

Spaces of Denial and the Denial of Place:  
The Architectural Geography of Homelessness in Victoria, BC

by

John Franklin Koenig  
B.A., University of Saskatchewan, 2001

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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ABSTRACT

This thesis documents and highlights – within the context of other exclusionary practices – some of the spatial and architectural strategies deployed by the government and the privileged classes to exclude and evict homeless citizens from the spaces of the city. Although various spatial scales are incorporated into the argument – from the national to the municipal – this investigation focuses primarily on the Capital Region of British Columbia and the City of Victoria, where much of the statistical and empirical research has been gleaned. Through the implementation of regressive legislation, oppressive urban planning, and exclusionary architectural design, the visible and abject homeless body is systematically concealed, wrongfully prohibited, or violently evicted from private and public space. Indeed, not only are homeless citizens *denied* a fundamental right to a private space of secure, adequate, and affordable housing, they are also *denied* fundamental political and physical rights to the public spaces of the city.

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## INTRODUCTION

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

Articles 1 and 2  
*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right.

Article 11.1  
*International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice....

Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age, or mental or physical disability.

Sections 7 and 15.1  
*Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*

The United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (the *Declaration*), sexist language notwithstanding, was proclaimed in 1948 to affirm that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind," and that "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world" (United Nations, 1948: Preamble). Likewise, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (the *Covenant*) was drafted in 1966 in recognition that "these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person," and that it is "the obligation of States under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and freedoms" (United Nations,

1966: Preamble). Canada, a Member State of the United Nations, has explicitly recognized and officially sanctioned both of these important documents.

Furthermore, regarding the promotion and implementation of *Covenant* rights in Canada, the United Nations has noted with approval that “the Supreme Court of Canada has held that section 15 (equality rights) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the *Charter*) imposes positive obligations on governments to allocate resources and to implement programmes to address social and economic disadvantage” (United Nations, 1998a: para. 4). The UN has also noted with satisfaction that “the [Canadian] Federal Government has acknowledged, in accordance with the interpretation adopted by the Supreme Court, that section 7 of the *Charter* (liberty and security of the person) guarantees the basic necessities of life in accordance with the Supreme Court of Canada and the *Covenant*” (United Nations, 1998a: para. 5). Clearly, through a continuum of obligations entailed in various human rights treaties and codes – from the international *Covenant* to the national *Charter* – Canada has explicitly pledged its commitment to promote and protect the rights and freedoms of all Canadians. This includes, as per Article 11 of the *Covenant*, an adequate standard of living, a continuous improvement in living conditions, and guarantees of the basic necessities of life, including food, clothing, and housing.

Nevertheless, in 1998, in the wake of meetings held in Geneva, Switzerland, to evaluate Canada’s performance regarding its obligation to protect *Covenant* rights, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights released a scathing report criticizing Canada’s failure to promote and implement the articles of the *Covenant*. After a review of Canada’s third periodic report to the Committee and of incriminating evidence revealed in briefs submitted to the UN by several Canadian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Committee rebuked Canada for its lack of effective and progressive action against the proliferation of poverty, inequality, and homelessness within its own borders. The Committee regretted that many of Canada’s policies were

inconsistent with the spirit and the articles of the *Covenant*, and it cited several “principal subjects of concern” including the following (United Nations, 1998a):

[Para.] 14. The Committee has received information about a number of cases in which claims were brought by people living in poverty (usually women with children) against government policies which denied the claimants and their children adequate food, clothing and housing.

15. The Committee is deeply concerned to receive information that provincial courts in Canada have routinely opted for an interpretation [of the *Charter*] which excludes protection of the right to an adequate standard of living and other *Covenant* rights ... despite the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada has stated, as has the Government of Canada before this committee, that the *Charter* can be interpreted so as to protect these rights.

19. The replacement of the Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP) by the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST) entails a range of adverse consequences for the enjoyment of *Covenant* rights by disadvantaged groups in Canada... [Whereas] CAP set national standards for social welfare, required that work by welfare recipients be freely chosen, [and] guaranteed the right to an adequate standard of living ... the CHST has eliminated each of these features and significantly reduced the amount of cash transfer payments provided to the provinces to cover social assistance.... The Committee regrets that, by according virtually unfettered discretion in relation to social rights to provincial Governments, the Government of Canada has created a situation in which *Covenant* standards can be undermined and effective accountability has been radically reduced.

32. The Committee is concerned that the minimum wage is not sufficient for a worker to have an adequate standard of living, which also covers his or her family.

33. The Committee is perturbed to hear that the number of food banks has almost doubled between 1989 and 1997 in Canada and are able to meet only a fraction of the increased needs of the poor.

In response to the UN concerns, representatives of the Canadian government appearing before the Committee repeatedly insisted that there were never any standards or rights guaranteed under CAP, and they cited the national deficit as the reason for cuts to social programmes. Committee member Mahmoud Ahmed retorted, saying that, “It is one thing to beat the budget deficit, but not at the expense of bringing about a very harmful, a very inhumane revolution that is taking place right now” (qtd. in Ackerly, 1999). Meanwhile, the Committee confronted the Canadian delegation with contradictory evidence from reports submitted by Canada in previous years, which had explicitly stated – contrary to the assertions of the Canadian representatives whom the Committee members were now addressing – that CAP, in fact, *did* set national standards to protect *Covenant* rights and *did* guarantee a right to an adequate standard of living (United Nations, 1998b: para. 33,

49). Committee member Virginia Bonoan-Dandan pointedly queried the Canadian delegation, “Were you lying then or are you lying now?” (qtd. in Ackerly, 1999).

After the two-day interrogation, Committee members expressed frustration over the evasiveness of the Canadian representatives. Members were especially dissatisfied with the vagueness of Canadian responses to specific questions regarding the proliferation of poverty, inequality, and homelessness during a period of economic recovery: “Maybe they haven’t done their homework properly or they’re embarrassed at answering the obvious – that there is a great deal of poverty in Canada and yet it’s such a rich country” (Committee member Ariranga Pillay qtd. in Branswell, 1998a). Other Committee members noted that the testimony was often contradictory, and one member even suggested that the Canadian representatives were stonewalling the Committee to prevent embarrassing the federal government: “When they [the Canadian delegation] are sent out on a mission like this, they are torn between two fires. On the one hand, the glaring facts, on the other hand, their duty towards their government” (Committee member Mahmoud Ahmed qtd. in Branswell, 1998a).

Meanwhile, back at home, the Canadian government – clearly rattled by the UN report – downplayed the Committee’s condemnation and dismissed the relevancy of the NGO reports which had criticized Canada’s human rights performance. Government ministers asserted (incorrectly) that the NGO analyses were based on outdated data and did not reflect recent initiatives (McCabe and Beltrame, 1998; Branswell, 1998b). Moreover, in an attempt to reconfigure Canada’s failing human rights record regarding poverty, the federal government promptly announced its intention to *redefine* poverty by replacing the current unofficial poverty line – Statistics Canada’s “Low Income Cut-Off” (LICO) – with a new poverty line more acceptable to the government – the “Market Basket Measure” (MBM). The absence of an official poverty line had been highlighted by the UN as a primary factor impeding the implementation of the *Covenant* in Canada:

While the Government of Canada has consistently used Statistics Canada’s “Low Income Cut-Off” as a measure of poverty when providing information to the Committee about

poverty in Canada, it informed the Committee that it does not accept the Low Income Cut-Offs as a poverty line, although this measure is widely used by experts to consider the extent and depth of poverty in Canada. The absence of an official poverty line makes it difficult to hold the federal, provincial and territorial governments accountable to their obligations under the *Covenant* (United Nations, 1998a: para. 13).

Despite the consistent use of LICO by the government in “providing information to the Committee about poverty in Canada” and despite the fact that it is “widely used by experts to consider the extent and depth of poverty in Canada,” government researchers recommended abandoning the popular LICO measure and replacing it with their own preliminary MBM, still unofficial but supposedly more “objective” (Canada, 1998; Beauchesne, 1998a, 1998b). Leaving aside, for the moment, the assertion of “objectivity” and the debate over the efficacy of redefining poverty in Canada (I shall return to these issues in the body of my thesis), the immediate consequence of this statistical sleight-of-hand would be the illusory effect of suddenly lifting 1.5 million Canadians out of poverty. By adopting the proposed MBM, the poverty rate would be cut by nearly 30% overnight, dropping from 17% to 12% through a policy of poverty reduction based on an administrator’s eraser. As one critic observed: “No muss. No fuss. No cost. Abracadabra and – presto – the have-nots will have” (Walkom, 1998).

I relate these events by way of introduction not only to highlight Canada’s failure to protect human rights by eradicating poverty and inequality within our own borders, but also to illustrate the brazen extent to which our government will refuse to accept poverty as a serious injustice worthy of immediate and progressive intervention. The federal government’s dismissal of the NGO reports and its subsequent attempt artificially to reduce the poverty rate in Canada are symptoms of a government in *denial* regarding the extent of poverty in Canada. More importantly however, they are also symptoms of an oppressive political economy that *denies* fundamental rights and an adequate standard of living to millions of Canadians. For, indeed, as I will demonstrate in the foundational arguments for this thesis, Canada’s failure to eradicate poverty and inequality is a

consequence of a political economy for which the *production* of poverty and inequality is a structural imperative: to secure the economic and political power of the privileged classes, the rights of property and capital are privileged over the inherent dignity and rights of human beings. The federal government's knee-jerk reaction to the UN condemnation is symptomatic of an unerring fidelity to such an ethic; and the outcome of such fidelity, in this case, manifests itself as a particular form of denial: a denial of voice and body to the poor themselves. By adopting the proposed MBM, upwards of 1.5 million Canadians struggling in poverty would be statistically erased from sight, moved along by administrative bodyguards policing the borders of the poverty debate.

Ultimately, however, the statistical machinations of the government are belied by the very real and very visible consequences of rampant inequality and poverty in Canada: the contemporary crisis of homelessness. Indeed, in 1998, only weeks before the UN forum in Geneva, several Canadian municipalities had drafted declarations emphasizing the depth and national scope of the crisis, a concern that was highlighted by the UN Committee and included in their final report:

The Committee is gravely concerned that such a wealthy country as Canada has allowed the problem of homelessness and inadequate housing to grow to such proportions that the mayors of Canada's ten largest cities have now declared homelessness a national disaster (United Nations, 1998a: para. 24).

This contradiction between, on the one hand, a recognition by Canadian municipalities that homelessness is a national disaster and, on the other hand, a virtual silence, stonewalling, and manipulation by the federal government concerning the proliferation of poverty and inequality in Canada is difficult to reconcile – but not inexplicable. By deflecting the poverty debate into the visible homeless body, the privileged classes – who control the various levels of government – reduce poverty to an individual concern and effectively insulate themselves from criticism at home. Blame is deflected onto the victims by emphasizing individual pathologies or proximate circumstances – such as mental illness or family dysfunction – as the primary explanations for their homelessness. Meanwhile, a more serious allegation is elided: that homelessness and poverty are,

ultimately, structural consequences of an oppressive political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice.

Yet, as the UN points out, the proliferation of homelessness – the publicly visible outcome of abject poverty and rampant inequality – is an extreme contradiction in a society as wealthy as our own; and as a *visible* contradiction it cannot be statistically erased from sight. Consequently, to attenuate this contradiction and to arrest awareness of systemic injustice, the strategy of spuriously blaming the victims for their homelessness is paralleled and supported by an equally oppressive strategy of spatially regulating the visibility of homeless individuals. In the same way that an awareness of poverty may be regulated through statistical suppression, an awareness of homelessness may be regulated through spatial exclusion. Through the implementation of regressive legislation, oppressive urban planning, and exclusionary architectural design, the offending contradiction – the visible and abject homeless body – is systematically concealed, wrongfully prohibited, or violently evicted from private and public space. Indeed, not only are homeless Canadian citizens *denied* a fundamental right to a private space of secure, adequate, and affordable housing as guaranteed by the *Covenant*, they are also *denied* fundamental political and physical rights to the public spaces of the city. The primary purpose of my own investigation is to document and highlight – within the context of other exclusionary practices – some of the spatial and architectural strategies deployed by the government and the privileged classes to exclude and evict homeless citizens from the spaces of the city. Although I incorporate various spatial scales in the development of my argument – from the national to the municipal – I will focus primarily on the Capital Region of British Columbia and the City of Victoria, where much of my statistical and empirical research has been gleaned.

In the course of my investigation, I will consistently resist the tendency to individualize the crisis. For indeed, any effective analysis of the socio-spatial exclusion

of homeless citizens entails, as a necessary prerequisite, a theoretical perspective that I have already introduced above: an insistence that homelessness is an outcome not of individual failing or random misfortune but of an oppressive political economy that *produces* poverty, inequality, and homelessness. By reasserting the political economy as a causal determinant in the production of homelessness, theoretical and critical links may be established between the oppressive social relations that produce homelessness and the exclusionary spatial contexts integral to those relations. As French social theorist Henri Lefebvre argues in *The Production of Space* (1991) – his innovative Marxist analysis of the dialectical relationship between space and society – space is not a neutral container within which social relations exist, but is itself a product of those very same relations. Therefore, in the same way that an oppressive political economy can *produce* the debilitating social condition of homelessness, it can likewise *produce* an oppressive spatial and architectural environment.

Consequently, in this thesis I transcend individualized representations of homelessness by deploying a political-economic or structuralist analysis of spatial and architectural exclusion. My primary objective is to highlight the manner in which the domination of space is exercised in the Capital Region of British Columbia, in and around the buildings that many residents take for granted. It is a thesis that deals with exclusion and violence – often unacknowledged and unnoticed – that is enacted every day against homeless citizens on the street. As a visible contradiction, homeless people are persistently and wrongfully subjected to oppressive and violent spatial strategies that aim to attenuate this contradiction. More precisely, in order to deflect criticism, those in power must: a) somehow account for this contradiction by displacing the blame onto the victims; b) deny the contradiction by conceptually and representationally erasing homeless citizens from the public sphere; and c) hide the contradiction by physically evicting homeless bodies from public view. In effect, my thesis deals with *denial*: a denial that homelessness is a violent outcome of an oppressive political economy; a

denial regarding the inherent violence of policies and legislation designed to spatially regulate homeless bodies; and a denial of fundamental political and spatial rights to the city for homeless citizens. Contemporary homelessness has hit the streets, and this – the public and contradictory embodiment of rampant poverty and inequality in our exceedingly affluent and supposedly democratic society – has exposed a domination of space as exercised by the privileged classes. This thesis will document and explain this spatial domination as it surfaces on the streets of Victoria, British Columbia.

In Chapter One, I will briefly introduce the highly contentious debate on homelessness itself. Through a review of pertinent literature from Canada and the United States, I broadly outline both the range of perspectives and the prevailing themes informing the debate. An appreciation of dominant themes and perspectives governing research on homelessness is essential for a just and meaningful discussion of a complex issue rife with elision, indifference, and misrepresentation in popular discourse. One important theme which suffers from such indifference and receives but stark and cursory treatment is the spatialized exclusion of homeless citizens. In a research environment dominated by socio-psychological studies, spatial analyses are relatively rare, except in the context of anthropological and geographical approaches that document the survival tactics of homeless citizens in the spaces of their everyday lives. My own investigation expands on these treatments by delivering a structural analysis of homelessness in the architectural and geographical spaces of the street. For indeed, homelessness is not only a socio-economic condition; it is also, and most emphatically, a spatial condition.

The foundational terms of the debate introduced in Chapter One are carried forward into Chapter Two, where I narrow the discussion specifically to the Canadian and local contexts. In this chapter I review research initiatives that are currently influencing the design and implementation of policies targeting homelessness in Canada and the Capital Region of British Columbia. The dominant tendency in current research

is to individualize the crisis by reifying oppressive social relations into the individual homeless body and by neglecting structural imperatives in the political economy that produce poverty, inequality, and homelessness. I then contrast these research initiatives with a review of alternative studies that deploy a political economic, structuralist, or spatial perspective. Unfortunately, much of this research is systematically ignored by those in power who wish to deflect criticism and who, therefore, favour studies that individualize the crisis. Hence, to contextualize my review and to alert the reader to this persistent bias in Canadian research, I introduce this chapter with a discussion of epistemological exclusion – of the exclusion of “dangerous” knowledge that challenges the authority of accepted (and acceptable) accounts. Through concrete examples, I reveal how structuralist analyses of homelessness and poverty are politically marginalized in public discourse, and therefore often fail to influence public opinion or government policy. Such exclusion, I argue, is an important and relevant corollary to the socio-spatial exclusion of homeless citizens documented in this thesis.

Part of the purpose of these first two chapters is not only bibliographic, through a review of pertinent literature, but also documentary, by revealing some of the exclusionary social policies in the political economy that produce poverty, inequality, and homelessness. To this end, I will also deconstruct many of the supporting mythologies that legitimize such policies. As a very visible and public crisis, homelessness is an issue about which many Canadian citizens have an opinion. Unfortunately, popular representations of homelessness proliferate and sustain a variety of stereotypes and misconceptions regarding homeless citizens and the causes of the crisis. An ancillary motive in these chapters, therefore, is to dispel the many myths that pervade popular and scientific representations of homelessness. Consequently, at times, the social science of homelessness will dominate the content of the discussion. This is not only symptomatic of the prominence of sociological and psychological research regarding homelessness, but also testimony to the primary scientific vehicles through which many of the myths

have been and continue to be legitimized and propagated. Debunking the disabling effects of myth is fundamental to any critical appreciation of the systemic socio-spatial exclusion of homeless citizens on the street; and, since the mythologies of homelessness are extensive and well-established, these chapters are necessarily sweeping and thorough. Furthermore, the exclusionary practices legitimized by these mythologies and discussed in these chapters will provide poignant social and political context for the spatial exclusion of homeless citizens documented in the remainder of my thesis.

In Chapter Three, I establish the theoretical framework for an architectural and geographical analysis of homelessness on the street. While architectural history is ostensibly the disciplinary basis for this thesis, I do not confine myself to this discipline's traditional preoccupation with architectural semiotics. The complexity of homelessness as a social issue necessitates a transdisciplinary approach that deploys a range of theory from several disciplines including architectural history, geography, psychology, sociology, political philosophy, and constitutional law. My primary theoretical foundation, therefore, is framed not by architectural theory but by the socio-spatial analytics of Henri Lefebvre (1991), whose spatialized Marxist analysis of social systems provides critical links between the political economy of a society and the spaces integral to that society.

After explaining the dialectical relationship between space and society through the spatialized Marxism of Lefebvre, I then refine these links by including architectural theory. Through a discussion of geographer Jon Goss's (1988) disciplinary outline for an "architectural geography," I establish a theoretical basis for examining architecture not only through its form but also through its use. As I will argue, this is an important consideration for the "architectural" space of the street which is defined more through its function than through its formal semiotics. Finally, throughout this chapter, I embed these core spatial and architectural concerns in political, psychoanalytic, and social theories that link the social marginalization of homeless individuals to the inherent

violence of an oppressive political economy and social system. By explaining homelessness as a violent outcome of the political economy – as a social product of oppressive social relations – explicit links can be established with the correlative production of spatial and architectural violence empirically documented in my thesis.

In Chapter Four, I begin my empirical analysis by revealing how ideologies related to regional and urban geographies in the Capital Region of British Columbia frame perceptions of homelessness in the City of Victoria. Part of the purpose of this discussion is to illustrate how exclusionary spatial strategies are scaled and legitimized across geographical regions and through political jurisdictions, from the urban to the rural and from the municipal to the national. I will argue that in Victoria, popular perceptions of homelessness are framed by two primary and pervasive ideologies: an *urban ideology* that naturalizes homelessness as an “urban problem” endemic to an urban environment, and an *aesthetic ideology* that collapses urban complexities into the domesticated contours of well-tended gardens and historical nostalgia. In effect, Victoria is mythologized as a “Garden of Eden” and a “Heritage City” where contemporary “urban problems” are deemed sinfully and anachronistically out of place. The primary function of these ideologies is to attenuate the contradiction of homelessness in a city that aggressively markets itself as a “City of Gardens” and a paradisaal tourist destination. As a political economic imperative for the region, the tourism industry perpetuates the myth that homelessness is out of place in Victoria. Accordingly, in order to fulfill the mythical vision of Victoria as the “City of Gardens,” the very real and visible presence of homeless citizens on the streets must be regulated and structured, if not annihilated altogether. Which finally brings us to the threshold of my final chapter and the primary objective of my thesis: documenting and explaining the persistent socio-spatial exclusion of homeless citizens in the architectural geography of the street.

Chapter Five, the final chapter, refines the discussion of ideology introduced in the previous chapter by narrowing the spatial scale and investigating how the street, in

particular, is conceptually shaped and mythologized. Through the work of geographer Neil Smith (1996, 1992) and popular historian Richard Slotkin (1992, 1985, 1977), I argue that a primary ideological fallacy framing this space is the mythical characterization of the street as a wild and disorderly “Frontier,” waiting to be (re)claimed and (re)settled by the regenerative spirits of the privileged classes. By conceptually rendering the street as an inherently violent Frontier lying at the threshold of civilized society, the City of Victoria legitimizes the implementation of oppressive municipal policies designed to socially sanitize the street and appease public fear. In particular, I reveal how the proxy of “public safety” has become a primary tool for spatial oppression that directly or indirectly does violence to the inherent dignity and rights of homeless citizens. Meanwhile, the residents of Victoria – who already disavow homelessness as out of place in the “City of Gardens” – are inoculated from recognizing the inherent violence of regressive and exclusionary policies targeting homeless citizens in the violent Frontier wilderness of the street.

Throughout this chapter, I will argue that the principal objective of civic intervention in this Frontier wilderness is to regulate the visibility of homeless individuals. For indeed, as I reveal through the work of cultural theorist Samara Kawash (1998), the corporeal “homeless body” – a *material* and *visible* outcome of abject poverty and rampant inequality – not only denotes a conceptual contradiction to Victoria’s professed identity as a “City of Gardens” devoid of “urban problems,” but also represents a *concrete obstacle* preventing effective closure over this identity. Consequently, as “positive embodiments” of contradiction and disruption in social harmony, homeless citizens are consistently subjected to regressive legislation, oppressive urban planning, and exclusionary architectural design that essentially functions to annihilate the spaces where homeless individuals can physically exist. In effect, the violent spatial exclusion of homeless citizens in the “Frontier” streets of the “Garden City” is achieved through a dialectic of spatial regulation, in which the spaces of denial – disavowal and inoculation –

dialectically enable a denial of place – an annihilation of the spaces potentially occupied by homeless citizens. I define this exclusionary dynamic as the dialectics of denial.

Ultimately, the intent of this thesis is to raise consciousness: to highlight and reiterate the violence and oppression exacted against the most disadvantaged citizens in our community. By establishing links between the political economy and spatial exclusion, I hope, first, to resist the persistent reification of the crisis into arguments of individual self-sufficiency and responsibility; and, second, to reassert the role of the political economy in the production of oppressive social and spatial relations. Although my thesis is ostensibly framed as a geographical and architectural analysis of oppression, the spatial exclusion documented in this thesis must be seen in light of a wider and more comprehensive practice of exclusion, thereby necessitating a transdisciplinary approach and a thorough examination of correlative policies and practices that support and perpetuate the proliferation of poverty, inequality, and homelessness.

Furthermore, nothing in this thesis is original. It has all been said before – many times before; but by compiling and juxtaposing in one volume some of the various and disparate exclusionary strategies affecting homeless individuals – not only spatially, but also socially, politically, and economically – I hope to restore an awareness of oppressive practices in our society that violently assault the inherent dignity and rights of homeless citizens, and of how this persistent and malignant oppression must concern all persons interested in progressive social justice. Such oppression is not an outcome of some grand conspiracy; nor are the privileged classes necessarily aware of the oppression to which they are party. It is simply and inexorably a fact: the current political economy based on individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital (rather than mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice) is inherently oppressive – socially, politically, economically, and spatially. Under such a system, the inherent dignity and rights of *all* Canadian citizens are in perpetual jeopardy. This includes, as per Article 11 of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and*

*Cultural Rights*, the realization of the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A principal objective in my thesis is to establish a theoretical foundation for an analysis of spatial exclusion in the architectural geography of homelessness on the street. Consequently, I have dedicated much of the discussion to the marshalling of theories which not only explain how and why homeless citizens are marginalized in our society, but also how that marginalization becomes manifest variously as social, political, economic, and spatial exclusion. Since homelessness itself is a very complex issue, rife with myth and misrepresentation in popular discourse, such theory-building requires a comprehensive perspective afforded by a transdisciplinary approach. Therefore, as I have already noted, although architectural history is ostensibly the disciplinary basis for my thesis, I have deployed concepts and theory drawn from several disciplines. The necessity of deconstructing the many myths framing homelessness, and then building a theoretical foundation for a more just and rigorous examination of homelessness in the street, has ultimately dictated the content of this thesis. Consequently, my analysis is structured from the outset to be theoretically strong but empirically limited, although the empirical evidence that I do present in this thesis sufficiently demonstrates the applicability of the theoretical concepts deployed.

In terms of research, my primary source materials are documents and books. I have drawn from a wide array of available resources, both local and non-local, governmental and non-governmental, popular and scientific. This includes evidence and data acquired from national, provincial, and municipal archives (both paper and

electronic); from newspaper articles, community urban plans, and city bylaw codes; and from articles, books, photo-essays, and ethnographies published by other authors and researchers writing on homelessness. Throughout my analysis, I also cite many statistics gleaned from a variety of documented sources. It should be noted, however, that the calculation and deployment of statistics can be hazardous and ideologically driven, and hence must be approached with extreme caution. Wherever possible, I try to reinforce my statistics with supporting figures from related contexts or disciplines. Poverty statistics, in particular, are limited due to the conservative nature of census data provided by Statistics Canada. As Reitsma-Street *et al.* (2000: p. 52) point out, census data typically under-represent the poor due to the difficulty of enumerating and acquiring data on certain groups, including First Nations people on reserves, people living in illegal suites, recent immigrants, and homeless individuals. Since these groups are more likely to be poor, poverty statistics generated from census data are likely to be conservative. Indeed, in the context of homelessness, there is no reliable national data available for analysis. Moreover, as I discuss in my thesis, although there have been local attempts at enumerating the homeless population, these numbers are subject to definitional and methodological controversy, and hence, are often a source of contentious debate.

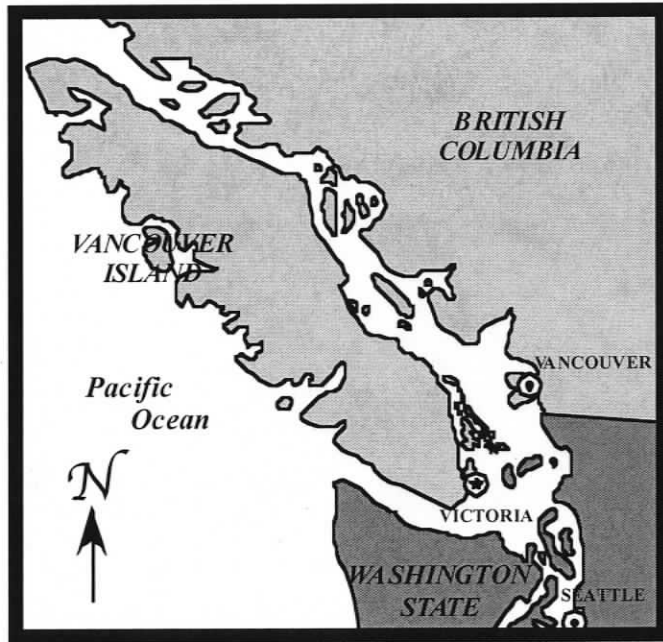
One research method notably absent in this thesis is an ethnographic account of homelessness specific to Victoria. The original intent of my investigation was to document and analyze the political economy of spatial exclusion and then contextualize this analysis with an account of spatialized resistance effected by homeless citizens on the street. As the thesis developed, however, it soon became apparent that the ethnographic component would have to be sacrificed for reasons, ironically, of a lack of space. In my conclusion, I acknowledge this absence of direct field engagement and suggest additional avenues for further research. Nonetheless, through ethics approval, I have acquired permission to use the electronic journal of the experiences of one homeless citizen in Victoria as a useful primary source (Johnston, 2007). This was complemented

by an informal three-hour interview with the individual for further insight regarding his life on the street.

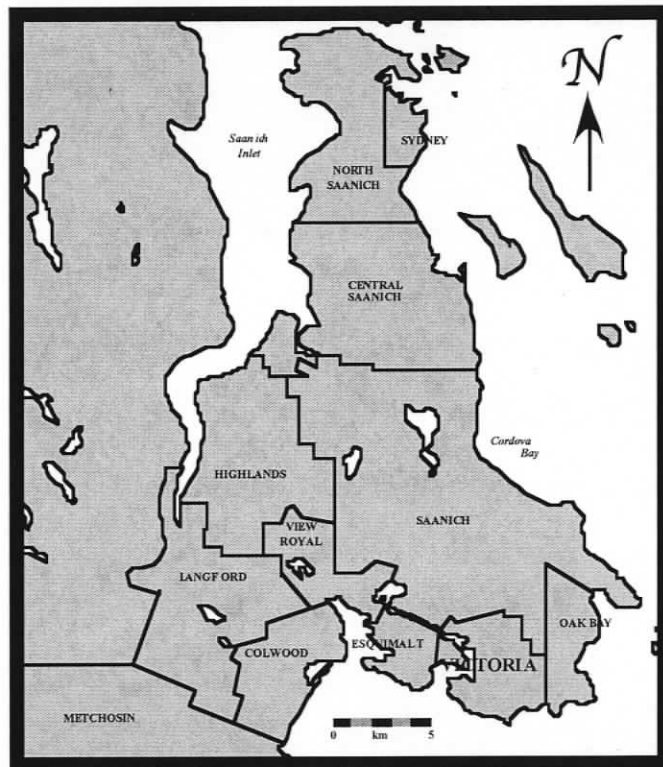
Generally, however, for insight into the daily struggles of homeless citizens, I have relied heavily on several ethnographies and analyses that provide voice to homeless citizens themselves. Some of these accounts are specific to homelessness in Victoria (Community Council, 2003b; Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001), while others focus on other jurisdictions (Baxter, 1991; Desjarlais, 1997; Neal, 2004). All accounts, however, are useful and generally applicable, given that poverty and homelessness (and the social, political, economic, and spatial exclusion that they entail) are structural consequences of an oppressive political economy that cuts across geographical regions and political jurisdictions. In effect, the challenges faced by homeless citizens across Canada – as revealed in various and disparate accounts – are very similar and generally comparable. Yet, despite the empirical limitations that accrue to a lack of ethnographic research specific to this thesis, I would hope that my analysis – theoretically rigorous and structuralist in perspective – may provide an opening for a more comprehensive investigation that includes an ethnographic approach, thereby contextualizing this analysis with the voices, creativity, and resistant spatializations of those struggling to survive on Victoria's streets.

Finally, on one last methodological note, the geographical locus of my thesis is ostensibly the City of Victoria. Victoria, with a population in 2006 of about 76,000, is only one of thirteen municipalities – each with its own mayor and council – and three unincorporated electoral areas in a region that supports over 330,000 people on the southern tip of Vancouver Island [Maps 1, 2, and 3: pp. 19-20]. This metropolitan area is more correctly known as Greater Victoria, or, in the language of Statistics Canada, the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Victoria. The politically defined Capital Regional District (CRD) includes the jurisdictions in Greater Victoria as well as Port Renfrew and the Gulf Islands. In my thesis, I use the term “Victoria” to refer to the City of Victoria

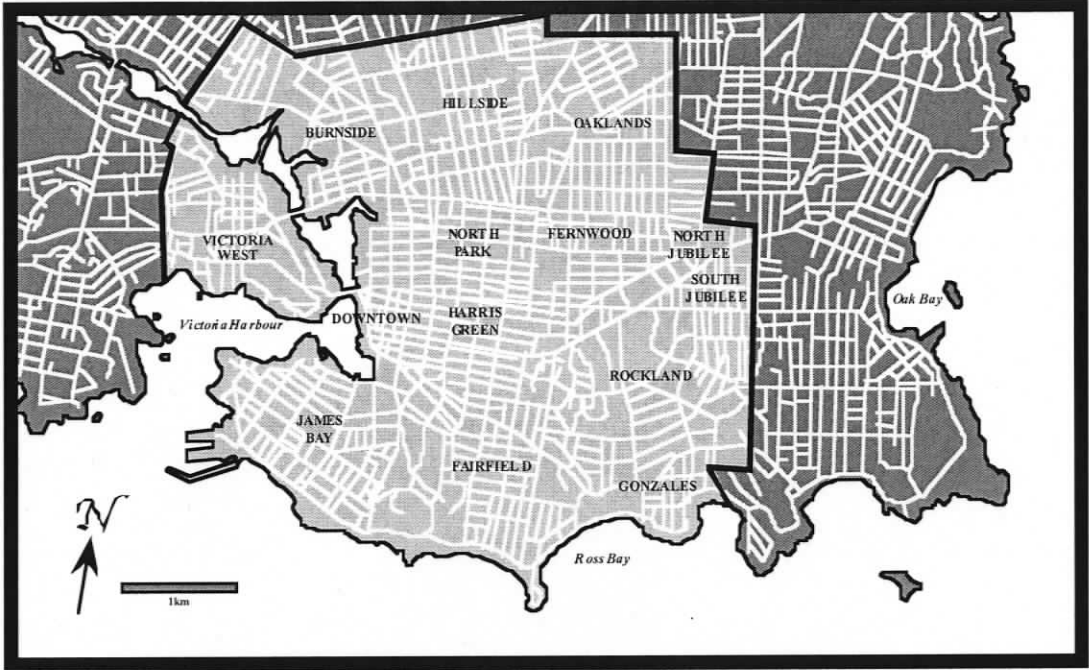
itself, while I use the term “Capital Region” to designate the CMA or CRD. Although my focus is the City of Victoria, I necessarily contextualize Victoria in the political economy of the wider region. Despite popular perceptions among local residents, homelessness is a crisis not restricted merely to the streets of downtown Victoria; it is a regional crisis and an outcome of an oppressive political economy that cuts across jurisdictions. Moreover, although the entire metropolitan region is popularly known as Victoria – especially for those who live outside Vancouver Island – I strive to maintain distinctions between various jurisdictions, since the political economy of spatial exclusion in this region is often dictated by differences in jurisdictional governance. Nevertheless, as I will argue in my thesis, the conflation of Victoria with the Capital Region does have exclusionary consequences for homeless citizens on Victoria’s streets. Therefore, in Chapter Four where I discuss this issue, I will often interchange “Victoria” with “Capital Region” to reinforce the popular perception that these are synonymous designations. In the remainder of my thesis, however, I am generally careful to maintain this distinction.



*Map 1: Vancouver Island and vicinity.*



*Map 2: Victoria and vicinity.*



*Map 3: The City of Victoria.*

## CHAPTER 1: HOMELESSNESS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DEBATE

Since the early 1980s in North America, homelessness has become a prominent and increasingly visible social crisis which has elicited the attention of citizens, researchers, politicians, advocates, and policy-makers alike.<sup>1</sup> Attendant upon this deepening awareness is a proliferation of research and discussion in popular and academic literature characterized by a multiplicity of themes and perspectives – rhetorical, empirical and theoretical. Much of this literature has evolved from analyses focused on the United States, where acute awareness of contemporary homelessness first surfaced in North America. Arguably, the study of New York’s homeless population in the early 1980s by Baxter and Hopper (1981) may be cited as the threshold for this deepening awareness (Orr, 1990b: p.13). The publication of this research coincided with the 1981-82 recession which provided the study with a poignant context for its reception. The results were extensive coverage of homelessness in the media and an intense debate concerning the extent of the crisis in the United States, with estimates ranging from 300,000 to 3,000,000 homeless individuals.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the numbers controversy continues to influence debate, since numerical estimates of homelessness provide one of

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<sup>1</sup> The ideologically laden terms “social crisis” and “homelessness” are used advisedly. I do not question the reality of the crisis as I do the tendency to reify the material foundation for the crisis – *the perpetuation and proliferation of inequality and poverty* – into a more manageable and depoliticized category. As I argue throughout this thesis, the political economy (and how it produces poverty) is elided by deflecting attention into the sociology of homelessness, as poverty is individualized and reified into the abject homeless body. In the spirit of Michel de Certeau, “They [the ministers of knowledge and power] transmute the misfortune of their theories [the theories of liberal capitalism] into theories of misfortune [the social crisis of homelessness]” (after de Certeau, 1984: p. 96). For an analysis of structurally generated poverty as a consequence of contemporary global capitalism, see Chossudovsky (1999).

<sup>2</sup> The lower estimate is the official figure published in a 1984 study by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) (ctd. in Blau, 1992: p. 21); the higher estimate comes from a 1982 study published by the Washington-based advocacy group Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) (Hombs and Snyder, 1982). Both estimates were heavily criticized. The HUD estimate, based on a national “snapshot” of the number of homeless persons during one night, was criticized for its questionable methodology and its implicit political agenda of legitimizing President Ronald Reagan’s draconian social policies; meanwhile, the CCNV estimate, based on a projection of the number of homeless persons over one year, was criticized for its lack of methodology and its own implicit political agenda of exaggerating the crisis. For a discussion of this controversy see Blau (1992: pp. 21-24), and Rossi (1989: pp. 66-70).

the key parameters for policy implementation. However, with a general consensus that homelessness is substantial and growing, a more diversified set of discourses – to be reviewed momentarily – has dominated the literature and has framed the crisis within particular ideological agendas.<sup>3</sup>

Although Canadian awareness has been, and still is, substantially influenced by the American experience, literature on homelessness in Canada was sparse until the late 1980s. In 1987 – to coincide with the United Nations International Year of Shelter for the Homeless – the Canadian Council on Social Development published *Homelessness in Canada: The Report of the National Inquiry*, which concluded that “an estimated range of 130,000 to 250,000 homeless people during the year remains conservative” (McLaughlin, 1987: p. 5).<sup>4</sup> Some commentators have attributed Canadian complacency in the 1980s to the inoculating effects of media coverage of the crisis in the United States, where homelessness was already on the national agenda. Indeed, the first general overview of homelessness in the Canadian context, published in 1993, contends that media coverage from the United States induced Canadians to regard homelessness as a crisis specific to the Americans and insignificant in Canada (O’Reilly-Fleming, 1993: pp. 1-5).

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<sup>3</sup> Some researchers have argued that the numbers controversy is an irresolvable debate mired in the politics of homelessness. Vastly different estimates are obtained, for example, depending on how a particular census study defines homelessness: should the count include only those individuals who are suffering *absolute* homelessness (those on the street or in shelters), or should the count also include those who are suffering *relative* homelessness (those at risk of homelessness or hidden in alternate but temporary accommodations)? In my opinion, the former method is overly restrictive and occludes the extent of poverty from the debate. For a discussion of methodological problems in counting the homeless population, see Peressini *et al.* (1996). For a proposed global definition of homelessness, see Springer (2000).

<sup>4</sup> This estimate is based on a survey of the number of homeless individuals using temporary or emergency shelter in 1986. By relying solely on shelter use, however, the survey misses those individuals who are living in the streets, who are hidden from view, or who are at risk of homelessness due to abject poverty; therefore, the phrase “remains conservative” was likely an extreme understatement. Since then, Canada has published no official national data on homelessness. For information concerning more recent attempts to enumerate the homeless population in various smaller jurisdictions see Bentley (1995), Begin *et al.* (1999), and Layton (2000: pp. 35-39). A recent survey in Victoria has revealed about 700 citizens suffering from absolute homelessness, 47 of whom are children (Cool Aid, 2005). This is a conservative estimate and does not include those who are hidden from view or many of those who are suffering relative homelessness. More importantly, however, as of the year 2000 there are approximately 43,000 people (about 14%) living in poverty in the Capital Region, and many thousands more who are on the edge of poverty (Community Council, 2005a: pp. 12-19).

In the past decade, however, Canadian awareness of homelessness has spread, given the increasing conspicuousness of homeless people in every Canadian city and the concomitant publication of an increasing array of reports and analyses. More recently, research incentives targeted specifically to issues concerning homelessness have substantially enhanced both national awareness of the crisis and the number of publications. Implementation of the National Homelessness Initiative in 1999, for example, has enhanced policy research, while funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in 2003 and 2004 has inspired transdisciplinary approaches. With increased funding, Canadian research is quickly diversifying towards a more thorough, if contested, understanding of the complexities generating and sustaining the crisis.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Crisis of Homelessness: Themes and Perspectives**

A review of literature on homelessness in Canada and the United States reveals a debate that has generated a distinctive set of conflicting discourses which address four prevailing themes: the parameters of homelessness (definition, demographics and extent); the experience of homelessness; the explanations for homelessness; and treatments of solutions that can help alleviate or eradicate the crisis. Early literature on homelessness was largely devoted to establishing the parameters. As noted above, attempts to define homelessness and determine the extent of the crisis are burdened by serious methodological problems subject to politics and ideological controversy. Concerning the

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<sup>5</sup> By speaking of homelessness in this section as a contemporary crisis apparent only in the past twenty-five years, I do not wish to imply that homelessness is entirely a late twentieth century phenomenon. Homelessness has had an extensive history, a history upon which the terms, labels, representations, and patterns of homelessness are substantively contingent: the contemporary crisis of homelessness, for example, is very different from homelessness during the Depression of the 1930s. For a general summary of historically constituted patterns of homelessness see Marcuse (1988: pp. 71-3); for a historical survey of the evolution of homelessness in Canada in the context of a comparative analysis with Canada's two most relevant influences, Britain and the United States, see Daly (1996: pp. 51-88). This latter work is one of the few studies that have attempted a comparative transnational analysis of homelessness. For a more extensive comparative perspective (albeit excluding Canada) see Helvie and Kunstmann (1999).

demographics of homelessness, however, there is general consensus that a “new homelessness” has emerged since the early 1980s, displacing the popular image of the single male “hobo” of preceding decades. Studies have revealed that there are increasingly more women, children, youth, and families suffering absolute or relative homelessness: doubling-up with family or friends, living in unstable conditions, or even living on the street (Barak, 1992: pp. 33-50; Begin *et al.*, 1999: n.p.). Furthermore, a significant percentage of homeless people is actually employed (perhaps 25-30% in the United States according to Barak, 1992: pp. 36-39, 50), a fact that not only perforates popular misconceptions of homelessness but also highlights the need for a living wage.<sup>6</sup>

The second theme – the experience of homelessness – has been a prominent theme in anthropological approaches. Accounts range from evocative and contextualized ethnographies (Desjarlais, 1997; Liebow, 1993) to romanticizing travelogues of excursions into the “underworld” (Toth, 1993).<sup>7</sup> Anthropological approaches rely heavily on empirical research garnered through direct engagement, detailed observations, and personal interviews. As a result, these approaches provide valuable insight into the oppressive condition of homelessness and, more important, give priority to the voices of those who suffer its debilitating consequences. There is also a tendency, however, to neglect structural contradictions in society that produce inequality, poverty, and homelessness (Susser, 1996: pp. 415-16). By focusing on proximate circumstances and

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<sup>6</sup> In Canada, there are currently no statistics for the number of homeless people who also work. Poverty statistics reveal, however, that in 1997 the working poor represented 30.8% of all non-elderly poor households in Canada and 28.7% of all poor families in British Columbia. Furthermore, in 1998 *full-time, full-year* minimum-wage income in every province was well below the poverty line. In British Columbia, for example, full-time full-year minimum-wage income for a lone parent with one child was \$4,135 *less than* the poverty line (a statistic made more poignant when one considers that this parent *also* has to find affordable and available child-care), while a one-earner couple with two children earned \$13,742 less than required to keep them out of poverty. Clearly, even if an unemployed homeless individual could find full-time work all year long (certainly no guarantee in itself), this *does not* ensure security from homelessness due to abject poverty. For the statistics cited above, see Ross *et al.* (2000: Chapter 5). For supporting statistics from the Capital Region, see Reitsma-Street *et al.* (2000: Chapters 4 and 6).

<sup>7</sup> For a review of the literature and the methodology in the anthropological approach, see Susser (1996) and Glasser and Bridgman (1999).

on the tactics of survival deployed by homeless people, anthropological studies risk individualizing the causality of the crisis by eliding the political economy. Therefore, these studies may unwittingly portray homeless citizens as passive agents who adapt to their plight but do not offer active resistance to the structural imperatives *producing* their oppressive condition.<sup>8</sup> Hence, some anthropologists have stressed the need for an holistic approach by considering “all aspects of the human condition, including the biological, cultural, social, linguistic, and psychological spheres of life” and by looking at “every possible factor that contributes to the state of homelessness, whether it is internally (personally) or externally (structurally) induced” (Glasser and Bridgman, 1999: pp. 9-11).

The two remaining themes – the explanations of and the solutions for homelessness – have been the most prominent themes in recent academic and policy-oriented research. The theoretical treatment of these themes, though extremely heterogeneous, may be usefully arrayed on a continuum defined by three competing perspectives: an individualist perspective focusing on personal dysfunction; a reformist perspective focusing on precipitating circumstances; and a structuralist perspective focusing on political economic imperatives. From an holistic standpoint, however, these perspectives should not be viewed as mutually exclusive. The conflicted terrain of the debate is largely a consequence of the ideological plasticity of the parameters framing the crisis, as competing viewpoints not only construct homelessness to suit political positions but also influence research to advance political agendas. For the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly outline the core arguments and attendant analyses characterizing

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<sup>8</sup> An excellent example of an anthropology that individualizes causality is found in the work of Oscar Lewis, who in the 1960s proposed the theory of a “culture of poverty.” According to Lewis, the “culture” perpetuates itself through its effects on the children who, by the age six or seven, “have usually absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their subculture [and] are psychologically unready to take full advantage of changing conditions or improving opportunities that may develop in their lifetime” (Lewis, 1966: p. 21). Lewis delineates several “traits” of poor people as markers defining the “culture.” Poverty, therefore, is individualized as emergent from its victims: the social condition of poverty is perpetuated by the “culture” of the poor themselves. Lewis’s tautologous argument for a “culture of poverty” is currently out of fashion (perhaps because references to poverty itself are anathema, except in the highly circumscribed context of homelessness), but its circular blame-the-victim logic has recently reappeared in an updated version known as the “cycle of homelessness.” For a classic critique of Lewis’s argument, see Davidson (1976).

each perspective. Familiarization with the tenets of each perspective is essential for an eventual link in the next chapter with studies that have spatial and architectural implications for an analysis of homelessness in the built environment.

### *The Individualist Perspective*

Individualist perspectives on homelessness tend to evaluate the crisis by explaining homelessness as a consequence of perceived deficiencies in the socio-psychological capacities of homeless individuals. Emphasis is placed on clinically diagnosed personal, familial, or “subcultural” pathologies of homeless people as the primary determinants generating or maintaining their homeless condition. These pathology-based models explain homelessness as consequent upon deviant behaviour and values arising from an individual’s mental illness, chronic substance abuse, family disorders, disaffiliation from community, or willful participation in a “culture of poverty.” In some versions of this perspective, homeless individuals are constructed as lazy or immoral, lacking the personal fortitude or the moral capacity to participate in mainstream society. Solutions which derive from such analyses call for punitive policies of containment such as reinstitutionalization or incarceration, or policies that attempt to enforce work by restricting “dependency-producing” welfare benefits, legislating a reduction in welfare rolls, and instituting workfare programmes.<sup>9</sup>

In the North American context, explanations that focus on individual pathologies as causal determinants largely derive from functionalist sociological studies of Skid Row in the decades from the 1920s through to the 1970s (Anderson, 1923; Bogue, 1963; Bahr,

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<sup>9</sup> Workfare programmes force welfare recipients to work or train in order to be eligible for social assistance. The rationale for such programmes is to encourage recipients to become less “dependent” on welfare by moving into the paid workforce. These policies, however, are based on two false assumptions: that welfare recipients are lazy and need “incentives” to look for work, and that the job market will provide adequate employment for all. Furthermore, some analysts have argued that such policies depress wages for the working poor by increasing competition for jobs and forcing workers to take jobs at lower pay (Klein and Montgomery, 2001). Meanwhile employers reap the benefits of reduced labour costs from the expansion of a cheap labour pool. In effect, the right to an adequate income when in need is trounced by an economic strategy that exploits labour, depresses wages, and lines the pockets of employers and corporations.

1973; Bahr and Caplow, 1973). These studies tended to focus on single, white males – “hobos,” “bums,” or “tramps” – who were objectified as pathologically deviant and disaffiliated individuals. Disaffiliation in particular was a prominent theme. Anderson (1923: p. 230), for example, had described the “hobos” of Skid Row as “the modern Ishmaels who refuse to fit into the routine of conventional social life. Resenting every sort of social discipline, they have ‘cut loose’ from organized society.” Meanwhile, studies which focused on the adverse social effects of deinstitutionalization from the 1960s through to the 1980s also emphasized pathology-based explanations (Dear and Wolch, 1987; Hope and Young, 1984).<sup>10</sup> Hence, the socio-pathology of the disaffiliated “Skid Row bum” and the psycho-pathology of the deinstitutionalized mentally ill have become foundational models implicit in the individualist perspective. Although extreme accounts of the individualist perspective – that individuals are homeless by choice, for example – have been heavily criticized and largely discounted in more recent academic literature, they remain nonetheless pervasive in the popular imagination, even among community leaders who have the power to influence and implement public policy:

I would say that society needs to do more research.... Through my walkabouts we’ve determined that there are a large percentage of people on the streets who are not in need and are not homeless. They are there as a choice of lifestyle (Bob Cross, Mayor of Victoria, BC, 1994-1999; qtd. in Cleverley, 1997a).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Deinstitutionalization had forced many patients suffering from mental illness onto the streets due to a parallel failure to fund community mental health centers (Reich and Siegal, 1978). It should be noted, however, that although deinstitutionalization certainly contributed to homelessness, its impact is often overstated. Recent studies have argued that the time lag between deinstitutionalization which began in the 1960s and the proliferation of homelessness in the 1980s suggests that the causal link between the two has been exaggerated (Blau, 1992: pp. 85-87; Snow and Anderson, 1993: pp. 234-37). Indeed, early research which had stressed deinstitutionalization as a primary cause for the dramatic rise in homelessness in the early 1980s has served to amplify the trope that most homeless people are mentally ill, a trope that persists in the popular imagination. In British Columbia, the 2004 “Premier’s Task Force on Homelessness, Mental Illness, and Addictions” – effectively conflating all three together – exemplifies the continued influence of this trope in public policy.

<sup>11</sup> This is the well worn mythology of “freedom of choice,” as if people choose to be homeless, poor, hungry, degraded, and exploited. Perhaps Mr. Cross was taking a page out of the draconian social policy book of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan who declared that, “One problem we’ve had, even in the best of times...is the people who are sleeping on the grates, the homeless who are homeless, you might say, by choice” (Frankel, 1984). The rhetoric of “homelessness as a choice of lifestyle” is a fallacious attempt to absolve society from accountability and must be resisted. For an insightful critique of this rhetoric, see Wright *et al.* (1998: pp. 26-28). For the legal ramifications of this rhetoric, see Feldman (2004: pp. 59-69).

### *The Reformist Perspective*

Emerging in the 1970s and gaining considerable momentum in the 1980s, critiques of individualist perspectives began to shift focus away from the individual homeless person to the social experiences that precipitate homelessness (Baum and Burnes, 1993; Redburn and Buss, 1986). Personal conditions such as chemical dependency, mental illness, and homelessness were no longer viewed as moral failings of the individual, but rather as diseases or circumstances that required diagnosis and treatment through the provision of services. Hence, the explanations for homelessness are located in the socio-economic conditions of a homeless person's life and in the inadequate services provided by society. Analyses from this perspective recognize poverty, unemployment, urban redevelopment, gentrification, the lack of affordable housing, deinstitutionalization, and personal attributes such as chemical dependency, mental illness, and family dysfunction, all as potentially precipitating homelessness. Solutions, however, remain narrowly focused on the immediate requirements of the individual and on rectifying, within the constraints of an existing political economy, the *proximate* circumstances sustaining an individual's homeless condition.

This reformist perspective, focusing as it does on proximate circumstances, is the most popular perspective employed by the community of service providers since the solutions that derive from analyses based on this perspective often involve expansion of services (Wright *et al.*, 1998: p. 12). Prominent proponents of such a perspective have been psychologists Alice Baum and Donald Burnes, who "do not consider major social, economic, and political forces to be at the root of today's homelessness":

[T]he homeless suffer from more immediate problems that prevent them from maintaining themselves in stable housing, from working, and from utilizing social benefits. If left untreated, these problems lead to isolation and alienation, misery, serious physical health problems, and early death. The effects of alcoholism, drug addiction and/or mental illness are the precipitating causes of the downward spiral that ends with the disconnection from society that stigmatizes the people who suffer from the diseases (Baum and Burnes, 1993: p. 170).

Other and more liberal reformist accounts tacitly recognize the role of social, economic, and political structures, yet they still concentrate on precipitating events and proximate causes as the basis of their analyses: “[Our analysis] is about causes, but mainly proximate rather than ultimate causes, and its focus is on the homeless individual, rather than on the larger social structures and norms that sustain, tolerate, and justify homelessness and other kinds of social deprivation” (Redburn and Buss, 1986: p. 55).

As Barak (1992: p. 54) points out, however, though reformist perspectives may “acknowledge the prevailing political, economic, and social relations affecting the homeless populations and associated with homelessness...[their] examinations tend to emphasize the process by which people wind up homeless divorced from the larger social arrangements.” Furthermore, the process of individuation with its tendency to “blame the victim” is still a prominent feature of these perspectives, for they attribute

defect and inadequacy to the malignant nature of poverty, injustice, slum life and racial difficulties. The stigma that marks the victim and accounts for his [*sic*] victimization is an acquired stigma, a stigma of social, rather than genetic, origin. But the stigma, the defect, the fatal difference – though derived in the past from environmental forces – is still located *within* the victim, inside his skin (Ryan, 1976: p. 7, orig. emph.).

By concentrating on precipitating events, reformist perspectives wish to correct the deficiencies or maladjustments of the *individual* by proposing solutions which intend to change the victim and the victim’s proximate circumstances rather than the political economy and the structural contradictions that generate or exacerbate these circumstances. If only the person will get a job, acquire housing, or receive the necessary support services to cure them of their addictions, they can get back on their feet and join mainstream society as a productive member.

### *The Structuralist Perspective*

By the mid-1980s and continuing into the present, critical and structuralist accounts of homelessness started to emerge, which attempt to situate the crisis in the structural contradictions inherent in a capitalist political economy that favours

exploitation and the accumulation of private capital over social and distributive justice (Barak, 1992; Blau, 1992; Murphy, 2000; O'Reilly-Fleming, 1993; Wolch and Dear, 1993b; Wright, 1996; Wright *et al.*, 1998). Emphasis is placed on social and political inequalities, the distribution of power, the institutional framework of policy decisions, uneven development, the creation of poverty, and the effects of a market economy on the availability of employment, social housing, welfare, and social services. These analyses not only question the causal relationship between a homeless person's individual attributes and that person's homeless condition – for example, whether chemical dependency precipitates homelessness or is, rather, preceded by life on the streets – but also wish to move beyond the proximate causes of “precipitating events” that form the bases of reformist accounts:

We must focus our examination of homelessness on the forces underlying the dislocations occurring in the urban and rural environments. In other words, regardless of an individual's disability or special needs, the key to making sense out of his or her homelessness lies in the ability of our analyses to explain the distinctive structural arrangements in which homeless individuals occupy special niches (Barak, 1992: p. 56).

Structuralist or political economic perspectives are most often employed by advocates and by the critical academic community interested in social justice. Although these analyses are extremely heterogeneous – focusing variously on housing, income, unemployment, law, or social welfare – all attempt to contextualize homelessness in the broad “trends in urban political economies [that] have created structural conditions that literally destine some people to be homeless” (Wright *et al.*, 1998: p. 13).

Not unexpectedly, these perspectives have also been subjected to criticism from conservative commentators emphasizing individual responsibility and from service-oriented reformists such as Baum and Burnes (1993), who do not wish to divert attention from the more immediate problems faced by many homeless people. In their criticism of Barak's analysis of homelessness in the United States and his contention that “the situation calls for fundamental changes in our prevailing economic and social priorities as they relate to the problem of the poor and the homeless” (Barak, 1992: p. 174), Baum and

Burnes argue that “[t]he relevance of such a transformation to the realities of homelessness in America today seems tenuous; Barak’s proposals serve to illustrate what others have proposed – that ‘as the distance from the city streets increases, understanding of the problem of homelessness decreases’ ” (Baum and Burnes, 1993: p. 144, citing Bassuk and Lariat, 1984: p. 306).

The debate over an “understanding of the problem of homelessness,” therefore, is fundamentally a question of ethical values and of scale, from an emphasis upon the individual and “proximate causes” to an emphasis upon the broader social, political, and economic societal structures and “ultimate causes.” As some studies point out, however, the debate need not be an either-or proposition: “defects and dislocations of social structure (in the broad sense of the term) create a population at risk of homelessness; defects of persons determine who within the at-risk population actually become homeless” (Wright *et al.*, 1998: p. 9). Yet, even this analysis remains somewhat problematic, for the statement suggests that homelessness is a consequence of personal “defects” rather than a cause. The commentators recognize, nonetheless, that homelessness is an issue that must be considered at many scales, from the personal experiences of a homeless individual to the structural imperatives of a political economy. With this caveat in mind, we will now reflect in this debate in the next chapter, where I reveal how these competing perspectives are manifest in current academic and policy-oriented research in Canada and the Capital Region of British Columbia.

## CHAPTER 2: HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA: RESEARCH AND PERSPECTIVES

Although some studies have recognized the need to incorporate multiple scales in any effective analysis of contemporary homelessness, there remains nonetheless a persistent tendency in Canadian discourse and public policy to reify the role of the political economy into dominant individualist and reformist agendas. In the individualist agenda, the elision of the political economy is a consequence of an ideological fidelity to personal responsibility and the work ethic. Therefore, individual comportment, personal pathologies, and chemical dependency are over-represented in this perspective, veiling the structural contradictions which *generate* poverty, inequality, and homelessness. In the reformist agenda, elision may be more of a practical necessity than an ideological obfuscation. The pragmatics of attending to an immediate crisis amid the constrictions of private and public resource allocations necessitates a narrow focus to enable the timely implementation of service-provision. Furthermore, since resource allocations are dependent upon private and public institutions that are already imbricated in the existing political economy, there is a sense that most service providers – from whom much of the reformist literature emerges – do not wish to bite the hand that feeds them.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, incisive structuralist critiques of homelessness in Canada have been and continue to be published by anti-poverty advocates and academics working through universities or non-governmental organizations. Yet, since these analyses are often critical of oppressive social norms and pernicious government policies, they are

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<sup>1</sup> In British Columbia, for example, the government has slashed financial support for legal aid and poverty advocacy – those social services that invariably *do* bite the hand that feeds them since they consistently challenge regressive government policies and legislation. In the 2002 budget, legal-aid funding was cut by 39% over three years, including the *complete elimination* of poverty legal aid, which has been reduced to pamphlets and self-help material (Caledon Institute, 2002: p.5). Victoria's own poverty advocacy group – Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) – has barely survived these cuts (Burrill, 2003; Lavoie, 2002a). Clearly, access to justice for low-income individuals has been seriously jeopardized. In response, the Canadian Bar Association (CBA) has launched litigation to establish a constitutional right to legal aid in British Columbia, the first such challenge to a legal-aid program in Canada's history. See the Canadian Bar Association (CBA, 2005) for the statement of claim.

consistently met with resistance, apathy, or denial from business communities, private citizens, and elected officials who benefit from the existing political economy and wish to preserve the status quo. As Sibley (1995) argues in his insightful discussion of the exclusion of knowledge in society, “Power is not evenly distributed in the knowledge industry, and those practitioners who have more of it have the capacity to marginalize or exclude the work of dissenters” (Sibley, 1995: pp. 115-182; qt. at p. 115). Hence, “dangerous” knowledge which challenges the dominant moral order of society is controlled through suppression, neglect, or dismissal to maintain what Sibley identifies as a “knowledge hierarchy” – the ordering, valuing, and ranking of knowledges. By branding some knowledges as legitimate and others as dangerous, those in power police the borders of existing social relations and protect the privilege of their stations.

In this chapter, I will review the individualist, reformist, and structuralist perspectives as they appear in Canadian and local research. I will begin with a discussion of the federal government’s National Homelessness Initiative (NHI), the primary funding mechanism for research in recent years. As an initiative designed to alleviate homelessness by reforming homeless individuals, this programme has promoted research framed by the reformist perspective. The outcome has been a proliferation of analyses which individualize the crisis and reify the political economy into the individual homeless body. To contrast this dominant tendency in research, I follow with a review of several analyses informed by the structuralist perspective. Through an examination of advocacy research, I seek not only to dispel the prevailing myths framing the crisis, but also to highlight the role of the political economy in the production of poverty, inequality, and homelessness. Finally, after establishing critical links between structural imperatives in the political economy and the production of poverty in our society, I briefly review research that has examined homelessness from a spatial perspective. Many of the studies are coarse-grained analyses documenting the forced eviction of low income households resulting from large-scale “slum” clearance and urban revitalization. Other research is

more finely grained but tends to individualize homelessness by focusing not so much on the production of exclusionary environments as on the mobility patterns and spatialized tactics of homeless people in their daily survival. Although my own investigation does speak to such issues, this thesis will focus primarily on the production of socio-spatial exclusion as it surfaces specifically in the built environment of the street.

Before I begin my review, however, I will briefly discuss the marginalizing consequences of a “knowledge hierarchy” framing public debate on homelessness. As introduced above, Sibley has argued that there is a relationship between the exercise of power and the production of knowledge in our society: “the exercise of power has a role in promoting or suppressing knowledge, [which] is reflected in the existence of hierarchies, that is, in the hierarchical organization of the purveyors of knowledge and in the ranking of *knowledges*” (Sibley, 1995: p. 122, orig. emph.). By revealing how structuralist analyses on poverty and homelessness are controlled through a knowledge hierarchy and marginalized through suppression, neglect, or dismissal – a process that I shall term “epistemological exclusion” – I hope to contextualize my review and alert the reader to a persistent and debilitating bias in official and popular discourse.

### **Epistemological Exclusion in Canadian Research**

As the funding cuts to legal aid and poverty advocacy attest, epistemological exclusion is often effected through funding discrimination or through the constraints imposed by restricted budgets. As Sibley argues in the context of universities, “the state and capital do not dictate what research is done in academic institutions, but they do encourage some forms of enquiry, primarily through the selective funding of research” (Sibley, 1995: p. 121). Selective funding is apparent in the type of research encouraged by the National Homelessness Initiative, a six-year reformist program funded by the federal government that I shall discuss later in this chapter. Epistemological exclusion

can also occur, however, through direct and explicit political posturing, involving the outright dismissal of rigorous analyses that criticize the production of poverty and inequality by an oppressive political economy. Many of these analyses are highly critical of regressive government policies that perpetuate oppression and contribute to the proliferation of homelessness. Hence, to deflect criticism, the government persistently marginalizes such analyses through aggressive strategies of epistemological exclusion.

As I briefly outline at the outset of my thesis epistemological exclusion is apparent in the reaction of the Canadian government in the wake of meetings held by the United Nations in 1998 to review Canada's human rights record. Faced with official UN condemnation for failing progressively to fulfill its commitment to eradicate poverty and inequality in Canada, the Canadian government questioned the accuracy of the various reports that criticized Canada's performance. These reports – critical, well-documented, and up-to-date structuralist analyses prepared by NAPO and several other NGOs, and presented to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – provided convincing evidence of the proliferation of poverty and inequality in Canada, and the persistent violation of the human rights of low income Canadians.<sup>2</sup> Jacquie Ackerly, an anti-poverty advocate from Victoria who had struggled on welfare for several years with four children, was NAPO's representative appearing before the Committee. Her comments concerning the outcome of the forum are illuminating:

The [UN] report validated all those messages that no one listened to in Canada.... If you're poor, you don't experience much validation from politicians or the media.... You just leave with the feeling that they don't believe you; they think that you are out of your depth and don't understand the complexities of the issues, nor do they expect you to.... [At the UN] we were treated as experts in the field (qtd. in Swanson, 2000: p. 18).

The lack of validation of which Ackerly speaks is symptomatic of epistemological exclusion produced by a knowledge hierarchy, as the authority of those in poverty and

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<sup>2</sup> Besides the National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO, 1998), other Canadian NGOs which submitted briefs or statements to the UN included, *inter alia*, the following: Charter Committee on Poverty Issues (Calderhead, 1998); National Association of Women and the Law (Day and Young, 1998); Ad Hoc Canadian NGO Committee on Human Rights and Investment (Foster and Sallows, 1998); and Rupert Rooming House Coalition (Hulchanski, 1998).

their advocates is dismissed as unreliable. Indeed, despite the UN's appreciation of the expertise of the various NGOs appearing before the Committee, the government asserted that the NGO reports were based on outdated data and did not reflect such recent initiatives as the National Child Benefit (NCB) to help alleviate child poverty (McCabe and Beltrame, 1998). Yet, a review of the NGO analyses reveals this assertion to be patently untrue: even the most recent initiatives – including the NCB – were examined and found woefully insufficient as anti-poverty measures.<sup>3</sup>

To parallel its strategy of delegitimizing the NGO reports, the federal government also attempted to circumscribe the boundaries of legitimate knowledge by *reconfiguring* the very parameters of poverty. Only weeks after being pilloried by the UN, the Canadian government publicly announced its intention to redefine the poverty line by replacing the popular Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) with the new Market Basket Measure (MBM) (Beauchesne, 1998a; Watson, 1998). The LICO, in use since 1968, is a measure of low income below which people are said to be living in “straitened circumstances.” It is measured as the income level at which a family will spend 20% more of its pre-tax income on essentials – food, clothing, and shelter – than the average Canadian family (Canada, 1999; Ross *et al.*, 2000).<sup>4</sup> The proposed MBM, on

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<sup>3</sup> For NAPO's critique of the NCB see NAPO (1998: para. 38-44). As NAPO had predicted, the NCB's impact on child poverty has been minimal. The intended recipients of the NCB are low income working families. For those families receiving social assistance from the provinces, the NCB is *deducted dollar-for-dollar* from their welfare payments, which means that welfare families – with an estimated two-thirds of all poor children – *receive no benefit from the NCB at all*. Such a policy, which excludes the neediest families (and children) in the nation, is unconscionable given the fact that in 1989 when child poverty was at 15.1%, the House of Commons passed a unanimous resolution to end child poverty in Canada by the year 2000. As of the year 2003, the child poverty rate has *increased* to 17.6%, to a total of 1.2 million children, or one child of every six (CCSD, 2006b). So much for political will. Sadly, the government does not seem to realize that ending child poverty must necessarily entail an end to poverty among families.

<sup>4</sup> Although Statistics Canada does not claim to measure poverty, most experts, politicians, and commentators use the low income cut offs as a poverty line; and indeed, for over three decades, the before-tax LICO has been the most accepted and most widely used definition of poverty in Canada. As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, for example, the federal government has consistently used the LICO as a measure of poverty when providing information to the United Nations about poverty in Canada. For a detailed and informative analysis of various methodologies for measuring poverty in Canada, including the LICO and the MBM, see Ross *et al.* (2000: pp. 5-11 and Chapter 2).

the other hand, does not tie the poverty line to average income levels. The poverty line is calculated by developing a basket of necessities and pricing the basket according to location (Canada, 1998). For this reason, the MBM is seen by some to be more “objective” (and hence more accurate) than the relative measure of LICO; and indeed, this was one of the primary justifications given by the government in their proposal to revise the definition of poverty.<sup>5</sup>

The argument that the MBM is more “objective,” however, is inaccurate. As David Ross of the Canadian Council on Social Development argues,

determining life’s necessities is a very subjective exercise. Everyone has their own definition of what should go in the basket. Once you abandon a bare survival concept of poverty and measure it in relative terms, you can pretend to be objective, but eventually you have to make a judgment about what constitutes a necessity (Ross, 1998; see also Ross *et al.*, 2000: pp. 21-26).

Ross goes on to clarify that a judgment about what constitutes a necessity is dependent upon the goal one wishes to achieve, which is itself another subjective determination. Is the goal merely to sustain bodily existence by providing only just enough in the basket to prevent starvation? Or is the goal more socially inclusive by providing the means to participate effectively and rewardingly in the community? Clearly, the determinations required for the MBM are complex (and relative) indeed. Furthermore, as Ross *et al.* (2000) point out, the efficacy of replacing the popular LICO with the new MBM as a poverty measure is itself questionable. In opinion polls conducted since 1976 by Gallup, Canadians have been asked the question, “Generally speaking what do you think is the least amount of money a family of four needs each week to get along in this

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<sup>5</sup> The principal argument against the LICO is its reliance on average income to calculate the poverty line. Even if everyone’s income were to increase ten-fold, goes the argument, the poverty rate as measured through average income would remain relatively unchanged. As Ross *et al.* (2000) point out, however, the problem with this argument is that it assumes that poverty reduction should be based on expanding the economy and improving everyone’s income. Rather, the utility of the LICO lies in its ability to measure poverty reduction as effected *not* through an expansion of income but through income *redistribution*, or redistributive justice. In this way, poverty can be eliminated by reducing the poverty gap – *by eliminating economic inequality*. The fact that millions of Canadians are still unable to meet basic needs during a period of economic recovery and a growing GDP clearly shows that improving average income through an expanding economy *does not benefit everybody equally* as the poverty gap widens further than it has ever been before. For an analysis of income inequality and the growing poverty gap in BC, see Lee (2004a).

community?” For the last three decades, answers to this question have corresponded closely with the LICO. This clearly indicates, the authors argue, that Canadians favour a relative or social-inclusion approach to the definition of poverty (Ross *et al.*, 2000: p. 30).

Definitional controversy aside, the immediate consequence of redefining the poverty line, as I have already noted, would be a sudden 5% decrease in the poverty rate (Canada, 1998), as 1.5 million Canadians struggling on low income would be statistically hidden from view by declaring them no longer poor. Furthermore, as critics had noted at the time, there was also an *economic* motive behind the government’s proposal. By adopting the new measure, the estimated annual cost of ending child poverty by the year 2000 – as the House of Commons had resolved in 1989, and which the current (1998) federal government was under extreme pressure to accomplish in the two years remaining – would have been cut in half from \$6.6 billion to \$3.3 billion (Canada, 1998). Reduced funding for anti-poverty initiatives, therefore, would have been the material consequence of replacing the LICO with the proposed MBM. Not unexpectedly, the government denied that saving money on the backs of the poor was the objective (Alberts, 1998).

Meanwhile, the very citizens who would be affected by the proposed MBM – those on low income – were not even consulted when the government established the parameters for its basket. Indeed, as if anticipating the criticism it would face from the UN in November of 1998, the government had, in fact, already been working on the MBM behind closed doors since March of that year. As Michael Farrell of NAPO explains, “It was one of those backdoor deals that nobody had any input into” (Beauchesne, 1998b). The National Council on Welfare (NCW) also had serious reservations about the secrecy surrounding the basket: “[P]oor people have a detailed understanding of poverty from their personal experience.... It is wrong for elected officials or bureaucrats who are tens of thousands of dollars away from any definition of poverty to decide unilaterally [what it means to be poor]” (qtd. in *Toronto Star*, 1999). In other words, the experiential knowledge of poor people about their own condition – a

knowledge ranked very low in the “hierarchy of knowledge” established by the privileged classes – is dismissed by the government and excluded from the political process.<sup>6</sup>

The reaction of the Canadian government in the wake of its embarrassing testimony before the United Nations in 1998 reveals the extent to which epistemological exclusion is deployed to protect the interests of the privileged classes. As we have seen, exclusion is apparent on several registers: the federal government’s dismissal of NGO reports criticizing Canada’s human rights abuses against low-income households; the government’s attempt to redefine poverty through a new and “more objective” poverty measure; and the exclusion of those in poverty from the political process of determining the contents of the government basket for the MBM. All these strategies represent a persistent attempt by those in power to circumscribe the poverty debate and maintain a “knowledge hierarchy.” Furthermore, such exclusion is paralleled and supported by the spatial exclusion of homeless individuals documented in this thesis. Indeed, the various exclusionary practices – whether they be sociological, epistemological, spatial, or otherwise – are dialectically related and mutually supportive of an oppressive and marginalizing socio-spatial regime. Together, they sustain an *edifice of exclusion*, so to speak, which structures all references to poverty and homelessness in our society, whether they be conceptual (such as statistics) or material (such as the body of a homeless citizen on the street). Therefore, as I reveal how denial and exclusion surface in the architectural geography of homelessness in Victoria, I urge the reader to remember the correlative strategies of exclusion delineated above. They are not unrelated.

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<sup>6</sup> While the denial of political representation has been roundly and rightfully criticized along other axes of difference (such as ethnicity and gender), the political exclusion of those suffering economic discrimination remains largely unreported and invisible. Until recently, such exclusion even extended into the simplest and most fundamental form of political expression: the right to vote. *It was not until the election year of 2000 that homeless citizens finally acquired effective suffrage* (Naumetz, 2000; Young, 2000). Before this election, homeless Canadian citizens were unable to vote due to the lack of an address, a concrete example of how structural exclusion is produced by an oppressive political economy that privileges property rights over human rights. The fact that this structural contradiction has only *recently* been rectified is testimony to the lethargy of the Canadian government to act effectively and progressively on issues of systemic injustice arising from discrimination against those in poverty.

With a critical awareness of how structural analyses of poverty and homelessness are marginalized through epistemological exclusion, I will now review the reformist and structuralist perspectives as they appear in current Canadian and local research. That I do not include the individualist perspective in my review is indicative not of its lack of purchase in society but of an academic and legislative community increasingly wary – either critically or politically – of this perspective’s overly restrictive tendency to blame the victims for their homelessness. As I have already noted, moralizing versions of the individualist perspective that attribute homelessness to “aberrant character” or “moral failing” have been thoroughly discounted in recent literature. Nevertheless, certain assumptions of this perspective – that homeless people are lazy “bums,” for example, and hence should be forced to work or face incarceration – remain prominent in the popular imagination. Indeed, in order to legitimize punitive policies, governments often deploy a reformist agenda to mask the underlying influence of an individualist perspective. In many Canadian provinces including British Columbia, for example, existing reformist policies of workfare – which implicitly attribute unemployment (and, by extension, homelessness) to the laziness of the unemployed individual – may be cited as evidence for the continuing currency of the individualist perspective as grafted to the reformist agenda. Consequently, although I do not include the individualist perspective in my review, the reader should take note that the foundational tenets of this perspective continue to inform both popular opinion and government policy.

### **The Reformist Perspective in Canadian Research**

Predictably, in Canada the most popular approach in current research is dominated by the reformist perspective. Much of this research is designed to assist local policy-makers in the administration of social services in their region. Many of the studies, therefore, are commissioned reports that concentrate on immediate local

“solutions” and the acquisition of empirical data to identify assets and gaps in the provision of services (British Columbia, 2000b; Norman, 2003; Victoria, 2003b). This tendency towards localized and policy-oriented research has recently been reinforced by the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) implemented in 1999 with a total of \$1.15 billion in federal funding over six years. This initiative had offered several programmes or enhancements to existing programmes that provided supportive funding for community-based projects designed to assess gaps in the provision of services and to implement policies and programmes to fill these gaps. Among the stated objectives was:

To develop a comprehensive continuum of supports to help homeless Canadians move out of the cycle of homelessness and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness by providing communities with the tools to develop a range of interventions to stabilize the living arrangements of homeless individuals and families – encouraging self-sufficiency where possible – and prevent those at-risk from falling into homelessness (Canada, 2003b).

The reformist agenda is readily apparent in the language deployed: homelessness is individualized as a “cycle” in which individual homeless Canadians become trapped; solutions require “interventions” into the lives of homeless people; and emphasis is placed on reforming the individual and the individual’s proximate circumstances by encouraging “self-sufficiency.”<sup>7</sup>

Through the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the City of Victoria was one of 61 communities participating in the NHI, receiving \$4.5 million over six years.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the Victoria Steering Committee on Homelessness has

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<sup>7</sup> Presumably, “self-sufficiency” means “getting a job.” Exactly how an individual or family is to become self-sufficient at the current levels of minimum wage, however, was not discussed in the Initiative. As revealed in n. 7 of Chapter 1 in this thesis, minimum wage in Canada *is not* a living wage, a fact that the rhetoric of self-sufficiency fails to acknowledge.

<sup>8</sup> In the context of Victoria’s participation in the NHI, the unique geopolitical situation of the Capital Region highlights the politics of federal funding and the spatialized constraints of the political economy. The funding formula for the NHI was tied to the population of the recipient municipality; Victoria’s population at this time was about 74,000 people. Yet, as the core district of a metropolitan community of 13 municipalities and 330,000 people, Victoria provides nearly all of the services available for homeless individuals in the region. Consequently, while pleased with whatever support the federal government could provide, Victoria Mayor Alan Lowe had reason to be less than impressed with the funding allocated to Victoria through this initiative. As he lamented, “Victoria is not being funded...at a level that reflects the regional demands being placed on our city.” Indeed, he astutely and correctly argued that “[homelessness in Victoria] is a regional problem and we need to work on it regionally” (qtd. in Curtis, 2004).

developed a community plan that mirrors the reformist perspective of the national programme:

Homeless people have the same basic set of needs that we all do, but often these are complicated by additional needs related to poverty, health, culture, life skills, employment, etc., that prevent the individual from adjusting and integrating on a sustainable basis into the community (Victoria, 2003c).

Although the plan seems to recognize poverty and other structural parameters which contribute to homelessness, these are immediately individualized, as research and resources are dedicated to the fulfillment of immediate needs proximate to the homeless individual. Hence, it is ultimately the responsibility of the homeless person to “adjust and integrate on a sustainable basis into the community.” The fact that the political economy *generates* poverty as a structural necessity; that the stresses of such poverty and an unequal access to health care *generate* ill health, both mentally and physically; that a dominant white, middle-class, patriarchal, heterosexist culture *generates* racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia; that an unequal access to quality education *generates* a disparity in life-skills between people; that a capitalist system which requires a pool of cheap labour to depress wages *generates* unemployment – that all these conditions exist is apparently of no consequence. It is the individual who must reform and conform.

Government expenditure in reformist research and initiatives such as the NHI are representative of a continuing trend in policy implementation and social spending in Canada. Increasingly, administrative and distributive responsibilities are downloaded onto the local economies of the provinces and the municipalities, while at the same time there is a transfer of *general expenditure* (welfare programs, for example) into *targeted expenditure* (programs for homeless individuals) in order to legitimize government policy (after Chossudovsky, 1999: p. 59).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as I discuss later in this chapter, over the

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<sup>9</sup> In the context of social programmes, the terms “spending” and “expenditure” have become popular terms which misrepresent the practices they are meant to describe. Government officials and the media consistently juxtapose “investing in business” with “social spending,” as if providing infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, and housing, and social programmes such as education, health care, and welfare were not in themselves *investments* in people but a burden. Although I still use the popular terms, I urge the reader to be cognizant of their ideological function.

past decade the Canadian government has initiated a retrenchment in the administration, funding, and guarantees of welfare and affordable housing, preferring instead to fund programmes such as the NHI which target the *consequences* of such a retrenchment – homelessness and homeless citizens. By targeting homeless individuals (rather than poverty) and promoting an ideology of self-sufficiency (rather than an ethic of mutual responsibility), the reformist programmes of federal and local governments effectively reify the ultimate causes of the crisis – the perpetuation and proliferation of inequality and poverty – into the individual homeless body. Consequently, despite the expenditure of hundreds of millions of federal dollars to fund research, reform homeless individuals, and support a burgeoning industry of service providers, homelessness remains an intractable crisis that continues unabated in urban and rural communities across Canada.

There is also the unsettling fact, however, that the service-provision industry itself has attained institutional status. Therefore, reformist institutions such as homeless shelters and out-reach programs arguably have a vested interest in the intractability of the crisis, as increasing numbers of homeless citizens rely on these institutions for primary needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. This is *not* to say that service providers across Canada do not wish to eradicate homelessness, but that the service-provision *industry* is imbricated in the political economy and operates at a structural level. Therefore, the industry's function in society may not be coextensive with the humanitarian intent and good will of service providers. Indeed, some studies have argued that institutions such as welfare and homeless shelters function primarily to sustain the political economy by socially and spatially regulating poverty and homelessness (Gounis, 1992; Piven and Cloward, 1993). Susan Ruddick (1990: p. 188), for example, has suggested that the function of out-reach programs is to seek out recalcitrant homeless individuals and draw them into the service system in an expanding network of control and surveillance.

Reformist institutions which provide services for homeless people, therefore, occupy important and necessary niches in the Canadian political economy. In a capitalist

society that depends upon the exploitation of consumption and labour to generate private profit, homeless individuals are deemed worthless because of their perceived inability to work and their structural inability to buy. Essentially, homeless people are stigmatized because they refuse or are unable to be exploited.<sup>10</sup> By reforming homeless individuals, the service-provision industry works to restore the labour potential of exploitable “human resources,” thereby fulfilling (for the capitalist) the essential service of managing and regulating a reserve army of labour. In effect, a homeless person becomes both the raw material and the finished product of a publicly funded industry that reproduces both a worker and a consumer for the efficient and uninhibited growth of private capital. Indeed, labour is reproduced at little or no expense to those who control the means of production. Structurally, then, the service-provision industry – informed by the reformist perspective – operates as a bureaucracy which not only depoliticizes homelessness, but also regulates it; not only reifies poverty into the individual, but also sustains the political economy through the regulation and exploitation of poverty and labour.

This structuralist critique of the service-provision industry, though cynical in its analysis, highlights and reiterates the potential limitations of research and policies that issue from the reformist perspective. By individualizing the crisis, reformist initiatives such as the NHI become trapped in the incarcerating optics of their own perspective and consequently fail to escape the structural imperatives of the political economy. Admittedly, in the absence of just and meaningful structural changes in Canadian society, the provision of services is essential for the immediate relief of suffering and distress.

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<sup>10</sup> The spirit of exploitation is explicitly conveyed, perhaps, in the once revised nomen of the provincial ministry responsible for administering welfare and social services in British Columbia, a charge that may also be leveled at parallel ministries in other jurisdictions. In 1996, the province changed the name of this ministry from “Social Services” to “Human Resources,” as if human beings are boards of soft-wood lumber to be exploited for use. As Swanson (2001: p. 11) notes, “The new name suggested that humans on welfare are ‘resources’ for employers, not human beings with inherent dignity, reason, and conscience, as the United Nation’s Declaration on Human Rights defines us.” Since the election of the new provincial Liberal government in 2001, the name of this ministry has again been changed. It is now known as the “Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance,” thereby signalling the government’s fidelity to an ideology of “self-sufficiency” discussed earlier, rather than an ethic of guaranteeing an adequate standard of living for those suffering the debilitating – and structurally produced – conditions of *unemployment*.

Indeed, the public image of providing immediate relief is the primary means by which service-providers garner legitimacy in the community.<sup>11</sup> Yet, as long as Canadian research and public policy fail to explain and rectify “the distinctive structural arrangements in which homeless individuals occupy special niches” (Barak, 1992: p. 56), the admirable and essential work of frontline service-providers across Canada is an investment of diminishing returns. For indeed, homelessness is not solely, nor ultimately, an individual outcome. Rather, the crisis is a predictable outcome of an oppressive political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice. The following section will investigate this claim and review literature in Canadian research that has resisted the reifying tendencies of reformist initiatives by revealing how the political economy *produces* poverty, inequality, and homelessness.

### **The Structuralist Perspective in Canadian Research**

Although comprehensive surveys that provide a political-economic critique of homelessness in Canada do exist (Daly, 1996; Murphy, 2000; O’Reilly-Fleming, 1993), most studies that deploy the structuralist perspective are more narrowly focused on specific issues that affect, produce, or maintain poverty and homelessness in various jurisdictions. These include analyses which examine socio-political inequalities (Davies *et al.*, 2001; Hulchanski, 2001), the economic restructuring of welfare (Klein and Long, 2003; Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002), juridical contradictions (Hulchanski, 2000;

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<sup>11</sup> Extrapolating from the insights of Castells (1983: pp. 128-129) concerning the legitimacy of community-based social movements and organizations, services such as homeless shelters and out-reach programs are successful in acquiring government support since they create legitimacy through the delivery of immediate rewards. Poverty advocacy and legal aid programs, on the other hand, are not as successful since they seek legitimacy through a *raising of the consciousness* of target groups, which can ultimately pose a threat to the dominant economic order. The complete elimination of government funding for poverty legal aid in the 2002 BC provincial budget (noted previously) is thereby thrown into sharper focus.

Shafer, 1998), and the availability of affordable and adequate housing (Irwin, 2004; Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001). These critiques reveal deep-seated structural contradictions in the social and political economy that generate not only the violence of poverty, inequality, and homelessness but also the subsequent violence of oppressive policies and legislation that regulate poverty and create hardship for low income households.

In the context of restructuring welfare, for example, the essential safety net of government assistance has been seriously eroded by the privileged classes who possess the political power to institute regressive legislation (Klein and Long, 2003; Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002). Indeed, in the past decade, there has been a relentless and unmerciful war, not against *poverty*, but against the most disadvantaged and disenfranchised citizens of our communities – those *in poverty*.<sup>12</sup> In 1995 the *Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP)*, implemented in 1966, was abolished and replaced by the *Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST)* with a concomitant cut of billions of federal dollars for health, education, and welfare. As outlined in its preamble, *CAP* had recognized that “the provision of adequate assistance to ... persons in need and the prevention and removal of the causes of poverty ... are the concern of all Canadians” (ctd. in Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002: p. 3). In effect, a fundamental human and economic right to an adequate level of income support when in need was enshrined as a national concern: assistance was federally mandated through national standards for the provincial delivery of welfare and social services. This is what the United Nations was referring to in 1998 when its committee queried the Canadian delegation about

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<sup>12</sup> To put this section in perspective: The poverty rate among all persons in Canada in 2003 was 15.9%, representing 4.9 million persons below Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off line. The hardest hit are single parent mothers with an egregious poverty rate of 48.9%. Nearly a quarter century earlier in 1980, the respective rates were 16% and 57.6% – not much of a difference, and testimony to the complacency at all levels of government regarding poverty. Meanwhile, income inequality has widened. Between 1980 and 2003, disposable income for the richest quintile in the country (top 20%) has increased 14.4%, while the disposable income of the bottom 80% has remained flat, or has even *decreased* for the second and third quintiles (-4.4% and -5.7% respectively). Finally, among the poorest of the poor (those with incomes less than 50% of the poverty line), the absolute number of individuals or families in this group has jumped to *two to three times* the number in 1989. Clearly, a steaming economy is not lifting all boats out of the water. For all statistics cited above, see the National Council on Welfare (NCW, 2006).

contradictions in their reports, and about Canada's apparent reversal in its interpretation of CAP as an effective programme for guaranteeing and protecting *Covenant* rights.

With the abolition of *CAP* and the introduction of the *CHST*, however, a guaranteed income when in need disappeared with a stroke of a pen. Federal funds were to be dispersed through block funding with annual lump-sum payments to the provinces, and executive power in the quality and implementation of welfare was transferred – free from obligations and federal standards – to the provinces.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the provinces were free to experiment with restructuring welfare. In British Columbia in 1996, for example, the NDP provincial government replaced the *Guaranteed Available Income for Need Act* of 1972 with the *B.C. Benefits Act*, which cut benefit rates, tightened criteria for eligibility, implemented employment or training requirements, and subsidized employers by up to \$8,000 a year (a species of corporate welfare) for hiring and “training” youth, usually at the non-livable levels of minimum wage. Benefit levels were not tied to the cost of living, and by 2001 “all welfare rates remained far below commonly accepted standards of adequacy for necessities of dignified living” (Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002: p. 4). As the change in the name of this punitive legislation suggested, without federal standards, no longer would there be a “guaranteed available income for need.”<sup>14</sup>

Yet, as if this was not punishment enough for those in poverty, in 2002 the *B.C. Benefits Act* and related acts such as the *B.C. Benefits Appeals Act* were repealed and replaced with the *Employment and Assistance Acts*, Bills 26 and 27. Introduced by the

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<sup>13</sup> Significantly, one of the few CAP rights that was not abolished by the CHST was the right not to be denied welfare because you were from another province. As Swanson (2001: pp. 108-109) points out, employers appreciated this clause since it maintains a flexible labour market by allowing desperate people in poverty to move from province to province competing for insufficient jobs, thereby providing the political-economic leverage for employers across the country to keep wages as low as possible while maximizing their own profit.

<sup>14</sup> It is also worth noting – as the United Nations had pointed out in 1998 – that a transfer of welfare responsibilities to the provinces effectively insulates the federal government from accountability and undermines the implementation of the standards enshrined in the *International Covenant*. Such is the political utility of downloading responsibilities in the context of protecting social rights (such as housing). The Government of Canada attempts to circumvent obligations ratified in international treaties by embedding them in other jurisdictions and isolating them from federal responsibility and accountability.

newly-elected provincial Liberal government, Bills 26 and 27 are appallingly regressive and punitive acts that emphasize work over benefits (even more than did *B.C. Benefits*) to establish a “benchmark of civility and citizen responsibility” in a “New Era for British Columbia,” as the B.C. Liberal platform was euphemistically labeled. These acts tightened eligibility criteria even further, drastically cut the already inadequate benefit levels, significantly increased punishments, substantially heightened the surveillance of applicants, and drastically reduced access to the appeals process. All applicants are expected to become “self-sufficient” by decreasing “dependency” and finding employment, regardless – as many critics have noted – of pay or working conditions, the job market, housing or transportation issues, or other obligations to children and family members (Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002: p. 2).<sup>15</sup> As policy analysts Seth Klein and Andrea Long argue in *A Bad Time to be Poor: An Analysis of British Columbia’s New Welfare Policies*:

This approach refuses to entertain larger structural and economic considerations, such as the failure of the market to produce an adequate supply of decent jobs, the failure of the market to produce an adequate supply of affordable housing, or the reality of socio-economic inequalities and oppression, such as the greater challenges faced by low-income families, the systemic discrimination faced by women in the workplace, or the cultural and workplace racism experienced by aboriginal people or other visible minorities.... [U]nderlying the new welfare rules is a continuing shift from a model of mutual responsibility and caring to one of personal obligation and self-sufficiency (Klein and Long, 2003: pp. 12, 13).

In the Capital Region, the consequences of these punitive welfare policies have been partially documented by the Community Council in a series of reports issued from July 2002 to January 2005 as part of the Community Reconstruction Project (Community Council, 2005b, 2004a, 2004b, 2003a). Through a survey of twenty-three social

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<sup>15</sup> The intended legislation of these policies were not included in the Liberal’s “New Era” election platform, and they contradict Premier Gordon Campbell’s own statements in the 2001 election campaign: “We have no intention of reducing welfare rates” (ctd. in Klein and Long, 2003: p. 8). Furthermore, the BC Association of Social Workers, in response to these punitive welfare policies, officially censured Minister Murray Coell, the Minister of Human Resources and former social worker, for abandoning his responsibilities “to uphold the BC Social Work Code of Ethics and Standard of Conduct” (Michael and Reitsma-Street, 2002: p. 2). Clearly, honesty and ethical conduct were not priorities in the Liberal agenda, as the government proceeded to exploit the labour and deepen the poverty of low income households in order to further the economic growth of business (or, more accurately, the profit interests of the privileged).

agencies, research findings indicate that agencies have seen “increases in the number of people with unmet survival needs [such as] food, shelter, clothing, health and medical support ... that more working people and immigrants were showing up at shelters ... [that] increasingly, poor families were unable to get affordable, appropriate housing ... [and that] increasingly, agencies were seeing clients turning to prostitution, to theft or to working under the table, or clients were staying in or returning to abusive relationships for financial reasons” (Community Council, 2005b: pp. 11, 12). In other words, it seems as though these “New Era” policies have not inspired “a new benchmark of civility and citizen responsibility,” but have, rather, established a new benchmark of barbarism and citizen distress by *producing* increased misery, “crime,” poverty, and homelessness at the bottom of the social and political economic ladder.

The exclusionary consequences of these punitive welfare policies have also been confirmed through a more rigorous analysis conducted by non-governmental organizations in the province (Wallace *et al.*, 2006). Drawing on previously undisclosed data obtained through Freedom of Information requests, the report sought to investigate the government’s claim that its new policies are successfully moving people from “dependency” on welfare to jobs and self-sufficiency. Contrary to the government’s claims, the report reveals that,

the recent drop in the [welfare] caseload is not the result of more people leaving welfare (i.e. an increase in what the government calls “exits”). Rather, fewer people are entering the system and accessing assistance. Simply put, the caseload reduction is mainly a front-door story (*Ibid*: p. 6).

As the report illustrates, the welfare application system has now become so complicated and restrictive that “it discourages, delays and denies people who need help,” as many people “are being ‘diverted’ to homelessness, charities and increased hardship.” The report goes on to conclude that, “Welfare reform in BC cannot be declared a success.... The BC government needs to address the much more complex goal of reducing poverty, not just reducing the caseload” (*Ibid*: pp. 5-10). Not unexpectedly, the government dismissed the report as failing to be “up to date on income assistance” (Kines and Rud,

2006; Richmond, 2006), a fallacious claim that, once again, illustrates the marginalizing manoeuvres of epistemological exclusion (Reitsma-Street, 2006).<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, paralleling a retrenchment in welfare, access to affordable housing has also become increasingly difficult for low-income households (Irwin, 2004; Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001). As the level of poverty remains high, as income inequality rises, and as disposable income drops for all but the top twenty percent of income earners, housing prices and rents are increasing and the affordable housing stock is shrinking. Over the past decade, government commitment to the provision of social housing has dramatically declined. In 1992, the federal government terminated its co-operative housing programme, which had provided capital funding for the construction of new social-housing units since 1949; and in 1993 federal funding for existing social housing was frozen so that future funding would be restricted to 1993 levels – about \$2 billion in annual operating grants (Begin and Casavant, 2001: n.p.). As Irwin laments in his analysis of social housing in Canada and British Columbia:

Canada now has the dubious distinction of being the only Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) country without an ongoing national housing program – even though Canada is a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that everyone has a right to an adequate standard of living, including housing (Irwin, 2004: p. 7).

After the withdrawal of federal involvement in housing in 1993, only two provinces continued to build new units of social housing – Quebec and British Columbia. In British Columbia in 2001, however, the newly elected provincial Liberal government froze a commitment by the previous government for 3,400 new units. Although the Liberals

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<sup>16</sup> Significantly, economist Marc Lee has also shown that the state of the B.C. economy in 2004 would not have been much different had the government not proceeded with these sweeping reforms: “External factors beyond the control of Victoria have played a major role in shaping BC’s economic performance, including low interest rates, a higher Canadian dollar, weak demand in the US and Asia, and US softwood lumber trade actions. Yet a tremendous amount of pain and hardship has been inflicted on British Columbians, in particular the poorest and most vulnerable, to support the government’s agenda and pay for revenues lost to tax cuts” (Lee, 2004b; qt. at p. 4). In the face of such hardship, the government has recently announced increases to income assistance rates (British Columbia, 2007d), thereby compensating only somewhat for the previous retrenchment. Accessibility, however, has remained very restricted, and with classificatory terminology such as “Expected to Work,” the new policies adhere to an ideology of “self-sufficiency” without accounting for the lack of decent jobs or for other obligations and barriers (such as child care responsibilities and societal discrimination) faced by many households in poverty.

later honoured this commitment by providing 3,400 new units under the Provincial Housing Program, no more new units are to be built by the program in the future (Irwin, 2004: p. 8; British Columbia, 2007a). Admittedly, the federal government did provide BC with additional capital funding for new social housing in 2001, a one-time payment of \$89 million for 2002-2007 to be matched by the province. As Irwin reveals, however, these funds have been diverted into the health-care system to be used for assisted-living units for seniors and people with disabilities in order to meet the government's commitment to construct new long-term care beds:

The provincial government is playing a shell game with housing, counting the same units as assisted living units, long-term care beds, and affordable housing units.... Assisted living is not social housing, nor is it a substitute for a community-based and continuing care strategy that belongs in the provincial health care system (Irwin, 2004: p. 4).<sup>17</sup>

Given the retrenchment (and shell game) in the provision of social housing, it comes as no surprise that there is currently a serious crisis in the availability of affordable housing for low-income households. Indeed, in our current political economy *less than 1%* of federal and provincial taxes are devoted to public housing, and *only 5%* of the housing stock in Canada and the Capital Region is non-market social housing; compare this with Europe, where 20% of households are publicly supported in affordable housing (Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001: pp. 9, 67). Meanwhile, wait lists for social housing have been (and remain) consistently high, as demand outstrips supply. BC Housing applications have hovered around 10,000 since 1998 (Irwin, 2004: p. 10), while in 2005 there were 1,950 households on the wait list of the Housing Registry for the Capital Regional District (CRD, 2007: p. 13). Furthermore, in 1996 approximately 27% of all

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<sup>17</sup> In the face of crushing need, (and perhaps in the optics of hosting the Olympics in 2010), BC Housing has recently announced a new strategy for housing in its Housing Matters BC platform. The strategy outlines a commitment to build about 1300 new units of supportive housing under the Provincial Homelessness Initiative (British Columbia, 2007b). Additionally, the province has announced the purchase of fifteen buildings in the province to protect affordable housing (British Columbia, 2007c). These buildings – eleven single room occupancy (SRO) hotels and four others to be converted into supportive housing – will provide 996 affordable housing units in Vancouver, Victoria, and Burnaby. While these initiatives are welcomed, they merely serve to (partially) correct for government retrenchment in welfare and housing already discussed. Nor are these initiatives sufficient replacements for a progressive and effective *national* programme of *guaranteeing* safe, adequate, and affordable housing for those in need.

Canadian households and 70% of all households in poverty were in “core housing need” (Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001: p. 5).<sup>18</sup> In the CRD, despite the fact that 22,205 households (16.7%) were in core housing need in 2001, the number of social-housing units in the region actually *dropped* from 6,947 in 1996 to 4,499 in 2004 (Community Council, 2005a: p. 22; Richards and Lindsay, 2003: p. 7).

Given the steady demand for affordable housing, government retrenchment in the provision of housing is nothing short of draconian. With a paucity of social-housing units, the vast majority of low-income households is relying on market housing and whatever shelter subsidies these households can garner from government transfers. Furthermore, the problem of housing is especially dire in the Capital Region, where market housing is increasingly unaffordable even for middle-income earners. A report commissioned by the CRD in 2003 to develop a regional Affordable Housing Strategy concluded that the “region is one of the most expensive and least affordable housing markets in Canada” (ctd. in Alcorn *et al.*, 2004: p. 2; see also CRD, 2007). In 2003, the annual income required to buy a resale condominium (the cheapest means of owning a home) in this region was \$53,972 (compared to about \$94,000 for a single family dwelling); yet, the median household income in the CRD in 2001 was \$46,387, which means that fewer than half of all households in the CRD can afford to buy even the *cheapest* form of dwelling (Community Council, 2005a: p. 21). Meanwhile, the average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Greater Victoria in 2003 was \$630, requiring the household to make over \$25,000 a year to remain out of core housing need; in 2003, 43% of tax filers in the CRD earned less than \$20,000; this is \$5,000 below the requirement to

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<sup>18</sup> As defined by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), a household is in “core housing need” if they cannot find shelter without spending more than 30% of their income. If shelter costs exceed this level, studies have shown that low income households have difficulty meeting the needs of other essentials such as food, clothing, and transportation. It is also worth noting that the CMHC definition of “core housing need,” as researchers have pointed out, is primarily an affordability norm which “assumes, but does not ensure, the housing is suitable, safe, and appropriate” (Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001: p. 5). Therefore, a household that is statistically not in “core housing need” may still be living in unsuitable, unsafe, and inappropriate housing.

remain out of core housing need as a one-income household renting a one-bedroom apartment (Community Council, 2005a: p. 24; 2003b: p. 12).

A corollary to unaffordability is the low vacancy rate in the Capital Region, which forces tenants to compete for secure shelter. The vacancy rate in 2004 was 0.6%, the lowest in the country, thereby providing landlords with excessive power to choose among potential tenants. Consequently, there have been several reports of discrimination against renting to people with children, people on social assistance, First Nations households, recent immigrants, and seniors (Community Council, 2005b: p. 21; 2003a: p. 8). Furthermore, for all renters compared to homeowners in Canada, although the proportion between the two has remained relatively stable since the 1960s (40% of households rent compared to 60% who own) the economic demographic between the two has shifted dramatically. As Hulchanski (2001) has shown, the income and wealth gap between renters and owners has grown substantially since the mid 1980s: the income gap between owners and renters has grown 16% between 1984 and 1999, while the wealth of homeowners has increased from 29 times that of renters in 1984 to 70 times in 1999.<sup>19</sup> As Hulchanski argues, the increasing concentration of low-income households in the rental market means that it is increasingly unaffordable for developers to build rental units, an excellent example of how a political economy based on profit and the accumulation of private wealth effectively restricts a society from protecting fundamental human rights such as secure, adequate, and affordable housing:

In order to compete with condominium developers, rental housing developers would have to set rents too high for most tenants. A thriving supply/demand market exists in the homeownership sector, but only demand and social need – without new supply – exists in the rental sector.... The low income and wealth levels relative to homeowners means that many tenants have a *social need* for adequate and affordable housing. They do not have enough money to generate effective *market demand* (Hulchanski, 2001: p. 3, orig. emph.).

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<sup>19</sup> Between 1984 and 1999, the median income of homeowners increased by 5% while the income of renters decreased by 3%; meanwhile the median net worth of homeowners increased 24% while the net worth of renters decreased 48%. Hulchanski argues that this trend exists partially because homeowners receive substantial tax subsidies towards their accumulation of household wealth; meanwhile there are no housing-related tax concessions for renters (Hulchanski, 2001: p. 3). The growing gap between renters and owners is testimony to the relationship between property and the production of social inequality.

Hulchanski concludes that since increased supply is the answer to low vacancy rates, “Given the income and wealth profile of Canada’s renters, only significant public-sector intervention will increase the supply of affordable rental housing” (*Ibid*: p. 4). Despite Hulchanski’s conclusion, however, Canada persists in its tradition of “keeping to the marketplace” (Bacher, 1993) when it comes to the provision of housing and the implementation of housing policies. Consequently, without effective, consistent, and progressive federal or provincial housing programmes that provide substantial capital funding for new units, the supply of affordable rental housing for low income households unable to enter the private homeowners market is effectively shrinking. Inevitably, then, many low-income households have been evicted onto the streets since, in Canada, there is no structural means (private or public) of providing adequate and affordable housing. In light of the Canadian crisis in housing and homelessness, I reiterate the mantra of housing activism that, while homelessness is not just a housing problem, it is *always* a housing problem (Springer, 2000).

As the economy grows in Canada and the GDP increases, poverty remains high, income inequality is rising, government assistance for low-income households is clawed back, and affordable housing is increasingly unavailable. Is it any wonder, then, that there is currently a crisis of homelessness in Canada? To reiterate the point that this chapter attempts to illustrate, homelessness is ultimately not an individual outcome, but a predictable outcome of an oppressive political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice. Nor is the issue necessarily government fiscal constraints; it is political and social will. This fact is borne out in a comprehensive cost analysis of homelessness in British Columbia conducted by the Ministry of Social Development and Economic Security in 2001. Ironically, the study found that the cost of providing government services to homeless individuals was *greater*

than the total cost of housing homeless persons in social housing with attendant supportive services:

When combined, the service *and* shelter costs of the homeless people in this study ranged from \$30,000 to \$40,000 on average per person for one year (including the costs of staying in an emergency shelter). The combined costs of services and housing for the housed individuals ranged from \$22,000 to \$28,000 per person per year, assuming they stay in supportive housing. Thus, even when the housing costs are included, the total government costs for the housed, formerly homeless individuals in this study amounted to less than the government costs for the homeless individuals (Eberle *et al.*, 2001b: p. 39, orig. emph.).

The report concludes that “[t]he prevention approach proved to be more cost-effective than the emergency or reactive approach,” and that “[t]hese preliminary findings suggest if minimizing government costs is a goal, public policy and service delivery must be focused on the prevention of homelessness” (*Ibid*: p. 40). In effect, the government’s refusal to intervene effectively and progressively in the housing market constitutes not only an infringement on the rights of homeless citizens to secure, adequate, and affordable housing, but also a breach of the public trust for administrative and fiscal competence from our government.

The fiscal contradiction noted above is at least partially explained by a slavish devotion to a political economy that privileges private property rights (and the private *wealth* that accrues from such rights) over a fundamental human right to secure and adequate housing (and the inherent *dignity* from which such a right emanates). The accumulation of private wealth and power for the privileged classes is partially sustained through the exploitation of the desperate *need* for secure housing faced by thousands of low income households. Housing is not a privilege; it is a necessity and a question of physical survival. Consequently, the egregious failure to provide affordable and adequate housing by our society is effectively an act of violence, as many families and individuals are evicted onto the streets. Meanwhile, public coffers are drained by reformist programmes that promote an oppressive ideology of competition and individual self-sufficiency over a humanitarian ethic of cooperation and mutual responsibility.

The near-evangelical crusade to secure the sanctity of private property rights from the collective right for affordable housing and the necessities of dignified living points to the way in which homelessness is fundamentally *a land use issue* (Wright, 1997: pp. 28-31). As Reitsma-Street *et al.* (2001) point out, housing policies and legislation are guided by a strong desire to maintain and strengthen the narrow definition of property rights governing our nation, which prohibits using or benefiting from the housing property owned by others:

This exclusion is considered essential to ensure profits, investment and privacy. Government at all levels supports these narrow property rights in most housing policies. Hence, governments have difficulty in expanding policies that support the needs of all people to enjoy broader property rights, which means that all citizens could use or benefit from common property in the form of parks, civic buildings, sewers and zoning laws that ensure affordable housing for all citizens (Reitsma-Street *et al.*, 2001: p. 6).

Consequently, any effective analysis of homelessness must include, as a primary consideration, the role of space (and spatial products such as architecture) in the social and political economy of our society. Poverty and homelessness are not only processes of social exclusion, they are also processes of *spatial* exclusion. In the next section I review some of the research that examines homelessness from a spatial perspective. Yet, as I begin to switch gears into a more thorough spatialization of homelessness, I urge the reader again to remember the violence of oppressive social policies outlined in the previous sections, for they constitute an important corollary to the violent exclusion of homeless citizens in the spaces of our collective community.

### **A Review of the Spatial Perspective**

In previous sections, I have outlined the contentious debate on homelessness and the persistent tendency to elide the political economy as a causal determinant for the crisis. A neglect of “structural conditions that literally destine some people to be homeless” (Wright *et al.*, 1998: p. 13) has serious ramifications for any spatialized analysis of homelessness. For, as I will argue in this thesis, space and architecture must

be understood as integral to the social, political, and economic structures of our society. By including political economy in the debate, space and architecture can then be effectively analyzed as an animating principle in the production of spatialized oppression and domination. As I begin to explain above, such oppression is most commonly experienced as spatial exclusion, a relevant and supporting corollary to the political, economic, and social exclusion attendant to the production of poverty and homelessness.

In the past decade, with increasing (re)awareness of the role of the political economy in producing homelessness, there has been a concomitant interest (especially among geographers) in diversifying the research and spatializing the crisis as a land-use issue. In this section, I will briefly review some of the research that has examined homelessness from a spatial perspective. Many of the studies are coarse-grained analyses documenting the forced eviction of poor households as a consequence of “slum clearance” and “urban revitalization.” Other research is more finely grained but tends to individualize homelessness by concentrating on the mobility patterns and spatialized tactics of homeless citizens in their day-to-day survival. Finally, some analyses investigate the politics of homeless squats, which highlight homelessness and the lack of affordable housing as a social injustice demanding immediate attention. Although my own investigation alludes to such issues, I will focus primarily on the spatialized exclusion of homeless citizens in the built environment of the street.

### *Spatializing Homelessness*

In a research environment dominated by socio-psychological studies, critical spatial perspectives – which explain homelessness as a structural consequence of oppressive socio-spatial relations – have only recently surfaced as alternatives to the reformist approach. Indeed, the political economy of space and its structural role in the (re)production and maintenance of a social system are themselves relatively recent fields of study, traceable perhaps to the mid-1970s in the innovative work of Harvey (1973) and

Lefebvre (1991: orig. pub. 1974). As I discuss in the next chapter, prior to the publication of this research, space had regularly been interpreted as a neutral container within which social beings interacted, a box-theatre for the transaction of productive social relations and the ontological development of society. In effect, space was there to be described, mapped, measured, and manipulated by society, but was not *in itself* considered integral to social (re)production nor instrumental to social (r)evolution.

Consequently, in the context of homelessness, the treatment of space in sociological studies of “Skid Row” from the 1920s to the 1970s was superficial and cursory at best. Descriptive passages of living conditions in Skid Row were deployed as background flavour to add an air of authenticity to the analyses and engender reformist sentiment among the privileged classes, a voyeuristic narrative device similar to that deployed by reformist Jacob Riis in his photo-essays on the New York Bowery district in the late nineteenth century (Riis, 1957: orig. pub. 1890). If space was considered at all beyond the merely descriptive, it was usually in the context of the physical and psychological health of the residents, and the debilitating effects of living in abject poverty. The atrocious living conditions of Skid Row, however, were often individualized as markers or traits attributable to a “slum culture” or a “culture of poverty,” as espoused by poverty researchers such as Lewis (1966). Epidemiological approaches to homelessness continue to be prominent, but they have recently been retooled into more thorough and spatialized perspectives (Fitzpatrick and LaGory, 2000; Sansom, 2000). Fitzpatrick and LaGory (2000) for example, reveal that “the ecology of risk” in an urban landscape is dependent upon the marginalization of people and resources within a spatialized health and service system. They argue that the health risks and harm protection associated with any particular place is structurally dependent on the spatialized consequences of uneven development in society:

That is, cities have both a topography of risk and protection. This topography ... tends to follow the shape and structure of the larger society, with the most visible distinctions occurring at the opposite ends of the system of stratification. Each metropolitan area reflects the contours of society, with risk heavily concentrated in the inner zones of the

metropolis where there are significant concentrations of low-income, underemployed minorities. At the same time, protection from risk, in terms of availability of health professionals, community resources, and supportive social networks, tend to be inversely related to risk and risk locations. These are not merely matters of material differences between people but reflect a larger fabric of inequality only partially related to income (*Ibid*: p. 13).

In the context of homelessness, the authors also point out that severe poverty is exacerbated by the deprivation of placelessness and the lack of a home, which represents more than an absence of income and resources: "To be without a home is to be deprived of the very spaces that provide for and honor human needs" (*Ibid*: p. 138).

One of the earliest contemporary analyses that examines homelessness from a spatial perspective, however, is a study conducted by Canadian geographer James Duncan of the University of British Columbia (Duncan, 1978). Duncan investigates the classification and the use of urban space by a particular social group whom he terms "men without property" – "the tramp." Although Duncan does recognize the social production of space into what he terms "prime" and "marginal" space and although he does acknowledge the role of property in the ideological construction of citizenship, his analysis remains primarily descriptive and conspicuously apolitical. He fails to engage with the spatialized oppression, exclusion, and violence that the production of space entails in the everyday life of the "tramp." Moreover, his analysis is framed by the prevailing assumptions about homelessness at the time, namely that "tramps" are homeless through a willful disaffiliation from society. Such mythology seriously limits his analysis: Duncan interprets the tramps' classification and use of space as emergent from their *choice* not to participate in society, a negotiated set of tactics to avoid scrutiny by what he terms the "host" population. As I have already argued, however, poverty and homelessness are emphatically not sub-cultural ways of life chosen by individuals; they are oppressive *political-economic outcomes* structurally produced by society. Poverty and homelessness are seriously debilitating conditions within which marginalized individuals and families are forced to *cope*, as they strive to meet daily needs for food, shelter, and other social necessities. Yet, despite this limitation in Duncan's analysis, he

does introduce the vitally important concepts of “marginal” and “prime” space. Such concepts would be deployed later, and more fruitfully, by other investigators conducting rigorous analyses of spatial exclusion and resistance (Wright, 1996; Sibley, 1995).

By the mid 1980s, as political-economic critiques of homelessness gained momentum, macro-spatial analyses of housing market trends in metropolitan economies began to reinterpret the crisis through a structuralist land-use perspective (Barak, 1992; Wolch and Dear, 1993b). Gentrification, in particular, was hotly debated (Smith, 1996: pp. 30-47). Gentrification, according to Smith (*Ibid*: p. 32), is the process “by which poor and working-class neighborhoods in the inner city are refurbished via an influx of private capital and middle-class homebuyers and renters – neighborhoods that had previously experienced disinvestment and a middle-class exodus.” Attendant upon this urban restructuring is the eviction and displacement of existing residents, who – due to their poverty – often do not have the political nor economic power to challenge the eviction and destruction of their communities. While there is general consensus that such eviction and displacement is constitutive of gentrification, apologists for the process – couching their arguments in triumphalist terminology such as urban “revitalization” or “renaissance” – dismiss these effects as the unfortunate and *inevitable* consequences of modern renewal spearheaded by middle-class culture, consumption, and investment; they celebrate the rehabilitation of slum neighbourhoods while lamenting the social costs. Other analysts such as Smith (1996) interpret gentrification as symptomatic of a wider class geography, marked by uneven development, inequitable patterns of capital investment in housing, and the role of *disinvestment* in creating opportunity for gentrifying professionals. These analysts also reemphasize the oppressive and exclusionary consequences entailed in gentrification, as it forces the eviction and displacement of low income families, and produces homelessness, housing insecurity, and increased hardship and at the bottom of the political economic ladder. As Smith

stresses, “for those impoverished, evicted or made homeless in its wake, gentrification is indeed a dirty word and should stay a dirty word” (Smith, 1996: p. 34).

By the late 1980s and the early 1990s, there was renewed interest in fine-grained analyses that examine the mobility patterns and spatialized tactics of homeless individuals and families (Wolch *et al.*, 1993a; Rowe and Wolch, 1990). Unlike Duncan (1978), the authors of these studies challenge the notion that homeless people are disaffiliated nomads wandering through the spaces of a “host” population. Rather, these studies effectively argue that the mobility patterns of homeless people are highly structured and dependent on the spatialized patterns of available resources and public services, which are themselves dictated by the spatialized political economies of cities.

As Wolch *et al.* (1993) argue,

the labeling of homeless people as mobile “drifters” and “transients” allows them to be viewed as somehow different or “other,” even though homeless people may move around for the same reasons that homed people do – to meet needs for food, shelter, income, friendship, and various services.... [M]obility is a coping strategy having less to do with personal characteristics or problems and more to do with the availability and location of resources. Thus homelessness acts as a “leveler,” leading different sorts of people into similar ways of coping with their common circumstance (Wolch *et al.*, 1993: pp. 159, 167).

Such mobility patterns often give rise to the illusion that homelessness is a problem specific to particular geographies or neighbourhoods, which in turn leads to the fallacious notion that homelessness is a consequence of unbridled urbanization within these areas. What these mobility studies suggest is that the proliferation of homelessness in any particular area is dependent not so much on urbanization *per se* as it is on the spatialization (the ghettoization) of services in various neighbourhoods of the city. As I will elaborate in this thesis, homelessness is an outcome not of urbanization, but of the production of poverty. The concentration of homeless people in an urban centre or a downtown core is a consequence of a political economy which produces poverty and homelessness in the first instance which then become concentrated geographically through uneven development and spatial exclusion.

Meanwhile by the mid-1990s, advocacy research emerged that challenged the popular misconception that homeless people are victims merely engaged in survival tactics and coping strategies – passive agents who adapt to their plight but do not offer active resistance to the structural imperatives *producing* their oppressive condition. This new research emphasizes the political agency of homeless people and the resistant spatializations that emerge from their alternative and imaginative use of dominant space (Lees, 2003; Wagner, 1993; Ruddick, 1990). Many of the investigators are scholar-activists who often work in conjunction with homeless mobilizations in order to highlight injustice and effect political change. One of the best accounts is offered by Wright (1996), who integrates theory with practice in a comprehensive analysis of one homeless mobilization with which he had become personally involved. Wright implicitly elaborates on Duncan's (1978) definitions of "marginal" and "prime" space – what he prefers to call "refuse" and "pleasure" space. He investigates not only how the production of these spaces constructs homeless and privileged identities, but also how the meaning of urban space is continually shifting through negotiations over its use, and – more importantly – how these negotiations can generate the conditions for the emergence of homeless mobilizations. Wright emphasizes the contested nature of space and the political opportunities that arise from the struggle over its use and its meaning.

Paralleling this interest in political activism and spatialized resistance, there are increasingly more studies revealing the often violent and oppressive responses from society: strategies of spatial exclusion that seek to sanitize space, criminalize homelessness, and disperse potential resistance that threatens the dominant political economic order (Amster, 2003; Sibley, 1995). One of the leading authorities is Mitchell (1997, 1996, 1995), from whom I take the provocative term "the annihilation of space by law" to inform the final chapter to my thesis. Whereas Wright (1996) and others emphasize the emancipatory potential of resistant spatializations, Mitchell concentrates on the oppressive and often violent responses to the threat embodied by homeless people.

Like Wright, Mitchell is also passionately concerned with social justice, as he sets out to expose the fundamental oppression inherent in anti-homeless laws that regulate the visibility of homeless individuals in the public spaces of the city. What these studies suggest – whether they be about resistant spatializations or oppressive spatial legislation – is that homelessness is not only a socio-economic condition; it is also and most emphatically a spatial condition. Any analysis of homelessness must, therefore, take into account the *struggle* over the meaning and the use of urban space. In effect, the fight for social justice in the context of homelessness is not only about money and politics but also about space, whether its fighting for the right to occupy “public” space as any other citizen or fighting for the right to a private space that one can call home – the right to affordable, appropriate, and secure housing.

Finally, in the context of housing and architecture, there has been very little literature focusing on the intersection between architecture and homelessness except as it pertains to the design and implementation of social housing projects, or to the socio-spatial implications of emergency shelter, such as the lack of personal safety and privacy (Desjarlais, 1997; Bridgman, 1998). Indeed, the practice of architecture and architectural history has traditionally effaced the human body as a parameter for analysis. Much of architectural history and theory has been preoccupied with the formal semiotics of buildings and the messages they convey (for a useful survey, see Mallgrave, 2006, 2005). Furthermore, Imrie (2003) has shown that an architect’s conception of the human body is predominantly reductive or non-existent, failing to acknowledge ethnic, gender, or physical differences. As he argues, “the body is either reduced to a mirror or self-referential image of the architect’s body [or] is ‘normalized’ as ‘a statistically balanced symmetrical figure’” (Imrie, 2003: p. 48; after McAnulty, 1992: p. 180).

In the past two decades, however, there has been increasing interest – primarily through feminist interventions, emerging especially from the disciplines of geography and philosophy – for a more rigorous and holistic conception of architectural space

(Cuthbert, 2003; Grosz, 2001; Rendell *et al.*, 2000; Goss, 1988). These studies emphasize the constitutive relationship between body, space, and architecture, as each produces and reproduces the others. Social relations are inscribed onto the built environment as the built environment – by regulating and instilling certain spatial practices while barring others – reinscribes these relations (both benignly and violently) onto the corporeal human body. These studies affirm and reiterate the relationship between structure and body – between spatial production and the practice, meaning, and use of architectural space. The built environment is no longer conceived as inanimate, but is increasingly being reinterpreted as a materialization of power relationships animated spatially through architectural design and implementation.

My own investigation expands on these space-power analyses by examining the spatialized oppression exacted against homeless citizens on the street. Through an architectural-geographical approach with a strong and comprehensive theoretical foundation, I will set out to explain why such oppression exists in our society, and how that oppression is manifest in the built environment of the street. To avoid unnecessary redundancy, in the next chapter I will elaborate further on literature that treats space as constitutive of society, drawing not only on studies that I have already discussed but also introducing others. After establishing a strong theoretical foundation, the remainder of the thesis will then examine empirical evidence from the City of Victoria that reveals, first, how homelessness and “the street” are conceptually framed in the region and, second, how our society – through legislation and design – *produces* an oppressive spatial and architectural environment adversely affecting homeless citizens. In particular, I will reveal some of the spatial and architectural strategies deployed by the government and the privileged classes to unjustly exclude and violently evict homeless citizens from the architectural geography of the street.

### CHAPTER 3: SPATIALIZING HOMELESSNESS: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

As we have seen, debate over the causal determinants generating the contemporary crisis of homelessness is fraught with competing perspectives struggling to assign accountability either at the individual level of the homeless person or, more radically, at the structural level of an oppressive political economy. Under the pressure to propose immediate solutions – and in a political climate antagonistic to structuralist accounts – the tendency in mainstream social policy analyses has been to emphasize proximate circumstances and an inadequate provision of services as the primary explanations for the crisis. Consequently, governments have responded by enhancing existing policies and reforming homeless individuals in an attempt to facilitate the reintegration of homeless people into mainstream society.

Despite their utility in providing immediate relief through expansion of services, many well-intentioned reformist analyses unwittingly adopt a “blame the victim” subtext that locates the “problem” – whether the cause or the solution – in the body of the homeless person. As Ryan (1976: p. 11, orig. emph) argues, “Blaming the victim is an ideological process...deriving from systematically motivated, but *unintended*, distortions of reality.” As an ideology, “blaming the victim” attenuates the contradiction of homelessness in an affluent society. By individualizing the crisis and ghettoizing the debate into narrow questions involving personal pathology or resource distribution, “blaming the victim” elides broader questions involving structural contradictions in the political economy that generate poverty, perpetuate inequality, and “literally destine some people to be homeless” (Wright *et al.*, 1998: p. 13).

Overcoming the inadequacies of individualist or reformist analyses requires an explicit theoretical framework that establishes links across social and geographical scales: from the corporate body of a society to the corporeal body of an individual; from political economy to personal experience. To effect these links, a broad transdisciplinary

approach will be required. First, a prerequisite to establishing a critical foundation will be the marshalling of theories that reconceptualize homelessness not as an individual outcome but as a social process of marginalization and violence. Next, a spatialization of homelessness in the built environment will entail theories that clarify the relationship between space, society and architecture. Finally, to reveal the architectural and spatial implications of oppression, theories are required to articulate the manner in which resistance and domination are expressed in a socio-spatial milieu. The breadth of this investigation will entail theories drawn from several disciplines including political philosophy, psychology, sociology, geography, and architectural history. Through a transdisciplinary approach, I hope to establish a theoretical foundation that not only captures the complexities of homelessness as it articulates with the built environment but also forges links across the frontiers of related but often isolated disciplines.

### **Difference and Marginalization**

A recurrent obstacle hindering any effective analysis of homelessness is the persistent tendency to individualize the crisis. Homelessness is not an outcome that may be explained solely through proximate circumstances such as personal dysfunction, an inadequate provision of services, or the vagaries of fortune; homeless people are not just “down on their luck.” Homelessness is an outcome of structural poverty – of systemic economic marginalization produced by an oppressive political economy. Indeed, since the condition of homelessness is physically and psychologically debilitating – even fatal – a society which produces homelessness is guilty of inflicting societal violence on individuals thus marginalized, in the same way, perhaps, that systemic oppression inherent in colonialism has been described as a form of violence (Fanon, 1968).

Reconceptualizing homelessness as a social process of marginalization and violence requires a critical foundation that politicizes the debate and interprets the crisis

as a violent outcome of differential power relations expressed as domination and legitimized through difference.<sup>1</sup> To establish this perspective, I rely on the reflections of political philosopher Iris Young (1990), who provides a conception of justice as emergent in the first instance from the issues of domination and oppression. Subsequently, I draw on the work of Julia Kristeva (1982) and her psychoanalytic theory of “abjection” to help explain how the corporeal homeless body becomes a receptacle for corporate disdain, and hence a target for oppression. Finally, to spatialize abjection beyond the body, the work of sociologist Herbert Gans (1995) concerning the dangers of behavioural labels will inform a discussion of “deviance,” a label often deployed to describe the behaviour of an abject homeless body as it articulates with the built environment. Using Gans as an opening into the work of other authors, I clarify the way that “deviance” spatializes the abjective threat evoked by the homeless body and works to legitimize spatial oppression.

*Iris Young: The Five Faces of Oppression*

In her insightful meditation on social justice and the politics of difference – a work that she describes as a normative reflection “aris[ing] from hearing a cry of suffering and distress” (Young, 1990: p. 5) – Young argues that

instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should *begin* with the concepts of domination and oppression.... I argue that where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression (*Ibid*: p. 3, my emph.).

By displacing the distributive paradigm that has dominated contemporary theories of justice, Young reorients the debate from issues of material possession to issues of

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<sup>1</sup> Some commentators have even suggested that the terminology of the crisis should likewise be politicized. The adjectival labels “homelessness” and “homeless” are passive terms which incarcerate the crisis proximate to the individual by articulating the individual’s condition while remaining silent about the social relations which *produce* the condition. Deutsche (1988), therefore, suggests using an active verbal term to highlight the *process*, rather than the *form*, of the crisis. She argues that, “To elucidate the specific historical, rather than mythical, reasons for the presence of today’s homeless, they should, more accurately, be called ‘the evicted’” (Deutsche, 1988: p. 8). Without hesitation, I concur. Yet, some research that I deploy in this thesis relies on popular labels to articulate a theory (see Chapter Five, for example, where I deploy Kawash’s (1998) definition of the “homeless body”). To be consistent, therefore, I shall continue to use the popular labels while cognizant of their ideological obfuscations.

oppressive social relations; from a formal concern over things to a processual concern over actions.<sup>2</sup> She argues that, while distributive issues are important, overemphasis on the distribution of material goods not only elides processual issues of power, institutional relations, and decision-making procedures, but also often assumes certain institutional processes as given. To overcome these deficiencies, Young argues that “Oppression and domination ... should be the primary terms for conceptualizing injustice” (*Ibid*: p. 9).

The operational foundation for Young’s premise is an accounting and analysis of several conditions of domination that she calls “the five faces of oppression”: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Although some or all of these conditions may operate concurrently in any historically and geographically situated system of social relations and across several axes of difference, I will discuss only two of the more prominent conditions affecting homeless people: marginalization and violence.

According to Young, marginalization “is perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression.... A whole category of people is expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination” (*Ibid*: p. 53). Yet, as Young notes, marginalization is not confined to the obvious issues of distribution and material deprivation. While many marginalized groups depend on the provision of welfare and social services to survive – and although their marginal position is an outcome not of their own choosing but of an oppressive society which restricts participation – their “dependency” is construed as “a warrant to suspend basic rights to privacy, respect and individual choice” (*Ibid*: p. 54). Therefore, marginalization also implicitly involves the exclusion of “dependent” individuals from equal rights of

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<sup>2</sup> I borrow the neologism “processual” from the discipline of archaeology where the term is used specifically to define a cultural-materialist theoretical approach. Since my thesis privileges process over form, I will require an adjective for “process.” Significantly, the word “process” (unlike “form”) currently has no adjective, which perhaps reveals the obsessions (and the potential elisions) inherent in societies dominated by the English language. Therefore, unhappy with alternatives such as “procedural,” “process-based,” or “process-oriented,” I will unabashedly extract the term from its disciplinary matrix, dust it off, wipe it clean of its specialized meaning, and deploy it, purely formally(!), as an adjective for “process.”

citizenship – including access to public space in the context of homelessness – as they become subjected to the invasive and oppressive rules and requirements of public and private officials who exercise power over their lives.

Reconceptualizing homelessness as a social process of marginalization is incomplete without a parallel reconceptualization of homelessness as a criminal act of violence. According to Young, violence not only refers to physical attack, but to “less severe incidents of harassment, intimidation, or ridicule simply for the purpose of degrading, humiliating, or stigmatizing group members” (*Ibid*: p. 61). In the context of homelessness, the material marginalization of homeless individuals is often accompanied by extreme humiliation and degradation by societal members and institutions which individualize their plight as consequent upon deficient character or deviant lifestyle. Such violence may include verbal assaults from passers-by, the criminalization of benign practices such as panhandling, or intimidation by police conducting officially sanctioned street sweeps. In anti-poverty literature, this has become known as “poor-bashing,” a name that effectively captures the violence of such degradation and dehumanization.<sup>3</sup>

Sociologist David Gil (1989) has also elaborated on societal violence through a discussion of its cyclical consequences. In an expansive and structurally inclusive perspective, Gil defines societal violence as that which “inhibits the unfolding of people’s potential” and “‘violates’ human development:”

The concept societal violence refers to systemic obstructions to human growth, development and self-actualization inherent in a society’s institutional order, its policies, practices, and human relations, its circumstances of living and quality of life, and its values and ideology (Gil, 1989: p. 40).

Included in Gil’s definition are structural outcomes such as unemployment, poverty, hunger, homelessness, and discrimination. In the context of homelessness, the violence

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<sup>3</sup> Anti-poverty activist and former president of the National Anti-Poverty Organization Jean Swanson has provided a book-length treatment of poor-bashing. She argues that naming the oppression can be a powerful tool for resisting it, and she provides a workable definition: “poor-bashing is when people who are poor are humiliated, stereotyped, discriminated against, shunned, despised, pitied, and falsely accused of being lazy, drunk, stupid, uneducated, having large families, and not looking for work ... poor-bashing, like racism and sexism, can also include threats, and even murder” (Swanson, 2001: p. 2).

perpetrated against homeless people, whether by individual members of society or by oppressive institutions and policies, may then engender counter-violence from the violated individuals; in a continuing cycle, society may then react with increasingly violent policies to appease a fearful public. Yet, as Gil argues, there is a persistent tendency to focus attention almost exclusively on the counter-violence enacted by the victims, thereby denying and occluding the substantive causality of societal violence:

Societies whose violent policies and practices give rise to counter-violence on the part of violated individuals and groups tend to respond by disregarding the actual causes, “blaming the victims,” and steadily increasing repressive violence. The tragic, vicious circle of societal violence, counter-violence, and repressive violence will continue as long as its roots, systemic societal obstacles to human development as an aspect of the normal workings of everyday life, are not acknowledged and transcended within and among societies and nations (*Ibid*: p. 41).

An emphasis upon counter-violence, whether real or imagined, obscures the violence of oppressive institutions and policies. Indeed, the crime and the violence of homelessness are masked by focusing on the crimes and the violence of homeless individuals (or, more accurately, on their *criminalization* and the *perception* of their violence).<sup>4</sup>

By reconceptualizing homelessness as a criminal act of societal violence, an analysis of the social process of marginalization is provided with a powerful corollary. Attention, therefore, may be redirected from the proximate circumstances of an individual to the processual outcomes of a violent and oppressive political economy as it systematically turns “the five faces of oppression” on select and stigmatized groups of people. Yet, domination and oppression are not only *enacted upon* but also *justified through* the visible body of the homeless individual. Therefore, a theory of the body as it articulates with issues of domination and oppression is needed in order to explain why the violent marginalization of homeless citizens is tolerated in our society. To this end, I

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<sup>4</sup> As will be discussed in subsequent chapters in this thesis, in the context of homelessness fear often drives social policy. This fear is a consequence – or more accurately the cause (see n. 5 below) – of the stereotypical perception that homeless people are dangerous. Such fear is often translated into oppressive social policies that focus on preventing the imagined crimes that may be perpetrated by homeless individuals. One means of acquiring public support for such policies is to *produce* crime where there is no crime. Hence the practice of creating new laws that effectively *criminalize* homeless citizens for non-criminal activity such as panhandling.

shall now shift my attention from political philosophy to psychoanalysis – from Young’s “five faces of oppression” to Kristeva’s concept of “abjection” – and suggest the way in which the corporeal homeless body becomes a receptacle for corporate disdain.

*Julia Kristeva: Abjection*

Young’s conception of justice as emergent from issues of domination and oppression is informed in part by Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory of “abjection,” outlined in her essay *Powers of Horror* (1982). Young argues in her opening remarks on Kristeva’s theory that

[t]he objectification and overt domination of despised bodies that obtained in the nineteenth century ... have not disappeared with that commitment [to equality in our own time], but have gone underground, dwelling in everyday habits and cultural meanings of which people are for the most part unaware (Young, 1990: p. 124).

By exploring how unconscious aversions continue to construct some bodies as despised and ugly, Young uses Kristeva’s concept of abjection to reveal how oppression and domination are manifest in the reactions and practices of everyday life and, therefore, often lie beyond the remedies of law and policy.

According to Kristeva (1982), the abject is that which has been expelled from a subject but has not yet attained the status of an object. The subject, therefore, is unable to position the abject as something opposable to and separate from a self-contained ego; the status of the abject remains ambiguous, as something that was at one time integral to the Self but has been expelled, thereby generating an unrepresentable (unobjectifiable) breach or lack that exists only as affect. Therefore, abjection is the moment of separation, the border between a binary opposition which has not yet been formulated as a subject-object or Self-Other relation. As an expelled border entity, the abject threatens to reenter the purified Self; it becomes a horrific and feared absent presence – no longer Self but not yet Other. Young explicates: “The abject provokes fear and loathing because it exposes the border between self and other as constituted and fragile, and threatens to dissolve the subject by dissolving the border” (Young, 1990: p. 144). Closure in meaning

or identity is destabilized through the yawning gap opened by the attempted eviction of the abject; and this destabilization, this loss of control over the boundaries of the Self, generates fear which is projected onto the abject “Other.”<sup>5</sup>

Kristeva associates abjection with aversive reactions induced by bodily excretions and other correlative residues:

Excrement and its equivalents (decay, infection, disease, corpse, etc) stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death (Kristeva, 1982: p. 260).

We react with disgust to the defiled because it represents an assault on our borders. What causes abjection is “not lack of cleanliness or health ... but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules” (*Ibid*: p. 232); and since the abject – the feared and unrepresentable threat – is ambiguously tied to the Subject, “abjection acknowledges [the Subject] to be in perpetual danger” (*Ibid*: p. 237).

In this way, according to Young, the concept of the abject enhances “an understanding of a *body aesthetic* that defines some groups as ugly or fearsome and produces aversive reactions in relation to members of those groups” (Young, 1990: p. 145, my emph.). Such an understanding points to the way in which homelessness is, in part, an issue of visibility, and in which reactions to the contemporary crisis – in civic policy and in everyday practice – are informed by aversion, disgust, and fear of the abject as ascribed to the visible corporeal bodies of homeless individuals. Contemporary poverty has hit the streets, and the *visibility* of this poverty has mobilized the horrific power of abjection with its attendant aversive, oppressive, and often violent reactions.

Young’s analysis of oppression and Kristeva’s concept of abjection help define and explain the marginalization and violence inflicted on homeless citizens. These

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<sup>5</sup> One defence against this loss of control over the boundaries of the Self is the practice of stereotyping, which is dialectically related to the fear experienced by the subject. As Sibley (1995) notes through Gilman’s (1985) work on the role of stereotyping in the structuring of the Self: “Fear *precedes* the construction of the bad object, the negative stereotype, but the stereotype – simplified, distorted and at a distance – perpetuates that fear” (Sibley, 1995: p. 15, my emph.). In other words, the face of the feared abject Other is the face of the Subject.

accounts are spatialized proximate to the body, however, and a more expansive spatialization of these processes will reveal how such oppression is legitimized through spatial context. Indeed, abjection is not merely limited to a body aesthetic; it may also be defined through an “aesthetic” of spatial practice – through the *use of space* – as the contextualized behaviour of a homeless body is refracted through the abjective lens of a fearful society. Therefore, to spatialize abjection beyond the immediacy of the body, I will extrapolate from the work of Gans (1995), whose critical analysis of behavioural labels will inform a discussion of “deviance.” As a behavioural label often defined through spatial practice, “deviance” acquires currency, in part, through the spatialization of embodied abjection. This examination of the relationship between the abject body and its space will then prepare us for a subsequent and more rigorous interrogation of the constitutive relations between space, society, and architecture as we move towards a more thorough spatialization of homelessness in the built environment.

*Herbert Gans, et al.: Deviance*

The concept of “deviance” – like the concept of “homelessness” – is fraught with contention. The definitions, perspectives, and theoretical approaches explaining deviance are not only diverse but also often contradictory. Therefore, before I discuss the significance of deviance for homeless individuals in the built environment, a brief clarification of the concept is warranted. Peace *et al.* (2000) provide a concise and recent summary of the debate. They argue that the study of deviance can be usefully divided into two “camps” of theory – consensus theories and conflict theories:

Consensus theories are based on the premise that there is a shared understanding in society about values, norms, what constitutes violations of norms, and how violations should be punished and controlled. Conflict theories are based on the premise that there is no underlying agreement about what constitutes norms or violations of norms, and that deviance is socially constructed based on the interests of those who hold or exercise power in society (Peace *et al.*, 2000: p. 2).

For my own investigation – which essentially deploys a conflict analysis of homelessness in the street – I subscribe to the latter perspective, in which the exercise of power is the

primary determinant explaining the deviance of homeless people. Deviance is not an acquired nor inherent characteristic of individuals that may be explained by socio-psychological dysfunctions arising from, for example, subcultural associations or disaffiliation from society. Deviance is a *label* that is *conferred* upon individuals by others who define what is “normal” and have the power to do so. Feminist studies in particular have revealed the normalizing oppression of patriarchal power and ideology in our society. Hence, in the context of gender relations, these studies have exposed deviance as a social construction produced by the gendered expectations in a patriarchal society of what constitutes normal appearance and behaviour for women.<sup>6</sup>

In the context of poverty and homelessness, Gans has dealt extensively with the dangers of behavioural labels in his book *The War Against the Poor* (1995). Extrapolating from Simmel (1965), he notes that the stigmatization of poor people as “deviant” is not necessarily a consequence of their behaviour, since others may behave in a similar way and not be stigmatized. Rather, stigmatization results from the fact that their behaviour is disapproved by others (Gans, 1995: pp. 3-4 and p. 12 n. 3; after Simmel, 1965: p. 140). As Gans demonstrates, this is an important distinction since it locates the stigmatization in those who stigmatize rather than in the “deviant” behaviour of those who are stigmatized. Furthermore, Gans points out that the behaviour of those suffering the debilitating conditions of poverty is generated not from lack of moral capacities, but from *poverty-related pressures*:

[T]he prime fact about poverty-related pressures is that they sharply restrict the choices of the poor, especially those that better-off people take for granted. Even though poverty-related pressures may not be comprehensible to more fortunate people, they are very real (Gans, 1995: pp. 4-5).

Extrapolating from Gans’s analysis into the context of homelessness, an important poverty-related pressure is a lack of private space within which to conduct the basic necessities of everyday life, such as eating, sleeping, urinating, and defecating. These are

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Macdonald (2000) and others in a volume of essays dedicated to the concept of deviance and compiled by Beaman (2000).

non-negotiable spatial practices that all humans *must* perform in order to survive. When a homeless person urinates or sleeps in public – a restricted “choice” induced by poverty-related pressures, which are themselves structural outcomes of an oppressive political economy – the “deviant” practice becomes metonymic for the “abnormality” of the individual. The oppressive social relations which necessitated such a practice in the first place are mystified through a fetishizing of the homeless body as the primary (and only) source of the spatial practice. Therefore, the homeless person must be mentally ill or morally lacking since urinating in the alley is deviant behaviour; or, if not mentally ill, the homeless person must have “chosen” to sleep in the dumpster as a result of “choosing” not to work.

Furthermore, the deviance of the behaviour is dependent upon the physical and social contexts – what psychologist Roger Barker (1968) calls “behaviour settings” – within which the behaviour is conducted: sleeping is not construed as abnormal, but sleeping in a dumpster is. Rapoport (1990), elaborating on Barker and others, has effectively argued for the importance of environmental context in providing “physical cues” for appropriate social communication and spatial practice:

The environment thus communicates, through a whole set of cues, the most appropriate choices to be made: The cues are meant to elicit appropriate emotions, interpretations, behaviors, and transactions by setting up the appropriate situations and contexts.... This happens so naturally, and frequently, during our regular activity systems, that we take it very much for granted. We only notice the process when it ceases to work, when we do not understand the cues, the rules, the expected behavior (Rapoport, 1990: pp. 80, 85).

I would add to this argument that we also notice this process when we see “deviant” others – such as homeless people faced with poverty-related pressures – who either will not or cannot follow the “cues” and hence do not exhibit “appropriate emotions, interpretations, behaviors, and transactions” as communicated by the environment. In a similar but more politically astute argument, Kawash (1998) links embodied abjection – signified by the abject homeless body – to its “manner of emplacement.” She argues that “place makes body as much as body makes place” thereby generating a “circuit of body, meaning, and place [that] closes to enforce the ideological and material exclusion of the

homeless” (Kawash, 1998: p. 336). Deploying the example of a homeless body sleeping in the cramped quarters of a seat on a subway car, Kawash argues that,

The most immediate difference between homeless and not in this case is the *manner of emplacement*, the embodied contrast between inhabiting the subway car as a sleeping or dwelling place and transiently occupying the subway car as a mode of transportation between other places.... The persistence of the homeless body coupled with its constrained emplacements – the contortions of that body on the subway car necessary to render it impossibly small, approaching disappearance – become the proof that the homeless are not a part of the public (*Ibid*: p. 336, orig. emph.).

In other words, the spatialization of embodied abjection is a significant determinant in defining deviance and legitimizing exclusion from “public” space.

Therefore, the “physical cues” of architecture, which help to generate meaning in the built environment, must play a prominent role in structuring “behaviour settings,” specifying “manners of emplacement,” and defining the “deviant behaviour” of homeless individuals. To construct someone as “deviant” or “out of place”, it is necessary to have a place within which their deviance can be articulated and cited as evidence. As Sibley (1995) argues in his analysis of geographical exclusion:

[T]he social self could also be seen as a place-related self, and this also applies to stereotypes of the other which assume negative or positive qualities according to whether the stereotyped individual or group is ‘in place’ or ‘out of place’ (Sibley, 1995: p. 19).

Hence, it is the evidentiary nature of behaviour or presence in particular environments that constitutes deviance and legitimizes the oppression of “out of place” individuals. Such an analysis that highlights the relationship between presence, context, and deviance – between body, place, and meaning – points to the necessity of clarifying the connections between society, space, and architecture through theories that reveal and explain the constitutive relations between these categories.

### **Society, Space, and Architecture**

As a behavioural label that is spatially dependent, the concept of deviance reveals how abstract social concepts often need a constitutive material geography to generate meaning. Indeed, this is the overt semiotic function of architecture, as different buildings attempt to convey, through their architectural elements, any number of desired concepts

such as power, order, security, or home. As a matter of course, therefore, architectural semiotics has been one of the dominating preoccupations of architectural history. Yet, in the same way that architecture generates meaning, meaning can generate architecture. How a society organizes itself as a meaningful corporate body through signifying practices partially determines how that society configures its space through its social organization and political economy. This dialectical relationship between a society and its space suggests that just as the political economy of a society can generate an oppressive social condition such as poverty, it can similarly generate an oppressive spatial configuration. Furthermore, as the concept of deviance implies, the spatial practices of any individual member of society can potentially create a differential rift in the accepted use of a particular space, thereby destabilizing dominant urban meanings normally ascribed to that space.

To clarify how space is dialectically related to a society and its member individuals, I will summon the spatialized Marxist analytics of French social theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991), who interprets space not as a neutral and empty container within which society exists, but as a formal and material outcome actively produced by the social and political economy of that society. Lefebvre's spatial theories will then inform a discussion of similar insights garnered from the work of geographer Jon Goss (1988). Through a broad base of theory, Goss reveals the implications of spatial production for architecture, and he outlines a transdisciplinary theoretical framework known as "architectural geography."

*Henri Lefebvre: The Production of Space*

In his book *The Production of Space* (1991) – originally published in French in 1974 – Lefebvre provides an analytical basis for "a *science of space*" that does not merely "supply inventories of what *exists in space*, or even generate a *discourse on space*, [but] give[s] rise to a *knowledge of space*" (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 7, orig. emph.). He

conceptualizes space as dialectically related not only to the productive forces and relations of a society's political economy, but also to the creative capacities of an individual's lived experience and practices of everyday life. In short, "(Social) space is a (social) product" (*Ibid.*: p. 26). That is, space is produced both materially and semiotically by an historically situated mode of production; in turn, this produced space – with its array of functional and symbolic sites, each appropriately assigned a productive set of social relations – is used as a (re)productive force to (re)produce society.

By insisting on the social production of space, Lefebvre dispels two pervasive illusions of space in popular and academic epistemologies: the illusion of transparency and the illusion of opacity (*Ibid.*: pp. 27-30). The illusion of transparency misrepresents space as an abstract *mental* construct "defined by the philosophers and mathematicians." Through this illusion, space is interpreted as an immaterial and empty container within which things exist: a neutral, *a priori* vacuum already existing around things. The illusion of opacity, on the other hand, misrepresents space as entirely a *physical* (natural) construct "defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature'."<sup>7</sup> Through this illusion, space is seen as constituted by material existent things relative to one other: a neutral, *a posteriori* space existing only between things. In contradistinction to both of these illusions, Lefebvre proposes a *social* space, a space that is both the medium for and the outcome of a social system: in short, (social) space and (social) being are interdependent and mutually constitutive.

In his critique of the mental and physical illusions of space and his insistence on a social space, Lefebvre transcends the subject-object (mental-physical) binarism that has plagued spatial thinking. He hypothesizes a "unitary theory" comprising not two but

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<sup>7</sup> Lefebvre makes no substantive distinction between "physical space" and "natural space" and uses the terms interchangeably depending on the requirements of his analysis. He seems to use the term "physical space" when discussing the physics of space and the term "natural space" when discussing its historical and social significance. As far as I can surmise, however, the two spaces are ontologically equivalent. Therefore, in summarizing his spatial theories, I too use the terms interchangeably in order to be faithful to Lefebvre's (translated) diction. I will, however, remind the reader of this terminological equivalency when pertinent to the discussion.

three fields of operation: not only the mental and the physical, but also the social; not only “logico-epistemological space” and “the space occupied by sensory phenomena”, but also “the space of social practice” which unifies the previous two (*Ibid*: pp. 11-12). Whereas mental space provides the conceptual and *subjective* reservoir for *thinking* about social space, physical (natural) space provides the material and *objective* reservoir for *producing* it. Indeed, Lefebvre describes natural space as “the common point of departure: the origin, and the original model, of the social process – perhaps even the basis of all ‘originality’ ” (*Ibid*: p. 30). By drawing on the resources of natural space and its objects – which provide only *use value* – the productive forces of society and the creative capacities of individuals forge their own spaces. Meanwhile, natural space, although “resistant, and infinite in its depth,” is slowly disappearing under the social mantle of produced space, “murdered by ‘anti-nature’ – by abstraction, by signs and images, by discourse, as also by labour and its products” (*Ibid*: pp. 30-31, 70-71).

In his analytical treatment of produced space, Lefebvre delineates three spatial moments which operate dialectically with one another: spatial practice, the representation of space, and the space of representation; or, more succinctly, perceived space, conceived space, and lived space, respectively. Consequently, the dialectical relationship between these spaces has been termed a socio-spatial dialectic or a trialectic of spatiality [Figure 3.1]. Perceived space and conceived space correspond roughly to the Marxist analytical categories of base and superstructure, the social dialectic which organizes an historically situated political economy.<sup>8</sup> Perceived space is the realm of *spatial practice* which

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<sup>8</sup> By summoning Marx as a model, I wish only to highlight Lefebvre’s academic genealogy and to assist the reader in comprehending his theories. There are significant differences between Marx and Lefebvre. The concept of ideology in Marx’s traditional formulation, for example, is entirely superstructural and bears very little *material* relation to the reality of the base (unlike knowledge, which is defined by Marx as a force of production through its incorporation into practice via, for example, technology). For Lefebvre, however, such a notion of ideology is over-used and inaccurate, and he wishes to ground ideology in a spatial relation: “What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies” (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 44). He argues that ideology and knowledge are often combined in various representations of space such as classical perspective or urban plans. Therefore, he deploys the more comprehensive concept of “representation” as an area within which ideology and knowledge are barely distinguishable.

secreted a society's social space (*Ibid*: pp. 33, 38). This space produces and reproduces the material conditions of a society by generating spatial forms and organizing spatial relations. It is an empirical, functional space – of both form and process – that we perceive as immediately apparent, but which delimits the material conditions of a society, both for the individual spaces of everyday life and for the codified spaces of a social and political-economic order.

Conceived space refers to the conceptualized *representations of space* by individuals in scientific disciplines, including practitioners such as urban designers, planners, and architects. This is the dominating space of society, “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (*Ibid*: pp. 33, 38-39). Therefore, conceived space is a space which codifies and symbolizes spatial products in order to enable the effective implementation of the (re)productive capacities of perceived space. Indeed, perhaps these two spaces – the perceived and the conceived – can be reasonably interpreted as a “closed” dialectic that sustains a corporate body and identity by spatially (re)producing an historically situated political economy.

Lefebvre's conception of perceived and conceived spaces effectively spatializes Marx's non-spatial classical formulation. The traditional dialectic is radicalized, however, by Lefebvre's analytical insight regarding an hypothesis of a *third* space disrupting the “closed” dialectic of the perceived and the conceived – a space of potential

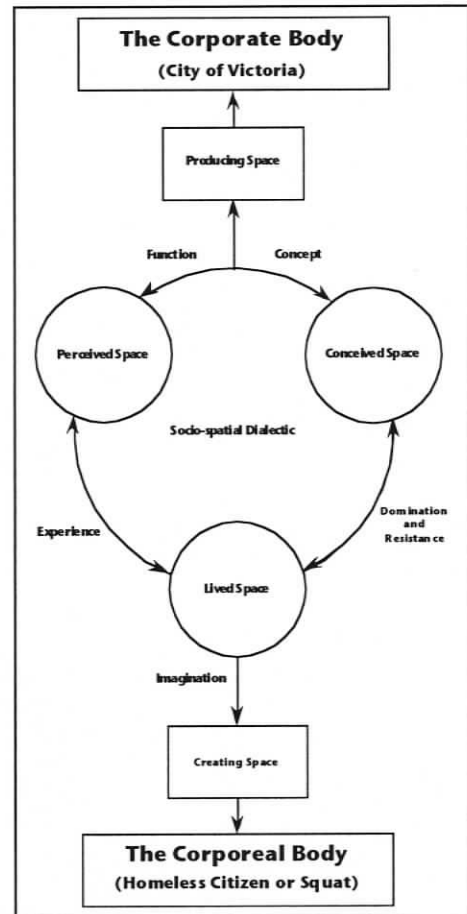


Figure 3.1: The trialectic of spatiality.

resistance and revolution which opens up the traditional dialectic with “an-other space” of alternative practices and meanings, thereby generating a radically open *trialectic*.<sup>9</sup> This third space of radical openness is defined by Lefebvre as lived space, or the *space of representation*. This is the dominated space which is passively experienced by the corporeal body and “directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’ ” (Lefebvre, 1991: p. 39, orig. emph.). It is a space in which *imagination* is used to emancipate space and resist its codification and domination through the symbolic use of its inherent natural space. For, unlike representations of space which tend toward *intellectually* derived systems of verbal signs (plans for example), the space of representation tends toward an *experientially* derived system of non-verbal symbols (art for example) (*Ibid*: pp. 33, 39). Lefebvre neatly describes this distinction – between the conceptual representation of space and the imaginative space of representation – as the difference between “the concept without life [and] life without concepts” (*Ibid*: p. 372). Indeed, in the spirit of this formulation, and especially in the context of homelessness, perhaps a similar distinction can be made between the *functional* spaces of perceived space and the *experiential* spaces of lived space, a distinction which may be described as the difference between “buildings without life and life without buildings.”

Lived space, then, is defined by experience and imagination (effected through what I have been defining as the corporeal body) as opposed to the dominant political economy of function and concept (effected through what I have been calling the corporate body). A struggle for meaning ensues between the dominated space of representation (lived space) and the dominating representations of space (conceived

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<sup>9</sup> The terms “an-other space,” “third space,” and “trialectic” are drawn from the work of urban geographer Edward Soja who provides an articulate discussion of Lefebvre’s spatial theory (Soja, 1999: pp. 26-82). Soja describes Lefebvre’s distinct brand of Marxism as “constantly open and flexible, always reactive to dogmatic closure, never content with any permanent construct or fixed totalization ... departing from the tight constraints of the either/or to explore, as a conscious political strategy, the combinatorial openness of the both/and also” (*Ibid*: p. 32).

space); this struggle is enacted in and through spatial practice (perceived space) where experience and function may come into conflict. Sometimes this struggle is apolitical and goes unnoticed, as when I refuse to eat in the dining room in my own home (intellectually planned function in conceived space) since the lack of closets in my one-bedroom apartment forces me to use the dining-room as a storage facility (experientially creative use in lived space). By deploying the ordinary *use value* of the room's inherent natural space – which defines the room simply as an enclosed two-by-three-metre space with gyproc walls, a stucco ceiling, and a sixty-watt light bulb for illumination – I appropriate the produced social space of “dining-room,” liberate this space from its name, and create, for my own immediate circumstances, a useful “storage-room.”

Sometimes, however, especially in the context of homeless individuals on the street where the struggle is often public, conflict can be politically charged. The social space of an entranceway leading into a business, for example, is a produced space that facilitates access in and out of the business for the efficient flow of consumers sustaining the political economy. The dominant use of this space during business hours is compromised, however, when the entrance is suddenly “obstructed” by the corporeal presence of a homeless individual who has spontaneously secured shelter beneath the doorway's covered alcove during a rainstorm – an appropriated social space with *natural (physical) cover* that simply went unnoticed by those who had the privilege of entering the building to get out of the rain.

Therefore, in the realm of perceived space, struggles are enacted through both spatial practice and urban meaning. Although functional and symbolic spaces are actively *produced* by the political economy to facilitate and reinforce the mode of production, there are nonetheless experiential spaces of everyday life that we, as individuals and small groups, imaginatively *create* as we actively appropriate and transform the dominant space to suit both our material needs and our need to ascribe meaning in our lives. With a critical appreciation of the constitutive relationship between

society and space, I will now build upon this argument by discussing the implications of the social production of space for architecture. Through Goss's (1988) transdisciplinary outline for an "architectural geography," I establish a theoretical foundation for examining architecture not only through its form but also through its use. As I will argue, this is an important consideration for the "architectural" space of the street, where spatial practice – the use of the street – is integral to urban meaning.

*Jon Goss: Architectural Geography*

Lefebvre's spatial theory provides a foundation for reconceptualizing space as a social product and as dialectically related not only to the political economy of a society but also to the individuals and groups who compose that society; not only to the corporate body but also to the corporeal body. By virtue of this theory, architecture as a spatial artifact is hence also a social product. Therefore, an analysis of the struggles in and through architecture over the meaning of the urban environment must analyze architecture not merely as an artifact planned and produced through the closed dialectic of ascribed meaning and function (conceived space and perceived space). Architecture is not only closed form but also open process, linked to the processual outcomes of society and open to alternative and conflictual uses and meanings (lived space). Buildings are porous socio-spatial artifacts that interact with the environment around and through them; they are material fact and immaterial social process. To clarify such a conception of architecture, Jon Goss (1988) has outlined a theory towards an examination of architecture as part of a geographical web of social relations.

In the spirit of Lefebvre, Goss emphasizes the need "to explain architecture as a social product, as the spatial configuration of the built environment incorporating economic, political, and ideological dimensions" (Goss, 1988: p. 394). An awareness of these three dimensions, he argues, leads to the following parallel considerations: buildings as objects of value; architecture as a spatial system; and architecture as sign.

Consequently, Goss deploys three theoretical approaches to address each dimension respectively: Marxist urban analyses, structuration theory, and semiotics. By summoning a broad base of theory, Goss escapes the parochial obsessions of individual disciplines and moves towards a transdisciplinary approach known as “architectural geography.”

As objects of value, Goss argues, buildings are produced and consumed within a property market that is driven by capital but partly regulated by the state (*Ibid*: pp. 94-96). As commodities that are produced to generate capital, the spatial products of a corporate body such as buildings, neighbourhoods, and cities, are marketed to attract investment in an endless pursuit of new value. The forms of architecture and the types of buildings produced within a specified geography (residential neighbourhood or downtown core, for example) will be influenced by the desired image that a developer wishes to present to a given market (individual home buyer or corporate investment). Homelessness – whether through the presence of homeless people themselves, or through the presence of institutions such as homeless shelters which provide services for the homeless – will generate anxiety over value simply through its visibility. Meanwhile, the institutions of the state (national, provincial, and local) intervene in the property market through fiscal management (property taxation and rent controls), legal regulation (zoning and building codes), and material production (public housing and urban renewal). As Goss points out, however, “The ideology of state intervention is the maintenance of community and the conditions of capital accumulation” (*Ibid*: p. 396). Therefore, in the context of homelessness – the visibility of which creates anxiety over property values and community safety – state regulation will be directed towards structuring this visibility.

While intimately connected to generating economic value in a market economy, the appearance of a building also influences other meanings not necessarily driven by capital. Through the formal properties of architecture, buildings can operate as signs invested with meaning to convey and legitimize a desired ideology, concept, or social relation. The detached single-family house in the United States, for example, has been

described as “a symbol for the American Dream” (Ford, 1994: p. 143), while Goss adds that the suburban residence “may legitimize domestic property, private accumulation of wealth, the nuclear family, and class/age group segregation” (Goss, 1988: p. 397). To secure semiotic closure in the dreams conveyed by such symbolism, the visibility of abject homelessness must be structured to minimize the challenge of its contradictory presence in socially antiseptic spaces such as suburban residential neighbourhoods. Therefore, the abjective semiotics of “a body aesthetic that defines [homeless individuals] as ugly or fearsome” (Young, 1990: p. 145) must be rendered invisible so such individuals do not challenge the dominant semiotics of the built environment.

Although architecture can be analyzed as a system of signs with semiotic meaning, Goss also warns that architectural semiotics – the traditional preoccupation of architectural history – “might place too much emphasis on the sign and symbol as opposed to the functional value of the building” (Goss, 1988: p. 397). This is an important consideration for the “architectural” space of the street, the semiotic meaning of which is determined largely through its *use*, rather than through its formal properties. This interaction between symbolic and functional value recalls Lefebvre’s dialectic of conceived and perceived spaces – of the representations of space and spatial practice – and it points to the way in which buildings, as physical spatial products, must be analyzed as part of a spatial system organized by a given society. In Goss’s words, buildings are

physical objects that present environments of opportunity and constraints that serve to reproduce [the] meanings, life-styles, and relations [of a society]. The space within a building, and the space external to it, is given character by its spatial relations with other buildings, and is formed by and formative of social relations (*Ibid*: p. 398).

Or, to paraphrase Lefebvre, architecture and society are mutually constitutive. Goss also notes, however, that both the interpretation and the use of architecture are conflictual:

There is a distinction between the sender’s message and the message received ... We must realize the complexity of multicode space and study it in its everyday usage (through interviews, literary and historic texts, or events) by everyday people who may be “reading” or “writing” different languages in the built environment (*Ibid*: p. 398).

Individual variation in the interpretation and the use of architectural space recalls Lefebvre’s concept of lived space – the space of representation – which, as already noted,

can potentially challenge, contradict, or resist a corporate spatial system organized by a dominant functionalist administration of spaces and buildings. Indeed, individual variation in the use of space is often recast as “deviance” by the corporate body to reaffirm dominant urban meaning and legitimize oppression. Therefore, given the potential for conflict in the interpretation or the use of architectural and geographical spaces, theories are required to reveal the manner in which resistance and domination are expressed in a socio-spatial milieu, as the produced spaces of the corporate body articulate with the lived spaces of homeless individuals. This will return us full circle to the philosophical and political foundation of my thesis, back to Young’s “five faces of oppression” and her insistence that “a conception of justice should *begin* with the concepts of domination and oppression” (Young, 1990: p. 3, my emph.).

### **Resistance and Domination**

The salient feature of Lefebvre’s concept of lived space is its representational potential for individuals living amidst dominant representations of space produced by a political economy. Consequently, lived space acquires its architecture, so to speak, through the creative capacities of the “inhabitants” and the “users” of a produced space. In short, agency is a prominent aspect of lived space. This has important implications for an interpretation of the lived spaces of homeless citizens. Spatialized agency provides a counterpoint to the persistent tendency in popular and academic discourses that treat those suffering from homelessness as passive agents, lacking the personal fortitude and the physical, mental, or moral capacity to establish “self-sufficiency” and escape “the cycle of homelessness.” Since homelessness is ultimately not an individual outcome, such a characterization is misplaced. Furthermore, in order to negotiate the challenges of homelessness, the everyday practices of homeless individuals must be innovative and often non-conforming. Indeed, in the interstices of an oppressively produced spatial

environment, homeless citizens must actively generate their own spaces, transfiguring the practices of their everyday life into tactics of resistance which challenge or circumvent the dominating spatial strategies deployed by the corporate body.

To rectify the misrepresentation of homeless individuals as social misfits without agency or initiative, I rely on the fieldwork of anthropologist Robert Desjarlais (1997). Through his holistic ethnography of homeless residents in a Boston shelter, Desjarlais reconceptualizes agency as situationally contingent, arising out of the contextual circumstances within which subjects act and through which they generate meaning. Such a reconceptualization is foundational for a further recognition that the spatial practices of homeless citizens are not merely spontaneous and adaptive, but coherent and resistant. To reveal the character of this resistant spatial practice, I rely on the theories of Michel de Certeau (1984) concerning “the practices of everyday life.” Through a linguistic model, de Certeau explains spatial practices as constitutive of a polemological space where struggles ensue between the discursive “strategies” of domination produced by a socio-spatial system and the “tactical” rhetorics of resistance deployed by the *consumers* or *users* of a produced space, which include homeless individuals.

*Robert Desjarlais: Reconceptualizing Agency*

In his ethnographic account of homelessness in a Boston shelter, Desjarlais (1997) explores the meanings and interpretations deployed by homeless people as they negotiate the social, architectural, and geographical contexts of a homeless shelter. Consequently, Desjarlais necessarily broaches the issue of agency, an *a priori* category that is often left unexamined and assumed to be unproblematic. As Desjarlais argues:

Despite the wealth of studies showing that models of personhood take distinct forms throughout the world, the methods of agency are assumed, for the most part, to be much the same everywhere, as if agency was an essential, unchanging given and ontologically prior to the situations in which it arises (Desjarlais, 1997: p. 201).

Desjarlais stresses the need to recognize the situated specificity of personal agency and to consider the possibility of diverse grounds for, and forms of, this contextually dependent

concept. His ethnography highlights the disparity between a dominant conception of agency privileged by the staff members of the shelter and an alternative conception enacted by the residents. The staff members understood agency through dominant cultural values inspired by capitalism and the industrial revolution, including “autonomy, self-sufficiency, productivity, progress [and] reliability,” in which human action is characterized as “being engaged freely, willfully, consistently, and continuously by individuals” (*Ibid*: pp. 204, 203). The residents, on the other hand, “typically acted in terms of negation and opportunism [which] prompted a form of agency characterized by reactivity, indirection, contradiction, spontaneity, and impermanence” (*Ibid*: p. 204).<sup>10</sup>

The disparity between the two forms of agency outlined in Desjarlais’ account may be semantically characterized as the difference between *practices* and *actions* in which, following Ricoeur’s (1992) analysis of the hierarchy of praxis, actions are the basal first-order units and practices are the integrative second-order units (Desjarlais, 1997: p. 204; after Ricoeur, 1992: pp. 152-53). Desjarlais, however, objects to a simple either-or treatment of agency as defined either by a set of practices involving a mode of “becoming” with developmental ontic transformations, or by a set of discrete actions involving a mode of “getting” with short-term manoeuvres:

[T]he situation in the shelter, in which the residents had to contend repeatedly with issues of “getting” amidst the staff’s calls for “becoming,” points to the way in which distinct kinds and ideologies of motivation can take root in a specific locale.... We therefore cannot talk about agency without taking into account the practical concerns that contribute to certain activities or lasting dispositions. Nor can we talk about the pragmatic or persuasive elements of personal agency without considering the political forces that create the conditions for these elements (Desjarlais, 1997: pp. 202, 204-205).

Therefore, agency must be understood as arising out of the contextual circumstances within which subjects act and through which they generate meaning. Moreover, the ontological distinction between discrete actions and developmental practices in the context of agency must be collapsed such that seemingly incoherent and unconnected *actions* (often labeled as deviant) may in fact have a foundational coherence of

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<sup>10</sup> This same type of agency has also been observed for homeless people living on the streets, as revealed in the work of anthropologist Anne Lovell (1992) concerning the temporality of street life.

alternative or resistant *practice*, arising out of immediate circumstances, using available local resources, fulfilling practical concerns, and defying dominant modes and meanings of socio-spatial relations. These alternative spatial practices, integral to the lived spaces of homeless individuals, constitute the means by which homeless people assert meaning (and space) in the oppression of their everyday lives. Indeed, the produced spaces of the corporate body are interrupted by a claim for representation which acquires materiality through the quotidian and spatializing practices of a homeless person's everyday life. To comprehend the lineaments of this spatialized resistance, we shall turn now to the work of de Certeau (1984) and his elaboration on "the practice of everyday life."

*Michel de Certeau: The Practice of Everyday Life*

In his investigation of 'the practice of everyday life,' de Certeau strives to "work out a *science of singularity*; that is to say, a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances" (de Certeau, 1984: p. ix, orig. emph.). Elaborating implicitly on the characteristics of the lived spaces of everyday life in Lefebvre's "science of space," de Certeau examines the ways in which the users – the consumers – of a socially produced space operate. He argues that as users of the cultural and spatial products of a dominant system of production, consumers contrive a production of their own, "another production, called 'consumption:'"<sup>11</sup>

The latter is devious, it is dispersed, but it insinuates itself everywhere, silently and almost invisibly, because it does not manifest itself through its own products, but rather through its *ways of using* the products imposed by a dominant economic order (*Ibid*: pp. xii-xiii, orig. emph.).

These ordinary ways of operating are manifest as innumerable, seemingly incoherent practices that obey their own logic, an everyday "art of practice" expressed as a

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<sup>11</sup> Whereas Lefebvre makes a distinction between a work and a product – between the *creative* output of individuals in everyday life and the *productive* output of a political economy in a social system – de Certeau makes no such distinction and subsumes both processes under the rubric of "production." This difference between the two theorists, however, is entirely semantic. De Certeau clearly distinguishes between the production of a society on the one hand and the "production" of the users of that society's products on the other, thereby paralleling Lefebvre's distinction between representations of space *produced* by a social system and the spaces of representation *created* by the users of a produced space.

“*bricolage*” or “making do” in which users appropriate space produced by the political economy and adapt it to their own interests and rules by using it in their immediate and particular circumstances: “Everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others” (*Ibid*: pp. xi-xx; qt. at p. xii, orig. emph.). Furthermore, this artful practice of everyday life is, with its complex logics, a “non-discursive activity, [an] immense remainder constituted by the part of human experience that has not been tamed and symbolized in language” (*Ibid*: p. 61).

To glimpse with a sidelong glance the formal structure of this complex art, de Certeau deploys linguistic parallels to explain spatial practice. His foundational model is framed by the theories of Wittgenstein, whose work provides “a philosophical blueprint for a contemporary science of the ordinary” (*Ibid*: pp. 8-14).<sup>12</sup> In his desire to retrieve the everyday use of words from their appropriated metaphysical use, Wittgenstein makes a distinction between the ordinary language of everyday life and the artificially produced language of scientific and philosophical discourse. As de Certeau elaborates, ordinary language is “a common place” (akin, perhaps, to Lefebvre’s natural space) that “encompasses every discourse, even if human experiences cannot be reduced to what it can say about them” (*Ibid*: p. 11). To maintain closure in their discursive systems, “scientific methods allow themselves to *forget* this fact [that non-discursive human experience is irreducible to discourse] and philosophers *think they dominate it* so that they can authorize themselves to deal with it” (*Ibid*: p. 11, orig. emph.).

These discursive tendencies – amnesia and domination – can perhaps be advanced as the two primary strategies that correspond respectively to the “conceived spaces” and “perceived spaces” of a discourse. The former strategy may be interpreted, perhaps, as operating in a discursive and conceptual *space of denial* concerning the unrepresentable complex logics of human experience in everyday life, while the latter may be interpreted

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<sup>12</sup> For de Certeau’s primary sources, see Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) and *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1921).

as generating a discursive and perceivable *denial of place* for a free, open, and representational enunciation of non-discursive experiences. Yet, these strategic and discursive practices are not entirely hegemonic. The linguistic reservoir for these practices remains ordinary language, a common linguistic historicity that amnesic or dominating discourses can never escape, and *through which* ordinary, varied, and non-discursive “ways of speaking” enunciate the logical (and *lived*) complexities of everyday life: alternative voices within a dominating discourse – or, to translate de Certeau’s spatial trajectory into a Lefebvrian lexicon, alternative lived spaces within the dominating produced spaces of a political economy.

De Certeau, therefore, distinguishes between the discursive and the non-discursive by modeling the former as a linguistic system (a discourse) and the latter as a speech act (an enunciation). Whereas a discourse abstracts data and generates a “proper” place into which objects of study can be transported, recorded, and examined, a speech act cannot be abstracted from the circumstances of its enunciation. In other words, speech acts are enunciative procedures that represent the *ways of using* words according to circumstances. Furthermore, enunciative procedures remain opaque to discourse,

not only because the scientific method [ie. discourse] requires a delimitation and simplification of its objects, but also because there corresponds to the constitution of a scientific space [ie. a “proper” place], as a precondition to any analysis, the necessity of being able to *transfer* the objects of study into it. Only what can be transported can be treated. What cannot be uprooted remains by definition outside the field of research (de Certeau, 1984: p. 20, orig. emph.).

Enunciative procedures, akin to Desjarlais’ conception of agency, have their own situated logic that cannot be discursively abstracted from nor understood outside their context of use. By appropriating or “poaching” on language relative to specific situations, the speech act creates both “a *present* through the act of the ‘I’ who speaks, and conjointly ... [an] existence of a ‘now’ which is the presence to the world” (de Certeau, 1984: p. 33, orig. emph.). The speech act is representational of the speaker, not of a discourse.

Subsequently, de Certeau spatializes this linguistic model into the practices of everyday life by distinguishing between a strategy and a tactic, the former of which he

models as a discourse and the latter as an enunciation. A strategy is the manipulation of power relationships

that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated. It postulates a [proper] *place* that can be delimited as its *own* and serve as a base from which relations with an *exteriority* composed of targets or threats (customers or competitors, enemies, the country surrounding the city, objectives and objects of research, etc.) can be managed (*Ibid*: pp. 35-36, orig. emph.).

A tactic, on the other hand, does not have a “proper” place from which to operate and, therefore, does not rely on the exteriority of the Other. Indeed, the space of the tactic *is* the space of the Other:

Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.... It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary owners. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse (*Ibid*: p. 37).

Finally, de Certeau applies these concepts to the spaces of the city through what he terms the “rhetorics of walking.” He argues that the “city,” as founded by urbanistic discourse, is defined by a threefold operation: the production of its *own* space (a proper place); the production of “a nowhen” (a detemporalization of space); and the production of a universal and anonymous subject (what I have defined as a corporate body). Therefore, the systems imposed by corporate strategies attempt to dominate all aspects of being – what Soja (1999: pp. 70-73) calls the ontological trialectic of spatiality, historicity, and sociality – in order to produce the discourse of a readable city, a “texturology” which is nothing more than “a representation, an optical artifact” (de Certeau, 1984: pp. 91-95), or in Lefebvrian terminology, a conceived space. Through a “chorus of idle footsteps,” however, the ordinary practitioners of the city “follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it” (de Certeau 1984: p. 93). The act of walking and *using* space, therefore, is an enunciative operation – a tactical ruse – within the strategic discourse (the perceived and conceived spaces) of an urban system:

The walking of passers-by offers a series of turns (*tours*) and detours that can be compared to “turns of phrase” or “stylistic figures.” There is a rhetoric of walking. The art of turning phrases finds an equivalent in the art of composing a path (*tourner un parcours*).... The long poem of walking manipulates spatial organizations, no matter how

panoptic they may be: it is neither foreign to them (it can take place only within them) nor in conformity with them (it does not receive its identity from them). It creates shadows and ambiguities within them (*Ibid.*: pp. 100, 101).

These “shadows and ambiguities” are the lived spaces of everyday life which, as spaces of tactical rhetoric, “make some parts of the city disappear and exaggerate others, distorting it, fragmenting it, and diverting it from its immobile order” (*Ibid.*: p. 102).

De Certeau also notes that these tactical ruses, these “way[s] of using imposed systems,” constitute “resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations,” a state of affairs which he describes as “an economy of the proper place” dominating the practices of everyday life (*Ibid.*: pp. 18, 55). Consequently, de Certeau argues that the tension between domination and resistance – between the strategic production of space by a political economy and the tactical ruses of individual consumers – must necessarily entail a “polemenological analysis” of culture:

[C]ulture articulates conflicts and alternately legitimizes, displaces, or controls the superior force. It develops in an atmosphere of tensions, and often of violence, for which it provides symbolic balances, contracts of compatibility and compromises, all more or less temporary. The tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong, thus lend a political dimension to everyday practices (*Ibid.*: p. xvii).

It is within this political and polemenological space (akin, perhaps, to Lefebvre’s perceived space, where spatial practices come into conflict) that the strategies of the corporate body – expressed either as *amnesia* through a discursive and conceptual *space of denial*, or as *domination* through a physical and perceivable *denial of place* – attempt to dominate the ambulatory tactics of everyday life, including the ruses and resistant spatial enunciations of homeless individuals.

In accordance with de Certeau’s insistence on a polemenological analysis, to appreciate the injustices perpetrated against homeless individuals, any effective analysis must, as Young (1990) argues, *begin* with the conceptions of oppression and domination. In the architectural geography of “the street,” the persistent marginalization and violence perpetrated against homeless citizens are manifest as a struggle over the proper *use* of the space. Through an active and personal agency characterized by spontaneity and

impermanence, homeless citizens territorialize by deploying the “enunciative” tactics and spatializing practices of everyday life. The abjective “semiotics” of these seemingly incoherent and deviant spatial practices surface in the perceived spaces of the city and consistently challenge the dominant spatial meanings conceived by the corporate body. Consequently, the lived space of an abject homeless person – that third space of radical openness that ruptures the produced spaces of the political economy and destabilizes the borders of corporate identity – are subjected to oppressive and violent spatial strategies instituted by a fearful corporate body which imagines itself to be in perpetual danger. The strategies deployed to meet this abjective threat are expressed both in the conceived and perceived spaces of the city – either as a conceptual *space of denial* which dismisses the inherent violence of spatial policies legislated to deal with the crisis, or as a perceivable *denial of place* which violently evicts the visible and representational presence of the corporeal homeless body itself. In the remainder of my thesis, after a discussion of foundational ideologies which frame local perceptions of homelessness, I will examine these oppressive strategies as they are deployed in the produced spaces of the City of Victoria and the Capital Region of British Columbia.

#### CHAPTER 4: FRAMING HOMELESSNESS: URBAN AND AESTHETIC IDEOLOGIES

Any effective analysis of the architectural geography of homelessness must unfold from the premise that space and identity – space and social relations – are constitutive of each other. Lefebvre’s critique of the two illusions of space in contemporary thought, the illusions of transparency and opacity, is fundamental to a reinterpretation of space as dialectically related to society: space is a *product* of society, and this produced space, in turn, functions both to reproduce the dominant social relations governing the political economy and to restrict the lived spaces emancipated by individuals. Ultimately, the role of Lefebvre’s spatial analytic in his urbanistic trajectory (Lefebvre, 2003, 1991, 1968) is to spatialize agency and reveal the potential for an “urban revolution” towards social utopia. For, according to Lefebvre, in the complex and concentrated spaces of a city, the creative emancipation of space through the spontaneity of everyday life is centralized and, hence, allowed to flourish beyond repression. The concentration of creative freedom in urban practice becomes a force for social revolution and the basis for a utopian society (Lefebvre, 2003; see also Castells, 1977: pp. 86-95).

Lefebvre the Marxian urbanist has been heavily criticized by other more fundamentalist Marxist thinkers, such as Manuel Castells and David Harvey, who sense a creeping tendency in Lefebvre’s urbanistic agenda to fetishize space as the principal mode for social revolution. As they argue, Lefebvre privileges appropriating space – the *product* – over appropriating the forces and social relations of *production* (Castells, 1977: pp. 86-95; Harvey, 1973: pp. 302-314). Indeed, Lefebvre may be accused of reifying the social relations of production into the socially produced ‘commodity’ known as space; and since space – specifically urban space – is privileged as the locus for social revolution, Castells accuses Lefebvre of turning “a *Marxist analysis of the urban phenomenon* [into] an *urbanistic theorization of the Marxist problematic*” (Castells, 1977: p. 87, orig. emph.).

These critiques of Lefebvre's urban theories are somewhat overstated, however, especially in light of recent cultural theories that argue for a politics of consumption and the power of cultural products (such as space) to offer resistance, inspire social upheaval, and explain culture change (de Certeau, 1984; Fiske, 1989; Jenkins, 1992). Yet, there is a threshold, nonetheless, at which fetishizing space (or spatial products such as architecture) may be deployed as an ideological veil to attenuate contradictions in society, in the same way that commodities are fetishized to veil the oppressive social relations inherent in their production. Consequently, Lefebvre's urbanistic agenda – with its implicit tendency to fetishize space – may inadvertently legitimize oppressive spatial practices and pernicious government policies that arise from such a fetish. Therefore, although I rely on Lefebvre for guidance, I feel that it is also necessary to elaborate on the spatial fetish. I do this not only to qualify Lefebvre's insights by warning against a fundamentalist application of his theories, but also to reveal foundational ideologies at work in the Capital Region that fetishize space in order to legitimize oppression.<sup>1</sup>

In this chapter, through a rigorous application of Castells' critique of the spatial fetish (1977: pp. 73-112), I discuss two principal ideologies framing popular perceptions of homelessness in Victoria: a technocratic ideology of environmental determinism defined by Castells as an *urban ideology*, and a romantic ideology of bucolic pastoralism which I define as an *aesthetic ideology*. An urban ideology naturalizes homelessness as an "urban problem" intrinsic to an alienating and complex urban environment, while an aesthetic ideology collapses urban complexities into the domesticated contours of well-tended gardens and historical nostalgia. In effect, Victoria is mythologized as a "Garden of Eden" and a "Heritage City" where contemporary "urban problems" are disavowed as sinfully and anachronistically out of place. Working dialectically, these ideologies not

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<sup>1</sup> For other problems and elisions in Lefebvre's work see also the critique advanced by Blum and Nast (1996) who take issue with Lefebvre's heterosexist formulations. Social differences other than class (such as gender and ethnicity) are likewise notably absent in my own analysis, a silence that I acknowledge in the conclusion of my thesis where I outline important avenues for further research.

only frame popular perceptions of homelessness in the region, but also legitimize the violent spatial exclusion of homeless citizens documented in my thesis.

### **Urban Ideology**

Castells launches his critique of the spatial fetish in his book *The Urban Question* (1977), where he challenges the tendency in sociological urban theory to assign explanatory power to “the technico-natural conditions of human existence and, ultimately, to its environment” (Castells, 1977: p. 73). The “city,” he argues, has been theorized as a formal entity that produces and explains a societal structure known as “urban culture,” a causal logic that attends to “an hypothesis of the production of culture by nature, or, to put it another way, of the specific system of social relations (urban culture) by a given ecological context (the city)” (*Ibid*: p. 75). According to Castells, this is a culturalist “urban ideology” that sustains the myth of an “urban culture.” He traces this ideology through its historical antecedents in sociological urban theory (including the urban theories of Henri Lefebvre) which link urbanization to modernization, to the evolution of civilization, and to “an ideology of modernity, assimilated, in an ethnocentric way, to the social forms of liberal capitalism” (*Ibid*: p. 83). In short, the city produces culture. This is what is meant by the term “urban ideology.”

Castells argues further that the mythological effect of such an ideology is to describe “the everyday problems experienced by people, while offering an interpretation of them in terms of natural evolution, from which the division into antagonistic classes is absent” (*Ibid*: p. 85). Society is conceived as a unified “public” entity, an imagined community which evolves organically and is in conflict, not *internally* by way of social contradiction and political oppression, but *externally* by way of the unintended effects of an alienating city. The formal properties of the city – heterogeneity, density, and dimension – are fetishized to explain the proliferation of “urban problems” such as

homelessness. Meanwhile, society remains “united in facing up to its ‘common problems’” as citizens come together to overcome “the natural and technological constraints that impede the full development of [their] creativity” (*Ibid*: pp. 84-85).<sup>2</sup>

Although Castells was writing decades ago, environmental determinism as a model to explain culture change is still a prominent – and admittedly useful – theoretical approach.<sup>3</sup> Through its continued prominence as a theory, however, its influence can also be traced to popular (mis)conceptions of the city, in which an urban ideology veils social contradictions and political oppression by attributing injustice in the city to the insidiousness of urban form. Social ills such as homelessness, crime, and prostitution – malignant outcomes of inequitable social relations in an oppressive political economy – are labeled as “urban problems” and attributed to poor urban planning or unbridled urbanization. As Castells (1977: p. 78) explains, “the diversification of activities and urban milieux causes considerable disorganisation of the personality, which explains the growth of crime, suicide, corruption and madness in the great metropolises.” The formal structures of an “urban culture” are deterministically linked to the socio-psychology of the individual. In effect, oppressive social relations are reified into urban form, and homelessness is naturalized as the inevitable outcome of an alienating city – an “urban problem” abstracted from (and to be overcome by) a unified corporate body.

In Victoria, an urban ideology is often deployed to block the implementation of progressive land use policies designed to mitigate homelessness in the region. The fear

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<sup>2</sup> I adapt the term “imagined community” from the work of Anderson (1991), who reflects on the ideological construction of a unified nation-state in the context of the proliferation of nationalism. The imagined community of a unified and cohesive “public” constituted by “the people” – what I term the “corporate body” – is also integral to the psychology of abjection outlined by Kristeva (1982). Indeed, as I reveal in the next chapter through the work of Kawash (1996), the visible homeless body as an abject threat to social cohesion is demonstrably (and paradoxically) central to corporate identity, and hence constitutive to the “public” as an imagined community.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the popular work of Diamond (2005, 1997) who argues that ecological factors are the primary determinants in the evolution of adaptive technologies and, hence, of human civilizations. In the context of space and geography, see also Soja (2000: pp. 3-116) who displaces the traditional emphasis on technologies by stressing the evolutionary role of space. Accordingly, he adapts the ancient Greek concept of *synekism* – or urban agglomeration – as a primary stimulus for human development.

of property devaluation and increased crime provides the rationale for opposition to the development of social services or affordable housing in local neighbourhoods. In the next section, I will discuss some of the debates engendered by this resistance and reveal the exclusionary effects of an urban ideology as manifest in Victoria and the Capital Region. I will reveal that the debates are consistently framed by issues of real estate value and property rights, rather than the fundamental human right to secure and affordable housing. In the same way that the urban form of a neighbourhood (rather than the social relations therein) often defines the neighbourhood, one's property often defines and, indeed, *bears the rights* of one's identity and dignity; the *inherent* dignity and rights of persons – *independent* of property and guaranteed by the UN *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* which Canada has officially recognized – is shamefully subordinated.

#### *Urban Ideology in Victoria*

The myth of an “urban culture” – with a tendency to explain social ills such as homelessness as “urban problems” – is a prominent and persistent fiction in the popular imagination. In Victoria, this is readily apparent in ongoing debates surrounding property development applications during the many public hearings at City Hall. Residents are invariably concerned about the ill effects of urbanization, which is perceived to attract “undesirables,” generate crime, and erode property values. The violent exclusion of marginalized citizens in our society is consistently elided in the debates. In effect, the socio-pathology of Not-In-My-Backyard (NIMBY) politics is a persistent and debilitating feature of the discussions. Such paranoia manifests itself as spatial exclusion that not only produces homelessness – by limiting the supply of affordable housing – but also creates the illusion that “urban problems” have been eradicated. Local residents – “united in facing up to [their] ‘common problems’” – preserve their quality of life by preventing “urban decay” and overcoming “the natural and technological constraints that impede the full development of [their] creativity” (Castells, 1977: pp. 84-85).

An excellent example of an ongoing debate circumscribed by an urban ideology is the current controversy over secondary suites. Secondary suites are self-contained living units, such as basement suites, built into detached houses in neighbourhoods zoned for single-family homes. Although secondary suites can never replace an effective national policy of supplying affordable social housing, this is one means by which the private rental market can provide housing within existing infrastructure. Indeed, in 1998 the president of the Architectural Institute of British Columbia endorsed secondary suites as a viable means of handling growth (Down, 1998), while recently both the province and the Capital Regional District (CRD) have included secondary suites as essential components to their housing-affordability strategies (British Columbia 2005a, 2005b; CRD, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

Following the national trend of downloading housing responsibilities to smaller jurisdictions, however, the governance for legalizing secondary suites remains the mandate of local municipalities. Consequently, there has been a patchwork of policies and legislation regulating secondary suites in the province, as various municipalities either resist or embrace the strategy. Even so, less than half of all local governments in the province have a permissive land-use policy for secondary suites (British Columbia, 2004c: p. 11). In the Capital Region, secondary suites have been legalized (or partially legalized) in only a few jurisdictions, including Central Saanich, Langford, Metchosin, Colwood, and View Royal. In Victoria, only homes built before 1970 are eligible for suites, while the Gonzales neighbourhood has been zoned for secondary suites without age restrictions since 2003; Victoria is, however, moving towards bylaw amendments that would help legalize more suites in the future (Urban Aspects, 2006; Victoria, 2006).

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<sup>4</sup> The benefits of secondary suites are shared reciprocally between landlord and tenant. As experts point out (British Columbia, 2005b: pp. 9-10), secondary suites not only supply rental units in existing infrastructure, they also enhance the ability of prospective homeowners to afford the outrageous mortgages typical in the Capital Region. Therefore, the provision of secondary suites may be more about restoring the private housing market for middle income earners than it is about providing housing *per se*. Indeed, there is no guarantee that the rental stock thus provided will necessarily be affordable for low income earners. Nonetheless, in the absence of national and provincial guarantees in housing, the provision of secondary suites is an essential stop-gap for the current housing crisis.

Despite official endorsements by experts and politicians and despite successful implementation of secondary-suite legislation in various municipalities (British Columbia, 2005b: pp. 23-40), proposals to legalize secondary suites in many jurisdictions continue to face vociferous opposition. Much of this resistance focuses on land-use issues such as traffic and parking; other concerns are more ephemeral and focus on the potential behaviour of tenants or the imagined decline in property values, neighbourhood character, and quality of life.<sup>5</sup> In 1999, for example, a Fernwood resident complained that the proliferation of illegal suites in her neighbourhood had been attracting a transient population and despoiling the quality of life: “The sense of community,” she lamented, “has really been lost” (qtd. in Harnett, 1999b). Recently a View Royal resident objected to the possibility that her municipality will adopt a secondary suite strategy: “[I]t seems obvious that the current political direction favours turning the once picturesque town of View Royal into an overcrowded slum. How very sad” (Mackin, 2006).

For both residents, increased density and diversity are the primary determinants in the “loss of community” or potential “slum” conditions. In effect, the emergence of an “overcrowded slum” and the presence of transients in the community are attributed directly to the introduction of secondary suites. “Overcrowded slums,” however, do not exist because of secondary suites; they are not “urban problems” produced by urbanization. They are consequences of an oppressive political economy that *produces* poverty *in the first instance*, which then becomes concentrated geographically through uneven development and spatial exclusion. Moreover, the complaints of the residents are

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<sup>5</sup> Traffic and parking problems are perhaps the most common arguments against legalizing secondary suites. In a recent survey of residents in View Royal, for example, respondents were twice as concerned over potential traffic and parking problems as they were over neighbourhood character (Bell, 2006b). As revealed by Saanich Mayor Frank Leonard, however, complaints over *existing* secondary suites target the tenants and the loss of neighbourhood character more often than they do the traffic: “Generally when we get complaints the problems aren’t land-use complaints they are behaviour complaints.... It’s when you get a house that’s totally rented out – top and bottom – and behaviour that really isn’t becoming of a neighborhood that we get complaints” (qtd. in Cleverly, 1997b). Therefore, the concern over traffic and parking may be more rhetorical than substantial. Indeed, traffic arguments may serve more as a politically correct proxy for the fear of attracting “undesirables” and “transients” into the neighbourhood.

rife with stigmatizing assumptions about those in poverty. The implication is that the quality of life in the community is jeopardized by an influx of transient low-income renters who remain abstracted from “the community” and turn the neighbourhood into a “slum.” The implicit poor-bashing bigotry engendered by these fears denies that the prospective tenants are contributing *citizens* of the Capital Region who *necessarily* seek such accommodation (illegal though it may be) due to a political economy that does not provide the means for all citizens to be effectively and securely housed.

The concern of the Fernwood resident also highlights a contradiction that makes the debate of secondary suites a tragi-comedy of sorts: there are *already* thousands of illegal suites in existence across the Capital Region.<sup>6</sup> Resistance to legalizing these suites arises largely from the concerns of property owners. For those homeowners who *do not* have secondary suites, legalization would mean an undesirable proliferation of suites in the community and an influx of “transients” despoiling the neighbourhood. For those homeowners who *do* have illegal suites, however, resistance is couched in fears of financial ruin: legalization would mean increased expenses due to higher property taxes, larger utility bills, suite registration and licensing, and suite conversion to conform to health regulations and building codes. Furthermore, since many illegal suites are not built according to code, tenants would have to be evicted if landlords cannot afford to upgrade their suites. In a housing climate in which many homeowners must rely on revenue from secondary suites, the forced eviction of tenants could be devastating to the housing markets, as thousands of middle-income homeowners default on their mortgages.

The existence of illegal suites, however, also means that many tenants are living in unregulated, unsafe, and unhealthy housing conditions. Since health and safety

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<sup>6</sup> According to the provincial government, secondary suites comprise an estimated twenty percent of British Columbia’s rental housing stock, including approximately 125,000 to 150,000 illegal suites (British Columbia, 2004c: p. 11). In the Capital Region, there are an estimated 20,000 secondary suites (legal and illegal), with perhaps 7,000 in Victoria alone; many of these suites would be considered illegal by their host municipality (Gidney, 2004). Indeed, in Victoria, of the estimated 7000 suites in the city, only half – approximately 3,400 – are legal (Urban Aspects, 2006: p. 34). Such contradictions are testimony to the lack of affordable housing available throughout the province and the city.

standards are not enforced, many of these suites are “environments of risk” adversely affecting the quality of life and personal well-being of the tenants.<sup>7</sup> By not legalizing suites and not enforcing building codes and health regulations, the City places the burden of risk on the tenants. Ultimately, the choice for the tenant becomes one of being evicted onto the street or living in substandard housing. The inherent right of low-income tenants to secure and adequate housing must defer to the financial concerns of property owners. Although I recognize this issue to be complex, the delay in legalizing suites in many jurisdictions speaks, at least partially, to this bias and reveals how imperatives in the political economy shape public policy. Indeed, an unwavering fidelity to the competitive private market to provide housing has created a conundrum, or in Marxist terminology, a contradiction: illegal, unregulated, and unsafe suites are tolerated to prevent a housing catastrophe. Sadly, those who suffer the most from this contradiction are low-income tenants who are not afforded the protection of the law. Meanwhile, landlords are given a pardon for their substandard suites and illegal activities as they exploit the desperation of low-income households seeking any form of shelter to keep them off the streets.<sup>8</sup>

Paralleling the controversy over secondary suites is the contentious issue of where to locate building projects for social services, homeless shelters, or non-market housing.

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<sup>7</sup> In Victoria, for example, a bylaw enforcement officer for the city has reported people living in sheds, garages, and other outbuildings. He recalls an older house on Caledonia Ave. where a tenant was paying rent for a shed-like structure in the backyard that had a dirt floor and a five-foot ceiling. He also recalls an “elevenplex” on Wark St. where the owner created eleven tiny suites in a single-family home; the officer described it as “a bit of a rathole” and a dangerous place to live. He reports seeing suites with plumbing and wiring problems, no insulation, gas leaks, mould and other health hazards. The officer also noted that, from his own experience, such suites are no bargain since market rents are often being charged (Gidney, 2004). For the concept of “environments of risk” and a spatialized discussion of the epidemiology of homelessness, see Fitzpatrick and LaGory (2000); for the local context, see Sansom (2000).

<sup>8</sup> The current policy in many jurisdictions is to ignore illegal suites unless a complaint is lodged by neighbours (British Columbia, 2005b: p. 18). Not unexpectedly, complaints from tenants are rare. As the Tenants Rights Action Coalition points out (TRAC, n.d.), tenants of illegal suites believe they are not covered by the Residential Tenancy Act. Tenants, therefore, do not exercise their various rights under the Act, such as demanding that landlords make necessary repairs or that they respect the tenants’ right to privacy. Indeed, both tenants and landlords may be reluctant to use the Act to resolve disputes for fear of suite closure. Consequently, in a housing climate in which low vacancy rates favour landlords, tenants are literally (and structurally) forced to surrender their rights to the power of the landlord in exchange for secure tenure. In effect, the political economy of medieval feudalism is alive and well in Canada.

Generally, residents are not against the provision of such services, but there is often strong opposition from local residents against the projects being located in their neighbourhoods. As I mentioned earlier, such resistance is more commonly known as Not-In-My-Backyard, or NIMBY. The exclusionary politics of NIMBY is so prevalent throughout British Columbia (and, indeed, throughout Canada) that the B.C. provincial government commissioned a task group in 1995 to investigate the NIMBY phenomenon and produce a series of guides to assist housing sponsors in understanding and addressing this issue. According to the research,

Nearly every rezoning, development permit or variance application evokes the claim that existing residents will see their properties devalued if a non-market development is allowed in the neighbourhood. Many local government politicians say that this is the most frequent concern at any public hearing. Too often, the discussion is based on speculation rather than fact (British Columbia, 1995b: n.p.).

The research goes on to show that a concern over property devaluation is unfounded. In a selection of seven case studies – including one in Victoria – that examined the impact of non-market developments on the property values of surrounding homes, professional property appraisers commissioned for this research found no evidence that the projects negatively affected sale prices:

House prices in the vicinity of the non-market project increased as much – and in some cases, more than – nearby areas of similar housing types and ages. There was no evidence of panic selling or extra-ordinary length of time on the market between dates of listing and sale (*Ibid*: n.p.).

This is despite the fact that, in each and every case, the non-market project had originally been opposed by local homeowners concerned about the potential devaluation of their property values. The results of this research have been confirmed in a follow-up report that tracked sales activity in the same neighbourhoods over an extended period (British Columbia, 2000a).

Despite increasing awareness of the hollow and bigoted concerns expressed by NIMBY, many social housing projects continue to face vociferous opposition from local residents who fear the proliferation of “urban problems” that they image would attend to the developments. In Victoria in 2005, for example, the opposition faced by Our Place –

a supportive housing project for the homeless – reveals the persistence of NIMBY and the oppressive demands that it engenders (British Columbia, 2006a). The project is sponsored by the newly created Our Place Society, an amalgamation of the Open Door drop-in center which offers advocacy and counseling services, and the Upper Room Society which provides meal programs and housing for the homeless. The new building – a renovation of an older facility – is currently under construction and was scheduled to open in the fall of 2007. It will seat 140 people, have enhanced support services, and provide forty-five self-contained transitional housing units (British Columbia, 2006b).

In 2005, upon approval of capital funding from the province, the newly established Our Place Society initiated the civic approval process for construction of the new facility. Meanwhile, it also began a search for an interim location where it could continue to provide drop-in services and meal programmes during construction. Securing an interim location met with considerable resistance from property owners and leasing agents. Indeed, many sites that were initially listed for rent were immediately withdrawn from the market once the purpose of the rental was discovered. A site was finally secured downtown in a building purchased by AIDS Vancouver Island and the Victoria Cool Aid Society, which offered to rent it to Our Place while its members raised money for renovations. Opposition to this arrangement was swift and unmitigated, and came largely from the Downtown Victoria Business Association (DVBA), which unsuccessfully attempted to get a bylaw passed to prevent social service agencies from operating in the downtown area. Meanwhile, opposition to the redevelopment project at the original site was also vociferous. Residents were concerned about parking problems, decreased safety, and depressed property values. Indeed, opposition came not only from residents near the development but also from those further afield who were aware of the project through media reports and were against such a project being approved and located anywhere in the city (British Columbia, 2006b: p. 6).

To appease the NIMBY paranoia of both residents and downtown businesses, Our Place – in collaboration with the city, the police, and the DVBA – drafted a “Good Neighbour Policy” which forms part of the lease agreement and imposes, *inter alia*, the following obligations applicable to the Society’s interim location:

- Make any necessary modifications to the exterior of the building to discourage loitering and sleeping (e.g., enhanced exterior lighting).
- Erect a solid, high fence at the west property line at the rear of the building.
- ...
- Extend operating hours so that the facility opens before the morning rush of commuters and closes before the afternoon rush, with no lunch time closure (7:00 am to 3:30 pm).
- Provide appropriately trained security personnel outside the building during hours of operation to discourage undesirable behaviour.
- Clean graffiti as soon as it is found.
- Clean all litter and power wash in front of the building every morning Our Place is in operation.

(British Columbia, 2006b: p. 8).

The poor-bashing assumptions with which the Society and their clients are forced to negotiate are glaring. The clients are implicitly demonized as criminal, filthy, and unsightly. They are not respected as contributing citizens of Victoria with inherent rights, dignity, reason, and conscience. Everything must be done to ensure that evidence of their existence is regulated, hidden, and “power washed” from the pavement. Such exclusion is effected through policies of containment and dispersal that weave through all dimensions of ontology – the social, the temporal, and the spatial: security personnel are hired to disperse or contain unbecoming behaviour; the hours of operation are amended to regulate contact with rush-hour commuters; and architectural design is deployed to disperse unwanted loitering or to contain the clients inside an internal courtyard.<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, upon approving the development permit for construction of the new facility, the city requested that the design of the new building also include an internal

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<sup>9</sup> The “Good Neighbour Policy” which Our Place was forced to create in order to secure a lease is another manifestation of the “code of conduct” policies that have been implemented by the city in the past. In 1998, for example, a much maligned “code of conduct” was adopted by the city to regulate the (mis)behaviour of individuals in the downtown core (Bell, 1998; Cleverly, 1998). Although city officials asserted that the code was to apply to all citizens, the targets of the code were obvious: panhandlers and homeless people. One section of the code, for example, requested that panhandlers not solicit within six meters of ATMs, bus stops, parking ticket dispensers, or entrances to financial institutions, a behaviour that was not, at that time, covered by an ordinance. Ultimately, such codes are coercive documents that represent *de facto* ordinances when the privileged classes are unable to legislate what they want.

courtyard to keep the large numbers of people coming for meals from gathering on public property (British Columbia, 2006b: p. 4). The implicit policy is carceral: out of sight, out of mind. While the clients are discouraged from congregating and socializing on public property – property to which they have an inherent right as citizens of the city – the thousands of tourists coming off the cruise ships at Ogden Point are tolerated, nay encouraged, to congregate and enjoy the many public amenities – including public space – that the City of Victoria has to offer.

The material outcome of such development debates in Victoria is the sustaining of uneven development in the city, as various neighbourhoods vociferously defend their communities from “urbanization” and the proliferation of “urban problems” that residents fear would attend to such diversity. Consequently, there has been a concentration of social services in and near the downtown core (Norman, 2003), a spatialized apartheid of services that has earned downtown Victoria the pejorative label “The Red Zone.” Such an appellation works ideologically to isolate the downtown core from adjacent neighbourhoods in the city which perceive the downtown – through the lens of an urban ideology – as an “urban jungle” beset with “urban problems” such as crime, drugs, and homelessness. At a slightly wider spatial scale, however, this same ideology is deployed to defend the character of neighbouring municipalities in the Capital Region. High density and urbanization are perceived to be characteristic of the City of Victoria itself; and as the “urban center” of the region with its “red zone” and attendant “urban problems,” Victoria and not Oak Bay or Saanich, it is argued, should be the location for multi-family zoning and for the provision of social services such as homeless shelters and supportive housing projects.

The exclusionary zoning practices of the neighbouring District of Oak Bay is a case in point; and indeed, Oak Bay’s notorious appellation as being behind the “tweed curtain” is a symptom of such exclusion. *The Official Community Plan* of the district (the *Plan*) is explicit about its low-density goals. According to the *Plan*, the goals “reflect an

agreed upon community consensus concerning the type of place Oak Bay should be in the future,” and, among the twenty-one goals outlined in the *Plan*, the top three specifically relate to the prevention of increased density:

- (a) To preserve the residential character of Oak Bay.
  - (b) To maintain and enhance the green and landscaped character of Oak Bay.
  - (c) To preserve the quiet nature of the community.
- (Oak Bay, 2006: sec. 2.2).

To accomplish these objectives, Oak Bay maintains highly restrictive zoning practices. As the *Plan* explicitly states: “Oak Bay’s fundamental housing objective is the preservation of the single-family character in most neighbourhoods” (*Ibid*: sec. 9.1). The few multiple dwellings that are available generally target higher-income seniors. Although the *Plan* does concede that “residents who are on fixed or modest incomes and persons with special needs may require consideration for housing” (*Ibid*: sec. 12.1), it also admits that due to the high demand for all housing types “lower income families will have increasing difficulty in finding accommodation within Oak Bay” (*Ibid*: sec. 7.4).

The housing difficulties faced by low-income families in Oak Bay, therefore, are not only a consequence of economics (skyrocketing prices and low vacancy rates), but also of politics (classist urban planning and spatial exclusion). Indeed, according to the *Plan*, individuals and organizations who wish to sponsor affordable, rental, and special-needs housing will be “[s]ubject to the overriding goals of the Oak Bay Community Plan” (*Ibid*: sec. 12.2). Therefore, in a district where the “overriding goal” is the preservation of residential character and where “individual dwellings themselves make up the quiet, residential neighbourhoods that are so valued” (*Ibid*: sec. 7.1), homeless shelters, social-housing projects, and legal secondary suites will likely never see the light of day behind the Tweed Curtain. The implicit policy for the provision of such housing in Oak Bay’s highly restrictive urban planning vision is to pass-the-buck and let the City of Victoria absorb the density, where it is presumably more appropriate.

Meanwhile, the recent tragedy of a homeless man dying from exposure in a Saanich park in December of 2005 also reveals the extent to which Victoria – perceived

as the “urban center” in the region – is summoned to justify the exclusionary practices of neighbouring municipalities. After the incident, a Saanich councilor admitted that, “[Homelessness] is something that snuck up on some people.... They always regarded it as a Victoria issue” (qtd. in Shaw, 2005). Homelessness is perceived to be a problem of the “urban centre” of Victoria, not of residential bedroom communities such as Saanich Municipality. The current policy regarding homeless individuals in Saanich adheres to this ideology, as city council’s solution is to have Saanich police transport homeless people found in Saanich to downtown Victoria (Paterson, 2006). Not only does this deny homeless people citizenship in the Municipality of Saanich (they do not own nor rent any property in Saanich and therefore apparently have no rights to citizenship), but it also assumes homelessness to be better handled in Victoria where there is, admittedly, a centralization of services. Another Saanich councilor, an advocate for the provision of social support services in the Saanich community itself, still reduces homelessness to an “urban question” when she avers that Saanich is no longer a community of 5000 people; it is a city, she says, and “we’re starting to have city issues” (qtd. in Heiman, 2006).

Homelessness, however, is emphatically not a “city issue.” That contemporary homelessness is an “urban problem” and an inevitable outcome of urbanization is a fallacious notion that has been refuted in recent academic literature (Aron and Fitchen, 1996; Bruce, 2006; Fitchen, 1992; Milbourne and Cloke, 2006). These studies have revealed that rural homelessness – often overshadowed by extensive and continuous media coverage of homeless people suffering on city streets – is a crisis just as prominent and devastating as urban homelessness; the death of a homeless man in a Saanich park is but one tragic example. Furthermore, structuralist critiques – outlined in Chapter Two – have sufficiently and convincingly argued that homelessness is a consequence of social inequalities and injustice produced by an oppressive political economy, a political economy that in-corporates *both* rural and urban spatializations.

In the Capital Region, for example, one of the most publicized squats in the past decade was located on the southwest coast of the Island, a two-hour drive from the storefronts and streets of “urban” Victoria. The squatters’ community at Sombrio Beach and surrounding coves attained public prominence in the mid-1990s when the province announced its intention, in 1994, to establish the Juan de Fuca Marine Trail as a provincial park and a tourist destination. The beach had attracted squatters since the late 1960s, and by 1994 over forty people were living in the area. A few of the residents had been living there for decades, and some families even had children who were born at the community: “I’ve lived here all my life,” proudly professed a thirteen-year-old. “I know all the trees and the rocks.” (Lavoie, 1994, 1996, 1998; qt. in Lavoie, 1998).

After the announcement of the new park, the province declared that the residents at Sombrio must vacate. After resisting the province’s demands for two years, the residents were finally given formal eviction notice effective January 31, 1997: they would have to vacate during midwinter. The B.C. Parks district manager said that there was no room for squatters on park land: “The public expects to have it cleaned up. A lot of people are now finding their way to Sombrio Beach and they don’t understand why the squatters are there.” He also added that, “The public does not expect to find squatters in the park” (qtd. in Lavoie, 1996, 1997c). In effect, the Sombrio residents are out of place in the park where “the public” – more accustomed to homelessness as an “urban problem” – does not expect to see squatters despoiling the pristine natural environment of the West Coast shoreline.

After a month of noncompliance, the remaining residents finally dispersed, and B.C. Parks moved in to demolish their cabins: “I feel like a janitor,” said one Parks contractor. “These people called themselves environmentalists, but there’s all this garbage and junk” (qtd. in Lavoie, 1997b). This so-called “garbage and junk,” however, was not created by the residents but by the demolition of their cabins. Before B.C. Parks moved in to demolish the community, the “garbage and junk” were personal possessions

and homes. “[I]f most people were asked to move out of their homes,” noted one of the residents, “and then their homes were burned, what would be left? A pile of garbage” (Stecko, 1997).<sup>10</sup>

A community had existed at Sombrio for the better part of three decades – that is, until the province announced that the land was to be converted into a provincial park for tourism. Some of the evicted residents went to other beaches up the Island while some left the province; others ended up in the care of the Salvation Army in downtown Victoria (Lavoie, 1997a). The homelessness created by this forced – and legalized – eviction was not a consequence of urbanization, nor was it an “urban problem” inherent in an “urban culture.” Homelessness, in this case, was a consequence of a political economy that cuts across both urban and rural geographies and favours property rights and capital accumulation (tourist dollars) over social justice and human dignity. Indeed, as I shall argue later, the tourism industry is a primary agent in the production of exclusionary spaces in the architectural geography of homelessness in the region.

To reiterate, then, the apparent concentration of homeless people in downtown Victoria must be seen not as an inevitable outcome of urbanization, but as a violent and marginalizing consequence of an oppressive political economy that produces poverty, inequality, and homelessness in the first instance, which then become concentrated geographically due to uneven development and spatial exclusion. Understanding this difference is essential to a proper and just understanding of the architectural geography of the crisis. Indeed, in the absence of meaningful structural changes to eradicate poverty and inequality, the Capital Regional District should at least develop a regional strategy to distribute responsibility and resources among various municipalities. NIMBY paranoia

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<sup>10</sup> This same resident also noted that, “I carried all my garbage up from the beach, as well as garbage left behind by day hikers and campers who decided to use my cabin for their own pleasure. I cleaned a significant pile of garbage left in the wooded parking lot near the access of my cabin trail, left by, not the squatters, but by individuals out for a Sunday drive.... From what I have seen, the environmental impact of the trail with its hordes of hikers will be much more extreme and foreign to this delicate ecosystem than our cabin ever was” (Stecko, 1997).

must be addressed not only within Victoria itself, but also within and between municipalities across the entire region. Even so, we must still bear in mind that while a regional strategy of distributing responsibilities may help mitigate the crisis, a distributive paradigm to resolve issues of social injustice is of limited utility. To restate the political philosophy of Young (1990: p. 3), "instead of focusing on distribution, a conception of justice should begin with the concepts of domination and oppression." Ultimately, the debate must be reoriented from issues of material possession to issues of oppressive social relations. Only then can homelessness be effectively and justly resolved.

The ideological effect of explaining homelessness as an "urban problem" is the veiling of oppressive social relations in the political economy that produce poverty, inequality, and homelessness. By fetishizing space and blaming urbanization for the proliferation of homelessness and other "urban problems," the privileged classes legitimize opposition to progressive land use policies (the legalization of secondary suites), rationalize the production of legislative enclaves (the "Tweed Curtain" of Oak Bay), demonize building projects designed to mitigate homelessness in the region (the supportive housing project of Our Place), and legalize the destruction of homes deemed out of place (the squatters' community at Sombrio Beach). Indeed, the exclusionary practices legitimized by an urban ideology are scaled through various geographies and jurisdictions, from the zoning bylaws of whole municipalities to property-development applications for specific buildings. In this way, the privileged classes defend their neighbourhoods from "urban problems" they fear would attend increased density and diversity. Residential communities unite to face-up to their "common problems" by spatially insulating themselves from an "urban" invasion of crime, drugs, and homelessness; the property rights of residents are privileged over the inherent human right for secure and affordable housing. Meanwhile, with literally no place to go, households in abject poverty are increasingly ending up on the streets.

An urban ideology, however, is not restricted to relations between local communities. Indeed, as I have already shown, an urban ideology operates at multiple scales. At the local scale, Victoria – and its “Red Zone” – are perceived as an “urban center” with associated “urban problems.” At the global-national scale, however, the City of Victoria – legislative capital of British Columbia – is metonymic for the entire Capital Region. In this context, “Victoria” (as a regional identity) strives to project an image of bucolic pastoralism – a “Garden City” devoid of “urban problems” such as homelessness. It is at this scale that an urban ideology intersects with and dialectically supports a more general *aesthetic ideology* governing popular perceptions of homelessness in the region. While an urban ideology reifies socially produced inequalities such as homelessness into “urban problems,” an aesthetic ideology collapses urban complexities into the naturalized contours of well-tended gardens and historical nostalgia. In effect, homelessness is disavowed by the corporate body – by “the public” and “the people” – as out of place in Edenic Victoria.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the evolution of an aesthetic ideology as manifest in Victoria and the Capital Region. I will argue that a primary function of this ideology is to highlight Victoria’s natural and historical assets as a means of enhancing travel and tourism, an enduring local industry that has evolved into a political-economic imperative for the region. By examining how Victoria is mythically mapped for the “touristic gaze” (Urry 1990), I will at the same time show how such mapping structures the visibility of homelessness in the city. Ultimately, I will argue that the dialectic between urban and aesthetic ideologies in Victoria not only serves to frame popular perceptions of homelessness in the region, but also provides a legitimizing foundation for the violent exclusion of visible homeless bodies in the architectural geography of the street itself.

## Aesthetic Ideology

In a letter to the *Times-Colonist* in 1998, a former manager of Victoria's Eaton Centre (now known as the Bay Centre) expressed his dissatisfaction with the "tarnish" of panhandlers on Victoria's streets, a "problem" aggravated, he says, by "a level of tolerance and empathy unique to the West Coast" (Campbell, 1998). The manager had moved from Winnipeg to Victoria, after working in similar shopping centres in Calgary and Edmonton. In his letter, he discusses the disjuncture between Victoria's professed image as marketed to the world and his own personal impression after moving to the city:

My experience has given me a perspective on problems facing downtowns throughout the country.... When I first arrived [in Victoria], I was startled at the number of panhandlers in the streets. The image I had as a result of Victoria marketing itself to other regions of Canada and internationally was of a charming harbor, a mix of heritage buildings and modern amenities, clean and active streets, and a vibrant nightlife. But what I saw after moving here was tarnished by the presence of street people begging for spare change.... That these streets are populated with panhandlers leaves a disturbing impression and directly conflicts with the way the city is marketed (Campbell, 1998).

The marketing to which the mall manager refers is evident in the various tourist publications dedicated to promoting Victoria on the national and international stage. Victoria is characterized as a unique amalgam of city life and natural ecology, a professed symbiosis that domesticates both the natural environment and the urban jungle:

Experience Victoria: Dazzling ocean and mountain views, dense forests, lush parkland, and magnificent stretches of coastline – Victoria is surrounded by the breathtaking splendour of the West Coast, creating an atmosphere that blends the natural beauty of the outdoors with the cosmopolitan bustle of contemporary urban life (Tourism Victoria, 2006a: p.5).

Remember when cities were walkable and nature wasn't miles away?...Imbued with the beauty and amenities of an historic capital city and blessed by magnificent nature all around us, Victoria is full of life. From superb cuisine, to museums and galleries, to our glorious beaches and outdoor adventures, we offer a truly remarkable experience and escape from the hurried world (Tourism Victoria, 2006b).

Victoria, British Columbia is always in season. Victoria has the mildest climate in Canada, and is a place so green all year that flowers fall out of the sky and even the lampposts bloom (Tourism Victoria, 2006c).

Victoria is portrayed as not so much metropolitan as cosmopolitan, a friendly heritage city with quaint architecture, a modest skyline, and plenty of gardens within which to frolic as one reads romantic stanzas from Wordsworth or any other appropriate pastoral

British poet. In effect, Victoria's natural beauty, colonial heritage, and mild climate are summoned to temper and displace the traditional image of modern metropolises as "urban jungles," where – according to an urban ideology – the intensification of social diversity creates considerable anxiety (Castells, 1977: pp. 73-112). As a palliative to urban angst, cosmopolitan Victoria – affectionately nicknamed the "City of Gardens" – offers "a truly remarkable experience and escape from the hurried world" where "flowers fall out of the sky" and urban problems such as homelessness and panhandling are nonexistent.

The corporate strategy of marketing Victoria as an experience "that blends the natural beauty of the outdoors with the cosmopolitan bustle of contemporary urban life" reveals the ideological armature framing perceptions of homelessness in the region. By tempering "the urban" with "the natural," the city sustains an ideological dynamic within which aesthetic and urban ideologies operate dialectically. While an urban ideology attributes socially produced inequalities such as homelessness to the insidiousness of urban form, an aesthetic ideology collapses urban complexities into domesticated images of Edenic gardens and historical nostalgia. In essence, homelessness – as a contemporary "urban problem" – is disavowed by the corporate body as sinfully and anachronistically out of place in the "City of Gardens." In the remainder of this chapter, I will outline the evolution of an aesthetic ideology in Victoria and the Capital Region and reveal its oppressive spatial consequences for homeless citizens on the street. This will prepare us for a more thorough investigation of spatial exclusion in the next chapter, where I reveal that Victoria's approach to homelessness has been, over the past decade-and-a-half, not "tolerant" and "empathetic" but, rather, progressively more exclusionary and violent.

### *Aesthetic Ideology in Victoria*

The genesis of an aesthetic ideology specifically related to Victoria precedes the founding of Victoria itself. Indeed, it may be said that Victoria was biblically spoken into being by the city's founder James Douglas, who arrived at the site as agent for the

Hudson's Bay Company in 1842. Shortly after landing in present-day James Bay on March 15, he wrote to a friend to relate his excursion and describe the locale of what would soon become Fort Victoria:

The place itself appears a perfect 'Eden,' in the midst of the dreary wilderness of the Northwest Coast, and so different in its general aspect from the wooded, rugged regions around, that one might be pardoned for supposing it had dropped from the clouds to its present position (qtd. in Segger and Franklin, 1979: p. 11).

Representational continuity with contemporary portraits of Victoria is striking. In 2006, Victoria is a city where "flowers fall out of the sky;" in 1842, Douglas depicts the locale as "a perfect Eden" that has "dropped from the clouds." A year later, in 1843, Fort Victoria was founded amidst this "perfect Eden." In the decades following its founding, Victoria hosted thousands of gold-seekers lured, first, by the Cariboo gold rush beginning in 1858, and then by the Barkerville gold rush of 1862. Indeed, in 1858, when Victoria's permanent population numbered only three hundred, an estimated twenty thousand people passed through the port. By 1862, when Victoria was finally incorporated as a city, there were some 2500 permanent residents, a population growth of eight hundred percent over four years (Gregson, 1977: pp. 12-26; Nader, 1976: pp. 419-421).

During these heady years of boom-town growth, Victoria experienced rapid and often haphazard development of its built environment. As one historian comments, "The visitor to Victoria in 1862 would have found not a city but a shacktown" (Gregson, 1977: pp. 12-26; qt. at p. 16). Indeed, one visitor in 1862 described the city as a hodge-podge of structures irregularly built and erratically arranged:

[Victoria's] appearance is not very prepossessing, as the houses are built in a most irregular manner, some being erected with sides and gabled-ends to the street, others at some distance back, and small log cottages side by side 'promiscuously' with large hotels and government offices. Most structures are of wood, a few of brick, the pavements or sideways are of wood (qtd. in Segger and Franklin, 1979: p. 13).

Yet, despite the ramshackle appearance of the city itself, the "Edenic" qualities of Victoria's natural environment continued to define the region. Said one settler in 1862,

British Columbia requires no advocacy, but to have the plain honest truth spoken about it. There is not a portion of the world's surface which possesses greater natural advantages, or a field more suited for the employment of the energies, industry, and capital of the British Colonist. Possessing a climate bracing yet genial ... its scenery is highly picturesque, its rivers, streams and lakes are numerous and full of fish.... [Victoria] is

beautifully situated on the shore of the inner of two harbours.... Our architecture is not, at present, of very exalted character, though a fair number of brick and even granite houses are rising in different directions... Nothing can be more delightful than the climate and scenery of these regions — England over again and with many additional advantages... already we have some fine gardens (qtd. in Segger and Franklin, 1979: p. 14).

As Segger and Franklin argue in an insightful analysis: “The paradisaical climate and picturesque setting are brought forward to compensate for [both] the flimsy appearance of the town [and the] sense of inferiority heightened by the ‘old country comparison’ ” (*Ibid*: p. 14). Victoria’s natural environment is constitutive of its identity, but it also serves as compensation, which ultimately declares it as ideological, as something that can be summoned to attenuate contradiction. In the preceding example, the contradiction is the settler’s loyalty to an inferior and ramshackle colony lacking clear signs of an “exalted architecture” that may compare to imperial England.

In the contemporary context, this same ideology is deployed to veil the contradictions of poverty, inequality, and homelessness as they exist not only in an affluent society but also in a city that increasingly relies on travel and tourism to sustain its political economy. The enduring importance of tourism as an industry for Victoria is evident in the founding of the Victoria Tourist Association as early as 1901, and in the provision of the first Tally-Ho carriage rides for tourists in 1903 (Nader, 1976: p. 423; VHF, 2004: p. 6). Arguably, the completion of the transcontinental railway in 1885 – with its terminus at Burrard Inlet on the mainland rather than in Victoria on the island – marked the beginning of Victoria’s decline in industrial and economic importance relative to neighbouring centres on the West Coast. Vancouver’s population, for example, first exceeded that of Victoria in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and by World War I the private sector of Victoria’s economy was already subservient to that of Vancouver (Nader, 1976: pp. 418-423).

Consequently, tourism – along with retirement and government administration – has become a primary industry sustaining Victoria’s political economy. Indeed, with a general decline in the agricultural and industrial base of the nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries, many cities including Victoria are struggling to attract capital investment through services and tourism. As Zukin (1995, 1991) argues, cities and regions are increasingly becoming reliant on cultural industries and visual attractions to compete in the global economy. Focus for many cities, therefore, has shifted from industrial production to conspicuous consumption – from factories to festival marketplaces – as the dominant political economic paradigm for attracting capital.

In Victoria's case, its visual attractions and cultural industries circulate through its natural beauty, its history, and its climate—the “Garden City,” the “Heritage City,” the city which is “always in season.” The aggressive marketing of these attractions – and of the aesthetic ideology which attends to them – generates a reservoir of cultural capital which translates into tourist dollars. As Fainstein and Judd argue, place marketing has become a prominent aspect of the tourist city:

Cities are sold just like any other consumer product. They have adopted image advertising [and] the product must plausibly resemble the representation.... To appeal to tourists, cities must be consciously molded to create a physical landscape that tourists wish to inhabit.... The constant transformation of the urban landscape to accommodate tourists has become a permanent feature of the political economy of cities (Fainstein and Judd, 1999b: pp. 4-6).

Accordingly, Victoria the “Garden City,” the “Heritage City,” the city which is “always in season,” constitutes a *stable virtual space* that transports people to another reality by creating “scenographic illusions that fix the transitoriness and fragmentation of contemporary urban life into stable and unified images of the mythical historic city” (Goss, 1996: pp. 223-224; after Boyer, 1992: p. 190). Meanwhile, the fabric of the city is manipulated in order to *reproduce* this virtual reality for the touristic experience. In effect, tourist spaces are created to “produce ‘liminal moments’ that lift the tourist above ordinary, everyday experience” (Fainstein and Judd, 1999b: p. 10). This virtual space maps itineraries and routes defined by clear markers which are “constructed through signs and signifiers that name and enshrine particular places as sacred objects of the touristic ritual” (*Ibid*: p. 7). Consequently, tourist cities such as Victoria are virtually experienced as theatrical networks of discrete places, variations on a theme-park (Sorkin,

1992) in which private sector interests, financed by public money, are “revitalizing” – for tourism and private profit – public streets as external shopping malls (Government Street), historic squares as festival marketplaces (Bastion Square), and private homes as heritage sites. In the words of Boyer (1992: p. 192), the city is reduced “to a map of tourist attractions, which suppresses the continuous order of reality, the connecting in-between places, and imposes instead an imaginary order of things.”

In Victoria, such mapping is apparent in the ubiquitous tour buses taking sightseers by scenic shorelines, through picturesque neighbourhoods, and to carefully preserved heritage sites (Gray Line West, 2006). Moreover, tourists can follow their virtual experience through the various tourist maps provided by the city which highlight the Parliament Buildings, Craigdarroch Castle, the Wax Museum, and other “signs and signifiers that name and enshrine” Victoria’s sacred places. Meanwhile, tourists are encouraged to discover the city on foot by taking unguided architectural walking tours or visiting Victoria’s many museums, art galleries, cemeteries, and public gardens. The Butchart Gardens, for example – the planting of which began in 1908 – have been a prominent and enduring tourist attraction since its inception. The attraction itself comprises fifty-five acres of formal gardens planted in a former limestone quarry, an apt metaphor for the industrial fate and commercial metamorphosis of the region.

Indeed, the planting of Butchart Gardens in 1908 coincided with what Segger and Franklin (1979: pp. 25-30) identify as a shift in corporate and popular attitudes in Victoria at the turn of the century. With the establishment of the Victoria Parks Board in 1907 to oversee Victoria’s beautification and with the concurrent residential commercialization of The Uplands in Oak Bay, Segger and Franklin argue that it was at this time that (affluent) Victorians began formalizing of new set of aesthetic goals for the city, aesthetic goals which continue to influence urban planning today. As the authors state, rather dramatically:

[Residents of Victoria] watched Vancouver – the atrocious, avaricious, smoking, rowdy monster – grow with massive doses of industrial development and consciously or

otherwise there seemed to be general accord that Victoria wanted no further part in industrialism which might pollute the rural charm of Victoria's parks, boulevards, and rose gardens (*Ibid*: p. 30).

Consequently, Segger and Franklin argue that Victorians began advocating the "garden city" concept of urban planning and started nurturing an ethic of "old world charm" and "heritage" values. As I discuss later in this chapter, one of the primary functions of an aesthetic ideology is to compensate for a declining economy. Arguably, in the context of *fin de siècle* Victoria, the corporate drive to reinvent Victoria as a "City of Gardens" – a drive which survives to this day – is demonstrably central to its inferior economic status relative to other centers on the west coast.

Complementing the florescent opulence of the "City of Gardens" is the architectural charm of the "Heritage City." Heritage conservation has been a formal part of Victoria's planning strategy since 1973, when the city appointed its first Heritage Advisory Committee. In the following year, Victoria designated as heritage properties its first three houses and a number of commercial buildings on Wharf St.; and, as of 2004, the city could claim to have 809 properties on its heritage registry, with a record fifty applications for funding during the year (VHF, 2004: p. 8). To support its heritage goals, the city has, over the years, instituted a number of funding mechanisms and financial incentives to assist heritage property owners with restoration and preservation expenses. In 1977, the city initiated a policy of property tax rebates to be issued to heritage property owners; in 1983, the Victoria Heritage Foundation (VHF) was established to disburse grants to heritage homeowners; in 1989, the Victoria Civic Heritage Trust (VCHT) was established to coordinate funding for the restoration of downtown heritage buildings; and in 1998, the much lauded Property Tax Incentive bylaw was passed to promote residential conversion of downtown heritage buildings (VHF, 2004: p. 8; Barber, 2003).

While some of these initiatives have been praised for spurring "revitalization" of the downtown core and while some have assisted in the development of housing units, they all represent a continuing trend of disbursing government transfers to (and

increasing the wealth of) those citizens least in need – wealthy property owners.<sup>11</sup> In twenty-seven years of funding, the City of Victoria and VHF have awarded 776 grants to 269 houses, with the City contributing \$2.2 million to the programme (VHF, 2004: n.p.). The primary beneficiaries of such a programme are wealthy homeowners who *actually live* in their newly restored houses and reap the enhanced rewards of an already privileged quality of life. Indeed, while public assistance progressively expands for the heritage conservation of private homes, government transfers for those really in need are clawed back. Over a five-year period from 1997 to 2002, annual municipal grants to the VHF increased 56% to a total of \$125,000 in 2002 while grants to the VCHT increased 62% to a total of \$284,500. Ultimately, a pernicious ideology of heritage conservation to nurture a heritage theme-park spectacle and attract tourism legitimizes the production of economic inequality and oppression.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, the heritage industry – and the aesthetic ideology that animates it – is not so much about *preserving* history as it is about *creating* nostalgia to stimulate consumption through a “spectacle of history made false” (Boyer, 1992: p. 204). In his analysis of the growth of the heritage industry in Great Britain, Hewison (1987) reveals that heritage does not merely tell a story of the past but has much to say about the culture within which it is an institution. He argues that the reason for the growth of a heritage industry is the perception that the country (or the city, in Victoria’s case) is in decline, and he concludes that heritage “is an attempt to dispel this climate of decline by exploiting the economic potential of our culture” (Hewison, 1987: pp. 9-10). The

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<sup>11</sup> Of the several case studies provided by the city to illustrate the residential conversion of downtown heritage buildings, only one building is noted as providing affordable housing: St. Joseph’s Hospital. All other conversions provide market-based apartments, townhouses, loft-style suites and timeshare condominiums for gentrifying middle class tenants (Victoria, 2007b).

<sup>12</sup> Victoria’s heritage programme is but one example supporting Hulchanski’s (2001) analysis of inequality in his “tale of two Canadas,” where homeowners are get richer and renters are get poorer. As he argues, the wealth gap between owners and renters – between rich and poor – is growing partially due to the fact that homeowners receive substantial tax subsidies towards their accumulation of household wealth, while there are no housing-related tax concessions for renters.

heritage industry represents a symbolic and nostalgic recovery of the past in order to retrieve a lost authenticity and compensate for a declining economy. In short, “The past has been summoned to rescue the present” (*Ibid*: p.21). Therefore, heritage is the material expression of a regenerative impulse, an impulse that intersects (at a political-economic level) with tourism and consumption, and (at a governance level) with policies of urban revitalization. As Fainstein and Judd (1999b: p. 11) argue, tourist cities attempt to reinvent themselves by “construct[ing] a new narrative of regeneration, and a physical infrastructure that evokes that narrative.” This recalls de Certeau’s (1984: pp. 91-95) linguistic analogy that cities produce a discourse of a readable city, a “texturology” which is nothing more than “a representation, an optical artifact.”

In Victoria, this “narrative of regeneration” is manifest in the city’s British ancestry and architectural heritage, publicly supported, as I have shown, by the city’s extensive heritage programme. Packaged facsimiles of old England signify a regenerative narrative in which “Old-World Tradition Meets New-World Experiences” (Tourism Victoria, 2006a: p. 8). Such facsimiles include, to name but a few, the red double-decker bus, formal gardens, horse-drawn carriages, and the Royal London Wax Museum modeled on Madame Tussaud’s Wax Museum in London, England. Meanwhile, Victoria’s architectural heritage – the Parliament Buildings, Craigdarroch Castle, and the nineteenth-century style homes, pubs, and shops – enhances the symbolic recovery of the past by making the city *readable* and *verifying* the authenticity of its “texturology.” Heritage buildings act as *visual* markers that signify the reality of one’s *virtual* heritage experience. Moreover, the “texturology” of carefully preserved heritage buildings is complemented by the textual and photographic distillation of Victoria into the many books devoted to its built environment.<sup>13</sup> Star architects such as Francis

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<sup>13</sup> See, for example Segger and Franklin (1979), Green (2001), and VHF (2004). The latter work is the first volume in a republished series examining the heritage architecture of Victoria’s neighbourhoods. This series provides an extensive and useful bibliography focusing on local heritage and history.

Rattenbury (designer of the Parliament Buildings and the Empress Hotel) and wealthy patrons such as the Dunsmuir (founders of Craigdarroch Castle) populate these books and act as stewards of Victoria's heritage theme-park. Immortalized forever in the names of streets, buildings, and parks that map the city, these and other famous Victorians guide both the tourist and the resident through the *paradiso* of Victoria's archite(x)tural heritage and social "history." Meanwhile, tourists and residents can ritualistically participate in this "history" by simply walking through the "narrative of regeneration" inscribed onto the readable city [Figure 4.1: p. 124].

The ideological and material consequences of catering to the touristic ritual and of structuring the city to evoke a "narrative of regeneration" is the presentation of historical and natural tableaux over the actual history and social life of the city (Boyer, 1992). Interaction is highly circumscribed to acceptable sites of visual consumption. As Fainstein and Judd (1999b: p. 7) note after Urry (1990), the tourist is taught how to "gaze" upon the object or place being visited. The city is objectified through photographs and reified into souvenirs; authenticity is acquired visually and materially through consumption, thereby transfiguring the virtual into the real and satisfying the touristic need to own the experience (Fainstein and Judd, 1999b: pp. 14-16). By mapping the city for touristic rituals, Victoria creates itineraries of exclusion in the perceived spaces of the city, as "sacred objects" become visual containment areas – or "tourist bubbles" (Judd, 1999; after Urry, 1990: p. 8) – for the touristic gaze. It is within these tourist bubbles that homelessness – the absolute antithesis to legitimate consumption and an untenable contradiction to Victoria's advertised image – is deemed out of place; heaven forbid that homelessness should be the lasting image on someone's photograph of the entrance to the Parliament Buildings. An imagined authenticity garnered through tourist paraphernalia and photographs displaces the authenticity of a panhandler asking for spare change on the street corner.



*Figure 4.1. Victoria's "tourist bubbles," and the "texturology" of old-world tradition: a) The Parliament Buildings; b) The Empress Hotel; c) A horse-drawn carriage; d) Craigdarroch Castle; e) The Royal Wax Museum; and f) A double-decker bus.*

Ultimately, an aesthetic ideology promoted by the tourist and heritage industries not only frames popular perceptions of homelessness in the city, but also frames the architectural geography within which these perceptions are naturalized. The “narrative of regeneration” inscribed onto the city – Victoria the “Garden City,” the “Heritage City,” the city which is “always in season” – expresses a “texturology” in which “tourist bubbles” narrate a script of historical fiction while contemporary homelessness falls silent between the lines. Yet, ironically, the redemptive objectives of this script are self-defeating. As Hewison (1987: p. 10) warns, “Hypnotized by images of the past, we risk losing all capacity for creative change.” By constructing a narrative of regeneration and producing spaces that evoke that narrative, we as a society become ossified in the textures of nostalgia, where an aesthetic ideology dominates the imagination and displaces any momentum for progressive social change. Instead of focusing our creative energies on issues of social equality, distributive justice, and the protection of the rights and well-being of all members in our collective community, our society – our city – attempts to “rescue the present by summoning the past,” a type of redemption that is, in the end, merely “a representation, an optical artifact,” a city emptied of all meaning by an aesthetic ideology – buildings without life.

The function of an ideology is to attenuate contradiction. In Victoria, the presence of homelessness in the city is a contradiction to its professed image as a “Garden City,” a “Heritage City,” a city which is “always in season.” The aesthetic ideology which attends to this image relies on a disavowal of the urban, where – according to an urban ideology – “urban problems” such as homelessness, crime, and drugs proliferate. Indeed, there is an intense dialectic set up in the Capital Region between the urban and the natural, between an urban ideology and an aesthetic ideology. Functionally, this dialectic works to perpetuate the myth that homeless citizens are out of place in the “City of Gardens,” roleless in Victoria’s “narrative of regeneration.”

Consequently, to sustain this image, the visibility of homeless citizens on the street must be regulated and structured, if not annihilated altogether.

In recent years, Victoria's "narrative of regeneration" has focused on revitalizing the downtown core, thereby signaling the exclusionary vision of downtown as a large "tourist bubble" accessible only to the privileged classes: the attempt by the Downtown Victoria Business Association to ban social services from locating in the downtown core (noted previously) is testimony to the currency of this exclusionary vision. Significantly, in the context of urban revitalization, the "narrative of regeneration" is often expressed through a vocabulary of the Frontier Myth (Smith, 1996, 1992), in which the central city – perforated with abandoned buildings and vacant lots – is imagined as an empty Frontier wilderness devoid of human habitation and awaiting (re)settlement by the regenerative spirits and long pockets of gentrifying professionals. Indeed, the liminality of the Frontier is enhanced in Victoria where "the natural" and "the urban" – wilderness and civilization – are not only materially proximate, but also conceptually juxtaposed in corporate representations touted by the tourist industry.

The relationship between the Frontier Myth and urban revitalization in Victoria is elaborated in the next chapter. That is where I integrate the disavowal and ideological framing of homelessness discussed in this chapter with the conceptual framing of the architectural geography of the street itself. Through the work of Slotkin (1992, 1983, 1975) and Smith (1996, 1992), I will illustrate how the "narrative of regeneration" expressed by an aesthetic ideology is carried by the Frontier Myth, and how this Myth, in turn, renders the street as a fearfully wild and dangerous space requiring civic intervention to tame. Through the work of Barthes (1972), I will also show how a conception of the street as an inherently violent and dangerous Frontier inoculates the residents of Victoria from recognizing the inherent violence of municipal policies targeting homeless citizens on the street. In effect, amidst calls to "reclaim downtown" and to "take the city back," the privileged classes of Victoria are living in a bubble of

their own, a bubble space of denial regarding the oppression and violence exacted against the most disenfranchised citizens in our community. This growing “revanchism,” as Smith (1996) identifies it, and its violent consequences for homeless people suffering on the streets of Victoria, will be revealed in the final chapter to this thesis. As I have illustrated in the present discussion, however, the ideological foundation for justifying such revanchism is established in part through a dialectic of urban and aesthetic ideologies. Homelessness – seen as an “urban problem” through the lens of an urban ideology – is emphatically out of place in the “perfect Eden” of Victoria, where “flowers fall out of the sky and even the lampposts bloom” (Tourism Victoria, 2006c).

**CHAPTER 5:  
REGULATING HOMELESSNESS: THE DIALECTICS OF DENIAL**

As I have argued in the previous chapter, urban and aesthetic ideologies conceptually frame popular perceptions of homelessness in Victoria. An urban ideology reifies oppressive social relations into urban form, and attributes socially produced inequalities such as homelessness to the characteristic afflictions of an alienating city – “urban problems” endemic to an “urban jungle.” Meanwhile, an aesthetic ideology deploys the natural and historical assets of the region to represent Victoria as a “Garden of Eden” and a “Heritage City” – a quaint cosmopolitan centre noted for its gardens, its heritage, and its climate, but certainly not for its “urban problems.” In effect, homelessness – conceived as an “urban problem” through the lens of an urban ideology – is disavowed as sinfully and anachronistically out of place in the “City of Gardens.” In this final chapter, I shift focus to the spaces of the street itself by revealing how the street in particular is conceptually shaped and mythologized. In so doing, I will also reveal the material and violent consequences of such myth for homeless citizens on the streets of Victoria. Indeed, as I will argue in this chapter, an ascribed mythology of “the street” – in concert with urban and aesthetic ideologies – cultures an ideological vaccine that fortifies corporate oppression, palliates corporate guilt, and – in the terminology of Roland Barthes (1972: p.150) – inoculates the corporate body from the dis-ease engendered by (and the violence exercised on) the visible and abject homeless body.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please forgive the epidemiological metaphor. Besides its relevance to a discussion of Barthes’s concept of inoculation, I also deploy it as satire to dominant representations of homelessness. As already discussed through Kristeva’s (1982) concept of abjection, homelessness is often associated with defilement, decay, infection, and disease. Indeed, Canada recently received an emergency supply of smallpox vaccine as part of a \$48 million strategy to defend the nation against bioterrorism, with an option to secure the delivery of more doses “to inoculate all 32 million Canadians if necessary” (Macleod, 2003). One of the reported fears is the deliberate infection of homeless people in populated areas, which may result in an epidemic of this highly contagious disease. Such fear mongering illustrates how homeless people are consistently portrayed as receptacles for disease and as infectious agents contaminating society. Hence, disease becomes metonymic for homelessness, thereby building upon foundational myths that inform civic policy in more quotidian issues – such as street safety – discussed in my thesis. For a discussion of the use and function of illness as metaphor, albeit restricted to the context of tuberculosis and cancer, see Sontag (1978).

Before continuing, however, a review of theoretical concepts that I deploy in this chapter is in order. Recall that, in his book *The Production of Space* (1991), Lefebvre spatializes Marxist social theory by proposing a spatial trialectic constituted by three spatial moments: conceived space, perceived space and lived space. Conceived space is the dominating space of society, a strategic space of conceptualized *representations of space* that are “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to ‘frontal’ relations” (Lefebvre, 1991: pp. 33, 38-39). Conceived space, therefore, is the space which codifies and symbolizes spatial products to enable the effective implementation of the (re)productive capacities of perceived space. For its part, perceived space is the space of *spatial practice* which secretes a society’s social space (*Ibid*: pp. 33, 38). This space produces and reproduces the material conditions of a society by generating spatial forms and organizing spatial relations. These two spaces – the conceived and the perceived – operate dialectically to spatially (re)produce the political economy of a corporate body. Perceived space, however, is also a space of struggle where the dominating space of society (conceived space) and the dominated space of its member individuals (lived space) often come into conflict. Lived space, therefore, is a tactical *space of representation*, a third space of radical openness disrupting the “closed” dialectic of the perceived and the conceived (*Ibid*: pp. 33, 39). This is the space of potential revolution where individuals emancipate space by deploying resistant spatial practices and creating alternative spatial meanings.

In this chapter, I will focus on the corporate dialectics of produced space, of conceived and perceived space as they dominate the lived spaces of homeless individuals in the street. Through the work of Slotkin (1992, 1983, 1975) and Smith (1996, 1992), I will argue that dominant corporate representations of “the street” in conceived space are informed, in part, by a Frontier Myth that functions to legitimize the violent exclusion of homeless citizens in the perceived spaces of the city. I will illustrate that this Myth is

deployed in two primary policy contexts: “urban revitalization” and “public safety.” In the former context, the Myth functions to disavow the existence of homeless people on the streets of the downtown core. Downtown Victoria is conceived as a virtual ghost-town, an empty Frontier wilderness awaiting (re)settlement by the regenerative spirits and long pockets of the privileged classes, thereby implicating the Myth in the “narrative of regeneration” expressed by an aesthetic ideology and discussed in the previous chapter. Subsequently, through a selection of local newspaper articles drawn from the past decade, I will also illustrate that the street, in particular, has been conceived as an inherently dangerous and violent Frontier requiring civic intervention to secure “public safety.” By rendering the street as a Frontier wilderness lying at the threshold of civilized society, the City of Victoria legitimizes the implementation of regressive municipal policies and bylaws that work to annihilate the (lived) spaces where homeless citizens can physically exist.

Moreover, through the work of Barthes (1972), I will also argue that a spatialized mythology of “the-street-as-frontier” effectively inoculates the residents of Victoria from recognizing their own complicit toleration of (and participation in) violent and oppressive corporate strategies aimed at taming this Frontier wilderness. In effect, amidst calls to “reclaim downtown” and to “take the city back” – sentiments identified by Smith (1996) as signaling the emergence of a “revanchist city” – the privileged classes of Victoria live in *denial* regarding the inherent violence of municipal policies and bylaws that target the most disenfranchised citizens in our community. In particular, I reveal how the proxy of “public safety” has become a primary tool for spatial oppression that directly or indirectly does violence to the inherent dignity and well-being of homeless citizens. Victimized by a paranoid society obsessed with public safety, homeless citizens are wrongfully and violently *denied* fundamental political and physical rights to the spaces of the city. In effect, the visibility of abject homelessness is regulated through a dialectic of denial in which the *spaces of denial* in conceived space (an inoculation of society) dialectically

enable a *denial of place* in perceived space (an annihilation of the lived spaces occupied by homeless citizens). This dialectic and its violent consequences for homeless citizens living on the streets of Victoria will dominate discussion for the remainder of my thesis.

### **The Frontier Myth: Inoculating Society and Annihilating Space**

In his semiological meditation on mythologies in bourgeois society, Barthes describes myth as “the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society: at all levels of human communication, myth operates the inversion of *anti-physis* [the real] into *pseudo-physis* [the ideological]” (1972: p. 142). More specifically, Barthes defines myth as “depoliticized speech” modulated by several insistent but adaptable rhetorical figures “to which the varied forms of the mythical signifier arrange themselves” (*Ibid*: pp. 150, 109-158). One such rhetorical figure identified by Barthes and most relevant to this discussion is the “inoculation” which

consists in admitting the accidental evil of a class-bound institution the better to conceal its principal evil. One immunizes the contents of the collective imagination by means of a small inoculation of acknowledged evil; one thus protects it against the risk of a generalized subversion (*Ibid*: p. 150).

Consequently, the crisis of homelessness – as it is represented in the sociological rhetoric of dominant individualist and reformist perspectives – is “a small inoculation of acknowledged evil” that immunizes society from recognizing the larger corporate evil of structurally generated poverty.

Inoculation, however, can also be effected through a *spatial* rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> In the context of the architectural geography of Victoria, inoculation is successfully achieved through the mythical signifier of the Frontier, which symbolically renders the street as a dangerous (and wild) frontier to be violently tamed and reclaimed by an homogenized civic (and civilized) public. By acknowledging the “accidental evil” of the “mean

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<sup>2</sup> Here, a distinction must be made between de Certeau’s spatialized rhetoric of practice (a *tactical* rhetoric of resistance in lived space) and my spatialized application of Barthes’ rhetorical signifier of inoculation (a *strategic* rhetoric of domination in conceived space).

streets,” the collective imagination is inoculated from structural contradictions in the political economy that *force* poverty-ridden individuals to seek alternative socio-spatial resources, either through alternative incomes from informal economies such as prostitution or panhandling which use the street as their marketplace, or through alternative spatial practices such as dumpster diving, urinating in alleys, and sleeping in building alcoves. Indeed, the spatialized mythology of “the-street-as-frontier” produces a conceptual space of denial in which the residents of Victoria are inoculated not only from recognizing a violent and oppressive political economy (at the global-national scale), but also from discerning the injustices of violent and oppressive civic policies that seek to eradicate not homelessness, but homeless individuals (at the local scale).

Functionally, then, the purpose of the spaces of denial – of disavowal and inoculation – is to facilitate and legitimize the implementation of oppressive municipal policies that structure the visibility of homelessness, or more accurately, the visibility of structurally generated poverty. These policies – drafted in conceived space as bylaws, building codes, zoning regulations, neighbourhood plans, architectural blueprints, etc. – have become dialectically in-corporated into perceived space through implementation and enforcement. By regulating spatial practices, structuring spatial artifacts, and redefining space itself through the privatization of public space, the corporate body of Victoria produces an urban space that materially constitutes a denial of place for the visible presence of the corporeal homeless body itself. In essence, the spaces of denial in conceived space dialectically enable a denial of place in perceived space, as the City of Victoria effects not only an annihilation of public space but also an annihilation of the visible corporeality of homeless citizens who inhabit that space.

Before I show the dynamic of this dialectic as manifest in Victoria, however, I will elaborate more extensively on the theoretical contours linking the Frontier Myth with the corporeality of homelessness on the street. Through a discussion of Kawash’s (1998) concept of the contingent “homeless body,” I explain how the visible contradiction of a

homeless body in the street – a *material* consequence of structurally generated poverty – constitutes a *produced* corporeality of abjection that exists *both* in conceived space as an emergent, contingent, and abjective concept through which the corporate body struggles to define itself, *and also* in perceived space as a “positive embodiment” of disruption to corporate cohesion. Consequently, to secure identity and effect social closure, the corporate body must somehow annihilate the corporeal homeless body itself. As I will argue, an annihilation of the homeless body is effected by annihilating its space – by violently destroying a homeless citizen’s lived space of representation as liberated from the produced spaces of the city. Ultimately, as I have already indicated, the spatial annihilation of the homeless body in perceived space is legitimized by inoculating society through a strategic spatialization of the Frontier Myth in conceived space. Therefore, to provide theoretical foundation, I will also clarify how the semiology of the Frontier Myth surfaces in the conceived space of “the street” and, hence, becomes inscribed onto – spatialized in – the architectural geography of contemporary homelessness. Moreover, in order to explain the violent and oppressive consequences of this Myth for homeless citizens on the street, I illustrate the constitutive links between the mythical narrative of the Frontier and the “narrative of regeneration” elaborated in the previous chapter. The concept – and the practice – binding these two narratives, I shall argue, is violence.

### *Spatializing a Mythology*

In his best-selling and highly acclaimed trilogy, historian Richard Slotkin (1992, 1985, 1973) traces the historical development of the Frontier Myth in American literary, popular, and political culture from the colonial period to the present. He argues that after the Myth had been established through the experiences of life and warfare on the colonial and early national frontiers (Slotkin, 1973), it was adapted in the nineteenth century to suit the ideological requirements of a nation in the process of transforming an agrarian society into an industrial nation-state (Slotkin, 1985). Subsequently, as the nation

industrialized and urbanized through the twentieth century, “the frontier” was abstracted from its historical and material foundations to become primarily a term of ideological rather than geographical reference, providing a simple but flexible set of symbols “that serves with equal facility the requirements of progressives and conservatives, of political managers and movie scriptwriters, of academic historiography and bureaucratic apologetics, of warfare and child’s play” (Slotkin, 1992, qt. at p. 4).

Although Slotkin restricts himself to the United States, his analysis of the Frontier Myth is equally applicable in Canada. While I acknowledge that the experience of colonialism is historically and geographically contingent – with respect not only to the settler nations involved but also to the native peoples encountered – the mythology of the Frontier collapses these differences and assumes a settlement pattern broadly homologous across the entire geography of North America. Indeed, historian Robin Winks (1971) has argued that, until the late 1930s, Canadian scholars had interpreted Canadian history through the lens of an American-based “frontier thesis” – first articulated by Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 – which hypothesizes that American character and development can be explained through the experience of the frontier (Turner, 1921b). Although more recent and more rigorous scholarship has revealed significant differences in the frontier experience between Canada and the United States, Winks maintains that “Canadians ... continue to embrace the myth of the American frontier” (Winks, 1971: pp. 19-28, 35), a claim that still obtains, if not in academia then certainly in popular culture. Indeed, one may argue that the Myth, as it evolved out of American culture, has been widely disseminated in Canada through American literature and through dominant American cultural institutions such as Hollywood. Consequently, the ideology of “the American frontier” – abstracted from its original historical and geographical referents – has arguably lodged itself in the Canadian consciousness.

Although the contemporary manifestation of the Frontier Myth is primarily ideological and has been alienated from its original geographical referent, this does not

mean that the Myth does not become inscribed onto a material geography suited to the ideological needs of those who deploy the Myth. In the context of urban revitalization, for example, Smith (1996, 1992) argues that the social meaning of gentrification is consistently constructed through the vocabulary of the Frontier Myth. By admitting a *geographical* constituency to mythical signifiers, Smith elaborates upon and extends the work of both Barthes and Slotkin. He contends that myth is not only constituted “by the loss of the historical quality of things” (Barthes, 1972: p. 129), in which “history becomes a cliché” (Slotkin, 1985: p. 16), but also by “the loss of the geographical quality of things:”

The greater the separation of events from their constitutive geography, the more powerful the mythology and the more clichéd the geographical landscapes expressing and expressed through the mythology (Smith, 1992: p. 69).

One such clichéd landscape circumscribed by the ideology of the Frontier, I shall argue, is the mythologized space of “the street.” Liberated from its original geographical referent, the ideology of the Frontier – and its panalogy of adaptable significations – stakes its mythical claim in the streets and conceptually colonizes the architectural geography of contemporary homelessness.

### *The Street as Frontier*

In his exhaustive study, Slotkin identifies and documents several prevailing themes that have become primary rhetorical ciphers inscribing the Frontier Myth onto the narratives of American cultural products such as films, novels, and histories. Among the thematic narratives identified by Slotkin are the heroic journey into the wilderness in quest narratives, redemption through suffering in captivity narratives, and the “hero-as-Indian-fighter” in triumphalist narratives. Slotkin also demonstrates that a “central and peculiar feature” integral to these narratives and informing the language of the Myth is the theme of conflict with its attendant thematic corollary of violence:

To establish a colony or settlement, the Europeans had to struggle against an unfamiliar natural environment and against the non-European, non-White natives for whom the

wilderness was home. Violence is central to both the historical development of the Frontier and its mythic representation (Slotkin, 1992: p. 11).

Furthermore, since the success of colonial expansion and industrial development depended on war or conflict with resistant peoples or classes,

[i]n each stage of its development, the Myth of the Frontier relates the achievement of “progress” to a particular form or scenario of violent action ... [T]he myth represented the redemption of American spirit or fortune as something to be achieved by playing through a scenario of separation [from home country or home colony], temporary regression to a more primitive or “natural” state [into the “wilderness”], and *regeneration through violence* (*Ibid*: pp. 11-12, orig. emph.).

This final stage in the frontier scenario – *regeneration through violence* – aptly characterizes the contemporary (oxy)moronic reinscription of the Myth onto the spaces of the street, as the rhetoric of civic redemption (most commonly articulated as urban revitalization) works to legitimize violent municipal policies and bylaws.<sup>3</sup> As Slotkin (1985: p. 47) argues of the Frontier Myth specifically – and as Barthes (1972) argues for myth, generally – material social conflict and its attendant violence are deflected into the immaterial (and inoculating) world of myth. Smith (1992: p. 74) also elaborates by explaining that, “Urban conflict was not so much denied as externalized, and whosoever disrupted this reigning urban harmony invited comparison with the external enemy, the ‘Other.’ ”<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, since homeless individuals and their alternative spatial practices are often considered disruptive to corporate harmony and identity, they “invite comparison with the external enemy.” Such a comparison in the context of homelessness is apparent

<sup>3</sup> Slotkin’s concept of “regeneration through violence” may be paralleled with the Dionysian concept of “creative destruction” which has been deployed by scholars to describe the way in which modernity has worked to destroy an existing world as a means of creating a new one (see Berman, 1982). In current Marxist analyses, “creative destruction” is also used to describe the violence of a capitalist political economy, which tends to destroy value (or space) as a means of creating new value (or space). Harvey (1989: pp. 15-18), in particular, has linked “creative destruction” to urban revitalization.

<sup>4</sup> While I agree with Smith that urban conflict (with its attendant violence) is externalized rather than denied, I would argue that the psychology of denial, in this case, operates at the processual level rather than the formal. I am not arguing that violence itself is denied, but that the *causality* of violence is denied. In effect, the externalization of violence-as-form inoculates society from recognizing its own causal and processual links to that violence. Through an urban ideology, violence is naturalized as an inevitable outcome of the “mean streets” in an alienating “urban culture.”

in the contemporary debates concerning the constituency of “the public” – or, in my terminology, the corporate body. According to Kawash (1998), homeless individuals are precariously positioned in the ongoing battle over who belongs to the public, who has access to public space, and who has the right to decide what uses of space are in the public interest.... The public, as it is represented in the bourgeois public sphere, is always defined against the visible, street-dwelling homeless; in this framework, homelessness is not a problem that occurs within the public but a threat that appears from elsewhere (Kawash, 1998: pp. 320-21).

Consequently, in the words of sociologist Lee Rainwater (1970: p. 11), homeless people are seen as “playing the role of the roleless and are in the structural position of being outside the structure.” As individuals who are seen as lying outside the public sphere, homeless people are semiotically constructed as living in the Frontier, in the wilderness, and outside of – roleless in – the structures of society: they are “the external enemy” and “a threat that appears from elsewhere.”<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, a conceptualization of homelessness as a threat lying outside the public sphere is dialectically supported by the perceived space of the street itself, a space which lies *outside* the physical structures of civil society. In order to produce the mythical inversion of *anti-physis* into *pseudo-physis* – of the real into the ideological – the Frontier Myth deploys a civilization-wilderness (internal-external) binary in which civil society is associated with the former and the Frontier is conceived as the threshold to the latter.<sup>6</sup> The spatialized mythology of “the-street-as-frontier” effectively exploits this binary through a *spatial tautology*: the street is self-evidently external to society because it lies

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<sup>5</sup> It is worth noting that a conception of homelessness as structurally peripheral to society also contributes to a denial of the causality of the crisis itself: the political economy of society cannot be a causal determinant to homelessness since homeless individuals are conceived as living outside the political-economic structure of society, “playing the role of the roleless.” To the contrary, however, the violent and oppressive condition of homelessness is emphatically and demonstrably central to the social, political, and economic structures in our society – a society which *produces* inequality and poverty as structural imperatives in a political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice.

<sup>6</sup> Turner’s frontier thesis of 1893 – which had laid the foundation for the Frontier Myth – consistently deploys this binary: “American development has exhibited not merely advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line, and a new development for that area.... In this advance, the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization” (Turner, 1921b: pp. 2, 3).

outside; therefore, the physical exteriority of the street offers irrefutable physical evidence for the Frontier and all of its attendant significations, including disorder, danger, conflict, and violence. Indeed, as Barthes argues in the context of the semiology of images and texts, tautology is a principal rhetorical figure of myth, “a feint at the right moment, a saving aphasia, it is death, or perhaps a comedy, the indignant ‘representation’ of the *rights* of reality over and above language” (Barthes, 1972: pp.152-53, orig. emph.). In the case of a *spatial* tautology, the assertion of “the rights of reality” is provided with a forceful, perceivable spatiality: the street is, in reality, outside, and hence self-evidently the Frontier.

For the remainder of this discussion, I will examine the paradoxical ramifications of this Frontier dichotomy for homeless citizens on the street. By physically and conceptually casting homeless bodies into the mythical realm of the Frontier, the corporate body struggles to define itself against the abjective presence of these bodies in public space at the same time that it paradoxically attempts to violently annihilate these bodies from public view. This is the paradoxical and ambiguous status of the abjective threat signified by the corporeal homeless body: it is an external threat to be eradicated and expelled, and yet paradoxically, is also *constitutive* to “public” identity. In effect, the corporate body (“the public”) *defines* itself through the corporeality of homelessness (“the external enemy” and “a threat that appears from elsewhere”) in order to effect the violent exclusion of homeless citizens in the Frontier wilderness of the street.

#### *The Corporeality of Homelessness in the Frontier*

As I argue above through the work of Kawash (1998), homeless individuals are precariously positioned in debates concerning the constituency of “the public.” Indeed, as I will illustrate later in this chapter, homeless citizens are consistently excluded both conceptually and materially from membership in this community. Oppressive bylaws that restrict the spatial practices of homeless citizens are framed as progressive and

benign attempts to ensure “public safety.” Through the enforcement of these bylaws, homeless citizens are moved-along to secure “public spaces” such as sidewalks, streets, and parks for “the people.” Finally, “public debate” concerning issues of urban or social planning typically excludes homeless citizens from the decision-making process, except as tokens for the benefit of political optics. As abject and external Others lying outside the public sphere, homeless citizens – who are already denied the ability to secure a *private* space due to structurally generated poverty – are denied fundamental political and physical rights to the *public* spaces of the city. Essentially, through a denial of place in either private or public space, homeless citizens are literally placeless. As Kawash remarks through the informed experience of Raymond, a homeless person participating in her study, “Placelessness is, as Raymond puts it, the nonexistence of the homeless body – having no *place* to be and having no place to *be*” (Kawash, 1998: p. 329).

Kawash also argues that despite the immateriality of “the public” and its imagined community, the concrete effects of spatial exclusion that surface from this ideological construct suggest “a material counterpart to the phantomal public, one that emerges as a particular bodily (dis)position or (dis)placement” (*Ibid*: p. 322). She defines this material counterpart to the phantomal public as the *homeless body*:

As a specific mode of embodiment, the homeless body is not an identity but an emergent and contingent condition that traverses and occludes identity. I want to emphasize that the “homeless body” is not the same thing as the homeless person or the human body that homeless people necessarily possess or inhabit. Rather, the homeless body emerges as a particular mode of corporeality in contingent circumstances through which the public struggles to define and secure itself as distinct and whole (*Ibid*: p. 324).

Therefore, the *homeless body*, although not coextensive with the homeless individual, *derives* its “emergent and contingent” spatiality from the *corporeal body* of a homeless person against which the corporate body struggles to define itself. This contingent and abject corporeality – the corporeality of homelessness – disrupts the cohesion of the corporate body and destabilizes the identity of the phantomal public. Kawash quotes Deutsche (1996) on this point: “The homeless person becomes a *positive embodiment* of the element that prevents society from achieving closure” (Deutsche, 1996: p. 278; qtd. in

Kawash, 1998: p. 329, emph. Kawash). And as a “positive embodiment” of disruption, Kawash notes, it is precisely “*body* [that] appears as a material, substantial, fleshy barrier to the unity of society” (Kawash, 1998: p. 329, orig. emph.).

The corporeality of homelessness, therefore, is marked both as a homeless body and as a corporeal body; it is a *produced* corporeality of abjection that exists both in conceived space as an emergent, contingent and abjective concept through which the corporate body struggles to define itself, and also in perceived space as an embodied spatiality and material consequence of structurally generated poverty. Consequently, corporate cohesion and identity can only be retrieved through both a disavowal of the abject homeless body in conceived space, and an annihilation of its lived spatiality in perceived space, a lived spatiality derived from the “material, substantial, fleshy barrier” of the corporeal homeless body. As Kawash notes, herein lies the contradiction, and the struggle:

The public view of the homeless as “filth” marks the danger of this body *as body* to the homogeneity and wholeness of the public. The desire or ambition for such wholeness thus faces an obstacle that may be ideologically disavowed but that always returns as an irreducibly material challenge (*Ibid.*: p. 329, orig. emph.).

In the previous chapter, I have discussed some of the ways in which the abject homeless body is conceptually framed and isolated from “the public,” ideologically disavowed by the corporate body. Homelessness – conceived as an “urban problem” through an urban ideology – is disavowed as sinfully and anachronistically out of place in the “City of Gardens.” This disavowal, however, is ruptured by the visible and public embodiment of the homeless person in perceived space: the lived space of the corporeal homeless body challenges the conceived spaces of corporate denial. Therefore, to achieve closure – to secure identity, cohesion, and unity – the corporate body must somehow annihilate the corporeal homeless body itself, rend(er) it nonexistent and placeless. Ultimately, unable to legally effect the direct and absolute genocide of homeless individuals, the corporate body must resort to indirect genocide by annihilating the spaces which the corporeal homeless body inhabits, or in the words of Kawash, “to exert such pressures against this

body that will reduce it to nothing, to squeeze it until it is so small that it disappears, such that the circle of the social will again appear closed” (*Ibid*: p. 329).<sup>7</sup>

The corporate body, therefore, attempts to annihilate the corporeality of homelessness by annihilating its space. The annihilation of this space generally takes two forms: an annihilation of space by design, which physically makes it difficult for a homeless person to be in any particular place; and an annihilation of space by law, which regulates space through the forcible removal of the corporeal homeless body itself. These violent spatial strategies are often cast as necessary and benign aspects of urban revitalization, as the corporate body seeks to effect a regeneration of social identity and a closure in urban meaning. Indeed, the violence of this Frontier War against the visible homeless body exemplifies Slotkin’s final phase in the Frontier Myth introduced above – *regeneration through violence*.

Meanwhile, the violence inflicted on homeless citizens by society is externalized from the corporate body and confined to the mythical realm of the Frontier as ascribed to “the street.” Not only is homelessness itself disavowed in the “City of Gardens,” the material violence inflicted on homeless citizens is likewise disavowed. Such is the vector of the Frontier Myth in the semiotic epidemiology of inoculation: a conceptual denial of societal violence is effected by acknowledging and evicting that violence into an external and mythologized space beyond the borders of civil society, thereby isolating the violence and denying societal causality. The walls of buildings literally become the physical, conceptual, and psychological borders between inside and outside, subject and

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<sup>7</sup> I use the politically volatile term genocide for lack of a more appropriate spatial term that describes the violent and often fatal consequences of spatial exclusion perpetrated against homeless citizens. The closest term that I have encountered in my research is from the work of geographers Porteous and Smith (2001) who coin the term “domicide” to describe “the deliberate destruction of home that causes suffering to its inhabitants” (Porteous and Smith, 2001: p. ix). Yet, they fall short of applying the term to contemporary homelessness. Theoretically, however, I see no reason why domicide should be limited to physical structures. If we accept Lefebvre’s concept of lived space – *the space of representation* – then the spaces created by homeless citizens in the produced spaces of the city are as much “home” as they are public spaces. Seen in this light, the annihilation of lived space in the context of contemporary homelessness – not to mention the structurally produced barriers preventing homeless people from acquiring safe and affordable housing in the first place – may very well be interpreted as an insidious form of domicide.

object, us and them. In Lefebvrian terms, the architectural geography of abject homelessness is externalized as the Frontier in conceived space in order to legitimize the (often violent) physical eviction of the abject homeless body from perceived space. Or, more succinctly, the corporate body is inoculated by acknowledging “the street” as an inherently dangerous and violent Frontier.

For the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss the Frontier Myth as it is deployed in the architectural geography of homelessness in Victoria. I will illustrate that the Myth animates a *dialectic of denial* in which an inoculation of society in conceived space – *the spaces of denial* – dialectically enables an annihilation of homeless citizens in perceived space – *a denial of place*. Indeed, whereas urban and aesthetic ideologies discussed in the previous chapter legitimize exclusion at a regional level, the Frontier Myth legitimizes exclusion at a street level. Ultimately, the violent physical exclusion of homeless citizens on the streets of Victoria compliments and extends the structural exclusion effected by the political economy of society. Homeless citizens are not only denied the ability to secure a *private* space due to structurally generated poverty; they are also denied fundamental political and physical rights to the *public* spaces of this city. Indeed, to reiterate the observation made by Kawash’s (1998: p. 329) homeless informant, above, through a denial of place in either private or public space, homeless citizens are literally placeless, “having no *place* to be and having no place to *be*.”

### **The Frontier Myth in Victoria**

In Victoria, the Frontier Myth is deployed in two primary policy contexts: “urban revitalization” and “public safety.” In the context of urban revitalization, the Frontier Myth functions to ideologically veil the visible presence of the homeless body itself on the streets of the downtown core. Downtown Victoria is imagined as an abandoned and empty wilderness – a ghost town – awaiting (re)settlement by the regenerative spirits of

the privileged classes. Such an image is violently enforced through repeated evictions of prominent squats and, more commonly, through the continuous dispersal of homeless citizens from the visible spaces of downtown streets. Meanwhile, in the context of public safety, the Frontier Myth functions to legitimize corporate oppression by casting the street as a dangerous and violent Frontier. The streets are portrayed as disorderly and violent spaces requiring civic intervention to secure the safety of residents and tourists. Both of these mythical representations in conceived space – “the-street-as-frontier” and “downtown-as-ghost-town” – work dialectically to disavow homelessness and legitimize corporate oppression in the perceived spaces of the city. In the following discussion, I will empirically reveal this dialectic as it operates in the City of Victoria. Indeed, as I will argue in the remainder of this thesis, Victoria’s approach to homelessness in the past decade-and-a-half has not been tolerant nor empathetic, but rather increasingly violent and exclusionary.

#### *The Frontier Myth and Urban Revitalization*

The “narrative of regeneration” expressed through the heritage industry and introduced in the previous chapter is not restricted to the political economy of heritage theme-parks and tourist dollars. The narrative also animates the correlative nostalgia for an urban renaissance and a “return to the city,” most commonly articulated in a spatial sense as gentrification or by the more depoliticized moniker of “urban revitalization.” Many cities have struggled to reverse the perceived social and economic decline afflicting inner cities and downtown districts, where disinvestment, abandonment, and decay are attributed to the flight of middle-class citizens and the proliferation of “urban problems” such as drugs, crime, poverty, and homelessness. In Victoria, the recent

*Downtown 2020* conference reveals the currency of these fears for Victoria's downtown core and the primacy of urban revitalization as a policy objective for the city.<sup>8</sup>

In preliminary research for this conference, a report commissioned by the city to "take stock" of the downtown core takes note of its socio-economic decline:

When panhandling becomes too frequent or too aggressive, drug use too open, homelessness and poverty too visible, and streets too dirty, the character of an area changes. Activity that was formerly a tolerable part of the urban scene becomes for many people an intolerable deterioration. When this threshold is crossed, people feel less safe, so they visit less.... This problem is happening in Victoria. There are parts of downtown in which the concentration of these concerns is sufficient to drive away shoppers and tourists, hurt existing retailers, and discourage new, good quality tenants from locating in vacant space (Coriolis Consulting Corp., 2003: p. 13).

In the context of these "problems," the report recommends keeping streets and sidewalks safe, comfortable, and attractive – not necessarily an unreasonable recommendation. The report goes on to recommend, however, that attaining these objectives will require a "pragmatic" approach:

These short-term objectives will require some immediate actions that some people will regard as avoiding the underlying problems, but this is not an either/or proposition. Of course the community needs long term, lasting solutions to basic social problems, but in the meantime, downtown needs to be a safe and comfortable place to work, live, shop, and visit (*Ibid*: p. 22).

Or, to put it another way: "in the meantime" be "pragmatic" and bring out the steel glove. Clean up the streets and make problems such as homelessness disappear so that "the people" (identified as shoppers, tourists, retailers, and good quality tenants) need not face such "intolerable deterioration" (identified as panhandlers, drug users, homeless individuals, and persons in poverty). After all, "this is not an either/or proposition;" privileged lives must be pampered for the benefit of downtown and "the people." In

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<sup>8</sup> Not unexpectedly, attendance at this conference was dominated by the privileged classes. Representation from those in poverty was highly circumscribed both through the exclusionary pricing and limited availability of tickets. As a delegate from the Victoria Status of Women Action Group (SWAG) notes about the opening session of the conference, "The invisible people were definitely not represented at this conference. First Nations people, people with disabilities, new Canadians, children, mothers and people living in poverty were all invisible in the morning forum on creating a vision of downtown Victoria.... This was in spite of some effort by the organizers to include the 'broader community' in the visioning process. The conference cost \$100 a ticket but the organizers gave out some free tickets to some social organizations. I was only able to attend for SWAG because I had won a ticket in their Ideas competition for suggesting an idea to make the downtown more child friendly" (L'Hirondelle, 2003: n.p.).

effect, panhandlers, drug users, homeless individuals, and persons in poverty are dehumanized as just so many intolerable problems. They are not respected as contributing citizens with inherent conscience, dignity, and rights.

Meanwhile, by physically renewing abandoned buildings and poverty-stricken neighbourhoods, policies of urban revitalization attempt to attract middle-class investment and occupancy to make communities more “diversified” and economically sustainable. Significantly, urban revitalization in Victoria is linked to the city’s heritage programme (Barber, 2003), thereby signaling the exclusionary vision of downtown as a “tourist bubble” accessible only to “the people” – shoppers, tourists, retailers, and good quality tenants. In effect, the “narrative of regeneration” expressed by the heritage industry is materially linked to the regenerative impulse for urban revitalization and a “return to the city.” Indeed, an early monograph dedicated to promoting a “return to the city” makes this link explicit by arguing for heritage preservation as a means of “restoring old buildings and ourselves” (Reed, 1979). Although the context is American, the sentiment is equally applicable in the local context:

There are few frontiers left in America.... But one frontier remains. It is the city, the morning-after depository of all those get-away-from-it-all dreams of America. It is the place most of us left on our landlocked voyage of trying to find something better.... It has indeed become a wilderness, a lost frontier.... But in spite of what seems like a continuing migration from the cities, a countermigration seems to be beginning. A new kind of American with a new kind of attitude is coming back to the city to clean the dust of disuse and repair the damage of ill-use from many old structures in the city. We could call them urban pioneers, the new settlers in the old territories of the city. A new kind of American who is establishing himself and herself in bare and barren areas of abandoned buildings and is beginning a new ecological and social cycle of regeneration. They are there so that others may follow (Reed, 1979: pp. xi-xiii).

In Victoria, this “narrative of regeneration” and its link to heritage as a vehicle for revitalization is recapitulated in the vision expressed by members of Victoria’s Chamber of Commerce, who use London’s Canary Wharf development as a stellar example of “transforming decay” through the revitalization of heritage areas:

Time and circumstance bring with them change; businesses come and go as a natural cycle of renewal.... As in nature, new growth often springs from existing decay and examples of innovative revitalization and exceptional design that have transformed decay can be found all over the world. For example, the Canary Wharf Development in London, England replaced docks on the Thames that were no longer required. The

economic stimulation to the area justified a connection of transportation links and directly resulted in the revitalization of heritage areas that once served those docks. Many retail and commercial tenants were drawn from heritage buildings on Fleet Street, which is now undergoing renovations for higher utilization. The entire cycle was incubated from a vision of something new coupled with a recognition that what was could be replaced with something better (Chamber of Commerce, 2003a: pp. 3-4).

The Orwellian landscape of this corporate citadel, however, reveals that the Chamber's conception of what constitutes "something better" is very restrictive and exclusionary. London's Canary Wharf development – bristling with corporate towers, transnational banks, and security cameras – is notorious for its exclusionary design and function, an extreme example of state-supported gentrification that has exacerbated socio-spatial polarization in London (Smith, 1989). Indeed, the design of this space is an excellent example of what Flusty (2001) identifies – in the context of Los Angeles – as "interdictory space," where space is

commonly designed, built and administered by those affluent enough to do so, and with the wants and sensibilities of the similarly affluent in mind. By corollary, interdictory space functions to systematically exclude those adjudged unsuitable and even threatening, people whose class and cultural positions diverge from the builders and their target markets (Flusty, 2001: p. 659).

Interdictory space, therefore, is "selectively exclusionary space," which is not to say, as Flusty contends, that

'the Others' making up the bulk of the city are forever banned from interdicted precincts. They are, in fact, often welcomed in. But only so long as they behave appropriately. And what constitutes appropriate behaviour in interdicted spaces is rigidly defined and strenuously enforced by management. In short, difference is fine as long as it is surrendered at the gate (*Ibid.*: p. 659).<sup>9</sup>

The Chamber's citation of Canary Wharf as a prime example of "innovative revitalization and exceptional design" signals their interdictory vision for Victoria's "decaying" downtown core. Indeed, the ubiquitous "codes of conduct" promulgated by the Chamber – and noted in the previous chapter – exemplify this interdiction. Moreover, these codes

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<sup>9</sup> In 2004, Canary Wharf as interdictory space gained international prominence when the corporate tenants of the Estate were successful in obtaining a court injunction banning a peaceful demonstration within the precinct of the Wharf. The demonstration – organized in conjunction with an anti-globalization conference – was meant to highlight the plight of underpaid and ill-treated migrant workers employed as cleaners in the Estate. Instead, Canary Wharf silenced its oppressed employees through a legal injunction issued by the government and enforced by the police (Globalise Resistance, 2004a, 2004b, 2004c; Tempest, 2004). In effect, appropriate behaviour on the Wharf was rigorously enforced by the state. Indeed, the Canary Wharf injunction reveals the way governments are deployed as regulatory mechanisms for the protection and advancement of corporate interests.

also reveal how the naturalization and acceptance of “pragmatic” approaches to Downtown “problems” signal, in the words of Flusty (2001), the banalization of interdiction, both materially – in the physical spaces of urban revitalization – and conceptually – in the narrative of regeneration which animates such interdiction.

The common denominator in these narratives of regeneration is the image of abandonment and disuse. Empty buildings, lots, and spaces are metonymic for an abandoned central city, waiting to be occupied by the regenerative spirits of middle-class suburbanites searching for a lost authenticity and longing for redemption. Meanwhile, homeless citizens who inhabit the spaces surrounding these “empty” buildings are denied existence or seen as somehow out of place in a “barren wilderness” and “lost frontier.” Consequently, the image of an abandoned central city awaiting (re)settlement by “good quality tenants” is rigorously and often violently enforced through the dispersal of homeless citizens and the repeated evictions of squatters who have either sought shelter in empty buildings or organized tent cities in empty lots and open spaces.

In Victoria, the list of evictions since the year 2000 is long and shameful. The more prominent of such evictions involve the dispersal of tent cities occupying empty lots and open spaces, both private and public: in 2001 forty citizens were evicted from the precinct of Christ Church Cathedral (Dickson, 2001a); in 2002 fifty were evicted from the front lawns of the Parliament Buildings (Lavoie, 2002b); in 2003 a half dozen campers were evicted from Harris Green (Young, 2003); in 2004 about a dozen homeless citizens were evicted from the precinct of St. Ann’s Academy (Knox, 2004); and in 2005 about thirty citizens were evicted from Cridge Park (Cleverly, 2005). Inevitably, the outcome of such evictions is the displacement and dispersal of homeless citizens to other areas of the city. After the Cathedral eviction in 2001, for example, Victoria police received a “tremendous number of complaints” from property owners about “doorway occupation, street camping, drug dealing, and sexual liaisons in doorways [along with] feces, urine, and needles being left in doorways” (qtd. in Dickson, 2001a). Meanwhile,

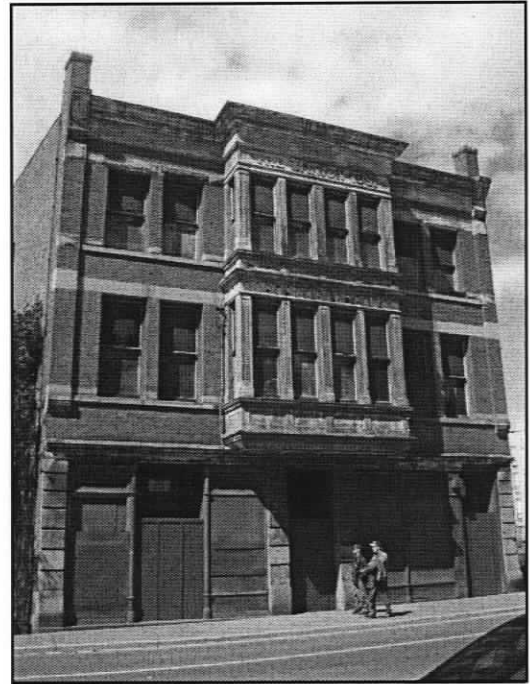
Victoria police responded to these complaints by asking the already displaced homeless citizens to again move along if they were found camping on private property.

Some evictions, however, have also involved the occupation of buildings – abandoned or otherwise. In 2001, for example, about fifty homeless youth were evicted from Spiral Island on Discovery St., a building leased by anti-poverty activist Ron Lund. The building was officially labeled by the city’s bylaw enforcement officer an “unlicensed homeless shelter,” and officials cited zoning regulations, safety issues, and potential legal liability as justification for the eviction (Young, 2001b, 2001c, 2001d). In effect, citizens struggling to survive *outside* on city streets – exposed and vulnerable to the elements, both natural and human – pose *less* of a liability for the city. Indeed, property bylaw violations are deemed to be more egregious than violations to the dignity and wellness of human beings. Meanwhile, many of the citizens evicted from Spiral Island had moved-on to the City Hall breezeway by Centennial Square, where they were promptly evicted *again* through a court injunction, this time to make way for an upcoming festival in the square – urban revitalization at work in the downtown core (McCulloch and Westad, 2001; Young, 2001a).

Despite the rhetoric of safety and liability, however, the exclusionary undercurrents implicit in the eviction of the Spiral Island community were revealed by the mayor himself. In the wake of assertions that the city wants to be flexible and sensitive to the evictees, the mayor let slip a revealing comment: “If we were to welcome these people to Victoria with open arms you can be assured it will attract others from Kelowna, Vancouver, Quebec and everywhere else” (qtd. in Young, 2001a). Lund later challenged the mayor for this remark, and asked him pointedly, “It sounds like a contradiction. You want to help them but you don’t want to help them. Which is it?” The mayor simply reiterated his position: “I’m not going to be opening the city for the rest of the homeless to come here because it’s not my problem.” This prompted a final retort from Lund: “Maybe the poor aren’t a problem. Maybe it’s the rich that are a

problem” (all qtd. in *Times-Colonist*, 2001). This exchange is important because it reveals that NIMBY runs deep in society, from individual property owners to public officials who have the power to implement policy. It also reveals that some residents of Victoria are not respected as citizens of our city. According to the mayor, homeless individuals are “these people” from elsewhere, and therefore, from his perspective, “not my problem.” Indeed, the mayor’s comments are rife with the psychology of abjection: homeless people are out of place in Victoria; they are “the external enemy” and “a threat that appears from elsewhere” (Smith 1992: p. 74; Kawash 1998: pp. 320-21).<sup>10</sup>

The Spiral Island eviction in 2001 was followed by several other building evictions in the years following: the Pandora protest squat in 2002 (*Times-Colonist*, 2002); the Memorial Arena protest squat later that year (McCulloch, 2003); and, most recently, the Janion Building protest squat in 2006, where tear gas was used to smoke an anti-poverty activist out of the building (Bell, 2006a) [Figure 5.1]. All of these evictions – no less than ten prominent evictions in the



*Figure 5.1: The Janion Building on Store St. One of several abandoned buildings lining the downtown core, and the site of a recent stand-off between police and a homelessness activist protesting the lack of social housing.*

<sup>10</sup> A prevailing and debilitating myth in Victoria is that most homeless people in the city are from somewhere else. This assumption holds that homeless people are attracted to Victoria due to its temperate climate. In effect, Victoria’s climate is to blame for homelessness in the city. The production of poverty by an oppressive political economy is veiled by an aesthetic ideology, in which homelessness – disavowed as out of place in the “City of Gardens” – is imported from elsewhere. Such a myth works to exclude homeless people from rightful citizenship to the city. The mayor’s comments – revealing his ulterior motive for the Spiral Island eviction – is testimony to this fact. Recent evidence, however, has helped to dispel this myth. An analysis of a one-night count of absolute homeless people in Victoria has revealed that most people sleeping in the rough on the night of the survey were indeed from the city (Cool Aid, 2005; Lavoie, 2005). At any rate, residency should have no bearing on the protection of human rights and dignity as guaranteed by the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

last six years, not to mention the many hundreds of requests by the Victoria City Police and private security guards asking homeless individuals to “move along” – are indicative of what anti-poverty activists in the United States had described, already twenty-five years ago, as “a forced march to nowhere” (Hombs and Snyder, 1982). The several abandoned buildings that line the streets of downtown Victoria – and the city’s evangelical crusade to secure property rights in lieu of human rights – are an indictment on our society for the violence perpetrated against the inherent rights and dignity of homeless citizens.

Meanwhile, Victoria continues to inscribe its “narrative of regeneration” onto the fabric of the city. Policies of urban revitalization and the rehabilitation of heritage areas are thought to solve poverty, crime, and homelessness after the “dust of disuse” has been power-washed from the pavement and the “damage of ill-use” has been repaired on streets and buildings. As I have discussed in previous sections, much of the revitalizing effort is directed to attracting middle-class investment through the conversion of heritage buildings – not into affordable housing but into apartments, condominiums, timeshares, and lofts for gentrifying professionals. One enthusiastic observer, commenting on the recent conversion of tenement buildings in the heart of Chinatown into gentrifying heritage townhouses, has described this latest trend in urban revitalization as creating a bit of “Bobo heaven” (Knox, 2000). He identifies this term as “being the latest cultural catchword, a contraction of bourgeois Bohemian, journalist’s David Brooke’s description of the creative, hip, well-educated dot.com latte-suckers who are gradually elbowing out the Yuppies and the Boomers” (*Ibid.*) The latest manifestation of such gentrification is the planned conversion of the historic Hudson Bay building on Douglas Street, touted by the developer as “Loft living of historic proportions” [Figure 5.2: p. 151].

Other revitalizing efforts are directed to the street itself. In 1999, for example, the city initiated the \$2.2 million Douglas Street Transit and Streets project, a revitalization programme targeting the public transit corridor on Douglas Street in the downtown core.

A principle outcome of this project was the installation of new street furniture, Arts and Crafts style steel benches locally designed and built, and hence lauded as a “local success story” (Down, 1999). The architect of the new furniture – inspired by the chairs of Arts and Crafts designer William Morris – designed the benches with narrow bands,



*Figure 5.2: Above: The vacant Hudson’s Bay Building and future site of “The Hudson” – revitalizing Downtown for “loft living of historic proportions.” Below: A new Arts and Crafts style bench lining the wall of this new development – revitalizing Downtown for a forced march to nowhere.*

alternating in width to reflect the impression that Douglas Street functions as a transition between the heritage sector of Downtown Victoria and the contemporary city. Aesthetic metaphors aside, however, the function of this new furniture, which I shall discuss later, is to regulate the presence of homelessness on the busiest thoroughfare in Victoria and to restrict the “public space” available for homeless people to engage in alternative economies and practices such as panhandling for subsistence or sleeping on public property.

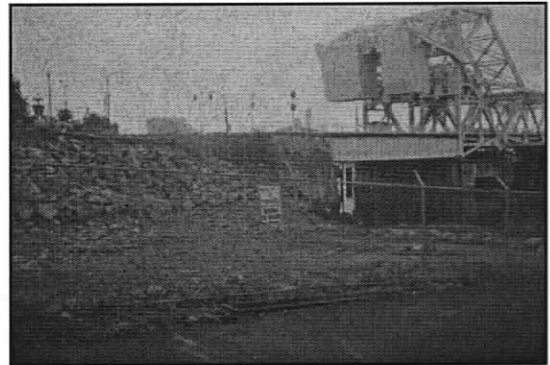
Street furniture had been a source of contention in the city in recent years, as business owners on Yates Street pressured city council to remove benches and planters from street corners in order to deter the “criminal element” from congregating in the area (Wilson, 1994). In 1993, for example, under vociferous protest, a bench on the corner of Yates Street and Government Street was removed by the city, ostensibly to make way for the rehabilitation of the old Post Office (Lavoie and Wilson, 1993). The bench was a popular crossroads for the street

community, a meeting place where they could connect, relax, and socialize. It was especially popular with a community of homeless citizens affectionately known as the “Apple Tree Gang,” and in particular with “Sassy” Vern Jack for whom the bench had become a personal space shared with others in his community – a lived space of representation. The bench was also, however, a thorn in the side of local business-people who viewed it as a hotspot of “drunkenness, crime and aggressive panhandling” that scared away shoppers and hurt business (Lavoie, 1993). The business liaison officer for

the Victoria Police described the bench as a “focal point for criminal activity” and deployed the abject metaphor of disease to make his point: “It’s just like a cancer. Once you allow it to go for so long you just can’t correct it” (qtd. in Lavoie, 1993).

Yet, as anti-poverty advocate Allan Tysick had pointed out, the Apple Tree Gang had *already* been evicted from their long-time congregating point under an apple tree below the Johnson Street Bridge (hence the nick-name). Earlier in the year, the Coast Guard had fenced off this area for safety and liability reasons [Figure 5.3], after a fire broke out in a temporary shelter that had been erected for the Apple Tree Gang

by a local business owner. After the eviction, the Gang started congregating at the bench, where – to the dismay of many local businesses – they would lounge, socialize, and sometimes sleep. In the end, after vociferous public debate and resistance, the bench was



*Figure 5.3: The ubiquitous fence: an ad-hoc design element to restrict access into various spaces of the city. In this case, the fence was erected to prevent the Apple Tree Gang from congregating at their usual location under the Johnson Street Bridge. The implicit message: Keep Marching.*

removed: the Apple Tree Gang was forced to keep marching, and the Post Office got its \$10 million facelift (Lavoie, 1993; Lavoie and Wilson, 1993).

In a related move a year later, concerned merchants had also pressured the city to remove street furniture such as large planters and benches from the northwest and southwest corners of the Broad Street and Yates Street intersection, claiming that it would help get rid of criminals plaguing the area (Wilson, 1994). Indeed, in an excellent example of urban ideology at work and echoing the rationale of the previous year, the business liaison officer for the Victoria Police identified these items as “key crime generators” where the “criminal element” hangs out. The officer had been quoted as saying that the visibility of these people – identified as drug dealers, pimps, and prostitutes – “leads the passer-by to believe this is a high-crime area as the passer-by must ‘run the gauntlet’ of the criminal element to traverse Yates Street” (qtd. in Wilson, 1994). In particular, the merchants wanted the BC Tel phone in the 600 block of Yates Street to be restricted to 911 service or to be removed entirely. The liaison officer indicated that, although most people use the phone for legitimate purposes, it had also become the “office phone” for criminals in the area (Wilson, 1994).

According to the merchants and the liaison officer, street furniture had “generated” crime in the area by attracting the “criminal element” who were involved in alternative economies such as drugs, prostitution, and panhandling. In other words, the presence of street furniture is advanced as an explanation for “crime” in the area, and the tactical ambiguity introduced into the area created an unwanted diversity on the street: the ambiguity of planter-as-bench had not attracted cappuccino-sipping shoppers out to enjoy the sunshine, but a “criminal element” plaguing the area. First of all, many such “criminals” are likely to be in abject poverty; they are necessarily involved in alternative economies such as prostitution and panhandling in order to survive in an oppressive political economy that does not provide the necessary resources for all of its citizens to meet fundamental needs. Second, removal of the furniture would mean a continued

reduction to the already meager public resources available to homeless citizens, such as a public phone to contact friends or service agencies, and planters or benches upon which to sit (or even sleep) while waiting for service agencies such as homeless shelters to open.

By installing the new Arts and Crafts style benches in 1999, however, the city sought to solve this problem of “criminal activity” concentrated around street furniture. With strategically placed arm-rests, the benches were designed *specifically* to deter lounging or sleeping [Figure 5.4]. The design of the new benches leaves no room for

doubt as to the proper use of the furniture. The message is simple and unambiguous: lounging or sleeping on this bench is inappropriate behaviour; please keep moving – preferably out of sight. So too, the city appears to have solved the problem

of large planters “generating crime” and being used as hang-outs by the “criminal element.” On certain corners in the downtown district where street youth often congregate (the convenience store on the corner of Douglas and Johnson Streets is a case in point), planters have been fitted

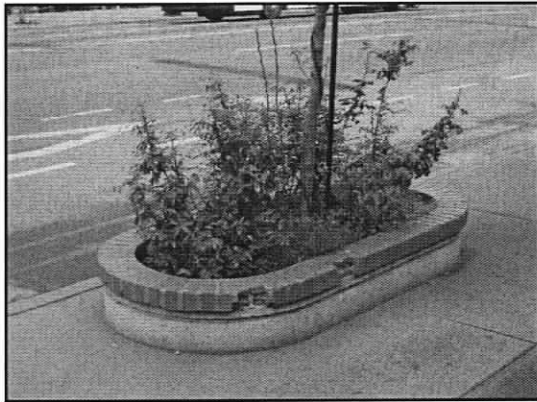
with metal parapets making it impossible to sit on their brick retaining walls [Figure

5.5: p. 155]. Indeed, the parapets send the unambiguous message that these planters are emphatically not to be used as benches upon which to hang-out or panhandle for spare change from passers-by, a small but not insignificant example of an annihilation of space by design (barely noticed by residents) that extends and complements the exclusionary design of the new benches.



*Figure 5.4: Out with the old ... in with the new. The new Arts and Crafts style benches that declare emphatically and unambiguously their “appropriate” and expected use.*

Through spatial exclusion and an annihilation of space by design – whether it be planned in advance through the design of new benches, or ad-hoc and spontaneous, by erecting the ubiquitous fence – homeless citizens are forced to find other places where they can congregate, lounge, or sleep while they wait for social service agencies such as homeless shelters and soup kitchens to open. Interdiction is effected by *physically* restricting the spaces where homeless people can congregate, an insidious form of



*Figure 5.5: Above: A “crime generator” on Douglas Street in Downtown Victoria. Below: A similar “crime generator” ostensibly deactivated by the metal parapet.*

eviction that lies at the heart of “urban revitalization.” Indeed, as I have illustrated above, implicit in policies of urban revitalization is the exclusion of those whose “deviant” practices threaten “to drive away shoppers and tourists, hurt existing retailers, and discourage new, good quality tenants from locating in vacant space” (Coriolis Consulting Corp., 2003: p. 13). By “pragmatically” dealing with the proliferation of “urban problems,” Victoria the “Garden City,” the “Heritage City,” the city which is “always in season” can then sprout forth from “existing decay” and from “intolerable deterioration” in a “natural cycle of renewal.” In effect, the violence exacted through “urban revitalization” is

naturalized as a necessary though regrettable consequence of “pragmatic approaches” towards making downtown “a safe and comfortable place to work, live, shop, and visit” for “the people.” Indeed, while Vern Jack is denied his simple bench, “the people”

initiate multimillion-dollar “revitalization” projects such as a facelift to the Post Office or residential conversions “of historic proportions” for gentrifying professionals. Meanwhile, in the spaces around these projects, homeless citizens suffering on the streets of Victoria – citizens *evicted* from meaningful participation in society by an oppressive political economy promulgated by the privileged classes – are repeatedly forced to keep moving in a continuous and endless march to nowhere. In the next section, I will elaborate more extensively on this forced march – and the marching orders that effect it – as it surfaces specifically in the “Frontier wilderness” of the street and in the policy context of “public safety.” It should be noted, however, that both of the policy contexts – urban revitalization and public safety – are mutually supportive and work together as part of the same “revitalizing” package.

#### *The Frontier Myth and Public Safety*

Since contemporary homelessness first spurred debate in the 1980s, many commentators have noted a shift in the prevailing sentiment for the crisis, shifting from a “politics of compassion” to a “politics of compassion fatigue” (Feldman, 2004: p. 2). This shift is manifest in a new and widening war against homeless citizens, or more accurately and more generally, in a war against the poor (Gans 1995). Smith (1996) has identified such a sentiment as an emerging “revanchism” – or revenge – against those who have been perceived as stealing the streets of the city from the constituency of “the public” and “the people” who are deemed the rightful users and owners of public space. Consequently, anti-homelessness ordinances have proliferated across the nation with the expressed intent of “taking back the streets.” In Victoria, a discussion group sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce in 2003 as prelude to the *Downtown 2020* conference on urban revitalization reveals the currency of revanchism in the city, as the title for this meeting – “Reclaiming Downtown” – explicitly expresses the revanchist spirit (Chamber of Commerce, 2003b).

The reclamation of the streets by “the people” parallels the nostalgic desire to (re)settle the Frontier of an abandoned an empty downtown core discussed in the previous section. As I have argued, deployment of the Frontier Myth in the latter context serves to disavow the presence of homeless citizens in the downtown district; in the context of the street itself, however, the Myth serves to legitimize oppressive and violent municipal policies exacted against homeless citizens. In a professed desire to secure “public safety,” the City of Victoria has instituted progressively violent and exclusionary policies and bylaws to “reclaim downtown” from the external threat of “these people” who appear from elsewhere. Indeed, over the past decade, the streets of Victoria have consistently been characterized as a dangerous, disorderly, and uncivilized Frontier requiring civic intervention to tame. Although much of the terminology has changed since the days of the colonial frontier – from “Indians” and “wilderness” to “panhandlers” and “streets” – the spirit of the characterizations remain consistent with the Frontier Myth. Some representative examples over the past decade from Victoria’s daily newspaper, the *Times-Colonist*, will serve to illustrate the inscription of this Myth and the contexts within which the rhetorics of the Myth strategically operate. Moreover, these examples will also serve to document the increasingly exclusionary and violent treatment of homeless citizens suffering on the streets of Victoria, as the city systematically annihilates the spaces where homeless citizens can physically exist.

- In 1995, the Yates Street theatre district was described by one contributing writer as an area besieged by “strife on the streets:”

... I and thousands of movie-going locals and tourists continue to be forced to run a gauntlet of smart-mouthed punks, panhandlers, transients, dopeheads, drug dealers and layabouts inflicting bad bongo drumming on us as we head to the theatre (Reid, 1995).

The street is depicted as a “gauntlet” of dangerous encounters “inflicted” on the civilized and law-abiding locals and tourists. Insofar as a gauntlet is often associated with armour, weapons, and battle, the reader can almost imagine the writer serpentine through the

street to avoid a fusillade of bullets. Indeed, the film-savvy critic likely intended a parallel with the 1977 Hollywood action film *The Gauntlet*, in which Clint Eastwood – famous for his Frontier adventures in “spaghetti westerns” – stars as Ben Shockley, a Phoenix police detective assigned to transport a prisoner turned mob-witness from Las Vegas to Phoenix. At the end of the film, after his dusty and dangerous journey across the south-western deserts (the witness is a target for both the mob and crooked cops), Shockley drives an armoured bus down the middle of a downtown Phoenix street through a gauntlet of gunfire from surrounding buildings. In effect, the film transposes the mythologized Frontier of the “wild, wild west” onto the highways and streets of 1970s America. Even if this allusion was accidental on the part of the local movie-going writer, it most certainly is not incidental.

Meanwhile several businesses on Yates Street had employed private bouncers – or “hired guns” as the *Times-Colonist* described them in consummate Frontier terminology (McCulloch and Wilson, 1994) – to patrol their store fronts and urge certain “undesirables” such as panhandlers and street kids to move along (McCulloch and Wilson, 1994; McCulloch, 1995; Vipond, 1994; Wilson, 1995). This is despite the fact that, at that time, *not even the police* had the authority to remove people from a public space if these people were not creating an obstruction nor breaking the law: the vagrancy sections of the *Criminal Code* which had provided for such authority had been repealed in 1972 as discriminatory and therefore unconstitutional.<sup>11</sup> Remarkably, while not

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<sup>11</sup> Until 1972, vagrancy and begging had been a crime under the *Criminal Code of Canada* (the *Code*) since 1892. Even when Parliament amended the *Code* in 1953, section 164.1 still provided that, “Everyone commits vagrancy who (a) not having any apparent means of support is found wandering abroad or trespassing and does not, when required, justify his presence in the place where he is found; [and] (b) begs from door to door or in a public place,” among other definitions. When Parliament again amended the *Code* in 1972, sections 164.1 (a) and (b) were repealed. In a House of Commons debate, the Federal Minister of Justice implied that the amendments were necessary because the laws were discriminatory: “Here we have an offence which has been applied differently to the rich and to the poor in our society and we propose to move against this difference in application” (Fulcrum Project, 2003; qtd. and ctd. at p. 6). Therefore, although the current *Code* still refers to Vagrancy (sec. 179.1), the crime no longer applies to those without “any apparent means of support,” nor to those who beg. For Canada’s current *Criminal Code* see the Canadian Legal Information Institute (CanLII, 2007).

officially sanctioned by the city, the “hired guns” of private businesses were tolerated by Victoria’s elected officials as “filling a perceived gap” in street security (qtd. in Vipond, 1994), the same officials who ought to represent and defend the rights of the law-abiding “undesirables” who were subjected to such pointed and illegal physical intimidation.

- In 1997, a letter to the editor lamented the social condition of the downtown core and expressed a revanchist desire to “take the city back:”

One only has to go downtown and see all the kids sitting on the sidewalk with their hands out, while nearby their dogs urinate against a lamp post. Watch the action around the soup kitchen and you will see drug deals, open alcohol and the so-called unfortunate few arrive by cab to get their free coffee and muffin.... Our sidewalks and open spaces are being taken over by street kids, drunks, drug dealers and prostitutes (Gonder, 1997).

The street is depicted as an unruly and uncivilized space controlled by street kids, drunks, drug dealers, prostitutes, and urinating dogs, all of whom ostensibly lie outside the constituency of “the public” implied by the citizen-writer’s concern for “*our* sidewalks and open spaces.” By summoning the homogenizing power of the collective personal and possessive pronoun, the writer not only forces the reader (the public) into an adversarial relationship with the groups cited in the letter, but also positions the reader – through the language of property rights (“our sidewalks and open spaces”) – as the lawful user of the contested space. Indeed, the writer provides testimony to the observations made by Smith (1992: p. 74) and Kawash (1998: pp. 320-21), discussed earlier: the groups cited in the letter – including street kids and those whom the writer disparagingly describes as the “so-called unfortunate few” – are excluded from the corporate body and conceived as “the external enemy” and “a threat that appears from elsewhere.”

Meanwhile, in a draconian campaign to fulfill the oppressive will of “a public” calling to “take the city back,” city council passed a controversial bylaw against street camping to improve pedestrian flow and safety on public sidewalks, thereby making it illegal to “obstruct a sidewalk [in the downtown core] by squatting, kneeling, sitting, or lying down on it between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.” (Streets and Traffic

Bylaw: sec. 75.1(2) as per Amendment Bylaw No. 37). This is despite the fact that pedestrians seem to get along quite well negotiating an obstacle course of street vendors, buskers, other pedestrians, tourists taking pictures, lamp posts, trash receptacles, benches, public art, bus shelters, and people waiting at bus stops. Somehow, an individual sitting discretely against a wall asking for spare change is overly obstructive and jeopardizes street safety. In effect, a concern for street safety acts as a proxy for oppression, for it legitimizes the criminalization of a non-criminal activity and provides power to exclude certain “undesirables” from access to public spaces. Indeed, this bylaw is a reinvention of the vagrancy laws that had been repealed as discriminatory in 1972. Essentially, after a successful fight by anti-poverty groups to get the *Criminal Code* amended, the old vagrancy laws have simply been transferred from the federal jurisdiction of the *Criminal Code* to the municipal jurisdiction of bylaw legislation. Consequently, the “gauntlet” of the theatre district no longer needs the illegal intervention of “hired guns;” the streets can now be swept clean *legally* by the sheriffs and deputies of the Victoria City Police.<sup>12</sup>

- In 1999, a personal safety consultant interviewed by the *Times-Colonist* warned about the dangers of banking alone at night at an ATM:

Like lions and tigers waiting in ambush around a watering hole, predators and purse snatchers hang around ATMs waiting for some quick cash, says [the personal safety consultant].... [He says] ATMs in bank buildings, which are secluded and out of the way, are prime places for people who are hard up for money and need quick cash. The City of Victoria last week endorsed a bylaw, being drafted, that will prohibit panhandling or any solicitation within 20 feet of an ATM. Many citizens complained to councilors about feeling intimidated by beggars standing beside bank machines (Dickson and Harnett, 1999).

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<sup>12</sup> According to the Streets and Traffic Bylaw, the minimum penalty for street camping is a fine of \$35.00, while the minimum voluntary penalty is \$15.00 (sec. 92(5); sec. 95(13) as per Amendment Bylaw No. 56). Furthermore, under the chattels section (sec. 74), the city has the power to remove, detain, and impound any chattel, obstruction, or thing which it deems to be a nuisance and unlawfully occupying a public place. This sometimes includes the possessions of homeless citizens who have nowhere else but public property to place their belongings (see for example Chung, 1998 and Curtis, 1998). The fees to retrieve belongings impounded by the city run anywhere from \$25.00 to \$100.00, with an additional daily impoundment fee of \$2.00 to \$7.00 per day (Streets and Traffic Bylaw: sec. 74(4) as per Amendment Bylaw No. 18). Essentially, homeless citizens – who have no option but to “camp” on public property – are penalized (criminalized) for being homeless. How a homeless person is to pay such fines is one of many contradictions in the anti-homelessness ordinances being instituted across Canada.

The street is depicted as a Frontier jungle replete with “lions,” “tigers” and “watering holes” where innocent and law-abiding citizens are “ambushed” by “predators.” Such imagery is deployed to emphasize the potential violence inherent in the “Frontier wilderness” of the street and to inspire fear in the reader in order to legitimize the necessity for civic intervention. While I acknowledge that crime is and should be a concern for any just society (although, what constitutes crime is debatable), this article unduly conflates the practice of panhandling with criminal activity. In effect, “beggars” (and, by implication, homeless citizens) are misrepresented as criminals – or, as in the dehumanizing description in the article, with “lions,” “tigers,” and “predators.” Such a conflation works to separate panhandlers (the majority of whom are homeless) from the constituency of the law-abiding “public” in order to legitimize laws that restrict the civil liberties of these “predators.” Furthermore, the tendency to conflate panhandling with crime is compounded by the fallacious belief that panhandling is a lifestyle choice, as preached by former Victoria Mayor Bob Cross: “We can’t just sit on our hands and say panhandling is an accepted lifestyle. I don’t agree sitting on a sidewalk is an accepted lifestyle” (qtd. in Harnett, 1999c). By criminalizing panhandling and subscribing to the notion that panhandling is a lifestyle choice, Cross comes dangerously close to social Darwinism by implying that some individuals are, *by nature*, criminal.

Meanwhile, as the article alludes, city council passed yet another controversial bylaw prohibiting panhandling at any location before 09:00 and after 21:00, and at any time within six meters of an ATM, a bus stop, a bus shelter, parking-ticket dispensing machines, or an entrance to a financial institution or liquor store (Streets and Traffic Bylaw: sec 75.3 as per Amendment Bylaw No. 42). Unable constitutionally to restrict the rights of a group of law-abiding citizens, the city attempts to circumvent the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* through a proxy of spatial regulation: the laws are deployed not with parameters defined by individuals but with parameters defined by the *architectural time-geography* of “public space.” Such laws are oppressive because they indirectly

restrict the civil liberties of law-abiding homeless citizens who use the street as a means of subsistence through alternative and informal economies such as panhandling. The successful legislation of this bylaw is all the more remarkable given that a similar anti-panhandling ordinance instituted in Winnipeg in 1995 – the first of its kind in Canada and, hence, the model for similar ordinances in other Canadian cities including Victoria – *was already* being challenged in the courts by the National Anti-Poverty Organization as unconstitutional and a violation of the *Charter*. NAPO had argued that the Winnipeg bylaw unconstitutionally restricts *all* panhandlers from panhandling, *even peacefully*, at certain times and in certain public spaces. As the Caledon Institute of Social Policy argued in a report supporting NAPO’s challenge: “To ban or severely to restrict a person’s right peacefully to ask others for help would jeopardize some of the most cherished rights of a democratic society” (Schafer, 1998: p. 2). The constitutional challenge was a partial success as the City of Winnipeg settled out of court.<sup>13</sup>

- In 2001, as city council enhanced police presence on downtown streets, a lengthy article provided an in-depth report of street safety and crime, including a discussion of panhandling, public drunkenness, and intravenous drug use:

[The police inspector] calls it Victoria’s culture of despair. It lurks in a part of the city most residents and tourists never see. It breeds in dark alley ways, littered with uncapped syringes and hastily discarded glass pipettes. It infects street youth, trapping them in addiction and petty crime (Dickson, 2001b).

Such a characterization works to inspire dread and fear of the uncanny areas of the street where intravenous drug use “lurks” and “breeds in dark alleys” as it “infects [and traps] street youth.” In all fairness, however, it should be noted that the sentiments and the intent of the inspector’s concern for “Victoria’s culture of despair” is one of compassion

<sup>13</sup> Winnipeg repealed its “Panhandling By-law” in September of 2000, and redrafted a new bylaw that focused on behaviour rather than architectural geography. Consequently, the new bylaw prohibits only “obstructive solicitation” (for both versions, see Winnipeg, 2000, 1995). Likewise, a prohibition on soliciting in an “aggressive manner” was also a feature of Victoria’s anti-panhandling bylaw. Such a clause, however, is unnecessary since the *Criminal Code* of Canada *already* restricts aggressive behaviour with laws against threatening, harassment, assault, and battery (secs. 264-269; see CanLII, 2007). The prohibition against “aggressive” panhandling merely serves once again to conflate panhandling with crime.

and empathy. I do not wish to trivialize the obvious hardships of living on the street, and the devastating effects of alcoholism and intravenous drug use. Yes, the streets can be dangerous, without question; but they are *far* more dangerous for those *on* the street than for those who are homed. The point is that the characterization of “the-street-as-frontier” operates not in the context (nor for the benefit) of those on the street. The characterization is deployed to exaggerate the perceived dangers for the homed. As Barthes (1972) contends, all mythologies are based on a kernel of truth; what makes it a mythology is the political uses for which it is deployed. In this case, the Myth serves to justify oppressive policies that do not ensure the safety of homeless citizens on the street, but rather are intended to alleviate the perception of danger among those who are homed.

Meanwhile, to combat the drug trade and to enforce the law – *including the newly created anti-camping and anti-panhandling bylaws* – eight new beat officers were added to patrol the downtown streets. The rationale, as the mayor explained, was that “the presence of beat officers will help the perception of safety in the downtown core. Right now, there is a fear factor in coming downtown” (qtd. in Dickson, 2001b). The mayor’s comments were mirrored by those of a business owner: “It’s the perception of the downtown being safe. If the masses perceive something to be dangerous and unsafe, then that becomes the reality” (qtd. in Dickson, 2001b). Despite a recognition that the issue of safety in the streets was (and still is) largely one of *perception* – a perception built, in part, through the Frontier Myth – the city persists in using law enforcement to cleanse the streets as a means to alleviate corporate fear. The city focuses on the *object* of perception rather than the *subject*: the “fear factor” in coming downtown is alleviated by attempting to remove what’s *seen* rather than changing the mythical and ideological foundations of *perceiving* what’s seen. Indeed, homeless individuals are persistently persecuted by fear and perception as they become subjected to the enhanced enforcement of newly created bylaws that criminalize non-criminal socio-spatial practices such as sitting against a building or panhandling for subsistence.

• In 2004, a letter to the editor from a resident of the Capital Region gave the reader “an education on downtown streets:”

Ever go for a late evening walk into town? Save your time and stay home, unless you’re looking for an unwanted education on what our city holds for you at night. People openly drink liquor on the street, urinating in full view of others, prostitution (rampant), beggars everywhere, foul language, breaking windows in full sight of passing police cars, lovely flower planters being smashed are just a few of the events you’ll definitely witness. Take a walk within two blocks of our illustrious City Hall and find out how often you can be asked if you “need anything” (read: dope is for dopes) [*sic*]. Guess what? It isn’t a lot different at 7 a.m. or even noon. What has happened to our lovely city? (Tateham, 2004).

The downtown streets are cast as a ceaseless orgy of debauchery, violence, and moral depravity, morning, noon and night. As someone who has walked the streets of the downtown core throughout the year 2004 (in the morning, in the afternoon, and at night), I can personally testify that such a characterization is a gross misrepresentation and hyperbolization. Nonetheless, the readers – many of whom are safely ensconced in their suburban homes – are regaled with an “education” from an urban explorer who has bravely (barely?) ventured out for a “walk into town” and who paints the downtown streets as an inhospitable Frontier. Our traveling hero, after depositing his holy grail of worldly experience for the readers’ edification, then romanticizes a lost and more innocent past as he laments the disappearance of “our lovely city.” In effect, the uncivilized Frontier bites into the Garden of Eden, as the spatialized mythology of “the street” intersects an aesthetic ideology of the “City of Gardens.”

Meanwhile, in the BC provincial legislature, a private member’s bill was tabled for debate. The bill has two elements: the Trespass to Property Act and the Safe Streets Act (British Columbia, 2004a, 2004b). The former Act is intended to update existing legislation by making it an offence to remain on a premises when requested to leave by the property owner or other relevant official. This Act essentially streamlines the power of eviction since the owner would no longer require a court injunction to remove the trespassing offenders. The latter Act would, *inter alia*, ban “aggressive” solicitation and solicitation of a “captive audience.” Indeed, this Act is simply a recapitulation of anti-

panhandling ordinances already on the books in many smaller jurisdictions, and like these ordinances, the targets of this Act are obvious – panhandlers and homeless people. As Michael Vonn, policy director for the BC Civil Liberties Association, argues:

[A]ny enterprising Brownie who attempted to sell cookies to “captives” could be charged. Except that isn’t going to happen. Proponents of this legislation claim that it targets behaviour and not people. But that’s very hard to believe. Everyone knows this law is about panhandling. This isn’t a law for *us*, this is a law for *them*.... It’s designed to be applied in a discriminatory manner. And so, despite being aimed at “them” – who are among our most vulnerable citizens – it takes away from everyone’s rights in a free and democratic society. Give that some thought the next time you find yourself short of change for the bus and dependent on the kindness of strangers (Vonn, 2004: orig. emph.).<sup>14</sup>

As for “aggressive” solicitation, Vonn reiterates the observation that there are already “ample provisions to deal with intimidating and aggressive behaviour in the Criminal Code” (Vonn, 2004). Essentially, what this Act will achieve is to provide oppressive legislation with sweeping application throughout the province, thereby insulating smaller jurisdictions from facing the type of resistance that Winnipeg had faced in 2000. Indeed, while the federal government downloads obligations guaranteed through international treaties – thereby insulating itself from accountability regarding the protection of *inherent rights* such as housing – the provincial government widens the scope of *punitive legislation* in order to liquidate resistance. Property rights are fortified against fundamental human rights enshrined by the international community. Not unexpectedly, the Acts became law in 2004.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In the context of these and similar laws directed against those in poverty, it is worth repeating the poignant remarks of Nobel Laureate Anatole France: “Our citizenship is another occasion for pride. For the poor it consists in supporting and maintaining the rich in their power and their idleness. At this task they must labour in the face of the majestic equality of the laws, which forbid rich and poor alike to sleep under the bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal their bread” (France, 1924: p. 91).

<sup>15</sup> The BC *Safe Streets Act* is modeled after the Ontario *Safe Streets Act* of 1999. The Ontario Act was recently subject to a constitutional challenge with the lawyers for the accused (a panhandler arrested under the Act) arguing, *inter alia*, that elements of the Act contravene sections in the Canadian *Charter*, including sec. 7 (right to life, liberty, and security of the person) and sec. 15 (non-discrimination clause). The challenge was struck down by the Ontario Court of Justice. The court held that, “Poverty in itself is not an analogous ground of discrimination under s.15. Poverty is not immutable, like race, or constructively immutable, like religion. The defendants failed to establish that the Act discriminates against the extremely poor. The restrictions in the Act do not apply only to the poor” (ctd. in Skinnider, 2005: p. 33). Juxtaposed against Anatole France’s satire noted above, the court’s ruling is farcical. Moreover, this ruling is testimony to the way in which poverty is consistently individualized by the privileged classes, and how such an ideology becomes imbricated (institutionalized) in the *structural* workings of our society.

Compare the preceding characterizations drawn from statements made over the last decade with statements concerning the social condition of Victoria taken from a series of editorials in the *Victoria Daily Times* of 1898, when Victoria was still essentially a frontier city trying to attract settlers, a bustling port in the youth of industrial capitalism, and a way-station for gold-seekers on their way to the Klondike:

It is time that Victoria was freed from those blots [visible prostitution and gambling], that those flaunting insults to our citizenship should be repressed, that those hideous moral deformities and sores should be put out of sight and kept out of sight.... [It] threatens to poison the very well-spring of our social institutions – the home (*Victoria Daily Times*, 1898a).

There are whole streets in Victoria infested by those social vermin and the sound of their swinish orgies makes night hideous in more quarters of the city than one.... [T]hose dens of infamy have more entrances than a rabbit warren [and] young boys can slip in and out by any one of them at any hour of the night or day, unobserved, unheeded, even by the police.... They do exist, those gross evils: they constitute the festering cancer that is eating into the social well-being of this community, and which throws into hideous contrast the glorious natural beauty of Victoria (*Victoria Daily Times*, 1898b).

For the third time we call upon the police commissioners of Victoria, and upon the chief of police of the city, to do their duty by putting a stop at once to the parade of the vilest forms of human degradation upon the city streets.... Why should this lovely spot be polluted by vice so coarsely exposed, so rampant and indefensible? (*Victoria Daily Times*, 1898c).

Although the contemporary representations of Victoria's streets are somewhat less explicit in their moralizing, the similarities between the contemporary and the historical versions are striking. In both eras – Victoria the contemporary city and Victoria the frontier city – the streets are depicted as wild, unruly, and uncivilized spaces requiring civic intervention to tame. Indeed, the depiction from 2004 and the second passage from 1898, above, are literally transposable, with very little lost to temporal displacement; both passages even summon an aesthetic ideology in order to legitimize an explicit (1898) or implicit (2004) call for civic intervention. The contemporary citizen of 2004 – overwhelmed by an acute sense of lost authenticity – asks, “What has happened to our lovely city?” Apparently, the streets of “our lovely city” have not changed significantly since the frontier days of the nineteenth century. The panic by residents over the moral order of Victoria's streets in the nineteenth century is reproduced, verbatim, as the

anxiety over Victoria's streets in the modern crisis of homelessness. Elaborating on Cohen's (1972) analysis of "folk devils and moral panics," Sibley describes this recurring tendency to demonize threats to the dominant moral order as the "resonance of historical panics in modern crises." This is worth noting, Sibley says, because

it demonstrates the continuing need to define the contours of normality and to eliminate difference.... Moral panics articulate beliefs about belonging and not belonging, about the sanctity of territory and the fear of transgression. Since panics cannot be sustained for long, however, new ones have to be invented (but they always refer to an old script) (Sibley, 1995: pp. 39, 43).

Hence, the similarities between the contemporary depictions of Victoria's streets in the twenty-first century and the historical versions from the nineteenth century provide testimony not only to the continuity of corporate anxiety over public space, but also, perhaps, to the resilience of "the street" as a signifier for disorder, danger, conflict, and violence in the "old script" and spatialized mythology of the Frontier.

By mythologizing the street as a dangerous and violent Frontier, the residents of Victoria are inoculated from recognizing corporate violence inflicted on homeless citizens. Over the past decade, the City of Victoria has instituted a series of increasingly oppressive policies and bylaws that further restrict the civil liberties of the most disenfranchised individuals in our community. Unable constitutionally to pass oppressive bylaws directed against a particular group of law-abiding citizens, the city has resorted to implementing restrictions through a proxy of the architectural geography of the street, thereby reinventing the unconstitutional vagrancy laws of the past. Meanwhile, police presence is enhanced to appease a fearful public and to enforce newly created bylaws that criminalize non-criminal activity and provide a legal basis for oppression. All of these measures are legitimized through a professed desire to secure the safety of the street for "the public" – to tame an unruly, dangerous, and inherently violent Frontier. Such policies constitute the material and violent outcome of the "narrative of regeneration" discussed in the previous chapter, as homeless citizens –

evicted from meaningful participation in society by an oppressive and violent political economy – are continuously moved along in a forced march to nowhere. The corporate body effects an annihilation of space – both through law and through design – that essentially constitutes an annihilation of the homeless body. Yet, as I have argued above, the annihilation of space – the denial of place – is dialectically predicated on and legitimized through the spaces of denial – an inoculation of “the public” through the spatialized mythology of “the-street-as-Frontier.” These then are the oppressive consequences of a dialectic of denial, as it systematically conceals, wrongfully prohibits, or violently evicts homeless citizens from the architectural geography of Victoria’s streets.

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

In May 2006, eight years after its harsh criticism of Canada's failure to promote and implement the articles of the *International Covenant*, the United Nations conducted another review of Canada's commitment to protect *Covenant* rights (United Nations, 2006). After considering Canada's fourth and fifth periodic reports, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights saw little improvement in Canada's performance and regretted that "most of [the Committee's] 1993 and 1998 recommendations in relation to the second and third periodic reports have not been implemented" (*Ibid*: para. 11). The "principal subjects of concern" reiterated by the Committee include, *inter alia*, the following (United Nations, 2006):

[Para.] 14. The Committee notes with concern the cuts in financial support to civil legal aid services with regard to economic, social and cultural rights in a number of jurisdictions of the State party. This leads to a situation where poor people, in particular poor single women, who are denied benefits and services to which they are entitled to under domestic law, cannot access domestic remedies. The drastic cuts in British Columbia raise particular concern in this regard.

15. ... The Committee also notes with particular concern that poverty rates remain very high among disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups such as Aboriginal peoples, African Canadians, immigrants, persons with disabilities, youth, low-income women and single mothers. In a number of jurisdictions, including British Columbia, poverty rates have increased among single mothers and children in the period between 1998 and 2003....

18. The Committee notes with concern that the minimum wages in all provinces and territories of the State party are below the Low-Income Cut-Off and are insufficient to enable workers and their families to enjoy a decent standard of living.

24. ... The Committee is also concerned that women continue to be forced to relinquish their children into foster care because of inadequate housing.

28. ... The Committee, while welcoming the decrease in the proportion of households with core housing need, notes with concern that in 2001 such households still represented about 13.7 to 16 per cent of all households. The Committee is further concerned that shelter allowances and social assistance rates continue to fall far below average rental costs, and the waiting lists for subsidized housing remain very long, for example, in Hamilton and Montreal.

Among its many recommendations, the Committee emphasized that federal, provincial and territorial legislation "be brought in line with the State party's obligations under the *Covenant*, and that such legislation should protect poor people in all jurisdictions from discrimination because of their social or economic status" (*Ibid*: para. 39). Furthermore,

in the context of the proliferation of homelessness, the Committee reiterated its recommendation that

federal, provincial and territorial governments address homelessness and inadequate housing as a national emergency by reinstating or increasing, where necessary, social housing programmes for those in need, improving and properly enforcing anti-discrimination legislation in the field of housing [and] increasing shelter allowances and social assistance rates to realistic levels (*Ibid*: para. 62).

Given Canada's poor record of implementing the Committee's recommendations in the past, however, a comprehensive national programme of guaranteeing *all* citizens access to secure, adequate, and appropriate housing will likely not be forthcoming soon.

Canada's blatant disregard for *Covenant* rights and its egregious failure to provide all Canadians with the necessities for dignified living – including housing – is a serious violation of its obligations as enshrined in international treaties. Such violations are not merely a question of semantics, such as disagreements over the definitions of poverty; they have very real and material consequences for the well-being of millions of Canadian citizens, and they seriously undermine the fight for progressive social justice. International standards for human rights exist, in part, to provide a framework by which State parties may promote social justice while respecting individual liberty, promote peace while respecting debate, and promote equality while respecting difference. They also exist as recognition that social injustice is a consequence of inequality and disempowerment manifest in oppressive social ills such as racism, sexism, poverty, and homelessness. For, indeed, the foundation of these standards lies in the recognition that “these rights derive from the inherent dignity of the human person” (United Nations, 1966: Preamble), not from an ascribed status defined along lines of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, birth, or property. (United Nations, 1948: art. 2). Herein lies one of the primary axioms for social justice: a recognition that all members of the human family are endowed with *inherent dignity, reason, and conscience* (*Ibid*: art. 1). As such, it behooves all states, including Canada, to protect all persons from the deprivation, exploitation, and indignity manifest in poverty

and homelessness, or as per the *International Covenant*, to ensure the realization of “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions” (United Nations, 1966: art. 11.1).

Throughout this thesis I have argued that poverty and homelessness are, ultimately, not individual outcomes of personal failing or random misfortune, but rather structural outcomes of an oppressive political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice. The privileged classes – who benefit from the political economy and control the various levels of government – maintain the status quo by redirecting issues of gross inequality and poverty into arguments of individual responsibility and self-sufficiency. By deflecting the poverty debate into the visible homeless body, the privileged classes reduce poverty to an individual concern and effectively insulate themselves from popular dissent and international obligations. Blame is deflected onto the victims by emphasizing individual pathologies or proximate circumstances – such as mental illness or family dysfunction – as the primary explanations for their homelessness.

Yet, the proliferation of homelessness – the publicly *visible* outcome of abject poverty and rampant inequality – is an extreme contradiction in a society as wealthy as our own. Consequently, to attenuate this contradiction and to arrest awareness of systemic injustice, the strategy of spuriously blaming the victims for their homelessness is paralleled and supported by an equally oppressive strategy of spatially regulating the visibility of homeless individuals. Through the implementation of regressive legislation, oppressive urban planning, and exclusionary architectural design, the offending contradiction – the visible and abject homeless body – is systematically concealed, wrongfully prohibited, or violently evicted from private and public space. Indeed, not only are homeless Canadian citizens *denied* a fundamental right to a private space of

secure, adequate, and affordable housing as guaranteed by the *Covenant*, they are also *denied* fundamental political and physical rights to the public spaces of the city.

In this thesis I have attempted to document, highlight, and explain – within the context of other exclusionary practices – some of the spatial and architectural strategies deployed by the government and the privileged classes to unjustly exclude and violently evict homeless citizens from the spaces of the city. As a requisite foundation, I have dedicated much of the discussion to the marshalling of theories that not only explain why homeless individuals are so loathed in society, but also how such loathing becomes manifest as spatialized exclusion. Homelessness is not an individual outcome but a social process of marginalization and violence legitimized through the psychology of abjection. The abject homeless body – abstracted from the constituency of the “public” – represents a destabilizing rift in social identity; and the *visibility* of this body, in turn, provokes fear and loathing in the “people” and engenders aversive, oppressive, and violent reactions from the “public.” Abjection, however, is not merely restricted to a homeless person’s body. It may also be spatialized as deviance, where disjunctures between spatial context and the alternative spatial practices of homeless people provide evidence for their moral depravity and their threat to social cohesion. The spatialization of abjection points to the constitutive relationship between a society and its space: spaces are *produced* by society to *reproduce* expected spatial practices and hence a specified set of social relations. Architecture, as a spatial product, is instrumental in structuring and reproducing these dominant spatial practices. Alternatively, spaces are creatively used and reinterpreted by homeless individuals to suit immediate needs and the need to assert meaning in the oppression of their daily lives. These creative spatializations will often challenge, contradict, or resist the dominating spaces produced by society.

Consequently, in the architectural geography of the street, the persistent marginalization and violence perpetrated against homeless citizens are manifest as a struggle over the proper *use* of the space. To document this struggle, I have presented

empirical evidence that not only demonstrates the applicability of the theory deployed, but also highlights and reiterates the violence and oppression exacted against the most disadvantaged citizens in our community. I have outlined a variety of strategies that operate through a range of geographical and jurisdictional scales. A brief synopsis of the primary arguments follows:

1) In the Capital Region of Victoria, perceptions of homelessness are framed by two prominent and pervasive ideologies: an urban ideology and an aesthetic ideology. Whereas an urban ideology naturalizes homelessness as an “urban problem” intrinsic to an alienating and complex urban environment, an aesthetic ideology collapses urban complexities into the domesticated contours of well-tended gardens and historical nostalgia. In effect, Victoria is mythologized as a “Garden of Eden” and a “Heritage City” where contemporary “urban problems” are disavowed as sinfully and anachronistically out of place.

2) Working dialectically, these pervasive ideologies legitimize uneven development and spatial exclusion at a regional level. By blaming urbanization for the proliferation of homelessness and other “urban problems,” various neighbourhoods and municipalities vociferously defend their communities from urbanization and justify the uneven development of essential services and affordable housing. Meanwhile, the heritage and tourist industries map the city for touristic rituals, thereby creating itineraries of exclusion in the spaces of the city. In effect, “sacred objects” become visual containment areas – or “tourist bubbles” – for the touristic gaze. It is within these tourist bubbles that homelessness – the absolute antithesis to legitimate consumption and an untenable contradiction to Victoria’s mythologized image – is deemed out of place.

3) At a finer scale, the architectural geography of the street itself is inscribed with the Frontier Myth in order to legitimize the violent exclusion of out-of-place homeless individuals from the visible spaces of the city. In Victoria, this Myth is deployed in two primary policy contexts: “urban revitalization” and “public safety.” In the context of urban revitalization, the Frontier Myth functions to ideologically veil the visible presence of the homeless body itself on the streets of the downtown core. Downtown Victoria is imagined as an abandoned and empty ghost town awaiting (re)settlement by the regenerative spirits and long pockets of the privileged classes. Such an image is violently enforced through repeated evictions of prominent squats and, more commonly, through the continuous dispersal of homeless citizens from the visible spaces of downtown streets. In the context of public safety, the Frontier Myth functions to legitimize corporate oppression by casting the street as a dangerous and violent Frontier. The streets are portrayed as disorderly and violent spaces requiring civic intervention to secure the safety of residents and tourists. Both of these mythical representations – “the-street-as-frontier” and “downtown-as-ghost-town” – work dialectically to disavow homelessness and legitimize corporate oppression, societal violence, and spatial exclusion.

4) By rendering the street as an inherently dangerous and violent Frontier lying at the threshold of civilized society, the residents of Victoria are effectively inoculated from recognizing their own complicit toleration of (and participation in) violent and oppressive corporate strategies aimed at taming this Frontier wilderness. In effect, the violence inflicted on homeless citizens by society is externalized from the corporate body and confined to the mythical realm of the Frontier as ascribed to “the street.” Not only is homelessness itself disavowed in the “City of Gardens,” the material violence inflicted on homeless citizens is likewise disavowed.

5) The violent spatial exclusion legitimized and facilitated by the Frontier Myth is effected by annihilating the spaces where homeless people can physically exist. Indeed, to achieve closure – to secure identity, cohesion, and unity from the threat embodied by the corporeality of out-of-place homeless individuals – the corporate body must somehow annihilate the corporeal homeless body itself, rend(er) it nonexistent and placeless. The corporate body, therefore, attempts to annihilate homelessness by annihilating its space. The annihilation of this space generally takes two forms: an annihilation of space by design, which physically makes it difficult for a homeless person to be in any particular place; and an annihilation of space by law, which regulates space through the forcible removal of the corporeal homeless body itself. In Victoria, these violent spatial strategies have become more prominent and increasingly oppressive over the past decade-and-a-half. From ad hoc or intentional design elements such as the ubiquitous fence or new street furniture, to progressively violent and exclusionary policies and legislation, homeless citizens in Victoria are persistently subjected to societal violence and consistently required to “move along” in a forced march to nowhere.

6) Finally, these progressively violent strategies of spatial exclusion are paralleled and supported by other forms of exclusion exacted against homeless citizens. Indeed, the various exclusionary practices – whether they be epistemological, social, economic, political, or spatial – are dialectically related and mutually supportive of an oppressive and marginalizing socio-spatial regime. Together, they sustain an *edifice of exclusion* which structures all references to poverty and homelessness in our society, whether they be conceptual (such as poverty statistics) or material (such as the body of a homeless citizen on the street). Such exclusion is legitimized and justified by a slavish devotion to an oppressive political economy that *produces* poverty and homelessness – a political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice.

Ultimately, this thesis is fundamentally about *denial*: a denial that homelessness is a violent outcome of an oppressive political economy; a denial regarding the inherent violence of policies and legislation designed to spatially regulate homeless bodies; and a denial of fundamental political and spatial rights to the city for homeless citizens. In effect, the visibility of abject homelessness is regulated through an oppressive and violent spatial dialectic, in which the *spaces of denial* – an inoculation of society – dialectically enables a *denial of place* – an annihilation of the spaces occupied by homeless citizens.

This thesis, however, is far from complete and far from adequate in its treatment of the complexities characterizing homelessness on the street. The silences and gaps that perforate my analysis are oppressive in themselves. Homelessness and poverty, for example, are defined along racial and gender lines. In Canada, women and First Nations people are disproportionately represented in poverty statistics. Consequently, any analysis that does not take into account these axes of difference will be incomplete at best. A more rigorous treatment of homelessness in the architectural geography of the street must include an analysis of the spatial implications of sexism and racism in our society. Although my own analysis fails to account fully for these implications, I would hope that my discussion provides an opening into investigations that are more sensitive to the palimpsest of inequalities in our society.

Also missing from my analysis is a proper treatment of agency. My discussion is primarily concerned with spatialized exclusion and domination perpetrated against homeless people in the architectural geography of the street. Although I have established a theoretical basis for agency, my analysis would benefit substantially from an empirical investigation of how homeless people spatially resist their oppression and how such resistance can effect political change. Both Lees (2003) and Goss (1996) reveal the ambivalence of space, and how such ambivalence can create opportunities for progressive and effective politics. So too, Wright (1996) has dealt extensively with spatialized

agency as manifest in homeless mobilizations and squats. Such analyses highlight and reiterate the enunciative power of “poaching” (to use de Certeau’s terminology) on the discursive spaces of an urban system.

Despite the silences and limitations, however, perhaps this thesis has helped to highlight and reiterate the violence and oppression exacted against the most disadvantaged citizens in our communities. Homelessness (and the spatialized oppression attendant to homelessness) is a barbarous outcome of an inherently violent political economy that favours individual self-sufficiency, exploitation, and the accumulation of private capital over mutual responsibility, social equality, and distributive justice. As a society, we live not so much in a democracy, as a plutocracy: government by and for the rich. For indeed, the various exclusionary practices of the privileged classes (whether they be epistemological, social, political, economic, or spatial) is ultimately an assault on some of the most fundamental and cherished principles of a democratic society. The conscience of any person concerned about “a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want” (United Nations, 1948: Preamble) should be outraged at the disregard and contempt for fundamental human dignity and rights manifest in the violence of homelessness and poverty. Indeed, is anyone in the human family ever truly home when others are forced into extreme deprivation and then allowed to suffer. The slopes of justice are slippery, and if we as a society tolerate the oppressive exclusion of those in need from an adequate standard of living, from a private space of safe, adequate housing, and from access to the democratic and public spaces of our communities, no one is secure from the exploitation and the violence that this political economy inflicts on those who do not conform to its imperatives of greed and private profit. Such an ethic can only be sustained at the expense of progressive social justice – at the expense of a truly caring, compassionate, and humane society.

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