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Pierre Bourdieu and Richard Nice
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The production of belief: contribution to an economy of symbolic goods*

PIERRE BOURDIEU
Translation by Richard Nice

'Once again, I don't like this word "entrepreneur"'

Sven Nielsen, Chairman and Managing Director of Presses de la Cité

'In another area, I had the honour, if not the pleasure, of losing money by commissioning the two monumental volumes of Carlos Baker's translation of Hemingway'

Robert Laffont

The art business, a trade in things that have no price, belongs to the class of practices in which the logic of the pre-capitalist economy lives on (as it does, in another sphere, in the economy of exchanges between the generations). These practices, functioning as practical negations,† can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing. Defying ordinary logic, they lend themselves to two opposed readings, both equally false, which each undo their essential duality and duplicity by reducing them either to the disavowal or to what is disavowed—to disinterestedness or self-interest. The challenge which economies based on disavowal of the 'economic' present to all forms of economism lies precisely in the fact that they function, and can function, in practice—and not merely in the agents' representations—only by virtue of a constant, collective repression of narrowly 'economic' interest and of the real nature of the practices revealed by 'economic' analysis.1

The disavowal of the 'economy'

In this economic universe, whose very functioning is defined by a 'refusal' of the 'commercial' which is in fact a collective disavowal of commercial interests and profits, the most 'anti-economic' and most visibly 'disinterested' behaviours, which in an 'economic' universe would be those most ruthlessly condemned, contain a form of economic rationality (even in the restricted sense) and in no way exclude their authors from even the 'economic' profits awaiting those who conform to the law of this universe. In other words, alongside the pursuit of 'economic' profit, which treats the cultural goods business as a business like any other, and not the most profitable, 'economically' speaking (as the best-informed, i.e. the most 'disinterested', art dealers

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† The terms negation, denial and disavowal are used to render the French dénégation, which itself is used in a sense akin to that of Freud's Vernachligung. See J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-analysis (Hogarth Press, London: 1973), entry 'Negation', pp. 261-263 (translator's note).
1 From now on, the inverted commas will indicate when the 'economy' is to be understood in the narrow sense in which economism understands it.
point out) and merely adapts itself to the demand of an already converted clientele, there is also room for the accumulation of symbolic capital. 'Symbolic capital' is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, mis-recognized and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a 'credit' which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees 'economic' profits. Producers and vendors of cultural goods who 'go commercial' condemn themselves, and not only from an ethical or aesthetic point of view, because they deprive themselves of the opportunities open to those who can recognize the specific demands of this universe and who, by concealing from themselves and others the interests at stake in their practice, obtain the means of deriving profits from disinterestedness. In short, when the only usable, effective capital is the (mis)recognized, legitimate capital called 'prestige' or 'authority', the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific profits produced by the field—nor the 'economic' profits they always imply—unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital. For the author, the critic, the art dealer, the publisher or the theatre manager, the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark or signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation.

The disavowal (dénégation) is neither a real negation of the 'economic' interest which always haunts the most 'disinterested' practices, nor a simple 'dissimulation' of the mercenary aspects of the practice, as even the most attentive observers have supposed. The disavowed economic enterprise of the art dealer or publisher, 'cultural bankers' in whom art and business meet in practice—which predisposes them for the rôle of scapegoat—cannot succeed, even in 'economic' terms, unless it is guided by a practical mastery of the laws of the functioning of the field in which cultural goods are produced and circulate, i.e. by an entirely improbable, and in any case rarely achieved, combination of the realism required for minor concessions to 'economic' necessities that are disavowed but not denied and of the conviction which excludes them. The fact that the disavowal of the 'economy' is neither a simple ideological

2 The 'great' publisher, like the 'great' art-dealer, combines 'economic' prudence (people often poke fun at him for his 'housekeeping' ways) with intellectual daring. He thus sets himself apart from those who condemn themselves, 'economically' at least, because they apply the same daring or the same casualness both in their commercial business and in their intellectual venture (not to mention those who combine economic imprudence with artistic prudence: 'A mistake over the cost-prices or the print runs can lead to disaster, even if the sales are excellent. When Jean-Jacques Pauvert embarked on reprinting the Littré (multi-volume dictionary) it looked like a promising venture because of the unexpectedly large number of subscribers. But when it was about to be published, they found there had been a mistake in estimating the cost-price, and they would be losing fifteen francs on each set. Pauvert had to abandon the deal to another publisher'—B. Demory, 'Le livre à l’âge de l’industrie', L’Expansion, October 1970, p. 110).

It becomes clearer why Jérôme Lindon commands the admiration both of the big 'commercial' publisher and the small avant-garde publisher: 'A publisher with a very small team and low overheads can make a good living and express his own personality. This requires very strict financial discipline on his part, since he is caught between the need to maintain financial equilibrium and the temptation to expand. I have great admiration for Jérôme Lindon, the director of Les Éditions de Minuit, who has been able to maintain that difficult balance throughout his publishing life. He has been able to promote the things he liked, and nothing else, without being blown off course. Publishers like him are needed to give birth to the nouveau roman, and they would be losing fifteen francs on each set. Pauvert had to abandon the deal to another publisher'—B. Demory, 'Le livre à l’âge de l’industrie', L’Expansion, October 1970, p. 110).

'It was during the Algerian war, and I can say that for three years I lived like an FLN militant, at the same time as I was becoming a publisher. At Editions de Minuit, Jérôme Lindon, who has always been an example for me, was denouncing torture' (F. Maspero, 'Maspero entre tous les feux', Nouvel Observateur, 17 September 1973).
mask nor a complete repudiation of economic interest, explains why on the one hand, new producers whose only capital is their conviction can establish themselves in the market by appealing to the values whereby the dominant figures accumulated their symbolic capital, and why, on the other hand, only those who can come to terms with the ‘economic’ constraints inscribed in this bad-faith economy can reap the full ‘economic’ profits of their symbolic capital.

Who creates the ‘creator’?

The ‘charisma’ ideology which is the ultimate basis of belief in the value of a work of art and which is therefore the basis of functioning of the field of production and circulation of cultural commodities, is undoubtedly the main obstacle to a rigorous science of the production of the value of cultural goods. It is this ideology which directs attention to the apparent producer, the painter, writer or composer, in short, the ‘author’, suppressing the question of what authorizes the author. If it is all too obvious that the price of a picture is not determined by the sum of the production costs—the raw material and the painter’s labour time—and if works of art provide a golden example for those who seek to refute Marx’s labour theory of value (which anyway gives a special status to artistic production), this is perhaps because people wrongly define the unit of production or, which amounts to the same thing, the process of production.

The question can be asked in its most concrete form (which it sometimes assumes in the eyes of the agents): who is the true producer of the value of the work—the painter or the dealer, the writer or the publisher, the playwright or the theatre manager? The ideology of creation, which makes the author the first and last source of the value of his work, conceals the fact that the cultural businessman (art dealer, publisher, etc.) is at one and the same time the person who exploits the labour of the ‘creator’ by trading in the ‘sacred’ and the person who, by putting it on the market, by exhibiting, publishing or staging it, consecrates a product which he has ‘discovered’ and which would otherwise remain a mere natural resource; and the more consecrated he personally is, the more strongly he consecrates the work.3 The art trader is not just the agent who gives the work a commercial value by bringing it into a market; he is not just the representative, the impresario, who ‘defends the authors he loves’. He is the person who can proclaim the value of the author he defends (cf. the fiction of the catalogue or blurb) and above all ‘invests his prestige’ in the author’s cause, acting as a ‘symbolic banker’ who offers as security all the symbolic capital he has accumulated (which he is liable to forfeit if he backs a ‘loser’).4 This investment, of which the accompanying ‘economic’ investments are themselves only a guarantee, is what brings the producer into the cycle of consecration. Entering the field of literature is not so much like going into religion as getting into a select club: the publisher is one of those prestigious sponsors (together with preface-writers and critics) who effusively recommend their candidate. Even clearer is the rôle of the art dealer who

3 This analysis, which applies in the first instance to new works by unknown authors, is equally valid for ‘under-rated’ or ‘dated’ and even ‘classic’ works, which can always be treated to ‘rediscoveries’, ‘revivals’ and ‘re-readings’ (hence so many unclassifiable philosophical, literary and theatrical productions, of which the paradigm is the avant-garde staging of traditional texts).

4 It is no accident that the art-trader’s guarantor rôle is particularly visible in the field of painting where the purchaser’s (the collector’s) ‘economic’ investment is incomparably greater than in literature or even the theatre. Raymonde Moulin observes that ‘a contract signed with a major gallery has a commercial value and that, in the eyes of the amateurs, the dealer is ‘the guarantor of the quality of the works’ (R. Moulin, Le Marché de la peinture en France, Paris, Les Editions de Minuit, 1967, p. 329).
literally has to ‘introduce’ the artist and his work into ever more select company (group exhibitions, one-man shows, prestigious collections, museums) and ever more sought-after places. But the law of this universe, whereby the less visible the investment, the more productive it is symbolically, means that promotion exercises, which in the business world take the overt form of publicity, must here be euphemized. The art trader cannot serve his ‘discovery’ unless he applies all his conviction, which rules out ‘sordidly commercial’ manoeuvres, manipulation and the ‘hard sell’, in favour of the softer, more discreet forms of ‘public relations’ (which are themselves a highly euphemized form of publicity)—receptions, society gatherings, and judiciously placed confidences.\(^5\)

The circle of belief

But in moving back from the ‘creator’ to the ‘discoverer’ or ‘creator of the creator’, we have only displaced the initial question and we still have to determine the source of the art-businessman’s acknowledged power to consecrate. The charisma ideology has a ready-made answer: the ‘great’ dealers, the ‘great’ publishers, are inspired talent-spotters who, guided by their disinterested, unreasoning passion for a work of art, have ‘made’ the painter or writer, or have helped him make himself, by encouraging him in difficult moments with the faith they had in him, guiding him with their advice and freeing him from material worries.\(^6\) To avoid an endless regress in the chain of causes, perhaps it is necessary to cease thinking in the logic, which a whole tradition encourages, of the ‘first beginning’, which inevitably leads to faith in the ‘creator’. It is not sufficient to indicate, as people often do, that the ‘discoverer’ never discovers anything that is not already discovered, at least by a few—painters already known to a small number of painters or connoisseurs, authors ‘introduced’ by other authors (it is well known, for example, that the manuscripts that will be published hardly ever arrive directly, but almost always through recognized go-betweens). His ‘authority’ is itself a credit-based value, which only exists in the relationship with the field of production as a whole, i.e. with the artists or writers who belong to his ‘stable’—‘a publisher’, said one of them, ‘is his catalogue’—and with those who do not and would or would not like to; in the relationship with the other dealers or publishers who do or do not envy him his painters or writers and are or are not capable of taking them from him; in the relationship with the critics, who do or do not believe in his judgment, and speak of his ‘products’ with varying degrees of respect; in the relationship with his clients and customers, who perceive his ‘trademark’ with greater or lesser clarity and do or do not place their trust in it. This

\(^5\) It goes without saying that, depending on the position in the field of production, promotion activities range from overt use of publicity techniques (press advertisements, catalogues etc.) and economic and symbolic pressure (e.g. on the juries who award the prizes or on the critics) to the haughty and rather ostentatious refusal to make any concessions to ‘the world’, which can, in the long run, be the supreme form of value imposition (only available to a few).

\(^6\) The ideology transfigures real functions. Only the publisher or dealer, who devotes most of his time to it, can organize and rationalize the marketing of the work, which, especially in the case of painting, is a considerable undertaking, presupposing information (as to the ‘worthwhile’ places in which to exhibit, especially abroad) and material means. But, above all, he alone, acting as a go-between and a screen, can enable the producer to maintain a charismatic, i.e. inspired and ‘disinterested’, image of himself and his activity, by sparing him the tasks associated with the valorizing of his work, which are both ridiculous, demoralizing and ineffective (symbolically at least). (The writer’s or painter’s craft, and the corresponding images of them, would probably be totally different if the producers had to market their products personally and if they depended directly, for their conditions of existence, on the sanctions of the market or on agencies which know and recognize no other sanctions, like ‘commercial’ publishing firms.)
'authority' is nothing other than 'credit' with a set of agents who constitute 'connections' whose value is proportionate to the credit they themselves command. It is all too obvious that critics also collaborate with the art trader in the effort of consecration which makes the reputation and, at least in the long term, the monetary value of works. 'Discovering' the 'new talents', they guide buyers' and sellers' choices by their writings or advice (they are often manuscript readers or series editors in publishing houses or accredited preface-writers for galleries) and by their verdicts, which though offered as purely aesthetic, entail significant economic effects (juries for literary prizes). Among the makers of the work of art, we must finally include the public which helps to make its value by appropriating it materially (collectors) or symbolically (audiences, readers), and by objectively or subjectively identifying part of its own value with these appropriations. In short, what 'makes reputations' is not, as provincial Rastignacs naively think, this or that 'influential' person, this or that institution, review, magazine, academy, coterie, dealer or publisher; it is not even the whole set of what are sometimes called 'personalities of the world of arts and letters'; it is the field of production, understood as the system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated.2

Faith and bad faith

The source of the efficacy of all acts of consecration is the field itself, the locus of the accumulated social energy which the agents and institutions help to reproduce through the struggles in which they try to appropriate it and into which they put what they have acquired from it in previous struggles. The value of works of art in general—the basis of the value of each particular work—and the belief which underlies it, are generated in the incessant, innumerable struggles to establish the value of this or that particular work, i.e. not only in the competition between agents (authors, actors, writers, critics, directors, publishers, dealers, etc.) whose interests (in the broadest sense) are linked to different cultural goods, 'middle-brow' theatre (théâtre 'bourgeois') or 'high-brow' theatre (théâtre 'intellectuel'), 'established' painting or avant-garde painting, 'mainstream' literature or 'advanced' literature, but also in the conflicts between agents occupying different positions in the production of products of the same type, painters and dealers, authors and publishers, writers and critics, etc. Even if these struggles never clearly set the 'commercial' against the 'non-commercial', 'disinterestedness' against 'cynicism', they almost always involve recognition of the ultimate values of 'disinterestedness' through the denunciation of the mercenary compromises or calculating manoeuvres of the adversary, so that disavowal of the 'economy' is placed at the very heart of the field, as the principle governing its functioning and transformation.

This is why the dual reality of the ambivalent painter-dealer or writer-publisher relationship is most clearly revealed in moments of crisis, when the objective reality of each of the positions and their relationship is unveiled and the values which do the

2 In reply to those who might seek to refute these arguments by invoking a cozy picture of solidarity between 'fellow producers' or 'colleagues', one would have to point to all the forms of 'unfair competition', of which plagiarism (more or less skilfully disguised) is only the best known and the most visible, or the violence—purely symbolic, of course—of the aggressions with which producers endeavour to discredit their rivals (c.f. the recent history of painting, which offers countless examples, one of the most typical, to cite only the dead, being the relationship between Yves Klein and Piero Manzoni).
veiling are reaffirmed. No one is better placed than the art-trader to know the interests of the makers of works and the strategies they use to defend their interests or to conceal their strategies. Although he forms a protective screen between the artist and the market, he is also what links him to the market and so provokes, by his very existence, cruel unmaskings of the truth of artistic practice. To impose his own interests, he only has to take the artist at his word when he professes 'disinterestedness'. One soon learns from conversations with these middle-men that, with a few illustrious exceptions, seemingly designed to recall the ideal, painters and writers are deeply self-interested, calculating, obsessed with money and ready to do anything to succeed. As for the artists, who cannot even denounce the exploitation they suffer without confessing their self-interested motives, they are the ones best placed to see the middle-men's strategies and the eye for an (economically) profitable investment which guides their actual aesthetic investments. The makers and marketers of works of art are adversaries in collusion, who each abide by the same law which demands the repression of direct manifestations of personal interest, at least in its overtly 'economic' form, and which has every appearance of transcendence although it is only the product of the cross-censorship weighing more or less equally on each of those who impose it on all the others.

A similar mechanism operates when an unknown artist, without credit or credibility, is turned into a known and recognized artist. The struggle to impose the dominant definition of art, i.e. to impose a style, embodied in a particular producer or group of producers, gives the work of art a value by putting it at stake, inside and outside the field of production. Everyone can challenge his adversaries' claim to distinguish art from non-art without ever calling into question this fundamental claim. Precisely because of the conviction that good and bad painting exist, competitors can exclude each other from the field of painting, thereby giving it the stakes and the motor without which it could not function. And nothing better conceals the objective collusion which is the matrix of specifically artistic value than the conflicts through which it operates.

Ritual sacrilege

This argument might be countered by pointing to the attempts made with increasing frequency in the 1960s, especially in the world of painting, to break the circle of belief. But it is all too obvious that these ritual acts of sacrilege, profanations which only ever scandalize the believers, are bound to become sacred in their turn and provide the basis for a new belief. One thinks of Manzoni, with his tins of 'artist’s shit', his magic pedestals which could turn any object placed on them into a work of art, or his signatures on living people which made them objets d’art; or Ben, with his many ‘gestures’ of provocation or derision such as exhibiting a piece of cardboard labelled ‘unique copy’ or a canvas bearing the words ‘canvas 45 cm long’. Paradoxically, nothing more clearly reveals the logic of the functioning of the artistic field than the fate of these apparently radical attempts at subversion. Because they expose the art of artistic creation to a mockery already annexed to the artistic tradition by Duchamp, they are immediately converted into artistic ‘acts’, recorded as such and thus consecrated and celebrated by the makers of taste. Art cannot reveal the truth about art without snatching it away again by turning the revelation into an artistic event. And it is significant, a contrario, that all attempts to call into question the field of artistic production, the logic of its functioning and the functions it performs, through the
highly sublimated and ambiguous means of discourse or artistic ‘acts’ (e.g. Maciunas or Flynt) are no less necessarily bound to be condemned even by the most heterodox guardians of artistic orthodoxy, because in refusing to play the game, to challenge in accordance with the rules, i.e. artistically, their authors call into question not a way of playing the game, but the game itself and the belief which supports it. This is the one unforgivable transgression.

Collective mis-recognition

The quasi-magical potency of the signature is nothing other than the power, bestowed on certain individuals, to mobilize the symbolic energy produced by the functioning of the whole field, i.e. the faith in the game and its stakes that is produced by the game itself. As Marcel Mauss observed, the problem with magic is not so much to know what are the specific properties of the magician, or even of the magical operations and representations, but rather to discover the bases of the collective belief or, more precisely, the collective misrecognition, collectively produced and maintained, which is the source of the power the magician appropriates. If it is ‘impossible to understand magic without the magic group’, this is because the magician’s power, of which the miracle of the signature or personal trademark is merely an outstanding example, is a valid imposture, a legitimate abuse of power, collectively misrecognized and so recognized. The artist who puts his name on a ready-made article and produces an object whose market price is incommensurate with its cost of production is collectively mandated to perform a magic act which would be nothing without the whole tradition leading up to his gesture, and without the universe of celebrants and believers who give it meaning and value in terms of that tradition. The source of ‘creative’ power, the ineffable mana or charisma celebrated by the tradition, need not be sought anywhere other than in the field, i.e. in the system of objective relations which constitute it, in the struggles of which it is the site and in the specific form of energy or capital which is generated there.

So it is both true and untrue to say that the commercial value of a work of art is incommensurate with its cost of production. It is true if one only takes account of the manufacture of the material object; it is not true if one is referring to the production of the work of art as a sacred, consecrated object, the product of a vast operation of social alchemy jointly conducted, with equal conviction and very unequal profits, by all the agents involved in the field of production, i.e. obscure artists and writers as well as ‘consecrated’ masters, critics and publishers as well as authors, enthusiastic clients as well as convinced vendors. These are contributions, including the most obscure, which the partial materialism of economism ignores, and which only have to be taken into account in order to see that the production of the work of art, i.e. of the artist, is no exception to the law of the conservation of social energy.8

8 These arguments take further and specify those which I have put forward with reference to haute couture, in which the economic stakes and the disavowal strategies are much more evident (see Bourdieu and Delsaut, 1975/), and philosophy; in the latter case the emphasis was placed on the contribution of interpreters and commentators to the misrecognition-recognition of the work (see Bourdieu, 1975e). The present text does not aim to apply knowledge of the general properties of fields that have been established elsewhere, to new fields. Rather, it seeks to bring the invariant laws of the functioning and transformation of fields of struggle to a higher level of explicitness and generality, by comparing several fields (painting, theatre, literature, and journalism) in which the different laws do not appear with the same degree of clarity, for reasons which have to do either with the nature of the data available or with specific properties. This procedure contrasts both with theoreticist formalism, which is its own object, and with idiographic empiricism, which can never move beyond the scholastic accumulation of falsifiable propositions.
The establishment and the challengers

Because the fields of cultural goods production are universes of belief which can only function insofar as they succeed in simultaneously producing products and the need for those products through practices which are the denial of the ordinary practices of the 'economy', the struggles which take place within them are ultimate conflicts involving the whole relation to the 'economy'. The 'zealots', whose only capital is their belief in the principles of the bad-faith economy and who preach a return to the sources, the absolute and intransigent renunciation of the early days, condemn in the same breath the merchants in the temple who bring 'commercial' practices and interests into the area of the sacred, and the pharisees who derive temporal profits from their accumulated capital of consecration by means of an exemplary submission to the demands of the field. Thus the fundamental law of the field is constantly reasserted by 'newcomers', who have most interest in repudiating self-interest. The opposition between the 'commercial' and the 'non-commercial' reappears everywhere. It is the generative principle of most of the judgments which, in the theatre, cinema, painting or literature, claim to establish the frontier between what is and what is not art, i.e. in practice, between 'bourgeois' art and 'intellectual' art, between 'traditional' and 'avant-garde' art, or, in Parisian terms, between the 'right bank' and the 'left bank'.

While this opposition can change its substantive content and designate very different realities in different fields, it remains structurally invariant in different fields and in the same field at different moments. It is always an opposition between small-scale and large-scale ('commercial') production, i.e. between the primacy of production and the field of producers or even the sub-field of producers for producers, and the primacy of marketing, audience, sales, and success measured quantitatively; between the deferred, lasting success of 'classics' and the immediate, temporary success of best-sellers; between a production based on denial of the 'economy' and of profit (sales targets, etc.) which ignores or challenges the expectations of the established audience and serves no other demand than the one it itself produces, but in the long term, and a production which secures success and the corresponding profits by adjusting to a pre-existing demand. The characteristics of the commercial enterprise and the characteristics of the cultural enterprise, understood as a more or less disavowed relation to the commercial enterprise, are inseparable. The differences in the relationship to 'economic' considerations and to the audience coincide with the differences officially recognized and identified by the taxonomies prevailing in the field. Thus the opposition between 'genuine' art and 'commercial' art corresponds to the opposition between ordinary entrepreneurs seeking immediate economic profit and cultural entrepreneurs struggling to accumulate specifically cultural capital, albeit at the cost of temporarily renouncing economic profit. As for the opposition which is made within the latter group between consecrated art and avant-garde art, or between orthodoxy and heresy, it distinguishes between, on the one hand, those who dominate the field of production and the market through the economic and symbolic capital they have been able to accumulate in earlier struggles by virtue of a particu-

9 A couple of examples, chosen from among hundreds: 'I know a painter who has real quality as regards skill, material, etc., but for me the stuff he turns out is totally commercial; he manufactures it, like bars of soap . . . When artists become very well-known, they often tend to go in for mass production' (gallery director, interview). Avant-gardism has often nothing to offer to guarantee its conviction beyond its indifference to money and its spirit of protest: 'Money doesn't count for him; even beyond the notion of public service, he sees culture as a vehicle for social protest' (de Baecque 1968).
larly successful combination of the contradictory capacities specifically demanded by the law of the field, and, on the other hand, the newcomers, who have and want no other audience than their competitors—established producers whom their practice tends to discredit by imposing new products—or other newcomers with whom they vie in novelty.

Their position in the structure of simultaneously economic and symbolic power relations which defines the field of production, i.e. in the structure of the distribution of the specific capital (and of the corresponding economic capital), governs the characteristics and strategies of the agents or institutions, through the intermediary of a practical or conscious evaluation of the objective chances of profit. Those in dominant positions operate essentially defensive strategies, designed to perpetuate the status quo by maintaining themselves and the principles on which their dominance is based. The world is as it should be, since they are on top and clearly deserve to be there; excellence therefore consists in being what one is, with reserve and understatement, urbanely hinting at the immensity of one's means by the economy of one's means, refusing the assertive, attention-seeking strategies which expose the pretensions of the young pretenders. The dominant are drawn towards silence, discretion and secrecy, and their orthodox discourse, which is only ever wrung from them by the need to rectify the heresies of the newcomers, is never more than the explicit affirmation of self-evident principles which go without saying and would go better unsaid.

'Social problems' are social relations: they emerge from confrontation between two groups, two systems of antagonistic interests and theses. In the relationship which constitutes them, the choice of the moment and sites of battle is left to the initiative of the challengers, who break the silence of the doxa and call into question the unproblematic, taken-for-granted world of the dominant groups. The dominated producers, for their part, in order to gain a foothold in the market, have to resort to subversive strategies which will eventually bring them the disavowed profits only if they succeed in overturning the hierarchy of the field without disturbing the principles on which the field is based. Thus their revolutions are only ever partial ones, which displace the censorships and transgress the conventions but do so in the name of the same underlying principles. This is why the strategy par excellence is the 'return to the sources' which is the basis of all heretical subversion and all aesthetic revolutions, because it enables the insurgents to turn against the establishment the arms which they use to justify their domination, in particular asceticism, daring, ardour, rigour and disinterestedness. The strategy of beating the dominant groups at their own game by demanding that they respect the fundamental law of the field, refusal of the 'economy', can only work if it manifests exemplary sincerity in its own refusal.

Because they are based on a relation to culture which is necessarily also a relation to the 'economy' and the market, institutions producing and marketing cultural goods, whether in painting, literature, theatre or cinema, tend to be organised into structurally and functionally homologous systems which also stand in a relation of structural homology with the field of the fractions of the dominant class (from which the greater part of their clientele is drawn). This homology is most evident in the case of the theatre. The opposition between 'bourgeois theatre' and 'avant-garde theatre', the equivalent of which can be found in painting and in literature, and which functions as a principle of division whereby authors, works, styles and subjects can be classified practically, is rooted in reality. It is found both in the social characteristics of the audiences of the different Paris theatres (age, occupation, place of residence, frequency of attendance, prices they are prepared to pay, etc.) and in the—perfectly congruent—
Table 1. The overlap of audiences between theatres (the 1963-4 season)

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<th>TNP</th>
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<th>Vieux Colombier</th>
<th>Montparnasse</th>
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We have shown for each theatre as a percentage, the three theatres that the audiences for each theatre had been to most frequently (from SEMA. La situation du théâtre en France, Tome II, Annexe, Données statistiques, Tableau 42).

characteristics of the authors performed (age, social origin, place of residence, lifestyle, etc.), the works, and the theatrical businesses themselves.

'Highbrow' theatre in fact contrasts with 'middle-brow' theatre ('théâtre de boulevard') in all these respects at once. On one side, there are the big subsidized theatres (Odéon, Théâtre de l'Est parisien, Théâtre national populaire) and the few small left-bank theatres (Vieux Colombier, Montparnasse, Gaston Baty, etc.), which are risky undertakings both economically and culturally, always on the verge of bankruptcy, offering unconventional shows (as regards content and/or mise en scène) at relatively low prices to a young, 'intellectual' audience (students, intellectuals, teachers). On the other side, the 'bourgeois' theatres (in order of intensity of the pertinent properties: Gymnase, Théâtre de Paris, Antoine, Ambassadeurs, Ambigu, Michodière, Variétés), ordinary commercial businesses whose concern for economic

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10 To remain within the limits of the information available (that provided by Pierre Guetta's excellent survey, Le théâtre et son public, roneo, Paris, Ministère des Affaires Culturelles, 1966, 2 vol.), I have only cited the theatres mentioned in this study. Out of 43 Parisian theatres listed in 1973 in the specialized press (excluding the subsidized theatres), 29 (two-thirds) offer entertainments which clearly belong to the 'boulevard' category; 8 present classical or neutral ('unmarked') works; and 6 present works which can be regarded as belonging to intellectual theatre.

11 Here, and throughout this text, 'bourgeois' is shorthand for 'dominant fractions of the dominant class' when used as a noun, and, when used as an adjective, for 'structurally linked to these fractions'. 'Intellectual' functions in the same way for 'dominated fractions of the dominant class'.
profitability forces them into extremely prudent cultural strategies, which take no risks and create none for their audiences, and offer shows that have already succeeded (adaptations of British and American plays, revivals of middlebrow 'classics') or have been newly written in accordance with tried and tested formulae. Their audience tends to be older, more "bourgeois" (executives, the professions, businessmen), and is prepared to pay high prices for shows of pure entertainment whose conventions and staging correspond to an aesthetic that has not changed for a century. Between the 'poor theatre' which caters for the dominant-class fractions richest in cultural capital and poorest in economic capital, and the 'rich theatre', which caters for the fractions richest in economic capital and poorest (in relative terms) in cultural capital, stand the classic theatres (Comédie Française, Atelier), which are neutral ground, since they draw their audience more or less equally from all fractions of the dominant class and share parts of their constituency with all types of theatre. Their programmes too are neutral or eclectic: "avant-garde boulevard" (as the drama critic of La Croix put it), represented by Anouilh, or the consecrated avant-garde.13

Games with mirrors

This structure is no new phenomenon. When Françoise Dorin, in Le Tournant, one of the great boulevard successes, places an avant-garde author in typical vaudeville situations, she is simply rediscovering (and for the same reasons) the same strategies which Scribe used in La Camaraderie, against Delacroix, Hugo and Berlioz: in 1836, to reassure a worthy public alarmed by the outrages and excesses of the Romantics, Scribe gave them Oscar Rigaut, a poet famed for his funeral odes but exposed as a hedonist, in short, a man like others, ill-placed to call the bourgeois 'grocers'.14
Françoise Dorin's play, which dramatizes a middlebrow playwright's attempts to convert himself into an avant-garde playwright, can be regarded as a sort of sociological test which demonstrates how the opposition which structures the whole space of cultural production operates simultaneously in people's minds, in the form of systems of classification and categories of perception, and in objective reality, through the mechanisms which produce the complementary oppositions between playwrights and their theatres, critics and their newspapers. The play itself offers the contrasting portraits of two theatres: on the one hand, technical clarity (p. 47) and skill (p. 158), gaiety, lightness (pp. 79, 101) and frivolity (p. 101), 'typically French' qualities (p. 101); on the other, 'pretentiousness camouflaged under ostentatious starkness' (p. 67), 'a confidence-trick of presentation' (p. 68), humourlessness, portentousness and pretentiousness (pp. 80, 85), gloomy speeches and décors ('a black curtain and a scaffold certainly help . . .'), pp. 27, 67). In short, dramatists, plays, speeches, epigrams, that are 'courageously light', joyous, lively, uncomplicated, true-to-life, as opposed to 'thinking', i.e. miserable, tedious, problematic and obscure. 'We had a bounce in our backsides. They think with theirs' (p. 36). There is no overcoming this opposition, because it separates 'intellectuals' and 'bourgeois' even in the interests they have most manifestly in common. All the contrasts which Françoise Dorin and the 'bourgeois' critics mobilize in their judgments on the theatre (in the form of oppositions between the 'black curtain' and the 'beautiful set', 'the wall well lit, well decorated' 'the actors well washed, well dressed'), and, indeed, in their whole world view, are summed up in the opposition between 'la vie en noir' and 'la vie en rose'—dark thoughts and rose-coloured spectacles—which, as we shall see, ultimately stems from two very different ways of denying the social world.¹⁵

Faced with an object so clearly organized in accordance with the canonical opposition, the critics, themselves distributed within the space of the press in accordance with the structure which underlies the object classified and the classificatory system they apply to it, reproduce, in the space of the judgments whereby they classify it and themselves, the space within which they are themselves classified (a perfect circle from which there is no escape except by objectifying it). In other words, the different judgments expressed on Le Tournant vary, in their form and content, according to the publication in which they appear, i.e. from the greatest distance of the critic and his readership vis-à-vis the 'intellectual' world to the greatest distance vis-à-vis the play and its 'bourgeois' audience and the smallest distance vis-à-vis the 'intellectual' world.¹⁶

What the papers say: the play of homology

The subtle shifts in meaning and style which, from L'Aurore to Le Figaro and from Le Figaro to L'Express, lead to the neutral discourse of Le Monde and thence to the

¹⁵ To give an idea of the power and pregnancy of these taxonomies, one example will suffice: statistical study of class tastes shows that 'intellectual' and 'bourgeois' preferences can be organised around the opposition between Goya and Renoir; to describe the contrasting fortunes of two concierge's daughters, one of whom 'marries into the servants' quarters' and the other becomes owner of a 'seventh floor flat with a terrace', Françoise Dorin compares the first to a Goya, the second to a Renoir (Dorin, 1973, p. 115).

¹⁶ What is bought is not just a newspaper but also a generative principle producing opinions, attitudes, 'positions', defined by a distinctive position in a field of institutionalized position-generators. And we may postulate that a reader will feel more completely and adequately expressed, the more perfect the homology between his paper's position in the field of the press and the position he occupies in the field of the classes (or class fractions), the basis of his opinion-generating principle.
(eloquent) silence of Le Nouvel Observateur can only be fully understood when one
knows that they accompany a steady rise in the educational level of the readership
(which, here as elsewhere, is a reliable indicator of the level of transmission or supply
of the corresponding messages), and a rise in the proportion of those class fractions—
public-sector executives and teachers—who not only read most in general but also
differ from all other groups by a particularly high rate of readership of the papers with
the highest level of transmission (Le Monde and Le Nouvel Observateur); and, con-
versely, a decline in the proportion of those fractions—big commercial and industrial
employers—who not only read least in general but also differ from other groups by a
particularly high rate of readership of the papers with the lowest level of transmission
(France-Soir, L’Aurore). To put it more simply, the structured space of discourses
reproduces, in its own terms, the structured space of the newspapers and of the
readerships for whom they are produced, with, at one end of the field, big commercial
and industrial employers, France-Soir and L’Aurore, and, at the other end, public
sector executives and teachers, Le Monde and Le Nouvel Observateur, the central
positions being occupied by private-sector executives, engineers and the professions
and, as regards the press, Le Figaro and especially L’Express, which is read more or
less equally by all the dominant-class fractions (except the commercial employers)
and constitutes the neutral point in this universe. Thus the space of judgments on
the theatre is homologous with the space of the newspapers for which they are
produced and which make them known; and also with the space of the theatres and
plays about which they are formulated—these homologies and all the games they allow
being made possible by the homology between each of these spaces and the space of
the dominant class.

Let us now run through the space of the judgments aroused by the experimental
stimulus of Françoise Dorin’s play, moving from ‘right’ to ‘left’ and from ‘right-bank’
to ‘left-bank’. First, L’Aurore: ‘Cheeky Françoise Dorin is going to be in hot water
with our snooty, Marxist intelligentsia (the two go together). The author of ‘Un sale
égoiste’ shows no respect for the solemn boredom, profound emptiness and vertiginous
nullity which characterize so many so-called ‘avant-garde’ theatrical productions. She
dares to profane with sacriligious laughter the notorious ‘incommunicability of
beings’ which is the alpha and omega of the contemporary stage. And this perverse
reactionary, who flatters the lowest appetites of consumer society, far from acknow-
ledging the error of her ways and wearing her boulevard playwright’s reputation with
humility, has the impudence to prefer the jollity of Sacha Guitry, or Feydeau’s
bedroom farces, to the darkness visible of Marguerite Duras or Arrabal. This is a
crime it will be difficult to forgive. Especially since she commits it with cheerfulness
and gaiety, using all the dreadful devices which make lasting successes’ (Gilbert

Situated at the fringe of the intellectual field, at a point where he almost has to
speak as an outsider (‘our intelligentsia’), the L’Aurore critic does not mince his words
Table 2. Degree of penetration of newspapers and weeklies in relation to fractions of the dominant class (no. of readers at the time of this survey among 1,000 heads of families in the relevant category)

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<th>Le Figaro</th>
<th>L'Express</th>
<th>Le Monde</th>
<th>Le Nouvel Observateur</th>
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Bold figures indicate the two highest values in each column.

* This number, the sum of all readers in the given category, is obviously an approximation since it doesn’t take account of double readership.


(he calls a reactionary a reactionary) and does not hide his strategies. The rhetorical effect of putting words into the opponent’s mouth, in conditions in which his discourse, functioning as an ironic antiphrasis, objectively says the opposite of what it means, presupposes and brings into play the very structure of the field of criticism and his relationship of immediate connivance with his public, based on homology of position.

From L'Aurore we move to Le Figaro. In perfect harmony with the author of Le Tournant—the harmony of orchestrated habitus—the Figaro critic cannot but experience absolute delight at a play which so perfectly corresponds to his categories of perception and appreciation, his view of the theatre and his view of the world:

How grateful we should be to Mme Françoise Dorin for being a courageously light author, which means to say that she is wittily dramatic, and smilingly serious, irreverent without fragility, pushing the comedy into outright vaudeville, but in the subtlest way imaginable; an author who wields satire with elegance, an author who at all times demonstrates astounding virtuosity. . . . Françoise Dorin knows more than any of us about the tricks of the dramatist’s art, the springs of comedy, the potential of a situation, the comic or biting force of the mot juste. . . . Yes, what skill in taking things apart, what irony in the deliberate side-stepping, what mastery in the way she lets you see her pulling the strings! Le Tournant gives every sort of enjoyment without an ounce of self-indulgence or vulgarity. And without ever being facile either, since it is quite clear that right now, conformism lies with the avant-garde, absurdity lies in gravity and imposture in tedium. Mme Françoise Dorin will relieve a well-balanced audience by bringing them back into balance with healthy laughter. . . . Hurry and see for yourselves and I think you will laugh so heartily that you will forget to think how anguishing it can be for a writer to wonder if she is still in tune with the times in which she lives. . . . In the end it is a question everyone asks themselves and only humour and incurable optimism can free them from it! (Jean-Jacques Gautier, Le Figaro, 12 January 1973).

From Le Figaro one moves naturally to L'Express, which remains poised between endorsement and distance, thereby attaining a distinctly higher degree of euphemization:
It's bound to be a runaway success. . . . A witty and amusing play. A character. An actor who puts the part on like a glove: Jean Piat. With an unfailing virtuosity that is only occasionally drawn out too long, with a sly cunning, a perfect mastery of the tricks of the trade, Françoise Dorin has written a play on the 'turning point' in the Boulevard which is, ironically, the most traditional of Boulevard plays. Only morose pedants will probe too far into the contrast between two conceptions of political life and the underlying private life. The brilliant dialogue, full of witticisms and epigrams, is often viciously sarcastic. But Romain is not a caricature, he is much less stupid than the run-of-the-mill avant-garde writer. Philippe has the plum rôle, because he is on his own ground. What the author of 'Comme au théâtre' gently wants to suggest is that the Boulevard is where people speak and behave 'as in real life', and this is true, but it is only a partial truth, and not just because it is a class truth (Robert Kanters, L'Express, 15-21 January 1973).

Here the approval, which is still total, already begins to be qualified by systematic use of formulations that are ambiguous even as regards the oppositions involved: 'It's likely to be a runaway success', 'a sly cunning, a perfect mastery of the tricks of the trade', 'Philippe has the plum rôle', all formulae which could also be taken pejoratively. And we even find, surfacing through its negation, a glimmer of the other truth ('Only morose pedants will probe too far . . .') or even of the truth tout court, but doubly neutralized, by ambiguity and negation ('and not just because it is a class truth').

Le Monde offers a perfect example of ostentatiously neutral discourse, even-handedly dismissing both sides, both the overtly political discourse of L'Aurore and the disdainful silence of Le Nouvel Observateur:

The simple or simplistic argument is complicated by a very subtle 'two-tier' structure, as if there were two plays overlapping. One by Françoise Dorin, a conventional author, the other invented by Philippe Roussel, who tries to take 'the turning' towards modern theatre. This game performs a circular movement, like a boomerang. Françoise Dorin deliberately exposes the Boulevard clichés which Philippe attacks and, through his voice, utters a violent denunciation of the bourgeoisie. On the second tier, she contrasts this language with that of a young author whom she assails with equal vigour. Finally, the trajectory brings the weapon back onto the Boulevard stage, and the futilities of the mechanism are unmasked by the devices of the traditional theatre. which have therefore lost nothing of their value. Philippe is able to declare himself a 'courageously light' playwright, inventing 'characters who talk like everybody'; he can claim that his art is 'without frontiers' and therefore non-political. However, the demonstration is entirely distorted by the model avant-garde author chosen by Françoise Dorin. Vankovitz is an epigone of Marguerite Duras, a belated existentialist with militant leanings. He is caricatural in the extreme, as is the theatre that is denounced here ("A black curtain and a scaffold certainly help!" or the title of a play: 'Do take a little infinity in your coffee, Mr Karsov'). The audience gloats at this derisive picture of the modern theatre; the denunciation of the bourgeoisie is an amusing provocation inasmuch as it rebounds onto a detested victim and finishes him off. . . . To the extent that it reflects the state of bourgeois theatre and reveals its systems of defence, Le Tournant can be regarded as an important work. Few plays let through so much anxiety about an 'external' threat and recuperate it with so much unconscious fury (Louis Dandrel, Le Monde, 13 January 1973).

The ambiguity which Robert Kanters was already cultivating here reaches its peaks. The argument is 'simple or simplistic', take your pick; the play is split in two, offering two works for the reader to choose, a 'violent' but 'recuperatory' critique of the 'bourgeoisie' and a defence of non-political art. For anyone naive enough to ask whether the critic is 'for or against', whether he finds the play 'good or bad', there are two answers: first, an 'objective informant's' dutiful report that the avant-garde author portrayed is 'caricatural in the extreme' and that 'the audience gloats (jubilee) (but without our knowing where the critic stands in relation to this audience, and therefore what the significance of this gloat is); then, after a series of judgments that are
kept ambiguous by many reservations, nuances and academic attenuations ('Insofar as ...', 'can be regarded as ...'), the assertion that Le Tournant is 'an important work', but, be it noted, as a document illustrating the crisis of modern civilization, as they would say at Sciences Po.19

Although the silence of Le Nouvel Observateur no doubt signifies something in itself, we can form an approximate idea of what its position might have been by reading its review of Félicien Marceau's play La preuve par quatre or the review of Le Tournant by Philippe Tesson, then editor of Combat, published in Le Canard Enchaîné:

Theatre seems to me the wrong term to apply to these society gatherings of tradesmen and businesswomen in the course of which a famous and much loved actor recites the laboriously witty text of an equally famous author in the middle of an elaborate stage set, even a revolving one decorated with Folon's measured humour. . . . No 'ceremony' here, no 'catharsis' or 'revelation' either, still less improvisation. Just a warmed-up dish of plain cooking (cuisine bourgeoise) for stomachs that have seen it all before. . . . The audience, like all boulevard audiences in Paris, bursts out laughing, at the right time, in the most conformist places, wherever this spirit of easy-going rationalism comes into play. The connivance is perfect and the actors are all in on it. This play could have been written ten, twenty or thirty years ago (M Pierre, Le Nouvel Observateur, 12 February 1964, reviewing Félicien Marceau's La preuve par quatre).

Françoise Dorin really knows a thing or two. She's a first-rate recuperator and terribly well-bred. Her Le Tournant is an excellent Boulevard comedy, which works mainly on bad faith and demagogy. The lady wants to prove that avant-garde theatre is tripe. To do so, she takes a big bag of tricks and need I say that as soon as she pulls one out the audience rolls in the aisles and shouts for more. Our author, who was just waiting for that, does it again. She gives us a young lefty playwright called Vankovitz—get it?—and puts him in various ridiculous, uncomfortable and rather shady situations, to show that this young gentleman is no more disinterested, no less bourgeois, than you and I. What common sense, Mme Dorin, what lucidity and what honesty! You at least have the courage to stand by your opinions, and very healthy, red-white-and-blue ones they are too (Philippe Tesson, Le Canard enchaîné, 17 March 1973).

Presuppositions and misplaced remarks

Because the field is objectively polarized, critics on either side can pick out the same properties and use the same concepts to designate them (‘crafty’, ‘tricks’, ‘common sense’, ‘healthy’, etc.) but these concepts take on an ironic value (‘common sense . . .’) and thus function in reverse when addressed to a public which does not share the same relationship of connivance which is moreover strongly denounced (‘as soon as she pulls one out, the audience rolls in the aisles’ . . . “the author was just waiting for that” . . . Nothing more clearly shows than does the theatre, which can only work on the basis of total connivance between the author and the audience (this is why the correspondence between the categories of theatres and the divisions of the dominant class is so close and so visible), that the meaning and value of words (and especially

19 This art of conciliation and compromise achieves the virtuosity of art for art’s sake with the critic of La Croix, who laces his unconditional approval with such subtly articulated justifications, with understatements through double-negation, nuances, reservations and self-corrections, that the final conciliatio oppositorum, so naïvely jesuitical ‘in form and substance’, as he would say, almost seems to go without saying: 'Le Tournant, as I have said, seems to me an admirable work, in both form and substance. This is not to say it will not put many people's teeth on edge. I happened to be sitting next to an unconditional supporter of the avant-garde and throughout the evening I was aware of his suppressed anger. However, I by no means conclude that Françoise Dorin is unfair to certain very respectable—albeit often tedious—experiments in the contemporary theatre. . . . And if she concludes—her preference is delicately hinted—with the triumph of the ‘Boulevard’—but a boulevard that is itself avant-garde—that is precisely because for many years a master like Anouilh has placed himself as a guide at the crossroads of these two paths' (Jean Vigneron, La Croix, 21 January 1973).
jokes) depends on the market on which they are uttered; that the same sentences can take on opposite meanings when addressed to groups with opposite presuppositions. Françoise Dorin simply exploits the structural logic of the field of the dominant class when, presenting the misadventures of an avant-garde author to a boulevard audience, she turns against avant-garde theatre the weapon it likes to use against 'bourgeois' conversation and against the 'bourgeois theatre' which reproduces its truisms and clichés (one thinks of Ionesco, describing The Bald Prima-Dona or Jacques as 'a sort of parody or caricature of boulevard theatre, a boulevard theatre decomposing and becoming insane'). Breaking the relation of ethical and aesthetic symbiosis which links 'intellectual' discourse with its audience, she turns it into a series of 'misplaced' remarks which shock or provoke laughter because they are not uttered in the appropriate place and before the appropriate audience. They become, in the literal sense, a parody, a discourse which establishes with its audience the immediate complicity of laughter only because it has persuaded them to reject the presuppositions of the parodied discourse, if indeed they ever accepted those presuppositions.

The foundations of connivance

It would be a mistake to regard the term-for-term relationship between the critics' discourse and the properties of their readerships as a sufficient explanation. If the polemical image each camp has of its opponents leaves so much room for this type of explanation, that is because it makes it possible to disqualify aesthetic or ethical choices by reference to the fundamental law of the field, by exposing cynical calculation as their source, e.g. the pursuit of success at all costs, even through provocation and scandal (more of a right-bank argument) or self-interested servility, with the theme (favoured on the left bank) of the 'lackey of the bourgeoisie'. In fact, the partial objectifications of self-interested polemics (which is what almost all studies of the 'intellectuals' amount to) miss the essential point by describing as the product of a conscious calculation what is, in fact, the almost miraculous encounter of two systems of interests (which may coexist in the person of the 'bourgeois' writer) or, more precisely, of the structural and functional homology between any given writer's or artist's position in the field of production and the position of his audience in the field of the classes and class fractions. The so-called 'écrivains de service', whose opponents accuse them of being the servants of the bourgeoisie, are justified in protesting that strictly speaking they serve no one: they serve objectively only because, with total sincerity, in full unawareness of what they are doing, they serve their own interests, i.e. specific interests, highly sublimated and euphemized, such as the 'interest' in a particular form of theatre or philosophy which is logically associated with a certain position in a certain field and which (except in periods of crisis) has every likelihood of masking its own political implications, even in the eyes of its protagonists. Through the logic of homologies, the practices and works of the agents in a specialized, relatively autonomous field of production are necessarily overdetermined; the functions they fulfil in the internal struggles are inevitably accompanied by external functions, which are conferred on them in the symbolic struggles among the fractions of the dominant class and, in the long run at least, among the classes. Critics serve their reader-

20 The logic of the functioning of the fields of cultural goods production as fields of struggle favouring strategies aimed at distinction means that the products of their functioning, whether haute couture 'creations' or novels, are predisposed to function differentially, as instruments of distinction, first between the class fractions and then between the classes.
ships so well only because the homology between their position in the intellectual field and their readership's position within the dominant-class field is the basis of an objective connivance (based on the same principles as that required by the theatre, especially for comedy) which means that they most sincerely, and therefore most effectively, defend the ideological interests of their clientele when defending their own interests as intellectuals against their specific adversaries, the occupants of opposing positions in the field of production.21

The power to convince

'Sincerity' (which is one of the preconditions of symbolic efficacy) is only possible—and only achieved—when there is a perfect and immediate harmony between the expectations inscribed in the position occupied (in a less consecrated universe, one would say 'the job description') and the dispositions of the occupant. It is impossible to understand how dispositions come to be adjusted to positions (so that the journalist is adjusted to his newspaper and consequently to that paper's readership, and the readers are adjusted to the paper and so to the journalist) unless one is aware that the objective structures of the field of production give rise to categories of perception which structure the perception and appreciation of its products. This explains how antithetical couples—of persons (all the 'maîtres à penser') or institutions, newspapers (Figaro/Nouvel Observateur, or in a different practical context, Nouvel Observateur/Humanité), theatres (right-bank/left-bank, private/subsidized, etc.) galleries publishers, reviews, couturiers, etc.—can function as classificatory schemes, which exist and signify only in their mutual relations, and serve as landmarks or beacons. As is seen more clearly in avant-garde painting than anywhere else, a practical mastery of these markers, a sort of sense of social direction, is indispensable in order to be able to navigate in a hierarchically structured space in which movement is always fraught with the danger of losing class, in which places—galleries, theatres, publishing-houses—make all the difference (e.g. between 'commercial porn' and 'quality eroticism') because these sites designate an audience which, on the basis of the homology between the field of production and the field of consumption, qualifies the product consumed, helping to give it rarity or vulgarity. This practical mastery gives its possessors a 'nose' and a 'feeling', without any need for cynical calculation, for 'what needs to be done', where to do it, how, and with whom, in view of all that has been done and is being done, all those who are doing it, and where.22 Choosing the right place of publication, the right publisher, journal, gallery or magazine is vitally important because for each author, each form of production and product, there is a corresponding natural site in the field of production, and producers or products that are not in their right place are more or less bound to fail. All the homologies which guarantee a receptive audience and sympathetic critics for the producer who has found his place in the structure work in the opposite way for those who have strayed from their natural site. Avant-garde publishers and the producers of best-

21 We can believe those critics most noted for their conformity to their expectations of their readership when they insist that they never espouse their readers' opinions and often fight against them. Thus, Jean-Jacques Gautier (1972, pp. 25–26) rightly says that the effectiveness of his critiques stems not from a demagogic adjustment to the audience but from an objective agreement, which permits a perfect sincerity between critic and audience that is also essential in order to be believed and therefore efficacious.

22 'You're not informed like that, they're just things you feel... I didn't know exactly what I was doing. There are people who sent things in, I didn't know... . . . Information means having a vague sense, wanting to say things and coming across the right way... . . . It's lots of little things, it's feelings, not information' (painter, interview).
sellers both agree that they would inevitably come to grief if they took it into their heads to publish works objectively assigned to the opposite pole in the publishing universe: Minuit best-sellers and Laffont nouveaux romans. Similarly, in accordance with the law that one only ever preaches to the converted, a critic can only 'influence' his readers insofar as they extend him this power because they are structurally attuned to him in their view of the social world, their tastes and their whole habitus. Jean-Jacques Gautier gives a good description of this elective affinity between the journalist, his paper and his readers: a good Figaro editor, who has chosen himself and been chosen through the same mechanisms, chooses a Figaro literary critic because 'he has the right tone for speaking to the readers of the paper', because, without having deliberately tried, 'he naturally speaks the language of Le Figaro' and is the paper's 'ideal reader'. 'If tomorrow I started speaking the language of Les Temps Modernes, for example, or Saintes Chapelles des Lettres, people would no longer read me or understand me, so they would not listen to me, because I would be assuming a certain number of ideas or arguments which our readers don't give a damn about'. To each position there correspond presuppositions, a doxa, and the homology between the producers' positions and their clients' is the precondition for this complicity, which is that much more strongly required when fundamental values are involved, as they are in the theatre. The fact that the choices whereby individuals join groups or groups co-opt individuals are oriented by a practical mastery of the laws of the field explains the frequent occurrence of the miraculous agreement between objective structures and internalized structures which enables the producers of cultural goods to produce objectively necessary and overdetermined discourses in full freedom and sincerity.

The sincerity in duplicity and euphemization which gives ideological discourse its particular symbolic force derives, firstly, from the fact that the specific interests—relatively autonomous with respect to class interests—attached to a position in a specialized field cannot be satisfied legitimately, and therefore efficiently, except at the cost of perfect submission to the laws of the field, i.e. in this particular case, disavowal of the usual form of interest; and, secondly, from the fact that the homology which exists between all fields of struggle organized on the basis of an unequal distribution of a particular kind of capital means that the highly censored and euphemized discourses and practices which are thus produced by reference to 'pure', purely 'internal' ends, are always predisposed to perform additional, external functions. They do so the more effectively the less aware they are aware of doing so, and when their adjustment to demand is not the product of conscious design but the result of a structural correspondence.

The long run and the short run

The fundamental principle of the differences between 'commercial' businesses and 'cultural' businesses is once again to be found in the characteristics of cultural goods. Publishers are also perfectly aware that a book's success depends on where it is published. They know what is 'made for them' and what is not and observe that a certain book which was 'right for them' (e.g. Gallimard) has done badly with another publisher (e.g. Laffont). The adjustment between author and publisher and then between book and readership is thus the result of a series of choices which all involve the publisher's brand image. Authors choose their publisher in terms of this image, and he chooses them in terms of his own idea of his firm; readers are also influenced by their image of the publisher (e.g. 'Minuit is highbrow') which no doubt helps to explain the failure of 'misplaced' books. It is this mechanism which leads a publisher to say, quite correctly: 'Each publisher is the best in his category'.

29 Gautier, 1972, p. 26. Publishers are also perfectly aware that a book's success depends on where it is published. They know what is 'made for them' and what is not and observe that a certain book which was 'right for them' (e.g. Gallimard) has done badly with another publisher (e.g. Laffont). The adjustment between author and publisher and then between book and readership is thus the result of a series of choices which all involve the publisher's brand image. Authors choose their publisher in terms of this image, and he chooses them in terms of his own idea of his firm; readers are also influenced by their image of the publisher (e.g. 'Minuit is highbrow') which no doubt helps to explain the failure of 'misplaced' books. It is this mechanism which leads a publisher to say, quite correctly: 'Each publisher is the best in his category'.
and of the market on which they are offered. A firm is that much closer to the 'commercial' pole (and, conversely, that much further from the 'cultural' pole), the more directly and completely the products it offers correspond to a pre-existent demand, i.e. to pre-existent interests, and in pre-established forms. This gives, on the one hand, a short production cycle, based on the concern to minimize risks by adjusting in advance to the identifiable demand and provided with marketing circuits and presentation devices (eye-catching dust-jackets, advertising, public relations, etc.) intended to ensure a rapid return of profits through rapid circulation of products with built-in obsolescence. On the other hand, there is a long production cycle, based on acceptance of the risk inherent in cultural investments and above all on submission to the specific laws of the art trade. Having no market in the present, this entirely future-oriented production presupposes high-risk investments tending to build up stocks of products which may either relapse into the status of material objects (valued as such, by the weight of paper) or rise to the status of cultural objects endowed with an econ-

24 It is said that Jean-Jacques Nathan (Fernand Nathan), who is regarded as being first and foremost a 'manager', defines publishing as 'a highly speculative trade'. The risks are indeed high and the chances of making a profit when publishing a young writer are minute. A novel which does not succeed may have a (short-term) life-span of less than three weeks; then there are the lost or damaged copies or those too soiled to be returned, and those that do come back reduced to the state of worthless paper. In the case of moderate short-term success, once the production costs, royalties and distribution costs are deducted, about 20% of the retail price is left for the publisher who has to offset the unsold copies, finance his stocks, and pay his overheads and taxes. But when a book extends its career beyond the first year and enters the back-list, it constitutes a financial 'flywheel' which provides the basis for forecasting and for a long-term investment policy. When the first edition has amortized the overheads, the book can be reprinted at a considerably lower cost-price and will guarantee a regular income (direct income and also supplementary royalties, translations, paperback editions, TV or film adaptations) which helps to finance further more or less risky investments that may also eventually build up the back-list.

Figure 1. Comparative growth in the sales of three books published by Editions de Minuit. Source: Editions de Minuit.
omic value incommensurate with the value of the material components which go into producing them.25

The uncertainty and randomness characterizing the production of cultural goods can be seen in the sales curves of three works published by Editions de Minuit.26 In Figure 1, curve A represents the sales of a prize-winning novel which, after a strong initial demand (of 6,143 copies distributed in 1959; 4,298 were sold by 1960, after deduction of unsold copies), achieves low annual sales (70 or so a year on average). Robbe Grillet's La Jalousie (curve B), published in 1957, sold only 746 copies in its first year and took four years to catch up with the initial sales of the prize-winning novel (in 1960), but, thanks to a steady annual rate of growth in sales (29% a year average from 1960 to 1964, 19% from 1964 to 1968), had achieved a total of 29,462 in 1968. Beckett's En attendant Godot (curve C) published in 1952, took five years to reach 10,000, but grew at a fairly steady 20% every year except 1963. From this point the curve begins to take on an exponential form and by 1968 (with an annual figure of 14,298) total sales had reached 64,897.

Time and money

Thus the various publishing houses can be characterized according to the distribution of their commitments between risky, long-term investments (Godot) and safe, short-term investments,27 and, by the same token, according to the proportion of their authors, who are long-term or short-term writers. The latter include journalists extending their usual activity into ‘current-affairs’ books, ‘personalities’ presenting their ‘personal testimony’ in essays or memoirs and professional writers who stick to the rules of a tried and tested aesthetic (award-winning literature, best-selling novels, etc.).28

25 Because of the unequal lengths of the cycle of production it is rarely meaningful to compare annual statements from different publishing houses. The annual statement gives an increasingly incomplete picture of the firm’s real position, as one moves away from firms with rapid turn-over, i.e. as the proportion of long-cycle products in the firm’s activity increases. For example, to assess the value of the stocks, one can consider the production cost, the wholesale price, which is unpredictable, or the price of the paper. These different methods of valuation vary are unequally appropriate, depending on whether one is dealing with 'commercial' firms whose stock returns very rapidly to the state of printed paper or firms for which it constitutes a capital which constantly tends to appreciate.

26 A further case, which cannot appear on the diagram, ought to be added—that of simple failure, i.e. a Godot whose career was over by the end of 1952 leaving a balance sheet badly in the red.

27 Among the guaranteed short-term investments, we must also include all the publishing strategies designed to exploit a backlist: new editions, naturally, but also paperback editions (for Gallimard, this is the Folio series).

28 Although one must never ignore the ‘moiré’ effect produced in every field by the fact that the different possible structurations (here, for example, according to age, size, degree of political and/or aesthetic avant-gardism) never coincide perfectly, the fact remains that the relative weight of long-term and short-term firms can probably be regarded as the dominant structuring principle of the field. In this respect, we find an opposition between the small avant-garde firms, Pauvert, Maspero and Minuit (to which one could add Bourgois, if it did not occupy a culturally and economically ambiguous position, because of its link with Les Presses de la Cité), and the ‘big’ publishers, Laffont, Presses de la Cité and Hachette, the intermediate positions being occupied by firms like Flammarion (where experimental series coexist with specially commissioned collective works) Albin Michel and Calmann-Lévy, old, ‘traditional’ publishing houses, run by ‘heirs’ whose heritage is both a strength and a brake, and above all Grasset, once a ‘great’ publishing house, now absorbed by the Hachette empire, and Gallimard, a former avant-garde firm that has now attained the peak of consecration and combines back-list exploitation with long-term undertakings (which are only possible on the basis of accumulated cultural capital—le Chemin, Bibliothèque des sciences humaines). The sub-field of firms mainly oriented towards long-term production and towards an ‘intellectual’ readership is polarized around the opposition between Maspero and Minuit (which represents the avant-garde moving towards conse-
An examination of two publishing houses that are characteristic of the two poles of the publishing field, Robert Laffont and Editions de Minuit, will enable us to grasp the numerous aspects of the oppositions between the two sectors of the field. Robert Laffont is a large firm (700 employees) publishing a considerable number of new titles each year (about 200), overtly success-oriented (in 1976 it had seven prints of over 100,000 copies, fourteen of over 50,000 and fifty of over 20,000). This entails a large sales department, considerable expenditure on advertising and public relations (especially directed towards booksellers), and also a systematic policy of choices guided by a sense of the safe investment (until 1975, almost half the Laffont list consisted of translations of works already successful abroad) and the hunt for best-sellers (the list of ‘famous names’ with which Robert Laffont refutes those who ‘refuse to recognize us as serious literary publishers’ includes Bernard Clavel, Max Gallo, Françoise Dorin, Georges Emmanuel Clancier and Pierre Rey). By contrast, Editions de Minuit, a small firm employing a dozen people, publishing fewer than twenty titles a year (by no more than about forty novelists or dramatists in twenty-five years), devoting a minute proportion of its turnover to publicity (and even deriving a strategic advantage from its refusal to use the lower forms of public relations), is quite used to sales under 500 (‘P’s first book, which sold more than 500 copies, was only our ninth’) and print-runs under 3,000 (in 1975, it was stated that out of 17 new titles published in the three years since 1971, 14 had sold less than 3,000 copies and the other three had not gone beyond 5,000). The firm is always loss-making, if only its new publications are considered, but lives on its past investments, i.e. the profits regularly accruing from those of its publications which have become famous (e.g. Godot, which sold fewer than 200 copies in 1952 and 25 years later had sold more than 500,000 copies).

These two temporal structures correspond to two very different economic structures. Like all the other public companies (e.g. Hachette or Presses de la Cité) Laffont has an obligation to its shareholders (Time-Life in this case) to make profits, despite very substantial overheads, and so it must ‘turn over’ very rapidly what is essentially an economic capital (without taking the time required to convert it into cultural capital). Editions de Minuit does not have to worry about profits (which are partly redistributed to the personnel) and can plough back the income from its ever-growing assets into long-term undertakings. The scale of the firm and the volume of production not only influence cultural policy through the size of the overheads and the concern with getting a return on the capital; they also directly affect the behaviour of those responsible for selecting manuscripts. The small publisher, with the aid of a few advisors who are themselves ‘house’ authors, is able to have personal knowledge of all the books published. In short, everything combines to discourage the manager of a big publishing house from going in for high-risk, long-term investments: the financial structure of his firm, the economic constraints which force him to seek a return on the capital, and therefore to think primarily in terms of sales, and the conditions in which he works, which make it practically impossible to have direct contact with manuscripts.

Footnote continued

creation) on one side, and Gallimard, situated in the dominant position, with Le Seuil representing the neutral point in the field, (just as Gallimard whose authors feature both in the best-seller list and in the list of intellectual best-sellers, constitutes the neutral point of the whole field). The practical mastery of this structure, which also guides, for example, the founders of a newspaper when they ‘feel there is an opening’ or ‘aim to fill a gap’ left by the existing media, is seen at work in the rigorously topographical vision of a young publisher, Delorme, founder of Galilée, who was trying to fit in ‘between Minuit, Maspero and Seuil’ (quoted by J. Jossin, L’Express, 30 August 1976).
and authors. By contrast, the avant-garde publisher is able to confront the financial risks he faces (which are, in any case, objectively smaller) by investing (in both senses) in undertakings which can, at best, bring only symbolically profits, but only on condition that he fully recognizes the specific stakes of the field of production and, like the writers or ‘intellectuals’ whom he publishes, pursues the sole specific profit awarded by the field, at least in the short term, i.e. ‘renown’ and the corresponding ‘intellectual authority’. The strategies which he applies in his relations with the press are perfectly adapted (without necessarily having been so conceived) to the objective demands of the most advanced fraction of the field, i.e. to the ‘intellectual’ ideal of negation, which demands refusal of temporal compromises and tends to establish a negative correlation between success and true artistic value. Whereas short-cycle production, like haute couture, is heavily dependent on a whole set of agents and institutions specializing in ‘promotion’ (newspaper, magazine, TV and radio critics) which must be constantly maintained and periodically mobilized (with the annual literary prizes performing a function analogous to that of fashion ‘collections’), long-cycle production, which derives practically no benefit from the free publicity of press articles about the prize competitions and the prizes themselves, depends entirely on the activity of a few ‘talent-spotters’, i.e. avant-garde authors and critics who ‘make’ the publishing-house by giving it credit (by publishing with it, taking manuscripts there and speaking well of authors published by it) and expect it to merit their confidence by refraining from discarding itself with excessively brilliant worldly successes (‘Minuit would be devalued in the eyes of the hundred people around Saint-Germain who really count if it won the Prix Goncourt’) and thereby discrediting those who are published by it or praise its publications (‘intellectuals think less of writers who win prizes’; ‘the ideal career for a young writer is a slow one’). It also depends on the educational system, which alone can provide those who preach in the desert with devotees and followers capable of recognizing their virtues.

The total opposition between best-sellers, here today and gone tomorrow, and classics, best-sellers over the long run, which owe their consecration, and therefore their widespread durable market, to the educational system, is the basis not only of two completely different ways of organizing production and marketing, but also

29 It is well-known in the ‘trade’ that the head of one of the largest French publishing houses reads hardly any of the manuscripts he publishes and that his working day is devoted to purely managerial tasks (production committee meetings, meetings with lawyers, heads of subsidiaries, etc.).

30 In fact most of his professional actions are ‘intellectual acts’, analogous to the signature of literary or political manifestos or petitions (with some risks, as well—consider the publication of La Question) which earn him the usual gratifications of ‘intellectuals’ (intellectual prestige, interviews, radio discussions, etc.).

31 Robert Laffont recognizes this dependence when, in order to explain the declining ratio of translations to original works, he invokes, in addition to the increased advances payable for translation rights, ‘the decisive influence of the media, especially television and radio, in promoting a book’: ‘The author’s personality and eloquence are an important factor in these media’s choices and consequently in access to the public. In this respect, foreign authors, with the exception of a few international celebrities, are naturally at a disadvantage’ (Vient de paraître—Robert Laffont’s monthly publicity bulletin—January 1977).

32 Here too, cultural logic and ‘economic’ logic converge. As the fate of Les Éditions du Pavois shows, a literary prize can be disastrous, from a strictly ‘economic’ point of view, for a young publishing house suddenly faced with the enormous investments required to reprint and distribute a prize-winning book.

33 This is seen particularly clearly in the theatre, where the classics market (the ‘classical matinées’ at the Comédie Française) obeys quite specific rules because of its dependence on the educational system.
of two contrasting images of the activity of the writer and even the publisher, a simple businessman or a bold ‘talent-spotter’ who will succeed only if he is able to sense the specific laws of a market yet to come, i.e. espouse the interests and demands of those who will make those laws, the writers he publishes.34 There are also two opposing images of the criteria of success. For ‘bourgeois’ writers and their readers, success is intrinsically a guarantee of value. That is why, in this market, the successful get more successful. Publishers help to make best-sellers by printing further impressions; the best thing a critic can do for a book or play is to predict ‘success’ for it (‘It’s bound to be a runaway success’—R. Kanter, L’Express, 15–21 January 1973; ‘I put my money on success for Le Tournant with my eyes closed’—Pierre Marcabru, France-Soir, 12 January 1973). Failure, of course, is an irrevocable condemnation; a writer without a public is a writer without talent (the same Robert Kanter refers to ‘playwrights without talent and without an audience, such as Arrabal’).

As for the opposing camp’s vision, in which success is suspect35 and asceticism in this world is the precondition for salvation in the next, its basis lies in the economy of cultural production itself, according to which, investments are recompensed only if they are in a sense thrown away, like a gift, which can only achieve the most precious return gift, gratitude (reconnaissance—recognition), so long as it is experienced as a one-way transaction; and, as with the gift, which it converts into pure generosity by masking the expected return-gift which the synchronization of barter reveals, it is the intervening time which provides a screen and disguises the profit awaiting the most disinterested investors.

Orthodoxy and heresy

The eschatological vision structuring the opposition between avant-garde and ‘bourgeois’ art, between the material ascesis which guarantees spiritual consecration, and worldly success, which is marked, inter alia, by institutional recognition (prizes, academies, etc.) and by financial rewards, helps to disguise the true relationship between the field of cultural production and the field of power, by reproducing the opposition (which does not rule out complementarity) between the dominated and dominant fractions of the dominant class, i.e. between cultural power (associated with less economic wealth) and economic and political power (associated with less cultural wealth), in the specific logic of the intellectual field, i.e. in the transfigured form of the conflict between two aesthetics. Specifically aesthetic conflicts about the legitimate vision of the world, i.e. in the last resort, about what deserves to be represented and the right way to represent it, are political conflicts (appearing in their most euphemized form) for the power to impose the dominant definition of reality, and social

34 The same opposition is found in all fields. André de Baecque describes the opposition he sees as characterizing the theatrical field, between the ‘businessmen’ and the ‘militants’: ‘Theatre managers are people of all sorts. They have one thing in common; with each new show, they put an investment of money and talent at risk on an unpredictable market. But the similarity stops there. Their motivations spring from very different ideologies. For some, the theatre is a financial speculation like any other, more picturesque perhaps, but giving rise to the same cold-blooded strategy made up of the taking of options, calculated risks, liquidity problems, exclusive rights, sometimes negotiated internationally. For others, it is the vehicle of a message, or the tool of a mission. Sometimes a militant even does good business . . . ’ (de Baecque, 1968).

35 Without going so far as to make failure a guarantee of quality, as the ‘bourgeois’ writer’s polemical vision would have it: ‘Nowadays, if you want to succeed, you need failures. Failure inspires confidence. Success is suspect’ (Dorin, 1973, p. 46).
reality in particular. On the right, reproductive art\textsuperscript{36} constructed in accordance with the generative schemes of 'straight', 'straight-forward' representation of reality, and social reality in particular, i.e. orthodoxy (e.g. par excellence, 'bourgeois theatre') is likely to give those who perceive it in accordance with these schemes the reassuring experience of the immediate self-evidence of the representation, i.e. of the necessity of the mode of representation and of the world represented. This orthodox art would be timeless if it were not continuously pushed into the past by the movement brought into the field of production by the dominated fractions' insistence on using the powers they are granted to change the world-view and overturn the temporal and temporary hierarchies to which 'bourgeois' taste clings. As holders of an (always partial) delegated legitimacy in cultural matters, cultural producers—especially those who produce solely for other producers—always tend to divert their authority to their own advantage and therefore to impose their own variant of the dominant world-view as the only legitimate one. But the challenging of the established artistic hierarchies and the heretical displacement of the socially accepted limit between what does and does not deserve to be preserved, admired and transmitted cannot achieve its specifically artistic effect of subversion unless it tacitly recognizes the fact and the legitimacy of such delimitation by making the shifting of that limit an artistic act and thereby claiming for the artist a monopoly in legitimate transgression of the boundary between the sacred and the profane, and therefore a monopoly in revolutions in artistic taxonomies.

The field of cultural production is the area par excellence of clashes between the dominant fractions of the dominant class, who sometimes fight there in person but more often through producers oriented towards defending their 'ideas' and satisfying their 'tastes', and the dominated fractions who are totally involved in this struggle.\textsuperscript{37} This conflict brings about the integration in a single field of the various socially specialized sub-fields, particular markets which are completely separate in social and even geographical space, in which the different fractions of the dominant class can find products adjusted to their tastes, whether in the theatre, in painting, fashion or decoration.

The 'polemical' view which makes a sweeping condemnation of all economically powerful firms ignores the distinction between those which are only rich in economic capital, and treat cultural goods—books, plays or pictures—as ordinary products, i.e. as sources of immediate profit, and those which derive a sometimes very substantial economic profit from the cultural capital which they originally accumulated through strategies based on denial of the 'economy'. The differences in the scale of the businesses, measured by turnover or staff, are matched by equally decisive differences in their relation to the 'economy' which, among recently established smaller firms, separate the small 'commercial' publishers, often heading for rapid growth, such as

\textsuperscript{36} Oh dear! All I do is reproduce what I see and hear, just arranging it and adapting it. Just my luck! What I see is always attractive, what I hear is often funny. I live in luxury and champagne bubbles' (Dorin, 1973, p. 27). There is no need to evoke reproductive painting, nowadays incarnated by the 'impressionists' who are known to supply the publishers specialising in reproductions of works of art with all their best-sellers (apart from the Mona Lisa): Renoir (\textit{Girl with Flowers, Le Moulin de la Galette}), Van Gogh (\textit{L'eglise d'Arles}), Monet (\textit{Les coquelicots}), Degas (\textit{Ballet Rehearsal}) Gauguin (\textit{Peasant Women}) (information supplied by the Louvre, 1973). In the literary field, there is the vast output of biographies, memoirs, diaries and testimonies, which, from Laffont to Lattès, from Nielsen to Orban, provide 'bourgeois' readers with alternative 'real-life' experiences.

\textsuperscript{37} In literature, as elsewhere, full-time producers (and, a fortiori, producers for producers) are far from having a monopoly of production. Out of 100 people in \textit{Who's Who} who have produced literary works, more than a third are non-professionals (industrialists, 14\%; senior civil servants, 17\%; doctors, 7\% etc.) and the proportion of part-time producers is even greater in the areas of political writing (45\%) and general writing (48\%).
Lattes, Laffont (as distinct from Robert Laffont), Orban, Authier or Menges\textsuperscript{38} and the small avant-garde publishers, which are often short-lived (Galilée, France Adèle, Entente, Phébus), just as, at the other extreme, they separate the ‘great publisher’ from the ‘big publisher’, a great consecrated publisher like Gallimard from a big ‘book merchant’ like Nielsen.

Without entering into a systematic analysis of the field of the galleries, which, owing to the homology with the field of publishing, would lead to repetitions, we may simply observe that, here too, the differences which separate the galleries according to their seniority (and their celebrity), and therefore according to the degree of consecration and the market value of the works they own, are replicated by differences in their relation to the ‘economy’. The ‘sales galleries’, having no ‘stable’ of their own (e.g. Beaubourg) exhibit, in relatively eclectic fashion, painters of very different periods, schools and ages, (abstracts as well as post-surrealists, a few European hyper-realists, some new realists), i.e. whose greater ‘accessibility’ (owing to their more classic status or their ‘decorative’ potential) can find purchasers outside the circle of professional and semi-professional collectors (among the ‘jet-set executives’ and ‘trendy industrialists’ as an informant put it). This enables them to pick out and attract a fraction of the avant-garde painters who have already been ‘noticed’ by offering them a slightly compromising form of consecration, i.e. a market in which the prices are much higher than in the avant-garde galleries.\textsuperscript{39} By contrast, galleries like Sonnabend, Denise René or Durand-Ruel, which mark dates in the history of painting because they have been able in their time to assemble a ‘school’, are characterized by a \textit{systematic slant}.\textsuperscript{40} Thus in the succession of painters presented by the Sonnabend gallery one can see the logic of an artistic development which leads from the ‘new American painting’ and Pop Art, with painters such as Rauschenberg, Jaspers Johns, Jim Dine, to Oldenburg, Lichtenstein, Wesselman, Rosenquist, Warhol, sometimes classified under the label Minimal Art, and to the most recent innovations of \textit{art pauvre}, conceptual art and art by correspondence. Likewise, there is a clear connection between the geometric abstraction which made the name of the Denise René gallery (founded in 1945 and inaugurated with a Vasarely exhibition) and kinetic art, with artists such as Max Bill and Vasareley forming a sort of link between the visual experiments of the inter-war years (especially the Bauhaus) and the optical and technological experiments of the new generation.

\textbf{Ways of growing old}

The opposition between the two economies, i.e. between two relationships to the ‘economy’, can thus be seen as an opposition between two life-cycles of the cultural-

\textsuperscript{38} Among the latter, one could also distinguish between those who have come into publishing with explicitly commercial aims, such as Jean-Claude Lattès, who started as a press attaché with Laffont and originally saw his project as a Laffont series (Edition spéciale), or Olivier Orban (both of whom went straight for commissioned stories), and those who have fallen back on ‘pot-boilers’ after various abortive projects such as Guy Authier or Jean-Paul Menges.

\textsuperscript{39} By the same logic, the discoverer-publisher is always liable to see his ‘discoveries’ seduced by richer or more consecrated publishers, who offer their name, their reputation, their influence on prize juries, and also publicity and better royalties.

\textsuperscript{40} As opposed to the Sonnabend gallery, which brings together young (the oldest is 50) but already relatively recognized painters, and to the Durand-Ruel gallery, whose painters are almost all dead and famous, the Denise René gallery, which stands in that particular point in the space-time of the artistic field in which the normally incompatible profits of the avant-garde and of consecration are momentarily superimposed, combines a group of already strongly consecrated painters (abstract) with an avant-garde or rear avant-garde group (kinetic art) as if it had momentarily managed to escape the dialectic of distinction which sweeps schools away into the past.
production business, two different ways in which firms, producers and products grow old. 41 The trajectory leading from the avant-garde to consecration and the trajectory leading from the small firm to the 'big' firm are mutually exclusive. The small commercial firm has no more chance of becoming a great consecrated firm than the big 'commercial' writer (e.g. Guy des Cars or Cécil Saint-Laurent) has of occupying a recognized position in the consecrated avant-garde. In the case of 'commercial' firms, whose sole target is the accumulation of 'economic' capital and which can only get bigger or disappear (through bankruptcy or take-over), the only pertinent distinction concerns the size of the firm, which tends to grow with time; in the case of firms characterized by a high degree of disavowal of the 'economy' and submission to the specific logic of the cultural goods economy, the chronological opposition between the newcomers and the old-established, the challengers and the veterans, the avant-garde and the 'classic' tends to merge with the 'economic' opposition between the poor and the rich (who are also the big), the 'cheap' and the 'dear', and ageing is almost inevitably accompanied by an 'economic' transformation of the relation to the 'economy', i.e. a moderating of the denial of the 'economy' which is in dialectical relation with the scale of business and the size of the firm. The only defence against 'getting old' is a refusal to 'get fat' through profits and for profit, a refusal to enter the dialectic of profit which, by increasing the size of the firm and consequently the overheads, imposes a pursuit of profit through larger markets, leading to the devaluation entailed in a 'mass appeal'. 42

A firm which enters the phase of exploiting accumulated cultural capital runs two different economies simultaneously, one oriented towards production, authors and innovation (in the case of Gallimard, this is the series edited by Georges Lambrichs) the other towards exploiting its resources and marketing its consecrated products (with series such as the Pléiade editions and especially Folio or Idées). It is easy to imagine the contradictions which result from the incompatibility of the two economies. The organization appropriate for producing, marketing and promoting one category of products is totally unsuited for the other. Moreover, the weight of the constraints which management and marketing bring to bear on the institution and on ways of thinking tends to rule out high-risk investments, when, that is, the authors who might give rise to them are not already turned towards other publishers by the firm's prestige. (They may equally be discouraged by the fact that the 'intellectual' series tend to pass unnotice when they appear in lists in which they are 'out of place' or even 'incongruous' e.g. as an extreme case, Laffont's 'Ecart' and 'Change' series.) It goes without saying that though the disappearance of the firm's founder may accelerate

41 The analytical opposition between the two economies implies no value judgment, although in the ordinary struggles of artistic life it is only ever expressed in the form of value judgments and although despite all the efforts to distance and objectify, it is liable to be read in polemical terms. As I have shown elsewhere, the categories of perception and appreciation (e.g. obscure/clear or easy, deep/light, original/banal, etc.) which function in the world of art are oppositions that are almost universally applicable and are based, in the last analysis, through the opposition between rarity and divulgation or vulgarization, uniqueness and multiplicity, quality and quantity, on the social opposition between the 'elite' and the 'masses', between 'elite' (or 'quality') products and 'mass' products.

42 This effect is perfectly visible in haute couture or perfumery, where the consecrated establishments are able to keep going for several generations (e.g. Caron, Chanel and especially Guerlain) only by means of a policy aimed at artificially perpetuating the rarity of the product (e.g. the 'Exclusive concessions' which limit sales outlets to a few places which are themselves chosen for their rarity—the great couturiers' own shops, perfume shops in the smartest districts, airports). Since ageing is here synonymous with vulgarization, the oldest brands (Coty, Lancôme, Worth, Molyneux, Bourjois, etc.) have a second career, down-market.
the process, it is not sufficient to explain a process which is inscribed in the logic of the development of cultural businesses.

The differences which separate the small avant-garde firms from the 'big firms' and 'great publishers' have their equivalents in the differences that can be found, among the products, between the 'new' product, temporarily without 'economic' value, the 'old' product, irretrievably devalued, and the 'ancient' or 'classic' product, which has a constant or constantly growing 'economic' value. One also finds similar differences among the producers, between the avant-garde, recruited mainly among the (biologically) young, without being limited to a generation, 'finished' or 'outdated' authors or artists (who may be biologically young), and the consecrated avant-garde, the 'classics'.

The classical and the old-fashioned

It is clear that the primacy the field of cultural production gives to youth can, once again, be traced back to the basis of the field in the rejection of power and of the 'economy'. The reason why 'intellectuals' and artists always tend to align themselves with 'youth' in their manner of dress and in their whole bodily hexis is that, in representations as in reality, the opposition between the 'old' and the 'young' is homologous with the opposition between power and 'bourgeois' seriousness on the one hand, and indifference to power or money and the 'intellectual' refusal of the 'spirit of seriousness', on the other hand. The 'bourgeois' world-view, which measures age by power or by the corresponding relation to power, endorses this opposition when it identifies the 'intellectual' with the young 'bourgeois' by virtue of their common status as dominated fractions of the dominant group, from whom money and power are temporarily withheld.43

But the priority given to 'youth' and to the associated values of change and originality cannot be understood solely in terms of the relationship between 'artists' and 'bourgeois'. It also expresses the specific law of change in the field of production, i.e. the dialectic of distinction whereby institutions, schools, artists and works which are inevitably associated with a moment in the history of art, which have 'marked a date' or which 'become dated', are condemned to fall into the past and to become classic or out-dated, to drop into the 'dustbin' of history or become part of history, in the eternal present of culture, where schools and tendencies that were totally incompatible 'in their time' can peacefully coexist because they have been canonized, academicized and neutralized.

43 We may therefore formulate the hypothesis that acquisition of the social indices of maturity, which is both the condition and the effect of accession to positions of power, and abandonment of the practices associated with adolescent irresponsibility (to which cultural and even political 'avant-gardist' practices belong) have to be more and more precocious as one moves from the artists to the teachers, from the teachers to the members of the professions, and from the professions to the employers; or, to put it another way, that the members of the same biological age-group, e.g. all the students in the grandes écoles, have different social ages, marked by different symbolic attributes and conducts, according to the objective future they are heading for. The Beaux-Arts student has to be younger than the normalien, and the normalien has to be younger than the Polytechnicien or the student at ENA. One would have to apply the same logic in analysing the relationship between the sexes within the dominant fraction of the dominant class and more specifically the effects on the division of labour (especially in culture and art) of the dominated-dominant position assigned to women in the 'bourgeoisie' which brings them relatively closer to the young 'bourgeois' and the 'intellectuals', predisposing them to the rôle of mediator between the dominant and dominated fractions (which they have always played, particularly through the 'salons').
Being different

It is not sufficient to say that the history of the field is the history of the struggle for the monopolistic power to impose the legitimate categories of perception and appreciation. The struggle itself creates the history of the field; through the struggle the field is given a temporal dimension. The ageing of authors, works or schools is something quite different from the product of a mechanical slippage into the past. It is the continuous creation of the battle between those who have made their names (fait date) and are struggling to stay in view and those who cannot make their own names without relegating to the past the established figures, whose interest lies in freezing the movement of time, fixing the present state of the field for ever. On one side are the dominant figures, who want continuity, identity, reproduction; on the other, the newcomers, who seek discontinuity, difference, revolution. To 'make one's name' (faire date) means making one's mark, achieving recognition (in both senses) of one's difference from other producers, especially the most consecrated of them; at the same time, it means creating a new position beyond the positions presently occupied, ahead of them, in the avant-garde. To introduce difference is to produce time. Hence the importance, in this struggle for life and survival, of the distinctive marks which, at best, aim to identify what are often the most superficial and most visible properties of a set of works or producers. Words—the names of schools or groups, proper names—are so important only because they make things. These distinctive signs produce existence in a world in which the only way to be is to be different, to 'make one's name', either personally or as a group. The names of schools or groups which have proliferated in recent painting (pop art, minimal art, process art, land art, body art, conceptive art, arte povery, Fluxus, new realism, nouvelle figuration, support-surface, art pauvre, op art, kinetic art, etc.) are pseudo-concepts, practical classifying tools which create resemblances and differences by naming them; they are produced in the struggle for recognition by the artists themselves or their accredited critics and function as emblems which distinguish galleries, groups and artists and therefore the products they make or sell.44

As the newcomers come into existence, i.e. accede to legitimate difference, or even, for a certain time, exclusive legitimacy, they necessarily push back into the past the consecrated producers with whom they are compared, 'dating' their products and the taste of those who remain attached to them. Thus the various galleries or publishing houses, like the various artists or writers, are distributed at every moment according to their artistic age, i.e. according to the age of their mode of artistic production and the degree to which this generative scheme, which is also a scheme of perception and appreciation, has been canonized and secularized. The field of the galleries reproduces in synchrony the history of artistic movements since the late nineteenth century. Each major gallery was an avant-garde gallery at some time or other, and it is that much more famous and that much more capable of consecrating (or, which amounts to the same thing, sells that much more dearly), the more distant

44 Academic criticism is condemned to interminable arguments about the definition and scope of these pseudo-concepts, which are generally no more than names which identify practical groupings such as the painters assembled in an outstanding exhibition or a consecrated gallery or the authors on the list of the same publisher (and which are worth neither more nor less than convenient associations such as 'Denise René is geometric abstract', 'Alexandre Iolas is Max Ernst', or, among the painters, 'Arman is dustbins' or 'Christo is packages') and many concepts in literary or artistic criticism are no more than a 'learned' designation of similar practical groupings (e.g. 'littérature objectale' for 'nouveau roman', itself standing for 'all the novelists published by Editions de Minuit').
its *floruit*, the more widely known and recognized its 'brand' ('geometrical abstract' or 'American pop') but also the more it is encapsulated in that 'brand' ('Durand-Ruel, the Impressionist dealer'), in a pseudo-concept which is also a destiny.

At every moment, in whichever field (the field of class struggles, the field of the dominant class, the field of cultural production), the agents and institutions involved in the game are at once contemporaries and out of phase. The *field of the present* is just another name for the field of struggles (as shown by the fact that an author of the past is present exactly insofar as he is at stake) and contemporaneity in the sense of presence in the same present, in the present and presence of others, exists, in practice, only in the struggle which synchronizes discordant times (so that, as I hope to show elsewhere, one of the major effects of great historical crises, of the events which *make history* (*font date*), is that they synchronize the times of fields defined by specific structural durations). But the struggle which *produces* contemporaneity in the form of the confrontation of different times can only take place because the agents and groups it brings together are not present in the same present. One only has to think of a particular field (painting, literature or the theatre) to see that the agents and institutions who clash, objectively at least, through competition and conflict, are separated in time and in terms of time. One group, situated at the vanguard, have no contemporaries with whom they exchange recognition (apart from other avant-garde producers), and therefore no audience, except in the future. The other group, commonly called the 'conservatives', only recognize their contemporaries in the past. The temporal movement resulting from the appearance of a group capable of 'making history' by establishing an advanced position induces a displacement of the structure of the field of the present, i.e. of the chronological hierarchy of the opposing positions in a given field (e.g. pop art, kinetic art and figurative art). Each position is moved down one rung in the chronological hierarchy which is at the same time a social hierarchy. The avant-garde is at every moment separated by an artistic generation (i.e. the gap between two modes of artistic production) from the consecrated avant-garde, which is itself separated by another artistic generation from the avant-garde that was already consecrated at the moment it entered the field. This is why, in the space of the artistic field as in social space, distances between styles or life-styles are never better measured than in terms of time. 

The consecrated authors who dominate the field of production also dominate the market; they are not only the most expensive or the most profitable but also the most readable and the most acceptable because they have become part of 'general culture' through a process of familiarization which may or may not have been accompanied by specific teaching. This means that through them, the strategies directed against their domination always additionally hit the distinguished consumers of their distinctive products. To bring a new producer, a new product and a new system of tastes onto the market at a given moment, is to push the whole set of producers, products and systems of tastes into the past. The process whereby the field of production becomes a temporal structure also defines the temporal status of taste. Because the different positions in the hierarchical space of the field of production (which can be equally well

45 Tastes can be 'dated', by reference to what was avant-garde taste in different periods: 'Photography is outdated'. 'Why?' 'Because it's gone out of fashion; because it's linked to the conceptual art of two or three years ago'. 'Who would say this:' 'When I look at a picture, I'm not interested in what it represents?' 'Nowadays, people who don't know much about art. Its typical of someone who has no idea about art to say that. Twenty years ago, I don't even know if twenty years ago the abstract painters would have said that. I don't think so. It's the sort of person who doesn't know anything and who says, "You can't fool me, what counts is whether it's pretty"' (Avant-garde painter, age 35).
identified by the names of institutions, galleries, publishers and theatres or by the names of artists or schools) are at the same time tastes in a social hierarchy, every transformation of the structure of the field leads to a displacement of the structure of tastes, i.e. of the system of symbolic distinctions between groups. Oppositions homologous with those existing today between the taste of avant-garde artists, the taste of 'intellectuals', advanced 'bourgeois' taste and provincial 'bourgeois' taste, which find their means of expression on markets symbolized by the Sonnabend, Denise René or Durand-Ruel galleries, would have been able to express themselves equally effectively in 1945, when Denise René represented the avant-garde, or in 1875, when Durand-Ruel was in that position.

This model is particularly relevant nowadays, because owing to the near-perfect unification of the artistic field and its history, each artistic act which 'makes history' by introducing a new position into the field 'displaces' the whole series of previous artistic acts. Because the whole series of pertinent events is practically present in the latest, in the same way that the six digits already dialled on the telephone are contained in the seventh, an aesthetic act is irreducible to any other act in a different place in the series and the series itself tends towards uniqueness and irreversibility. As Marcel Duchamp points out, this explains why returns to past styles have never been more frequent than in these times of frenetic pursuit of originality:

The characteristic of the century now coming to an end is that it is like a double-barrelled gun. Kandinsky and Kupka invented abstraction. Then abstraction died. No one was going to talk about it any more. It came back thirty-five years later with the American abstract expressionists. You could say that cubism reappeared in an impoverished form in the post-war Paris school. Dada came back in the same way. A second shot, second wind. It's a phenomenon typical of this century. You didn't find that in the 18th or 19th centuries. After the Romantics, came Courbet. And Romanticism never came back. Even the pre-Raphaelites aren't a rehash of the Romantics.

In fact, these are always apparent returns, since they are separated from what they rediscover by a negative reference to something which was itself the negation (of the negation of the negation, etc.) of what they rediscover (when, that is, the intention is not simply of pastiche, a parody which presupposes all the intervening history). In the present stage of the artistic field, there is no room for naivety, and every act, every gesture, every event, is, as a painter nicely put 'a sort of nudge or wink between accomplices'. In and through the games of distinction, these winks and nudges, silent, hidden references to other artists, past or present, confirm a complicity which excludes the layman, who is always bound to miss what is essential, namely the inter-relations and interactions of which the work is only the silent trace. Never has the very structure of the field been present so practically in every act of production.

Never too has the irreducibility of the work of cultural production to the artist’s
own labour appeared so clearly. The primary reason is that the new definition of the artist and of artistic work brings the artist’s work closer to that of the ‘intellectual’ and makes it more dependent than ever on ‘intellectual’ commentaries. Whether as a critic but also the leader of a school (e.g. Restany and the new realists), or as a fellow-traveller contributing his reflexive discourse to the production of a work which is always in part its own commentary or to reflection on an art which often itself incorporates a reflection on art, the intellectual has never before so directly participated, through his work on art and the artist, in an artistic work which always consists partly of working on himself as an artist. Accompanied by historians writing the chronicles of their discoveries, by philosophers who comment on their ‘acts’ and who interpret and over-interpret their works, artists can constantly invent the distinguishing strategies on which their artistic survival depends, only by putting into their practice the practical mastery of the objective truth of their practice, thanks to the combination of knowingness and naivety, calculation and innocence, faith and bad faith that is required by mandarin games, cultivated games with the inherited culture, whose common feature is that they identify ‘creation’ with the introduction of deviations (écairs), which only the initiated can perceive, with respect to forms and formulae that are known to all. The emergence of this new definition of the artist and his craft cannot be understood independently of the transformations of the artistic field. The constitution of an unprecedented array of institutions for recording, preserving and analysing works (reproductions, catalogues, art journals, museums acquiring the most modern works, etc.), the growth in the personnel employed, full-time or part-time, in the celebration of works of art, the increased circulation of works and artists, with great international exhibitions and the increasing number of chains of galleries with branches in many countries—all combine to favour the establishment of an unprecedented relationship between the body of interpreters and the work of art, analogous to that found in the great esoteric traditions. To such an extent that one has to be blind not to see that discourse about a work is not a mere accompaniment, intended to assist its perception and appreciation, but a stage in the production of the work, of its meaning and value. But once again it is sufficient to quote Marcel Duchamp:

Q. But to come back to your ready-mades, I thought that R. Mutt, the signature on The Fountain, was the manufacturer’s name. But in an article by Rosalind Krauss, I read: ‘R. Mutt, a pun on the German, Armut, or poverty’. ‘Poverty’ would entirely change the meaning of The Fountain.

M.D. Rosalind Krauss? The redhead? It isn’t that at all. You can deny it. Mutt comes from Mott Works, the name of a big firm that makes sanitary equipment. But Mott was too close, so I made it Mutt, because there was a strip cartoon in the papers in those days, Mutt and Jef, everybody knew it. So right from the start there was a resonance. Mutt was a fat little guy, and Jef was tall and thin... I wanted a different name. And I added Richard... Richard is a good name for a loo! You see, it’s the opposite of poverty... But not even that, just R.—R. Mutt.

Q. What possible interpretation is there of the Bicycle Wheel? Should one see it as the integration of movement into the work of art? Or as a fundamental point of departure, like the Chinese who invented the wheel?

M.D. That machine has no intention, except to get rid of the appearance of a work of art. It was a whim. I didn’t call it a work of art. I wanted to throw off the desire to create works of art. Why do works have to be static? The thing—the bicycle wheel—came before the idea. Without any intention of making a song and dance about it, not at all so as to say: ‘I did that, and nobody has ever done it before me’. Besides, the originals have never been sold.
Q. What about the geometry book left out in the weather? Can one say that it's the idea of integrating time and space? With a pun on 'géométrie dans l'espace' (solid geometry) and 'temps', the rain and sun that transforms the book?

M.D. No, no more than the idea of integrating movement and sculpture. It was just a joke. A pure joke. To denigrate the solemnity of a book of principles.

Here we see, directly exposed, the injection of meaning and value by commentary and commentary on commentary—to which the naive but knowing exposure of the falsity of the commentary contributes in its turn. The ideology of the inexhaustible work of art, or of 'reading' as re-creation masks—through the quasi-exposure which is often seen in matters of faith—the fact that the work is indeed made not twice, but a hundred times, by all those who are interested in it, who find a material or symbolic profit in reading it, classifying it, deciphering it, commenting on it, combating it, knowing it, possessing it. Enrichment accompanies ageing when the work manages to enter the game, when it becomes a stake in the game and so incorporates some of the energy produced in the struggle of which it is the object. The struggle, which sends the work into the past, is also what ensures it a form of survival; lifting it from the state of a dead letter, a mere thing subject to the ordinary laws of ageing, the struggle at least ensures it the sad eternity of academic debate.49

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49 The next task would be to show the contribution the economy of works of art, as a limiting case in which the mechanisms of negation and their effects are more clearly seen (and not as an exception to the laws of economy), makes to the understanding of ordinary economic practices, in which the need to veil the naked truth of the transaction is also present to varying degrees (as is shown by the use made of a whole apparatus of symbolic agents).