Michael Burawoy

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.

Pierre Bourdieu

As we have seen in the previous lectures on Gramsci and Fanon, Bourdieu rarely mentions, even more rarely engages, and certainly never examines the works of his antagonists – at least not in public. To award them space, to give them attention would, of course, serve to recognize and legitimate their contributions. As regards those he does recognize, such as Sartre and Foucault, he locates them within the academic field and in this way reduces their contributions to a particular set of interests or unconscious illusio, all the while careful not to place himself in such a field. These are strategies of distinction in which first one silences, makes invisible, and then if that is not feasible, one constitutes the antagonist as an unworthy other, unworthy of serious attention.

On Silencing Beauvoir

These strategies of silencing and recognition, doubtless not fully conscious, but deeply embedded in Bourdieu’s academic habitus, come into full view in his treatment of

masculine domination, and in particular in the silencing of Simone de Beauvoir. In *Masculine Domination* – a book that is full of references to a diverse array of second wave feminism -- Bourdieu gives but one footnote to Beauvoir:

> 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. (MD, p.86, footnote 11)

This dismissive footnote to Beauvoir as victim to Sartre’s symbolic domination is elaborated in Bourdieu’s preface to the French translation Toril Moi’s, *Simone Beauvoir: The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (1994). In that preface Bourdieu summarizes Moi’s first two chapters which place Beauvoir in her relation with Sartre and then on relation to the French intellectual field. As we see in the epigraph above Bourdieu is not interested in *The Second Sex* or in Moi’s interpretation of *The Second Sex* but in Beauvoir’s “dutiful” relation to Sartre. He claims that Beauvoir does not analyze 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 describing her own relation to Sartre, or her imagined relation to Sartre. Moreover, while she does undertake such an analysis, she does not make the mistake of universalizing her own situation as an intellectual woman but recognizes how different is the plight of others, trapped in domesticity. In other words, Bourdieu invokes Beauvoir as a victim of Sartre’s symbolic domination, which then becomes the justification of his own silencing of Beauvoir -- not even referring to her founding classic of modern day feminism – thereby consciously enacting the very symbolic domination he denounces.
Of course, Bourdieu is not alone in this silencing as Toril Moi (1994: chapter 7) has herself shown. When *The Second Sex* first appeared in 1949 it became an instant national scandal among both feminists and conservatives. There was a 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 under bed covers. Plagiarize 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 paid in silence.

Why then is Bourdieu, 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 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…” (p.59). He denounces the silencing of women, but that does not give him pause to invoke Sartre’s supposed domination of Beauvoir’s thought to justify his own suppression of her understanding of masculine domination. He conspires with
Sartre to symbolically dominate Beauvoir, and thus finds himself dominated by his own masculine domination.

That would be bad enough, but he would, at least, be following the crowd in expunging her work from the recognized 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, complex, subtle detail, and, as we shall see, always seeking paths beyond masculine domination. Yet not a single acknowledgement to The Second Sex finds its way into Bourdieu’s Masculine Domination, although there are ample references to second wave feminism, particularly the Americans.

The argument of this lecture, therefore, is that Masculine Domination is a pale replication of the ideas of The Second Sex. ² 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 naturalization and eternalization of domination. Both were vocal enemies of identity politics, of all forms of essentialism and, thus, of difference feminism. Both denounced any attempt to romanticize the resistance of the dominated or the culture of the dominated. To recover 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.

This pursuit of the universal got Beauvoir into trouble with feminists who claimed that her universalism was masculinist. It also gave ammunition to Bourdieu who appropriated this feminist claim, without examining it. Referring to Beauvoir obtaining the agrégation in philosophy Bourdieu writes:

She loves this destiny 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 destructing, for the sole pleasure of shining or of seducing, which are the same thing, the project of Simone de Beauvoir.”3

This is a travesty of Beauvoir’s imagination of freedom that, as I shall show, runs through *The Second Sex*, an imagination based on mutual recognition of other.

In this lecture, therefore, I wish to restore Beauvoir’s originality, showing how all Bourdieu’s categories and arguments can be found in *The Second Sex*, and how she goes beyond him by always gesturing beyond domination to freedom. And all this despite her book predating his by half a century. Bourdieu silences Beauvoir only to appropriate her ideas, albeit in a superficial way.

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3 From Bourdieu, “Apology for a Dutiful Woman,” p.viii. Translated by Ana Villarreal
Apart from the strategic importance of making an intervention in to such a central concern 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” (MD:2). Symbolic domination is not a matter of combining force and consent but operates far more deeply through the attuning of social structure with those “schemes of perception and appreciation” he calls habitus, itself the inscription and product of social structure.

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. (pp.37-8)

A fish is so attuned to the water in which she swims and without which she could not exist, so she does not recognize it for what it is, and takes it for granted as natural and eternal. So then, how does anyone break through this analysis? How does Bourdieu see
structures of domination that are invisible to others? And what does one make of the feminist tradition’s revelation of masculine domination from which he borrows?

We will turn to these questions later but for now it is interesting to read Simone de Beauvoir’s own account of how she discovered 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. (Force of Circumstance, pp.94-5)

Certainly, 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. Can one deny that this confrontation with what had been unrecognized or misrecognized was a quite conscious process? But, on the other hand, one might argue that this consciousness did not change 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.

Beauvoir is self-conscious about the depth of her feminine habitus and *The Second Sex* underlines just how deep and powerful it is. “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” (TSS: 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” (TSS: 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” (TSS: xxvii). Thus, Beauvoir sees masculine domination as a *special type* of domination different from class domination whereas Bourdieu sees it as a *prototype* that holds the hidden secret of class domination as symbolic domination. Yet, for both, and this is the important point here, masculine domination is an extreme form of domination – domination not recognized as such or at least not recognized in its depths.

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 recognizing deeply internalized dispositions. Thus, as we shall in greater detail, Beauvoir’s treatment of masculine domination embraces Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic domination, but it also seeks to transcend it.
Naturalization or Reversing Cause and Effect

At the heart of masculine domination is its naturalization and the reversal of cause and effect that follows. If the differences between men and women are inherent to these different species, then we can say indeed that the gender division of labor merely reflects differences in natural abilities and talents, we can say that women are naturally emotional and men naturally rational. In fact what is presumed to be cause -- the natural differences between men and women -- is actually the effect of historical forces and socialization.

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. (MD, p.3, See also, MD, pp.22-3)

Beauvoir goes into far more detail. Indeed, Part I of The Second Sex entitled “Destiny” devotes successive chapters to the biological foundations, psychoanalytical foundations and the 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, she finds this view wanting. Biological differences there are and the woman experiences her body very differently than the man, experiences, however, that are not given anatomically but are influenced by society and upbringing -- for the woman the body is an alien force outside her control whereas man is at home with his body. In the final analysis, differences there
are but they cannot explain the subjugation of women, which is the cumulative product of social and economic forces, most importantly the relation of the forces of production to reproduction. Biology does not produce subjugation but subjugation, at least in part, produces biology. Biology is not destiny.

Psychoanalysis is a major advance on the purely biological arguments in that it tells us what part of the anatomy is destiny – specifically the genital organs. The body does not exist in 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” (TSS: 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. The next chapter, therefore, invokes historical materialism: the form of masculine domination and its possible transcendence cannot be understood outside economic history, which provides changing opportunities and possibilities for men and women. But she rejects Engels’s claim that private property lies at the root of masculine domination since this claim fails to deal with the formation of the very subjects, male and female, that makes the gender division of labor a hierarchical one. She rejects, therefore, both the “sexual monism” of Freud and the economic monism of Engels,” and calls for their integration with a certain appropriation of biology.

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. (TSS, p.60)
Thus, Beauvoir dispenses with the scientific foundations for the view that woman is destined to be man’s Other, showing them to be fallacious. Yet she will also draw on these very same theories to investigate the way man and woman produce each other in a hierarchical relation of domination and how that relation has both historical and biographical determinants.

The Historical Labor of Dehistoricization

For Bourdieu the naturalization of masculine domination lies with the matching of subjective and objective structures, the inculcation of a habitus by social structures and the resulting harmonization of the two so that domination cannot be recognized as such (MD:33). But this matching of the subjective and the objective is not spontaneous but the result of a long historical labor that, thereby, produces the effect of eternalization.

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 “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. (MD: 82-3)

Such a history that Bourdieu calls for in programmatic terms, Beauvoir had already attempted in Part II of *The Second Sex*, itself divided into 5 chapters. She knows that a
history of the second sex must be a history of the social production of masculine
domination and its “naturalization,” “eternalization” or as Bourdieu calls it
“dehistoricization.” Bourdieu’s chapter 3 “Permanence and change” does not compare to
Beauvoir’s ambition, scope and accomplishment already in 1949 – heavily influenced by
Engels’s flawed history, to be sure, but an enormous achievement nonetheless. Included
here is the feminist appropriation of Levi-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 then
takes up as though they were original to them. In justifying his own intervention into
gender studies Bourdieu claims as his contribution is 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 recognized the importance of these arenas both in the chapter “Since the
French Revolution: The Job and the Vote” but also in Part V of her book where she
describes the “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” (TSS:138). Part III of The Second Sex is entitled “Myths” and is devoted to
the exploration of the fantasies men harbor about women that justifies their
subordination. It describes the struggles of men to realize themselves with, through and against women; 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-realization, 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 founds 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 glimpses woman as a human being with her own needs with whom he might share a life of transcendence.

Except possibly 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 does not explore that dominant point of view in any detail, which he might simply dismiss as a focus on the superficial, on “consciousness.” But it is here that Beauvoir discovers not only myths that ratify and eternalize domination but also she also catches glimpses of transcendence when men, caught in the grip of their dependence on women, recognize that their freedom can only be won with and through the freedom of women. The relentless pursuit of the sources of domination never blind Beauvoir to the possibilities of liberation. Of these possibilities we rarely catch even a glimmer in Bourdieu. In any event when the imagination is
brought down to earth, Beauvoir finds woman bound into immanence, and so the convergence with Bourdieu is restored.

**Producing the Gendered Habitus**

The archeological history of the unconscious has to be supplemented, says Bourdieu, by an understanding of personal unconscious, we need an ontogeny as well as 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 symbolical 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. (MD: 55-6)

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 celebrated sentence for which she has become famous (and famously misquoted), “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*. (p.267)

It is painful even to read the way she describes what must, after all, have been close to her own up-bringing. She draws on an array of literatures to develop a psycho-dynamic
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 all. Beauvoir insists that socialization can go awry. She points out, anticipating the work of Nancy Chodorow 30 years later, that as a result of their upbringing, being mothered by women, but also in revulsion against aggressive masculinity, from early on, in addition to heterosexual dispositions, women develop strong bonds with other women, which 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, that is, a casualty of masculine domination, and, on the other hand, lesbian sexuality as a liberated sexuality of mutual recognition. Of course, in France of 1949, we must not forget that lesbianism was a “forbidden” sexuality. It was an extraordinary act of courage to even broach the subject, let alone affirm its propriety. How 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 socialization, 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.
Domination and Its Adaptations

Once the girl becomes a woman and enters as an adult into society, she faces the strictures of marriage, 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” (TSS: 604). The child becomes an obsessive focus of attention, both as resentment and as compensations for her chains. Working with a definite vision of the nuclear family, and of the male bread winner, 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 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 labor force is a precondition for liberation, oppression follows her into the workplace. She is now bound in servitude to employer and patriarch. Nor does she think all this 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, enchained by their sovereignty.

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4 Beauvoir devotes a whole chapter to prostitution as an alternative to marriage. Just as lesbianism is a departure from normal sexualization so prostitution is a similarly alternative road to marriage whose significance and evaluation differs from society to society.
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 attention awarded to 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 center, but is diffused throughout society. Still, woman is not only object, but, even in Bourdieu’s rendition, has a subjectivity, a vision of men. Here he draws on Virginia Woolf’s, *To the Lighthouse* to capture the many ways women’s dependency on men leads them into a supporting role, participating vicariously in men’s games, a cheer leader of their men. The wife pacifies and protects the man against other men, trying to alleviate his anxieties, trying to comprehend the harshness of his domestic rule as a measure of his paternal love, or a response to the insecurities he faces. But above all women love men for the power they wield, the power denied to them.

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). (MD: 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,
put 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 idolizes him only to drag him down into her lair, demanding his everlasting attention. She realizes 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 form 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. (TSS: 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” (TSS: 628). Today these notions of woman enclosed in domesticity sound rather antiquated and Beauvoir herself recognizes 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” (TSS: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 (TSS: 680-681). Indeed, all these stratagems to realize 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. Neither Bourdieu nor Beauvoir, indeed particularly Beauvoir, can leave women doubly imprisoned, objectively and subjectively. Both search for a possible escape from immanence, from entrapment, from symbolic domination.

**Liberation**

Once again Beauvoir and Bourdieu show an amazing convergence in their interpretation of liberation. Bourdieu has generally resisted the temptation to formulate utopias, but in his postscript to *Masculine Domination* he indulges himself, 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” (MD:109). Yet he then goes on to imagine the possibility of the suspension of domination in favor 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 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. (MD: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.

(TSS: 731)

Even the expressions they use are the same, not just 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” (TSS: 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” (MD:110-111).

Still the contrast is clear. For Bourdieu liberation is thrown in as an obligatory and ill-fitting afterthought, whereas for Beauvoir it is her central concern, a subterranean stream running through the entire book that occasionally shoots up in a 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” (TSS: 730). Whereas Bourdieu tells us nothing of the conditions for his “pure love,” “art for art’s sake love”, Beauvoir insists that authentic love requires structural equality that would require access to abortion, contraception, voting rights (remember this is France 1949), but also more radical ideas such as co-parenting (TSS: 726). Beauvoir is dismissive of that spurious “equality in inequality” -- an equality of opportunity that becomes meaningless under unequal conditions. Instead she affirms socialist equality that does not yet exist (TSS: 680), but is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition of liberation. While she is only too mindful of the shortcomings of the Soviet Union (TSS: 724) with regard to the
question of female emancipation, nevertheless she applauds the promise of equality, the imagination of equality. For Bourdieu 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 condition but certainly not sufficient 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, one might say that the central tenet of her book is the specificity of masculine domination as compared to 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 in soul to masculine domination. The only hope for women, it would seem, is for working class to first make its revolution and then, and only then, women can possibly seek emancipation.

It would be hard, then, 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. (TSS: xxv. See 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 analyzes the danger of a struggle that successfully causes the recognition of an alternative sexuality. Once recognized it becomes invisible again and subjected to many of the same oppressions.

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” (MD: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 Lukacs 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. (MD: 40)

The foundations of symbolic domination, therefore, do not lie in a “mystified consciousness” but in “dispositions attuned to the structure of domination”, 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” (MD: 42-3). But we have no idea what such a transformation entails or how it might occur.

Is this different from Beauvoir who denies that women can think in terms other than those afforded by masculine domination? Bourdieu would say her writing is imbued with a “philosophy of consciousness,” but when she writes of woman -- “She has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her. It is opaque to her eyes” (TTS: 598) – is she not writing of symbolic domination? 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” (TSS: 611). You might call this absence of a “counter-universe” (TTS: 617) “false consciousness,” to be sure, but it is also deeply embedded, nurtured over a life-time. 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, nor how oppressed women may begin to assert their own standpoint. She is deeply pessimistic about any good sense emerging within the common sense. Like Bourdieu she sees only bad sense!
Theory and Practice

We see now just how different both Beauvoir and Bourdieu are from Frantz Fanon who defended intellectuals’ engagement in revolutionary activity. That was, of course, the theme of The Wretched of the Earth. A decade earlier, however, Fanon wrote Black Skins, White Masks (1952) which is much closer to The Second Sex. There Fanon dissects the psychic consequences of racial domination, discovered when he came to France from Martinique where he had thought of himself as a Frenchman and not a black man. The shock of racism, just like the shock of sexism, led Fanon to a devastating account of the situation of the racially oppressed, the mythologies that support racial domination as well as 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.⁵ More than Beauvoir does for women, Fanon emphasizes the virtues of the dominated culture, specifically the Negritude Movement, as necessary to give dignity to blacks, but always his goal, like Beauvoir and indeed Bourdieu, is to transcend racism toward a universalism where race exists but not as an instrument of domination.

Black Skins, 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. Unlike Fanon, however, she would never attach herself to a revolutionary movement. Although she inspired the feminist movement she only slowly identified herself with it.

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⁵ The same structure can also be found in Sartre’s Anti-Semite and Jew (1946) that appeared just as De Beauvoir began work on The Second Sex.
Fanon, on the other hand, travels to Algeria where he becomes a spokesman for the National Liberation movement and the revolutionary force of the peasantry. This is the standpoint of *The Wretched of the Earth*. Beauvoir never has her Algeria but remains aloof from, although openly sympathetic to, such liberation movements. She and Sartre become global intellectuals supporting humanistic struggles, very much like Bourdieu himself.\(^6\)

For Fanon theory and practice come together in a revolutionary movement whereas for Beauvoir they remain separate. This creates the contradictory position in which she dissects masculine domination, yet in her own life she 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. Far better is the “brotherhood” of Sartre! Beauvoir lives out, reflects on, struggles with the contradictions between her theory and her practice.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, seems far less self-conscious of 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 acknowledge that well-intentioned men can fall victim to deeply ingrained cognitive structures and unwittingly reproduce those when they think they are challenging them. He suggests this is true of

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\(^6\) Beauvoir meets Fanon in 1961 in Rome, not long before he denied and writes a flattering portrait of his intellectual intensity (*Forces of Circumstances*, pp.591-7.)
Kant, Sartre, Freud and even Lacan, but doesn’t question his own complicitness 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 declaiming it. The disposition of masculine domination runs deep in the unconscious for 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 recognizes that the insights of women into the life of men are often inaccessible to men themselves. They see the games of men for what they are (MD: 31, 75). They are more aware of the pitfalls of domination and how it leads to contradictory and inauthentic behavior. Notwithstanding their common framework, focused on elucidating the structures of domination, Beauvoir’s analysis is incomparably more profound, addressing rather than repressing the ambiguities and contradictions of approaching freedom from within the cage of domination.

If the habitus of masculine domination runs so deep, how is it than anyone, not least Beauvoir and Bourdieu, can even recognize 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 recognize them as insights)? Here, too, there is convergence. Bourdieu argues that masculine domination is most “magnified” in traditional societies like the Kabyle, and, while it is not recognized as such by the participants themselves, an outside ethnologist (like himself) can undertake “a socioanalysis of the andocentric unconscious that is capable of objectifying the categories of that unconscious” (MD: 5). He then
transplanted his appreciation of the Kabyle andocentric 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 andocentric 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. (TSS: xxxii-xxxiv)\footnote{7}

Objectivity for Beauvoir, like Bourdieu, comes from being both an outsider, located in a relatively autonomous space, and an insider connected to the subjects under interrogation.

\footnote{7} This is what Patricia Collins 40 years later will call the perspective of “the outsider within,” although she will trace its genealogy not to Beauvoir but to George Simmel.
While Bourdieu’s “outside from without” connection to the Kabyle is different from Beauvoir’s “outsider 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 the academy, defined by skholè and the competitive struggle for truth, for Beauvoir it is the public sphere, epitomized 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 romanticization of oppression, for that would be the triumph of misrecognition. Most fundamentally, they both agree that with some exceptions (like themselves), when it comes to appreciating the foundations of masculine domination men and women have only “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 he believes in the good sense of the oppressed, well, 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 the 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, 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, black men, being in contradictory positions, no less than white men, cannot see through the mists of domination. Patricia Hill Collins, therefore, endorses the standpoint of an organic intellectual closely tied to communities of poor back 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 contempt for organic intellectuals!

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