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"Life as a ride in the métro"

Pierre Bourdieu on biography and space

Hélène Lipstadt

The history of a life is one of those notions that has been smuggled like contraband ... from common sense ... into the world of scholars. ... To try to understand a life as a unique and self-sufficient series of successive events with no links other than their association with a "subject" whose constancy is no doubt merely that of a common name, is nearly as absurd as to try to make sense of a ride [trajet] in the métro without taking into account the structure of the entire urban transport system, that is the matrix of objective relations between the different stations.¹

Sentimental Education, that book on which a thousand commentaries have been written, but which has undoubtedly never been truly read, supplied all the tools necessary for its own sociological analysis.²

Architectural spaces address mute injunctions directly to the body and, just as surely as court etiquette, obtain from it the reverence and respect born of distance.... Their very invisibility (to analysts themselves...) undoubtedly make these the most important components of the symbolic order of power and the totally real effects of symbolic power.... One can break with misleading appearances and with the errors inscribed in substantialist thought about place only through a rigorous analysis of the relations between structures of social space and those of physical space.³

These days, space has a seemingly exponentially increasing number of friends, and biography, a similarly growing number of less-than-friendly critics. As the epigraphs for this essay suggest, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, considered by many to be the most important sociologist of the second half of the twentieth century, counts as both. In order to use Bourdieu on space for the telling of lives, need we defy his condemnation of biography? If we write biographies, are his insights on space forbidden to us? There is, I argue, no need to choose, for Bourdieu believed that the
study of lives is the study of space. Lives should be studied as if they were “a ride in the métro,” that is, by taking a “necessary detour through space.” After all, “who would think of evoking a voyage without having an understanding of the landscape in which it happened?”

No single text among his 40-odd books and 400 articles explains how this is to be done. His famous analysis of the Berber house of the Kabyle in Algeria and the gendered embodied spatial orientations of its inhabitants does not provide the solution (Figure 3.1). That essay can be transposed to other social and spatial formations, but, Bourdieu warned, only in very specific conditions and then only with a recognition of its shortcomings. The way to the “necessary detour” is through three texts by Bourdieu: his analysis of Sentimental Education, Gustave Flaubert’s novel about youthful successes and failures in art and love in mid-nineteenth-century Paris (written in 1975 and revised in 1992 as “Prologue, Flaubert analyst of Flaubert,” it is cited as “Prologue”); his 1986 manifesto for ridding historiography and the social sciences of “The Biographical Illusion” (henceforth, “Illusion”) and his 1993 instructions for understanding the “Site Effects” of social suffering and privilege in contemporary society (henceforth, “Site”).

All three are needed. “Illusion” identifies the serious epistemological problems biography poses. It offers a solution that, while spatial, leaves the part played by physical space (under which Bourdieu subsumed architectural space) in it unaddressed. “Prologue” accounts for the conditions that

![Figure 3.1](image-url)

*Figure 3.1 The dual spatial orientation of the Kabyle house (the right angles represent the movement of the female and male subjects’ bodies), from Pierre Bourdieu, The Logic of Practice, 1990 (1980).*
made Flaubert's literary innovation possible by reading real historical conditions out of an account of fictional lives lived in real spaces and historical time, but does not explain how to make the spatial component of the analysis available for other readings. "Site" proposes an analytical framework for the reading of contemporary physical space as the homologue of social space, but leaves it to readers to work out the application from accompanying texts – and none of them refer to historical examples.

Metaphorically riding the métro with Bourdieu and observing him struggle to correct current misunderstanding of sites of social differentiation allows us to find our method for the spatial study of lives. It had been "hiding in plain sight," in his reading of Flaubert's reading of his own condition into his account of an aspiring writer in Paris before and after the Revolution of 1848. Following in Bourdieu's footsteps as he follows Flaubert following in the footsteps of the novel's main characters in a specific historic time and space, we arrive at an understanding of how to account for lives lived in space and spaces in lives. More precisely, we come to grasp that both lives and spaces only make sense if dynamically related to other lives and other spaces, for they are constructed by and in those relations.

The understanding is spatial and thus resembles the one that we architectural historians are trained to possess, except it is now rendered more powerfully so. It also serves as an access road to a potentially liberating new self-understanding, an adjustment of the disposition we bring to our study of lives and spaces, or to use Bourdieu's term, our disciplinary habitus. The changes are as timely as they are welcome. The result is a thorough-going reorientation of architectural history that, I will argue in my conclusion, both realizes the internal disciplinary changes that designers and historians of architecture believe the new paradigm of authorship in architecture demands and the external ones sought by the historians who are urging us to go "beyond the boundaries" of architectural history and inviting members of other disciplines to enter ours.

We must first, however, rid ourselves of common misapprehensions about Bourdieu and space. There is no doubt that Bourdieu conceived society as a space. Some students of space go further, claiming that he held that physical or geographic space plays a primary role in shaping social space and in forming the habitus, the system of dispositions that orients individuals, or that habitus and habitat, space and disposition, are one and the same. Not surprisingly, the habitus has become one of those words in architecture and planning that attracts serious as well as not-so-serious attention. Emphasizing the habitat narrows our understanding of the habitus. Other places, and especially the school, play an enormous role in the unconscious incorporation of the social and the historical during early socialization, the all-important time for the formation of the habitus. Moreover, that formation is an on-going process. Misconstrue the habitus, and one misses the main objective of Bourdieu's sociology and misses out on his
most important achievement. As the philosopher Charles Taylor has explained, the habitus enables Bourdieu to correct the “wrong, intellectualist epistemology [that] has made deep inroads into social science, to ill effect” and thereby to help show philosophy and the social sciences the way out of the “cul-de-sac of monological consciousness.”

There is, however, no mistaking Bourdieu’s position on biography. A note that his literary executor found attached to the manuscript of *Esquisse pour une auto-analyse*, Bourdieu’s *socioanalysis*, his self-reflective social self-analysis of himself, captures his principled opposition to both autobiography and autobiography: “Ceci n’est pas une autobiographie. I find it impossible to write one, and not only because of my ‘dé(nonciation)’ of biography, my announcing that biography was an illusion and denouncing it for being so. I find the genre profoundly antipathetic.” He was referring there to “Illusion.”

There is much to be gained in using Bourdieu on space in the place of standard biography. First, in terms of method, as we saw in the first epigraph, Bourdieu insists that a rupture with the commonsensical in ordinary language and the consensual in expert discourse is the necessary first step for the construction of any object of research. Biography is a notion especially susceptible to be taken for granted by non-expert and expert alike, and the spatial study of lives is a new object of research. Second, the aim of Bourdieu’s sociology was a kind of emancipation. He sought to generate sufficient understanding in individuals of their social position to free them, as much as possible, from the domination, real and symbolic, to which they are subject. As all students of physical space know, space is complicit in domination, ostentatiously so as representation and surveillance, but also so surreptitiously so that Bourdieu believes it escapes notice, as he asserted in the citation from “Site” with which this essay begins. They therefore have a duty to undertake the kind of analysis that uncovers that complicity at work.

The task is not one to be taken on lightly. Most biographies undertaken by students of space are monographs. The monograph is the genre most prized by academic publishers because, we can presume, it is the genre most read by architectural historians. A reconsideration of biography thus means that architectural historians will be reassessing a mainstay of advancement in the discipline. “Illusion” and “Prologue” were designed to instigate this kind of rethinking. They provoked impassioned discussion in the relevant disciplines. “Site” is a part of *Misère du Monde*. When published, it stimulated broad national debate in France about social inequality.

A review of the core concepts of Bourdieu’s sociology that Bourdieu embedded into all three texts will make it easier to keep up with him. The quadriga of fields, illusio, capital, and, of course, the habitus, together with the study of the dynamic interaction that makes them inseparable from one another, drives all of Bourdieu’s sociology. A field is a universe of social relations constituted by the members of the field in accordance with the field’s logic, stakes, capitals and interests.
ical, journalistic, juridical (legal), academic, economic, bureaucratic, and the field of cultural production — and the overarching and intertwining field of power make up society, or social space. The field of power is constituted by relations between individuals from any field who dominate their particular field and who recognize each other as competitors. The field of cultural production is a market of symbolic goods, an up-side-down world where an anti-economic logic of disinterest prevails, one that renders that field more autonomous than all others. The illusion, most frequently defined as a “belief in the game,” is possessed by the player who is invested in — in both the economic and psychoanalytic sense — and committed to the game, even ready to die for stakes whose values are specific to that field and to no other field. Capitals are of several types: economic, composed of assets and attitudes toward them; social, consisting of identities, influence and networks; and cultural, constituted by incorporated skills and talents, concrete cultural possessions, and credentials and degrees. The habitus is an embodied schema of perception and appreciation and of vision and division that permits improvisation and is capable of transformation. It is not destiny. For example, working with and against the field’s highly cherished historic tradition, or its space of possibles, makes invention and subversion realizable for those whose habitus is so well adjusted to the field as to detect possibilities undetected by others in that space. On occasion, a member of a field, who possesses the subversive habitus of a misfit diverges radically from it and launches a symbolic revolution.\(^8\)

“The Biographical illusion”

“Illusion” owed its origin to an actual life story. Consulted by a childhood friend from his native village about a dramatic turn of events in his life, Bourdieu had to recognize that while he possessed a full grasp of the facts of the situation, he was incapable of understanding his friend’s narrative. Much as if he were William Faulkner, the friend was recounting several different overlaid life stories, with the main narrative serving as the vehicle for telling others in a veiled form. “I realized right there … the full extent to which the linear life stories with which ethnographers and sociologists are content are artificial…. I was led to bring back … a whole set of questions that had been repressed concerning biography.”\(^19\)

The spatial metaphors of the ride in the métro and the voyage in a landscape clearly invite us to substitute the dynamic matrix of relations between an individual and a field for biography’s single focus on the subject. What is less clear is the specifically Bourdieusien motivation for this critique. Given that he is hardly the only one to contest “the atomized, individualistic, pre-Freudian unified self of liberal humanism,”\(^20\) and biography as a “master narrative,” we are within our rights in asking what Bourdieu’s particular brief against biography is and how his presentation of its deficiencies validates their substitution by space.
Bourdieu holds that biography represents one of those cases where scientific analysis comes dangerously close to the ordinary discourse that describes life as a “path.” Biography smuggles “biographical illusions” into the analysis. Phrases like “from the beginning,” and “he made his way” bring the presupposition that life is a unified linear progression, while those of “already” and “always” define it as a complete and oriented whole that is, moreover, experienced as a “project,” its purposefulness transparent to the subject. In addition, the chronology of a life story introduces the confusion of succession in time with causality, making the chronological appear as the “chrono-logical.” Teleology and intentionality are unwittingly taken for granted. In addition, by confusing states, or succession in time, with stages, successive moves toward success, biography unthinkingly replicates a subject’s propensity to be what Bourdieu calls the “ideologist of his or her own life,” to offer a selective and flattering narrative of that life. Finally, by replicating the “story line” of the grand narratives of traditional literature, biography compounds these explicitly biographical illusions with a “rhetorical illusion.”

As a result, the biographer becomes a colluding partner in the maintaining of this artifice. The “evil twining” of biographer and subject is the unintended consequence of the former’s unreflecting pursuit of establishing meaning that comes with, in common parlance, “the job description,” or the disciplinary habitus of being a professional of interpretation. In addition, by accepting the life story, biographers join official models of self-presentation in both its blameless form of the official biography and in its disciplinary ones of the official inquiry. They perpetuate everything the state and society invests in making the proper name into the guarantor of the “constancy of the nominal” required by the social order.

What goes missing in biography is as important as what goes wrong, and it is here that time and space are at risk. Time, the variation that comes with each retelling, is effaced by the biographical illusion of the unitary ordered life. Space, especially the relational space of intimacy, is flattened and made unrecognizable. Discourses of the self are normally constructed to be whispered within “protected markets” constituted by familiars and are adjusted to accord with their shared “logic of confidences.” Both temporal dynamism and spatial plasticity are lost when these discourses are translated into a “public presentation” of a life.

Bourdieu’s solution is the field, with its dynamic ever-shifting relational structure of positions and unfixed boundaries, and the trajectory within it. The latter is a “constructed notion, . . . a series of positions successively occupied by the same agent (or the same group) in a space which is constantly evolving and subject to ongoing transformations.” The trajectory turns biographical events into so many “locations” [placements] and “moves” [déplacements] in the field. The meaning of the positions and the moves are defined by their objective relation to all the other positions in the field, the kinds of capitals they require and confer, and the value of those capitals at
that particular moment in the history of the field. The trajectory captures the process of "social ageing," which, while it corresponds to biological aging, is not identical with it, and whose full social significance can only be measured by relating it to the trajectories of those agents within the field who define their chances in relation to the same "space of possibles."23

So we understand a life to be movement within a field whose meaning is established by the value of the positions in the field held and lost, or never attained at all. Their worth is measured in terms of the amounts and types of capitals that are the coin of the realm in that field, and of the value of the field's currency in the ensemble of fields, or social space. As a constructed notion, a trajectory is neither the trip intentionally taken nor the voyage later selectively recalled by the traveler. Rather, it is an analytical construct (the "ride" or trajet in the "metro") established by the sociologically-minded observer who can take into account the "objective," e.g., measurable, "differences" between positions and the internal changes in the field as well as its responses to external pressures that modify the structure and boundaries of the field, and can relate that trajectory to that of others in the field and to the field's history, its successive states.

"Prologue; Flaubert, analyst of Flaubert"

In The Rules of Art (1992), "Prologue" frames Bourdieu's historical analysis of the constitution of the literary field in mid-nineteenth-century France. Using a traditional internal reading of a classic work of French literature, Bourdieu illustrated the structural homologies, or structural mirroring, between the literary field in the early stage of its development that is described in the novel and the one in which Flaubert found himself. He highlighted the novelist's quasi-sociological self-understanding, his imparting to the book those "tools necessary for its own sociological analysis." The novel shows Flaubert possessing, albeit in a masked form, a sociological understanding of the logic that, since his time of and that of his contemporaries, Zola and Manet, orders and energizes fields of literature and art as autonomous fields. This capacity accounts for Flaubert's particular, and particularly important, literary innovation, his symbolic revolution. At the same time, and in a manner that has been overlooked, his analysis of the novel as the story of a set of intersecting lives understood as trajectories within the field of power and within identifiable areas of the city of Paris served as practical demonstration of the conjunction through homology of social and physical space. To make that conjunction clearer, I have mapped a summary of Bourdieu's plot summary onto the map that accompanied his analysis (Figure 3.2).

Frédéric Moreau, the son of a widow from the provinces, comes to Paris to study in 1840, with the vague hope of becoming some kind of artist—a writer, a composer, or a painter. The space of the novel is bounded by and defined against the two social and spatial extremes of Paris, that of the
quartiers populaires of the “working classes” (I, the site of his friend Dussardier’s office, but otherwise outside the action of the novel, as are the areas of revolutionary armed struggle whose western limit is indicated by the dotted line) and that of the Faubourg St.-Antoine of the old aristocracy (III). Frédéric moves between three groups situated between these two social poles: the “student milieu” (II), “new bourgeoisie” (IV), and the “demi-monde” (V). The student milieu consists of a group of young students from across a spectrum of social backgrounds and of dispositions who gravitate around him, namely, Deslauriers, Sénécal, Dussardier, de Cisy, and
Martinon. They inhabit the Latin Quarter, which is also home to the failed artists of the Latin Quarter. The “new bourgeoisie” is itself subdivided into two poles, that of “politics and business,” represented at one end by Monsieur Dambreuse, an aristocrat who has become a banker, his wife and daughter, Cécile, and at the other, that of “art and politics,” around the couple of Monsieur Arnoux, an art merchant and owner of an art magazine, and his wife. Each has a salon to which Frédéric hopes to gain entry. The Dambreuses receive well-placed and well-connected politicians, businessmen, and clerics; the Arnoux, aspiring and successful artists and writers, ranging from the aesthetically conservative to the radical. The “demi-monde” is the ambit of the actress, Rosanette, who is the mistress of Arnoux. Here, the male denizens of the other spaces meet, and meet sexually available women.

Propelled by an unexpected legacy that makes him very wealthy, Frédéric is able to move from group to group and between each of the women at its center, although he does not lose sight of the young provincial girl (Louise Roque) his mother intends him to marry. Against the background of the Revolution of 1848 and its aftermath, he oscillates between alliances with the women who become his lovers, Madame Dambreuse and Rosanette, all the while maintaining a cult of the pure, and thus unattainable, Madame Arnoux. Some of the students succeed; some do not, Frédéric among them. He eventually returns to the provinces, where, after losing his Mademoiselle Roque and exhausting his legacy, he lives as a petit bourgeois. Madame Arnoux reappears many years later, but only just long enough to tell him that she has shared his love. He is left with memories of his sentimental education, which Bourdieu defines as the experience of social ageing, or the process of succeeding and failing in the game of social success.

Like any initiate, Frédéric must make an “inaugural investment” in a field by embracing its belief in itself as a game worth playing, its illusio. However, he invests in neither the option of art offered to him by the Arnoux nor of business proffered by Dambreuse’s circle; nor does he totally reject them by forming a permanent alliance with the demi-monde. Thus, Frédéric’s legacy has given him everything but the will to make the proper use of an inheritance. His trajectory, however, is only one of the possible ways of playing the game of a sentimental education, and his moves are inflected by their interaction with those of his fellow students, as they compete for the favor of social power (dispensed by Monsieur Dambreuse) or sexual favors (offered by Rosanette and her friends). Frédéric’s sentimental education will consist of learning about the mutual exclusiveness of two forms of love and two forms of art, pure and mercenary, or, put more positively, the need for an “interest in disinterestedness” to succeed in the economically upside-down world of art. It is this world, that of the literary field and the field of cultural production, that was in formation at the time that Flaubert wrote his novel and whose history and theorization is the subject of Bourdieu’s book.
Bourdieu describes the social space of the novel as a "field of power," structured by the two salons of the Arnoux and the Dambreuses (Figure 3.3). It is a "true milieu in the Newtonian sense, where social forces...are exercised, and find their phenomenal manifestation in the form of psychological motivations such as love or ambition," and thus a "force-field," as well as a "field of struggles," a game with power at its stake. The trajectories of the group of students in this social space will be conditioned by the relation between the forces at work in the field and the dispositions stemming from their social origins (i.e., the habitus determined by their earliest socialization), which orients but does not determine that trajectory, and the capitals of all sorts that will shape, but not determine, their choices among the possibilities offered to them by the field.

Each of the friends has his own combination of the differing dispositions and capitals needed for success in different arrangements, that, in their ensemble, cover the spectrum of possibilities of social aging, almost as if Flaubert had constructed a controlled experiment of the workings of a field. The narrowness of the social space, which Bourdieu compares to a "crime novel" set in an "isolated manor,"

![Image](image-url)

Figure 3.3 The Field of Power according to *Sentimental Education*, from Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 1996 (1992).
the Right Bank (IV), but will only move there after receiving his legacy (Frédéric move 2). It is a quarter inhabited by the members of the new dominant class (Arnoux 1 and Dambreuse). Rosanette’s Faubourg Monmartre (V), to the north and east of the Chaussée d’Antin, is the quarter of successful artists and writers, a kind of shadow of (IV), but one that is much superior to (II), the domain of failed artists. Faubourg Monmartre is the site of Arnoux’s gallery and the office of his art magazine (Art Industriel) when he is prosperous, and of his home after his bankruptcy (Arnoux move 2). Like social space, the physical space of Paris is hierarchical and structured, and, as in social space, trajectories in it involve moving to and from positions which are desired or disdained in accordance with the logic of the field. In the novel, all upward trajectories move from south to northwest (Frédéric and his friend Martinon, who will marry Cécile), downward ones from north to the south of true “outsiderdom” (Arnoux move 3), or from west to east (Rosanette), and then to the provinces (Frédéric, whose moves take him off the map to the northwest). The worst is not to move at all (Deslauriers).29

Bourdieu's analysis of the correspondence of social space and physical space of the novel does not spell out the role of space in the embodiment that forms the habitus. He hints at the role of space in its incorporation, however, in his analysis of Flaubert’s description of Frédéric’s working-class friend, Deslauriers’ “sense of the social distance which obliged him to keep his distance,” and of Frédéric’s feminine corporal hexis. The hexis30 is the embodied and durable organization of one’s sense of one’s place that organizes feeling, thinking, and moving. It is illustrated by Frédéric’s tendency to join the women in their space of the salons. Bourdieu’s citation of Flaubert’s description of Dambreuse’s reaction to the overthrow of monarchy by the Revolution of 1848 can also be construed as a description of the kind of dramatic conditions that can transform a habitus, which is, after all, not destiny: “The world was coming to an end!... He dismissed three servants, sold his horses, bought a soft hat to wear in the street, and even thought of letting his beard grow.”31 Although Bourdieu does not make this point, it seems that when Dambreuse relinquished his horses (in the plural, which suggests he owned a carriage) and opted for a soft hat (which suggests he gave up a banker’s top hat), he “down-sized” not only his household but also the sizable figure he had previously cut in physical space (“the street”) not only for others, but also for himself. He contemplated modifying the embodied form of his position – he “even thought of letting his beard grow!”

We now understood Frédéric’s life as his voyage, his “ride in the métro,” having taken into account the “entire urban transport system” of the relations between the literal stations of the salons in the field of power (and those, like Rosanette’s outside it), and the objective relations of gender, class, and fractions of class between them. But we have done more, because we have taken in the matrix of objective relations between the spaces occupied by those positions in relation to each other, and in relation to those
that actually organized urban and social space, the east and west of the
Faubourg Saint-Germain and Faubourg Saint-Antoine, of the aristocracy
and the working classes, as well of Paris and the provinces. We are now
ready to move from the example to the theory of which it is an instantia-
tion, and to a method that allows us to see the working of structural mirr-
ing between any physical space and any social space.

"Site effects"

"Site" was one of the essays that provided an interpretive framework for the
some 60 extensive dialogues that make up The Weight of the World, Bour-
dieu and colleagues' 1993 study of the new forms of social suffering among
the working class and underclass and of those who provide them with
social, educational, and legal services. It was clearly meant to be valid for all
spaces. We will show that this is the case by illustrating the propositions he
makes there with spatial situations described in "Prologue," which are
inserted in our text in italics.

Bourdieu's "Site effects" begins with the necessity of effectuating a
rupture with both the commonsensical notions of ordinary discourse about
place and with the experts' view of place as a direct inscription of the social.
For Bourdieu, the notion that everything about a specific place, those
observable conditions "on the ground," explains life as lived there exempli-
fies a substantionalist error. An explanation of a place will never be found in
that specific place, but in the relation between the general structure of all
physical spaces and the structure of society, itself a space. Human beings
occupy a site. If defined absolutely, it is a localization, the point in physical
space where they, like things, are situated. If defined in terms of relations, it
is a position, the rank that they occupy. When the volume, extent, and
surface occupied is taken into account, site is place, something that has
"bulk." Social and physical space resemble each other, inasmuch as both are
defined by the inability of individuals to be more than one thing at a time:
"mutual exteriority" defines physical space, and "mutual exclusion," or
"distinction," defines social space.33

Several interdependent conclusions about physical space follow:
"The structure of social space shows up as spatial oppositions," enabling
inhabited space to function as a "sort of spontaneous symbolization of
social space." Hierarchized societies are expressed in hierarchized spaces,
which, however, can, by dint of the passage of time, come to look for all
that world as if they are facts of nature; they are thus subject to the natural-
ization effect. There are spaces in the salons where women naturally gather.
They are so identifiable feminine that they establish Frédéric's feminine disposi-
tion. The relation between the social and the spatial is not direct, but rather
a "blurred ... translation." Possession of capital endows a power over phys-
ical space which appears in that space in one of the three forms that sites
take. Each site is constituted by a different type of structured spatial rela-
tions between agents and goods and services, private and public, that expresses an agent's position in social space relative to other agents. Localizations are either permanent sites of relations such as the home that indicate one's social existence or the temporary ones, like a place on the podium, that denote one's position of rank relative to others. Positions express the agent's position determined by outright ownership. Place, the amount of space or degree of bulkiness the position consumes, is one of the best manners to express power. Frédéric's different addresses in Paris; Frédéric's seat assigned by protocol at a dinner at the Dambreuses; Frédéric by virtue of the property he owns; and Dambreuse's ostentatiously powerful appearance in the street before the Revolution of 1848.34

In other words, physical space is social space "reified," that is "physically realized or objectified." Reification appears in the distribution of goods and services and of agents with more or less of the ability to appropriate goods and services as a result of capitals possessed and spatial proximity to those goods. These relations of the distribution of agents and goods, and of agents to goods, endow the reified social space with value or deprive it of value. Reified social spaces are fields, socially bounded universes of relations. Chaussée d'Antin objectifies the social positions of the spatially translated aristocrat-turned-bourgeois, Dambreuse, and the new bourgeois, Arnoux. The field of power is reified as the triangular space of the Sentimental Education, a space which is itself defined by its relationship to the two reified spaces of the aristocratic and working-class quarters. Different reified spaces and fields overlap in physical space. Holders of homologous positions in different fields are found in the same spaces, which are at homologously great distances from the addresses of the position holders who, according to the logic of their respective fields, are their opposites. Arnoux's gallery in IV is close to the residences of successful artists and is far from II. In the same way as the distinction that a part of Paris confers on those who live there or who aspire to do so only becomes fully analytically comprehensible by virtue of that relation to its opposite, the dominant position in France held by the capital city can only be understood in relation to the provinces. This site in physical space, which is here the (political) capital, concentrates the poles of all the fields in social space that require for their occupation the largest concentrations of all forms of capital and their holders and does so at the cost of the provinces. To be provincial is to lack both the capital and capital. The Paris of Sentimental Education. Finally, physical space as a relation of reified and objectified social oppositions is reproduced in language and thought, which are constitutive of mental structures, or the categories of perception and evaluation, of vision and division that make up the habitus. Frédéric (or any provincial) speaks of "going up" to Paris, independently of the actual geographical position of his provincial town in relation to the city.35

In the societies described in "Site," physical spaces operate as mediators for that conversion of social structure into mental structure by issuing social structure's imperatives in the form of "mute injunctions and silent calls to
Incorporation takes time – that of continuous or repeated experience of a spatial distance that affirms social distance – and it takes motion in space, the “displacements and body movements” by which those silent commands are incorporated. Because they pass through space to the body, it is an imperceptible process whose very imperceptibility causes these social distinctions to be experienced as natural ones, rather than cultural and historical, and thus arbitrary. For example, the value of social ascent or descent and acceptance or exclusion is assigned according to what is really proximate distance to a high-value site. The effect of monumental architecture is to elicit a “respectful demeanor”; the effect of making spatial distinctions such as Left and Right Bank or an East or West End serve in the place of social distinctions is to instigate an equivalent social reverence – silently, imperceptibly. The double inscription of social space in, first, the structure of physical space, and second, in the mental structures that physical space imperceptibly inculcates makes physical space the site par excellence for the exercise of domination and of symbolic violence, a violence all the more insidious for the being masked by its spatial nature.

Because they are possessed of these qualities, spaces become stakes, and, as stakes, they are the object of struggles, both individual and collective. The sites and places of reified social space earn profits, according to the nature of the site as localization, position or as a bulky place. Profits of localization take the form of the benefit of direct proximity to valuable persons or goods, such as valued establishments, public and private; profits of position include that of the distinction that comes with possessing a distinctive property; and profits of occupation accrue to those sites whose bulk create a distance from unwanted intrusion either through owned private space, or through a public space possessed by one’s gaze. Proximity in physical space assures that proximity in social space will be effective and efficient when it generates the opportunities to maximize social capital through encounters of the kind that naturally occur when one is in the right place at all the right times. Spatial mobility is the form of the individual struggle for space; “moving up,” as is well known, allows but also requires moving from one neighborhood to another. For an individual to fully appropriate such a space, social and cultural capitals as well as the appropriate habitus are required. Without that habitus, a habitat is not fully inhabited. That said, “if the habitat shapes the habitus, the habitus also shapes the habitat, through the more or less adequate social usages that it tends to make of it.” Absent the ability to meet the conditions tacitly laid down by space for its adequate use, one is at risk of being “out of place” and deprived of the benefits of the “club effect” that comes from having long been in a place that is exclusive and of the symbolic consecration that comes from partaking of the accumulation of many agents’ capitals in one place.
Every effect present in the exclusive neighborhood is also present in the “problem suburbs,” but with, so to speak, the signs reversed. Proximity means distance from valued resources; homogeneity degrades rather than maximizes (or maximizes degradation); proximity and inhabitation produce stigmatization rather than consecration. As the space degrades the individuals, the individuals degrade the place, symbolically and physically. Institutions such as the school that magnify dispossession by offering something other than the excommunication that is the common state of the inhabitants are among the places degraded. As neighborhoods such as these are brought into being through the political construction of space—as the result of credit policy, housing policy, and everything that assigns value to land, housing, and social services—the only possible form of struggle is collective, or for the rare individuals who can afford it, flight.

“Site’s” compatibility with “Prologue,” which is a rewriting of an article of 1975, dispels the (mistaken) impression that the interest in space Bourdieu displayed in the essay on the Kabyle house was not sustained and that space for Bourdieu was only a heuristic and a metaphor. The significance of that recognition lies not in the calming effect it will ideally have on this question, a matter of interest to specialists, but in the changes that it can generate in the practices of students of lives and of space in general, and then for students of architectural space, in particular.

**Understanding**

Understanding requires embracing Bourdieu’s solutions to the problems posed by biography and his propositions about space. To return to Bourdieu’s original metaphors of the landscape and the voyage and the “necessary detour,” for students of lives to deploy the concepts of *localizations, positions and places* in physical space and *spatial mobility* without the corresponding *social space and trajectory* is tantamount to describing the “landscape” without the “voyage” that traversed it. When students of social space do the reverse, that is, describe the trajectory through social space without its homology in physical space, they deprive themselves of the full benefit of taking a “detour” through a landscape that is not merely metaphorically spatial.

As for students of architecture, the conditions for entry into this new and powerful understanding are demanding, for they require the same degree of self-reflection that Bourdieu demanded from himself. It begins with a break with one’s discipline’s “unthought thought.” Once we have recognized that splitting biography from space had the effect of keeping architectural history from realizing its natural affinity with the study of social space through the examination of its homologue, physical space, we can look at other aspects of our practice. Let us consider a few of the additional ruptures we will need and the benefits that they offer.

Grappling with the falsely logical “chrono-logical” is a way of confronting the mental constructions that make up the disciplinary habitus of
students of architectural space. The establishment of temporal continuity of the logic of the generation of the commission of the design and reconstructing the building campaign is often an architectural historian's primary task. But, as a notion that takes progression for granted, it has every chance of being yet another of those cases in which expert categories reprise the unthought categories of ordinary discourse. How much richer would such analyses be if temporal continuity were to be also conceived as a spatial relation, as a “move forward” that is always and simultaneously a “move against” opposing and designs, designers and, especially, with and against the beckoning and constraining alternatives of the space of possibles.

These are practical changes, but they signal a fundamental change in the logic of that practice. We will have recognized that our disciplinary version of biography, the monograph, has kept our disciplinary habitus parked in the “cul-de-sac of monological consciousness” since, well, Vasari’s invention of the “life of the artist.” But, as Bourdieu told a conference of many, many hundreds of students of space come to discuss the habitus, architecture may be a “very intellectual or intellectualist art,” but that habitus does not have to be our destiny.40

These practical changes would enable us to realize the promise that Bourdieu held out for any discipline courageous enough to incorporate a sociological dimension. They would help us discover, as Bourdieu did from his study of Baudelaire and Manet, that “that sociology (or social history) that is always accused of being “reductive” and of destroying the creative originality of the writer or artist is in fact capable of doing justice to the singularity of ... great upheavals.”41 How much better would we understand our “misfits,” the against-all-odds-but-oh-so-typical trajectories from the provinces to the Veneto or Paris or Berlin that turned a mason into a Palladio, a Jeanneret into a Le Corbusier, a Mies into Mies van der Rohe. The times are propitious for such an endeavor. More and more, architectural historians are grappling with the problematic nature of architectural authorship and architects are celebrating rather than denying architecture’s inherently collaborative nature.42 More than lip service is being paid to cross disciplinarity.43

Approaching a life as a constructed trajectory in a field that demands construction and finds its homologues in physical space should have a natural appeal for historians of architecture and urban form, who, after all, are quite at home with the measuring of objective distances and the mapping of urban networks, transport or other. Predisposed to think spatially, students of space and lives will find the detour through Bourdieu’s spaces has helped them reach their destination of a specifically spatial way of accounting for lives, and to see the disciplinary promise it contains. The exercise has been spatial, but also temporal. We have accompanied Bourdieu on his “ride” through time, from 1848 to the present, and space, from the historical Paris of the field of power to the troubled suburbs of the disempowered, and through knowledge formations, from the empirical to the
FAITES VOUS MEME VOTRE EDUCATION SENTIMENTALE

A partir du schéma de la page 72. et sur la base des homologies structurales dégagées par l’analyse, vous pouvez imaginer qui seraient aujourd’hui les personnage principaux de ‘l’Éducation sentimentale’ (sans oublier les émeutes de mai 1968).

Exemple : ARNOUX est (a) directeur d’un hebdomadaire de gauche
(b) directeur d’une galerie d’avant-garde
(c) directeur d’une maison d’édition d’avant-garde
(d) directeur d’une agence de publicité
etc.

Figure 3.4 A board game to “Make your own Sentimental Education,” from Pierre Bourdieu, “L’invention de la vie de l’artiste,” 1975.

theoretical, without ever falling back into a polarization of one against the other. We have understood national, regional, and urban spaces as the homologue of social space, and neighborhoods and rooms as gendered elements of some of those spaces.

Much has been done, but much also remains to be done. Architecture is notably missing, missing from the analysis, just as architects are, with one exception, missing from Sentimental Education. Bourdieu’s exteriors and interiors are spatial without ever being architectural. In this omission, there lies an opportunity for architectural historians to enrich the spatiality of Bourdieu’s method of analysis, even as it empowers their own. The effort that Bourdieu never undertook would, I am sure, be welcome. In 1975, Bourdieu designed a board game that allowed readers to “Make Your Own Sentimental Education.” Using his method of “structural homologies,” they were invited to transpose the field of power from the Paris of the epoch of the revolution of February 1848 (Figure 3.4) to that of the student revolt of May 1968.

Students of space, it’s our move.
Notes


8 Pierre Bourdieu, “The genesis of the concepts of the habitus and the field,” Sociocriticism 2 (May–June 1985): 15. All technical terms drawn from Bourdieu’s sociology are italicized on first usage and are defined at that time. Unless otherwise noted, Bourdieu is the author of the cited text and italics used for emphasis are his.


13 It is only among groups such as the Kabyle, in which education is not “institutionalized” and “the whole group” exerts “pedagogic action,” that “the whole system of objects” informs bodily hexis. Even among the Kabyle, “objects, the house and the village” work alongside other products and practices to inculcate the logic of practice, Pierre Bourdieu, Logik, 73-74.


17 80,000 copies were sold and dialogues were performed as plays, Franck Pouppeau and Thierry Discepolo, eds. and comps., “Désenchantement du politique et Realpolitik de la raison,” in Interventions, 1961-2001: Science Sociale & Action Politique, by Pierre Bourdieu (Marseille: Agone for Contre-feux, 2002), 231.


19 Bourdieu and Wacquant, An Invitation, 207.


22 “L’illusion biographique,” 70-71.

23 “L’illusion biographique,” 71-72.

24 Rules, 40-43.

25 Rules, 10.


27 Rules, 9-10.

28 Rules, 14.

29 Rules, 40-43.

30 Cf. Logik, 69.

31 Rules, 16, 12, 31.

32 There were 69 dialogues in the original French edition, and 54 in the English language one, of which two were with residents of the inner city “‘ghettos’” of Chicago and New York.


34 “Site,” 124.


36 “Site,” 126.
43 For example, the September 2005 conference sponsored by the Society of Architectural Historians (United States) and the Institut national de l’histoire de l’art (France), “Changing Boundaries: Architectural History in Transition,” and the special issues of the Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, cited in n. 8.
44 Rules, 7.
45 “L’Invention,” 93. Make your own Sentimental Education. To play the game, overlay the diagram of the Field of Power (Figure 3.3), and, on the basis of the structural homologies established by the analysis in the text, imagine who the principal characters of the Sentimental Education would be today (without forgetting the effects of the student revolution of May 1968). For example: M. Arnoux is (a) an editor of a leftist weekly magazine; (b) a director of an avant-garde art gallery; (c) an editor-in-chief of an avant-garde publishing house; (d) a CEO of an advertising agency.