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Embodying Plurality: Becoming more-than homeless

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Abstract: Arising from seven months of auto/ethnographic research in an English city, this paper attends to the mundane practices through which we – ‘the homeless’ - renegotiate ourselves to become more-than-homeless. The ‘we’ through which these auto/biographies are writ denotes an inflection on the spectral presence of my own experiences of homelessness, spectral because they reflect a historic occurrence brought back in the doing of this research. Affording a unique position of betweenness, this article thus seeks to add depth and nuance to the homeless literature by emphasising the embodied performances through which we become more-than-homeless. To this end, this paper contributes to recent approaches in homelessness research drawing on performativity and embodiment to show how we are neither ontologically nor existentially reducible to our homelessness. Exploring the webs of relational engagements between human and non-human others, space and subjectivity, the ongoing (re)negotiations expressed in This article has been accepted for publication and undergone full peer review but has not been through the copyediting, typesetting, pagination and proofreading process, which may lead to differences between this version and the [Version of Record](#). Please cite this article as [doi: 10.1111/TRAN.12373](https://doi.org/10.1111/TRAN.12373)

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acts of remembering, forgetting, supressing, misremembering and imagining, distance the moment of homelessness so that we are able to become someone other than 'homeless'. This distancing is not to shade the ways in which we are different. Rather, it is to reveal a dimension of possibilities, both spatial and temporal, through which we resist a subsumption into the singular mass of 'the homeless', becoming instead someone more-than-homeless.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Arising from seven months of auto/ethnographic research, this paper attends to the mundane practices through which we – ‘the homeless’ - renegotiate ourselves to become more-than-homeless. The ‘we’ through which I write denotes an autoethnographic inflection on the spectral presence of my own experiences of homelessness, spectral because they reflect a historic occurrence brought back in the doing of this research. Developing through participant observation, informal and semi-structured interviews, volunteering and ‘being with’ participants, the homeless auto/biographies distilled share ancestry with a life history approach adopted by May (2000), insofar as they exceed the moment or place of homelessness itself. And yet so too do they differ, seeking neither chronological sequencing nor a reconstruction of homeless life. Weaving through acts of remembering, forgetting, supressing, misremembering and imagining, the narration of homeless (auto)biographies instead intimate a *distancing*. Emphasising the messy and relational entanglements between people, space and subjectivity through which an embodied account of homelessness is emerging, the negotiation of a social self enacted in spaces themselves writ through with various discourses of power and regulation has become forefront (Barker, 2013; Cloke et al., 2008; 2010; Duff, 2017; Gerrard and Farrugia, 2015; Hennigan, 2018; Lancione, 2013). Contributing to these debates, what acts of distancing reveal is a dimension which, when recognised thus far, appears as if only incidentally (with exception Langegger and Koester, 2016): that although we are homeless, we are neither ontologically nor existentially reducible to our homelessness. Instead, we are more-than-homeless.

Distancing then is not to shade the ways in which we are different; our differences have long marked us as objects of study, to some worthwhile ends. Inspired by the deconstructive turn of feminist scholars and cultural criticism, the 1990s and early-2000s, for instance, beget a renewed flurry for the recognition of difference *within* ‘the homeless’ populace. These ‘discoveries’ included the rural homeless (Cloke et al., 2000; 2001; 2003) the young (Carlen, 1996; Ploeg, 1989), ethnic minorities (Harrison, 1999; Kramer and

Barker, 1996), women (Watson, 2000), single adults (Fitzpatrick et al., 2000), and the 'hidden' homeless (Crisis, 2004). Critiqued by some for failing to contribute to wider theoretical debates (Pleace and Quilgar, 2003), the tendency toward sub-categorising intoned a conceptual void left by the erasure of identities. This is not to undermine or render obsolete such work. Integral in disrupting representations of a unanimous homeless experience and therein highlighting social and spatial absences in policy and service provision (e.g. Davies et al., 2002), these contributions reflect their political and intellectual contexts. They speak, that is, of an underlying agenda for service provision necessitating empirically rich research, funded in the UK almost exclusively by charity and policy-orientated organisations (Pleace and Quilgar, 2003). Paradoxically then, even as identity comes under erasure, it remains essential. As Hall puts it, "there are no other, entirely different concepts with which to replace [identities], there is nothing to do but to continue to think with them -albeit now in their detotalised or deconstructed forms," (Hall, 1996: 15).

Yet if this was Hall throwing down the gauntlet, the challenge of thinking through a conceptual absence seemingly impossible, then its uptake has been far from disappointing. Supplementing feminist theories with performativity and embodiment, understandings of 'the homeless' intone plurality, process and subjectivity to usurp the staticity of a singular homeless identity. From the interactionist sociality of encounters entailing constant posturing and performing (Goffman, 1959), scholars have been able to demonstrate the regulation and managing of impressions enabling homeless persons to access services (Cloke et al., 2008), 'blend in' with the (domiciled) public (Langeegger and Koester, 2016), or simply survive day-to-day life (Barker, 2013). Similarly, Butler (1990; 1993; 1997) although working on gender, has ensured the politics of discourse no longer goes unchallenged. Unmasking dynamics of power involved in constructing and enacting 'the homeless' identity, Cresswell (1999), Pascale (2005), and Duff (2017) thus analyse how discursive performances inscribe and enact embodied struggles for place. Embodied because, to paraphrase Thrift, human and non-human actors are ongoing rearrangements whose immaterial, fleeting, improvised and affective engagements allow "new means of occupying, usurping, and producing spaces and times," (Thrift, 2000: 216).

In and of itself, clumping together 'the homeless' is thus neither inherently benevolent nor malign. Through the course of history and across various spaces, the naming of social groups has been manipulated to achieve diverse ends, ranging here from the expansion of state authority (Humphries, 1999), to developing service provision (Balda, 2016; Coleman et al., 2007), and the re-shaping of public narratives (Andersson and Valentine, 2015; Breeze

and Dean, 2012). Albeit in different ways, manipulation of ‘the homeless’ as a definitive substratum of society reverberates in its engagement with the breakdown of social relations and appeals to justice, with the echoes of an observation levelled by Griffin (2018) toward protest scholars. Concerned with the (perceived) innate good of protest, and here he distinguishes political activism from broader forms of protest, Griffin (2018: 215) attests how “it is almost impossible to conceive of their foci as being anything other than heroic, acts of great social good.” Instrumental within policy and service provision, homelessness research proffers potent testimony to such reflections, as discussions on the success of a suburban women’s hostel in Bristol by May et al. (2007) bear out. And yet, as objects of study in legislation and social support, homelessness inadvertently, if predictably remains, “the defining feature of a person’s character, overshadowing all other axes of identity,” (McCarthy, 2013: 46).

What distancing reveals instead are the possibilities both spatial and temporal through which we create openings to become more-than-homeless. For so far as scholarship is concerned, our nominalisation appears accidental, if not always benign. A form of shorthand emerging from theoretical modes of thinking underpinned by notions of socio-economic justice, wherein categorising people *en mass* transfigures homelessness into ‘the homeless’: a concept definable as much as an object worthy of examination (Farrugia, 2010; Pascale, 2005). This paper then, is less about homeless young people and rather more about young people who are amongst other things homeless. Subtle as this distinction is, its articulation is nothing less than a resistance against the dissolving and subsuming of our individual beings into a collective: ‘the homeless’.

2. EMBODIED NOBODIES

Writing in the plural to encompass a partially autoethnographic account risks enforcing the very antithesis of the argument at stake, persisting as it does in obscuring and concealing individuals. Supposing this iterance pits academics as a nefarious other, who although not holding us to be ‘filthy panhandlers’ (Knecht and Martinez, 2009) nevertheless know us as ‘homeless’ (Parsell, 2011), engenders a misunderstanding just as dangerous. To stop here then, is to miss the point. As opposed to simply denoting the presence of my experiences, and in the interests of reiterating the multiplicity of self, ‘we’ encompasses the plurality through which we are constructed – by both ourselves and others. Consequently, although by numbers we are six women and eight men, we speak from a great many more positions. If ever the

ambivalence of plurality is forgot, the sharp reprise of a young woman whose participation came to an abrupt end with the incensed rebuke: “*you ain’t homeless no more, you forgot what it’s like,*” serves as a reminder. Not least does her consternation point toward the inherent instability and constant negotiating of self through which scholars have turned to theories of performativity and embodiment. Perhaps more immediately, her anger betrays the power relations saturating research encounters. Mistakenly interpreting how “the researcher cannot conveniently tuck away the personal behind the professional, because fieldwork *is* personal” (England, 1994: 85), I assumed our similarities - *being homeless* - would mitigate any such tensions. I thought anger at being reduced to scholarly languages and categories I would never otherwise have known myself by would suffice. Personal precisely because it was inherently semi-autobiographical, in truth I was riding roughshod over the power my role as researcher engendered.

And yet, at first, knowing when to keep quiet or reciprocate questions *did* position me as “you’re one of us!” Our similar ages, ranging between eighteen and twenty-five, abetted in establishing temporary kinship, and an awkwardness at asking questions beyond the conversational made for reassurance, more often laughter. My own biases and mistrust for services cast me as a confidant, and yet entering accommodation units as a volunteer, tensions between honouring participant’s trust and obeying safeguarding regulations exacerbated the dynamics at play. Further still, our experiences were diverse and incomparable: between us, we lived in high- and low-support accommodation units, temporary accommodation, hostels, squats, sofa-surfed, or utilised a mixture of shelters, family members, and sex-for-rent beds. Stopping at nothing to avoid sleeping rough, of which eleven participants had some experience, jail cells also featured as alternative sites of accommodation. Following a common practice in homelessness research, four participants were recruited directly through their service workers, reflecting how services like hostels, accommodation units, soup kitchens and drug clinics provide a primary point of contact between the two seemingly estranged worlds of researchers and researched (for instance Langegger and Koester, 2016; May et al., 2007; Watts et al., 2018). And yet, snowballing among participants, it was in coffee shops, gardening, and dancing to portable radios that I became part of everyday life. Spaces, in other words, estranged from institutional and non-institutional service provision. Until, in an instant, I got it wrong.

Rather than languish in the loss of trust caused by my embodiment of the role of researcher, the confrontation points toward the larger web of meanings, norms and narratives to which any given body is connected (Cresswell, 1999). This process of embodiment as the

Accepted Article

site where homelessness is both lived and felt ratifies the body as a site where broader forms of power relations are enacted and ascribed (Lancione, 2019; Parsell, 2011). When I asked to record our conversation and was rebuked for the audacity, I neglected to recognise how I was performing power as a researcher. Thus when Butler (2005: 84) writes, “I speak as an ‘I’, but do not make the mistake of thinking that I know precisely all that I am doing when I speak in that way,” she too is intimating this relational, co-constructive dynamic. Crucially, Butler’s (1990; 1993; 1997) emphasis on discourse implores we recognise the *creation* of subjects. Speaking as a collective is thus neither to subsume our individual selves into a singular conglomeration of ‘the homeless’, nor to make a dualistic distinction between those homeless and not. As work by Bennett (2011), Imrie (2004) and Veness (1993), makes clear, institutional definitions of home and homeless are bound to relations of power which otherwise conceal lived experiences and forms of resistance – be it domestic abuse, the inaccessibility of home for those with disabilities, or the very construct of home as a place of dwelling. Instead then, ‘we’ expresses an attempt to convey the becoming, the multiple, the unboundedness of self and the ways in which the moment(s) of homelessness are themselves caught in a non-linear temporality. As we shall soon see, its lived experiences extend behind and ahead of the moment in which it is encountered. ‘We’ thus also marks tensions and contradictions between our experiences, a slippage between our personal worlds such that we are never limited to being previously/homeless, but people always becoming (Veness, 1993). Following in the tradition of homelessness scholarship with its underlying thematic of social justice, the protestation here concerns the presentation of homelessness as the locus of our being.

2.1 Being homeless?

Writing on the revolting masses of France, Stefan Jonsson (2008) asserts that nominalisation of ‘the mass’ stretched its tenants in all manner of directions such that, “regardless of what these masses have looked like in reality -indeed, regardless of whether they have ever really existed- they have lived a life of their own in intellectual history, in political traditions, and in art, literature, theatre, and cinema” (Jonsson, 2008: 7). Writing of legislative responses developed across Britain since the fourteenth century, A. L. Beier (1985; 2008), William Chambliss (1965) and Jon May (2000) similarly attest how various mechanisms –charity, criminalisation, institutionalisation, enforced labour – have sought to manage poverty through control of the poor. Whilst this is to paint with a broad brush, the process of identifying (and nominalising) the impoverished masses reflect dynamic and complex

historical relations between vagrancy, poverty and labour. Aided and abetted by the unique breadth of vagrancy laws once premised “-on personal condition, [a] state of being [means] individuals merely need to exhibit the characteristics or stereotypes of vagrants for authorities to make an arrest,” (Ocobock, 2008: 1). To this day, this vague yet visual emphasis on poverty remains. What follows explores the legacy of such vagrancy laws implicitly present through continuing practices of spatial exclusion. Drawing on work from Australia and North America alike, the continued colouring of contemporary relations between homelessness, poverty, un- and underemployment, mobility and conceptions of the ‘un/deserving poor’ are demonstrated to remain neither simple nor static. With aesthetics found to be wanting, foiled by the slow deconstruction of its masses by feminist and cultural critique, space is made for the individual. As will become shortly apparent, this distancing stretches our capacity for understanding beyond both the spatial and temporal dimensions of the ‘here-and-now’ revealing, in its stead, the messy, fragmentary collisions composing any given individual.

Tackling relations between incarceration and visible homelessness, Garland et al., (2010) and Gerrard and Farrugia (2015) exemplify how contemporary debates on homelessness in the US and Australia share ancestry with the European invention of vagrancy. Opening with an extract from *The Sydney Morning Herald* published in 1864, Gerrard and Farrugia posit that criminalisation of the “houseless and homeless poor, who are sentenced for no crime but their poverty” (HGD, 1864 cited in Gerrard and Farrugia, 2015: 2219), is underscored as an assault on the city, wherein the city represents the spectacle of capital (see also May, 2000). This class-specific aesthetics of homelessness finds its roots in Duncan (1978) and Smith (1996), whose work on urban space reveals of gentrification a bourgeois politics and affective response – fear, disgust, contempt- to (perceived) failure. Speaking of his decision to commute from the rural town where his supported accommodation is locatedⁱ, into the city where he sells the *Big Issue*, Elvis, a twenty-five-year-old man, typifies the collusion between poverty and exclusion:

“Right cess pit. Scum up there. Up their own arses. Don’t go there, don’t beg. I get the first bus out in the morning, and I go back late, you know maybe six or seven. I spend all the time here if I can. I stay there only to live.”

It is a four-hour roundtrip for which he will have to sell five magazines daily to break even on his bus fare. And yet, as the seller of a magazine organised to offer homeless individuals a legitimate form of income, Elvis relishes the idea that he is his own boss, able to choose

when he does or does not work. Discernible by the *Big Issue* jacket issued to all vendors, Elvis is not however, recognised as an entrepreneur in the conservative rural town. Instead of being a trader, he is identified as ‘homeless’. Residents police what the law will not, and Elvis is forced by their neglect and cruelty to sell his wares elsewhere, legitimate though they are. To discern why Elvis continues to face social cleansing enforced by the rural town’s residents, Neil Smith’s theory of the ‘revanchist city’, what he described as “a revengeful and reactionary campaign [...] against the supposed ‘theft’ of the city” (Smith, 1996: 207), proves useful. Extended by Don Mitchell (1997) in his iconic and influential essay *The Annihilation of Space by Law*, Mitchell adopts revanchism in order to examine the nature and implications of anti-homelessness laws in North American cities. At the same time, Mitchell builds from Tim Cresswell’s (1996) work on the socio-political antagonisms of place and deviance. Concluding public space has become subject to the whims and wills of the bourgeoisie, fear and punitive policies decree the challenge of annihilating homeless spaces instantaneously as one of annihilating homeless people (Mitchell, 1997). Writing a year later, Kawash (1998) draws a similar conclusion arguing that the fleshy, ‘filthy’ corporeality of homeless persons, in the sense of being physically, visibly, and symbolically distinguishable, is what discerns ‘the homeless’ apart from the (propertied) public. Feeding into subsequent research through two channels, classed-aesthetics betray, on the one hand, a practice of identifying impoverished bodies and, on the other, a wider practice privileging the aesthetics of poverty with an emphasis on the urban.

Of the former, Gerrard and Farrugia’s (2015) paper capitalise on body aesthetics to posit a general theory of stigma, which Hennigan (2018) later picks up on to develop an argument on the devaluation of homeless people. With the former thus relating to questions of *who* is homeless, the second responds to the space(s) -the *where*- of homelessness. Critically, this work on aesthetics posits homelessness as a visible marker of failure; as Duff points out, even when hidden, “homelessness makes visible the myriad failures of urban living, the failure to provide shelter, decent work, recognition and belonging,” (Duff, 2017: 516). Yet that much is known and recognised of the ties between criminalisation, charity, homelessness and aesthetics has done little to explain why homeless people “are such a fearsome threat to the ‘identities’ and ‘imagination’ of the upper classes,” (Hennigan, 2018: 153).

Accepted Article

If in theory policing poverty depends on appearances, including the spectacle of capital, in practice its regulation entails a messy entwining of charity, institutionalisation, and enforced labour. Yet when policy-orientated research began deconstructing the notion of a homeless identity in the 1990s with recognition of its complex bricolage of gendered, racialised, sexualised and aged experiences, it set the groundwork for challenging homeless spatialities (see Cloke et al., 2008; 2010). Perhaps most obvious amongst these changes was the shift toward a home-to-homeless continuum in which rooflessness marked just one form of homelessness (Somerville, 1992). Redefined so as to include sofa surfers, those in overcrowded, dangerous or insecure accommodation, those trading sex for rent beds, sleeping in vehicles, or anyone unable to stay in a fixed place where they have a right to live; the hidden homeless complicated the optic privileging previously defining who was homeless and where homelessness took place (Cloke et al., 2000; 2001; Reeve and Batty, 2011; Fitzpatrick *et al*, 2017; LAHC 2017). Comprised of individuals who could no longer be assumed to be visibly apparent to the domiciled public, scholars were forced to forge new ways in which to understand and recognise their subjects.

Approaching homelessness through performativity and embodiment has proved one such way in which to refigure understandings. Employing Goffman's (1959) theory of impression management within their analyses, Cloke et al., (2008; 2010) and Barker (2013) demonstrate how regulated performances for particular audiences enable individuals to capitalise – or not - on limited resources. Crucially, their emphasis underscores individual agency and the spontaneous reflexivity involved in embodied performances. Exploring the performativity's at play in places offering free or inexpensive meals to 'the homeless', Cloke, May and Johnsen (2010) reveal the negotiations involved when accessing food occasions contact with other homeless individuals, service staff, and volunteers. Remarking of the volatility such spaces are liable to entail, they observe how women in particular adopt strategies, such as avoiding eye contact, to diffuse confrontational encounters. Diametrically, and without want for the (re)enforcement of solely submissive narratives, Barker's (2013) work investigates how embodying violence affords young homeless people in Canberra, Australia, social standing amongst their peers. Their performances, he observes, fall across a continuum of conviction wherein repeating acts which might otherwise be considered self-destructive or counter-productive in fact foster self-belief in an ability to survive on the streets. Liberated from a purely aesthetic identification, the insights of performativity are one of an unfolding spatial-temporality where, at any given moment, an array of actors negotiate

their audiences, resist prefixed boundaries, and renegotiate themselves to meet a diverse range of ends. Performing is as much a creating of the self for ourselves as it is for others.

But there are more than human performances at play. In selling the *Big Issue*, Elvis becomes a merchant in the city even as he is subjected to a punitive modality in the rural town. Clearly, space is not reducible to a mere stage against which performances take place; it too is engaged in the forces of becoming. Turning to Deleuze and Guattari, Lancione (2013) weds two theoretical concepts -assemblages and abstract machines- to engage directly with these entanglements between city and people. Reminding us how “performances are not enacted in a vacuum” (Lancione, 2013: 358), he challenges us to rethink subjectivity through the web of non-human relations through which we also become. It is why Duff (2017), building from what Butler calls a ‘right to appear’, defines homelessness as an embodied struggle for place. At the heart of collectivising us into ‘the homeless’ persists this spirit of a pursuit for socio-economic and political justice. Whilst this is self-evident amongst discourses evoking concepts of rights and citizenship, so too is it present in studies exploring the exclusions and oppressions we collectively encounter. Satirically, in so doing, we remain homeless (see also Blomley, 2011; Watt, 2018; Whiteford, 2008). And yet, remarking of their participants a proclivity to “go to the movies, hang out in Starbucks, and read books while riding city buses,” (Langegger and Koester, 2016: 1040), Langegger and Koester recognise the ways in which we also perform mundane acts and ‘blend in’ with the domiciled public. Bringing to attention what, although well established, has yet to become foregrounded, the authors attest how homelessness as it is embodied and performed occurs against a larger, broader, deeper web of relations. Adjusting our approach to homelessness through these relations – productive, social, political - enables a spatial and temporal unfolding through which to examine homelessness *without* tethering it to preconceived ideas of people and places, and without centralising it as the sole theme of our being. What might happen for instance, if we begin not with Elvis’ homelessness but explore instead his embodied performances as they connect him into a larger network of meaning?

“-[M]y mam she would pay into the Co-operative plan when she was alive, into their funeral plan, the Co-operative, you know? I do it now too, I pay £55 every month, I work bloody hard for it but I do it. We have our graves together up in [cemetery...] Me mam raised us, we were very close you know. [His sister is] buried one side and my grave is the other, so mam is between us both... It’s very beautiful...I paid £900 for these big, these statues of angels to stand over them.”

With considerable pride, Elvis endures his daily commute so as to pay for the family grave where his mother and sister are buried. When he earns enough, he sends money to a florist and they lay fresh flowers on his behalf. On the rare occasion that he can afford to travel there himself, he does so. Meeting regularly at his pitch, I soon befriend his customers; a select group of repeat clients, predominantly mothers with young children, and a small cohort of men who linger to exchange news and gossip. Rarely does someone new to these rhythms purchase a magazine. Occasionally, when Elvis brings his radio, we dance, and elderly couples who pass us on their way to the shops, and young children who wriggle free of their parent's grasps, will join us. When Elvis does not appear for several days, his customers grow concerned. Unsettling the idea that homelessness is definitive, *au contraire* we begin to find a family man whose homelessness brings a collection of other times and spaces to the fore.

How might we understand these actual experiences - complex, messy, fluid – which shape being homeless? The rest of this paper endeavours to begin answering this question, exploring how the spatio-temporal frames of homelessness unfold when we examine embodied performativity. How by drawing near the pursuit of hobbies, interests and careers we make space for a life beyond homelessness. How through friendships and families, and also more-than-human relations, we distance the loneliness and temporal collapse our homelessness inflicts. Engaging in temporalities beyond the moment of homelessness, we begin to understand ourselves as someone more-than-homeless, someone worth knowing.

3. SOMEONE WORTH KNOWING

Rather than posit ourselves as Other by beginning with a singular name for our state of being, we found in seven months an eclectic assortment of nouns to describe ourselves at any given moment. Indeed, the pseudonyms given throughout mark just one example of this vast array. Deciding which identity to elicit over any other marked us into a lattice work of relations such that when we envision who we could become, we do so by positing ourselves into a wider web of social, political, spatial and temporal relations (Thrift, 2000). Stripping identity back to embodied performances, back that is to the relational and affective encounters of the social self, the here-and-now of homelessness grows unsettled, distanced, and we become someone more-than-homeless.

“I got into DJing through the Free Party scene. So I used to know or help organise all the Free Parties around, so all the raves, all that. They were all down to me. Whoop whoop. Yeah, it started off when I was sixteen, yeah I’d just turned sort of sixteen, fifteen going on sixteen. I’d started going to Free Parties, saw some popular people DJing and mainly I got started off on a laptop because everyone laptop DJs because it’s the easiest thing to do. So I started off on that. I was like well, I’m enjoying this and then like, I was, got in with [DJs] and then was helping them for like a long time.” [Dorian, 24, supported accommodation].

Priding himself as a DJ, Dorian’s musical performances emphasise the entwining of the relations through which we are reconstituted as more-than-homeless. Broadening beyond the immediate moment of homelessness, his forays into the music industry provoke a dynamic interplay through the embodiment of loss, longing and love. Meeting Dorian at the end of his shifts in a town-centre card store, we would browse second-hand dealerships for collectable CDs, DVDs, and comics. Using comic book characters as a way to navigate the challenges in explaining emotionally fraught incidents, his accounts of friendships and lovers told of the embodied becomings made possible by distancing homelessness:

“[K-] died recently from ketamine and heroin. Yep, knew her as well. She was like a sister to me. There’s just, yeah, there’s so many people and like that’s what’s made me not want - to get out of that scene. I don’t take drugs now [...] Yeah, my life used to be quite revolved around drugs [...] I’ve done it, I’ve been there, now I’m moving on.”

Adrift in the temporal coalescence of past, present and future, to suppose that homelessness may be so readily distanced however, imposes a nescience better guarded against. For at times, homelessness reigns supreme. It feels totalising. Paralysing. Whispering miserably that he is simply “going through the motions [of daily life],” twenty-year-old Christopher takes no respite from the grind of day-to-day living. Even soccer, for which he had once been captain of the local team and with whom he travelled to Lancashire, no longer appeals. “I’m just not interested.” Elvis too articulates dim visions of what it means to be homeless. “There’s nothing for you. Once you’ve been homeless once you’ll be homeless forever. See me, my mates, we’ve got housing now but we’re homeless still [...] it’s a disease, I mean c’mon! You know the things in *your* head, in *mine*.” Such accounts emphasise the value of existing scholarship, from examining structural conditions of marginalisation and exclusion (Mitchell, 1997), disrupting homogenous representations of the homeless experience (Loehwing, 2010),

to the more recent turn in analysing the affective and performative experiences of homelessness (Duff, 2017). That such research inches us closer toward attaining inclusion economically, politically, and/or socially from levels between cities to nations, remains unequivocally pertinent. Crucial, in fact, in challenging and moving away from the living legacy of vagrancy laws (May, 2000), and in developing better policies and service provision (see for instance Buckingham, 2012; Davies et al., 2002; May et al., 2007). Adding a new dimension, an alternative direction by which to know those experiencing homelessness, is not to detract from the important work that remains to be done on space, justice and homelessness. It hopes and aims instead to enrich and nuance such work.

Thus, when Parsell (2011: 442) writes, “we know them as ‘homeless people’”, the assertion being made is that homeless people are not within the audience; that (we) ‘the homeless’ are not ‘we’ the knowing. We are made to be subjects perpetually located ‘on the other side of the wall’ (Dorling, 2018: np). Parsell (2011) and Dorling (2018), like Rob Rosenthal (1991) remind us that when homelessness constitutes the reference point for knowing individuals, we (‘the homeless’) appear always elsewhere and Other to researchers. Rosenthal’s cynicism for studies relying solely on surveying berated researchers for leaving themselves “no other method of ‘knowing’ homeless life or the individual homeless person” (Rosenthal, 1991: 110). And yet, there is just as much reason to believe researchers, students, and those engaging with research, are or have been homeless too. There is a slippage between personal worlds when we reflect on the embodied performances which create us in the plural (Veness, 1993), a slippage which reminds us that we are more-than-homeless.

“So many people see how young and naïve we are and try and take advantage. Because where I was completely on my own, everyone was like ‘we’ll help you,’ and [squatting]...that, that was the only choice I had. I was squatting and revising for my [A-levels] and everyone else was going to prom and they were going ‘what dress am I going to wear?’ And I was thinking ‘what am I going to eat?’” [Cece, nineteen, supported accommodation].

Completing college with exemplary grades, the aspirations which enabled Cece to thrive in her A-levels by imagining times and spaces in which she was *not* homeless, have since become swallowed by the precarity in which she was nevertheless living. Following a brutal attack inducing long-term neurological damage, the legacy of Cece’s homelessness infiltrates into the creation of possible futures. Appearing unphased, Cece explained, “I’m trying

different things. Things that I never thought that I would want to get into because...I just need to broaden my horizons, so I'm starting to go into childcare at the moment." But appearances, as we have seen, can be deceiving. After several months, Cece invited me for coffee. Apologising for running late, we spent almost forty minutes talking about cats, a coping strategy developed following her assault, before Cece regained enough control to confront the reality of her crushed dreams:

"It's just not realistic for me to still be trying to [train as a vet], and like, I went quite like *oh my god, my life is over, this is my dream and I have nothing left*. But then one of my health workers was like 'don't think of it like that. Take it as an opportunity to "discover yourself,"' so yeah, I'm trying to get my life back. That's what I'm doing, I'm discovering."

Weaving through our mundane performances are an array of such coping strategies. These become apparent in unusual ways, but their effect is to remind us that we are never *just* homeless. We do not always succeed in this. As Christopher, Elvis and Cece's narrations make apparent, homelessness even when distanced, remains *felt*, remains *embodied*. It encroaches on the ways we socialise, on what we feel and believe we are capable of achieving, and its violences exist not just as a linguistic smothering of individuality, but sometimes physically, with long-lived consequences.

Asserting that homelessness does not obey a linear temporality then is to reflect on the capacity of embodiment to be both immanent and transcendental (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This unsettling of the here-and-now comes through memory and in turn, remembering, misremembering, forgetting and suppressing. Despite the complexities apparent in memory and its studies (see Griffin, 2018), there remains a simple and poignant synthesis; "memory makes us" (Jones, 2011: 875). Indeed, Jones and Garde-Hansen (2012) pose memories underpin the very process of our becoming, emphasising the relational mobility of bodies and world, past and present (also Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004). And yet, at risk of supposing memory necessitates we look only backwards in time, the transcendental capacities of embodiment enable us to project forward, to *imagine*. This creativity is for Merleau-Ponty (1962), a reprise of bodily perception, a realisation of the emergence of self and world. As a memory made flesh, the attack which robbed Cece the opportunity to become a vet demonstrates the persistent presence of past and future through which the immediate moment is lived. Set adrift in all manner of temporal directions, homelessness is lived in this spatio-

temporal swash. The lucid imaginings and hopes we create from homelessness include careers, family, personal interests, and the defeat of boredom. The spaces imagined and lived are not principally homelessness service sites, but football fields, tennis courts, athletic tracks, farms. Our trips to Blackpool, Iceland, Spain and Germany, our plans to visit Australia, and the woodland creeks with trout for fishing summoned in day dreams, cannot be separated from our homelessness. Neither, crucially, are they -are *we* - reducible to it.

3.2 All that we are

March, 2018. A former lawyer, a priest, a local council official, and a group of volunteers gathered in a hostel conference room. It is almost like the beginning of a bad joke, except there is no punchline. Or rather, there is no comedic punchline. Heavy snow across the UK brought by anticyclone Hartmut and Storm Emma, the *Beast from the East*, prompted emergency night shelters across the city to reopen. But it is March. Winter shelters have shut down, and the emergency refuges cannot stay open during the day. It is freezing, concern is mounting.

Dawn: I'm just really upset by what's going on...

Beth: I want to help more.

Hattie: It's so visible, I feel horrid, y'know, walking [street] you can see five, six, seven, eight of them all on that one street. We need to do something.

[Fieldnotes: 13 March 2018]

Amidst Hattie's motivation for attending the emergency meeting is an identification of homeless bodies through performances of sleeping, sitting, begging, and drinking on the streets, but equally bound up in the spatialities of these performances, are their temporalities. In the prelude to Christmas, I met Elvis daily at his pitch. Standing in aimable silence beneath the arches, we awoke from our stupor one day as a stranger lingered, threw a crumpled twenty-pound note into Elvis's upturned hat, and hurried away. "It's this time of year." He informed me, sagely. "People feel guilty, or generous, or generous because they're guilty." Elvis is not just 'out of place' spatially, but temporally. By the time Elvis and I part ways, he has received several Christmas cards, a bottle of rum, and a new scarf. In the spatio-temporal visibility of performed homelessness, Dawn, Beth, and Hattie (above), and the various strangers wishing Elvis 'Merry Christmas,' embody the charitable discourses creating homeless subjects (Andersson and Valentine, 2015). And yet there is a paradox in the framing of charitable homeless discourses. Illustrating the conundrum, one soup-run

volunteer, Felix, recasts us in Biblical Bethlehem in response to a peer's frustration over the solution to homelessness:

Sarah: They *just* need a home-

Felix: -The city is full...There's no room here.

[Fieldnotes: 13 March 2018]

Advocating for the forcible relocation of homeless bodies northwards on a premise that council house availability might alleviate local pressures, Felix's assertion contemptuously intones a patronising paternalism much akin to the emphasis in service provision on rehabilitating potential labourers (Hennigan, 2018). Ignored are the individual attachments and subjectivities of those concerned. Similarly exploring how Vancouver's homeless and street-youth became subject to spatial cleansing in the prelude to the 2010 Olympic Games, Kennelly (2015) raises questions over issues of access and opportunity promised by Vancouver's Olympic committee. With public narratives leaving little space for a concept of the more-than-homeless, we are stripped of attachments to people and places, made to be only 'homeless'. It seems little surprise that housing, no matter the context of its issuing, presents the sole solution.

To ratify the point; approaching homeless services aged just fifteen at the time, Rand reflected that she was formally advised to get pregnant if she wanted council housing. The risks posed by teen pregnancy, dropping out of education, turbulent family relations, and the challenges of financially supporting a child mattered not: the waiting list for social housing demanded she compete. That another woman living in the same hostel remained there with her new-born when Rand was finally awarded access to temporary accommodation eight months later, reinforced misgivings for the system of priority need – a label (theoretically) entitling its holder to state resources and housing support (LAHC, 2017). Bennett's (2011) work on the homeless at home, and the London Assembly Housing Committee (LAHC, 2017) report into hidden homelessness, better analyse the failures of synonymising housing with home (and therein, the end of homelessness), and the UK's priority need system. Paying ode to the limited understandings and responses facing those in homelessness, what these accounts demonstrate here is the urgency with which we must acknowledge individuals as more-than-homeless.

In his early twenties, Sam, had been in town for just a month when we first met. It was a move of necessity, but one which jeopardised his rehabilitation now he could no longer access his GP and receive his regular prescription of methadone – an opiate used as a substitute for those with a heroin addiction. Sofa-surfing so as to avoid sleeping rough, Sam avoided homeless service sites which might otherwise have been able to support him with his addiction, health, and ongoing legal cases, because he didn't identify himself as being homeless *enough* to use those sites. Unperturbed, the inevitability of a forthcoming stint in prison offered him the promise of vocational training, something he saw as essential in re-imagining a life beyond homelessness. A life in which he could not only be employed, or become a home-owner, but where he could have a family.

“You can get food inside, and I want to go back to brick-laying you know? So normally it's good in [jail], if you want to change, they really do help. I've got nothing to lose anymore. I'm desperate.”

Imagination, like Cece's dreams to become a vet, provide a source of motivation to enact change as well as a space in which, at least in our dreaming, we can escape homelessness as it is lived in the here-and-now. Sam is not just homeless, he is someone struggling to become a better version of himself, a husband, a father. It is these moments of believing and imagining, this confluence of past, present and future created by memory, which reveals *why* we cannot be reduced to 'homeless people', how we are instead more-than-homeless; how we are, each of us, someone becoming.

“When I get out [of jail] I want to sort my life out. I want a job again, and I want a nice big house. Proper big! So I can have kids and they can run around and slide down a staircase and leave their toys everywhere... a really big house.”

For others, meanwhile, future prescriptions are insufficient for sustaining anything other than a practical response to immediate survival. Resonating with the coalescing embodiment of affective processes of belonging are the ways in which Beanie, a twenty-two-year-old, prides herself on an ability to fulfil daring ventures of dubious legality. Recounting, often with great delight, acts of theft, public indecency and substance misuse, Beanie exhibits a display of negative cultural capital (Barker, 2013), capable of creating and sustaining a reputation bearing social significance among a cohort of non-homeless friends. This tenacity to perform knowingly reckless and illegal acts stems

from a temporal collapse. That there is nothing worse that can happen, that “I’m already living in the gutter.” Likewise recounting the despondency haunting the need to belong, Elvis describes the drastic actions of one friend:

Elvis: My mate, when it got cold he’d go smash a window or whatever, anything stupid to get inside a cell for a night [...] he just got given eight years in jail for burglary. He wanted Christmas dinner, so he went and burgled this place. Burglary is well serious, you know? Burglary! *I* wouldn’t, never.

JJ: Do you think he did it to get caught, or because he wanted to sell things on?

Elvis: I think he’d have been happy either way. This way he gets somewhere warm to sleep, and he doesn’t have to do it all again...

Percolating through haunting manifestations of the here-and-now, the ongoing moment of homelessness appears to bear no end. A temporal collapse, conceived through homelessness, with a gravitas so cruel it allows us little hold on a future beyond its orbit. Memories become ghosts, become us. There is no escape. The linguistic violences which subsume us tether us to a mire in which we become known only as ‘homeless people’. Fascinating with the ways in which we are different, whilst necessary to ensure support is appropriately targeted and provided, and that legislation recognise the structural forces at play, pays little mind to the everyday embodied practices through which we (re)locate ourselves to be both elsewhere and else-when. Which provide us various (temporary) means of belonging to people and places beyond homelessness. Beanie’s performances though fuelled by homelessness, nevertheless attach her to friendships and subsequently spaces where she is a leader, respected, admired. By her own admission, those are not the qualities of someone ‘homeless’.

And so it is that we become feelings of times and places. Constellations, in other words, of our temporalities, wherein memories become imaginative tools in our constant renegotiation and recreation of self, the vicarious act of which is an address of the spectral nature of homelessness; presence and absence wreathed in such manner that their binary distinction becomes void. Writing on the performative relational engagements between homeless people and the city, Lancione (2013) argues we must do more to understand the more-than-human mico-politics at play in these relations. “[W]here the subjective experience of homelessness unfolds in the conscious and unconscious entanglements of the self and the city,” (Lancione, 2013: 359). These are the details which may enable us to restructure homeless politics, one premised less on a discourse of social justice where we must first

reclaim our humanity, our rights, our citizenship, and instead fostered “by the re-assessment of its more-than-human, fluid and relational becoming,” (ibid).

Speaking into the more-than-human are our attachments to family. In the active agency of these belongings, affectual processes attach us to (beastly) beings, materialities, and spaces beyond the homeless landscape. Themselves in flux, such belongings may offer only a temporary emotional release. Locating our uncertainties or reluctance to commit suicide with a responsibility we feel we owe to our pets, we are able to seek to help, survive the night, or feel at least temporarily as though we may be significant to someone, even if that someone is a dog, a cat, a rat. And yet these attachments do not offer us necessarily a means to feel as though we really belong, as though we should really be alive. Ridiculing a neighbouring property for their inability to dispose of household waste, Beanie, Nicola, and I, spent an overcast January morning in fits of laughter. We were too busy teasing Beanie over her tale of a rat “the size of [a pug],” to mind about planting potatoes, and for a while, in laughter, we belonged together in that garden. We were not so much an assembly of researcher/researched, or previously/homeless; in that moment, we were something akin to friends. Then, with anecdotes swaying from pet gerbils to history classes on the bubonic plague, Beanie launched into a fierce tirade against rats. Laughter faltered. Nicola grew silent. Later, alone, I asked Nicola if everything was okay. Categorising homeless sufferers together in anecdote, she recited Beanie’s rant on rats as dirty, and dangerous, on their association with the waste of human life, their representation with criminal underworlds and death, to suggest that this is what it is to be homeless. Popular (mis)representations fail to depict beings who are social, intelligent, sensitive. As Nicola punctuated, “we just want to be loved and to be *allowed* to love.”

Writing on social networks in the time-space discontinuity of homelessness, by which they refer to the fragmentary and transient nature of social engagements implied in daily routines structured around immediate survival needs, Rowe and Wolch (1990) find relations of love to be fundamental in restoring positive and valued personal identities. In all its guises, from romance, sexual encounters, longing, family, to hatred and absence, love here too proved integral to participants’ everyday lives. The suggestion that arises is that in loving and being loved, there is an *escape* from the singularity of a homeless identity. These affective ties to people, places and to both moments and futures dissolve the concept of a homeless identity, demonstrating instead the irreducibility of individuals. Recast as trajectories weaving through the liveliness of embodied engagements, we can be neither framed nor fixed.

This is at once liberating and brutally constraining. Manuel, twenty-one, e-mailed soccer clubs on a weekly basis in the hope of finding sponsorship. When an American team extended an offer, tantalisingly opening an opportunity to break onto the international circuit, his history with homelessness left him without identity documents. With no passport and no money to travel, Manuel was left to watch his window to America close. “I was playing every single day, I was training. I was training on my own; going for a run, kickabout. Every single day. And then after a year it’s not happening.” His love of soccer, the very thing through which he escaped the ongoing moment of homelessness by relating to friends and coaches, to muddy pitches on cold winter nights, withered. “My mum is telling me I need to go professional if I want to keep going, I had to work. I need money. That is why I had to stop. It isn’t happening [...] I hate it so much.”

4. CONCLUSION

Though we may be homeless, ontologically and existentially we are anything but reducible to our homelessness. Synchronously precarious and more-than, we drift in the spatio-temporal, submerging on occasions into a desolate realm from which there seems little chance of escape. But we are not *limited* to our homelessness. Instead, we are more-than-homeless. This ‘we’ with which I write denotes an empathetic and autoethnographic proclivity woven throughout biographical excerpts from fourteen young people in an English city. Shared over seven months, the honesty and earnest with which these lives became shaped continues to astonish me, and I hope their telling here, though fragmentary and incomplete, does some justice to them all. For justice is, in a way, what we have sought.

This should not be surprising; troubling a long history of relations between vagrancy, poverty and labour, scholars working on homelessness have invariably pursued social, economic and political justice in one form or another. In the 1990s and early-2000s, deconstruction of ‘the homeless’ identity began amidst a renewed flurry of scholarship recognising its subject populace was not as homogenous or androgynous as it appeared (Takahashi, 1996; DeVerteuil et al., 2006). Amongst the ‘discovered’ were women whose experiences revealed vastly diverging accounts to those of male rough sleepers. Whilst recognition and inclusion of women’s experienced subsequently fed into developments within service and policy provision, it did so in ways not always useful, as May et al., (2007) highlight in accounting for lacking provisions for visibly homeless women. Redressing absences and usurping the myth of a unanimous homeless experience, such work nevertheless

paved the way for an alternative approach drawn from performativity theory and embodiment.

Dissolving into subjectivity and practice, researchers continue to inch away from an aesthetics of poverty and individual pathology to honour the agency of their subjects. Exploring the management of impressions (Cloke et al., 2008; 2010; Barker, 2013), the spontaneity of relations entangling people and spaces (Lancione, 2013), and discursive practices embodying the struggle for place (Duff, 2017), the broader network of human and non-human relations into which we are gathered dispel with the fixity and staticity of a homeless identity. And yet, we remain a collective, our individuality transfigured into 'the homeless' so as to denote a concept and object of examination (Farrugia, 2010; Pascale, 2005). Engendered in this transfiguration is the noble and heroic notion that we might yet be able to belong through a right to the city, or through recognition as citizens. Writ through acts of distancing, this paper has sought to emphasise that by stripping back and attending to individuals as more-than-homeless, we already perform various acts of belonging. That we do so by exceeding the spatial and temporal boundaries of homelessness as an ongoing situation of the here-and-now to perform another sense of self. Acts embodied into a larger network of relations that require attending to *holes*, as opposed to the whole, through which we begin to open and unfold as *someone*. Distancing then is not a reinforcement of dualistic divisions in which we 'the homeless' are Other and elsewhere. What distance reveals instead are the possibilities both spatial and temporal through which we create openings to become more-than-homeless.

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END NOTES

- ⁱ Although Elvis' supported accommodation is located in a rural town, by his own account it is the city in which he lives, works, and socialises, often electing to sleep rough with friends over returning alone to his accommodation. For this reason, Elvis is included within the research despite the apparent discrepancy in locations.