The Dark Side of Power and the Intellectual: C. Wright Mills and Gerald D. Berreman

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Two ways: One is to suffer; the other is to become a professor of the fact that another has suffered.

--Soren Kierkegaard

Intellectuals, as Kierkegaard suggests, are by virtue of their calling always at the crossroads of a moral dilemma. Does academic life, in monastic fashion, allow a comfortable and pious sequestering from the world? Is it enough to produce knowledge that others might by chance discover and convert to usefulness? What moral commitments does a scholar have both to the people studied and to the problems raised? These are enduring questions for the intellectual. Despite much theorizing to the contrary, the mirage called value-freeness remains sacrosanct, and objectivity continues to be widely admired. Even for those who abandoned the idyllic possibility of unfettered knowledge long ago, academic culture still has many ways of discouraging scholars from activism beyond the confines of universities. Academics can abdicate without censure from the responsibility of making their work useful and even view this abdication as necessary for the quality of their work. Many seek refuge behind this wall of security. But not all.

A few intellectuals passionately defy the comfortable majority as well as disciplinary propriety. For them knowledge without political commitment is an immoral act. They feel little kinship for the disassociated scholar who, in their eyes, and as Nietzsche would argue, resembles "an instrument," with "no purpose in himself." For Nietzsche the "objective man is in truth a mirror: accustomed to prostration before everything that wants to be known, with such desires only as knowing or 'reflecting' imply." His own persona evades him and he "calls up the recollection of 'himself' with an effort, and not infrequently wrongly" (1965:152). Such scholars, he continues, impoverished in spirit as they are, dilute any troubles they may confront in their research by jumping immediately to the "general case"—safe, objective, and emotionless. In contrast, the independence of mind exercised by radical colleagues places them outside the canons of routine scholarship and orthodox professorship. They refuse to accept the imposed doctrines of compromise and, far too often, come to know the heavy cost of such boldness. Such dissenters join a select group of public intellectuals, expatriates of the university's ivory towers, who speak out boldly. They claim the right to the dignity of their own experiences, write

persuasively and directly from their convictions and from their own brand of moral and civic cynicism. The obvious names jump to mind: Noam Chomsky, Susan Sontag, David Suzuki, Helen Caldicott, Desmond Tutu, Bertrand Russell, Lionel Trilling, Kate Millett, Edmund Wilson, Ralph Nader, Rachel Carson, Jean-Paul Sartre. The contemporary concerns of these activists range through issues as diverse as the machinations of foreign policy, the environment, the status of women, human rights, genetic testing, the Third World debt, human cloning, gay and lesbian rights, indigenous land rights, world trade, consumer and patient rights, globalization, and the human condition generally. Their agenda has two stages: to render visible the dark side of the power that offends, and thereby to activate for change.

This essay deals with the contributions of two such intellectuals, whose careers, when taken together, span the years since World War II. One is C. Wright Mills, a sociologist whose research and writing was done in the 1940s and 1950s. The other is Gerald D. Berreman, an anthropologist whose work spans the decades from the 1960s to the present. They are scholars of different academic and political generations. Mills, a professor at Columbia University, died in 1962 in his forty-fifth year. At this time Berreman was in the first years of his first permanent academic position at the University of California, Berkeley. They never met.

Yet they are drawn together by a strain of powerful ideas that link public and intellectual spheres. Their truths are political, strongly aesthetic, and supersede seemingly logical conventions. They recognize compatriots across the lines of disciplines, languages, and nationalities. Mills observed on first reading a biography of Thomas Wolfe: "My God that man is my brother" (Mills and Mills 2000:305). It is this kind of kinship that Gerald Berreman undoubtedly felt on discovering the writings of Mills, in particular the book *The Sociological Imagination* (1959). He writes of Mills as "my favorite social scientist," and of the stance described by Mills as the "politics of truth" and "an adequate definition of reality," in short, the undeniable political relevance of knowledge and the responsibility of the social scientist in addressing human problems (Berreman 1979a:xiv-xv). He remains faithful to these basic ideas through several decades of writing. In honor of his intellectual predecessor Berreman confers the title *The Politics of Truth* (1981a) on the book which reports on some of his own activist work in the 1960s and 1970s.

The truth that draws Mills and Berreman together appears to be that things are really not as they seem; things are not as they should be. Clearly each believes in acting according to his conscience, irrespective of the bureaucratic structures within which he resides and makes his living. Mills assertively proclaims that "it's a writer's responsibility to orient modern publics to the catastrophic world in which they live...he cannot do this if he remains a mere specialist. To do it at all, he's got to do it *big!*" (fly-leaf of Mills and Mills 2000). Berreman echoes similar sentiments: "I think the crucial thing is that we act as human beings and as social scientists according to our consciences and our knowledge—for the two are inseparable—and that we not be

scared off by the myth of value-freedom. Our acts can have direct effect and can serve as examples to others. If we do not act, our science will die" (1968:395). They encounter the familiar conflict between conscience, passion, and the artificial inhibitors of the knowledge of which they are a part. Dealing with these conflicts demands considerable personal courage.

Both Mills and Berreman found themselves as university professors in the quagmire of highly political times. They freed themselves from the yokes of academic bureaucracy demanded by their disciplines, entered into the political process and ultimately became important figures in the beginnings of a radical social science.

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The 1940s and 1950s, when Mills came to academic maturity, followed a global conflict where the United States and the rest of the world was attempting to recreate some of the stability of earlier years as quickly as possible. The emerging stability of the late forties and the quiet fifties, the frightened and silent generation as they came to be known, were reflected in a status quo sociology of structural-functionalism and Grand Theory. Talcott Parsons, who dominated this intellectual period, was deemed the sociologist who provided the theoretical intelligence that supported the bureaucratic establishment of the day. Parsonian sociology was admired not only by the orthodox but also by the majority. His sociology, widely taught and practiced at the time, is now criticized for its stationary perspective, for being inelastic in accommodating change, and for not recognizing the creative impetus for change. Mills came to see Parson's social system as the bedrock that supported the establishment, the ultimate conservative view. Its analytic offering was to become a rallying call for later intellectual and radical critiques of, or against, the military-industrial complex.

C. Wright Mills threw the first stones at establishment sociology and its relationship to American politics. He was a passionately unrelenting critic refusing to compromise or "to make the excuses that others were making—excuses mislabeled descriptions and analyses—for what was happening to their country" (Swados 1963:40). These analyses were, for him, examples of the emperor without clothes. "The fact is that it is not readily understandable; the suspicion is that it may not be altogether intelligible.... To many of those who claim to understand it, but who do not like it, it is a clumsy piece of irrelevant ponderosity" (Mills 1959:26). For the advocate it was a "wondrous maze, fascinating precisely because of its often splendid lack of intelligibility" (26).[1] There was a serious breach in social science, Mills observed, not only between those "who would observe without thinking" and those "who think without observing," but also in what "kinds of thinking, what kinds of observing, and what kinds of links, if any, there are between the two" (Mills 1959:33). His own chosen path was clear. "I have a big responsibility to thousands of people all over the world to tell the truth as I see it and to tell it exactly and with drama and quit

this horsing around with sociological bullshit" (Mills and Mills 2000:326). Clearly he saw himself as called to lead the revolt.

These sentiments were supported by Mills' choice of research topics. His academic concerns can be summed as power, politics, and knowledge—power and powerlessness. He was very keen on having a wide readership for his pointedly critical intelligence on these issues. To him the crucial perpetrators of power, the ones that continually drew him in almost everything he wrote, were authoritarianism, totalitarianism, and bureaucracy. At first these matters interested him as they existed on the American scene, but later he extended his concerns to the Soviet sphere.

After a dissertation derived from an interest in pragmatism, in the work of George Herbert Mead and Karl Mannheim, and centered in the sociology of knowledge as an analytic (published posthumously as *Sociology and Pragmatism* in 1966), he turned to an investigation of labor leaders, *The New Men of Power* (1948). He was particularly interested in the power that originated with the working class. He placed a great deal of hope on the power of labor leaders to implement change of the non-establishment kind. This hope was to be dashed, however, as it became clear to him that union officials increasingly began to adopt the cultural attributes of the already powerful, shunning those of the working class.

He followed this with a classic work which revealed the powerlessness of the middle class, *White Collar* (1953), a convincing chronicle of the malaise of the times. In particular he devoted a chapter to intellectuals, observing that intellectuals in the post-war period were in a moral slump. They had not protested the war and now, further alienated, they "broke with the old radicalism and became in one way or another liberals and patriots, or gave up politics altogether" (1953:147), inclinations of which he did not approve. Further, the conditions of their lives were set by state and business bureaucracies, which in turn had become their main consumers as well as employers. Even in large universities academics were controlled by a "vague general fear" which was conveniently labeled "discretion" and "good judgment" (1953:151). He described this state of affairs as a "defeat of the free intellectuals" by an enemy not clearly definable. In short, intellectuals were in a spiritual void. Obviously he was keenly aware of his own position, if only by virtue of his chosen calling, in this spiritual wasteland.

He completed the trilogy of his excursion into class and power when he produced *The Power Elite* (1956), an examination of the centralization of the power and knowledge that affected the lives of ordinary men and women. A powerful and controversial book, it demonstrated effectively that a power elite ruled America—the metropolitan 400, the very rich, the chief executives, the corporate rich, the celebrities, and those who ruled the Pentagon—a self-perpetuating power elite. Through each of the three parallel volumes he attempted to show, mostly by example, what issues should concern intellectuals. What particularly angered him were the

intellectuals who were defaulting on what he saw as their moral mission, who were devoid of moral passion, and who were "sophisticated apologetics for the inexcusable...as shields of orthodoxy and bellboys of authority" (Miliband 1968:6). *The Power Elite* sold very well and was read by those of varying political persuasions. Reportedly among his disciples were Tom Hayden, the left wing radical and later the politician, and Dwight Eisenhower, who initiated in one of his speeches the active use of the term "the industrial-military complex." It also brought him to the attention of the press, which began to feature him as an intellectual celebrity, clad in leather and goggles, riding his motorcycle, and also to give attention to his squabbles with his colleagues. The sociological establishment was hardly forgiving. Despite the grounding of his work in all of the acceptable scholarly procedures—he had actual data—he received a barrage of unremitting criticism. Nor were the granting bureaucracies forgiving when all but one turned down his requests for research funds. He had emerged as an active critic and intellectual agitator, determined not to be beaten into conformity. He saw no alliance with the liberals of the time. In fact, he had a very low opinion of American liberalism, its false promises, flabby principles, fawning apologetica, and enslavement to other powers. In a letter to his closest friend, Harvey Swados, who was wounded from a review, he wrote that Swados was not "to allow the shit-liberal types of reviews...to bother him or hurt him. They are inevitable: would be same if book being reviewed were half blank paper or great American novel. It is a good book...so fuck them all" (Mills and Mills 2000:327).

Though Oxford University Press had published two of his social class and power books and Harcourt Brace the other, he chose to publish his activist prose in the leftist periodicals—*Labor and Nation, Partisan Review, The New Leader, The New Republic, The Unionist and Public Forum, La Revue Socialiste,* and *The New Left Review.*

Of his eleven books, two were direct incursions into the political strongholds of the country. In 1958 he published *The Causes of World War Three,* a war that he felt would inevitably come. He argued that it would be total, and also absurd, brought about by the power elite of the United States and the Soviet Union. Surely a dreaded war, as well as the hoped-for peace, warranted concerted reasoning and action. Consequently he called for the United States to abandon its "military metaphysic," its monolithic doctrine of capitalism, and to recognize that the "only realistic military view is the view that war, and not Russia, is now the enemy" (1958:101). Two-thirds of the world exists in poverty, he noted, and consequently he suggested that industrialization should not be allowed to become the new metaphysic, the new fetish. Rather, it should be a means to give humanity a suitable standard of living. He advocated coexistence as the new metaphysic. In addition to these crucial directives he asked Washington to remove security and loyalty restrictions in the conduct of scientific research, to help in the training of scientists, and to remove all scientific research and development from the private economy. These sound like familiar arguments reappearing in different intellectual generations. In particular, he directs

the last suggestion to the intellectual. "Every time intellectuals have the chance to speak yet do not speak, they join the forces that train men [and women] not to be able to think and imagine and feel in morally and politically adequate ways" (1958:134).[2] The book sold in the hundreds of thousands, an unprecedented sale for sociological writing.

Inspired by political hope, Mills, along with many intellectuals, had supported Castro at the time of the Cuban Revolution. It was a moral cause. As Mills and others saw it, here was a revolution brought about by intellectuals and it had the ongoing support of many American and European intellectuals. Norman Mailer, Jean-Paul Sartre, Truman Capote, James Baldwin, and others signed a "Fair Play for Cuba" petition. In particular, Mills hoped that developing countries such as Cuba would not succumb to either a Soviet or American model. In 1960, after visiting Cuba and taping interviews with Fidel Castro and others, he published *Listen Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba,* a rather remarkable book finished in six weeks. Mills wrote of the revolution as a Cuban revolutionary might see it. This work brought even more criticism from academics than his previous works. Yet it sold an unprecedented quarter of a million copies. He was attracting the type of attention that, he hoped, might balance the influence of the power elite. He trusted that other intellectuals would join his efforts (Scimecca 1977:19).

The book that solidified his intellectual reputation more than any other was *The Sociological Imagination* (1959), which was angry, philosophical, hopeful, soul-searching, full of intellectual and emotional truths, critical, liberating, provocative, manipulative, interdisciplinary, and above all, sociologically enterprising. In it he attacked established sociology, its "bureaucratic techniques" and "pretensions." He suggested that the social scientist's chief task was political and intellectual: "to make clear the elements of contemporary uneasiness and indifference" (1959:13). Above all he advocated a "sociological imagination," a form of self-consciousness by which it would be possible to grasp "what is going on in the world" as well as understand what was happening to the individual. Intellectuals with this sociological imagination, he suggested, should address their work to three ends: firstly, to those with power and those with an awareness of having power; secondly, to those whose actions have such consequences; and, thirdly, to those who are troubled but powerless and confined, in this hopeless state, to the prison of the everyday (1959:185). Sadly, the role of the intellectual, a subject to which Mills gave considerable attention in his thinking and his writing, was to be the subject of the book that he did not live to write. Much of what he had begun to collect on the topic, most intriguingly in the form of letters to an imaginary Soviet colleague called Tovarich, remains unpublished. Together with his correspondence, published and unpublished, these short vignettes on the culture of the intellectual are the closest to what would have been his only autobiography.

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Gerald Berreman began his early work in the context of the embattled Berkeley of the 1960s, during years when that campus became increasingly more and more involved in the many merging and cross-cutting struggles that faced the United States and the world. The Berkeley campus had become politicized very quickly into an arena for protests against the House of Un-American Activities Committee hearings, the gathering momentum of the war in Vietnam, counterinsurgency in Southeast Asia and in Latin America, and the Cuban Missile Crisis. Equally important were the ongoing and growing support given to the continuing national struggles for civil rights in the southern states and elsewhere, and the open activism on behalf of peace. These broad national issues were interlaced with more localized protests for freedom of speech on campus, against the draft, against Defense Department funding for academic research and against university and city attempts to downplay populist rights in the form of the Hippie and Flower Child movement and People's Park. While the struggles began in the early part of the 1960s, they continued into the 1970s. Many radical groups founded at this time were a presence at Berkeley and other such politicized campuses: Students for a Democratic Society, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Student Mobilization Committee to Stop the War in Vietnam, the Black Panthers, and the Free Speech Movement. These were unprecedented times in North America, turbulent times in the history of intellectual activism, confrontational times in the history of anthropology, and certainly exciting times for those of us who lived through them. This era was a backdrop for Berreman's early writing and activism. In most ways that one can think of, the Zeitgeist was almost opposite to those quieter times about which Mills agonized and in which he wrote. It is interesting to speculate that if Mills, who had been unhappy at Columbia and for many years had wished to go to Berkeley, had been granted this wish, what he would have said and how he would have directed his energies. Unfortunately even before his death in 1962, he was already ill with heart disease and his writing had not come to reflect what was undoubtedly his awareness of the growing civil rights struggle and the other fronts on inequality and justice on which liberal intellectuals were beginning to be involved. The outrage and activism on the part of academics like Berreman against the war in Vietnam, in particular, would have confirmed some of his most fervent hopes for the commitment and participation of intellectuals. Thus, in a sense, Berreman carried on his work.

As if attuned to a synchronized intellectual program, Gerald Berreman's oeuvre does seem to continue where that of Mills ended. Like Mills, Berreman found himself in a conservative discipline, with few texts that turned a critical eye on the whole anthropological enterprise itself, let alone the world in which the discipline was situated. He wrote that:

> many of us are equally sick of anthropology as it is exemplified in most of our journals, books, and courses—even those we have ourselves perpetuated...the malaise that is affecting our discipline, our professional association, our department, our students, our

faculty—in short ourselves...the malaise is close...to the heart of the troubles faced by intellectuals in America today....It is variously described as anomie, alienation, anti-intellectualism, unscientific attitude, disrespect, laziness, know-nothingness, narcissism, being stoned, or being on the forefront of a new era. It is often described as a manifestation of radicalism, radical chic, impertinence, or a counter culture. It seems chaotic, but I don't think it is. Rather, it is coherent and comprehensible. [1972a:83-84]

Berreman's work and that of others in the 1960s was to change that. By the end of the decade in both sociology and anthropology there were critical analyses of the roots and intents of the disciplines to join the few lonely texts already in existence such as Robert Lynd's classic, *Knowledge for What? The Place of Social Science in American Culture* (1967[1939]). Among these new works were Gouldner's reflections on "the myth of a value-free sociology" (1962), Wrong's critique of the "over-socialized" person common in sociology (1961), Nader's suggestion that anthropologists should "study up" instead of continuing to "study down" (1972), and Gough's proposal of the idea of anthropology as the "child of imperialism" (1968). Of particular importance is the volume edited by Dell Hymes, *Reinventing Anthropology* (1972), based on papers, including one by Berreman, previously delivered at the annual meeting of the Kroeber Anthropological Society. The volume itself was an open call for a radicalized anthropology.

In accounting for the early stages of his preoccupation with inequality of all kinds and social justice in its many forms, Gerald Berreman relates the story of his two years of military service at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. He witnessed many acts of racial bias and worked in defense of a soldier charged on racially based grounds. He and an African American colleague, using their social science background, decided to document racism and racial segregation at the base. The resulting reports, unsolicited and no doubt totally unwelcome, were presented to the military and civilian authorities. These were significant years for Berreman in molding his anthropological interests. They were further gelled on reaching India, where he was struck by the similarities in ascribed powerlessness. Here began a lifelong commitment to write about caste and other forms of social inequality. Working with race in the United States, the Aleuts, and examining the case of the Burakumin of Japan provided a contrast of a small society with essentially an egalitarian pattern, yet placed within a colonizing and dispossessing larger frame. To that experience he added his knowledge of the ongoing inequalities between large-scale national societies to form a palette for the comparative study of inequality, which he sees as the most inhuman, basic, and unnecessary form of social injustice.

The problem of inequality is of such crucial importance for Berreman that he has devoted an integral part of his career to explicating its horrors and unpacking the malevolent source of its powers. He does not offer the reader "lifeless descriptions of

human life," for a discipline "which does not reflect and convey or illuminate the human experience is no anthropology at all...too much contemporary anthropology is this nonanthropology" (1972a:93). Not only does he accuse the discipline of lack of concern for experience—curious in a discipline that purports to understand just that—but he also accuses it of a static and lifeless epistemology (1966).

These are not the only attributes of anthropology to come under his critical gaze. He argues that the insularity of anthropology, where commitments to area studies and single ethnographic cases are the ritually proper way to enter the discipline as well as to remain in it, works to provincialize anthropologists and isolate them from one another. This insularity thus inhibits them from turning their attention to the cross-cultural issues that really matter. Caste, race, gender, and other inequalities, he suggests, are important enough to deserve the widest possible informed audience and the comparability that this would ensure. "At professional meetings, let's read our papers in sessions on social organization, stratification, culture change, and economic anthropology whenever we can. Otherwise we Indianists will continue to talk only to one another and ultimately, no doubt, only to ourselves" (1979b:123).

If the anthropologist, or anyone else for that matter, should have doubts about the importance of the study of inequality, Berreman reminds us that "the welfare of the most powerful and privileged of people and nations, and the future of us all, cannot be isolated from that of the poorest, most vulnerable, most wretched of the earth. Human rights and self-interest, social justice and survival, are now one and the same" (1981b:39). Moreover, should one doubt this, he thinks the problem worth focusing on "because it is an entirely cultural, learned, man-made phenomenon which could be drastically reduced or eliminated, were people to decide to do that" (37).

Throughout his career Berreman has kept a critical eye on national policy. Frequently he made his analyses public, writing, as indeed did Mills, in the type of publications where those in power might read them or, conversely, the powerless be made aware of their situation. His writings appeared in *The Nation, The Daily Californian, International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs Documents, Cultural Survival, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* and *The Newsletter of the American Anthropological Association;* he spoke at symposia as widely distributed as High Technology and Its International Impact (1979) and the International Congress on Applied Systems Research and Cybernetics (1981). His highlighting of the questionable and controversial aspects of governmental policy ranged through many topics. He points critically to the much-admired Peace Corps as yet another form of colonialism, to Defense Department funding of the Himalayan Border Countries Project, to the connections between the CIA and AID (American International Development), to activities of the Advanced Research Projects Agency (an arm of the Defense Department), as well as to private institutions like the Rand Corporation.

In short, he advocates an awareness of the political baggage which accompanies the research undertakings of any social science researcher. In 1976 he alludes to the legacy of "Vietnam, the CIA, Nixon, Locheed, Rand Corp., Aramco, Project Camelot, the Bay of Pigs, the Asia Foundation, ex-Ambassador Moynihan and the like. When we work at home cross-culturally we are likely to be visited by the ghosts of Watergate, J. Edgar Hoover, social indicators, pollsters, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Moynihan Report, behavior modification, Jensenism, and the entire history of American race, class, and ethnic antagonisms and exploitation" (reprinted 1981a:77).[3]

He sees no anthropologist as innocent. To this end, throughout his career and especially during and in the aftermath of Vietnam and the counterinsurgency in Thailand and elsewhere in Southeast Asia (see also Wakin 1992), Berreman has devoted much attention to the ethics of research. "Some of the most sordid instances of social science complicity in the destruction of cultures and peoples are hidden in...reports and occasionally as well in the secret files of powerless ethics committees or timid executive committees of professional organizations such as that of my own profession" (1981a:96). His relationship with orthodox anthropology and his perception of the political stance of his colleagues was to become even more strained in the high noon of the Vietnamese war and the insurgency problems in Southeast Asia. Not only in the case of commitment to the study of inequality but, even more pointedly, in the involvement in national policy, he could scarcely countenance the notion that world events and national events were seen as clearly irrelevant to the professional concerns of anthropologists.

Thus, much of Berreman's activism centered in the affairs of the American Anthropological Association in both the formal code of ethics of the association and in the informal practices of its leaders. He has argued that the code should include clauses which demanded that: 1) the anthropologist's paramount responsibility be to those they study; 2) no secret research should ever be undertaken; 3) anthropologists have the responsibility to speak out publicly on what they know through their specialties; and 4) anthropologists be held accountable for their actions by the association (Berreman 1991; 1993). It is important to note that, despite the obvious need for these four articles of faith, the code in existence today, the Revised Principles of Professional Responsibility, has no clause on secret and clandestine research.[4]

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In addition to their radical stance on the politics both within their respective disciplines and at the national level, Mills and Berreman had many mutual academic interests and concerns. Among them were critical questions about procedures in research and about theoretical preferences. Both had a commitment to pragmatism of the American variety. Mills' dissertation in sociology and anthropology at the University of Wisconsin focused on pragmatism, was located in the sociology of

knowledge, and was inspired by the work of George Herbert Mead. It was published posthumously with a preface by one of Mills' disciples, Irving Louis Horowitz (1964), who pointed out the unique contribution and the existing, relative poverty of philosophical work in the sociological realm. The admiration for Mead may well suggest that Mills resembled other followers of the social philosopher and was a symbolic interactionist, the form that American pragmatism took in the sociological realm. Indeed, some symbolic interactionists claim Mills' early work as being of their genre. It is clear that Mills had a concern and interest with the "self," one of the main concerns in the symbolic interactionist camp, now also enjoying rapid growth in anthropology (Whittaker 1992a). His early work on "situated actions and vocabularies of motive" and on institutions and persons was reprinted in an interactionist reader (Manis and Meltzer 1967), while his book with Hans Gerth, *Character and Social Structure* (Gerth and Mills 1953), strengthens the claim to kinship in its preoccupations with self. In addition, the notion of "situated actions," another central symbolic interactionist concern, was an analytic prerequisite throughout much of his work.

Berreman, on the other hand, is probably the strongest proponent of interactionst methodology/theory (if these two should ever be separate entities) within the discipline of anthropology (Whittaker 1994:383-84). Early in his career he produced a classic work both in symbolic interactionism and in ethnographic methodology, *Behind Many Masks* (1962). He has continued to evoke in his works, either overtly or in a taken-for-granted sense, many facets of the symbolic interactionist platform: the interactionist creation of identity, sense of self, bestowal of stigma, and the importance of these in acculturation generally (1964; 1973a; 1983); the idea that status and social categories are produced through interaction (1967a; 1972b:401-02; 1972c); and the exclusiveness of interaction within the cultures of caste systems (1967a; 1973b). In presenting the notion that caste is process, in the same sense that Blumer argues that society *is* symbolic interaction, Berreman uses perhaps one of the strongest of all interactionist ideas (1967b).

Both Berreman and Mills have declared themselves solidly on the side of qualitative inquiry in social science. Mills had the harder battle as the research climate of the times supported abstracted empiricism, a broad acceleration of quantitative analyses, and hard-nosed, statistically significant, scientific versions of social science. It was also a time when there were almost no voices raised about the misplaced rigor that such analyses might promote. Except for Mills. He rejected that social science had come to "a set of bureaucratic techniques which inhibit social inquiry by 'methodological' pretensions, which congest such work by obscurantist conceptions, or which trivialize it by concern with minor problems unconnected with publicly relevant issues" (1959:20).

Berreman, being in anthropology, was freed from some of these battles, and he is able to write the following:

> Working as we anthropologists do, with people, they become friends and confidants rather than statistics or economic resources, for we know them to be as real, thoughtful, humorous, sensitive to happiness and sorrow, as proud, fearful, loyal, resentful, fallible, insightful, as concerned with their families, as devoted to their traditions and pleasures, as are the people we know best at home...impersonality cannot survive the intimacy of anthropological research. And it is hard to lie to yourself about them, or to participate in exploiting them. [1980:4]

His particular battles, methodologically speaking, are (and were) against the blatant disregard of the need to investigate the imperatives which underscored ethnographic thinking and writing. His call for "an ethnography of ethnography" was a familiar one in his teaching as well as in his writing. Happily neither he nor Mills had ever to fight to liberate himself from the personal demons of an upbringing of a value-free or scientific imperialism kind.

Comparative analysis was a basis for the most powerful work by both men. Berreman's most convincing writings on inequality made the strongest impression because they were viewed comparatively, such as caste in India against race in America, the comparative status of women, or the class system and the caste system. Mills' enterprise of finding the comparative locus of power depended on examining all three American social classes. Indeed, comparability was woven into his proposal for the sociological imagination:

> that imagination is the capacity to shift from one perspective to another—from the political to the psychological; from the examination of a single family to comparative assessment of the national budgets of the world; from the theological school to the military establishment; from considerations of the oil industry to studies of contemporary poetry. It is the capacity to range from the most impersonal and remote transformations to the most intimate features of the human self—and to see the relations between the two. [Mills 1959:7]

For both scholars the comparative view is the most pressing imperative and even the most compelling form of their analysis. It was also the foundation of their political agenda. Clearly what continued to drive them, politically and morally, was the comparison between what was, as they saw it, and what ought to be.

More hidden than visible is the commitment that both scholars appear to have for considering the nature of the human as ascribed by social science. Usually such assignations are done silently without acknowledgement, and in most cases probably completely without examination. This most crucial epistemological question is rarely

asked in the social sciences and no open inferences about it are made. Clearly both Berreman and Mills, however, were concerned about this. Berreman constructed an existential, self-conscious, choosing, and potentially free creature in his writings. This imagery was inevitable considering his preference for phenomenological and symbolic interactionist interpretations. Mills also decried the passive spectator image, the creature at the mercy of seemingly inanimate social forces, the archetype behind much of sociological, structural-functional, and grand theory rationality. Given the pragmatist interests of his youthful career with Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, and George Herbert Mead, Mills viewed the person as liberated but also alienated. Further, given this assumption, he could then address himself to the powers that restrained and alienated the free image. Obviously without the notion of the free, choosing person folded into the epistemology, the radicalism of Mills and Berreman, which depended on reaching and convincing the public, a self-determining public, would not be possible. The hurling of bombs always suggests not only a frustrated last resort but also the only possible alternative in a society of robotic archetypes, of non-choosing individuals, and of "over-socialized" persons.

The radicalism shared by Mills and Berreman seemed to spring from their awareness of being, on the one hand, in peculiar social times demanding intervention and, on the other, their conviction that academic life as practiced was not politically responsible. And, obviously, they believed all academics should be. Mills writes to the imaginary Tovarich in 1959 that:

> The most immediate problem we face is the nationalist smugness and political complacency among the dominant intellectual circles of our own countries. We confront a truly deep apathy about politics in general and about the larger problems of the world today. [Mills and Mills 2000:277]

He feels that intellectuals owe loyalty to something that is "bigger than any government" (Mills and Mills 2000). Similarly, Berreman argues that: To say nothing is not to be neutral. To say nothing is as much a significant act as to say something (1968:392). He continues, quoting Douglas Dowd, that the alternatives are not "neutrality" and "advocacy." To be uncommitted is essentially to be committed to the status quo.

As radical intellectuals they had much in common. They openly supported other self-declared radicals: Mills offered support to Trotsky and to Fidel Castro; Berreman to Daniel Berrigan and Robert Coles. Both admired James Agee, Mills for Agee's capacity for indignation (Mills and Mills 2000:15), Berreman for his proposal for the partnership of courage, reason, and passion, and that ultimately each individual is "above all else responsible for his own soul" (Berreman 1981a: 43, 186).[5] They addressed the issues that plagued their times. Each had little optimism about the American military, the bureaucracy of the Federal government, and its products.

Both gained fame within their disciplines and outside. Though their work was separated by a couple of decades, Berreman and Mills were given almost the exact same social accolades and social labels: intellectual hero, existential hero, prophet, seeker of utopia, romantic, cult figure, maverick, traitor, visionary of the brave new world, Marxist (see also Berreman 1979a:xiv). At times certain labels came with a derogatory valence. In the case of Mills, the Marxist appellation was applied at a time when the writing of Marx had not yet emerged onto the intellectual scene as a specific cultural world with its own language, disciples, and characteristic analysis.[6] The distinctions between radicalism and Marxism, between leftist views and Marxism, had yet to become clear. Mills in particular had an interesting relationship with the Marxists—sometimes drawn to them (he sometimes called himself a "plain Marxist"), sometimes in dispute with them. One of the disputes was over the notion of the "power elite." Mills refused to accept the Marxist concept of "the ruling class" proposed to him. Even though he rejected the label of Marxist, his last book dealt with Marxists (Mills 1962). It offered itself as a primer on types of Marxism for those who were learning to understand Marxism and an attempt to dispel the notion that Marxism was synonymous with communism.

Both paid a price for their radicalism. Berreman was targeted by the CIA and its supporters. Mills reported being watched by the FBI. They were often seen as being anti-capitalist. In the rhetoric of the many trying to understand the few, the simple, straight-forward conclusion was that those who positioned themselves somewhere on the left had to be opposed automatically to all western economic policies. Undoubtedly, these affiliations were very complicated, as Noam Chomsky observes, in answer to a question that asks if he is opposed to Western capitalism:

> I'm not opposed to Western capitalism. Look around the world and you will find various systems that differ in many respects. Some have better features than others and that includes the U.S. The U.S., for example has more provision for freedom of speech than probably any other country, but there has never been a country that allows any kind of democratic involvement on the issues. There has never been a society like that. [Chepesiuk 1995:144]

Both men relied on freedom of speech, however difficult it may have been to actualize it, and both remained in their positions as university professors, part of the intellectual elite whose scholarly perks, such as academic freedom, depended on their capitalist government.

Mills was heavily censured by a long list of scholars, the "power elite" of sociology at the time: Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell, Edward Shils, Talcott Parsons, and Neil Smelser. Shortly after Mills' death, Shils, who disliked Mills both academically and personally, wrote of him in the *Spectator* as:

> A demogogic simplifier...he had a singularly incurious mind...[he wrote] vigorous and cloudy rhetoric. Now he is dead and his rhetoric is a field of broken stones, his analysis empty, his strenuous pathos limp. He was a victim of his own vanity and of a shriveled Marxism which will not die and which goes on requiring the sacrifice of the living. [Tilman 1984:11]

It is the irony of ideological intellectual history that it is Shils who has faded and the work of Mills has inspired an enormous literature and, in particular, *The Sociological Imagination* lives on, in high regard, several academic generations later. At the time, however, with the sociological ruling class in opposition to him, Mills often referred to the pain this ostracism caused him. While he spoke of his loneliness in one breath, he renewed his own assault on sociological orthodoxy with the next.[7]

Berreman faced his own critics for his comparative views on social inequality—caste, race, age, gender, class, and ethnicity (see Berreman 2002 and many other writings), and the allocation of power and powerlessness that was implied. He makes the point in his writings that in birth-ascribed subjection to discrimination, exploitation, and to a stigmatized identity, there is cross-cultural similarity in how the micro-process of subordination actually works. Critics argued on the principle that such comparisons defied many of the underpinnings they considered important, such as the religious ones of the caste system in India in the case of Dumont (see Sharma 1994; Freeman 1980). In raising the ultimate questions about this cross-cultural similarity in structure, process, and experience, which throws light on the labels and the essences used, such as race, caste, ethnicity, and gender as well as on the rationales attached thereto, Berreman points to an important epistemological matter. He pleads the case for an examination of the imperatives of essentialism generally, a very pressing contemporary issue.[8] In short, he makes a strong case by forcing the analysis which points to how social entities are arbitrarily labeled and become reified. What powers bring about such reifications? What social powers are served thereby?

In 1970 Berreman was nominated for the presidency of the American Anthropological Association from the membership at large, specifically Robert Murphy and Steve Polgar and their respective colleagues. This placed him in opposition to the three candidates that the Nominating Committee had put forth. He was the left wing, anti-war candidate, critical of some association decisions, especially the ones on the ethics code. He found himself face to face with the orthodoxy of the silent majority of anthropologists on most of the issues that he raised—the war in Vietnam, the counter-insurgency in Southeast Asia, and the necessity for non-secret anthropological research. So powerful was the conservative element in the leadership of the association, so forceful the secretive, behind-the-scenes pressures that essentially narrowed the three committee-chosen candidates down to one, that Berreman was out-maneuvered and lost the election to Anthony Wallace. More than anything else, these covert actions against the radical left showed not only the power

of the threat posed by radicals, but also the high price radicals must pay for their beliefs.

When the rumbling dies down Mills and Berreman will be remembered for articulating the sentiments of what was to be the coming radical phase of both the sociological and anthropological disciplines.[9] They put their pens to the "politics of truth" by seeking the sources of inequality, of power and powerlessness. Both decided that the answer should be in the social scientific study and comparative analysis of social stratification. Mills began with class, Berreman added caste, race, and gender. They believed in taking the responsibility for spreading their own uneasiness. Together they took a stand on matters as diverse as the United Coal Miners, the Peace Corps, Cuba and Castro, counterinsurgency in Thailand, the military elite, government funding of research, Puerto Rican immigrants, female oppression, and the Chipko Indian environmental movement. They fervently believed that the task of being the moral barometer of their respective times, of witnessing abuses and of making the power elite responsible, belonged to committed intellectuals. Social justice was properly situated under this stewardship. Mills and Berreman exemplified an American conscience. They believed in holding a nation to its promise. They believed in holding social science to its promise.

Acknowledgements

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[1] As someone who learned sociology at the knee of a student of Parsons, Kaspar Naegele, I feel an inordinate nostalgia for the special intricate code through which Parsonian sociology operates. It seems almost like an offence to substitute "need," the suggested sanity, for the more Parsonian "need disposition orientation patterns."

[2] In deference to Mills, who wrote in times not yet sensitive to the fact that "man" no longer constitutes a covering term for all people, I have inserted "and women." Interestingly, the cadence of reading gender-insensitive 1950s and 1960s material is interrupted in many of Mills' works when he deliberately inserts "men and women." This was a sensitivity before its time.

[3] I do not want to leave the impression that Canada is without its own ghosts. The claimed innocence of the researcher is challenged by widely held beliefs such as those about the Department of Indian Affairs, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in its undercover activities, residential schools, church orphanages, Philippe Rushton (Canada's Arthur Jensen), James Bay, non-negotiated land claims, Oka, and Clayoquot Sound, as well as whatever is added from the American scene by association.

[4] Clearly on the world social science research scene secret research is considered both inappropriate and unethical (see Whittaker 1999).

[5] James Agee has contributed to many a social science text. He has been much more than the writer of screenplays and the movie reviewer for *Time*. Widely acclaimed for many a social virtue, he can also be acclaimed for ethnographic brilliance and a humanistic ethical commitment to those he writes about (Whittaker 1978).

[6] In 1971 May Diaz taught a course in social theory, entitled Comparative Societies, in the undergraduate program at Berkeley. Apparently Marx was introduced in this course for the first time at Berkeley. In the 1950s the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with little apology,

confiscated from university students books written by Marx. Mills wrote in *The Marxists* (1962) that "there is today no 'marxist social science' of any intellectual consequence. There is just—social science: without the work of Marx and other marxists, it would not be what it is today; with their work alone, it would not be nearly as good as it happens to be. In the United States, the intellectual influences of marxism are often hidden...many [social scientists] are often unaware of the source of their own methods and conceptions" (1962:11).

[7] Despite his sense of intellectual lonliness, Mills had many disciples, most of whom appeared in print after his death. Among them are Horowitz (1964; 1983); Domhoff and Ballard (1968); Press (1978); Scimecca (1977); and Tilman (1984). Many devoted articles in honor of Mills have been written—by Anatol Rapoport, Ernest Becker, Erich Fromm, Alvin Gouldner, Marvin Scott, and Peter Worsley (see Horowitz 1964).

[8] On the question of essentialism—a critique of its impact has been argued in the age of deconstruction, particularly among feminist scholars addressing the essentialism in the notion of woman (see Fuss 1989), but also in other social science reifications (Whittaker 1992a; 1992b).

[9] In 1972 Anthropologists for Radical Political Action was formed, some years after the Radical Caucus had emerged at the American Anthropological Association. Journals like *Insurgent Sociologist* and *Critical Anthropology* were created. Books such as *Radical Sociology*, edited by David Horowitz, appeared in 1971, and *Radical Sociology*, edited by J. David Colfax and Jack L. Roach in 1971.