

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 a movement that forges a reciprocal connection between sociology and its publics—a position he himself adopted in later life, despite his oft-stated contempt for organic intellectuals.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

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, *THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION*

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, "GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS"

All this means that the ethno-sociologist is a kind of organic intellectual of humanity, and as a collective agent, can contribute to de-naturalizing and de-fatalizing human existence by placing his skill at the service of a universalism rooted in the comprehension of different particularisms.

— BOURDIEU, “A RETROSPECTIVE ON THE ALGERIAN EXPERIENCE”

So far, I have created imaginary conversations between Bourdieu and Marxism: how Bourdieu appropriated so much of Marx but took it in a direction unimagined by Marx, namely the political economy of symbolic goods; how in many ways Gramsci and Bourdieu are at loggerheads over the durability and depth of domination; how, despite their common views of colonialism, Bourdieu and Fanon clash over the means of its transcendence; how Freire and Bourdieu responded to the domination perpetuated by formal education in diametrically opposed ways; and, finally, how Bourdieu's understanding of masculine domination as symbolic power was a pale replica of Beauvoir's feminism. We turn now to another conversation, between Bourdieu and Mills. Both deeply ambivalent about Marxism, they shared similar sociological and political projects, despite living half a century apart and on different continents.

The quotes from Bourdieu and Mills above are chosen to underscore their convergent views on the relations between sociologists and their publics, a notion of the traditional intellectual who can potentially challenge domination by denaturalizing and de-fatalizing what exists, demonstrating the links between the taken-for-granted lived experience (the particular) and the social forces that constitute it (the universal). They differ, however, in that Bourdieu recognizes and lives out the contradictions between “science as a vocation” and “politics as a vocation,” to use Max Weber's terms, since science rests on a *break* with common sense while politics rests on an *engagement* with common sense. Mills, on the other hand, would probably have as little tolerance for Bourdieu's scientific “jargon” as he did for Parsons's, since he doesn't see a fundamental break between science and common sense, seeing an easy passage from the sociological imagination (linking micro and macro) to the political imagination (turning personal troubles into public issues). We will return to this question in the conclusion to this conversation, but first we must build up the case that, despite their obvious differences, Mills is Bourdieu in the 1950s, decked out in American colors.

STRIKING CONVERGENCES

Bourdieu's major methodological text, *The Craft of Sociology* (written with Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Jean-Claude Passeron in 1968), in many respects converges with C. Wright Mills's famous elaboration of the sociological imagination in 1959. Indeed, one cannot but notice that the title of Bourdieu's book is borrowed from Mills's appendix, “On Intellectual Craftsmanship.” Both books are critical of the divorce of theory from empirical research; both emphasize social science research as process—a *modus operandi* rather than an *opus operatum*, as Bourdieu would say. Bourdieu follows Mills in attacking US sociology for its professionalism, its formalism, its empiricism, and its provincialism. Yet I cannot find any references to Mills in Bourdieu's writings, except the inclusion of a short extract—one of forty-four “illustrative texts”—from *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), in which Mills criticizes public opinion research for creating its own spurious object, an argument also found in *The Craft of Sociology* and one that Bourdieu will elaborate later in his career.

Given their similar methodological outlooks and empirical foci, the comparison of Bourdieu and Mills underlines how the world has changed since the 1950s (while in some ways reverting back to that era), as well as the abiding differences between the United States and France. Still, there are parallels in the political context that shaped their writing. In the United States, the years immediately after the Second World War witnessed the continuity of the radicalism that had begun in the 1930s, but it wasn't long before reaction asserted itself in the form of McCarthyite witch hunts, a broad anticommunism, American triumphalism, and the “end of ideology.” Just as Mills confronted the swing away from the political configuration of the New Deal, much of Bourdieu's writings can be seen as coming to terms with the denouement of the 1960s and the rightward turn in the 1980s and 1990s. Both sustained a critique of the present at a time when progressive alternatives were in retreat, though more so in the US of the 1950s than in France of the 1980s.

Biographically, Bourdieu and Mills came from very different backgrounds—the one grew up the son of a postal employee in a village in the French Pyrenees, the other from middle-class stock in Texas. More interesting, however, they both began as philosophy students but quickly turned from abstract and abstruse intellectual preoccupations to a more direct engagement with the world. For Mills, his interest in pragmatism gave him a particular stance on sociology that was opposed to structural functionalism and survey research, just as Bourdieu reacted against the pretensions of Sartre and his circle, as well as against social reform sociology.

Like Bourdieu, who developed a knee-jerk reaction against the Marxism of the communist intellectuals who surrounded him at the École Normale Supérieure, Mills had his Marxism refracted through the milieu of New York leftism. Only late in his short life would Mills take up a serious engagement with the history of Marxism. Like Bourdieu, he borrowed many ideas from Marxism, but, also like Bourdieu, he never quite identified with its political project as he saw it. Thus, both were hostile to the Communist Party and were never members, although—again—both exhibited sometimes overt and sometimes covert sympathies for democratic variants of socialism.

Both openly recognized the influence of Weber, with whom they shared a preeminent concern with domination, its reproduction and its repercussions. Like Weber, they never spelled out any future utopia. Both had only a weakly developed theory of history: Mills focused on the shift from a nineteenth-century aristocratic order (alongside putative democratic publics) to the new regime of power elite and mass society, while Bourdieu subscribed to modernization theory based on the differentiation of relatively autonomous fields, analogous to what Weber called value spheres.

Mills and Bourdieu were reflexive sociologists inasmuch as they dissected the academic and political fields in which they operated—although they were more adept at applying that reflexivity to others than to themselves. Both were invested in the sociology of knowledge, both a sociology of sociology and a sociology of the academy. Mills's dissertation was a study of the history of pragmatism—the secularization and professionalization of philosophy. Following in the footsteps of Veblen, Mills was always critical of the American system of higher education but, again like Bourdieu, took advantage of its elitist aspects that gave him the space and autonomy to develop his distinctive sociology. Still, both felt themselves to be outsiders in the academy and from this vantage point wrote their savage criticisms, lambasting the establishment and generating the hostility of their colleagues and a following among new generations of students.

Both were public sociologists and also major public intellectuals, not just in their own countries but across the world. Both served their scholarly apprenticeships as professionals but soon sought out wider audiences. Neither hesitated to enter the political arena as an intellectual, and their careers displayed a steady movement from the academy into the public sphere. Mills was writing in an era of relative political passivity, and his notions of mass society reflect this. Like Beauvoir, he inspired a movement he

never anticipated—in his case the New Left of the 1960s. It remains to be seen whether Bourdieu will inspire such a movement—certainly his political writings and addresses have played an important role in public debate in France. Both held out hope for intellectuals as an independent force that would pioneer progressive politics in the name of reason and freedom.

CLASSES AND DOMINATION

Bourdieu has come to be known for his metatheoretical framework—centering on fields, habitus, and capital as well as the master idea of symbolic violence—that transcended his own empirical projects, a theoretical framework that has been taken up by others. Mills's only venture into broader theoretical issues was *Character and Social Structure*, written with Hans Gerth (Gerth and Mills 1954). It advanced a social psychology with a notion of “character,” parallel to but far richer than Bourdieu’s “habitus,” that was tied to a concept of “institutional order” corresponding to Bourdieu’s notion of field. Covering a similar terrain to but more critical and far more accessible than Parsons’s *The Social System* (1951), *Character and Social Structure* never captured the same audience—perhaps because the authors were two outlaws with limited influence and following at the time. It is now a largely forgotten text, unlike Mills’s empirical critiques of US society and his invitation to the sociological imagination, which have inspired successive generations of students. These assaults on the class structure of the US have definite parallels in Bourdieu’s corpus, although Bourdieu’s work is more theoretically self-conscious than that of Mills. In both cases their impact transcended sociology, not just in reaching the public realm but in spreading to other disciplines beyond sociology.

The three major works of Mills to address US society in the 1950s dealt sequentially with labor and its leaders (*New Men of Power*, 1948), the new middle classes (*White Collar*, 1951), and the dominant class (*The Power Elite*, 1956). Mills’s framework for studying US society does develop over the decade of his writing, but his portrait shows a clear continuity: ever-greater concentration of power in a cohesive economic-political-military elite; a burgeoning new middle class of professionals, managers, sales workers, and bureaucrats; and, finally, a pacified working class betrayed by its leaders. These are also the three classes treated in Bourdieu’s monumental *Distinction*. Whereas Mills works his way up the social hierarchy, Bourdieu works his way down, from the dominant classes to the petty bourgeoisie and finally to the working class. Both study the way the dominant classes impose their will on society, but where Mills focuses on the concentration of

resources and decision-making in the power elite, Bourdieu takes this concentration of power and wealth for granted, instead focusing on how domination is hidden or legitimated by the classifications the dominant class uses to establish its distinction.

Bourdieu, therefore, focuses on symbolic violence—the exercise of domination through its misrecognition. Simply put, the dominant class distinguishes itself by its cultural taste. Whether this be in art, architecture, music, or literature, the dominant class presents itself as more refined and more at ease with its cultural consumption than the *petite bourgeoisie*, whose taste is driven by emulation, and the working class, whose lifestyle is driven by economic necessity. The distinction of the dominant class actually derives from its privileged access to wealth and education, but it is presented as innate, thereby justifying its domination in all spheres of life. According to Bourdieu, the popular aesthetic of the working class—its concern with function rather than form, with the represented rather than the representation—is a dominated aesthetic, bereft of genuine critical impulse. Bourdieu's innovation, therefore, turns on viewing class not just as an economic-political-social formation but also as a cultural formation. Class members possess cultural capital as well as economic capital, so that a class structure is a two-dimensional space defined hierarchically by the total volume of capital, but also horizontally (within class) by the composition of capital (i.e., the specific combination of economic and cultural capital). He shows how this class structure is mirrored in the distribution of cultural practices and patterns of consumption.

It is interesting to compare this vision of class structure with Mills's *Power Elite*, where he describes the dominant class as three interlocking sets of institutions—economic, political, and military. He calls them “domains,” but he might as well have called them fields. He also writes about their distinction and their ruling-class lifestyle, inherited through families, acquired in elite schools and colleges, and developed through networks of self-assurance. Mills even devotes a chapter to “celebrities” who distract attention from the concentration of power. Symbols of prestige hide the power elite from public view. This is all quite parallel to Bourdieu, but ultimately the emphasis is very different. Mills is less interested in the relation between cultural and economic-political elites—between the dominant and dominated fractions of the dominant class, as Bourdieu puts it—and more interested in the changing relations among the three pillars of the power elite, in particular the ascendancy of the military (the warlords) over the economic

and political elites. This different emphasis reflects the very different place of the United States and France within the world order—the one a dominant military power, the other a cultural nobility.

If there is divergence in their conceptualizations of the dominant class, there is more convergence in their respective discussions of the middle classes. A theme that threads through both discussions is the insecurity of the middle class, trying to maintain its position within the stratification system. As the gap between the middle classes—especially the old middle classes subject to deskilling but also the new middle classes subject to bureaucratization—and the working class closes, so the status panic of the former intensifies. As a form of capital, education becomes more important than property in asserting middle-class distinction. Thus, *White Collar* makes much of the rising importance of education, in addition to the role of the mass media and the illusory world it creates. Mills devotes considerable space to the fate of the intellectuals and their loss of independence through bureaucratization, becoming a technocracy, serving power and unresponsive to publics. Mills describes, in terms directly analogous to those of Bourdieu, how the academic field is looking more and more like an economic market, invaded by the logic of corporate capital.

On the subject of the working class, both Bourdieu and Mills have much less to say. Bourdieu's more ethnographic *The Weight of the World* (Bourdieu et al. [1993] 1999) has a richer, if untheorized, exploration of working-class life than does *Distinction*, which is reliant on survey research. The culture of the working class is a dominated culture, responsive to the pressing needs of economic necessity and the prestige of the dominant culture. Mills's analysis of the working class is thinner, since *The New Men of Power* is devoted more to labor leaders than to the led, utilizing survey research. The argument is very similar to the one Bourdieu makes in *Language and Symbolic Power* (1991)—the representatives of subordinate classes enter the field of power, where they engage in a competitive game among themselves, and the logic of the field of power trumps their accountability to the dominated. Mills describes how labor leaders, through their negotiations, are co-opted onto the terrain of the business class. They seek to attach themselves to the lower levels of the power elite. Both Mills and Bourdieu, therefore, see leaders manipulating the led—representation becomes rhetoric used to simultaneously pursue and hide games within the higher reaches of society. Bourdieu's essays ([1982] 1990, [1984] 1993) on public opinion follow Mills's critique of mass society.

Yet alongside Mills's critique is always an alternative political vision, albeit a political vision that becomes more utopian over time. *The New Men of Power* describes the absorption of labor leaders into the power elite, accomplices of the "main drift," but it also maps out the political field of the immediate postwar period as an array of publics that includes the Far Left (Leninist Left), the Independent Left (more critical than interventionist), the Liberal Centre (which might include support for trade unions), the Communists (which he sees as antidemocratic fifth columnists), the Practical Right (which supports class war against unions and leftists), and Sophisticated Conservatives (corporate liberals tied to the military-industrial complex who see unions as a stabilizing force that manages discontent). Like so many commentators of his time, Mills expected capitalism to undergo another "slump" that would force the hand of the Sophisticated Conservatives but also attract popular support to a true Labor Party that would organize worker control and democratic planning.¹ Socialism, he asserted, had been derailed by social democracy, petty trade unionism, and communism. In line with this program, Mills hoped for a new type of intellectual, a "labor intellectual," independent of but committed to the working class, capable of forging a new vision and a new collective will.

Mills's political optimism did not last long. Reaction swept across the country, so that when he turned to *White Collar* (1951) he came up with a much bleaker scenario. There he refers to the middle classes as a rearguard, without a will of their own, siding with the prevailing forces in society, and, pending a slump, those prevailing forces lay with the power elite. When it comes to *The Power Elite* (1956), Mills is consumed by despair. Denouncing the "higher immorality" and "organized irresponsibility" of the dominant classes, his political imagination turns from the bleak future to the radiant past. He contrasts the mass society he sees around him with a democracy of publics—the founding dream and early practice of American society. Mills never reconciles himself to the present, never withdraws from the intellectual battle for another world.

If there was always a strong utopian element in Mills's writings—at first projected onto leftist political forces and then as emancipatory projects buried in history—one is hard-pressed to find any equivalent in the writings of Bourdieu, who saw his public jeremiads as being adequately political in their own right. They would be less effective if connected to utopian thinking. In part, this was because of the historic role of French intellectuals, starting with Zola, and the openness of the public sphere to such intel-

lectuals—so different from their more marginal place in US politics. No less important, Bourdieu was always opposed to conjuring up false hopes in the transformative potential of the dominated classes. His political engagement around issues of human rights, labor rights, education, and so forth was firmly rooted in the concrete present. Bourdieu mobilized his analysis of the subjective experience of domination, largely absent in Mills's writings, against what he regarded as the misguided illusions of leftist intellectuals. Bourdieu refused speculative connections across the yawning gap between hope and reality, the yawning gap that separated Mills's utopian disposition and his sociological analysis, the unrecognized distinction between Mills's political imagination and sociological imagination.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

The refusal to confront the gap between sociological imagination and political imagination—indeed, the confusion of the two—can be found in *The Sociological Imagination*, one of the most widely read and inspiring introductions to sociology. *The Sociological Imagination*, published in 1959, just three years before Mills died, looks two ways—back to sociology and forward to politics. When looking back to sociology, it is a devastating and memorable indictment of professional sociology for the sins of abstracted empiricism and grand theorizing. Abstracted empiricism refers to survey research divorced from any historical or theoretical context, typified in Mills's mind by the work of his titular boss, Paul Lazarsfeld, with whom he had a most rocky relationship. Abstracted empiricism approximates to market research and exemplifies the bureaucratization of sociology, and more generally how intellectuals were increasingly serving the corporate world as consultants and experts and as orchestrators of public opinion. Grand theory, on the other hand, refers to the hegemony of structural functionalism within the world of theory—formal theory, arcane and inaccessible to the uninitiated. According to Mills, grand theory is an elaborate but empty architecture of mundane yet unsubstantiated claims.

Against abstracted empiricism and grand theory, Mills celebrated the sociologist as craft worker, uniting in one person the development of sociological theory through engagement with empirical data. He paints a romantic image of the lone sociologist uncorrupted by the academic environment—a self-portrait of his isolation in and alienation from the academic world. This image is an absurdly unsociological critique of professional sociology—a Manichean struggle between God and the Devil—but one that justified his own abandonment of that world.

If the first romance in *The Sociological Imagination* is with the sociologist as craft worker, the second is with the sociologist as “independent intellectual,” looking outward to politics rather than inward to academia. Here too are two positions to avoid: on the one hand, the sociologist as adviser to the prince—the technician, the consultant—and, on the other hand, the philosopher-king who aspires to rule the world. In the political realm, the adviser to the prince and the philosopher-king are the counterparts to the abstracted empiricist and the grand theorist in the academic realm, while the independent intellectual is the counterpart of the craft worker. The independent intellectual speaks *to* publics and *at* rulers, maintaining a distance from both. Here indeed is Mills’s notion of the public sociologist—a concept he describes but does not name—for him a traditional rather than an organic intellectual.

The connection between the craft worker and the independent intellectual is made through the idea of the sociological imagination that famously turns private problems into public issues. But here the slippage begins: between, on the one hand, the *sociological imagination*—i.e., the connection between social milieu and social structure, micro and macro—and, on the other hand, the never-specified *political imagination* that connects private troubles to public issues. It is one thing to demonstrate that unemployment is not a problem of individual indolence but one of the capitalist economy; it is another matter to turn that sociological understanding into a public demand or a social movement for security of employment. Indeed, appreciating the broad structural determinants of one’s personal troubles is as likely to lead to apathy and withdrawal as to engagement. *The New Men of Power*, *White Collar*, and *The Power Elite* each attempts to bridge the divide between sociology and politics but in an abstract way, as though sociological imagination inevitably leads to political engagement. Political imagination cannot be reduced to sociological imagination, as Bourdieu knows only too well.

The first problem concerns the very existence of publics for Mills’s public sociologist to address. His writings all point to the disappearance of publics and the rise of mass society, so with whom, then, will the public sociologist converse? Bourdieu recognizes the dilemma quite explicitly, albeit in a specific way. The argument is laid out in *The Craft of Sociology*, which speaks directly to Mills’s sociologist as craft worker. It criticizes both existentialism (the counterpart to Parsons’s structural functionalism) and the reaction to it in the form of imported American empiricism. Like Mills, Bourdieu engages in is a continual dialogue of theory and empirical re-

search: the one cannot exist without the other. Bourdieu rarely indulges in flights of political fancy;² his claims are always empirically grounded. Yet, he closely follows Gaston Bachelard, the French philosopher of science, by insisting on the break between science and common sense, or what Bourdieu calls *spontaneous sociology*. For sociology, such a break with common sense is especially important, because its subject matter deals with familiar problems about which everyone has an opinion. Throughout his academic life, Bourdieu will be fighting against what he regards as amateurish commentators—“doxosophers”—who claim to know better than professional sociologists.

Although the home of sociology, France has always had difficulty developing an autonomous professional sociology and separating itself from social reform and public discourse. In this sense, the academic context of Bourdieu is very different from that of Mills. The former faces the struggle to create a science against common sense, while the latter is suffocated by professionalism and struggles to reconnect his science to common sense. This accounts, at least in part, for their opposed genres of writing, the latter always straightforward and accessible, the former dominated by complex linguistic constructions and the coining of esoteric concepts.³ For a renewal of sociology to be accepted by the French academic pantheon, it was necessary to adopt the style of writing of the discipline with the highest distinction, namely philosophy. While denouncing the detachment of philosophy from everyday reality, Bourdieu nevertheless replicates a philosophical rhetorical style to claim sociology’s legitimacy within the academic world, but the result can be separation from the wider publics he seeks to reach. He is only too aware of the gap between sociology and politics, even as he tries to overcome that gap in his later years. Mills suffers from the opposite problem—by making his books accessible and by resisting the idiom of science and high theory, he loses credibility within the world of sociology and mistakes his sociological imagination for political imagination.

Still, reacting to opposite challenges—Bourdieu embracing science against common sense, Mills embracing common sense against formalistic science—they converge on a common understanding of methodology, represented in the idea of craftwork as the interactive unity of theory and research. Likewise, Bourdieu, no less than Mills, is committed to the idea of the independent intellectual. Moreover, his targets are the same as Mills’s. On the one hand, he denounces the philosopher-king, or what he calls the “total intellectual,” epitomized by Jean-Paul Sartre, and, on the other hand, he denounces the advisers to the king—the technocrats, experts, consultants to the state,

and servants of power. The philosopher-king—the public intellectual as total intellectual—has a certain reality in France that it does not have in the United States. Notwithstanding the higher appreciation of the intellectual in France, Bourdieu nonetheless faces the same dilemma as Mills. Neither sees a public out there that he can address. Mills talks of a mass society, atomized, withdrawn, and alienated from politics and public discussion, whereas for Bourdieu the problem is, if anything, even more serious. The habitus is so deeply inculcated that the dominated are unreceptive to criticism of domination. Furthermore, the independent intellectual faces the power of the media and its own mediators. Bourdieu lost no opportunity to attack the media's power to determine the message, to even shape the research that becomes the message. Although Mills was also aware of the power of the media, he never wrote such a broad assault on the media as Bourdieu carries out in *On Television* ([1996] 1999).

Whether they sought it or not, both—but Bourdieu more than Mills—became celebrities in their own time for their angry oppositional views. They became media events in their own right, and the more they railed against the establishment, the more celebrated they became! Yet both were opposed to the idea of the organic intellectual who would circumvent the media and engage directly with publics. In theory, both opposed the organic intellectual on the grounds that it compromised their independence, yet their actual practices were quite different.

Mills rarely participated in any collective demonstration or protest, refused to sign petitions, and generally avoided the people he somewhat contemptuously dismissed as the masses. He was a pure intellectual, speaking out to the people from his pulpit. Bourdieu, however, was very different. He was always ready to initiate or sign a petition, he would talk to all sorts of publics, and he could be found addressing workers on picket lines. He had no allergy to the people in whose name he spoke. Quite the contrary, he had enormous sympathy for those at the bottom of social hierarchies, vividly expressed in *The Weight of the World*, which describes the plight of the lower classes and immigrants under modern capitalism. Here lies the paradox—according to his theory, such unmediated engagement is not only a futile but a dangerous activity. Yet he also saw this practice of public sociology as developing a political imagination out of his sociological imagination. Mills was always truer to the idea of the traditional intellectual, standing aloof from the individual and collective struggles below, but even he, in the last three years of his life, compromised his independence in a desperate political partisanship.

FROM SOCIOLOGY TO POLITICS

The Sociological Imagination (1959) was Mills's farewell to sociology. In the remaining three years of his life he became a public intellectual, writing two short polemical books intended to capture the public imagination. The first was *The Causes of World War Three* (1958), a continuation of the arguments of *The Power Elite* but written for an even broader public. It condemned "crackpot realism" and "organized irresponsibility" not just in the United States but in the Soviet Union too. Together, these power elites were ushering in World War III. He ends the book with an appeal to intellectuals to fight against the insanity of "rationality without reason," calling instead, you might say, for Bourdieu's "realpolitik of reason."

The second book was of a very different character. If *The Causes of World War Three* diagnosed the way the power elites of the two superpowers were heading toward the annihilation of the human race, *Listen, Yankee*, written in 1960, pointed to an alternative scenario—a socialism that was neither capitalist nor communist. The Cuban Revolution served to make the alternative real—a "concrete fantasy" intended to galvanize a collective political imagination. *Listen, Yankee* is based on Mills's short, intense visit to Cuba in 1960. He spent three-and-a-half long days with Fidel Castro and nearly a week with the head of the Institute for Agrarian Reform. In his account of the Cuban Revolution through the eyes of its leaders, Mills points to the already ongoing and remarkable experiments in economic planning, education expansion, welfare provision, and land reforms—experiments that would be institutionalized as the mark of Cuban socialism. He undertakes a class analysis of the social forces that are driving the social transformations and the counter-revolutionary forces opposing it, not least the support being given to the counter-revolution by the United States. He describes the challenges Cuba faced both domestically and internationally. The open hostility of the United States, Mills says, was driving Cuba into the arms of the Soviet Union, which led to intensified US military threats. *Listen, Yankee* addresses the US public, befuddled by the jingoist media and ignorant of the destructive path of US imperialism throughout Latin America, but particularly in Cuba—imperialism justified under the Monroe Doctrine. The Cuban Revolution should be seen, he argued, as a reaction to Yankee supremacy, an experiment in true democracy, an experiment that all people of conscience can learn from, an experiment they must defend.

It was only two years before the end of his forty-six-year life that Mills discovered the potential of Third World revolutions. He was ahead of his time. In its class analysis, in its understanding of colonialism and imperialism, in its

vision of socialism, *Listen, Yankee* is a precursor to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, which appeared the following year—the same year that its author died at the age of thirty-five. These two sadly curtailed lives—Mills's and Fanon's—ended within three months of each other, inspiring in their different ways social movements across the world. Both saw the key role of intellectuals in forging revolution, but Mills came to this idea late in life, only when he began traveling abroad, especially to Latin America, where he discovered, firsthand, the significance of revolutionary theory, which he had previously dismissed as a Marxist ruse.

Just as Mills became ever more outspoken and radical during the last three years of his life, so in the last decade of his life Bourdieu also became more angry, more public, more accusatory. He had always seen sociology—or, at least, his sociology—as having political consequences in the sense that it revealed the hidden bases of domination; nonetheless, his denunciations took on polemical force when faced with the conservative turn of politics in France and elsewhere. His book *On Television* ([1996] 1999) and then the two short collections of essays *Acts of Resistance* (1998) and *Firing Back* ([2001] 2003) spoke out against neoliberalism and the tyranny of the market. He established his own press, Liber-Raisons d'Agir, to publish such politically motivated and publicly accessible books. His magazine, *Actes de la recherche en science sociales*, had always had a broad intellectual audience. He became a major intellectual spokesman of a broad left front in France but also worked to develop what he called an Internationale of intellectuals. He could be found on picket lines with workers, as well as writing open letters to prominent leaders protesting against violations of human rights. He was committed to intellectuals as an independent collective force, to the intellectual as an “organic intellectual of humanity,” as he once called it. Mills had a similar vision of intellectuals as a “third force,” an idea he had formulated as early as the Second World War when he taught at the University of Maryland, a view that stuck with him until his dying days. In *Listen, Yankee* he wrote of Cuba as a cultural center of the world, proposing to establish a “world university” and with it create an international community of progressive intellectuals. The parallels between Mills and Bourdieu are perhaps astonishing, but then they are also expressing the unconscious desires of intellectuals on the road to class power.

Yet here is the paradox: Bourdieu recognizes that ideas can have only limited effect on social change. The dominated, who have an interest in a critical sociology, cannot grasp its meaning, because their submissive habitus is so deeply inscribed, whereas those who can grasp its meaning have

no interest in the message. There is a contradiction, as I have said before, between Bourdieu's logic of theory and his logic of practice. His theory says such interventions are futile, yet his actions imply that such interventions might dislodge public discourse and thus disrupt symbolic violence. In the final analysis, his own political engagement contradicts his attacks on such notions as ideology and consciousness as too thin to grasp the depth of domination. Thus, despite his theory, Bourdieu subscribes to the idea of the organic intellectual engaged directly with publics, as well as the traditional intellectual speaking from the tribune, addressing humanity. He feels compelled to supplement his sociological analysis with political engagement. We need to make sense of this by unleashing Bourdieu on Bourdieu, but first we must ask how irreversible and how universal is symbolic violence.