Nicholas Gamso

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Unwelcome Guests: Neoliberalism and the Representation of Marginality

> No fat rich man´s pony can ever overtake you
> And there´s not a rider from the east to the west
> Could hold you a light
> in this dark mist and midnight
> When the potbellied thieves
> chase their unwelcome guest
> — Woodie Guthrie

In May of this year, the US Supreme Court ruled that the California prison system was overcrowded to an inhumane degree, dealing a major blow to what's become known, among activists, journalists, and scholars as the "Prison-Industrial Complex." This complex — heretofore "carcerality" or "the penal state" — a financially unsustainable but nevertheless ever-expanding program of prison construction and mass incarceration, has become emblematic of neoliberal capitalism, emerging during the period in which the neoliberal economic model proffered by a handful of economists and politicians became the dominating principal of the United States' domestic and international agenda. Neoliberalism, according to Geographer and Social Theorist David Harvey, necessitates "an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" and but that has also become a mode of "creative destruction," of "Divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life an thought, reproductive activities, attachments to the land and habits of the heart" (2-3). In other words, it is a system that is ubiquitous and totalitarian, and, as such, may unite disparate and diverse struggles, antagonisms, and forms of exploitation: The operations and products of the neoliberal penal state are, therefore, manifest well outside the prison walls, in physical, rhetorical, and journalistic spaces designed to emphasize neoliberal dogma while de-emphasizing, through displacement and erasure, its human cost.

With due consideration of the effects of the Court's ruling and the durability, despite protests, of the current economic and political regimes, I am interested in identifying the potential agency of people marginalized by three decades of criminalizing poverty, those who have been materially dispossessed and bereft of meaningful recourse, those whose vulnerability has been first codified and then criminalized: The homeless, like the incarcerated, are subject to modes of *representation* that are monopolized by distant powers, by developers and law enforcement but also by researchers and journalists. Considering the way the media and intellectuals have unknowingly interpolated dominant ideologies helps in avoiding a major theoretical pitfall — one which may advance the logic of the penal state more than we, as scholars and activists ourselves, would wish: we should be careful not to abstract the lives of prisoners or the poor, the abject, the dispossessed. Obscured and systematically occluded, without rights, the figure of the prisoner has been over-theorized, characterized as some state-controlled specter that constitutes what we *aren't* — a space of bare life in or the keeper of our repressed, deviant selves. There is truth in these functionalist explanations: prisoners *are* useful scapegoat, ritualized figures deployed at times the service of the state; and indeed the homeless are mischaracterized as responsible for, and not merely victims of, urban disorder. But these are groups one whose subjectivity, in scholars' efforts to understand the social order's constitutive outside, have been uncritically effaced. The impulse to abstract the experiences of the disposed forestalls an incredible opportunity for scholars and activists today, at a moment when the US population is sinking deeper into poverty and the quick fix of mass incarceration is failing to keep up: the penal state is an object of increased distrust precisely because it tags and confines millions, because its incursions on collective social life are proving too vast, too reckless to be sustained. And the mechanisms for keeping the barbarians at bay — by turns gentrification, ghettoization, incarceration — are failing to keep up.

I will try understand how what Pierre Bourdieu terms "dominant discourse" is transformed

into social and physical reality, and, particularly in neoliberalism's ascendant decades, how this transformation became manifest in the relationship between urban development and criminalized poverty. Specifically, I'll look at how political rhetoric aids *and is aided by* planning and architecture, systems of control — yes — but also as strategies of representation that seek to fragment civic populations. The homeless have been particularly vilified in this process, pathologized and reduced to caricatures even among media sympathizers. I'll look at the literature on representation and advocacy, and consider in a final, speculative section the potential for serious interventions among journalists and scholars today. The criminalization of poverty and its links to urban development have been widely documented by social scientists, and media critics have long noted journalism's neglect of issues of economic inequality. Yet, despite this ongoing critique, even radical scholars have had little success in proliferating a new vocabulary of economics and marginality; monolithic concepts like "the prison-industrial complex" and codified typologies like "the homeless" and "the underclass" have become sympathetic monikers that abstract the lives of many of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society and obscure the complexity of the systems that produce them.

There are, of course, some notable successes: I have included here excerpts from a few texts — popular, short-form reportage, critical ethnography, and collective activist statements — to serve as examples of new ways of representing marginality. But I will consider them in light of two theoretical schools that have made significant inroads in critiquing the totalitarian and systemic nature of the current economic and political order: I will survey the analysis of urban social life developed by critical Marxist geographers David Harvey, Neil Smith, Mike Davis, and Jason Hackworth, who see neoliberalism manifest in the workings of the contemporary city and in particular a two-fold model of development that consists of, first, devaluation of public housing and social services and, second, the protection by the state of new globalized real estate investment. But to frame this paper and provide key terms, I will use the work of French sociologists Pierre

Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, who emphasize the union of material and symbolic systems in the reproduction of the social field. They foreground the interpolation of discourse and insist on "reflexivity" of the researcher and the reporter, a concept that compels my questions about the potential efficacy of representation in the contemporary moment.

Theory and Representation

Wacquant and Bourdieu's work on neoliberlism exemplifies a methodology that *must* be employed in order to make a serious intervention on behalf of those disenfranchised by the criminalization of poverty: Wacquaint's own work on urban poverty and the development of the American penal state — in concert with Bourdieu and others in *The Weight of the World* (1993) and alone in *Urban Outcasts* (2008) and *Punishing the Poor* (2009) — is particularly useful here as an analysis of how tenets of neoliberal ideology have been codified in the American imaginary. He argues, rightly, that paranoid political rhetoric of the last three decades — regarding crime, morality, and personal responsibility — has legitimized in the eyes of Americans a system that preys on longstanding race- and class- antagonisms and foundational narratives about the virtues of a government that "governs least." He is also keen in his sense of how journalists have interpolated a political discourse of personal responsibility by pathologizing the behavior of particular offenders. But I'm not convinced that the reading of political rhetoric proffered by Wacquant grasps the central mechanisms through which discourse and representation that lead to objective realty; in particular, I'm suspicious that "small governance" is a real or even professed interest of the majority, despite its perennial occurrence in American political history. Further, Wacquant provides no terms for useful intervention by scholars or activists, aside from critique.

His argument makes most sense beside Bourdieu's remarks from three decades earlier about the process through which dominant ideology becomes manifest in every discourse and in the positions, physical as well as conceptual, of every institution, every individual. Bourdieu calls

dominant discourse "the accompaniment of a politics, a prophecy that contributes to its own realization because those producing it have an interest in its truth and the means to make it true." The transference of an idea or a worldview, a politics or a political ideology from mere discourse to objective reality is one of dominant power's most necessary actions: "The dominant representations continuously objectify themselves in things and the social world contains the realized ideology on every hand, in the form of institutions, objects and mechanisms (not to speak of the habitus of agents)" (112). For Bourdieu, the key is repetition and circulation of terms that refer to essential concepts and oppositions: neoliberalism is discursively successful because its prescribes its own inevitability, prescribes through its claims of newness and openness ("neo" and "liberal") proof of an evolutionary ascendance[1]; Bourdieu's analysis — written during a period of technocratic rule in Western Europe but restated in his writing on globalization in the 1990s — foresees the most durable myth of neoliberal capitalism, the myth that, as Margaret Thatcher famously said, "there is no alternative." This myth renders even critics of neoliberalism complicit in its ubiquity and its circulation as a discourse across various fields and positions large and small, individual and institutional. Neoliberal ideology exerts itself in a kind of fatalistic personal attitude, one which "makes a virtue of necessity" on the level of the individual (the "agent") as well as the institutional (civic and academic bodies, nonprofit organizations, etc).

Bourdieu's analysis of this system is useful, for my purposes, at the levels of institutional (and state-led) planning, where representing the interests and underlying ideologies of a local

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[1] Bourdieu emphasizes the strategic use of oppositional discourse by politicians, which re-hashes the conceptual antagonism between "old" and the "new," "closed" and "open," "past" and "future." Each of these oppositions evokes countless others such as "small" and "large," "provincial" and "cosmopolitan," "immobile" and "mobile"; and as each term is assigned to individuals and institutions, outlooks and political ideologies, it functions more and more on the basis of its constitutive opposite: if Neolibralism is coded as "new" and "open" its proponents may feel or be perceived as *not* parochial or backward, but open to the *novel*, cherishing "'dynamism' and 'mobility,' 'mutation' and 'change'" (103-105).

population justifies the specific practices that accumulate capital for private parties. But it is also essential to understanding how other fields, journalistic and academic, unknowingly reproduce dominant discourse and lead to uncritical typologies and a "sovereign" view of widespread phenomena. Bourdieu advocates a perspective that acknowledges the global without ceding to the totalizing discourses of globalization or relinquishing the immediate, the intimate, or the local. What's required, then, for the scholar or journalist — and, for that matter, for the artist — to engage in serious political action is a critique of his or her own position, which is a constitutive part of the composition of his own field and of social life at large as surely as do sweeping economic or political paradigms. This necessitates a radical critique of those institutions with whom we, as academics and activists, are apt to empathize, and the way these institutions represent social life not only through rhetoric but the allotment of material and intellectual resources.

This economy of emphasis is central to the operations and proliferation of neoliberal ideology, which reveals itself in some moments — deploying at once imagery and physical violence, physical limits and financial obstacles, discourses of belonging and legal methods of alienation — and *stands back* or *divests* in others. Its violence and brutality emerge and recede not just through political rhetoric, but via complex strategies of *representation*. "Representation" — which I've borrowed from the social science lexicon — and not merely "discourse" or "visibility," seems a term broad enough to encompass the many ways myths of criminality and social life are produced: the political and spatial valences of poverty and power, the role of journalists and scholars in articulating abstract social theories and minute quotidian realities, even the successes and failures of activist groups who attempt to articulate the rights of the dispossessed — the potential efficacy of all these parts, their political function, resides in representation. The term "representation," further emphasizes diverse means of proliferating an ideology, but also underscores the innocent interpolation of dominant ideology at levels rhetorical and geographic, spoken, performed and

experienced.

There is a potential for a renewed efficacy here, for just as the neoliberal state traffics in the notions of personal responsibility and trains us to look for tropes of deviance and abnormality, so might new modes of representation — of the individual, and of the system — provide a viable challenge to dominant powers.

<div align="center">Dispossession and Urban Space</div>

Cities are characterized by density and diversity and long-entrenched social antagonisms, provoking development models that rely on the transformation of extant space and the manipulation of extant populations. Urban Renewal, especially since the financial crises of the 1970s, has sought to erase and beatify the derelict, to clear the way for new wealth and commerce; but in the process it has produced a surplus of marginalized people — deemed undesirable for reasons economic and racial — whose visibility has threatened to compromise the economic and political success of private investment in infrastructure and real estate. Some systems of development and speculation had built within them effective if unethical remedies for poverty's visibility: the public housing projects and planning of the post-war period, which did offer long-term security for the poor, confined the poor while gesturing toward utopian altruism; concomitant waves of "White Flight" that spurred urban sprawl managed to diffuse the realm of political and social representation across large swaths of suburbia, abandoning poor urban areas. But by the middle of the 1980s, when public housing money had been slashed and a body of international investors saw opportunities for growth in the city, new models of dealing with the poor had to be conceived. By remaking the urban landscape entirely, by rebuilding it and ascribing to it novel and marketable qualities, developers in the era of ascendant neoliberalim monopolized spatial and architectural forms of representation.

Concurrent schemes to slash social services and defund public housing produced an unprecedented homelessness crisis, and politicians at all levels of government dealt with the issue of

visibility by criminalizing poverty. Development *necessitated* the production of a massive penal apparatus and made a virtue of such necessity by using to clear the way for private real estate speculation and "commercial revitalization." In his account of the gentrification of the Lower East Side, *New Urban Frontiers,* Neil Smith clarifies the relationship between the accumulation of capital and the ascription, to certain segments of the population, of outsider status. He observes that by constructing new buildings, rather than merely rehabilitating old ones, developers both establish a rent gap — exploiting economic divisions and distending social rifts among dominated classes — and produced the conditions for new rounds of capital investment. This is what Smith calls the "perverse rationality" of gentrification:

> having produced a scarcity of capital in the name of profit [developers] flood the neighborhood for the same purpose, portraying themselves all along as civic-minded heroes, pioneers taking a risk where no one else would venture, builders of a new city for the worthy populace" (23).

Accumulation and reinvestment are the ends, but also in their prescription of the "worthy populace," the means of urban development and gentrification. Developers market themselves as saviors of derelict urban spaces precisely because they determine who the "worthy populace" is and ghettoize it materially and spatially: they establish and manipulate "the frontier," the physical contours of the social body, and are always in negotiation with the concept of social acceptability. Representation, in other words, functions variously as a prerequisite for, and a retroactive justification of, urban development. Determining and representing social norms and popular interests may be the first step, for developers and politicians, in the process of drumming up investment, setting the terms by which populations are tagged for removal; but representing social norms can also be used as a mode of damage control when plans go awry.

In both cases, the most historically successful strategies have been based around the threat

of anarchy and the consequential need for a visible threshold (famously termed the "Thin Blue

Line") between order and chaos. Praying on converging forms of anxiety, this desire cedes control

of representations material, visible, and purely discursive, to dominant powers. In addition to waging

"wars" on soft drugs and petty crimes and enacting draconian "stop and frisk" and "three-strikes"

laws, politicians and private parties manipulated these anxieties with physical representations of

power. High and low, but always *visible*, technology regulated and intimidated specific populations

while incubating among the wealthy a justificatory sense of paranoia. In New York, during long

periods of urban renewal parks were "beatified" and "renovated" by fencing off patches of grass,

planting flowers, and replacing park benches so that sleeping became virtually impossible and

loitering clearly discouraged. In Los Angeles, in the decade preceding the 1992 riots, the LAPD

combined increased aerial surveillance and assaults on downtown high rises with urban architecture

that emphasized its monolithic, "prison- or fortress-like qualities." Spaces of gentrification and

renewal become, at times, zones of indistinction, and at others prominent stages for the theater of

the state (what Mike Davis calls "letting it all hang out"), and best reveal how development is itself a

form of representation.

The schemes that accompany gentrification need, then, to be particularly ugly, justifying a

politically hazardous set of operations through a *catastrophist* political rhetoric that emphasizes the

threat of urban disorder. Rhetoric is more easily controlled and managed than other forms of

representation, especially those that emerge without warning or by groups unaccounted for by long-

established discourses. Here, Smith details the divisive rhetoric employed by city officials to justify,

after the fact, the 1988 police riot in Tompkins Square Park:

> Ed Koch […] took to describing Tomkins Square Park as a "cesspool" and blamed the riot
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> on "anarchists." Defending his police clients, the president of the Patrolmen's Benevolent
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> Association enthusiastically elaborated: "social parasites, druggies, skinheads and

communists" an "insipid conglomeration of human misfits"— were the cause of the riot. (5) In this case, the state was up against damning accounts of the riot in local newspapers, and the circulation of a video by documentarian Clayton Patterson, on the basis of which seventeen officers were cited for misconduct. The video undid the state's monopoly of representation — officers mounted on horseback riding up Avenue A, wearing riot gear, their badges hidden — which could only be contained by vilifying the victims, morphing them by discursive turns into criminals. Were the racial demographics different, and the park cleared only of homeless minority youths and not "anarchists" and "communists" — catchalls unearthed, it must have seemed, from the rhetoric of prior political eras — this discourse may have been unwarranted. But without requisite assumptions about race and delinquency and having misplaced or misused its means of representation, the state had to resort to ways of altering what Wacquant calls the "*gaze that society trains on certain street illegalities*," those which create "*dispossessed and dishonored populations*" (4).

The resurrection of retrograde monikers like "communist" points to the kind of grandstanding characteristic of neoliberal rhetoric, linking it to a central tenet of neoliberal ideology: personal responsibility. Wacquant, who divines this discourse in his study of carcerality, points to the political rhetoric of conservative politicians like Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, which emphasizes neoliberalism's intervention in what they declare was a failure of the welfare state. They claimed that Johnson's great society and the decade of social change that followed adhered to "a social philosophy that saw man as primarily a creature of his material environment" and "viewed criminals as the unfortunate products of poor socioeconomic conditions or an underprivileged upbringing" (10). This was how Reagan justified waves of cuts that, by 1983, had reduced the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) low- and moderate-income housing budget to a mere 13 percent of what it had been before he took office. Over the next two decades, federal money allocated to public housing has hardly risen, ineffectively supplemented by schemes

that encourage private developers to produce affordable housing through tax credits and increased attention to "homelessness assistance," programs that seeks to provide temporary relief to the homeless and not long-term security (Western Regional Advocacy Project 4-5).

Of course, it was Bill Clinton who signed the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) into law, limiting "lifetime" welfare assistance to 5 years and requiring work. *Workfare* was part of an ideology that not only privileged homeownership, but prescribed mechanisms for mobility among the more socially attractive, those whose visibility in urban spaces could be easily controlled. Geographer Jason Hackworth sees this moment as one of specifically neoliberal restructuring: by vying competitively for housing grants (particularly those offered through HOPE VI), local governments plans for housing had to be sanctioned by federal bodies; more money was allocated to middle-income housing renovation, and not to particularly at-risk individuals and families, while those who did benefit from new funding were monitored, their behavior incentivized by "one strike" rules, by work fare, and a string of other programs that emphasized "self-sufficiency" while penalizing minor infractions (Hackworth 48-50). Planners' emphasis on personal responsibility became inscribed in the very landscape of the city and in New York especially, where the presence of the homeless became an impediment not just to "commercial revitalization" but potential profits derived from international tourism and entertainment industries; again questions of deviance and visibility dominated the city's representation of itself, its interests, and its people.

Reportage and Representation

If the cost cutting and urban renewal projects of the 1980s had produced homelessness at an unprecedented scale, remaking the physical landscape of cities and necessitating the incarceration of vulnerable and marginalized people, then the turn in the 1990s toward workfare, epitomized by the PRWOA, constituted a novel shift in the roles of public institutions and their unofficial

spokespeople. For Wacquant, this was a defining stage in what he calls

> "the organizational coupling of the left hand and right hand of the state under teh aegis of
> the same disciplinary philosophy of behaviorism and moralism … an unprecedented
> institutional innovation which overturns the accepted categories of social theory, empirical
> research, and public policy -- starting with the safe separation between those who manage or
> study "welfare" and those who track "crime." (291)[2]

The conflation of these two categories is central, for me, to seeing how representations of
criminality and poverty became codified among journalists and scholars. Journalists have been
especially susceptible to and, by turns, complicit, ignoring the plights of cities' most vulnerable
populations while obsessing over criminality and deviance, reducing to sound bites ("welfare queen,"
"gang banger") the very strata of society that neoliberal development is designed to reproduce.
Minority youths especially — whom Wacquant calls, with an eye to deadening statistics, America's
"subproletariate" — are vilified and reduced, their images circulated in the imaginary, as ungrateful
beneficiaries of the state's charity.

But the conflation of poverty and delinquency also made significant inroads in even
academic literature. Talmadge Wright, a sociologist and housing rights activist in Chicago, has
written extensively on the representation of poverty in academic and journalistic works, arguing that
these same discourses of personal responsibility, and the influence and largess of HUD and
organizations like the National Institute of Mental Health have codified representations along

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[2] Wacquant borrows this formulation from Bourdieu: the "Left hand of the state" is made up of
social workers — "family counselors, youth leaders, rank-and-file magistrates … and also,
increasingly, secondary and primary teachers," those who "trace, within the state, the social struggles
of the past." The "Right hand," by contrast, is constituted by "the technocrats of the Ministry of
Finance, the public and private banks and the ministerial cabinets"; Wacquant takes Bourdieu's
assertion that increasingly under neoliberal doctrine the "left hand of the state has the sense that the
right hand no longer know, or worse, no longer really wants to know what the left hand is doing"
(*Acts of Resistance* 2).

institutional and dominant ideological lines similar to those described by Wacquant. Here he writes about the concept of "the homeless," a phrase that could "capture public sympathy," but might also "displaced concerns over the unequal distribution of power, property and privilege: In the body of academic literature that followed cuts of the 1980s, "the contemporary 'homeless' were equated with a small portion of the mentally ill who had been cast into the streets as a result of de-institutionalization and the failed funding of community mental health centers during the mid 1970s" (15). In many works, negotiations about how best to depict the poorest people in American society gave way to disciplinary categories, classifying homeless people on the basis of researchers' areas of expertise and creating elaborate classificatory schemes: drugs and alcohol, disintegration of the family, racial animus were each declared to be the silver bullets to homelessness:

> For many researchers, this transformation of a growing, destitute population into "The homeless" and then its attendant dispersion into segmented social categories moved the political agenda away from issues poverty, redevelopment, displacement, land use policies, job loss and other structural features of capital to those agendas generated by perceivable behavioral differences within a destitute population and the problems associated with creating better service networks. These differences … worked to separate poor populations from each other in terms of priority research funding, policymaking, and social activism. (21)

This acquiescence to the edicts of dominant modes of representation, and, in turn, to normative modes of classifying and reproducing the social hierarchy, represents a major impediment to efficacious critique and social change. Wright's solution, in his own work, has been to apply theories of active agency (derivative from Bourdieu's early methodological writing) to the subjects of research and to invest in longstanding relationships with the people about whom he writes and for whose rights he advocates.

This can act as a model for contemporary journalists, too, especially in times of widespread economic volatility. William T. Vollmann, in a recent essay for *Harper's* — "Homeless in Sacramento: Welcome to the New Tent Cities" — documents an extended period he spent with residents of Safe Ground, a growing, mobile encampment of homeless individuals and families in Sacramento.[3] Many of the homeless people who live as part of this community are refugees of urban and suburban development; others have been laid off and evicted during the current recession; and many of them have been in and out of prison for decades. But these people share a knowledge of the legal system and of their rights, working closely with a lawyer who has challenged loitering laws and who maintains friendships with journalists and civic and religious groups. They are not what the public at large may perceive to be "the homeless," not the "conglomeration of human misfits" described by New York law enforcement two decades ago; rather, they've transformed their public face and renewed their subjectivity with the help of Left media and through public demonstrations. Vollmann depicts this group with candor and without any kind pathologizing. And though his writing does occasionally fall into the stylized rhythm of a road novel[4], its greatest strength is recognizing the agency of the people he depicts and its reflexivity. Many of the people he meets don't particularly like him, and he acknowledges this, noting, too, that he has doubts about his ability to represent the people in his article fairly. He observes, too, that the community is subject to internal politics and challenges that at times have to do with substance abuse and neglect; but rather than ascribing these issues to a "culture of poverty," he sees them as part of any collectively run enterprise. He emphasizes, in other words, normalcy and familiarity.

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[3] Vollman's title is eluding to the Hoovervilles of the depression, and he gestures in his article to populist representations of artists and journalists like Studs Turkel, Dorothea Lange, Jacob Riis, and Woodie Guthrie.

[4] "My new friend Peyton, A blocky man with a crew cut, invited me to be a fourth in a game of Yahtzee, but I didn't feel like it. So I lay down on the floor and listened to the creakings of chairs" (38).

The goal, for Wright, Vollmann, and other activists, has long been to change the face of homelessness by dismantling the myths of deviance and the pathologies that go with them. Their challenge is to affect systemic change *through* representation. Organizations like Picture the Homeless in New York and Chicago's Anti-Eviction campaign have worked along similar lines, holding spontaneous demonstrations, and garnering significant press attention, outside of corporate banks, guilty of predatory lending, and on the stoops of those who quickly became victims of the foreclosure crisis.

<div align="center">Systemic Challenges and New Horizons</div>

In activist groups' and scholars' attempts to variously unsettle and even overthrow neoliberal hegemony, there have been regrettably few successes; as Hackworth says, summarizing critiques of anti-corporate movements today, even while observing the inherent illogic of neoliberal dogma fails in the face of its proponents' most insidious gestures, those which "promote a set of policies that are anything but liberal (whether classical, egalitarian, or neo-)" (200). The prominence of discourse and representation is key here, for many of the strategies used to challenge neoliberalism do little to undermine its underlying constitutive parts, reacting instead to its political rhetoric and reductive (mis)interpretations of neoliberal doctrine by the press. Hackworth is especially concerned by what he perceives to be a lack among social movements the necessary scope to overturn the current economic order. He points to five "overlapping threads of resistance," which have failed to "coalesced into a systematic challenge to neoliberal urbanism": he lists a neo-Keynsianism that attempts to resurrect a long-abandoned welfare system to supplement the losses suffered by ordinary people; the anti-globalization movement, a group of disparate and diffuse social movements whose moniker was imposed largely by mainstream media, obscuring a necessary focus on locality; the economic justice movement, which has been most efficacious at the hands of established organizations and whose goals, some critics have said, are too pragmatic and parochial to

affect serious systemic change. Hackworth levels this charge, too, at momentary and ad-hoc organizing against specific development projects, or against gentrification of particular neighborhoods, whose public outcry but quickly recede, lacking a common vision or even common aims. Lastly, he points to disparate efforts to collectivize the private, and, in the case of real estate, to maintain collectively-owned housing; this has been relatively successful but, he claims, has also failed to coalesce.

For Hackworth, the question of the symbolic is secondary to material, systemic changes. So, too, is the local cause or anecdotal case secondary to the need for a structural shift in governance and management. However, I think these resistance movements — though they do suffer at times from a lack of, or legitimate and reasonable resistance to, a unified vision — have profound potential precisely because they recognize the importance of the local on the lived experiences of individuals. As Wacquant observes, the failure of movements for economic justice on the left can be ascribed in large part to an inability to confront and understand the quotidian and the hyperlocal, and to proliferate this knowledge. We acquiesce to dominant discourse because our "diffuse frustration and anxiety" lacks a "language that could gather the dispersed fragments of personal experiences into a meaningful collective configuration" (57). To be sure, economic and social divisions that have taken place on a local level are so invisible, tied if not to a cabal of global elites, an international financial structure that is intrinsically and deliberately esoteric; but this fact does not and should not negate the local, for the movements he acknowledges, even when they fail to affect major change at a global or paradigmatic level, are in some respects resisting an artificial coalescence.

In fact, organizations like Right to the City have been tremendously successful and building bridges between specific groups — some linked to identitarian causes, others with state and unaffiliated institutions — within cities and between them, just as Safe Ground sees itself as part of a "mosaic of solutions" to homelessness. But from a theoretical perspective, I think Hackworth's

skepticism is best best challenged by Bourdieu's in *The Weight of the World* (1993), researched and written with own students, including Wacquant; they were sent together into the global field and individually into specific loci to attempt to define a world wide phenomenon but *not* gladly to bow before one. In its preface, Bourdieu identifies the collective potential of the anthology, which is made up of close readings, intimate analyses, and vignettes:

> All of them must be brought together as they are in reality, not to relativize them in an infinite number of cross-cutting images, but, quite to the contrary, through simple juxtaposition, to bring out everything that results when different or antagonistic visions of the world confront each other. (1999[1993]:3)

This is a "complex and multi-layered representation capable of articulating the same realities but in terms that are different and, sometimes irreconcilable" but that will "relinquish the single, central, dominant, in a word, quasi-divine, point of view that is all too easily adopted by observers" (3).

Though social scientists a generation ago, struck by the astounding brutality of neoliberal economic reform on the poor, went about critiquing its operations and the inherent illogic of concepts like limitless growth, the escalation of the current economic crisis has begun to reveal to the public at large just how unsustainable the current economic order is. There have always been, of course, moments when power has lost control of discourse and of the imaginary, when it has failed to contain its own violence, as in the case of Rodney King or after the 1988 riot in New York's Tompkins Square Park; but recent waves of foreclosure and unemployment have in fact unsettled the monopoly of representation: Empty high-rises are foregrounded, today, against the slow rise of tent cities, revealing the cracks in the elaborate edifice of urban renewal and suggesting potential sites of corrosion at the hands of activists, academics, and journalists; further, as populist ire has become directed at financial institutions, the esoteric networks of bankers, planners, investors, and their colleagues in the public sector have become more vulnerable to the kind of radical critique

necessary to undermine their (effective) hegemony. According to a 2009 study by the National

Coalition for the Homeless, Homelessness has risen, on average, ten percent as a result of the

foreclosure crisis. As the homeless become a more visible part of the social makeup, and as the

quick fix of incarceration is no longer on the table (or, at the very least, if it is reformed with due

reason), then reasserting the anecdotal, the hyper-local may function as a legitimate wakeup call.

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