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## Introduction

Bourdieu in Algeria

PAUL A. SILVERSTEIN AND JANE E. GOODMAN

For over thirty years Pierre Bourdieu's *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique* (1972) has been "good to think with," to invoke the famous phrase of Claude Lévi-Strauss. Translated into English and heavily revised, the *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (1977a) remains an anthropological standard, often overshadowing Bourdieu's own subsequent rewritings of the text in *The Logic of Practice* (1990) and *Pascalian Meditations* (2000). The theoretical constructs that Bourdieu developed in this work—most notably, *habitus*, misrecognition, and symbolic domination—have had a long and productive history in social theory and political philosophy. Yet these notions have entered the mainstream of social thought independently of the North African and French political and social contexts in which they were initially developed. Almost independently, that is. For the ethnographic exemplars of Bourdieu's concepts—the Kabyle Berbers of northern Algeria, distantly shadowed by the Béarnais peasants of southwestern France—have tended to accompany the theory that they supposedly incarnate: sometimes persistently reinvoked alongside the constructs that they help to illuminate, other times mere traces of their original embodiment as the ethnographic representatives

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of Bourdieu's theories. Bourdieu himself would continue to draw on his Kabyle and Béarnais ethnography as the empirical base for his theoretical refinements throughout his career, even to his last publications before his untimely death on January 23, 2002 (see Bourdieu 2001, 2002).

At the same time that *habitus* has made the theoretical rounds, circulating widely across disciplines and geographies to illuminate new contexts and concerns, the politics of scholarship and the poetics of scholarly representation have come under increasing and well-deserved scrutiny (e.g., Clifford and Marcus 1986; Said 1978). Within this substantial literature, the representation of ethnic or indigenous Others as well as the colonial location of much ethnographic research have been subjected to special attention (Asad 1973; see also Cooper and Stoler 1997; Dirks 1992; among others). Bourdieu himself has been lauded for the way in which he “has taught us to ask in what field of power, and in what position in that field, any given author writes” (Rabinow 1986: 252). Yet the colonial location of Bourdieu's work is nearly impossible to discern from the *Outline*, the primary ethnographic study in which the notion of *habitus* was brought to maturity.<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu himself began to speak and write about it only during the final years of his life in publications that by and large appeared posthumously (see Bourdieu 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004b, 2008; Bourdieu et al. 2002; Honneth et al. 1986). While Bourdieu's portrayals of Algerian Kabyles have received some critical attention, such critiques have largely been articulated in theoretical rather than ethnographic terms. For instance, his Kabyle ethnography has been variously evaluated as “occidentalizing” (Reed-Danahay 1995); as underwritten by untenable “dualistic typologies” (Free 1996: 412; cf. Lane 2000: 112); as overly Durkheimian in its presumption of a stark dichotomy between supposedly homogenous and differentiated

societies (Herzfeld 1987: 83–86; Free 1996; Lane 2000: 13–16); or as inattentive to national, regional, or colonial contexts (Herzfeld 1987: 7–8; Free 1996). Yet few scholars, to our knowledge, have revisited the ethnographic, historical, and political terrains within which Bourdieu developed his Kabyle corpus.

In this volume scholars of North Africa and France come together to critically reexamine some of Bourdieu's foundational concepts in relation to the ethnographic, intellectual, and political contexts out of which they developed and in which they continue to circulate. Bourdieu's Algerian oeuvre is predicated, we contend, on the colonial setting in which he carried out his research. This context led him to portray Algeria in terms of a profound cleavage: what Bourdieu understood to be an "originary" or precolonial Algerian society is set against a "destructured," ruptured, and fragmented society that 130 years of colonial occupation had irrevocably destabilized. This fault line traverses nearly every aspect of Bourdieu's Algerian ethnography. His books themselves line up along it: whereas the *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, *The Logic of Practice*, "The Kabyle House," and companion studies portray a traditional Algerian Berber society seemingly untouched by colonial relations, emigration, or capitalism, a corollary set of writings—among them, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (Work and Workers in Algeria, 1963) and *Le Déracinement* (The Uprooting, 1964)—depict an ethnically mixed (Berber and Arab) society fractured by colonial practices of land expropriation, capitalist regimes of labor, and large-scale population "resettlements" that were a key form of control throughout the colonial period, and particularly during the Algerian revolution. The methodologies that drive the two kinds of studies also diverge: whereas the latter set of works are supported by lengthy statistical analyses and extended interviews with named, situated informants,

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the former are informed by structuralist and symbolic approaches to social behavior, albeit recalibrated to Bourdieu's practice-based theoretical framework. Informants themselves are disjunctively cast. They are quoted at length and highly individualized in the sociological studies, while they remain largely silent in the *Outline* and related works, where they are collapsed into timeless and nameless ethnic figures. The same kind of bifocal lens—focused through the angle of the rupture and fragmentation brought about by modernity—informs Bourdieu's analysis of both his natal province of Béarn (1962a, 1962b, 2002) and his more recent study of neoliberalism in contemporary France, *La Misère du monde* (Bourdieu et al. 1993), which explicitly follows from the earlier *Travail et travailleurs* project (Addi 2002: 38 n. 3; Sayad 2002: 71; Wacquant 2004: 407 n. 16; but see Colonna, this volume).

Our volume begins from this cleavage. In placing Bourdieu's "two Algerias" in productive tension with each other and with his work in Béarn, we seek to unsettle what Loïc Wacquant (1993) has rightly described as a tendency in American scholarship to import discrete aspects of Bourdieu's work while divorcing them from the larger intellectual and political projects in which Bourdieu was engaged. This results, Wacquant contends, in "partial and fractured understandings" and even "systematic misconstrual of [Bourdieu's] thought" (Wacquant 1993: 238–39). While we do not pretend to engage Bourdieu's lifetime scholarly trajectory, we seek to gesture toward the kind of inclusive reading Wacquant calls for by reconnecting the *Outline* and related works to the earlier and little-known set of sociological studies that Bourdieu carried out during the Algerian war as well as in his natal region.

Bourdieu's theories have been productively analyzed elsewhere with regards to their embeddedness in a European philosophical

tradition extending from Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Bachelard, Panofsky, Lévi-Strauss, Canguilhem, and Althusser back to Marx, Durkheim, Mauss, Weber, Sombart, Husserl, and beyond (e.g., Addi 2002; Hérán 1987; Lahire 2001; Lane 2000; Pinto 1998; Shusterman 1999; Vandenberghe 1999), as well as in relation to Anglo-American social theory (Calhoun, LiPuma, and Postone 1993). While not neglecting these important trajectories, our primary focus lies with the relationship between theory and ethnography in Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu himself later narrated his development of practice theory as much as an outcome of his academic studies of phenomenology (and particularly his engagement with Husserl and Merleau-Ponty—see Hammodi, this volume) and his eventual philosophical break with the objectivist approach of anthropological structuralism, as a particular response to the specific problems encountered in the course of his Algerian field research (Honneth et al. 1986: 38–45; Wacquant 2004: 390–91). The authors in this volume are thus specifically concerned with the development of Bourdieu's theoretical project as it relates to at least five specific ethnographic contexts: first, the French-Algerian war,<sup>2</sup> in which Bourdieu himself was directly implicated initially as a member of the French military, and later as an engaged critic of both French colonialism and revolutionary utopianism; second, the ethnolinguistic and religious dimensions of the Kabyle region at the time of Bourdieu's research; third, Bourdieu's involvement with a particular constellation of Berber intellectuals during and after the war—most notably, novelists Mouloud Mammeri and Mouloud Feraoun and sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad; fourth, the transnational Berber Cultural Movement, with which Bourdieu was in dialogue at various points throughout his career; and finally, the resonances between Bourdieu's own upbringing in rural Béarn, his wartime research in Algeria, and his later intellectual life in Paris—including the twin

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lenses of equilibrium and disjuncture through which he approached socio-spatial oppositions of rural/urban and colony/metropole.

It is easy, with some four decades of hindsight (decades that also witnessed the burgeoning of the field of postcolonial studies), to be critical of Bourdieu's Algerian ethnography. A self-taught ethnographer (Honneth et al. 1986: 38), Bourdieu was learning to do ethnographic research on the fly, at times with machine guns firing around him (Bourdieu 2004: 423). Conducting ethnography of and during wartime conditions,<sup>3</sup> he worked in dangerous and unsettling situations that would discourage most researchers. Bourdieu's strong anticolonial stance and his unswerving advocacy of Algerian independence earned him the confidence of many of those Muslim Algerians he interviewed in Algiers and across the war-torn countryside. It also earned him a place on a Far Right assassination list and led to his precipitated departure from the country under cover of darkness during the final months of the war (Yacine 2004: 491). His work was principled and politically engaged at a time when colonialism was barely in the purview of most anthropologists. Yet our admiration for the intellectual, political, and personal risks Bourdieu took should not preclude critical engagement with his Algerian research. Indeed, such an engagement is long overdue.

### **Wartime Ethnographer**

Writing on Bourdieu's life is a complicated task for, as his longtime translator Richard Nice has remarked, there exist "two versions of Bourdieu's past. One is the mythical one in which he is the peasant boy confronting urban civilization, and the other, which he actually thought more seriously, is what it's like to be a petit bourgeois and a success story" (Mahar 1990, quoted in Reed Danahay 2005: 34). In the case of his wartime years, the retrospective gaze of Bourdieu

and his students tends to promote a heroic image of an engaged intellectual battling the twinned distortions of colonialism and nationalist utopianism, risking his personal well-being for ethnographic truth and scientific valorization of Kabylia, and altering his academic trajectory according to a larger “civic impulse” (Bourdieu 2003b: 85; see Yacine 2004).

A more critical reading would underline Bourdieu’s professional ambition and intellectual continuity across his Algerian experience, emphasizing Bourdieu’s approach to Algeria as a “living laboratory” in which to conduct an “epistemological experiment” (Bourdieu 1972: 222; see Addi 2002: 42; Sayad 2002: 66; Wacquant 2004: 389; Yacine 2004: 498) into the continuity and rupture of social practices and cultural *doxa* in contexts of extreme upheaval. Such a reading would connect Bourdieu’s Algerian research to his ongoing philosophical interests in phenomenal fields (Hammoudi, this volume) and relations of domination and resistance (Colonna, this volume). It would further emphasize his metropolitan academic pedigree from the École Normale Supérieure, the support received from his family’s regional connections, and the later patronage offered by Raymond Aron—elements of class reproduction that Bourdieu himself would later examine in a variety of sociological and reflexive studies (Bourdieu 1988 [1984], 1996 [1989], 2004a; Bourdieu and Passeron 1970). This social and educational capital made possible a number of research and professional opportunities for Bourdieu in Algeria and later upon his return to Paris—opportunities unavailable to his indigenous Algerian collaborators like Mouloud Mammeri and Abdelmalek Sayad, who would later come to rely on Bourdieu’s own patronage during the postwar years. In the end, both “versions of Bourdieu’s past” obviously reflect important conditions in the production of Bourdieu’s Algerian ethnographic work and his elaboration

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of specific ethnographic practices, and in what follows we attempt to demonstrate how they both are encapsulated within it.

Bourdieu's introduction to Algeria, like many colonial ethnographers before him, was mediated by his military service. In general, the ethnology of Algeria—and of Kabylia in particular—had been closely tied to military interests since the mid-nineteenth century, with most of the foundational ethnographies and linguistic studies written by military personnel (Lorcin 1995; Lucas and Vatin 1975). However, Bourdieu's relationship to the imperial project was quite different from the military ethnographers before him; he was deployed to Algeria, paradoxically, because he already opposed the military actions being taken to preserve French Algeria from the nationalist movement for independence. In spite of being a graduate of the *École Normale*, when Bourdieu was drafted into military service he refused to follow his peers into the Reserve Officers' College, to which elite young men were typically assigned. In his later narration of events, Bourdieu points to his upbringing in a petit bourgeois family in the rural French province of Béarn—where his father had been a postal worker and his grandfather a sharecropper—which made him ill at ease with class-based privilege and reluctant to separate himself from the “rank and file” (2004b: 416).<sup>4</sup>

Sent instead to serve with the Army Psychological Services in Versailles, he soon found himself at odds with his superiors over the Algerian question. As he describes it, “heated arguments” over whether Algeria should remain French or be granted independence led to his deployment to the French colony in October 1955 at the age of 25 (2004b: 416; see Yacine 2004: 490–91, 2008: 30). Once in Algeria, Bourdieu was initially part of a unit charged with guarding air bases and other strategic sites (including, at one point, a large munitions dump in the Chellif Valley) (Bourdieu 2004b: 416; Yacine 2004: 491,

2008:30). He appears to have become progressively disillusioned with what he characterized as his fellow soldiers' blind submission to authority, and increasingly interested in the dynamics of Algerian society (Bourdieu 2004b: 418). In 1956 during the final months of his tour of duty, Bourdieu was reassigned to clerical work in the documentation and information service of the French administration in Algeria, following his parents' intervention through Colonel Ducourneau, a member of the Algerian government who happened to be from Bourdieu's natal region of Béarn (Bourdieu 2004b: 419; Yacine 2004: 491, 2008: 30). There he had the opportunity to meet leading scholars of Algeria, among them Emile Dermenghem, archivist of the government's well-stocked Algerian library and author of key works on the Maghreb, as well as the young historian André Nouschi.<sup>5</sup> Under Dermenghem's guidance and with Nouschi and other fellow-travelers as interlocutors, Bourdieu began to read "everything written about Algeria" (Yacine 2004: 490) and particularly about Kabyle culture, which had been deployed as a central ethnographic case in the emerging social sciences since Durkheim (Hammoudi, this volume).<sup>6</sup>

Like most wars the French-Algerian war was characterized as much by ideological struggles as by what transpired on the battlefield. In this case the opposing camps can be roughly grouped into proponents of a "French Algeria" (*Algérie française*) and an "Algerian Algeria" (*Algérie algérienne*). At the war's start many French and Algerian intellectuals associated with the "Ecole d'Alger"—including such respected figures as Albert Camus, the French sociologist and ethnographer Germaine Tillion, and the Algerian novelist and educator Mouloud Feraoun—favored a "reconciliation" between France and Algeria that would ensure a continued economic and political relationship between the metropole and the settler colony,

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albeit one premised on the civic, political, and social equality of all subjects/citizens. Termed “integrationism,” this approach was increasingly adopted as state policy in the years following World War II and became enshrined in the 1958 Constitution of the Fifth Republic that simultaneously defended the territorial indivisibility of France, reaffirmed categories of legal subjectivity based on religious or geographic origin, and established policies of social promotion to ensure the future equality of all citizens.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, from the earliest moments of the war, Bourdieu endorsed an “Algerian Algeria” that would be fully independent from the French state.

Yet Bourdieu sharply demarcated himself from other leading intellectual proponents of “Algerian Algeria”—most notably, Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon. In Bourdieu’s view, Sartre, Fanon, and others aligned with the Communist Left were blind to the socioeconomic realities of the Algerian population. If the Far Right Orientalists, who dominated the University of Algiers during the war, were mired in a form of “colonial ethnology” fueled by studies of Arabic language and literature (Adnani and Yacine 2003: 232; Bourdieu 2003b: 6; Sprecher 2003: 297–300), the leftists sought to locate in the Algerian peasantry a nascent revolutionary consciousness that would align them with an emerging transnational proletariat (Le Sueur 2005: 253–54). For Bourdieu, as he later recalled, proponents of both positions were equally blind to the complex realities of Algerian society under colonial domination. He found the Left’s utopianism “misleading and dangerous” (Honneth et al. 1986: 40; see Addi 2002: 61–66; Lane 2000: 19–20) and even “irresponsible” (cited in LeSueur 2005: 252). The Left’s views were motivated, Bourdieu contended, by “Parisian” ideas (Le Sueur 2005: 252) that fed “a mythical conception of Algerian society” (Honneth et al. 1986: 38) but paid little heed to the “objective situation” of colonial Algeria.

While Bourdieu shared the Left's interest in the conditions of possibility for the development of revolutionary consciousness, he wrote that Algerians' support for the war did not necessarily make them—sociologically speaking—“revolutionaries” (Bourdieu 1961, 1962c). Instead he approached the Algerian peasant as caught up in a “millenarian utopianism” (Bourdieu 1958: 125) that was motivated by “an incoherent resentment” against the colonial situation rather than “a true revolutionary consciousness” (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 32). To gain critical purchase on their condition would require “a certain distance as well as the instruments of thought inseparable from education” (Bourdieu et al. 2002: 32). In these writings from within the wartime context, we see early formulations of Bourdieu's theorization of a divide between prereflexive and reflexive consciousness that runs through his later practice-oriented theoretical work (see Hammoudi, this volume), as well as initial intimations that literacy and education provided the only gateways to critical reflexivity (Goodman, this volume; Lane 2000: chapter 4).

As he was formulating these sociopolitical arguments, Bourdieu began working on a book for the popular French series “Que Sais-Je?”<sup>8</sup> titled *Sociologie de l'Algérie* (Sociology of Algeria) based on the library research undertaken while finishing his military service. Tassadit Yacine (2004: 497) has averred that this early work establishes an “umbilical connection between politics and social science,” and Loïc Wacquant has underlined the book's political engagement, noting that the 1962 English translation featured on its cover the flag of the revolutionary National Liberation Front (FLN) prior to the independence of Algeria (Wacquant 2002: 551). Bourdieu himself, well after the fact, narrated his motivation somewhat differently, referring to the project as arising from a

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civic, more than political impulse. I believe that the French of this period, whether they were for or against independence, converged in their lack of knowledge of the country, and they had poor reasons for being for or against independence. It was thus very important to provide the bases for a judgment, for an adequate understanding, not only for the French of the period, but also for educated Algerians who, for historical reasons, were ignorant of their own society. (Bourdieu 2003b: 85)

*Sociologie de l'Algérie* is the only work in which Bourdieu's "two Algerias" appear side by side, albeit fleetingly. The majority of the book is a study of the "objective structures" (economy and social organization) of traditional Algerian society. The first four chapters are devoted to discrete Algerian populations: three Berber groups (the Kabyles, the Shawiya, and the Ibadites) and "the Arab speakers." A fifth chapter ("A Common Stock") is concerned with the social, economic, and religious<sup>9</sup> structures that Bourdieu thought united these various groups as "variations on a single theme" (1958: 80). The colonial project makes a brief appearance only in the final chapter ("Alienation") where it is portrayed in terms of profound disaggregation and de-culturation wrought on "traditional" Algerian society.<sup>10</sup> The theme of rupture would subsequently come to dominate Bourdieu's writing on Algeria until after the war's end.

### **An Ethnography of Rupture**

In 1958, the year *Sociologie de l'Algérie* appeared, Bourdieu took a position as assistant professor at the University of Algiers (1958–61) and began conducting research during the academic breaks as part of a team sponsored by ARDES (Association for Demographic, Economic, and Social Research), the Algerian branch of the French INSEE (the

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