

The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed

O Poésie, ô ma mère mourante
Comme tes fils t'aimaient d'un grand amour
Dans ce Paris, en l'an mil huit cent trente:
Pour eux les docks, l'Autrichien, la rente
Les mots de bourse étaient du pur hébreu.

Théodore de Banville, Ballade de ses regrets
pour l'an 1830

PRELIMINARIES

Few areas more clearly demonstrate the heuristic efficacy of *relational* thinking than that of art and literature. Constructing an object such as the literary field¹ requires and enables us to make a radical break with the substantialist mode of thought (as Ernst Cassirer calls it) which tends to foreground the individual, or the visible interactions between individuals, at the expense of the structural relations – invisible, or visible only through their effects – between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be isolated individuals, groups or institutions.² There are in fact very few other areas in which the glorification of ‘great individuals’, unique creators irreducible to any condition or conditioning, is more common or uncontroversial – as one can see, for example, in the fact that most analysts uncritically accept the division of the corpus that is imposed on them by the names of authors (‘the work of Racine’) or the titles of works (*Phèdre* or *Bérénice*).

To take as one’s subject of study the literary or artistic field of a given period and society (the field of Florentine painting in the quattrocento or the field of French literature in the Second Empire) is to set the history of art and literature a task which it never completely performs, because it fails to take it on explicitly, even when it does break out of the routine of

monographs which, however interminable, are necessarily inadequate (since the essential explanation of each work lies outside each of them, in the objective relations which constitute this field). The task is that of constructing the space of positions and the space of the position-takings [*prises de position*] in which they are expressed. The science of the literary field is a form of *analysis situs* which establishes that each position – e.g. the one which corresponds to a genre such as the novel or, within this, to a sub-category such as the ‘society novel’ [*roman mondain*] or the ‘popular’ novel – is subjectively defined by the system of distinctive properties by which it can be situated relative to other positions; that every position, even the dominant one, depends for its very existence, and for the determinations it imposes on its occupants, on the other positions constituting the field; and that the structure of the field, i.e. of the space of positions, is nothing other than the structure of the distribution of the capital of specific properties which governs success in the field and the winning of the external or specific profits (such as literary prestige) which are at stake in the field.

The *space of literary or artistic position-takings*, i.e. the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field – literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics, etc. – is inseparable from the *space of literary or artistic positions* defined by possession of a determinate quantity of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of the distribution of this specific capital. The literary or artistic field is a *field of forces*, but it is also a *field of struggles* tending to transform or conserve this field of forces. The network of objective relations between positions, subtends and orients the strategies which the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (i.e. their position-takings), strategies which depend for their force and form on the position each agent occupies in the power relations [*rappports de force*].

Every position-taking is defined in relation to the *space of possibles* which is objectively realized as a *problematic* in the form of the actual or potential position-takings corresponding to the different positions; and it receives its *distinctive value* from its negative relationship with the coexistent position-takings to which it is objectively related and which determine it by delimiting it. It follows from this, for example, that a position-taking changes, even when the position remains identical, whenever there is change in the universe of options that are simultaneously offered for producers and consumers to choose from. The meaning of a work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes

automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader.

This effect is most immediate in the case of so-called classic works, which change constantly as the universe of coexistent works changes. This is seen clearly when the simple *repetition* of a work from the past in a radically transformed field of possibles produces an entirely automatic *effect of parody* (in the theatre, for example, this effect requires the performers to signal a slight distance from a text impossible to defend as it stands; it can also arise in the presentation of a work corresponding to one extremity of the field before an audience corresponding structurally to the other extremity – e.g. when an avant-garde play is performed to a bourgeois audience, or the contrary, as more often happens). It is significant that breaks with the most orthodox works of the past, i.e. with the belief they impose on the newcomers, often take the form of *parody* (intentional, this time), which presupposes and confirms *emancipation*. In this case, the newcomers ‘get beyond’ [*dépassent*] the dominant mode of thought and expression not by explicitly denouncing it but by repeating and reproducing it in a sociologically non-congruent context, which has the effect of rendering it incongruous or even absurd, simply by making it perceptible as the arbitrary convention it is. This form of *heretical break* is particularly favoured by ex-believers, who use *parodie* or *parody* as the indispensable means of objectifying, and thereby appropriating, the form of thought and expression by which they were formerly possessed.

This explains why writers’ efforts to control the reception of their own works are always partially doomed to failure (one thinks of Marx’s ‘I am not a Marxist’); if only because the very effect of their work may transform the conditions of its reception and because they would not have had to write many things they did write and write them as they did – e.g. resorting to rhetorical strategies intended to ‘twist the stick in the other direction’ – if they had been granted from the outset what they are granted retrospectively.

One of the major difficulties of the social history of philosophy, art or literature is that it has to reconstruct these spaces of original possibles which, because they were part of the *self-evident* givens of the situation, remained unremarked and are *therefore unlikely to be mentioned* in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs. It is difficult to conceive of the vast amount of information which is linked to membership of a field and which all contemporaries immediately invest in their reading of

works: information about institutions – e.g. academies, journals, magazines, galleries, publishers, etc. – and about persons, their relationships, liaisons and quarrels, information about the ideas and problems which are ‘in the air’ and circulate orally in gossip and rumour. (Some intellectual occupations presuppose a particular mastery of this information.) Ignorance of everything which goes to make up the ‘mood of the age’ produces a derealization of works: stripped of everything which attached them to the most concrete debates of their time (I am thinking in particular of the connotations of words), they are impoverished and transformed in the direction of intellectualism or an empty humanism. This is particularly true in the history of ideas, and especially of philosophy. Here the ordinary effects of derealization and intellectualization are intensified by the representation of philosophical activity as a summit conference between ‘great philosophers’; in fact, what circulates between contemporary philosophers, or those of different epochs, are not only canonical texts, but a whole philosophical doxa carried along by intellectual rumour – labels of schools, truncated quotations, functioning as slogans in celebration or polemics – by academic routine and perhaps above all by school manuals (an unmentionable reference), which perhaps do more than anything else to constitute the ‘common sense’ of an intellectual generation. Reading, and *a fortiori* the reading of books, is only one means among others, even among professional readers, of acquiring the knowledge that is mobilized in reading.

It goes without saying that, in both cases, change in the space of literary or artistic possibles is the result of change in the power relation which constitutes the space of positions. When a new literary or artistic group makes its presence felt in the field of literary or artistic production, the whole problem is transformed, since its coming into being, i.e. into difference, modifies and displaces the universe of possible options; the previously dominant productions may, for example, be pushed into the status either of outmoded [*déclassé*] or of classic works.

This theory differs fundamentally from all ‘systemic’ analyses of works of art based on transposition of the phonological model, since it refuses to consider the field of position-takings in itself and for itself, i.e. independently of the field of positions which it manifests. This is understandable when it is seen that it applies relational thinking not only to symbolic systems, whether language (like Saussure) or myth (like Lévi-Strauss), or any set of symbolic objects, e.g. clothing, literary works, etc. (like all so-called ‘structuralist’ analyses), but also to the social relations of which these symbolic systems are a more or less transformed expression. Pursuing a logic that is entirely characteristic of symbolic structuralism, but realizing that no cultural product exists by itself, i.e. outside the relations of interdependence which link it to other

products, Michel Foucault gives the name ‘field of strategic possibilities’ to the regulated system of differences and dispersions within which each individual work defines itself.³ But – and in this respect he is very close to semiologists such as Trier and the use they have made of the idea of the ‘semantic field’ – he refuses to look outside the ‘field of discourse’ for the principle which would cast light on each of the discourses within it: ‘If the Physiocrats’ analysis belongs to the same discourses as that of the Utilitarians, this is not because they lived in the same period, not because they confronted one another within the same society, not because their interests interlocked within the same economy, but because their two options sprang from one and the same distribution of the points of choice, one and the same strategic field.’⁴ In short, Foucault shifts on to the plane of possible position-takings the strategies which are generated and implemented on the sociological plane of positions; he thus refuses to relate works in any way to their social conditions of production, i.e. to positions occupied within the field of cultural production. More precisely, he explicitly rejects as a ‘doxological illusion’ the endeavour to find in the ‘field of polemics’ and in ‘divergences of interests and mental habits’ between individuals the principle of what occurs in the ‘field of strategic possibilities’, which he sees as determined solely by the ‘strategic possibilities of the conceptual games’.⁵ Although there is no question of denying the specific determination exercised by the possibilities inscribed in a given state of the space of position-takings – since one of the functions of the notion of the relatively autonomous field with its own history is precisely to account for this – it is not possible, even in the case of the scientific field and the most advanced sciences, to make the cultural order [*épistémè*] a sort of autonomous, transcendent sphere, capable of developing in accordance with its own laws.

The same criticism applies to the Russian formalists, even in the interpretation put forward by Itamar Even-Zohar in his theory of the ‘literary polysystem’, which seems closer to the reality of the texts, if not to the logic of things, than the interpretation which structuralist readings (especially by Todorov) have imposed in France.⁶ Refusing to consider anything other than the system of works, i.e. the ‘network of relationships between texts’, or ‘intertextuality’, and the – very abstractly defined – relationships between this network and the other systems functioning in the ‘system-of-systems’ which constitutes the society (we are close to Talcott Parsons), these theoreticians of cultural semiology or culturology are forced to seek in the literary system itself the principle of its dynamics. When they make the process of ‘banalization’ and ‘debanalization’ the fundamental law of poetic change and, more generally, of all cultural change, arguing that a ‘deautomatization’ must necessarily result from the ‘automatization’ induced by repetitive

use of the literary means of expression, they forget that the dialectic of orthodoxy which, in Weber's terms, favours a process of 'routinization', and of heresy, which 'deroutinizes', does not take place in the ethereal realm of ideas, and in the confrontation between, 'canonized' and 'non-canonized' texts. More concretely, they forget that the existence, form and direction of change depend not only on the 'state of the system', i.e. the 'repertoire' of possibilities which it offers, but also on the balance of forces between social agents (who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes) and (who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the other prevail). When we speak of a *field* of position-takings, we are insisting that what can be constituted as a *system* for the sake of analysis is not the product of a coherence-seeking intention or an objective consensus (even if it presupposes unconscious agreement on common principles) but the product and prize of a permanent conflict; or, to put it another way, that the generative, unifying principle of this 'system' is the struggle, with all the contradictions it engenders (so that participation in the struggle – which may be indicated objectively by, for example, the attacks that are suffered – can be used as the criterion establishing that a work belongs to the field of position-takings and its author to the field of positions).⁷

In defining the literary and artistic field as, inseparably, a field of positions and a field of position-takings we also escape from the usual dilemma of internal ('tautological') reading of the work (taken in isolation or within the system of works to which it belongs) and external (or 'allegorical') analysis, i.e. analysis of the social conditions of production of the producers and consumers which is based on the – generally tacit – hypothesis of the spontaneous correspondence or deliberate matching of production to demand or commissions. And by the same token we escape from the correlative dilemma of the charismatic image of artistic activity as pure, disinterested creation by an isolated artist, and the reductionist vision which claims to explain the act of production and its product in terms of their conscious or unconscious external functions, by referring them, for example, to the interests of the dominant class or, more subtly, to the ethical or aesthetic values of one or another of its fractions, from which the patrons or audiences are drawn.

Here one might usefully point to the contribution of Becker who, to his credit, constructs artistic production as a collective action, breaking with the naïve vision of the individual creator. For Becker, 'works of art can be understood by viewing them as the result of the co-ordinated activities of all the people whose co-operation is necessary in order that the work

should occur as it does'.⁸ Consequently the inquiry must extend to all those who contribute to this result, i.e. 'the people who conceive the idea of the work (e.g. composers or playwrights); people who execute it (musicians or actors); people who provide the necessary equipment and material (e.g. musical instrument makers); and people who make up the audience for the work (playgoers, critics, and so on)'.⁹ Without elaborating all the differences between this vision of the 'art world' and the theory of the literary and artistic field, suffice it to point out that the artistic field is not reducible to a *population*, i.e. a sum of individual agents, linked by simple relations of *interaction* – although the agents and the *volume* of the *population* of producers must obviously be taken into account (e.g. an increase in the number of agents engaged in the field has specific effects).

But when we have to re-emphasize that the principle of position-takings lies in the structure and functioning of the field of positions, this is not done so as to return to any form of economism. There is a specific economy of the literary and artistic field, based on a particular form of belief. And the major difficulty lies in the need to make a radical break with this belief and with the deceptive certainties of the language of celebration, without thereby forgetting that they are part of the very reality we are seeking to understand, and that, as such, they must have a place in the model intended to explain it. Like the science of religion, the science of art and literature is threatened by two opposite errors, which, being complementary, are particularly likely to occur since, in reacting diametrically against one of them, one necessarily falls into the other. The work of art is an object which exists as such only by virtue of the (collective) belief which knows and acknowledges it as a work of art. Consequently, in order to escape from the usual choice between celebratory effusions and the reductive analysis which, failing to take account of the fact of belief in the work of art and of the social conditions which produce that belief, destroys the work of art as such, a rigorous science of art must, *pace* both the unbelievers and iconoclasts and also the believers, assert the possibility and necessity of understanding the work in its reality as a fetish; it has to take into account everything which helps to constitute the work as such, not least the discourses of direct or disguised celebration which are among the social conditions of production of the work of art *qua* object of belief.

The production of discourse (critical, historical, etc.) about the work of art is one of the conditions of production of the work. Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it, which is thus designated as a worthy object of legitimate discourse (a recognition sometimes extorted by the logic of the

field, as when, for example, the polemic of the dominant confers participant status on the challengers), and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it and judge it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art. (And one's only hope of producing scientific knowledge – rather than weapons to advance a particular class of specific interests – is to make explicit to oneself one's position in the sub-field of the producers of discourse about art and the contribution of this field to the very existence of the object of study.)

The science of the social representation of art and of the appropriate relation to works of art (in particular, through the social history of the process of autonomization of the intellectual and artistic field) is one of the prerequisites for the constitution of a rigorous science of art, because belief in the value of the work, which is one of the major obstacles to the constitution of a science of artistic production, is part of the full reality of the work of art. There is in fact every reason to suppose that the constitution of the aesthetic gaze as a 'pure' gaze, capable of considering the work of art in and for itself, i.e. as a 'finality without an end', is linked to the institution of the work of art as an object of contemplation, with the creation of private and then public galleries and museums, and the parallel development of a corps of professionals appointed to conserve the work of art, both materially and symbolically. Similarly, the representation of artistic production as a 'creation' devoid of any determination or any social function, though asserted from a very early date, achieves its fullest expression in the theories of 'art for art's sake'; and, correlatively, in the representation of the legitimate relation to the work of art as an act of 're-action' claiming to replicate the original creation and to focus solely on the work in and for itself, without any reference to anything outside it.

The actual state of the science of works of art cannot be understood unless it is borne in mind that, whereas external analyses are always liable to appear crudely reductive, an internal reading, which establishes the charismatic, creator-to-creator relationship with the work that is demanded by the social norms of reception, is guaranteed social approval and reward. One of the effects of this charismatic conception of the relation to the work of art can be seen in the cult of the virtuoso which appeared in the late nineteenth century and which leads audiences to expect works to be performed and conducted from memory – which has the effect of limiting the repertoire and excluding avant-garde works, which are liable to be played only once.¹⁰

The educational system plays a decisive role in the generalized imposition of the legitimate mode of consumption. One reason for this is that the ideology of 're-creation' and 'creative reading' supplies teachers – lectores assigned to commentary on the canonical texts – with a legitimate substitute for the ambition to act as anchors. This is seen most clearly in the case of philosophy, where the emergence of a body of professional teachers was accompanied by the development of a would-be autonomous science of the history of philosophy, and the propensity to read works in and for themselves (philosophy teachers thus tend to identify philosophy with the history of philosophy, i.e. with a pure commentary on past works, which are thus invested with a role exactly opposite to that of suppliers of problems and instruments of thought which they would fulfil for original thinking).

Given that works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such, the sociology of art and literature has to take as its object not only the material production but also the symbolic production of the work, i.e. the production of the value of the work or, which amounts to the same thing, of belief in the value of the work. It therefore has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work – critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such, in particular teachers (but also families, etc.). So it has to take into account not only, as the social history of art usually does, the social conditions of the production of artists, art critics, dealers, patrons, etc., as revealed by indices such as social origin, education or qualifications, but also the social conditions of the production of a set of objects socially constituted as works of art, i.e. the conditions of production of the field of social agents (e.g. museums, galleries, academies, etc.) which help to define and produce the value of works of art. In short, it is a question of understanding works of art as a manifestation of the field as a whole, in which all the powers of the field, and all the determinisms inherent in its structure and functioning, are concentrated. (See Figure 1.)

THE FIELD OF CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND THE FIELD OF POWER

In figure 1, the literary and artistic field (3) is contained within the field of power (2), while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it, especially as regards its economic and political principles of hierarchiza-

Subjectivity
Symbolic
Production
CAPITAL
(like
Kuhn)

Recognized
by
spectators,
qualified
"nettes"
"experts"
"Bourgeois"
"powers"

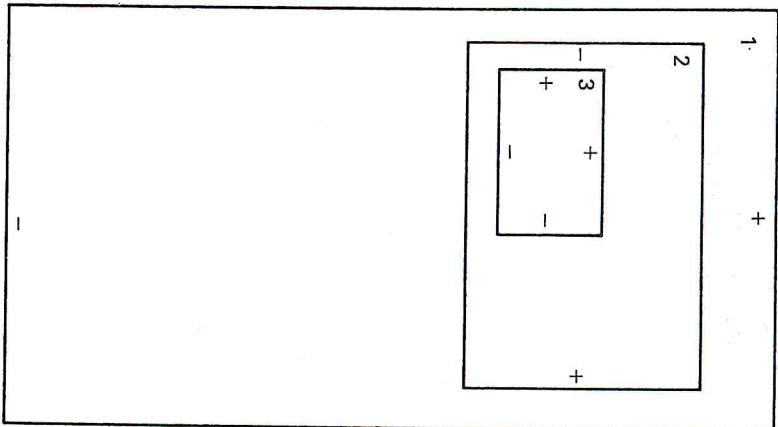


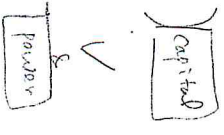
Figure 1
Field of class relations → power → culture

tion. It occupies a dominated position (at the negative pole) in this field, which is itself situated at the dominant pole of the field of class relations (1). It is thus the site of a double hierarchy: the heteronomous principle of hierarchization, which would reign unchallenged if, losing all autonomy, the literary and artistic field were to disappear as such (so that writers and artists became subject to the ordinary laws prevailing in the field of power, and more generally in the economic field), is success, as measured by indices such as book sales, number of theatrical performances, etc. or honours, appointments, etc. The autonomous principle of hierarchization, which would reign unchallenged if the field of production were to achieve total autonomy with respect to the laws of the market, is degrée specific consecration (literary or artistic prestige), i.e. the degree of recognition accorded by those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize. In other words, the specificity of the literary and artistic field is defined

by the fact that the more autonomous it is, i.e. the more completely it fulfils its own logic as a field, the more it tends to suspend or reverse the dominant principle of hierarchization, but also that, whatever its degree of independence, it continues to be affected by the laws of the field which encompasses it, those of economic and political profit. The more autonomous the field becomes, the more favourable the symbolic power balance is to the most autonomous producers, and the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production, in which the producers produce for other producers, and the field of large-scale production [*la grande production*], which is symbolically excluded and discredited (this symbolically dominant definition is the one that the historians of art and literature unconsciously adopt when they exclude from their object of study writers and artists who produced for the market and have often fallen into oblivion). Because it is a good measure of the degree of autonomy, and therefore of presumed adherence to the disinterested values which constitute the specific law of the field, the degree of public success is no doubt the main differentiating factor. But lack of success is not in itself a sign and guarantee of election, and poètes maudits, like 'successful playwrights', must take account of a secondary differentiating factor whereby some poètes maudits may also be 'failed writers' (even if exclusive reference to the first criterion can help them to avoid realizing it), while some box-office successes may be recognized at least in some sectors of the field, as genuine art.

Thus, at least in the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers (as with Symbolist poetry), the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of 'loser wins', on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains), that of power (it condemns honours and temporal greatness), and even that of institutionalized cultural authority (the absence of any academic training or consecration may be considered a virtue).

One would have to analyse in these terms the relations between writers or artists and publishers or gallery directors. The latter are equivocal figures, through whom the logic of the economy is brought to the heart of the sub-field of production-for-fellow-producers; they need to possess, simultaneously, economic dispositions which, in some sectors of the field, are totally alien to the producers and also properties close to those of the producers whose work they valorize and exploit. The logic of the structural homologues between the field of publishers or gallery directors and the field of the corresponding artists or writers does indeed mean that



SMCRES
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the former present properties close to those of the latter, and this favours the relationship of trust and belief which is the basis of an exploitation presupposing a high degree of misrecognition on each side. These 'merchants in the temple' make their living by tricking the artist or writer into taking the consequences of his or her statutory professions of disinterestedness.

This explains the inability of all forms of economism, which seek to grasp this anti-economy in economic terms, to understand this upside-down economic world. The literary and artistic world is so ordered that those who enter it have an interest in disinterestedness. And indeed, like prophecy, especially the prophecy of misfortune, which, according to Weber, demonstrates its authenticity by the fact that it brings in no income, a heretical break with the prevailing artistic traditions proves its claim to authenticity by its disinterestedness.¹¹ As we shall see, this does not mean that there is not an economic logic to this charismatic economy based on the social miracle of an act devoid of any determination other than the specifically aesthetic intention. There are economic conditions for the indifference to economy which induces a pursuit of the riskiest positions in the intellectual and artistic avant-garde, and also for the capacity to remain there over a long period without any economic compensation.

The Struggle for the Dominant Principle of Hierarchization

The literary or artistic field is at all times the site of a struggle between the two principles of hierarchization: the heteronomous principle, favourable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g. 'bourgeois art') and the autonomous principle (e.g. 'art for art's sake'), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise.¹² The state of the power relations in this struggle depends on the overall degree of autonomy possessed by the field, that is, the extent to which it manages to impose its own norms and sanctions on the whole set of producers, including those who are closest to the dominant pole of the field of power and therefore most responsive to external demands (i.e. the most heteronomous); this degree of autonomy varies considerably from one period and one national tradition to another, and affects the whole structure of the field. Everything seems to indicate that it depends on the value which the specific capital of writers and artists represents for the dominant fractions, on the one hand in the

struggle to conserve the established order and, perhaps especially, in the struggle between the fractions aspiring to domination within the field of power (bourgeoisie and aristocracy, old bourgeoisie and new bourgeoisie, etc.), and on the other hand in the production and reproduction of economic capital (with the aid of experts and cadres).¹³ All the evidence suggests that, at a given level of overall autonomy, intellectuals are, other things being equal, proportionately more responsive to the seduction of the powers that be, the less well endowed they are with specific capital.¹⁴

The struggle in the field of cultural production over the imposition of the legitimate mode of cultural production is inseparable from the struggle within the dominant class (with the opposition between 'artists' and 'bourgeois') to impose the dominant principle of domination (that is to say – ultimately – the definition of human accomplishment). In this struggle, the artists and writers who are richest in specific capital and most concerned for their autonomy are considerably weakened by the fact that some of their competitors identify their interests with the dominant principles of hierarchization and seek to impose them even within the field, with the support of the temporal powers. The most heteronomous cultural producers (i.e. those with least symbolic capital) can offer the least resistance to external demands, of whatever sort. To defend their own position, they have to produce weapons, which the dominant agents (within the field of power) can immediately turn against the cultural producers most attached to their autonomy. In endeavouring to discredit every attempt to impose an autonomous principle of hierarchization, and thus serving their own interests, they serve the interests of the dominant fractions of the dominant class, who obviously have an interest in there being only one hierarchy. In the struggle to impose the legitimate definition of art and literature, the most autonomous producers naturally tend to exclude 'bourgeois' writers and artists, whom they see as 'enemy agents'. This means, incidentally, that sampling problems cannot be resolved by one of those arbitrary decisions of positivist ignorance which are dignified by the term 'operational definition': these amount to blindly arbitrating on debates which are inscribed in reality itself, such as the question as to whether such and such a group ('bourgeois' theatre, the 'popular' novel, etc.) or such and such an individual claiming the title of writer or artist (or philosopher, or intellectual, etc.) belongs to the population of writers or artists or, more precisely, as to who is legitimately entitled to designate legitimate writers or artists.

The preliminary reflections on the definitions of the object and the boundaries of the population, which studies of writers, artists and, especially, intellectuals, often indulge in so as to give themselves an air of

scientificity, ignore the fact, which is more than scientifically attested, that the definition of the writer (or artist, etc.) is an issue at stake in struggles in every literary (or artistic, etc.) field.¹⁵ In other words, the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer and therefore to delimit the population of those entitled to take part in the struggle to define the writer. The established definition of the writer may be radically transformed by an enlargement of the set of people who have a legitimate voice in literary matters. It follows from this that every survey aimed at establishing the hierarchy of writers predetermines the hierarchy by determining the population deemed worthy of helping to establish it. In short, the fundamental stake in literary struggles is the monopoly of literary legitimacy, i.e., *inter alia*, the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves writers; or, to put it another way, it is the monopoly of the power to consecrate producers or products (we are dealing with a world of belief and the consecrated writer is the one who has the power to consecrate and to win assent when he or she consecrates an author or a work — with a preface, a favourable review, a prize, etc.).

While it is true that every literary field is the site of a struggle over the definition of the writer (a universal proposition), the fact remains that scientific analysts, if they are not to make the mistake of universalizing the particular case, need to know that they will only ever encounter historical definitions of the writer, corresponding to a particular state of the struggle to impose the legitimate definition of the writer. There is no other criterion of membership of a field than the objective fact of producing effects within it. One of the difficulties of orthodox defence against heretical transformation of the field by a redefinition of the tacit or explicit terms of entry is the fact that polemics imply a form of recognition; adversaries whom one would prefer to destroy by ignoring them cannot be combated without consecrating them. The '*Théâtre libre*' effectively entered the sub-field of drama once it came under attack from the accredited advocates of bourgeois theatre, who thus helped to produce the recognition they sought to prevent. The '*nouveaux philosophes*' came into existence as active elements in the philosophical field — and no longer just that of journalism — as soon as consecrated philosophers felt called upon to take issue with them.

The *boundary* of the field is a stake of struggles, and the social scientist's task is not to draw a dividing line between the agents involved in it by imposing a so-called operational definition, which is most likely to be imposed on him by his own prejudices or presuppositions, but to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing

agents. One could thus examine the characteristics of this boundary, which may or may not be institutionalized, that is to say, protected by conditions of entry that are tacitly and practically required (such as a certain cultural capital) or explicitly codified and legally guaranteed (e.g. all the forms of entrance examination aimed at ensuring a *numerus clausus*). It would be found that one of the most significant properties of the field of cultural production, explaining its extreme dispersion and the conflicts between rival principles of legitimacy, is the extreme permeability of its frontiers and, consequently, the extreme diversity of the 'posts' it offers, which defy any unilinear hierarchization. It is clear from comparison that the field of cultural production demands neither as much inherited economic capital as the economic field nor as much educational capital as the university sub-field or even sectors of the field of power such as the top civil service — or even the field of the 'liberal professions'.¹⁶ However, precisely because it represents one of the *indeterminate sites* in the social structure, which offer ill-defined posts, waiting to be made rather than ready made, and therefore extremely elastic and undemanding, and career paths which are themselves full of uncertainty and extremely dispersed (unlike bureaucratic careers, such as those offered by the university system), it attracts agents who differ greatly in their properties and dispositions but the most favoured of whom are sufficiently secure to be able to disdain a university career and to take on the risks of an occupation which is not a 'job' (since it is almost always combined with a private income or a 'bread-and-butter' occupation).

The 'profession' of writer or artist is one of the least professionalized there is, despite all the efforts of 'writers' associations', 'Pen Clubs', etc. This is shown clearly by (*inter alia*) the problems which arise in classifying these agents, who are able to exercise what they regard as their main occupation only on condition that they have a secondary occupation which provides their main income (problems very similar to those encountered in classifying students).

The most disputed frontier of all is the one which separates the field of cultural production and the field of power. It may be more or less clearly marked in different periods, positions occupied in each field may be more or less totally incompatible, moves from one universe to the other more or less frequent and the overall distance between the corresponding populations more or less great (e.g. in terms of social origin, educational background, etc.).

The Effect of the Homologies

The field of cultural production produces its most important effects through the play of the *homologies* between the fundamental opposition which gives the field its structure and the oppositions structuring the field of power and the field of class relations.¹⁷ These homologies may give rise to ideological effects which are produced automatically whenever oppositions at different levels are superimposed or merged. They are also the basis of partial alliances: the struggles within the field of power are never entirely independent of the struggle between the dominated classes and the dominant class, and the logic of the homologies between the two spaces means that the struggles going on within the inner field are always overdetermined and always tend to aim at two birds with one stone. The cultural producers, who occupy the economically dominated and symbolically dominant position within the field of cultural production, tend to feel solidarity with the occupants of the economically and culturally dominated positions within the field of class relations. Such alliances, based on homologies of position combined with profound differences in condition, are not exempt from misundstandings and even bad faith. The structural affinity between the literary avant-garde and the political vanguard is the basis of rapprochements, between intellectual anarchism and the Symbolist movement for example, in which convergences are flaunted (e.g. Mallarmé referring to a book as an '*attentat*' – an act of terrorist violence) but distances prudently maintained. The fact remains that the cultural producers are able to use the power conferred on them, especially in periods of crisis, by their capacity to put forward a critical definition of the social world, to mobilize the potential strength of the dominated classes and subvert the order prevailing in the field of power.

The effects of homology are not all and always automatically granted. Thus whereas the dominant fractions, in their relationship with the dominated fractions, are on the side of nature, common sense, practice, instinct, the upright and the male, and also order, reason, etc., they can no longer bring certain aspects of this representation into play in their relationship with the dominated classes, to whom they are opposed as culture to nature, reason to instinct. They need to draw on what they are offered by the dominated fractions, in order to justify their class domination, to themselves as well. The cult of art and the artist (rather than of the intellectual) is one of the necessary components of the bourgeois 'art of living', to which it brings a '*supplément d'âme*', its spiritualistic point of honour.

Even in the case of the seemingly most heteronomous forms of cultural production, such as journalism, adjustment to demand is not the product of a conscious arrangement between producers and consumers. It results from the correspondence between producers and consumers, and therefore of the products offered, and the space of the consumers, which is brought about, on the basis of the homology between the two spaces, only through the competition between the producers and through the strategies imposed by the correspondence between the space of possible position-takings and the space of positions. In other words, by obeying the logic of the objective competition between mutually exclusive positions within the field, the various categories of producers tend to supply products adjusted to the expectations of the various positions in the field of power, but without any conscious striving for such adjustment.

If the various positions in the field of cultural production can be so easily characterized in terms of the audience which corresponds to them, this is because the encounter between a work and its audience (which may be an absence of immediate audience) is, strictly speaking, a *coincidence* which is not explained either by conscious, even cynical adjustment (though there are exceptions) or by the constraints of commission and demand. Rather, it results from the homology between positions occupied in the space of production, with the correlative position-takings, and positions in the space of consumption; that is, in this case, in the field of power, with the opposition between the dominant and the dominated fractions, or in the field of class relations, with the opposition between the dominant and the dominated classes. In the case of the relation between the field of cultural production and the field of power, we are dealing with an almost perfect homology between two chiasmic structures. Just as, in the dominant class, economic capital increases as one moves from the dominated to the dominant fractions, whereas cultural capital varies in the opposite way, so too in the field of cultural production economic profits increase as one moves from the 'autonomous' pole to the 'heteronomous' pole, whereas specific profits increase in the opposite direction. Similarly, the secondary opposition which divides the most heteronomous sector into 'bourgeois art' and 'industrial' art clearly corresponds to the opposition between the dominant and the dominated classes.¹⁸

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FIELD

Heteronomy arises from *demand*, which may take the form of personal *commission* (formulated by a 'patron' in Haskell's sense of a protector

or client) or of the sanction of an autonomous market, which may be *anticipated or ignored*. Within this logic, the *relationship to the audience* and, more exactly, economic or political interest in the sense of interest in success and in the related economic or political profit, constitute one of the bases for evaluating the producers and their products. Thus, strict application of the autonomous principle of hierarchization means that producers and products will be distinguished according to their degree of success with the audience, which, it tends to be assumed, is evidence of their interest in the economic and political profits secured by success.

The duality of the principles of hierarchization means that there are few fields (other than the field of power itself) in which the antagonism between the occupants of the polar positions is more total (within the limits of the interests linked to membership of the field of power). Perfectly illustrating the distinction between relations of interaction and the structural relations which constitute a field, the polar individuals may never meet, may even ignore each other systematically, to the extent of refusing each other membership of the same class, and yet their practice remains determined by the negative relation which unites them. It could be said that the agents involved in the literary or artistic field may, in extreme cases, have nothing in common except the fact of taking part in a struggle to impose the legitimate definition of literary or artistic production.¹⁹

The hierarchy by degree of real or supposed dependence on audience, success or the economy itself overlaps with another one, which reflects the degree of specific consecration of the audience, i.e. its 'cultural' quality and its supposed distance from the centre of the specific values. Thus, within the sub-field of production-for-producers, which recognizes only the specific principle of legitimacy, those who are assured of the recognition of a certain fraction of the other producers, a presumed index of posthumous recognition, are opposed to those who, again from the standpoint of the specific criteria, are relegated to an inferior position and who, in accordance with the model of heresy, contest the legitimization principle dominant within the autonomous sub-field, either in the name of a new legitimization principle or in the name of a return to an old one. Likewise, at the other pole of the field, that of the market and of economic profit, authors who manage to secure 'high-society' successes and bourgeois consecration are opposed to those who are condemned to so-called 'popular' success – the authors of rural novels, music-hall artists, *chansonniers*, etc.

The Duality of Literary Hierarchies and Genres

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the period in which the literary field attained its maximum autonomy, these two hierarchies

seem to correspond, in the first place, to the specifically cultural hierarchy of the genres – poetry, the novel and drama – and secondarily to the hierarchy of ways of using them which, as is seen clearly in the case of the theatre and especially the novel, varies with the position of the audiences reached in the specifically cultural hierarchy.

The literary field is itself defined by its position in the hierarchy of the arts, which varies from one period and one country to another. Here one can only allude to the effect of the hierarchy of the arts and in particular to the dominance which poetry, an intellectual art, exerted until the sixteenth century over painting, a manual art,²⁰ so that, for example, the hierarchy of pictorial genres tended to depend on their distance – as regards the subject and the more or less erudite manner of treating it – from the most elaborate model of poetic discourse. It is well known that throughout the nineteenth century, and perhaps until Duchamp, the stereotype which relegated the painter to a purely manual genre ('stupid as a painter') persisted, despite the increasing exchange of symbolic services (partly, no doubt, because the painters were generally less rich in cultural capital than the writers; we know, for example, that Monet, the son of a Le Havre grocer, and Renoir, the son of a Limoges tailor, were much intimidated in the meetings at the Café Guerbois on account of their lack of education). In the case of the field of painting, autonomy had to be won from the literary field too, with the emergence of specific criticism and above all the will to break free from the writers and their discourse by producing an intrinsically polysemic work beyond all discourse, and a discourse about the work which declares the essential inadequacy of all discourse. The history of the relations between Odilon Redon and the writers – especially Huysmans – shows in an exemplary way how the painters had to fight for autonomy from the *littérateur* who enhances the illustrator by advancing himself, and to assert the irreducibility of the pictorial work (which the professional critic is more ready to recognize).²¹ The same logic can be used to analyse the relations between the composers and the poets: the concern to use without being used, to possess without being possessed, led some composers (Debussy, for example) to choose to set mediocre texts which would not eclipse them.

From the economic point of view, the hierarchy is simple and relatively stable, despite cyclical fluctuations related to the fact, for example, that the more economically profitable the various genres, the more strongly and directly they are affected by recession.²² At the top of the hierarchy is drama, which, as all observers note, secures big profits – provided by an essentially bourgeois, Parisian, and therefore relatively restricted, audience – for a very few producers (because of the small number of theatres). At the bottom is poetry, which, with a few, very rare exceptions (such as a few successes in verse drama), secures

virtually zero profit for a small number of producers. Between the two is the novel, which can secure big profits (in the case of some naturalist novels), and sometimes very big profits (some 'popular' novels), for a relatively large number of producers, from an audience which may extend far beyond the audience made up of the writers themselves, as in the case of poetry, and beyond the bourgeois audience, as in the case of theatre, into the *petite bourgeoisie* or even, especially through municipal libraries, into the 'labour aristocracy'.

From the point of view of the symbolic hierarchies, things are less simple since, as can be seen from Figure 2, the hierarchies according to distance from profits are intersected by hierarchies internal to each of the genres (i.e. according to the degree to which the authors and works conform to the specific demands of the genre), which correspond to the social hierarchy of the audiences. This is seen particularly clearly in the case of the novel, where the hierarchy of specialties corresponds to the hierarchy of the audiences reached and also, fairly strictly, to the hierarchy of the social universes represented.

The complex structure of this space can be explained by means of a simple model taking into account, on the one hand, the properties of the different arts and the different genres considered as economic enterprises (price of the product, size of the audience and length of the economic cycle) and, on the other hand, the negative relationship which, as the field increasingly imposes its own logic, is established between symbolic profit and economic profit, whereby *discredit* increases as the audience grows and its specific competence declines, together with the value of the recognition implied in the act of consumption. The different kinds of cultural enterprise vary, from an economic standpoint, in terms of the unit price of the product (a painting, a play, a concert, a book, etc.) and the cumulative number of purchasers; but they also vary according to the length of the production cycle, particularly as regards the speed with which profits are obtained (and, secondarily, the length of time during which they are secured). It can be seen that, although the opposition between the short cycle of products which sell rapidly and the long cycle of products which sell belatedly or slowly is found in each of the arts, they differ radically in terms of the mode of profit acquisition and therefore, because of the connection that is made between the size of the audience and its *social quality*, in terms of the objective and subjective relationship between the producer and the market.

There is every difference between painters who, even when they set themselves in the avant-garde, can expect to sell to a *small number of connoisseurs* (nowadays including museums) works whose value derives

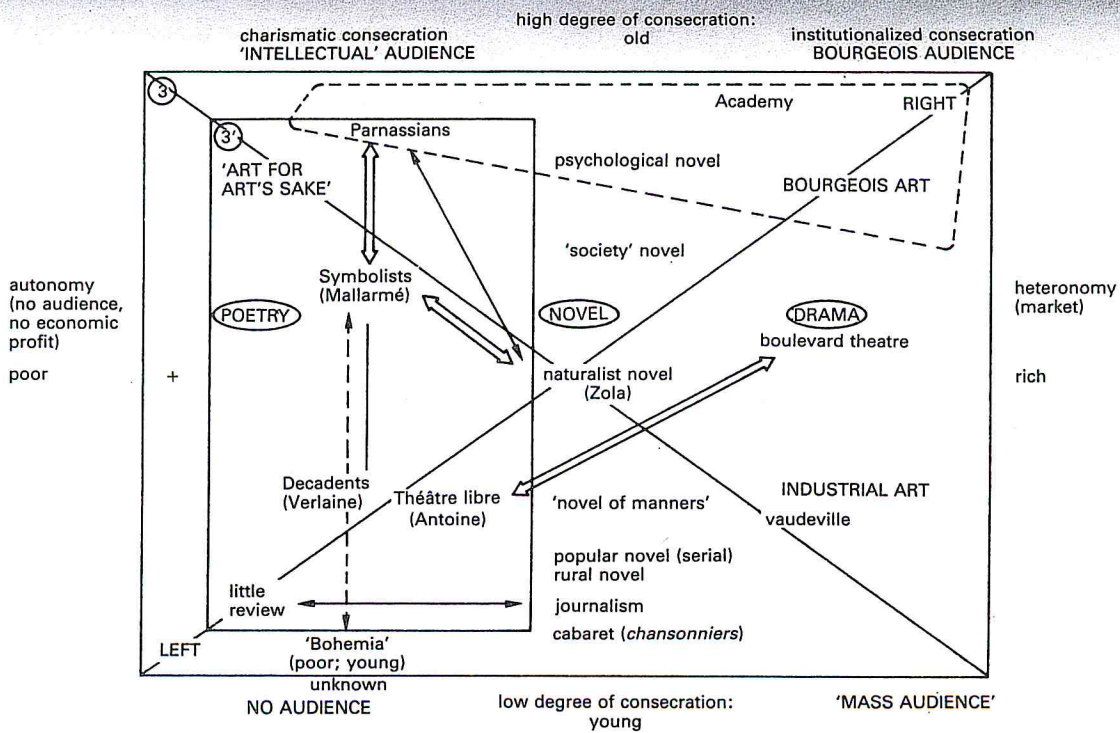


Figure 2 French literary field in the second half of the 19th century; + = positive pole, implying a dominant position, - = negative pole, implying a dominated position

partly from the fact that they are produced in limited numbers, and the writer who has to sell to an audience that is as wide as possible but one which, as it grows, is no doubt less and less composed of connoisseurs. This explains why the writers are, much more than painters, condemned to have an ambivalent attitude towards sales and their audience. They tend to be torn between the internal demands of the field of production, which regard commercial successes as suspect and push them towards a heretical break with the established norms of production and consumption, and the expectations of their vast audience, which are to some degree transfigured into a populist mission (Zola, for example, endeavoured to invoke a popular legitimacy to sublimate commercial success by transforming it into popular success). As for the dramatists, they are situated between the two poles. Established playwrights can earn big profits through repeated performances of the same work; for the others, as for composers, the main difficulty is to get their work performed at all.

Thus, the relationship of mutual exclusion between material gratification and the sole legitimate profit (i.e. recognition by one's peers) is increasingly asserted as the exclusive principle of evaluation as one moves down the hierarchy of economic gratifications. Successful authors will not fail to see this as the logic of resentment, which makes a virtue of necessity; and they are not necessarily wrong, since the absence of audience, and of profit, may be the effect of privation as much as a refusal, or a privation converted into a refusal. The question is even harder to resolve, at least summarily, since the collective bad faith which is the basis of a universe sustained by denial of the economy helps to support the effort of individual bad faith which makes it possible to experience failure in this world as election hereafter, and the incomprehension of the audience as an effect of the prophetic refusal to compromise with the demands of an audience attached to old norms of production. It is no accident that ageing, which dissolves the ambiguities, converting the elective, provisional refusals of adolescent bohemian life into the unrelieved privation of the aged, embittered bohemian, so often takes the form of an emotional crisis, marked by reversals and abjurations which often lead to the meanest tasks of 'industrial art', such as vaudeville or cabaret, and of political pamphletting. But, at the other end of the scale of economic profits, a homologous opposition is established, through the size of the audience, which is partly responsible for the volume of profit, and its recognized social quality, which determines the value of the consecration it can bestow, between bourgeois art, which has an honoured place in society, and industrial art, which is doubly suspect, being both mercantile and 'popular'.

Thus we find three competing principles of legitimacy. First, there is the specific principle of legitimacy, i.e., the recognition granted by the

set of producers who produce for other producers, their competitors, i.e. by the autonomous self-sufficient world of 'art for art's sake', meaning art for artists. Secondly, there is the principle of legitimacy corresponding to 'bourgeois' taste and to the consecration bestowed by the dominant fractions of the dominant class and by private tribunals, such as *salons*, or public, state-guaranteed ones, such as academies, which sanction the inseparably ethical and aesthetic (and therefore political) taste of the dominant. Finally, there is the principle of legitimacy which its advocates call 'popular', i.e. the consecration bestowed by the choice of ordinary consumers, the 'mass audience'. It can be seen that poetry, by virtue of its restricted audience (often only a few hundred readers), the consequent low profits, which make it the disinterested activity *par excellence*, and also its prestige, linked to the historical tradition initiated by the Romantics, is destined to charismatic legitimation which is given to only a few individuals, sometimes only one per generation and, by the same token, to a continuous struggle for the monopoly of poetic legitimacy and a succession of successful or abortive revolutions: Parnassians against Romantics, Symbolists against Parnassians, neo-classicists against the early Symbolists, neo-Symbolists against neo-classicists.

Although the break between poetry and the mass readership has been virtually total since the late nineteenth century (it is one of the sectors in which there are still many books published at the author's expense), poetry continues to represent the ideal model of literature for the least cultured consumers. As is confirmed by analysis of a dictionary of writers (such as the *Annuaire national des lettres*), members of the working and lower middle classes who write have too elevated an idea of literature to write realist novels; and their production does indeed consist essentially of poetry — very conventional in its form — and history.

The theatre, which directly experiences the immediate sanction of the bourgeois public, with its values and conformisms, can earn the institutionalized consecration of academies and official honours, as well as money. The novel, occupying a central position in both dimensions of the literary space, is the most dispersed genre in terms of its forms of consecration. It was broadly perceived as typical of the new mercantile literature, linked to the newspaper and journalism by serialization and the impact they gave to it, and above all because, unlike the theatre, it reached a 'popular' audience; with Zola and Naturalism it achieved a wide audience which, although socially inferior, provided profits equivalent to those of the theatre, without renouncing the specific demands of the art and without making any of the concessions typical of

'industrial' literature; and, with the 'society' novel [*roman mondain*], it was even able to win bourgeois consecrations previously reserved for the theatre.

Genesis of a Structure

In this legitimacy conflict, the different positions in the literary field obviously govern the position-takings, which are the aesthetic retranslations of everything which separates the field of restricted production – above all poetry which, from the 1860s on, exists virtually in a closed circuit – from the field of large-scale production, with drama and, after 1875, the Naturalist novel. In fact, although it is justified inasmuch as it grasps transhistorical invariants, the representation of the field which one is obliged to give for the purpose of analysis remains artificial to the extent that it synchronizes writers and literary groups who are contemporary only in the abstract logic of an all-purpose chronology which ignores the *structural time-scales* specific to each field. Thus bourgeois drama, whose variation-time is that of common sense and bourgeois morality and which, while being strongly 'dated', does not grow old (but without becoming classic) because there is nothing to 'outmode' it and push it into the past, lives in the long time-scale of evergreen dramas (*Madame Sans-Gêne* or *La Dame aux Camélias*) or the ageless comedies of conjugal life. Poetry, by contrast, lives in the hectic rhythm of the aesthetic revolutions which divide the continuum of ages into extremely brief literary *generations*. The novel, which really enters the game with the break introduced by the Naturalist novel, followed by the 'psychological novel', lies between these two extremes.

The fact that social age is largely independent of biological age is particularly apparent in the literary field, where generations may be less than ten years apart. This is true of Zola, born in 1840, and his recognized disciples of the *Soirées de Médan*, almost all of whom went on to found new groups: Alexis, born 1847; Huysmans, 1848; Mirbeau, 1848; Maupassant, 1850; Céard, 1851; and Hennique, 1851. The same is true of Mallarmé and his early disciples. Another example: Paul Bourget, one of the main advocates of the 'psychological novel', was only twelve years younger than Zola.

One of the most significant effects of the transformations undergone by the different genres is the transformation of their transformation-time. The model of permanent revolution which was valid for poetry tends to extend to the novel and even the theatre (with the arrival, in the

1890s, of *mise en scène*), so that these two genres are also structured by the fundamental opposition between the sub-field of large-scale production and the endlessly changing sub-field of restricted production. It follows that the opposition between the genres tends to decline as there develops within each of them an 'autonomous' sub-field, springing from the opposition between a field of restricted production and a field of large-scale production. The structure of the field of cultural production is based on two fundamental and quite different oppositions: first, the opposition between the sub-field of restricted production and the sub-field of large-scale production, i.e. between two economies, two time-scales, two audiences, which endlessly produces and reproduces the negative existence of the sub-field of restricted production and its basic opposition to the bourgeois economic order; and secondly, the opposition, within the sub-field of restricted production, between the consecrated avant-garde and the avant-garde, the established figures and the newcomers, i.e. between *artistic generations*, often only a few years apart, between the 'young' and the 'old', the 'neo' and the 'paleo', the 'new' and the 'outmoded', etc.; in short, between cultural orthodoxy and heresy.

The dualistic structure of the field of cultural production, which in the French case is expressed in the form of the opposition right bank, left bank (most clearly in the theatre), has thus been progressively constituted through a series of transformations of the field, particularly of the hierarchy of genres, which has led to the constitution of a highly autonomous sub-field of restricted production, continuously supported, in its claim to a specific autonomy, by its opposition to the sub-field of large-scale production, and characterized by a specific form of opposition, struggle and history.

Without endeavouring to describe here this complex set of partly independent processes, it is possible, with the aid of the work of Christophe Charle and Rémy Ponton,²³ to outline the evolution of the genres which widens the gap between the two sub-fields and leads to the increasing autonomization of the sub-field of restricted production. Whereas under the July Monarchy poetry and drama were at the top of the cultural hierarchy (and consequently attracted the majority of producers), with drama top in the economic hierarchy, under the Second Empire the novel joined drama at the top of the economic hierarchy, with Zola's enormous print runs (his novels had sold 2,628,000 copies by 1905) and substantial profits, without being symbolically discredited (so that it succeeded in attracting a large proportion of the newcomers). It did so because, thanks to its commercial successes, it no longer depended on the newspapers and serialization and because it won these successes without renouncing its literary pretensions. Over the same

period, poetry, which continued to attract a large proportion of the newcomers, was progressively deprived of any audience other than the producers themselves. The crisis of the 1880s affected the Naturalist novelists severely, especially those of the second generation, as well as a proportion of the writers who, having started out as poets, converted into the novel genre, with the psychological novel, a cultural and especially a social capital much greater than that of their Naturalist rivals. This, as we have seen, had the effect of bringing into the novel the division into competing schools which already existed in poetry. Drama served as a refuge for unlucky novelists and poets, who came up against the protective barriers characteristic of the genre, the discreet devices for exclusion which, like a club, the closed network of critics and consecrated authors deploys to frustrate pretentious *parvenus*. Despite short-term setbacks, the endeavours of the Naturalists (in particular, Zola's effort to overthrow the hierarchy of the genres by transferring into drama the symbolic capital he had won among a new, non-theatregoing audience) and of the Symbolists mark the beginning, with Antoinette's *Théâtre libre* and Paul Fort's and Lugné-Poe's *Théâtre de l'Œuvre*, of the schism which henceforward made drama a bipolar field.²⁴ No doubt because it is the genre most directly constrained by the demand of an (at least initially) mainly bourgeois clientele, drama was the last literary form to develop an autonomous avant-garde which, for the same reasons, always remained fragile and threatened.

This process of transformation thus led to the establishment of an autonomous sub-field which is opposed to the heterogeneous sub-field as an anti-economic economy based on the refusal of commerce and 'the commercial' and, more precisely, on the renunciation of short-term economic profits (linked to the short cycle of the field of large-scale production) and on recognition solely of *symbolic, long-term profits* (but which are ultimately convertible into economic profits). And, like Charle, we may see Zola's *J'accuse* as the culmination of this collective process of autonomization (and emancipation) — a prophetic break with the established order which asserts, in defiance of every *raison d'état*, the irreducibility of the values of truth and justice and, by the same token, the absolute independence of the guardians of these values, the intellectuals, explicitly defined as such in opposition to the constraints and seductions of economic and political life.

The parallelism between the economic expansion of the 1860s and the expansion of literary production does not imply a relationship of direct determination. Economic and social changes affect the literary field indirectly, through the growth in the cultivated audience, i.e. the potential readership, which is itself linked to increased schooling, at secondary and also at primary level. The existence of an expanding

market, which allows the development of the press and the novel, also allows the number of producers to grow. The relative opening up of the field of cultural production due to the increased number of positions offering basic resources to producers without a private income had the effect of increasing the relative autonomy of the field and therefore its capacity to reinterpret external demands in terms of its own logic (denunciation of 'industrial literature' obscures the fact that, while the field is a source of constraints, it is also liberating, inasmuch as it enables new categories of producers to subsist without constraints other than those of the market). The Naturalist revolution, which marked a step towards autonomization, can thus be seen as the encounter between the new dispositions which were brought into the field by Zola and his friends, thanks to a modification of the tacit entry conditions (this is how the morphological changes have to be understood) and which found the conditions for their fulfilment in a transformation of the objective chances. Nor can the reversal which occurred in the 1880s be understood as a direct effect of external economic or political changes. In fact, the crisis of Naturalism is correlative with the crisis of the literary market, or more precisely, with the disappearance of the conditions which had previously favoured the access of new social categories to production and consumption. And the political atmosphere (the proliferation of *Bourses du travail*, the rise of the trades unions and the socialist movement, Anzin, Fourmies, etc.), which was not unconnected with the spiritualist revival in the bourgeoisie (and the many conversions among writers), was bound to strengthen the reaction against a literary group which scandalized by its productions, its manners and its position-takings (and, through the group, against the cultural pretensions of the rising fractions of the petite bourgeoisie and bourgeoisie) and encourage a return to forms of art which, like the psychological novel, maximize denial of the social world.

Structure and Change

Changes which affect the structure of the field as a whole, such as major re-orderings of the hierarchy of genres, presuppose a concordance between internal changes, directly determined by modification of the chances of access to the literary field, and external changes which supply the new producers (the Romantics, the Naturalists, the Symbolists and the whole *fin-de-siècle* literary and artistic movement) and their new products with socially homologous consumers. This is not true to the same extent of changes which affect only the field of restricted production. These endless changes, which arise from the very structure of the field, i.e. the synchronic oppositions between the antagonistic positions

(dominant/dominated, consecrated/ novice, old/young, etc.), are largely independent of the external changes which may seem to determine them because they accompany them chronologically. This is true even when such internal changes owe their subsequent consecration mainly to a 'miraculous' encounter between (largely) independent causal series. This argument would have to be demonstrated, for example, in cases such as that of Mallarmé (or Debussy, or Fauré), in which the two opposing theses — the absolute independence of pure art, led solely by the autonomous logic of its own development, and the thesis of direct dependence on the historical situation — can both find arguments. Indeed, the *coincidence* between the properties of the social experience which privileged consumers may have had in a certain historical conjuncture and the properties of the work, in which are expressed the necessities inscribed in a *position* progressively instituted and containing a whole past and potential history, and in a *disposition*, itself progressively constituted through a whole social trajectory, is a sort of trap laid for those who, seeking to escape from internal reading of the work or the internal history of artistic life, condemn themselves to the *short circuit* of directly interrelating the period and the work. In such cases, both the period and the work are reduced to a few schematic properties, selected for the purposes of the argument, as in the Lukácsian or Goldmannian mythology of the writer as the unconscious spokesman of a group, which is simply an inversion of the Romantic myth of the poet *vates*.

Understanding a work of art, from Goldmann's standpoint, is a matter of understanding the social group from which and for which the artist composes his work, and which, at once patron and addressee, efficient cause and final cause, creates with and, as it were, through him.²⁵ But what is this group? The group the artist comes from — which may not coincide with the group from which his or her clients are drawn — or the group which is the main or favoured addressee — but is there always one? — of the production? There is no reason to suppose that the addressee, when there is one (the commissioner of the work, its dedicatee, etc.) is really the final, still less the efficient, cause of the work. At most he or she may be the occasional cause of an effort whose principle lies in the whole structure and history of the field of production and, beyond this, in the whole structure and history of the social field in question. To make the artist the unconscious spokesperson of a social group to which the work of art reveals what it unknowingly thinks or feels is to condemn oneself to assertions which would not be out of place in the wildest metaphysics, but which will have a familiar ring for readers of political theology: 'Between such art and such a social situation, can there be only a fortuitous encounter? Fauré, of course, did not intend it, but his *Madrigal* manifestly

created a diversion in the year in which trade unionism won acceptance, in which 42,000 workers flung themselves into a 46-day strike at Anzin. He proposes individual love as if as a remedy for class warfare. In the end, it could be said that the *grande bourgeoisie* turns to its composers and their dream-factories to provide the fantasies it politically and socially needs.²⁶ To understand a piece by Fauré or Debussy or a poem by Mallarmé, without reducing it to its function of compensatory escapism, denial of social reality, flight into lost paradises, means first of all determining all that is inscribed in the position, i.e. in poetry as it defines itself around the 1830s, after a continuous process of purification, sublimation, begun in the 1830s with Théophile Gautier and the Preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, taken further by Baudelaire and the Parmassians, and carried to its most evanescent extreme with Mallarmé and *le vertige du néant*; it also means determining all that this position owes to the negative relationship which opposes it to the Naturalist novel and associates it with everything that reacts against Naturalism, scientism and positivism — the psychological novel, which is obviously in the front line of the battle, but also figures such as Fouillée, Lachelier and Bourtroux, who combat positivism in philosophy, or Melchior de Vogüé, who reveals the Russian novel and its mysticism, or all those who convert to Catholicism, etc. Finally, it would mean determining everything in Mallarmé's personal and family trajectory which predisposed him to occupy and fulfil a social position progressively shaped by its successive occupants, and in particular, the relationship, examined by Rémy Ponton,²⁷ between a downward social trajectory which condemns him to the 'hideous toil of a pedagogue' and pessimism, or hermetic, i.e. anti-pedagogic, use, of language, another way of breaking free of a social reality he refuses. One would then have to explain the 'coincidence' between the product of this set of specific factors and the diffuse expectations of a declining aristocracy and a threatened bourgeoisie, in particular their nostalgia for ancient grandeur, which is also expressed in the cult of the eighteenth century and the flight into mysticism and irrationalism.

Without ever being a direct reflection of them, the internal struggles depend for their outcome on the correspondence they may have with the external struggles between the classes (or between the fractions of the dominant class) and on the reinforcement which one group or another may derive from them, through homology and the consequent synchronisms. When the newcomers are not disposed to enter the cycle of simple reproduction, based on recognition of the 'old' by the 'young' — homage, celebration, etc. — and recognition of the 'young' by the 'old' — prefaces, co-optation, consecration, etc. — but bring with them dispositions and position-takings which clash with the prevailing norms of production and the expectations of the field, they cannot succeed without the help of external changes. These may be political breaks, such as revolution-

ary crises, which change the power relations within the field (the 1848 revolution strengthened the dominated pole, causing writers to shift, very temporarily no doubt, to the left, i.e. towards 'social art'), or deep-seated changes in the audience of consumers who, because of their affinity with the new producers, ensure the success of their products.

In fact, one never observes either total submission – and erudite reproduction presupposes a form of regulated innovation, even an obligatory, limited, break with predecessors – or an absolute break – and a break with the immediately preceding generation (fathers) is often supported by a return to the traditions of the next generation back (grandfathers), whose influence may have persisted in a shadowy way. For example, though there is no need to emphasize how much the Parrassians maintain of the Romantic tradition, it is less obvious that they tapped a current of Hellenism which had lived on despite the Romantic break with imitations of Antiquity. Events such as the publication in 1819 of the works of Chénier, impregnated with Hellenism, the discovery of the Venus de Milo in 1820, the Greek War of Independence, and the death of Byron, turn attention to Grecian Antiquity; Greek myths are revitalized by the prose poems of Ballanche (*Antigone*, 1814; *Oryphée*, 1827), and at the height of the Romantic period, there are the works of Paul-Louis Courier and Maurice de Guérin.

In the field of restricted production, each change at any one point in the space of positions objectively defined by their difference, their *écart*, induces a generalized change – which means that one should not look for a specific *site* of change. It is true that the initiative of change falls almost by definition on the newcomers, i.e. the youngest, who are also those least endowed with specific capital: in a universe in which to exist is to differ, i.e. to occupy a distinct, distinctive position, they must assert their difference, get it known and recognized, get themselves known and recognized ('make a name for themselves'), by endeavouring to impose new modes of thought and expression, out of key with the prevailing modes of thought and with the doxa, and therefore bound to disconcert the orthodox by their 'obscurity' and 'pointlessness'. The fact remains that every new position, in asserting itself as such, determines a displacement of the whole structure and that, by the logic of action and reaction, it leads to all sorts of changes in the position-takings of the occupants of the other positions.

As well as the countless labels too obviously intended to *produce* the differences they claim to express, one could point to 'manifestos', which often have no other content than the aim of distinguishing themselves

from what already exists, even if they do not all go so far as the founders of the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* and explicitly declare the aim of 'doing something different'.²⁸ As for the transformations induced by the effect of the structure, a characteristic example can be found in the changes which the Naturalist novelists made in their style and themes – Maupassant with *Une vie* and Zola with *Le rêve* – in response to the success of the psychological novel,²⁹ and one may even suspect that the effect of the field explains some aspects of the sociology of Durkheim (classified by Bouglé among the representatives of the 'spiritualist initiative', alongside Bergson and Laberthonnière), in which Bouglé sees 'an effort to underpin and justify spiritualist tendencies in a new way'.³⁰

Because position-takings arise quasi-mechanically – that is, almost independently of the agents' consciousness and wills – from the relationship between positions, they take relatively invariant forms, and being determined relationally, negatively, they may remain virtually empty, amounting to little more than a *parti pris* of refusal, difference, rupture. Structurally 'young' writers, i.e. those less advanced in the process of consecration (who may be biologically almost as old as the 'old' writers they seek to oust),³¹ will refuse everything their 'elders' (in terms of legitimacy) are and do, and in particular all the indices of *social ageing*, starting with the signs of consecration, internal (academies, etc.) or external (success), whereas the 'old' writers will regard the social non-existence (in terms of success and consecration) and also the 'obscurity' of their young rivals as evidence of the voluntaristic, forced character of some endeavours to overtake them (as Zola puts it, 'a gigantic, empty pretension').

The 'young' have an interest in describing every advance in the internal hierarchy of the sub-field of restricted production as an advance in the hierarchy of the field of cultural production as a whole, and therefore contest the independence of the internal hierarchy (cf. the contesting of the 'mandarins'). They may point to the fact that while 'bourgeois' consecration (academy places, prizes, etc.) is primarily awarded to writers who produce for the mass market, it also goes to the most acceptable members of the consecrated avant-garde (and the *Académie Française* has always made room, to a varying extent at different periods, for producers from the field of restricted production). It is also clear that the opposition, within the 'autonomous' field, between professional writers, whose activity obliges them to lead an organized, regular, quasi-bourgeois life, and the 'bohemian' world of 'proletaroid intellectuals' who live on the odd jobs of journalism, publishing or teaching, may give rise to a political division, as was seen at the time of the Paris Commune.³²

The history of the field arises from the struggle between the established figures and the young challengers. The ageing of authors, schools and works is far from being the product of a mechanical, chronological, slide into the past; it results from the struggle between those who have made their mark (*fait date* – ‘made an epoch’) and who are fighting to persist, and those who cannot make their own mark without pushing into the past those who have an interest in stopping the clock, eternalizing the present stage of things.³³ ‘Making one’s mark’, initiating a new epoch, means winning recognition, in both senses, of one’s difference from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; it means, by the same token, creating a new position, ahead of the positions already occupied, in the vanguard. (Hence the importance, in this struggle for survival, of all distinctive marks, such as the names of schools or groups – words which make things, distinctive signs which produce existence.) The agents engaged in the struggle are both contemporaries – precisely by virtue of the struggle which synchronizes them – and separated by time and in respect of time: avant-garde writers have contemporaries who recognize them and whom they recognize – apart from other avant-garde writers – only in the future; consecrated writers recognize their contemporaries only in the past. The emergence of a group capable of ‘making an epoch’ by imposing a new, advanced position is accompanied by a displacement of the structure of temporally hierarchized positions opposed within a given field; each of them moves a step down the temporal hierarchy which is at the same time a social hierarchy; the avant-garde is separated by a generation from the consecrated avant-garde which is itself separated by another generation from the avant-garde that was already consecrated when it made its own entry into the field.³⁴ Each author, school or work which ‘makes its mark’ displaces the whole series of earlier authors, schools or works. As Shklovsky points out,³⁵ each period excludes certain hackneyed subjects: Tolstoy forbids mention of the ‘romantic Caucasus’ or moonlight, while Chekhov, in one of his juvenilia, lists the newly unacceptable commonplace. Because the whole series of pertinent changes is present, practically, in the latest (just as the six figures already dialled on a telephone are present in the seventh), a work or an aesthetic movement is irreducible to any other situated elsewhere in the series; and *retours* to past styles (frequent in painting) are never ‘the same thing’, since they are separated from what they return to by negative reference to something which was itself the negation of it (or the negation of the negation, etc.).³⁶

That is why, in an artistic field which has reached an advanced stage of this history, there is no place for *naïfs*; more precisely, the history is immanent to the functioning of the field, and to meet the objective

demands it implies, as a producer but also as a consumer, one has to possess the whole history of the field.³⁷

Here it would be appropriate to point to the ideal-typical opposition between Rousseau and Duchamp. Rousseau, the painter as object, who does something other than what he thinks he is doing, does not know what he does, because he knows nothing of the field he stumbles into, of which he is the *plaything* (it is significant that his painter and poet ‘friends’ stage parodic consecration scenes for him); he is made by the field, a ‘creator’ who has to be ‘created’ as a legitimate producer, with the character of ‘Douanier Rousseau’, in order to legitimate his product.³⁸ By contrast, Duchamp, born into a family of painters, the younger brother of painters, has all the tricks of the artist’s trade at his fingertips, i.e. an art of painting which (subsequently) implies not only the art of producing a work but the art of self-presentation; like the chess-player he is, he shows himself capable of thinking several moves ahead, producing art objects in which the production of the producer as artist is the precondition for the production of these objects as works of art; he admires Brisset as ‘the Douanier Rousseau of philology’ and invents the ‘ready-made’, a ‘manufactured object promoted to the dignity of an *objet d’art* by the symbolic authority of the artist’ (quite unlike Rousseau, who makes ‘assisted ready-mades’ but shamefacedly conceals his sources, e.g. for *Le lion mangeant les explorateurs*); even when he uses mythical or sexual symbols, he refers to an esoteric, alchemical, mythological or psychoanalytic culture; and he always situates himself at the second degree, even when he disabuses his exegeses of the sophisticated interpretations they have given of his works.

POSITIONS AND DISPOSITIONS

The Meeting of Two Histories

To understand the practices of writers and artists, and not least their products, entails understanding that they are the result of the meeting of two histories: the history of the positions they occupy and the history of their dispositions. Although position helps to shape dispositions, the latter, in so far as they are the product of independent conditions, have an existence and efficacy of their own and can help to shape positions. In no field is the confrontation between positions and dispositions more continuous or uncertain than in the literary and artistic field. Offering positions that are relatively uninstitutionalized, never legally guaranteed, therefore open to symbolic challenge, and non-hereditary (although there are specific forms of transmission), it is the arena *par*

excellence of struggles over job definition. In fact, however great the effect of position – and we have seen many examples of it – it never operates mechanically, and the relationship between positions and *position-takings* is mediated by the dispositions of the agents.

Likewise, morphological changes never produce their effects *mechanically*. For example, the influx, in the 1850s, of a large number of writers living with precarious means on the lower edges of the field is retranslated into a redefinition of the post, i.e. of the image of the writer, his sartorial symbolism, his political attitudes, his preferred haunts (café rather than *salon*), etc. More generally, a *numerus clausus* has the effect of protecting a definition of the function, and an increase in the number of legitimate performers of the function – whether architects, doctors or teachers – is sufficient to change the function more or less radically, through the objective devaluation which automatically ensues, the struggle by the guardians of the post to preserve the rarity which previously defined it, and the endeavours of the new occupants to adapt the position to their dispositions.

The 'post' of poet as it presents itself to the young aspirant in the 1880s is the crystallized product of the whole previous history. It is a position in the hierarchy of literary crafts, which, by a sort of effect of *caste*, gives its occupants, subjectively at least, the assurance of an essential superiority over all other writers; the lowest of the poets (Symbolist, at this time) sees himself as superior to the highest of the (Naturalist) novelists.³⁹ It is a set of 'exemplary figures' – Hugo, Gautier, etc. – who have composed the character and assigned roles, such as, for intellectuals (after Zola), that of the intellectual as the champion of great causes. It is a cluster of representations – that of the 'pure' artist, for example, indifferent to success and to the verdicts of the market – and mechanisms which, through their sanctions, support them and give them real efficacy. In short, one would need to work out the full social history of the *long, collective labour* which leads to the progressive invention of the crafts of writing, and in particular to *awareness* of the *fundamental law* of the field, i.e. the theory of art for art's sake, which is to the field of cultural production what the axiom 'business is business' (and 'in business there's no room for feelings') is to the economic field.⁴⁰ Nor, of course, must one forget the role of the mechanism which, here as elsewhere, leads people to make a virtue of necessity, in the constitution of the field of cultural production as a space radically independent of the economy and of politics and, as such, amenable to a sort of pure theory. The work of real emancipation, of which the 'post' of artist or poet is the culmination, can be performed

and pursued only if the post encounters the appropriate dispositions, such as disinterestedness and daring, and the (external) conditions of these virtues, such as a private income. In this sense, the collective invention which results in the post of writer or artist has to be endlessly repeated, even if the objectification of past discoveries and the recognition ever more widely accorded to an activity of cultural production that is an end in itself, and the will to emancipation that it implies, tend constantly to reduce the cost of this permanent reinvention. The more the autonomizing process advances, the more possible it becomes to occupy the position of producer without having the properties – or not all of them, or not to the same degree – that had to be possessed to produce the position; the more, in other words, the newcomers who head for the most 'autonomous' positions can dispense with the more or less heroic sacrifices and breaks of the past.

The position of 'pure' writer or artist, like that of intellectual, is an institution of freedom, constructed against the 'bourgeoisie' (in the artists' sense) and against institutions – in particular against the state bureaucracies, academies, salons, etc. – by a series of breaks, partly cumulative, but sometimes followed by regressions, which have often been made possible by diverting the resources of the market – and therefore the 'bourgeoisie' – and even the stage bureaucracies.⁴¹ Owing to its objectively contradictory intention, it exists only at the lowest degree of institutionalization, in the form of words ('avant-garde', for example) or models (the avant-garde writer and his or her exemplary deeds) which constitute a tradition of freedom and criticism, and also, but above all, in the form of a field of competition, equipped with its own institutions (the paradigm of which might be the *Salon des refusés* or the little *avant-garde review*) and articulated by mechanisms of competition capable of providing incentives and gratification for emancipatory endeavours. For example, the acts of prophetic denunciation of which *J'accuse* is the paradigm have become, since Zola, and perhaps especially since Sartre, so intrinsic to the personage of the intellectual that anyone who aspires to a position (especially a dominant one) in the intellectual field has to perform such exemplary acts.⁴² This explains why it is that the producers most freed from external constraints – Mallarmé, Proust, Joyce or Virginia Woolf – are also those who have taken most advantage of a historical heritage accumulated through collective labour against external constraints.

Having established, in spite of the illusion of the constancy of the thing designated, which is encouraged by the constancy of the words artist, writer, bohemian, academy, etc., what each of the positions is at each moment, one still has to understand how those who occupy them have been formed and, more precisely, the shaping of the dispositions

which help to lead them to these positions and to define their way of operating within them and staying in them. The field, as a field of possible forces, presents itself to each agent as a *space of possibles* which is defined in the relationship between the structure of average chances of access to the different positions (measured by the 'difficulty' of attaining them and, more precisely, by the relationship between the number of positions and the number of competitors) and the dispositions of each agent, the subjective basis of the perception and appreciation of each objective chances. In other words, the objective probabilities (of economic or symbolic profit, for example) inscribed in the field at a given moment only become operative and active through 'vocations', 'aspirations' and 'expectations', i.e. in so far as they are perceived and appreciated through the schemes of perception and appreciation which constitute a habitus. These schemes, which reproduce in their own logic the fundamental divisions of the field of positions in their own logic 'commercial art', 'bohemian'/'bourgeois', 'left bank'/'right bank', etc. – are one of the mediations through which dispositions are adjusted to positions. Writers and artists, particularly newcomers, do not react to an 'objective reality' functioning as a sort of stimulus valid for every possible subject, but to a 'problem-raising situation', as Popper puts it, they help to create its intellectual and affective 'physiognomy' (horror, seduction, etc.) and therefore even the symbolic force it exerts on them. A position as it appears to the (more or less adequate) 'sense of investment' which each agent applies to it presents itself either as a sort of, by contrast, as an impossible destination, an unacceptable destiny or one that is acceptable only as temporary refuge or a secondary, accessory position. This sense of social direction which orients agents, according to their modesty or daring, their disinterestedness or thirst for profit, towards the risky, long-term investments of journalism, serials or the theatre, is the basis of the astonishingly close correspondence that is found between positions and dispositions, between the social characteristics of 'posts' and the social characteristics of the agents who fill them. The correspondence is such that in all cases of coincidence and concordance in which the position is in a sense materialized in the dispositions of its occupants, it would be equally wrong to impute everything solely to position or solely to dispositions.

The mechanistic model that is, more or less consciously, put into operation when social origin, or any other variable, is made the principle crudely defined, determining position, e.g. father's occupation, more or less in turn determines opinions – totally ignores the effects of the field, in

particular those which result from the way in which the influx of newcomers is quantitatively and qualitatively regulated.⁴³ Thus the absence of statistical relation between the agents' social origin and their *position-takings* may result from an unobserved transformation of the field and of the relationship between social origin and *position-takings*, such that, for two successive generations, the same dispositions will lead to different *position-takings*, or even opposing ones (which will tend to cancel each other out).

There is nothing mechanical about the relationship between the field and the habitus. The space of available positions does indeed help to determine the properties expected and even demanded of possible candidates, and therefore the categories of agents they can attract and above all *retain*, but the perception of the space of possible positions and trajectories and the appreciation of the value each of them derives from its location in the space depend on these dispositions. It follows as a point of method that one cannot give a full account of the relationship obtaining at a given moment between the space of positions and the space of dispositions, and, therefore, of the set of *social trajectories* (or constructed biographies),⁴⁴ unless one establishes the configuration, at the moment, and at the various critical turning-points in each career, of the space of available possibilities (in particular, the economic and symbolic hierarchy of the genres, schools, styles, manners, subjects, etc.), the social value attached to each of them, and also the meaning and value they received for the different agents or classes of agents in terms of the socially constituted categories of perception and appreciation they applied to them.

It would be quite unjust and futile to reject this demand for complete reconstruction on the ground (which is undeniable) that it is difficult to perform in practice and in some cases impossible (for example, a special study would be required in order to determine, for each relevant period, the *critical points* in the trajectories corresponding to each field, which are often unquestioningly assumed to be situated where they are today). Scientific progress may consist, in some cases, in identifying all the presuppositions and begged questions implicitly mobilized by the seemingly most impeccable research, and in proposing programmes for fundamental research which would really raise all the questions which ordinary research treats as resolved, simply because it has failed to raise them. In fact, if we are sufficiently attentive, we find numerous testimonies to this perception of the space of possibilities. We see it for example in the image of the great predecessors, who provide the terms for self-definition, such as the complementary figures of Taine and Renan, for one generation of novelists and intellectuals, or the opposing

personalities of Mallarmé and Verlaine for a whole generation of poets; more simply, we see it in the exalted vision of the writer's or artist's craft which may shape the aspirations of a whole generation: 'The new literary generation grew up thoroughly impregnated with the spirit of 1830. The verses of Hugo and Musset, the plays of Alexandre Dumas and Alfred de Vigny circulated in the schools despite the hostility of the University; an infinite number of Mediaeval novels, lyrical confessions and despairing verses were composed under cover of classroom desks.⁴⁵ One could quote whole pages in which Cassagne evokes the adolescent enthusiasms of Maxime Ducamp and Renan, Flaubert and Baudelaire or Fromentin. But one can also quote this very significant passage from *Manette Salomon*, in which Goncourt and Goncourt show that what attracts and fascinates in the occupation of artist is not so much the art itself as the artist's lifestyle, the artist's life (the same logic nowadays governs the diffusion of the model of the intellectual): 'At heart, Anatole dreamt of the studio. He aspired to it with a schoolboy's imaginings and the appetites of his nature. He saw in it those horizons of Bohemia which enchant from a distance: the novel of Poverty, the shedding of bonds and rules, a life of freedom, indiscipline and disorder, every day filled with accident, adventure and the unexpected, an escape from the tidy, orderly household, from the family and its tedious Sundays, the jeering of the bourgeois, the voluptuous mystery of the female model, work that entails no effort, the right to wear fancy dress all year, a sort of unending carnival; such were the images and temptations which arose for him from the austere pursuit of art.⁴⁶

Thus, writers and artists endowed with different, even opposing dispositions can coexist, for a time at least, in the same positions. The structural constraints inscribed in the field set limits to the free play of dispositions; but there are different ways of playing within these limits. Thus, whereas the occupants of the dominant positions, especially in economic terms, such as bourgeois theatre, are strongly homogeneous, the avant-garde positions, which are defined mainly negatively, by their opposition to the dominant positions, bring together for a certain time writers and artists from very different origins, whose interests will sooner or later diverge.⁴⁷ These dominated groups, whose unity is essentially oppositional, tend to fly apart when they achieve recognition, the symbolic profits of which often go to a small number, or even to only one of them, and when the external cohesive forces weaken. As is shown by the progressive separation between the Symbolists and the Decadents (analysed below), or the break-up of the Impressionist group, the factor of division does in this case lie in dispositions, the basis of aesthetic and

political position-takings whose divergencies are felt the more strongly when associated with unequal degrees of consecration.⁴⁸

Starting out from the same, barely marked, position in the field, and defined by the same opposition to Naturalism and the Parnasse group – from which Verlaine and Mallarmé, their leaders, were each excluded – the Decadents and the Symbolists diverged as they attained full social identity.⁴⁹ The latter, drawn from more comfortable social backgrounds (i.e. the middle or upper bourgeoisie or the aristocracy) and endowed with substantial educational capital, are opposed to the former, who are often the sons of craftsmen and virtually devoid of educational capital, as the *salon* (Mallarmé's 'Tuesdays') to the café, the right bank to the left bank and bohemia, audacity to prudence,⁵⁰ and, in aesthetic terms, as 'clarity' and 'simplicity' based on 'common sense' and 'naïveté' to a hermeticism based on an explicit theory which rejects all the old forms; politically, the Symbolists are indifferent and pessimistic, the Decadents committed and progressive.⁵¹ It is clear that the field-effect which results from the opposition between the two schools, and which is intensified by the process of institutionalization that is needed to constitute a fully-fledged literary group, i.e. an instrument for accumulating and concentrating symbolic capital (with the adoption of a name, the drawing-up of manifestos and programmes and the setting-up of aggregation rites, such as regular meetings), tends to consecrate and underscore the critical differences. Verlaine, skilfully making a virtue of necessity, celebrated naïveté (just as Champfleury countered 'art for art's sake' with 'sincerity in art') whereas Mallarmé, who sets himself up as the theorist of 'the enigma in poetry', found himself pushed ever further into hermeticism by Verlaine's striving for sincerity and simplicity.⁵² And as if to provide a crucial proof of the effect of dispositions, it was the richest Decadents who joined the Symbolists (Albert Aurier) or drew closer to them (Ernest Raynaud), whereas those Symbolists who were closest to the Decadents in terms of social origin, René Ghil and Aylbert, were excluded from the Symbolist group, the former because of his faith in progress and the latter, who ended up as a realist novelist, because his works were not considered sufficiently obscure.

The Habitus and the Possibles

The propensity to move towards the economically most risky positions, and above all the capacity to persist in them (a condition for all avant-garde undertakings which precede the demands of the market), even when they secure no short-term economic profit, seem to depend to a large extent on possession of substantial economic and social capital.

This is, first, because economic capital provides the conditions for freedom from economic necessity, a private income [*la rente*] being one of the best substitutes for sales [*la vente*], as Théophile Gautier said to Feydeau: 'Flaubert was smarter than us . . . He had the wit to come into the world with money, something that is indispensable for anyone who wants to get anywhere in art.'⁵³

Those who do manage to stay in the risky positions long enough to receive the symbolic profit they can bring are indeed mainly drawn from the most privileged categories, who have also had the advantage of not having to devote time and energy to secondary, 'bread-and-butter' activities. Thus, as Ponton shows,⁵⁴ some of the Parnassians, all from the petite bourgeoisie, either had to abandon poetry at some stage and turn to better-paid literary activities, such as the 'novel of manners', or, from the outset, devoted part of their time to complementary activities such as plays or novels (e.g. François Coppée, Catulle Mendès, Jean Aicard), whereas the wealthier Parnassians could concentrate almost exclusively on their art (and when they did change to another genre, it was only after a long poetic career). We also find that the least well-off writers resign themselves more readily to 'industrial literature', in which writing becomes a job like any other.

It is also because economic capital provides the guarantees [*assurances*] which can be the basis of self-assurance, audacity and indifference to profit – dispositions which, together with the flair associated with possession of a large social capital and the corresponding familiarity with the field, i.e. the art of sensing the new hierarchies and the new structures of the chances of profit, point towards the outposts, the most exposed positions of the avant-garde, and towards the riskiest investments, which are also, however, very often the most profitable symbolically, and in the long run, at least for the earliest investors.

The sense of investment seems to be one of the dispositions most closely linked to social and geographical origin, and, consequently, through the associated social capital, one of the mediations through which the effects of the opposition between Parisian and provincial origin make themselves felt in the logic of the field.⁵⁵ Thus we find that as a rule those richest in economic, cultural and social capital are the first to move into the new positions (and this seems to be true in all fields: economic, scientific, etc.). This is the case with the writers around Paul Bourget, who abandoned Symbolist poetry for a new form of novel which broke with Naturalism and was better adjusted to the expectations of the cultivated audience. By contrast, a faulty sense of investment, linked to social distance (among writers from the working class or

the petite bourgeoisie) or geographical distance (among provincials and foreigners) inclines beginners to aim for the dominant positions at a time when, precisely because of their attractiveness (due, for example, to the economic profits they secure, in the case of the Naturalist novel, or the symbolic profits they promise, in the case of Symbolist poetry) and the intensified competition for them, the profits are tending to decline. It may also make them persist in declining or threatened positions when the best-informed agents are abandoning them. Or again, it may lead them to be drawn by the attraction of the dominant sites towards positions incompatible with the dispositions they bring to them, and to discover their 'natural place' only when it is too late, i.e. after wasting much time, through the effect of the forces of the field and in the mode of relegation. An ideal-typical example of this is Léon Cladel (1835–92), the son of a Montauban saddler, who came to Paris in 1857, joined the Parnasse movement and, after seven years of fairly impoverished bohemian existence, returned to his native Quercy and devoted himself to the regionalist novel.⁵⁶ The whole oeuvre of this eternally displaced writer is marked by the antinomy between his dispositions, linked to his starting-point, to which he eventually returned, and the positions he aimed at and temporarily occupied: 'His ambition was to glorify his native Quercy, a Latin soil trodden by rustic Hercules, in a sort of ancient, barbarous "geste"'. In distilling the arrogant poses of village champions from furious peasant scuffles, Cladel aspired to be numbered among the modest rivals of Hugo and Leconte de Lisle. Thus were born *Ompdrailles* and *La Fête votive de Bartholomé-Porte-Glaive*, bizarre epics, pastiching the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in inflated or Rabelaisian language.⁵⁷ Tension and incoherence, oscillating between parody and utter seriousness, are manifest in this project of describing the peasants of Quercy in the style of Leconte de Lisle: 'Being instinctively led' he writes in the preface to his novel *Celui-de-la-croix-aux-boeufs* (1878), 'towards the study of plebeian types and milieux, it was almost inevitable that there would sooner or later be a conflict between the coarse and the refined.'⁵⁸ Always out of step, Cladel was a peasant among the Parnassians (who, objectively and subjectively, placed him with the 'populace', like his friend Courbet),⁵⁹ and a petit-bourgeois among the peasants of his native region. Not surprisingly, the very form and content of the rustic novel to which he resigned himself, in which rehabilitation gives way to self-indulgent depiction of peasant savagery, express the contradictions of a position entirely defined by the trajectory which led to it: 'A beggar's son, a beggar dreamer, he had an innate love of village life and country people. If, from the outset, without any shilly-shallying, he had sought to render them with that holy roughness of touch which distinguishes the early manner of the master painters,

perhaps he would have made a place for himself among the most sparkling young writers of his generation.⁶⁰

But these forced returns to the 'people' are only particular cases of a more general model. And all the evidence suggests that the confrontation, within the artistic and literary field, with bourgeois, Parisian artists and writers, which impels them towards the 'people', induces writers and artists of working-class or petit-bourgeois origin to accept themselves for what they are and, like Courbet, to mark themselves positively with what is stigmatized — their provincial accent, dialect, 'proletarian' style, etc. — but the more strongly, the less successful their initial attempts at *assimilation* have been. Thus, Champfleury, a writer from very modest provincial petit-bourgeois origins, after having for some time been 'torn between two tendencies, a realism à la Monnier and German-style poetry, Romantic and sentimental',⁶¹ found himself impelled towards militant realism by the failure of his first endeavours and perhaps especially by consciousness of his difference, provoked by contact or objective competition with the Parisian writers, which sent him towards 'the people', i.e. to realism in his manner and to objects excluded from the legitimate art of the day. And this negative return to the people is no less ambiguous, and suspect, than the regionalist writers' retreat to the peasantry. Hostility to the libertarian audacities and arbitrary populism of the bourgeois intellectuals can be the basis of an anti-intellectual populism, more or less conservative, in which 'the people' are once again merely a projection in fantasy of relations internal to the intellectual field. A typical example of this field-effect can be seen in the trajectory of the same Champfleury, who, after having been the leader of the young realist writers of 1850 and the 'theorist' of the realist movement in literature and painting, was increasingly eclipsed by Flaubert and then by the Goncourts and Zola. He became a state official at the Sèvres porcelain factory and set himself up as the historian of popular imagery and literature, and, after a series of shifts and turns, the official theorist (awarded the Légion d'Honneur in 1867) of a conservatism based on exaltation of popular wisdom — in particular, of the resignation to hierarchies that is expressed in popular arts and traditions.⁶²

Thus, it is within each state of the field that — as a function of the structure of the possibles which are manifested through the different positions and the properties of the occupants (particularly with respect to social origin and the corresponding dispositions), and also as a function of the positions actually and potentially occupied within the field (experienced as success or failure) — the dispositions associated with a certain social origin are specified by being enacted in structurally marked practices; and the same dispositions lead to opposite aesthetic or

political positions, depending on the state of the field in relation to which they have to express themselves. One only has to consider the example of realism in literature or painting to see the futility of the attempts of some contemporary critics to relate the characteristics of this art directly to the characteristics of the social group — the peasantry — from which its inventors or advocates (Champfleury or Courbet) originate. It is only within a determinate state of an artistic field, and in the relationship with other artistic positions and their occupants, themselves socially characterized, that the dispositions of the realist painters and artists, which might have been expressed elsewhere in other forms of art, were fulfilled in a form of art which, within that structure, appeared as a form of aesthetic and political revolt against 'bourgeois' art and artists (or the spiritualist criticism which supported them) and, through them, against the 'bourgeois'.

To make this argument fully convincing, one would have to show how habitus, as systems of dispositions, are effectively realized only in relation to a determinate structure of positions socially marked by the social properties of their occupants, through which they manifest themselves. Thus, nothing would be more naïve than to endeavour to understand the differences between the *Théâtre de l'Oeuvre* and the *Théâtre libre* solely in terms of the differences of habitus between their respective founders, Lugné-Poe, the son of a Parisian bourgeois, and Antoine, a provincial petit-bourgeois.⁶³ Yet it seems quite impossible to understand them solely on the basis of the structural positions of the two institutions which, initially at least, seem to reproduce the opposition between the founders' dispositions. This is only to be expected, since the former are the realization of the latter in a certain state of the field, marked by the opposition between Symbolism, which is more bourgeois — not least in the characteristics of its advocates — and Naturalism, which is more petit-bourgeois. Antoine, who, like the Naturalists, and with their theoretical support, defined himself against bourgeois theatre, proposed a systematic transformation of *mise en scène*, a *specific* theatrical revolution based on a coherent thesis. Emphasizing milieu over characters, the determining context over the determined text, he made the stage 'a coherent, complete universe over which the director is sole master'.⁶⁴ By contrast, Lugné-Poe's 'scrappy but fertile' directing, which defined itself in relation to bourgeois theatre, but also in relation to Antoine's innovations, led to performances described as 'a mixture of refined invention and sloppiness'; inspired by a project that was 'sometimes demagogic, sometimes elitist', they brought together an audience in which anarchists rubbed shoulders with mystics.⁶⁵ In short, without exploring any further an opposition which appears everywhere, between the writers, newspapers or critics who support one or the other,

between the authors performed and the content of the works, with, on one side, the 'slice of life', which in some ways resembles vaudeville, and, on the other, intellectual refinements inspired by the idea, enunciated by Mallarmé, of the multi-levelled work, it can be seen that the opposition between class dispositions receives its particular content in the particular space. There is every reason to think that, as this case suggests, the weight of dispositions – and the explanatory force of 'social origin' – is particularly strong when one is dealing with a position that is in the process of birth, still to be made (rather than already made, established and capable of imposing its own norms on its occupants); and, more generally, that the scope allowed to dispositions varies according to the state of the field (in particular, its autonomy), the position in the field and the degree of institutionalization of the position.

Finally, we must ask explicitly a question which is bound to be asked: what is the degree of conscious strategy, cynical calculation, in the objective strategies which observation brings to light and which ensure the correspondence between positions and dispositions? One only has to read literary testimonies, correspondence, diaries and, especially, percolated by Huret) to see that there is no simple answer to these questions and that lucidity is always partial and is, once again, a matter of position and trajectory within the field, so that it varies from one agent and one moment to another. As for awareness of the logic of the game as such, and of the *illusio* on which it is based, I had been inclined to think that it was excluded by membership of the field, which presupposes (and induces) belief in everything which depends on the existence of the field, i.e. literature, the writer, etc., because such lucidity would make the literary or artistic undertaking itself a cynical mystification, a conscious trickery. So I thought, until I came across a text by Mallarmé which provides both the programme and the balance-sheet of a rigorous science of the literary field and the recognized fictions that are engendered within it: 'We know, captives of an absolute formula that are indeed, there is only that which is. Forthwith to dismiss the cheat, however, on a pretext, would indict our inconsequence, denying the pleasure we want to take: for that *beyond* is its agent, and the engine I might say were I not loath to perform, in public, the impious dismantling of the fiction and consequently of the literary mechanism, display the principal part or nothing. But I venerate how, by a trick, we project to a height fortified – and with thunder! – the conscious lack in us of what shines up there. What is it for? A game.'⁶⁶ This quasi-F Feuerbachian theory reduces beauty, which is sometimes thought of as a Platonic Idea, endowed with an objective, transcendent existence, to no more than the projection into a metaphysical beyond of what is lacking in the

here-and-now of literary life. But is that how it is to be taken? Hermeticism, in this case, perfectly fulfils its function: to utter 'in public' the true nature of the field, and of its mechanisms, is sacrilege *par excellence*, the unforgivable sin which all the censorships constituting the field seek to repress. These are things that can only be said in such a way that they are not said. If Mallarmé can, without excluding himself from the field, utter the truth about a field which excludes the *publishing* of its own truth, this is because he says it in a language which is designed to be *recognized* within the field because everything, in its very form, that of euphemism and *Vernennung*, affirms that he *recognizes* its censorships. Marcel Duchamp was to do exactly the same thing when he made artistic acts out of his bluffs, demystificatory mystifications which denounce fiction as mere fiction, and with it the collective belief which is the basis of this 'legitimate' imposture (as Austin would have put it). But Mallarmé's hermeticism, which bespeaks his concern not to destroy the *illusio*, has another basis too: if the Platonic illusion is the 'agent' of a pleasure which we take only because 'we want to take it', if the pleasure of the love of art has its source in unawareness of producing the source of what produces it, then it is understandable that one might, by another willing suspension of disbelief, choose to 'venerate' the authorless trickery which places the fragile fetish beyond the reach of critical lucidity.