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Cambridge in the 1960s: intellectual debate as a form of institutional *méconnaissance*.

The purpose of this paper is to revisit my 'naïve' experience of Cambridge in the 1960s in the light of the theoretical perspective on it which I subsequently (after 1980) found in the work of Bourdieu. This process involves a retrospective consideration of the extent to which my naïve experience and the Cambridge *méconnaissance* of its presumed privilege provided the elements which made me susceptible to the adoption of Bourdieu's sociological analyses, and it also raises questions about the objective 'scientificity' of Bourdieu's explanatory framework – asking whether the trans-cultural applicability of Bourdieu's concepts derived from an affinity between our social and historical situations rather more than from their general, analytical validity. If the sociological explanations which Bourdieu developed of his own situations – which I assimilated to make sense of my own experiences – were, for both of us, functions of the conditions which they explained, the pertinent further question becomes: does the discourse of the sociology of education itself become a form of 'méconnaissance' which aids resistance to the very democratic challenges which it identifies?

I came up to Clare College to read English in October, 1963, almost exactly on my 19th birthday. My room was on the first floor of Staircase L, Memorial Court. I remember clearly the names and faces of the other students on the staircase. On my floor there was, additionally, one student from grammar school in Scarborough reading Divinity, one student reading History, and one Natural Sciences student who had just returned from a 'gap' year in Sarawak. On the ground floor, there was a student from grammar school in Merseyside who was also reading English, one Medic from Sevenoaks School, another historian and another Natural Scientist from a public school. During the year we got to know each other quite well, not only because our kitchen spaces were outside our rooms and open to the hall and landing, but also because the college chaplain diligently organised staircase discussion groups which few people seemed to avoid or resist. As clearly as I remember the names and faces of the students, I also remember those of the college staff 'below stairs', particularly our 'gyp' who cleaned our rooms and made our beds, married to one of the bowler-hatted college porters.

As a cohort, we now seem to have been – and perhaps were – sublimely unaware of our exceptional social situation, either because we believed that our admission was the consequence of a proper recognition of our intellectual deserts or because we believed that our social privilege was intrinsically appropriate without any reference to prior learning or achievement. We were an acquiescent cohort. We were still prepared to play some of the 'Town and Gown' games. By and large we wore our gowns and dined in college hall. It was sport to run away from patrolling proctors and to be prepared to climb into college after gates were locked at night. We attended sherry receptions given by the Master or the Senior Fellows. We stood when the Master and Fellows filed into Hall for dinner and tolerated the intonation of Latin grace by one of the Scholars, barely audible above the scraping of tables and benches as we struggled to be seated. We were interested in college identity. We wore our college scarves and participated in college societies, whether sporting, literary and artistic, musical or religious. The chapel was an intrinsic part of college life, significantly strengthened by the activities of choral and organ scholars. As one of a group of students reading English, my learning was largely shaped by the prior experience of the other members of this group and by our shared perceptions as they were articulated in tutorials with the college English Fellows. Outside the college, of course, we attended a selection of the lectures advertised in the Register and a range of university societies and events, but the college remained the main focus of the short number of weeks spent in Cambridge which constituted our three years of study at the university. For us, the Sidgwick site was quite new and we had little sense, either physically or intellectually, of belonging to the

English Faculty. At lectures we saw some women students, but I remember no sense of outrage at the inequity of opportunities for women in the university. New Hall had just been founded, joining Girton and Newnham as single sex colleges for women, and there appeared to be little pressure to extend this provision further.

I began my university studies of English Literature at a time when 'Cambridge English' was in flux. One of my college tutors – John Newton – was one of the few remaining 'Leavisites' and committed to the practice of 'practical criticism'. The structure of the English tripos[1] was still dominated by the emphasis on literature and its 'background' which was the legacy of the influence of Basil Willey who had only just retired. At the same time, I attended the lectures given by the recently appointed Raymond Williams and the Finals papers from which I could choose already reflected his influence in that they included new papers on 'The Novel' and 'Tragedy'.

There appeared to be two main areas of intellectual debate in Cambridge during my undergraduate years. The first related to the philosophical theology emanating from the Divinity School, usually known as 'Cambridge theology' and associated mainly with the work of Alec Vidler, Hugh Montefiore, Harry Williams and Donald McKinnon. This, of course, became a 'public' debate with the publication of John Robinson's *Honest to God* (Robinson, 1963), and the subsequent publication of *The Honest to God Debate* (Edwards, ed., 1963). I was personally aware of the related inter-disciplinary discussions taking place informally between my theological Dean of College – Maurice Wiles – and L.C. Knights (Literature) and Mary Hesse (History and Philosophy of Science), mainly in relation to the role of the imagination, analogy and models in the advancement of 'scientific' thought. The second related to the 'two cultures' debate. C.P. Snow had given his Rede lecture on "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution" in the Senate House, Cambridge, in May, 1959, long before I had come up to Cambridge, but Leavis's response – "Two cultures? The significance of C.P. Snow" – was given as the Richmond Lecture in 1962, published in the *Spectator* in March, 1962, eliciting comment in Snow's "The Two Cultures: a second look" which was written in September, 1963 and published, along with a reprint of the original lecture, in 1964. For me, this was a 'debate' which was 'in the air which I breathed' (as Bourdieu was to say of the epistemological tradition derived from Koyré, Bachelard, Canguilhem, and Duhem within which he worked, Bourdieu, 1992, 41) but it was brought home to me directly as I experienced the 'virulence' (Snow, ed. Collini, 1993, 58) of which Snow accused Leavis as he regularly attacked Snow's 'culture' in the seminars which I attended in his home in Bulstrode Gardens.

I gained my degree in 1966 and proceeded to register for a PhD, still in Cambridge, commencing in the autumn of 1966. My research was registered with the title: "Literature and Science, 1770-1800". This choice of topic reflected elements of my personal intellectual trajectory as well as their objectifications in the Cambridge debates to which I have referred. Brought up within a nonconformist family[2], I had, throughout my schooling, experienced a tension between religious world views and the apparently secular assumptions of the curriculum of the sciences. Born and educated in Bristol, I had in the sixth form, been attracted to the early writing of the Romantic poets as a consequence of their associations with my home town and with the West Country. Within my undergraduate degree, I submitted, for Part I [3](in 1965) a paper entitled: "The science and poetry of feeling – conflicting or complementary? An account of the relationship between Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, and Humphry Davy,

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[1] See footnote 7 for an explanation of local Cambridge terminology.
[2] For more detail of my background and its relation to my reception of the work of Bourdieu, see Robbins (2006)
[3] See footnote 7.

during the period from 1796 to 1804". In part, this explored actions associated with the Peneumatic Institution in Bristol, where the poets experimented with the effects of 'laughing gas'. The interest in Davy – thought by Coleridge to be as much a 'poet' as a 'scientist' – led me, the following year, to carry out research in his original context in Cornwall, leading to a paper which I submitted for Part II[4] (in 1966) entitled: "Enigmatic Variations. A study of Culture and Society in Cornwall during the second half of the 18th century".

I formulated my research proposal as an historical case-study of the philosophical question of the relationship between literary and scientific discourses. In this I had been influenced by the Stanton lectures given by R.W. Hepburn in Cambridge in the mid-1960's and by his published analyses of the relationship between poetry and religious belief in 17th century English literature (Hepburn, 1955). The brief synopsis of my proposed research also made some reference to immediate philosophical influences – Michael Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (Polanyi, 1958) and Marjorie Grene's the *Knower and the Known* (Grene,1966). Raymond Williams was the Director of Studies assigned by the English Faculty and Williams insisted that my work should also be supervised by staff in the recently established Department of the History and Philosophy of Science. In my first term, I wrote a long essay for Williams on "Science and Literature in the first half of the 18th Century". This was a preliminary enquiry which tried to examine the relationship between a developing philosophy of autonomous science and an aesthetic which was changing its emphasis from mimesis to expression, from 'the mirror' to 'the lamp' as M.H. Abrams put it (Abrams, M.,1953). It involved a study of the relationship between Newtonian physics and Deism and of both to Augustan poetry, but it also involved a particular study of James Thomson's "The Seasons" and the relationship between nature poetry and the emerging biological and geological sciences. Gillispie's *From Genesis to Geology* was a key secondary text (Gillispie, C.C., 1951). Within my specified period of 1770-1800, I quickly decided to focus on the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Joseph Priestley. In part, this reflected the influence of Williams who was mainly interested in that part of my project which related to Coleridge. More importantly, the orientation of my project was affected by the developments in the study of English Literature which were occurring as I was researching. I submitted my PhD in 1970 and it was accepted, after revision, in 1972. By that time, Williams's colleague, Stuart Hall, had taken over, in 1968, as Director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (founded by Richard Hoggart in 1964); Williams had invited Lucien Goldmann to Cambridge in 1970 to give two lectures and had subsequently written, in 1971, an article on "Literature and Sociology: in memory of Lucien Goldmann" (Williams, 1971) after Goldmann's premature death; and Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood had published *The Sociology of Literature*. (Laurenson and Swingewood, 1972). The influence of French structuralist thinking began to push the development of the study of English Literature towards the sociology of literature in the new universities of the 1960s, particularly the University of Essex.

My work imbibed this changing emphasis. By the time of its completion, my thesis was entitled: "Literature and Natural Philosophy, 1770-1800. Literary fictions and scientific systems with particular reference to the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Joseph Priestley". It is evident from the changed title that I had retreated from the bold 'two cultures' perspective of my original proposal but it is perhaps less evident that the concentration on two authors marked a shift towards a socio-historical analysis and away from a philosophical case-study. In retrospect, my doctoral thesis demonstrates an underlying unease about the kind of analysis that it was attempting to offer – a tension between the tradition of literary critical evaluation and the emergent orientation towards a social science of literary and scientific products.

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[4] See footnote 7.

I first encountered the work of Pierre Bourdieu through the two translated articles which he contributed to *Knowledge and Control: New Directions for the Sociology of Education*, edited by M.F.D. Young in 1971 (Young, 1971). It was only later in that decade that I read the translations of the works – first published in the 1960s - in which Bourdieu and Passeron advanced their sociologies of education: *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and *The Inheritors, French Students and their Relation to Culture* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). From the autumn of 1968, I was given permission to live away from Cambridge. Although my thesis was not yet complete, at the beginning of 1970 I was appointed to be a lecturer in English at the newly designated North East London Polytechnic – now the University of East London. My PhD thesis was submitted in September, 1970, and examined in 1971. It was initially referred and the revised submission was eventually approved in 1972. By the time this approval came through, I had become involved in the challenge to consider what kind of 'Humanities' curriculum should be appropriate for a new higher education institution which was seeking to widen participation and to provide vocational training. At Williams's suggestion, I had also enrolled part-time at the London School of Economics in 1972 to become qualified as a sociologist. After a qualifying year, I was allowed to enrol, part-time, for an MSc, whilst, in the same year (1973/4), I was seconded internally at the polytechnic to become a member of a development team which was charged with the task of exploiting Mrs Thatcher's proposal for a new, 2-year, higher education award – the Diploma of Higher Education. As Secretary of State for Education, Mrs. Thatcher recommended the introduction of the new course in her *A Framework for Expansion* White Paper of 1972. Her intention was to manage the over supply of trained teachers by introducing mechanisms of credit recognition and transfer between institutions across the binary divide so as to maximise the benefits of the early stages of teacher training. The proposal was an early indication of her inclination to find ways to make the whole higher education system more entrepreneurial and more responsive to changing socio-economic demands.The intention at the polytechnic was to make the new award a change agent for the kind of transformation of British higher education envisaged by Eric Robinson in his *The New Polytechnics: the People's Universities* (Robinson, 1968) – a vision which had inspired Anthony Crosland's institution of the 'binary divide'. Robinson believed that the curriculum of the university sector was socially exclusive because it only offered opportunities to those who already possessed the kind of learning which they provided. He tried to seize the opportunity given by the White Paper to design a two-year award which would revolutionise curriculum development: the curriculum would not be determined by objective bodies of knowledge to be acquired but would be established by course designers by negotiating an encounter between their predicted student intake and the 'output' expectations of potential employers. Robinson's 'systems model' of course design contrived to be both 'student-centred' and 'vocational' but, in effect, he aspired to equalise opportunities in British higher education by substituting a prescribed technological ethos for what he regarded as the moribund ethos of academicism. The new course at the polytechnic was one of the first in the country to be approved by the Council for National Academic Awards for a 1974 start. It was established in the polytechnic within a new unit which adopted the title of the School for Independent Study. The choice of title indicates that Robinson's ideological intentions were not exactly realised. The School became famous for its open access policy and for running courses which transmitted generic skills to all students whilst also enabling them to negotiate their own learning programmes to be supervised by specialist staff located in any department within the institution. In practice, it was radically liberal and individualistic rather than vocational. I was involved with the work of this School until it was abolished in 1991[5].

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[5] For more detail of this pedagogical innovation, see my *The Rise of Independent Study* (Robbins, 1988).

It was, therefore, the combination of an introduction to the sociology of knowledge and education at the LSE and innovative pedagogical practice within my polytechnic which drew me to a reading of the work of Bourdieu and Passeron in the 1970s. I subsequently met Bourdieu in 1986 and, thereafter, became heavily involved in seeking to represent his ideas in the UK.

Whilst I was completing my first year of undergraduate study at Cambridge – making adjustments between the content of my 'A'-level course[6] and the way in which it had been taught to me at school and the content of Cambridge Part I [7]English and its structure of teaching, in university lectures and college tutorials – Bourdieu and Passeron were writing a report on their research which was published in 1964 first of all as an internal working paper of the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, entitled "Les étudiants et leurs études" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964a). The research had been undertaken by Bourdieu, Passeron and a team of collaborators during the previous few years in several French universities, but mainly at the University of Lille where Bourdieu held a position as *maître de conférences*. The research team had issued questionnaires to students of Sociology and Philosophy. The questions had asked students to give details about their social backgrounds, their economic situations, their religious and political affiliations, and their residential arrangements, as well as about their tastes in music, literature and art and their competencies in writing or performing. In the book which followed from the report in the same year – *Les héritiers* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964b) – Bourdieu and Passeron concluded that the performance of students in higher education reflected the extent to which, on entry, they already possessed the 'cultural capital' which enabled them to satisfy the expectations of examiners as prefigured in curricula and examinations. The students were ignorant of their situations in that they acquiesced in the assumption that their education operated on a level playing-field precisely so as to be able to attribute their performance to individual merit rather than to prior training. Bourdieu and Passeron resisted the notion that the performances of students were *determined* by their socio-economic backgrounds, but there was, nevertheless, the sense that their research was instrumental in disclosing the realities of situations of which the students were themselves unaware as participants. The refrain of *Les Héritiers* is that the inequalities of opportunity in schooling are largely unperceived ['inaperçues'] by the students. The first sentence of the second chapter, for instance, begins:

> "Bien que les inégalités devant l'Ecole restent le plus souvent inaperçues et soient toujours ce dont on parle le moins lorsque l'on parle des étudiants et surtout lorsque les étudiants parlent d'eux-mêmes, …" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 47)
>
> [Although inequalities of schooling usually are left unnoticed and are always least mentioned when we speak of students and especially when they talk about themselves …][8]

At about the same time, Bourdieu analysed family relationships in his native Béarn and introduced a comment which indicated the difficulty he was experiencing in reconciling the determinist framework of analytic traditions, whether Marxist or 'structuralist', with a commitment to individual agency:

> "Thus, individuals play within the limits of the rules, so that the model that can be constructed does not represent either what must be done or even what is done, but what

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[6] This is the 'Advanced'-level course taken in schools, normally for two years, between the ages of 16 and 18. University admission is largely determined by performance in 'A'-levels.

[7] My undergraduate degree in English in Cambridge was a three-year degree. At the end of the 1st year, there were 'Prelim' examinations. At the end of Year 2, we were examined for Part I, and, at the end of Year 3, for Part II. The combination of Parts I and II constituted the 'Tripos'.

[8] This is my translation rather than the one made by Richard Nice for Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979.

would tend to be done in extreme cases, if the intervention of principles external to the logic of the system, such as sentiment, were totally excluded." (Bourdieu, 1962, 47; 2002, 39, 2008, 26)

By the end of the 1960s, however, and particularly, perhaps, as a result of their perceptions of the 'events' of May, 1968, Bourdieu and Passeron revisited their earlier research so as to present a view of the functioning of the educational system. The text which we know of as *Reproduction In Education, Society and Culture* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) was published as *La reproduction. Éléments pour une théorie du système d'enseignement* (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1970). The unconsciousness of their situations which had been attributed to students was now considered to be an essential characteristic of the way in which the whole system functioned. Social science disclosed the unawareness which was endemic within the whole system. Bourdieu and Passeron now attempted to expose the objective reality of the system, claiming, in their Foreword, to resist in anticipation the 'moralistic' readings of their work:

> "Of all the possible ways of reading this text, the worst would no doubt be the moralizing reading, which would exploit the ethical connotations ordinary language attaches to technical terms like 'legitimacy' or 'authority' and transform statements of fact into justifications or denunciations; or would take objective effects for the intentional, conscious, deliberate action of individuals or groups, and see malicious mystification or culpable naivety where we speak only of concealment or misrecognition." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, x).

It was this passage which caused the translator – Richard Nice – to add a note announcing his choice of word to stand for 'méconnaissance'. Nice commented:

> "… 'méconnaissance', the process whereby power relations are perceived not for what they objectively are but in a form which renders them legitimate in the eyes of the beholder. The (admittedly 'artificial') term 'misrecognition' has been adopted because it preserves the link with 'recognition' (*reconnaissance*) in the sense of 'ratification', and is consistent with the usage of other translators. …" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, xiii)

Nice's gloss does not fully convey the extent to which Bourdieu and Passeron presented 'méconnaissance' as a two-stage process. As is generally known, the first 'book' of *La reproduction* presents a series of propositions which are designed to constitute the 'foundations of a theory of symbolic violence'. Bourdieu and Passeron began by defining the 'twofold arbitrariness of pedagogic action'. This twofold arbitrariness obtains for any form of 'pedagogic action'. Pedagogic action can be defined as the transmission of knowledge or values. It is always twofold in its arbitrariness, whether, for instance, in relation to communication in social groups or families as much as in schools or universities, because 'what' is transmitted and 'by whom' it is transmitted are both 'arbitrary'. For Bourdieu and Passeron, méconnaissance performs an essential function in concealing both aspects of twofold arbitrariness. It does so in two stages, by denying first of all that transmitted content is a function of the power position of the transmitters, and, secondly, by making this denial or deception the basis for the perpetuation of the originating power relations. As Bourdieu and Passeron posed their question:

> "… what are the social conditions for the establishment of a relation of pedagogic communication concealing the power relations which make it possible and thereby adding the specific force of its legitimate authority to the force it derives from those relations?" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 12)

It is important to remember that, certainly for Bourdieu, this formulation was not one which was at all confined to consideration of the educational system. The issue is one of 'disenchantment' generally. Bourdieu's intellectual orientation had been early shaped by his observations, in all his Algerian fieldwork, of the consequences of the collapse of traditional social organisation and values effected both by mobility from the countryside into Algiers and by the enforced 'déracinement' inflicted by the French army. It had been confirmed by his observations of the experiences of unmarried men in his native Béarn where he found that 'celibacy' came to be regarded as a pathological condition in correlation with the rise of individualist, urban values in place of traditional, collective norms. The sentence in *Les Héritiers* quoted above, drawing attention to the ignorance of students of their own unequal opportunities, continues by suggesting that student complicity derives from their satisfaction with the range of practices which enable them to identify themselves internally as 'university students' rather than differentiate themselves extraneously by reference to their indigenous social condition (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 47). A little later, Bourdieu was to make this same point most graphically in discussing the ritual of the Catholic church. In "Le langage autorisé. Note sur les conditions sociales de l'efficacité du discours rituel", Bourdieu wrote:

> "… the abdication of the symbolic attributes of authority, like the cassock, Latin, and consecrated objects and places, highlights a break with the ancient contract of delegation which united a priest with the faithful through the intermediary of the church. The indignation of the faithful underlines the fact that the conditions which render ritual effective can be brought together only by an institution which is invested with the power to control its manipulation. What is at stake in the crisis of the liturgy is the whole system of conditions which must be fulfilled in order for the institution to function, i.e. the institution which authorizes and regulates the use of the liturgy and which ensures its uniformity through time and space by ensuring the conformity of those who are delegated to carry it out." (Bourdieu, 1975, in Bourdieu, ed. J.B. Thompson, 1991, 115)

In April of the year of the publication of *La reproduction* (1970), Bourdieu gave a paper at a conference of the British Sociological Association at Durham, entitled "Reproduction culturelle et reproduction sociale" (Bourdieu, 1971). In the early part of the 1970s, Bourdieu also re-visited some of his earlier 'structuralist' analyses of Algerian society. In *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (Bourdieu, 1972) Bourdieu reprinted three studies in Kabyle ethnology and then proceeded to highlight the inadequacies of the structuralist detachment which they represented. By the time of the English 'translation' of this text as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977) Bourdieu had fully articulated his 'post-structuralist' approach. In essence, he argued that in the process of interpreting other cultural practices ethnologists impose their own 'cultivated' perspectives and dispositions. In order to appreciate indigenous cultural practice, Bourdieu argued that we have to accept that social science constitutes a discourse which objectifies the primary experience of those whom it observes and does so in obedience to the socially constructed rules of the discourse in accordance with which the analyst is operating. In the context of the anthropological analysis with which Bourdieu was familiar – that of colonial Algeria – the post-structuralist position readily satisfied French post-colonial guilt in that it required French intellectuals to acknowledge that western anthropology was, implicitly, a form of conceptual colonisation. In other words, western anthropology owed its authority to a form of méconnaissance. Bourdieu advanced the contention that social agents structure their own situations and that the structural analyses of scientific analysts is just one discourse which may help to disclose the motives of those under observation. Bourdieu applied this thinking to the educational research which he had undertaken with Passeron in the 1960s. There were two important consequences of Bourdieu's particular interpretation of the collaborative work. Firstly, Bourdieu wanted to insist that participants in the educational system construct the

mechanisms of méconnaissance. Bourdieu discarded the supposed scientific neutrality specified in the Foreword and began to convey the view that the méconnaissance within the process of pedagogic communication was a conspiracy on the part of the culturally dominant to perpetuate their domination over the socially dominated. It was this necessary alliance between social and cultural reproduction which Bourdieu spelt out in his paper at Durham and which, as became clear later, was precisely the interpretation of their collaborative work which Passeron could not accept[9]. Not only did Bourdieu insist that méconnaissance was socially constructed by

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[9] By contrast, Passeron pursued his interest in the language of social scientific explanation. His approach was 'reflexive' in as much as he attempted to analyse sociologically the deployment of language and concepts in social scientific investigation, including, in his *Les mots de la sociologie* (Passeron, 1980), an analysis of the deployment, with Bourdieu, of the concepts of 'habitus' and 'cultural capital' in their work of the 1960s, but Passeron resisted Bourdieu's path to ontological reflexivity. (*Les mots de la sociologie* was a thesis written at the University of Nantes and only published there, but sections of the text are collected in *Le raisonnement sociologique* (Passeron, 1991, 2006) where his arguments become more accessible). Passeron made his position most effectively clear in comparing the analysis of the use of words in philosophy and sociology by discussing the limitations of Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Lalande, 1960), concluding that, as distinguished from the meaning of concepts deployed in philosophy,

> "The systemic meaning of sociological concepts derives in fact at least as much from their role in the systematic analysis of data as from their place within a theoretical system" (Passeron, 1980, 165)

Passeron sought to maintain the self-reflexion of scientific practice and, in doing so, to preserve the objective status of science. The corollary of his position was that sociological reflexivity had always to be open to the absorption of an ongoing plurality of scientific practices in constantly changing historical situations. He necessarily took exception to what he described as 'tentations policières' – attempts to police the use of standardised sociological concepts. He illustrated this temptation by reference to 'marxist sectarianism' but it equally reflected his view of the way in which Bourdieu had steered the Centre de Sociologie Européenne, Paris, when he seized control of it from Raymond Aron, its founder, in 1968. Bourdieu and Passeron papered over the cracks between their diverging positions in co-authoring (with J.-C. Chamboredon) *Le métier de sociologue* in 1968 (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1968), but, subsequently, Passeron saw that the text was consistent with Bourdieu's inclination to follow the Durkheimian agenda in instituting a research group and a supporting in-house journal which would both be based on a defined, unified methodology which was a latter day interpretation of the 'first philosophy' that was the underlying assumption of Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive*. Passeron perceived that Bourdieu's project inherited from Durkheim what Aron identified as a tendency towards totalising or totalitarian sociologism. This manifested itself not only as an intellectual tendency but also as one which incorporated ontological reflexivity such as to refuse the distinction between science and cultural experience. In sympathy with Aron intellectually, if not politically, Passeron retained that distinction as it had been elaborated by Aron in his introduction to two early translations of the work of Weber into French, published in 1959 as *Le savant et le politique* [the scientist and the politician]. After the publication of Bourdieu's *La distinction* in 1979 (Bourdieu, 1979), Passeron collaborated in running a seminar with Claude Grignon which eventually resulted in the joint publication of *Le savant et le populaire* [science and popular culture] (Grignon & Passeron, 1989). In this text they indicate, in discussion, the ways in which they differently took issue with Bourdieu's work.

With the benefit of a grant from the ESRC, I have been seeking to retrieve Passeron's work – which was rather eclipsed as Bourdieu's reputation steadily ascended. I have been overseeing a translation of the second (2006) edition of Passeron's *Le raisonnement sociologique* (first edition, 1991) (Passeron, 2006) and this should make accessible Passeron's alternative route out of the findings which he reached with Bourdieu in the 1960s. As I suggest in this note, the fundamental difference, in my opinion, between Bourdieu and Passeron is that Bourdieu amalgamated a Durkheimian view of the scope of sociology with an attraction for a rather Heideggerian modification of Husserlian phenomenology, whereas Passeron remained close to Weber, by way of Aron, and was intent on developing a non-idealist or non-symbolic logic of social scientific explanation which involved delimiting competing discourses. Bourdieu's explanation tended to be totalising and affective whereas Passeron's is circumscribed and rational. I have only come to appreciate Passeron's position since 2007. This article attempts to represent the way in which, from 1986, my knowledge of Bourdieu's work provided me with an apparatus to understand my own career, but I have to say that the analysis is incomplete because it does not yet try to articulate the extent to which the position adopted by Passeron is one which might resolve some of the problems of self-referential circularity which have arisen as a result of my attempts to apply Bourdieu's conceptualisations to my situations. I shall be hoping to confront this question more directly elsewhere in the near future, perhaps in an

participants but, secondly, it was also a corollary of his post-structuralism and his incipient 'reflexive sociology' to argue that the analyses of social scientists were interventions within the analysed situations. The social scientist, therefore, did not objectively analyse the gradual disenchantment of traditional society but, instead, was a protagonist in generating disenchantment by offering an interpretation of what was 'really' happening.

Both born in 1930 in provincial France, Bourdieu and Passeron both experienced a process of streaming in their early schooling which led to their migration to Paris to prepare for entry to the prestigious Ecole Normale Supérieure. Both were given philosophical training at the Ecole in the early 1950s and, on returning from military service in Algeria, both transformed themselves into 'sociologists' as mentees of Raymond Aron (himself a *normalien* philosopher turned sociologist). The educational research which they undertook together in the early 1960s involved a comparative analysis of the experiences of students of philosophy and sociology, taking account of the differences of their social origins and conditions. In other words, they sought to undertake an objective analysis of their own situations, attempting to legitimate generalisation beyond their own particular experiences. As an undergraduate, I was, within English culture, almost a contemporary of the French students analysed by Bourdieu and Passeron. Bourdieu and Passeron argued that the social situations of students affected their choice of university courses, suggesting that students who already possessed prior social/cultural capital were willing to risk securing the dubiously valuable qualification offered by sociology whereas those with limited prior social/cultural capital required the established status provided by graduation in philosophy to realise their aspirations. Using this analysis by analogy, it could be said that my choice of PhD topic was mixed, arising from a prior social/cultural ambivalence. I took the risk of attempting a cross-disciplinary study, involving supervisory input from staff within a new department of the history and philosophy of science and from a member of staff within the English Faculty who was already thought to be radically subversive of its traditional values, but it was, nevertheless, a study which sought legitimation and accreditation through submission and examination only within the English Faculty. My doctoral thesis was a study of the relations between science and literature at a particular historical moment and it was a study which, methodologically, sought to generate a socio-historical science of trans-cultural conceptual transfer, itself, therefore, incipiently becoming an attempted sociology of both literary and scientific production – but it was neutralised by absorption into the dominant field of literary study.

It was only when I began to work at North-East London Polytechnic and, simultaneously, began to read some of Bourdieu's articles in translation, that it became possible for me to deploy his insights in understanding my situation and, consequently, to realise that my academic study of the 'two cultures' reflected a performative public debate and, in doing so, consolidated the euphemisation of the real cultural divisions underlying my undergraduate and postgraduate experiences. A short digression here is in order to cross-refer to the contemporaneous thought of Jurgen Habermas. His *Strukturwandel der Offentlichkeit* was first published in 1962, and only published in English translation by Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press in the United States and Polity Press in the UK in 1989 as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere. An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. In his 'translator's note' to the

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introduction to the translation of *Le raisonnement sociologique* which is due to be published, as *Sociological Reasoning*, by Bardwell Press, Oxford, at the end of 2010.

translation, Thomas Burger comments that 'Offentlichkeit' 'may be rendered variously as "(the) public," "public sphere," or "publicity"'. He also clarifies that Habermas distinguished between several types of 'Offentlichkeit', notably between 'politische Offentlichkeit' ('political public sphere'), 'literarische Offentlichkeit' ('literary public sphere'), and 'repräsentative Offentlichkeit' ('representative publicness'). In his original Preface of 1961, Habermas specifically admitted that his research had been restricted to a limited object:

> "Our investigation is limited to the structure and function of the *liberal* model of the bourgeois public sphere, to its emergence and transformation. Thus it refers to those features of a historical constellation that attained dominance and leaves aside the *plebeian* public sphere as a variant that in a sense was suppressed in the historical process." (Habermas, 1989, xviii).

The essential argument of Habermas's delimited enquiry is well summarised by Thomas McCarthy in his Introduction to the 1989 edition:

> "As a sphere between civil society and the state, in which critical public discussion of matters of general interest was institutionally guaranteed, the liberal public sphere took shape in the specific historical circumstances of a developing market economy. In its clash with the arcane and bureaucratic practices of the absolutist state, the emergent bourgeoisie gradually replaced a public sphere in which the ruler's power was merely represented *before* the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse *by* the people." (Habermas, 1989, xi)

The intellectual debates in Cambridge which constituted the backdrop to my student experiences were forms of 'representative publicness'. By my admission to Cambridge, I had been invited to share in the debate and to participate in a partial embourgeoisement of an academic public sphere. At the polytechnic, I was immediately involved in seeking to extend that access so as to constitute a plebeian public sphere. Ironically, however, the institutionalisation of the polytechnics was trapped ambiguously within a misrecognized bi-culturalism which corresponded with the méconnaissance of Cambridge. The polytechnics were instituted as both technological institutions and as the 'people's universities', as institutions insisting on vocationalism and on open access.

In 1970, Bourdieu and Passeron presented themselves as the scientific analysts of méconnaissance. Objectively they realised that it performed a necessary function in securing cohesion within the educational system just as in securing the cohesion of traditional society or of the Catholic church. They referred to the paradox of Epimenides to outline the dilemma which they foresaw. As they put it:

> "… it is one thing to teach 'cultural relativism', that is, the arbitrary character of all culture, to individuals who have already been educated according to the principles of the cultural arbitrary of a group or class; it would be quite another to claim to be giving a relativistic education, i.e. actually to produce a cultivated man who was the native of all cultures. The problems posed by situations of early bilingualism or biculturalism give only a faint idea of the insurmountable contradictions faced by a PA claiming to take as its practical didactic principle the theoretical affirmation of the arbitrariness of linguistic or cultural codes." (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977, 12).

In other words, Bourdieu and Passeron were apparently agreed that the substance of their scientific analysis could not unilaterally become the basis for the prescription of pedagogic

policy. Their underlying assumption seemed to be that a total social transformation would be a prerequisite for the valid introduction of pedagogic change. This was the soixante-huitard vision. During the last 40 years, postmodern philosophy and the abolition of the institutional 'binary divide' have intervened. The traditional canon of English Literature has become a commodity owned by a minority, the legitimacy of scientific judgements is constantly challenged and counter-challenged, and institutions of higher education struggle for survival in an international market with little reference to local social function. The challenge still remains to expose institutional méconnaissance so as to reconcile the transmission of knowledge and information in universities with plebeian debate within a social democratic society[10].

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[10] I have recently explored some of these questions which relate to the necessary social conditions for the possibility of sociological explanation in Robbins, 2009, and Robbins, 2010.

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