

MICHAEL BURAWOY

SYMBOLIC
VIOLENCE

CONVER
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WITH
BOURDIEU

SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE

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SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE CONVERSATIONS WITH BOURDIEU

Michael Burawoy

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Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.

— PIERRE BOURDIEU AND JEAN-CLAUDE PASSERON,
REPRODUCTION IN EDUCATION, SOCIETY AND CULTURE

For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even that they themselves exercise it.

— PIERRE BOURDIEU, "ON SYMBOLIC POWER"

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For many years I was a Bourdieu skeptic. Under pressure from Berkeley graduate students to take Bourdieu seriously, I enrolled in Loïc Wacquant's Bourdieu Boot Camp course in the spring of 2005. It opened my eyes to the ever-expanding panorama of Bourdieu's oeuvre. It was in the memos for that course that I first began imaginary conversations between Bourdieu and Marxism. It took me another four years to develop my own seminar on Bourdieu. Teaching is the greatest teacher of all. I owe an incalculable debt to the students who have passed through those seminars but also to the many audiences who have listened to and commented on the enactment of one or more of the conversations.

Let me mention just a few who have enhanced these conversations with conversations of their own—in Berkeley with Gabe Hetland, Zach Levenson, Mike Levien, Mara Loveman, Fareen Parvez, Gretchen Purser, Raka Ray, Adam Reich, Ofer Sharone, Mary Shi, Shelly Steward, Cihan Tuğal, and Loïc Wacquant; in Madison with Gay Seidman and Matt Nichter; in South Africa with Kate Alexander, Shireen Ally, Andries Bezuidenhout, Jackie Cock, Bridget Kenny, Oupa Lehoulere, Prishani Naidoo, Sonja Narunsky-Laden, Irma du Plessis, Vish Satgar, Jeremy Seekings, Ari Sitas, Tina Uys, Ahmed Veriava, Michelle Williams, Eric Worby, and, of course, Luli Callinicos and Eddie Webster; in France with Quentin Ravelli, Ugo Palheta, Anton Perdoncin, Aurore Koechlin, and Sebastian Carbonell. In addition, I was very fortunate to have two encouraging but anonymous reviewers for Duke University Press.

One friend and colleague, in particular—Jeff Sallaz—has been a source of continual support. When he was a graduate student at Berkeley he put up with my skepticism toward Bourdieu, and then he was generous enough to help me through my conversion. When I first went public with my conversations at the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2008, he listened to the recordings in Arizona and sent me invaluable comments. When Ruy Braga heard of my Madison conversations he thought they would be important in Brazil for bridging the divide between Marxists and Bourdieusians. So

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he organized their translation and publication in Portuguese under the title *O marxismo encontra Bourdieu* (Marxism meets Bourdieu).

At the same time, Karl von Holdt, then head of the long-standing Society, Work and Politics Institute (SWOP) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, invited me to give lectures in 2010. He bravely accepted my proposal to extend the six Madison conversations to eight. I faced a stimulating and engaged audience, as there always is at Wits, but I had a problem convincing them of Bourdieu's importance. Karl saved the day, stepping in at the end of every lecture to show the relevance of Bourdieu's ideas for South Africa. His conversations about my conversations were duly published by Wits University Press in 2012 as *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment*. Since then there has been a French version in preparation by a group of young French sociologists.

The biggest challenge of all was to produce a US version—one suited to the US world of sociology. When Gisela Fosado of Duke University Press invited me to do just that, I set about revising the lectures once again and included two further conversations: one of Bourdieu with himself based on the book *La misère du monde* (*The Weight of the World*), and a prologue tracing my successive encounters with Bourdieu—from skepticism to conversion to engagement. Finally, I wrote a new conclusion that arose from an ongoing dialogue with my colleague Dylan Riley, in which I redeemed Bourdieu against Dylan's Marxist critique.

This all took much longer than expected, but now it is finished. Each conversation can be read by itself, but there is a cumulative theme that interrogates the underappreciated concept that lies at the heart of Bourdieu's writings—symbolic violence.

My lifelong friend and fellow Marxist Erik Wright had difficulty fathoming my Bourdieusian odyssey. While recognizing the enormous influence of Bourdieu's work, he had little patience for its arbitrary claims, its inconsistencies, and its obscurantist style. His skepticism notwithstanding, it was Erik who invited me to give those experimental Madison lectures in 2008. He helped me through them, commenting on them and orchestrating a lively conversation with the audience. He had a unique capacity to draw out what was salvageable, to separate the wheat from the chaff. For more than forty years I was blessed by his generosity—emotional, intellectual, social, and culinary—as we each took intersecting paths between sociology and Marxism. He left us while I was putting the finishing touches to this book. I miss him badly, as will so many others. He was an extraordinary human being. I dedicate this book to him and to the many adventures we had together.

ENCOUNTERING BOURDIEU

My path to Bourdieu has been long and arduous, strewn with skepticism and irritation. His sentences are long, his paragraphs riddles, his essays perplexing, his knowledge intimidating, his books exhausting, and his oeuvre sprawling. When I thought I understood, I wondered what was novel. Struggling with his texts, I experienced the full force of symbolic violence. Pierre Bourdieu is not only the great analyst of symbolic violence, but he is also the great perpetrator of symbolic violence, cowing us into believing that some great truth is hidden in his work. For many years I was anti-Bourdieu.

Taken individually his works are incomplete, but as the pieces came together I began to see the vision that arose from his theory of symbolic violence—a breathtaking panorama stretched before me. Only by putting symbolic violence and its ramifications into conversation with Marxists, those enemies from whom he borrowed so much, could I begin to grasp and then grapple with the ambition of his theoretical mosaic. The conversations began as a mischievous game, but little by little the pace quickened, turning into a trot and then into a headlong gallop as I became absorbed in my own game, obsessed with Bourdieusian theory. The Bourdieusian lens rose ever more powerful, ever more paradoxical, posing a new challenge to Marxism and giving a new meaning to sociology.

In the United States, as in other countries, sociologists grew increasingly receptive to Bourdieu over time, to the point that he is now one of the discipline's most-cited figures (Sallaz and Zavisca 2007). Critical sociologists of education such as Annette Lareau (1989) were among the first adopters, extending Bourdieu's early research on "schools as reproduction machines." As more of Bourdieu's books became available in English, scholars began

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discussing and applying his famous troika of interrelated concepts: habitus, capital, and field. The reproduction of class through education continued to be an arena for the fruitful application of these concepts (Lareau 2003; Kahn 2011). Cultural sociologists, in works such as Michèle Lamont's *Money, Morals, and Manners* (1994), considered how cultural capital creates symbolic boundaries in national contexts. Ethnographers began to use the concept of habitus to consider the interplay among structure, situation, and character (Wacquant 2004; Desmond 2007; Sallaz 2009). More recently, political and economic sociologists have adopted the concept of field to map and understand institutional space (Fligstein 2002; Eyal, Szelenyi, and Townsley 1998; Medvetz 2012). As Bourdieu-inspired research in the US has developed, researchers increasingly work with multiple dimensions of Bourdieu's theoretical troika.

However, American sociologists rarely elaborate these concepts into a full-fledged account of symbolic violence—a form of domination that works through concealing itself from its agents, or, in Bourdieusian language, a form of domination that works through misrecognition. The central thesis of this book is that behind Bourdieu's ideas of habitus, capital, and field lies the deeper notion of symbolic violence, itself connected to reflexivity and public engagement. My goal is to unravel this underlying structure of Bourdieu's theory by bringing his different works into dialogue with others, especially Marxists, who have also struggled to understand political and cultural domination.

In putting Bourdieu into dialogue with the Marxist tradition, I am following what he demands but rarely undertook, that is, to locate himself in relation to his opponents, to those he repressed or dismissed. He advanced the tools of reflexivity, adept at reducing others to their social position or their place within fields, but he conveniently left himself out of the account. This prologue is my attempt to give some sense of how, as a Marxist, I struggled with Bourdieu and how these imagined conversations emerged from successive encounters with his work, positioning him in relation to an intellectual-political tradition he repudiated.

There are three phases to my encounter. The first was *skepticism*, when I found Bourdieu's work pretentious and unoriginal. The second was *conversion*, when I discovered the depth and scope of his corpus to be seductive and a worthy challenge to Marxism. In the third phase, *engagement*—the chapters of this book—I bring Bourdieu into conversation with the enemies he thought he had slayed: in particular, Marx, Gramsci, Fanon, Freire, and Beauvoir. In putting him into conversation with C. Wright

Mills, I show how the two converge, albeit from different national and historical worlds. I then dare to generate my own conversation with Bourdieu, based on my own ethnography, engaging his idea of the twofold truth of labor. This then leads me to put Bourdieu into conversation with himself, surfacing a fundamental contradiction that threads through his work, between the logic of theory and the logic of practice. In the conclusion I offer a provisional assessment of Bourdieu's oeuvre. But first, here in this prologue, I follow Bourdieu's prescription to reveal my *modus operandi* behind the *opus operatum*—the finished product that is the nine conversations.

SKEPTICISM

My first encounter with Pierre Bourdieu's work occurred when finishing my dissertation at the University of Chicago. It was 1976. My teacher, Adam Przeworski, gave me an obscure article to read: "Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction" (Bourdieu [1972] 1976), since reproduced in *The Bachelors' Ball* ([2002] 2008a). Here Bourdieu likens the kinship system in his home in the rural Béarn to a card game in which players are dealt a particular hand (a combination of daughters and sons of different ages) to consolidate or expand their patrimony. Heads of families develop matrimonial strategies in light of the uncertain outcome of fertility strategies. There were rules to be followed—some hard, some soft—but the game was, nonetheless, one of continual improvisation. For Przeworski, Bourdieu's article offered a rare game-theoretic model of social reproduction, analogous to the model he was developing for the strategies of political parties competing in elections under the limits defined by a changing class structure (Przeworski and Sprague 1986).

The reproduction of social structure through strategic action was akin to my own representation of life on the shop floor in south Chicago (Burawoy 1979). I and my fellow machine operators strategized over the deployment of the social and material resources at our command within the confines of the elaborate rules of "making out"—rules that were enforced by all, often against our individual economic interests. Orchestrated by the participants, so I argued, the game of "making out" simultaneously secured and obscured surplus labor, thereby mystifying the underlying class relations, a process that Bourdieu would call *misrecognition*. While I didn't appreciate it at the time, there was a strange convergence with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence—a game that seduces participants into spontaneous consent while concealing the social relations that are the conditions of its existence. Only many years later would I recognize similar arguments

at the heart of Bourdieu's account of "double truth" in gift exchange, education, consumption, politics, and more.

Before that moment of epiphany, though, my skepticism toward Bourdieu's work only deepened with each encounter. If the first meeting with Bourdieu didn't leave a deep impression, the second encounter left me puzzled. This was the book that first made Bourdieu famous in the English-speaking world—his collaboration with Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* ([1970] 1977). Put off by the abstruse language, I shrugged my shoulders and wondered what the fuss was all about. The elaborate enumeration of propositions and sub-propositions that made up their "Foundations of a Theory of Symbolic Violence" led to the same conclusion as Bowles and Gintis's (1976) in their more accessible *Schooling in Capitalist America*, which had also just appeared: education reproduces class inequality. In their much discussed "correspondence principle," Bowles and Gintis show how working-class children go to working-class schools that lead to working-class jobs.

Yet there was an important difference. Bourdieu and Passeron argued that working-class kids went to "middle-class schools" and couldn't cope because they didn't possess the appropriate cultural capital. They retreated in shame, destined for the lower levels of the labor market. Still, the originality escaped me. Basil Bernstein (1975) had made the same argument far more convincingly—the "restricted" linguistic codes of working-class kids disadvantaged them in schools that favored the "elaborated" linguistic codes of children from the middle and upper classes. Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1977) would make the even more interesting argument that working-class lads rebel against the school's middle-class culture, leading them to embrace working-class culture and to enthusiastically seek working-class jobs. By comparison *Reproduction* appeared formalistic in its exposition, wooden in its abstraction, and mechanical in its understanding of human behavior. It was functionalism at its worst. Or so it appeared.

But I had another axe to grind. As a follower of Louis Althusser (1969), Nicos Poulantzas (1973), Étienne Balibar (1977), Maurice Godelier (1972), and other Marxist structuralists, I found *Reproduction* to be an unacknowledged iteration of their arguments. Thus, Nicos Poulantzas's analysis of politics and the state and Étienne Balibar's analysis of law showed how formally neutral and "relatively autonomous" apparatuses, when placed alongside class inequality, reproduced that inequality and, moreover, did so in the name of universalism. The state and the law may not recognize class but in so doing all the more effectively reproduced class—an argument that Marx

had made long ago in *On the Jewish Question*. In the same way, Bourdieu and Passeron showed how the arbitrary culture (presented as universal) of the “relatively autonomous” school reproduces arbitrary (class) domination. Yet they wrote the book as a critique of Marxism even as they appropriated some of its reigning ideas. In short, *Reproduction* was annoyingly pretentious, with few references to other works, while claiming an undeserved novelty.

During the 1980s Bourdieu’s US audience widened as translations of his work multiplied and secondary commentaries began to emerge.¹ He was fast becoming a popular figure in Berkeley where I was teaching. So I began by studying what was becoming a canonical text, especially among anthropologists: *Outline of a Theory of Practice* ([1972] 1977)—an analysis of the Kabyle, a major ethnic group in Algeria. Yet I found his theory of practice uncannily similar to the one developed by the Manchester school of social anthropology. Particularly curious was his recapitulation of the work of my teacher in Zambia, Jaap van Velsen—a Dutchman and Oxford-trained lawyer, who became an anthropologist under the influence of Max Gluckman. Van Velsen’s monograph, *The Politics of Kinship* (1964), based on fieldwork in Malawi in the 1950s, argued that social action cannot be represented as the execution of prescribed norms but rather should be regarded as the pursuit of interests through the strategic manipulation of competing norms. True to his training, van Velsen regarded legal contestation as a metaphor for society. It was a profound break with classical anthropology, which relied on informants who spun stories of symmetrical kinship patterns—idealized versions of their community in which the anthropologist was treated to what was supposed to happen rather than to what actually happened.

Van Velsen’s methodology was to document a succession of contentious cases that showed marriage patterns to be the result of feuding villagers appealing to alternative norms. Dispensing with “informant anthropology,” he focused on the discrepancy between how people actually behaved and how they claimed to behave. Bourdieu advanced a parallel theory of strategic action in his study of the Kabyle but without intensive observational material—he was not trained as an anthropologist and, according to Fanny Colonna (2009), he did not even take field notes. For Bourdieu, this body of literature from across the Channel was not worthy of serious engagement, even though his endnotes showed he was not unaware of the Manchester school and, in particular, of the work of van Velsen. If there was anything novel to Bourdieu’s approach it was the concept of *habitus*, which, so it appeared to me, only added obfuscation to the Manchester school’s situational analysis.

Outline of a Theory of Practice also suffered from an anthropological romanticism portraying the Kabyle as some isolated, self-reproducing “tribe” untouched by the colonial order, removed from the anticolonial struggle and disconnected from the wider economy. There is but one solitary reference to a migrant returning from France who enters the analysis because he violated the norms of gift exchange. In contrast, the second novelty of van Velsen’s (1960) work, and of the Manchester school more generally, was to determine how village life was shaped by wider social, political, and economic “fields” in which it was embedded. Thus, van Velsen (1967) traced anomalous matrimonial strategies among the Lakeside Tonga to the absence of men who had migrated to the South African mines. This was the extended case method that explored microprocesses in their relation to a wider context. Ironically, given Bourdieu’s later focus on “fields,” *Outline of a Theory of Practice* showed no sign of any wider colonial field embedding the Kabyle. At the time, I was unaware of Bourdieu’s other work on Algeria that put colonialism front and center, namely his study of urban working classes as well as the resettlement camps in the rural areas. Indeed, as others have pointed out, there is a certain variance within his Algerian writing (Goodman and Silverstein 2009), divided as it is between upholding the pristine “traditional” ethnic group and embracing a world-historical modernity brought to Algeria through colonialism. He would conceive of social change, as Bronisław Malinowski had done before him, as a clash of cultures. Once again, after reading *Outline of a Theory of Practice* I wondered, why all the fuss? It’s been said before and better.

The next step on my Bourdieusian odyssey took me to Bourdieu’s magnum opus, *Distinction*, first published in English in 1984. I took this monster of a book with me to Hungary where I was then working in the Lenin Steel Works. Every day, after coming off shift, I would write up my field notes and then turn to *Distinction*. His “correspondence” analysis didn’t correspond to my experiences of working-class life in state socialist Hungary. But it was not the best of circumstances to appreciate such a complex, detailed, exhaustive, and exhausting interrogation of the French class structure through the lens of cultural consumption. Still I understood enough—or so I thought—to wonder whether Antonio Gramsci had not said it all before, but more succinctly and with more respect for the working class.

At the time I was not aware of Bourdieu’s antipathy to Gramsci, but the idea that the cultural realm had a logic and coherence of its own, partially autonomous from the economic—a culture that emanated from

the specific conditions of the dominant class but nonetheless claimed universality, seemed to be none other than a repackaging of Gramsci's notion of hegemonic ideology. Given that *Distinction* was written in 1979, when Gramsci's work was widely read in France, it was especially strange that his name appeared but once in this voluminous book. Moreover, the class structure that framed Bourdieu's analysis—dominant, new and old petty bourgeoisie, working class—seemed to fit Gramsci's class perspective (with the notable absence of the peasantry), as did the division of the dominant class into economic and cultural fractions. It was only a partial replication of Gramsci since the chapter on politics had no conception of civil society or class struggle. I would later consider Gramsci and Bourdieu as antagonists, but at the time *Distinction* did not live up to the claim that it represented some theoretical breakthrough in class analysis; rather it was a subliminal adaptation of Gramscian ideas.

Whether it was the analysis of education, or rural Africa, or cultural consumption in France, there seemed to be little that was original. How was it, then, that I should descend from an adamant skepticism into the maddening crowd of Bourdieusian devotees?

CONVERSION

With the erosion of interest in Marxism and feminism in the 1990s, Berkeley graduate students were developing a taste for Bourdieu—especially with what was then called the cultural turn. They could have their materialist cake and eat it with cultural sophistication. Bourdieu was fast becoming the theorist of the moment, replacing Habermas and Foucault. Moreover, unlike these others, he was a sociologist with an enthusiasm for systematic empirical research. Graduate students were knocking on my door, demanding I take him more seriously. At Berkeley, qualifying examinations in sociology include a required field in social theory as well as two substantive fields. Students taking theory with me have to put the classics into conversation with a contemporary theorist of their choice. While the list of acceptable contemporary theorists was substantial, I drew the line at Bourdieu because, so I claimed, he had no theory of history or social change—his was a theory of social reproduction and not very original at that.²

As Bourdieu's light shone ever more brightly—especially after Loïc Wacquant joined the department in 1994 and Bourdieu's visit to the campus in 1995—the clamoring only became louder. So in 2003, I received a delegation of four graduate students—Sarah Gilman, Fareen Parvez, Xiuying Cheng, and Gretchen Purser—requesting a reading course on Bourdieu.

I agreed to meet with them every week and they could try to persuade me that my dismissive sentiments were a great mistake. I read their memos and listened to their presentations. Slowly but surely they introduced me to the astonishing breadth of Bourdieu's research. While still skeptical I did begin to realize how little I knew about Bourdieu's work and how limited was my understanding of his theory. The ice was melting but very slowly.

Toward the end of the semester Gretchen Purser, exasperated by my continuing obduracy, came into my office, excitedly pointing to two pages toward the end of *Pascalian Meditations* on the twofold truth of labor. Here Bourdieu appeared to have adopted my theory of the labor process. I say "appeared to" because there was no reference to my book *Manufacturing Consent*—where I had argued that capitalist work was organized to simultaneously secure and obscure surplus labor—although it had been earlier discussed and excerpted in Bourdieu's journal *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*. In Bourdieu's rendition this became the "twofold truth of labor"—on the one side there was the experience of the workers and on the other side there was the social scientist's truth, structurally inaccessible to those workers. Bourdieu even invoked the idea of exploitation as being obscure to workers. It was strange to find this Marxist blip in an ocean of anti-Marxism and even more surprising that Bourdieu was writing about labor, never one of his central concerns (except, of course, as I was later to learn, in his Algerian writings).

There was another intriguing convergence in our interpretation of social structure as a game whose uncertainty secures participation while simultaneously obscuring the conditions and consequences of its reproduction. I didn't realize at the time that "securing and obscuring" was the essence of symbolic violence, the key to Bourdieu's approach to all social fields, to the wider society, and, indeed, to all societies throughout history! "Securing and obscuring"—though, of course, he never used those words—defined his methodology as well as his theory; it was the basis of the relation between the logic of practice and the logic of theory. Whereas I had confined the idea to the labor process, for Bourdieu symbolic violence seemed to be ubiquitous, to have no limits—a claim that I shall question in these conversations.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let's return to the narrative of my discovery of Bourdieu with those four graduate students. Their memos had piqued my curiosity—it appeared that I was clearly more Bourdieusian than I ever imagined. I clearly needed a remedial course in Bourdieu. I was in luck. In 2005, I asked my colleague Loïc Wacquant for permission to take

his graduate seminar on Bourdieu. He agreed, but on the condition that I behave like any other graduate student, doing all the readings and submitting weekly memos. I happily complied. Loïc would deal the death blow to any remaining doubts I might have had about the importance of Bourdieu.

Professor Wacquant is exciting and excitable—a brilliant expositor and merciless critic. He had no compunction about terrorizing the class, including me. Here was an uncompromising defender of all things Bourdieu, as if the master were flawless and the only thing left to do was to put him to work, applying him to the problems of the world. Wacquant had thrust himself on Bourdieu, studied at his feet, and became a close collaborator, coauthor, official interpreter, and propagator-in-chief. In effect he became Bourdieu's adopted son, and he oversaw many of the English translations of Bourdieu's writings, acting as the guardian of Bourdieusian truth. I learned a vast amount from Wacquant, who, as he used to say, knew Bourdieu's works better than Bourdieu. This book is a product of his course.

Wacquant refers to his course on Bourdieu as a boot camp. Indeed, it was—involving a massive amount of reading and the writing of weekly memos. An entirely new vista opened up before me—Bourdieu's early work on Algeria, his enunciation of the craft of sociology, his successive accounts of the peasants of Béarn, his analysis of politics, of the academy, of literature and painting, his brilliant theoretical consummation in *Pascalian Meditations*, his dissection of the ruling class in *State Nobility*, not to mention his public interventions *On Television* and the weighty tome *The Weight of the World*.

It was in that class that I first interrogated Bourdieu's relation to the unmentioned elephant in the room—Marxism. I was struck by Bourdieu's increasing hostility to Marxism, yet his concepts—misrecognition, struggle, capital, field, *illusio*, class domination—exhibited an obvious Marxist provenance. You might say his hostility was the revenge of a habitus cultivated in the anticolonial struggles of Algeria and in the tumult of Paris of the 1960s, and animated by a resentment toward his Marxist colleagues who had dominated the École Normale Supérieure. He was living proof of his own theory that intellectual gladiators cannot escape the ideas of their opponents—they are often part of a common intellectual field with its own shared but unstated principles (*nomos*).

My weekly memos focused on the relation between the assigned Bourdieu reading and a prominent Marxist. Loïc would do a spot-check reading of our memos, randomly humiliating their authors in class. He especially enjoyed ridiculing my memos, and I must confess I enjoyed it too. It

was exhilarating to be learning so much, especially from someone who never flinched from defending everything Bourdieu wrote. I became addicted to Bourdieu, treating his works as a field site, taking copious notes, trying to make sense of his corpus and its internal contradictions. It became a giant, moving jigsaw puzzle that I'm still piecing together.

The convergences between my own work and Bourdieu's—his notions of strategic action, symbolic violence, and misrecognition—that had earlier been the grounds for dismissing him as unoriginal, now became the basis of a fascination. Beyond that, I was now drawn to the meta-questions he poses around the meaning and importance of social science. He asks not only the fundamental question of social reproduction but also considered what is distinctive to and the basis of sociological knowledge as opposed to other social sciences. He applies his sociological theory to the world of sociology. He asks if and how it is possible and why it is necessary to transmit such sociological knowledge beyond the academy. These were the questions I had been grappling with for more than a decade.

Inspired by the engaged sociology I had discovered in South Africa and the dissident sociology I had found in Hungary, turned off by the instrumentalization of sociology in Russia, and perturbed by the hyper-professionalism of sociology in the US, I had become an advocate for public sociology. I had made it a theme in my department and then of the meetings of the American Sociological Association in 2004. Public sociology was one of four types—professional, policy, critical, and public—that emerged from posing two questions. First, sociology for whom? For the academic or the extra-academic audience? Second, sociology for what? As a means to an end (instrumental knowledge) or as a discussion of ends in themselves (reflexive knowledge)? The distinction between instrumental and reflexive knowledge ran through sociology from Max Weber to the Frankfurt School and Jürgen Habermas, while the distinction between sociology for an academic audience as opposed to sociology for an extra-academic audience paralleled Bourdieu's distinction between autonomous and heteronomous poles of a field. I identified with Bourdieu's (1975) concept of the scientific field as a terrain of contested domination.

I became especially intrigued by parallels in Bourdieu's thinking when I read his account of the genesis of the literary field in *Rules of Art* ([1992] 1996). In his rendition the literary field begins with an account of "bourgeois art" (i.e., art sponsored by the dominant classes). In the context of sociology, this is what I had called the *policy moment* in which sociology enters the service of various clients. The first rebellion against bourgeois lit-

erature comes from writers attentive to the life of subaltern classes—what Bourdieu calls “social art.” Within sociology, this corresponds to *public sociology*, that is, a sociology which is accessible and accountable to diverse publics, and enters into a dialogue with such publics. The literary field, however, is only really constituted when writers separate themselves from both the patronage of bourgeois art and the affiliations of social art to constitute “art for art’s sake” (i.e., “pure art” following its own autonomous principles). For sociology, too, this is the moment of its true birth, with the arrival of *professional sociology*, a sociology that is accountable to itself—that is, to a community of scholars developing their own research programs. Finally, the dynamism of the literary field comes from challenges to the consecrated artists (i.e., challenges from the avant-garde who seek to further the autonomy of art but also shift the principles upon which its autonomy rests). Today’s consecrated art can be found in yesterday’s avant-garde. Within sociology, this was the *critical moment* in which the assumptions of professional sociology are interrogated and transformed. New research programs emerge—at least in part—from the critical theorists of yesterday. I was sold.

Still, there are differences in our understanding of field. My notion of the academic field is organized around a division of labor, a division of knowledge-practices, arranged in a contested hierarchy, whereas Bourdieu’s field has less of a structure, based as it is on the distribution of academic capital. Most interesting, however, are our divergent views of public sociology.³ Bourdieu’s theoretical writings are hostile to the idea of the “organic intellectual” connected to the dominated class. Instead he embraces what I call, following Gramsci, the “traditional intellectual”—discovering and then spreading truth from on high. Where I am inclined to give credence to the possibility of a direct and immediate connection between the intellectual and lay publics, Bourdieu considers the dominated as incapable of comprehending the conditions of their own subjugation. Whereas I see the dominated as possessing a kernel of “good sense” that can be elaborated in dialogue with intellectuals, Bourdieu regards them as suffering from an irrevocable “bad sense.” For Bourdieu there can be no fruitful unmediated dialogue between intellectuals and publics: either intellectuals manipulate the dominated or the dominated deceive the intellectuals.

The sociologist has a privileged access to knowledge, dependent on a certain leisured existence called *scholè* unavailable to those who have to endure their subjugation. That was Bourdieu’s theoretical stance, which he regularly deployed against Marxists or feminists who tried to establish connections to oppressed groups. And yet, at the same time, Bourdieu was

never reluctant to present his views to different publics. Toward the end of his life, as he became ever more disenchanted with the direction of social and economic policy, he tried to link up with progressive social movements. Indeed, I would say Pierre Bourdieu became the greatest public sociologist of our time. Here then is the paradox: in theory the dominated are unresponsive to sociology; in practice Bourdieu had no compunction in haranguing them with his sociology. There is a curious gap between his theory and his practice that he never managed to close. This went to the heart of the contradiction that threads through Bourdieu's work and the conversations of this book.

ENGAGEMENT

I was hooked. On the one hand, Bourdieu was so close and, on the other hand, so far. This combination of nearness and distance led me to deeper explorations of the relationship between Bourdieu and Marxism. Few Marxists took Bourdieu seriously. My good friend Erik Wright couldn't understand my preoccupation as he considered Bourdieu's work hopelessly confused, imprecise, and contradictory. Still, knowing of my budding obsession, he proposed I visit his department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison to give a seminar on the work of Pierre Bourdieu. This was an offer I couldn't refuse. So, with some trepidation I agreed to give such a seminar in the spring of 2008. I had a year and a half to prepare. As the appointed semester approached it became clear that this would be no ordinary seminar but a series of public lectures, pitting Marxism against Bourdieu.

How to approach the most influential sociologist of our era, whose work ranges over philosophy, methodology, literature, art, education, politics, sport, journalism, colonialism, political economy, education, intellectuals, and much more? A sociologist who is able to encompass such diverse research within an overarching framework? I wanted to engage him critically with the armory of Marxism, developing the memos I had begun in Wacquant's course. What better place to do this than the Havens Center in Madison that had, for twenty-five years, hosted Left intellectuals from all over the world, including Bourdieu himself? Taking a leaf out of Bourdieu's methodology, I claimed that he could only be understood by putting him into conversation with his putative antagonists. I chose a succession of Marxists who were centrally concerned with the question of cultural domination—starting with Marx himself and moving on to Gramsci, Fanon, Beauvoir, and Mills. Bourdieu ignored these theorists, although all of them dealt with the question of cultural domination that lies at the cen-

ter of his interest in symbolic violence. He repressed the convergences and divergences that made these conversations so interesting.

Without doubt Marx himself was cognizant of the power of ideological and political superstructures to absorb and contain class struggle. But apart from some very concrete analyses of different political conjunctures and a few memorable and tantalizing aphorisms, Marx had little to offer by way of sustained theory. He was, after all, a theorist of capitalism as an economic system whose reproduction brought about its own downfall. It is interesting that *Capital* was the model Bourdieu took as the basis for his own theory of cultural and political fields.

My engagement with Bourdieu, therefore, centered around the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, who took Marx's hints seriously and became a theorist of superstructures. His notion of hegemony is the Marxist counterpart to Bourdieu's symbolic violence, but with a dramatic difference. If symbolic violence was domination not understood as such, hegemony was the opposite—domination understood as such. The one called for misrecognition, the other for consent. I explored these parallel concepts in a conversation between Bourdieu and Gramsci and then, in another conversation, I puzzled over my own research into the labor process and its political regulation, which was inspired by Gramsci's notion of hegemony but actually looked more like Bourdieu's symbolic violence. At least, that was the case for my ethnographic study of work in the US, but not so for my studies of work in socialist Hungary, where exploitation and domination were transparent. I tried, thereby, to put historical and geographical limits on the relevance of symbolic violence.

Frantz Fanon is an especially interesting figure, as he moved from France to Algeria at the same time as Bourdieu. Like Bourdieu he too would contrast colonial violence with racial oppression in France. Written in 1952, *Black Skin, White Masks* describes the symbolic violence French society wrought on immigrants from the colonies, but it was his analysis of colonialism in *The Wretched of the Earth* ([1961] 1963) that made him famous throughout Africa. Bourdieu regarded him as politically irresponsible, not least for his attachment to the National Liberation Front and for inflaming the radical opposition to French colonialism. Similarly, Bourdieu treated Simone de Beauvoir with contempt, as a dutiful woman dominated by her subjection to the despised Sartre. Yet his treatment of masculine domination as symbolic violence proved to be a pale imitation of *The Second Sex* ([1949] 1989). Finally, I took up C. Wright Mills's skeptical outlook on Marxism to make him Bourdieu's counterpart in the US. The extraordinary

parallels between these two sociologists, despite living in different eras and different countries, served to underline their common indebtedness to and divergence from Marxism.

In April 2008 I gave the six Havens lectures under the title “Conversations with Bourdieu” to a skeptical but responsive audience. Hearing about these lectures, Ruy Braga proposed to have them translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil. Given the strength, albeit declining, of Marxism and the popularity of Bourdieu’s sociology in Brazil, this seemed to be the perfect trial balloon. They were published in 2010 as *O marxismo encontra Bourdieu* (Marxism meets Bourdieu) with a substantial introduction written by Braga himself that pointed to what was novel—a critical dialogue between Marxism and critical sociology. While Marxists saw Bourdieu as an ally, Bourdieusians tended to regard Marxism as the defeated enemy, yet, as reviews suggested, here was a way for Marxists and Bourdieusians to recognize not just their antagonisms but also their complementarities.

That same year, 2010, Karl von Holdt invited me to give lectures at the University of the Witwatersrand. I proposed to revise the lectures for a very different audience, adding an introductory lecture and one on Paulo Freire—a gesture to Brazilian social science and a Marxist response to Bourdieu’s bleak vision of education’s role in social reproduction.

The South African lectures were clearly going to be more difficult than the ones in Madison. Apart from such notable exceptions as the sociologists Ari Sitas and Jeremy Seekings and researchers in the field of education, Bourdieu was not so well known among South Africans. At the same time, Marxism was far more entrenched in South Africa, so I would have to convince a skeptical audience that this French sociologist was worth taking seriously. Adopting a critical approach might leave the audience baffled as to why they should bother with this northern theorist. It was not enough to point to his importance in the north; I had to show that Bourdieu could shed light on the problems facing South Africa. It was my intention to put Bourdieu to work in the local scene but—for all my long interest in South Africa and its sociology—I quickly realized I was not up to the task. I was saved by Karl von Holdt himself, who was developing a fast-growing taste for Bourdieu. After each lecture he delivered a fascinating commentary on the South African relevance of the debate between Marxism and Bourdieu.

On the face of it Bourdieu’s symbolic order does not fit well with South African reality, but Karl artfully posed the question of the relation between symbolic and material violence—how symbolic violence can engender violent protest involving killings, burnings, and destruction of pub-

lic property; how apartheid inculcated not a habitus of submission but a habitus of defiance that lives on in the new South Africa; how missionary education, far from reproducing the colonial order, instilled aspirations and conferred symbolic resources that fueled the leaders of the anti-apartheid struggles, including Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo. Karl showed how northern theory can travel south, but in the process it takes on new meaning and even transforms itself in the new setting. We published my lectures and Karl's responses to them as *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment* (2012).

BOURDIEU IN THE UNITED STATES

Karl welcomed Bourdieu back to Africa, where he had begun his sociological sojourn half a century earlier. The African embrace of Bourdieu, therefore, was perhaps less surprising than the appeal of Bourdieu in the US. In his own empirical research and theoretical legacies, Bourdieu barely recognized any other country but France and Algeria. Yet somehow Bourdieu's work has transcended national boundaries to give sociology a new *raison d'être* in the US as well as in many other corners of the world. How has this been possible?

Undoubtedly, one attraction of Bourdieu is the conceptual toolkit of capital, field, and habitus. This is not a theory but a set of framing concepts that can be applied to almost any problem, giving mundane research an identity and appearance of theoretical sophistication. Deploying this toolkit effectively circumvents the thorny issues that lie at the heart of the theory of symbolic violence. It appeals to the empiricist tendencies in US sociology.

Still, there have been theoretical traditions in the US, and none so strong as the structural functionalism of the 1950s associated with the name of Talcott Parsons, who, in his time, enjoyed a similar reach and influence across disciplines and national boundaries as Bourdieu. Like Bourdieu, Parsons was hard to comprehend; like Bourdieu, he developed his own conceptual apparatus and language; like Bourdieu, his critique of Marx warranted the dismissal of the entire Marxist tradition; like Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, Parsons's notion of "value consensus" explained the coherence and endurance of society.

My first conversation for this US edition is, therefore, between Parsons and Bourdieu—how, amid their obvious divergences, they offer some surprising convergences. If the Achilles heel of Parsons's research program is the deepening conflicts in US society, the Achilles heel of Bourdieu's is the

capacity of subordinate groups to see through symbolic violence and comprehend their subjugation. In a new conversation written for this edition, I have wrestled with *The Weight of the World*—a rich collection of essays based on in-depth interviews conducted by Bourdieu and his colleagues with men and women who were living in the bowels of French society. The interpretive essays that introduce each interview are curious in that there is little sign of symbolic violence or even the derivative concepts of *habitus* and *capital*. So, in this conversation I play Bourdieu against Bourdieu, highlighting contradictions in his own work, exploring the conditions for the disruption of symbolic violence. There are, I suggest, two Bourdieus: the man of theory expounding on the depth of misrecognition and the man of practice giving credence to the perspectives of the dominated.

My colleague Dylan Riley provides an answer to this paradox by rejecting Bourdieu's theory in favor of his practice. Bourdieu's appeal, argues Riley (2017), lies not in its science, a deeply flawed project, but as an ersatz politics for critically minded scholars who are removed from the experiences and struggles of the popular classes. He argues that when it comes to understanding social class, social reproduction, and social change, Bourdieu's work is so riddled with contradictions and anomalies that its appeal must lie elsewhere. Bourdieu's theory, he claims, resonates with the world of privileged academics, pursuing careers in the elite university, competing for distinction and academic recognition. In my conversation with Riley (Burawoy 2018a) I recuperate Bourdieu against Marxist demolition, suggesting that Riley misrecognizes Bourdieu's originality that revolves around the troika of symbolic violence, reflexivity, and public engagement. I resolve the paradox of two Bourdieus, the disjuncture between his science and his politics, by restoring their unity in an ambitious project—intellectuals on the road to class power—a project that can only be sustained, however, by Bourdieu's misrecognition of capitalism.

Riley's contribution may be a polemical overreaching in its demolition of Bourdieu, but he is onto something important, namely the source of Bourdieu's extraordinary appeal in his affirmation of the intellectual. Bourdieu speaks to the helplessness of the critical social scientist in a world that appears to be ineluctably shifting rightward. That is one aspect of his appeal; the other aspect is his compelling refutation of Marxism. Bourdieu denies Marxism's fundamental category, namely, capitalism, while reinventing and generalizing the idea of "capital." He denies Marxism's theory of history and in the same breath denies its theory of the future, marginalizing class struggles in favor of classification struggles. Finally, Bourdieu abandons com-

parative methodology that allows Marxism to investigate different societies, past, present, and future. It is remarkable that after all this demolition work, there is still something left for sociologists to work with, but there is—his general concepts on the one side and his theory of symbolic violence on the other. Denying subaltern classes any possible understanding of the conditions of subjugation is the ultimate challenge to Marxism, but Bourdieu accomplishes this with a critical eye toward domination. In these conversations I take all these challenges seriously and mount a response from the side of Marxism.

In his article “Passport to Duke” (1997), Bourdieu scolds American literary scholars for misreading his work as embracing postmodern thinking. Their confusion or “allodoxia” arises because Americans fail to recognize the specific (French) academic field in which his work arose, to which it is a response, and which gives it meaning. He warns against the circulation of texts as though they were “isolated asteroids,” detached from their origins, which can be deployed at will to support whatever argument is the flavor of the month. It is an open question whether I have avoided this same fate, but in creating these conversations I have tried to resist the temptation of unmediated appropriation and instant application that diminish Bourdieu’s contributions to social theory.

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NOTES

PROLOGUE

1. In the US, Paul DiMaggio (1979) was among the first, followed by Rogers Brubaker (1985) and Lamont and Lareau (1988). Then in the 1990s came more comprehensive assessments based on earlier articles: Swartz (1997), Robbins (1991), and the critical assessments in Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone (1993). By far the most significant overview was written by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992).
2. I still adhere to this view that Bourdieu has no theory of history or social change and his central contribution is to a theory of social reproduction. This is not to say that he does not undertake historical analysis. He certainly does, for example, when he studies the genesis of the literary field or the modern state, but this does not amount to a *theory* of social change; it is an *account* of social change. Thus, the essays in Gorski (2013) show how Bourdieu's ideas about social reproduction can be very useful in studying historical events, but they have no predictive power that would mark a theory of social change. There are germs of a theory of social change in his account of the self-destruction of the Béarn kinship system or French colonialism—how social reproduction is simultaneously social transformation. But these germs remain underdeveloped. Overall, if there is an implicit account of social change it is that of Durkheimian social differentiation.
3. David Swartz (2013, chaps. 6 and 7) offers an extended discussion of Bourdieu as public sociologist and how he fits with my own version.

1. SOCIOLOGY IS A COMBAT SPORT

Epigraph: Carles (2001).

1. See the responses of Anderson (2002), Duneier (2002), and Newman (2002) to Wacquant's (2002) attack on their work.
2. There is, of course, an element of combat in Parsons too, for example, in the way he deals with Marx at a time when Marxism was enjoying a certain renaissance in US sociology: "Judged by the standards of the best contemporary social-science theory, Marxian theory is obsolete" (1967, 132). Marx was a "social theorist whose work fell entirely within the nineteenth century. . . . He belongs to a phase of development which has been superseded" (135).

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