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Jane E. Goodman and Paul A. Silverstein, eds., *Bourdieu In Algeria: Colonial Politics, Ethnographic Practices, Theoretical Developments*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. 282 pp. \$35.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-0-8032-1362-3.

Reviewed by Gretchen Purser, University of California-Davis.

Pierre Bourdieu is unequivocally one of the most important social scientists of the twentieth century, having influenced a strikingly wide range of academic disciplines and reinvigorated the role of the “public intellectual.” Bourdieu is best known for his conceptual triad of *habitus*, *capital* and *field*, which he put to use in a dogged theoretical effort to bridge what he saw as the “illogical” and insidious philosophical divides between objectivism and subjectivism, structuralism and constructivism, social physics and social phenomenology. Despite the ever-increasing influence of Bourdieu’s ideas [1], very few scholars have engaged with his early studies on Algeria, where in 1955, at age twenty-five, Bourdieu was sent for national service soon after completing his graduate training at the Ecole normale supérieure and where, faced first-hand with the oppressive conditions of colonial rule and the passionate struggle for national liberation, Bourdieu made the conversion from philosopher to autodidactic and methodologically-pluralistic social scientist. [2] So widely overlooked are Bourdieu’s early sociological and ethnological studies of Kabylia, a mountainous region in Northern Algeria, that, as one contributor to this volume under review rightfully points out, “Bourdieu’s ‘theory of practice’ is now essentially free-floating, traveling widely across disciplines and geographies, unmoored from the society in which it was developed” (p. 95). While this omission is due in part to the lack, and/or late appearance, of English-language translations of Bourdieu’s works on Algeria, it is nevertheless surprising given that it was on the basis of this early field research that Bourdieu’s theoretical project—and abiding commitment to politically-engaged scholarship—were forged. It is furthermore surprising because Bourdieu himself renounced what he viewed as the myopia of “theoreticism” (“theoretical work done for its own sake”) and staunchly advocated for a “total science,” requiring the complete “fusion of theoretical construction and practical research operations.” [3]

Bourdieu In Algeria, edited by Jane E. Goodman and Paul A. Silverstein with contributions from American, North African and French anthropologists, thus offers a long overdue critical reflection upon the historical, political and ethnographic contexts of Bourdieu’s early field research. “We are convinced,” the editors write in their lucid and lengthy introductory remarks to the volume, “that critical engagement is the highest form of recognition and gratitude we can offer to a scholar as inspiring to our own projects and intellectual development as has been Pierre Bourdieu” (p. 51). Although four of the five substantive chapters have been previously published in French- or English-language journals, the compilation of these papers into a single volume and the editors’ efforts to analytically tie them together make this book an important contribution that should be read by all social scientists working with Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts and/or practicing the craft of ethnography.

At the heart of this volume is the question—posed but, in my view, never directly answered—of the proper “relationship between theory and ethnography” (p. 5). Though the contributors tackle different aspects of Bourdieu’s work and frame their discussions in different terms, they nevertheless converge around what I see as two main points of critique: first, that Bourdieu imposed an overly rigid and

deterministic theoretical framework upon a profoundly complicated empirical reality; and second, that Bourdieu's work on Algeria, though driven by a fiercely anti-colonial politics, is marked by a colonial outlook that emphasizes historical rupture and reifies a false dualism between "traditionalism" and "modernity."

Fanny Colonna, a former student of Bourdieu, focuses her essay ("The Phantom of Dispossession") upon Bourdieu's monomaniacal emphasis on domination: "The problem," she writes, "is that—by Bourdieu's choice of research subjects and thus of problematics—he has almost always, if not always, privileged relations of domination" (p. 65). At issue here is Colonna's contention that this overwrought frame effaces other possible ways of seeing and understanding and oversimplifies a far more complex social reality to which she clearly believes Bourdieu ought to have attributed greater importance in his scholarly work. Colonna maintains that whether he is referring to the dispossessed peasantry of war-torn colonial Algeria (as in *Sociologie de l'Algérie*, *Le Déracinement* and *Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie*) or the contemporary inhabitants of France (as in *The Weight of the World*), Bourdieu renders his subjects—whom he believes to have no access to their own logic and limited capacity for self-reflection—utterly "crushed by an interpretive frame that leaves them no place" (p. 70). While she makes a clear case for more empirically-rigorous and actor-centered fieldwork (noting that Bourdieu, who entered the field with no training, did not take field-notes) and a more holistic and inductive approach to ethnography, she misses the mark when she makes the plea that "a social world of domination would be uninhabitable and, notwithstanding his pessimism, Bourdieu was not unaware of that" (p. 88). In my view, the single most inventive and important contribution of Bourdieu's theoretical project is to show quite the opposite: that, in fact (symbolic) domination is something to which we acclimate quite well, take for granted, misrecognize and, as they say, "wear like a glove."

Jane Goodman ("The Proverbial Bourdieu") raises similar questions about the relationship between fieldwork and theory, focusing on what she sees as a significant discrepancy in Bourdieu's representation of the Kabyle Berber population. Goodman points out that Bourdieu presents two divergent "Kabylias:" a "disenchanted" version found in *Le Déracinement* and *Travail et Travailleurs en Algérie* and an "idealized" version found in *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. Whereas Colonna's critique focused squarely on the former, Goodman focuses her critique squarely upon the latter. She notes that in *Outline* Bourdieu relies almost exclusively upon proverbs and sayings (as opposed to social agent's prose) as a way of grasping the basic social and mental structures (collective habitus) within a mythical, pre-colonial Kabyle society. The result, Goodman argues, is that he "conflat[es] oral texts gathered across a hundred-year period by different individuals and in diverse locations" and thereby renders the Kabyles a timeless and homogenized subject. Though Goodman attempts to root Bourdieu's "idealistic" portrayal within a particular political project, suggesting that it "may have been intended to lend support to the Berber's claims to a unique cultural heritage" (p. 108)—a theme upon which Paul Silverstein will elaborate—she nevertheless echoes and affirms Colonna's critique by arguing that the ethnographic portrayal was selected in order to be consistent with his more general theoretical project: "Kabyles were made to speak in proverbs because more sustained attention to their language and literacy practices could have unsettled the very notion of habitus, which relies on the linked assumptions that speakers lack critical purchase on central aspects of their own society and that only the trained observer is capable of cultural critique" (p. 118).

In their respective chapters, Deborah Reed-Danahay ("Bourdieu in Bearn and Kabylia") and Paul A. Silverstein ("Of Rooting and Uprooting") further explore the theme of rupture, and the nostalgic yearnings, contained within Bourdieu's early works. Their accounts read more as intellectual history than empirical or theoretical critique. Reed-Danahay places Bourdieu's Algerian studies in dialogue with the concurrent field research he carried out in his natal village of Béarn in the southwest of France. [4] Reed-Danahay argues that via a process that he would later come to call "participant objectification," Bourdieu diagnosed a parallel tragedy in the disparate experiences of the uprooted Algerian peasants and the French peasant bachelors and that he treated both field sites as "places to observe an

‘experiment’ having to do with before and after of social change in a way that seems to characterize society as not always changing but, rather, being disrupted at certain moments” (p. 142). She goes on to suggest that Bourdieu’s theoretical development was no doubt shaped by his own experience of uprooting and the personal struggles—and unique analytical insight—generated by his resulting “split habitus.” Whereas Reed-Danahay looks to Bourdieu’s biographical past, Paul Silverstein brings the discussion around to Bourdieu’s enduring relevance, particularly vis-à-vis the modern-day Berber cultural movement. He begins by tracing the long history of arboreal metaphors of “rooting” and “uprooting” throughout social theory. He argues that although root metaphors were popular within French right-wing discourse, Bourdieu and his co-author, Abdelmayek Sayad, reappropriated this language for the purposes of advancing anti-colonial critique and depicting the consequences of colonial rule. Silverstein brings together his own ethnographic fieldwork conducted amongst Franco-Algerians in suburban Paris with an analysis of Bourdieu’s essay on the *akham*, or Kabyle House (which, as he argues, was itself based on the nostalgic reconstructions of “uprooted” Kabyles interviewed in resettlement camps) to show the mutual constitution of an academic and diasporic “structural nostalgia” for a pre-colonial Kabyle. Like Reed-Danahay and several of the other contributors, Silverstein argues that such a rendering of “rooted” Kabylia neglects the internal differentiation and historical dynamism that is irreducible to the “uprooting” generated by colonial contact.

Abdellah Hammoudi (“Phenomenology and Ethnography”) reiterates all of the aforementioned critiques in an essay dominated by a long exegesis on Bourdieu’s fusion of the phenomenological insights of Merleau-Ponty with those of an emergent structuralism. Like many of the other contributors, Hammoudi insists that Bourdieu failed to grasp the complexity and dynamism of “traditional” society, that he selected his empirical data to meet the needs of his theoretical argument and that he ignored his subjects’ accounts, competencies and accommodations. Labeling Bourdieu’s work an “ethnography of discourses,” Hammoudi—echoing points raised by Colonna and Goodman—calls instead for an “ethnography of discussion, dispute, quid pro quo or accommodations”: in short, an ethnography capable of “rediscover[ing] the rich and exciting inspirational space of ambiguities and paradoxes” (pp. 246-47). His discussion of the type of empirical complexity that is missing from Bourdieu’s ethnographic accounts (most notably, Islam and linguistic diversity) is quite insightful and illustrates the author’s cultural and scholastic familiarity with the Kabyle region. But his portrayal of Bourdieu as a “reproduction theorist” (p. 224) is an oversimplification (commonplace, though it may be) and I suspect that many readers will be left wondering why Hammoudi doesn’t situate his critique within the broader context of Bourdieu’s work, wherein, over the course of many decades, Bourdieu refined the concept of habitus and its relation to that of capital and field. [5] Finally, Hammoudi makes the claim that Bourdieu’s writings on Algeria are stamped by “the academic division of labor and its attendant power relations.” Here, one has to seriously wonder what role, if any, Hammoudi sees for theory in research, for he seems to critique Bourdieu simply for using the Algerian terrain as the basis for exploring a set of theoretical questions. In a statement that contradicts Bourdieu’s own account of what it meant for him to shift from philosophy, then the pinnacle of academe, to the lowly discipline of sociology, Hammoudi makes the unsubstantiated claim: “Remaining in the enchanted circle of a dominant epistemic legitimacy, [Bourdieu] seems to have opted for objects of study that assured him above all else of a choice position in the philosophical and political debates of the European tradition” (p. 239).

Certainly, the more familiar readers are with Bourdieu’s writings, the more they will be able to mull over the issues and challenges that are raised within this important, if uneven, volume. While I would recommend this book without reservation to anyone working within a Bourdieuan tradition or interested in social scientific and intellectual history, I nevertheless do not think that the book lives up to its full potential. This is due to the contributors’ reluctance to engage in the admittedly difficult task of specifying the implications of their critiques for the relevance of Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts today. Furthermore, it is due to the omission of any and all direct discussion of how the contributors define, and envision the purpose of “theory.” More attention to these issues would have significantly

helped the volume move further towards the editors' stated goal of tackling "larger, enduring issues surrounding the politics of ethnography in a changing world" (p. 46).

LIST OF ESSAYS

Paul A. Silverstein and Jane E. Goodman, "Introduction: Bourdieu in Algeria"

Fanny Colonna, "The Phantom of Dispossession: From *The Uprooting* to *The Weight of the World*"

Jane E. Goodman, "The Proverbial Bourdieu: *Habitus* and the Politics of Representation in the Ethnography of Kabylia"

Deborah Reed-Danahay, "Bourdieu's Ethnography in Bearn and Kabylia: The Peasant *Habitus*"

Paul A. Silverstein, "Of Rooting and Uprooting: Kabyle *Habitus*, Domesticity and Structural Nostalgia"

Abdellah Hammoudi, "Phenomenology and Ethnography: On Kabyle *Habitus* in the Work of Pierre Bourdieu"

Dale F. Eickelman, "Afterward: Re-reading Bourdieu on Kabylia in the Twenty-first Century"

NOTES

[1] For evidence of the increased diffusion of Bourdieu's ideas into American sociology, see Jeffrey Sallaz and Jane Zavisca, "Bourdieu in American Sociology, 1980-2004," *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (2007):21-41. Based upon a quantitative analysis of citation patterns in four of the discipline's top journals, the authors report that capital—a concept developed in Bourdieu's later works, most notably *Distinction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984)—is the most popular Bourdieuan concept within sociology.

[2] There are, of course, some notable exceptions to the widespread lack of engagement with Bourdieu's Algerian studies. See Craig Calhoun, "Pierre Bourdieu and Social Transformation: Lessons from Algeria," *Development and Change* 37:6 (2006):1403-1415; Ethnography, "Pierre Bourdieu in the Field," *Ethnography* 5:4 (2004): 387-624; Franz Schultheis, Patricia Holder and Constantin Wagner, "In Algeria: Pierre Bourdieu's photographic fieldwork," *The Sociological Review* 57:3 (2009):448-470.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc J.D. Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 26-35.

[4] Interested readers are advised to check out Bourdieu's own reconstructive account of his fieldwork, provided in the posthumously-published Pierre Bourdieu, *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse* (Paris: Raisons d'Agir Editions, 2004). Trans. as *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2008). See also Loïc Wacquant, "Following Pierre Bourdieu into the field," *Ethnography* 5:4 (2004):387-414.

[5] Bourdieu does note that the social world tends to reproduce itself. This does not, however, mean that his theory cannot account for change. Bourdieu notes that in periods of disjuncture between habitus and field, moments of "misfire" can occur that can potentially serve as springs of social innovation and

change. What remains to be well understood are the conditions under which such a disjuncture leads to: (1) hysteresis (attachment to anachronistic ideas and values, reflective of a temporal lag in the process of eventual habituation), (2) chaos or capitulation (disorganization of behavior and thought linked to the disappearance of any coherent vision of the future), or (3) struggle and unrest (generated by a break in the doxic acceptance of the social order).

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