
Mon Dieu, Bourdieu: The Magic of the Academy and Its Ancestor Cults

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Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry. William of Baskerville in Umberto Eco, *Name of the Rose*

Introduction: Making Bourdieu, Making Magic

Abstract: By looking at the vast corpus of texts on Pierre Bourdieu in an unexpected way, this article uses a material culture analysis to study the social relations of academics. We find Bourdieu's name and his dictionary of concepts used not only as signifiers of his theory but also for its *mana*, the efficacy of its social capital. Bourdieu is a ghost summoned by his inner circle that has turned his name and concepts into totems that are reinforced through ritualized writing, hence feeding the development and stewardship of Bourdieu's (and academia's) ancestor cult, its magic.

Keywords: Bourdieu, magic, social capital, material culture, academia, ancestor, knowledge production, legitimacy

Résumé : Examinant le vaste corpus des textes relatifs à Pierre Bourdieu d'une façon inattendue, cet article a recours à une analyse de culture matérielle pour étudier les relations sociales des universitaires. Nous constatons que le nom de Bourdieu et son dictionnaire de concepts sont utilisés non seulement comme signifiants de sa théorie mais aussi son *mana*, l'efficacité de son capital social. Bourdieu est un esprit convoqué par son cercle rapproché qui a transformé son nom et ses concepts en totems dont la puissance est renforcée par une écriture ritualisée, nourrissant ainsi l'élaboration et l'intendance du culte des ancêtres de Bourdieu (et du milieu universitaire), son pouvoir magique.

Mots-clés : Bourdieu, magie, capital social, culture matérielle, monde universitaire, ancêtres, production du savoir, légitimité

This article is about a system of magic based around an ancestor cult, filled with rituals and totems, in the halls of every university, throughout every discipline. Granted, there is a great degree of variation in the magic of biology and, say, the fine arts; however, this variation does not negate the simple but profound fact that, as we argue here, there is magic in the academy and that it has concrete consequences for the scientific method and, above all, the locus of scientific legitimacy. Some anthropologists know this process as contagious magic (Fraser 1959), others as mimesis (Taussig 1993). Magic, in this understanding, is not separate from modernity and most certainly not its binary opposition, but it describes a process that may even be "inherent to the exercise of power in general" (Geschiere 2003:162), as exemplified in Geschiere's (2003) comparison between African witch doctors and American spin doctors and her conclusion that, despite significant differences, both instances constitute a negotiation and manipulation of the imaginary. Magic is, thus, a process wherein "forms of publicity and secrecy complement or supplement each other, that is . . . the ways in which the persuasiveness of the symbols we live by thrives on a combination of faith and skepticism, revelation and concealment" (Pels 2003:3).

In this article, we contend that such magic can be found in the academy and set out to argue this case based on an examination of the legacy and academic treatment of Pierre Bourdieu. The practitioners of this magic we call the Ancestor-Cult of Bourdieu—those who use Bourdieu and his terms in contagious and mimical ways. Bourdieu's name and his dictionary of concepts are often used as signifiers of his theory, but

they are also often found being used for its *mana*, the efficacy of its social capital. Importantly, the purpose of this article is not to discredit the work of Bourdieu or the work of those whose research is informed by it but, in fact, to reinforce one of Bourdieu's (2003) core concepts—the notion of participant objectivation—and, therein, the need to more carefully examine anthropological professionalism and its impact on knowledge production.

It is indeed scientifically attested that [the anthropologist's] most decisive scientific choices (of topic, method, theory etc.) depend very closely on the location she (or he) occupies within her professional universe, what I call the “anthropological field,” with its national traditions and peculiarities, its habits of thought, its mandatory problematics, its shared beliefs and commonplaces, its rituals, values, and consecrations, its constraints in matters of publication of findings, its specific censorships, and, by the same token, the biases embedded in the organizational structure of the discipline, that is, in the collective history of the specialism, and all the unconscious pre-suppositions built into the (national) categories of scholarly understanding. [Bourdieu 2003:283]

We therefore ask, if contagious magic is indeed being deployed in research, to what extent is the research valid? Are these the mechanisms of what Richard Feynman (1985) called “cargo-cult science”? Where lies the legitimacy of academic writing? Where is its authority? These are questions too big for this article to cover in detail; however, what does seem certain and a premise from which we operate is that there is a paradox if academic authority is invoked, above all, through references to an ancestral authority beyond anything else. Specifically, we argue that a recognition of and engagement with this paradox is crucial, however marginal, for moving anthropological knowledge production beyond the boundaries imposed by magicians in the academy and the prevalence of ancestor cults.

The Material Culture of Academia

The production of this text required the identification of a methodological framework in which we would be able to insert and explain our data and which could most comprehensively identify degrees of revelation and concealment in the academic treatment of Pierre Bourdieu. We argue that this is best done through a material culture approach to the study of *homo academicus*, thus following Bourdieu's notion of *objectivation* and Latour's (1986) proposition that any academic knowledge production, indeed, the scientific revolution in itself, could not

have been possible without the possibility of transforming knowledge into inscriptions (objects) and, as a result, into “immutable mobiles” (1986:7). Through inscriptions, a 3D observation is turned into a flat, 2D object that can be easily multiplied and spread (mobile), while remaining the same in its reproductions (immutable). Inscriptions can then also “be reshuffled and *recombined*” (1986:19), producing an ever increasing corpus or “cascade” (1986:20) of new inscriptions that are resistant to dissent.

In this recognition, we divided “the book” in two: the “book” as we would know it in the emic parlance of the university and the “book-object” as what publishers worry about. Here we elevate the book-object to a position equal to that of the text within; in other words, we are judging the book by its cover. This is a simple adaptation of Pellegrin's methodology used in *The Message in Paper* (1998), wherein she investigated office rituals surrounding the use of paper: “the latent and incidental message through which an object becomes an artefact of human interaction as a residue of a social relation” (1998:103). The book-object is not without analytic import; indeed, a semiotic analysis of the book-object has much to reveal. What we have found in the analysis are totems (Durkheim 1995) in the book-object and rituals, which are generative of magic (Fraser 1959), in its social life (Kopytoff 1986) including its modern applications (Pels 2003; Taussig 2003).

Consider the following quote from Malinowski (1961:397) in the inverse: “The objective items of culture, into which belief has crystallized in the form of tradition, myth, spell and rite are the most important sources of knowledge.” Framing the Bourdieu issue in terms of magic, ritual, totem and the like is by no means tongue in cheek; it is not allegorical but, instead, firmly literal as readily visible in Meyer and Pels's (2003) landmark edited volume *Magic and Modernity*. Eschewing the epoch obsessionism of modernist and postmodernist scholarship, Meyer and Pels and others firmly situate the classic anthropological discourse on magic in contemporary contexts. We take this project one step further by looking at magic practices inside the academy itself.

Importantly, the books reviewed here represent an assemblage of objects tethered to a particular time and particular place: a bookshelf in a university library. It is not a systematic selection of texts based on a desire for comprehensive coverage of a discrete theoretical topic; instead, it constitutes a systematic analysis of the materiality of books as a type of knowledge “container.” We are not asking what Bourdieu and scholars of his work have to say about something, as is most commonly

the case but, rather, what these objects, including but not restricted to their texts, say about Bourdieu and scholars of his work. The Bourdieusian corpus merely provides a convenient genre of media for analysis. If this assemblage of objects is taken to represent the entire corpus of Bourdieu's work, then it is, without any doubt, incredibly inadequate; yet, to do so is *not* the purpose of this article. The assemblage discussed and presented here matters insofar as libraries matter: the bookshelf in question is the result of a long line of information management decisions involving policies and budgets, and academics' and librarians' opinions of which books, among the many, matter and should be rewarded with increased, using Latour's (1986) term, "mobility," or using Morville's (2005), "findability." According to Morville, in this age of information overload, the ease of finding information is most important and then, to borrow the subtitle of his (2005) volume, "what we find changes who we become."

Exemplary is our experience with the initial double-blind reviews that we received for this article. One reviewer suggested, rightfully so, that our analysis had major gaps in its treatment of the Bourdieusian corpus. The accounts covered here indeed ignore some literature on Bourdieu that transcends the magic of ancestor cults, perhaps even counteracting this very phenomenon. We were asked to take a closer look at Bruce Knauft's *Genealogies for the Present* (1996). After reading some reviews we agreed that it would, indeed, offer important additional, perhaps even diverging, insights. Yet, when we proceeded to actually find the book, we learned that no university library in our immediate surrounding had purchased a copy and this included the libraries of two research-intensive universities with strong anthropology and social science departments. In other words, the findability of this particular volume was, for the authors of this article, severely restricted, suggesting an instance of academic magic in and of itself. The book's existence was revealed to us, yet access to it remained concealed.

Thus, we ask our readers not to confuse what is written here with a comprehensive examination of Bourdieu and what has been written on him; this is "a medium is the message" study. We suggest that insofar as Stocking's (1992) *The Ethnographer's Magic* constitutes an anthropology of anthropology, our article is the result of, and to be understood as, an anthropological archaeology of academic knowledge production, focusing on the artefacts and technologies of the academic at a particular place and time.

Data Analysis: The Totem, Rituals and Magic

In this section we represent and analyze our data set. We do so by the following indices. First, we consider the book as a book-object: its physical materiality (details regarding the production, the birth of the book, are located in the culturally appropriate Bibliography section and, therefore, they will not be stated here unless otherwise useful) and the direct interlocutors, especially those who, through translating or other editorial practices, write prefaces. Second, we treat the book as *book*, as it is commonly understood. We analyze the print, the text itself.

We argue that, due to the actions of the cult and broad interest in and out of academia, these texts are living in the sense that at the point when we catch and release them for our study, their social biographies (Appadurai 1986:1) are in medias res. There is a birth and maturation; that is to say, the books have been written, edited and published and have yet to die (death in this case is hard to define). Books are commonly not treated as objects that, like dead books or scrolls, are enamoured by museologists. However, we find the line between the living and the dead, in this context, is a matter defined *in writing*. In our readings of these texts, our concern has been to identify the phraseology indicating the socially constructive mechanisms used by members of Bourdieu's cult.

Bourdieu, the Teacher and the Teacher-Object

This artefactual category is, at first sight, the most basic and includes two books intended to provide our most general understanding of Bourdieu and his work: instructions on how to best approach him, which of his concepts are the most integral, and how we can link him to others whom we have read introductory texts about, such as Foucault, Latour or even Marx.

The two artefacts included are Grenfell (2008a) (Artefact 1), and Webb and colleagues (2002) (Artefact 2). An analysis of both artefacts—the books and the book-objects—reveals their simple associations: an attempt to disentangle Bourdieu's colourful and complex writing to make his main concepts and contexts of research approachable for anyone irrespective of one's primary fields of research. The introductory chapters of both artefacts fully acknowledge this purpose, especially Grenfell (2008b:6), whose edited volume is "to offer what amounts to a worldview from a Bourdieusian perspective; as a way of encouraging others to develop and apply it in their own methods and disciplines." The

reason given by Webb and colleagues for writing *Understanding Bourdieu* (2002) is not much different, though perhaps even more telling: they hope to decipher Bourdieu in order to proliferate his name and his concepts, given that “Bourdieu’s status is far more peripheral than that of Foucault” (Webb et al. 2002:1) particularly in the context of Anglo-American scholarship. Both books are clear in their intentions: they attempt to teach us about Bourdieu or perhaps, to be more precise, to teach us that and how we should include Bourdieu and his key concepts in our research because “there are few aspects of contemporary cultural theory... to which Bourdieu has not made a significant contribution” (2002:1).

Constructing Bourdieu and his work in such a manner clearly portrays him as a teacher, someone we can learn from and, given that we cannot always learn from the teacher directly, someone who can and should be taught about—a teacher-object. Bourdieu and his work are so crucial for the social sciences that we *have* to be able to “talk” about him; in other words, to “reference” him in discourses both verbal and textual. The Bourdieusian worldview is indispensable, although so large, protracted and complex that those of us who are not primarily concerned with Bourdieu need the help of others to understand him—to not include him in our work is simply not an option; at least this is the message we find throughout both of these introductory volumes.

At the same time, these volumes do not recognize that the very phenomenon described in the previous paragraph could be considered contradictory, or rather, in its partial recognition and hence revelation, it continues to be concealed. And herein lies the magic. Returning to concrete examples, Grenfell argues that his edited book “can also be read as an epistemological warning to those who might reify the concepts which follow as concrete entities, or metaphorical narratives, rather than approaching them as necessary tools to understanding the practical logic of fields” (2008c:10). Similarly, in the context of epistemic reflexivity, Webb and colleagues (2002:61) note, “Bourdieu has insisted on the close relations between his theories and the specific contexts in which they are employed and out of which they (in a sense) arose.” Grenfell as well as Webb and colleagues fully acknowledge that one has to be cautioned about the application of Bourdieu’s concepts, that one has to consider them within their given contexts. After all, the sacred Parisian philosopher must be ritualistically isolated from the profane Anglo-American reader.

On the other hand, neither Grenfell nor Webb and colleagues apply this recognition in individual chapters,

the best example being the individual chapters on epistemic reflexivity in both texts. Deer (2008), responsible for Grenfell’s chapter on reflexivity, discusses epistemic reflexivity, but, we argue, she does so only superficially. Deer (also Webb et al.) does not, at any point in time, put Bourdieu’s epistemic reflexivity within the context of his actual ethnographic practice. They discuss his theory of practice without a recognition of practice itself, thus distorting or perhaps appropriating Bourdieu and his concepts, transforming them into tools “to begin to construct the kind of ‘new gaze’, or *metanoia*, to which Bourdieu referred. It is to see the world through the eyes of one man” (Grenfell 2008d:218). This reductionist portrayal is an attempt, we feel, to distil Bourdieu into the brevity and impact of Newtonianesque laws, unhinged from ethnographic context.

Here we have seen the magic of education, the hallmark of the academic witchdoctor’s trade. The ethnographic record is replete with evidence of magicians wielding important and sacred knowledge about anything and everything, from biology to the stars, but the trick is in the wielding. We have clearly seen in this section that editors, operating under the austere pretences of creating greater access to cryptic texts, have concealed knowledge. The crafty use of Bourdieusian totems, hence, creates magic. Combined with the effect of being “revealers,” these editors constructed a magical object and in so doing ritually created their own magical effect. The function and target of this effect, however, is crucial to the poignancy of our critique: drawing out the resilience of anthropology through the dissolution of a subjectified pretence implicated in the objectification of knowledge in book form.

Bourdieu, the Provocateur

The title of this artefactual category and the primary artefact it analyzes is a curious one. An *agent provocateur* refers to a person who, acting on behalf of state interests, poses as a revolutionary to incite violent protest, thus providing the pretext for the state to respond in kind. A bold statement, indeed, when made in reference to Bourdieu. Yet, our concern here is not to judge whether or not Bourdieu was indeed an agent provocateur (or perhaps instead a “demonstration marshal,” those revolutionary stewards charged with the task of routing out the imposters), but it is to identify the degree to which Bourdieu is portrayed as (rather than simply is or was) an agent provocateur.

Grenfell (2004) (Artefact 3) and Reed-Danahay (2005) (Artefact 4) fall into this category. Both represent and analyze Bourdieu within the context of the provocateur, Bourdieu’s “socio-political engagement” (Grenfell 2004:2)

and Bourdieu as a man “who seemed to enjoy the challenge and riposte of academic discourse as he attacked his opponents and was defensive in responses to critics” (Reed-Danahay 2005:1). Both volumes do not (only) introduce Bourdieu’s concepts and attempt to spread a Bourdieusian worldview, but perhaps more troublesome, they let Bourdieu merge as an everyday hero. By so doing, they spread his influence beyond the confined boundaries of the academy. In Grenfell’s own words, “This book aims to present Bourdieu’s work as a practical example of intervention, and its consequences, in the social world ... to develop a theory of practice and method which link academic thought to the world of Everyman” (Grenfell 2004:3). Reed-Danahay bluntly states, “My own perspective ... will lend Bourdieu a bit more social agency than he admits” (2005:20).

This is, then, reflective of the old “rationality debate” (Luhrmann 1997:298) in the anthropological discourse on magic, which asks, “To what extent can a connection be made between sign and signifier, act and action, thought and agency?” (1997:298). Indeed, these two accounts clearly reveal that Bourdieu is made to be more than just a scholar, a teacher; he is to be understood as someone, a provocateur, who one cannot escape from, not even Bourdieu himself. By so doing, Grenfell (2004) and Reed-Danahay (2005) not only surpass Bourdieu’s own claims, but they may also even contradict him and his work. Reed-Danahay admits that the reason why Bourdieu never directly implicated himself in his work is that, “given his theory, he could not write an autobiography in which he was the heroic, unique, individual” (2005:23); yet, she and Grenfell do nothing else, and they do not seem to apprehend the contradiction in so doing. They write heroic stories for, about and of Bourdieu, hence rejecting Bourdieu’s very teachings. Grenfell (2004) continuously underlines Bourdieu’s commitment to social improvement—in the context of Algeria, education and training, and media and culture, just to mention a few. Likewise, Reed-Danahay (2005) examines, among others, education, habitus and situated subjectivities. Bourdieu, then, does not become a *provocateur* but an *anti-provocateur*, an academic but also an everyday hero outside of the conventional and with an invincible spirit:

At the time of his death in 2002, one daily newspaper announced that “Bourdieu was dead” but then added the comment that “it was not certain that he had recognized the fact yet!” In this black humour, there is something profound about his fierce independence and determination not to be ruled by social conventions and definitions. [Grenfell 2004:192]

Both of these volumes, seemingly unconsciously, introduce the deepest irony in the cult of Bourdieu: the creation of a new distinction, the Bourdieu distinction, the distinction of being an initiate or an outsider of the ancestor cult through the social capital of his name traded through networks of academics. We find a social stratification, internal to the world of academics but also bolstering the magical appearance of it to those on the outside of the academy.

Bourdieu, the Myth, the Musketeer

Swashbuckling to the next artefactual category, we find ourselves in the elevation of Bourdieu’s heroism to the near-mythical, the fictional. Bourdieu is no longer only a contemporary hero for the world of academics as well as the outside world, but he is also intertwined with the French nation’s myth, the heroes of the past and their impact on the present.

Such a construction of Bourdieu is most explicit in Yair’s portrayal (2009) (Artefact 5) of him as musketeer, fighting for “France”: *Pierre Bourdieu: The Last Musketeer of the French Revolution*. In this volume, we find the cult of Bourdieu through a twisting hagiographic lens conflating Bourdieu’s place in French history into the mythic cosmology of the ancien regime, d’Artagnan and even Joan of Arc. Here we find the totems of our analysis. We see a construction of Bourdieu’s origin myth through constructive connections into the ancestry of the French Revolution.

Though one was a child of the *ancient regime* and the other its harsh critique, d’Artagnan and Bourdieu share origin and spirit ... both fought for what they conceived as the true spirit of France: unity, justice, freedom. Like d’Artagnan two hundred and fifty years before him, Bourdieu was combating to attain justice too, and he also challenged power in order to attain a good society. They were both idealists, then, and they were both romantic, constantly believing in just causes and in the ability to attain them through struggle and perseverance. [Yair 2009:13]

Yair continues:

Notwithstanding her [Joan of Arc’s] tragic death—or maybe largely because she was willing to risk death to liberate France from the British occupation—the French celebrate her heroic and patriotic actions until today. She traditionally became the representative of ‘true France.’ In keeping with that tradition, Pierre Bourdieu wanted to liberate France and to unify all the citizens around common fraternal values. [Yair 2009:30]

The text is replete with the obvious allusions to musketeers, Joan of Arc and other heroes of France, and we find even more opaque symbology in ideas, such as Yair's verbose conclusion: "This book has shown that, like Voltaire, Bourdieu was a man of the Revolution. He chose to stand by the ideals of egalitarianism and universalism—showing that the current social order is actually the *ancien regime* reincarnated in a new guise; that it is still arbitrary and unjust, exploitative and dominating" (Yair 2009:155). In this example alone, but also throughout the volume, we find the ritual process at play, the "distinction" of manipulating the social capital of "Bourdieu," the aesthetic signifier of this revolutionary taste.

Lastly, we also find concealment in revelation within Yair's book. While Yair proposes primarily to argue "that sociologists theorize within a delimited conceptual space that is culturally set" (2009:137), this argument seems to get lost as Yair's mystification of Bourdieu stands at centre stage, overshadowing the claimed scientific purpose of Yair's work. Yair reveals a critical stance, though conceals it in his constructions and thematic emphasis. Magic is done.

Hence, we find the magic in Bourdieu's transformation from a hero in the academic witch doctors' pantheon to a mythical hero imbricated in the broader cosmology of France, a France that Bourdieu himself was well-known to be at odds with. The nation of "France" is a conglomerate of culturally and socially distinct regions manufactured for the political and economic purposes of elites at a particular point in history, a fact Bourdieu knew all too well. The multisited nature of his life's work, which some count as groundbreaking, makes this very point: that life in the French colony of Algeria, the "French" peasant life of rural Bearne and the metropolitan core of Paris were all historically contingent social constructs, distinct from each other in many ways. Thus, the image of Bourdieu as a Joan of Arc or d'Artagnan is indeed a puzzling one, where the fictional characters were and are used to create a sense of singular French nationality. It is fair to say that Bourdieu worked in a critically opposing direction.

Bourdieu, the God, the Olympian

To preface the following introduction to this artefactual category, "Bourdieu, the God, the Olympian," it behoves us to once again iterate our wholesale rejection of any notion that modernity or postmodernity has untethered us from the so-called premodern ways of being. In this artefactual category, we examine a particular process seen throughout the ethnographic record. An example of which can be found in our, the authors, own academic

lineage through our doctoral supervisor Christine Jourdan to her doctoral supervisor Roger Keesing. Keesing's life work was with the Kwaio of the Island of Malaita in the Solomon Islands, and such was his involvement with these people that when he passed away, Professor Jourdan was tasked with the ritual role of stewarding Keesing's remains from Canada back to the Kwaio, where he became part of a set of social relations that he himself had watched his friend Elota being embedded into years before, a process that "captures the essence of the status and role he has now been given in death: an ancestor (*adalo*). To the Kwaio of Malaita (Solomon Islands) this is what Roger has become and his elevation to the status of an ancestor talks to the place he occupied in their life" (Jourdan 1997:1).

This, we contend, is a precise example of what has been happening to Bourdieu, and it is important to mark that, in this contention, we do not deride the cult of Bourdieu as being unscientific (Bourdieu 2007a) but rather seek to situate what we do as academics in a richer and more precise context predicated on the very knowledge produced by social scientists. Bourdieu's elevation was not into the world of the Kwaio ancestors but into his own, that of Marx, Nietzsche, Wittgenstein and, most illustriously following Bourdieu's implicit cosmology, Aristotle. From Artefact 6 to Artefact 8, we find evidence of book-objects and their attendant texts acting to transmogrify Bourdieu into the pantheon of academic gods, sharing a pew with others worshipped in kind—Marx, for example, and sitting close to the feet of Sophia.

Swartz and Zolberg (2004a) (Artefact 6), Susen and Turner (2011) (Artefact 7), and Brown and Szeman (2000) (Artefact 8) exemplify this elevation to Olympus: Susen and Turner (2011) by explicitly attempting to align Bourdieu with already enthroned Olympians; Brown and Szeman (2000) and Swartz and Zolberg (2004a) by expanding Bourdieu's reach, transforming him into a true God of academia, whose work is not only applicable for social scientists but also across the humanities.

A mere glimpse at Susen and Turner's edited book-object, focusing on its skeleton or what is emically referred to as its "table of contents," is telling; hardly any of academia's Olympians are ignored; everyone is analyzed in correlation to Bourdieu, his concepts and work. Chapter 2 "Pierre Bourdieu: Unorthodox Marxist?" (Fowler 2011), in its title, somewhat acknowledges that Bourdieu may not be a Marxist in the traditional sense, though within the text itself the argument is made "that Marx had a distinctive impact on Bourdieu and that the significance of this influence is often downplayed when examining Bourdieusian concepts ... Bourdieu's

syntheses ... were aimed at strengthening, rather than at undermining, Marx's historical materialism" (Susen 2011:371). In a similar fashion, Wacquant (2011) suggests that Bourdieu's and Durkheim's work are based on the same four pillars, and other chapters (chapter 5) go on to assert Weber's influence (Bourdieu et al. 2011), Nietzsche's significance for Bourdieu's thoughts (chapter 6) (Rahkonen 2011) and so on.

Swartz and Zolberg's edited volume (2004a) is not much different, even though its focus is on the spread of Bourdieu's work across academia beyond his strongholds in sociology, anthropology and philosophy. In their introduction, Swartz and Zolberg propose that individual scholars' disciples

carry and propagate the faith, transmitting it to new generations... Defense of conceptual and methodological orthodoxy can stifle further intellectual development and lead to sectarian allegiance... This collection of papers devoted to the recognition of the importance of Pierre Bourdieu assiduously avoids both extremes: devotion to or profanation of a "sacred" work. [2004b:1]

Through this proposition, the editors implicate their awareness of the very argument of this article; however, the extent to which this awareness is actually translated into practice remains doubtful. The "twelve papers" in the volume are said to "offer but a glimpse of the many ways Bourdieu's oeuvre has inspired new research, critical reflection, and creative elaboration" (2004b:11).

While recognizing Bourdieu's potential to inspire is certainly of some value, it does not account for recognizing an appropriation of Bourdieu for nearly any school of thought, any issue of concern. Within the volume itself, the chapter by Svendsen and Svendsen, "On the Wealth of Nations: Bourdieuconomics and Social Capital," is one of the most telling. Svendsen and Svendsen (2004) exaggerate the potential importance of Bourdieu for the study of socio-economics by defining "Bourdieuconomics" as "the usage of a capital theory that, methodologically, operates with visible, material forms of capital (i.e. the substance) and invisible, non-material forms of capital (i.e. inhered in relations) *at the same level*" (2004:246). The authors emphasize that

a Bourdieuconomics should not be seen merely as a supplement to traditional economic or social scientific analyses. Rather, it forms a *basis for all human sciences*, because it directs focus to structural forces ... which contribute to form the strategies of the actors in their attempts to gain capital. [2004:247; emphasis added]

Looking now to the dissections of the Brown and Szeman (2000) book-object, we find indicators of the Bourdieuan word *totem* and its aesthetic appeal to academic social capital in even more far flung arenas such as modern jazz (Lopes 2000) and the space-time continuum (Ekelund 2000). Exemplary, in this regard, is the chapter by Caterina Pizanias "Habitus Revisited: Notes and Queries from the Field" (2000). In this chapter, Pizanias attempts to establish a straightforward connection among Bourdieu, particularly his concept of habitus, and issues of gender and contemporary art. She acknowledges that applying Bourdieu within this context is somewhat unorthodox, though she has no concern with recognizing her appropriation of Bourdieu; she "*appropriated* Bourdieu's concept of the field and *habitus* in order both to document and to analyze contemporary artistic phenomena" (Pizanias 2000:146; emphasis added). This is not said to discredit the argument of the author but merely to indicate and underline that such appropriation has occurred, that efforts have been made to ensure that Bourdieu's influence transcends his primary fields of research.

Thus, we find ourselves submerged in a discourse on magic in an explicit attempt to facilitate Bourdieu's transition into the realm of Olympians. Bourdieu is not just any scholar, he is not a mere follower of other gods and ancestors, but he is a god himself. His reach and his connection and comparability with already enthroned gods warrants his ritualistic elevation into the halls of Foucault, Marx, Nietzsche and others who have, through similar practices of magic, already been deified through and in the academy.

A Critique of Bourdieu?

This artefactual category stands out in comparison to the ones previously discussed. It does not concern praises for Bourdieu, his transformation into a master-teacher, hero, mythical figure or god; rather, it concerns the critique of Bourdieu. In other words, it comprises works that outright reject any of his thoughts, concepts and work. The example we found fitting into this category is Verdes-Leroux's *Deconstructing Pierre Bourdieu: Against Sociological Terrorism from the Left* (2001) (Artefact 9).

Verdes-Leroux does not hide her disagreement and discontent with Bourdieu and his legacy as described above. The titles of individual chapters located in the book skeleton are telling in themselves—above all, the title of the introduction: "Pierre Bourdieu, or a Con-Artist's Sociology" and its echo of Tylor's notion of sorcery. "The sorcerer generally learns his time-honored profession in good faith, and retains his belief in it more

or less from first to last; at once dupe and cheat, he combines the energy of a believer with the cunning of a hypocrite" (Tylor 1871:134). The written text serves only as reinforcement to these titles. Quoting Bourdieu to discredit Bourdieu, she notes,

When I consider that Bourdieu is being taught in high schools and colleges, I am tempted to think of his sociological theory in the same terms that he himself wrote about the Marxist vulgate: it has "clouded and confounded the brains of more than one generation." [Verdes-Leroux 2001:7]

Verdes-Leroux insists that

Pierre Bourdieu, who has so many titles and so much power, is wrong to want to import and impose his whims, his contempt and his self-complacency, his bellicose accents, into the intellectual field, the field of social sciences ... Bourdieu carries on, with any means possible, a permanent war. [2001:178]

Truly it is here that we find the guile of an insidious agent provocateur or at least an attempt to that point.

There is no doubt, the words are strong and perhaps in their strength they hope to destroy Bourdieu, the master-teacher, the hero, the myth, the god. Yet, we argue that in this very attack Verdes-Leroux strengthens rather than weakens Bourdieu's reputation. Not only does the very existence of her monograph indicate Bourdieu's true fame—why else would it be worth writing a book on him if his concepts are that insignificant; if, as she argues, they are inherently misinformed—but her strong language and, more than anything, to some extent, the superficial nature of her analysis seem more likely to attack her validity as scholar than Bourdieu's; given this, she is indeed attacking a God among academics, which is a Herculean task. Above all, Verdes-Leroux hardly mentions and analyzes Bourdieu's theory of practice, which is integral to his work and, for many, the reason for his magical elevation. Bourdieu's theory of practice follows him throughout his work and perhaps even more so throughout writing on him and his works, the other artefacts discussed here; still, Verdes-Leroux fails to acknowledge this centrality of Bourdieu's theory of practice or, indeed, does so by *not* including it in her critique. Besides, the volume lacks a clear analytical perspective focusing on Bourdieu's person rather than his work, his concepts and ideas. Surely, it is insufficient to constantly reiterate and eventually conclude that

Bourdieu, in all his demolishing, attacking, denouncing, and in all his supporting, flattering, and alternating bouts of demagoguery and threats, fails to fulfill

that which he says is the function of the 'creative' professions: "public utility and sometimes public salvation." [Verdes-Leroux 2001:265]

We argue that the very revelation of this critique, the animosity in its language and, in the end, its imperfections help strengthen Bourdieu's legacy, raising him above those scholars who are analyzed in a seemingly neutral fashion. Through her passionate attack, Verdes-Leroux allows Bourdieu to transcend mere academic objectivities, a feeling supported by the publisher (which allowed this equation of anger with critical thought not only to be published in French but also to be translated eventually into English). The content of her arguments, when washed of their vitriol, are sound. Indeed, we argue the same thing, but the point we try to make is that establishing this argument is not enough; there needs to be an attempt to explain why and how Bourdieu's work, at least as it is presented in this particular context of a particular university library, has only rarely been looked at critically, beyond concealment in revelation. However, before turning to this point, we have one more artefactual category to consider.

"The Priests"

Last but not least, we find ourselves dealing with the holy of holies, the inner circle of Bourdieu's ancestor cult, the priests who created and maintain the sacred objects we have thus enumerated and evaluated. Here we find an ecclesiastic semisecret society. Not fully secret, the membership list is obvious as is often the case with all manner of secret societies, but their actions, indeed, their recognition of being embroiled in such activity is not so obvious and herein lies the magic. What we have presented thus far as semiotic impressions comes into the concrete in the analysis of the following actors and their actions. Here we look at the life of the text before its published birth, the focus being on how it was conceived and the sometimes adulterous practices embroiled therein—obviously recognizing that the publication process is highly secret, at least for the uninitiated. To be explicit, the "priests" are those who talk for Bourdieu, even before his death but especially so after it. Although our data set has dealt with some texts written (and edited) before his death, it is the bits written after that are, in some ways, the most distorting. In the main, this section deals with the various translators whose prefaces seek to contextualize the knowledge in a given way, but it is no small aspect of our analysis. Our object analysis here ignores the greater part of the text, the

product of the priests, to instead narrow in on the texts generated solely by the translators and editors.

A. *The Priests of Book-Objects*

Caesar did not crown himself, but he *was* crowned by his friends (countrymen) and fellow Romans after thrice being commanded onto the stage. This is how gods are born. In the work of Richard Nice (little is known about this man but that he is a translator residing in Goettingen, Germany) and Wacquant we find the same thrusting of laurels by those in the periphery who have something to gain and the same rejection by the object being immortalized. “Sketch for a Self Analysis” begins with a declaration by Bourdieu that “this is not an autobiography” (Bourdieu 2007a:1). The part that Nice plays in this text is ambiguous in the extreme. As translator he transforms Bourdieu’s words into his own, adapting complex theoretical elaborations to his own understandings thereof. Yet, we do not find acknowledgement of this process in this volume. A preface concerning the translation exists but it is not Nice’s but the publisher’s note to the French edition—the real author we do not know—and tells us of Bourdieu’s attitude toward (auto)biographies. (Why would this note be included? For its unique, indispensable content? The content is simple; it tells us of the origin of the book, first published in German then translated to French and, as not acknowledged in the preface, then translated once again from French into English.)

All these linguistic ambiguities allow the interjection of magic, the revelation and concealment of certain interpretations. Nice is careful to note Bourdieu’s notations in the preliminary drafts regarding how this particular one should be, and will be, used. We find great circumspection about the role of biography and resistance toward being mythologized, with scientific zeal taking its place; however, we have not found that the scientific zeal has extinguished the magical effects of the biographical hero-making dynamics contained within the same text. This is a case of scientific magic being born of scientific magic, struggling to transcend into something more scientific in the abstract but never being able to cut the tethers of earthly, particular magic.

We find a similar occurrence, although in its concise nature inherently different, in the translator’s note to the English edition of Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (2007b). Nice is once again the translator, but more than this he seems to have been involved in editing, removing parts of Bourdieu’s original work in French. To what extent Nice made such decisions, or the editors, or both, or even Bourdieu, we do not and cannot know based on the text alone, though one thing

we do know for sure: Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* has been changed in the creation of the book-object; the information that is being transmitted to his Anglo-American readership is inherently different from the information transmitted to his French readers.

This fact is revealed, though once again, one may argue that in this revelation it is concealed in the unexplained vagaries of translation. The magic comes into full force: stripped of its ethnographic context, this work, untethered, as it were, from the physical world is open to the greatest degree of conflagration and trickery. “The argument is carried further, particularly as regards the concepts of practical logic and symbolic capital, the order of exposition is recast, and, partly for reasons of space, the ethnographic chapters with which the French edition opens have been curtailed” (2007b:vii).

B. *Article-Objects*

This last assemblage of artefacts is of a different material nature than those we have dealt with above. Here we consider nine objects, not book-objects but article-objects instead (in their totality, it is a journal-object). We did not find this journal volume on the shelf of the library where we conducted our archaeological research; yet, we find it crucial to include nonetheless, as it served as the cue that led us to the artefacts previously discussed. As part of a graduate course in anthropology, we were asked to read this special journal edition and to submit a short paper on Bourdieu in response. Hence, this journal-object served a purpose similar to the mammoth tooth that encourages archaeologists to keep digging for more extensive finds.

Two years following the biological death of Bourdieu, the journal *Ethnography* published a special memorial edition (2004) composed of nine contributions from seven contributors; the remaining articles were written by Bourdieu, in honour of him. In this cabal, we find exemplars of the priests of Bourdieu: Wacquant, Yacine, Sayed, Mammeri, Silverstein, Bourdieu’s wife, Marie-Claire Bourdieu, as well as several translators—that is to say, “adaptors”¹ of Bourdieu’s work, including Richard Nice.

First, the collection of articles has to be considered as a whole as the journal-object. The editors of *Ethnography* decided that Bourdieu, as ancestor, is important enough to create a special issue dedicated to him, his research and, remembering the contributors, to his closest followers, his apostles as well. This issue of *Ethnography* is more than a standard journal edition; it is an edited volume, similar to a book, just more readily accessible online and in print (as long as one is aware of

it and finds references to it). It resembles an ultimate homage to Bourdieu's work, original and commentary.

For this reason, it is crucial not to forget the very content of this edition, the articles chosen as representative of his work and work on him: Bourdieu's ethnography in Algeria and Bearn (his transition from philosopher to ethnographer, his experiences in the field, his relationship with Algeria and Kabyle society, and some thoughts on French colonialism) as well as his photography (discussed in one article, though visible across the volume in mostly unexplained photographs). There is, thus, no doubt that these articles inherently link Bourdieu and *Ethnography*, transferring the social capital of his name to the social capital of *Ethnography* itself.

This is not to denounce the value of this volume and the opportunity it offers to read something actually written by Bourdieu rather than something that is written *about* him. Nevertheless, it highlights how even editorial decisions, not only the decisions made by contributors, shape and contribute to the creation and maintenance of the ancestor cult. Besides, let us not forget that Bourdieu, despite his death, is still listed as a member of *Ethnography's* editorial board.

The Magic of the Academy

Concluding our attempt to identify the academy's magic in the making of Bourdieu, we are certain that totems, rituals and magic exist in the modernity of our universities. The Bourdieusian corpus, the books and book-objects dedicated to him, reveal both the production and consumption of "academic magic" through the development and stewardship of Bourdieu's ancestor cult. We even go as far as to claim that Wacquant, Nice, Reed-Danahay, even Verdes-Leroux and all the others involved in the creation and sustenance of Bourdieu, the teacher, every day and mythical hero, the Olympian, can be considered spirit mediums, reviving and reforming Bourdieu on their own terms and through the academy's magic. Bourdieu is a ghost summoned by his inner circle, his apostles, his spirit mediums—whichever term one prefers—who have turned his name and concepts into totems that are applied and reinforced through ritualized writing (the creation of artefacts, books and book-objects), hence feeding academia's ancestor cult, its magic.

Instead of producing a science, which was Bourdieu's ultimate goal, we have come dangerously close to producing a cargo cult; or within Bourdieu's own conceptualizations, we have found a case of *illusio*, which, to use the definition of a spirit medium, is "the fact of being caught up in and by the game, a believing that the game is worth playing and recognizing its stakes. A politician

for example, will demonstrate *illusio* by believing the political field constitutes 'the' only game in town" (Webb et al. 2002:xiii).

What are the implications of this *illusio*, magic and cargo cult for academia? To borrow from Carl Sagan (1996), can we, as academics, escape from this "demon-haunted world"? We suspect we cannot, at least, not completely. What then should we make of the legitimacy and authority of academic writing? As previously mentioned, Latour (1986) provides a point of entry for this project. Whereas Latour laid the foundation, in broad strokes, of the role of inscriptions for the development of the scientific process at large, we have taken a closer look at the operational mechanics of how authority is constructed by grounding academically inflected auto-ethnography in its materiality by looking at the materials used by academics. Latour (1986:3) argues that "the most powerful explanations . . . are both material and mundane, since they are so practical, so modest, so pervasive, so close to the hands and the eyes that they escape attention," and our article has sought out to do exactly that. Importantly, this does not delegitimize the academic process of writing in itself, but it highlights the importance of paying closer attention to Bourdieu's notion of participant objectivation in the anthropological striving for reflexivity.

The academic's field is the field of knowledge production in relation, and response, to the disciplinary and regional ecology (or milieu) particular scholars find themselves in. There is nothing inherently wrong in this, but it is crucial to understand the social life of academic texts and the conditions in which they are produced; because "although *in principle* any interpretation can be opposed to any text and image, *in practice* this is far from being the case; the cost of dissenting increases with each new collection, each new labeling, each new redrawing" (Latour 1986:17). Bourdieu can be understood as an ancestor, with a cult that follows him, because the texts written about and even against Bourdieu continue to elevate his importance for the academic enterprise to such a level that *not* to consider Bourdieu or at least other similarly strong ancestors marks the writer as dissident, with a diminished social capital in face of academic "objectivity" which is "slowly erected inside the laboratory walls by mobilizing more faithful allies" (1986:18); in some ways comparable to the continued discrimination against practicing anthropologists in the context of the American Anthropological Association (Brondo and Bennett 2012).

It is said that ethnography is the sine qua non of anthropological authority. Indeed, such was the case for Bourdieu. However, we have found that this is not

always the case; the sine qua non of anthropological authority in the cases examined above is the mastering of a corpus of work from a socially acceptable ancestor, living or dead. In this case, the ethnographic claim of “being there” is transplanted from a place to a page, and “intensive fieldwork” becomes “intensive reading” (ethnographers have always been required to do both anyway). The distinction that emerges is, on the one hand, ethnography with its ability for falsification and verification as a still emerging science and, on the other hand, social theory that has a falsification and verification not based in scientific comparison but rather in detailed reading of text that is treated like scripture—in other words, a theology. This observation reaffirms the concern voiced by Latour with regard to the social life of inscriptions and the extent to which their predominance has come to result in a prevalence of the 2D in comparison to the 3D world of observations. “Most of what we call ‘abstraction’ is in practice the belief that a written inscription must be believed more than any contrary indications from the senses” (Latour 1986:23).

On the one hand, there is the faulted authority of a researcher having “been there,” and on the other hand, there is the faulted authority of a researcher having faith in his or her reading of a great ancestor. The former is pragmatic and contingent on temporally relevant variables; the latter is dogmatic. The former has impressive and exotic words like “*kula*,” whereas the latter wields impressive language like “structures of structuring structures.” Ultimately, truth, however contingent and limited it may be, lies in the veracity of the individual scholar; authority is something entirely different. What we have done here is to stress the need for a typology of authorities used by academics followed by an axiology, an evaluation, to lay bare the layer of magic scholars may employ to further an argument. In the current vogue of undisciplining the academy, we argue that, if nothing else, authority needs to be even more disciplined.

It begins to become clear ... that objectivation of the subject of objectivation is neither a mere narcissistic entertainment, nor a pure effect of some kind of wholly gratuitous epistemological point of honour, in that it exerts very real scientific effects. This is not only because it can lead one to discover all kinds of “perversions” linked to the position occupied in scientific space, such as those spurious theoretical breaks, more-or-less conspicuously proclaimed, in which some young anthropologists eager to make a name for themselves indulge periodically ... or that kind of fossilization of research and even thought that can ensue from enclosure in a scholarly tradition per-

petuated by the logic of academic reproduction. More profoundly, it enables us also to subject to constant critical vigilance all those “first movements” (as the Stoics put it) of thought through which the unthought associated with an epoch, a society, a given state of a (national) anthropological field smuggle themselves into the work of thought, and against which warnings against ethnocentrism hardly give sufficient protection. [Bourdieu 2003:286]

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Notes

- 1 Most articles were not merely translated into English (an adaptation in itself), but they were “translated and adapted” (among others, see Bourdieu and Bourdieu 2004:601; Bourdieu and Sayad 2004:445).

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