build is already in itself to dwell" (1971, p. 348). Heidegger goes on to distinguish between two types of building, and two types of dwelling. Building is both, from the old German, also to dwell, but it also to construct. In the prior sense, it means to care for, to nurture, what has already grown, what is already in existence. This is, he is clear, about "not making anything" (p. 349). Meanings are of course, changing and accountable to time, and building is more commonly thought as making, creating. Or as a noun—the product of building is the building. This need not signify dwelling at all however. Public institutions are not sites of dwelling, and indeed, as Heidegger explains, one must "dwell" in order to be. Dwelling is the activity of being.

I wonder if like language, the building, what is created, both signifies dwelling and leads us away from dwelling *because* it actually reveals the secrets and concealments of dwelling even

as it seeks to hide them away. By this I mean that language, the codification of experience, the

signification of our being in the world, can only approach the experience of our being in the

world.[8] It draws from the past and points toward a future. In the very moment we language

experience, we are already looking back at our being in the world with an eye toward how we

will be in the future. We build home, we dwell, according to the past and toward what is to

come, but the activity of home is located in the here and now, which is already disappearing.

And so the duality of *home* and *homeless* warrants further consideration. It is not such an easy

duality as national or local policy would have it.

If that seemed a theoretical departure, or an abstraction of the lived condition, I offer the

national model for ameliorating homelessness: Housing First. Housing First proposes various

localized responses that seek to provide rapid rehousing for people living homeless. This means

that rather than the traditional, incremental approach to rehousing, the commitment is "housing

first, questions later." A rather fascinating quandary is the criminalization of homelessness, or, of

making home in the world along the seam of public and private. While Housing First has been

effective in addressing the problem of bodies occupying public spaces and doing what bodies

must, the underlying issue remains, well, "out of sight."

But what of *the* building? What of the architectural spaces of home and community?

What are the multiple relationships between body and architecture? Anthony Vidler's project is

compelling for its simultaneous exploration and upsetting of the organic connection between

body and architecture (1992), his aim to "examine the complex and shifting relations between

buildings and bodies, structures and sites" (p. xi). While the feeling of home is not entirely

spatially bound, we can say, as Vidler does, that home is an orientation at the very least. One

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[8] While I don't go into a discussion of the semiotic tradition, clearly Saussure, Pierce, Barthes, and the many who have developed semiotics as a field of study discuss this tension thoroughly.

knows "one's way about" home. Vidler explains that this at-homeness is, for Freud, the site in which the uncanny emerges. The enclosure of the home can only occur because of its capacity to rupture. The stranger, the threat is always present from within (p. 24). The stranger/strangeness is secreted away inside the familiar. But there is a history to and within a secret. Vidler, by way of Freud, explains the secret:

> Freud…was…intrigued by the first part of the passage [from the dramatist Karl Ferdinand Gutzkow]: 'The Zecks are all *Heimlich.'*… 'Heimlich?...What do you understand by *heimlich*? 'Well…, they are like a buried spring or a dried-up pond. One cannot walk over it without always having the feeling that the water might come up again' (p. 25).

When one's life is made in the streets, though, the water is already bubbling up right at the surface. There is no concealment. Now how does this bear out in the structure and function of community?

Community?

The city or town in which one lives can remain a place without becoming in one's mind or experience a community. What, then may I say about community that distinguishes it from home and place? As the focus of my specific project is homelessness, teasing out the particularities of the terms at play is crucial. Homelessness is not the opposite of home, though. Homelessness emerges not as the negative of home, but as a complex condition that relocates home and the uncanny within place, such that the community process is one, I would argue, that seeks through the exclusion/inclusion agonism to retract back into the "homely and comforting," but absent, interior. This idea of the absent interior finds clarity in Day's "Community as Event," (2004) in which he writes, "The constituted community is always impossible, it is 'always already' because it is both always present and always yet to come. In Derrida's words after

Blanchot, it *comes* to us from the future (*a venir*) in so far as that future is made up of potential pasts and presents" (p. 420). The danger with theorizing community is that it is, as with home and place, haunted by its own impossibility. If home contains the unhomely, and more unsettling, the uncanny, and if place is revealed as a set of meanings that at once contain both traces of a past not one's own and one's "everyday experience of living in a particular environment," then the tension in community follows an agonistic logic through the embeddedness of the outside within, the stranger that gives community a shape through its retraction away from the stranger. Community, then, can only be seen in its traces. Or perhaps community might be seen to erupt along the fault-line of home and place, if it is a kind of organizing that emerges in the gap between home and place.

To return to the idea of particularity as it evidences in the familial home, we find parallels with the relationship between the particular and the communal. The tension in the philosophical project at hand is its tendency toward the presupposition of community, and is well expressed by Esposito:

> This appears to contradict the tendency of a certain kind of political philosophy to see in the question of community its very same object. It is this reduction to 'object' of a political-philosophical discourse that forces community into a conceptual language that radically alters it, while at the same time attempts to name it: that of the individual *and* totality; of identity *and* the particular; of the origin *and* the end; or more simply of the *subject* with its most unassailable metaphysical connotations of unity, absoluteness, and interiority (2010, p. 1).

Perhaps one of the difficulties in theorizing community is the slippage between public and community, polis and community, community and society. *Gemeinchaft* and *gesellchaft* provide a blurry binary between community and society, and perhaps the distinction in that case is a matter of the network density—a set of loose ties versus rich networks. While some communication scholarship makes ready distinctions between the two, they are inseparable. The

social is a fabric from which the conventions of community emerge. Or perhaps it is the inverse.

Community is *a priori*. The social shapes the associational, makes a geometric project out of

what is phenomenologically round. I think my hesitation here reveals what I hope will be a

fruitful confusion. I briefly alluded to Zygmunt Bauman's distinctions between the polis and

community in the context of discussing how stigma troubles the notion of community interior,

and I think it a lucid enough distinction to revisit here (2000). Community invokes a tension

between freedom and security. In Bauman's formulation, one's freedom is the sacrifice for the

security community offers. Interestingly, though, Heidegger's genealogy reveals that "the

[German] word for peace, *Friede,* means the free, *das Frye,* and *fry* means: preserved from harm

and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded" (Heidegger, 1971). Freedom cannot be

traded for security, because it already is security. The relationship performs a double negation.

Recently, I saw a bumper sticker on a truck that read, "Freedom isn't free." A head scratcher,

until you think through it. Whoever penned that axiom was spot on. Freedom *isn't* free. It is

secured through rights, which means it is also always threatened. My freedom to move in public

spaces is secure by my rights to citizenship, which may at any point be suspended. I'll come

back to this momentarily, but I want to note that my freedom to be here is also accountable to

time, and so it is certainly the case that freedom isn't free.

Esposito is again relevant. As he reads Heidegger's more general philosophy of

community in *Communitas* (2010)*,* Heidegger theorizes the "ecstatic community" in response to

Kant. Heidegger, according to Esposito, "makes" Kant accountable to time. That time is

understood to "'stretch' the subject to the breaking point," that it is the "abyss" where the subject

is constituted outside of himself, now interrogates the idea of the subject as closed or discrete

(87). We commune around our common disappearance. Time negates the subject, makes the idea

of the individual and the subject irrelevant. It is the great equalizer. The abyss reminds us of our temporality—nay, it is our temporality. So when Esposito asks what Kant saw when he peered into the abyss, and subsequently fled in terror, he appropriately notes that it is the no-thing, the absence of a self and a subject. The subject is articulated against something, and time erases form. Heidegger's ecstatic community is the being of community; it works against its own permanence. To return to my previous consideration, one can only see community in its traces. Community cannot be *achieved* because it already *is,* and it is precisely because it is the always-already that it is always out of reach. As Esposito writes, "the community needs to be understood literally as 'coincidence,' as a falling *together"* (95). Community is now seen as nothing but the fall. So what does it mean to be a *member* of something that never arrives? It means we are all existentially partial. Our political subjectivity is not closed or secure, but is constitutively open, and insecure. What draws us together is our debt, our obligation, our imperative to obey, but with nothing other than obedience itself driving that imperative. Community, then, is a lack, a displacement or a deferment of the gift in perpetuity.

I have pointed to the complex tensions that lie beneath the cheery sense of belonging that drives the nostalgic imagination. If we are to say that we work in the spirit of *community*, and we do, then perhaps we might take note of the irreconcilable tensions that underpin the community process. Simply believing in the virtue of community as both presupposed and desirable on one hand obfuscates the exclusionary principles of community and on the other, amplifies the mythical community interior.

The Recursion of Self and Other

I can only call to memory the expression on Leland's face at first sight, and it will be a weak reconstruction, one already slipping far from visceral recollection, from the immediate depth of his features. I may imagine the light falling over the bill of his hat, knowing the principles of chiaroscuro, knowing the geometric curvatures of light and shadow and human form. I can see, as if I were painting it, the bill shadowing his eyes, but not enough to mask them—a clear, steady blue, thin furrows cutting through the fine skin beside and beneath them— not enough to gray the ruddiness of his skin, a deep red-brown against which his eyes gain a unique brilliance. His hair is the color of a cigarette stain, imbrications of deep yellow and dim gray. It shoots out from beneath his cap in wild plumes. Leland is short, his gait uneven. His hands are small, fingers blunted at the tips, fingernails chewed to the quick. When he grins, it is a broad and familiar thing—a welcome infection. People smile in return. To me, and later to many others, he offers the most banal and cordial greeting, and it has no more meaning than it ever does. "Good afternoon. How are you?" I am, predictably, fine. Doing well. I volley the question, "How are *you?*" Smiling idiotically as though his response will mirror my own—a polite and careless reply. Leland however, surprises me. He is not so good. He has walked that day from St. Pete. It is now 5:00 in the afternoon. Leland began walking that morning—a distance of roughly 24 miles. And I am inclined in that moment and now, to think about what 24 miles feels like when foot is connected to pavement and gravel and soil. Particularly in a Florida mid-summer afternoon. Well, Leland tells me, his face bland, "It is hot." Rivulets of sweat sluice down his forehead, over the bridge of his nose. The back of his t-shirt is drenched. Armpits, too. He is boiling, exhausted, and needs a place to stay for the evening.

"When any of us asks how far it is to some destination, the first measure is, 'Can I walk there?' and the next question is 'How long will it take?' The walking question," Lanigan tells us, "is a human body measure of proxemic location typically noted by an emblematic building (architectural object), and the time taking question is a chronemic measure of kinesic action (phenomenological subject)" (12). Walking brings the body into contact with the spatial coordinates of (an)other. Feet meet pavement, and we are aware of the body's otherness, its intersection with the world. Leland walked 24 miles, his stunted body curved down into itself, his spine a question mark. Heat radiated from the pavement. He hugged the shoulder of the Gandy Bridge, his body calling into being the border between, not just road and water, but the crushing speed of cars and the depths of the Bay. He is walking toward help, but he has no idea how or if that will manifest. The purposive point-to-point movement that lies beneath the walking and the time-taking questions may look a little different. Leland's drift is migratory. He follows the rhythm of shelter, he is drawn by the possibility of help. He moves toward the familiar skyline of downtown Tampa, where the bulk of shelter spaces and services are located. Leland and I meet jut north of the Salvation Army on Florida Avenue, where he has been told he cannot stay.

Here's the thing: Leland had a rucksack. It was stolen the week before at a shelter. And we could certainly pick apart that word: "shelter," but time matters and we must move through Leland's story with some attendance to pacing, to the movement of a human life in the liminal zone. Leland's rucksack contained his identification, his military identification, a blanket, a little cash, his change of clothes, and his cigarettes. In a word, it contained everything he needed. Without cash and identification, he cannot stay a night at a local shelter. Even if he had identification, he doesn't have cash, and he has used up his free nights at the Salvation Army.

And it is Saturday, and so there is no way for Leland to get an ID and/or to access his pension. He wants clean clothing and a place to sleep. He has slept outside for the week, and his body is tired. His back hurts, and he wants a bed to sleep in.

I had nothing to offer except a T-shirt. It was larger than Leland's petite frame, but it was clean and he liked it alright. I had no cash (he didn't want it anyway), offered food, but he had no need, and so I asked what he did need. A ride across town. I hesitated—couldn't get there from where I was. Riding across town to a location he couldn't identify, spending hours of time I'd have to justify to my family. I saw myself in an instant. Disingenuous and frightened of what I didn't and couldn't know. Even in writing this, I am vain. Because now I'm "honest." Showing the uglier sides of myself, but in telling them you will accept me. Relate to me. That's the hope, right? But I also want to write this so you see him. So that you know him as more than a color point in this place, more than a signifier of economic and social breakdown. But of course, that presumes that I can do that, that I can render someone else in such a way as to make sense of him. I don't know and can't know the details of Leland's life any more than he has chosen to share with me.

In telling this story, I struggle with the thought that I have stolen it. Is this appropriation? Or can I leverage it for noble means and make my peace? Both/and? Leland, I may never see you again. You live for me now as a shadow of yourself, and of who I was in that moment. You signaled a deeper condition. I was helpless. I had nothing to ameliorate your condition. I couldn't understand it, couldn't anticipate it or respond to it. And then selfish in my need to help. I was consumed by my own impotence.

I do not share this in order to elicit sympathy for Leland or to reveal some kind of understanding about the condition of homelessness. Sympathy can look an awful lot like

philanthropy—it leaves the polarity of self and other, us and them, well intact. It is projected outward, and is what one feels when they cannot make sense of another's pain. Sympathy is not what such an encounter requires. Sympathy forecloses on hearing, seeing, being with another, being open to another. Think of the sympathetic nervous system. As the body's reactionary response to external stimuli, it prompts the fight or flight reflex. It is an apt embodiment of the emotional response when we come into contact with the other. This is not about a direct biological threat, but about a retreat from the infection of the other. However, the parasympathetic nervous system entails the body's need to rest, to wait, to nourish—we come back to compassion. Waiting with another's suffering.

I come back to Heidegger's discussion of the original meaning of building, as a place of rest, of growing what already is. Building is a relational activity, the state of being in the world that does not react to one's being here by creating the building to house experience, but rather rests in experience. Perhaps the moment of encounter between self and other is the dance between waiting, resting, and reacting. I pointed in my introduction to the tension between theorizing lived experience and the call to respond to it. I can't help but wonder, as one responding to another, what watching the dance of rest and reaction might reveal and, also, as one who works and will continue to work toward greater and more caring responses to the diverse experiences of home and community, if that place of rest might create a better way of being with each other.

You see, as for understanding the condition of homelessness, I cannot convey Leland's story in such a way as to understand it. That would presume a great deal: 1) that I have in fact conveyed Leland's story at all; 2) that I know Leland's story and can positively recount it; 3) that the story is about Leland; 4) that telling the story achieves that end: understanding, and; 5)

Leland's story needs to be understood. The story I told isn't, in fact, Leland's story at all. I have

no idea what Leland's story is. I know neither the collection of moments that preceded our

encounter, nor how he experienced our relationship for that brief time, nor what (if any) thoughts

he had after about it. I don't know if it was even a story for Leland at all (story being something

that is recalled and told). I am the author at this point. Leland was a disruption of the smooth

flow of a day I would likely otherwise not remember. And neither is the story a story of me. The

story behind us, in which we emerged as two people in our separation, now connected around a

set of exchanges (resources, dialogue, affect), could certainly be read as a story of policy, of

surveillance and discipline, of systemic failings at multiple levels of scale. And that would not be

an inaccurate reading. But it is also a moment that reveals the curious tension between self and

other in community. In this case, it is precisely the needs that separate our lived condition that

also bind us together. I will go *home* after our exchange. Leland will most likely sleep on the

street. I have identification but the chances of needing to produce it to validate my presence here,

to legitimize my belonging, are slim. Not only does Leland's lack of a form of identification

foreclose on finding shelter that night, but in his case, legal forms of identification are only proof

that he has been counted, and may leave him more vulnerable within a punitive legal system, and

work against economic security long term. If his home address is listed, it is a remnant of a life

that he no longer leads.

So what *is* required in such an encounter? Well, there is no resolution, and thus no

requisite response. I had nothing to offer that would change Leland's situation in any way at all

(and I questioned whether, even with a slight perceptual shift, the impact of which remains to be

seen, any significant change for me ever occurred or if it remains in the future tense). I am left

only with questions. Perhaps what is required is only attention and attunement to the infection of

self and other, to the boundary crossing, with an ear and an eye and a feel for any change that emerges out of the moment. In the moment I described, Leland and I were both hearing each other through past encounters. I did *do* something—Leland had asked for jeans, so I went to the Family Dollar and purchased shorts (they didn't have jeans), flipflops (which don't make sense when one lives on the streets), a trac phone (Leland didn't know how to use it), a pack of socks (which he kept), a pair of sunglasses (doesn't wear them), a pack of smokes (quite happy with those), and a new hat (which he also kept). I assumed I could anticipate Leland's needs. Clearly, I was wrong. The question of what it means to communicate with another, what is required in order to realize the communicative possibility, remains for me. Our connection and drift apart, our incongruous expectations, our reach toward and retreat from each other is significant in that it is a manifestation of the dialectic tension of community. So again, for all my frustration—at my impotence, the vast gaps and failings in the systems that should be able to support Leland, at my reflexive view of my arrogance—this moment was, inevitably, not about *me,* nor about Leland. This is about the structure, function, and (im)possibility of community.

Community, Immunity, and Law

Understanding community as a communicative process is a study in paradox. This requires one to see community as a process always unfolding and enfolding, taking in and sacrificing, gathering and consigning, to see community as an accretion and as something both *a priori* and impossible. There are flows and exchanges, there is motion and heat, there is decomposition and reorganizing, and so community is best understood as a process, as only a possibility, and perhaps an *impossibility* at that, though I need to be careful, because the word "possibility" signifies a thing

which can be animated. What I mean is that community isn't the thing made possible—it *is only the possibility,* hence it is also *impossible.*

If we are to take up Agamben's explanation of the state of exception—and I find his theory particularly illuminating for its attention to the persistent tension that *is* community—the polis always contains its own fracture (2004).[9] Using Carl Schmitt's definition of the sovereign, Agamben locates the actual power of the sovereign in this state of exception. Sovereignty is exercised in the moment the sovereign suspends the law, rendering the life within the bios bare life. This is what must be excluded from the polis, and yet is written into being by policy. Agamben proposes an irreconcilable tension between life as such, and the good life, the political life, which both requires bare life and creates itself through the exclusion of bare life. We can return to the discussion of home and the uncanny for theoretical parallels—that which is bare life and excluded is haunted by the presence of the policies that constitute it as such. And inversely, that which is the bios, the good life, is haunted by the presence of bare life, which is the necessary condition of existence. They are inextricable.

Other views of community[10] examine it as an ordering process, a utilitarian management of the "natural setting," a means of "insert[ing] the properties [a thing] reveals when inserted into the instrumental system we have laid out" (Lingis, 7). Here the intelligible member is rendered. The

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[9] Agamben also develops this in *State of Exception* (2005) and opens the theoretical possibilities in *The Coming Community* (1993).

[10] *Cf.* Underwood and Frey, whose literature review of community takes up the empirical approach to "community." Also, literature from various disciplines and profiessional traditions that discuss *building* community: Steeves (1993) whose work emerged during a particular historical moment in which the term "community" experienced a renaissance and reentered cultural and political dialogue. Within the subsets of "community" literature, outside of those rare works that spend time addressing what is meant by the term, "community," we can only presume it exists. It is something into which we can enter. Underwood and Frey's literature review was useful in my explorations of community, but in part by revealing what the missing part of the broad project: the question of what is meant by "community."

form of community, which is ordered and structured by law, that is, the very law that "turns community into its opposite" (Esposito, 22), creates the communal subject and determines its intelligibility and eligibility as member. I'll return to the paradoxical function of Law in a moment, particularly because it bears out so immediately in the lives of those who live homeless, but I want to follow Lingis down this path for a moment longer, because he teases out the inclusionary/exclusionary paradox that sets the foundation for understanding the function of Law. He writes that this "community that produces something in common, that establishes truth and that now establishes a technological universe of simulacra, excludes the savages, the mystics, the psychotics—excludes their utterances and their bodies" (Lingis, 13).

Perhaps the literature that proposes a distinction between the *gemeinschaft* and the *gesellschaft* is a useful theoretical merger, as we come to understand that scholarly perspectives have dualized the organic community (*gemeinschaft*) from the associational community (*gesellschaft*) (Tönnies, 1957). This is of course a line in the sand, as though the very process by which a system organizes itself is apart from its undoing. *Gessellschaft* structures itself along the lines of what it both must conceal and present to the associational and public community, and *gemeinschaft* contains the germinal seed of the organic community—it responds specifically to the organic community by both structuring how the communal organism is a part of the public and by engaging the boundary between private and public community. Looking at the space between, I would argue that such a distinction fails to recognize the ecological context in which communal relationships emerge. The communicative community, which is not, as Serres proposes, the "city maximally purged of noise" (quoted in Lingis, 2013), but indeed the noise itself, is rhizomatic, comprised necessarily of the noise and the tension between self and other in which the noise is singularized and brought into ideological meaning. The communicative community emerges within

the noise, *and* it is the noise. Communication and community are bound together, not as threads, but liquid processes.

If the noise of community is relevant, and yet language and discourse, and by extension Law, pulls out singular tracks from the noise in order to compress noise into a communicative economy—intelligibility of self and other—then we arrive back at a discussion of the state of exception. Again, those who live homeless embody that tension. The body that makes home in "public" places represents noise in the system. The distinction between the body dwelling, which must remain private, and the public, which organizes the biological fact of bodies by excluding what is most common to us all, finds its boundary in the body of the person living homeless—or rather making home in public places. Homelessness is thus not home*less*, but a dislocation of home, or perhaps an uncomfortable relocation of home where it should not be.

The social location of one who disrupts, or, better still, reveals that community is only the seam between exterior and interior, exclusion and inclusion, is also theorized beyond homelessness as a generalized threat to political subjectivity in myriad ways. In "Melancholy and Community" (2013: 27-36), Esposito's community isn't subject to melancholy—it *is melancholy.* The inevitable paradox of the in-common and the exclusionary fracture that guides it translates to "the originary melancholic, lacerated, and fractured character of community" (28). The "melancholic man" may be seen as Goffman's stigmatized identity, or Lingis's "savages…mystics …psychotics" (13, 2013) on one hand, but Esposito is not satisfied with an externalizing of melancholia, or an individual property of any given agent. Rather, "Melancholy resembles a fault and a wound that community experiences not as a temporary or partial condition but as community's *only way of being;* and of not being, or of being precisely in the form of its own 'not,' but of that which must be, but that cannot be, if not in a defective, concave modality" (2013, 28). The relationship between community

and law is the melancholia. The two together require community to twist back upon itself, to perform a self-negation through law, through the structuring of community against itself.

Moreover, facile constructions of community as an "it" may have dire consequences. If we treat community as both possible and realized we risk, as Esposito sums, "forcing community open until we make it explode, or implode, with catastrophic effects…What was the twentieth-century totalitarianism if not the illusion, the furious illusion, of being able to identify community with itself and, in doing so, to fulfill it?" (2012, p. 29). Community is just as totalizing as immunity, and this can no doubt be seen in the vast inclusionary reaches of a neoliberal, globalized economy. Esposito's arguments seem rather bleak against the kind of ebullient American optimism that attaches to "building" and "creating" and "organizing" community. Esposito's is a *negative* philosophy. He takes away meaning, revealing the vacuous *no*-thing that is community. And yet, with *what* have we charged forth with when we rally behind "community"? In his reduction of community, Esposito isn't bleak at all, but rather opening a question that hits hardest at our attachments to community as a thing, as a foreclosure upon its own possibilities.

Esposito writes explicitly, "Community is not an 'entity' [*ente*], but instead a 'non-entity' [*un ni-ente*], a non-being [*non-ente*] that precedes and cuts every subject, wresting him or her from identification with him or herself and submitting him or her to an irreducible alterity" (29). Esposito's thesis brings alterity into the communal process as an extension of melancholy. We are dislocated in the moment of contact, which both produces the self and reveals the self as other. In the same way that we perceive the body by way of the flesh which draws together the body and the world, but is at once both body and world and yet neither, community is the seam between self and other. Both perform a dislocation of the subject in the moment the boundary between body and world, self and other is revealed. And so, Esposito's philosophy can be

viewed as a philosophy of boundaries. Quite simply, the boundary without is also within—this fracture is the primary site of infection. That which appears to separate "the community" from what it is not, is only the fracture that *is community.* This alterity is not an *effect* of the boundary between self and Other; it is an effect of the boundary between self and other that is birthed at the inception of human consciousness. It resides deeply embedded in our desire toward and retraction from community.

So what is the function of immunity? We can see in media coverage and public responses to homelessness that the phenomenon, the systemic problem of homelessness is often framed as a disease. The biomedical influence on biopolitical systems becomes eerily potent here. In my concluding thoughts, I return to this concern as a problem of metaphor, but I want to attend in this chapter to the means by which the immunity paradigm has been theorized. In Esposito's exegesis of the immunity paradigm, one he traces to Niklas Luhmann's work in *Social Systems* (2013)*,* we understand that in community, we are bound to one another through the *munus,* the gift-obligation that articulates with the *cum,* the being-with-together. *Community,* in Esposito's genealogy, is always-already and always out of reach, precisely because it co-occurs with *immunity.* He explains, "If the members of the *communitas* are bound by the same law, by the same duty, or gift to give (the meanings of *munus*), *immunis* is he or she who is exempt or exonerated from these. *Immunis* is he or she who has no obligations toward the other and can therefore conserve his or her own essence in tact as a subject and owner of himself or herself" (39). But, as previously noted, this tension is always alive in the body-subject. Esposito sketches two lines of thought for immunity. On one hand, biomedically framed, immunity is the process by which the body is protected from a viral agent, or the means by which the body excludes the viral agent, by introducing a strain of the viral agent into the body, thereby prompting the

immune defense. From the position of law, the granting of immunity relieves the subject from his or her obligation to give—the *munus* being the very core of community. However, as the value of membership is determined by the gift exchange, being granted immunity also excises one from the communal corpus. The immunitas is alone, isolated from community, from what is common (Butchart, 2015).

If the immunitas constitutes a threat against the common, but a threat required to be embedded in the flesh of the community, the membrane that comprises the communal corpus, then we can say that community requires the interiorization of the other in order to prompt the retreat, and so the fracture, or perhaps the friction, is persistent within us. We can start to understand the inclusion/exclusion paradigm here as tracing its origin to the immunity/community agonism. If we might scale out beyond the individual, then we can start to (re)examine the role of institutions for the concretizing of this agonism. The policies I briefly outlined in the introduction become a way of exteriorizing by means of interiorizing—a paradoxical loop that leaves one chasing one's own tail.

"The homeless" are at once a part *of community* and alienated *from community;* the threat prompts the immune response, while all at once *requiring* the agent of threat. That is, immunization functions to exclude the threat by way of including it. If homelessness is framed as an "epidemic," "the homeless," the one whose body is ever visible, is its most absolute manifestation, and presented with this figure, a notably disruptive and threatening figure if we are to read the metanarrative of policy, the community membership scrambles to shore itself up, to locate itself within an interior community which is already compromised, and must be by the very logic that writes it into being. The body, both the individual body and the body of the community, is central to understanding the means by which the biopolitical and biomedical

immunization paradigms draw together in the function of immunity within community. As

Butchart sums:

> The body...is the terrain upon which life struggles against 'illness, aging, and deterioration.' The body, Esposito explains, 'is the frontline, both symbolic and material, in life's battle against death. […] As long as it holds out, there will be no death.' As a "liminal zone" between life and death, body is the locus *par excellence* at which the immunitary intention of bio-politics is carried out (ECA Conference, 2015).

So what is to be done with a body relegated to bare life? In the following section, I discuss local

and national policies that raise questions, not about the body being regulated, but about the sign

systems in which those policies emerge.

You Shouldn't Be Here: Death by Policy

As my discussion of Esposito and Agamben's work indicates, biopolitical thought

provides a kind of theoretical figure-ground from which Esposito's consideration of the

community and immunity emerges.[11] The policies regarding "the homeless" and "the

panhandler" often emerge alongside of or embedded in policies that criminalize the condition of

living on the streets. The concept of biopower is not a philosophical abstraction—it finds its

trade in bodies, in the life-and-death fact of the human body. Foucault argues that biopower

emerged as a result of matters of economic capital and labor fusing with the regulation of the

body (1990). The body is viewed in this line of thinking as a singular, fleshly, corporeal body

(birth and death stats, for example, public health risks, epidemiological data and their place in

governmentalization), and as one body-subject within the body of the polis and the community.

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[11] Though I draw from both Agamben and Esposito, I want to clarify that they have distinct and different perspectives. Esposito indeed responds to Agamben's biopolitical perspective with an "affirmative biopolitics." I bring them together in this dissertation with the intent to situate the theories around a particular phenomenon. While the distinctions between their orientations to community and biopolitics remain, I intend to view their theoretical departures as points for conversation rather than disjunction.

The corporeal body gains significance for the project of governmentality in its statistical presence—birth certificates and social security numbers establish membership, citizenship. The body is seen as capital—as a means of reproducing the conditions for the concentrated flow of wealth: bodies as market trade, and the subject as market agent. The subject and the body are now necessarily, ideologically separated. If we might agree that biopolitics is a mode of governance and ideological reproduction in the (hyper)modern moment[12] (and I do), then the immune response is presaged by both a political structuring and the political subject's understanding of one's body as having political significance, and this significance means one is part of a larger body—one's political significance is safeguarded against the threat of bare life, the threat of the precariousness and inevitable demise of human existence by its inclusion in both policy (the Law writes bare life into the public sphere through its negation, and by denaturalizing it, separating from the body) and because bare life is the content of community (Feldman, 2006). Again, this is the fusion of the biopolitical and biomedical models of immunization.

Policy, of course, is one way of observing how this fusion manifests. One can see quite readily how immunity functions through law. Below, I provide s local timeline of policies regarding those who live homeless and panhandle in Tampa. I then contextualize local policy in Tampa within the broader national policy framework. .

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[12] Hypermodernity is characterized by the profusion of multiple and proliferative modernities. Rather than a totalizing, singular modernity, the hypermodern moment exists across multiple temporal, spatial zones, drawing lines across, between, over and through such various, co-occurring cultural, social, political moments. Anna Tsing's work in *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (2005) draws the complex relationship between global and local tensions with respect to Indonesian deforestation. I note here its relevance for understanding multiple, co-occurring and often colliding modernities.

Table 1: Timeline of Panhandling and Homelessness Legislation

October, 2009	Panhandlers in Tampa are required by ordinance to purchase and wear safety vests. Those who do not abide are issued warnings by Tampa police (Wilmath, tampabay.com).
June 13, 2010	Pinellas County's ordinance banning panhandling goes into effect. This bans street vendors (often newspaper hawkers) and panhandlers from most of downtown St. Petersburg. (Van Sickler, tampabay.com)
March, 2011	Hillsborough County bans panhandling (Varian, tampabay.com).
November, 2011	Following the lead of broader Hillsborough County and Pinellas County, Tampa issues a partial ban on panhandling, which states that panhandling is not allowed anywhere in the city except Sunday. Newspaper hawkers are exempt. Streets have been all but cleared of panhandlers six days a week (Danielson, tampabay.com)
August 2012	Clearwater passes a public sitting ban, banning any lying down or sitting in public right of ways. (Harrell, tampabay.com)
July 2013	Tampa passes two ordinances: 1) the geographic scope of the ban against what is called "aggressive panhandling" is expanded to include downtown Tampa and Ybor City, and; 2) a ban on the storage of personal property in public places (Mole, examiner.com)

I was on the steps of the County Building in downtown Tampa the morning those last ordinances were passed. July 18, 2013. It was hot. Baking hot. Seven of us stood holding handmade signs. We garnered some media attention, nods from passersby. Across from the steps, a man slept on a bench.

Figure 4: Man Asleep across from Hillsborough County Building on July 18, 2013, Amanda Mole, *The Examiner. Reprinted with permission from the photographer.*

We took turns interviewing with ABC Action News and the *Tampa Bay Times*. We explained to anyone who stopped the complexity of the two ordinances, the last of which criminalizes the

very condition of human life in a public space. The transcript from the meeting for those two items is 53-pages-long. For the four hours we were there, the man on the bench slept in the early afternoon sun. After the meeting adjourned, and the decision was announced, we stayed and talked with people as they exited. Steven Sapp, owner of a now defunct newspaper, *The Epoch,* written about, for and often by those who live homeless, had been inside. Steven is a fast talker, and he knows his shit. He is tenacious and assertive, and slick. He got his few minutes to talk, but Steven has also made a "name" for himself, and it isn't favorable. He is not well liked by many. He shares the news with us, introduces us to Frank Reddick. Reddick is one of the two council people who might be open to a different way of thinking. It feels as though something might happen, something might change. Meanwhile, the man on the bench sleeps, unmoving. And we talk, seemingly unmoved by his presence. Ms. Molé's photograph of his presence haunts me. One social worker for the Veteran's Administration, who claimed to have been formerly homeless, was the most adamant supporter of the legislation. Her argument is that all these "bums" are drug addicts, alcoholics, and mentally ill. We can't have them sleeping in public places. They are as dangerous as they are sick. And still, twenty feet from our conversation, the man slept in the heat of the day.

The ordinance that banned the storage of personal property in public places followed on the heels of county, regional, and state policies that banned, not only panhandling, but public sitting, standing in right of ways, storage of personal property, and—in one particularly pernicious move—blankets. This last one was repealed during the freeze in January and February, when temperatures in Florida's Panhandle dropped to seventeen and eighteen degrees on the coldest night (Strickland, 2014). As I began to survey local and national policies, the pattern was plain: such policies criminalize the very activities that sustain the life of a human

body. A body must rest, sit, eat, sleep, eliminate waste. This is none other than the absolute base of the hierarchy of needs, right?

Now to draw local and state policies into the national context, Several cities have instituted bans or severe restrictions on providing meals for people living homeless in public spaces, among them Raleigh, NC, Orlando, FL, Philadelphia, PA, Dallas, TX, and Las Vegas, NV. Los Angeles passed such a ban in February of 2014, and New York City banned donations to food programs at homeless shelters out of an apparent concern about the nutritional value of those food donations. Clearwater's aforementioned 2012 public sitting ban was not a policy outlier. As a recent report from the National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty details, 53% of the 187 cities surveyed for their 2014 report, *No Safe Place: The Criminalization of Homelessness in U.S. Cities* have criminalized public sitting and lying down. As the authors state so plainly:

> There are some activities so fundamental to human existence that it defies common sense that they might be treated as crimes. Falling asleep, standing still, and sitting down, are all necessary actions for any human being's survival. While these activities are unquestionably legal when performed indoors, more and more communities across the country are treating these life-sustaining behaviors as criminal acts when performed in public places by people with nowhere else to go. (2014)

Clearly, if one does not have a home or a shelter in which to do the business of survival privately, one must do it publicly. The quandary is clear. And the consequences can be extreme. Jerome Murdough's death in a suicide watch cell in Riker's Island, February of 2014, provides one particularly brutal example. Murdough, after being arrested on a misdemeanor charge of trespassing (for seeking shelter from the cold in a city housing project in New York), died of hyperthermia. That is, Murdough, who was arrested for trying to survive the cold, an activity that requires shelter, died of overheating in a suicide watch cell. According to a CBS News report,

Murdough "'basically baked to death'" (cbsnews.com, 2014, December 9). Now, Murdoughs'

case may be an outlier, a tail on the bell curve of the larger problem, but the point is that the

basic conditions for ensuring one's survival were the very conditions for his arrest, his death the

unintended consequence.

However, what is intended with these policies? That's a question that haunts me. They

are, I would argue, policies of erasure. If Law is charged with the protection of life, and yet, it is

precisely Law that criminalizes the conditions for one's survival, then what is the outcome? It is

a disappearing act. Write the abject body, the body that is undesirable, out at its limits. A magic

trick. Here and gone.

Beyond and within biopolitics, the policies above indicate the slippage toward

necropolitics—a politics of killing (Banerjee 2008; Haritaworn, Kuntsman, Posocco, 2014, p.

177). Though Foucault's conception of biopower was not reliant on "bare life," the life stripped

of political subjectivity, of social, communal and economic viability (Fuggle, 2013), when the

concern is the body, the biological persistence and survival of those bodies that occupy the zone

of bare life—in this case "the homeless" or "the panhandler"—then the biopolitical perspective

must locate itself there. When policies reflect, not the absence of a voice, but an active erasure of

those voices, we have an obligation to talk about the limits of theoretical inquiries that do not

attend to the necropolitical perspective. Politics is now the agent of death. If the biopolitical

management of the social, communal, and public lifeworld is a means of determining which

bodies are politically viable and which are not, necropolitics becomes the arm of political

disposal.

And so the *body* of "the homeless" becomes important in understanding the reaches of

biopower and the biopolitical machine. As I read Esposito's work, I began to think through a

politics of contagion, by which the immunitary logic embedded in the processes of community—the gift-exchange-in-perpetuity that defines the (im)possibility of community—is dissolved as a binary proposition in favor of ambiguity. We infect one another—the individual is not discrete but again, an ecological moment. I am perhaps taking some liberties with Esposito's philosophy. I remain true to his basic proposition that community is a lack—it is a debt paid forward in perpetuity.

Within the boundary of community, certain bodies are perceived valuable, some are not, but the position is tenuous. It has long been noted that downward mobility is a much easier slope than upward mobility. Perhaps we are talking rather about outward and inward mobility. Once "out," getting back "in" requires a systemic feat of herculean magnitude. The panhandler, the vagrant, the bum, the derelict, the transient, the beggar, the visibly homeless—the presence of the abject body in place and time calls for a rethinking of the promise of community in the contemporary moment, when the mechanisms of neoliberalism have hypertrophied, expanding and sluicing through the channels of technology and global economy with an unprecedented liquidity and flexibility.[13] The global shift in labor practices and economic stability toward a diffuse insecurity throughout social and economic systems has a profound impact on the political subject, *and* on the relationship between one's sense of subjectivity and one's haunting sense of the precariousness of human existence. The ever-present articulation of political subjectivity and human life is messy, but it is, of course, not unique to this age of anxiety.[14] Frankly, "In order to have a subject, we must first have a body" (Canellopolous, 2010, p. 321).

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[13] *Cf.* Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2001, 2003, 2007)
[14] I am presaging the embedded biopolitical perspective that informs the discussion of community responses to homelessness.

What of this articulation? How is it felt? Articulations, boundaries, borders, edges all

dialectics that invite a consideration of sense, and particularly of touch. I don't mean touch

purely in the sense of contact, skin of self to other, but also touching with consciousness.[15]

Touch

Community *happens,* but it is precisely its temporality that also leaves it as a trace, a

haunting. We take it with us—the relationships, the *sense* of it. Community is about touch,

contact. We sense it. Even to consider boundary and community requires us to see boundary as,

not only the cleavage that makes the one two, but also the seam that draws those two into

contact, in perpetuity. That is, the one is never "one," but emerges as one only in contact, only as

both in touch and departing from touch with the other, over time and in time. But "touch"

becomes a conceptual problem for thinking community when the other is "the homeless." In his

1987 *Harper's* article, evocatively titled, "Helping and Hating the Homeless," Peter Marin

writes:

> The dream of freedom and equality that brought men and women here had
> something to do with space, as if the wilderness itself conferred upon those
> arriving here a new beginning: the Eden that had been lost…Space was a sign of
> God's magnanimity. It was a kind of grace. Somehow, it is all this that is folded
> into the sad shapes of the homeless. In their mute presence one can sense,
> however faintly, the dreams of a world gone a-glimmering, and the presence of
> our failed hopes. A kind of claim is made silently, an ethic is proffered, or, if you
> will, a whole cosmology, one older than our ideas of privilege and property. It is
> as if flesh itself were seeking, this one last time, the home in the world it has been
> denied.
>   Daily the city eddies around the homeless. The crowds flowing past leave
> a few feet, a gap. We do not *touch the homeless world.* Perhaps *we* cannot touch
> it. It remains separate even as the city surrounds it (1987, emphasis added).

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[15] I am speaking of consciousness in the sense that Merleau-Ponty (2012) speaks of
consciousness in *Phenomenology of Perception*: "The be a consciousness, or rather, to be an
experience, is to have an inner communication with the world, the body, and others, to be with
them rather than beside them" (99).

Marin's echo of the haptic disconnect in the urban encounter between those living homeless and the rest of the city's inhabitants, the passers-by, is a fiction, but it reveals a persistent fracture, one that asks us to *get closer,* to close the gap between. Though *getting closer* is not accurate, either. We are closer. We cannot *not touch* the homeless world because we are also the homeless world.

By this I mean, first, that there is no "homeless world" *apart* from *community,* outside of "the city" that is not also *a part* of the city, the much guarded and policied public. Marin's sentiments evoke some imagined and untouchable encapsulation of "the homeless" and the space "they" occupy, through this consuming idea of a "we" that is somehow not conjoined within the sphere of the bubble. This world apart, this world Marin proposes as *not* the city surrounding it— this is the fallacy that sustains its own logic. Does Marin expose an existent bubble, one definitively bounded (if diaphanous), or does he blow one out of the cultural imaginary that turns away from the haptic encounter, the continually bursting bubbles that are the city? My use of the "bubble" here is inspired by Peter Sloterdijk's work, appropriately titled *Bubbles,* in which he begins with a deceptively fanciful account of a child blowing a bubble and then watching it float away. He explains that the child following the soap bubble does not remain "planted on its extensionless thought-point while observing an extended thing on its course through space" (19). Rather, the child and the bubble are drawn together in the "zone between the eye and the object," an "animated zone" that now encompasses the two as one.

Second, I mean that we are already *in touch*, we are already touching. And this concept of touch is necessary in thinking about community. In *The Eyes of the Skin,* Juhani Palasmaa details the hegemonic capacities of the eye, its various narcissistic and nihilistic visions, we understand that, if vision entails and animates a distancing and detachment, "it is impossible to think of a

nihilistic sense of touch, for instance, because of the unavoidable nearness, intimacy, veracity and identification the sense of touch carries" (10). But before there is veracity and identification, which themselves are a spacing, there are the unavoidable nearness and intimacy—this, the *being* of touching, the being *as* touching. Contact *must* occur before it enters the sense of touch as something consciously understood and discursively identified as touch. It is only possible for Marin to say that we cannot *touch* the homeless world, indeed for him to even *imagine* such a separation between worlds, because of a departure from the touch itself. A move away from the moment of contact— after touch has already occurred.

I come back to the root of compassion: the *cum* and the *passas/pation*. It is perhaps an odd closing for a way of thinking community that draws heavily from Esposito's philosophy—one in which nihilism and community are drawn together. But that would presume that compassion is, like the general thinking of community, a reaction against nihilism. Compassion is not reactive. It is not to be built or pursued. It requires patience, and waiting, and extending one's self toward the other. And it certainly requires touch. Touch is more than physical contact between one part of the body and some other, of course. We touch with our eyes, our voices, we can touch with meaning, with words that nudge an experience into consciousness. In a precarious economy and in the thick of a global technological revolution, at a time in which one can always be *in touch,* no matter where on the globe one is, touch can also be said to be the extension between one and another across multiple, co-occurring times and spaces. In chapter two, I once again take up the body and touch as continuous themes central to understanding the relationship between community and immunity in an age characterized by profound creativity and profound anxiety—this, the "Age of Precarity" ushered in by the global reaches of capitalism.

CHAPTER TWO:

PRECARITY AND THE PRECARIOUS COMMUNITY

Precarity is often both a framing of a global (and thus generalized) economic shift toward one's insecurity of time, labor, and social bonds, and at the same time, a concept and a means by which the daily insecurity of human life is managed and structured. But can it be leveraged in a way that maintains some potency? That reveals a particular means by which we view community? By which we shore up and open to the boundaries between self and other? Might it tell us something about the means by which we discursively frame the contemporary social, political, economic and communal moment? Might it, moreover, tell us anything about what happens when those concepts are embodied? I wonder if precarity, even with its discursive limitations, might offer a fruitful theoretical foundation for understanding the liminal space between the dialectics I explore in this dissertation: self/other, us/them and body/world. I introduced precarity in rather bland fashion, "capital's response to the rejection of 'jobs for life' and demands for free time and flexibility by workers" (Neilson and Rossiter, 2005). Alternately, I framed it in the introduction as the current term for temporary, low-wage, or all manner of insecure labor. Of course it is important to note that not all types of insecure labor warrant the same anxiety. Some are significantly more precarious. The laborer feels the anxious press of the clock, the disciplinary regime of time, its nimble but ever present grip on the sense of one's self. The closer one gets to economic collapse, and the further out from one affliative sense of

security, the more acute the relationship between the body and time becomes. The body, which is

always being toward death, *must not fail.* This body, in time and place, must persist. Only, of

course, it cannot. A trip to Towson, Maryland brought the mundane fact of the body and its

relationship with precarity into stark relief for me, and so I offer it here as a way of seeing what

that relationship looks like in the lived context.

Maps, Time, and Encounters

> It takes faith to move. You are putting yourself through temporary expense and hardship because you have faith that over the long run you will slingshot forward. Many highly educated people, who are still moving in high numbers, have that long-term faith. Less-educated people often do not.
> One of the oddities of the mobility that does exist is that people are not moving to low-unemployment/high-income areas. Instead they are moving to lower-income areas with cheap housing. That is to say, they are less likely to endure temporary housing hardship for the sake of future opportunity. They are more likely to move to places that offer immediate comfort even if the long-term income prospects are lower.
> This loss of faith is evident in other areas of life. Fertility rates, a good marker of confidence, are down. Even accounting for cyclical changes, people are less likely to voluntarily vacate a job in search of a better one. Only 46 percent of white Americans believe they have a good chance of improving their standard of living, the lowest levels in the history of the General Social Survey…The American Precariat seems more hunkered down, insecure, risk averse, relying on friends and family but without faith in American possibilities. This fatalism is historically uncharacteristic of America.
> (Brooks, New York Times, 2014, February 10).

I am on a train headed to Penn Station in Baltimore. The whir and screech of the train are a

comfort. I am on my way to Towson University to make myself stand out in a pool of perhaps

more than 50 applicants. It is a risk. I am not going for an interview. I am going because I have

framed it as a convenient detour in a previously scheduled trip. This is partially true. I have

friends in DC, and my husband has an office in Baltimore. Towson is only a train ride away—

that is, just over an hour by train, and then a twenty-minute cab ride from Penn Station. I hope to

meet the faculty who are charged with my fate as a Towson applicant. Perhaps, I have reasoned,

if they recall my visit, and if I can make some sort of lasting impression, I will land, at the very least, an interview. And then a tenure-track position. And then the vaunted security of a career.

But right now, I am on a train, and the rain outside is a steady, consuming, misty sort of rain. The conversations around me are hushed. Low tones. Not the purposeful, anxious, urgent conversations I heard on the DC Metro—a man and a woman discussing a policy briefing on security measures for incoming international flights; a man who could not understand how the data report for a particular congress person had not been sent that morning, in spite of his clear and urgent need; two women discussing how they were to handle a client whose needs for legal representation exceeded his ability to pay, but whose case warranted the representation. These conversations were instead private, muted, unavailable, save for a few words: Tuesday, wallet, smoke, Newark, weekend. Small, insignificant, meaningless as narrative signposts. I have no idea what they mean contextually, and stringing them together offers no insight, but the banal comfort of these words, and the hushed tones in which they are offered, lull me into a dull, easy space. I try to focus on the announcements of the stations, but the train speaker turns the announcer's voice into a tangle of notes and breath and sound. Nothing to make sense of. Beneath my repose, however, is the persistent anxiety of having a destination—one I should be able to identify, and communicate.

. . .

The train pulls up to Penn Station—thankfully too grand to miss. I exit and see signs pointing toward the queue for the taxi. Having grown up in Florida, these nervous agitations of public transit (which are a profound convenience and comfort to many) come to me as ruptures in my private navigations of place, which have more often than not taken place behind the

seemingly safe embubblement of a car. They leave me on edge, nervous I'll miss the crucial announcement, and end up on some unnavigable trajectory. I'll land in the middle of some senseless, placeless space. Look around and find myself terribly unfettered from the familiar. It's happened before. I get off at the wrong stop, the dangerous stop, the one at which very, very few depart, and I'm there alone, no idea where to go, no phone, nothing to do but walk—and walk without direction. And the terror isn't people, not in the flesh—the terror lies in the idea of being without some anchor, some sense of home, some familiarity. No recognizable horizon. Sublimity is terrifying.

I line up in the queue, wait my turn, each lock-step movement a relief. I will hand over my bags to someone in a uniform, someone who officiates the transport of bodies. The trunk will burst open, empty and waiting. The officiator will first open the back door of the cab, shut it, womblike, after me, erecting the emergent barrier between provider and consumer, then efficiently hoist the bags in the trunk, and move on to the next car. I will give a destination to the driver, sit back and distract myself, a world apart from where I am.

But I can't do this, because I am in a small space with another human being, a person charged with delivering me safely to my destination, and then returning safely to a life beyond this moment in time. And so we talk. He talks about Towson. I ask him how long he's been here, in the Baltimore area. He's been here four years. He likes it, he supposes. He moved here from Philadelphia, and to there from Germany, and to Germany from Pakistan. I ask him what brought him to Baltimore. He tells me he was an environmental engineer. Received his Master's from a university in Germany, came to Philadelphia with his wife. He worked for 26 years as an environmental engineer for a publicly funded institution and raised his children there. He remembers the weather on the day he received his severance package. He said it was beautiful.

One of the most beautiful days they'd had in months. He was told to pack his stuff and to take

the rather generous severance package he was offered. He was 63 when he was laid off—26

years committed to the company. When they lost their funding, he lost what he knew. He spent

the next year looking for a job in his field, but he knew his age worked against him. Money

began to run low, and he had a cousin who managed a cab company in Baltimore. And so, after

26 years of making place and family and community, he uprooted with his wife and moved to

Baltimore, and four years later, he is driving a cab, a job for which he is thankful. He is worried

his glaucoma will be a problem soon.

We are now on the Towson campus—a rich, rolling space, old brick architecture with its

spires and arches, next to modern functionalism, brick boxes with large windows, holdovers

from the time of bomb shelters. I want to take in what I'm seeing, but our conversation has

pulled me in. His is the story I'm theorizing. Rather, it is a part of the story I'm theorizing. This

is what precarity looks like. This is how manifests in a life. The fear of my own precariousness—

that is how I encounter public transit. That is a direct fear. It has no continuity—it ruptures the

flow of consciousness, and it is momentary and immediate. What this man describes is a

persistent anxiety, a fear that flows quietly, smoothly, continuously through his experience. It has

ebbs and flows, to be sure, but it remains ever present. The precariousness of the human life,

which is universal and persistent, now becomes embedded in the structures and institutions that

comprise one's encounter with their political, economic, communal subjectivity. A career of 26

years, one which required almost a decade of education and two dramatic cultural uprootings in

return for a belief in job security and a sense of one's professional self and intellectual

livelihood, was shattered in minutes. The community, used here in its parochial sense, in which

he'd lived and made life with his wife, children, grandchildren, colleagues, and friends, now at

risk, now increasingly untenable. And now the management and governmentalizing of risk infects even the most intimate of networks.

The Ambivalence of Threat

In the prior chapter, I discussed community and immunity as a dialectic relationship that operates on a biopolitical-biomedical seam in which the community body is always threatened. I discuss *the homeless*, and, as a sort of subset of *the homeless* that is tied to how the value of labor is perceived, *the panhandler*, and it may seem a curious choice to enter into a discussion on homelessness and precarity by way of this story, but the slippage is evident. If *the homeless* represents the affective, economic and social limits of a risk society, of precarity as an organizing energy in the system, then this encounter, a common, banal encounter with insecurity, reveals a liminality. It reveals the hairline seam of freedom and security, the fragile agonism that defines the political subject's struggle in the hypermodern moment, that is, the moment in which modernity has achieved a multiform and proliferative state.

Guy Standing, in his book, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class,* the author makes a key distinction. In Standing's formulation, the precariat is the evolution of the proletariat. The precariat is required and valued for her or his contribution to the global flow of capital, and has a particular mechanistic value in the production and reproduction of capitalist ideology. The precariat, whose time and labor are flexible, adaptable, fluid and insecure, is necessary for the smooth function of neoliberalism. The precariat oils the machine. But Marx's *lumpen proletariat*—the offal, the unwanted, the surplus—is the ghost in the machine, a reminder of one's ephemeral location in the system. Standing updates the *lumpen proletariat* accordingly. Resting at the periphery of the precariat's experience in the global economic structure is the

lumpen precariat, that "sad shape" Marin (1987) pointed to, which harbors and signifies the

failings of our dreams of mobility and progress. The precariat, Standing explains, is not yet, as

Marx defined the proletariat, a *"class-for-itself,"* but is clearly a *"class-in-the-making"* (7), and

so creative possibilities abound. The *lumpen precariat*, then, is of course the under class. I might

qualify that assertion by saying that the *lumpen precariat* is a non-class, inasmuch as class is tied

to one's relationship with the polis, with political legitimacy and subjectivity. When one's body

is written out by policy, as ion the case of those who live homeless, perhaps it is the case that

"class" is no longer in the order of sensemaking—or at the very least, it certainly upsets the order

of sensemaking. But I want to take up Standing's use of the term "periphery" for a moment,

because if we think of "periphery" in terms of boundary, then we might understand the

distinction between precariat and lumpen precariat defies easy categorization, particularly when

specific labor practices such as day labor, migrant labor, and sweatshop labor come into play.

The laborer in these cases dances between locations. While their labor is required, their bodies

are disposable. They count for their cheap, temporary, and unskilled labor, and are discounted as

political subjects. They comprise a liminal class—a laboring class that occupies the space

between a kind of labor that signifies one's political legitimacy and the non-class of those who

live homeless or in vulnerable shelter.

       With the proliferation of insecurity in economic, social and ecological systems, the

Subject scrambles toward a mythical interior, one revealed as always threatened, not, as I

explained in the previous, from without, but right at the boundary that seams together the

exterior and interior. The threat reveals the permeability of the boundary. Our acknowledgement

of the threat, though, is often not direct. In my discussion of the uncanny, I think what is realized

is that the threat often persists as a haunting, a shadow. It's persistence is precisely so because

we cannot point to it directly, and our sense of security rests upon the presence of the possibility

of a threat rather than something explicit. Therefore, the haunting also produces a certain kind of

hopefulness or optimism: the creative possibilities that abound in the adaptive system that

sustains desire. Lauren Berlant addresses the relationship between anxiety and hope, and the

complex imbrications of both, in *Cruel Optimism* (2011). She writes so clearly in her

introduction:

> But, again, optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignites a sense of possibility
> actually makes it impossible to attain the expansive transformation for which a person or
> a people risks striving; and, double it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside
> a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a
> person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same
> time, profoundly confirming (p. 2).

If community operates as an originary ambivalence, by which the law that preserves community

functions to kill the very bond that is community, then what is the impact of the current

amplification of insecurity at all levels of culture and political?

The limitations of this dissertation weigh heavily as I seek to understand that relationship.

"The homeless" haunt the community, an unsettling colllective presence that simultaneously

disrupts the myth of security and maintains it. Security measures are taken to protect the

vulnerable community membership, but such policies acknowledge the presence of the Other and

in addressing said presence through policy, subjectify the Other. And so the identity of *the*

homeless must be embodied as the common enemy.[16] *The homeless* becomes a category of

person, a clear and present Other, rather than an activity. The condition of homelessness cannot

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[16] See, additionally, Lindemann (2007), Gowan (2009), Del Casino and Jocoy (2008), Lankenau
(1999), Marvasti (2003), Shier, Jones and Graham (2010) for scholarship on narrative
constructions of homelessness and panhandling, namely those which have relied upon archetypal
narratives of "the hobo" or of deviance and stigma. This is particularly problematic because it
impacts policies shelter policies and service provision. One must identify with a narrative of a
perceived deviance or stigma in order to access services.

be reviled—it is a category, an abstraction of the lived condition that must be populated in order

to see it—but *the homeless,* now rendered an identifiable deviant with/in the social strata,

prompts defense. On This isn't exclusive to homelessness of course. Doctors aren't people who

practice medicine; they are doctors. Welders are not people who weld; they are welders.

Teachers are not people who teach; they are teachers. And so forth. But in this case, *the homeless*

signifies a social ugliness, a cancer, the undesirable. Tactically, safety vests made visible, under

the guise of safety concerns, a population most community members describe as "beggars,"

"bums," "druggies," "alcoholics," and "perverts" (Wilmath, 2010). The green, yellow or orange

safety vest was a simple, heuristic pronunciation of the unintelligible, undesirable body, of

perhaps (or at least presumed) abject poverty, of the failings of the economic, political, social

and communal systems in which stability and security are discursive hauntings. The vests further

acted to signify a haptic disconnect—a "no-place" within place that cannot be "touched," even as

we are *touching it.*

One respondent to an article detailing the impact of Tampa's 2010 safety vest ordinance

wrote, "with any luck they will be killing each other over the vests in the homeless camps"

(Wilmath, 2010). Another respondent evidences a more complex set of issues in the following

response:

> I am tired, when I am struggling to earn a living, of being solicited for handouts. The
> calls from a phony Police Benevolent group (I am on the do not call list) telling me they
> need money and if I am "concerned about the drug problem" I will give it. I am not
> concerned about the drug problem. And going to the grocery, I am solicited at the cash
> register to give to (a legitimate at least) charity and I hate having to tell a disapproving
> cashier, "no I am just here to buy food". Between all the schools that are begging and the
> other entities that are begging despite having resources, I have developed compassion
> fatigue. Now the real beggers have upgraded to "street vendors"; it is bad enough that
> public libraries are their default living rooms and bathrooms where they hog all the
> comfortable chairs to sleep, but now they are cloaked in the legitimacy of their new title.
> What ever happened to "bum"? And it will only get worse. (Reader response, Wilmath,
> 2010)

The quote, like Marin's from earlier, points to the proximity between self and other, the slippage toward and retreat from the other. She or he notes, "I am tired, when I am struggling to make a living…" of needing to respond to another needs. The reader's own self-proclaimed nearness to economic distress guides her or his retreat from the economic distress of others. The reader also legitimizes her or his own labor via a negative logic—"my work is legitimate because it is not that." Struggling and begging are juxtaposed oppositionally. I am struggling, the Other is begging, and then further delegitimizes the broad scope of labor activities that have been labeled by policy as "panhandling" by decrying the usage of "street vendor." What strikes me most, though, is the moment the reader retreats from the other through her proximal closeness to the other.

In efforts to understand such responses in public forums, we might look at conceptions of "the good life," of a realizable community interior, where there is a sense of belonging. I don't believe it too far a stretch to trace parallels between the late 20th-century, post-bubble, social-political economy in Japan and the current post-bubble, social-political, local economy in Tampa Bay. Anne Allison writes of Japan's post-bubble social climate: "What constituted belonging and well-being at the peak of Japan's bubble economy is becoming ever more remote for more and more Japanese today. And yet—as a feeling, a mindset, an excitation turned to anxiety—this orientation towards a life not quite reachable for too may lingers on" (Allison, 2012, 351). However, I might qualify Allison's assessment in this way: the idea of a good life might be best conceived of as orientation *away* from a place in the social system—that is, perhaps it is not so much that one is ever reaching toward the "good life" as it is one is ever running from the margins. I wonder, too, if the foreclosure on one's compassion for another is exacerbated by his

or her own threatened place in the social-political economy, and by his or her own heightened

and sustained insecurity.

Also compelling is the usage of "compassion fatigue," for several reasons. First,

"compassion fatigue" was a term coined in the 1990s (Figley, 1995) to address the effects of

workers in therapeutic settings—workers (therapists, counselors, social workers, etc.) for whom

compassion was an entailment of the job. The fatigue they experienced was one of feeling with

another. From the reader's comment, the fatigue grows from the barrage of requests to feel with

another, but this isn't accurate. What would seem to occur is that the retreats behind a term that

invokes a perceived assault on one's capacity to *care*. The reader's exhaustion occurs before the

feeling with.

 I believe a brief case study in Richmond, Virginia exemplifies this dynamic. Forte

(2002) examines the presence of a homeless shelter and service provision center in a burgeoning

business community in Richmond. Responses were varied, but the multiple responses in favor of

relocating the center are revealing. Business owners and residents alike wished the shelter gone.

Forte writes:

> For those arguing against downtown services, 'criminals' and 'murderers reside at the
> [Daily] Planet [the shelter in contest]...there is 'lax enforcement' of city ordinances.
> Critics of [the Daily Planet]…ask 'Who in the name of right reason can deny that at least
> a significant connection between the downtown location of the Planet and the
> disproportionate pace of downtown robberies?' (2002, 148).

One has only to do a quick scan of comments from readers of the *Tampa Bay Times*, such

as those included previously, to see an echo of the sentiments of the Richmond shelter

opponents, and to see that they reflect the place of "the homeless" and "the panhandler" in the

cultural imagination more clearly than policy, which obfuscates the vitriol expressed by

community "members." This is not to say that there isn't activism by both people panhandling

and sympathizers who share a commitment toward, say, greater compassion and understanding for each other—there certainly is. However, in addition to a consideration of how the presence of the "panhandler" reveals the fractures in our concepts and practices of community, this chapter merges the discourse of precarity with the prior consideration of the idea of community. Thus, I examine the policies in Tampa as indicating a trend toward dis-passion in community processes. Accordingly, I seek an understanding of the ways in which policy negates the function of community by turning it upon itself.[17] The function of policy, the arm of Law that is crafted rhetorically and consequentially embodied, calls to our attention this irreconcilable fact: community cannot be protected against its own dissolution, because its protection requires its being toward death. That is, the policies intended to protect it require the precariousness of its contents—the human lives that populate community, the People comprised of people. I come back to this point because, again, any conception of "precarity," if it is to reveal something beyond a certain momentary cache, begins with the ephemera of the body.

With regard to local policies and, in particular, the 2011 panhandling ban, Tampa's city council reached this agreement in October of 2011 as a compromise with *The Tampa Bay Times*. In February 2011, the city council members shot down the ban after hearing the comments and concerns of the public (Danielson, tampabay.com). Coincidentally, a local influential named Bill Sharpe was investing the last remnants of his life savings into *The Epoch*, a small newspaper with the aim of offering a space for both news relevant to people living homeless and also a public venue for the voices of the homeless to be heard. Bill Sharpe hung himself on April 2, 2012 in the office he called "home" after losing his South Tampa home to foreclosure, but *The*

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[17] There is a drift from *immunity* to *autoimmunity,* whereupon the encapsulation of the immune response, the closure it creates, impels a self-destructive response. This dissertation does not address this turn, but Derrida

Epoch remains (Mitchell, tampabay.com). Sharpe was alternately criticized for capitalizing on a loophole, and lauded for his compassion and innovative approach. Regardless of the polarized views of Sharpe, *The Epoch*'s business model ensures that people earn $.75 on the dollar for each paper they sell, and the potential to do so 7 days a week (Tillman, tampabay.com).

I include Bill Sharpe's efforts because I believe both his presence and the response to his work reveal a kind of community-scale schizophrenia, a deeply embedded logical fallacy that simply cannot be reasoned through. On one hand, people who are panhandling are reviled for a perceived "unwillingness" to work or participate in the labor force and in the "civilizing" institutions that define the American interior. On the other, an effort to secure "legitimate" income fails largely to shift the rhetoric in public discourse. Inevitably, people hawking *The Epoch* are still, first, reviled by the same people who criticized them for begging, and second, living homeless. Again, the work of this paper is to seek a theoretical foundation that at least works toward understanding such schizophrenia, and so I offer an inquiry into the relationship between precarity and community.

The Dailiness of Precarity

I can abstract this to the level of governmentalization, and that is an appropriate and necessary abstraction, but it is also alive here, right in front of us. We might create a distance from our own immediate awareness, view our lives from inside the lines drawn around zones of belonging, but what of the abrupt awareness that we operate along those very lines daily? That we, as subjects and citizens, are only the seam between the interior and exterior? Does something shift in our perception? Do we see through and across the distance?

On a Sunday afternoon, I drove home from the USF library, having spent the afternoon writing about precarity. Traffic was light. Tampa's panhandling ban, as I've noted, is partial, and on Sundays, the corners and medians, the sides of interstate exits, are peopled by those flying signs: "Hungry vet. Will take food or money. God bless." "Out of work. Need job. Anything will help. Thank you." I pull off I-275 southbound onto the Hillsborough Avenue exit. Windows rolled up, air conditioning at full blast, I sit contentedly encapsulated in my speed machine, staring blankly at the side of the road while I wait for the light to change. Then something shifts. I can't *not* pay attention. I become aware of what is in my field of perception. I am considering the human form at rest—at rest in a specific place, the intersection of an interstate exit and a major urban corridor. I am considering the human form at rest against a stop sign, legs drawn up, elbows resting on kneecaps, browned and weathered hands slumped between, fingers maintaining a loose grip on the edges of a small square of cardboard. Up the ropey, slender arms, the sleeves of a navy t-shirt, his head droops between his shoulders. The baseball cap hides his face. This is theft—my looking is theft. He has not allowed me into this space, but I have stolen this look. And his resting, contrary to the imperative from the sign against which he rests, is not pastoral, not a stopping point. It is not gentle. It is a violent rest, one beset by the threat of reprisal, the threat of punishment, the threats of heat and traffic, the gaze of passersby, and the stories they will tell about it, about him—my story included. I take a reflexive turn, try to see myself as another might, sitting with my window rolled up, peering through the glass. See my own gaze. Of course I can't actually see that. I have no idea what that looks like. I can take stock. I can see out, in, but not back. I can view the arc of the city. See the screaming interstates stretch up and over the city. I can look here and I can sense the meanness of this place, but I cannot see it. I cannot look upon it. To "look" in this sense is a particular way of looking, one which arrests

and constructs what is before me, but in such a way that the view is *already* constructed, and the activity of seeing fills in a pre-existing form. This is about perceptual sight, not the visual process of looking. Perceptual sight is the antecedent process, though recursive. I first become aware that staring has a point of focus. I then begin to make sense of the space, and the body within that space. He is resting in a space where rest seems improbable at best. He emerges in my perceptual field as a body at rest in this restless, threatened and threatening space. As my sense of our tenuous relationship grows (I am the driver behind closed windows, armed with a small, polite smile should he awaken and look at me. Smile, indicate you see him, but that you have no money. This is the compassionate protocol, rather than ignoring him and looking straight ahead. I am now looking back at myself, seeing the gulf between our experiences, gaining a sense of the distance. My looking is also now a feeling. It emerges out of the place where touch fails us.

Again, this is a work about contact—about touch, about touch and being, perhaps even touch *as* being. In this chapter, I take up precarity as encounter, as an emergent means of *making sense* at the point of the rupture of our first sense, touch. I am concerned here and elsewhere about the particular haptic disconnect within the place and time of the city, its propensity to, as I discussed previously, immunize itself against a threat that it excludes through its inclusion, a threat that it harbors at the boundary between "us" and "them." This threat, though its presence is necessary in order to prompt the immune response, must also be contained and isolated in its containment, and that concern guides this work in its totality. Marin's quote (1987) "*we* cannot touch the homeless world," I find his words, now almost thirty years later, to reflect a kind of structural belief in "community" as a closed system, a boundary that maintains an absolute distinction between membership and its outside (i.e., the foreigner, the alien, the destitute, the

abject, the other). The rich, contaminating energy of a community is lost to the speed of traffic, the timing of lights, the abutment of soft-shouldered corners against the persistent flow of cars, the policed performance of community that forecloses on its very possibility. The concept of *precarity* describes a particularly potent terrain at the constitutive periphery of community, given the absolute vulnerability of, not simply the bodies and lives that inhabit the social category "panhandler," but also the very possibility and hope for *community* itself in a risk society, one culturally, ecologically, economically, politically and socially imagined as *threatened*.

I think we may understand precarity as a two-fold process: on one hand, it is embedded in institutional responses to precarious economy and social, communal ties; on the other, it describes the *sense* of *being* a precarious human body in a precarious economic moment with increasingly ephemeral social, communal ties. In this case, we can make the distinction between the universal condition of precarious biological existence ("precariousness") and "precarity" as a structuring element to systemic responses to the particularly human awareness of precariousness. In this chapter, I begin with the body, because any discussion of precarity must begin there, even if the author opts not to explicate it as a starting point. It lives there first and always. Beginning with what, as Nancy notes, is most *in common* (the body, which is at once both most familiar and most strange) to community leads us inevitably back to community—by which I mean the body is already in community even as its written out. How does precarity impact community? Does the *precarious community* offer unique, generative possibilities? With an aim toward understanding the complex imbrications of precarity and community and the ways in which they manifest zones of melancholia, this chapter locates the conversation on community and communication, specifically the *idea* of community, in conversation with the concept of community and precarity.

The consequence of *precarity*, however, cannot be sufficiently located solely in the realm and language of economics. When I say *precarity,* I am referring to a much more diffuse organizing system that cuts across the experience of the contemporary global political economy and life of community. How does one encounter precarity in the systems, networks and institutions that comprise one's place and sense of the life world? How does one move through and orient to the precarious community? Though perhaps these aren't the right kinds of questions. If, as Merleau-Ponty (1945) says, "…there is no inner man, man in in the world, and only in the world does he know himself," then there is no "one" who encounters precarity, only "one" who is the living condition of precarity. This, of course locates us back at the body as a zero-point of orientation. This is where precarity is written, not in a conception of "inner man," by "inner man," but in the embodied being *moving and being in the world,* being *in the world.* Though many disciplines (economics, economic anthropology, political science, political philosophy, sociology, etc.) have richly theorized the concept of precarity, communication is a discipline particularly well poised to offer a view of the matter that sees the layered and multi-dimensional impact of what many argue is an increasingly precarized life world.

The concept of *precarity* has most readily been viewed as an economic and sociological problem. From an economic perspective, we can look to Nielson and Rossiter for a common and rather succinct summation. The authors explain that precarity is understood as "capital's response to the rejection of 'jobs for life' and demands for free time and flexibility by workers." They go on to explain that, given precarity's emergence as a reactionary mode of being to the constraints of the postindustrial workforce, "the opposite of precarity is not regular work, stable housing, and so on. Rather, such material security is another version of precarity, consuming time, energy, and affective relations as well as producing the anxiety that results from the

'financialization of daily life'" (Nielson and Rossiter, 20). From Nielson and Rossiter, we understand that even if the economic feature of *precarity* is highlighted, the impact on the life world is much broader—but the locus of *precarity*, its point of entry and access, is best understood as having an economic origin.

From a sociological perspective, German sociologists and communicology scholars Sabine Kergel (2011) and Rolf Dieter Hepp (2010) focus on the breakdown of the nuclear family, friendship networks and communal affiliations as the primary consequence. Precarity becomes the organizing energy for what we hold dear as the most resilient coordinates of community: the family. As I'll explain in further detail later in this chapter, Kergel and Hepp look at the precarious social networks that suffer with the changes in both those participating in the labor pool, and the kind of labor available to its participants. While Kergel and Hepp provide excellent and systemically rooted analyses of the familial and communal impact of precarity, I would point out that their work stays firmly rooted in the very economic perspective they were seeking to shift. They begin from a logic of economy in order to explore the increasingly disrupted nuclei of the modern family.

Drawing those two perspectives together reveals a relationship that points to the ways in which the precarization of life sluices throurgh the multiple times and places in which one lives. Now, if we locate this in the body and along the seam of self and other, the situation grows still more complex. Standing's lumpen precariat is an insufficient theoretical category, though a useful point of entry to look. Again, the lumpen precariat is, in Standing's view, an underclass (2012). Standing explicitly talks of beggars, panhandlers, the underbelly of society as the beggars, vagrants. It would seem to me, however, that perhaps if the are talking about a non-class, class being tied to political legitimacy. This is bare life, the body excised from the gift

exchange. The presence of the abject other reveals the absolute reaches of precarious labor and social conditions. One is broken from associational and affiliative ties, from his place in community, and is now alone, anchorless. Is this "home-free" or "homeless"? Either/or propositions aren't useful, of course, so I want to return to Leonard Feldman's work. He carefully discusses the dualism that captures the cultural imagination: "The most typical opposition is between a vision of the homeless as dangerously and profanely free (justifying criminalization) and a vision of the homeless as sacralized, helpless sufferers (justifying shelter)" (7). Feldman places that oppositional relationship along a more complex grid, however, and examines "sacred freedom," a kind of spiritual liberation that is celebrated by scholars such as Thomas Dumm (as cited in Feldman) and popular media representations such as photographer Kitra Cahana,[18] or as Feldman notes, Terry Gilliam's 1995 film, *The Fisher King.*

There have also been a number of critiques of precarity as a useful conceptual framework. It has been taken to task as: an insufficient descriptor of long-standing labor disparities across local, regional, national and global lines of tension that erupt around matters of gendered and classed labor (Munck, Lorey, Butler); a simple discursive reframing of *precariousness* (Hesmondhalgh and Baker); in keeping with the prior critique, a rather fashionable post-Marxist framing for current flexible labor conditions (locate the source for this). Current work on precarity more often than not falls within one of three thematics: it is a problem of economy and labor; it is a sociologic concern of affiliative networks and the breakdown of the

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[18] Kitra Cahana's photojournalism follows the "New Hobo"—a class largely comprised of "millenials" who have taken to the "rails" and roads. Cahana's treatment is complex in many ways, certainly, but there is the sense of the spiritually guided nomad that undergirds her work and her commentary. The "New Hobo" performs the archetypal hobo, replicating the music, the food, and what can only be called the costume of the Depression era "hobo." She also points to systemic vulnerabilities and the myriad experiences of people who live homeless. The overriding nostalgia for a time one never lived describes well the "sacred freedom of the spiritually superior" (Feldman, 7).

family in a current socioeconomic epoch; or it is a political concern to be understood through the articulation of sociologic and economic meanings. Any one of the three warrants great care and attention, and the work produced from these perspectives is rich in its theoretical gifts. Perhaps there is a still more complex rendering, however, one that is located in the tension between the precariousness of the human body and the means by which the existential fear of human precariousness—as a matter of *being*—is leveraged as an ideological function and structuration. While such arguments call attention to the critical work to be done in theorizations of the concept of precarity, I argue, first, that there is a conflation of terms. If a person *being* a human being is by the nature of existence precarious, then might we view *precarity,* in its inception as a particularly political and economic problematic, as a sort governmentalizing of the human condition of precariousness? Precarity is embodied, but it is also a structuration of embodiment—if we are always and only bodies in departure, then our own sense of the body is also always precarious. This chapter is a reimagining of *precarity* through the body's precariousness, through the governmentalizing of the body—a biopolitics that looks at the counterlogical turn by which the very adaptability of the body through its opening is formulated as risk, as something against which we must actively guard ourselves and our social, political, communal subjectivities. Precarity as an organizing energy for precarization (Lorey) is precisely this turn.

Making Meaning: Precarity in Communication Scholarship

In the following chapters, I discuss the ontology of precarity. It lives in the body. It makes *sense* and lives in one's *sense* of the world. It is the structuration of the body's precariousness, and we see it made manifest in the systems and institutions that organize the

swarm, the mass, the seething tangle of human bodies, into a manageable, governed multitude. However, the competing perspectives on precarity's meaning and import are diverse, and often divergent. I consider these below in order to arrive at a space of *con*vergence. The careful theorizing across disciplines offers a rich landscape for meaning-making, but I want to look specifically at the work emerging from the communication discipline, as I believe it is one particularly well situated to reveal precarity as a complex *phenomenon.* I believe we must approach it ontologically, and I believe that phenomenological work opens the theoretical field to rich, innovative understandings. In chapter four, I pick up that project, building on the body of work produced within communication scholarship.

Precarity is a term that has needled its way into communication literature of late. A review of work from the journals of the National and International Communication Associations, as well as the Sage Communication journals, reveals a growing interest in the genealogy of the term, analyses of its various affects and effects, its ontology, and critiques of it as a useful theoretical apparatus. The growth pattern (through 2014) in precarity literature from these communication journals[19] is as follows:

- 2006: 1
- 2007: 1
- 2008: 8
- 2009: 5
- 2010: 11
- 2011: 12
- 2012: 13
- 2013: 17
- 2014: 13 (as of October)

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[19] Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies; Cultural Studies; Theory, Culture, Society; Culture, Theory, and Critique; Critical Studies in Communication; European Journal of Communication; Social Semiotics; Quarterly Journal of Speech; Journal of Communication Inquiry; The Review of Communication; Philosophy and Rhetoric; Semiotica; Text and Performance Quarterly; Communication, Culture and Critique

There is a significant spike in the number of publications between 2009 and 2010, but more importantly, a rather dramatic increase over the past total eight years. Doubtless the complex of economic changes from 2005 onward provide the most obvious explanation for this increased attention: the housing bubble and its subsequent bursting, the increase of unemployment, and the gradual remedying of the percentage of those unemployed—a rather sour balm, however, given the stagnation of hourly wages and the number of working-age Americans who no longer participate in the labor pool, having given up, at least for the time being, looking for work (Harrington, *Tampa Bay Times,* 10/4/2014). That said, scholars, philosophers and theorists from a rather broad scope of disciplines and foci have taken up precarity quite readily from 2003 onward. So what about the last five years has warranted the more concentrated attention to precarity in the fields of cultural studies and communication? Here is a quick summary of the frequency of explicitly precarity-oriented articles in the NCA, ICA and Sage journals from 2006 through Spring 2015:

- 1 *Review of Communication*
- 2 *Text and Performance Quarterly*
- 2 *European Journal of Communication*
- 2 *Critical Studies in Media Communication*
- 4 *Culture, Theory, and Critique*
- 9 *Journal of Communication Inquiry*
- 26 *Cultural Studies*[20]
- 22 *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*
- 21 *Theory, Culture, and Society*

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[20] *Cultural Studies'* Volume 29, Issue 5-6, from September 2015, is dedicated to the title themes, "Everyday Debt and Credit." I counted only those which explicitly discussed precarity , but want to note that issue in its entirety is in keeping with the project of this dissertation: understanding the myriad ways in which shifts in the global political economy (in this case, the daily practices and orientations toward credit and debt; in my case, precarity as the outcome of current governmentalizing processes that seek to manage the precariousness of human life) manifests variously across different spatial, temporal, occupational, communal and social experiences and locations.

The pattern is telling. Cultural studies as a field is particularly concerned with the impact of a precarious *economy*. Forty-six of the 81 articles published that explicitly deal with the concept of precarity are concerned first and foremost with it as a primarily economic concern. One cannot, of course, talk about precarity without discussing it as a matter of economy, and while all articles discuss it necessarily as a matter of political economy, I note those 46 articles as featuring matters of employment and labor practices versus embodiment, social and communal shifts and patterns, and cultural manifestations of a precarious global system. This work attends to a shift toward a so-called creative labor-based economy, the burdens of emotional labor, the emerging "flexploitation" phenomenon by which the boundaries of work-home become increasingly diaphanous, and the potentiating spaces that emerge when the concept and condition of labor is a more fluid field. These are key components, and yet, precarity is not purely an economic condition. Its effects are far reaching, as much social as economic—and these are also spare summations. When the precariousness of the human condition—i.e., the liminal condition, the in-between the security of a communal connection, the assured gift-exchange that creates the (im)possible reach toward community—becomes the guiding tension, the structuring belief in security crumbles. That is the difference, yes? It is that we can't believe in the secure structures of familial and communal networks.

Precarity as a term in the US has longer roots than many theorists acknowledge. The genealogic tradition often locates it as a distinction from the French precarité, but we can look to Dorothy Day's usage of the term in 1952 as an equally viable starting point. Doing so lets us lets us reimagine the term within a particular conjuncture of economic, social, communal and political issues. Precarity can be viewed as a global economic management of time and

resources, but it takes shape locally. That is, discourse emerges locally and has local meaning. A genealogy by which we may know precarity within a common national and local context would look to its Catholic roots, specifically those that emerged in the US. Although Day conflates the terms precarity and precariousness, her spare and earnest work points to a distinction. Precarity, in Day's work, is not simply the body's precariousness, but an orientation to the body's place in the world, a means of understanding and making sense of it, and a consciousness of our impermanence. As she advises, "The main thing is not to hold onto anything" (Day as quoted in Ellsberg and Hennessey, 2005, p. 109).

Day's reminder of our transitory being-in-the-world points us back to the ephemerality of touch. We touch, and then that which we touch departs. Might we see precarity as a means of consciously framing the tension between touch and the cognition of touch? The event and the structuring of the event? Or does the *event* ever happen outside of one's cognition of a moment as *event?* The moment at which the event gains a narrative structure, and that structure is only in keeping with extant narrative structures. The sense we make of it is historical—it only makes sense because it has happened *before.* But it hasn't happened before. It is anew. The myth is that it has happened before and history will tell us what to do now. But what if we have no anchor? In the sublime moment, everything is an option. I don't deny that impermanence has a consequence, or a set of consequences. For those who make their lives in and on the streets, those consequences are sometimes dire. Indeed, the literature that vaunts the creative possibilities of the current precarious moment often strikes me as not simply naïve, but as terribly blind and unaware of the most direct consquences of a labor economy that has taken up its own insecurity as a modus operandi— flowing systemically beneath the adaptive structuring of political, social and communal systems. Indeed, beneath our engagement with the economic currency, we *live*

there. We make our lives in those stacked contractions. It's not that constant. Even now, I believe in the constancy of my own condition, all the while undercutting it, making sure it cannot stay as it is.

How is it that precarity scholarship, both within the discipline and without, has taken up the tensions between the precariousness of the human body and its political subjectivity, its social identity, and its communal membership or lack thereof? A cursory map of the current extradisciplinary scholarship on precarity within the discipline reveals where this chapter locates itself within the literature. I found that both within and without there are four basic thematic thrusts. Though all are deeply embedded in each other, I looked for the perspectives that the authors featured. Rather than a more traditional literature review, I sketch four themes within the communication literature on precarity and then, within each, turn back toward my central problematic. Thus, I am not simply laying out the scholarship thematically; I am also engaging it recursively with the broader concerns of this dissertation. And so, in that spirit, I culled the following patterns from the literature:

1. Precarity and Creativity

2. Precarity and "The Dangerous Class"

3. Precarity: Questioning the Term

4. Precarity and Its Social, Political and Economic Importance

The first is a view of precarious economy as motivating creative capacities politically, economically and professionally. Such literature is often still critically aware of the consequences of the "casualization" of labor, but whereas others view precarity as deleterious or even devastating to the subject in his political and economic sense of self, these authors see

spaces of resistance and possibility in current precarious economic, political and social situation in that it may potentiate—and sometimes does, purportedly actualize—creative responses and participatory frameworks inconceivable in more rigid, secure economic conditions (Murray and Gollmitzer, 2011; Banks and Deuze, 2009; Davidson, 2013; Cormany, 2014; Gregg). Such scholarship looks at "flexicurity," mobility of employment, co-creative (if uneven) "partnerships" between customers and media production networks and corporate media firms (Banks & Deuze, 2009), and a "presentist" orientation to politics—which Butler clarifies is a political engagement, an organizing of assemblies in many cases, without imagining a discernible or secure future—as potentially generative (Butler).

Banks and Deuze approach this bi-focally, at once noting the possibility and critiquing its implications as a conduit for exploitative labor conditions. DePeuter works within the logic of creative labor analyses to discuss the ways in which "creative labor" works to mask the machinations of neoliberal economy. In the broad spectrum of precarious labor, creative labor occupies a problematic space. On one hand, it meets the conditions of low-wage-earning capacity, requisite flexibility, and economic insecurity. On the other, it bears little resemblance to more persistent economic and socially precarious labor conditions: migrant labor and temporary low-wage affective labor, for example. Creative labor often maintains social levity. Creative laborers are generally perceived as producers within the global economy. *Creativity,* in the sense of creative labor, is still tied to a value logic that privatizes one's *creativity.* The capacity to locate one's creativity privately, to market it, sell it—this is what defines creativity as an economic concern.

The second theme within the scholarship which views precarious economic-political-social patterns as deleterious at best, and potentially devastating at worst. This work examines

precarity as fomenting a "dangerous class," to use Guy Standing's (2008) nomenclature, and

discusses precarization as, for some, an exploitative management of the multitude and the

precariousness of life itself. For others (for example, Hepp, 2012; Butler, 2012; Lorey, 2012;

Kergel, 2008, 2009), locating or defining precarity as exclusively or primarily an economic

pattern and concern ignores the complex merger of economic precariousness with an equally

concerning "disassociation" from social, affective bonds (Castel, 2000; Hepp, 2012; Butler,

2012; Kergel, 2008, 2009; Kalleberg, 2009). In this view, precarity cannot be simply located in

economic structures and systems, but must be examined for its central role in the "slow death" of

formerly "stable" social structures. Kergel offers a classic sociological perspective in "Full Time,

Empty Time" and "Socio-Semiotic Aspects of Social Insecurity in Europe" in which she

centralizes the cohesion of the family as both the concerning consequence and causal element of

the destabilization of labor structures. In her argument, the "feminisation" of labor and its

attendant impact on cohesive family units evidences and sustains the deleterious effects of the

precarious economy. Though the concept of the "feminisation" of and the centrality of a stable

family unit bear scrutiny for their links to a kind of Parsonian functionalism, one fruitfully

critiqued from both within and without the discipline of sociology, Kergel rightly points to the

need to understand the specifically social impact of precarity beyond labor and economic

impacts. Hepp deepens the sociological inquiry in that he uncouples employment status from

poverty. Such a move separates the formula by which employment equals security. In the short

film, "Tampa Panhandlers," one respondent's recounting of her experience resonates:

> Yeah. My husband's a mason. He's used to making $27 an hour. And they laid him off.
> When they laid him off—and he was with the company for years, they didn't care, and I
> was a[…]I was making $10 an hour. And they laid us all off, a bunch of people, like 60
> something people[…] Then he started collecting unemployment. And that ran out. He got
> the extension. That ran out. Cause we're looking for work everywhere. It's not like we're
> lazy or nothing. We love work. And uh, nothing out there, and now we've resorted to

this. (Tampa Panhandlers"—responses from "panhandlers" in Tampa after the late 2011 panhandling ban)

That uncoupling proves key in knowing how to hear the above anecdote. One's labor, which ties one to the interior of community and to one's subjectivity in the polis, is never secure.

3. Precarity literature also addresses a persistent need to closely examine the term "precarity" and its deployment as something "new." Such work often troubles the idea that precarious labor is a recent phenomenon. Precarity as a purportedly "new" phenomenon beginning with shifts in labor relationships in the 1970s is questioned on the basis of, for some, a Eurocentric blindness to its persistence as an economic mode well known to the global South (Munck, 2013). Ronaldo Munck argues that "precarity" was not an emergent problematic shift in labor conditions, but rather an expansion into the global North of conditions that had persisted and defined majority labor standards in the global South, which long predated the identification of shifting labor conditions in the global North. Others follow this line of reasoning and argue that precarity's sudden emergence as a "new" economic mode and an urgent site of critical inquiry was only observed and discussed once it began to affect the white, middle class (Lorey, 2010; Murray and Gollmitzer, 2011). Isabella Lorey clarifies in her recent discussion:

> For many people it is not possible any more to protect oneself and precarize the other at the same time. Precarization has become 'democratized.' Now those who should be the white middle class experience precarity as if it is new. It is no longer located at the 'margins,' related to the nonhegemonic. That precarization has grown to the 'center' is the condition for governing through insecurities (172).

The second critique locates itself within the West, but notes a similar pattern as the prior critique. Kergel's analysis of the "feminisation" of labor asserts that precarious forms of labor were common to women prior to the 1960s and 1970s.. An interesting absence in Kergel's analysis is the means by which the normative function of social, political and economic institutions and practices is ensured was via the oppression of those whose labor fueled the

community interior from a marginal location. Precarity, in this view, would have historically cut across the lines of gender and race precisely at their intersection with class.

Yet a fourth vein of inquiry takes up precarity with an eye toward its social, political and economic urgency. The vast majority of work on precarity shares this sense of urgency, of course, so it might be viewed a guiding motivation. The work of, to offer a small sampling, Nielson and Rossiter (2005), Hepp (2008), Kergel (2008), Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2004), Foti (2004), Lazzarato (2011), Lorey (2010), Butler (2009) and Standing (2011) conveys such a pressing sense of the precarity problem. We understand that precarity is the manifestation and respondent structuring of precariousness in the life world, a means of understanding discursively and thus organizing politically around the ways in which the precariousness of life and economy are managed institutionally. Precarity, to return again to the project of offering a sort of foundational understanding, is "being unable to plan one's time, being a worker on call where your life and time is determined by external forces" (Foti, 2004).

Neilson and Rossiter expand on that definition:

The term refers to all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalized, seasonal and temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work, to subcontractors, freelancers or so-called self-employed persons. But its reference also extends beyond the world of work [though remains tethered to it] to encompass other aspects of intersubjective life, including housing, debt, and the ability to build affective social relations. (Nielson and Rossiter, 2015).

To return to Neilson and Rossiter's quandary, Standing, too, sees creative possibilities for the precariat. The precariat, Standing explains, is not yet, as Marx defined the proletariat, a *"class-for-itself,"* but is clearly a *"class-in-the-making"* (7), and so creative possibilities abound. However, he goes on to critique scholarship or activist rhetoric that gives "the precariat a positive image…a romantic free spirit who rejects norms of the old working class steeped in stable labor" (7). Standing frames the issue of precarity as fomenting a "new and dangerous

class," a seething, potent, and yet "dangerously" fractured class of temporary, insecure, under-insured, most often under-paid workers (2011). Standing argues that the precariat is a threatening presence, one defined by "the four As: anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation," (19). Such disfranchisement and anger without an identifiable source at which to direct the anger leaves the precariat grasping for some representation, some semblance of social identification, and this may very well manifest through conservative, radically right wing, reactionary influences (2011).

These categories are not absolutely distinct from one another, but rather a set of overlapping and intersecting themes within the literature. Butler, de Peuter, and Banks and Deuze are not uncritically celebratory of the creative capacities of the precarious, yet neither do they foreclose on such possibilities. They lead with cautionary steps toward the possibility of a liberatory framework, but do so with an understanding of the peculiar complexities of the liquidity of precarity and its myriad consequences. Liquidity as an elemental framing of precarity warrants more attention here. Zygmunt Bauman's *Liquid Modernity* provides the inspiration for such an avenue of inquiry, and it is useful, given this sense of the whole scale diffusion of precariousness throughout the communicative systems that comprise the lifeworld, as Castel, Kergel, Berlant and Hepp have noted. Bauman tells us:

> Contrary to most dystopian scenarios…the present-day situation emerged out of the radical melting of the fetters and manacles rightly or wrongly suspected of limiting the individual freedom to choose and to act. *Rigidity of order is the artefact and sediment of the human agents' freedom.* That rigidity is the overall product of 'releasing the brakes': of deregulation, liberalization, 'flexibilization', increased fluidity, unbridling the financial, real estate and labour markets, easing the tax burden, etc. (as Offe pointed out in 'Binding, Shackles, Brakes', first published in 1987); or (to quote from Richard Sennet's *Flesh and Stone*) of the techniques of 'speed, escape, passivity'—in other words, techniques which allow the system and free agents to remain radically disengaged, to by-pass each other instead of meeting (5).

The liquidizing of institutions, of rigid, over-determined structures which police the life world, which organized the collective, and against which the collective could organize, means that the individual now orders his labor and position in a continually adaptive and responsive process. The only security in such an epoch is the persistent insecurity of change and adaptation with little view toward a foreseeable future. As Butler proposes, this at once opens up the possibilities for a creative politics, and at the same time, allows for a "radical disengagement," a retraction away from a larger system and into the immediacy of flexible and insecure life patterns.

While Bauman deploys the term "flexibilization" and talks in terms of in/security, his arguments are incisive for imagining the precarity problematic, and his work finds an interesting partnership with Richard Lanigan's aforementioned article, "On homeworld and community models of the city: The communicology of egocentric and sociocentric cultures in urban semiotics." It is useful to return here to the distinction between *gemeinschaft* (community as it is given by birth and blood, kinship networks and affective social bonds, those which are disrupted, as Hepp, Kergel and Castel point, by increasing precariousness in communicative systems) and *gesellschaft* (the associational and institutional bonds that are more ephemeral and which Bauman points to as increasingly unstable or unavailable, but as structural enablers of communal affiliations and relationships—their liquidity resulting in the individual human agents' retraction into rigid order and disaffiliation). As I noted earlier, I want to attend to the concept of the no-place within place. To start, let's attend to this distinction to Place and Non-place. Lanigan sums Place and Non-place communities along this line. Place communities are locationally bound. We know ourselves proximally and the relationships that emerge have a particular physicality to them, while Non-place communities are purpose-driven or task-oriented, and a certain placial and temporal mobility that distinguishes them from Place communities. This distinction grows

blurrier with revolutions in communication technology, which expand one's sense of spatial community while contracting the timing of community. They emerge around some shared concern, need, or activity, but aren't rooted in place. I wonder, might the liquidity of the current economic, political, social and communal moment be understood also in terms of a slippage between Place and Non-place communities, in which a person's proxemic identity, bound to place and to affective social bonds, bound to family, village, neighborhood, town, city, moves fluidly into his chronemic identity, bound by institutional affiliations and roles, by temporal and temporary costumes, performances? In the Non-place community, as Lanigan tells us, one can be sent to or called (hailed) from one's Place community, from one *place* to another, or worse still, to *no place,* outside of place, the no-place within place. And it is here that we arrive back at the central figure of inquiry, "the homeless," the populated category containing the bodies that occupy the no-place possibility within Place and Non-place communities. This, the terrifying reminder that boundaries are permeable, that they can and will be crossed, that they *contain* nobody and no body. There is no comfort in a boundary that is always in play, always shifting, always threatened by its own dissolution—the atomic shift from solid to liquid is the terror here.

Community in the "Age of Precarity"

I have framed precarity as a particularly embodied process—the interface between the body and the means by which human life is organized and governed. Of course we are dealing with the possibilities and foreclosures of discourse. Precarity as a word only points toward a lived experience. It signifies something that cannot be understood, described, or conveyed through its mere utterance. It describes nothing. It "trends" and becomes passé. It has no referent. So why use it at all? We could say the same of neoliberalism, or globalization, or even

capitalism, and, as I explained in the prior chapter, community. These words do not describe the lived condition of labor, of community, of environment, of relationship. They do not tell us anything about what it means to, for example, have one's labor mediated on a Taiwanese variety show (Martin, 2013), or to bend one's back in the American Apparel factory for low-wage, short-term contractual labor and then see one's experience mediated as a counter-narrative to sweatshop labor (Moor and Littler, 2008). As scholars, as students, as activists, as laborers, surely we grow weary of terms that at once seek to encapsulate a broad condition, all the while obfuscating the particularity of that self-same condition. And yet we cannot so easily dispense with them. We are a signifying species. Without the word, the condition is unintelligible beyond its particularity. In what is a not-so-curious-a-turn, we hold the word accountable to its commonality, and then regulate it according to its particularity. In this case, precarity derives its meaning for its capacity to point toward a common condition, and yet it describes the particularity of a given working condition, and, more importantly, the particularity of the individual, the precariat. And yet the precariat, as with the proletariat, is a body that sacrifices its singularity for the many, for the global streams and flows of capital.

The theoretical landscape for precarity is a fast growing and changing one. It is fitting that the scholarship on *precarity* responds to the immediacy, urgency, and ubiquity of the condition it seeks to describe. Work on precarity seeks to describe the "crisis" of precarious labor, precarious relationships, the precarious sense of one's time, the all-consuming shift toward lives now lived at the edge of crisis, in seeming perpetuity. The definition engages two critical elements that I believe fit well with the work of this chapter: the embodiment of precarity and, inextricable or perhaps even preemptive of embodiment, the temporal and spatial diffusion of precarity as it is experienced.

The Precarious Community

I return to the theory of community as an impossible tension between the common and the individual, community as its own impossibility, community as a threatened center that can only make sense of itself through its capacity to marginalize, community as ecology, community as thing, community as process, community as a *falling together*. Some theories propose community as an architectural project, something to be built, sustained, resurrected, bolstered, or reframed. Such theories would seem to propose a *thing*ness to community—a certain objective reality to community, and I believe it is fair to say that if not an exhaustive theoretical field, community has at the least been widely and sometimes wildly theorized—the concept, the possibility, and the actuality of community inspires dirges and elegies, nostalgia and fear. However one chooses to theorize community, one thing is certain: community is embodied. We *live* in that *falling together,* there is life there, and so I will not pursue this line of theory abstractly, as though the fractured structures or disrupted processes of community aren't peopled, as if *we* are not peopling the gaps that emerge as a result.

We arrive back at an indisputable claim: human life is precarious—even the concept of "threat" can only ever be an artifact, since life in any singularity is terminal, death assured. Yet to examine the artifacts of human life and communication—the institutions, the social systems, indeed the structures of language itself, perhaps even, if one is to follow Lacan or Freud into the structures of human consciousness, in our entire understanding of self-hood—is to observe an accretive pull toward the impossible: security. Another framing of this desire can be found in Esposito's *Communitas,* in which the author examines the Hobbesian claim that fear is the elemental energy that binds us each to the other (2009). It is our persistent fear of death, the fear termed "terribly originary," Esposito explains, that precedes and maintains "the social covenant."

The social covenant, then, is concretized by sacrifice, that is, again, the sacrifice of "life to its own preservation." We are bound together by our fear of death, and so convene through sacrifice against death. It is not the State's task to eliminate fear, but to crystallize it, to give it shape in an Other, a common enemy. Yet the "orginary figure of the enemy" is always located in each individual (Esposito, pp. 21-27).

Again, community requires the threat to be present right at the border between interior and exterior. The nebulous and floating *common enemy* gains shape and embodiment when one seeks to understand a particular community process. Jacques Ranciere sums in *Disagreement,* "Plato invents the regime of community interiority in which the law is the harmony of the ethos, the accord between the *character* of individuals and the *moral values* of the collective" (68). Law, in this view, gives shape to an interior, to a common, and more importantly, creates a cleavage between "interior" and "exterior." Law, counter to the concept that it is what protects the common, creates the zone of abjection, the exterior or margins.

However, viewing communities as an assemblage, a process of assembling multiple tensions and crises, energies and constraints, policies, bodies, and multiple common motivations, beliefs, and values[21] offers a way to map the process. As an imaginative project, one I can't actualize but only think through, I would like to construct a provisional model of community processes, a series of concentric circles, each one with permeable boundaries. This varies from

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[21] I am influenced here by Grossberg's notion of assemblages. I wonder if conceiving of community as an historical assemblage, a moment bound to context, evidencing the sort of "radical contextuality" Grossberg applies to the field of cultural studies, opens up the field of meanings that emerge within any given historical moment, so "home" and "homeless" become floating signifiers. The benefit of such a shift in scholarship might mean that the archetypal "homeless person," or "panhandler" might lose its potency. The "hobo" that holds the cultural imagination captive and defines so many community responses disintegrates and the materiality of poverty gains an undeniable presence. I realize this footnote has all kinds of problems, so please read this as a conversational footnote.

Figure 3 in some ways. Agamben's *Homo Sacer* provides the basis for this model. At the center

is the polis, or the center that sustains the bios—this represents the community interior. Since

this model exists only in my imagination, the "interior" is floating, and mobile, its edges

diaphanous, liquid. It flows into the next concentric circle: the zone of precarity, which would

need to be of denser substance. It would need to encroach or intrude upon the interior. The

interior would gather itself closer in, but as its edges are not rigid, it would leak out into the zone

of precarity. Though denser than the interior, the zone of precarity is not solid, and so it, too,

leaks out into the surrounding zone of bare life—the zone of the abject. The trick in crafting such

a model would be creating stickier barriers for that which seeks to move back in toward the

center—not an impossible feat, but much more improbable for the vast number of agents in the

system. . The zone of the precariate is a liminality, sure, but its wide girth is indicative of the

diffusion of precarity throughout the polis. Precarious labor precariousness in the life world.

Precarity, to return again to the project of offering a sort of foundational understanding, is "being

unable to plan one's time, being a worker on call where your life and time is determined by

external forces" (Foti, 2004). Neilson and Rossiter expand on that definition, "The term refers to

all possible shapes of unsure, not guaranteed, flexible exploitation: from illegalized, seasonal and

temporary employment to homework, flex- and temp-work, to subcontractors, freelancers or so-

called self-employed persons. But its reference also extends beyond the world of work [though

remains tethered to it] to encompass other aspects of intersubjective life, including housing, debt,

and the ability to build affective social relations" ("From Precariousness to Precarity and Back

Again" fibreculturejournal.org).

      To return to Standing's synopsis of the precariat, although I believe he understates the

potential for organization and perhaps progressive change, it is fair, I believe, to say that the vast

creative possibilities of which Butler and Lorey speak lose traction for those skirting ever closer to the margins. In Tampa, concurrent with the Republican National Convention, CBS News released a report idetnfying the problem of homelessness as "plaguing" the city (cbsnews.com 8/26/12). Several residents occupying shelters in Tampa Bay responded in the clip. Their comments don't express unique sentiments; rather, they reveal a common thread, one with which the reader may already be familiar, should you review the opening quotes I included from the short film, "Tampa Panhandlers" (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bn_gya_xWQk): that is, the ever-present threat of precarity. One respondent notes plainly, "The economy is bad. You can lose your job any second and be right here where we're at" (cbsnews.com 8/26/12). Yet another says, "We had everything, and everything got took away from us." In "Tampa Panhandlers," one respondent, a man in the act of panhandling, tells the interviewer, a college student, that shelters cost $10 a night. Moments later, a woman, the aforementioned tender whose story was conveyed in the opening quote, tells the interviewer that she has not made any money for the day, and so would be sleeping on the sidewalk that night. She then wistfully relays her childhood love of camping. In the liminal zone of precarity, hers is the experience that haunts the precariat—the once-was-ness that arrests the precarious worker, impels the worker to see himself in her experience, and at the same time, turn away from that familiar nostalgia the woman expressed, toward the present-past of a mythical security, thus leaving the self/Other dualism well intact. "*That* is not *me.*"

Concluding Thoughts on the Precarious Community

This discussion of precarity I have viewed precarity as a concept that enriches current conceptions of toward community, situating community as an emergent process within global

political economy and shifts in labor practices and patterns, and on the other, precarity as organizing an often uni-directional flow from the chimerical interior to the disposable and threatening identity spaces that populate the exerior. The most dire consequences of the precarization of human life haunt the system, howl at the heels of affective, temporary, creative, and migrant laborers (among others), driving them toward a center that doesn't exist. In the desperate scramble away from the perceived margins (and again, margins are a perceptual , the precarious laborer finds one's self clinging to insecurity, and reviling those who people who represent the embodied threat to the community, those whose identities, lives, and political enfranchisement are under erasure, if we are to read local policies as a narrative of community desire.

It is my hope that there are ways to reimagine the potential for creativity in the still-emerging precariat, and that such a vision might be guided by greater compassion, an awareness that we are not bound together only by fear, but also by an ethic of care. I am aware that sounds naïve, but hope is dangerous, too. I believe the possibilities and need to continue this discussion are clear. Further exploration of relevant and highly related theories of affect, threat in particular, theories of risk, and a richer inquisition into the agonism between immunity and community would offer a great deal to this discussion. Additionally, further theorizing of the problematic would engage more thoroughly the biopolitical perspective, and a critical examination of the language of disease and epidemic becomes key. I only hinted at it in this work, but there is much to be done in this capacity.

Finally, I return to my introductory claim: this is messy, and it should be. Theory growing from abject experiences and from an exclusionary tendency within community structures is best offered with a commitment to reflection, reflexion and humility. I live less than a mile from the

lion's share of institutions in Tampa built and designed to "serve" people living homeless in Tampa. I *live* in a *house*, I *sleep* in a *bed*, my children are tucked every night into theirs, and I do tuck them into bed—an anachronistic comfort that's written out of and into sustained cultural narratives of childhood, narratives that remain present but out of reach for families who sleep in shelters and on sidewalks. I cannot disclaim such privileges as I seek a theoretical foundation in order to make sense of a phenomenon that troubles me. Yet for me, it is a haunting, and I can let it be fleeting or choose to see it in the periphery. For the people whose "safety" is often tied to the capabilities and capacities of institutions that are reeling from budget cutbacks and a general ambivalence in communities for "the homeless," such distance is not possible. They encounter themselves outside of themselves at every turn, and I say this as a direct, immediate threat. Law displaces those who are already out-of-place.

Given my "optimism," I am inclined to wonder if viewing the processes differently, if rendering the systems ecologically that are so often presumed stable and available for study (community being the primary system), if we might land in a very different way of understanding how we might open the space for greater responsivity? I turn now to what can only be called a thought experiment. In the following chapter, I "took to the streets." The next chapter asks whether or not thermodynamics might offer the conversations in this dissertation— those of community and economy—a different expression, one that locates us in the infrastructural and architectural project of community life. I propose a formative thermodynamic model of communication, one in which I rough in the components of the model but with the recognition that it, appropriately, partial.

CHAPTER THREE:

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF OVERHEATING

I focus on heat for several reasons, though the body regulates in other ways as well--excretion of fluids and waste, the movement and synthesis of oxygen and carbon dioxide, our varying circadian rhythms. Heat is my chosen intensity because: 1) there is a global concern about the impacts of global warming, and so it seems a wise choice given the currency of heat in a common lexicon--from this vantage, I can trouble the concept from both the embodied, phenomenological standpoint, and point back reflexively to its metaphorical possibilities; 2) heat is one name for an intensity that might alternately be viewed as speed (Eriksen), and, building on, though digressing from, Paul Virilio's thesis in *Speed and Politics*, it bears heavily on our immediate ecological interactions between body and world, self and other, and us and them; 3) heat is an intensity that is associated with contact, with an immediate relationship with (an)other; 4) because I am dealing with the embodied experience of being in place and space, and heat, shifts in temperature, are first-order responses to the body in an environment; 5) because the body's vulnerability to temperature when one lives on the street cannot remain a metaphorical strain, but is an immediate concern for survival (recall the story of…). I have no intention to belabor heat and overheating systems as a monolithic phenomenon, a kind of universalizing of the multiple means by which the body and the world adapt. It does not stand in place of another regulatory response, but bears scrutiny in its own right as a concern for communication. Now,

heat as a metaphorical concept is not new to communication scholarship. Certainly McLuhan's foundational work on hot and cool media comes to mind, and it brings time into play as a relevant component of understanding message transmission and reception. However, such a model of communication offers limited insight. It reduces the ecology of communication to the message. Rather, a thermodynamic, or open systems approach, which I explore through heat as an intensity that calls to our awareness the passage between world and body, allows for a complex rendering of the phenomena of study. As I discussed before, *homelessness* and *the homeless* are phenomena that are not self-evident. As I mentioned earlier, the mere utterance does not reveal the condition, nor set *the problem.* On one hand, the terms signify experiences of the body's vulnerability in the world, in particular, those whose embodied vulnerability in the world is felt immediately as they make home in public places out of necessity, but against policies that claim a commitment to public safety, while rendering these publicly composed lives still more vulnerable. On the other, they

This chapter maintains a close commitment to the phenomenological project. I detail a lived experience of overheating spaces within a particular place, Tampa, and then offer an analysis and interpretation of the data. In chapter four, I take up my own proposition from this chapter: I point toward a thermodynamic model of communication and, inevitably, community. These two chapters thus present a bifocal commitment: first, to situate the prior discussions on community and precarity within a direct, ecological context, one that views the body and the phenomenon of panhandling in space and place; second, to look toward a model of communication and community that reaches beyond one particular phenomenon and reveals broader communicative patterns in community. A thermodynamic view of communication and community attends to both the particularity of experience and the context in which it emerges.

Medians, Heatstroke, and the Case for a Thermodynamic Approach to Communication

Tampa's medians in the older parts of town are thin strips of concrete, hugging close to the asphalt from whence they emerge. The curbs that distinguish them from the flow of traffic are worn—appearing as a slippage, an accident. There is a pole, marked with reflective tape, to announce the median's presence to drivers so they don't run amok and drive up over a hapless pedestrian occupying the median. The breadth of the intersection at Kennedy and Dale Mabry makes the median requisite, but there is the lasting sense that whoever planned it resented its necessity. This is a heavily burdened intersection. Traffic moves quickly and silence is rare at best.

I am here on a Saturday morning in April, though, and it is unusually quiet. There are gaps in the flow—distance between the waves. I am here to be a median-dweller for a day, to join the others who live daily in that liminal zone. Specifically, I am here to sell *The Epoch,* a spare news-rag written for, about, and sometimes by those in Tampa Bay who live homeless or close to it. Specifically, I am here as a tourist in poverty, as a do-gooder, a fraud. A human body is fragile. Flesh tears, bones break, blood gushes, runs out, breath thins and disappears, empties the body of its animation. In the median, my tourist status shimmers, threatens to vaporize, even if just for the moment.

The heat on the street is expansive, consuming. It was 86 degrees in the shade, but in the median, where the only wind is the breeze a car creates when it blows by, the driver's eyes glued to a space beyond me, his drive to make the yellow light evident in the set of his jaw, it is 98 degrees and still only noon.

I walk the groove in the median, looking away from cars while the light is green, and then trying to make eye contact when it turns red. I thrust the newspaper out toward the cars and smile hard at them. *Look at me.* But they don't look at me. Or they do, and then look away. I am a green safety vest, and I want something from them. The sun boils off the hoods of their cars. I take stock—aside from two beat up pick-up trucks and some work vehicles, I see Mercedes, Lexuses, Audis. A couple of Hondas comprise the low end of the spectrum. I vibrate with the steady hum of luxury sedans and SUVs—these "manifest[ations of] the permanence of the social revolution" (Virilio, 1977). There are people inside, behind rolled up windows, who believe in that "social revolution." It has served them just fine. I watch from the median, and feel the rebellion fomenting in my gut. A bead of sweat forms at my hairline and sluices down my forehead, into the corner of my eye, and down again along the bridge of my nose. In the silence, the heat is oppressive.

Floridians know heat intimately. We know the rhythm of mosquitoes and fleas, when the termites will strike. We know when someone says 2:30 PM what that means in a Florida summer. We know the threat of heatstroke, and if we grew up here, were likely schooled in the signs of it at an early age. I used to watch my sister to see if she was still sweating, or if the area around her mouth looked white, these being the visible signs of danger.

Heatstroke is an interesting phenomenon. It results when the body's circulatory system is strained due to loss of fluid. Heat transfer through the skin is no longer efficient, and the resultant strain on the circulatory system throws the body into an overheating situation (Nielsen 2011). Bodies are relational, ecological. They require the heat transfer between themselves and the environment in order to maintain stasis. Heat transfer, the relationship between the body and

heat—this is intimacy a priori. This unites the body with its ecological other, ensures that beyond and before reasoning of a self, the body is only the shape it takes in relation to elemental forces.

The body as an ecology itself is a system of transports, flows, exchanges, adaptations. It cannot experience itself outside of its negotiations with the Other. Sloterdijk writes of "object shadows," these providing the earliest gleanings of a self in relationship to an/Other. The "candidates" for such "object shadows" are the placenta and the umbilical cord—the earliest encounters through touch. The body in the extra-placental world engages with a soundscape, a smellscape, and the visual landscape, a sense of topography, and a sense of temporality. Outside of the "black monochrome" (Sloteridjk, 346), the placental void, the body is in constant vibration. Where the vibrations of life exist, so, too, does heat, inextricably bound to movement itself.

Streets at once striate the smoothness of the human journey and experience, and at the micro-level, when bodies move along sidewalks, bump against another without stopping, there is an unceasing smoothness in the flow of bodies and structures (Deleuze and Guattari,1987). As de Certeau writes, "The ordinary practitioners of the city live 'down below,' below the thresholds at which visibility begins. They walk—an elementary form of this experience of the city…whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read it" (93). The walker, however, finds their journey striated by the structure of the street. If we pull in closer, though, streets, too, are smooth. They are systems of transport, flows, exchanges, adaptations, surprises. Relationships are immediate, the changes more often than not ephemeral unless there is a shutdown in the system, and the movement and rhythm of the street is arrested. But drawing this parallel leaves the human body and the street separable. The human body and

the street—more importantly, the human body on and in the street—share a particular, and particularly complex, relationship.

My proposition here is inspired by the various work on communication that views it in terms of intensities. In part, I offer this phenomenology in conversation with Virilio's (1978) argument for considering the grave consequences of a world in which speed and time have subsumed space. I also consider the concept of noise in the system, though from a specifically ecological standpoint, and as somewhat of a rebuttal to the Shannon and Weaver tradition of viewing communication via message transmission models. As I will discuss further in the following chapter, Alphonso Lingis's discussion of noise in *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common* has remained influential, in that communication *is* the noise. Finally, I turn to the discipline of anthropology for a complex rendering of overheating communicative systems. If Innis and McLuhan addressed hot and cool mediums of communication, their work rested on the concepts of channels of communication. The concern was about message transmission. My effort is to see the noise of communication and relationship, to understand the consequences for communication and relationship in overheating, oversped spaces. As Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2012) says so succinctly in "The Consequences of Living in an Overheated World," speed is just another way of talking about heat.

I contribute to this conversation by viewing overheating processes at a particular level of scale. Virilio's philosophical analysis operates at the macro scale, and his cautionary tale reaches into the past and future of globalization with a startling and unsettling foresight, if we are to look at drone technology and the global technological capacities of warfare technology. What we see in this case is our capacity to kill in absentia—the technological collapsing of time and space. Virilio's proposition is striking for my purposes because if military policy in an oversped,

overheating world takes a necropolitical turn, so, too, Eriksen's scholarship on and concern with overheating has guided Principal Investigator for an international anthropological study based out of the University of Oslo, *Overheating: The Three Crises of Globalisation* (www.sv.uio.no/sai/english/research/projects/overheating/). The group draws together researchers across the globe, who are studying various sites of overheating phenomena using a common conceptual framework for understanding overheating via "three major crises of globalization," namely environmental, economic, and cultural crises. I wonder if I might contribute still another dimension to those inquiries. That is, what might be revealed if one narrowed the scope further and further in, until one arrives at a specific geographic point? Not a region, nor a state, nor a city, nor even a part of town, but a set of exact coordinates at an exact intersection, where heat is felt radiating from the streets, where heat and speed manifest directly in the pedestrian body, where the human being standing in traffic understands his own precariousness every time a car cuts in close to the median. And so I think that a consideration of heat as an elemental energy, and specifically the progressive processes of heat transfer, critical heat flux, and overheating, provides a way of understanding relationship and marginalization on the street.

To be clear, the critical focus here is on the linked phenomena of homelessness and panhandling, but the central concerns of my work are: What happens when heat subsumes the relational capacities of a public space, namely the street? When public relational capacities are foreclosed upon by critical heat flux and inefficient heat transfer, what are the consequences for community and for those who occupy the most precarious positions in the public, in this case those who panhandle and sell newspapers for a living? Finally, what might be said of cooling

times and places in the street (i.e., the corners, curbs and stoplights) both of which slow the

system down?

I ask those questions and I can only wonder if they're the right ones. Other questions

arise as well. How *does* one make place, or more importantly, dwell, in overheating spaces? Or

does the overheated system foreclose upon that possibility? Medians are places of relative

isolation for newspaper hawkers and panhandlers. Rarely do two people occupy the same

median, or if they do, they take opposite ends of a long stretch, so the relationships that haunt

place are rarely available beyond a fleeting hello. Casey talks about place as defined by its

capacity to gather, to pull together bodies, histories, objects, memory, hauntings (1993). Standing

in the median, I sense his incisiveness. This no-place is still place. As the bridge of which

Heidegger (1951) speaks "gathers the fourfold in *such* a way that it allows a site for it," so, too

the median makes the intersection a location, a site. Gathered together here, too, are the traces of

those who stand here every day, along with my own shame that comes unbidden, when I read the

assumptions people make of me through gesture and the briefest of exchanges. In this articulated

place, the convergence of all that came before me and will continue after my moment on this

strip of concrete is over, bears heavily on my shoulders, imbues this place with meaning. The

difficulty—and I must acknowledge this—is that the meaning isn't mine to decipher, and any

effort I make at decoding the impressions that haunt that place—a place which, to borrow from

Anzaldúa (1987),[22] makes a version of "home" atop the razor wire—will be audacious at best,

arrogant at worst. And so what do I do with that experience? This, I believe, is what deferring to

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[22] Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* references the razor wire along the fences at the borders between the U.S. and Mexico, and I find that I often return to her work for inspiration for my conception of boundary. She and other feminist scholars have discussed the concept of oppositional consciousness, and while I don't take that up in this dissertation,

what is elementally both metaphorical *and* experiential/embodied offers—heat offers a means of viewing the phenomenon apart from the traps of identity. It offers a way of seeing the patterns writ large. I don't intend in this analysis to write around the experience of those who sold *The Epoch,* or to write around poverty. My observations are of the silencing patterns of street rhythms, heat, and speed, and I wish to open a set of questions, through a sort of narrative-theoretical analysis, about the relationship between heat and marginalization. In this way, both the experience of the newspaper hawker and panhandler, and the structures of poverty and oppression will manifest.

Why Streets?

The following work begins as a curvature of intentions. I commenced with a hope that if I unfolded the relationship between house and home, I could trace the seams and see how those two became folded together in the first place, such that I could find my way toward understanding dwelling and alienation and the space between. A phenomenology of houses, with the careful vision and imagination of Bachelard (1964), and the looping, deceptively wild language of Lingis.[23] But houses cannot speak a language I need to hear right now, or maybe *I* am the one who cannot *hear.* Perhaps Bachelard's investigations sit too present in my mind, overtaking my ability to see beyond his vision in *Poetics of Space.*

Or perhaps the matter at hand is that there is a road along which those houses stretch, and when the houses end, they end at another road, and on that road, which is a major thoroughfare, relationship means something different. Heat and speed, the elemental energies of life itself, subsume relationship and identity. There is terror there, and anger, and the trajectory of life is

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[23] I am not referencing any specific work here by Alphonso Linigs, but a sampling from his corpus might be *Trust* (2004), *Dangerous Emotions* (2000), and *Violence and Splendor* (2011).

exaggerated in its precarity. And here is where my intention curves, out from the slow decay of houses toward the precipitous ignition and extinguishment of relationship on the street. I need to see the streets themselves—the road striping and reflectors, the curbs, corners, and medians—those concretions of the inner life's liminal and neutral zones. What is intimacy in such overheated, transitory spaces? And what is the seam between intimacy and politics? Moreover, what happens to intimacy and politics is an overheated space—namely, the streets?

And so the project begins with feet to pavement, the slap-shuffle of shoes on asphalt, and I would try to unlearn my sense of the place, to get to know the streets without feet that knew their way home, and their way-away-from home. But infant eyes are impossible. I have lived in Tampa for twelve years. I know the rhythm of traffic flows throughout the city, I know the landmarks that guide me home, I know the stories of corruption that render Tampa streets such abysmal sites of human and vehicular tragedy.

Heat Transfer, Critical Heat Flux, and How Things Fall Apart

Virilio writes, "For the masses of unemployed, demobilized workers without an occupation, Paris is a tapestry of trajectories, a series of streets and avenues in which they roam, for the most part, with neither goal nor destination, subject to police repression intended to control their wanderings…*Can asphalt be a political territory?*" (1977, emphasis added). The "unemployed, demobilized workers" occupy a space of intensity—the streets are not simply mobile, but fast. The speed of streets makes them a space of occupation, of ideological reproduction, but the revolutionary, the capacity for fomentation, requires space, place and time. If we are to examine speed and heat, we arrive at the ways in which speed overheats the system

and brings the death of the revolutionary. The proletariat can only be the precariat when place overheats.

Peter Marin 's quote comes back to haunt: "Daily the city eddies around the homeless. The crowds flowing past leave a few feet, a gap. We do not *touch the homeless world.* Perhaps *we* cannot touch it. It remains separate even as the city surrounds it" (Marin, emphasis added.) How is this gap possible? I return to my post in the median in South Tampa. I walk the space back and forth, over and over. I move among the cars during the seconds when the light is red, seeking connection, or shying away from it. I raise $25 in two hours, and $15 of it comes from two people, both of whom remind me, as I stand next to the car windows of these strangers in the middle of traffic, that this is dangerous work. I should get off the streets. There isn't time to explain my purpose, nor am I sure of my motivations for offering the explanation. And so I mumble, "thanks so much," and smile obsequiously, and disappear back onto the median. Yes, it was a disappearance, but not from sight. I retreated back into a world no one can "touch."

It is interesting that Marin calls on a haptic awareness. Let us imagine for a moment that heat transfer is a kind of touch, a haptic engagement with the Other. In this imagining, heat transfer is the connection between skin and surface and creates the active haptic possibility. One is touched *by.* Touch is the medium by which the self encounters Other most intimately, an intimacy that gathers the two into at least three, then we arrive at my initial claim. We cannot "touch" the "homeless world" because we exist in an overheated space; heat transfer is slowed, sometimes eradicated, as when a system hits a crisis of speed.

The rather stale, but useful example from thermodynamics is the frying pan. Let us say one turns the temperature to high beneath the pan, as one is often inclined to do. The continual increase in temperature, the shift in intensity, has a dire impact on optimal heat transfer. The

resultant phenomenon is, of course, critical heat flux. The resultant barrier between the heating

surface and that object, the frying pan, which encounters the heating surface, in this example,

we'll use water. The pan has now overheated, and the relationship shuts down. The bubbles

separate and maintain their integrity, away and apart from each other and the heating surface.

The "gap" between worlds isn't between two worlds, but an infinite number. The

overheated street renders each agent a contained bubble. The cars and their occupants occupy a

singular space, a bubble that will not expand nor burst, but leave the agents in the system in

isolation. And so what? So cars move as one collective "vehicular prosthesis," compressing time

and erasing place. The speed at which the automobile can move over terrain, and the driver's

direct connection with the car, the fusion of driver and automobile, moves the human body faster

over and further away from a terranean awareness. One starts to *believe* in speed, to believe in

the prosthetic speed machine. Street numbers and names are not meaningful coordinates with the

speed of technology. They have been emptied of meaning by the emergent technological

dromocracy (Virilio, 1977). At the micro scale, the distinction between body and automobile

grows ever more diaphanous.

Why is this problematic, though? The literature abounds on selves—the socially

constructed self is likely the most useful of theoretical foundations for this work, in that social

constructionism pays attention to the momentary identity shifts that grow from and comprise the

stories of the self as they are told and retold. I propose that the self is a product of heat transfer,

the sustained relationship between the heating surface and that which encounters it. The self is

only a set of codeterminant relationships, the coordinates of self are only those relationships, the

map of stories that are housed in memory. When one occupies the median, and is subject to the

rhythmic overheating of the street, locating stable coordinates by which to gather a self requires

the system to slow and cool down. If the barrier between worlds, the gap that separates the occupants in "the homeless world" and "our world" is revealed as a controvertible physical phenomenon, if the system can be cooled, will the possibility for relationship re-emerge?

As I traversed the median, with little sense of why I was doing this, a pressing guilt over my fraudulence and what I can only call a partial commitment to thrusting my arm at passing cars, the question of who I was flittered away from me at times. The median at times carried away those coordinates of self, scattered them to the winds. When the median's sublimation grew too much to bear, I went to the corner to gather myself together, to seam the shattered parts of me into a whole. In the next section, I seek to examine street corners as potential spaces of cooling, or of stabilizers of heat transfer in the overheated street system.

Corners and Intersections, Angles and Curves: Cooling the System

Let me rewind the tape. Before the median, there is the corner. From the vantage point of the corner I look with trepidation at the medians where I'll be spending the next few hours. I review the copy of *The Epoch,* delaying my inevitable departure. The cover boasts an open letter to Mayor Bob Buckhorn on page 3. I am having a hard time leaving. I survey the traffic, assess the speed and volume of cars, try to inconspicuously observe the woman standing in the opposite median, moving between cars to the rhythm of the stoplights. I feel breathless, anxious. How will I navigate that territory? I know I'm clinging to my southeast corner, to this momentary haven. Here, no one approaches me. Drivers do not roll down their windows or call me over. They round the corner, and drive away. I will cross to the liminal zone of the median soon. The compulsion is there, but I am choosing my performance right now, negotiating the self I will send out into that precarious space—where bodies are another kind of traffic.

In *Poetics of Space,* Gaston Bachelard's phenomenology of the poetic image, the house, and the small architectural and natural homing and haunting spaces and places that occupy the human imagination, the author explores the corner. Bachelard's corner is a germinal space, a space that itself is hidden and so invites the hiding of its dweller, and of the dweller into an impoverished "solitude." The haven enfolds the dweller, as the Oliver's male spider is enfolded into darkness. These are corners that occupy the shadows of interior spaces for Bachelard. The intimacy there is deep and solitary. The spare angles, the architecture which is nest-like in its chaos, the drift toward decay and dust—there is an ascetic quality to the corner. Bachelard reminds us: "At times, the simpler the image, the vaster the dream" (137), and with this, we have a hint of the sublime capacities of the corner. Folded in, the dweller retreats into a compression, a convergence of planar surfaces that transmute into a roundness when the corner becomes a verb. One corners and folds back and away from the exterior, into a peculiar and explosive vastness. As Bachelard writes, "The corner becomes a negation of the Universe" (136). Here is the depth of home, the germinal homeness that compels us to retreat to that corner over and again. One retreats into the corner to live in a haunted space, to daydream the crosshairs of times present-past and present-future.

Bachelard points to the corner as a forgotten and decaying space, and yet a ubiquitous presence in human consciousness—it is a repository for the daydream, the orginary shelter for Being. He writes of O.V. de Milosz's *L'amoureuse initiation,* "I have sought to present an unusually complete experience of a gloomy daydream, the daydream of a human being who sits motionless in his corner, where he finds a world grown old and worn." And yet, peer into the shadow, and the spider is there, with her new life, caressing the six egg sacs that will draw in and destroy life in order to create life.

Let us imagine the spherical possibilities in the corner. Bachelard describes it in this way: "The corner is a sort of half-box, part walls, part door…. Consciousness of being at peace in one's corner produces a sense of immobility, and this, in turn, radiates immobility. An imaginary room rises up around our bodies, which think that they are well hidden when we take refuge in a corner" (137). The bubble forms as an over-imagined barrier, but if we are to look at the corner and the sphere of intimacy that is the corner, then we must also account for the bursting of the bubble. The planar geometry of the corner shoots out into the world, and the "dialectics of inside and outside" are ever present. As with the vulvar entrance-exit Sloterdijk describes, the activity of entering presages the exit. The cornered self remains as a haunting, joining the life and decay with its traces (Agacinski, 2003). The corner dweller will rupture the reverie, discard or shake loose of the daydream and move into the exterior.

Bachelard tells a story of DaVinci, who during a class, points to the cracks in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel and advises his students to study them when they are fatigued. There, a place of rest. But also, and this cannot be forgotten, a certain terror, for the crack in the ceiling contains the possibility of its repair, but also the abysmal possibility that no repair is possible. In the latter, one's imagination follows the depth and ledges into a treacherous space, a space without bottom or coordinates. The planar convergence remains a promise always just out of reach.

Should we turn our attention to corners in the exterior world, though, what does Bachelard's contribution reveal? Might such a rendering of the cornered self open up a way of reimagining the urban street corner? The interior corner is a cooling place. It sits apart, it is hidden, it provides refuge. Does the exterior corner do the same?

Considering the Street Corner

I have a book on my shelf of Antonio Lopez Garcia's paintings (1990). One painting has

always arrested my imagination, held it right there in its warm, muted palette, its textured, dingy

cityscape. What holds my attention in *The Street of Santa Rita* (1961) is not the skyline, or the

unfamiliar familiarity of the buildings, but the sidewalk. The sidewalk holds my attention.

Garcia's painting extends an invitation to the viewer—the eye follows the sidewalk to the

cornered convergence, and drifts toward a daydream, an imagined possibility for the semi-hidden

space around the other side. Maybe this is the magic of the street corner—it is both invitation and

expulsion. It is a relational space, a pause in the flow of traffic. Wherever one is in the street, and

wherever one may be headed, the corner requires a slowing, sometimes a choice, sometimes a

briefly thoughtful engagement with direction and desire. For the pedestrian, the corner is the safe

zone—there is a sense of the destination. For the driver, the corner rounds the journey, shifts the

trajectory. For the newspaper hawker and the panhandler, the corner may be more complex.

Might I consider the corner in the way Heidegger considers the bridge? "The bridge swings over

the stream 'with ease and power.' It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks

emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream" (330). The crosswalk striates the smooth

space of streets and traffic, and the corners are brought into being and meaning by the crosswalk.

They are now spatial coordinates, gathered together by the crosswalk, folded into the median

space. And they do have meaning here, at this particular intersection. They jut out into the speed

and heat of the street, slowing its dizzying pace anytime a car turns or a group of pedestrians

crosses the street.

Might the corner invite, in its cooling capacity, intimacy? Might it provide both haven and connective space? In my final thoughts, I ask about what it might mean to imagine streets as intimate spaces.

Intimacy and Identity: A Concluding Gesture

"For if 'to be is to inhabit' (in ancient German, *buan*), not to inhabit is no longer to exist. Sudden death is preferable to slow death of he who is no longer welcome, of the reject, of the man deprived of a specific place *and thus of his identity*" (Virilio, 1977).

During my two-hour flirtation with a reality apart from my own, I grew contemplative. I considered the shirt I had been given to wear—a brilliant aqua, a hyper-real hue. Ocean and spring—a color signifier for pleasant but distant memory traces. I watched at a distance my own recursive struggles with performance. Who was I supposed to be here? And even if I could answer that question, to what anchors might I tether myself in order to hold onto the answer? And if I could find the anchors, what does it mean that I needed them in the first place? These were followed by questions about the nature of my reflexivity. Is this experience too much guided by what I hoped to learn rather than a genuine openness to whatever came up?

In addressing my last question, I need to take care to note that relationships do form on and in streets. 2:30 arrived at last, and I left the heat of the day, climbing into the passenger seat of *Epoch* publisher Steven Sapp's SUV. We drove around the area, looking for a vender to talk to, and I had the vague impression we were on safari, but I was taken by surprise. Steven spotted "Tommy" and stopped to talk for a while. Tommy tried to talk over the music he had piping into his skull from a set of ear phones, and he laughed, mouth open and face turned toward the sky, when Steven gestured for him to pull out the ear phones. Steven and Tommy have known each other for over three years now, and they enjoy an easy rapport. Steven knows the rough

topography of Tommy's life, and he has shared stories with Tommy as well. They catch up on the latest news for other vendors, shake hands and look at each other. There is a critical exchange—the bubbles collide and burst, become one (that is always two). Here's the thing: when one occupies the median, when the value of one's life is so readily negotiable at the hands of speed and heat and steel, intimacy is critical. Intimacy slows and cools the system, creates the public possibility of touch.

Perhaps de Certeau (1984) offers a useful framing when he examines the conceptual move from "city" to "urban practices." The street, as with the city, becomes an immunizing space, inoculating each against the other. The median dweller lives in the "gap" as the agent of disease, the viral presence against which the pedestrian and the driver, both of whom are "passing through," must immunize himself. The median dweller does not move with traffic, but stands steady against the stream of it, and this is not the sort of body that makes sense in places of high speed and heat, though even the briefest scan of nationwide policy measures regarding panhandling and homelessness, as I've discussed in prior chapters, would indicate that the median dweller's presence can't be made sense of anywhere I close with still another set of questions: Can reimagining streets as sites of alternately failed and potentiated intimacy render them as the lost spaces of revolution Virilio bemoans? Can the basic tenets of critical heat flux allow a narrative to emerge that transcends the over-localizing tendency of stories—stories which often times draw our attention away from the elemental dimensions of oppression? As I watch the lights change to red, and I move back out into traffic, the drivers roll their windows up. I smile and wave, smile and wave, but the time is too short to reestablish optimal heat transfer. Relationships form and burst immediately. I see my reflection in the glass of a car window. And then I am gone. I retreat into the median space, a space shadowed even in sunlight.

In the following chapter, I point toward a reimagining of a thermodynamic model of communication. I note that this is exploratory, an early unfolding of a set of communicative processes and the relationships among agents and processes within a system. I use the terms "exergy," "entropy," "heat," but I want to take care to reiterate that these are not properties within a system, nor are they states of being. If the larger system is a process, so, too, are the relationships that organize and adapt within the system—that is, the whole is both only and more than the relationships that comprise it. And so what I offer in chapter four is an imaginative project, a way of seeing communicative processes as precisely that—processes, always unfolding. As with community, we can view this as always already and always out of reach.

CHAPTER FOUR:

TOWARD A REIMAGINED THERMODYNAMIC MODEL OF COMMUNICATION

I want to begin by first noting the colloquial problem of the concept "model." One can

model a process with the aim of providing a solution to a problem. That model can then be

widely applied. Or one can model a process with the aim of illuminating how something works.

Both are useful tools, to be sure. But often times, a model presumes a state of being, a means of

connecting the parts and processes within a given, actualized phenomenon, each to the other. Of

course, a classic communication model that exemplifies this well is Shannon and Weaver's

mathematical model of message transmission, which presumes the primacy of both the message

and the messenger, first of all, and secondly operates on the basis of eliminating noise in the

system. For the purposes of streamlining communication technologies, it serves a purpose, and

yet we understand little from such a model about the ways in which we arrive at meaning, and

the context in which meaning emerges, through and within flows of power in both discursive and

embodied ways. But perhaps I'm not ready I had to suspend the mechanism of thought—or at

least strong arm it into submission—and *feel* my way into the model. I'm not trying to overwrite

the process here, but instead point to something key in such a model: I don't need to think it into

existence—it is already *there,* and in a particularly meditative moment, in which deep listening

converged with deep seeing and feeling, with an awareness of my haptic presence in multiple,

co-occurring systems (spheres, I might say), the fact of the repeating, differentiating, adapting

system revealed itself, at least in part. The model that is still emerging reveals itself, not as a reductive set of correlative terms, but as a dance of energic thrusts and convergences. Everywhere there is a magnetism, everywhere a radiance, everywhere the world vibrates, whirs, hums. The noise of the world consumes us and is us, and we retract, in the rational communicative system, from that terrifying wholeness, from the creative possibility of the "murmur of the world" (Lingis, 1994).

Below, I sketch out the components of a thermodynamic model of communication, after which I'll offer a brief consideration of community and communication. I want to pay attention to the relationship between communication and community because this preliminary model of a thermodynamic view of communication, with specific attention to homelessness as my site of inquiry, rests precisely on the inextricability of communication from community. As I rough in the components of such a model, it is with a bifocal view toward magnifying the structural fractures in community on the one hand, and toward a theoretical mapping of communication at all scales as thermodynamic processes on the other.

"Modern" thermodynamics (a term which must be complicated in academic, cultural and discursive terrain outside the physical sciences—but a term that proves relevant given the prior discussion of labor) departs from classic studies of thermodynamics in that the attractive, ever-observable closed system is deemed partial, and open, complex systems become the subject of study, from "stars to lovers to the latest computer programs" (Schneider and Sagan, 2005). Gilles Deleuze explicates a metaphysical framing of thermodynamics in *Difference and Repetition* (1994)*,* in which he offers a philosophy of form via morphological processes (read: complex adaptive processes). The open, complex system provides a ground for seemingly inexhaustible theorizing. With its shifting terrain, its continual adaption, its persistent defiance of an inherent

"it-ness," its endless activity—recursions, iterations, loosening and tightening couplings, its improvisational capacities—communication isn't something one lays over or wedges into complex systems theories; complex systems theories are deeply and necessarily concerned with communication, and considering them jointly but in their own terms provides mutual illumination. With its ties to complex systems theories, thermodynamics presents itself as a rich metaphysical terrain for understanding complex communicative systems.

Entropy, Exergy, Energy, and Heat

My current formulation takes into account the concepts of entropy, organizing, and thermal exchange, as they relate to politics (including governmentality and ideology and how those forces translate to policies and infrastructure, as well as political subjectivities and citizenship), economy (particularly current conditions of precarity, security and surplus), and the social (under which, for these purposes, I locate the more immediately relational processes and emergent structures of community and identity). Relatively recent publications from Rod Swenson (1997) and Schneider and Sagan's coauthored book, *Into the Cool: Energy Flow, Thermodynamics, and Life* (2005)*,* which, although noted by one reviewer for its theoretical pitfalls (Bahar, 2005), offered approachable understandings of open systems and thermodynamics for those outside the physical sciences disciplines, and in order to ground my exploration of thermodynamics in its physical roots, I consulted these texts alongside more complex renderings of thermodynamics, such as Deleuze's metaphysical project in *Difference and Repetition*.

Schneider and Sagan note, perhaps reductively, that the primary forces in thermodynamic systems theories are energy, heat, work and entropy. For the purposes of understanding

communication, I understand these as equally primary intensities in the organizing patterns of community, social, political and economic systems, though the complex negotiation between energy, exergy, and entropy presents itself as still more relevant. Thermodynamics, as Funtowicz and Ravetz (1997) observe, is an anthropocentric narrative, and so understanding the tripartite complex I just noted means understanding it as tied to a set of cultural and economic value systems. Funtowicz and Ravetz's example of a waterwheel capturing the "available energy" of a waterfall is a telling one: "Given the two possibilities (waterwheel in place, or not), the potential energy could be realized in two different ways: one as the highly structured energy of rotation, the other as the largely random motion of turbulent fall" (796-797). What emerges in this example may offer some tremendous insights about how community instantiates along the lines of value. Some energy, the authors go on to say, is more "useful" than others. The exergy-entropy agonism is bound up in an economic and utilitarian view of systems, and this is not to be ameliorated—but recognized for its capacity to reveal something about the merger of the phenomenon and the function of the sign systems that shape how we interpret experience. There is no-*thing* that is exergy, nor entropy. There is an observation of a shift of intensities, an observation of what is presumed a degradation of a system, and the shift is then given discursive weight and political import as entropy or exergy.

We are talking, then, about labor. You see, when faced with a disruption or, to borrow a useful term from gender studies, a "queering" of labor activities, there is a conservative retraction by which social, political and communal concepts of labor become locked tightly within the insular logic of economy. Insularity, impermeability, are the effects of either overheating or overcooling. The labor of "panhandling" is illegitimate, or perhaps delegitimized in part because of the location in which it takes place—that uncomfortably nebulous zone of

public and private. The presence of the panhandler forces open the insular logic of economy, against which it reacts. The slew of policies that write the body out at its limits are also reflective of that liminality. *Public* spaces are only public for those who can retreat behind the doors of *private* residences or places of business. The following discussion of labor is notably abbreviated, but I think it a necessary (if insufficient) exploration, in that the metaphor of disease grows increasingly complex when the multiple communicative institutions in which it emerges and in which it is sustained are examined.

As Marcuse (2005) explains, labor and, more importantly, the *idea* of labor, has been inextricably bound to the *idea* of economy and its function as a system. Marcuse sums the concern when definitions of labor are viewed as principally a problem of economics, one solved by economic theory (2005). If labor has "place, meaning and function…in the totality of human Dasein," then "the problem is further complicated by the fact that the economic concept of labor has also had a decisive influence on the interpretation of the essence of labor in general— including labor outside the economic sphere" (123). In this equation, "panhandling" and "the panhandler" are not perceived as laboring bodies. They are surplus in an overburdened system if economic logic prevails, and the communal, political corpus, the organism of the People,[24] now framed *as* an organism, a body, enters the social imaginary as such. The *health* of the community gains discursive and notably biological significance. "The panhandler," then, become an ailment, the dramatic and visible indicator of a deeper and dangerous "epidemic": "homelessness" (cbsnews.com). Again, as noted, "panhandling" and "homelessness" are interlocked phenomena, and this work recognizes the complex relationship between them. However, I attend to "panhandling" and "the panhandler" because both the activity and the one who performs it are

often conflated with "the homeless" in common rhetoric and discourse, and seem to occupy a kind of archetypal and semiotic place in the social and cultural imaginary.

To return to the passage from Funtowicz and Ravetz, we might reframe entropy, viewed as the degradation of self-organizing processes, the force against which the system organizes itself. A thermodynamic view of communication that accounts for the erasure of certain subjectivities would take up this invitation in order to understand the inclusion and exclusion paradox I discussed in chapter two, along, not simply metaphorical lines, but in terms of revealing the partiality of the communicative system. Agamben and Esopsito's work comes back into play. The state of exception, as realized in the immune community, and immunity understood from biopolitical and biomedical paradigms, introduces and requires the presence of the very thing that it seeks to eradicate.

I return to Agamben's work as it provides a useful theoretical platform with his explanation of the state of exception and the complex of biopower and the juridical order. To restate, the state of exception, rather than the state of rule, is where Agamben locates the actual power of the sovereign. Sovereignty is exercised in the moment the sovereign suspends the law, rendering the life within the bios bare life. The relationship between bare life and bios that Agamben observes is unresolvably Lacanian—a lasting fracture that politics requires while all the time professing to preserve it. That is, politics seeks to protect and manage bare life through its exclusion, which necessarily *in*cludes it within the structure of the polis. *Homo sacer* is both the biological human body and a signifier of a persistent fracture at the core of the biopolitical system—a guiding fracture, specifically. Might the fracture Agamben describes be alternately conceptualized as an expression of the relationship between exergy and entropy?

To follow the logic of this tension and see how it might look in a closed system—even if an imperfect closure—I think Elizabeth Povinelli, by way of Ursula LeGuin's fictional account in "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" proves insightful, and intersects with both Agamben's explanation of the state of exception and *homo sacer* and with the aforementioned thermodynamic state of tension between exergy and entropy.

In *Economies of Abandonment,* Povinelli introduces a terrifying realization of the state of exception with "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas." The presence and brutalization of the "child in the broom closet," as her introduction is aptly titled, is the requisite condition for Omelas's citizens to enjoy the "good life." Their contentment, prosperity and inclusion is tied inextricably to the child's suffering. As Povinelli explains:

> She and they are not *like* a shared body; they are a shared body. Or, as I have put it previously, they share a mutual, if distributed, form of *enfleshment.* The solidarity the citizens of Omelas share with each other must, as of necessity, loop through her. As a result, the ethical imperative to not to put oneself in the child's place, nor is it to experience the anxiety of potentially being put in her place…Instead, the ethical imperative is to know that your own good life is already in her broom closet, and as a result, you must create a new organization of enfleshment by compromising on the goods to which you have grown accustomed (and grown accustomed to thinking of as 'yours' including the health of your body) or admit that the current organization of enfleshment is more important to you than her suffering (4).

Now Le Guin's fictive account finds a blurrier parallel in the world beyond her pages, and while this work won't take up the project of analyzing those structures, I will point to Peter Sloterdijk's deceptively fanciful account of a child blowing a bubble and then watching it float away. He explains that the child following the soap bubble does not remain "planted on its extensionless thought-point while observing an extended thing on its course through space" (19). Rather, the child and the bubble are drawn together in the "zone between the eye and the object," an "animated zone" that now encompasses the two as one. I return to Agamben's formulation of the bios as a sphere containing bare life within it, or perhaps more accurately, defining itself

through the inclusion of bare life within the polis as the requirement by which the polis defines

itself as against bare life. I find parallels in Schneider and Kay's (1994) explanation of exergy,

entropy and system boundaries in their synopsis of Silveston's Bénard cell experiments:

> The further a system is moved from its equilibrium state the more exergy is destroyed, the system produces more entropy, and more work is required to maintain it in its nonequilibrium state. Due to the convective overturn most of the working fluid becomes vertically isothermal (with little gradient) and only the boundary layers on the edge of the system carry the gradient. As the gradient is increased the boundary layers become thinner and more dissipation occurs (631).

I cannot claim knowledge of Silveston's experiments , but the implications for boundaries in

social systems, for the dissipation that co-occurs with the thinning of the boundary has what I

believe are obvious implications for a thermodynamic view of human communicative systems.

The dissipative tendency of a thinning boundary presents a certain terror in the human

communicative system, and I think Sloterdijk takes this up in his introduction to *Bubbles*.

Moreover, Sloterdijk's account becomes particularly interesting when it enters into conversation

with Deleuze's morphogenetic exegesis. I am inclined to argue (albeit humbly) that what

Deleuze does not account for in his ecstatic vision of the open system, a world of endless

creative becoming, is the terror of "shellessness," the naked snail sensibility that emerges when

the bubble bursts (Sloterdijk). Sloterdijk's account of modern epistemological enterprises reads:

"Research and the raising of consciousness have turned man into the idiot of the cosmos; he has

sent himself into exile and expatriated himself from his immemorial security in self-blown

bubbles of illusions into a senseless, unrelated realm that functions on its own" (23). A

thermodynamic view of communication would need to account for these "self-blown bubbles,"

or at least remain cautious of (re)creating them.

This may be done in part by maintaining an eye toward, as Funtowicz and Ravetz point

out, the anthropocentric underpinnings of thermodynamic theory, but also by uncovering the

assumptions behind terms which are leveraged with the presupposition of their existence: community, communication, heat, for example. As I hope to develop my project as an inquiry into overheating and communication, I'll take a moment and look at the concept of heat more closely. As I understand it, heat is not a property of a system. It can only be observed or identified as it crosses a boundary—that is, changes in temperature are changes of intensity (Deleuze). Deleuze further explains intensity in the notes to *Difference and Repetition.* He writes, "…intensity cannot be composed of two homogenous terms but must contain at least two series of heterogeneous terms." Equilibrium must be disturbed in order to create the condition for adaptation. DeLanza further explains the necessity of disequilibrium: "This shortcoming of nineteenth century thermodynamics, to overlook the role of the intensive and stress only the extensive, to concentrate on the equilibrium form that emerges only once the original difference has been canceled, has today been repaired in the latest version of this branch of physics, appropriately labeled 'far-from-equilibrium thermodynamics" (De Landa, 5).

Key in my developing formulation will be difference, which Deleuze notes is not related to intensity, but rather *is* intensity, and a more thorough attendance to "far-from-equilibrium" states within human communicative systems. Deleuze's explication of difference clarifies that differentiating processes, if I understand him, are only observed in the transfer between intrinsic and extrinsic organizing systems—they are intensities. As noted, classic considerations of the principles of thermodynamics were concerned with simple, closed systems. Open, complex systems, however, and in this inquiry, specifically communicative systems, have required a reconsideration of entropy. Entropy is now understood to decrease rather than increase in an open system, and so agents are continually self-organizing in novel patterns, and the system, rather than dispersing, engages in adaptive processes.

In Deleuze's exploration of the second law of thermodynamics proves crucial in that entropy becomes the central site of inquiry. If, in the open system, entropy decreases and self-organizing increases, thus leading to the adaptive capacities of a system, the question of entropic tendencies under conditions of overheating bears further scrutiny. How do communicative systems respond to overheating? What might looking at critical heat flux metaphysically reveal about community, social, political and economic systems—systems understood, again, in this sketch as open, related, co-occurring, and coconstitutive and coconstituting systems? How might such revelations impact an analysis of the structural fractures in which homelessness, which is a condition at once materially manifested and deeply existential and psychic, emerges?

Community and Communication: Revisiting the Relationship

To view communication as an elemental, even originary force, requires complexifying the term further: if communication is potentiating and potentiated by the conditions within a system, communication is also contaminating, it intrudes upon the immune system (which is itself also a communicative system) with a violence that precludes any moralizing of the term in its systemic necessity. Immune systems are themselves communicative, and so they sustain the very violence against which they seek to secure themselves. The violence of the communicative system both ruptures and draws together, randomizes and orders. The tension lies between the wholeness of the noise of the world and the attendant instinct to find the singular thread of intelligibility and relegate the remainder to background noise (Lingis, 1994; Deleuze, 1994; Anton, 2008). This is both the drive of human communication and the impossibility, for we hear contextually. Sense is made within the background noise—the background noise is required for communication to occur.

Perhaps I've attached too much to Lingis's thesis, but it finds resonance in thermodynamic perspectives and in complex systems theories broadly. From my exposure to communication theory, Lingis's consideration is rare, though perhaps communicological perspectives find resonance (e.g., Anton, 2008). Serres's view of communication and the optimal communicative community finds a parallel in a basic introduction to thermodynamics, in which the authors write, "A thermodynamic system is defined as a quantity of matter of fixed mass and identity on which attention is focused for study. Everything external to the system is the surroundings, and the system is separated from the surroundings by the system boundaries" (4). The thermodynamic project for these authors is to close the system and to relegate its "surroundings" to background noise. Lingis remains a relevant critic of such a project because, as with background noise in communicative systems at all scales, the "surroundings" are not to be understood apart from the system, but *as* the system. Deleuze and Guattari's illuminating discussion of smoothness and striation (1987) reveal this inextricability as well: the smooth space of the ocean, for example, is striated by the maritime endeavor, an endeavor that finds its legitimacy in the persistent smoothness of that which it seeks to striate. The imbrications of smooth and striated spaces are the communicative dance. In its partiality, I think developing a thermodynamic model of communication opens the field up to the question of communication, rather than its presumption. Do we communicate? Can we communicate? How do we experience communication? From the questions, emerge the possibilities.

CONCLUSION

With the seam of the biopolitical and the biomedical drawn out, and with the care I've taken to discuss the means by which policy writes the body out at the limits of what a body must do to survive, I want to discuss the problem of metaphor in social policy as a closing excursus. I focused in the body of this dissertation on community and heat as intensities that are realized and transmuted through precarity, as a mode of responding to them by way of governing and institutionalizing the flows and exchanges of those intensities through economic and social practices and policies. This work's primary contribution is that it opens a space of meaning making and pulling apart, and in keeping with that project, there is an additional way of seeing that warrants attention in the context of the prior work. By way of, well, introducing this conclusion, I will attend to what has been latent in my discussion: this is quite undeniably a problem of *metaphor* as well as of embodiment.

As I've argued, the question of community is central to any discussion of how policy deals with the condition and, more importantly, the visibility of homelessness. I've noted that community as a "purr word" (Frey and Underwood, 20110) masks that irreconcilable tension at the core of community—the necessary tension between the accretion that draws the subject into a membership, an interiorized space, and the exterior *threat* against which community forms, but keeps at its heart. Immunization requires the presence of that which it seeks to eliminate. The problem, however, is not the tension. The tension *between* the interior and the exterior of community is not undesirable. The *tension,* the fracture that opens community is the very process

that sustains life. The body must be open and able to adapt in order to survive. The problem is when Law functions to close the boundaries, and to seal off the interior. The function of policies that address, not homelessness as a condition, but the people who live that condition, is to delimit an interior, communal space against the Other, to identify a boundary and then to seal it off.

To take up the question of community and policy, and then to ask new questions that point toward a transformative politics, I argue that the extant metaphors that guide the vision and provisions for community actually work instead to *limit* the possibilities for community. Thus, we must reimagine the limits of community within the biopolitical sphere. Given the map of the discourse of homelessness in which policy has been written, enforced, and embodied, we can say that the metaphors tell a story, but more importantly, they point the direction for the story. The metaphorical turn is not an abstraction or a move away from the presence of the body—biopolitics begins with the flesh, with the biological fact of the human body in its being (Campbell, 2006). Rather, the metaphorical turn engages and places the body right at the center of law and policy.

The broader dissertation project explored the immunitarian paradigm in terms of its relationship with community. I have been careful to attend to the sense of "waiting" that compassion requires—but I want also to note that compassion requires holding dialectics in play, living in paradox, and recognizing that our propensity for oppositional thinking has too often binarized a phenomenon that is only both/and, rather than either/or. I believe this is consistent with a systems perspective, in that it requires an open seeing of phenomena. Interventions are a tough prospect. They require more than our cultural, social, political system has taught us. While "neoliberalism" has been critiqued for its failure to address multiple modernities, it is directly reflective of I suggest a metaphorical shift from current community metaphors that are framed as

disease and immunization, toward contagion and *adaptation*. I suggest that such a shift invites us to reimagine the methods and possibilities for meaningful, lasting social transformation. Notably, such transformation is not a projection outward, but a transformation in perception—one that could lead toward greater care, connection, and responsivity.

Mapping the Discourse

Mapping the discourse of public responses reveals the very particular discursive ecology in which social policy regarding homelessness has been written, and is not undercut by a persistent and seemingly unresolvable dialectic. On one hand, there is an evident awareness of the systematic complexities underlying poverty, and on the other, there is a co-occurring response that at its mildest is a categorical dispassion, a lack of identification with the Other, and at its worst is a remarkable vitriol for those who occupy the most vulnerably embodied spaces. What the text reveals is consistent with my prior discussion: we see an intractable story of community as a closure against an ever-present threat. This is the story of community, the narrative foundation that lies right alongside of the story of inclusion. If within, then without. Inclusion requires exclusion. That's the dialectic story we know. Metaphor shapes the story that will be told. Metaphors set the problem and the solution will be consistent with the metaphorical framing.

I focus here on the metaphorical problem at the three levels of scale I've addressed in the previous chapters: those who live homeless, the policies that define, surveil, and discipline those who live homeless, and mediated coverage and responses to homelessness. There is a consistent, structural thread across all three: once the metaphor of disease becomes the primary metaphorical lens, the means by which the text (homelessness and "the homeless") is read must

follow the narrative line of that metaphorical framing. Each metaphor requires a narrative resolution. The metaphor implicates its creators in the story-telling process. Once one activates the metaphor, it has narrative consequences—it prompts a response along those metaphorical lines, and we arrive at a resolution that sustains the very problem inherent in the story. New stories, new visions, new *solutions*. not *re*-solutions, are out of reach—out of imagination. The scenario is already imagined, the course set, not by intention but by the perceived trajectory of the story (Bruner, 2009). So what are the metaphors in play here?

The metaphorical framing of the condition of homelessness presents it as a plague, one that emerges within and out of the failings of social, political and economic systems. There is a curious turn, a notably neoliberal turn, however, when the person experiencing that condition and responding to it becomes the subject (and then object) of that self same discourse. Rather than locating the "plague" systemically at the institutional level of scale, there is a turn toward "the homeless." The person becomes the signifier for a complex of systemic failings—at once the victim and the bearer of the plague, they become the viral agent, the threat embodied. There, too, is a move from "plague" to "infestation." I sketch these two metaphors through an abbreviated scan of local and national news coverage and public metaphorical framings of homelessness.

These comprise the primary metaphors in mediated coverage. CBS News, the National Student Campaign Against Homelessness and Hunger (http://www.studentsagainsthunger.org/), the Huffington Post (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/carey-fuller/homelessness-ignored-epidemic_b_1660599.html), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (http://homeless.samhsa.gov/resource/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-youth-an-epidemic-of-homelessness-executive-summary-26488.aspx) all frame homelessness as an *epidemic* and a *plague*. This is a familiar leitmotif, but we may perhaps understand "plague"

as a condition that capitalizes on our collective and individual, embodied vulnerabilities. As I

noted, there is a turn when the discussion takes up the *one* who lives the condition. Here is where

the language changes. Infestation enters the metaphorical terrain. For example, former

conspiracy theorist Charlie Veitch (Storr, 5/29/2014,

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/), released a short on YouTube

entitled "Cleansing Manchester of the Homeless Infestation" (Charles Veitch, 2015). His is a

response *against* the policing of those living homeless, but he responds to the language of

infestation. More disturbing is a text written and self published by martial artist and self-

proclaimed philosopher Phil Elmore entitled *The Homeless Threat,* in which "we" are under

attack from "them."

   News and media coverage of homelessness and public responses to the presence of those

living homeless is rife with the discourse of, inevitably, threat. This is a threat to the health of the

community, a contaminant. And on the other side of this metaphorical framing, those who live

homeless often find themselves in a threatened territory—temporary shelters that are themselves

infested (http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/lice/body/gen_info/faqs.html), health crises with no

provisions for health care, living in vulnerable conditions at all level of scale. This is a

biologically framed problem. What is curious is that the policies that address homelessness, as

I've detailed in the previous chapter, regulate the body at its limits—though the limits of the

body are actually not delimiting, but liminal. That is to say again, in the most literal sense, such

policies regulate the very points of contact between the body and the world—they regulate

movement and contact. To recap: NO *sleeping, standing, walking, sitting, eating. No protection*

from the cold, no personal possessions, no memories, no homing, no making one's self known or

knowing one's self, but this one *must* ALWAYS *be ready to account for who he or she is, as a*

viable person/citizen/member *here.* Every "no" is followed a most basic need of our animal existence.

To take up metaphor and narrative frames, Schön's work provides a means of unlocking the persistence of the disease metaphor. Metaphor, as I mentioned earlier, *does something,* and it *reveals something.* It motivates a response, but the response maintains the stability of the metaphorical framing. The metaphor provides both the context for understanding "the problem" and delimits the realm of possible responses. In order to see perhaps what comes *before* the language of policy, before the social policies as artifacts, understanding the generative metaphor in play may be crucial. As Schön writes, "My point here is not that we *ought* to think metaphorically about social policy problems, but that we *do* already think about them in terms of certain pervasive tacit generative metaphors; and that we ought to become critically aware of these generative metaphors" (256). And so, recognizing that the metaphor of disease and threat are the salient metaphors in news coverage of homelessness allows us to understand and see the available responses. We see terms such as "chronic," "aggressive," "epidemic," "plague" often, and they tell a story about how the problem gets defined and the purpose set.

However, are there places, conversations, creative spaces and methods in and through which we might see ourselves seeing? In which the medical metaphorical framing is made explicit? Of course, we cannot dispense with our corporeal metaphors for community, because community is corporeal—it is the condition of being, and of being with. It is also a body comprised of bodies. However, when the biomedical model, one that profits and is deemed successful by its capacity to eradicate disease, to eliminate foreign agents in the body, sets the realm of possibility for imagining community, the prescription is already given. You see, we require contamination. We require our own endangerment. We—embodied and vulnerable—

must *open*, always open, in order to *be.* The labor of being requires the opening. Or perhaps it *is the opening.* Should we close ourselves, we are left alone with our precariousness, alone in the shelter of risk, the communicative community a dream out of reach.

Now we have a new view of the tension out the tension between community and immunity. Immunity, again, occupies two terrains. One, immunity is seen as a function of Law in community. Political immunity absolves its subject of the obligation of community. In that absolution, the *immunitas* is *outside* of community, and outside the polis. The *immunitas* not only is outside the obligation of the gift exchange of community, but also *has no gift to give.* Without the gift, how does one make sense in community? One does not. But, to revisit and sum the biomedical immunity intervention, immunization requires the introduction of the viral agent into the body in order to create the immune response. When leveraged at the scale of community, immunity in this fashion negates the very interiority that defines our understanding of community—rather, the way in which community enters consciousness through the sense of self and other. That is, we must take in that which the body (at any corporeal level of scale) seeks to destroy. Law functions precisely to immunize community *against itself.* The being-with, the *mitsein* that is the human condition, is actually mitigated by the structure (Law) that sustains it.

Homelessness on one hand provides a site of inquiry by which we may understand how the community-immunity tension is realized, and on the other, is a lived experience that warrants care and attention within the discipline of communication. But, and this is the reflexive turn, *not as a generalizable condition* that can be understood or even imagined through the simple utterance of the word. Nor can one story or anecdote reveal what *it* is. Rather, I offered a phenomenology of community broadly that manifests through a particular phenomenon. The semiotic phenomenological method provided a means of, not unseeing (which is an impossible

task—we perceive from our locations in the world), but of questioning the presupposition that the terms we use contain the experience of the condition. To that end, "homeless" was imagined dialectically through an exploration of home. Community was imagined alongside its dialectical other, immunity. When articulated as the seam between two seemingly oppositional phenomena, both "homeless" and "community" are revealed in their complexity as tensions, boundaries, seen only as they are crossed.

My consideration of boundary brought me to my question of how Law organizes against the precariousness of human life in the contemporary political economy through the precarization of labor and employment practices that are hinged upon insecurity. I argued that rather than an end in itself (a definitive economic or sociological pattern), I located precarity as a central concern for communication scholarship precisely because the impact of current labor conditions that leave one unable to manage one's time is whole-scale across communicative systems

I looked to a thermodynamic rendering of community because we can take up Esposito's two-fold argument of immunity and community phenomenologically. Heat exchange is a biological requisite for survival. When a viral agent is introduced into the body, the body responds by heating up, by adjusting temperature in order to survive. The biological membrane, experienced and felt by shifts in temperature, is relegated to the singular human body, but to the broader communicative network of community. Beyond or in addition to the streetscape I described, overheating has consequences for relationship in less obvious ways. In the following recounting, I'll discuss this more as I saw it manifest in institutional spaces.

The community corpus is not mere metaphor. Again, the body is a body comprised of bodies at all levels of scale. The human body is comprised of atoms, cells, bacterium, viruses; the

body of the People is comprised of the people, their human bodies, even as the body of the People legislates the human body out of the public sphere. And as with the human body, which is a system of flows and transports, openings and closures, community is a relationship, the membrane between an interior and an exterior. Thinking into community in this way, along a nihilistic thread, presented no short order of problems. I had to watch my own thinking unfold and transform, knowing only that it would, but without selecting a direction for the shift and just waiting to see what happened.

I noted my "standpoint" as culturally American in this work, and it does present a difficulty. Aside from my own struggle to watch, describe, reflect and interpret the moments as they arrived, I grappled with my work *in community* all the while questioning the terms at play. The danger of the data being taken as self-evident is that we foreclose on the possibilities of sight. The problem (and the solution) are already before us. Homelessness (and even its recent counterpart, houselessness) both set the problem as a lack of a home, and set the solution: provide the home. The issue, then, is that the "problem" persists. One without a home cannot belong.

The theorists I cite complicate and at times annihilate the very projects we take to heart. We build, solve, resolve. We throw tissues at a grief that is much deeper than the tears it produces, and then we believe that those tissues are the resolution. *Just stop crying.* The measure of success is the cessation of tears and runny noses. But the *problem* is not the crying. The crying only signifies a much deeper complex of grief and happiness, memory and story, body and emotion, and the recursions of all those with each other. Crying is only a regulatory response of the body.

When a community cries out, what is the source of its howls and moans? When we feel affection for "our community," for what is it we long? Affection being, of course, an expression of desire. Looking beneath the source of the grief, or looking into it reveals something from which we often run: that there is nothing there to desire or grieve. Only a debt. And yet, we persist. We charge forth with our tissues and our ideas about how to fix this, how to make it better. Even as I wrote this dissertation, I was engaged in a community-*building* effort. By way of a first-order conclusion, I'll turn to that now.

Doing "The Work" but What is Working?

On April 10, 2014, I met with Hillsborough County's County Administrator, Mike Merrill. We met mid-morning. I was led to a conference room, a vast expanse of table swelling in the center of the room. Near twenty chairs crowded around the table. Empty. Arm rests free of arms. I waited. Fluorescent lights vibrated. I can see it in the periphery of my vision. I am sensitive to fluorescent lights. I find myself inexplicably irritable, the edges of me thin out. I can't hear what people say as well. The vibration of the lights are right there, encroaching on my senses. I fight the instinct to turn them off. The entire back wall of the room is window. The Florida spring beams through the glass. Overhead, the bulbs vibrate.

I take out a notebook. All the questions I had disappear. I'm not nervous. But the stopgap of questions, the ones I want to ask that don't have a clear purpose, they choke up –a knot of concern that tightens the throat.

Mike Merrill walks in, apologetic for the delay. I am struck by several things: he is calm. Somber. This conversation will have gravity. I sense it. I notice his comportment. He is tall, lean, straight-backed and broad-shouldered, but he carries a weight.

"'To be perfectly honest,'" Merrill replies in an interview with the *Tampa Bay Times*, answering the question as to whether or not he would consider the County Administrator position a long-term appointment, "I don't have a passion for it like someone who has aspired to do this job.'" The words used to describe him are "honesty" and "humility" (Varian, 2010). He is effective. He is unilaterally supported in his appointment. And he is tired. He sits across the table from me. I have a small, spiral-ringed notebook and a pen a hotel bartender gave me. It's a good pen. Weighty, but slim. "I'm going to give you this pen because you look like you're doing something that matters," he'd said. I don't romanticize his impression. Three nights at a hotel bar. One appetizer, one bourbon. Every night the same. I tip well and ask next to nothing. But I feel that now, the need to do "something that matters." But what?

Mike Merrill's eyes turn down at the edges. This gives one the impression he is searching, looking beneath surfaces—and, as I will discover, this is a time when form follows intention. He *is* searching. I am not wrong in my initial assessment. Merrill doesn't want his job. As county administrator for Hillsborough County, he has had to make tough and unpopular decisions. He has "cleaned house" when it was needed.

 I have an hour of his time, and my questions have no answers. He sits down across from me. He used to be where I am now. He was a student in the program. A communication scholar. There is a connection here, but how to find it? What to say? I don't recall the exact unfolding of the conversation. As I write this, I feel the early fiction writer's pressure to show how bodies move in space. There must have been a point of origin.

He is generous with his time. We talk for better than an hour. His initial question is operational. In sum, *what can I do for you?* I don't have a set of questions that would fit that trajectory. I am not interviewing him. I want to know how he understands the matter at hand:

what do the policies accomplish? Why and how did they come to pass? What's the landscape in which they have emerged? And who understands the consequences and where are their voices heard? Mike Merrill shares with me the damning statistic, supported by my finding on HomelessHub.org: when some of them are placed in permanent housing, in which they have access to medical care, mental health care, dental care—all manner of necessary support—they die. Now one theory is that the body's immune system is worn down from time on the streets, and when a person can rest, illness catches up with him. And that may be the case, but I am left to wonder, as I consider Leland's story, one I share with Merrill, whether there is a greater complexity in this. I wonder, in talking with Leland and several others who have lived or currently live on the streets, whether the kind of knowing that street living requires—the kind of constant innovation and strategy, even the kind of pain and the kind of escape living on the streets would seem to require—if these have a certain "value." And in these places, that value is discounted. And if I head down that path, then it seems to me that in the cases Merrill and Gulliver describe, these places are just well-funded mausoleums, cold storage for people no one wants to see or think about. And that's an ugly way to see this, I suppose. Leland stayed a while longer. I got him some water. Gave him my pack of cigarettes. He took off, waving and smiling at the patrons as he left. I went home heavy hearted, angry, brooding, thinking over and over again, "We've gotten it all wrong."

Have we gotten it all wrong though? I had the chance to briefly work with the Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative from September of 2013 until February of 2014. During that time, the new CEO, Antoinette Hayes, and the COO, Antonio Byrd, launched a remarkable effort to rapidly rehouse 75 veterans in one day. They located scattered site housing—that is, groups of apartments located throughout the city to maintain both a support network for newly placed

residents and to meet the needs of residents who already occupy diverse areas of town. Their first effort accommodated veterans, and launched on Veteran's Day, November 11, 2014. The mayor spoke, heads of sports' teams, movers and shakers in the local and national business world—it was quite spectacular. A woman and her child took the microphone at the end. She told her story of coming back from Iraq and gradually losing support networks and economic stability. They'd been staying in shelter spaces for several months. She spoke quietly. The crowd erupted into applause after she finished. Volunteers and veterans filed into the cruise terminal that acted as the staging ground for the day's event. I was there to act as a participant observer, documenting my observations about the process, about the responses from the veterans and the volunteers, to listen for patterns of communication. Such observations were to provide the groundwork for what was intended to become a narrative document of Operation Reveille!, the name for the rehousing effort in Tampa, one modeled after Hayes' successful event in St. Louis, Missouri. St. Louis is Tampa's sister city, though while there is a glut of affordable housing in St. Louis, there is a dearth in Tampa. That said, Hayes found 75 units across the city and placed 75 veterans in permanent housing situations that day. I have no intention to disclaim the importance of that effort. It was tremendous. I got to know a veteran who wouldn't let himself believe he was getting an apartment until they placed the key in his hand, at which point he started weeping. I can't imagine many who would remain unmoved.

But in talking with Hayes later, she shares stories of those who, once having a place to live, would sneak in the window at night and sleep on the floor because they felt like they were trespassing. Others simply left and didn't come back. The results of this effort remain to be seen. I don't say that with skepticism. My question is whether we've set the problem wrong. And so the solution cannot account for a problem that remains unseen.

In order to still better understand this particular *community*, I attended several meetings hosted by the Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative. These are Continuum of Care meetings, and draw together representatives from the agencies and organizations that work to assist those who live homeless in Tampa Bay. The meetings began at 9:00 AM, following thirty minutes of networking. I arrived at 8:30 and observed how the "network" lit up. The few who arrived either sat alone, waiting for the meeting to begin, or talked to the one or two people they seemed to already know. People trickled in slowly, and took seats next to those they knew. They introduced themselves by name and agency. The meeting proceeded, and I began to understand its purpose: this was a data swap. How many homeless in, how many out, how many returning, who has motel vouchers, who has surplus bread, what events were taking place soon, etc. This is clearly important information, but it was information—not knowledge. I took stock of the beleaguered faces, heard the frustration in the room as they recounted a lack of resources or connectivity, saw the doubt as one attendee announced the benefits of the new data system they would be using that would track those incoming and outgoing in the county shelters. The meeting adjourned. Four or five people remained to talk. I walked away with no understanding of the landscape of local homelessness nor how the participants in that meeting were making sense of the conditions they were supposed to be ameliorating.

And I began to wonder if, when the flow and stream of resources is , and the necessary pacing for providing and accounting for those resource far exceeds the provision of the resources, perhaps one's capacity for sensemaking and vision is limited to that which is manageable: an exchange of information.

As I continued my involvement with the organization, we developed a set of introductory questions to shift the ways in which participants might orient to that space, which

has the capacity to be highly relational, which has the capacity to invite the myriad knowledges into conversation with one another. At the December 2014 meeting, we piloted a World Café process, changing the organization of the space and crafting questions that would point toward a kind of group sensemaking. We began the meeting, however, with the question, "What keeps you dedicated to the work you're doing?" I learned that six of the forty participants had lived homeless at some point in time in their lives. I learned that Antonio Byrd, COO of the Initiative, came to the work because he, too, had lived homeless. The questions I asked were crafted to invite participants to reflect on their ideal community, on the community in which they currently live, on what they wish for that community in the future, and what next steps they could take before they left the room. The last question often produced the same answers as the third question. "Good transportation" is desired. How do you get there? "Better transportation." There was a shift, however, when they saw that the next step was right there at the table. The other side of overheating is, of course, overcooling. Either way, a paralysis—the network slows to, but it is not a foreclosure on rebirth. It is an invitation to activate what lay latent in the room.

That fear, "We've gotten it all wrong," is reductive, a singularizing assessment of complex problems that require complex responses. Perhaps what we've gotten wrong is, again, our presumption that we know what the problem is. What I saw in those meetings was both promising and disheartening. The amount of care was tremendous. The exhaustion was palpable. The questions were non-existent. I am inclined often to close with a simple proclamation, one that is open to possibility and intentionally ambiguous: there is work to be done. I will close with a projection of future directions for the "work."

Looking Forward

I introduced this dissertation by leveraging this as an engaged philosophy of communication. I'll return to that motivation, since I think it sets the tone well for future work. The brief anecdotes I shared from my time in the "field" with THHI are not intended to provide the foundation for my dissertation—hence their place as concluding thoughts and reflections—but instead to ground me in my commitment to understanding the concept of community as an embodied (im)possibility, one for which the ruptures and internal fractures have dire consequences for those living homeless. This commitment means a path on which I continually view philosophy as guiding my work in community, and my work in community as guiding my philosophical inquiry. It is precisely the trajectory of my questions in this dissertation that guided my approach to working with Tampa Hillsborough Homeless Initiative. I then watched and reflected as the trajectory of my questions changed in response to what I gleaned from spending time getting a sense of the landscape at various levels of scale.

I believe this work contributes to the philosophy of communication in a unique way: my philosophical interventions and reflections begin in the lived context, in the immediate and experiential social and communal worlds. Additionally, this work contributes to communication scholarship more broadly by bringing philosophy into what has often been staked out within the purview of social science work. Beyond a story or a study of homelessness as a phenomenon *out there,* we see ourselves, our sense of community as sustaining a fracture—irreconcilable, absolutely, and yet, it is precisely that fracture that sustains the tension that *is* community. We need it. It is an opening. I have been asked along the way what I proposed to do about the problems I theorize. I struggle with that. I am engaged in a fair amount of *doing,* and as of yet, I haven't participated in an effort that feels like we've nailed it—perhaps because there is a

presumed "it" to be nailed. However, I just skimmed the surface with Tampa Hillsborough

Homeless Initiative. What we began was a process of reflection, a way of seeing forward and

backward reflexively. I think helping to facilitate reflective spaces, spaces that are process-

oriented, is a fine starting point.

…

I accompanied the veteran I was paired with on the day of Operation Reveille! to his

new apartment. IKEA and Ashley Furniture had furnished the place. There were non-perishables

stocked in the cabinets, as well as dishes, dishtowels, paper towels, and soap. His refrigerator

was full of juice, Gatorade, water, deli meats and cheeses. He had a large bag of produce in his

hand given to him by a local grower. He, the driver, and I walked through the apartment. Each

detail was met with amazement. He had a small porch, two chairs outside—the view was a

grassy field. He had a hard time pulling himself together, and neither the driver nor I were any

more composed than he was.

We stayed a little while—no rush to get back to the terminal. We talked, and as we

did, his face faltered. He looked around and the smile faded. I asked if everything was okay. His

response: "This isn't mine." It was chilling. Though he brightened again, I felt that moment of

fear. He is haunted by the strangeness of this place, this place contrived to feel like home—and

beautifully contrived. With great care. He will settle in, make home, abandon the immediate,

visceral memory of living in his truck. Those days will become "those days," but that brief

moment sticks with me. "This isn't mine."

I am struck still by his quiet proclamation, one that sums both the existential

condition of homelessness and the lived sense of alienation when one's home is already made for

them. He simply steps into a life someone else conceived for him. When I think of a moment

such as this one, I realize I don't yet know what the conversations will be as I move forward. I know only that these remarkable moments I've had over the course of this work have granted me an irrevocable perceptual shift. I move forward not with trepidation, but with great care.

I replied to my new acquaintance with all I had available: "All you can do is breathe your way through it." We walked back into the afternoon sun and looked at the field across the parking lot. Beyond it, the cars moved on Gandy Boulevard. The heat came off the pavement even in November. The cars in the parking lot were furnaces by then. We shook hands and hugged, promised to stay in touch, though with no means to do so. As we drove away, I watched him in the doorframe of his apartment, staring at the field across the street, standing on the threshold, still and unmoving. The metaphor haunts me still.

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APPENDIX A: PERMISSIONS

Figure 1: "The High Life, " Laura Adams Wilson, 2014.

Initial Facebook Correspondence:

Hey Laura. I have an odd request, and I'm hoping you can help. I'm writing my dissertation, and I have this idea: I want to begin with an image of a city from an aerial point of view. But not an actual photograph. A painting. Bursts of color. Doesn't necessarily need to be aerial, but I want something that is a city reduced to points of color. Does that make sense? Your work comes to mind, of course, because of your play between loose structure and form and the way you use color. Is there an image you would not mind me using for this purpose? I know that's an odd request. Especially when we haven't talked in years, but your work comes immediately to mind as relevant.

Laura Adams Wilson

Hey doll! How are you? I am honoured that you thought of me! What is the use? Will it be published with credit to me? I have a couple area paintings but they are more landscape based rather than city. Can you scroll through my FB page and see if anything specific tickles your fancy?

Heather Curry

Of course I would credit you! Without a doubt. Just my dissertation. If it became more, we could talk about official permissions--any fees or what have you. For now, it's just a diss. It will go to the university and be on the university commons site, but I would cite you and your work, so we could talk about how you prefer to have that citation listed--following, obviously, the literary conventions. I'll check your FB page. The idea is this: Tampa introduced panhandling laws in 2011. There was an article from a Tampa Bay Times reporter about a safety vest ordinance that sounded an awful lot like a fashion editorial. "Tampa was awash in hues of bright green and yellow." That sort of thing. I want to begin with an image that shows a city as color points--use that as a way to connect the abstraction of policy to the stories behind it. But the painting has to be dynamic, well rendered, something that calls the reader/viewer to pay attention. Your work does precisely that! There's also the meditation on city-color, the way we view architecture, the way we engage it, as static. Your paintings remind viewers that structure and form are mobile and energic. That's important for discussions about urban architecture and policy. Does that make ANY sense?

Laura Adams Wilson

Yes:)! Sounds fab! Let me know if any of the pieces will work:)!!

Email Correspondence:

                              12:30 PM (27 minutes ago)

Heather Curry <hrcurry@gmail.com>
to Laura

Morning, friend!

We already established this months ago, but I think something more official-sounding might be useful. Would you mind sending an email that acknowledges that you have granted permission for me to use your painting, "The High Life" in my dissertation, *A Semiotic Phenomenology of Homelessness and the Precarious Community: A Matter of Boundary*?

Much appreciation,

Heather

                              12:48 PM (9 minutes ago)

Laura Wilson
to me

Dear Heather,

I am granting you permission to use
A copy of my original painting, "The High Life" in your dissertation, *A Semiotic Phenomenology of Homelessness and the Precarious Community: A Matter of Boundary*?
Best wishes my friend,
Laura Adams Wilson

Sent from my iPhone

Figure 4: Man Asleep across from Hillsborough County Building on July 18, 2013, Amanda Mole, *The Examiner*.

Facebook correspondence with Amanda Mole:

Hey there. I sent an email via gmail, but in case you didn't get it, wanted to follow up here. I'll copy the text from it (sorry if you get it twice): Hi Amanda, I'm closing up my dissertation, and I included a photograph from your Examiner article detailing the passage of that crappy legislation that banned storage of personal property in public in July of 2013. You took this poignant photo of a man sleeping on a bench while the City Council and community members fought over the legislation. Would you mind if I used it in the final version of my diss? If a problem, no worries. I'll remove it. I think it falls under the public domain, but I'd still want your permission to reprint. Many thanks! Hope all is well. I always admired and continue to admire your tremendous moxy. You're a helluvan activist. Best, Heather

Oddly I did not get your email, but.you absolutely have permission! Can I read your dissertation?

Wow. Sure! No one wants to read this thing! But I'd be happy to share. Thank you so much! I wonder if I'm using the incorrect email address. No matter. This will work just fine. Much, much appreciation!