

## TO EACH WASTE ITS DUMPING SITE

Source: Zygmunt Bauman (2004) *Wasted Lives*, Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 70–93.

Once the modern mode of life stopped being a privilege of selected lands, the primary outlets for human-waste disposal, that is the 'empty' or 'no man's' territories (more precisely, the territories that thanks to the global power differential could be seen and treated as void and/or masterless), have vanished. For the 'redundant humans' now turned out in the parts of the planet that have recently jumped into or fallen under the juggernaut of modernity, such outlets were never in existence; in the so-called 'premodern' societies, innocent of the problem of waste, human or non-human alike, the need for them did not arise. As an effect of that blocking or non-provision of external outlets, societies increasingly turn the sharp edge of exclusionary practices against themselves.

If the excess of population (that is, the part that cannot be reassimilated into normal life patterns and reprocessed back into the category of 'useful' members of society) can be routinely removed and transported beyond the boundaries of the enclosure within which an economic balance and social equilibrium are sought, people who escape transportation and remain inside the enclosure, even if currently redundant, are earmarked for recycling. They are 'out', but only temporarily – their 'staying out' is an abnormality that commands and musters a cure; they clearly need to be helped 'back in' as soon as possible. They are the 'reserve army of labour' and must be put in and held in such a shape as would allow them to return to active service at the first opportunity.

All that changes, however, once the channels for draining human surplus are blocked. As the 'redundant' population stays inside and rubs shoulders with the 'useful' and 'legitimate' rest, the line separating a transient incapacitation from the peremptory and final consignment to waste tends to be blurred and no longer legible. Rather than remaining as before a problem of a separate part of the population, assignment to 'waste' becomes everybody's potential prospect – one of the two poles between which everybody's present and future social standing oscillates. To deal with the 'problem of waste' in this new form the habitual tools and stratagems of intervention do not suffice; nor are they particularly adequate. The new policies soon to be invented in response to the new shape of the old problem will most probably start by subsuming the policies once designed to deal with the problem in its old shape. To be on the safe side, emergency measures aimed at the issue of 'waste inside' will be preferred and sooner or later given priority over all other modes of intervention in the issues of redundancy as such, temporary or not.

All these and similar setbacks and reverses of fortune tend to be magnified and made yet more acute in those parts of the globe that have only recently been

confronted with the previously unknown phenomenon of 'surplus population' and the problem of its disposal. 'Recently' in this case means belatedly – at a time when the planet is already full, when no 'empty lands' are left to serve as waste-disposal sites and when any asymmetry of boundaries is turned firmly against newcomers to the family of moderns. Surrounding lands will not invite their surplus nor can be, as they themselves were in the past, forced to accept and accommodate it. Such latecomers to modernity are left to seek a *local* solution to a globally caused problem – though with meagre chances of success.

Where family and communal businesses were once able and willing to absorb, employ and support all newly born humans, and at most times secure their survival, the surrender to global pressures and the laying of their own territory open to the unfettered circulation of capital and commodities made them unviable. Only now do the newcomers to the company of moderns experience that separation of business from households which the pioneers of modernity went through hundreds of years ago, with all its attendant social upheavals and human misery but also with the luxury of global solutions to locally produced problems – an abundance of 'empty' and 'no man's lands' that could easily be used to deposit the surplus population no longer absorbed by the economy emancipated from familial and communal constraints: a luxury not available to the latecomers.

Tribal wars and massacres, a proliferation of 'guerrilla armies' (often little more than barely disguised bandit gangs) busy decimating each other's ranks yet absorbing and annihilating the 'population surplus' (mostly the young, unemployable at home and without prospects) in the process – in short, a 'neighbourhood colonialism' or 'poor man's imperialism' – are among such 'local solutions to global problems' the 'latecomers to modernity' are forced to deploy or rather have found themselves deploying. Hundreds of thousands of people are chased away from their homes, murdered or forced to run for life outside the borders of their country.

Perhaps the sole thriving industry in the lands of the latecomers (deviously and deceitfully dubbed 'developing countries') is the mass production of refugees. It is the ever more prolific products of that industry which the British Prime Minister proposes to unload 'near their home countries', in permanently temporary camps (deviously and deceitfully dubbed 'safe havens'), thereby exacerbating the already unmanageable 'surplus population' problems of immediate neighbours who willy-nilly run a similar industry. The aim is to keep 'local problems' local and so nip in the bud all attempts of latecomers to follow the example of the pioneers of modernity by seeking global (and the sole effective) solutions for locally manufactured problems. As I write these words, in another variation of the same theme NATO has been asked to mobilize its armies to help Turkey to seal its border with Iraq in view of the impending assault on the country. Many a statesperson of the pioneer countries objected, raising many imaginative reservations – but none mentioned publicly that the danger against which Turkey was to be protected was the influx of freshly made homeless Iraqi refugees, not an attack by battered and pulverized Iraqi soldiers.<sup>1</sup>

However earnest, the efforts to stem the tide of 'economic migration' are not and probably cannot be made a hundred per cent successful. Protracted misery makes millions desperate, and in an era of a global frontier-land and globalized crime

one can hardly expect a shortage of ‘businesses’ eager to make a buck or a few billion bucks capitalizing on that desperation. Hence the second formidable consequence of the current transformation: millions of migrants wandering the routes once trodden by the ‘surplus population’ discharged by the greenhouses of modernity – only in a reverse direction, and this time unassisted (at any rate thus far) by the armies of *conquistadores*, tradesmen and missionaries. The full dimensions of that consequence and its repercussions are yet to unravel and to be grasped in all their many ramifications.

In a brief but sharp exchange of views that took place towards the end of 2001 in connection with the war on Afghanistan, Garry Younge mused on the condition of the planet a day *before* 11 September, that is before the day that by common agreement shook the world and ushered in a completely different phase of planetary history. He remembered ‘a boatload of Afghan refugees floating off Australia’ (to the applause of 90 per cent of Australians) to be in the end marooned on an uninhabited island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean:

It is interesting now that they should have been Afghans, given that Australia is very involved in the coalition now, and thinks there is nothing better than a liberated Afghanistan and is prepared to send its bombs to liberate Afghanistan . . . Interesting also that we have now a Foreign Secretary who compares Afghanistan to the Nazis, but who, when he was Home Secretary and a group of Afghans landed at Stansted, said that there was no fear of persecution and sent them back.<sup>2</sup>

Younge concludes that on 10 September the world was ‘a lawless place’ in which the rich and the poor alike knew that ‘might is right’, that the high and mighty can ignore and bypass international law (or whatever is called by that name) whenever they find that law inconvenient, and that wealth and power determine not just economics but morality and the politics of global space and for that matter everything else concerning life conditions on the planet.

As I am writing, a case is being held in front of a High Court judge in London to test the *legality* of the treatment accorded to six asylum seekers, fleeing regimes officially recognized as ‘evil’ and/or as routinely violating, or negligent of, human rights, such as Iraq, Angola, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Iran.<sup>3</sup> Keir Starmer QC told the judge, Mr Justice Collins, that the new rules introduced in Britain have left hundreds of asylum seekers ‘so destitute that they could not pursue their cases’. They were sleeping rough in the streets, were cold, hungry, scared and sick; some were ‘reduced to living in telephone boxes and car parks’. They were allowed ‘no funds, no accommodation and no food’, and were prohibited from seeking paid work while being denied access to social benefits. And they had no control whatsoever over when, where and if their applications for asylum would be processed. A woman who had escaped from Rwanda after being repeatedly raped and beaten ended up spending the night on a chair at Croydon police station – on condition that she did not fall asleep. A man from Angola who found his father shot and his mother and sister left naked after a multiple rape ended up being denied all support and sleeping rough. Two hundred similar cases are currently waiting for the decision of the courts.

In the case presented by Keir Starmer QC, the judge proclaimed the refusal of social assistance unlawful. The Home Secretary reacted to the verdict angrily: 'Frankly I am personally fed up with having to deal with a situation where Parliament debates issues and the judges then overturn them. . . . We don't accept what Mr Justice Collins has said. We will seek to overturn it.'<sup>4</sup>

The plight of the six whose case Keir Starmer QC presented is probably a side-effect of overcrowding and overflowing in the designed or improvised camps to which asylum seekers are routinely transported at the moment of landing. The numbers of homeless and stateless victims of globalization grow too fast for the designation and construction of camps to keep up.

One of the most sinister effects of globalization is the deregulation of wars. Most present-day warlike actions, and the most cruel and gory among them, are conducted by non-state entities, subject to no state laws and no international conventions. They are simultaneously outcomes and auxiliary but powerful causes of the continuous erosion of state sovereignty and the continuing frontier-land conditions in the 'interstate' global space. Intertribal antagonisms break into the open thanks to the weakening hands of the state, or in the case of the 'new states', of hands never given time to grow strong; once let loose, they render the inchoate or entrenched state-legislated laws unenforceable and practically null and void.

The population as a whole finds itself in a lawless space; the part of the population that decides to flee the battlefield and manages to escape finds itself in another type of lawlessness, that of the global frontier-land. Once outside the borders of their native country, escapees are deprived of the backing of a recognized state authority that could take them under its protection, vindicate their rights and intercede on their behalf with foreign powers. Refugees are stateless, but stateless in a new sense: their statelessness is raised to an entirely new level by the non-existence of a state authority to which their statehood could be referred. They are, as Michel Agier put it in his most insightful study of refugees in the era of globalization,<sup>5</sup> *hors du nomos* – *outside law*; not this or that law of this or that country, but *law as such*. They are outcasts and outlaws of a novel kind, the products of globalization and the fullest epitome and incarnation of its frontier-land spirit. To quote Agier again, they have been cast in a condition of 'liminal drift', with no way of knowing whether it is transitory or permanent. Even if they are stationary for a time, they are on a journey that is never completed since its destination (arrival or return) remains forever unclear, while a place they could call 'final' remains forever inaccessible. They are never to be free from the gnawing sense of the transience, indefiniteness and provisional nature of any settlement.

The plight of Palestinian refugees, many of who have never experienced life outside the camps hastily patched together more than fifty years ago, has been well documented. As globalization takes its toll, though, new camps (less notorious and largely unnoticed or forgotten) mushroom around the spots of conflagration, prefiguring the model Tony Blair wishes the UN High Commission for Refugees to render obligatory. For instance, the three camps of Dabaab, populated by as many people as the rest of the Kenyan Garissa province in which they were located in 1991–2, show no signs of imminent closure, yet till this very day they do not appear on the map of the country. The same applies to the camps of Ilfo (opened in

September 1991), Dagahaley (opened in March 1992) and Hagadera (opened in June 1992).<sup>6</sup>

On the way to the camps, their future inmates are stripped of every single element of their identities except one: that of stateless, placeless, functionless refugees. Inside the fences of the camp, they are pulped into a faceless mass, having been denied access to the elementary amenities from which identities are drawn and the usual yarns of which identities are woven. Becoming 'a refugee' means to lose

the media on which social existence rests, that is a set of ordinary of things and persons that carry meanings – land, house, village, city, parents, possessions, jobs and other daily landmarks. These creatures in drift and waiting have nothing but their 'naked life', whose continuation depends on humanitarian assistance.<sup>7</sup>

As to the latter point, apprehensions abound. Is not the figure of a humanitarian assistant, whether hired or voluntary, itself an important link in the chain of exclusion? There are doubts whether the caring agencies doing their best to move people away from danger do not inadvertently assist the 'ethnic cleansers'. Agier muses whether the humanitarian worker is not an 'agent of exclusion at a lesser cost', and (more importantly still) a device designed to unload and dissipate the anxiety of the rest of the world, to absolve the guilty and placate the scruples, as well as defuse the sense of urgency and the fear of contingency. Putting the refugees in the hands of 'humanitarian workers' (and closing eyes to the armed guards in the background) seems to be the ideal way to reconcile the irreconcilable: the overwhelming wish to dispose of the noxious human waste while gratifying one's own poignant desire for moral righteousness.

It may be that the guilty conscience caused by the plight of the damned part of humanity can be healed. To achieve that effect, it will suffice to allow the process of biosegregation, of conjuring up and fixing identities stained by wars, violence, exodus, diseases, misery and inequality – a process already in full swing – to take its course. The carriers of stigma would be definitely kept at a distance by reason of their lesser humanity, that is their physical as well as moral dehumanization.<sup>8</sup>

Refugees are human waste, with no useful function to play in the land of their arrival and temporary stay and no intention or realistic prospect of being assimilated and incorporated into the new social body; from their present place, the dumping site, there is no return and no road forward (unless it is a road towards yet more distant places, as in the case of the Afghan refugees escorted by Australian warships to an island far away from all beaten tracks). A distance large enough to prevent the poisonous effluvia of social decomposition from reaching places inhabited by their native inhabitants is the main criterion by which the location of their permanently temporary camps are selected. Out of that place, refugees are an obstacle and a trouble; inside that place, they are forgotten. In keeping them there and barring all leakage, in making the separation final and irreversible, 'compassion by some and

hatred by others' cooperate in producing the same effect of taking distance and holding at a distance.<sup>9</sup>

Nothing is left but the walls, the barbed wire, the controlled gates, the armed guards. Between them they define the refugees' identity – or rather put paid to their right to self-definition. All waste, including wasted humans, tends to be piled up indiscriminately on the same refuse tip. The act of assigning to waste puts an end to differences, individualities, idiosyncrasies. Waste has no need of fine distinctions and subtle nuances, unless it is earmarked for recycling; but the refugees' prospects of being recycled into legitimate and acknowledged members of human society are, to say the least, dim and infinitely remote. All measures have been taken to assure the permanence of their exclusion. People without qualities have been deposited in a territory without denomination, whereas all the roads leading back to meaningful places and to the spots where socially legible meanings can be and are forged daily have been blocked for good.

The exact numbers of refugees scattered around the world is a matter of contention and likely to remain such, given that the very idea of 'refugee' – hiding as much as it reveals – is an 'essentially contested concept'. The most reliable figures available are produced bureaucratically, through registration and filing – primarily by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in the annual *The State of the World's Refugees* reports. The reports give the numbers of people already recognized as answering the UN definition of a 'refugee' and so of legitimate concern to the UNHCR. The latest report estimated the number of such people at 22.1 million (this figure does not include refugees under the care of other agencies, notably the 4 million Palestinian refugees, and of course the persecuted minorities denied statehood who did not register anywhere or have been denied registration). Of the 22.1 million, 40 per cent were located by the end of 2000 in Asia, nearly 27 per cent in Europe, and slightly over 25 per cent in Africa. The most prolific suppliers of refugees were the territories of tribal conflicts and the target places of global military operations: Burundi, Sudan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq.<sup>10</sup> Most countries, UNHCR complains, 'do not subscribe to the definition' by which it operates. Even more countries insist on assurances that the temporary protection they are pressed to offer 'is indeed temporary' and that refugees will eventually be returned to their home countries or move elsewhere. 'Being under protection' does not mean 'being wanted' – and everything needed, and much more, is being done to prevent the refugees from confusing the two conditions.

Once a refugee, forever a refugee. Roads back to the lost (or rather no longer existing) homely paradise have been all but cut, and all exits from the purgatory of the camp lead to hell . . . The prospectless succession of empty days inside the perimeter of the camp may be tough to endure, but God forbid that the appointed or voluntary plenipotentiaries of humanity, whose job it is to keep the refugees inside the camp but away from perdition, pull the plug. But they do, time and again, whenever the powers-that-be decide that the exiles are no longer refugees since 'it is safe to return' to a homeland that has long ceased to be their homeland and has nothing to offer them that could be wished for. There are, for instance, about 900,000 refugees from the intertribal massacres and the battlefields of uncivil wars waged for decades in Ethiopia and Eritrea, scattered over the northern regions of Sudan,

itself an impoverished, war-devastated country. They are mixed with other refugees who recall with horror the killing fields of southern Sudan.<sup>11</sup> By the decision of the UN agency endorsed by the non-governmental charities, they are no longer refugees and so are no longer entitled to humanitarian aid. They refused to go, however; apparently, they do not believe that there is 'a home' to which they could 'return', since the homes they remember have been either gutted or stolen. The new task of their humanitarian wardens is therefore to *make* them go . . . In Kassala camp, cutting of water supplies was followed by the forceful removal of inmates beyond the perimeter of the camp which just like their homes in Ethiopia has been razed to the ground to bar all thought of return. The same lot was visited on the inmates of Um Gulsam Laffa and Newshagarab camps. According to the local villagers' testimony, about 8,000 inmates perished when camp hospitals were closed, water wells dismantled and food delivery abandoned. It is difficult to verify their fate; though what one can be certain of is that hundreds of thousands have disappeared from the refugee registers and statistics even if they did not manage to escape from the nowhere-land of non-humanity.

Refugees, the human waste of the global frontier-land, are 'the outsiders incarnate', the absolute outsiders, outsiders everywhere and out of place everywhere except in places that are themselves out of place – the 'nowhere places' that appear on no maps used by ordinary humans on their travels. Once outside, indefinitely outside, a secure fence with watching towers is the only contraption needed to make the 'indefiniteness' of the out-of-place hold forever.

It is a different story with the redundant humans already 'inside' and bound to stay inside as the new fullness of the planet bars their territorial exclusion. In the absence of empty places to which they could be deported and the locking up of the places to which they would travel of their own free will in search of sustenance, waste-disposal sites must be laid out inside the locality which has made them supernumerary. Such sites emerge in all or most large cities. They are urban ghettos; or rather, to follow Loïc Wacquant's insight, 'hyperghettos'.<sup>12</sup>

Ghettos, named or unnamed, are ancient institutions. They served the purpose of 'composite stratification' (and in one go 'multiple deprivation' as well), overlapping differentiation by caste or class with territorial separation. Ghettos might be voluntary or involuntary (though only the latter tend to carry the stigma of the name), the main difference between the two being which side of the 'asymmetrical boundary' they faced – the obstacles piled up, respectively, at the entry to or at the exit from the ghetto territory.

Even in the case of 'involuntary ghettos' there was, however, a modicum of 'pull' factors added to the decisive 'push' forces. They used to be 'mini societies', replicating in miniature all the major institutions that served the daily needs and life pursuits of those living outside the ghetto boundaries. They also provided its residents with a degree of security and at least a whiff of the feeling of *chez soi*, of being at home, unavailable to them outside. To quote Wacquant's description of the pattern dominant in the black American ghettos of the last century:

the black bourgeoisie's [doctors, lawyers, teachers, businessmen] economic power rested on supplying goods and services to its lower-class brethren; and



all 'brown' residents of the city were united in their common rejection of caste subordination and abiding concern to 'advance the race' . . . As a result, the postwar ghetto was *integrated both socially and structurally* – even the 'shadies' who earned their living from such illicit trades as the 'numbers game', liquor sale, prostitution and other *risqué* recreations, were entwined with the different classes.<sup>13</sup>

The orthodox ghettos might have been enclosures surrounded by insurmountable, even if non-material, barriers [physical and social] and with the few remaining exits exceedingly difficult to negotiate. They might have been instruments of class-and-caste segregation and might have branded their residents with the stigma of inferiority and social rejection. Unlike the 'hyperghettos' that have grown out of them and took their place towards the end of the last century, they were not however dumping sites for the surplus, redundant, unemployable and functionless population. Unlike its classical predecessor, the new ghetto, in Wacquant's words, 'serves not as a reservoir of disposable industrial labour but a mere dumping ground [for those for who] the surrounding society has no economic or political use'. Abandoned by their own middle classes, who ceased to rely on black clientele alone and chose to buy their way into the higher grade security of the voluntary ghettos of 'gated communities', the ghetto dwellers cannot create on their own substitute economic or political uses to replace the uses denied to them by the greater society. As a result, 'whereas the ghetto in its classical form acted partly as a protective shield against brutal racial exclusion, the hyper-ghetto has lost its positive role of collective buffer, making it a deadly machinery for naked social relegation.'

In other words: the American black ghetto has turned purely and simply into a, virtually single-purpose, waste-disposal tip. 'It has devolved into a one-dimensional machinery for naked relegation, a human warehouse wherein are discarded those segments of urban society deemed disreputable, derelict, and dangerous.'

Wacquant notices and lists a number of parallel and mutually coordinated processes that bring the American black ghettos ever closer to the model of prisonlike Goffmanesque 'total institutions': a 'prisonization' of public housing ever more reminiscent of houses of detention, with new 'projects' 'fenced up, their perimeter placed under beefed-up security patrols and authoritarian controls' – and as Jerome G. Miller noted, 'random searches, segregation, curfews, and resident counts – all familiar procedures of efficient prison management';<sup>14</sup> and the transformation of state-maintained schools into 'institutions of confinement' whose primary mission is not to educate but to ensure 'custody and control' – 'Indeed, it appears that the main purpose of these schools is simply to "neutralize" youth considered unworthy and unruly by holding them under lock for the day so that, at minimum, they do not engage in street crime.'

There is a movement in the opposite direction, transforming the nature of American prisons, their manifest and latent functions, their declared and tacit purposes and their physical structures and routines, so that urban ghettos and prisons meet halfway, their meeting place being the explicit role of a dumping ground for human waste. To quote Wacquant again, 'The "Big House" that embodied the correctional ideal of melioristic treatment and community reintegration of inmates



gave way to a race-divided and violence-ridden “warehouse” geared solely to neutralizing social rejects by sequestering them physically from society.’<sup>15</sup>

As far as other urban ghettos are concerned, and particularly the ghettos emerging in the great number of European cities with a significant immigrant population, a similar transformation may be fairly advanced but remains incomplete. Racially or ethnically pure urban ghettos remain a rarity in Europe. Besides, unlike the American blacks, the recent and relatively recent immigrants who populate them are not locally produced human waste; they are ‘imported waste’ from other countries with a lingering hope of recycling. The question of whether such ‘recycling’ is or is not on the cards and so whether the verdict of assignment to waste is final and globally binding remains open. These urban ghettos remain, we may say, ‘halfway inns’ or ‘two-way streets’. It is because of that provisional, undecided, underdefined character that they are the sources and the target of acute tension erupting daily into reconnaissance skirmishes and boundary clashes.

This ambiguity that sets the immigrant and thus far mixed-population ghettos of European towns apart from the American ‘hyperghettos’ may not however last. As Philippe Robert found, French urban ghettos that originally had the character of ‘transit’ or ‘passage’ stations for new immigrants who were expected soon to be assimilated and ingested by established urban structures turned into ‘spaces of relegation’ once employment was deregulated, becoming precarious and volatile, and unemployment became durable. It was then that the resentment and animosity of the established population grew into a virtually impenetrable wall locking out the newcomers-turned-outsiders. The *quartiers*, already socially degraded and cut off from communication with other parts of the cities, were now ‘the only places where [the immigrants] could feel *chez soi*, sheltered from the malevolent looks of the rest of the population’.<sup>16</sup>

Hughes Lagrange and Thierry Pech note in addition that once the state, having abandoned most of its economic and social functions, selected a ‘policy of security’ (and more concretely of personal safety) as the hub of its strategy aimed at recouping its fallen authority and the restoration of its protective importance in the eyes of the citizenry, the influx of newcomers was overtly or obliquely blamed for the rising uneasiness and diffuse fears emanating from the ever more precarious labour market.<sup>17</sup> The immigrants’ *quartiers* were depicted as hothouses of petty criminality, begging and prostitution, which were accused in their turn of playing a major role in the rising anxiety of ‘ordinary citizens’. To the acclaim of its citizens desperately seeking the roots of their incapacitating anxiety, the state flexed its muscle, however flabby and indolent in all other domains, in full public view – criminalizing those margins of the population who were the most feeble and living the most precariously, designing ever more stringent and severe ‘firm hand’ policies and waging spectacular anti-crime campaigns focused on the human waste of foreign origin dumped in the suburbs of French cities.

Loïc Wacquant notes a paradox:

The same people who yesterday fought with visible success for ‘less state’ to set free capital and the way it used the labour force, arduously demand today ‘more state’ to contain and hide the deleterious social consequences of the

deregulation of employment conditions and the deterioration of social protection for the inferior regions of social space.<sup>18</sup>

Of course, what Wacquant noted is anything but a paradox. The apparent change of heart strictly follows the logic of the passage from the recycling to the disposal of human waste. The passage was radical enough to need the keen and energetic assistance of state power, and the state obliged.

It did it first by dismantling collective forms of insurance to cover individuals who fell off the productive treadmill (temporarily, it was assumed). It was the kind of insurance that made obvious sense to both left and right wings of the political spectrum as long as the fall (and thus the assignment to productive waste) was deemed to be a temporary mishap, ushering in a brief stage of recycling ('rehabilitating', then returning to active service in the industrial force). But it quickly lost its 'beyond left and right' support once the prospects of recycling started to look remote and uncertain and the facilities of regular recycling looked increasingly incapable of accommodating all who had fallen or who had never risen in the first place.

Second, the state obliged by designing and building new secure waste-disposal sites – an endeavour certain to command ever growing popular support as the hopes of successful recycling faded, as the traditional method of human-waste disposal (through the exportation of surplus labour) ceased to be available, and as the suspicion of human universal disposability deepened and spread wider, together with the horror that the sight of 'wasted humans' evoked.

The social state is gradually, yet relentlessly and consistently, turned into a 'garrison state', as Henry A. Giroux calls it, describing it as a state that increasingly protects the interests of global, transnational corporations 'while stepping up the level of repression and militarization on the domestic front'. Social problems are increasingly criminalized. In Giroux's summary,

Repression increases and replaces compassion. Real issues such as a tight housing market and massive unemployment in the cities – as causes of homelessness, youth loitering and drug epidemics – are overlooked in favour of policies associated with discipline, containment and control.<sup>19</sup>

The immediate proximity of large and growing agglomerations of 'wasted humans', likely to become durable or permanent, calls for stricter segregationist policies and extraordinary security measures, lest the 'health of society', the 'normal functioning' of the social system, be endangered. The notorious tasks of 'tension management' and 'pattern maintenance' that, according to Talcott Parsons, each system needs to perform in order to survive presently boil down almost entirely to the tight separation of 'human waste' from the rest of society, its exemption from the legal framework in which the life pursuits of the rest of society are conducted, and its 'neutralization'. 'Human waste' can no longer be removed to distant waste-disposal sites and placed firmly out of bounds to 'normal life'. It needs therefore to be sealed off in tightly closed containers.

The penal system supplies such containers. In David Garland's succinct and precise summary of the current transformation, prisons which in the era of recycling

'functioned as the deep end of the correctional sector' are today 'conceived much more explicitly as a mechanism of exclusion and control'. It is the walls, and not what happens inside the walls, that 'are now seen as the institution's most important and valuable element'.<sup>20</sup> At best, the intention to 'rehabilitate', to 'reform', to 're-educate' and to return the stray sheep to the flock is only paid an occasional lip service – and when it is, it is countered with an angry chorus baying for blood, with the leading tabloids in the role of conductors and leading politicians singing all the solo parts. Explicitly, the main and perhaps the sole purpose of prisons is not just any human-waste disposal but a final, definitive disposal. Once rejected, forever rejected. For a former prisoner on parole or on probation, a return to society is almost impossible and a return to prison almost certain. Instead of guiding and easing the road 'back to the community' for prisoners who have served their term of punishment, the function of probation officers is keeping the community safe from the perpetual danger temporarily let loose. The interests of convicted offenders, insofar as they are considered at all, are viewed as fundamentally opposed to those of the public.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, offenders tend to be viewed as 'intrinsically evil and wicked', they 'are not like us'. All similarities are purely accidental . . .

There can be no mutual intelligibility, no bridge of understanding, no real communication between 'us' and 'them' . . .

Whether the offender's character is the result of bad genes or of being reared in an anti-social culture, the outcome is the same – a person who is beyond the pale, beyond reform, outside the civil community . . .

Those who do not or cannot fit in must be excommunicated and forcibly expelled.<sup>22</sup>

In a nutshell, prisons, like so many other social institutions, have moved from the task of recycling to that of waste-disposal. They have been reallocated to the front line of the battle to resolve the crisis in which the waste-disposal industry has fallen as a result of the global triumph of modernity and the new fullness of the planet. All waste is potentially poisonous – or at least, being defined as waste, it is deemed to be contaminating and disturbing to the proper order of things. If recycling is no longer profitable and its chances (at any rate in the present-day setting) are no longer realistic, the right way to deal with waste is to speed up its 'biodegradation' and decomposition while isolating it as securely as possible from the ordinary human habitat.

Work, social welfare, and family support used to be the means whereby ex-prisoners were reintegrated into mainstream society. With the decline of these resources, imprisonment has become a longer-term assignment from which individuals have little prospect of returning to an unsupervised freedom . . .

The prison is used today as a kind of reservation, a quarantine zone in which purportedly dangerous individuals are segregated in the name of public safety.<sup>23</sup>

Building more prisons, making more offences punishable by imprisonment, the policy of 'zero tolerance' and harsher and longer sentences are best understood as

so many efforts to rebuild the failing and faltering waste-disposal industry – on a new foundation more in keeping with the novel conditions of the globalized world.

There is also another kind of waste directly linked to the globalization process in its present form: a kind of waste whose origins can be traced back to globalization's 'frontier-land' conditions and one that globalization in such a form cannot but turn out daily in Manuel Castells's 'space of flows'.

As has been already suggested, under classical 'frontier-land' conditions cattle barons and outlaws were in tacit agreement: neither of them wished the lawlessness and the rule of the quickest and the shrewdest and the least scrupulous to grind to a halt and be replaced with the government of law. They both thrived on the absence of routine, on fluidity of alliances and front lines and on the overall frailty of commitments, rights and obligations. Such a convergence of interests did not augur well for the personal safety of everyone inside the frontier-land, whatever precautions residents or travellers took to insure themselves against the danger. It made the frontier-land a site of perpetual uncertainty and at the same time made insecurity immune to all effective intervention. Insecurity could not be confronted at its source; like the coalitions and the battlefields, the resulting anxiety was free-floating, unsure of its targets and selecting them at random. Frontier-land conditions are best conveyed by Jurij Lotman's metaphor of the minefield, of which one can say with a high degree of certainty that explosions will occur there, but can only guess at their timing and location.

In the present-day rendition of frontier-land conditions the place of cattle barons has been taken by global manufacturing, trade and capital companies, while the free-roaming bandits, single or in gangs, have been replaced by terrorist networks and an indefinable number of scattered individuals who spy in terrorist acts an archetype for their own private battles with individually suffered traumas or simply a hint as to how even a snubbed and spurned wretch can go down with a bang.

The acts of both major adversaries/partners in the frontier-land game add profusely to the production of human waste. The first are most active in the 'economic progress' branch of the industry, the second in the 'creative destruction of order' branch – a thoroughly deregulated version of the coercive undertakings in which modern states used to be engrossed from the start even while claiming monopoly on designing and building social order.

No authority can claim today an exclusive grip over its ostensibly sovereign territory. Even the most closely guarded borders are porous and prove easy to penetrate; courtesy of shock-greedy media, the massive forces summoned to protect borderlines against leaks and break-ins (like the widely publicized sight of tanks at Heathrow) daily remind the public of the ultimate vanity of the effort. Strikingly different and often incompatible ideas of the right and proper order of things meet and clash inside each ostensibly sovereign territory, their champions and foot soldiers vying with each other to lift the world to the height of their idea – though invariably at the expense of the residents, transformed in the process into thoroughly disposable props of the battle scene, the 'collateral damage' of the actions of war.

In the era of globalization, the 'collateral damage' and 'collateral casualties' left behind by the continuously sizzling and occasionally erupting enmities between the liquid modern versions of cattle barons and mounted bandits turn gradually into the

staple and most voluminous products of the waste industry. While (in theory at least, if not in practice) one can fight tooth and nail against an adverse verdict delivered by the authority in judgement, fight to reverse the verdict, argue to prove one's case, appeal to a higher court in case your argument is rejected, try to arouse public indignation and protest, and if all that fails seek rescue in an escape from the realm of the court's sovereignty – none of such expedients are available to the victims of 'collateral damage'. There is no authority they may resist, sue, lay charges against, or demand compensation from. They are the waste of the ongoing creative destruction of global legal, political and ethical order.

Under such circumstances no line drawn to separate 'the waste' from a 'useful product' is likely to remain uncontested and no sentence condemning to a life-on-a-refuse-heap is likely to hold for long without an opposition trying hard to overthrow and reverse it. And so no one feels truly secure amidst the uncounted number of competing design-and-build projects. No one can rely on a recent or currently enforced verdict, however powerful the authority that delivered it might be. No one can assume that the spectre of a disposal tip has been once and for all exorcized and the danger of being rejected and consigned to waste definitely averted. The overall impression is one of randomness, unalloyed contingency, blind fate – and against haphazard sequences, unaccountable accidents and *non sequiturs*, just as against ad hoc alliances of powers held together or dismantled by bribery or blackmail, there is no conceivable defence. One can possibly avoid being a victim, but nothing can be done to escape the fate of being a 'collateral casualty'. That adds a wholly new sinister dimension to the spectre of uncertainty that hovers above the world remade into a global frontier-land.

The 'social state', that crowning of the long history of European democracy and until recently its dominant form, is today in retreat. The social state based its legitimacy and rested its demands for the loyalty and obedience of its citizens on the promise to defend them and insure against redundancy, exclusion and rejection as well as against random blows of fate – against being consigned to 'human waste' because of individual inadequacies or misfortunes; in short, on the promise to insert certainty and security into lives in which chaos and contingency would otherwise rule. If hapless individuals stumbled and fell, there would be someone around ready to hold their hands and help them to their feet again.

Erratic conditions of employment buffeted by market competition were then, as they continue to be, the major source of the uncertainty about the future and the insecurity of social standing and self-esteem that haunted the citizens. It was primarily against that uncertainty that the *social* state undertook to protect its subjects – by making jobs more secure and the future more assured. For the reasons already discussed this is however no longer the case. The contemporary state cannot deliver on the social state's promise and its politicians no longer repeat the promise. Instead, their policies portend a yet more precarious, risk-ridden life calling for a lot of brinkmanship while making life projects all but impossible; they call on the electors to be 'more flexible' (that is, to brace themselves for yet more insecurity to come) and to seek individually their own individual solutions to the socially produced troubles.

A most urgent imperative faced by every government presiding over the dismantling and demise of the social state is therefore the task of finding or

construing a new 'legitimation formula' on which the self-assertion of state authority and the demand of discipline may rest instead. Being felled as a 'collateral casualty' of economic progress, now in the hands of free-floating global economic forces, is not a plight which state governments can credibly promise to stave off. But beefing up fears about the threat to personal safety from similarly free-floating terrorist conspirators, and then promising more security guards, a denser net of X-ray machines and a wider scope for closed-circuit television, more frequent checks and more pre-empting strikes and precautionary arrests to protect that safety, looks like an expedient alternative.

By contrast with the all-too-tangible and daily experienced insecurity manufactured by the markets, which need no help from political powers except to be left alone, the mentality of a 'besieged fortress' and of individual bodies and private possession under threat must be actively cultivated. Threats must be painted in the most sinister of colours, so that the *non-materialization of threats* rather than the advent of the foreboded apocalypse can be presented to the frightened public as an *extraordinary* event, and above all as the result of the exceptional skills, vigilance, care and goodwill of state organs. And this is done, and to spectacular effect. Almost daily, and at least once a week, the CIA and the FBI warn Americans of imminent attempts on their safety, casting them into a state of constant security alert and holding them there, putting individual safety firmly into the focus of the most varied and diffuse tensions – while the American President keeps reminding his electors that 'it would take one vial, one canister, one crate slipped into this country to bring a day of horror like none we have ever known'. That strategy is eagerly, even if so far with somewhat less ardour (less because of lack of funds rather than will), copied by other governments overseeing the burial of the social state. A new popular demand for a strong state power capable of resuscitating the fading hopes of protection against a confinement to waste is built on the foundation of *personal* vulnerability and *personal* safety, instead of *social* precariousness and *social* protection.

As in so many other cases, so also in the development of that new legitimation formula America plays a pioneering, pattern-setting role. There is little wonder that many a government facing the same task looks towards America with sympathetic anticipation, finding in its policies a useful example to follow. Underneath the ostensible and openly aired differences of opinion on the ways to proceed there seems to be a genuine 'union of minds' between the governments, not at all reducible to the momentary coincidence of transient interests; an unwritten, tacit agreement of state power holders on a common legitimation policy. That this may be the case is shown in the zeal with which the British Prime Minister, watched with rising interest by other European prime ministers, embraces and imports all American novelties related to the production of a 'state of emergency' – such as locking up the 'aliens' (euphemistically called 'asylum seekers') in camps, giving 'security considerations' unquestioned priority over human rights, writing off or suspending many a human right that has stayed in force since the time of the Magna Carta and habeas corpus, a 'zero tolerance' policy towards alleged 'budding criminals', and regularly repeated warnings that *somewhere, sometime, some* terrorists will most surely strike. We are all potential candidates for the role of 'collateral casualties' in a war

we did not declare and to which we did not give our consent. When measured against that threat, hammered home as much more immediate and dramatic, it is hoped that the orthodox fears of social redundancy will be dwarfed and possibly even put to sleep.

'Collateral damage' was a term that might have been specifically invented to denote the human waste specific to the new planetary frontier-land conditions created by the impetuous and unrestrained globalization drive that thus far effectively resists all attempts at taming and regulating it. Fears related to that variety of modern waste production seem to overshadow the more traditional waste-related apprehensions and anxieties. Little wonder that they are most eagerly employed in the construction (and so also in the attempts at deconstruction) of new planet-wide power hierarchies.

These new kinds of fear also dissolve trust, the binding agent of all human togetherness. Epicurus, the ancient sage, already noted (in the letter to Menoeceus) that 'it is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us'. Without trust, the web of human commitments falls apart, making the world a yet more dangerous and fearsome place. The fears aroused by the frontier-land variety of waste tend to be self-reproducing, self-corroborating and self-magnifying.

Trust is replaced by universal suspicion. All bonds are assumed to be untrustworthy, unreliable, trap-and-ambush-like – until proven otherwise; but in the absence of trust the very idea of a 'proof, let alone a clinching and final proof' is anything but clear and convincing. What would a credible, really trustworthy proof be like? You wouldn't recognize it if you saw it; even staring it in the face, you wouldn't believe that it was indeed what it was pretending to be. The acceptance of proof, therefore, needs to be postponed indefinitely. The efforts at tying up and fastening bonds line up in an infinite sequence of experiments. Being experimental, accepted 'on a trial basis' and perpetually on trial, always of a provisional 'let's wait and see how they work' kind, human alliances, commitments and bonds are unlikely to solidify enough to be proclaimed fully and truly reliable. Born of suspicion, they beget suspicion.

Commitments (employment contracts, wedding agreements, living together arrangements) are entered into with a 'cancellation option' in mind; and by the firmness of the 'opt out' clauses is their quality judged and desirability measured. In other words, it is clear from the very start that a waste-disposal site will indeed be, as it should and as it is bound to be, their ultimate destination. From the moment of their birth, commitments are seen and treated as prospective waste. Frailty (of the biodegradable sort) is therefore seen as their advantage. It is easy to forget that the bond-tying commitments were sought in the first place, and continue to be sought, for the sake of putting paid to that mind-boggling and blood-curdling fragility of human existence . . .

Bereaved of trust, saturated with suspicion, life is shot through with antinomies and ambiguities it cannot resolve. Hoping to get on under the sign of waste, it stumbles from a disappointment to a frustration, each time landing at the very point it wished to escape when starting its journey of exploration. A life so lived leaves behind a string of faulty and abandoned relationships – the waste of the global



frontier-land conditions notorious for recasting trust as a sign of naivety and as a trap for the unresourceful and gullible.

## Notes

- 1 At the time of the Gulf War, 'when Saddam turned his helicopter gunships on the Iraqi Kurds, they tried to flee north over the mountains into Turkey – but the Turks refused to let them in. They physically whipped them back at the border crossings. I heard one Turkish officer say. 'We hate these people. They're fucking pigs.' So for weeks the Kurds were stuck in the mountains at 10 below zero, often with only the clothes they were wearing when they fled. The children suffered the most: dysentery, typhoid, malnutrition . . .', see Maggie O'Kane, 'The most pitiful sights I have ever seen', *Guardian*, 14 Feb. 2003, pp. 6–11.
- 2 Garry Younge, 'A world full of strangers', *Soundings* (winter 2001–2), pp. 18–22.
- 3 See Alan Travis, 'Treatment of asylum seekers "is inhumane"', *Guardian*, 11 Feb. 2003, p. 7.
- 4 See Alan Travis, 'Blunkett to fight asylum ruling', *Guardian*, 20 Feb. 2003, p. 2.
- 5 See Michel Agier, *Aux bords du monde, les réfugiés* (Flammarion, 2002), pp. 55–6.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 94.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- 10 See Sharon Stenton Russell, 'Refugees: risks and challenges world-wide', *Migration Information Source*, 26 Nov. 2002.
- 11 See Fabienine Rose Émilie le Houerou, 'Camps de la soif au Soudan', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, May 2003, p. 28.
- 12 See Loïc Wacquant, 'Urban outcasts: stigma and division in the black American ghetto and the French urban periphery', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 3 (1993), pp. 365–83; 'A black city within the white: revising America's black ghetto', *Black Renaissance* (fall/winter 1998), pp. 142–51.
- 13 See Loïc Wacquant, 'Deadly symbiosis: when ghetto and prison meet and mesh', *Punishment and Society* 1 (2002), pp. 95–134.
- 14 Jerome G. Miller, *Search and Destroy: African-American Males in the Criminal Justice System* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 101.
- 15 Wacquant, 'Deadly symbiosis'.
- 16 See 'Une généalogie de l'insécurité contemporaine', entretien avec Philippe Robert, *Esprit* (Dec. 2002), pp. 35–58.
- 17 See Hughes Lagrange and Thierry Pech, 'Délinquance: les rendezvous de l'état social', *Esprit* (Dec. 2002), pp. 71–85.
- 18 Wacquant 'commet la "tolerance zero" vint à l'Europe', p. 40. In *Manière de Voir* (Mar./Apr. 2001), pp. 38–46.
- 19 See Henry A. Giroux, 'Global capitalism and the return of the garrison state', *Arena Journal* 19 (2002), pp. 141–60.
- 20 David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 177–8.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- 22 *Ibid.*, pp. 184–5.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 178.