Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

Chapter 8

HABITUS AS TOPIC AND TOOL

Reflections on becoming a prizefighter

Loïc Wacquant

In this essay, I recount how I took up the ethnographic craft; stumbled upon the Chicago boxing gym that is the main scene and character of my ethnography of prizefighting in the black American ghetto; and designed the book *Body and Soul* that reports on its findings so as to both deploy methodologically and elaborate empirically Pierre Bourdieu's signal concept of habitus (Wacquant 2004a). I draw out some of the biographical, intellectual and analytic connections between this research project on a plebeian bodily craft, the theoretical framework that informs it, and the macro-comparative inquiry into urban marginality of which it is an unplanned offshoot. I sketch how the practicalities of fieldwork led me from the ghetto as implement of ethnoracial domination to embodiment as a problem and resource for social inquiry. Through this reflection on becoming a prizefighter, I argue for the use of fieldwork as an instrument of theoretical construction, the potency of carnal knowledge, and the imperative of epistemic reflexivity, as well as stress the need to expand the textual genres and styles of ethnography so as to better capture the *Sturm und Drang* of social action as it is manufactured and lived.

The concept of habitus supplied at once the anchor, the compass, and the course of the ethnographic journey recapped in *Body and Soul*. It is the *topic* of investigation: the book dissects the forging of the corporeal and mental dispositions that make up the competent boxer in the crucible of the gym. But it is also the *tool* of investigation: the practical acquisition of those dispositions by the analyst serves as technical vehicle for better penetrating their social production and assembly. In other words, the apprenticeship of the sociologist is a methodological mirror of the apprenticeship undergone by the empirical subjects of the study; the former is mined to dig deeper into the latter and unearth its inner logic and subterranean properties; and both in turn test the robustness and fruitfulness of habitus as guide for probing the springs of social conduct. Contrary to a commonly held view that it is a vague notion that mechanically replicates social structures, effaces history, and operates as a "black box" that obviates observation and confounds explanation

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

(see Jenkins 1991 for a standard regurgitation of these nostrums), it emerges that Bourdieu's sociological reworking of this classic philosophical concept is a powerful tool to steer social inquiry and trace out operant social mechanisms. Properly used, habitus not only illuminates the variegated logics of social action; it also grounds the distinctive virtues of deep immersion in and carnal entanglement with the object of ethnographic inquiry.

From the South Pacific to the South Side of Chicago

Since the notion of habitus proposes that human agents are historical animals who carry within their bodies acquired sensibilities and categories that are the sedimented products of their past social experiences, it is useful to begin with how I came to ethnographic research and what in intellectual interests and expectations I brought with me to the South Side of Chicago. My initiation to fieldwork predates my entry in graduate school at the University of Chicago in 1985. To fulfill my military duties (as every French male had to do back then), by a stroke of luck, I was assigned to do a civilian service in the South Pacific as a sociologist in a research center of ORSTOM, France's former "office of colonial research." So I spent two years in New Caledonia, a French island northeast of New Zealand, in a small research team—there were only three of us—at the time of the Kanak uprising of November 1984. This means that I lived and worked in a very brutal and archaic colonial society, because New Caledonia in the 1980s was a colony of the nineteenth-century type that had survived virtually intact to the end of the twentieth century (see Bensa 1995 for an account). It was an extraordinary social experience for an apprentice sociologist to carry out research on the school system, urbanization, and social change in the context of an insurrection, under a state of emergency, and to observe in real time the struggles between the colonials and the independence forces, and to have to reflect in a concrete way about the civic role of social science. For instance, I was privileged to participate in a closed congress of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front in Canala at the height of the clash, and I also traveled all the way around the "Grande Terre" (the main island) and made several sojourns in Lifou island at the home of friends who were long-time Kanak militants at a time when practically no one was moving about in the territory.

The New Caledonian crucible sensitized me to ethnoracial inequality and to spatial consignment as a vector of social control—the Kanaks were largely relegated to isolated rural reservations and hypersegregated neighborhoods in the capital city of Nouméa. It also alerted me to the variegated workings of rigid hierarchies of color and honor in everyday life and to the crucial place of the body as a target, receptacle, and fount of asymmetric power relations. And it exposed me to extreme forms of deprecative racial imagery: the native Melanesians were typically pictured as "super-primitives" devoid of culture and history, even as they were rising to seize their historical fate

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

(Bourdieu and Bensa 1985). All of this would prove immensely useful later, on the South Side of Chicago, where germane treatments of African Americans were current. It is in New Caledonia that I read the classics of ethnology, Mauss, Mead, Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Bateson, etc. (especially works on the South Pacific: the Trobriand Islands were just nearby) and that I kept my first field notebooks. The very first was scribbled among the tribe of Luecilla, in the Bay of Wé, at Christmas of 1983, about a year before the independentist uprising (its highlight was a section on going bat-hunting and having to eat the roasted proceeds of our expedition at dinner that evening). Field notations found their way into my first publications on educational inequality, colonial conflict, and the transformation of Melanesian communities under the pressure of capitalist expansion and French rule.

At the close of my Caledonian sojourn, I got a four-year fellowship to go do my doctorate at the University of Chicago, the cradle of U.S. sociology and home of the main tradition of urban ethnography. When I arrived in Upton Sinclair's town, my intention was to work on a historical anthropology of colonial domination in New Caledonia, but I got unexpectedly derailed and detoured into America's dark ghetto. On the one side, the New Caledonian gates were abruptly shut after I filed a complaint against the mediocre bureaucrat who was my supervisor in Nouméa and had forced his name as co-author of a monograph on the school system that I had carried out by myself (Wacquant 1985). The directors of the Institute in Paris hastened to cover up for the cheater and effectively banned me from the island. On the other side, I found myself confronted day-to-day with the gruesome reality of Chicago's ghetto, or what was left of it. I was assigned the last student-housing unit available on campus, the one no-one had wanted, and so lived on 61st Street, at the edge of the poor black district of Woodlaw. It was a constant tremor and puzzlement to have right under my window this quasi-lunar urban landscape, with its unbelievable decay, misery, and violence, backed by a totally hermetic separation between the white, prosperous and privileged world of the university and the abandoned African-American neighborhoods all around it. Coming from Western Europe. where such levels of urban blight, material destitution and ethnic segregation are unknown, this challenged me profoundly on a quotidian level, intellectually and politically. It is at this point that the second decisive encounter of my intellectual life took place, the one with William Julius Wilson (the first was with Pierre Bourdieu, five years earlier, when I decided to convert from economics to sociology after hearing a public lecture by him, see Wacquant 2002a).

Wilson is the most eminent African-American sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century and the foremost expert on the nexus of race and class in the United States—his analysis of "Blacks and American Institutions" in *The Declining Significance of Race* (Wilson 1978) set the parameters for that subfield of social research in 1978. He was one of the faculty who had initially attracted me to Chicago, and so when he asked me to work

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

with him on the big research project on urban poverty he had just started (roughly, the agenda marked out by his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*, Wilson 1987), I jumped at the chance, and I quickly became his close collaborator and co-author. This afforded me the opportunity to get straight to the core of the subject and also to get a close-up look at how this scientific and policy debate operated at the highest level, especially in the philanthropic foundations and think tanks that shaped the resurgence of the problematic of race, class and poverty in the inner city. That is how I started my investigations, first as an acolyte of Wilson and then by myself, on the transformation of the dark ghetto after the riots of the 1960s, by striving to break with the pathologizing vision that pervaded and distorted research on the question.

I owe a huge personal and intellectual debt to Bill Wilson, who was a mentor at once demanding and generous: he stimulated and supported me, and he also gave me the freedom to diverge from his analyses, and at times to go in a direction diametrically opposed to his. By example, he taught me intellectual courage: to pursue the big picture, to dig deep into the details, to ask the hard questions, even when this entails ruffling a few social and academic feathers along the way. He also invited Pierre Bourdieu to speak to his research team on his Algerian research on urbanization and proletarianization from the early 1960s (Bourdieu et al. 1963). As it turns out, Bourdieu had tried to get *The Declining Significance of Race* translated into French a few years earlier. This meeting and the ensuing discussion solidified my sense that I could make a link between Bourdieu's early anthropological inquiries into the lifepaths of Algerian sub-proletarians and the contemporary predicament of the residents Chicago's black ghetto which preoccupied Wilson. But I did not know just how yet.

Ethnography played a pivotal role at that juncture, on two counts. On the one hand, I took more anthropology than sociology courses because the sociology department at the University of Chicago was very dull intellectually and because I was viscerally committed to a unitary conception of social science inherited from my French training. The courses, works, and encouragements of John and Jean Comaroff, Marshall Sahlins, Bernard Cohn and Raymond Smith pushed me toward fieldwork. On the other hand, I wanted to quickly find a direct observation post inside the ghetto because the existing literature on the topic was the product of a "gaze from afar" that seemed to me fundamentally biased if not blind (Wacquant 1997). That literature was dominated by the statistical approach, deployed from on high, by researchers who most often had no first-hand or even second-hand knowledge of what makes the ordinary reality of the dispossessed neighborhoods of the Black Belt, and who fill this gap with stereotypes drawn from common sense, journalistic or academic. I wanted to reconstruct the question of the ghetto from the ground up, based on a precise observation of the everyday activities and relations of the residents of that *terra non grata* and for this very reason, *incognita* (see Wacquant [1992] 1998a for an early effort).

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

I deemed it epistemologically and morally impossible to do research on the ghetto without gaining serious first-hand knowledge of it, because it was right there, literally at my doorstep (in the summertime, you could hear gunfire going off at night on the other side of the street), and because the established works seemed to me to be full of implausible or pernicious academic notions, starting with the scholarly myth of the "underclass" which was a veritable intellectual cottage industry in those years (see Katz 1993 and Gans 1995 for critical accounts and Wacquant 1996 for a conceptual dissection). As a white Frenchman, my formative social and intellectual experiences made me a complete foreigner to this milieu and intensified the need I felt to acquire some practical familiarity with it. After a few aborted attempts, by accident I found a boxing gym in Woodlawn, some three blocks from my apartment, and I signed up saying that I wanted to learn how to box, quite simply because there was nothing else to do in this context. In reality, I had absolutely no curiosity about or interest in the pugilistic world in itself (but I did want to get good exercise). The gym was to be just a platform for observation in the ghetto, a place to meet potential informants.

Habitus comes to the gym

But, very quickly, that gym turned out to be, not only a wonderful window into the daily life of young men in the neighborhood, but also a complex microcosm with a history, a culture, and a very intense and rich social, aesthetic, emotional, and moral life of its own. In a matter of months, I formed a very strong, carnal, bond with the regulars of the club and with the old coach, DeeDee Armour, who became a sort of adoptive father to me. Gradually I found myself attracted by the magnetism of the "Sweet Science" to the point where I spent most of my time in and around the gym. After about a year, the idea grew on me to dig into a second research subject, namely the social logic of a bodily craft. What is it that thrills boxers? Why do they commit themselves to this harshest and most destructive of all trades? How do they acquire the desire and the skills necessary to last in it? What is the role of the gym, the street, the surrounding violence and racial contempt, of self-interest and pleasure, and of the collective belief in personal transcendence in all this? How does one create a social competency that is an embodied competency, transmitted through a silent pedagogy of organisms in action? In short, how is the *pugilistic habitus* fabricated and deployed? That is how I found myself working on two connected projects simultaneously—two projects ostensibly very different from each other but in fact tightly linked: a carnal micro-sociology of the apprenticeship of boxing as sub-proletarian bodily craft in the ghetto, which offers a particular "slice" of this universe from below and from inside (Wacquant 2004a); and a historical and theoretical macrosociology of the ghetto as instrument of racial closure and social domination, providing a generalizing perspective from above and from the outside (Wacquant 2008).

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

I had started writing a field diary after every training session from my first afternoon at the gym, initially to overcome the overpowering sense of being out of place on the pugilistic scene on so many levels and not knowing really what I would do with these notes. Now I shifted to taking systematic notes and to exploring the various facets of the Sweet Science. The notion of habitus immediately came to me as a conceptual device to make sense of my personal experiences as a boxing apprentice and a scaffold to organize my ongoing observation of pugilistic pedagogy. I had read Bourdieu's anthropological works front to back, during my Caledonia years. So I was fully familiar with his elaboration of the notion, intended to overcome the antinomy between an objectivism that reduces practice to the mechanical precipitate of structural necessities and a subjectivism that confuses the personal will and intentions of the agent with the spring of her action (Bourdieu [1980] 1990; see Wacquant 2004b for a genealogy and exegesis of the notion). The author of *Outline of a Theory of Practice* had retrieved habitus from a long line of philosophers, stretching from Aristotle to Aquinas to Husserl, to develop a dispositional theory of action recognizing that social agents are not passive beings pulled and pushed about by external forces, but skillful creatures who actively construct social reality through "categories of perception, appreciation and action." But, unlike phenomenology, Bourdieu insists that, while being resilient and shared, these categories are not universal (or transcendental, in the language of Kantian philosophy), and that the generative matrix they compose is not unchanging. Rather, as the embodied sediments of individual and collective history, they are themselves socially constructed.

> As the product of history, habitus produces individual and collective practices, and thus history, in accordance with the schemata engendered by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemata of thought and action, tend, more surely than all formal rules and all explicit norms, tend to guarantee the conformity of practices and their constancy across time.
>
> (Bourdieu [1980] 1990: 91F)

Four properties of the concept of habitus suggested its direct relevancy for disclosing the social making of prizefighters. First, habitus is a set *acquired* dispositions, and no one is born a boxer (least of all, me!): the training of fighters consists precisely in physical drills, ascetic rules of life (concerning the management of food, time, emotions, and sexual desire), and social games geared toward instilling in them new abilities, categories, and desires, those specific to the pugilistic cosmos (Wacquant 1998b). Second, habitus holds that practical mastery operates *beneath the level of consciousness and discourse*, and this matches perfectly with a commanding feature of the

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

experience of pugilistic learning, in which mental understanding is of little help (and can even be a serious hindrance in the ring) so long as one has not grasped boxing technique with one's body (Wacquant 1995a). Third, habitus indicates that sets of dispositions *vary by social location and trajectory*: individuals with different life experiences will have gained varied ways of thinking, feeling, and acting; their primary dispositions will be more or less distant from those required by the Sweet Science; and thus they will more or less be invested in and adept at picking up the craft. This certainly accorded with my personal experience and notations on the disparate behaviors of my gym mates over time, as they tangled with the competing lure of the street and the gym, adapted to the authority of our coach, and sought to remake their self in accordance to the exacting demands of the trade. Fourth, the socially constituted conative and cognitive structures that make up habitus are malleable and tranmissible because they result from *pedagogical work*. If you want to pry into habitus, then study the organized *practices of inculcation* through which it is layered (Wacquant 1995b).

The "magical moment" of fieldwork that crystallized this theoretical hunch and turned what was initially a side activity into a full blown inquiry into the social logics of incarnation, was a rather inglorious one: it was getting my nose broken in sparring in May of 1989, about nine months into my novitiate. This injury forced me to take a long "time out" away from the ring, during which Bourdieu urged me to write a field report on my initiation for a thematic issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* in preparation on "The Space of Sports." The result was a long article that showed me that it was both feasible and fruitful to convert the theory of action encapsulated by the notion of habitus into an empirical experiment on the practical production of prizefighters at the Woodlawn gym (Wacquant 1989; 2002a). This article was soon augmented by more direct engagement with habitus on the theoretical front.

While I was carrying out my investigations on boxing and on the ghetto, I was in permanent contact with Pierre Bourdieu, who encouraged and guided me. Upon learning that I had signed up to learn how to box at the Woodlawn Boys Club, he had written me on a note that said essentially, "Stick it out, you will learn more about the ghetto in this gym than you can from all the surveys in the world." (Later on, as I got deeper into my immersion, he got a bit scared and tried to get me to pull back. When I signed up to fight in the Chicago Golden Gloves, he first threatened to disown me as he feared that I would get hurt, before realizing that there was no need to panic: I was well prepared for this trial by fire.) Bourdieu came to Chicago several times, visited the gym, and met DeeDee and my boxer friends (I introduced him to them as "the Mike Tyson of sociology"). During one of these visits, we hatched the project of a book that would explicate the theoretical core of his work, aimed at the Anglo-American readership, since it was on this front that there were the strongest distortions and obstacles to a fertile grasp of his

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

models. We devoted three years to writing this book across the Atlantic (by fax, phone, letters and meetings every few months), entitled *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), in which we disentangle the nexus of habitus, capital, and field. During those years, I led a sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde existence, boxing by day and writing social theory by night. In the afternoon, I would go to the gym, train, hang out with my buddies, and "conversate" on end with our coach DeeDee before driving him home at closing time. And, later that evening, after having typed my fieldnotes, I would turn to the book manuscript with Bourdieu. It was in turns intoxicating, invigorating, and exhausting. But the daytime sessions as a student of pugilism offered both a respite from theoretical cogitation and powerful stimuli for thinking through the abstract issues tackled in the book in very mundane empirical terms. The sociology of the ghetto (which I had extended to encompass a comparison with the postindustrial transformation of the French urban periphery), the carnal ethnography of the skilled body, and theoretical work with Bourdieu: all of these strands were elaborated together and at the same time, and they are all woven together.

The boxing project is an ethnography in a very classic mold in terms of its parameters, a sort of village study like the ones British anthropologists conducted in the 1940s, except that my village is the boxing gym and its extensions, and my tribe the fighters and their entourage. I retained this structural and functional unity because it encloses the boxers and carves out a specific temporal, relational, mental, emotional and aesthetic horizon which sets the pugilist apart, pushes him to "heroize" his lifeworld, and thereby raises him above his ordinary environs (Wacquant 1995c). I wanted, first of all, to dissect the cloven relation of "symbiotic opposition" between the ghetto and the gym, the street and the ring. Next, I wanted to show how the social and symbolic structure of the gym governs the transmission of the techniques of the "Manly Art" and the production of collective belief in the pugilistic *illusio*. And, finally, I wished to penetrate the practical logic of a corporeal practice that operates at the very limits of practice by means of a long-term apprenticeship in "the first person." For three years, I melted into the local landscape and got caught up in the game. I learned how to box and participated in all phases of the preparation of the pugilist, all the way to fighting in the big amateur tournament of the Golden Gloves. I followed my gym buddies in their personal and professional peregrinations. And I dealt on a routine basis with trainers, managers, promoters, etc., who make the planet of boxing turn and share in the spoils of this "show-business with blood" (Wacquant 1998c). In so doing, I was sucked into the sensuous and moral coils of pugilism, to the point where I seriously envisaged interrupting my academic trajectory to turn professional.

But, as the foregoing should have made clear, the object and method of this inquiry were not of the classic mold. *Body and Soul* offers an *empirical and methodological radicalization of Bourdieu's theory of habitus*. On the one

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

hand, I open the "black box" of the pugilistic habitus by disclosing the production and assembly of the cognitive categories, bodily skills and desires which together define the competence and appetence specific to the boxer. On the other hand, I deploy habitus as a methodological device, that is, I place myself in the local vortex of action in order to acquire through practice, in real time, the dispositions of the boxer with the aim of elucidating the magnetism proper to the pugilistic cosmos. This allows me to disclose the powerful allure of the combination of craft, sensuality, and morality that binds the pugilist to his trade as well as impresses the embodied notions of risk and redemption that enable him to overcome the turbid sense of being superexploited (Wacquant 2001). The method thus tests the theory of action which informs the analysis according to a recursive and reflexive research design.

The idea that guided me here was to push the logic of participant observation to the point where it becomes inverted and turns into *observant participation*. In the Anglo-American tradition, when anthropology students first go into the field, they are cautioned, "Don't go native." In the French tradition, radical immersion is admissible—think of Jeanne Favret-Saada's ([1978] 1980) *Deadly Words*—but only on condition that it be coupled with a subjectivist epistemology which gets us lost in the inner depths of the anthropologist-subject. My position, on the contrary, is to say, "go native, but *go native armed*," that is, equipped with your theoretical and methodological tools, with the full store of problematics inherited from your discipline, with your capacity for reflexivity and analysis, and guided by a constant effort, once you have passed the ordeal of initiation, *to objectivize this experience and construct the object*, instead of allowing yourself to be naively embraced and constructed by it. Go ahead, go native, but come back a sociologist! In my case, the concept of habitus served both as a bridge to enter into the factory of pugilistic know-how and methodically parse the texture of the work(ing) world of the pugilist, and as a shield against the lure of the subjectivist rollover of social analysis into narcissistic story-telling.

From flesh to text

Some of my critics, conflating the narrative form of the book for its analytic contents and mistaking my work for an extension of the "study of occupations" in the style of the second Chicago School (Hughes 1994), did not even notice the double role which the concept of habitus played in the inquiry and even complained about the absence of theory in the book (Wacquant 2005b). In fact, theory and method are joined to the point of fusion in the very empirical object whose elaboration they make possible.

Body and Soul is an *experimental ethnography* in the originary meaning of the term, in that the researcher is one of the socialized bodies thrown into the sociomoral and sensuous alembic of the boxing gym, one of bodies-in-

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

action whose transmutation will be traced to penetrate the alchemy by which boxers are fabricated. Apprenticeship is here the means of acquiring a practical mastery, a visceral knowledge of the universe under scrutiny, a way of elucidating the praxeology of the agents under examination, as recommended by Erving Goffman (1989) in a famous talk on fieldwork—and not the means of entering into the subjectivity of the researcher. It is absolutely not a fall into the bottomless well of subjectivism into which "auto-ethnography" joyfully throws itself (Reed-Danahay 1997), quite the opposite: it relies on the most intimate experience, that of the desiring and suffering body, to grasp *in vivo* the collective manufacturing of the schemata of pugilistic perception, appreciation, and action that are shared, to varying degrees, by all boxers, whatever their origins, their trajectory, and their standing in the sporting hierarchy (Wacquant 2005a). The central character of the story is neither "Busy" Louie, nor this or that boxer, and not even DeeDee the old coach, in spite of his central position as conductor: it is the gym as a social and moral forge.

Indeed, I hold that, with this project, I did in an explicit, methodical, and above all *extreme* manner that which every good ethnographer does, namely, to give herself a practical, tactile, sensorial grasp of the prosaic reality she studies in order to shed light on the categories and relations that organize the ordinary conduct and sentiments of her subjects. Except that, usually, this is done without talking about it or without thematizing the role of "co-presence" with the phenomenon being studied, or by making (herself and others) believe that this is a mental process, and not a bodily and sensual apprenticeship which proceeds beneath the level of consciousness before it becomes mediated by language. *Body and Soul* offers a demonstration in action of the distinctive possibilities and virtues of a *carnal sociology* which fully recounts the fact that the social agent is a suffering animal, a being of flesh and blood, nerves and viscera, inhabited by passions and endowed with embodied knowledges and skills—by opposition to the *animal symbolicum* of the neo-Kantian tradition, refurbished by Clifford Geertz (1973) and the followers of interpretive anthropology, on the one hand, and by Herbert Blumer (1969) and the symbolic interactionists, on the other—and that *this is just as true of the sociologist*. This implies that we must bring the body of the sociologist back into play and treat her intelligent organism, not as an obstacle to understanding, as the intellectualism drilled into our folk conception of intellectual practice would have it, but as a vector of knowledge of the social world.

Body and Soul is not an exercise in reflexive anthropology in the sense intended by what is called "poststructuralist" or "postmodern" anthropology, for which the return of the analytic gaze is directed either onto the knowing subject in her personal intimacy or onto the text that she delivers to her peers and the circuits of power-knowledge in which it travels, in a contradictory and self-destructive embrace of relativism (Hastrup 1995; Marcus

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

1998). Those forms of reflexivity, narcissistic and discursive, are rather superficial; they certainly constitute a useful moment in a research undertaking by helping to curb the play of the crudest biases (rooted in one's identity and trajectory, affects, rhetorical effects, etc.). But they stop the movement of critique at the very point where it should start, through the constant questioning of the categories and techniques of sociological analysis and of the relationship to the world these presuppose. It is this return to the *instruments of construction of the object*, as opposed to the subject of objectivation, which is the hallmark of what one may call *epistemic reflexivity* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 36–46; Bourdieu 2002). And here is another difference with the "egological" or textual reflexivity of the subjectivist anthropologists: epistemic reflexivity is deployed, not at the end of the project, *ex post*, when it comes to drafting the final research report, but *durante*, at every stage in the investigation. It targets the totality of the most routine research operations, from the selection of the site and the recruitment of informants to the choice of questions to pose or to avoid, as well as the engagement of theoretic schema, methodological tools and display techniques, at the moment when they are implemented.

So *Body and Soul* is a reflexive book in the sense that the very design of the inquiry forced me to constantly reflect on the suitability of the means of investigation to its ends, on the difference between the practical mastery and the theoretical mastery of a practice, on the gap between sensorial infatuation and analytic comprehension, on the hiatus between the visceral and the mental, the *ethos* and the *logos* of pugilism as well as of sociology. Likewise, *Urban Outcasts* (Wacquant 2008), the companion book of macrosociology which draws up the comparison of the structure and experience of urban relegation in the Black American ghetto and the French urban periphery, is a work of reflexive urban sociology because it ceaselessly interrogates the very categories it puts into question and into play—"underclass," "inner city," "banlieues," hyperghetto, anti-ghetto, precariat—to think the novel configurations of marginality in the city. And because it rests on a clear-cut demarcation between folk categories and analytic categories, which is for me the plinth of reflexivity.

Epistemic reflexivity is all the more urgently needed by ethnographers as everything conspires to invite them to submit to the preconstructions of common sense, lay or scholarly. By methodological duty, they must be attentive to the agents they study and take seriously their "point of view." If they do their job well, they also find themselves bound to these agents by affective ties that encourage identification and transference (for an astute analysis of the methodological use of transference in *Body and Soul*, see Manning 2005). Finally, the public image of ethnography (including, regrettably, in the eyes of other social scientists) likens it to story-telling, diary-writing, if not to epic. So much to say that the anthropologist or sociologist who relies on fieldwork must *double the dose of reflexivity*. This is what I

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

tried to demonstrate in "Scrutinizing the Street" about recent trends and foibles in U.S. urban ethnography (Wacquant 2002b). The considered target of my critique is not the three books on race and urban poverty that I subject to a meticulous analytic dissection (and still less their authors, who are here simply points in academic space, or their political positions, to which I am completely indifferent), but a certain epistemological posture of unreflective surrender to folk apperceptions, to ordinary moralism, to the seductions of official thought and to the rules of academic decorum. This posture is the fount of serious scientific errors, as these errors are systematic and have both ordinary and scholarly common sense on their side.

To enable the reader to experience the thrills of the apprentice boxer and make palpable both the logic of the fieldwork and its end-product required adopting a quasi-theatrical mode of writing. How to go from the guts to the intellect, from the comprehension of the flesh to the knowledge of the text? Here is a real problem of concrete epistemology about which we have not sufficiently reflected, and which for a long time seemed to me nearly irresolvable (notwithstanding the varied attempts at and discussions of formal innovation and poetic construction among anthropologists). To restitute the carnal dimension of ordinary existence and the bodily anchoring of the practical knowledge constitutive of pugilism—but also of every practice, even the least "bodily" in appearance, including sociological analysis—requires indeed a complete overhaul of our way of writing social science. In the case at hand, I had to find a style breaking with the monological, monochromatic, linear writing of the classic research account from which the ethnographer has withdrawn and elaborate a multifaceted writing that mixed styles and genres, so as to capture and convey "the taste and ache of action" to the reader (Wacquant 2004a: vii–xii).

Body and Soul is written against subjectivism, against the narcissism and irrationalism that undergird so-called "postmodern" literary theory, but that does not mean that we should for that deprive ourselves of the literary techniques and instruments of dramatic exposition that this tradition gives us. That is why the book mixes three types of writing, intertwined with each other, but each given priority in one of the three parts, so that the reader slides smoothly from concept to percept, from analysis to experience. The first part anchors a classic sociological style in an analytic mold that identifies at the outset structures and mechanisms so as to give the reader the tools necessary for explaining and understanding of what is going on. The tone of the second part is set by ethnographic writing in the strict sense, that is, a dense depiction of the ways of being, thinking, feeling, and acting proper to the milieu under consideration, where one encounters again these mechanisms but in action, through the effects they produce. The experiential moment comes in the third part, in the form of "sociological novella" that delivers felt action, the lived experience of a subject who also happens to be the analyst.

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

The weighed combination of these three modalities of writing—the sociological, the ethnographic, and the literary—according to proportions that become gradually inverted as the book progresses, aims to enable the reader to feel emotionally and understand rationally the springs and turns of pugilistic action. For this, the text weaves together an analytic lattice, stretches of closely edited fieldnotes, counterpoints composed by portraits of key protagonists and excerpts from interviews, as well as photographs whose role is to foster a synthetic grasp of the dynamic interplay of the factors and forms inventoried in the analysis, to give the reader a chance to "touch with her own eyes" the beating pulse of pugilism. Here again, everything hangs together: the theory of habitus, the use of apprenticeship as technique of investigation, the place accorded to the sentient body as vector of knowledge, and formal innovation in writing. Indeed, there is no point in carrying out a carnal sociology backed by practical initiation if what it reveals about the sensorimotor magnetism of the universe in question ends up disappearing later in the writing, on the pretext that one must abide by the textual canons dictated by Humean positivism or neo-Kantian cognitivism.

Many social researchers view theory as a set of abstract notions that either float high up in the pure sky of ideas, disconnected from the nitty-gritty of the conduct of inquiry, or constitute responses to the empirical questions that the latter raises, to be discovered in the real world, as in the approach labeled "grounded theory." This is a misconstrual of the relationship of theory and research, and ethnography in particular. Whether the investigator is aware of it or not, theory is always driving field inquiry because, as Gaston Bachelard (1971) taught us, "the vector of knowledge goes from the rational to the real," and not the other way around. And it must of necessity engage observation in order to convert itself into propositions about an empirically existing entity. This applies to habitus, which, like every concept, is not an answer to a research question but an organized manner of asking questions about the social world—in the case recounted here, a methodical plan to vivisect the social fabrication of pugilists in their workaday environment.

References

Bachelard, G. (1971) *Epistémologie*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

Bensa, A. (1995) *Chroniques Kanak. L'ethnologie en marche*, Paris: Ethnies.

Blumer, H. (1969) *Symbolic Interaction*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bourdieu, P. ([1980] 1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

———(2002) "Participant Objectivation: the Huxley Medal lecture," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 9: 281–94.

Bourdieu, P. and Bensa, A. (1985) "Quand les Canaques prennent la parole," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 56: 69–85.

Bourdieu, P., Darbel, A., Rivet, J., and Seibel, C. (1963) *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, Paris and The Hague: Mouton.

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press and Cambridge: Polity Press.

Favret-Saada, J. ([1978] 1980) *Deadly Words: witchcraft in the bocage*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gans, H. (1995) *The War Against the Poor*, New York: Pantheon.

Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books.

Goffman, E. (1989) "On Fieldwork," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 18: 123–32.

Hastrup, K. (1995) *A Passage to Anthropology: between experience and theory*, London: Routledge.

Hughes, E. C. (1994) *On Work, Race, and the Sociological Imagination*, ed. L. A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jenkins, R. (1991) *Pierre Bourdieu*, London: Routledge.

Katz, M. B. (ed.) (1993) *The "Underclass" Debate: views from history*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Manning, P. (2005) *Freud and American Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Marcus, G. (1998) *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Reed-Danahay, D. (ed.) (1997) *Auto/Ethnography: rewriting the self and the social*, New York: Berg.

Wacquant, L. (1985) *L'École inégale. Éléments de sociologie de l'enseignement en Nouvelle-Calédonie*, Paris and Nouméa: Editions de l'ORSTOM with the Institut Culturel Mélanésien.

———(1989) "Corps et âme: notes ethnographiques d'un apprenti-boxeur," *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 80: 33–67.

———(1995a) "The Pugilistic Point of View: how boxers think and feel about their trade," *Theory and Society*, 24: 489–535.

———(1995b) "Pugs at Work: bodily capital and bodily labor among professional boxers," *Body and Society*, 1: 65–94.

———(1995c) "Protection, discipline et honneur: une salle de boxe dans le ghetto américain," *Sociologie et sociétés*, 27: 75–89.

———(1996) "L''underclass' urbaine dans l'imaginaire social et scientifique américain," in S. Paugam (ed.) *L'Exclusion: l'état des savoirs* (pp. 248–62), Paris: Editions La Découverte.

———(1997) "Three Pernicious Premises in the Study of the American Ghetto," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 21, "Events and Debate": 341–53.

———([1992] 1998a) "Inside the Zone: the social art of the hustler in the black American ghetto," *Theory, Culture and Society*, 15: 1–36.

———(1998b) "The Prizefighter's Three Bodies," *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 63: 325–52.

———(1998c) "A Fleshpeddler at Work: power, pain, and profit in the prizefighting economy," *Theory and Society*, 27: 1–42.

———(2001) "Whores, Slaves, and Stallions: languages of exploitation and accommodation among professional fighters," *Body and Society*, special issue on "Commodifying Bodies," 7: 181–94.

———(2002a) "Taking Bourdieu into the Field," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 46: 180–86.

Template: Royal C, Font: ,
Date: 17/03/2009; 3B2 version: 9.1.470/W Unicode (Jun 2 2008) (APS_OT)
Dir: P:/eProduction/WIP/9780415452205/dtp/9780415452205.3d

———(2002b) "Scrutinizing the Street: poverty, morality, and the pitfalls of urban ethnography," *American Journal of Sociology*, 107: 1468–532.

———([2000] 2004a) *Body and Soul: notebooks of an apprentice boxer*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.

———(2004b) "Habitus," in J. Beckert and Zafirovski, M. (eds.) *International Encyclopedia of Economic Sociology* (pp. 315–19), London: Routledge.

———(2005a) "Carnal Connections: on embodiment, membership and apprenticeship," *Qualitative Sociology*, 28: 445–71 (response to the special issue on "Body and Soul," 28, no. 3).

———(2005b) "Shadowboxing with Ethnographic Ghosts: a rejoinder," *Symbolic Interaction*, 28: 441–47 (response to the symposium on "Body and Soul").

———(2008) *Urban Outcasts: a comparative sociology of advanced marginality*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Wilson, W. J. (1978) *The Declining Significance of Race: blacks and changing American institutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

———(1987) *The Truly Disadvantaged: the inner city, the underclass, and public policy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.