

Political Power and Social Theory
Volume 21

Political Power and Social Theory

Julian Go
Editor

POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY

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POLITICAL POWER AND SOCIAL THEORY

EDITED BY

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Political Power and Social Theory is a peer-reviewed annual journal committed to advancing the interdisciplinary understanding of the linkages between political power, social relations, and historical development. The journal welcomes both empirical and theoretical work and is willing to consider papers of substantial length. Publication decisions are made by the editor in consultation with members of the editorial board and anonymous reviewers. For information on submissions, please see the journal website at www.bu.edu/sociology/ppst.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

This volume of PPST is the first volume under my sole editorship. The editorial transition (from Diane E. Davis, the former editor) has been challenging but surprisingly seamless thanks to Dr. Davis' helpful hand and the capable team at Emerald Publishing. I am honored by this opportunity. I am also humbled. For years PPST flourished under the formidable skills and vision of Dr. Davis. While I am doubtful that I will be able to match her deft editorial skill and leadership, I am determined to maintain the journal's integrity and innovations while honoring its traditions. The complexities of sociopolitical structures, past and present, demand critical analysis. A proper understanding of power relations requires meticulous research and bold theorizing. My goal is to ensure that PPST continues to contribute to these tasks.

I am proud to start this volume with two exciting pieces from promising junior scholars. Together the two papers continue the journal's tradition of offering cutting-edge scholarship on fascinating topics often overlooked in mainstream social analyses: in this case, poets and monetary policy. In "“Autonomy from What?” Populism, Universities, and the U.S. Poetry Field, 1910–1975,” Baris Büyükokutan offers a historical and textual analysis of poetry movements in the United States to discuss the relationship between the autonomy of intellectuals *from* the wider society and the influence of those intellectuals *upon* society. Scholars from Gramsci to Bourdieu have offered differing perspectives on this relationship. Büyükokutan fruitfully deploys material on poets to show that the relationship can vary over time and across different contexts. In “Monetary orders, financial dependence and idea selection: The international constraints on American monetary policy, 1961–1963,” Aaron Major examines U.S. monetary policy in the early 1960s to engage larger debates about the relative role of ideational and material structures in policy-making. Major shows how material relations of dependency were critical in the shift toward monetary tightening, thereby helping better understand not just whether ideas matter in policy change but also when and how.

The last two sections of this volume look beyond the United States to examine the emergent middle classes. The first section, guest edited by Gay Seidman, contains essays that originated in a conference at Princeton

University. Together the contributions from Eva Bellin, Grzegorz Ekiert, Amy Kracker Selzer and Patrick Heller, Joel Stillerman, and Devesh Kapur offer a view into the middle classes, their growth, and their political place around the world. As Seidman highlights in her introduction to the section, the essays unsettle our traditional understandings. While traditional social science has long assumed a direct and positive relationship between the growth of the middle classes and the development of democracy, the essays together reveal that the political identities and potential role of the middle classes are less linear. Due to their economic aspirations, the historical legacies from which they emerge, and the political structures in which they are embedded, the middle classes are not always going to take to the streets for democratic reform as readily as our theories would predict.

The final section, part of the journal's regular "Scholarly Controversies" series, continues the focus upon the middle classes while speaking specifically about the global south. Diane E. Davis, PPST's former editor, provides a stellar overview of the issues at stake in analyzing the middle classes in the global south and how to study those groups in the first place. While sharing some of the views of the other essays, one of Davis' additional contributions is to situate the middle classes within larger global economic processes and structures while urging us to take seriously the urban context of their development. Responses to the essay from Gavin Shatkin, Ryan Centner, Celso M. Villegas, and Raka Ray offer different spins on the essay while contributing their own insights.

To conclude, I thank Gay Seidman for putting together the essays from her conference and all of the authors for their wonderful contributions. They have made my job easy. I also thank Claire Ferres, Stephanie Hull, Matthew Burton, and the rest of the team at Emerald for their patience, guidance, and care. Finally, I hope all of you will join me in thanking Diane E. Davis for all of her years of editorial service to PPST. The journal, and we the readers, will miss her.

PART I
POETS, POWER, AND FINANCE IN
THE UNITED STATES

“AUTONOMY FROM WHAT?” POPULISM, UNIVERSITIES, AND THE U.S. POETRY FIELD, 1910–1975

Barış Büyükokutan

ABSTRACT

Much writing on dissenting intellectuals posits a uniform relationship between autonomy from the popular element and social influence. The case of U.S. poets from 1930 to 1975 challenges this, as dissenting poets' sphere of influence grew during the hegemony of populist as well as antipopulist movements. In order to account for this, this chapter draws on the conceptualization of autonomy as a process whose parameters are mutually irreducible and potentially contradictory. Where these parameters are more or less fully synchronized, dissenting intellectuals face a united bloc of opponents that they cannot divide; therefore, they need to fight all of these opponents simultaneously. Where there is little such synchronization, in contrast, they can negotiate temporary alliances with some of their foes, use these alliances to secure gains in more important fronts, and revise their alliances as circumstances change. Twentieth-century United States, this chapter argues, was an example of the latter kind of setting. Dissenting poets were able to use universities and popular element against one another, depending on how they saw their overall situation. When autonomy from universities mattered most, they reclaimed the popular element; when autonomy from the popular element mattered most, they set aside their differences with university

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administrators and joined the academic ranks. This distinction between greater and less synchronization of the powers, the chapter argues, has implications for political sociology beyond the study of intellectuals.

How can dissenting intellectuals acquire social influence? Some of the best-known answers to this question point to a simple and universal relationship between influence and the autonomy of intellectual practices from the language and concerns of ordinary people. Following Gramsci (1971, 1994) and Lukacs ([1938] 2006), one tradition of scholarship calls on intellectuals everywhere to embrace “the people” at all times, renouncing the ideal of autonomy from the popular element (Bürger, 1984; Chomsky, 1969, 1978; Sartre, 1948; Wald, 1987). Another tradition, culminating in the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1993, 1996), forcefully rejects populism in all times and places in favor of artistic and scientific autonomy (Adorno, 1997; Barthes, 1953; Mannheim, 1985; Robbins, 1990, 1993). In their disagreement, both traditions conceptualize the relationship between these two variables independently of context and as one-to-one – they disagree about the direction of autonomy’s impact, but they agree that there is one and only one such direction.

Why, then, did two very different attitudes toward autonomy from the popular element accompany the growth in the influence of dissenting U.S. poets from 1930 to 1975? While an elitist and artificial language and the exclusion of “social” themes dominated U.S. poetry from 1930 to 1955, after 1955 leading U.S. poets relied on “ordinary American” language to tell the stories of “ordinary Americans.” In spite of this radical break, the influence of dissenting poets grew throughout the entire period. Their audience expanded; the number of social milieus in which “the poet” was a respectable figure increased; and they used these newly acquired power bases to challenge mainstream culture and politics-as-usual.

Does this mean that autonomy from the popular element has no impact on dissenting intellectuals’ social influence? In this chapter, I argue otherwise. The stance toward populism emerges once again as a key factor when a more dynamic view of artistic autonomy replaces the one that these two traditions share. In this improved view, the parameters of autonomy – i.e. answers to the question “autonomy from what” – may cancel each other’s effects and may threaten artists’ interests in different degrees at different moments. Dissenting intellectuals can, therefore, sometimes play them off one another. When they perceive populism to hurt them more than

it helps them, they can assert their full independence from the popular element by making concessions on another front. When changes in the political and cultural conjuncture increase the relative significance of that other front, they can accept greater dependence on the popular element to restore balance. A seemingly incoherent approach to autonomy from the popular element, then, may hide a very coherent approach to the autonomy process as a whole.

From this improved view of autonomy emerges the chapter’s main contribution – a new theorization of the constraints that dissenting intellectuals have to take into account. I propose to distinguish between settings of intellectual practice in terms of how synchronized the parameters of autonomy are. More or less full synchronization gives rise to a single antagonism with all dissenting intellectuals on one side and all the powers-that-be on the other. The internal structure of intellectual fields¹ is relatively simple here – dissenting intellectuals form a single group and face all of their peers who are on the side of the status quo. Autonomy can therefore be treated, for practical purposes, as a single variable, a single percentage figure (Fig. 1). For settings like this, the two traditions of thought I mentioned above are appropriate – the only problem for dissenting intellectuals here is figuring out whether autonomy from all the powers helps or hurts them.

Extant scholarship takes this pattern to be universal because the founding myth of the modern intellectual, the Dreyfus Affair in France (1894–1906), is an example of such full synchronization. But the forces that were aligned together in the Dreyfus Affair may sometimes work at cross-purposes. In such settings, dissenting intellectuals cannot simultaneously fight all of these forces; they have to prioritize their struggles and make compromises. The internal structure of intellectual fields reflects this complexity – the rivalry of groups competing for dominance within the intellectual field in question

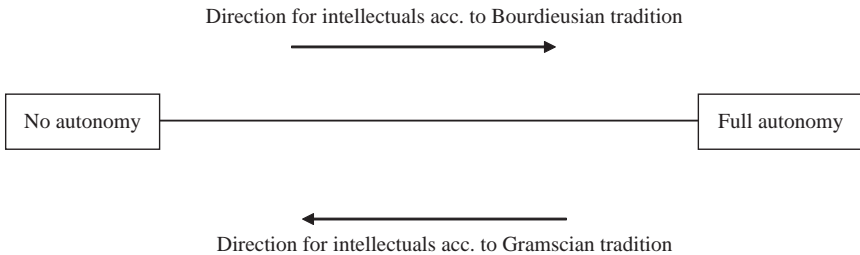


Fig. 1. Full Synchronization of the Parameters of Autonomy.

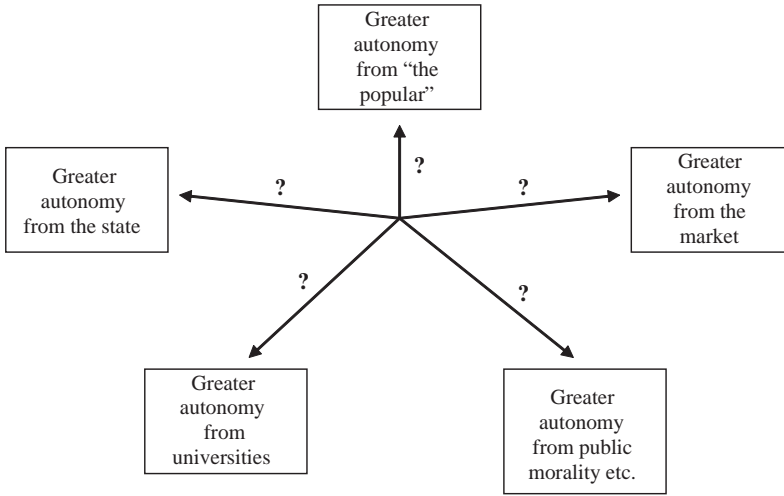


Fig. 2. Weak Synchronization of the Parameters of Autonomy.

replicates the conflict between parameters of autonomy. As a result, these groups cannot simply be called pro- and anti-autonomy sides – each one advocates greater autonomy from some powers and less from others. Descriptions of the relative power of intellectuals vis-à-vis temporal powers must, therefore, always refer to particular stakes and their current alignment (Fig. 2). In such settings, the recipe for success is neither autonomy’s “absolutist defense” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 187) nor its unconditional renunciation à la Gramsci, it is balancing the potentially conflicting demands of its shifting terrain. There are no hard-and-fast rules for doing this, however, so the direction dissenting intellectuals should take cannot be specified without knowledge of the concrete situation.

Twentieth-century U.S. poets exemplify the latter case because they had to take into account at least three distinct parameters of autonomy that did not align together: the popular element, universities, and the state. The popular element and universities had a special relationship – gains with regard to one meant losses with regard to the other. As a result, they could not be fought simultaneously. The state, on the other hand, could be aligned either with the popular element or with universities. At some moments, greater independence from the state meant greater independence from the popular element and greater dependence on universities; at others, it meant greater independence from universities and greater dependence on the popular element.

Because poets tended, correctly, to see the state as their chief enemy, at each moment most of them supported the side that seemed to offer the best strategy to deal with the state. In the 1930s and 40s this was the antipopulist side. During the Great Depression and World War II, poets who disagreed sharply with state elites over political issues stood little chance of prevailing. It made sense, therefore, to seek shelter from politics, and antipopulism carried the day by securing access to one such shelter – the nation's universities. Antipopulist poets used universities as the breeding ground of a new kind of dissent, one that the state could not crush so easily. From the mid-1950s on, in contrast, it was easier to attack the state, and a particularly good way to do this was to accuse the state with loss of contact with the American people. This required the new generation of dissenting poets to identify with "the people." That, in turn, meant equating "academicism" with elitism and rejecting it.

I proceed as follows: After defining key terms, I discuss sociological views of the relationship between dissenting intellectuals' autonomy and the social influence they command. I focus on Gramscian and Bourdieusian traditions and identify their shared premise, which I show to be inadequate for certain settings. Next, I separately trace changes in the independent variable – dissenting poets' relationship to populism between 1930 and 1975 – and the dependent variable – their collective cultural capital in the same period. This is meant to show in detail that extant literature on autonomy cannot account for the experience of twentieth-century U.S. poets. The next section is the heart of the argument. In it I examine the history of the U.S. poetry field and find that U.S. intellectuals were able to use universities and the popular element against one another, switching sides when they perceived the cultural and political conjuncture to shift. I conclude with the implications of my findings.

DEFINING THE TERMS

Among other things, intellectuals have been defined as the producers of decontextualized knowledge (Collins, 1998, p. 19), as people who concern themselves with symbolic systems in general and not with their particular functioning (Parsons, 1969), as members of a privileged technocratic class (Bell, 1976; Gouldner, 1979), and as people who provide their social classes with consciousness (Gramsci, 1971, p. 5). An evaluation of all of these definitions is beyond the scope of this chapter. A tentative definition is necessary, however, so I adopt the simplest and the most widespread one.

Following Lipset (1963, p. 333), I define intellectuals as people who “create, distribute, and apply culture.” Twentieth-century U.S. poets clearly belong to this category. By “dissenting intellectual” I refer to cultural producers who are unhappy enough with the cultural and political status quo to take action against it.

Lipset’s definition is objectivistic in that it takes the intellectual as a thing-like entity rather than as a contingent label that helps create the powers attributed to its holders. Recently, Bourdieu and his associates challenged such approaches, pointing out that the label of the intellectual is more important as the object of struggles for appropriation than as a technical referent (Bourdieu, 1996, 2004; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Charle, 1990). If, however, culture is understood to be an arena of conflict rather than the rarefied and incontestable apex of human accomplishment as Lipset’s generation took it to be, Lipset and Bourdieu’s works converge.

There are also multiple ways to conceptualize and measure the social influence of a social category, and as with definitions of the intellectual, their critical evaluation is beyond the scope of this chapter. What I understand by this term is collective cultural capital – the broad cultural competence attributed to a social category and that could be converted to other kinds of capital. Following Bourdieu (1984, 1990), I use the term “capital” to refer to all kinds of resources that actors can use to perpetrate symbolic violence. I gauge changes in twentieth-century U.S. poets’ cultural capital by tracing the number of milieus in which people belonging to this social category had a legitimate presence – milieus in which the discourse of “the poet” could not be dismissed as irrelevant.

In contrast to the concepts of intellectual and influence, the meaning of autonomy tends to be taken for granted in social scientific writing. Of the few explicit definitions of the term, I follow Bourdieu’s and take autonomy to be the existence of a specific “nomos” that regulates the functioning of a field of cultural production. The construction of this nomos requires the invention of a new kind of capital specific to that field – i.e., the invention of a separate principle of hierarchization associated only with that field. In concrete, the “conquest of autonomy” means the credible assertion of independence from any demand. Insiders as well as outsiders can be the source of such demands; in either case the properly poetic – or the properly literary, the properly aesthetic, etc. – is defined in terms of another quality – e.g., the effective, the rational, the profitable, the patriotic, the popular. These other qualities constitute the parameters of autonomy – i.e., possible answers to the question “autonomy from what.”

The popular element in the arts, or "the popular," refers to the realistic depiction of an authentic "people"² that artists associate with a particular place – e.g., "the American people." The measure of success for art that relies primarily on the popular element, then, is its accessibility. Therefore, this kind of art frowns upon formal experimentation for its own sake, but it has no problem with the kinds of experimentation that can be justified as making art more accessible. In literature, the use of the popular element refers to two things: form-wise, writing in the simple, "authentic" language of ordinary people; content-wise, describing the everyday lives of such ordinary people. Extensive use of the popular element is often the result of its celebration and idealization, i.e., populism. Populism does not necessarily involve the acceptance of the market principle since artists may believe that "the people" may not be able to afford artistic products. Finally, autonomy from the popular element refers to the strength of the belief, among artists, that artists do not need to rely on the popular element to be legitimate. Therefore, autonomy from the popular element is the rejection of populism.

DISSENTING INTELLECTUALS' SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND POPULISM: A REVIEW

Two mutually exclusive sides have dominated the debate about populism. In their disagreement, however, these two sides agree that autonomy from the popular element necessarily means autonomy from all other relevant social forces as well. Therefore, they both assume that the level of intellectuals' autonomy can, at every moment, be summarized as a single percentage figure. This leads to the conclusion that the direction for intellectuals is always self-evident – "up" the scale for the proautonomy side, "down" the scale for the antiautonomy side. This conclusion is flawed, however, since the assumption it is built on is unwarranted.

The Populist Tradition

The most convincing argument in favor of artistic populism first appeared in the work of Gramsci (1971, 1994). Gramsci took class conflict to be the most fundamental social fact and held civil society to be an arena of class conflict. These led him to claim that cultural production must be either on the side of the revolutionary class or opposed to it – genuine autonomy from this central social dynamic is not possible.

Intellectuals are traditional or organic depending on whether they recognize this truth. Traditional intellectuals either cannot see the impossibility of genuine autonomy or will not admit to seeing it. Either way, their brand of cultural production prevents large masses of people from grasping their real situation. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, consciously and openly take up the political causes of the revolutionary class of their time. Their audience is the exploited class, and their aim is to show members of this class where their real interests lie.

Importantly, if organic intellectuals are to be successful in this task, they must refrain from difficult artistic styles and formal experimentation for its own sake; they must speak in a language that the people will easily understand. This choice, Gramsci argues, will eventually turn organic intellectuals to the leaders of a broad coalition of democratic forces. Many scholars have since repeated this argument in one form or another (e.g. Lukacs, [1938] 2006; Sartre, 1948; Wald, 1987; Domhoff, 1999; also see Mills, 1963; Chomsky, 1969, 1978).

The most developed version of the Gramscian position to appear in recent times is Peter Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984). Bürger argues that the autonomy of art in bourgeois society robs artists of any social or political significance, and that the avant-garde appeared when artists realized this fact. In his perspective, opposition to the separation of art and life, and therefore the appreciation of the popular element, is the defining feature of the historical avant-garde of the interwar period. Distinguishing between this genuine avant-garde and what he sees as its shallow repetitions after 1945, Bürger evaluates the willy-nilly acceptance of autonomy by the latter as a second-best solution that falls short of real political potential.

The Antipopulist Tradition

The populist tradition quickly begot its mirror image. A contemporary of Gramsci, Mannheim ([1929] 1985) argued that intellectuals' independence from the expectations of the public allows them to uncover political truths that are hidden from actors with no such autonomy. Bloch ([1938] 2006) and Brecht ([1938] 2006) defended the dense language and intense formal experimentation of avant-garde German writers against Lukacs, who called for a simpler depiction of the everyday struggles of the working class using the language of the working class. After World War II, Adorno (1997, [1965] 2006) and Barthes (1953) rejected Sartre's distinction between committed and autonomous writing. In the United States, Greenberg

(1961), Shils (1961, 1972), Coser (1970), Gouldner (1979), and Robbins (1990, 1993) argued that a separate realm for intellectual activity, free from the whims of laypeople, is of paramount importance.

The back-and-forth between these scholars and their populist opponents has clear parallels with some famous social scientific debates – e.g., the so-called “Sokal affair” and the public sociology debate. Sokal’s professed loyalty to the working masses and his belief in the virtues of linguistic simplicity and transparency motivated his famous attack on postmodernism (Sokal, 1997; also see Eagleton, 1999). Critics of his position responded by saying that it is impossible for social scientists to have unmediated contact with the masses and that critical thinking about social issues requires the use of a dense and specialized language (Butler, 1999; Miller, 2000). In the public sociology debate (Burawoy, 2004, 2005), some scholars criticized mainstream – i.e., autonomous – sociologists’ tendency to play the role of the detached expert (Ghamari-Tabrizi, 2005) and called for the complete destruction of sociology’s disciplinary turf in order to build an alliance with the masses (Aronowitz, 2005). Others rejected this call, pointing out that mass media, which sociologists must rely on to reach laypeople, necessarily corrupts sociological discourse (Beck, 2005; Ericson, 2005; Stacey, 2004).

Bourdieu’s work (1993, 1996, 2004; Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) features the most recent and most developed argument in the antipopulist tradition, and the examination of his opposition to Gramscian scholarship sums up the entire debate. In *Rules of Art* (1996), Bourdieu argues that the autonomization of the French literary field in the late nineteenth century enabled following generations of writers to play a different, more effective kind of political role. “Far from there existing, as is customarily believed, an antinomy between the search for autonomy (...) and the search for political efficacy,” Bourdieu writes, “it is by increasing their autonomy (...) that intellectuals can increase the effectiveness of a political action whose ends and means have their origin in the specific logic of the fields of cultural production” (1996, p. 340). This is because, Bourdieu argues, autonomy makes writers and artists’ forays into the public sphere more credible. Delegitimizing the pursuit of broad recognition in favor of the approval of a small group of peers, autonomy prevents intellectuals’ political practices from being perceived as self-interested publicity seeking.

Autonomy means independence from any kind of demand, but Bourdieu’s writings on literary, artistic, and scientific fields neglect the popular element, focusing only on the market and the state. Bourdieu implies that the popular element is problematic in the arts only when it functions as a proxy for the market, and he is careful to point out that that

does not always happen (Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995, p. 107). From this point of view, some young writers' position-taking on the side of "the popular" against aesthetic formalism and elitism is an empty gesture meant only to discredit the previous generation and to clear the attention space. As long as they are not flirting with the market, these upstarts are still to be considered agents of autonomy. Claiming to be "men of the people" is one thing, the argument goes, *being* "men of the people" is another.

In judging older literati, however, Bourdieu does not distinguish between what they say and what they do. Moreover, there are two very important reasons why the popular element should be considered separately as a source of heteronomy³ from a Bourdieusian perspective. The first of these is the opposition of Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals to Gramsci's. Bourdieu's manifesto of intellectual responsibility, "For a Corporatism of the Universal," ends with a polemic against Gramsci's notion of organic intellectual:

Cultural producers will not find again a place of their own in the social world unless, sacrificing once and for all the myth of the 'organic intellectual' (...) they agree to work collectively for the defense of their own interests. (1996, p. 348)

Because of the centrality of this text – it was published separately as a journal article and republished, without any revision of its core arguments, as the postscript to *Rules of Art* – Bourdieu must have understood his position to be radically different from Gramsci's. But it is clear that Bourdieu and Gramsci would not disagree over how intellectuals should position themselves vis-à-vis the state and the market. The state under capitalism is a bourgeois institution and the market is a site of capitalist exchange, so Gramsci would also urge intellectuals to renounce them. The only thing they can disagree about is the status of the popular element. Using the simple language of the masses in the arts is something to be favored from Gramsci's perspective because it is something that happens naturally as intellectuals descend from their ivory towers. From a more consistent Bourdieusian perspective, in contrast, the construction of a complex, artificial language that consciously separates itself from everyday speech is a commendable step toward greater autonomy.

The second reason has to do with theoretical rigor: When what matters for artists is restricted to autonomy from the state and the market, the logic of Bourdieu's writings becomes circular. This is because the real objects of Bourdieu's sociology of intellectuals are *dissenting* intellectuals. Other intellectuals' acquisition of social influence is a non-issue – their educational credentials and expertise in manipulating symbols make them valuable allies

for actors with political and economic power. Since dissenting intellectuals are opposed to the state by default, the meaning of autonomy cannot just be autonomy from the state. It cannot just be autonomy from the market either – if there is a “market for dissent,” it will be necessarily small as political power is based on the consent of the governed in modern societies. As a result, no analysis is needed to establish that dissenting intellectuals must be opposed to the market principle. If, therefore, the state and the market are taken to be the only parameters of autonomy that really matter, Bourdieu’s theory is reduced to the following meaningless proposition: Dissenting intellectuals will have greater social influence when they are dissenting intellectuals.

In line with all this, there is a kernel of thought in Bourdieu’s own writing that acknowledges the heteronomous nature of the popular element. Consider the following quote about the highly artificial, difficult, and elitist language Emile Zola, the foremost defender of artistic autonomy and the most influential dissenting intellectual of his time, used in his novels:

[Zola’s] concern to keep a distance [between literary and non-literary worlds] is never as evident as in the contrast that he maintains (...) between the language put into the mouths of working-class characters and the narrator’s remarks, the latter always marked by signs of great literature – in their rhythm, which is that of the written word, or in the traits typical of sustained style, such as the use of the *passé simple* tense and indirect speech. Thus someone who in his manifesto *Le Roman expérimental* loudly proclaimed the independence and dignity of the man of letters, affirms in his work itself the superior dignity of literary culture and language, by which he should be recognized and for which he claims recognition. In this way he designates himself as the author *par excellence* of popular education, itself totally founded on the acknowledgement of that cutting-off which is at the basis of the respect for culture. (1996, p. 117)

Passé simple is a tense that fell out of use in daily speech in France; Zola’s extensive use of it in his novels is a perfect example of the kind of formal experimentation that the populist tradition frowns on for making art inaccessible. It is a creative anachronism that differentiates literary language from the language of ordinary people and makes it difficult to follow for those without proper instruction. As Bourdieu repeatedly points out, this “proper instruction” has to start in the family and go on uninterrupted in elite schools if it is to be successful, so only a very small fraction of the population receives all of its benefits. Therefore, the language Zola constructs with outlandish materials like *passé simple* serves to disqualify the vast majority of people from becoming his readers. This deliberate exclusion of “the people” directly leads, according to Bourdieu, to the acquisition of greater autonomy and so to greater effectiveness in the public sphere.

The Shared Premise

The opposition between populist and antipopulist traditions is made possible by an implicit agreement on the nature of intellectual autonomy. Specifically, both sides of the debate assume that increased autonomy from the popular element necessarily means increased autonomy from all other relevant social forces as well. The best representatives of both traditions, Bourdieu and Bürger, are cases in point. While they acknowledge that autonomy has multiple parameters, in crucial points they both speak of autonomy “in general.” A brief review of comparative evidence, however, shows that this simplification is sometimes unwarranted.

In his best moments, Bourdieu is aware that conquering the autonomy of a field from the state does not always result in increased independence from the market or vice versa (e.g., Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995, pp. 69–72). His writings on the political field present the state as a contradictory entity rather than as a foe, pure and simple (e.g., Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 33–34). *Rules of Art* includes an analysis, however underdeveloped, of the divisions among agents of autonomy, opening the way to seeing the division among sources of heteronomy (pp. 136–137).

However, Bourdieu frequently contradicted himself in these matters, leading critics to wonder how much to generalize from his historical analyses of particular fields (Calhoun, 1993, p. 82). By including private banks under the state, he conflated the state and the market (1998, pp. 1–2). He presented the Royal Academy of the Arts as nothing but an extension of the state without examining whether it had its own partial autonomy from the state (1996, pp. 131–137). And the nuanced view of the state came after Robbins (1993, pp. 109–110) warned that Bourdieu’s “lazy assumptions” made him blind to recent efforts by the state to protect art and science from the market. Based on this, it is safe to say that a simplistic, almost Manichaeian streak competes with a more nuanced one in Bourdieu’s writings on cultural production.

Notably, the simplistic streak predominates in Bourdieu’s work on art and literature in nineteenth-century France, but it is rather subdued when the focus is on other societies or on France in more recent times. This may be due to genuine empirical differences between nineteenth-century France and other sites rather than on confusion on Bourdieu’s part. The Academy of the Arts, like universities, was tightly controlled by the state after all in the nineteenth century, and the French ideology of state–industry relations emphasized cooperation and interpenetration rather than separation and mutual balancing up until neoliberalism (Dobbin, 1994). Before the rise of

republicanism to dominance, the church and the armed forces were also part of this alliance, giving it a very conservative outlook.

Opposition to this united conservative bloc shaped the formation of the idea, and therefore the reality, of the modern intellectual (Charle, 1990). Under the Second Empire (1852–1870) and in the first decades of the Third Republic (1870–1940), dissenting writers and artists were on the defensive. They focused on the construction of a purely artistic sphere in which none of these powers could legitimately intervene. Importantly, in this process, victories against one adversary counted as victories against others. On the relationship between writers and painters, for example, Bourdieu wrote:

Progress towards autonomy having been accomplished at different times in two universes, because of different economic or morphological changes, and in relation to powers which also differed (such as the Académie or the market), the writers could benefit from the conquests of the painters to increase their independence, and vice versa. (1996, p. 132)

During the Dreyfus Affair (1894–1906), intellectuals finally went on the offensive, challenging the conservative press, the state, and the church simultaneously (Begley, 2009; Burns, 1991; Whyte, 2005). The Affair began when it became clear that an officer of the French Army was selling military secrets to the German embassy in Paris, and the conservative bloc focused on Captain Alfred Dreyfus. Dreyfus was a convenient target – he was Jewish and his family was from German-occupied Alsace; his very presence in the officer corps symbolized the revolutionary spirit of liberty and equality. The evidence against him, however, was flimsy, and the real culprit, an aristocratic officer with a gambling problem and a deep-seated hatred for democratic principles, was soon identified.

Rather than admitting defeat, the conservatives pressed harder for Dreyfus' conviction, and they succeeded. Upon the decision of the court, writers and artists launched a vocal campaign to overturn it. They wrote that they did this to uphold truth and justice – values that, according to Bourdieu (1996, pp. 129–131), define autonomous art – over and above the honor and respectability of political authority. For multiple reasons, of which intellectuals' campaign was just one, the conservative bloc was defeated and republicanism replaced conservatism as the dominant ideology of the country. The leader of "*les intellectuels*," novelist Emile Zola, became a national hero.

This kind of simple confrontation, however, is the exception rather than the rule. Once the separation of state and church was complete in France, intellectuals could rely on elements within the state in dealing with religious conservatism. In the 1940s, the state and the market had become

distinct sources of heteronomy (Sapiro, 2002, 2003) and later the state started to protect cutting-edge art against the logic of the market (Bourdieu & Haacke, 1995, p. 72). Even the market can be an ally for dissenting intellectuals when the state is the main source of their troubles; examples of such situations are found in France (Moriarty, 1994) as elsewhere (Woodmansee, 1994).

Yet the Dreyfus Affair continues to be treated as the paradigm of intellectuals' political interventions everywhere. Because the Affair was so consequential and intellectuals' participation in it was so well advertised, following generations of French writers have enjoyed incredibly high status as spokespeople of the nation (Ferguson, 1987). No longer facing such a formidable united bloc of opponents after the Affair, they nonetheless relied on the achievement of the Zola generation to retain this position. As the Affair turned from history to myth, intellectuals in other countries also built their collective identity upon the celebration of the Affair (Said, 1994). As a result, scholars of intellectual history, who are intellectuals themselves after all, often attempt to understand very different experiences in terms of the Affair.

Bürger's work is a case in point. Perhaps because he takes the Dreyfus Affair for granted, in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* he accepts the stated goal of the historical avant-garde – completely abandoning the “bubble” of autonomy in order to heroically engage with all the powers-that-be – at face value (van den Berg, 2005). However, closer examination of these movements reveals that their leaders rarely followed the utopian practice they preached (Scheunemann, 2005; Silverberg, 2006; Strong, 1997; White, 2005). Instead, they negotiated their conflicting goals and often settled for less than what their ideal called for. For instance, destroying the institutional setup of art did not promise them much eventual fame, so the leaders of these movements indefinitely postponed the project when worldly success seemed within their reach. They discriminated between various parameters of autonomy, made temporary alliances with some of the powers, and attacked those they believed they could beat.

THE CASE: TWENTIETH-CENTURY U.S. POETRY VS. THEORIES OF AUTONOMY

I focus on U.S. poetry between 1930 and 1975 because the collective cultural capital of U.S. poets' was steadily rising in this period despite two very different strategies with regard to autonomy from the popular element

Table 1. Dissenting Poets’ Autonomy from the Popular Element and Their Collective Social Influence.

	Dissenting Poets’ Autonomy from the Popular Element	Dissenting Poets’ Collective Social Influence
c. 1930 to mid-1950s	Increasing	Increasing
Mid-1950s to 1975	Decreasing	Increasing

before and after the mid-1950s (Table 1). The rest of this section will demonstrate this point. I will first examine changes in the independent variable, autonomy from the popular element, showing that it increased in the first half of the period and then declined. I will then show that the dependent variable, the collective influence of the poets as measured by the number of the public milieus in which they had a legitimate presence, was rising throughout the entire period.

The Independent Variable: Populism and U.S. Poetry

From about 1930 to about 1950, the reigning literary movement in the United States was New Criticism (Altieri, 2006; Breslin, 1983; Perkins, 1987; von Hallberg, 1985). New Criticism explicitly rejected reader response as a legitimate measure of literary quality.⁴ It defined good literature by its rejection of immediacy and transparency, and by its extensive use of paradox, ambiguity, and irony – hallmarks of difficulty. Poetry was the paradigm of literature since, the New Critics argued, in it these features were paramount (Beck, 2001; Jancovitch, 1993).

New Critics considered seventeenth-century English poetry an excellent example of such an art and tried to replicate its achievement. They forsook literary forms that developed in North America and relied on British English. Their most trusted tool, iambic pentameter, produced rhythms that would almost never appear in daily American speech:

There once the penitents took off their shoes
 And then walked barefoot the remaining mile;
 And the small trees, a stream and hedgerows file
 Slowly along the munching English lane,
 Like cows to the old shrine, until you lose
 Track of your dragging pain.

(Robert Lowell, “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket”)

In this poem, note the regular alternation of unstressed and stressed syllables in the second line – the defining feature of iambic pentameter – which produces an artificial rhythm that heightens the language and emphasizes its separation from everyday speech. This structure is deliberately broken in the other lines to emphasize certain words – “penitents” in the first line, “small” in the third, “shrine” in the fifth – that are crucial for the meaning of the poem. Also note the regular rhyme – “mile” with “file,” “shoes” with “lose,” “lane” with “pain” – that adds to the deliberately artificial sound of the poem. The use of rhyme does not, however, make the poem easier to read, make sense of, or memorize because of the extensive use of enjambment – i.e., the decoupling of grammatical units from poetic lines.

To take another example:

Where we went in the black hull no light moved
 But a gull white-winged along the feckless wave,
 The breeze, unseen but fierce as a body loved,
 That boat drove onward like a willing slave
 (Allen Tate, from “The Mediterranean”)

Again note the overall pattern of alternating unstressed and stressed syllables, left intact in the last line but deliberately distorted in the others to emphasize crucial words – e.g., “white-winged” – or to insert definite or indefinite articles. Note also the regular rhyme and the use of words, like “feckless,” that do not appear in daily American speech. Most importantly, note that “moved” and “loved” are used, in Elizabethan fashion, as a rhyming couplet, declaring the poem’s allegiance to high British English.

The New Critics are generally associated with a conservative, even reactionary, politics (e.g., [Breslin, 1983](#); [Perloff, 2002](#); [Skerl, 2004](#); [Stein, 1996](#)), so it may be difficult for some readers to think of them as dissenting intellectuals. Their notorious reputation, however, may reflect not so much their actual program as the success of the labeling work of hostile commentators from the next generation. “While literary historians and scholars have told us a great deal about the mavericks and renegades,” writes Brunner, “what little we know of [the] center we know through the eyes of its fiercest opponents” (2001, p. ix).

A closer look at New Criticism reveals that the prevailing opinion about it is indeed problematic. The New Critics’ rivals have conveniently forgotten that their emphasis on irony and ambiguity had an antiauthoritarian