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Pierre Bourdieu, *Picturing Algeria*, eds. Franz Schultheis and Christine Frisinghelli, with a foreword by Craig Calhoun. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012. xvi + 230 pp. 170 photographs, list of photographs, and notes. \$27.50 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-231-14842-9; \$22.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-231-14843-6.

Review by Jennifer W. Olmsted, Wayne State University.

*Picturing Algeria*, a lushly illustrated book from Columbia University Press, presents a selection of amateur photographs taken by the young Pierre Bourdieu during his time in Algeria (1957-1960) just before the war of independence. This period had a profound influence on Bourdieu's intellectual formation. Once he returned to France, he decided to turn his attention to social science rather than continuing in phenomenology, his original field of study. In the words of Craig Calhoun, who wrote the foreword to this volume, Bourdieu's Algerian experience "helped shape his lifelong project of doing philosophical work by concrete sociological investigation rather than just abstract reflection" (p. xiii). The photographs published here thus perform the dual task of showing us both a society and a scholar in transformation.

Published by Columbia University Press in collaboration with the Social Science Research Council, *Picturing Algeria* is a translation of *Images d'Algérie*, published in 2003.<sup>[1]</sup> Although it is not a catalogue, the French-language edition was originally published in conjunction with a 2003 exhibition of Bourdieu's photographs at the Institut du monde arabe in Paris and the Camera Austria space at the Kunsthaus Graz. The foreword by sociologist Calhoun was written specifically for the English edition. While the photographs and their accompanying texts comprise the bulk of the volume, the book includes short essays by co-editors and exhibition co-organizers, Franz Schultheis, a professor of sociology and former student of Bourdieu's, and Christine Frisinghelli, curator at Camera Austria. There is also a June 2001 interview between Schultheis and Bourdieu, who collaborated closely on this project until the latter's death in January 2002.

The photographs that form the substance of *Picturing Algeria* are divided into six main sections, five of which address themes from Bourdieu's work: "War and Social Transformation in Algeria," "Habitus and Habitat," "Men-Women," "An Agrarian Society in Crisis," and "The Economics of Poverty."<sup>[2]</sup> Each of these is accompanied by quotations from eight of Bourdieu's many publications. Among the six books and two articles represented here, only four have been translated into English, a fact that is significant in and of itself. The four that have been translated, making them more familiar to American academics, include *Masculine Domination* (2001), *The Logic of Practice* (1990), *Algeria 1960* (1979), and *The Social Structures of the Economy* (2005).<sup>[3]</sup> All four of the untranslated books and articles deal specifically with Algeria.<sup>[4]</sup> As Calhoun notes in his foreword, this gap in translation hinders our understanding of Bourdieu's work. One of the delights of *Picturing Algeria* is the access it provides to these texts in the form of lengthy, translated excerpts. Additional strengths of *Picturing Algeria* include the excellent curation of both texts and photographs and the highly effective juxtaposition of word and image, the product of a painstaking selection process described by Frisinghelli in her essay at the end of the book.

The most compelling aspect of this publication is the photographs themselves, which bear witness to a society in transition. As visual testimonials, these fascinating images are gripping and irresistible. Along

with objects and the occasional landscape, Bourdieu photographed ordinary people from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds in both city and countryside. Although he took some photographs that capture the pleasures of life (children playing, men relaxing), Bourdieu focused on the harsher realities of poverty, hard labor, war, and the oppression of women. Because he had no training as a photographer and thus largely failed to compose his pictures, these images lack, for the most part, the condescending taint of the picturesque so often associated with French visual representations of North Africans. This lends them a freshness and immediacy that are deeply engaging. On the other hand, many of the photographs were clearly taken surreptitiously, often capturing subjects in awkward side or rear views. Bourdieu notes in the interview that his Rolleiflex camera with its viewfinder on the top was “very useful to me because there were often situations in Algeria where it was very ticklish to take photographs, and this way I could take them without anyone noticing” (p. 8).<sup>[5]</sup> This statement reminds us that taking pictures in Algeria in the late 1950s was a highly fraught, even politicized, act, regardless of the intentions of the Frenchman behind the lens. Here, the book’s lack of reference to postcolonial theory and to the literature on French images of Algerians is perhaps most deeply felt.

Bourdieu and the authors muse at some length on the role of photography in the latter’s intellectual practice and development. Calhoun, for example, describes photography as a tool that enabled Bourdieu to document his fieldwork more fully. Bourdieu makes the same characterization in his interview with Schultheis, where he recounts that some of the photographs, such as those depicting objects, were meant to serve as a simple aide-mémoire. Yet Calhoun goes on to suggest that these images served more than a merely documentary purpose, noting that Bourdieu often chose scenes in which the old and new orders were juxtaposed, a claim that is supported by the photographs included in the book and of course by Bourdieu in the interview with Schultheis. As Bourdieu put it, he sought in some photographs to capture “situations that really touched me because different, dissonant realities merged into each other in them” (p. 13). He cites images like a veiled woman driving a scooter or a can, once used to package pork, now repurposed to hold water on a Muslim grave.

Calhoun’s contention that Bourdieu occupied a privileged position as a photographer is more problematic: “Bourdieu did not deploy his camera artlessly, simply to record, as in a few years he would describe French peasants doing in his book on photography. His camera was a Leica, not a Kodak Brownie, and his ambitions were greater” (p. ix). The book to which Calhoun refers is the unfortunately titled *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, first published in French in 1965.<sup>[6]</sup> Calhoun suggests here that Bourdieu, despite a complete absence of formal training in photography, possessed greater sophistication than a camera-wielding peasant. While Bourdieu may well have lacked the supposedly naive eye of the tourist, it is hard to accept the claim that he was producing something significantly more sophisticated than such a tourist might make. In fact, the apparent artlessness of Bourdieu’s photographs is one of their most fascinating aspects.

Like Calhoun, Schultheis adopts a somewhat hagiographic tone in his discussion of the photographs. Rather than simple tools of documentation, Bourdieu’s photographs “testify to a journey of initiation and a profound conversion that served as the starting point of an extraordinary scientific and intellectual trajectory” (p. 2). In Schultheis’s conception, Bourdieu’s photographs become souvenirs less of a place than of a quasi-spiritual experience. While there is no denying the impact that Bourdieu’s years in Algeria had on his intellectual development, the trope of the young man forever transformed by his experiences in a foreign country haunts *Picturing Algeria*. More specifically, the idea of the intellectual or artist changed by North Africa is a common theme in French art and literature. One has only to think of Delacroix and Matisse, among many others. Although this notion needs to be examined more critically with regard to Bourdieu, it is difficult to resist Schultheis’s characterization of the photographs as powerful records of Bourdieu’s intellectual transformation.

Despite its beautiful reproductions of the photographs, the American edition of this book is aimed chiefly at social scientists. In some ways, this is a completely sensible position, because Bourdieu’s work

on Algeria is more purely sociological than his later work on cultural and economic capital, the habitus, the field, and so on. The selection of texts that accompany the photographs attests to this emphasis on Bourdieu as a social scientist, particularly because the majority of quotes are taken from Bourdieu's early sociological studies of Algeria. The decision to present the book to a somewhat limited audience of social scientists seems like a missed opportunity because Bourdieu's work has invigorated such a wide range of humanistic fields. Despite this claiming of Bourdieu's photographs for social science, historians of North Africa and of France will find much to interest them here, as will historians of photography. Indeed, some of the book's shortcomings, especially the absence of any reference to the literature and critical theory on photography, may well act as springboards for new explorations of Bourdieu's work and intellectual legacy. Perhaps the photographs and translated texts published here will also stimulate greater Anglophone interest in Bourdieu's work on Algeria.[7] With its translation of lesser-known texts, thoughtful juxtaposition of texts and images, and, above all, beautiful presentation of the photographs, this book provides a fascinating glimpse into the working process and intellectual origins of one of the most important scholars of the twentieth century.

## NOTES

[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Images d'Algérie: Une affinité élective* (Arles: Actes Sud, 2003).

[2] A sixth section, entitled "In Algiers and Blida: Image Sequence," has no accompanying text.

[3] Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2001); *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1990); *Algeria 1960: the disenchantment of the world* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979); and *The Social Structures of the Economy* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[4] The four texts are: Pierre Bourdieu, "Guerre et mutation sociale en Algérie," *Études méditerranéennes* 7(Spring 1960): 25-37; Pierre Bourdieu with A. Darbel, J. P. Rivet, and C. Seibel, *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie*, 2nd ed., (Paris: Édition Mouton, 1963); Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, *Le Déracinement: la crise de l'agriculture traditionnelle en Algérie* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1964; new edition 1996); and Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad, "Paysans déracinés, bouleversements morphologiques et changements culturels en Algérie," *Études rurales* 12(January-March 1964): 56-94.

[5] Though not as well-known as Leica (a brand also used by Bourdieu), Rolleiflex is a high-end camera that had its heyday from the 1920s to the 1960s.

[6] Pierre Bourdieu, with Luc Boltanski, Robert Castel, Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Dominique Schnapper, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990). First published in French as *Un art moyen* by Éditions de Minuit, 1965. The English title seems misleading, as the word "moyen" is better translated as "average" or "ordinary."

[7] In the realms of anthropology and ethnography, this work has already begun, as evidenced by the recent publication on Bourdieu in Jane E. Goodman and Paul Silverstein, eds., *Algeria: Colonial Politics, Ethnographic Practices, Theoretical Developments* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

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