

What might this mean for education in a country such as ours? Is the 'universal' something that can be separated from the dominant culture in which it is embedded? Modernity was constituted in South Africa through violence: colonial conquest, dispossession, slavery, forced labour, the restriction of citizenship to whites, and the application of violent bureaucratic routines to the marshalling, distribution and domination of the black population. Knowledge, reason, rationality, science and the state were racially constituted structures of violence. Is it possible to separate reason from the domination of the West and its implication in colonisation?

There are those who argue that Western culture is intrinsically racist and hostile to the rest of the world – that it is inherently a form of symbolic violence that can only be oppressive. Would the teaching of Latin and French and Voltaire and Shakespeare in South African schools be a way of making the world culture of reason available to all and therefore an emancipatory endeavour, or would it perpetuate oppression? Should it instead be a priority to teach Sesotho or isiXhosa (the teaching of which is still rather rudimentary) and construct a new canon drawing on Steve Biko and Ngugi wa Thiong'o as part of a project to value indigenous culture, knowledge and resistance, and draw from them in constituting a new post-apartheid democratic culture, as against a project of Eurocentric universalism?

Put differently, could it be that some of the self-limiting perspectives of the national liberation movement that make it susceptible to the prevailing orthodoxies of global capitalism have been derived from the influence of the very missionary education that made so important a contribution to the formation of generations of its leadership?

#### NOTES

- 1 Gramsci's use of the male pronoun throughout jars with contemporary sensibilities and leads him to miss the gender side of education, which is as important as the class dimension. Bourdieu and Passeron are more sensitive to contemporary usage, but they too are primarily focused on the significance of class.

## CONVERSATION 6

### THE ANTINOMIES OF FEMINISM

MICHAEL BURAWOY

#### Beauvoir Meets Bourdieu

*If the scholarly principle of her literary 'vocation', of her emotional 'choices' and even of her relation to her own status as a woman offered to us by Toril Moi have but little chance of appearing as Simone de Beauvoir, this is because she is separated from this by the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre to whom she delegated, in a way, her capacity to do philosophy .... There is not a better example of the symbolic violence that constitutes the traditional (patriarchal) relationship between the sexes than the fact that she will fail to apply her own analysis on relations between the sexes to her relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre.*

*She loves this destiny [aggrégation in philosophy] like she loves he who embodies the realisation of what she would long to be: Normalien, instituted by the rite of the concours in a superman socially authorised to despise the inferior castes ... a philosopher who is sure of being one – sure to the point of destroying, for the sole pleasure of shining or of seducing, which are the same thing, this is the project of Simone de Beauvoir.*

Bourdieu (1995: viii)

Bourdieu very rarely refers to Beauvoir, but when he does it is with undisguised contempt, reminding us of his treatment of Fanon. Of course, both had a close relation to Jean-Paul Sartre, Bourdieu's imagined combatant and intellectual nemesis. The passages above are drawn from Bourdieu's preface to the translation of Toril Moi's biography of Simone de Beauvoir. In this preface written under the mocking title, 'Apology for a dutiful woman',<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu claims that Beauvoir had no ideas of her own independent of Sartre, and then reduces her to a project of his own (Bourdieu's) projection – to be a philosopher dismissive of those beneath her.

This strategy of *reductionism* justifies the silencing of Beauvoir. If her ideas are an emanation of Sartre's, then there's no need to take them seriously. Bourdieu thereby exercises the very symbolic violence he condemns, namely the masculinist practice of *silencing* women. The final move in this denigration is to *appropriate* Beauvoir's ideas from *The Second Sex* (1989 [1949]) – a foundational classic in the analysis of masculine domination as an expression of symbolic violence. Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination* (2001 [1998]) is but a superficial and diminutive gloss on *The Second Sex*. Reductionism, silencing and appropriation are three stages in the labour of producing one's own distinction through the conquest and erasure of others. In this conversation, I attempt to recover Beauvoir's voice so that she can enter into a conversation with Bourdieu.

## ON SILENCING BEAUVOIR

These strategies of combat, doubtless not fully conscious, but deeply embedded in Bourdieu's academic habitus, come into full view in *Masculine Domination* – a book that is full of references to a diverse array of second-wave feminists. Bourdieu confines Beauvoir to a single dismissive footnote:

For a specific illustration of what is implied by this perhaps somewhat abstract evocation of the specific forms that masculine domination takes within the educational institution, see Toril Moi's analysis of the representations and academic classifications through which Sartre's hold imposed itself on Simone Beauvoir (Bourdieu 2001 [1998]: 86, footnote 11).

Once again he opportunistically exploits Toril Moi's biography of Beauvoir. He focuses on Moi's first two chapters, which do indeed place Beauvoir in her relation to Sartre and then in relation to the French intellectual field, but he ignores Moi's subsequent chapters devoted to the interpretation and original contributions of *The Second Sex*.

Moreover, Bourdieu claims that Beauvoir does not analyse her relation to Sartre, yet *The Second Sex* contains precisely that. Whether one looks at the chapter on love or on the independent woman, she is examining her own relation to Sartre, or her imagined relation to Sartre. Her prize-winning novel, *The Mandarins*, is a thinly veiled dissection of her two major relations, one with Sartre and the other with the American poet Nelson Algren. And then there are the four volumes of memoirs. Moreover, even as she undertakes such a self-analysis, she does not make the mistake of universalising her own situation as an intellectual woman, but recognises how different is the plight of others, trapped in domesticity. If there is one thing one cannot accuse Beauvoir of, it is a failure of reflexivity. Paradoxically, it is Bourdieu, the great exponent of reflexivity, who systematically fails the test of reflexivity. We never discover any reference to, let alone analysis of, his relations with women (or men), even in his own sketch for a self-analysis.

Of course, Bourdieu is not alone in this silencing of Beauvoir, as Moi (1994: chap. 7) has herself shown. When *The Second Sex* first appeared in 1949 it became an instant national scandal. There was public outrage at the bluntness with which Beauvoir – the leading woman intellectual in France of her period – dealt with male domination and female complicity. Everyone seemed incriminated in her uncompromising indictment of the oppression of women. Subsequently, feminists have been loathe to refer to her work, no matter how much they borrowed from her. It became a sacrilegious text of unpleasant revelations, whose reading took place only in secret. Plagiarise from it, yes, but to take it seriously is to taint one's intellectual and/or feminist reputation. Influential though it was for second-wave feminism, homage to Beauvoir was all too often paid in silence.

Why then is Bourdieu, the advocate of reflexive sociology, complicit in this collective amnesia? It is especially surprising, given that the silencing of women is precisely a strategy of domination that he explicates, and seemingly condemns, in *Masculine Domination*. In a section fittingly entitled, 'Masculinity as nobility', Bourdieu (2001 [1998]: 59) writes of 'the virtual denial of their [women's] existence' in which 'the best intentioned of men (for symbolic violence does not operate at the level of conscious intentions) perform discriminatory acts, excluding women, without even thinking about it, from positions of authority'. He denounces the silencing of women, but that does not give him pause to invoke Beauvoir's supposed 'dutiful' relation to Sartre to justify his own suppression of her understanding of masculine domination.

That would be bad enough, but he would at least be following the crowd in expunging her work from the recognised intellectual field. Bourdieu, however, is doubly guilty in that Beauvoir not only prefigured so much of second-wave feminism, but also so much of what Bourdieu himself had to say about masculine domination 50 years later. Moreover, she does so in far richer, more complex, subtle detail and, as we shall see, always seeking paths beyond masculine domination. Yet not a single acknowledgement of *The Second Sex* finds its way into Bourdieu's *Masculine Domination*, although there are ample references to second-wave feminism, particularly the Anglo-Saxon feminists who took so much from Beauvoir.

The argument of this conversation, therefore, is that *Masculine Domination* is a pale imitation of the ideas of *The Second Sex*.<sup>2</sup> Nor should such a convergence be surprising. After all, both Bourdieu and Beauvoir were implacable enemies of domination, always seeking to reveal its hidden and manifest contours. Both were uncompromising in their denunciation of the mythologies of the naturalisation and eternalisation of domination. Both were vocal enemies of identity politics, of all forms of essentialism and, thus, of difference feminism. Both denounced any attempt to romanticise the resistance or culture of the dominated. To recover and then celebrate the particularity of women, or any other oppressed group, from within the field of its domination is to affirm that domination. Rather, they both insist that domination is overcome by giving the dominated equal access to the universal.

Here, therefore, I wish to restore Beauvoir's originality, showing how Bourdieu's categories and arguments not only already existed, but were far better elaborated in *The Second Sex*, and, moreover, how Beauvoir goes beyond him by always gesturing to freedoms beyond domination – and all this despite her book pre-dating his by half a century.<sup>3</sup>

## SYMBOLIC DOMINATION

Apart from the strategic importance of making an intervention in such a central trope of modern social thought, why is Bourdieu interested in masculine domination? For him, it is:

... the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence, a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition (more precisely misrecognition), recognition, or even feeling (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 1–2).

For Beauvoir, masculine domination is the supreme form of othering, of which race and class are also examples:

[Woman] is simply what man decrees. Thus she is called 'sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being. For him she is sex – absolute sex, no less. She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxii).

Already here we see that Beauvoir gives more agency to men in the constitution of women, although she will show how men are also dominated by their domination. Still, the effect is the same: 'She [woman] has no grasp even in thought, on the reality around her. It is opaque to her eyes' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 598).

Symbolic domination is not a matter of combining force and consent, but operates far more deeply through the internalisation of social structure via those 'schemes of perception and appreciation' that are constitutive of habitus:

So the only way to understand this particular form of domination is to move beyond the forced choice between constraint (by forces) and consent (to reasons), between mechanical coercion and voluntary, free, deliberate, even calculated submission. The effect of symbolic domination (whether ethnic, gender, cultural or linguistic, etc.) is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousness but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action that are constitutive of habitus and which, below the levels of the decisions of the consciousness and the controls of the will, set up a cognitive relationship that is profoundly obscure to itself. Thus, the paradoxical logic of masculine domination and female submissiveness, which can, without contradiction, be described as both *spontaneous and extorted*, cannot be understood until one takes account of the *durable effects* that the social order exerts on women (and men), that is to say, the dispositions spontaneously attuned to that order which it imposes on them (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 37–38).

A fish is so attuned to the water in which it swims and without which it could not exist that it does not recognise the water for what it is and takes it for granted as natural and eternal. It is interesting, therefore, to read how Beauvoir explains her own discovery of masculine domination.

Writing her memoirs in 1963, she reflects back on the moment of epiphany. It was 1946 and she was having a conversation with Sartre about writing her memoirs:

I realized that the first question to come up was: What has it meant to me to be a woman? At first I thought I could dispose of that pretty quickly. I had never had any feeling of inferiority, no one had ever said to me: 'You think that way because you're a woman'; my femininity had never been irksome to me in any way. 'For me,' I said to Sartre, 'you might almost say it just hasn't counted.' 'All the same, you weren't brought up in the same way as a boy would have been; you should look into it further.' I looked, and it was a revelation: this world was a masculine world, my childhood had been nourished by myths forged by men, and I hadn't reacted to them in at all the same way I should have done if I were a boy. I was so interested in this discovery that I abandoned my project for a personal confession in order to give all my attention to finding out about the condition of women in the broadest terms. I went to the Bibliothèque Nationale to do some reading, and what I studied were the myths of femininity (Beauvoir, 1964 [1963]: 94–95).

In this rendition, Beauvoir, by an act of self-conscious willpower, pursues the origins and reproduction of masculine domination, all laid out in *The Second Sex*, which reveals the architecture and archaeology of masculine domination as constituted by society. This confrontation with what had been unrecognised or misrecognised appears here as a quite conscious process – as indeed it was for Bourdieu, who claims to have discovered the structures of masculine domination through scientific observation of its elementary forms among the Kabyle. On the other hand, one might argue that Beauvoir's consciousness did not transform her practice of femininity. She does not escape the dilemma of being complicit in masculine domination, as *The Mandarins* – the novel of her two lives, the one among Parisian intellectuals and the other with her American lover, Nelson Algren – makes clear. She is far more honest about her own complicity than Bourdieu, who retreats to Virginia Woolf when he wants to talk about the concrete practices of male domination.

Like Bourdieu, Beauvoir is under no illusion about the depth of female subjugation: 'The bond that unites her [woman] to her oppressors is not comparable to any other. The division of the sexes is a biological fact, not an event of history' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxv). So it is easily presented as natural, inevitable and eternal. 'They have no past, no history, no

religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxv). They have no awareness of themselves as an oppressed collective. 'When man makes of woman the *Other*, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies toward complicity' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxvii). Thus, Beauvoir sees masculine domination as a *special type* of domination that is stronger and deeper than class or racial domination, for the latter occupy spaces from which oppositional identities can be formed. 'Having no independent domain, she cannot oppose positive truths and values of her own to those asserted and upheld by males: she can only deny them' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 611). In one of his rare moments of comparison of different dominations, Bourdieu seems to think the opposite, namely that masculine domination is the *prototype* of symbolic domination, but that class domination is its deepest expression (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]: 384). Yet for both – and this is the important point here – masculine domination is the most pure form of symbolic domination, i.e. domination not recognised as such, or when it is recognised, it may not affect the unconscious practical sense.

Finally, one might surmise that the revulsion that greeted *The Second Sex*, as well as its subsequent silencing, speaks to the unconscious levels it excavates and the resistance, whether among the dominators or the dominated, to recognising deeply internalised dispositions. Thus, as we shall see in detail, Beauvoir's treatment of masculine domination embraces the notion of symbolic domination, but it also seeks to transcend it. In demonstrating my claim that there is nothing in *Masculine Domination* that does not already exist in a more elaborated form in *The Second Sex*, I have organised the following sections along the thematic lines of *Masculine Domination*.

## NATURALISATION, OR REVERSING CAUSE AND EFFECT

At the heart of masculine domination is its naturalisation, which gives rise to the reversal of cause and effect. If it were the case that the differences between men and women are inherent, as though these two beings were different human species, then we could indeed say that the gender division of labour merely reflects differences in natural abilities and talents. We could say, for example, that women are by their nature emotional and men by their nature rational. In reality, what is presumed to be cause – the natural differences between men and women – is actually the effect of historical forces and socialisation. Thus, Bourdieu writes:

The biological appearances and the very real effects that have been produced in bodies and minds by a long collective labour of socialization of the biological and biologicization of the social combine to reverse the relationship between causes and effects and to make a naturalized social construction ('genders' as sexually characterized habitus) appear as the grounding in nature of the arbitrary division which underlies both reality and the representation of reality and which sometimes imposes itself even on scientific research (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 3; see also pp. 22–23).

Beauvoir goes into far more detail. Indeed, Part I of *The Second Sex*, entitled 'Destiny', devotes successive chapters to the biological, psychoanalytical and historical materialist foundations of masculine domination. While there are those who ground masculine domination in the biological differences between men and women, after examining biological evidence in excruciating detail, Beauvoir finds this view wanting. Biological differences there are, and the woman experiences her body very differently than the man – for the woman the body is an alien force outside her control, whereas man is at home with his body – but these experiences are not given anatomically, but are shaped by society and upbringing. In the final analysis, biological differences cannot explain the subjugation of women, which is the cumulative product of social and economic forces, most importantly the relation of production to reproduction. Biology is not destiny.

Psychoanalysis represents a major advance in that the body no longer exists in and of itself, but as lived by the subject. In a subjectivist flourish, Beauvoir writes: 'It is not nature that defines woman; it is she who defines herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life' (1989 [1949]: 38). While psychoanalysis gives the framework within which to study the dynamics of gender, it does not explain the origins of masculine domination nor its persistence, resting as it does on the assumption of the patriarchal father. Beauvoir's next chapter, therefore, turns to historical materialism and, in particular, Engels' claim that private property is at the root of masculine domination. While acknowledging the influence of economic forces, she rejects Engels' argument on the grounds that it never explains the very constitution of male and female subjects. Rejecting, therefore, both the 'sexual determinism' of Freud and the 'economic determinism' of Engels, she presents a history of male domination by integrating the biological and psychoanalytic into a materialist analysis of history:

In our attempt to discover woman we shall not reject certain contributions of biology, of psychoanalysis, and of historical materialism; but we shall hold that the body, the sexual life, and the resources of technology exist concretely for many only in so far as he grasps them in the total perspective of his existence (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 60).

In this way, Beauvoir dispenses with the scientific foundations for views that regard woman as by nature destined to be man's 'Other', showing them all to be fallacious. Yet she will also draw on these very same theories to reverse causality, showing how history and biography shape the concrete hierarchical relations through which man and woman (re)produce each other.

## THE HISTORICAL LABOUR OF DEHISTORICISATION

For Bourdieu, the naturalisation of masculine domination lies with the matching of subjective and objective structures, the inculcation of a habitus by social structures, and the resulting harmonisation of the two so that domination cannot be recognised as such (2001 [1998]: 33). But this matching of the subjective and the objective is not spontaneous, but the result of a long historical labour that produces the effect of eternalisation:

It follows that, in order to escape completely from essentialism, one should not try to deny the permanences and the invariants, which are indisputably part of historical reality; but, rather, one *must reconstruct the history of the historical labour of dehistoricization*, or, to put it another way, the history of the continuous (re)creation of the objective and subjective structures of masculine domination, which has gone on permanently so long as there have been men and women, and through which the masculine order has been continually reproduced from age to age. In other words, a 'history of women' which brings to light, albeit despite itself, a large degree of constancy, permanence, must, if it wants to be consistent with itself, give a place, and no doubt the central place, to the *history of the agents and institutions which permanently contribute to the maintenance of these permanences*, the church, the state, educational system, etc., and which may vary, at different times, in their relative weights and their functions (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 82–83; original emphasis).

Such a history that Bourdieu calls for in programmatic terms, Beauvoir had already attempted in Part II of *The Second Sex*, itself divided into five

chapters. She knows that a history of the second sex must be a history of the social production of masculine domination and its 'naturalisation', 'eternalisation' or, as Bourdieu calls it, 'dehistoricisation'. Bourdieu's chapter 3, 'Permanence and change', does not compare to Beauvoir's ambition, scope and accomplishment – heavily influenced by Engels' flawed history, to be sure, but an enormous achievement nonetheless. Included here is an anticipation of feminist appropriation of Lévi-Strauss's idea of women as objects exchanged among men in the pursuit of masculine politics, as well as a sophisticated analysis of how the second shift will reproduce rather than undermine masculine domination. Beauvoir prefigured the work of Gayle Rubin and Arlie Hochschild, whose ideas Bourdieu subsequently takes up as though they were original to them.

In justifying his own intervention into gender studies, Bourdieu claims as his contribution the focus on the reproduction of the structure of masculine domination outside the domestic sphere in agencies such as the church, the educational system and the state (and, he might have mentioned, the economy), as if feminists have not explored these areas already. But even more to the point, *The Second Sex* itself recognised the importance of these arenas, both in the chapter 'Since the French Revolution: The job and the vote' and in Part V, where Beauvoir describes 'woman's situation'.

Having drawn up a history of masculine domination, a history in which man defines woman as other, so Beauvoir asks how men have imagined women in their dreams, 'for what-in-men's-eyes-she-seems-to-be is one of the necessary factors in her real situation' (1989 [1949]:138). Part III of *The Second Sex* is devoted to the exploration of the myths men create about women to justify their subordination. It describes the struggles of men to realise themselves with, through and against women; and the fantasies they create about women as nature, as flesh, as poetry. Woman is constituted as other, as slave and companion to man's fanciful desires for his own self-realisation, as an idol to worship, as a distraction or compensation for the anxieties of his own entrapment in the cruel or noble competition with other men. Woman serves so many functions as other to man's projection of himself, his limitations and his potentialities. Man cannot live without the mythology and reality of woman. Beauvoir discovers the most vivid expression of these imaginations in literature. There she also detects the possibility that man, seeing woman as necessary to his existence, defining himself in her mirror, also catches sight of a human being with her own needs with whom he might share a life of transcendence.

Even in his treatment of the Kabyle, there is no counterpart in Bourdieu to Beauvoir's dissection of the creative literary outpourings of men. Although Bourdieu's conception of symbolic violence is one in which the dominated apply the dominant point of view to themselves, he never explores that dominant point of view in any detail. But it is here that Beauvoir discovers not only myths that ratify and eternalise domination, but also catches glimpses of transcendence when men, caught in the grip of their dependence on women, recognise that their freedom can only be won with and through the freedom of women. The relentless pursuit of the sources of domination never blinds Beauvoir to the possibilities of liberation, so different from Bourdieu's notion of habitus as internalised social structure that pre-empts the possibility of any such vision. Important as they are in foretelling alternatives, Beauvoir is under no illusion that such imaginations can be easily sustained against woman's bondage to immanence.

## PRODUCING THE GENDERED HABITUS

The history of the collective unconscious has to be supplemented, says Bourdieu, by an understanding of the personal unconscious; we need both an ontogeny and a phylogeny. Here too Bourdieu offers general formulations:

The work of transformation of bodies which is both sexually differentiated and sexually differentiating and which is performed partly through the effects of mimetic suggestion, partly through explicit injunctions and partly through the whole symbolic construction of the view of the biological body (and in particular the sexual act, conceived as an act of domination, possession), produces systematically differentiated and differentiating habitus. The masculinization of the male body and the feminization of the female body, immense and in a sense interminable tasks which, perhaps now more than ever, always demand a considerable expenditure of time and effort, induce a somatization of the relation of domination, which is thus naturalized (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 55–56).

Beauvoir devotes Part IV of *The Second Sex* to the formative years of the woman: childhood, the young girl and sexual initiation. It opens with the sentence for which she has become famous (and famously misunderstood): 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.'

No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. Only the intervention of someone else can establish an individual as an *Other* (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 267).

It is painful even to read the way she describes what must, after all, have been close to her own upbringing. She draws on an array of literatures to develop a psychodynamic view of the way femininity is forced upon girls, the fantasies and anxieties of compulsory segregation in adolescence, and, finally, the traumas of sexual initiation. From then on she has been made, she has been painfully disciplined, to be woman.

Well, not always. Beauvoir insists that socialisation can go awry. She points out, anticipating the work of Nancy Chodorow (1978) 29 years later, that as a result of their upbringing, specifically being mothered by women – but also in revulsion against aggressive masculinity – from early on, alongside heterosexual dispositions, women develop strong bonds with other women. This can lead to lesbian relations. She devotes an entire chapter to ‘The lesbian’ – a tortured chapter, perhaps reflecting her own ambivalence – in which she wavers between, on the one hand, lesbian sexuality as second best to heterosexuality, i.e. a casualty of masculine domination, and, on the other hand, lesbian sexuality as a liberated sexuality of mutual recognition. Of course, we must not forget that in the France of 1949, lesbianism was a ‘forbidden’ sexuality. It was an extraordinary act of courage to even broach the subject, let alone affirm its propriety.

Times have changed, so that today Bourdieu feels compelled to add what seems to be an obligatory appendix – ‘Some questions on the gay and lesbian movement’ – in which he too wavers between seeing the gay-lesbian movement as subversive of masculine domination and as upholding dominant classifications. But Bourdieu simply takes lesbian and gay sexuality as a given, whereas Beauvoir offers a rudimentary theory of its emergence. Bourdieu’s notion of socialisation, of habitus – the bodily inscription of social structure – misses all the ambiguities, resistances and contradictions so central to Beauvoir’s more open and indeterminate analysis. In *Masculine Domination*, the limitations of the notion of habitus become particularly clear.

## DOMINATION AND ITS ADAPTATIONS

Once the girl becomes a woman and enters as an adult into society, she faces the strictures of marriage and motherhood, and then the transition

from maturity to old age. The story is always a bleak one, a story of domestic drudgery, boredom and confinement. Isolated in a ‘living tomb’, woman serves only to ‘assure the monotonous repetition of life in all its mindless factuality’ (1989 [1949]: 604). The child becomes an obsessive focus of attention, both in resentment of and as compensation for woman’s chains.<sup>4</sup> Working with a definite vision of the nuclear family and the male breadwinner, Beauvoir describes the woman’s escape via adultery, friendship or community as unsound evasions, each road paved with falsehood. This is the picture of the American woman in the 1950s that Betty Friedan (1963) would later paint in *The Feminine Mystique*, a destiny against which the feminist movement would rebel.

Beauvoir is aware that domesticity is not necessarily woman’s destiny. Although escape from confinement and entry into the labour force is a precondition for liberation, oppression actually follows her into the workplace. She is now bound in servitude to employer and patriarch. Nor does she think all is paradise for men. Indeed, just as Bourdieu insists that the dominators are dominated by their domination, so Beauvoir describes how men are also oppressed by their oppression, chained by their sovereignty.

Reflecting the shift that occurred over the subsequent 50 years in which women have become more mobile and less prisoners of domesticity, Bourdieu focuses more on the body in motion, the way the woman’s body is a body for others, the way it is surveilled and self-surveilled, generating insecurity and anxiety. Women become objects in a market of symbolic goods. Not for nothing does he insist that masculine domination has no centre, but is diffused throughout society. Still, woman is not only object, but, even in Bourdieu’s rendition, has a subjectivity and a vision of men. Here he draws on Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* to capture the many ways in which women’s dependency on men leads them into a supporting role, participating vicariously in men’s games, a cheerleader of their men. The wife pacifies and protects the man against other men, trying to alleviate his anxieties and to comprehend the harshness of his domestic rule as a measure of his paternal love or a response to the insecurities he faces.

Above all, women love men for the power they wield, the power denied to women:

Because differential socialization disposes men to love the games of power and women to love the men who play them, masculine charisma is partly the charm of power, the seduction that the possession of power exerts, as such, on bodies whose drives and desires are themselves politically socialized. Masculine domination finds one of its strongest supports in

the misrecognition which results from the application to the dominant of categories engendered in the very relationship of domination and which can lead to that extreme form of *amor fati*, love of the dominant and of his domination, a *libido dominantis* (desire for the dominant) which implies renunciation of personal exercise of *libido dominandi* (the desire to dominate) (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 79–80).

Here, too, Beauvoir had said it before in her extraordinary second chapter of Part VI of *The Second Sex*, 'Women in love', where she describes how women deify men, putting them on a pedestal in order to worship them. He is her representative in the outside world, his victories are her victories, his defeats her defeats. She idolises him only to drag him down into her lair, demanding his everlasting attention. She realises herself through him, but this love of the powerful man is doomed to disaster, either because man cannot sustain her expectations or because his desire is capricious and ephemeral:

Shut up in the sphere of the relative, destined to the male from childhood, habituated to seeing in him a superb being whom she cannot possibly equal, the woman who has not repressed her claim to humanity will dream of transcending her being towards one of these superior beings, of amalgamating herself with the sovereign subject. There is no other way out for her than to lose herself, body and soul, in him who is represented to her as the absolute, as the essential. Since she is anyway doomed to dependence, she will prefer to serve a god rather than obey tyrants – parents, husband or protector. She chooses to desire her enslavement so ardently that it will seem to her the expression of her liberty; she will try to rise above her situation as inessential object by fully accepting it; through her flesh, her feelings, her behaviour, she will enthrone him as supreme value and reality; she will humble herself to nothingness before him. Love becomes for her a religion (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 643).

Such are woman's attempts at salvation – idolatrous love, along with narcissism or mysticism – attempts to 'transform her prison into a heaven of glory, her servitude into sovereign liberty' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 628).

These notions of woman enclosed in domesticity sound rather antiquated, and Beauvoir herself recognises that 'Today the combat takes a different shape; instead of wishing to put man in a prison, woman endeavors to escape from one; she no longer seeks to drag him into the realms of immanence but to emerge, herself, into the light of transcendence'

(1989 [1949]: 717). She thinks it will be transcendence, but it turns out to only intensify her subjugation, the one at home intensified by the one at work (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 680–81). Indeed, all these stratagems to realise herself, to become a subject, are illusory and self-defeating. They are what Beauvoir calls 'justifications' and what Bourdieu calls 'making a virtue of a necessity', adaptations of the dominated to their domination. Both paint a bleak picture in which women understand such adaptations as paths of freedom, whereas in fact they intensify subjugation.

But neither Bourdieu nor Beauvoir, but particularly Beauvoir, can leave women doubly imprisoned, objectively and subjectively. Both search for a possible escape from immanence, entrapment and symbolic domination.

## LIBERATION

Once again, Bourdieu adopts a notion of liberation, surprisingly close to Beauvoir's. This is all the more astonishing as Bourdieu has generally scoffed at the attempt to formulate utopias. Yet in his postscript to *Masculine Domination*, he does just that, serving up a weak replica of Beauvoir. The postscript begins by reasserting that 'love is domination accepted, unrecognized as such and practically recognized, in happy or unhappy passions' (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 109). Yet he then goes on to imagine the possibility of the suspension of domination in favour of mutual recognition:

This is a world of non-violence, made possible by the establishment of relations based on full *reciprocity* and authorizing the abandonment and entrusting of self; a world of mutual recognition, which makes it possible, as Sartre [sic] says, to feel 'justified in existing' ... the world of the disinterestedness which makes possible deinstrumentalized relations, based on the happiness of giving happiness, of finding in the wonderment of the other, especially at the wonder he or she arouses, inexhaustible reasons for wonder (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 110).

This is exactly what Beauvoir had elaborated in the last chapter of *The Second Sex*:

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue none the less to exist for him *also*: mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an *other* (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 731; original emphasis).



Even the expressions they use are the same, not only 'mutual recognition', but the idea of the 'gift of self'. Beauvoir writes of genuine love through mutual recognition as 'revelation of self by the *gift of self* and the enrichment of the world' (1989 [1949]: 667) and Bourdieu follows with the true love of mutual recognition that can be found in 'the economy of symbolic exchanges of which the supreme form is the *gift of self*, and of one's body a sacred body, excluded from commercial circulation' (2001 [1998]: 110–11).

Still, the difference is clear. For Bourdieu, liberation is thrown in as an obligatory and ill-fitting afterthought, perhaps a concession to the feminists he is trying to win over, whereas it is Beauvoir's central concern, a subterranean stream running through the entire book that springs up in a final resplendent fountain of hope – there can be no domination without the possibility of liberation. She does not imagine a dissolution of the differences between men and women, but instead imagines a plurality of such relations, 'differences in equality': 'New relations of flesh and sentiment of which we have no conception will arise between the sexes' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 730).

Whereas Bourdieu tells us nothing of the conditions for his 'pure love', 'art for art's sake of love' (2001 [1998]: 111), Beauvoir insists that authentic love requires structural equality that would, in turn, require access to abortion, contraception and voting rights (remember this is France 1949), but also more radical ideas such as co-parenting (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 726). Beauvoir is dismissive of that spurious 'equality in inequality' – an equality of opportunity that becomes meaningless under unequal conditions. Instead, she affirms a socialist equality that does not yet exist (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 680) – a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of liberation. While she is only too mindful of the shortcomings of the Soviet Union (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 724) with regard to the question of female emancipation, nevertheless she applauds its promise of equality, its imagination of equality. For Beauvoir, women's emancipation is not just an abstract utopia; it is a real utopia based on what she sees around her, what could be.

Beauvoir is clear that solitary individuals cannot successfully strive for transcendence in a capitalist society. The economically independent woman is a necessary, but certainly not sufficient, condition, as she makes amply clear in her penultimate chapter on the dilemmas of professionalism – contradictory pressures and double standards – that holds up well in the light of contemporary research. For Beauvoir, liberation can only be a collective project and under economic conditions that provide for

its possibility. And yet she does not see how women can strive together, collectively, for the transformation of the conditions of their existence. Indeed, the argument of *The Second Sex* rests on distinguishing masculine domination from racial and class domination. Whereas workers or blacks can forge an organic unity among themselves in opposition to a dominant group, not so with women, who orbit around individual men, complicit in their own subjugation, seeking the best possible partnership on the matrimonial market, subjugated in body and soul to masculine domination. The only hope for women, it would seem, is for the working class to first make its revolution and then – and only then – create the conditions for women to seek emancipation. It would be hard, therefore, for Beauvoir to comprehend the feminist movement to which her own book contributed. Feminist movements that express the genuine interests of women have never existed:

The proletarians have accomplished the revolution in Russia, the Negroes in Haiti, the Indo-Chinese are battling for it in Indo-China; but the women's effort has never been anything more than a symbolic agitation. They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxv; but also p. 129).

So was the feminist movement she witnessed toward the end of her life another movement that was confined to the interests of men? Was this a movement that was conducted on the terrain of masculine domination, or did it challenge that domination?

Like Beauvoir, Bourdieu is also sensitive to the dilemmas of challenging domination from below. In writing about the gay-lesbian movement, Bourdieu analyses the possibilities, but also the dangers, of struggles that successfully articulate the interests of an alternative sexuality. Once recognised, however, gay sexuality becomes invisible again and subject to many of the same oppressions as women. Querying the extent to which the feminist movement has eroded masculine domination, he enters a polemic against consciousness raising, which cannot be what it claims to be. The very language of consciousness is inappropriate for comprehending masculine domination that is inscribed deeply in an enduring habitus. 'If it is quite illusory to believe that symbolic violence can be overcome with the weapons of consciousness and will alone, this is because the effect and conditions of its efficacy are durably and deeply embedded in the body in the form of dispositions' (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 39). He continues:

Although it is true that, even when it seems to be based on the brute force of weapons or money, recognition of domination always presupposes an act of knowledge, this does not imply that one is entitled to describe it in the language of consciousness, in an intellectualist and scholastic fallacy which, as in Marx (and above all, those who, from Lukács onwards, have spoken of 'false consciousness'), leads one to expect the liberation of women to come through the immediate effect of the 'raising of consciousness', forgetting – for lack of a dispositional theory of practices – the opacity and inertia that stem from embedding of social structures in bodies (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 40).

The foundations of symbolic domination, therefore, do not lie in a 'mystified consciousness', but in 'dispositions attuned to the structure of domination', so that the 'relation of complicity' that the dominated 'grant' to the dominant can only be broken through a 'radical transformation of the social conditions of production of the dispositions that lead the dominated to take the point of view of the dominant on the dominant and on themselves' (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 42–43). But we have no idea what such a transformation entails or how it might occur.

Is Bourdieu's symbolic domination different from Beauvoir, who also sees women thinking in terms given to them by masculine domination when she writes of woman: 'She has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her. It is opaque to her eyes' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 598)? Woman's critical faculties are critically limited: 'Having no independent domain, she cannot oppose positive truths and values of her own to those asserted and upheld by males; she can only deny them' (1989 [1949]: 611). You might call this absence of a 'counter-universe' (1989 [1949]: 617) 'false consciousness', to be sure, but it is also deeply embedded, nurtured over a lifetime. Indeed, every page of *The Second Sex* is testimony to just how deep it is and the elaborate ways it is inculcated and reproduced. Moreover, let it be said that Beauvoir is no devotee of consciousness raising and is sceptical of programmes for oppressed women to assert their own standpoint. She is deeply pessimistic about any good sense emerging within common sense. Like Bourdieu, she sees an ocean of bad sense, dotted with islands of momentary liberation.

## FROM FEMINIST CRITIQUE TO FEMINIST MOVEMENT

We see now just how different both Beauvoir and Bourdieu are from Frantz Fanon's writings on Algeria that advance intellectuals' engagement in

revolutionary activity. That was the theme of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon's earlier book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967 [1952]), however, is the counterpart to *The Second Sex*. There, Fanon dissects the psychic consequences of racial domination, discovered when he came to France with a view of himself as a Frenchman and not a black Martiniquan. The shock of racism, just like the shock of sexism for Beauvoir, led Fanon to a devastating account of the situation of the racially oppressed, the mythologies that support racial domination and the inauthentic responses to that domination, namely those attempts to assimilate to whiteness that were doomed to failure. The analysis closely parallels the situation, myths and justification linked to masculine domination found in *The Second Sex*.<sup>5</sup> More than Beauvoir does for women, Fanon emphasises the virtues of the dominated culture, specifically the Negritude movement, as necessary to give dignity to blacks, but always his goal, like Beauvoir, is to transcend racism toward a universalism where race exists, but not as an instrument of domination.

*Black Skin, White Masks* ends in despair, with no clear road to the universalism Fanon seeks, just as Beauvoir ends *The Second Sex* with a similar vain hope of liberation. Whereas Fanon would soon travel to Algeria, where the liberation movement becomes his key to universalism, Beauvoir would have to wait many years for the feminist movement, and even then she had to overcome her scepticism before declaring her support in 1972. She had always kept her distance from feminism, thinking that the woman question was subordinate to the socialist project, but when she realised that the Left had little interest in the emancipation of women; when she saw the continuing oppression of women in France, especially around rights of abortion; and when she became more familiar with the realities of women's position in the Soviet Union, she threw her intellectual and political weight behind an autonomous and radical feminism (Schwarzer, 1984).

For Fanon, theory and practice come together in a revolutionary catharsis, whereas for Beauvoir they always remain in tension. Hers is a more contradictory position in which she dissects masculine domination, yet in her own life finds herself falling into the same traps that she denounces as inauthentic. While she is writing *The Second Sex* she is having a passionate affair with Nelson Algren that bears all the marks of her analysis of 'women in love' – knowing it to be an inauthentic and ultimately futile response to masculine domination. More successful, though never without its tensions, is the 'brotherhood' of Sartre! Throughout her life, Beauvoir lives out, reflects on, and struggles with the contradictions between her theory and her practice.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, seems far less self-conscious about the contradictions between the moral implications of his theory of masculine domination and his practice, between the logic of theory and the logic of his own practice. He acknowledges that well-intentioned men can fall victim to deeply ingrained cognitive structures and unwittingly reproduce these, even when they think they are challenging them. He suggests this is true of Kant, Sartre, Freud and Lacan, but doesn't examine his own complicity in masculine domination. We have already noted how he dismisses Beauvoir, on the grounds that she is simply an appendage of Sartre. Yet, as I have shown, his work is but a pale imitation of hers. He practices sexism in the very act of denouncing it.

Masculine domination runs deep in the unconscious of both men and women. But perhaps women, as the victims of domination, are in a better position to bring it to the surface. Even Bourdieu recognises that women's insights into the life of men are often inaccessible to men themselves. They see the games of men for what they are (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 31, 75). They are more aware of the pitfalls of domination and how it leads to contradictory and inauthentic behaviour. Notwithstanding their common concern to elucidate the structures of domination, Beauvoir's analysis is incomparably more profound than Bourdieu's, addressing rather than repressing the ambiguities and contradictions of approaching freedom from within the cage of domination.

## THE INSIGHT OF THE OUTSIDER

If the habitus of masculine domination runs so deep, how is it that anyone, not least Beauvoir and Bourdieu, can even recognise it for what it is? If masculine domination is opaque and beyond the grasp of men and women, how have Bourdieu and Beauvoir managed to develop their insights (and, indeed, how have we managed to recognise them as insights)? Here, too, there is some convergence, and both rely on their position as outsider.

Bourdieu argues that masculine domination is most 'magnified' in traditional societies like the Kabyle, and, while it is not recognised as such by the participants themselves, an outside ethnographer (like himself) can undertake 'a socioanalysis of the androcentric unconscious that is capable of objectifying the categories of that unconscious' (2001 [1998]: 5). He then transplanted his appreciation of the Kabyle androcentric unconscious to the more complex and differentiated unconscious structures of masculine domination found in advanced societies.

Just as Bourdieu's distance from, but connection to, Kabyle society gave him insight into its androcentric unconscious, so Beauvoir argues that it is her composite position as independent-woman-intellectual that gives her both distance from and insight into the subjugation of women – an insight denied to both intellectual men and dependent women.

Very well, but just how shall we pose the question? And to begin with, who are we to propound it at all? Man is at once judge and party to the case; but so is woman. What we need is an angel – neither man nor woman – but where shall we find one? Still, the angel would be poorly qualified to speak, for an angel is ignorant of all the basic facts involved in the problem .... It looks to me as if there are, after all, certain women who are best qualified to elucidate the situation of woman .... Many of today's women, fortunate in the restoration of all the privileges pertaining to the estate of the human being, can afford the luxury of impartiality – we even recognize its necessity. ... Many problems appear to us to be more pressing than those which concern us in particular, and this detachment even allows us to hope that our attitude will be objective. Still, we know the feminine world more intimately than do the men because we have our roots in it, we grasp more immediately than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine; and we are more concerned with such knowledge (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: xxxiii–iv).

Objectivity for Beauvoir, like Bourdieu, comes from being an outsider, located in a relatively autonomous space, but, crucially, she is also an insider connected to the subjects under interrogation.<sup>6</sup>

While Bourdieu's 'outside from without' connection to the Kabyle is different from Beauvoir's 'outsider from within' connection to the experience of women, nonetheless they both have a notion of objectivity that is grounded in some segregated intellectual arena. For Bourdieu, it is the academy, defined by *skholè* and the competitive struggle for truth; for Beauvoir, it is the public sphere, epitomised by intellectual debate in the Parisian café or in journals like *Les Temps Modernes*. Such distance is necessary to avoid being mired in the misrecognition that accompanies symbolic domination – women seeing themselves through the eyes and with the categories of men. Thus, both are suspicious of movements based on the romanticisation of oppression, for that would be the triumph of misrecognition or bad faith. Most fundamentally, they both agree that with some exceptions (like themselves), when it comes to appreciating the foundations of masculine domination, men and women

are dominated by their 'bad sense' and, specifically, women are complicit in their own subjugation.

They are, therefore, both traditional intellectuals demystifying masculine domination from on high. They are not only different from Fanon in Algeria, who is deeply engaged with revolutionary struggle, but also from Gramsci, who, like Bourdieu and Beauvoir, finds himself in what in the end proves to be a non-revolutionary context, but unlike them believes in the good sense of the oppressed, or at least the working class. Given the presumption of good sense, there is therefore a place for organic intellectuals who can elaborate that good sense (while also attacking bad sense), developing a war of position. We find analogous feminist intellectuals who see insight and good sense arising from the dominated. Patricia Hill Collins (1991), for example, argues that the most oppressed have the clearest view of the social structure and of their own position within domination and that they spontaneously generate cultures of resistance. She is specifically talking about poor black women in the United States. White women and black men, being in contradictory positions no less than white men, cannot see through the mists of domination. Collins, therefore, endorses the standpoint of an organic intellectual closely tied to communities of poor black women, elaborating their standpoints and their culture, transmitting these to wider publics. Consistent with this perspective, Collins is hostile to the traditional black intellectuals Louis Gates, Cornel West and even W. E. B. du Bois for the pretentious elitism in their representations of racial domination.

Indeed, there are strong traditions of feminism, very different from Beauvoir, that have deep roots in women's communities. Beauvoir was the traditional intellectual who gave language and vision to the movement and thereby established the very possibility of organic intellectuals. It remains to be seen whether Bourdieu's critical role as a traditional intellectual will also contribute to an organic connection between sociology and its publics – a position he himself adopted in later life, despite his oft-stated contempt for organic intellectuals.

## Transforming Patriarchy?

Both Beauvoir and Bourdieu investigate the invisible domination of woman in a modern Western society – France – where modernity is layered with older orders of patriarchy going back to feudalism and before. Gender domination has been distilled over centuries and becomes for Bourdieu the prime instance of symbolic violence, which is 'a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition' (Bourdieu, 2001 [1998]: 2). As Beauvoir puts it, this is an oppression where the oppressed 'has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her. It is opaque to her eyes' (Beauvoir, 1989 [1949]: 598).

What would Beauvoir or Bourdieu make of gender domination in South Africa, where 'gentle' and 'invisible' symbolic violence is joined by what can only be described as a campaign of private, explicit and atrocious physical violence against women? What would they make of the glaring disjunction between the new symbolic order arising out of the transition to democracy, which sets out explicitly to defend women against discrimination and empower them in all spheres – public and private – through policies, legislation and state institutions, and the competing symbolic orders that gain from society the vitality with which they continue to subjugate women?

These extraordinary disjunctions and juxtapositions between old and new, stasis and change, legislation and implementation, formal and informal, official rhetoric and daily practice, and between fractured and competing moralities, and all the contradictions, hypocrisies, clashes, enmities, alliances, polemics and fluctuations of mood – hope, anger, despair, triumph, cynicism, mirth – that accompany them, are precisely what characterise our society, providing formidable challenges to any attempt at Bourdieusian analysis of social order.

The rape trial of Jacob Zuma, at the time deputy president of the ANC, epitomised in the most public way possible the competing moralities and notions of patriarchal order in South Africa. Zuma's defence rested on

a performance of himself as a traditional Zulu man deeply embedded in cultural notions of sexuality – themselves publicly contested. Outside the court, he danced and sang his trademark machine gun song before crowds of supporters, who threatened violence against the complainant. On the other side of the road, a coalition of gender activists and feminists demonstrated their support for the complainant. Inside the court, the judge dismissed all progressive arguments, criticised the women's organisations for challenging the 'conservative legal traditions of criminal law' while remaining silent about the conduct of the defendant's supporters outside the court, and brought all the most conservative assumptions of legal tradition regarding the complainant's testimony in rape trials to bear on his decisions (Vetten, 2007). Zuma was acquitted and went on to become president of the ANC and the country, and the complainant went into exile.

Much could be said about the significance of this moment for gender domination in South Africa. As Vetten remarks, two weighty traditions, that of Roman-Dutch law and that of (ostensible) Zulu culture, found common cause in their defence of patriarchy (which is not to say that, even had the court been less biased, Zuma would have been found guilty). But three points are salient in relation to Bourdieu: it cannot be said that resistance to gender domination is unthinkable; nor can it be said that domination and resistance are invisible; and the symbolism of direct physical violence (machine guns, the burning of a picture of the complainant, threats of violence) is intimately tangled with the invisible dimension of symbolic violence.

White patriarchy overlaps in many ways with black patriarchy, but it also has its own symbolic universe, related to ideas about the conquest of Africa, the significance of the farm, '*swart gevaar*', and anxieties about democracy and crime. Guns are central to this symbolic order, as an Afrikaner MP explained in an unpublished interview:

That whole tradition and psyche and culture of 'I own a weapon. I am a man because I've got a weapon' – that was part of our culture, that was the way we grew up. I think about the days when I walked with a pellet gun, with my friends, sometimes we just shot at rocks, but I was, I was *armed* ...

The vast majority of legally owned firearms belong to whites. The symbolic meaning of the gun is closely associated with white masculinity, as many submissions to parliament opposing the Firearms Control Bill made clear. 'My family sleep safe at night, secure in the knowledge that I

will stand up for them', read one (Kirsten, 2008:138). It is not surprising that in the symbolic contestation over gun control legislation, Gun Free South Africa activists were subject to aggressively obscene phone calls by anonymous callers who made hostile comments about women, as well as about blacks, Jews and Muslims. But guns do not only constitute a form of symbolic violence – they also kill. South Africa has one of the highest rates of intimate femicides in the world, and many are killed with legally owned firearms (Kirsten, 2008: 8–9).

The relationship between symbolic violence and physical violence is a complex one. Some forms of symbolic violence legitimate specific repertoires of physical violence against the dominated, in which case the physical violence is girded around with tacit and explicit codes that regulate the occasions, kinds and limits of the physical violence that may be used. Part of the power of symbolic violence in this case is that it leads the dominated to accept that she deserves the 'punishment' directed against her.

In other cases, physical violence may be a response to an erosion of the efficacy of symbolic violence or a breakdown of hegemonic masculinity; physical violence then may be a strategy for restoring patriarchy or establishing the terms of a new form of patriarchy. Here, the workings of the symbolic order may be more ambiguous – it may have sufficient symbolic force to persuade the victim that she deserves punishment or, on the contrary, it may fracture further if the physical 'punishment' is seen to transgress the codes enshrined in the symbolic order – which is, after all, a kind of tacitly understood compact between men and women – and becomes thereby an injustice.

Much of the violence against women in South Africa today is a response to the breakdown or erosion of older symbolic orders of patriarchy in both black and white communities, and is an attempt to restore them or reconstitute male domination in a different way through the use of force. The older orders of patriarchy are challenged and destabilised by the anti-discriminatory provisions of the Constitution, as well as a range of policies and pieces of legislation introduced by the ANC – from the Employment Equity Act and the Domestic Violence Act to the quotas to increase the number of women holding political office.

But patriarchy was already being eroded by economic and social shifts in society, such as the growing number of unemployed men, the increasing employment of women and the breakdown of traditional households, with a growing number of women-headed households. Male 'breadwinners' who cannot bring home the bread, young men who cannot sustain their masculinity because they lack an income and cannot pay *lobola*, a

growing number of women in positions of political and economic power, and the growing number of independent women who prefer to make their way outside of a relationship with a dominant male make for an explosive social mix under the sign of a destabilised symbolic order. Gender violence is one response (Mosoetsa, 2011, esp. chap. 2).

Many of these factors are visible in our research into community protests and local politics. Generally, politics and power are highly sexualised in local municipalities and women are important symbols of male power, as Beauvoir intimates. Thus, many stories and rumours circulate in political circles as well as in the community more generally about the sexual liaisons of key political figures. Men with power in the ANC, the town council or the municipal administration are said to have numerous mistresses and to have fathered numerous children with them. Mistresses and girlfriends are given jobs in the administration or, if already employed, are readily promoted, according to these stories. In the symbolic order crystallising around the new elite, politics and power are highly sexualised, and sexual liaisons with mistresses and girlfriends signal status (Langa, Dlamini & Von Holdt, 2011).

For women in the elite, however, the symbolic terms are reversed. Here the rumours are about the powerful man with whom the woman is involved in a sexual liaison, and her access to power is explained by his patronage. So, the woman mayor in one of the towns we studied was said to have got her position only because she was having an affair with a provincial MEC who 'forced her down the throat of the community'. In this way, the leadership of women who are appointed because of the ANC's official policy of increasing the number of women in political office is subverted by rumours that they owe their positions to their sexual subjugation to powerful men (Langa, Dlamini & Von Holdt, 2011). This goes along with the sense, articulated by these women, that they are generally disempowered and disregarded within ANC structures.

For young men who have little prospect of work or income, as for women in the elite, the symbolic terms of male power are reversed. To have a girlfriend, a young man needs money. Even more seriously, a young man without money cannot pay *lobola* to the parents of the woman he hopes to marry and so is unable to start a family. Young unemployed men in our research sites constantly compared themselves to men in the elite, expressing envy, anger and powerlessness, and criticising women for their materialism and a willingness to trade jobs for sex: 'I hate that M-guy [a councillor], he took my girlfriend. He has money and I don't have money. You can't find a girlfriend if you don't have money.'

In contrast to those who display their status, wealth, and power through mistresses and girlfriends, these young men are excluded from expressing their masculinity. Violent protest provides an alternative avenue for asserting their masculinity, whether in street battles with the police or in demanding and bringing about the downfall of a councillor or mayor. In two of our research towns, the mayors who were under attack by the protest movements were women. Some of the young male protesters, their masculinity deeply troubled and insecure, were adamant that they would not be ruled by a woman, because woman made poor leaders, being incapable and 'stubborn' (Langa, Dlamini & Von Holdt, 2011; Dlamini, 2011; Von Holdt, 2011a).

This instability in, or destabilisation of, the symbolic order that gives meaning to patriarchy generates multiple fissure lines through which violence may erupt. Such violence has a complex relationship with symbolic violence, as new symbolic orders are elaborated or resisted. Thus, the young male protesters in one focus group told us that young women like to be beaten, so that they can display the marks of assault as a sign of how much their men love them. If young women do indeed react like this, then they are subject to a symbolic violence that predisposes them to accept – and, indeed, treasure – the physical violence of their men against them. This may, on the other hand, be a fantasy of power on the part of disempowered young men – a symbolic violence they wish to exist, but does not – and nonetheless may predispose them to behaving violently. Young men who gang-rape lesbians, who also have benefitted from the expansion of anti-discriminatory legislation and litigation, in an effort to 'discipline' them are no doubt also resorting to violence in an attempt to shore up patriarchy and fragile masculinity (Toyana, 2011).

What we have in South Africa, then, is a picture of a destabilised patriarchal symbolic order and contending projects to reconstitute symbolic order. This applies as much to patriarchy as it does to class and racial hierarchies, and, indeed, the destabilisation of one has repercussions in the others, since different hierarchies in society do not exist in parallel, but mesh with each other, each hierarchy modifying or reinforcing the others. Bourdieu's concept of symbolic order and the symbolic violence it perpetrates provides powerful analytical tools for understanding society, but only if we push it to expand and take in the possibilities for destabilising and contesting symbolic order, and if we explore a much closer relationship between the gentle violence of symbolic domination and the brutality of direct physical violence.

Moreover, the South African case demonstrates that symbolic violence

can be rendered visible and challenged. The numerous women's organisations and movements that have championed women's rights and contributed to progressive legislation and policies, and the difficult battles they take on in their communities are evidence of this. Even when the impact is limited, new rhetoric and new formal rights bolster discourses through which oppressed women may see their world afresh, its opacity becoming transparent, and find ways to challenge their domination. Indeed, in the same focus group described above, a feisty young woman drew on such discourses to challenge the men's views and made it clear that she would never tolerate such abuse.

It may indeed be that stripping away or rooting out one layer of symbolic violence simply reveals other, deeper and more intractable layers. But this is no reason to abandon the idea of freedom that is enshrined in our constitution and in much of the legislation enacted by the post-apartheid democratic parliament.

#### NOTES

- 1 An obvious reference to *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*, the first volume of Beauvoir's autobiography.
- 2 I will rely on the original English translation of *The Second Sex*, despite its known problems; see Moi (2002).
- 3 Toril Moi says as much herself in her essay, 'Appropriating Bourdieu: Feminist theory and Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture' (Moi, 1999; see p. 283, footnote 21). There is nothing original in his gender analysis, but, so she argues, his concepts are nonetheless very useful for feminism. This is also the general tenor of the collection *Feminism after Bourdieu* (Adkins & Skeggs, 2004).
- 4 Beauvoir devotes a whole chapter to prostitution as an alternative to marriage. Just as lesbianism is a departure from normal sexualisation, so prostitution is a similarly alternative road to marriage whose significance and evaluation differs from society to society.
- 5 The same structure can also be found in Sartre's *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1948 [1946]), which appeared, probably not coincidentally, just as Beauvoir began work on *The Second Sex*.
- 6 This is what Patricia Collins 40 years later (1991) will call the perspective of 'the outsider within', although she will trace its genealogy not to Beauvoir, but to George Simmel.

## CONVERSATION 7

### INTELLECTUALS AND THEIR PUBLICS

MICHAEL BURAWOY

#### Mills Meets Bourdieu

*It is the political task of the social scientist – as of any liberal educator – continually to translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals. It is his task to display in his work – and, as an educator, in his life as well – this kind of sociological imagination.*  
Mills (1959: 187)

*Political competence, inasmuch as there can be a universal definition of it, undoubtedly consists in the ability to speak in universal terms about particular problems – how to survive dismissal or redundancy, an injustice or an accident at work, not as individual accident, a personal mishap, but as something collective, common to a class. This universalization is possible only by way of language, by access to a general discourse on the social world. This is why politics is in part bound up with language. And here again, if you like, we can introduce a bit of utopia to attenuate the sadness of sociological discourse, and convince ourselves that it is not too naive to believe that it can be useful to fight over words, over their honesty and proper sense, to be outspoken and to speak out.*  
Bourdieu (2008 [1977]: 76–77)