

The Return of the Repressed

Riots, "Race" and Dualization in three advanced societies * by Loïc Wacquant

In the expansionary decades following the mid-twentieth-century traumas of depression and war, the rich countries of the capitalist West came to think of themselves as peaceful, cohesive, and egalitarian societies—in a word, as civilized in both the ordinary, morally effusive, meaning of the term denoting the most accomplished form of culture and human life, and in Norbert Elias's (1978) sense of "civilizing" as engaged in a long-term process of restructuring of social relations entailing the extension of chains of interdependencies, the multiplication of organizations, and the pacification of social exchange via the monopolization of the use of public violence by a centralized bureaucratic state.

Advanced nation-states such as the United States, France, and Great Britain also embraced a vision of themselves as increasingly democratic in Tocqueville's understanding of the term, that is, oriented towards the ineluctable reduction of inequalities of condition, particularly those derived from "ascribed" positions and identities. Indeed, one of the most salient dimensions of the self-understanding of First World societies during the immediate postwar period was that inherited statuses, such as class, ethnicity, or "race," were increasingly irrelevant for access to valued social locations and the attendant bundle of life chances. (1) Mass consumption, the supposed embourgeoisement of the working class, the growing weight of educational credentials in the competitive allocation of persons in an increasingly differentiated occupational structure, the diffusion of liberal individualism: together these factors promised to usher in an unprecedented era of personal well-being and social comity. Two books, published simultaneously in 1960 in the United States, may be taken as emblematic projections of this emerging societal vision, as revealed their titles: W.W. Rostow's (1960) *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* and Daniel Bell's (1960) *The End of Ideology*. Sociology gave a scholarly expression to this belief by elaborating the notion of "meritocracy." In the United States, a whole school of stratification research (based at the University of Wisconsin, Madison) labored to formalize this vision of an increasing fluid and porous class structure by making "status attainment" the conceptual backbone of countless studies of "opportunity." (2)

During the same period, it became widely accepted that the more extreme forms of inequality in basic life circumstances had been or were about to be alleviated, if not eradicated, by the wide provision of public goods, such as education, health, and housing, through the arm of the welfare state—in the case of Western European countries—or via the trickle-down effects of sustained free market growth and targeted programs of assistance—in



Abandoned housing near Saint Paul, Bristol, UK

the United States. Buoyed by industrial consolidation and by the continued expansion of newer services sectors, First-World societies came to construe poverty as a mere residue of past inequities and backwardness or as the product of individual deficiencies liable to remedy, at any rate a phenomenon bound to recede and disappear with the full "modernization" of the country. (3) Thus, on the even

of the sixties, the economist John Kenneth Galbraith (1958) characteristically called poverty an "afterthought" and an anomaly in U.S. society. True, the so-called "islets" of poverty were rather populous, since there were still tens of millions of poor people in America, among whom a disproportionate number of blacks, but they would not remain so for long: when he launched the "War on Poverty" in 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson proudly announced that the United States would eradicate poverty by the year 1976, so that the bicentennial of the country would also herald the birth of the first "society of affluence" in history. In France, at about the same time, the equally rosy horizon of a "New society" was being beamed by the hegemonic Gaullist party under Jacques Chaban-Delmas's leadership, later to be refurbished as the promise of "advanced liberal society" by President Giscard d'Estaing, whose labor minister had published a best-seller proclaiming that one can "vanquish poverty in the rich countries" (Stoléru 1974). As Sinfield (1980: 93) notes, through the 1970s, there was "no poverty debate in France," no political mobilization around the issue as well as no official policy to combat it.

The obsolescence of class was presumed to apply equally to ethnicity and "race" (or postcolonial divisions). (4) To varying degrees, First World societies also took to seeing themselves as "nonethnic" social formations, increasingly homogenous and unified as gemeinschaftliche relations founded on ancestry, region, and culture gave way to instrumental affiliations based on interest, occupational specialization, and the functional imperatives of a complex technological economy. Assimilation for all was the order the day (Gordon 1961) and adoption of the national cultural patterns seemingly the only available course for outgroups that lived in, or entered into, these societies (Hirschman 1983).

By thus eliding the question of ethnicity, the ideologues of advanced society marched in the steps of classical and contemporary social science. Did not Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim, progenitors of the two main rival currents of sociology, agree that capitalist industrialization would result in the replacement of traditional social bonds by impersonal forms of identification and belonging rooted in commodity relations and increasingly abstract civic ideals? Likewise, the two paradigms of social change that dominated social science in the postwar era, structural-functionalism (and its offshoot modernization theory) and developmental Marxism (led by the work of the Latin American dependistas and world-system theory) postulated that ethnicity and race were fated to be eroded and eventually disappear. Thus, for the advocates of modernization such as David McLelland, Alex Inkeles, and Daniel Lerner (1958), the "passing of traditional society" logically implied the dissolution of

ascribed social ties and the concurrent emergence of the free, enterprising, "achieving" individual, due to the rise of literacy, technology, and the mass media (5). For defenders of various Marxist theories of societal transformation, from André Gunder Frank and Fernando Enríque Cardoso to Immanuel Wallerstein, class formation was to wash away ethnicity and create a global class structure—eventuating, in the vision proposed by Wallerstein (1983), in a transition towards a "socialist world order." Various theories of postindustrial society shared these assumptions and similarly conceived ethnracial divisions, not as enduring bases of social structuring endowed with their own dynamic, but as "backward," reactive, or derivative principles of grouping, transitory impediments in the natural course of modern society towards universalism (Kumar 1995). (6)

Violence from below: Race Riots or Bread Revolts?

Over the past two decades, this self-image of the First World was shattered by spectacular outbursts of public unrest, rising ethnic tensions, and mounting destitution and distress at the heart of large cities. Far from witnessing a resorption of poverty and an erosion of ethnonational affiliations, advanced societies have been plagued by the concurrent spread of "new poverty" and the surge—or resurgence—of racializing ideologies often accompanied by violent conflicts directly involving youths in lower-class neighborhoods (Wilson 1987, Mingione 1993). Three instances of urban disruption in France, England, and the United States among many illustrate the phenomenon. (7)

October 1990 in Vaulx-en-Velin, a drab and quiet working-class town of the periphery of Lyon, France: several hundred youths, many of them second-generation immigrants from the Maghrib, take to the streets to confront police after a neighborhood teenager dies in a motorcycle accident caused by a patrol car. For three days and nights, they clash with law enforcement officials and the Compagnies Républicaines de Sécurité (CRS, riot brigades) hastily dispatched by the government, pelting police vans with rocks, ransacking shops, and setting two hundred cars on fire. When calm finally returns, tens of injured are counted, damage is estimated at some 120 million dollars, and the country is in a state of shock. The long-simmering rage of the banlieues—declining peripheral areas with high densities of degraded public housing—zooms to the top of the political agenda and will dominate public debate for years on end. (8)

July 1992 in Bristol, England: a nearly identical chain of events triggers several nights of rioting on the Hartcliffe estate, a dilapidated industrial district on the southern edge of town. Violence breaks out after two local teenagers joyriding on a stolen police

motorcycle are killed in a collision with an unmarked police car. Later that night, some hundred youths go on a rampage through the local shopping center. When police counterattack, they are showered with bricks and stones, steel balls, scaffolding, and gasoline bombs. The confrontation quickly spills throughout the neighborhood. Over five hundred elite troops have to be called in to restore order to a one-square-kilometer area temporarily turned urban guerrilla zone. Similar large-scale incidents break out that same summer in Coventry, Manchester, Salford, Blackburn, and Birmingham. (9)

April 1992 in Los Angeles: the acquittal of four white police officers implicated in the brutal videotaped beating of Rodney King, a defenseless black motorist arrested after a car chase, sets off an explosion of civil violence unmatched in American history in the twentieth century. In the ghetto of South Central, white motorists are snatched out their cars and beaten, stores are vandalized, police cars are overturned and set aflame. The Korean-owned liquor outlets, swapmeets and markets that dot the area are targeted for systematic destruction. So overwhelming is the eruption that neither firefighters nor the police can prevent the torching of thousands of buildings. Rioting promptly mushrooms outwards as scenes of mass looting multiply. A state of emergency is proclaimed and seven thousand federal troops, including 1,200 Marines, are drafted in and deployed. Sniper fire and shootings between rioters, police, and storeowners who take up arms to defend their shops bring the death toll to forty-five. By the end of the third day of upheaval, nearly 2,400 have suffered injury and over 10,000 are under arrest; a thousand families have lost their homes and 20,000 their jobs. Total destruction is estimated at a staggering one billion dollars.

These outbursts of collective violence are but three drawn from a list of urban disturbances too long to enumerate. (10) Most of the disorders, big and small, that have shaken up the French working-class banlieue, the British inner city, and the ghettos and barrios of North America have involved chiefly the youths of impoverished, segregated, and often dilapidated urban neighborhoods caught in a spiral of decline; they appear to have been fueled by growing ethnorracial tensions in and around those areas. Thus the dominant interpretation in media accounts as in political debates has been that they are essentially "race riots" expressive of animosity against, or between, the ethnic and/or immigrant "minorities" of these countries (Cross and Keith 1993, Gooding-Williams 1993).

There is much, on the surface of things, to support this view. The Europe of the 1980s was indeed swept by a seemingly unstoppable wave of xenophobic sentiment in the public sphere if not in everyday life. (11) In France, long-covert "anti-Arab" hostility burst out in the

open (Silverman 1990) and fueled a reported increase in racist assaults. It has found a political expression in the xenophobic populism of the National Front (Husbands 1991), which in turn stimulated the growth of a wide "anti-racist" movement, symbolized by the irruption on the public scene of the activist group SOS-Racisme (incubated under the wing of the Socialist Party). In Great Britain, antagonism between black West Indians, South-East Asians, and whites has flared up in repeated street confrontations and grown more acrimonious. Debates about street crime and police brutality have been racialized to the extent that public unrest and violence are increasingly openly perceived and treated as essentially "black problems" (Solomos 1988). Meanwhile in the United States a society-wide backlash against the gains made by so-called minorities (mainly African-Americans but also, secondarily, Latinos and some Native and Asian groups) in the wake of the Civil Rights confrontations of the 1960s has led to a noticeable deterioration of race relations recorded inter alia by an escalation in racially-motivated or "hate" crime, a generalized fear of black males in public space (Anderson 1990), interethnic incidents on university campuses, or yet the blatant exploitation of anti-black feelings in local and national political campaigns (Franklin 1992). And while Europe has become haunted by the specter of the crystallization of American-style "ghettos" on its soil, the United States has been consumed by nightmarish visions of a so-called "underclass," a fearsome group said to have coalesced at the heart of the segregated metropolis which epitomizes all the urban pathologies of North America. (12)

In all three countries, then, urban violence and collective unrest have come to be closely linked, if not equated, in the public mind with ethnorracial division and/or immigration. In the United States, this association is a long standing one, dating from to the era of black urbanization after Emancipation, if not further back, and it is periodically reactivated during periods of economic contraction or social conflict. In Europe, this connection is more recent, even as it has proved ideologically powerful in the rocky socioeconomic conjuncture opened by the sweep of deindustrialization and economic recessions in the mid-1970s. Nonetheless, several elements suggest that the label "race riot" is misleading and hides another, deeper, phenomenon, mixed with it in different proportions.

The collective urban disorders of the 1980s and 1990s are not a simple extension of traditional racial uprisings such as the United States has experienced throughout the last century (Young 1970). Contrary to the ambient discourse of journalism and certain magazine-inspired sociology, we are not witnessing an "Americanization" of urban poverty and protest, a mutation in the regime of urban marginality



A typical building (called a "barre") in the estate of Les Quatre Mille



Crumbling buildings and urban desertification on Chicago's South Side

that would herald an epochal transatlantic convergence between the two continents (Wacquant 1992a). A closer look at their anatomy suggests that these urban disorders led by lower-class youths have, to a varying extent depending on the country, combined two logics: a logic of protest against ethnoracial injustice rooted in discriminatory treatment—of a stigmatized quasi-caste in the United States, of “Arab” and other “colored” migrants come from the former colonies in France and Great Britain—and a class logic pushing the impoverished fractions of the working class to rise up against economic deprivation and widening social inequalities with the most effective, if not the only, weapon at their disposal, namely direct confrontation with the authorities and forcible disruption of civil life (13) .

As a period of neoliberal restructuring following the throes of stagflation, the 1980s were the decade of the slow maturing of mixed riots—mixed in terms of their dynamics and goals as well as by virtue of their multi-ethnic composition. For, contrary to media portrayals, neither the declining French banlieues nor the degraded British inner cities are solely or even predominantly populated by immigrants and those who partook in unrest in them were more often than not recruited across a kaleidoscope of ethnic lines. While youths issued from Maghrebine or West-Indian immigration have assumed the lead in the urban clashes that have rocked France and England during those years, they acted in concert with, and with the active support of, the offspring of native European families residing in formerly industrial neighborhoods now lying fallow. And their demands are those of working-class youths everywhere: decent jobs, good schools, affordable or improved housing, access to basic public services, and fair treatment by the police and other agencies of the state (Jazouli 1992). They have nothing “ethnic” about them.

Similarly, during the riots of South-Central L.A., the thousands who pilfered merchandise from burning supermarkets and mini-malls were far from being all black: over half of the first 5,000 arrests were Latinos and another 10% whites. The uprising was not exclusively an Afro-American outcry against gross racial discrimination perpetrated by the police and further affirmed by an egregious miscarriage of justice (the blanket acquittal of the white policemen involved in the beating of Rodney King by an exclusively white jury). It was also and inseparably a “bread revolt” against grinding poverty and the severe aggravation in daily living conditions brought on by economic recession and cutbacks in government programs, as testified by the televised scenes of Latinos but also Asians and whites milling about ransacked stores in search of free goods. As one of the city’s seasoned observers put it, “the nation’s first multiracial riot

was as much about empty bellies and broken hearts as it was about police batons and Rodney King.” (14).

Violence from above: Deproletarianization, Relegation, Stigmatization

It is tempting to view outbreaks of collective violence “from below” as symptoms of moral crisis, pathologies of the lower class, or as so many signs of the impending societal breakdown of “law and order.” Thus the typical responses of the English authorities to the wave of violent incidents that rocked the cities of the Midlands in the summer of 1992 was to bemoan the deviant behavior and amorality of lower elements of the working class. After the Bristol riots, politicians vied to blame “mindless hooliganism” fueled by alcohol, even though the residents of Hartcliffe agreed that hostility between youths and police had been building up for months; that no “hooligan” was ever spotted or arrested during the riots; and that consumption of alcohol on the nights of the disorder was not above normal. Similarly, in the United States, the loathsome tale of the “underclass” has provided a low-cost, depoliticized, ready-made discourse with which to account for the relentless rise of violence in and around the ghetto since the mass upheavals of the sixties. Indeed such violence has been widely seen as definite proof of the existence of that group defined precisely by its antisocial behaviors.

Yet close comparative analysis of their timing, makeup, and unfolding shows that, far from being irrational expressions of impenitent incivility or pathological atavism, the public disorders caused by dispossessed youths in the cities of Europe and the United States over the past dozen years constitute a (socio-)logical response to the massive structural violence unleashed upon them by a set of mutually reinforcing economic and sociopolitical changes. These changes have resulted in a polarization of the class structure which, combined with ethnoracial segregation and welfare state retrenchment, has produced a dualization of the metropolis that has consigned large sections of the unskilled labor force to economic redundancy and social marginality. (15) This violence “from above” has three main components:

- 1. mass unemployment, both chronic and persistent, amounting, for entire segments of the working class, to deproletarianization and the diffusion of labor precariousness bringing in their wake a whole train of material deprivation, family hardship, and personal difficulties;***
- 2. relegation in decaying neighborhoods in which public and private resources dimin-***

ish just as the social fall of working-class households and the settlement of immigrant populations intensifies competition for access to scarce public goods;

3. heightened stigmatization in daily life as well as in public discourse, increasingly linked not only to class and ethnic origins but also to the fact of residing in a degraded and degrading neighborhood.

These three forces have proved all the more noxious for combining against the backdrop of a general upswing in inequality. Far from representing a peripheral by-product of a "Third-worldization" of rich countries or regressions towards premodern forms of sociopolitical conflict, this return of the repressed realities of poverty, collective violence, and ethnoracial divisions issued from the colonial past at the heart of the First-World city must be understood as the result of the uneven, disarticulating development of the most advanced sectors of capitalist societies, whose manifestations are therefore quite unlikely to abate soon (16).

Unlike previous phases of economic growth, the uneven expansion of the 1980s, where it occurred at all, failed to "lift all boats" and issued instead a deepening schism between rich and poor, and between those stably employed in the core, skilled sectors of the economy and individuals trapped at the margins of an increasingly insecure, low-skill, service labor market, and first among them the youths of neighborhoods of relegation. (17) In the United States, this gap has grown so pronouncedly that it is readily palpable on the streets of big cities, where beggars and the homeless became a common sight in the 1980s even in lavish business districts, and in the extremes of luxury and destitution, high society and dark ghetto, that have flourished and decayed side by side. Thus, while the share of national wealth owned by the richest one percent of Americans doubled in a decade, jumping from 17.6% in 1976 to 36.3% in 1989, more people lived under the official "poverty line" in 1992 than at any time since 1964: 36 million, including one of every three black or Latino households.

In France, income inequality grew for the first time in the postwar era in spite of a host of social transfer measures targeted on deprived categories implemented by successive Socialist government. As the ranks of the "Golden Boys" bulged at the Palais Brogniard along with the unprecedented appreciation in stocks and real estate values, so did those of the unemployed, the homeless, and the destitute. Today, according to official estimates regularly broadcast by the media, over three million French people live in poverty, 300,000 are deprived of regular housing, and half-a-million are recipients of the national guaranteed minimum income plan (RMI) hastily instituted in 1988 in an effort to curb rising

destitution. On the national news, reports on conflicts between "bosses" and "workers" going on strike to defend their wages and social rights have been replaced by stories about delinquency and somber assessments of the predicament of Rmistes (recipients of the RMI, a term coined to capture the new reality of quasi-permanent rejection from the wage labor sphere). In Great Britain supply-side economics and rollbacks in social expenditures by the state have likewise caused a redistribution of wealth upwards and a sharp divergence of living standards between working class and upper class as well as between provinces. The Northern sections of the country has been dramatically impoverished, as the regional economies of major industrial centers such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow crumbled. So much so that some analysts took to comparing the provinces of the North of England to the Italian mezzogiorno to highlight the growing national dualism.

Employment shifts from manufacturing to education-intensive jobs, on the one side, and to deskilled services positions on the other, the impact of electronic and automation technologies in factories and even in white-collar sectors such as insurance and banking, the erosion of unions and social protection have combined to produce a simultaneous destruction, casualization, and degradation of work for the residents of the dispossessed districts of the large cities. For many of them, economic restructuring has brought not simply loss of income or erratic employment: it has meant outright denial of access to wage-earning activities, that is, deproletarianization. Thus most West European countries have witnessed a steady rise not only in unemployment—the average rate in the European Community increased from 2.9 % in 1974 to nearly 11% in 1987—but, more significantly, in the number of the long-term unemployed who come overwhelmingly from the lower class. By the early 1990s, the proportion of jobless without employ for a year or more exceeded three-fourths in Belgium, one-half in the Netherlands, and 45% in France and the United Kingdom. The comparable figure of 8% for the United States is misleading because its measurement is different (it suffices to work one hour in a month to be counted as "employed") and it hides enormous variations across categories and locations: in many inner-city areas, effective jobless rates among adults hover well above 50% and for many exclusion from formal employment lasts for years and even decades. Survival based on a mix of casual labor, welfare support and illegal activities trumps regular wage labor participation. (18)

The persistent permanent exclusion from wage labor of a segment of the working class and the correlative growth of the informal economy in declining urban areas are two converging indicators of the formation, at the core of First-World cities, of what Fern-

ando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1979) called an "excess reserve army of labor," for whom economic advancement translates into a regression of material conditions and a curtailment of life chances. Witness the spread of hunger or malnutrition (attested by the prosperity of "soup kitchens" and assorted food banks) and the reappearance of bygone contagious diseases such as tuberculosis in the flagging neighborhoods of relegation of New York, Paris and London.

Just as their economies underwent deindustrialization and globalization, advanced countries have absorbed a fresh influx (or the definitive settlement) of immigrants from the Third World who are typically channeled into those very neighborhoods where economic opportunities and collective resources are steadily diminishing. (19) The formation of a worldwide space of circulation of capital over the past three decades has led to the knitting of a global network of labor circulation that has reshaped the population and brought in large

Whether or not the arrival of the new immigrants has accelerated the partial deproletarianization of the native working classes by providing a substitute pool of pliable labor needed by the expanding deskilled service sectors is unclear. What is beyond doubt is that their concentration in the segregated and degraded lower-income neighborhoods has accentuated the social and spatial polarization in the city because it occurred at a time when, thanks largely to state support of individual housing through urban planning and fiscal policy, the middle classes were fleeing mixed urban areas and relocating in protected territories where they benefit from a higher level of public services (France), provision their basic household needs on the private market (United States), or enjoy a mix of superior public and private goods (England). Spatial segregation intensifies hardship by accumulating in isolated urban enclaves downwardly mobile families of the native working class and immigrant populations of mixed nationalities who are young, economically fragile, and equally deprived of readily marketable skills in the core of the new economy. Thus, over half of Vaulx-en-Verin's 45,000 residents in 1990 lived in large, cheerless public housing projects, and one in four were of foreign origin; over 40% were under age twenty and one-third of all adults could not find employment. Government programs of training and job search assistance are unable to help youths gain a firm foothold in the shrinking and fragmenting labor market, and sports and cultural activities can provide only so much diversion. Similarly, joblessness among inhabitants of South Bristol ages 16 to 25 at the time of the riots stood at 50% and had risen with the increased presence of foreign families. The crime rate in Hartcliffe—among the highest in England at the time—was in no small part due to the severe dearth of community resources and of recreational facilities needed to keep youths occupied when trapped in the social void between school and work. Turning to the United States, between 1978 and 1990, the County of Los Angeles lost 200,000 jobs, most of them high-wage unionized positions in industry, just as it received an infusion of nearly one million immigrants. Many of these jobs were lost to minority residents of South Central and to inner-city communities where public investment and programs were being aggressively curtailed (Johnson et al. 1992). As a consequence, in 1992 unemployment in South Central exceeded 60% among young Latinos and blacks and the illegal drug economy had become the most reliable source of employment for many of them.

Such cumulating of social ills and the narrowing of the economic horizon explain the atmosphere of drabness, ennui, and despair that pervades poor communities in large Western cities and the oppressive climate of insecurity and fear that poisons daily life in the



Inside the public housing complex of Les Quatre Mille in La Courneuve (northeast of Paris)

numbers of fresh migrants into the big cities of Europe and North America (Fassman and Münz 1996, Portes 1999). These "new immigrants," as they are often called to distinguish them from the transatlantic migration chains that primarily connected the Old and the New Worlds until the middle of the twentieth century, originate mainly in former colonies of Western Europe or in the economic and political satellite countries of the United States. They tend to congregate in the poorer neighborhoods of large urban centers, those where housing is cheaper, where they can more easily gain a foothold in the informal and entrepreneurial sectors of the economy, and where networks of compatriots or coethnics provide critical assistance in the process of adaptation to life in the new country (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, Castles 1993).

black American ghetto (Wacquant 1992b). Residents of these neighborhoods feel that they and their children have little chance to know a future other than the poverty and exclusion to which they are consigned at present. Added to this sense of social closure is the rage felt by unemployed urban youths due to the taint befalling residents of decaying urban areas as their neighborhoods become denigrated as hellish breeding grounds of "social pathologies." Youths of Maghrebine origins in the Northern district of Marseilles, their counterparts issued from Jamaica and Pakistan in London's Brixton, and blacks trapped on Chicago's South Side do not suffer only from material deprivation—shared, in the ethnically mixed areas of urban Europe, with their white neighbors—and from the ambient ethnoracial or ethnonational enmity: they must also bear the weight of the public scorn that is now everywhere attached to living in locales widely labeled as "no-go areas," fearsome redoubts rife with crime, lawlessness, and moral degeneracy where only the rejects of society would bear to dwell.

The reality and potency of the territorial stigma imposed upon the new "urban outcasts" of advanced society should not be underestimated (Wacquant, 1993a). First, the sense of personal indignity it carries is a highly salient dimension of everyday life that colors interpersonal relations and negatively affects opportunities in social circles, the school, and the labor market. Second, one notes a strong correlation between the symbolic degradation and the ecological disrepair of urban neighborhoods: areas commonly perceived as dumpsters for the poor, the deviant, and the misfit tend to be avoided by outsiders, "redlined" by banks and real estate investors, shunned by commercial firms, all of which accelerates decline and abandonment. They can be overlooked at little cost by politicians—except, precisely, when they become the site of visible unrest and street confrontations. Third, territorial stigmatization encourages amongst residents sociofugal strategies of mutual avoidance and distancing which exacerbate processes of social fission, feed interpersonal trust, and undermine the sense of collectivity necessary to engage in community-building and collective action.

Lastly, there is the curse of being poor in the midst of a rich society in which participation in the sphere of consumption has become a sine qua non of social dignity—a passport to personhood if not citizenship (especially among the most dispossessed, who have nothing else at disposal to signal membership). As testified by the proliferation of "mugging" in the British inner city, *dépouille* (the stripping of fancy clothes under threat of force) in the estates of the French banlieue, and gold-chain snatching and drug dealing on the streets of the black American ghetto, violence and crime are often the only means that youths

of proletarian background with no employment prospects have of acquiring the money and the consumer goods indispensable for acceding to socially recognized existence.(20)

Political Alienation and the Dilemmas of Penalization

If direct and spontaneous forms of infra-political protest by way of popular disruption of public order, outright seizure of goods, and destruction of property have spread in the declining urban boroughs of advanced society, it is also that formal means of pressure on the state have declined along with the disruption and then decomposition of traditional machineries of political representation of the poor.

In France, the crumbling of the Communist Party and the centrist turn of the successive Socialist governments have left the working class in deep political disarray—a disarray upon which the extreme-right wing party of Le Pen was quick to capitalize with an ideology scapegoating immigrants that, for lack of something better, has the virtue of offering a crystal-clear picture of society, a coherent diagnosis of its main ills, and a radical cure that promises to restore workers' sense of dignity as citizens (redefined as "nationals"). In Great Britain, a decade and a half of Thatcherism prolonged by the neoliberal policy of Tony Blair has speeded up the long-term decline of trade unions and the ideological revamping of the Labor Party, while the breakup of working-class communities undercut the local mobilizing capacity of their grass-roots organizations. In the United States, where the lower class has never had much of a political voice, the mass exodus of whites and the middle class to the urban periphery, the nationalization of political campaigns, the demise of big-city electoral "machines," and the administrative fragmentation of the metropolis have converged to marginalize poor minorities in the political field (Weir 1993). Stripped of the institutional means to formulate collective demands in a language comprehensible by state managers, what are poor urban youths to do if not take to the streets? A teenage rioter from Bristol speaks for many of his peers in East Harlem, the Red Belt boroughs of Paris, and of Toxteth in Liverpool when he exclaims.(21)

I don't have a job and I'll never have one. Nobody wants to help us get out of this shit. If the government can spend so much money to build a nuclear submarine, why not for the inner cities? If fighting cops is the only way to get heard, then we'll fight them.

The widening gulf between rich and poor, the increased closure of political elites onto themselves and the media, the increasing dis-

tance between the lower class and the dominant institutions of society all breed disaffection and distrust. They converge to undermine the legitimacy of the social order and to redirect hostility toward the one institution that has come to symbolize its unresponsiveness and naked repressiveness: the police. In the vacuum created by the lack of political linkages and the absence of recognized mediations between marginalized urban populations and a society from which they feel rejected, it is no wonder that relations with the police have everywhere become both salient and bellicose, and that incidents with the "forces of order" are invariably the detonator of the explosions of popular violence that have rocked poor urban neighborhoods over the past two decades in the city (Cashmore and McLaughlin 1992, *Cultures and Conflicts* 1992). (22)

In the French working-class banlieues, the police are regarded by the youths of the housing projects (of Arab and French origins alike) as an undesirable presence sent for the express purpose of intimidating and harassing them, and nearly all instances of collective unrest over the past decade have at their start an incident opposing them to local law enforcement. It is not a coincidence if the police invented the bureaucratic category of "urban violence" in those years, based on a pseudo-scientific scale of levels of aggression (of which the "gathering of youngsters in the building stairways" is the first stage!), in order better to de-politicize these confrontations and to make them liable to a strictly penal treatment (Bonelli 2001). The Scarman report on the riots that rocked British cities in the early 1980s notes likewise that inner-city youths are "hostile and vindictive towards the police and no longer have any confidence in them" (Benyon 1984: 126). But it is in the segregated black and Latino areas of the American urban core that relations with the police are the most antagonistic and the most virulent. Residents of the ghetto are torn between their need for protection from rampant crime and their fear that police intervention will add to the violence, not diminish it, due to their discriminatory and brutal behavior. In the desolate districts of the Los Angeles ghetto, the forces of order act as if they were waging a trench war with the residents, treating them as an army of occupation would its enemies (Davis 1992, Herbert 1997). In June of 1992, Amnesty International released a report compiling evidence of a deep-seated pattern of routine police brutality against poor African-Americans and Hispanics in Los Angeles going on unchecked for years in near-complete impunity from local and federal authorities. (23) The 60-page report details heinous incidents of excessive use of force, often "amounting to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment," that involve the unwarranted use of firearms "in violation of international

standards," shootings or beatings of compliant suspects and even innocent bystanders, the routine overuse of electric "tazer" guns, (24) and the unleashing of attack dogs on suspects (including juveniles and minor offenders, some of them already in custody) who had surrendered and posed no threat. For the disaffected youths of declining urban districts, then, the police constitutes the last "buffer" between them and a society that rejects them, and which they therefore view as "the enemy," trespassers in a territory where their rule is often openly contested and incites defiance and hostility that can extend to verbal and physical aggression—as illustrated by the controversial song "Cop Killer" by the Afro-American rap singer Ice T. In all advanced countries, whenever the police comes to be considered as an alien force by the community it is supposed to protect, it becomes unable to fulfill any role other than a purely repressive one and, under such circumstances, it can only add to discord and disorder, often fueling the very violence it is entrusted to curb (Wacquant 1993).

Political responses to the return of urban marginality and collective violence have varied significantly from country to country depending on national ideologies of citizenship, state structures and capacities, and political conjuncture. They span a wide spectrum between the criminalization of poverty and dispossessed populations identified, at one end, and politicization of the problem via the collective renegotiation of social and economic rights, at the other. The two tendencies, symbolized by the prison and the ballot box, can be observed to operate simultaneously in all three societies considered here, albeit in different combinations and trained on different categories, as various fractions of their respective ruling classes manage to steer state policy towards one or the other pole. (25) No country has fully avoided increased recourse to the criminal justice apparatus (irrespective of the evolution of crime) and all have had to reconsider some citizenship rights and range of social entitlements, whether to restrict or expand them selectively. Yet it remains that, overall, the question has been most fully politicized in France and most completely depoliticized in the United States, with United Kingdom occupying a sort of median ground between these two paths. (26)

Through a decade of urban strife, the French government has passed legislation creating a guaranteed minimum income for those fallen through the cracks of the work and welfare grid; it has expanded unemployment benefits and training schemes for unskilled youths; it has established a mechanism to transfer wealth from rich to poor cities (albeit a very limited one), and deployed a comprehensive urban redevelopment program officially designed to improve conditions in 400 "sensitive neigh-

borhoods" throughout the country. (27) Renewed state activism was officialized by the nomination, at the end of 1990, of a Minister of the City (with rank of state minister, highest in the French administrative hierarchy) and by the political engagement of both President and Prime Minister to win the battle of "urban renewal." Yet, over the ensuing years, urban disturbances have continued, if in a somewhat muffled fashion, and ferments of unrest remain as testified by incidents in the declining public housing estates of Argenteuil, Sartrouville, and Mantes-la-Jolie in the Parisian Red Belt in 1994. The "social treatment" of urban marginality by means of an "urban policy" may alleviate its symptoms; it does nothing to attack its root causes.

The response of the United States government to the Los Angeles upheaval was in sharp contrast: once open rioting was checked by the immediate proclamation of a state of emergency and massive military presence, the first priority of the Bush administration was to send a team of special prosecutors and to boost funds available to bring the full force of the law to bear on the thousands arrested during the disturbance. (28) Unlike in cases of meteorological disasters (such as the hurricanes and floods that periodically ravage the coastal areas of the South or the plains of the Midwest), in which the federal government extends prompt and generous material and financial assistance to victims (who are essentially property owners of the middle and upper classes), Washington was content to coordinate charity relief and to encourage private rebuilding and reinvestment efforts. And, although the riot had broken out at the very start of the 1992 presidential campaign, the fate of the urban poor was not deemed worthy of mention by any of the three major candidates to the White House. Stubborn refusal to acknowledge the structural mooring and political import of the uprising gave warrant to continue the policy of state neglect that helped cause it in the first place (Johnson et al. 1993) and all but guarantees that the human toll—in terms of crime, incarceration, fear and excess mortality—exact by urban marginalization will continue to mount unchecked.

The United Kingdom is positioned about midway between these two poles of politicization and criminalization. The inclination to attribute disorder to a "black criminal minority" is always strong; yet even the staunchly laissez-faire governments of Thatcher and Major have had to reestablish a degree of state oversight of urban zoning and housing improvement. At the local level, many British cities have opted for a two-pronged approach, elaborating more effective policing techniques in order to regain control of the streets at the very outset of a putative riot on the one hand, and engaging in establishing connections and building trust between the forces of order and

the resident populations (under the aegis of "community policing"), on the other. After the Handsworth riots for instance, the Birmingham police developed a series of indicators of tension designed to preempt the outbreak of violence and they were able, in collaboration with neighborhood leaders, to keep young men off the streets when incidents threatened again. But one wonders how long such policies of "papering over" widening social cleavages can be expected to dampen discontent, especially given that the state policy of "urban regeneration" fostering market mechanisms deepens inequalities within as well as between cities (Le Galès et Parkinson 1994).



Urban dereliction on 63rd Street, Chicago

Coda:

A Challenge to Citizenship

The popular disorders and urban protests that have shaken the advanced societies of the capitalist West over the past two decades find their roots in the epochal transformation of their economy (deregulation of financial markets, desocialization of wage work, revamping of labor to impose "flexibility"), the social polarization of their cities, and in state policies that have more or less overtly promoted corporate expansion over social redistribution and commodification to the detriment of social protection. (29) The ruling classes and governments of rich nations have, to varying degrees, proved unable or unwilling to stem the rise of inequality. And they have failed to curb the social and spatial cumulation of economic hardship, social marginality, and stigmatization in the deteriorating working-class neighborhoods of the dual metropolis.

The conjugation of (real or perceived) ethnic divisions and deproletarianization in declining urban districts deprived of the organizational means needed to forge an emergent identity and formulate collective demands in political space promises to produce more unrest and to pose a daunting challenge to the institution of modern citizenship for the decades to come.

Citizenship, in T.H. Marshall's (1964) famous formulation, serves essentially to mitigate the class divisions generated by the marketplace: it is its extension, from the civil to the political to the socioeconomic realm, that has "altered the pattern of social inequality" and helped make advanced society relatively pacified and democratic. (30) During the postwar era of steady and protected growth, well-bounded and sovereign nation-states were able to establish a clear separation between members and non-members and to guarantee a relatively high degree of congruence between the basic dimensions of membership—with the spectacular exception of African Americans in U.S. society. Today, that ability and congruence are both deeply reduced so that the hitherto hidden fractures of the space of citizenship are appearing in full light. As the external boundaries and the (real or imagined) internal homogeneity of advanced societies are eroded, from above by high-velocity capital flows and from below by the confluence of the decomposition of the industrial working class and increased immigrant inflows, it becomes increasingly clear that citizenship is not a status achieved or granted once and equally for all, but a contentious and uneven "instituted process" (to use the language of Karl Polanyi) that must continually be struggled for and secured anew.

Thus the question facing First-World countries at the threshold of the new millennium is whether their polities have the capacity to prevent the further contraction and fragmentation of the sphere of citizenship fueled by the desocialization of labor and, correspondingly, what new mediating institutions they need to invent to provide full access to and active participation in it. Failing which, we may witness not only continued urban disorder, collective violence, and ethnoracial conflict (actual or imagined) at the heart of the advanced societies, but a protracted process of societal fission and a capillary ramification of inequalities and insecurities akin to a "Brazilianization" of the metropolis of Europe and North America.

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Loïc WACQUANT is Professor of Sociology at the University of California in Berkeley and Researcher at the Centre de sociologie européenne in Paris. His interests comprise comparative urban marginality, incarnation, ethnoracial domination, the penal state, and social theory and the politics of reason. His recent books include *Body and Soul: Notebooks of An Apprentice Boxer* (2004), *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics: The Mystery of Ministry* (2005), *Parias urbains. Ghetto, banlieue, État* (2006), and *Das Janusgesicht des Ghettos und andere Essays* (2006). His ongoing investigations include a carnal anthropology of desire and a historical sociology of racial rule. He is a co-founder and editor of the interdisciplinary journal *Ethnography*.

(1) This broad-brush portrait does not allow recognition of significant variations among what are cursorily labelled "First World" societies. For a pointed presentation of differences in the sociopolitical construction of inequality and poverty in France, Great Britain, and the United States, see Silver (1993: esp. 342-348).

(2) The terminology itself is revealing of the ideological presuppositions of such research. Knottnerus (1987) dissects the image of society underlying "status attainment" research, raised out in particular by members of the Wisconsin school. One could show that the ideology of social meritocracy (as embodied by the writings of Talcott Parsons, Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, on the American side, and Raymond Aron and Henri Mendras, on the French side) fulfilled for Euro-American societies a function similar to that played for Brazil by the national myth of "racial democracy," as formulated by Gilberto Freyre (1946).

(3) Castel (1978) offers an historical account of this problematic in the case of the United States, while Wilson and Aponte (1985) record the cyclical "disappearance" and "rediscovery" of the question of poverty in American society over the twentieth century. On the corresponding girations of the French debate (around the theme of "exclusion" after the late 1980s), consult Paugam (1993); on the British discussion, Morris (1994).

(4) "Race" is put in quotation marks to stress that (i) racial identity is but a particular case of ethnicity (one that falsely presents itself and is believed to be based on biological inheritance), that is, a historically constructed principle of social classification; (ii) the gamut of social and symbolic relations designated by "race" (or "color") varies significantly from one society to the next and from one historical conjuncture to another, and with it (iii) the mechanisms of (re)production of racism as a mode of domination invoking nature as principle of legitimation.

(5) The opposition between "ascription" and "achievement" is one of the founding antinomies of the structural-functionalist theory elaborated by Talcott Parsons (1971), which portrayed the United States as the historical incarnation of the supposedly universal ideal of the meritocratic society. For a curt and acerbic critique of the shortcomings of this theory, read Bourdieu (1975).

(6) Florestan Fernandes (1978) offers a capsule expression of this widespread view in his appraisal of the nature and fate of ethnic divisions issued from slavery in Brazilian society: "The Brazilian racial dilemma constitutes a pathological social phenomenon, which can only be corrected by processes that would remove the obstruction of racial inequality from the competitive social order." This position is of course much older: recall that the "race relation cycle" of the early Chicago school, with its ordered progression from conflict and competition to accommodation and assimilation, pointed to the gradual resorption of ethnoracial divisions.

(7) I can give only the briefest sketch of such incidents here. For a fuller account of the rise of collective violence and ethnoracial tensions in the housing projects of France's urban periphery during the 1980s, see Adil Jazouli's (1992) *Les Années banlieues*; for an exemplary American case, Bruce Porter and Marvin Dunn's (1984) analysis of The Miami Riot of 1980; for an overview of the British riots of the early 1980s, read the Scarman Report and its offshoots (Benyon 1984).

(8) Clashes continued through the summer of 1991, forcing the central government to expand and institutionalize various programs of "incident prevention," in particular during the summertime (the so-called *Opérations été chaud*). Similar outbreaks of collective violence would occur periodically over the ensuing decade, culminating with the wave of simultaneous riots that rocked France for three long weeks in November of 2005.

(9) In 1980, 1981, and 1985, major riots had erupted in "inner-city" areas of Bristol, London, Liverpool, Birmingham, and a host of other declining working-class municipalities.

(10) One should add to incidents in France, Britain and the United States the rash of violent attacks on foreigners and asylum seekers in Germany and repeated incidents involving North-African immigrants in Northern Italy and Southern Spain.

(11) On the rise (or resurgence) of racism on a European scale and its various national manifestations, see Allen and Macey (1990), Miles (1992), and Holzner (1993).

(12) Mingling social science, journalism and commonsense, empirical analysis and ordinary preconceptions, the academic-cum-policy myth of the "underclass" has fused and given new life to age-old prejudices against African Americans, the poor, and state intervention by demonizing the black urban subproletariat (Wacquant 1992b). Its invention partakes of a broader reconfiguring of the ideological map of "race" in the United States, along with the legend of Asians as "model minority," the symbolic unification of diverse population streams coming from Central and South America under the category of "Latinos," and the growing demands for official recognition made by the self-proclaimed representatives of "multiracial" persons.

(13) On the logic and social conditions of the political efficacy of such popular disruptions, see Piven and Cloward's (1977) classic study, *Poor People's Movements*, a very topical book in the current phase of rightward recentering of progressive political parties.

(14) Mike Davis, "In L.A., Burning All Illusions," in Hazen (1992); for further materials, see the excellent selection of press reports compiled by the Institute for Alternative Journalism (Hazen 1992) and some of the essays in Gooding-Williams (1993) and Baldassare (1994). This interpretation was later validated by Pastor (1995), who shows that the active participation of Latinos and poverty rates were central to the outbreak and spread of the riot, and by Murty et al. (1994), who report, based on street interviews with 227 residents and workers in South-Central Los Angeles, that participants to the outbreak perceived themselves as "freedom fighters" over the issues of poverty, unemployment, police brutality and racial discrimination, a mix of motives that fits well the confluence of structural forces determining the clash.

(15) For an exploration of the complexity and dynamics of this process of dualization, see Mollenkopf and Castells (1991), Paine, Gordon and Harloe (1992); for an appeal to analytical caution on this front, Marcuse (1989).

(16) For an elaboration of this argument, see Wacquant (1996 and 1999a).

(17) For statistical data of the rise of income inequality in England, France, and the United States, see Townsend (1993), Centre d'études des revenus et des

coûts (1989) and Danziger and Gottschalk (1993) respectively.

(18) At the core of Chicago's ghetto in 1988, for instance, nearly six adults in ten survived on meager welfare benefits and fully 80% of recipients expected to remain on public aid for more than a year. (Wacquant and Wilson 1989)

(19) On the causes and role of international migration in activating or amplifying social transformations in advanced societies, see the excellent conceptual précis by Zolberg (1991) and the empirical analyses of Sassen (1989), Tarrus (1992) and Castles (1993).

(20) For illustrations in the American context, see Taylor (1989) and Padilla (1992). One suspects that a similar logic is at work, *mutatis mutandis*, in the fearsome week-end irruptions of "funkers" on the wealthy, white beaches of Ipanema and Copacabana in Rio de Janeiro.

(21) Cited in *The Guardian*, July 20, 1992, in a report on the wake of the Bristol riot.

(22) The other dominant institution which is increasingly perceived as a vehicle of official intrusion and external imposition, though in a quite different register, is the school, due to the long-overdue universalization of secondary education. Balazs and Sayad (1991) explore the range of reactions to the symbolic violence of public education in the French working-class banlieue of Vaulx-en-Velin, including rude behaviors (relabelled "incivilities" in the idiom of official criminology), vandalism, avoidance, and violence.

(23) I strongly recommend reading the entire report entitled *Police Brutality in Los Angeles, California, United States of America* (Amnesty International 1992). That such a scathing report should fail to elicit any meaningful reaction from local and national authorities testifies to their remarkable indifference to endemic and routine police abuse in the neighborhoods of relegation.

(24) A tazer gun is a hand-held weapon that allows police to neutralize potential or actual assailants by subjecting them to a powerful electric shock from a distance. It can easily be abused since its employ leaves few if any external physical traces. Its deployment by police departments in the US has been controversial: several studies have shown that the supposedly "safe" electric shock caused the death of dozens of targets.

(25) I have shown elsewhere how, over the decade that followed this initial diagnosis (1993), the solution consisting in penalizing social insecurity through the glorification and amplification of the penal state has diffused and generalized to the First World and even parts of the Second World (Wacquant 1999).

(26) The following characterization of patterns of policy reactions to urban marginality and disorder in the advanced societies is a simplification that exaggerates the homogeneity and consistency of state responses in each country. One would need to distinguish in each case between different levels (central and local) and domains (ideological, legislative, judiciary, welfare, etc.) of response as well as between different sites of intervention (e.g., homelessness or collective violence), and between target groups (foreigners or citizens, etc.). Because states are highly differentiated and imperfectly coordinated organizational machineries, they often engage in policies that are either inconsistent or operate at cross purposes with one another. In addition, there exists a yawning gap between the proclaimed purposes and effective aims of a given policy, its bureaucratic implementation and its effects at ground level.

(27) See Paugam's *La Société française et ses pauvres* (1993) for a detailed discussion of the centerpiece of this policy, namely, the creation of "a national guaranteed minimum income" program, its political rationale, foibles, and actual impact.

(28) A highly publicized (and unsuccessful) effort was even made to identify and arrest suspects of crime and looting based on evidence adduced by hundreds of hours of amateur video shot during the riots. One other indicator of the American emphasis on repression: more than two-thirds of the twelve billion dollars expended annually by the federal government in its much-vaunted "War on Drugs" are allotted to law enforcement, while education and treatment services fall far short of need due to grossly insufficient financing. The result has been a doubling of the population incarcerated in a decade with no visible impact on the street commerce and use of narcotics.

(29) As Mollenkopf and Castells (1991: 404) note in the case of the United States, "the public sector did not play a redistributive and corrective role but amplified the demand toward income inequality, spatial segregation, and lack of adequate services for a large part of the population." This observation applies in the main to British public policy during that period, though starting from a stronger cushioning role for public institutions. The record for France is more mixed on this count, with different sectors of state action evolving in opposite directions.

Turner (1986) makes a strong case for the significance of citizenship in dampening the contradictions of advanced society and offers an insightful critical exegesis of Marshall's influential thesis. For a provocative historical reconceptualization of citizenship as an "instituted process" à la Polanyi, see Somers (1993). An exemplary study of cross-national variation in patterns of immigrant incorporation due to differences in the political definition of citizenship is Brubaker (1992).

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