

Stealing Others' Lives: Constructing Aesthetic Biographies

Prof. Michael Grenfell,
University of Canberra 2016

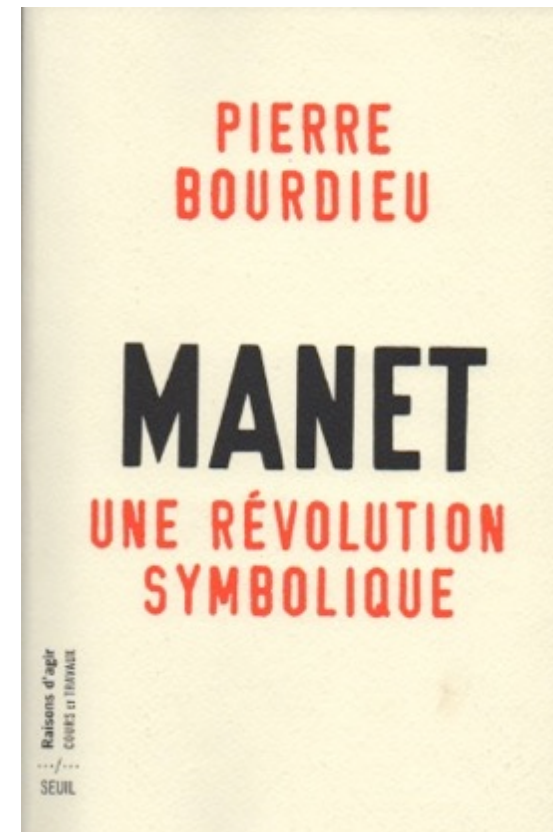
Talk Structure

- Biography and Aesthetics
- Two Examples
- Methodology and Art
- Summing Up

This work as an example of the:

Problem of Biography and Aesthetics

Consumption and Production



EMINENT VICTORIANS

CARDINAL MANNING - FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE

DR. ARNOLD - GENERAL GORDON

OR

LYTTON STRACHEY

LONDON

CHATTO & WINDUS

1918

THE BIOGRAPHICAL ILLUSION

- Placements and practices in social space – different successive states of structure in the distribution of different types of capital which are in play in a specific field'

A Reflective and Relational Methodology for Aesthetics

‘to construct systems of intelligible relations
capable of making sense of sentient data’.

Rules of Art: p.xvi

A reflexive understanding of the expressive
impulse in trans-historical fields and the
necessity of human creativity immanent in
them. (ibid).

A Bourdieusian Approach to the Biographical Aesthetics

.....involves.....

Structure

Structuring *and* Structured Structures

Externalisation of Internality and the
Internalisation of Externality

=>

‘A science of dialectical relations between objective structures...and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualised and which tend to reproduce them’.

Structure

- Primary Cognitive Experience
- Intensional
- Self, Other, Objects
- Interest; Doxa; Heterodoxa
- Form and Content
- Homologies
- Macro and Micro: *Without* and *Within*

3-Phase Methodology

1. Construction of the Research Object
2. Field Analysis:
 - data collection; analysis; presentation
3. Participant Objectivation

Field Analysis: 3 levels

- **Level 1:**Field in relation to other fields and the field of power.
- **Level 2:**Examine the inter-relations between agents and institutions;
- **Level 3:** Compare the habitus of a range of individuals;

Bourdieu's Thinking Tools

“**Habitus** and **Field** designate bundles of *relations*.

A **field** consists of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power (or capital);

habitus consists of a set of historical relations ‘deposited’ within individual bodies in the forms of mental and corporeal schemata of perception, appreciation and action.”

(Bourdieu 1992: 16).

Ontological complicity

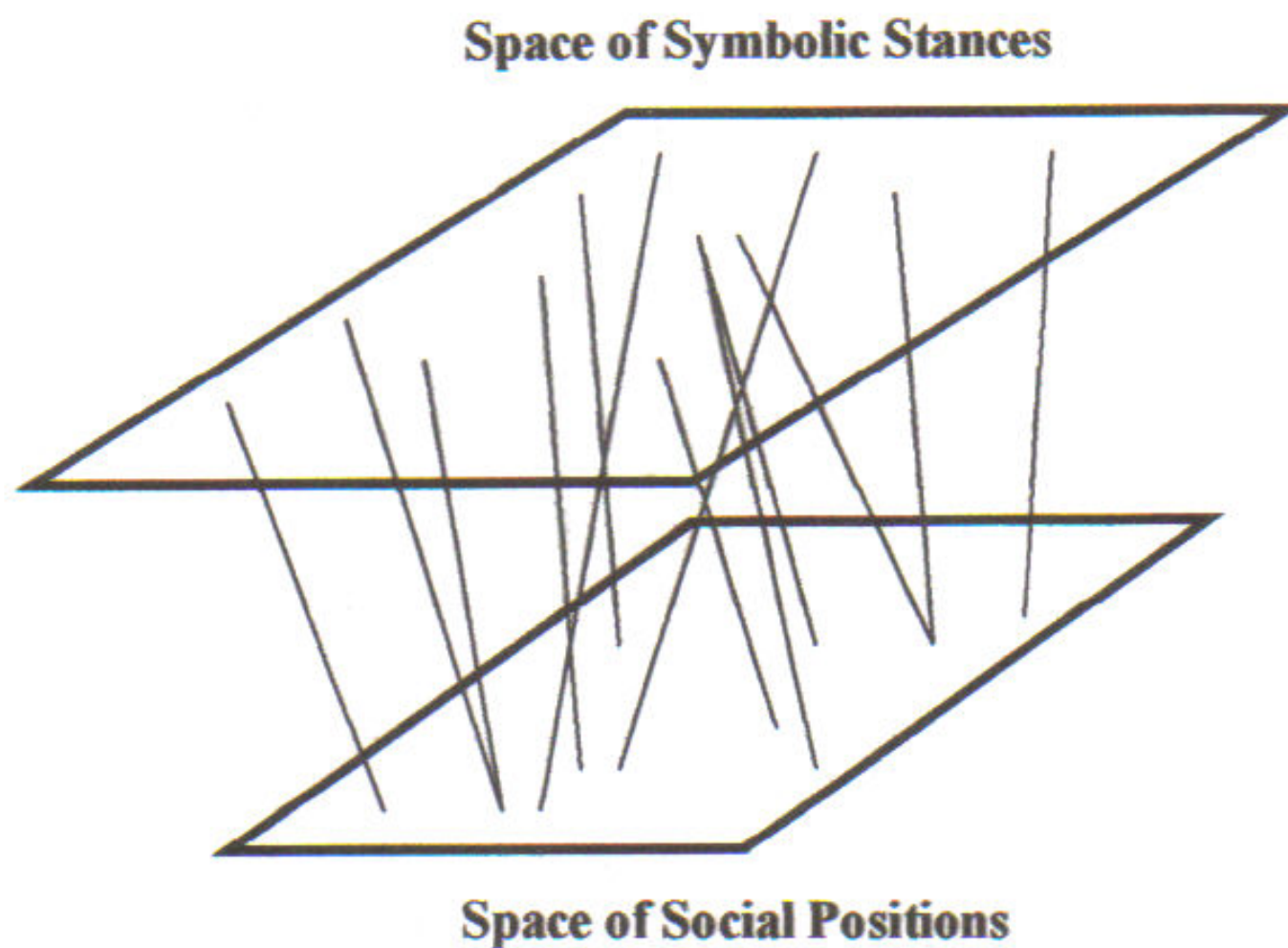


Figure 1: The independent, but corresponding spaces of stances and positions.

Capital: A Medium for Field Manoeuvres

Bourdieu identifies three distinct forms of **capital**:

- **Cultural Capital** - embodied dispositions, cultural goods and educational qualifications;
- **Social Capital** - social connections and obligations, including those associated with associations and institutions;
- **Economic Capital** - into which, given certain conditions, all other capitals can be converted.

(based on Bourdieu 1986/83)

Symbolic Capital and Markets

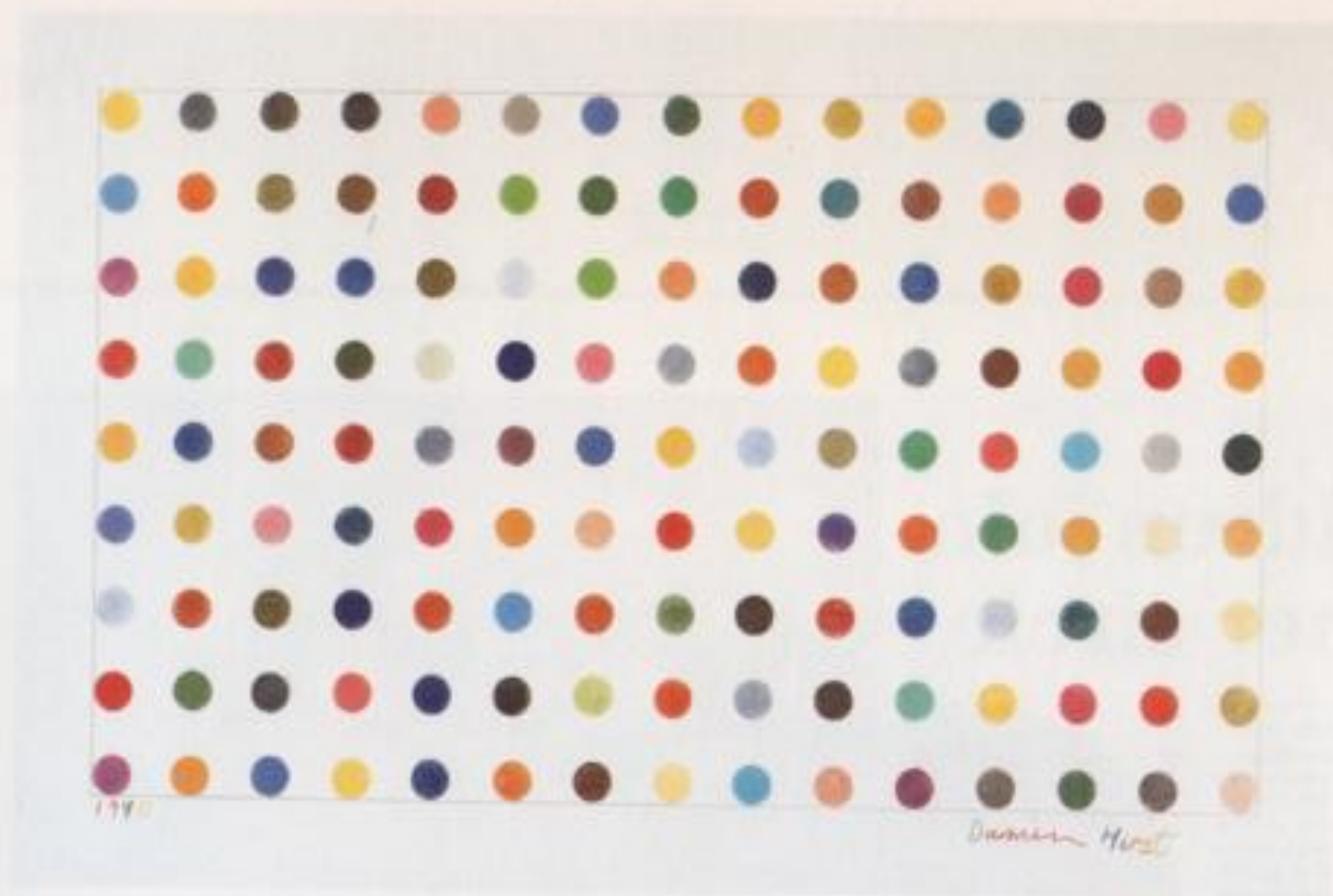
Crucial to any individual/organisation's position within a particular *field* is the quantity and form of *capital* which has been accrued by that individual or organisation.

Their present *field* position conditions the nature and range of choices that can be made about future acquisition of symbolic capital and subsequent position taking.

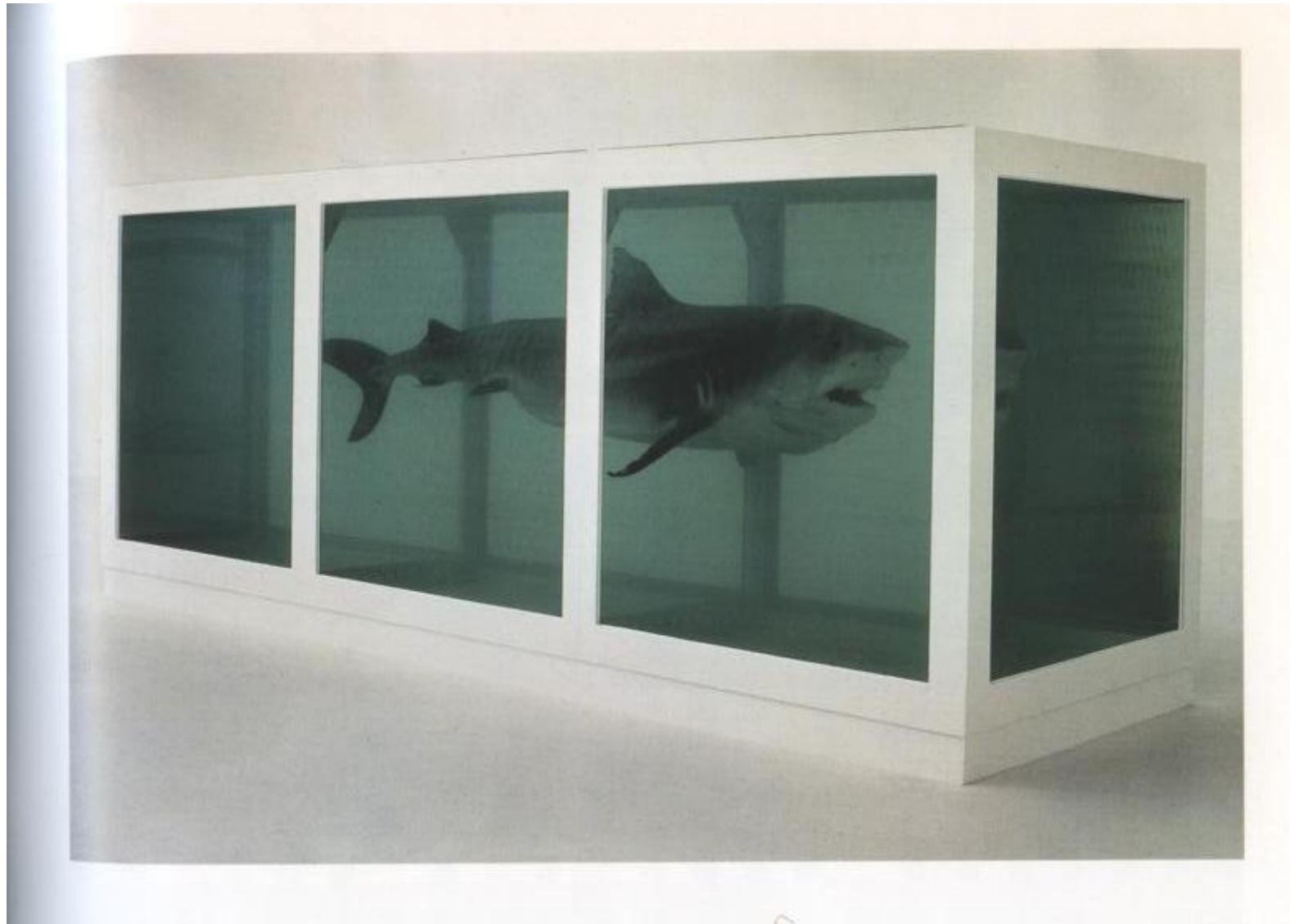
This, in its turn, shapes the nature and range of future choices and so on ...

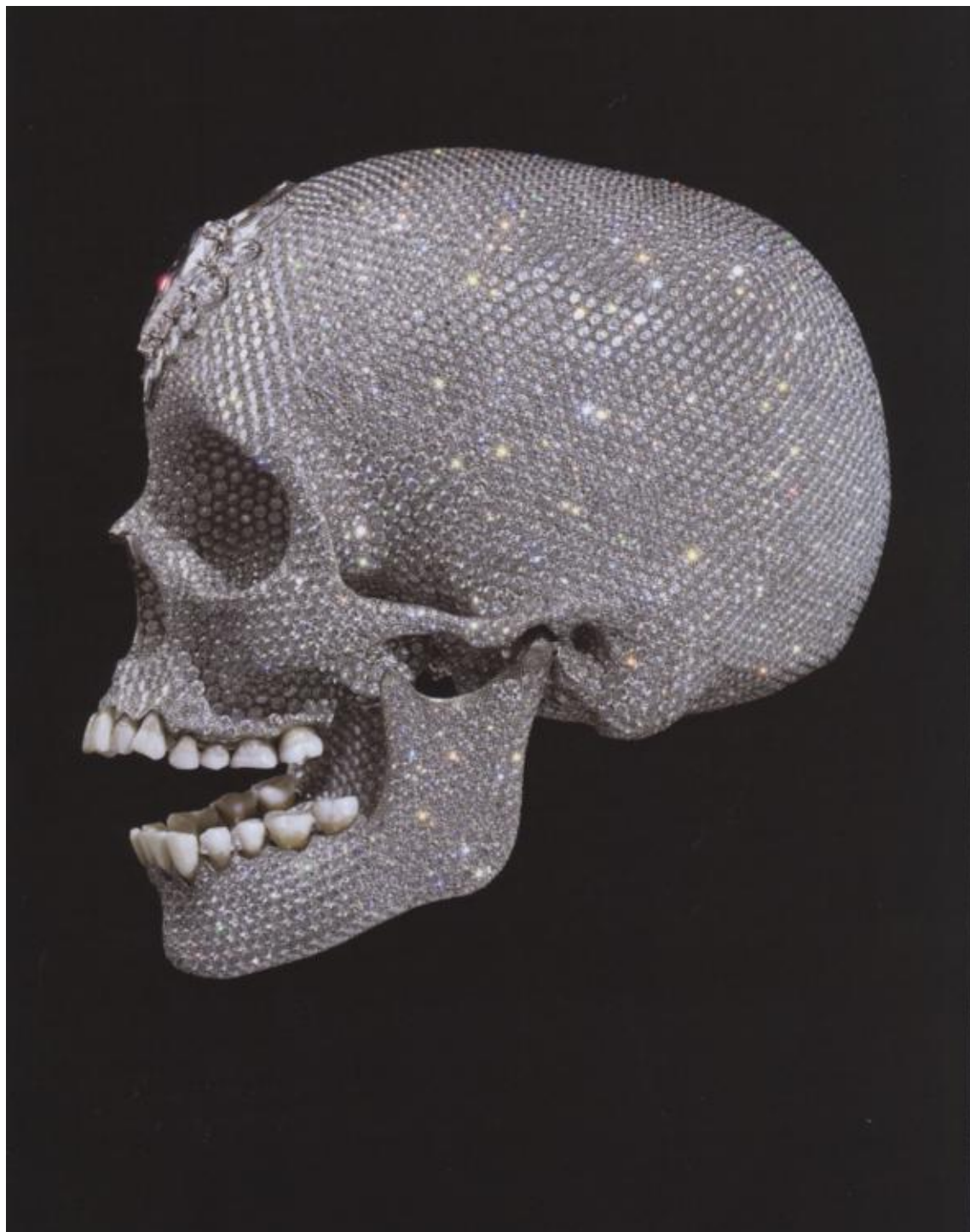
At base – AN ISSUE OF LANGUAGE

EXAMPLE: ART – THE yBas



SPOT DRAWING
1990
Coloured pencil on paper 23 x 32½ in



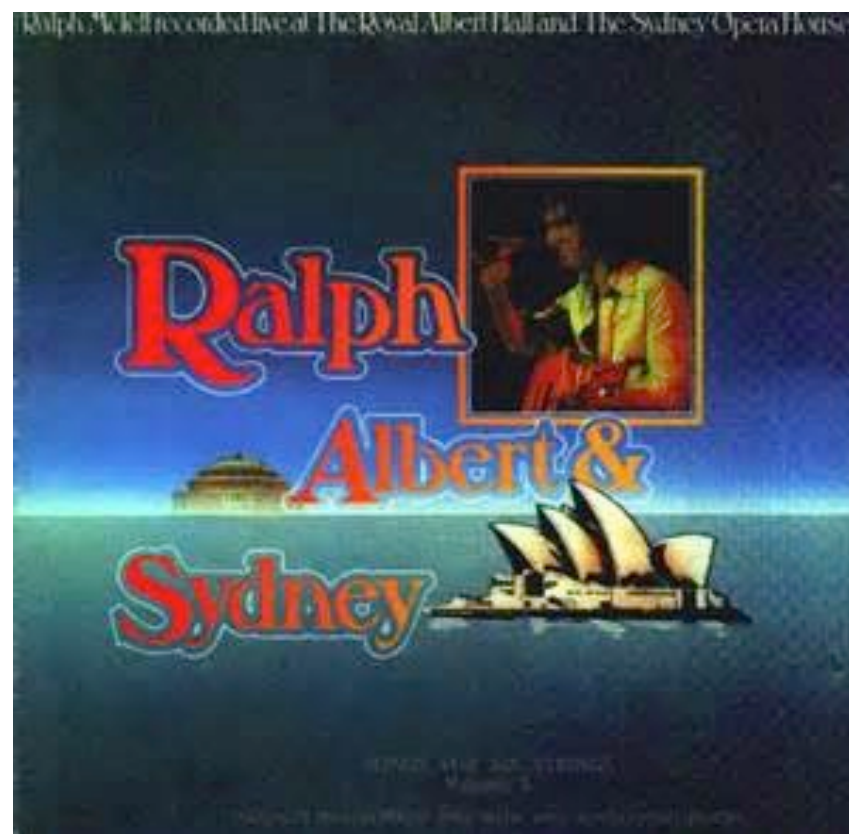
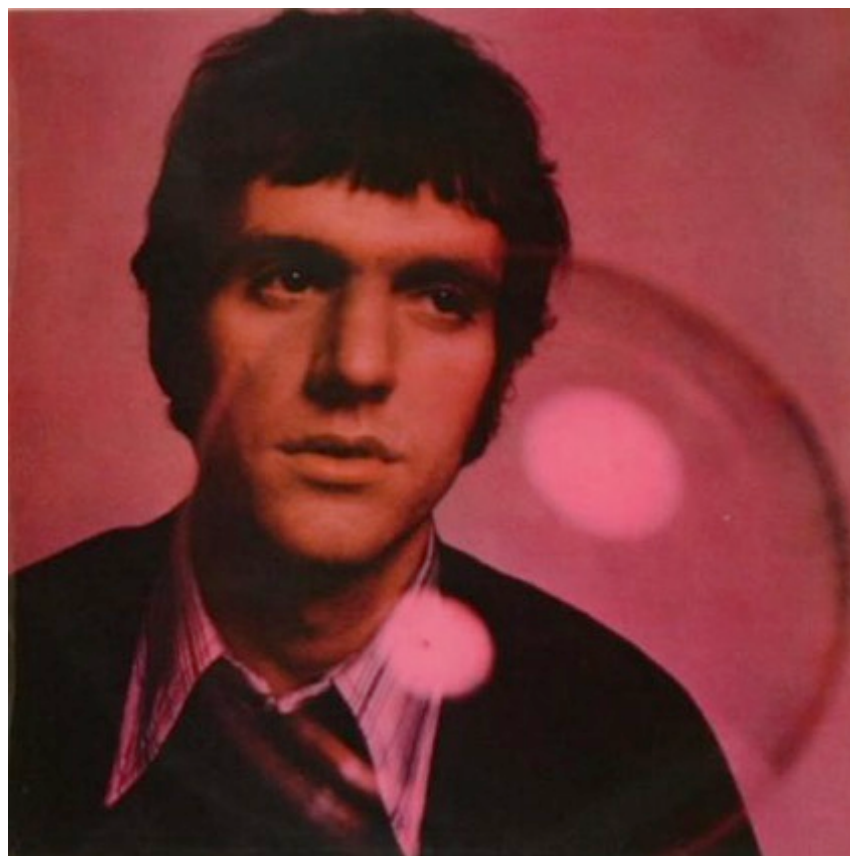


**PARALLEL LIVES: THE
BIOGRAPHIES OF RALPH McTELL**

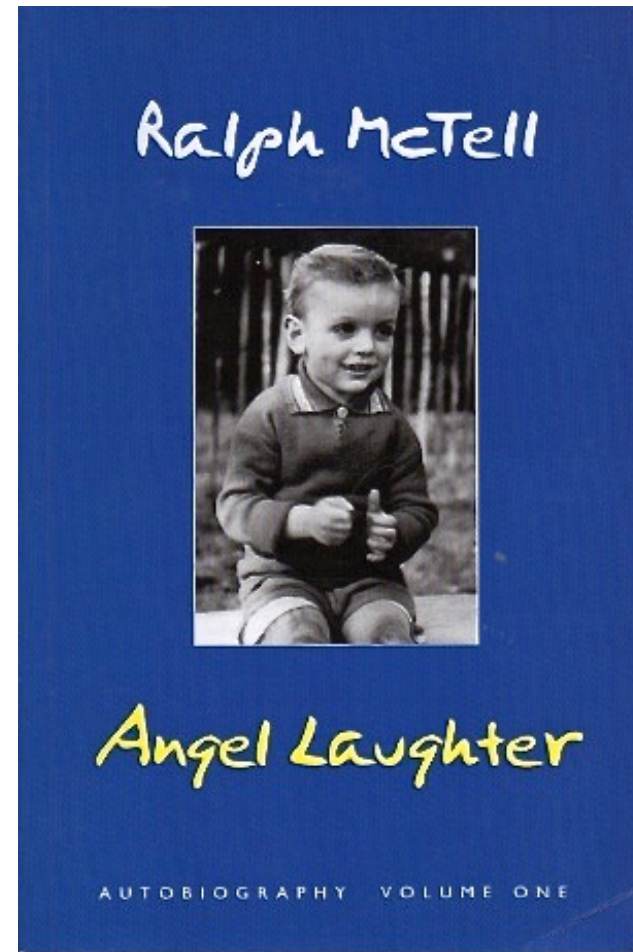
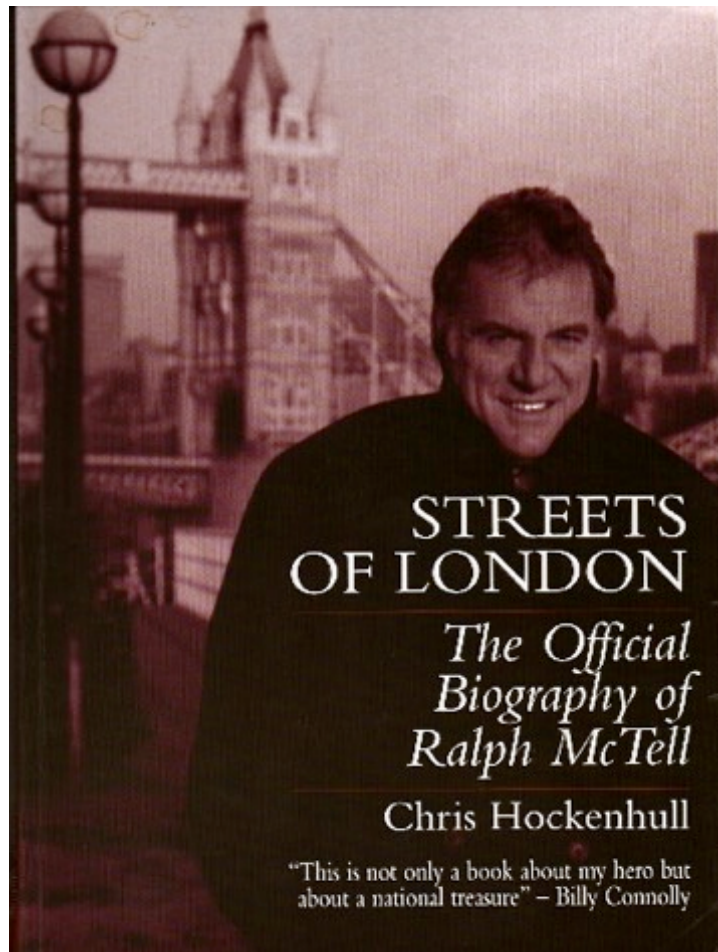
Parallel Lives:
THE BIOGRAPHIES
OF RALPH McTELL

Michael Grenfell





Biographies



A Synecdoche

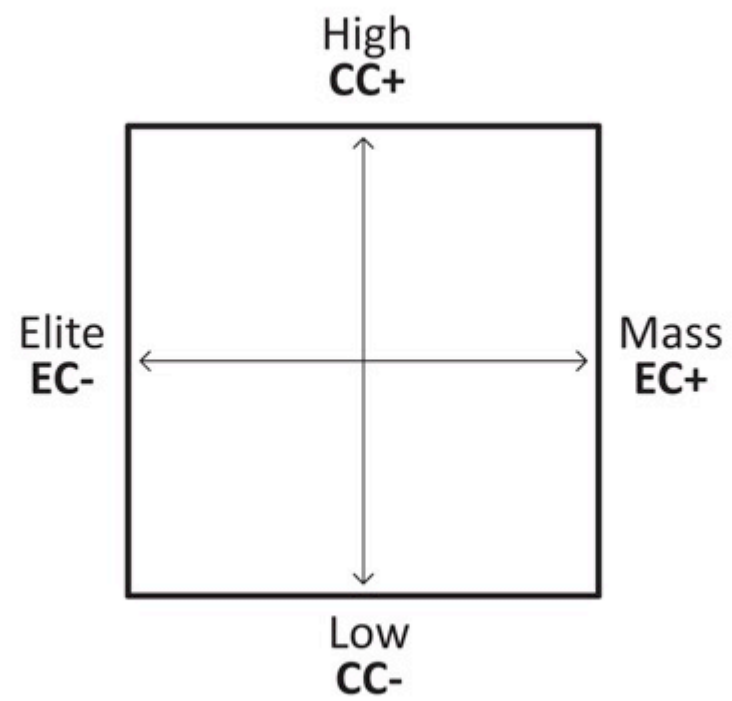


[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=16WC_Dyo6Fo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=16WC_Dyo6Fo)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?
v=xiyME-xkN4U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xiyME-xkN4U)

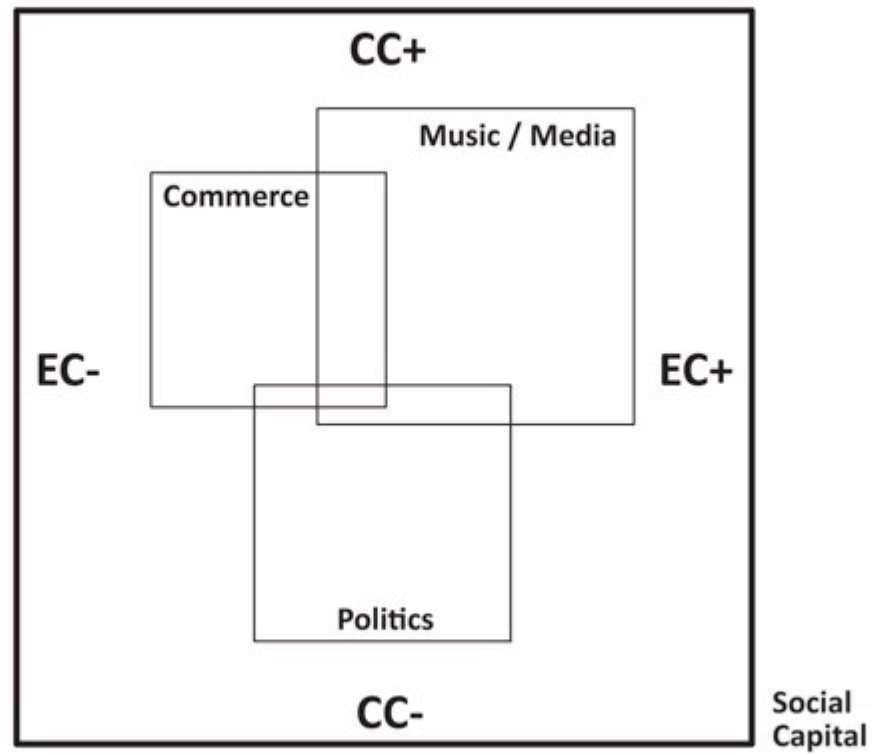
Field Theory?

- Social Space v. Field
- 1966: 'Intellectual Field and Creative Project'. (Panowsky)
- Field Studies
- **Explorations** in 'Field Theory'.
- The Nature of Fields and their Operations
- Field and the State
- Microcosms



Level 1

Relationships between the Music Field and the Field of Power

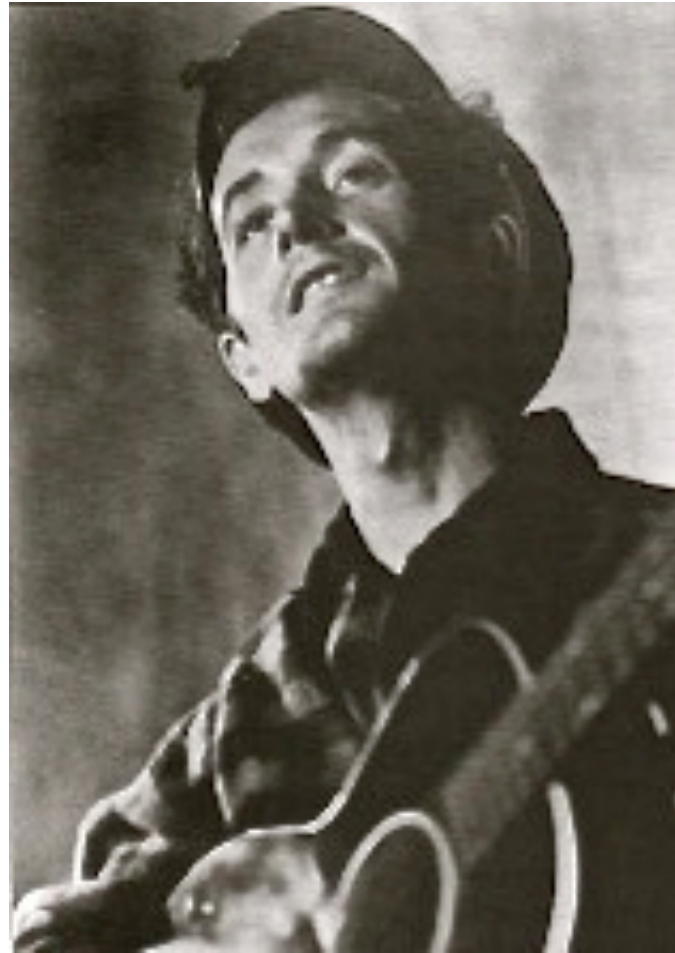


Field of Power (1950/60s):

Post-War

- **The State:** Labour Party 1945; Tory Party 1951
- **Expansion of Higher Education:** Comprehensive Education 1946; Robbins report 1963.n US and Britain, Student protests
- **Post-war Generation:** National Service 1957; Welfare State 1945; Baby Boom 50s; Travel/ Communications.
- **Youth Culture:** Beatniks (Literary); American Influence/Dance->Jazz-> Skiffle->Folk.
- **Liberalization:** e.g. Sexual Revolution: Homosexuality; Lady Chatterley Obscenity Case (1960).
- **War:** Cold War 1947; Colonial wars 50s; Nuclear Bomb; Cuban Missile Crisis 1962 Nuclear Weapons.

The Beats



Field of Technology

- Development of first long playing record (in 50s), Vinyl, 45rpm single, E.P.
- Radio – Television
- Guitars replaced the piano
- The rise of the Electric Guitar.

Field of Media

- BBC: Radio/ TV
- Publications/ Journalism
- Youth Culture:

Field of Cultural Production

- **Art Minimalism**
 - Music, e.g. John Cage 1952
 - Abstract Expressionism: Pollock, Rothko; Ben Nicholson, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth.
- **Popular Music:** Crooner/ Show music - > Groups
Rock Idols. Skiffle
- **Literature-Poetry/Drama:** Thomas, Angry Young Men, Workers' Theatre, Realism, The Beats
- **Folk Music/Protest singers:** Traditional → Protest; American/ English Vernacular → Singer Songwriter.

**** TRANSATLANTIC EXCHANGE ****

First and second Folk Revivals

Cecil Sharp (1859-1924)



Ewan MacColl (1915-1959)



First Folk Revival (1900 - >)

- Sharp / Karpeles
(EDFSS)
- Vaughan Williams
(Butterworth)
- Kibbo Kift
(Orange - Gurdjieff)
- Education

STATE

BBC

EDUCATION

Transatlantic
Generation
(1961)

Second Folk Revival (1950 - >)

- 1930's Communist League
- Workers Music Association
(Topic Records 1934)
- Alan Lomax
- Clubs
(Blues & Ballads, London)
- TUC
(The Iron Muse 1963)

SMALL SCALE <

> LARGE SCALE

Social
Capital

Cultural
Capital

Economic
Capital

Level 2

The Field

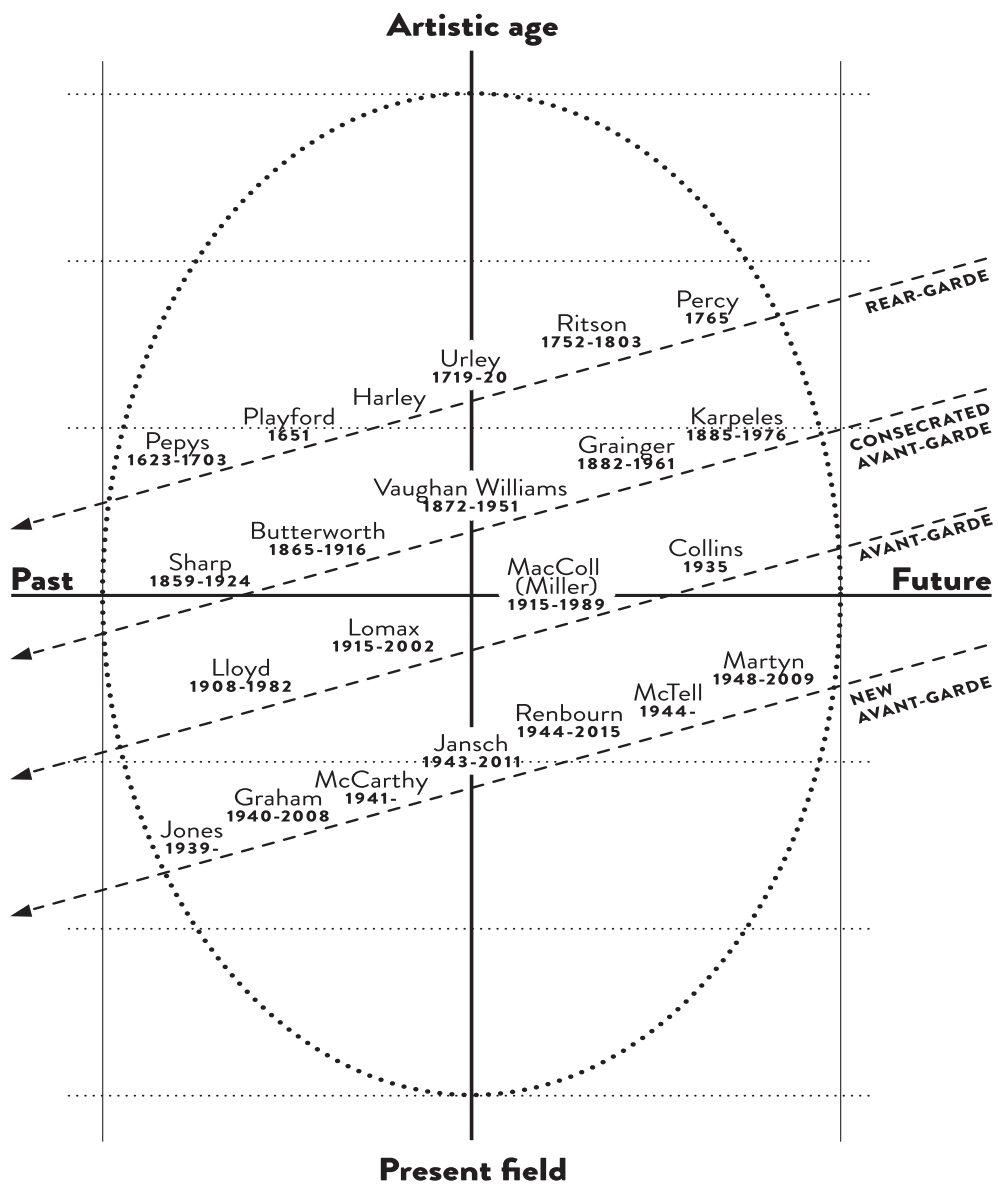
FOLK BLUES->JAZZ->SKIFFLE ->POP/ ROCK

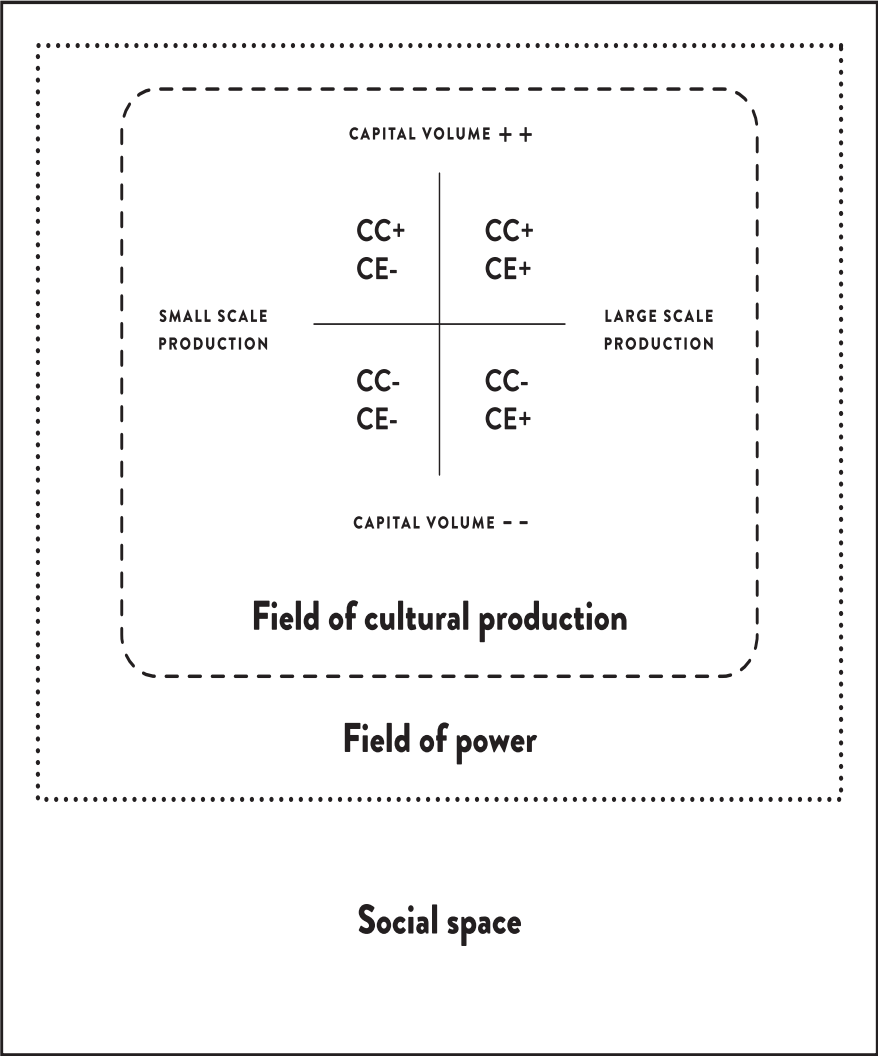
Ken Colyer



Lonnie Donnigan







Cultural Fields

Restricted Production

- A system producing the symbolic goods (and instruments of appropriation of these goods) objectively destined (at least in short term) to a public of symbolic goods producers, themselves producing for producers of symbolic goods.

Large Scale Symbolic Production

- Organised to the production of symbolic goods destined for non-producers (the 'wider public') which can be recruited either in non-intellectual segments of the dominant class (the 'cultivated public') or other social classes.

Cultural Fields

Restricted Production

- Form over Function
- Produces its own norms of production
- Own evaluative criteria of products
- Obeys laws of competition for strictly cultural recognitions – granted by peers (privileged and competitors)

Large Scale Symbolic Production

- Function and form
- Obeys laws of competition for the conquest of as vast a market as possible.

Past

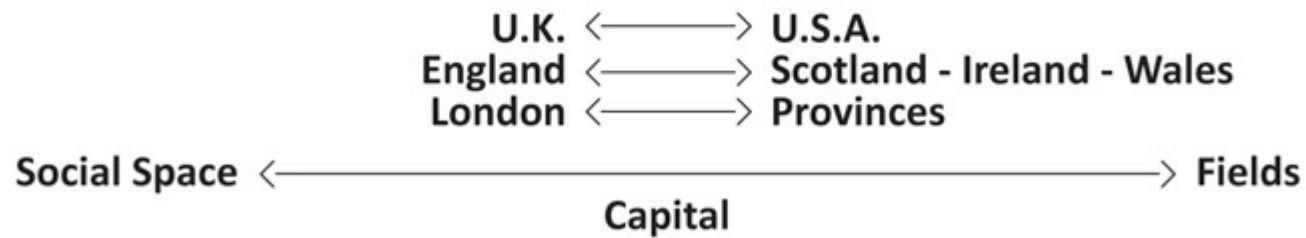
- Sharp / Karpeles
- Lomax
- MacColl
- Guthrie
- Skiffle
- Blues

Present

- Dylan / Baez
- Simon & Garfunkel
- Graham
- Jansch
- Renbourn
- McTell

Future

- Pentangle
- Albion Band
- Steeleye Span

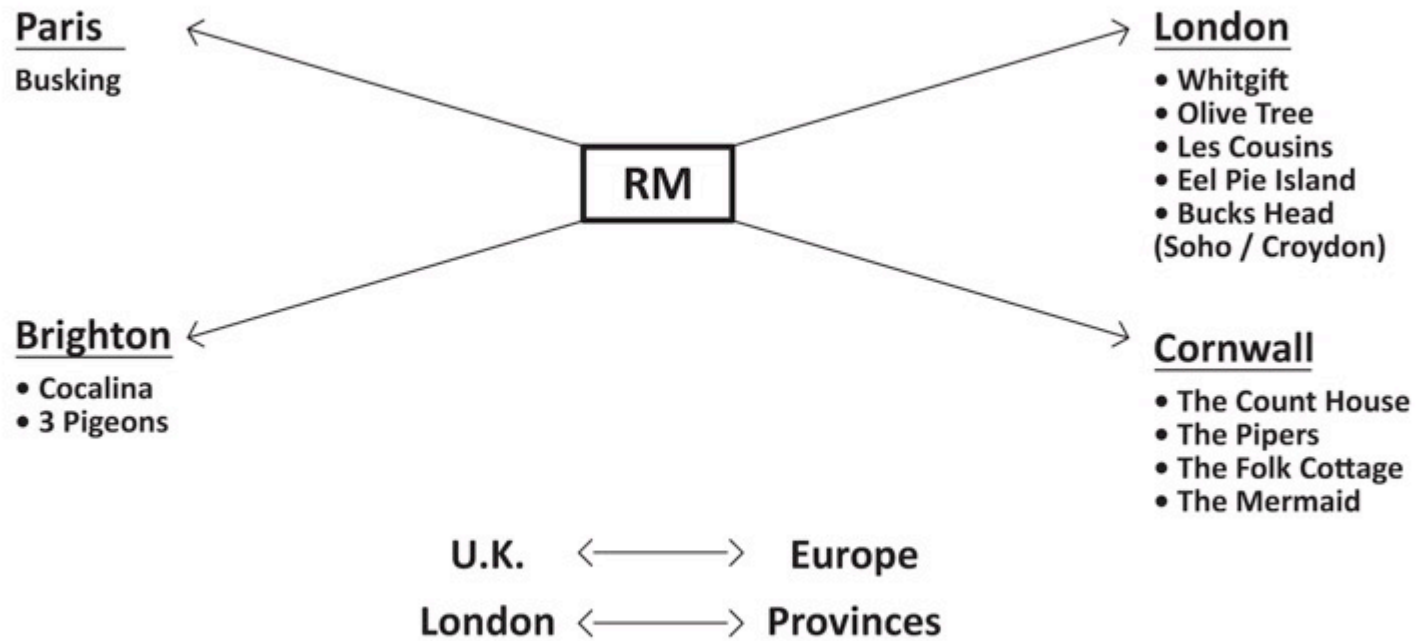


Level 2

Habitus

London - Paris

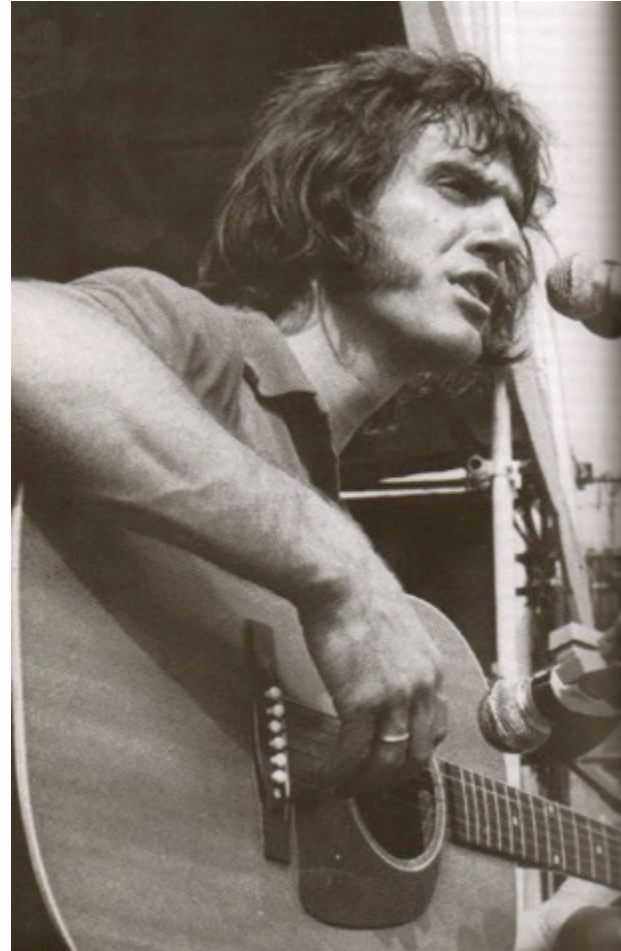


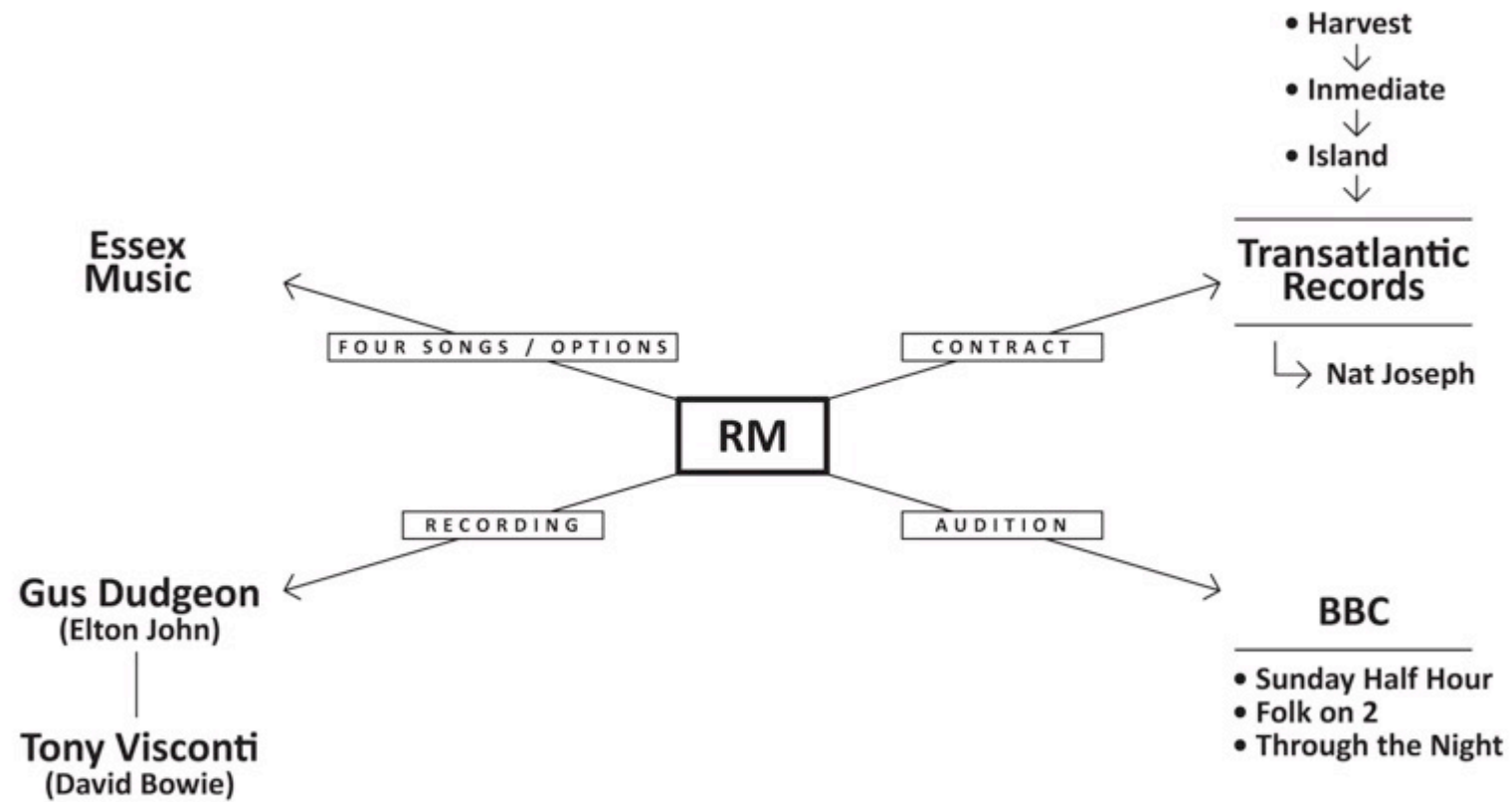


Cornwall



1968/ 69





Past

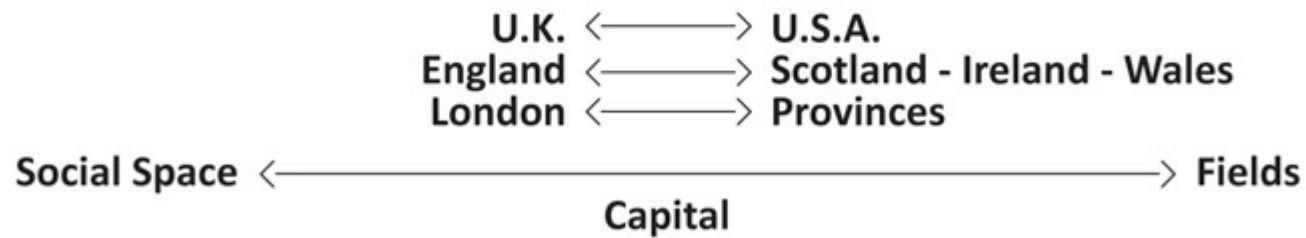
- Sharp / Karpeles
- Lomax
- MacColl
- Guthrie
- Skiffle
- Blues

Present

- Dylan / Baez
- Simon & Garfunkel
- Graham
- Jansch
- Renbourn
- McTell

Future

- Pentangle
- Albion Band
- Steeleye Span



Youth Generation

- 1957 : Teenage Invented
- Disposable Income -> Cultural Consumers
- Post war
- WC -> MC Embourgeoisement
- Liberal minded
- Individualistic
- Welfare State
- London <-> Provinces
- International Travel

- All this implies a certain relation to the world

Skholè

Return of the Repressed

- Synecdoche
- Glimpse – Epiphanic Moment
- The Creative Moment
- Production and Consumption
- Psychological; Philosophical; Spiritual
- Social



Artist and their Audience Become One!

Folk _____ Blues
Traditional Folk _____ Singer Songwriters
U.K. _____ U.S.A.
Traditional Jazz _____ Modern Jazz
Country Blues _____ Traditional Blues
Classic Literature _____ The Beats
Pop _____ Rock
Pop/Rock _____ Folk
Acoustic _____ Electric
Restricted _____ Large scale

Vs.

3. Participant Objectification

- Empirical and Scientific Subject
- A Subject that does not make of itself an Object
- Objectivation of the Objectifying Subject
- Apply the same tools to the researcher than the Research
- Disarm

3- Biases

1. Position in Social Space (Habitus/ Cognitive Structures)
2. Orthodoxy of the Field Site (language)
3. *Skholè* – Scholastic Fantasy (Relations to the world – Substantialist/Relational)

Participant Objectivation:

3 Levels (Subject that does not make of itself an Object)

1. Fields in relation to the field of power – my connection/ connecting.
2. My relationship to the doxa in the field; held in institution. What am I connected to? Doxa of the discipline – Aims. Position in field.
3. My habitus and that of other people in the site context; Their habitus and mine; personal relationships/ networks. My position and proximity.

Four Breaks

- From Empirical Knowledge
- From Phenomenological Knowledge
- From Objective Knowledge
- From Scientific Knowledge =>

Instead of *Stealing Lives*: Praxeological Biography

- *Reflexive Objectivity*
- A Historical Sociology of the Past.
- A Sociological History of the Present.

Homo Sociologicus

Why do it?

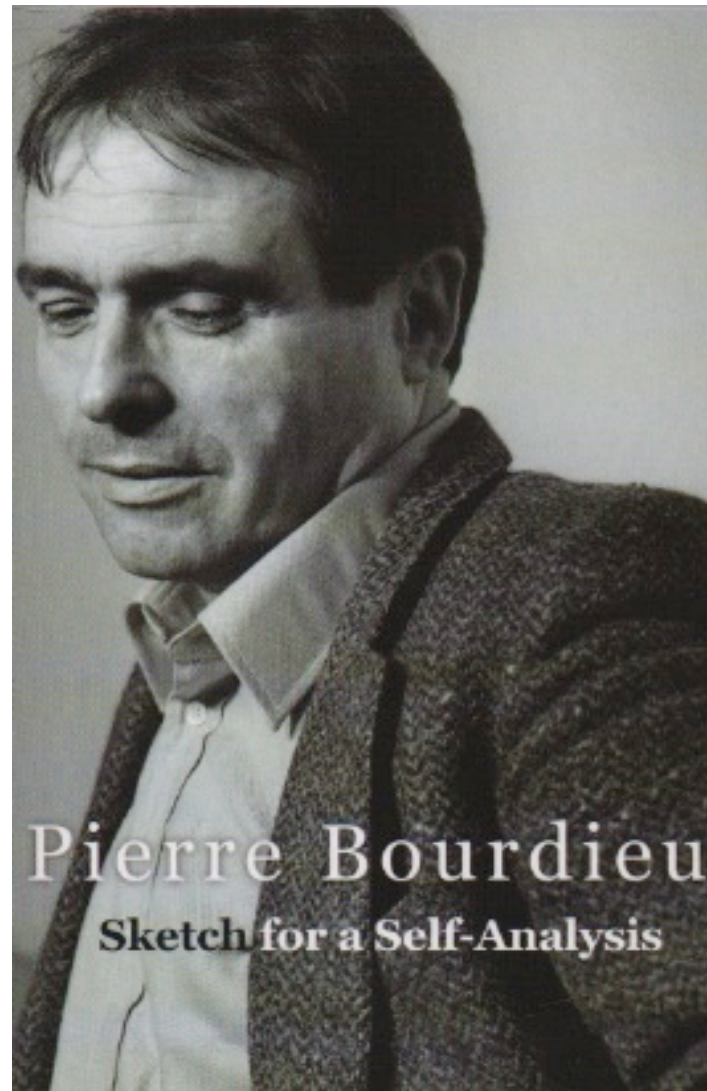
..... 'seems to be more reassuring,
more humane than belief in the
miraculous virtues of pure interest in
pure forms'

1993: 188

Praxeological Knowledge

Any particular reading item is in relation to every other point set within the concepts of the Theory of Practice – thus, an Epistemological Reading (Gaze, Metanoia)

Note the relation between Language, Experience and Understanding/ Explanation



Pierre Bourdieu
Sketch for a Self-Analysis

THE END