THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED
URBAN VIOLENCE, "RACE", AND DUALIZATION
IN THREE ADVANCED SOCIETIES *

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In the expansionary decades following the mid-century traumas of depression and war, the rich societies of the capitalist West came to think of themselves as peaceful, cohesive, and egalitarian—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 a long-term process of restructuring of social relations entailing the extension of interpersonal networks, the multiplication of organizations, and the pacification of social exchange as the state firmly establishes its monopoly over the use of public violence.

Advanced nation-states such as the United States, France, and Great Britain 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 in that 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 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: all promised to usher in an unprecedented era of social well-being and amity.² Sociology gave a formal expression to this belief by elaborating the notion of "meritocracy" and, in North America, a whole school of stratification research enshrined this belief in the growing fluidity and porousness of the class structure by making "status attainment" the conceptual backbone of countless studies of "opportunity."³

Correspondingly, 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 security, 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—in 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 residue of past inequities and backwardness or as the product of individual deficiencies, at any rate a phenomenon bound to recede and disappear with the full modernization of the nation.⁴ Writing

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, Britain, and the United States, see Silver (1993: esp. 342-348).
³ The terminology itself is revealing of the guiding assumptions of such research. Knotterus (1987) provides a dissection of the image of society underlying "status attainment" research, carried out in particular by the Wisconsin school. One could show that the ideology of social meritocracy (as exemplified by the writings of Talcott Parsons, Peter Blau and Otis Dudley Duncan, and Raymond Aron, for instance) fulfilled for Euro-American societies a function not unlike that of Brazil's myth of "racial democracy" as expressed by Gilberto Freyre (1946).
⁴ 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" of the question of poverty in North America over the century. On
in the early 60s, Galbraith (1963) characteristically called poverty an "afterthought" and an anomaly in North American society. True, there were still poor people around, and not an insignificant number of them, but they would not be there for long. In 1964, as he launched the "War on Poverty," President Lyndon B. Johnson proudly announced that the United States would eliminate poverty by the year 1976, so that the two-hundredth anniversary of the United States would also herald the birth of the first "society of affluence." In France, at about the same time, the equally rosy image of a "New society" was being beamed by the hegemonic Gaullist party under Jacques Chaban-Delmas's leadership, later to be refurbished by President Giscard d'Estaing as the promise of "advanced liberal society." 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." To varying degrees, First World societies also took to seeing themselves as "nonethnic" social formations, increasingly homogenous and unified as "gemeinschaftliche" relations of ancestry, region, and culture gave way to instrumental affiliations based on interest, occupational specialization, and the functional imperatives of a complex technological economy. Assimilation was the order the day (Gordon 1961) and adoption of the national culture seemingly the only available course for outgroups that lived in, or entered into, these societies.

In eliding ethnicity, the ideologues of advanced society marched in the steps of classical and contemporary social science. Did not Marx and Durkheim agree that capitalist industrialization would result in the replacement of traditional social bonds by rationalized, 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 (including the work of the Latin American dependistas and world-system theory) agreed that ethnicity and race were fated to be eroded. For advocates of modernization such as David McLelland, Alex Inkeles, and Daniel Lerner, the "passing of traditional society" implied the dissolution of ascribed social ties and the concurrent emergence of the free, entreprising, "achieving" individual due to the rise of literacy, technology, and the mass media. For defenders of various Marxist theories of societal transformation, from Andre Gunder Frank and Fernando Enrique Cardoso to Immanuel Wallerstein, class formation was to wash away ethnicity and create a global class structure--eventuating, in the view of the latter, in a transition towards a socialist world order. Various theories of postindustrial society shared these assumptions and similarly conceived ethnroracial 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.\(^6\)

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the recent French debate, consult Verdès-Leroux (1978) and Moreau de Bellaing (1988); on the British discussion, Townsend et al. (1987).

5 "Race" is put in quotation marks to stress that (i) racial identity is but a particular case of ethnicity (one believed to be based on biological inheritance), that is, an historically constructed principle of social classification; (ii) what is meant by race (and racism) may vary significantly from one society to the next and from one historical conjuncture to another.

6 Florestan Fernandes (1978) offers a capsule expression of this widespread view in his appraisal of the nature and fate of racial divisions 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
VIOLENCE FROM BELOW: RACE RIOTS OR BREAD RIOTS?

Over the past decade or so, this self-image of the First World has been shattered by spectacular outbursts of public unrest, rising ethnic and racial tensions, and increased destitution 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 racial ideologies often accompanied by violent conflict in the city (Mingione 1993, Cross 1992, Wilson 1987). Consider three such instances of urban disorder in France, England, and the United States.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 compagnies républicaines de sécurité (riot troops) 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—tops the political agenda and will dominate public debate for months on end.8

July 1992 in Bristol, England: a nearly identical chain of events triggers several nights of rioting on the Hartcliffe estate, a poor industrial district on the southern edge of town. Violence breaks out after two local men 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 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 North American history this century. In the ghetto of South Central, white motorists are snatched out their cars and beaten, stores vandalized, police cars 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

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7 I can give only the briefest sketch of such incidents here. For a fuller account of the rise of violence and ethnoracial tensions in the housing projects of France's urban periphery, see Adil Jazouli's (1992) Les années banlieues; for an exemplary American case, Bruce Poster and Marvin Dunn's (1984) analysis of The Miami Riot of 1980; for a review of the British riots of the early 1980s, consult 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 Operations été chaud).

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.
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. 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 ten thousands are under arrest; a thousand families have lost their homes and twenty thousand persons 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. Most of the disorders, big and small, that have shaken up the French banlieue, the British inner city, and the ghettos and barrios of North America have involved chiefly the youths of poor, segregated, and often dilapidated urban neighborhoods and appear to have been fueled by growing "racial" tensions in and around those areas. Thus the dominant interpretation in media accounts and 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).

There is much, on the surface of things, to support this view. The Europe of the 1980s has indeed been swept by a seemingly unstoppable wave of racist sentiment. In France, long-covert "anti-Arab" hostility has burst out in the open (Silverman 1990) and fueled an increase in racist assaults. It has found an political expression in the xenophobic populism of the National Front (Husbands 1991), which has in turn stimulated the growth of a wide "anti-racist" movement led by the organization SOS-Racisme. In Great Britain, antagonism between black West Indians, Asians, and whites has flared up in repeated street confrontations and grown more acrimonious. Debates about street crime and policing have been "racialized" to the extent that public unrest and violence are increasingly perceived 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 Asian groups) in the wake of the Civil Rights movement of the sixties 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 on the street, interethnic incidents on university campuses, and the blatant exploitation of anti-black feelings in local and national political campaigns (Franklin 1991). And while Europe became haunted by the specter of the crystallization of American-style "ghettos" on its soil, the United States was 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.

In all three countries, then, violence and urban unrest have thus come to be closely linked, if not equated, in the public mind with "race" and immigration. In the United States, this association is a long standing one, dating from to the era of black urbanization after

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

11 On the rise (or re-emergence) of racism on a European scale and its various national manifestations, see Allen and Macey (1990), Miles (1992), and Wieviorka (1992).

12 Mixing social science, journalism and commonsense, empirical analysis and ordinary preconceptions, the myth of the "underclass" has given new life to age-old prejudices against Afro-Americans, the poor, and state intervention by demonizing the black urban subproletariat (Wacquant 1992a). Its invention partakes of the reconfiguring of the ideological map of "race" in the United States, along with the myth of Asians as "model minority" and the symbolic unification of diverse Hispanic population streams into "Latinos."
Emancipation, if not further back, and it is periodically reactivated during periods of economic contraction or social conflict (Curtis 1989). In Europe, it is more recent and tenuous, though it has proved ideologically powerful in the rocky socioeconomic conjuncture opened by the recessions of the mid-1970s (Jacquin and Wieviorka 1991). Yet several elements suggest that the label "race riot" is misleading and hides another, deeper, phenomenon, mixed in different proportions with it.

The collective urban disorders of the 1980s are not a simple extension of traditional racial uprisings such as the United States has experienced throughout this century (Young 1970). And we are not witnessing an "Americanization" of urban poverty and protest, a transformation in the regime of urban marginality that would mark an epochal transatlantic convergence between the two continents (Wacquant 1992b, 1993a). A closer look at their anatomy suggests that these disorders have, in varying proportions depending on the country, combined two logics: that of protest against racial injustice rooted in discriminatory treatment—of a stigmatized quasi-caste in the United States, of "Arab" and other colored immigrants in France and Great Britain—and that of the poor rising against economic deprivation and widening social inequalities with the most effective, if not the only, weapon at their disposal, namely direct forcible disruption of civil life.

The 1980s may turn out to be the decade of the slow maturing of mixed riots—mixed in terms of their dynamics and goals as well as by virtue of their multiethnic composition. For, contrary to media portrayals, neither the French banlieues nor the British inner cities are solely or even predominantly populated by immigrants and those who partook in unrest there were more often than not recruited across a kaleidoscope of ethnic lines. While second-generation immigrant youths from the Maghrib and the West Indies have assumed prominent leadership roles in the urban clashes that have rocked France and England, they have acted in concert with, and with the active support of, the offsprings of native European families residing in flagging industrial neighborhoods. And their demands are the demands of working-class youths everywhere: jobs, decent schools, affordable or improved housing, access to public services, and fair treatment by police and other agencies of the state (Jazouli 1992).

Similarly, in South-Central L.A., the thousands who pilfered merchandise from burning supermarkets and mini-malls during the riot were far from being all blacks: 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. It was also a "bread revolt" against poverty, hunger, and the severe material aggravation brought on by economic recession and cutbacks in government programs, as testified by the Latinos and even Asians and whites who could be seen on television milling about ransacked stores in search of free goods. As one of the city's most astute observers puts 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."13

VIOLENCE FROM ABOVE: DEPROLETARIANIZATION, SEGREGATION, 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 British authorities to the wave of violent incidents that

13 Mike Davis, "In L.A., Burning All Illusions," in Institute for Alternative Journalism (1992); for further elements, see also Davis (1992) and the excellent selection of reports compiled by the Institute for Alternative Journalism.
swept through 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 residents of Hartcliffe agreed that hostility between youths and police had been building up for months and despite the fact that no evidence was ever adduced that "hooligans" were involved, or that consumption of alcohol on the nights of the disorder was above normal. Similarly, in the United States, the loathsome (and fictitious) tale of the "underclass" has provided a low-cost, ready-made discourse with which to account for the rise of violence in and around the ghetto.

Yet close comparative analysis of their timing, makeup, and unfolding shows that, far from being irrational or atavistic expressions of incivility, recent public unrest by the urban poor of Europe and North America constitutes 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 classes which, combined with racial and ethnic segregation, is producing a dualization of the metropolis that threatens not simply to marginalize the poor but to condemn them to outright social and economic redundancy. This violence "from above" has three main components: (1) mass, persistent, and chronic unemployment, amounting, for entire segments of the working class, to deproletarianization bringing in its wake pervasive material deprivation; (2) relegation in decaying neighborhoods in which public and private resources diminish just as competition for them increases due to immigration; (3) heightened stigmatization in daily life and in public discourse, all of which are the more deadly for occurring against the backdrop of a general upswing in inequality. Far from representing a peripheral by-product of Third-worldization or reversals to premodern sociopolitical forms of conflict, this return of the repressed realities of poverty, violence, and ethnoracial divisions linked to their colonial past at the heart of the First World city must be understood as the result of the uneven, disarticulating transformation of the most advanced sectors of Western societies and its manifestations are therefore not likely to abate soon.

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, middle-class sectors of the economy and individuals trapped at the margins of an increasingly insecure, low-skill, service labor market. 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 have become a common sight 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 North Americans has doubled in a decade, jumping from 17.6% in 1976 to 36.3% in 1989, more people live under the official "poverty line" in 1992 than at any time since 1964: 36 million of them, including one of every three black or Latino households.

In France, income inequality rose for the first time in the postwar era in spite of a host of social transfer measures implemented by the Socialist government. As the ranks of the "Golden Boys" bulged at the Palais Brogniard along with 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, three million French people live in poverty, 300,000 are deprived of

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14 For an exploration of the complexity and dynamics of this process of dualization, Mollenkopf and Castells (1991), Fainstein et al. (1992), and for a cautionary discussion, Marcuse (1989).

15 For surveys of the rise of income inequality in England, France, and the United States, see Townsend (1990), Centre d'etudes des revenus et des couts (1989) and Danziger and Gottschalk (1992) respectively.
regular housing, and half a million are recipients of the national guaranteed minimum income plan (RMI). On the national news, talk of "workers" and trade unions going on strike to defend wages and social benefits has been replaced by discussion of "exclusion" and somber assessments of the predicament of Rmiistes, a term coined to capture the new reality of quasi-permanent rejection from wage labor. 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 part of the country has been dramatically impoverished, as the regional economies of major cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow crumbled. So much so that analysts are now comparing it to the Italian mezzogiorno to highlight the growing national dualism.

Employment shifts from manufacturing to education-intensive services, 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 poor residents of large cities. For many, however, 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. At the close of the 90s, 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 Kindom. The comparable figure of 8% for the United States is misleading because its measurement is different and hides enormous group and geographical variations: in many inner-city areas, effective jobless rates among adults hover well above 50% and for many unemployment can last for years and even decades.16

The persistent or permanent exclusion from wage labor of large numbers of residents and the parallel 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 Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto call an "excess reserve army of labor" for whom economic advancement translates into a regression of material conditions and life chances. Witness the spread of hunger and the reapparance of bygone contagious diseases such as tuberculosis in the flagging inner-city neighborhoods of New York City, 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 these very neighborhoods where economic opportunities and collective resources are steadily diminishing.17 The formation of a world-wide space of circulation of capital over the past three decades has led to the knitting of a global network of labor circulation that has brought large numbers of migrants into the big cities of Europe and North America. These "new immigrants," as they are often called to distinguish them from the transatlantic migration chains that primarily connected Old and New Worlds until mid-century,

16 At the core of Chicago's ghetto, for instance, nearly six adults in ten survive on meager welfare benefits and fully 80% of recipients expect to remain on public aid for more than a year (Wacquant and Wilson 1989: 19).
17 On the causes and role of international migration in activating social transformations in advanced societies, see the excellent analytical synopsis by Zolberg (1991) and the detailed empirical analyses of Sassen (1989) and Castles et al. (1984).
originate 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 may 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 adaption to life in a new country (Portes
and Rumbaut 1990).

Whether or not the arrival of the new immigrants has accelerated the partial
deproletarianization of native working classes by providing the substitute labor needed by the
expanding deskilled service sectors is unclear. What is beyond doubt is that their concentration
in segregated or degraded working-class neighborhoods has accentuated social polarization in
the city because it occurred at a time when, thanks largely to state support of individual housing,
the middle classes were removing themselves from 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-Velin's 45,000 residents live
in a large, cheerless public housing project, and one in four are of foreign origin; over 40% are
under age twenty and one third of all adults cannot find employment. Government programs of
training and job search assistance seem unable to help youths gain a firm foothold in the
shrinking labor market, and sports and cultural activities can provide only so much diversion.
Similarly, joblessness among inhabitants of South Bristol ages 16 to 25 stands at 50% and has
risen with the increased presence of foreign families. The crime rate in Hartcliffe--among the
highest in England--is in no small part due to the severe dearth of community resources and of
recreational facilities needed to keep youths occupied. 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 simultaneously being drastically curtailed (Johnson et al. 1992). As a consequence,
unemployment in South Central exceeds 60% among young Latinos and blacks and the illegal
drug economy has become the most reliable source of employment for many of them.

Such cumulation of social ills explains the atmosphere of drabness, ennui, and despair
that pervades poor communities in large Western cities and the oppressive climate of insecurity
and fear that pervades daily life in the black American ghetto (Wacquant 1992b). Residents of
these neighborhoods feel that they and their children have little future other than the misery and
exclusion to which they seem consigned at present. Added to this sense of social closure is the
rage felt by unemployed urban youths as a result of the taint that befalls residents of decaying
urban areas as their neighborhood become identified as disreputable breeding grounds of "social
problems." Arabs in North Marseilles, Jamaicans and Pakistanis from London's Brixton, and
blacks on Chicago's South Side do not suffer only from material deprivation--shared, in mixed
European urban areas, with their white neighbors--and from racial enmity: they have also to bear
the public scorn attached to living in locales widely perceived as "no-go areas" rife with crime,
lawlessness, and moral degeneration in which only inferior members of society are thought 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, schools, and the labor market. Second, one observes 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 and overlooked by politicians, all of which accelerate decline and abandonment. Third, territorial stigmatization encourages amongst residents sociofugal strategies of mutual avoidance and distancing and exacerbates processes of internal social differentiation that conspire to decrease 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 active participation in the sphere of consumption has become a sine qua non of social dignity--a passport to citizenship even among the most dispossessed. 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 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 working-class youths with no employment prospects have of acquiring the money and the consumer goods indispensible for acceding to socially recognized existence.18

POLITICAL ALIENATION AND THE DILEMMAS OF POLICING

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

In France, the crumbling of the Communist Party and the reformist turn of the Socialist government have left the working class in complete political disarray--a disarray on which the extreme right wing party of Le Pen was quick to capitalize with an ideology scapegoating immigrants that, however groundless, has at least the virtue of offering a crystal-clear picture of society, a coherent diagnosis of its ills, and a radical cure that promises to restore workers' sense of dignity as citizens. In Great Britain, a decade of Thatcherism has speeded up the long-term decline of trade unions and 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 classes have never had much of a political voice, the exodus of whites and of the middle class to the suburbs, the nationalization of political campaigns, the demise of big-city electoral "machines," and the administrative fragmentation of the metropolis have made poor minorities politically expandable (Weir 1993). Absent a political mechanism 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 young 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:19

18 For illustrations in the American context, see Padilla (1992) and Taylor (1989). One may suspect 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.
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 growing self-closure of political elites, the increasing distance 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 of the authority 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 become both salient and bellicose (Cashmore and McLaughlin 1992), and that incidents with the "forces of order" are invariably the detonator of explosions of popular violence in the city.  

In the French banlieues, police are more and more regarded as an undesirable presence sent for the express purpose of intimidating and harrassing youths, Arab and French alike, and nearly all instances of collective unrest have at their start recurring friction and chronic incidents with local law enforcement. The Scarman report (Benyon 1984) on the British riots of the early 1980s likewise notes that inner city youths are "hostile and vindictive towards the police and no longer have any confidence in them." But it is in the segregated black and Latino areas of the North 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 its discriminatory and brutal behavior. In Los Angeles, the forces of order act as if they were waging a trench war with the inhabitants of minority areas, treating them as an army of occupation would its enemies (Davis 1992). 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.  

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 unwarranted use of firearms "in violation of international standards," shootings or beatings of compliant suspects and even bystanders, overuse of an electric "tazer" gun, and the unleashing of attack dogs on suspects (including juveniles and minor offenders, some of them already in custody) who have surrendered and pose no threat.

For the disaffected youths of declining urban enclaves, then, the police are the last buffer between them and Society and they represent "the enemy," trespassers in a territory where their rule is often openly contested and in which they incite defiance and hostility, if not aggression--as illustrated by the controversial song "Cop Killer" by the Afro-American rap singer Ice T. Trends in all countries converge in this respect to show that, whenever the police comes to be

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20 The other dominant institution increasingly perceived as a vehicle of official intrusion and external imposition, though of a different kind, is the school. For an exploration of reactions to the symbolic violence of public education in the French banlieue of Vaulx-en-Velin, including rudeness, vandalism, violence, and avoidance, see Balazs and Sayad (1991).


22 A tazer gun is a hand-held weapon which allows police to neutralize potential or actual assailants by subjecting them to a powerful electric shock. It can easily be abused since its employ leaves few if any external physical traces.
considered as an alien force by the community, it becomes unable to fulfull any role other than a purely repressive one and that, under such circumstances, it can only add to further disorder and violence (Wacquant 1993b).

Political responses to urban violence and to the civil disruption it causes 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 outright criminalization and repression at one end, and politicization of the problem via the collective renegotiation of social rights at the other. Both tendencies, symbolized by the jail and the ballot box, can be observed to operate simultaneously in all societies, albeit in different combinations and targeted at different groups, as various fractions of their respective ruling classes attempt to steer state response towards one or the other pole. No country has fully avoided recourse to the criminal justice system and all have had to reconsider some citizenship rights and social entitlements, whether to restrict or expand them. Yet it remains that, roughly put, the question has been most fully politicized in France, only partially so in the United Kingdom, and nearly completely depoliticized in the United States.23

Through a decade of urban strife, the French government has passed legislation creating a guaranteed minimum income, expanded unemployment benefits and training schemes for youths, established a mechanism to transfer wealth from rich to poor cities (albeit a very limited one), and deployed a comprehensive urban redevelopment program designed to improve conditions in 400 "sensitive neighborhoods" throughout the country.24 Renewed state activism was capped by the nomination at the end of 1990 of a Minister of the City (with rank of state minister, the highest in government) and by the political engagement of both President and Prime Minister to win the battle of urban renewal. Yet, over the ensuing three years, urban disturbances have continued, if in a somewhat muffled fashion, and ferments of unrest remain as testified by recent incidents in the declining public housing estates of Argenteuil, Sartrouville, and Mantes-la-Jolie in the Parisian Red Belt. The "social treatment" of urban marginality may alleviate its symptoms, it does little to attack its root causes.

The response of the United States government to the Los Angeles riot was in sharp contrast: once open rioting was checked by 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.25 Unlike in cases of natural disasters (such as hurricanes and floods), during which the federal government

23 The following characterization of patterns of policy reactions to urban disorder and marginality in advanced society is a simplification that greatly exaggerates the homogeneity and consistency of state reactions in each society. 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 target groups (foreigners or all 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 is often a considerable gap between the proclaimed purposes and actual aims of a given policy and its "street-level" bureaucratic implementation and effects.

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

25 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 tapes. One other indicator of the North 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 insufficient financing. The result has been a doubling of the population incarcerated in a decade with no visible impact on the trade and use of narcotics.
extends prompt and generous material and financial assistance to victims, Washington was content to coordinate charity relief and to encourage private rebuilding and reinvestment efforts. And though the riot had broken out in the midst of the presidential campaign, the fate of the urban poor was not deemed worthy of mention by any of the three major candidates for the White House. Stubborn refusal to acknowledge the structural mooring and political import of the uprising gives warrant to continue the policy of state neglect that helped cause it in the first place and all but guarantees that the human toll—in crime, incarceration, fear and death—exacted by urban marginalization will continue to mount unchecked.

The United Kingdom stands somewhere in between these two poles. 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 some state control over urban zoning and housing improvement. Locally, many British cities have followed 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 trust-building and community policing on the other. After the Handsworth riots for instance, the Birmingham police developed a series of indicators of local tension designed to preempt the outbreak of violence and they were able, in collaboration with local leaders, to keep young men off the streets. But one wonders how long such policies of "papering over" widening social cleavages can be expected to dampen discontent.

CONCLUSION: A CHALLENGE TO CITIZENSHIP

The popular disorders and urban protests that have shaken the advanced societies of the capitalist West over the past decade find their roots in the epochal transformation of their economy, the polarization of their cities, and in state policies that have more or less deliberately promoted corporate expansion over social redistribution and commodification over social protection. 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 prevent the social and spatial cumulation of economic hardship, marginality, and stigmatization in the deteriorating working-class neighborhoods of the dual metropolis.

The conjugation of ethnic inequality and class exclusion in declining urban enclaves deprived of organizational means of collective identity formation and grievance resolution promises to produce more unrest and to pose a daunting challenge to the institution of modern citizenship for years to come. Citizenship, in T.H. Marshall's (1964) famous formulation, served essentially to mitigate the class divisions generated by the marketplace: it is its extension, from the civil to the political to the social realm, that "altered the pattern of social inequality" and helped make advanced society relatively pacified and democratic. During the postwar era of protected growth, well-bounded and sovereign nation-states were able to establish a clear separation between members and non-members and to guarantee relatively a high degree of

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26 As Mollenkopf and Castells (1992: 404) note in the case of the United States, “the public sector did not play a redistributive and corrective role but amplified the trends toward income inequality, spatial segregation, and lack of adequate services for a large part of the population.”

congruence between the basic dimensions of membership. Today, that ability and congruence are both gone and 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 combination of increased immigrant streams and the concurrent decomposition of the industrial working class, 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" that must continually be struggled for and secured anew.

Thus the question facing First World nation-states at the close of the millenium is whether their polities have the capacity to prevent the further contraction and fragmentation of the sphere of citizenship and, correspondingly, what new mediating institutions they need to invent to provide full access to and active participation in it. If not, we may witness not only continued urban disorder, violence, and ethnoracial conflict at the heart of the advanced society, but a protacted process of societal fission and a ramification of inequalities and insecurities akin to a "Brazilianization" of the metropolis of Europe and North America.

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