

Carnal Connections: On Embodiment, Apprenticeship, and Membership¹

Loïc Wacquant

This article responds to the special issue of Qualitative Sociology devoted to the author's book, Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer (vol. 20, no. 3, summer 2005). Four themes are tackled: the positioning of the inquirer and the question of social acceptance and membership; the dynamics of embodiment(s) and the variable role of race as a structural, interactional, and dispositional property; the functioning of the boxing gym as miniature civilizing and masculinizing machine; apprenticeship as a mode of knowledge transmission and technique for social inquiry, the scope of carnal sociology, and the textual work needed to convey the full-color texture and allure of the social world. This leads to clarifying the conceptual, empirical, and rhetorical makeup of Body and Soul in relation to its triple intent: to elucidate the workings of a sociocultural competency residing in prediscursive capacities; to deploy and develop the concept of habitus as operant philosophy of action and methodological guide; and to offer a brief for a sociology not of the body (as social product) but from the body (as social spring and vector of knowledge), exemplifying a way of doing and writing ethnography that takes full epistemic advantage of the visceral nature of social life.

KEY WORDS: boxing; embodiment; habitus; membership; apprenticeship; black American ghetto; viscerality; writing; reflexivity; autoethnography; carnal sociology.

I am grateful to the contributors to the special issue of *Qualitative Sociology* devoted to *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an Apprentice Boxer* (vol. 20, no. 3, summer 2005) for the seriousness and sincerity which they have engaged my book, and for the varied and vigorous reactions, criticisms, and queries contained in their papers. I shall aim to respond in the same spirit, by explicating my purposes, spelling out and defending my claims when needed, and pointing to some

Correspondence should be directed to Loïc Wacquant, Department of Sociology, 410 Barrows Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA, 94720; e-mail: loic@uclink4.berkeley.edu.

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implications of my incarnate approach to and analysis of pugilism as skilled action. For the sake of clarity, I shall regroup their comments in four thematic clusters and tackle each *in seriatim*: the positioning of the inquirer and the question of social acceptance and membership, indicating how friendship can be an invaluable resource for fieldwork; the dynamics of embodiment(s) and the variable role of race as a structural, interactional, and dispositional property; the functioning of the boxing gym as miniature civilizing and masculinizing machine and the conundrum of the “missing women”; and, finally, apprenticeship as a mode of knowledge transmission and technique for social inquiry, the scope of carnal sociology, and the textual work needed to convey the full-color texture and allure of the social world.

I hope that these responses and elaborations clarify the conceptual, empirical, and rhetorical makeup of *Body and Soul* (Wacquant 2000/2004, hereafter B&S) in relation to its triple intent: (i) to vivisect the manufacturing of prizefighters in an effort to elucidate the workings of a bodily craft, that is, a sociocultural competency residing in prediscursive capacities that illumines the embodied foundations of all practice; (ii) to deploy and develop the concept of habitus by tracing its layering and fleshing out the imbrication of its sensual, moral, and aesthetic facets; and (iii) to offer a brief for a sociology not *of* the body (as intelligible social product) but *from* the body (as intelligent social spring and vector of knowledge), exemplifying a distinctive manner of doing and writing ethnography that recognizes and takes full epistemic advantage of the visceral nature of social life.

POSITIONING “BUSY” LOUIE

All the contributors remark on the peculiar position and relations I developed as a French novice learning to box in a predominantly black gym located in Chicago’s ghetto. Stoller and Zussman question my claim that my “French nationality provided [me] with a special entry into the social niches of African America” (Stoller 2005, p. 198); both recount personal anecdotes implying that such a notion is deceiving if not deceitful (Zussman [2005, pp. 201, 206] seems to think it is a distinctively French fantasy). This is ultimately an empirical matter; and, in the case at hand, my nationality was clearly a facilitating feature, and on both sides of the investigative equation.

It saved my limbs if not my life one muggy afternoon of August 1988, in my third week of training, when a burly young man stopped me as I was coming out of the back of the gym and inquired aggressively about my reasons for being there. An enigmatic and tense interrogation ensued, centering on what a student from the nearby university like me knew “about us black people,” during which his four friends initially sitting on a bench were ambling closer towards me, causing me to worry whether I should try to dash for my car parked on the street or sprint straight to my apartment building three blocks away before their bellicose intentions erupted into physical onslaught. But the threat of imminent

fracas vanished in a flash when something in my response tipped my would-be assailant to my foreignness. I was asked my nationality. Because my interlocutor had “heard that French people’re nice, ’cuz they got a nice cultural background,” I was let go unharmed on this note: “*You lucky you a Frenchman,*’ cuz if you be some redneck or some other white dude from over here, you in big trouble man. You don’t come in this neighborhood if you a redneck.”

This happy dénouement is but one of many manifestations I received of the well-documented a priori sympathy that France enjoys in the black-American community (for historical reasons mentioned in B&S p. 10).² As my ringmate Ashante once put it, “French people ain’t crackers, they always had good rapport with blacks, goin’ all d’way back,” by which he meant that a Frenchman is not directly implicated in the bitter black-white dualism that organizes American society and may even have cultural affinities with his community. Thus trainer Eddie was proud to take me to a self-advertised “French bakery” in Hyde Park to check on its authenticity (it was a sham), and he admired the French because “they tend to eat like blacks ’cause you said you eat rabbits and d’whole pig, right, d’inside of the pig too, right? Yeah, well we black people do that too.” Needless to say, it is not a matter of what “the French” really are or do but how they are perceived to be and behave. My gym buddies’ vision of my home country as a Communist society where all youths attend university for free, women instinctively bare their breasts on the beach, and adults never stop fornicating (“The French, they make love *all the time*: they make love sooo much, that’s why their fighters never win no world titles”) needed not be accurate for it to afford me a measure of goodwill.

On the side of the inquirer, being an alien (at multiple levels) in and to the city of Chicago meant that I continually diverged from the expected course of conduct of a white American—starting with going into the ghetto specifically because I had been warned not to set foot “west of Cottage Grove” and “south of 61st Street” under any circumstance by a university official on my first day on campus. The shocking paucity of U.S. researchers who have conducted sustained fieldwork among black Americans after the wave of urban ethnographies of the sixties crested along with the ghetto riots testifies to a distinctive reticence to seek entry into their “niches.” Likewise, it is not by happenstance that the half-dozen white students from the University of Chicago who came to train at the Woodlawn Boys Club for short periods over the three years of my sojourn there were *all* foreigners.³

²These include the novel experience of equalitarian treatment by black soldiers during World War I and the “Negrophilia” of the artistic and political avant-garde of Paris during the interwar decades, which fostered the myth of a “color-blind France” and thence the consolidation of an expatriate community of African-American writers, performers, and academics after mid-century who construed France as their homeland-in-exile (Stovall 1996; Archer-Straw 1999).

³Zussman’s (2005, p. 201) opening tale of the three naïve young Frenchmen raring to visit Harlem upon landing in New York City, in spite of being warned by their American hosts to not venture in a territory they considered off-limits, further confirms that white Americans and foreigners view the black ghetto through different lenses. And it undercuts the very point Zussman (2005, p. 207) aims

My Frenchness is not a matter of having enjoyed a “special entry” in the sense of a *privileged* access to the ghetto forbidden to, say, Euro-American researchers, so much as a *propitious prop* that often smoothed early communication and oiled personal relations. (White Americans can and do conduct such work, in rare cases, but at the cost of violating a deeply rooted norm of social as well as academic propriety, cf. Bourgois 2000). That my black and white interlocutors alike sensed that I was “racially naïve” in U.S. terms, due to exhibiting the embodied national sense of another society, played to my advantage. It afforded me a modicum of protection⁴ and a statutory right to cultural ingenuousness making it possible to actively inquire into many taken-for-granted matters—which persistent curiosity, combined with my wearing thin-rimmed, round glasses and my frail physique, also exposed me to being miscategorized as Jewish, as I discovered late while conducting lifestory interviews. Paul Stoller (2005 p. 198) is nonetheless right that the clinching factor in establishing my membership in the local branch of the boxing fraternity was the fact that I subjected myself in full to the rigors of the craft and “paid my dues” in the ring (on which more below).

Yet, from a general methodological standpoint, of the four factors that jointly shaped my location and connections in the social space of the gym discussed in the book’s prologue (B&S, pp. 9–11)—nationality, opportunistic entry, surrender to the requirements of the trade, and minimal athletic abilities—what deserves greatest emphasis is the fact that I entered the Woodlawn Boys Club as a run-of-the-mill trainee, ostensibly to learn the rudiments of the sport, and *not as a sociologist*, to subject the club and its denizens to the mystifying gaze of the scholar. Of course I was always a peculiar apprentice, white, highly educated yet culturally green, physically unimpressive, and pugilistically inept at first. One anecdote will suffice to gauge how unprepared I was for my journey among pugs: the first time head-coach DeeDee dispatched me onto the floor to “flash my form” shadow-boxing, I kept my glasses on for the entire session! But the very improbability of my surviving the fistic firing line endeared me to the gym’s regulars who, to a man, had predicted that I would last no more than a few weeks.⁵

to make by recounting it: only Americans carry the kind of ethical baggage (rooted in historical guilt) that makes them construe going into a poor black neighborhood as a basis upon which to “claim a personal virtuosity, a moral high ground.”

⁴Ulf Hannerz (1968, p. 204) reports similar preferential treatment due to his foreignness in the ghetto of Washinton in the 1960s: “In the introductions [to local residents of Winston Street], it was particularly pointed out that I was Swedish, which apparently created a special position for me, clearly separated from other whites; this seemed to be quite useful in that I was not quite so readily assimilated into the perspective of black-white conflict.” I seriously doubt that the fact that Paul Stoller is American and not French was of *no pertinence* to his Nigerian informants; it must have been when they discussed things French on Niger’s independence day, for instance (as suggested in a structurally similar context by Cole [2001]).

⁵During the first few months of my initiation, Ashante, a hard-nosed welterweight who later became my regular sparring partner, used to ask the gym’s old coach at what time “the Frenchie” was coming so that he could arrange to train early, shower, jump back into his clothes, and then sit in the backroom to laugh at “Mister Magoo” for an hour. Ashante revealed this bygone habit to me in

For nearly a year, I attended the Woodlawn Boys Club and kept a detailed diary on my tribulations in and around the gym without thinking that I would do anything of my notes, other than document a narrow slice of everyday life in a section of the ghetto. It is only after I was sentenced to a period of forced inactivity by a broken nose suffered in sparring in July of 1989 and wrote a long article on pugilism for an issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* on “The Space of Sports” at the urging of Pierre Bourdieu, that I undertook, not only to use the gym as an observation post into the remnants of Bronzeville, but also to make the manufacture of boxers an object of study in itself. When the time came to make my “sociological coming out,” I was terribly nervous and fearful that the club members would think that I had hidden my intention from them and infiltrated their ranks to study them surreptitiously. But my proposal to “write a little history of the gym,” to document its rich inner life in the face of an impending shut-down due to the latest wave of so-called urban renewal, was met with enthusiastic approval quickly followed by utter indifference.⁶ The revelation of my research interest changed little in my insertion in the club for, by then, the bonds of friendship and trust I had forged day-to-day with the gym’s core circle and my demonstrated commitment to the ethos of the craft overrode all other considerations. For DeeDee and his charges, I continued to be Louie the inquisitive gym member, eager sparring partner, personal pal, and occasional all-around helper; only now I was carrying around a tape recorder and asking even more questions than before.

So Hoffman and Fine (2005, p. 157, emphasis added) could not be more wrong when they assert that “it is apparent that his coach and gym mates *never forgot* that his goal was to depict them for a world in which they were the outsiders.” For it was not my goal for a full year, and by the time it became so, it mattered little. In truth, my Woodlawn colleagues *never really cared* and rarely remembered that I pursued a research project, for the simple reason that, try as I might, I never succeeded in explaining to them what it is that a sociologist is and does! For lower-class men from Chicago’s South Side robbed of even the pretense of an education by a bankrupt public school system, the world of the written word is a *terra incognita*. Literate culture—not to mention academic culture—is an alien planet so distant that its geography and the designs of its creatures are simply immaterial. One illustration: my ring comrades could not fathom why I would not fulfil my scholarly duties at *Harvey* College, a city community college located thirty blocks away on Woodlawn Avenue, instead of *Harvard* University, which would require my migrating far away and thus leaving the gym, much to our joint chagrin.⁷ When the question of my real-life occupation came up during my sojourn

amused astonishment, about two years into my apprenticeship, after a rough sparring session during which I had caused him as much trouble as he could handle that day.

⁶This is a common second-best characterization: Herbert Gans (1967, p. xxxv) described his research among *The Levittowners* as “a historical study” because he had trouble explaining what sociology is to the well-educated neighbors of his middle-class suburb.

⁷When I returned the local boxing scene for a brief foray in the winter of 1995, a black manager who used to hang out at Woodlawn asked if I was “done finished with yo’ school.” Upon learning that

among Chicago pugs, I was variously introduced as a social worker, psychologist, interpreter, journalist, photographer, student or teacher, even jokingly as a spy (which is not uncommon among fieldworkers in the most varied places, cf. Owens [2003]), but nearly never as a sociologist. And, inside the pugilistic cosmos, such attributions were always trumped by my publicly attested qualities of amateur boxer, sparring partner, cornerman, and gym buddy.

Now, I agree with Stoller (2005, p. 197) that the “non-native anthropologist can never transcend difference,” but the record shows that she can, within the microsocal space anchored by the ethnographic encounter, *provisionally suspend* or significantly attenuate many differences (plural) pertinent to her inquiry in the course of building extended and intimate relations.⁸ The multiplex rapports that we develop with our key informants are malleable and subject to the same variations and vagaries as ordinary social ties; they range from the instrumental to the affective, from the exploitive to the mutual, from fleeting to lasting, and from shallow to deep (contrast, e.g., Burawoy 1978 with Schwartz 1980, and Behar 1993 with Ortner 2003, for two illustrations of opposites in two different settings and disciplines). They always have a peculiar curving due to their inscription in the research enterprise, but their import is not *eo ipso* reducible to that single purpose. One does not have to hold an exalted notion of interpersonal fusion or an irenic vision of the family to recognize that long-term field friendships can, under definite circumstances, be transformative of both parties and grow to take on a filial or fraternal/sisterly quality (see Mintz 1989 for a discussion of changing disciplinary views of the epistemic import of such friendships). The fleshly companionship that arises in the course of years of daily training and suffering side-by-side, and especially sparring together—which implies entrusting one’s body to the other, and an other increasingly like oneself—is conducive to developing such carnal connections.⁹ Nor is it a matter of exclusive and fixed identities: one can be a fictive “brother” and a “white man” sequentially or even simultaneously, to different audiences, for different purposes, and

I taught at a university on the West Coast, he exclaimed in genuine awe, his face beaming with a look of deference that made me shrivel in embarrassment: “A *Pro-fe-ssor!* Man, you done climbed up there, I tell ya. A *pro-fe-ssor*. Tha’s somethin’ else, Louie.”

⁸But does the native anthropologist “transcend difference,” and if so which difference(s) and from whom? Even if she issues from the very social setting and collective she studies, the insider or “halfie” ethnographer still diverges from any given informant on a variety of dimensions (by class, age, education, etc.), as do informants from one another. And she is always at variance with its members in that she necessarily adopts a scholarly posture that is fundamentally at odds with the “natural attitude” of everyday life, to use the language of Alfred Schutz (unless she adopts the carnal approach advocated in *Body and Soul*, which allows one to mate these two perspectives).

⁹Emile Durkheim writes eloquent pages about suffering in unison as the basis of membership in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* ([1912] 1995). At DeeDee’s memorial service, I was asked by his family to walk in the procession with them and to sit in their midst in the funeral house; and I was honored to be among the pall bearers who took him to his last home. I do not mention this to display my “trophies of intimacies” with boxers (to invoke a snide expression of Erving Goffman), but to indicate that deep engagement with one’s subject can lead to a profound recasting of one’s social personality and associations.

under different circumstances. Which brings us to the vexed topic of race and embodiment.

RACE AND EMBODIMENT(S)

Let me make clear at the outset that the boxing universe is no “racial paradise.” It would be astounding if an unregulated bodily craft rooted in extreme class inequality, situated near the bottom of the hierarchy of athletic avocations, and whose history in the United States ties it tightly to caste exclusion and subaltern immigration (Sammons 1988; Miller and Wiggins 2003) turned out to be a dreamland of fairness and comity. But one must distinguish between the fabrication of boxers as skilled performers and prizefighting as commercial spectacle and manly fantasy. For one of the paradoxes of the Sweet science is precisely that, while its public *consumption* remains deeply affected by the politics of racial representation, its *production* side tends in manifold ways to deracialize bodies and social relations (the same is true of many performing arts, such as song and dance).¹⁰ So how exactly does race materialize itself in an ordinary gym such as the Woodlawn Boys Club and how did it affect “Busy” Louie in particular?

All the participants in the pugilistic universe—boxers, trainers, managers, promoters, and officials—readily agree that there exists notable differences in the style and temperament of pugs roughly correlated with their community of descent and they tend to read bodies accordingly, to answer Alford Young’s (2005, pp. 182–183) query. These ethnic types are arranged according to a hierarchy inverse and symmetrical to the order of the corresponding groups in U.S. social space, with black boxers at the top (mating rhythm, movement, and technique), Mexican and Puerto Rican fighters in between (they “come to fight” and display toughness and persistence), and whites at the bottom (defined mostly by the qualities they lack). But these styles are variations on a common score that must not be overemphasized, as a ring veteran from the 1960s put it: “Styles? Yeah they’re different, but every man is the same: *every man, when you cut him, the blood is red*. You hit him in the jaw, don’t matter what color he is, they’ll go down.” Trainers insist that they can “blacken” a fighter by teaching him technique, footwork, and strategy. And they are largely oblivious to the provenance of their charges (see also Anderson 1992). Old Gene, the black coach in charge of Fuller Park, has tutored African-American, Euro-American, and Latin-American boxers and, like virtually all his Chicago colleagues, he stresses similarities over differences:

The fundamentals *trainin*,’ trainin’ hard, one thing an’ *listenin*,’ an’ have confidence in me,
I have confidence in you: if you don’t have confidence in each other, (shaking his head)

¹⁰Read Early (1981) for a perceptive exegesis of the staging of high-level bouts as “symbolic racial showdowns,” and Ward (1998) on the racial disjunctures between the production and the consumption of rhythm and blues in the United States of the postwar decades.

we not gonna make *no connections there*, you see? I've treated a lotta white kids jus' like I have black kids, I seen a lotta *good white kids* in here, you see, same thing.

What is true in the gym training applies also to performing in the ring. While in past eras an interracial fight took on special significance—this type of bout was called “a natural” and drew special attention and emotions, from the days of “Papa” Jack Johnson into the 1980s (cf. Roberts 1983 and Bederman 1995)—today’s run-of-the-mill professional boxers are largely indifferent as to whether they face a white, black, or Latino opponent. African-American fighters in particular attribute little if any significance to the ethnicity of their opponent and they do not consider themselves the representatives of their community when they step into the squared circle. In the words of my gym comrade Smithie:

No, it doesn't [matter], I've learned through competitiveness, that race is used to control weaker men's minds. When you stand before a man, that man has arms, it doesn't matter what color that arm is, or that hand is that's hittin' you in d'face (chuckles): it's a hand *hittin' you in d'face*. . . . What you center in on is the calliber that you're fightin', what calliber fighter that you're fightin', okay—not that he's black or white.

It should be noted that my report on the “pronounced color-blindness of pugilistic culture” (B&S, pp. 10–11) is based not merely on how boxers and coaches “discuss” and “describe” their milieu to “an anomalous French academic,” as Hoffman and Fine (2005, p. 156) allege, but on direct observation of how they behaved toward one another in their workshop day-to-day. And I do write pugilistic *culture* and not *economy*, for this “show business with blood” that is prizefighting has long been and continues to be tainted by racial preferences, albeit in a considerably attenuated form.¹¹ But such bias in commercialization does not gainsay the *relative autonomy of bodily capital from the symbolic capital of “race.”* For the boxing club is the fulcrum of a web of corporeal disciplines, forms of sociability, and moral vectors that tend to depress and deflect ethnoracial vision and division as they impress and enforce commitment to the craft and its rules.

Young (2005, p. 182) is curious to learn more about “how Wacquant’s Caucasian body [was] read by the members of the gym from the moment when he enter[ed] their world.” The answer is that the forging of the pugilistic habitus entails the gradual effacing of extraneous properties—such as skin tone as the outward indicator of descent—and their supersession by properties of pressing pugilistic import: strength, speed, endurance, hardness, dexterity, resistance to pain, and the ability to punch, slip, parry, etc. This means that, as with every other member of the club, my whiteness receded as I climbed up the *gradus* of the trade and as my organism absorbed and then displayed its distinctive practical skills and sensibili-

¹¹ In the 1920s and 30s, black fighters were routinely prevented from fighting their white counterparts or excluded for competing for titles to enforce the prevalent national mythology of the innate inferiority of African Americans (Gilmore 1975). Today white fighters are better protected, promoted, and remunerated even at the local level, owing to their drastic scarcity and wider visual appeal to predominantly white audiences, which make them commercially more valuable (as indicated in “Fight Night as Studio 104,” B&S, p. 188).

ties. What my gym mates noted after several months of training was that I had lost weight and gained muscle mass and definition; that my nose had toughened and stopped bleeding as I got inured to sparring; that I was able to withstand (and dish out) solid body shots as well as work the double-end bag with efficiency; DeeDee also liked to remark jokingly on my newly discovered “washboard.” While it never wears off entirely, the phenotype of the boxer is blurred and eventually trumped by the fact that his body has turned into a finely-tuned punching engine, a sharp tool, a taut weapon and a glistening armor as well as a living temple for the masculine values of the Sweet science—to recall the images prizefighters commonly invoke to express their sense of possessing and producing skilled organisms fashioned for and by battle between the ropes (Wacquant 1998a).

Judith Farquhar (2005, p. 193) asks similarly “to what extent is the body of ‘Busy Louie’ Wacquant comparable to the bodies of Curtis, Ashante,” and other Woodlawn pugs, and she wishes that I “had gone to more trouble to sort out the differences among the bodies at issue.” Obviously no two organisms are alike and one could delve into the potentially infinite variations between fighters on any number of social and pugilistic scales, contrasting them by class trajectory, ethnicity, education, and marital and family status as well as across physical makes, ring styles, career phase, and sporting aspirations. *Body and Soul* deliberately brackets such differences to focus on similarities in order to capture *not diverse embodiments but the process of incarnation* whereby the brittle combination of categories, skills, and desires that constitutes the proficient pug is implanted into, and in turn deployed by, boxers in their day-to-day activities. It is relentlessly targeted on the invariant ingredients and stages of the metamorphosis to which all bodies, no matter their origin and characteristics, are susceptible and subjected, to the degree that they are immersed in the specific universe, and submit to its disciplining routines and moral dictates.

There are two reasons for this choice. First, the study of commonalities in the making of boxers necessarily precedes the investigation of differences, as one must first establish a common baseline from which the various apprentices diverge. Second, the theoretical agenda of the book is to engage, exemplify, and test empirically the notion of habitus by disclosing in considerable detail how a particular type of habitus is concretely fabricated—how pugilistic understanding, knowledge, and yearning is collectively made into “flesh and blood.”¹² This implies that, much as in her classic 1980 essay “Throwing Like A Girl,” Iris Young (2004) seeks to uncover the core properties of *female* bodily experience and trace the connections between the subordinate place women occupy in the social structure and the distinctive features of their motility and incarnate subjectivity, while leaving aside myriad differences among women, in *Body and Soul*

¹²In the sense elaborated by Drew Leder (1990), who proposes to supplement Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s “horizontal” focus on the visible surface of the lived body (flesh) with a “vertical” dissection of the inner “circuitry of vibrant, pulsing life” lodged in the depths of the visceral body (blood).

I focus on the generic properties of *pugilistic* embodiment as such, overlooking dissimilarities among boxers to spotlight the manner whereby they acquire and activate the system of schemata of perception, appreciation, and action characteristic of their craft.¹³

The transmission and mastery of bodily knowledge through practical osmosis and visual mimesis, the silent pedagogy of enskilled organisms in action, the temporal and moral orchestration of their ballet in the closed confines of the club, the painstaking husbanding of corporeal capital in and around the gym: these are the same for all aspirant boxers, whatever their skin color and their designs on the amateur circuit or in the professional ranks. I point out in *Body and Soul* that the motives and paths that lead the gym members to the ring vary greatly (B&S, pp. 27–29, 37–38, 50–52, 131–138, 204–207). Yet, once they step through the gates of the club the same powerful dynamic of craft, sensuality, and incarnate morality is at work in transforming and binding them together in a collective *locally and provisionally* transcending the differences in social position, trajectories, and experiences that they imported into the gym.¹⁴ So far as we know, the process whereby social relations and symbols are slowly imprinted into the body in the form of cognitive, emotive, and conative gestalts, or “dispositional representations”—ultimately anchored by specific circuits of synaptic connections (LeDoux 2002)—is the same for all individuals.

To put it differently: in keeping with the main thrust of the blossoming anthropology of the body (Lock 1993), Farquhar (2005, p. 196) wishes that I had centered on the organism as socially constructed, arising “from whole worlds of practice” and therefore “shot through with inequalities and dominations.” My primary interest is elsewhere: it is the body as an intelligent and sentient assemblage of *shared* categories, capacities, and cravings; not only socially constructed, and therefore traversed by vectors of power, but socially constructing; as the fount of communal sense, joint sensation, and skillful action. This is also why, to Dunning’s (2005, p. 175) apparent irritation, I do not “situate *Body and Soul* in the context, firstly, of the sociology of sport and, secondly, of sport more generally,” because such is not the analytic space within which the inquiry locates itself. My focus is not on the social organization and culture of athletic pursuits but on the twofold process of *incorporation of social structures*: the collective creation of proficient bodies and the ingenuous unfolding of the socially constituted powers they harbor.

Lastly, like every ethnographer engaged in long-term immersion, I came to adopt some of the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting typical of my gymmates,

¹³This is also why I do not directly address “the possible conversions of bodily capital” and “the negative consequences associated with participation in boxing” (Krueger and SaintOnge 2005, pp. 187, 189), which I discussed extensively elsewhere (Wacquant 1995a, 1995b, 1998b, 2001), and to which I will return in *Passion of the Pugilist* in my fuller analysis of the social structure of the pugilistic economy and the social determinants of ring careers.

¹⁴This is what warrants the “breakdown in the comparison between the purposes of the French graduate student with a book to write and the lifelong dilemma of being black and poor faced by everyone else in the book” that “the form of the book accomplishes” (Farquhar 2005, p. 196).

whether insensibly as a result of marinating in their midst or through explicit instructions. The initial distance between the Woodlawn regulars and “Busy” Louie was thus further reduced (without ever being annulled, as dramatized by DeeDee’s final repartee at the book’s closing) by the fact that (i) I imbibed the local language; (ii) I modified my appearance and demeanor, as when I agreed to let Curtis cut my hair in a “fade” at the gym; (iii) I gained and demonstrated minimal mastery of the rules of street culture, as indicated in this fieldnote:

This afternoon, I came in the gym carrying a “hot” sports bag I had just bought off the street from a local hustler peddling stolen merchandise in the vicinity. When I explained to my club mates who had inquired as to its provenance that I had bargained hard, eventually getting the price from 26 dollars down to a mere 6 bucks (for a rather fancy bag probably worth a good 40 dollars in a regular store), there were glowing nods of approval among the coaches in the backroom. At the end of my account, Eddie roared in appreciation: “Tha’s good, Louie. This smart. See, *we educate you in d’ ways of d’ streets*. By you comin’ here, we gave you a education in streetlife. Now you know what to do: (louder, for all to hear) Louie got his *degree in Streetology, man, Louie’s cool.*”

Moreover, in the closed context of the ghetto and the gym, what matters most at ground level is people’s doings, how they relate to one another in recurrent interpersonal encounters, rather than how the broader society categorizes and treats them. Because “race,” that is, blackness in America resides in the denial of equal dignity, historically rooted in the generalized dishonor of slavery and perpetuated by the lopsided handling of state institutions (Patterson 1982; Wacquant 2005a), conduct that publicly affirms mutual respect is highly salient. And the boxing gym and its satellites are rife with occasions to manifest such respect. As Charlie, one of the coaches from Woodlawn, put it early in my journey among Chicago pugs: “If you treats me like peoples, I treats you like peoples.” In the daily round of the club, ascriptive and positional traits, such as class, ethnicity, nationality and occupation, proved to be less relevant than interactional properties manifested in repeated face-to-face encounters.

Now, “can such a story transcend the firmly entrenched discourse of race and poverty in America?” (Stoller 2005, p. 198). Evidently not, because it does not touch on the structural bases of racial division and domination beyond the gym. The *power of the pugilistic melting pot to “deracialize”* bodies and relations is both *limited and localized*; it remains contained with the narrow and brittle purview of pugilistic networks, and it operates with decreasing intensity and efficacy as one moves from the ring proper to the training floor to the back-room and the dressing-room of the club and beyond. Much like romantic fusion or erotic union between a man and a woman may momentarily overcome the dominion of gender without threatening the structures of masculine rule (Weitman 1998; Bourdieu 1998/2001), the manufacturing of pugilists attenuates racialized differences within the specific space and temporality of the gym and its extensions, but it does little to dent the encompassing structures of ethnoracial inequality.

We can better “restore the stubbornly raced world of urban America to sociological consideration,” as recommended by Farquhar (2005, p. 195), then, if, instead of attributing uniform meaning and potency to blackness (or its antonym, whiteness), we recognize the differential degree and manner in which situations and postures are racial(ized) or not. An *analytical distinction between race as a structural, interactional, and dispositional (or embodied) property* allows us to realize that the gym, while being located inside a racialized structure, is the site of semi-deracialized interactions anchored by the production and assembly of racially indifferent dispositions. It helps us avoid collapsing the pride of boxing with racial pride, as Farquhar (2005, p. 195) does, for “the nobility of boxing done well” is independent of, although fed by, ethnoracial division and stigma: prizefighting brings membership in an honorific craft, no matter the ethnic provenance of the practitioner. Thus the shift from racial separation in the description of the ghetto to racial mixing inside the gym to “boxing as the operative category of embodiment” (Farquhar 2005, p. 194) is fully warranted by the dynamic observed at ground level. For, in the end, in the tense tussle between interlocking sociocorporeal forces twirling in the pugilistic crucible, boxing remakes race more than race shapes boxing.

One last issue on the race front: Robert Zussman’s (2005) fanciful claim that I fancy myself as a “Black Frenchman,” that I put forth my miraculous racial mutation as a “warrant” for writing about “poor American blacks,” and that the purpose of my monograph is precisely to exhibit this supposed warrant.¹⁵ Aside from the mystifying silliness of writing a book intended to demonstrate that one is founded to write it, this claim is doubly absurd and it would not deserve a response beyond mirth, if it were not also revealing of the power of ordinary racial prenotions and professional status preoccupations in American academe to warp serious scientific discussion. Zussman’s reading of *Body and Soul* is evidently “colored” by *his* whiteness and his anger at my sacrilegious assessment of the Chicago tradition of urban ethnography to which he is beholden. He is so intent on turning my critique of the field studies of race and poverty that I dissect in “Scrutinizing the Street” (Wacquant 2002) onto my own work in order to disqualify it, and with it my critique of moral empiricism, that he must insist that my ethnography of prizefighting is comparable to these studies, when it diverges profoundly from them in object, method, scope, and style.¹⁶ Repainting the Woodlawn Boys Club

¹⁵As basis for this bizarre claim, Zussman adduces the fact that one of my gym nicknames was “the Black Frenchman.” The nickname is mentioned last in a list of five monikers I earned during my stint among boxers (B&S, p. 11) and *never appears again* in the entire book—as befits an amusing aside.

¹⁶I have responded elsewhere to slanted critiques of *Body and Soul* that are aimed in reality at “Scrutinizing the Street” (see my contribution to the symposium organized by *Symbolic Interaction*, vol. 38, no. 3, Fall 2005; Wacquant 2005b). Let me just note here, with regard to Zussman’s (2005, p. 202, pp. 202–203, p. 203) variant of it, that (1) I do not “dichotomiz[e] the ring and the streets around it” but highlight their double-sided relation of symbiotic opposition; (2) documenting and displaying sentiments felt in the field, by the participants as well as the observer, is not the same

as “an all-black gym” for purposes of his polemic (that the gym had both Latino and white members is plain from the text, not to mention the picture on the book’s front cover!), Zussman (2005, pp. 201, 205) maintains that I *should be* writing about race (as he would have as a white American) and complains loudly that I remain “curiously silent” on the topic outside of “a few rhetorical flourishes.” He then establishes artificial parallels between my monograph and the three books discussed in “Scrutinizing the Street” so that he may hoist me by my own evaluative petard. His professional bile blinds him to the fact that there exists no relationship of logical implication between the flaws of my own ethnography and the validity of my evaluation of the works of others: even if it were true that “Wacquant commits nearly every analytic sin of which he accuses others” (Zussman 2005, p. 202), that does not make my so-called “accusations” inaccurate, nor the “sins” in question any less troubling. Indeed, the allegation that I succumb to the same failings as I discern in others might, if anything, indicate that these are indeed serious threats to the practicing ethnographer.

The corrective to Zussman’s delusional interpretation is provided by all eight reviews of *Body and Soul* that precede his, but especially by Alford Young (2005, p. 181, emphasis supplied) when he writes that “the move that Wacquant makes in putting his body into the analysis is both critical and effective in that he does not aspire to be exactly like the men that he studies—indeed *he makes explicit throughout his book how much he could not be.*” Far from documenting my alchemical attainment of some mystical blackness, the closing lines of *Body and Soul* (B&S, 255) stress stubborn difference within similarity: DeeDee’s sage verdict is that, unlike his gym comrades, “Busy” Louie has no need to press further in his pugilistic trek. They “demonstrate the extent to which [this author] is in, but not all the way in, as a participant in the community of boxers” (Young 2005, p. 181). But there is one last twist: sensing the absurdity of his argument, Zussman (2005, p. 205) shifts target and contends that his ultimate “interest is less in whether Wacquant’s claim is true than in whether it is necessary.” Here we might well agree on the methodological superfluity and epistemological fatuity of anyone’s claim to strict insider status as a basis for making knowledge claims in the social sciences. Had I achieved such stupendous feat of biosocial magic (or ethnic self-delusion) as Zussman credits me with, that would provide no “warrant” for my ethnographic report. For membership in a category or collective does not by itself make one a good anthropologist of it.¹⁷ At best it might make one an informant

as infusing sociological analysis with “sentimentalism”; (3) there is no need to bring in “social movements, politics, and the state” to capture the forging of pugilistic competency as cultivated sensorimotor intentionality inside the gym; (4) unlike the books appraised in “Scrutinizing the Street,” *Body and Soul* is not aimed at a policy audience and makes no grand macrosociological claim, nor does it address the hoary topic of “racism” and still less proffers remedies for urban marginality. I nonetheless agree with Zussman’s (2005, p. 203) candid summation of his own arguments: “They are all, of course, cheap shots.”

¹⁷Surprisingly, Zussman’s argument is not backed up by an appeal to standpoint epistemology. It is a coarse retread of the U.S. debate over the privilege of “insider knowledge” about the black social

about it; at worst, it invites a descent into moral subjectivism, a parroting of the folk sociology of members, that is the negation of rigorous ethnography—and one of the perennial pitfalls of U.S. urban field studies that I spotlight in “Scrutinizing the Street” (Wacquant 2002, pp. 1488–1489, 1500–1501, 1520–1524). The warrant to study prizefighters, as any other social world, and by whatever method, comes not from the social ties that the inquirer entertains with members of that microcosm but from the *theoretical problematic* that animates the inquiry.

THE GYM AS CIVILIZING AND MASCULINIZING MACHINE

Hoffman and Fine (2005, p. 153) contend that I exaggerate the closure of the gym and unduly “generalize from a single case.” This is doubly incorrect. First, it is they who overstate the degree to which I rely on “the perspective of [my] key informant and trainer, the moral exemplar DeeDee.”¹⁸ I draw on a multiplicity of sources whose views I could crosscheck against one another and, more importantly, verify *de visu* thanks to my long-term immersion. For instance, my depiction of the “institutional organization of low-level amateur and professional boxing” relies not on DeeDee’s outlook but on direct observation carried out at three successive installments of the Golden Gloves tournament, two dozen amateur shows, and fifteen professional “cards.” It is backed up by in-depth interviews with all fifty professional boxers active in Chicagoland in the summer of 1991, a dozen trainers and officials from the Illinois Amateur Boxing Federation and Board of Professional Regulation, and the gamut of protagonists in the fistic commerce, from promoters and managers on down to the “card girls,” not to mention countless incidental gym conversations on the ins-and-outs of public performance.¹⁹ In the fall of 1991, I also trained at the two other “pro” gyms of the city at the time, Fuller Park (a mid-sized municipal facility not far from the infamous Robert Taylor Homes housing project on the South Side) and Windy City (a large private club located in a busy industrial section of the city’s West

condition that emerged in the wake of the racial upheavals of the sixties, a controversy that was resolved three decades ago (Merton 1972).

¹⁸A personal note: DeeDee was no “moral exemplar,” nor was he “bitter or jaded,” as Hoffman and Fine (2005, p. 153) assert, on the contrary. He was well aware of and open about his personal flaws, such as his edginess and his smoking, both of which contravened his teachings. And he followed a quasi-Spinozist philosophy of life remarkably well-suited to the penury, unpredictability, and harshness of his profession and social surroundings (as detectible in the conversations recorded before and after Curtis’s fight at Studio 104, B&S, pp. 154–156, 228–232) that led him to accept the things he could not control while punctiliously monitoring those factors that fell within his province of influence (such as the conduct of his charges in and around the gym).

¹⁹If there was one “key informant” on the boxing economy, it is the matchmaker who ruled the metropolitan boxing market at the time (B&S, pp. 198–201), whom I both observed first-hand in gyms and at shows and whom I interviewed four times in a private setting for a total of ten hours towards the end of my sojourn. By then, because I knew and had also interviewed many of the fighters, trainers, and managers to whom he referred in his accounts, I could triangulate his views with those of the other central characters on the scene (see Wacquant 1998b for details).

Side), with sufficient assiduity to cause DeeDee to become openly irritated by my apparent infidelity to Woodlawn. And I hung out at Sheridan Park long enough to find out at ground-level what set this small cagey gym ensconced in Chicago's Little Italy apart from its peers.

Second and relatedly, I construct the Woodlawn Boys Club as a "particular case of the possible," to recall Gaston Bachelard's expression, by spotlighting the variables that ascribe it a definite place in the universe of gyms (B&S, p. 9, pp. 19–24): namely, its location in a desolate and dangerous area, the occupational authority and stern personality of a nationally renowned coach, and its correlative ability to recruit members from the entire metropolis (and beyond: Smithie drove in daily from Gary, in nearby Indiana) with a view towards competing in the professional ranks. Hoffman's (2004) dissent here likely arises from the fact that he studied *amateur* clubs located in less regimented Park District facilities, run by less seasoned *trainers*, and populated with *younger* trainees coming from the *immediate vicinity* mainly for *recreational* purposes, all factors that tend to lower the barrier between the gym and the street and facilitate the incursion of neighborhood-based hierarchies and concerns into the pugilistic cosmos. Yet, as "forcing houses for changing the self" (Goffman 1961, p. 12), all boxing gyms are organized so as to unmoor their members from their mundane attachments and to foster collective cloistering.²⁰

In order to fulfill its mission, that is, not only to impart pugilistic technique but also, and more crucially, to transmit the collective mystique and instill the embodied ethics of the craft, the gym must close itself to outside forces and submerge its members in its specific rules and requirements. In so doing, it acts to reshape and rescale to the greatest possible degree the range of capacities and sensibilities of its denizens. In this respect, Eric Dunning (2005, p. 175) is right to point to the congruence of my portrayal of the Woodlawn Boys Club as a foundry of mindful martial bodies with Norbert Elias's classic macro-analysis of the "civilizing process." Indeed, elsewhere I have described the gym as

a *small-scale civilizing machine* in Elias's sense of the term: it simultaneously imposes strict taboos on certain forms of violence, lowers one's threshold of acceptance of disorderly behavior, and promotes the internalization of controls and obedience to authority. So that immersion in the "personal community" formed by the gym membership and broader boxing fraternity tends to reduce that "lust for attacking" which prizefighting appears to exemplify and thrive on. (Wacquant 1995a, p. 499)²¹

²⁰This is readily apparent from studies of boxing gyms conducted in such diverse countries as Sweden, France, and Australia (Øygarden 2001; Beauchez 2002; Lafferty and MacKay 2004). One gets a strong visual sense of the overwhelming invariance of boxing clubs in the deft photographic portrait of one hundred gyms in North America by Lommasson (2005).

²¹In that essay, I cite both Elias's *The Civilizing Process* and Elias and Dunning's own *Quest for Excitement: Leisure and Sport in the Civilizing Process*. I did not refer to these two books in *Body and Soul* because they focus on macro-historical transformations of sensibilities and bodily practices in the *longue durée* of centuries, whereas I bound my inquiry to the near-synchronic term of a small-scale institution that works to erase outside time.

The degree to which gyms succeed, and thus the porousness of the membrane that sets them off from the world about them, depends on such variables as the age composition, geographic dispersion, and career track and stage of the boxers, the character and charisma of their coaches, their seniority and position in the local pugilistic space, and the intensity of threats from their proximate environment (such as a lively street trade in narcotics in the vicinity, which creates criminal turbulence as well as rival career opportunities).

There is yet another reason why a traditionalist gym such as Woodlawn displayed a consistently high level of sociosymbolic separation from the outside: those who did not want or could not put up with its strict regimen were put out by head coach DeeDee—something a trainer in a city facility such as that studied by Hoffman cannot do. So my portrait of Woodlawn does not “mystif[y] the isolation of the gym for ambient effect” (Hoffman and Fine 2005, p. 153). Nor does it stipulate that the antagonism between the gym and the surrounding ghetto is one that forbids communication and exchange, quite the opposite. I stress repeatedly that the club defines itself in and through “*a double relation of symbiosis and opposition to the neighborhood*” (B&S, p. 17, original emphasis), such that it both feeds upon and fights against the preoccupations and values of the encompassing street networks and culture.²² This is why, *pace* Lynn Geurts (2005, p. 145), while it is a life-affirming medium so long as it holds boxers inside its grip, boxing cannot be the definitive “antidote” to the allure and deadly dangers of “fast life” in the inner city that it would aspire to be: aside from the physical wreckage it necessarily creates, prizefighting deeply depends on the ghetto for its raw bodily materials, unprocessed masculine libido, and cultural support. Nor can it save its devotees from a fate of social obscurity and economic marginality, as Patrick Krueger appears to expect (Krueger and SaintOnge 2005, p. 189). The best it can do is offer a place of respite and a temporary shield for constructing a gloried self within the parallel social and symbolic universe of the craft. But it cannot by itself remove the powerful impediments to social stability and mobility that the young men who take up boxing encounter in their peregrinations at the bottom of the class and ethnic structure.

So I agree with Fine (2004a) that social agents are adept at oscillating between the task at hand in a given setting and the broader world beyond it; only I contend that the span and speed of such oscillation varies inversely with the degree of closure of the microcosm in which they are involved. In this regard, it must be stressed that, like a church, a monastery, a totalitarian party, or a utopian

²²This double relationship is further elaborated in “Protection, Discipline, and Honor” (Wacquant 1995b). Aside from the place of politics, the picture of Chicago gyms that Hoffman and Fine (2005, pp. 152–153) oppose to mine is in fact quite congruent with the Woodlawn scene, where boxers also “relayed stories of getting in street fights (acts that were generally admonished by the head coach unless an assailant had been critically provoked), and discussions of pop and hip-hop icons were routine,” and where “parents, friends, and intimates visited the gym on occasion” in the case of the younger amateurs (see, for starters, B&S, pp. 25, 33–34, 39–40, 51, 54–55).

community, a boxing gym belongs to the genus of *greedy institutions* as defined by Lewis Coser, that is, organizations which “seek to make total claims on their members and which attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality,” and which therefore “attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries. Their demands on the person are omnivorous” (Coser 1974, p. 4).²³ These demands are codified by the occupational ethic of “sacrifice,” which mandates a total devotion to the craft and a diligent reorganization of one’s entire life according to the *preceptum pugilisticum*, as DeeDee reminds us in this tirade aimed at those who complain that professional boxing did not grant them the fulfillment of their aspirations:

Those guys us’ly come back after it’s all over an’ say (in a whiny voice) “what I shoulda did an’ I didn’ get a break, an’ this an’ that,” they cry-babies, but (firmly) they didn’ *dedicate* theyselves to boxin’. N’ there’s no shortcut in boxin’ . . . Look at the ole man, he’s back because he lived a *good clean life* while he was away—George Foreman²⁴—so tha’s why he was able t’come back, but if he hadn’t of-sacrificed an’ kept his body and mind clear while he’s been out d’ring all these years, he couldn’ of-come back. So it just boils down to a basic thing: *sacrifice*.

The regulated practices of abstinence that compose the trinity of the pugilistic cult as regards food, social life, and sexual commerce ostensibly aim at maximizing the fructification of corporeal capital and the readiness of the fighter for battle in the ring. But, like all religious edicts, they also have for practical effect to sharpen the social and symbolic boundaries between the devotees of the Manly art and those around them—starting with the age peers in their class and community—and to strengthen their ties with one another. Hoffman and Fine’s (2005, p. 155) counter that athletes frequently “stray from the preached gospel” handed by their coaches is no counter at all. First, I myself supply numerous examples of boxers who violate the commandments of the pugilistic catechism by smoking, training irregularly, running the streets with their buddies, eating and drinking with excess, or failing to “leave them ladies alone” at the appointed time (e.g., B&S, pp. 132, 139–140, 147–148, 241, 243; see also Wacquant 1998a). A high frequency of deviation from official doctrine is to be expected, given that boxers occupy marginal social

²³“Greedy institutions, though they may in some cases utilize the device of physical isolation, tend to rely mainly on non-physical mechanisms to separate the insider from the outsider and to erect symbolic boundaries between them . . . [They] aim at maximizing assent to their styles of life by appearing highly desirable to the participants. Greedy institutions are characterized by the fact that they exercise pressures on component individuals to weaken their ties, or not to form any ties, with other institutions or persons, that might make claim that conflict with their own demands” (Coser 1974, p. 6).

²⁴Foreman is a former heavyweight world champion, who won the gold medal in the 1968 Olympic games and then crushed titlist Joe Frazier in 1973 before losing his title to Muhammad Ali a year later in Kinshasa, Zaire, in a legendary fight dubbed “The Rumble in the Jungle” (and beautifully chronicled in Leon Gast’s movie, *When We Were Kings*). After two decades spent as a priest, he made a surprisingly successful return to the ring, eventually fighting again for the world title at age 42 and acquiring the status of a marketing folk-hero for middle-aged men.

positions outside the club and that the gym is itself a structurally weak “greedy institutions”: it holds its members for only a few hours of the day; it is bereft of economic resources and rewards to bestow; and it is not the seat of a broadly recognized symbolic authority.

Second, and more importantly, it is in the very nature of what Max Weber called a “hero ethic” that few conform to its dictates. In contrast with those composing an “average ethic,” the principles of *Lebensführung* of such a moral code “make basic demands on a person to which he can generally *not* live up except for the great high points of his life, which point the way as guideposts in his *striving* in infinity” (cited in Weber 1975: 378). The deontology of sacrifice sets up an ideal that is widely shared and constantly propounded; that few effectively realize it does not make it any less salient and valorized, on the contrary.²⁵ Its constant collective reaffirmation, in words if not deeds, in and around the gym, generates a moral tension and works to reconfigure the activities and ties of all those who fall within its sphere of diffusion, even those who fail to meet or chose to disregard its exacting guidelines. And it provides a convenient and readily approved “vocabulary of motives” (Mills 1940) to explain away a faulty performance in the ring—as when boxers excuse a lackluster fight by insinuating that they did not stay away from their girlfriend on the eve of the contest (e.g., B&S, p. 241).

One of the major attractions of the pugilistic trade to its participants is that it serves as a vehicle for moral transcendence through the *heroization of everyday life* (see also Wacquant 1995b and 1998a). The rules of the pugilistic ethic make the most mundane behaviors of ordinary existence, nutrition, sleep and sex, and social and family obligations, over into treacherous temptations that must be avoided and ubiquitous obstacles to be vanquished, setting up an endless series of tests that, together with daily training and periodic contest inside the squared circle, enable the boxer to affirm his valor and erect a gloried self—the sexual connotations of the verb are invoked here on purpose. For the heroization of the boxer’s life is first and foremost a process of *masculinization*, as it entails a systematic accentuation of those properties deemed demonstrative of virility. Cultural history and comparative anthropology show that the heroic ethic is the manly ethic par excellence: it extolls the distinctively masculine virtues of assertive action, competitive control, deliberate deprivation, and decisive denial (of doubt, fear, pain, and dependency), and it sets up masculinity as a prize to be won or a land to be conquered (see Gilmore 1990, for distant societies, and Kimmel 1995, for the United States).²⁶ Boxing conforms to and indeed redoubles

²⁵The audacious violations of the code of “sacrifice” by Ricardo Mayorga cited by Hoffman and Fine (2005, p. 154) only reaffirm the sanctity of its rules: as Emile Durkheim showed long ago, crimes have to be committed for the community to be able to communicate and reactivate its commitment to shared norms.

²⁶Upon surveying conceptions of masculinity around the globe, Gilmore (1990, p. 223) stresses that in nearly every society, “manhood is a kind of male procreation; its heroic quality lies in its

this pattern. The Manly art purports to provide access to a higher grade of masculinity that can be achieved via an exclusive confrontation between men who have sublimated their heterosexual desire into a homoerotic desire for the martial, belligerent body of another man who similarly followed this ascetic course (Wacquant 1998a).

This leads us to the question of the missing or miscast woman. Lynn Geurts's (2005, p. 146) disappointment about *Body and Soul* is that it fails to represent women as willful and active participants in the boxing trade. She regrets that "flesh-and-blood women have little voice, nearly no agency, and teeter on the brink of sheer *spectacle* to this account." I plead guilty to focusing on men in a fiercely guarded masculine preserve from which the second sex is well-nigh absent physically even as it is symbolically omnipresent.²⁷ This focus is not (solely) the result of an unreflective "methodological androcentrism" often rightly reproached of male scholars—to which one would fruitfully counterpose a principled "methodological feminocentrism" (e.g., Wolf 1996). Rather, it is the product of (i) how women objectively figure inside of that universe made of men, by men and for men, men who clash ritually against one another to affirm their virility not by subjugating but, precisely, by *erasing* women from their reserved space of contest; (ii) the analytic and writing strategy chosen, which is to replicate in the compass and dramatic makeup of the text the movement whereby boxers are enwrapped into the gym and bound to one another into a special sociomoral community severed from the mundane; (iii) the kind and scope of personal relations that I developed with my gym mates as the primary social vehicle for ethnographic production.

The marginal role accorded women in *Body and Soul* is not a "glaring omission" but an accurate report on the fact that "women in full-bodied relationality to these men are nowhere to be found" on the pugilistic stage proper, to use Geurts's (2005, p. 148) own words. For the lovers, mothers, and sisters of fighters are dutifully kept to the wings and the backstage of the craft; they reenter its experiential foreground only in the aftermath of the climactic moment of the fight, as rewards (figured by the "exotic dancers" who perform on the dancefloor of Studio 104 after the boxing show held in the parking lot, B&S, pp. 220–225), and as social and emotional supporters when the fighter exits the (sacred, homoerotic) space of masculine confrontation to return to the (profane, heterosexual) world of everyday life anchored by work, family duties, and romantic ties. Put differently, the public

self-direction and discipline, its absolute self-reliance—in a word, its agential autonomy." This is an apt characterization of boxing as craft and contest.

²⁷This remains true even after the entry of females in official competition (it was approved by the U.S. Boxing Amateur Federation in 1993, that is, after my time at Woodlawn). Notwithstanding the growing popularity of the game amongst women, female boxers continue to be considered as a *curiosa*, their fights a sideshow or a freak show whose tenuous pugilistic legitimacy is at best derivative (thus Laila Ali owes her ring recognition and public fame essentially to her legendary father Muhammad).

production of prizefighters is “gendered work” carried out by and amongst men.²⁸ Similarly, *Body and Soul* is not “dismissive of the concrete problem of sexism in this South Side community of boxers” (Geurts 2005, p. 148). It is studiously agnostic about it because the issue simply does not fall within its purview, as the book takes existing gender relations in the black community and beyond as a background matrix productive of definite subjectivities and relations that get imported into the gym and remoulded therein. And it shows how masculine control of the microcosm of boxing is built into its very makeup, through the exclusion rather than the subordination of women.²⁹

It is true that the reader is “not honored with an explanation about efforts to interview Curtis’s (intriguingly strong) wife” (Geurts 2005, p. 148). But neither is the reader treated to an exposition of Curtis’s complicated relationship with his absentee father (who is coldly rebuffed when he attempts to enter Curtis’s dressing room just prior to his fight) and his omnipresent brothers, and of his ties to his rambunctious cousins, and his neighborhood acolytes (some of whom are notorious drug dealers), or his barber and his preacher. Or given an extended report on Curtis’s experiences in the school system, on the labor market, and with the gamut of state agencies that supervise the life of America’s urban poor. Any account of “relationality” is necessarily selective. And here the span of connections dissected is purposefully kept to the closed milieu of the Woodlawn Boys Club and its direct extensions, because I wanted the book to *enfold the reader into the microcosm of the gym in the same fashion as the boxers themselves* are sucked and cocooned within it.³⁰ Thus the support work and stroking function carried out by mothers, girlfriends, wives, and sisters in the wings recedes from the ethnography,

²⁸Reproaching me for neglecting the active role of women in the manufacturing of prizefighters is akin to criticizing, say, Marjorie De Vault (1991) for failing to treat men as full-fledged agents in the work of “feeding the family,” when she rightly reports that husbands are “passive background objects” in the social organization of caring. Geurts (2005, p. 147) remarks that she finds *Body and Soul* “particularly eloquent on the ways in which boxers divert their heterosexual libidinal drives away from flesh-and-blood women and toward ‘gettin’ it on’ in the ring, in a kind of homoerotic desire for their opponents.” But she does not see that the fading presence of women is the sociological counterpart to that intra-masculine focus.

²⁹Geurts (2005, p. 148) writes that “women do not speak, by and large, in this narrative either, and there is not even a footnote to explain why.” There is just such a footnote (note 8 on page 7 of the book’s Prologue) to indicate that the sequel study, *The Passion of the Pugilist*, will take up the question of gender frontally, and in particular examine “the ways in which these boxers think and talk about women” as potential ring rivals. The reader will then discover how and why prizefighters feel that women *can* box but that they *should not* box, as revoking the gender exclusivity of the craft would annul the symbolic profit of masculinity that is the fulcrum of the pugilistic economy. Curiously, Geurts overlooks the “exotic dancers” of Studio 104, described over a full five pages (B&S, pp. 220–225) in the scripted public display of the specifically feminine form of bodily capital, i.e., eroticized flesh, that is the counterpart to the violent skilled body of boxers across the gender line.

³⁰This homology between the technique of exposition and the process examined is remarked by Krueger and SaintOnge (2005, p. 186). Because she had a broader design explicitly locating that craft within the span of gender relations, Saouter (2000, chapters 6 and 7) devotes two entire chapters of her book on rugby in Southwestern France to the relation of rugby players to their mothers, wives or girlfriends, and female fans.

along with other social relations, just as it does from the phenomenal horizon of the prizefighters. This is not the result of masculine oversight but the product of a deliberate analytic choice.

In an ideal world with no limitations of time to inquire and space to write, and absent the strongly gendered expectations inscribed in the fabric of interpersonal relations, I would have replaced the boxers in the socioemotional triad tying them to their mother and female companion (when they had one), and then compared it to the pseudo-familial triad formed by the fighter, his trainer-mother and his manager-father.³¹ But the bonds that I developed with my gym mates were angled away from their domestic and familial spheres. So, while I grew close enough to Curtis, Ashante, and Anthony, for instance, to know their mothers and to be well apprised of the latter's typical attitude of reluctant support towards their son boxing, that very closeness made it delicate for me to disregard the tacit moral contract that binds gym members, according to which they are not to pry into the personal life of their mates. The very friendship I had developed with them inside the club militated against trespassing onto intimate terrains outside of it.

APPRENTICESHIP, VISCERALITY, WRITING

"Twenty centuries of diffuse Platonism and of Christianized readings of the *Phaedon* incline us to see the body not as an instrument of but as an obstacle to knowledge and to ignore the specificity of practical knowledge, which is treated either as mere obstacle to knowing or as a rudimentary science" (Bourdieu 1997/2000, p. 170, my translation). *Body and Soul* endeavors to avoid these twin errors by making apprenticeship both the *object* and the *means* of inquiry. By the same token, it seeks to demonstrate practically that initiation in real time and space is not only "one of the most felicitous paths toward ethnographic acceptance," as proposed by Stoller (2005, p. 198), but a fruitful conduit for gaining an adequate command of the "culture" at hand, that is, a major *technique of ethnographic investigation and interpretation* in its own right. And one that is especially well-suited to capturing the visceral quality of social life that standard modes of social inquiry typically purge from their accounts.

As a traditional and practical mode of knowledge transmission that gradually converts a novice into a recognized member of the craft through a total pedagogy imparting at once sensorimotor, mental, and social aptitudes, apprenticeship brings to the fore the antepredicative components of the corporeal intelligence that tacitly guides social agents in their familiar universe prior to entering the

³¹I will show in *Passion of the Pugilist* how, in division of labor and ethos, the pair formed by the trainer and manager operate as a sort of parental unit overlooking the boxer, with the former taking on the motherly role of nurturance and emotional succor while the latter wields authority and makes economic decisions. There is scant mention of partners and mothers in the abundant native and journalistic literature on the Manly art. Yvonne Lafferty, at the University of Queensland, is presently conducting research on this topic.

plane of consciousness and language (Merleau-Ponty 1947/1962). It enables us to grasp human conduct not as the raw precipitate of external structures (causes) or the refined outgrowth of internal drives and decisions (reasons) but as a mutual moulding and immediate “inhabiting” of being and world, carnal entanglement with a mesh of forces pregnant with silent summons and invisible interdictions that elude the scholastic distinction between subject and object as they work simultaneously from within, through the socialization of cognition and affect, and from without, by closing and opening viable paths for action. Apprenticeship considered as an activity enables us to pry into practice in the making and to realize that the ordinary knowledge that makes us competent actors is an incarnate, sensuous, situated “knowing-how-to” that operates beneath the controls of discursive awareness and propositional reasoning (Ryle 1940; see also Crossley 2001, chapters 4 and 5). Apprenticeship taken as a method allows us to probe into the makeup of habitus by studying not its products but its production; not the regulated strategies it informs but the coordinated techniques and patterned relations that form it. In short, practical initiation opens the joint labor of constitution of the social agent up for empirical observation and even experimentation.

The central argument of *Body and Soul* here is, as Nina Eliasoph (2005, p. 160) stresses, that “we must enter the boxer’s bodies, as they collectively learn” their trade, “if we are to understand meaning-making.” For meaning-making is not a mental affair liable to an intellectualist reading, as the hermeneutic tradition, trapped in the scriptural metaphor of social action as text, would have us believe (Rabinow and Sullivan 1987). We cannot content ourselves with an interpretive deciphering of the boxers’ words and deeds, for the springs of their conduct do not reside merely “out there” in the form of publicly available symbols and codes; they also dwell “in here,” in the invisible schemata of cognition, cathexis, and action through which they probe and construct the world about them. A carnal sociology that seeks to situate itself not outside or above practice but at its “point of production” requires that we immerse ourselves as deeply and as durably as possible into the cosmos under examination; that we submit ourselves to its specific temporality and contingencies; that we acquire the embodied dispositions it demands and nurtures, so that we may grasp it via the prethetic understanding that defines the native relation to that world—not as one world among many but as “home” (Jackson 2000).

Body and Soul maintains that, while gaining membership in a group—whether boxers, baritones, or bartenders—is never a warrant for studying it, it can be an invaluable *methodological springboard*, provided it is theoretically controlled and pragmatically implemented. As a study of embodiment, it takes the socialized organism as an empirical object and “an opportunity for a rethinking of culture and the self” (Csordas 1999, p. 180). But it does more: it treats the mindful *body of the analyst* as a fount of social competency and an indispensable tool for research. So much to say that, while it is particularly apt for studying intense

or passion-laden institutions, carnal sociology is not limited to studying “the extremes of society,” tasks “forc[ing] a kind of whole body/mind concentration that is usually not available to people in daily life,” or situations of risk and urgency (Eliasoph 2005, pp. 161–162). It is a general approach to social life because *all agents are embodied* and *all social life rests on a bedrock of visceral know-how*, or prediscursive knowledges and skills that are both acquired and deployed in practical entailment with a definite social cosmos.³² In this regard, Eliasoph (2005, p. 162) is right to note that “boxing is not very different from other activities: differences in bodily training seamlessly slide into differences in emotions and cognition.” Cognition and emotion, in turn, are incarnate responses that engage the trained faculties and proclivities of an indivisible “body-mind complex” (to recall a notion of William James) forged in and for accomplishing-things-in-the-world.³³ And a fertile means for examining these competencies is to acquire them in practice.

Eliasoph (2005, p. 163ff) is on target again when she ties the promise of carnal analysis closely to the question of writing. To yield all of their fruits, a full-bodied theory of action and a methodological approach premised on practical implication into the empirical maelstrom studied call for producing texts unlike the linear, monological, and monochordal accounts typically produced by field researchers. Breaking with the “visualism” that dominates such reporting, *Body and Soul* aims, not only to produce a “tasteful ethnography” (Stoller 1989) by disclosing the distinctive sensory semiosis of pugilism, but also to *communicate the visceral cast of social action and indeed of field inquiry itself*. For ethnographers are no different than the people they study: they are suffering beings of flesh and blood who, whether they acknowledge it or not, understand much of their topic “by body” and then work, with varying degree of reflexive awareness and analytic success, to tap and translate what they have comprehended viscerally into the conceptual language of their scholarly discipline.

There are three reasons why *Body and Soul* came out nearly a decade after the fieldwork was completed and most of its arguments were worked out. The first is that I was turned off by the widespread professional expectation of a lurid exposé on the beastly world of boxing (as disclosed by that bizarre circus animal, the “boxing sociologist”), an expectation that was at loggerheads with my design to de-exoticize the craft and show what it shares with other passionate pursuits. The second is that I had to extricate myself from the emotional vortex into which

³²In this regard, I would certainly join with Elias in “disapprov[ing] the use of the term sociology of body” and the implication there are fields of social science where bodies do not matter (Dunning 2005, p. 171). For carnality is not a specific domain of practices but a dimension of all practice.

³³The most “mental” of actors, such as the philosopher, the mathematician, or the chess player, are fully embodied—although their distinctive brand of embodiment is one that systematically effaces the organism from the phenomenological foreground. Thinking itself is a deeply corporeal activity, as numerous philosophers, cognitive linguists, and neuroscientists have shown (e.g., Ryle 1940; Lakoff and Johnson 1999; Damasio 1999).

leaving the gym had plunged me and resign myself to putting a definitive close to an episode of my life that was vastly more vivacious and rewarding than academe can ever be. The passing of coach DeeDee Armour in February of 2000 might be the event that triggered the realization that the book had to be finished and published, if only as an oblique sociological memorial to his lifework.³⁴ The third was the thorniest: it was to find an expressive form and format suited to conveying to the reader at once the outer enthralling power and the inner social logic of prizefighting, to encapsulate and yet elucidate the pragmatic, sensual, and moral magnetism that it holds for those who come to be wedded to it day-to-day—an allure that boxers express by couching their attachment to the craft in the idiom of romantic love, infectious disease, and narcotic dependency (see Wacquant 1995a, pp. 507–510) and whose primal vigor I had unexpectedly come to feel firsthand.

The challenge to transmit together the sensuous pizzazz and the sociological necessity of the Sweet science posed intractable problems of structure, composition, voice, and length until I made two successive moves. First I decided to split the task into two books, the one more narrative and perceptually driven (*Body and Soul*), and the other more thematic and conceptually propelled (*Passion of the Pugilist*), even as both partake of a single theoretical project, attacked from different angles, which is to examine the fabrication of social competency and to experiment with habitus, in the twofold sense of putting the notion to the test empirically and methodologically. Second, after much fumbling about, I resolved to fully assume the marriage of the three modes of writing that *Body and Soul* braids together: the *analytical*, ferreting out social structures and mechanisms, anchored by “The Street and the Ring”; the *narrative*, stringing together persons and events, most prominently in “Fight Night at Studio 104”; and the *experiential*, focusing on cognition and affect from the subjective point of view, climaxing with “‘Busy’ Louie at the Golden Gloves.” Instead of repressing or minimizing its literary dimension, I strove to integrate it into the scientific scaffolding of the book in the hope that it would work both as a piece of depictive ethnology and as an exercise in analytical sociology—with the risk that it might fall in-between these two genres or worse, if judged by each as pertaining to the other, be deemed to fail by the standards of both.³⁵

For this purpose, I drew on the techniques of textual construction that I had learned over the years by reading, writing for, and assisting in the editing of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, which include the integration of multiple

³⁴I say “might be” because we do not know well why and how we come to write the books that we do, aside from the obvious factors of professional pressure, social convention, and ego gratification. The expressive urge that we invest in such undertakings is variously shaped by the position we occupy in social space and in the intellectual field, but also by our personal relationships to significant others and how these mesh with writing as an inscriptive activity. In the present case, the writing drive was long censored (or, rather, diverted onto other objects) by the human dimensions and intimate implications of the task at hand more than by any other force.

³⁵Put differently and retrospectively, instead of choosing between them, I tried to combine in a single book the complementary strengths of “totalizing ethnography” and “narrative ethnography” (to use the typology of Dodier and Baszanger 1997) while skirting their converse limitations.

tiers of text featuring different fonts and types; the mixing of direct and indirect styles; the use of sidebars and boxes to intercalate field documents and interview excerpts, close-up descriptions of pivotal phases and processes, or the portraits and viewpoints of salient agents; and photographs used not as adornment but as visual instruments of objectivation, all in an effort to wed analytical precision with experiential acuity.³⁶ I was also alert to the swirling debate on the “poetics and politics” of ethnography raised by American anthropologists around the time I was conducting my fieldwork (Clifford and Marcus 1987; Crapanzano 1992). But, unlike most participants in that debate, I hold that a concern for rhetorical composition and authority need not entail an abandonment of conceptual rigor and scientific veracity—in short, that “blurred genres” of writing can serve the aims of a postpositivist social *science* rather than imply a wholesale surrender to the seductions of humanistic musing.

This is why, however flattering it might be to be accorded such pioneer status, I must dissent with Gary Fine’s (2004b, p. 505) proclamation of *Body and Soul* as the “first sociological classic of reflexive autoethnography.” My book is reflexive in that it self-consciously features the ethnographer in the picture and ongoingly turns the sociological theory it develops back onto his field experiences, but it is decidedly not autoethnographic by any current acception of that ill-defined genre (e.g., Reed-Danahay 1997; Bochner and Ellis 2002). It is not an exercise in “native anthropology,” since I am a sociologist who became a boxer of sorts and not the other way around. It is not autobiographical or even biographical as it is not organized around the life stories of individuals; if there is a central character to the tale told, it is not this or that boxer or even head coach DeeDee, and certainly not the author (except in Robert Zussman’s flowery imagination): it is the gym as socioemotional melting pot and pragmatic-cum-moral vessel. The personal trials and ring tribulations of its author are invoked, not to construct a “narrative of the self” (Denzin 1996), but inasmuch as they inform us about, and assist us in the analysis of, the multifaceted social alchemy whereby pugilistic agents are forged. The author thus enters into the ethnography not as the singular individual Loïc Wacquant but as “Busy” Louie, one of the experimental subjects undergoing this wondrous *metanoia* out of which emerges the proficient boxer, a new being furnaced out of the old, capable of and desirous to invest himself durably in the fistic craft, for better or worse.³⁷

³⁶This journal, founded and edited by Pierre Bourdieu under the motto “to display and to demonstrate,” has been a major site of formal experimentation in social science writing since its origin in 1975. It seeks to convey not only the finished product but also the concrete operations of production of sociological knowledge, in an effort to “make possible a mode of expression genuinely adapted to the demands of a science which, taking as its object social forms and formalisms, must reproduce in the display of its results the operations of desacralization that enabled it to reach that object” (untitled 1975 editorial preface to the first issue of *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 1975; for a fuller discussion, see Wacquant 2005c).

³⁷This is why, to the chagrin of Young (2005, p. 183), I do not dwell on the many “moments of curiosity, concern, confusion, intrigue or conflict associated” with my presence at the Woodlawn Boys Club.

Body and Soul is moreover written against the grain of postmodernism and at crosscurrent with the narcissistic irrationalism that has informed autoethnographic efforts of the past decade. It firmly grounds its subjects in an objective social structure of material forces and symbolic relations. It studiously shuns the hoary notion of identity and sidesteps the issues of “voice and authenticity, and of cultural displacement” and “resistance” that have preoccupied contributors to that current to the point of obsession (Reed-Danahay 1999, p. 3).³⁸ Far from joining in the fashionable jeremiad over “the ends of ethnography” (Clough 1998), its goal is to harness an expanded gamut of representational techniques and conceptual resources to the reinvigorating of fieldwork now detectible across the social sciences. I use documentary procedures and fictional devices, such as the elaboration of scenes, the depiction of characters, or the classical dramatic schema of the unity of time, place, and action (in the narration of “Fight Night at Studio 104”), to give the reader a vivid sense of the “taste and ache” of the action unfolding in and around the ring *and* to disclose its social springs and cultural rationale. Put differently: *Body and Soul* puts literary means of expression at the service of an expansive sociology—instead of the other way around, as advocated by Carolyn Ellis (1995) and Ruth Behar (1996)—and so it can be construed as *anti-autoethnographic* in design and spirit.

Contrary to the fears of most sociologists and to the hopes of many anthropologists in the Anglo-American sphere, then, concern for textuality and tropes need not entail a slide into the epistemological morass of endlessly multiplying “standpoints” and a free-fall into subjectivity. It can be coupled with a commitment to rationalism and scientific objectivity (properly historicized), and thus with an empirically oriented social theory. So let me reassure Eliasoph (2005, p. 167) that theory has not, appearances to the contrary, been “moved” to “another book.” It figures fully in both this volume and its sequel, albeit under different guises. The concept of habitus as operant philosophy of action and methodological guide organizes the entirety of *Body and Soul*, even as it gets gradually backgrounded after the reader has been supplied with the conceptual tools and structural parameters needed to trace out on her own how prizefighters maneuver around, and play with, the dualities that organize their existence: material interest and sensuous desire, affection and exploitation, individuality and collectivity, the masculine and the feminine, the sacred and the profane, abstinence and *jouissance*. If theoretical language disappears from the surface of the text in the book’s second and third part,³⁹ it is to better grip the reader and make her experience vicariously the sociomoral engulfment and temporal vertigo that boxers undergo. But the problematic of

³⁸For a bracing critique of the rampant misuses and abuses of the notion of “identity” in contemporary social science that is particularly apposite here, ponder the indispensable essay by Brubaker and Cooper (2000); for a germane appraisal of “The Biographical Illusion,” read Bourdieu (1986, 1987).

³⁹So successfully that some U.S. critics of *Body and Soul* have deemed it blithely atheoretical, which testifies to the power of rhetorical conventions: theory that does not take the standard form of abstract conceptual language goes unnoticed.

the “mutual intromission of world and agent” (to use the aptly sexual expression of Pierre Bourdieu in *The Rules of Art*) guides every question, observation, and notation throughout the book, including the telling of the “sociological novella” written through the eyes (and fists) of “Busy” Louie. But to acknowledge this, one must revoke the false equation of social theory with a self-advertised, abstract conceptual discourse and recognize that theory can be lodged instead in the very operations that produced the empirical object at hand—whatever the writing style in which it is presented. And one must take care to apply to a multivocal text a multilayered reading that properly matches each mode of writing with its corresponding mode of evaluation.⁴⁰

Similarly, I chose the present tense deliberately to “presentize” the reader and insert her into the distinctive, self-generated temporality of the pugilistic cosmos, set by the interweaving of the tempo of training, the fluctuations of competition, and individual bodily and biographic rhythms. If “[my] ethnography floats in a kind of timeless ether,” as Stoller (2005, p. 199) points out, it is because the gym tends to loosen the string of outside events, snatch its members from their external temporal moorings, and thrust them into the relative timelessness of the pugilistic trade, with its compulsive rumination and constant consumption of its own slow-moving history (see esp. B&S, pp. 35–39). Like other worlds of passion, religion, science, art, politics, and warfare among them, boxing is an extraordinary machine to secrete its own time, to *make time* by forcibly synchronizing the multiple interlinked temporalities brought from the outside by participants (the times of schooling, work, family, biography, and, in the case of this author, research) and subordinating them to its own dictates.⁴¹

Timelessness, alas, is a social fiction. Because they are embodied, social agents are mortal beings, irrevocably fated to finitude and death, as I was brutally reminded by DeeDee’s passing. And so are the ethnographers, or the field personae

⁴⁰Because they conflate the analytical, the narrative, and the experiential voices interwoven in the book and artificially recast them under the dual categories of “ethnographic realism” and “personal memoir,” Hoffman and Fine (2005, pp. 152, 155, 156) mistake the practical naïveté of the boxing novice Busy Louie for the (alleged) “cultural naïveté” of the sociologist Loïc Wacquant. This leads them to portray the latter as a wide-eyed Dumbo who “buys into the blustery exaggeration” of informants who supposedly fascinate the former and to complain that *Body and Soul* “occasionally reads like the vast majority of the dramatic literary treatments of the sport in its strikingly romantic and totalizing descriptions” that “transfor[m] brutality into the arts and science.” But the romancing and the totalizing are in the fistic world, not in the eye of the beholder; and I demonstrate that there is both science and art involved in pugilistic bruising. Moreover, I do not accept at face value the enthused statements of members (e.g., Hoffman and Fine claim that I “buy” the “braggadacio” of old Herman Mills” when I write: “Mills *rambles on badly* and tells me the same story several times.g . . . DeeDee and the others *don’t even pretend to listen to him*,” B&S, 159, emphasis added). Their warning that “the stories that boxers tell constitute the world as much as the blows that they give and receive” is exactly the argument that I make about the oral folklore of the gym (B&S, pp. 39–40).

⁴¹The argument that time is not external and transcendent to practice but, on the contrary, a constitutive yet emergent, and therefore variable, feature of systems of social action is made by Bourdieu (1997/2000: Chapter 6).

that they invent and incarnate to ply their trade. Completing this experimental study of pugilism as bodily craft and sociology as carnal endeavor has demanded of me a painful form of self-work amounting to a silent and solitary *labor of mourning*, because it has entailed closing a chapter of my life that I wish would have remained open indefinitely, even if only in fantasy. Writing *Body and Soul* has meant building the textual coffin in which to inter forever the being of flesh and blood who conducted the social and sociological experiment it reports on. So I am much obliged to the contributors to this symposium for having offered “Busy” Louie a beautiful academic wake.

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