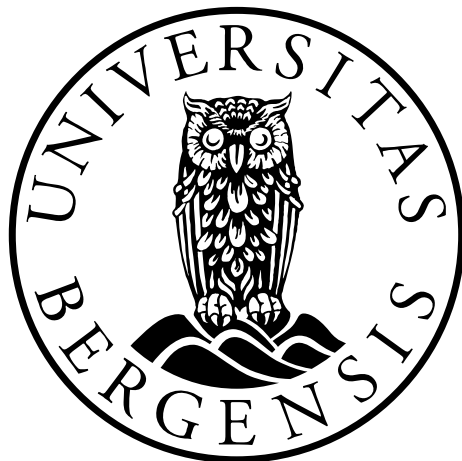


CRAFTING DISTINCTIONS

*Reinventing Work, Desire and Design
Among the Petty Bourgeoisie of Paris*



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Chapter 1:

Introduction

According to the *New York Times* (Lobrano, 2011), Parisian newspapers are obsessed with a group of people called *Les Bobos*. The first time I heard about them was in the spring of 2011. While studying ethnology as an exchange student in Paris, the word “Bobo” was constantly popping up in conversations with my classmates. “That restaurant is so Bobo”, people would say, or “This is a very Bobo neighborhood”. I got the notion that whenever something was labeled “Bobo”, it had a sense of coolness to it. A certain form of symbolic capital was being attached by the young to a new cultural movement that was remaking places, people and forms of consumption.

The Bobos

The word “bobo” was first coined by the American columnist David Brooks (2000) in his book *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There*, and is a contraction of the words “bourgeois” and “bohemian”. For some, the meanings of these two words are so inherently different that their combination seems intuitively paradoxical. The word “bohemian” is often used to describe “a person, as an artist or writer, who lives and acts free of regard for conventional rules and practices” (dictionary.com, 2015). “Bourgeois” on the other hand, is frequently used to describe a person “whose political, economic, and social opinions are believed to be determined mainly by a concern for property values and conventional respectability” (dictionary.com, 2015). However, the French sociologist Bernard Lahire (Polloni, 2010) has argued that bohemians were frequently the children of the bourgeoisie, and that to pursue a “free” unencumbered artistic lifestyle required for a certain amount of economic independence. The noted anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu has spent a lifetime exploring class relations, and in particular this inter-relationship between economic capital and cultural capital, money and formality among the Bourgeoisie.

Incorporating aspects of bourgeois and bohemian cultures, the Bobos have been described by Brooks (2000) as a “new upper class”. They seem to participate in elite culture through education, for many have college degrees and university graduate and post-graduate

qualifications. Others gain their economic rewards and intellectual capital from new job skills in the IT industry and information industries. Brooks argues that: “Many of the members of the educated elite didn’t go out hungry for money. But money found them” (ibid, pp. 38). These are people who did not take up education for the sake of money: “They are affluent yet opposed to materialism”, and “are by instinct antiestablishmentarian yet somehow sense they have become a new establishment” (ibid. pp. 41). The Bobos are much more idealistically driven and seek to use their knowledge and limited wealth to achieve ethical and lifestyle goals that are often opposed to viewing the pursuit of wealth as a goal in itself. Brooks characterizes them as a class combining the idealism of the 1960s with the individuality and egocentricity of the 1980s.

“It was now impossible to tell an espresso-sipping artist from a cappuccino-gulping banker. And this wasn't just a matter of fashion accessories. [...] The intangible world of information merges with the material world of money, and new phrases that combine the two, such as "intellectual capital" and "the culture industry," come into vogue. So the people who thrive in this period are the ones who can turn ideas and emotions into products. These are highly educated folk who have one foot in the bohemian world of creativity and another foot in the bourgeois realm of ambition and worldly success. The members of the new information age elite are bourgeois bohemians. Or, to take the first two letters of each word, they are Bobos.” (Brooks, 2000 pp. 10-11)

Brooks was originally discussing a phenomenon in his own society, the United States of America. But the term has since travelled across the Atlantic and gained a foothold in France among other places. France is a country known for both bohemian and bourgeois culture. The Parisian Bobos are children of the latter, from whom they seek to distinguish themselves. Through their style and practices of consumption, the Bobos also seek to differentiate themselves from the larger mainstream culture and for this reason Bobos can be studied as a kind of subculture. In particular, they transform their economic security and resources into an aesthetic project, where the self becomes a work of art to be staged and performed. The Boulevards of Paris have throughout the centuries functioned as promenades and, as Mumford (2015) points out, the city has often acted as a performative space. Focusing on Paris, Savitsky (2012) argues that streets in the cool areas in one way are often transformed into the catwalks of a fashion show. Paris with its assemblage of people provides a diversity of ready-made audiences that allows the city to become a space of drama and theatre for performing identities, culture and relationships.

For some, the word “bobo” has a negative meaning. It is used in political debates in a derogatory way to describe someone that is leftist but is not actually proletarian. They do not often actively participate in the international left wing movement, even though they can be pro-immigration and anti-globalization (Watrin & Legrand, 2014). The Bobos have been accused of being disconnected from the French people, for being naïve and too politically correct in seeking green or environmental credentials and being tolerant of other marginal groups and cultures. Their progressive ideals are said to be utopian. Their liberal values are accused of ruining French society. Their support for gay rights is said by conservatives to contribute to the destruction of the traditional French family. Also, their fascination for everything ethnic and exotic has been criticized as also contributing to the decay of French national identity. During a political debate in 2012, former president Nicolas Sarkozy told an opponent to shut up, claiming that he himself was addressing everybody, while the opponent only cared about the Bobos (ibid.).

Boboism is not restricted to America and France. This new “creative class” is found all over the world, and the subcultural form that I studied in Paris, can be found in different local versions all over the western world. Some claim that this culture is a French variety of the broader hipster movement. The two groups definitely share some similar traits, but they are far from identical. Hipsters are more concerned with trends and styles, while the Bobos emphasize ethics, values and class distinctions. The hipsters represent a section of the youth mass culture, while the Bobos denote a chic urban lifestyle. In fact, hipsters and Bobos both exist in Paris, and it is possible for a Bobo to also be a hipster.

Symbolic Practices

The aim of this thesis is not to accurately map out the Bobos as a subculture. I rather seek to unearth this group’s practices of aestheticization and commodification as part of their specific ethical values. The Bobos I studied in Paris are, in the words of Brooks (2000 pp. 10), turning “ideas and emotions into products”. In this thesis I examine how they do so not randomly, but by paying attention to themes like ‘exoticism’, ‘authenticity’, ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘craftsmanship’. These themes are being marketed and disseminated as commodities available for commercial exploitation. The scale of this marketing, which is often small, is also part of a revaluing of craft skills and labor. Moreover, to the extent that the exotic, the authentic, marginal and the cosmopolitan are marketed, manufactured and sold, it is often with a touch of irony or parody. This is to say that these images of otherness

and alterity are sought out to often be put in quotation marks, and are partly politicized caricatures of tourism and voyeurism. I will look at the creative, symbolic and cultural practices of production and consumption among this diffuse group. Here my inspiration is Hebdige's (1988) work on style in subcultures and how the self becomes a work of art, and how this art piece is continuously staged and performed in an everyday theatre. This theatre, as we shall see with respect to Bobos, is also a theatre of production, or more accurately of skilled labor, as well as a theatre of consumption. For the Bobos are not just revisiting the consumer culture and restylizing it, they are also revisiting every sites of production to revalorize the arts of labor.

I will look at the consumption and production of specialty coffee and gourmet street food, and the appropriation of cultural images that can often be embedded in these practices. I hope to reveal a new way of being a person, a modern creative subject, for creativity is celebrated in this movement that marks itself out in opposition to mass culture. I will be documenting and analyzing new aesthetic strategies and unpack the logic and practices of their cultivation. Within Bobo practices of consumption and production, there is a new ethics and art for governing life that is not just being proclaimed as words and thoughts, but as new everyday practices of work, pleasure and appreciation. There is a search for new ways of being an authentic self in these creative practices that often revalues marginality, alterity and lowliness. These are embraced to mark out realms of freedom and resistance to the dominant culture and its way of organizing work, consumption, pleasures and perception of tastes. The attentiveness to alterity also produces and requires attentiveness to the dominant culture. What is more, there is an attentiveness to the way the dominant mass culture can appropriate marginal-oppositional symbols and practices, leading to the need to reinvent the symbols and practices to remark difference.

This thesis will look at rituals of transgression and celebrations of the exotic (the latter often including marginality and lowliness). To the Bobos, the exotic is not just meaningless exotica, but a step in the development of new forms of cosmopolitanism, and part of a process of interrogating western society's truths and identity. The exotic, Kapferer (2013, pp. 815) claims, has "defined populations subject to imperialism and to colonial authority, and these were primarily the subjects of anthropological work". This is partly why anthropology has been criticized for its exoticism. My thesis is a semiotic attempt at reading the significance of the exotic in everyday life, how Parisian Bobos stage and craft the exotic

within everyday practices of consumption and production that seek to fashion a new social world, subjects and subjectivities.

Fieldwork, Method and Informants

I conducted my fieldwork in spring 2014, and the reasons for choosing Paris as the setting are many. First and foremost, Paris has a large Bobo population, and the city is often regarded as their capital. This category is both widely known and controversial in Paris, which triggered my interest and was decisive in my choice of a location for fieldwork. The usage of the term in everyday speech shows that the category is not just a theoretical abstraction, but also a living concept, a label that people apply but also one that is embraced. The Bobos are studied in their practices of work, consumption, style and pleasure and how this is closely linked to class. I could have studied popular youth forms of consumption in Bergen or Copenhagen; where many people are also using taste and style as an identity marker. However, I believe the social stratification to be more evident in France, where the tensions between the classes have played an important part in the country's history. Yet, I also believe that many of the transformations in identity and culture that I studied in Paris are occurring in other large western cities like New York, Berlin, Melbourne and London. In these cities one finds again new aesthetic practices linked to a new class fraction of the bourgeoisie that seeks a new art for governing everyday life: its tastes, pleasures, work regimes, patterns of consumption and forms of production. A new moral order for animals, humans and the world is being envisaged in a new aesthetics of care that seeks to improve the everyday quality of life by focusing on making it durable, sustainable, beautiful and moral.

When I spent a semester as an exchange student in Paris, I started unsystematically observing Bobos in their natural habitat. I had a good sense of where I could find potential informants. The fact that I have studied French and lived in France before opened up possibilities for better interaction with informants. It also provided access to French books, articles and the mass media.

When I was planning my fieldwork, I first considered recreating Bourdieu's famous taste maps, and to undertake an intricate survey of what informants would consider a meaningful or beautiful photograph, meal, film or novel. Eventually, I settled on a more anthropological, qualitative approach, where participant observation and my ethnography would dictate what

the project would be. I was able to participate in many of the cultural, symbolic and everyday practices of the Bobos. My observations were supplemented with some informal interviews. The fact that I have also worked ethnographically in many of the small retail food businesses that many Bobos initiate, work in or frequent, helped me to have a rapport with them. We shared similar knowledge, for I also had a detailed knowledge of cooking processes, coffee making, stock purchase, retail management, labor regimes, and serving customers.

When I arrived in Paris, I rented an apartment in one of northeastern neighborhoods, or *arrondissement*. Especially the hip area around the Canal St. Martin is a popular Bobo center. The locations for my fieldwork were wherever I found culture being produced and consumed by young people of *the new petty bourgeoisie*. The sites that made up my field included coffee shops, nightclubs, restaurants as well as concept stores, concert venues and art exhibitions. The geographical proximity to my subjects of study made it possible to stay updated on different trends and new, Bobo-friendly cafés, bars, restaurants and residential developments. I focused on a limited number of neighborhoods, rather than one specific location. My study also led me to venture outside of the old city walls as well. Montreuil, a suburb east of Paris, is popular among the Bobo families who are in need of more space. Montreuil is also at an earlier stage of a gentrification process compared to the area around Canal Saint Martin. The social geography has changed since Bourdieu's study on bourgeois taste. Bourdieu's Paris in the 1970 was divided in two. On the right side of the river Seine was where you could find avant-garde and haute couture culture. The right bank quarter of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, for instance, was where philosophers like Jean Paul Sartre and Simone Beauvoir used to spend long days at cafés. This was a quarter closely connected to other forms of cultural creativity, such as jazz music and literature. According to Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot (2013), this area is today inhabited by neo-liberal doctrines, and creativity has given way to luxury, whereas the creative class has moved further north.

Before I started my fieldwork, I imagined that getting in touch with informants was going to be difficult. There exist some well-established, stereotypical images of the Bobos as a proud and aloof ensemble of young people. Ultimately it turned out to be a quite satisfying experience. I got in touch with informants in various ways; some I approached out in the urban space, where they worked as baristas, sommeliers, chefs or small shopkeepers. The age of my informants range from about 25-35, and the group's ethnic composition is quite

homogenous, as almost all of them are white. These individuals had private collective dinners and gatherings that I attended a couple of times, and by way of *snowballing* I got introduced to even more people. I also already had a little group of acquaintances established in Paris from previous visits, and their network provided me with other informants.

There were some challenges associated with the informants' high level of education. Almost everybody knew of the theoretic terms and frameworks that I was going to use. Some had a deep knowledge of the theories of Bourdieu, and mentioned his various forms of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) in their everyday conversation and analysis of the world. The informants were aware of their own position in the social field, often referencing their bourgeois background. As a consequence, I had one less thing to decipher, and a part of my job as an "unearther" of social interaction was reduced as people sought to do part of my work for me.

Theoretical Framework

Without grounding theory in solid ethnography, the theory will fly away by the slightest breath of wind. I will use, but also interrogate, Bourdieu's theories on class distinctions in my thesis. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu (2010) offers an extensive look at the different taste preferences of the French middleclass compared to other classes and their tastes and perceptions.

Bourdieu explains how agents, by means of aesthetic choices, are positioning and grouping themselves within the social field. This is often a form of cultural market place, where players are predisposed and set to accumulate different forms of capital - economic, cultural, social and symbolic. The existing level of capital and habitus (from family and school) determines an agent's place in the social field and is often consolidated and augmented by the social field. However, this is not a given position, Bourdieu also looks at this social field as a field of contestation, rivalries and resistance; and it is here that Bobos as a section of the petty bourgeoisie distinguish themselves from those above and below.

Aesthetic choices and tastes; what Bourdieu calls distinctions, is constantly being used by groups to distance themselves from each other in the social field. Taste in fashion, interior design, literature, music, movies, food among other things become class markers, and thus instruments of cultural hegemony and resistance. In many cases, distinctions are ways for

separating highbrow from lowbrow aesthetics, but interestingly Bourdieu provides empirical evidence that some parts of the petty bourgeoisie are also trying to differentiate themselves from the larger culture to which they belong and also from the bourgeoisie, which is often contemptuous of them. As strategies of distinction by the petty bourgeoisie, Bourdieu mentions practices that are often individualized such as vegetarianism and yoga. Both confer form of moral authority through redefining and exploring a new form of cultural capital that are juxtaposed to the moral-aesthetic order of both the upper and lower classes.

One of Bourdieu's key points is that genuine good taste does not exist: a society's legitimate taste is often merely the taste of the ruling class, part of its cultural hegemony. Taste is socially constructed, it is an experience mediated by social relations and culture. Good tastes are claimed by certain social groups and contested by others. In particular, taste is often a form of cultural capital that is inscribed in the senses; that is in ways of seeing, tasting, smelling, and hearing. All of these senses are ennobled by good taste amongst the upper classes, whose status becomes an extension of noble taste, and is indeed naturalized by it. In particular, Bourdieu takes and develops further Marcel Mauss' concept of *habitus*, a shared unconscious and bodily, tacit form of knowledge that can be used to display a subject's position in a social-symbolic hierarchy. Taste is an important part of a person's habitus and is a way of internalizing a social structure and its positions into what seem like perceptual preferences. Taste is the merging of symbolic-conceptual understandings and social positions with perceptual structures and this creates aesthetic dispositions, which are internalized from an early age¹. These habits of taste, thinking and perception, serve as one of several cultural mechanisms for the reproduction of stratifications between the classes. Bourdieu claims that the highbrow taste is perceived as purer than the lowbrow, and those with the right amount of cultural capital and the right habitus create an illusion of good taste as just coming from the body, from an ennobled body and its refined senses. In doing so this cultural knowledge and its social distinctions are naturalized; class distinctions are regrounded in a refined sense of natural judgments.

¹ It can be argued that art is the merging of perception with conception. Langer (1953, pp. 59) argues that "Art is expressive through and through — every line, every sound, every gesture; and therefore it is a hundred per cent symbolic. It is not sensuously pleasing and also symbolic; the sensuous quality is in the service of its vital import."

Bourdieu makes a distinction between those with economic capital and those with cultural capital, noting that they are not always aligned and mutually supportive of each other. Sometimes groups can be low in economic capital yet claim higher forms of cultural capital. The cultural capital is often inscribed within the nobility of certain bodies, which claim greater powers of discernment, appreciation and subtlety in the realm not of course senses but of a civilized informed sensuality. An agent from a low class may lack the terminology to have a satisfying conversation about wine tasting with a wine expert, who possesses subtle distinctions of smell, taste and texture that are often informed with a knowledge of wine growing regions, vine varieties, soil types, climate and annual variations in weather. The bourgeoisie demonstrates that to be able to appreciate certain symbolic goods, an individual needs certain sensuous predispositions that are informed by knowledge and experience, which can be costly (the wines, books, courses and visits to specialized wineries). Bourdieu argues that highbrow taste often has more focus on aesthetics, or on forms, whilst the lowbrow taste is more concerned with what functions objects have. It is true to say that class struggles and aspirations also take the form of the lower class seeking to move into the informed palates of the bourgeoisie, and thus also the bourgeoisie's learning and boasting of good knowledge, for example of wines. Though these sections of the lower class might not be able to afford the costly wines and experiences of the bourgeoisie, they also celebrate quality within an affordable range. It is in this matter that they are similar to Bobos.

Bourdieu analyses the differences in the way an individual from the dominant fraction of the bourgeoisie and an individual from the dominated fraction consume cultural goods. The dominated fraction goes to the theatre or watch a movie in the cinema in such a frequency and regularity that it takes "away any 'extra-ordinary' quality" (Bourdieu, 2010, pp. 267). There is a desire for maximum experience for minimum economic cost. This leads them to "neglect" or not fully take up all the potential symbolic profit of the event except the experiential one given directly from the appropriation of the work itself, and from their discourse about it. As one person said: "You go to the theatre to see the play, not to show off your wardrobe" (ibid.). Part of the value for money also comes from the expectation of some symbolic profit from their discourse about the experience of the film or play, for example over a drink with friends. However, for the haute bourgeoisie an activity like theatre-going is "an occasion for conspicuous spending" (ibid.), to dress up in lavish garments, acquire tickets to the most exclusive seats in the most expensive theaters, "choosing a theater is like choosing the right shop, marked with all the signs of quality" (ibid.). The dominant fractions

often combine a night out at the theater with a subsequent restaurant visit, perhaps cocktails previously or in the break.

Bourdieu provides analytical tools and a class perspective for analyzing the symbolic practices of the Bobos of Paris. Yet, there are some opponents of Bourdieu's toolbox. In *Political Philosophy*, Robert Grant (2006, pp. 203) has reservations about reducing culture to an economic analysis and argues that

“There is something grotesque in the idea that the prior knowledge and understanding with which one approaches a work of art are a kind of ‘capital’, that experiencing it is a kind of ‘consumption’, that experiencing it and then discussing it afterwards amounts to a ‘symbolic profit’ on the said cultural ‘capital’ (also on the real economic cost), and that appreciating it is a form of ‘symbolic appropriation’.

In terms of applying Bourdieu's analysis to Bobos, what should be noted is that economic capital is comfortable but not very high. However, their claims to cultural capital are high in terms of education and the cultural practices they take up. It is necessary to see the bourgeoisie not as a unified group but as divided into class fractions, for example the petty bourgeoisie and the haute bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie is the subordinated part, and this is where you will find among others the teachers and small shopkeepers. Bourdieu (2010) makes numerous references to “the new petite bourgeoisie”, which is a part of the bourgeoisie, what he calls “the dominated fraction of the dominant class”. It is within this social context of changing class relations that my informants are located.

Another scholar who has influenced my perspective is Dick Hebdige and his book *Subculture: the Meaning of Style* (1988), which analyzes youth sub-culture in post-war Britain. His perspective on symbolic forms of resistance and appropriation within a field of class contestations is an important piece of theory I have borrowed from him. He argues that a subculture never exists in and of itself but always in relationship to other subcultures, from which they are borrowing, quoting and resisting. In his perspective, a subculture's identity emerges through its distinctive rituals of consumption that are reworking culture, identity and forms of belonging.

The Structure of the Thesis

The next chapter will feature the ethnographic data so as to outline two sites of consumption from my fieldwork. This will allow a major part of the descriptive ethnography to be established early on, so as to inform my discussion and analysis of other ethnography.

In chapter three I will document and analyze the Bobos and their relationship to practices of cultural creativity. I treat creativity not as a spontaneous event, a unique isolated phenomena but as part of symbolic practice that involve partly a critique of the mass industrialized production of culture but also of people and subjectivities. I look at aestheticized forms of craftsmanship, what I call the spectacle of production, for it is not only consumption that is being used by Bobos to recraft themselves and their world. They embrace a love for skilled labor. *The Craftsman* (2008) by Richard Sennett is a work I will be using in this chapter.

Chapter four deals with exoticism. I analyze how exoticism is collected and consumed, and on the construction of otherness as a cultural practice. I will provide an ethnographic account of an experience at an African themed nightclub, inspired by the colonial era, and compare it to other forms of exoticism used by Bobos that can embrace, for example, Scandinavian minimalism and lower working class foods. Even mainstream culture can be quoted as a spectacle that is unaware of its own exoticism. Here I will draw partly on the theoretical concept of imaginative geographies by Edward Said (2003).

The consumption of gastronomic goods will be the focus in chapter five. I outline recent developments in haute cuisine discourse, where Bobos are using food as a means of *épater la bourgeoisie* (to shock the bourgeoisie). Here I analyze their new cuisine in light of Richard Peterson's concept of *cultural omnivorousness* and the emergence of new cosmopolitanism. My aim is to do ethnography of class that focuses not just on wealth but also on the phenomenological-symbolic character of class practices as ways of working on the self and society. I do not wish to romanticize the practices of Bobos as simply resistant practices, even though they can have that quality. I also explore how Bobos can align themselves with various parts of the dominant social order, for example enterprise, industrial quality goods and mass manufactured durable commodities such as plywood. Here there is also a desire to remake both production and consumption as human enterprises, as parts of the arts of human beings. It is this re-ennobling of the everyday - work, eating, drinking, cooking, clothes – that reworks the minutia of existence into an ethical art that redefines

beauty as requiring attention to sustainability, durability, quality, environment, work, and identity.

Chapter 2:

Sites of Consumption

In this chapter, I will present two empirical cases from my fieldwork in Paris. I will introduce two different sites of consumption. The first is a coffee shop, which I will use to illustrate the new wave of artisanal cafés that are emerging not just in Paris but also globally throughout many western societies and even in the developing Third World. I do not claim to analyze those areas but note that new kinds of artisanal cafes have emerged where something more than just coffee is produced and consumed. I will use my example to explore how the space is being used in new ways, and that what is being consumed are new ways of locating identity, experience and relationships. In my second example, I will present ethnography on restaurants, and how this data indicates changes in the Parisian culinary scene. My aim is to unearth the complex social and cultural nature of various forms of consumption and what is indicated by changes in consumption patterns, in the items being consumed but also in the way they are being consumed. Eating and drinking is not just a way of consuming calories, or even legal drugs like caffeine but also bound up with etiquettes of the self, that can be described as ways of internalizing objectifying tastes and distinctions.

The Coffee Shop

It is Tuesday afternoon and I want a cup of coffee. In the heavily gentrified tenth arrondissement I find a coffee shop that has a conspicuous light-navy façade. It is somewhat small, counting approximately 20 square meters. Once entering the shop, I find the tables on the right hand side and the bar to the left. There is a state of the art, handcrafted espresso machine from the Italian company la Marzocco, and high above it there are three long shelves filled with bags of specialty coffee. The shelves are situated so high up that the staff needs a decorative ladder to reach the treasured merchandise. All of which adds to the ambience that this no ordinary coffee, but one that requires some difficulty to acquire and process. On the top shelf I notice they are displaying other coffee related things that are up for sale. There are electrical and manual coffee grinders, as well as coffee brewing equipment like the Chemex, Aeropress and Kalita. In addition there are and numerous coffee filters in different types and sizes. All of this equipment allows for the experience of making

and drinking great coffee to be democratized. Patrons can move away from overly processed and refined coffee, so that they can hold and manipulate its freshness. There is something being promised here but there is also a remaking of the consumer into at least a small producer of products and pleasures. The craft of coffee making is to be shared, and as we shall see, it is an art; an art of pleasure-making that is being disseminated.

The music played in the coffee shop is an important feature, and crucial for setting the right ambiance. Some of the cafés I have visited did not even have any music; they simply let the chatter from visitors and the noises from the coffee grinder and milk steamer be the soundtrack. At this particular café they always play music. What genre or mood is barista dependent, as the staff chooses the music themselves. This particular Tuesday, they are playing a categorically eclectic playlist; hot jazz and hip hop goes hand in hand, followed by old RnB hits and 80s funk music. It is the assemblage of diversity that the music encodes, remirroring from all the different coffees of the world that are lined up on the three shelves.

The barista, Marcel, starts loudly singing along to the words “I don’t think you’re ready for this jelly”, the lyrical hook of Destiny’s Child “Bootylicious”. The music and the barista singing along to it, epitomizes the laidback and unpretentious vibe of this café. This atmosphere is also illustrated through the coffee shop’s general interior design; it is practical and functional, referencing both Scandinavian minimalism and Brooklynesque coolness. Again, it is diversity that is not just being assembled but also reassembled in new creative aesthetic styles. These styles do not just accumulate randomly but so as to juxtapose, augment, complement and contrast with other styles. It is the global nature of consumption that is being highlighted in a cosmopolitanism that merges style with functional pragmatics. It is a strange combination but it is indicative of a new kind of craftsmanship that pervades the new arenas of petty bourgeois production and consumption. The bar, coffee shop and restaurant are being taken over by new kinds of youth, who embrace commerce and business, but in ways that seek a return to the beauty of craftwork. It is small-scale forms of production and the creativity they allow producers in charge of their own tools, their small-scale machines and workshop, which is being celebrated.

They have managed to squeeze four tables into the tiny café, while also using the windowsill facing the street as a table with two accompanying stools. On sunny days the employees put out small colorful, wooden folding stools on the street, in front of the café. The emphasis is

not on luxury seating or luxury comforts, indeed the seats are often quite Spartan. All of this is highlighting the fact that the pleasure lies somewhere else. In the innermost part of the café, there is a narrow staircase leading up to a mezzanine. The people sitting by the three tables on the mezzanine floor are on display to the whole café, therefore only the most well dressed people have settled there. The mezzanine looks almost like a stage.

Underneath the mezzanine, there is an open concept kitchen with one girl working as a chef. She makes sandwiches, toast, granola, quinoa salad, coleslaw as well as chocolate chip cookies, lemon cake, banana bread and muffins. The café discovers its identity in making these items in a unique way rather than buying them from some larger bakery or wholesale. In a world of mass production and overly processed food, the emphasis is on going against all of this and affirming the craft of making food fresh from scratch. This process is not to be hidden behind walls in a separate room, but is to be observed, put on display and celebrated. So what is being consumed is partly production, or at least the human scale of production where machines are subordinate to craftsmen and their craft. Machines are in this context not denied, but indeed valued as long as they do not control what can be introduced into the processes of production.

Nouvelle Vague

This café is certainly not one of the classic Parisian sidewalk cafés that the city has become so well known for. Indeed what is being observed here an attempt to reinvent the café and to move it in a new direction for new kinds of consumers who seek other ways of distinguishing themselves, marking out their identity as individuals but also a diffuse culture of consumption that represents other ways of crafting and defining pleasures. At this new café, I am going to get immensely disappointed if I am hoping to catch a plate of *Steak Frites* or a *Croque Monsieur*. There is no adjacent *Bureau du Tabac*, the small counter where one can buy cigarettes and post stamps. The café that I'm visiting is relatively new, one of several *nouvelle vague coffee shops* emerging in great haste all over the city. I have on many occasions heard the term "nouvelle vague", meaning new wave. It is used to describe the emergence of hip and artisanal coffee spots. I link these coffee bars to the phenomenon of third wave coffee culture, and the ongoing global artisanalization of coffee. This itself is also part of a global artisanalization of all kinds of consumer goods, like cheese making, beer brewing and spirits and liquor distillation. The term "third wave" was originally used to describe the evolution of coffee culture in the US, but is now applicable

across continents. In his article “Coffee, Connoisseurship, and an Ethnologically Informed Sociology of Taste” John Manzo (2010, pp. 143) cites food writer Jonathan Gold:

“The first wave of American coffee culture was probably the nineteenth century surge that put Folgers on every table, and the second was the proliferation, starting in the 1960s at Peet’s and moving smartly through the Starbucks grande decaf latte, of espresso drinks and regionally labeled coffee. We are now at the third wave of coffee connoisseurship, where beans are sourced from farms instead of countries, roasting is about bringing out rather than incinerating the unique characteristics of each bean, and the flavor is clean and hard and pure.”

Manzo is accusing this definition of third wave coffee culture of being imprecise and revisionist, but at the same time he claims it to be significant. It offers an important insight into how members of the movement understand the processes they are creating and participating in (ibid.). The first wave of coffee culture provided consumers with pre-roasted and ready ground coffee. Previously one had to source green beans and roast them in your own home. The second wave of coffee culture established coffee as something more than just a mere commodity to be drunk as a stimulant and to refresh thirst. The coffee bar culture begins to flourish in its own right rather than as coffee being a supplement to other food consumption activities. Baristas start making cafe lattes and cappuccinos to consumers on daily basis. Consumers become acquainted with the distinction between roasts, like for example French Roast or Italian Roast. Also, there is now a focus on origin; people have started to appreciate distinctive qualities in coffees from the different countries. The third wave is the present-day movement, and with it comes the true culinary appreciation of coffee as a craft – almost as an art form. Roasters are concerned with sourcing the best beans from the best farms and cooperatives.

There is a focus on *terroir* and elevation. All of this attention to detail marks the creation of coffee into something that is to serve the most demanding and subtle of palates. For as Bourdieu notes, it is a noble sensuousness that is being affirmed in middle class forms of taste. The aristocratic subtlety of the body serves to individualize the middle class even more so for the courser forms of consumption of the working class and even of those sections of the middle class that do not know how to live and appreciate the distinctions in flavor. The culture of wine tasting has been incorporated into coffee culture, with the subtle palates of wine discriminations providing a tacit model of the distinction in coffee and those who consume it. The perceived dull and reactionary coffee blends that combine coffees from

different farms are in decline, in favor of a *single origin coffee*; coffee that has been sourced from one farm and that has its unique distinctive flavor and character. For it is this that is being consumed, the disguising marks of character are being internalized in the uniquely sourced and processed beans.

In the classic old Parisian cafés, you will have to find your table and wait for the waiter to take your orders. The waiter will subsequently bring you the food and drinks, and a bill when requested or when he simply wants you to leave the establishment. In the vast majority of the nouvelle vague places I frequented, I had to order at the bar, pay and wait by the counter for the coffee to be made. When the client is transformed into a waiter, the café runs more efficiently, and the manager saves money. Apart from this entirely economical aspect, I also believe there to be cultural explanations; the third wave coffee shop is a cultural import from mainly the United States and Australia.

Then there is another, perhaps more interesting explanation; the customer is, while waiting for the coffee to be prepared, passively almost forced to observe the last and arguably most visually interesting part of the production process. The barista becomes an artisanal showman, and in witnessing the creation of the beverage the consumer will become more attached to the final product. The coffee doesn't magically appear on your tabletop from some abstract, magic space; the customer knows that it has been carefully crafted, and it is revalued as more authentic. This is a spectacle of production rather than a spectacle of consumption, where you are served like royalty with servants. There is a democratic theme here in all of this, of elevating the staff to the same status as consumers whilst bringing customers to the same level as staff. It is also about shifting attention to what is being sold, and it is the experience of being waited but also the craft of marking high quality food and drink which is not afraid to display itself. Indeed all of this is what is being aestheticized, celebrated as what is beautiful. Here the art of the coffee shop is not in the regimented etiquette and uniform of the staff, this culture seeks the layback whilst demanding a perfection of taste. Taste is not to be compromised, but is to be revisited and remade in more subtle, distinguishing forms that is celebrating diversity rather than homogeneity and uniformity.

The traditional Parisian waiter is smartly uniformed. He generally wears a white shirt, with a preferably dark vest covering much of the torso. In most cases he is seen with a small black

bowtie and a dark colored or even black bistro apron, with pockets for his pens. The nouvelle vague baristas are certainly very different from this romantic stereotype. In most cases, the people tending third wave coffee bars are not uniformed at all. They wear their own casual, and often fairly trendy clothes. Also, they seem to be a lot younger than the Parisian café waiters; as the movement is still so young, Paris is at the moment not flowing over with middle-aged third wave baristas. To a certain degree, there has been a fall of an iconic figure, the arrogant and grumpy, yet somewhat charming French café waiter. However, you will still find him in the more touristic parts of the city, where he is being cultivated as a cultural symbol.

I order a regular black filter coffee from Marcel the barista. He is a 27 years old man from Cannes, who is planning on one day soon starting his own coffee shop together with his British friend and colleague Mark. There is a new entrepreneurial spirit among the young and it spans ethnic cultural groups not just as an accidental meeting of friends and business partners, but also as what is being marketed. Many have travelled widely and/or they seek out knowledge of other cultures and regions that have their own specialized tastes and products. There is a certain internationalism and cosmopolitanism that is being marked and commodified but more than this, there is an encyclopedic pursuit of excellence and subtlety that has a class dimension to it. It is the lower middle class entrepreneur throwing off the hegemony of the upper classes with its formal etiquette and established tastes. These are being surpassed, or so it is claimed, by an informal aesthetic and etiquette that asserts its knowledge over global products.

The upper class rejection of mass produced goods and tastes is embraced by an even nobler sensuality that is not afraid to dirty its hands in the making and pursuit of taste. What is being crafted are products but also the tensions and rivalries within class relations where it is not just a question of the lower middle distinguishing its hip new tastes from the mass culture of the working class and lumpenproletariat, for it is also a question of it competing and outdoing middle and upper classes celebrations of tasteful subtle distinctions. There is within these new forms also opportunity for those at the bottom to rise if not to small scale entrepreneurs then to the new hip workers of the café who can make these superb products. It is the cultural capital of class relations that is being redefined and not in some one to one way, but as a field of contestation, rivalry, tensions and alliances.

In the café, the “coffee of today” this particular Tuesday is from Nyeri, a county in central Kenya. It is a Gatina Peaberry, of the bean varieties SL 28 and SL 34. A regular coffee bean is flat on one side. This is because there are normally two fertilized seeds in one berry, and they develop side-by-side, pressing against each other. When in the odder case only one of the seeds is fertilized you get a pea-shaped round coffee bean, a peaberry. These coffee beans are sometimes, like in the case of the Gatina Peaberry, specially sorted for their distinct quality in taste. It is this geographical knowledge, along with this knowledge of plant growth, seed development and taste that becomes the domain of the cultural capital of a new entrepreneurial class. It seeks out these quirks in nature that other cultures have discovered and learned to process. This knowledge colonizes or more accurately appropriates and celebrates these local discoveries, making them into the domain of a new cultural identity. Products are being refined in a new and more natural way, outside of mass production and factory processes with nature, geography and quirks in biological development working to sort out new species that are the basis for new species of taste. The natural is embraced as a field of biological diversity that can supply more original, unique and distinctive tastes than the domain of industrial food processing.

Products are being reselected in their diverse uniqueness, in ways that overcome the homogenizing processes of industrial farming with their one species mass produced crops. It is also food processing which is accused of the same homogenization of taste, of blending and destroying the original unique tastes of foods with artificially produced mass tastes. There is a desire for more craft forms of food processing that are seen to preserve and highlight the authentic tastes of the selected food, which in this case are coffee beans. I have noticed that a lot of the nouvelle vague coffee shops are using a relatively new, cool Parisian micro-roaster; six of the ten shops I most frequented offered only coffee from this particular roaster.

Coffee and Concept

Instead of the Tabacs of the old Parisian cafés, the nouvelle vague kinds of coffee shops are more likely to include other non-coffee related retail products that are carefully selected by the proprietor to reflect on a lifestyle or convey certain values. Books, records, clothes, cakes, specialized sandwiches and hamburgers are being sold next to specialty coffee. There is one tremendously popular coffee shop and lunch spot in the North Marais district of Paris, where foodies and coffee aficionados flock to from all over the city. The interior walls are

painted white, but some of the walls are trendily covered in plywood. When I visit, it almost feels like I am in some sort of botanical conservatory, because there are a lot of decorative green plants inside the café. There is a clothing store inside this coffee shop, selling expensive designer clothes. In the middle of this shop, they have planted a big green tree.

Another nouvelle vague coffee shop that I visited seemed to be inspired by Scandinavian minimalism in terms of practical industrial style furniture. Here is also the paradox, and that is that even though the mass production of the consumer society can be rejected, the hardy durable nature of factory machines and décor is embraced. This paradox appears because it is not industrial production that is being rejected but rather its wasteful forms that employ built in obsolescence. There is an ecological ethics steering these new forms of taste that produce a self-conscious ironic style of embracing and remaking the factory, transforming the industrial into something beautiful, into an economy of beauty. As I stepped on the beautiful polished cement floor of the café, I quickly discovered that half the space of the coffee shop was dedicated to selling cycle wear retail. The store was stocked with backpacks, socks, and helmets. There were also two bicycles, hanging on the wall in the café part of the store, functioning as decoration. The environmental theme here was clear; the environment was to be preserved through a new aesthetic that made physical exercise and the body as good for both individuals and the environment. One can argue that a new youth culture and its ethic is being affirmed and internalized.

This environmental ethics also takes the form of recycling products, by making the tables out of bits and pieces. In this café, the tables had classic lion feet of ornate bistro table bases, cast in sturdy durable iron, but the tabletops were in trendy plywood. It is a nice fusion of the traditional and modern, it is like there has been a reimagining of old things alongside modern plywood being given a new aesthetic beauty. There is a new aesthetic being created that challenges established notions of art and beauty, seeking a simplicity that highlights and does clutter the things that are important. In this case, new forms of taste and sensuality are the basis of a new individualism, for that too is being crafted.

Sans Bureau Fixé

Given the long school hours in France, there were rarely any adolescent school goers in the café during daytime. This stands in stark contrast to for example Norway, where young high-school students are flocking to cafés. This might have to do with the disposable incomes of

the young. In Paris, it is rather the university students, professionals and small business people that come to the café. For example, Guillaume des Fleurs, who is the Bobo florist running the neighboring flower boutique, is a regular sight at the café. It seems the two businesses have established some form of gift economy; I notice he brings the café a beautiful bouquet of flowers and gets a sandwich in return. The rest of the establishment's clientele is also quite Bobo-looking; it consists of a mix of foreign hipster tourists, people waiting for their laundry at the vis-à-vis Laundromat, Fashionistas and people without permanent offices, or SBFs (Sans Bureau Fixé), as they are called. These petty bourgeoisie people often have creative jobs and are not tied to an office. They are often people who would otherwise work from their homes. Still, some SBFs are not really without an office.

My friend Miguel has his own little record label and his one-person enterprise rents an office space. He enjoys “being out” among people, and prefers the lively atmosphere of the café location to the quiet and isolating setting of his office. It is not like he has found one coffee shop and uses it as an office, he is a coffee shop nomad, wandering about, usually changing site several times a day. Compared to a one-man office, the open space of the cafés offers a self-disciplinary mechanism of Foucauldian dimensions: “I am forced to work more efficiently at the café. The people around me can see what I'm up to on my computer, and I waste less time looking at celebrities on the red carpet, or read about the next Marvel superhero film.” He uses the collective gaze of others as his conscience to police himself. He is also using the diversity of material, social and cultural settings in the café to reposition his own perspective when he gets stuck and needs a fresh way of looking at things or new inspiration. There is an art of creativity, or rather a craft of creativity being sought in this urban nomadism that seeks to protect and foster processes of creation by immersing itself within their other material realizations such as unique food, drink, décor, fashion and music.

I ask Marcel, the barista, about economy and he replies that there is not a lot of money to be made from running an independent specialty coffee shop. Most businesses need a steady flow of customers throughout the day, if you have one person sitting with a cup of coffee and occupying a table for several hours every day, he could potentially be an economical burden to the establishment. As a field ethnographer in Paris, I didn't have access to a permanent office. I did some work from the apartment and different public libraries, but I spent many hours writing in the various cafés. To minimize my negative economical footprint on the businesses, I always avoided the lunch rushes.

Sometimes the SBFs aren't merely an economical problem. One time I worked for two hours on my laptop computer at a newly established third wave coffee bar. As it was a completely new shop, not a lot of people knew about it, only a couple of other people were present at the time of the incident. As I was leaving, the owner grabbed hold of me and in a polite manner told me that I was more than welcome to return another time, but that my computer was not. Embarrassed and a bit ashamed I was told that it created "an uncool vibe", and that it was bad for the atmosphere of the shop. This shows that for some cafés, SBFs can also become an aesthetical problem that is not in keeping with the culture and social relation of their other customers. The certain aesthetic formulated by the business owner may place restrictions not only on the interior design, menu and staff, but also on the consumer making sure that he or she has a certain ethos, a set of values and beliefs. Of course these cannot be policed, but are to be steered and cultivated by making people comfortable or uncomfortable.

Other coffee shop entrepreneurs have figured out a way to make a profit from the SBFs: they create a space customized to all of their needs and charge them money per hour. These coffee shops, which function as "offices", are sometimes called *coffices*. They are actually a global phenomenon that has to do with downsizing and the movement towards subcontracting among large firms that includes large banks, insurance companies, universities, schools and the public service. It is cheaper for many of these large institutions to move their workers onto contracts where they are responsible for their superannuation, holidays, sickness benefits, and office space. Many of these SBFs typically pay about three-four euros an hour, and get unlimited free coffee and some light food, like a muffin or a cookie. The most important thing for the SBFs is that there is good space for placing a laptop close to where it can be recharged and a free, speedy Wi-Fi connection. Even though these places are filled with people trying to work, the coffices are not "quiet zones". People are allowed to speak without whispering, because one essential point of seeking out these areas is to work in a vivacious and informal ambiance. One of the latest additions to Paris' booming coffee scene has extended the concept: They offer permanent seats in designated spaces in the back of the premises. Individuals can rent out these seats for 400 euros a month, and then you get, in addition to unlimited coffee, access to a kitchenette and two hours a month in the coffee shop's own meeting room. These coffee shops are corporate enterprises; they are scaled down versions of what hotels sometimes provided for corporate and academic customers.

Gastronomy

For the Bobos, the coffee shops are important gathering places. However, they also often go out to eat, and they are always looking to try out new and exciting food dishes. These past few years, the Bobos have become increasingly concerned with casual quality food, and promote the importance of keeping up with the current food trends.

The Food Truck

The Bobos of Paris have quite recently started embracing new kinds of food. That is why street food appears frequently in their patterns of consumption. The flagship of street food culture is the food truck. The concept of food trucks has, like the third wave coffee culture, been imported from USA. In today's Paris one can often observe long lines of hungry people outside one of these mobile restaurants, waiting patiently for a pulled pork sandwich or a medium rare hamburger.

The concept is immensely popular; the French have fallen in love with greasy American dishes like bacon cheeseburgers named "The Dude" or "The Obama Burger". You can also get ribs, pulled pork and meatball sandwiches. One of the trucks can be booked for very hip and seemingly quite casual weddings. There is also one truck devoted to gourmet hot dogs, offering a dessert hot dog made of banana and Nutella, a chocolate hazelnut spread. Most trucks are referencing the original American Food Truck, but you will also be able to find more exotic alternatives. One truck specializes in Vietnamese bun bo and another Argentinean empanadas. One of the trucks has chosen a less greasy style, serving carrot soup and lamb tagine with prunes. Street food is revalorized and made gourmet. Gone is the cheap food that filled up working class stomachs and there has emerged a more upmarket and slightly more expensive products that revalorizes working class and rural cooking as a style to be placed and appreciated alongside other cuisines of street food drawn from all over the globe. The aesthetic movement that Bourdieu (2010) analyzes as part of middle class aesthetics is colonized and popularized by lower entrepreneurial sections of the middle class that commodifying experiences of other cultures, rural areas, tradition but also of working class culture. Its cuisine also become exotified and moved upmarket in the forms of pies, hamburgers and hot dogs for sensitive palates.

Hamburger Workshop

You can also have your trendy meals in real restaurants. Numerous artisanal burger places have popped up in Paris lately. Most of the best gourmet burger places in Paris are situated in walking distance from each other, in the area where you find the majority of the Bobo population. This is in the northern parts of the city, with its mixture of shabbiness and cool. Here you find drug dealers and chic bars and restaurants side by side. A barista once suggested to me where I might find the best burger in Paris. This was not just another burger joint; it was nothing less than an "l'atelier du hamburger". In other words, the hamburgers made there are works of art, and the chefs consider themselves to be true artists of taste. It is almost as though the sensual palate of the canvas painting or the subtle score of music were being transposed onto the tongue as the new most sensitive instrument of all. But it is not a pure coarse tongue that is shaped but a sensitive feeling tongue that makes the flavors of food in a new way of living life as an intense qualitative experience. The culture of advertising, which promises the most satisfying soft drink or chocolate, has been appropriated by entrepreneurs of pleasure who claim to craft the best burgers and hot dogs in Paris, if not the world.

When I first visited the hamburger workshop, there was a long line of famished Bobos outside. However, it turned out that the circulation of customers was quick, so I did not have to wait long. I read the menu while waiting outside. I could choose between four different kinds of meat, and whether I wanted it well done, "à point", pink, bloody or "bleu". In stage two I got to choose between four of the most well known French cheeses: Raclette, Tomme de Savoie, Chèvre, and a blue cheese from Auvergne. The hamburger atelier also lets you choose your own vegetables: grilled eggplant or peppers, sun-dried tomatoes or caramelized onion. Then you are given the choice between four types of fresh herbs; parsley, chives, coriander or estragon. After that, you are free to add the homemade sauce of your choice. Fries on the side are extra, and they are peeled, chopped, washed and fried in the restaurant.

When I arrived inside of the restaurant, a dark, loud and crowded room met me. The ceiling was quite low, and I got the impression that I had just entered a very jolly dungeon. Behind the counter, where everybody gave their orders on the way in, I observed an impressive number of staff stacked together, standing shoulder to shoulder. One girl was taking orders, another was handling the cash, two guys were cooking the burger, and then there was a line of people putting on different ingredients on the burger. It looked very much like an

assembly line. All of the employees, women and men, were dressed like old fashioned paper boys, wearing overalls checkered shirts with rolled up sleeves and sixpences. They were singing along to the music that played way too loud from speakers in the corners. I had to yell to get my order through. “What do you want to drink?” a girl in a paperboy costume asked me from behind the counter. “BEEER!” her colleague shouted, answering for me. Everyone in the restaurant was in a very festive mood, and it struck me more as a gourmet fast food place to grab a quick burger before catching a movie or going to a concert, than as a place to spend a nice quiet meal accompanied by profound conversations. The interior was modest with gray stonewalls and dim lighting; the burger was obviously the main attraction. These were served on small trays that the guests themselves had to carry to the small tables, like in some sort of cantina. Diners had to eat the burgers on low, uncomfortable stools. This was probably part of the business model: get guests quickly into the restaurant, and out again even quicker.

Not far from the “atelier du Hamburger”, is a calmer, but perhaps even trendier burger place. My bourgeois landlord, Mme Brunet, has a Bobo son called Frédéric, an art school alumnus who is currently freelancing in the design business. The first thing Frédéric did after handing me the key to my new apartment was to give me this restaurant’s card. Word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is important for this group. People are handing out personal information and contacts for this section of the lower middle class that cannot afford expensive advertising. Here everyone has a relative or friend who is risking his or her capital in these small business ventures. What immediately catches my attention is the restaurant’s beautiful entrance, in the style of an old art deco cinema. The name of the restaurant is written on a bright illuminating background; in affixed letters similar to those traditionally describing what films the cinema is showing. The sign also says, in English: “Quality hamburgers” and “Freaking Fast Wi-Fi”. The whole place feels like a refined tribute to elements of American popular culture, with certain vulgarities left out. It seemingly represents a romanticized America. The black-painted ceiling is decorated with about a hundred naked light bulbs that are fastened almost with surgical precision. The tiles on the floor are in a cubic pattern. The naked brick walls have a rustic, non-finished touch, and the color scheme is limited to black, white and gray. The back wall is in fact a large mirror, and the reflection of the many light bulbs makes the room seem almost infinitely long. Although this is the place where I have seen some of the most dandy-looking people in my life, the atmosphere is always relaxed and the waiters take their time to talk with you and recommend

different burgers.

This romanticized America is America as it could have been if it had occurred in Europe. It is America as a possibility that emerged but could not fully realize itself in America.

America is embraced in quotation marks, as a style, to be recivilised by Europeans who need it to break of their suffocating conformity. The frontier of America is an imaginary frontier of exploration, an exploration of experience and identity that Europeans need to reclaim.

Food is a consumption of symbolic meanings and its imaginary forms are often fantastic in terms of the spaces and histories they seek out. But it is all being redigested, internalized to produce something new.

What is going on with the burger restaurants and food trucks is a remaking of popular forms of consumption in terms of what they could have been, but what this actually means is the bourgeoisification of working class food. Gone are its high fats, artificial color and flavors, high calories and sugar to be replaced by organic meat, fresh vegetables and salad, with non-industrial sauces. The cost is much higher, no high school student or factor worker could afford it except as a restaurant meal. Popular food moves up the class structure to be embraced as a creative possibility, as a combination to be recrafted with quality ingredients that will resensualize this mass item. It is also this living of the world as parody, as irony that is part of the aesthetic of Bobo culture and of its new wave of food making. It is quoting and copying so as to create second versions, second natures. This is not a dismissal or rejection but a reinvention of popular mass culture, or at least it is creating another cultural stream, another mass style of consumption that seeks individual creators, unique craftsmen and finds them not in woodwork, metalwork or tapestry but in everyday sensuality. The coffee and the hamburger are to be experienced. The quality of life is to be lifted and re-educated.

Commodification

When new food trends see the light of day, the Bobos are usually the first to embrace them; Bobos are what you might call early adopters. Often entrepreneurs associated with the Bobo culture are running these places. Yet, sometimes non-Bobo entrepreneurs notice their success and try to mimic them. I have visited two places like this. At first glance, they look like proper Bobo places: a nice logo set in an artisanal typeface, white tiles on the wall, wooden benches, naked light bulbs hanging from the ceiling and menus written in chalk on a large blackboard. At closer inspection the imitation gourmet burger place reveals itself. They

are stumbling in the refined details of the aesthetic, and by neglecting the Bobo ethos it becomes evident that they have appropriated the Bobo aesthetic merely to attract customers. In this case, that which copies is itself copied but not in a way that represent irony on irony, or parody on parody. It is rather an attempt to imitate a style without being aware of its own internal mimetic practices as grounded in parody and irony. It is here that the inauthentic forms of Boboism are constituted, why it is possible to recognize bad copies of a movement grounded in copying. Copying is a culture itself, part of a mimetic practice.

The aesthetic is impersonated also in other trades. After a two-month renovation process, it looked like my closest neighbor was ready to open up a business. The decor was minimal but earthy, with white walls and wooden floors, green plants everywhere and pillows in faded colors. The space had the typical artisanal trendy ambiance. It turned out to be a nouvelle vague looking coffee shop. However, when I ordered a filter coffee and asked about the coffee's origin, the manager told me that he did not know anything about coffee. It is here that Boboism is itself being commodified, becoming a business style to be copied by those who do not embrace or know the inner ethic of the movement.

Chapter 3:

Craftsmanship and Creativity

“When the skill becomes obsolete (say because of new technology), it either disappears from the market altogether or (like hand-weaving) reappears in an aestheticized form, as a craft (it can also disappear from the market but survive as a hobby).” (Grant, 2006, pp. 204)

Throughout the centuries, modern Paris has been recognized as an important intellectual center for creativity and the fine arts. Writers and artists have been coming from all over the world to be inspired and create “true art” amongst the likeminded. There have, for example, been different bohemian waves in Paris, from Montmartre to Montparnasse, all of whom celebrated creativity and excess as interlinked. The Bohemian culture has to some extent become a self-conscious project that has been adopted and internalized by different groups in different ways. As the term “Bourgeois Bohemian” suggests, there is still a bit of bohemia left in Paris today. In this chapter I will try to introduce the Bobo movement as a culture of creativity, and try to examine its links to the meanings of craftsmanship. Here I treat creativity not as a natural spontaneous event but as a part of a symbolic practice that in many cases involve a critique of mass culture and its routinization and standardization of everyday life. In this critique there is implied a certain elitism bound up with a celebration of aesthetic standards and values that serve to define and distinguish those who hold them.

In his book, “The Craftsman”, Richard Sennett provides a brilliant enquiry of craftsmanship, the skill of making things well for the sake of the work itself. According to Sennett, this is a basic, continuous human impulse (Sennett, 2008, pp. 8). Many forces drive this urge, even “though craftsmanship can reward an individual with a sense of pride in work, this reward is not simple. The craftsman often faces conflicting objective standards of excellence; the desire to do something well for its own sake can be impaired by competitive pressure, by frustration, or by obsession.” (Sennett, 2008, pp. 9).

The Spectacle of Production

Once more, it is meaningful to bring the reader to the comfort of an artisanal coffee shop. I have mentioned earlier that most Parisian nouvelle vague cafés are serving coffee from one specific roaster. The other shops either import coffee roasted mainly in Sweden, Norway or the United Kingdom, or use other, smaller local roasters. Some of the coffee shops in fact roast their own beans, which is the case with the shop outlined below.

This café is much like the ones I have described earlier; the interior design is bright and modern. One wall is covered in plants, a vertical garden where plants are actually growing out of the wall. This element gives the customers a feeling of being outside in the jungle, perhaps not far from where the coffee beans are actually growing, but also resonating with the idea that urban space can be recolonized with vegetation. What distinguishes this place from the ones in the previous chapter, in terms of layout and interior, is partly the fact that this one has a lobby. To enter the bright and modern café, you need to pass through a rather run-down antechamber. The ambiance of this room is completely different; while the coffee shop part is decorated as a temple of contemporary sensuous consumption, this space looks almost like a craftsman's workshop from days of old. The color palette here is beige and faded yellow, with a dark wooden floor. The antechamber definitely has a more rundown bohemian vibe to it than the café. It is decorated with Spartan jute sacks, the brown bags that have been used for the transportation of green coffee beans. The lighting is dim, and on the walls hangs wooden frames with small, vintage-looking maps referencing different coffee-producing countries in the world.

There is a long wooden, vintage counter and again the theme is nostalgia. It is cluttered and filled with posters informing about up-coming cultural events. Behind the counter, a whole wall is dedicated to their wide selection of different coffee beans, lined systematically in see-through plastic containers. Country of origin and taste profiles can be read on colorful stickers. There are approximately 30 of these containers that are hung over wooden shelves, on which coffee equipment is being stored. It looks like an old fashioned pharmacy, an ironic display of an old drug. Customers choose the coffee that they want to take home, and then the merchant fills up the desired amount of grams in a brown paper bag and closes it with a sticker showing the café's logo.

The emphasis here is on aestheticizing the warehouse and on distributing in an individualistic way without the waste of individual packaging. There is new kind of care being asserted in this kind of craftsmanship. It certainly celebrates caring for the taste of the consumer, giving them the best quality product in an economical way. It is also seeking to care for the world by making the mechanism of distribution and the site of consumption also obey environmental recycling norms. The jute sacks are now decorations and instead of prepackaging, everything is measured out in homogenous brown bags that deny the relevance of wasteful brand named packaging. Both production and consumption here become symbolic of an economy of care. Production does not just obey technical mechanical specifications, and its economy must include other ways of measuring value. Likewise for the consumer, their satisfaction is maximized not only in the quality of the coffee but also in the way it is delivered and processed.

The coffee served in the café is roasted in this artisanal space, and the centerpiece of the room is a big yellow coffee drum roaster. It looks well used, and has a lot of buttons and control sticks. The machine is always running, with an operator constantly pouring the contents of the jute sacks into the roaster, carefully smelling the beans and making sure that they are evenly roasted. The machine and operator have one specific material function; to roast green beans so that they are transformed into aromatic ones that are essential for the various coffee drinks served in the adjacent coffee shop. This task is important if the café is to put into practice its desire for self-sufficiency. Everything can be efficiently made on one space and they avoid costly and wasteful transportation and double handling. Yet it is also true to say that this desire for home self-sufficiency is turned into a spectacle, where what is being celebrated are manageable forms of technology that still require skilled workers. The smelling of the beans is partly theatrical but it is also the assertion that coffee drinking like wine making and tasting is an art for sensitive and knowledgeable palates. The machine cannot work without its sensitive craftsmen and together they form an aesthetic spectacle where technology is embraced as long as it is an extension of the sensuous creative nature of humans. Here the coffee machine is an extension of the human nose just as much as the hand.

In addition to its material processing tasks, the coffee machine also serves a symbolic function. It is quite large and impressive. There is a great symbolic value in having the coffee roaster in plain sight and not tucked away in the cellar or a back room. It is a

magnificent piece of machinery with a timeless appearance, looking neither modern nor ancient. It is an object of beauty; a piece of micro industrial décor. The machine is in fact the first thing that welcomes you upon entering the shop. It makes the entrance area very hot, which strengthens the feeling of being in a craftsman's workshop. The reason for placing the roaster this close to the door could be due to a ventilation issue, as the machine produces a substantial amount of exhaust. There is a tube transporting exhaust outside, and this tube would have to be quite long if the machine were located further into the workshop. This is also the best way of immediately communicating to the consumer what kind of domain he has entered. Here the process of production is happy to flaunt itself.

A question that arises is why the public is even allowed into this space that is usually a "backstage area" of coffee production. Visitors are in fact not only allowed to enter the antechamber, but also required to walk all the way through it to reach their true destination, the café. The room represents a form of intermediate stage, meant to prepare the body and mind for the impending consumption. It is a way of communicating that a cup of coffee is about more than cultivating sensuousness, a five-minute break dedicated to the gratification of the senses. It is about 'craft' and 'authenticity', authentic forms of craftsmanship that know the intimate details of their raw material just as much as they know the intimate details of the body, its shape, desires and pleasures. It is 'authenticity' which is also being consumed and commodified in this workshop 'café. What people are taking in is certainly the coffee they drink but also the desire for a return to more authentic kinds of work that depend upon the knowledge, skills, tastes and perceptions of the worker.

In many ways, it is the shopkeeper, the petty bourgeois distributor of goods, who is being reenobled as a craftsman. There is an attempt to move him from being just a retailer of pre-packaged goods and pleasures to a knowledgeable creator and conveyer of goods, tastes and pleasures. This is what is being commodified and aestheticized, it is the nostalgia for a return to a more skilled form of retailing that involves production and processing so as to deliver a fresher and more fulfilling product. Capitalism and commodification are not being rejected, but there is an attempt to move away from machine line production that makes the worker an extension of the machine. Instead there is a desire to return to the workshop where the tool and machine are extensions of the knowledge, skills, tastes and perceptions of a craftsman.

In the above case the coffee roaster is a craftsman who must pay attention to the heat, its duration and intensity, the quality of beans, the darkness and lightness of the roast, the strength and pleasantness of the smell, and even the mechanical racket from the machine. The stimulation of all these senses also brings the customer even closer to the production process, making the act of production partly what is being consumed, with a new kind of consumption being produced.

At one level the craftsman is performing manual labor, doing a job that is vital to the café, but at the same time he becomes a symbolic prop, performing the role as the romantic craftsman and as an icon of authenticity. More than producing coffee, he is producing desire, new kinds of desire for fresh products that can be immediately consumed so as to maximize pleasure. Here production and consumption are joined so as to get rid of wasteful mediations that destroy the full experience of reality. There is a new commodification of the senses and pleasures promised here that is disciplined by an ethics of care for nature, environment and also work itself as a domain of enjoyment and pleasure. This is also what the coffee roaster is performing, a worker who discovers pleasures in his skills, knowledge, tastes and augmented perceptions. It is not brute work or the natural body that is celebrated here, nor is it spontaneous pleasures. Instead it is a cultured sensuality, an art of the self that is also a new way of caring for the environment, the worker and consumer. It is a moral economy that is asserted for pleasures and desires which are not to be denied but maximized in their realization with a new morality of care.

A Culture of Creativity

During my fieldwork in Paris, I encountered and befriended many people who would fall under the category Bobo. What many of my informants have in common is that they are culture creators, or perhaps more accurately they create cultural goods, pleasures and experiences. They are from the sections of the middle classes who identify and take pride in their forms of intellectual work. Moreover they are often people who seek to use their refined skilled knowledge to redefine activities that have sometimes been de-skilled and stripped of their craft aspects. Though rich in cultural capital, they are not necessarily very rich in economic wealth, and can be seen as part of what Bourdieu (2010) calls the “the dominated fraction of the dominant class”. My informants are a diverse group and include graphic designers, writers, musicians, coffee shop entrepreneurs and a crossword developer. Perhaps they can be seen as members of a new kind of petty bourgeoisie that is more

cosmopolitan. For they do not have the conservative and reactionary opinions and values that are often associated many sections of the French petty bourgeoisie (ibid.). Many of my informants were quite passionate and perhaps even obsessed with affirming new value structures. They often sought to objectify and realize their beliefs and values through cultivating new forms of consumption. They sought to transform consumption into a moral activity, into new kind of choices for commodities that had more ennobled aspects to them.

Compared to the haute bourgeoisie, my informants were low in economic capital; thus they sought out new kinds of symbolic capital through consuming noble commodities that merged ethics with pleasure. When they drink coffee, they drink hand-brewed coffee, and seek beans of the highest quality, preferably roasted by a local micro roaster. They want to know the origin of the beans and the story behind the brewing process. The focus is on excellent craftsmanship in every aspect of the production process. It is a unique ethical palate that is also being cultivated here which is indicative of a noble sensibility. Bourdieu (2010) analyzed this cultivation of sensitive sensuousness, the body that knows how to appreciate the finest fine details of taste. He calls it the naturalization of distinctions, or the naturalization of class differences.

In many ways the Bobos are contesting the upper bourgeoisie's hold on "true taste". They are developing and marketing alternative products, experiences and pleasures that recraft taste. In a sense they embrace the aristocracy of taste articulated by class distinctions but seek to strip away class and to partly democratize access to this hierarchy of taste by also redefining it. They do not get rid of the hierarchy of taste but reconfigure its contents and ranking with an alternative kind of knowledge that informs and guides their senses. They outperform the upper class in embracing taste as site of distinctions and do so by redirecting it into a subcultural style that makes an art out of taste, that crafts taste at the same time as it makes craftsmanship tasteful.

The Bobos do not go to big hypermarkets, so as to stash their trolleys full of economy packages of groceries in order to save time and money. Here they distinguish themselves from the consumption patterns of the working class and of other section of the petty bourgeoisie. Time and money are two goods that the Bobos do not lack. Their affluent backgrounds or high education level provides them with professions that secures a steady income, whilst their creative or independent jobs often gives them more flexible working

days. This allows for the Bobos to spend both time and money hunting around markets for the perfectly ripe avocado pear or some other fruit, vegetable or food item that can be made to symbolize a discerning eye and palate. It is this intelligence incarnated into the body that is celebrated when the avocado is prepared and served, the latter processes involve their own fine aesthetics. The emphasis is not on mass consumption but on selective forms of consumption, not the purchase of many cheap items but an economy of consumption that cuts back in quantity to make up in quality. These are different ways of maximizing consumption, through the consumption of inferior products or the less frequent consumption of more intense pleasures and experiences. There is a cultural elitism in all this, and it is partly bound up with an ethical critique that we live in worlds of over-consumption, in worlds of obesity where we need to rediscipline and recraft our pleasures and consumptive practices. It is no accident that none of my Bobo informants were over-weight, but often overly thin. There is an aestheticism here that is not the denial of pleasure but its supreme realization in perfect choices. The individualism of Bobos is not just in the cultivation of a sensual palate but also in discriminating eyes and judgments, choices informed by knowledge and morality. This is a denial of continual pleasure so as to anticipate and realize its intense realization in moments that must be perfected.

Albertine, one of my informants, works as a professional crossword developer. She claims that the creative practices of her everyday life are increasing alongside her growing economical independence. She says that she is now actively seeking new places to explore her creative personality. She has engaged in Urban Exploring, and has even written a book about it. Apart from crafting crosswords, exploring urban space and writing books, she is creating her masterpiece: her own board game. I have tested an early version. She also claims to also be checking out new Bobo bars and restaurants along with her new steady income. Food, drink, clothing and furniture become more than commodities, they become signatures of the self. More than that, they become practices for working upon the self. This is what Foucault (1988) refers to as techniques for forming subjects and subjectivities.

I spoke to an aspiring poet attending a bookbinding workshop in Montreuil, an increasingly gentrified neighborhood in the eastern parts of Paris, where ethnic French young Bobo families are living side by side with immigrant families. The workshop was very expensive, my informant admitted, but it was worth it, as he is now able to craft his own books. This bookbinding course is an example of the revisiting and revitalization of old skills and

techniques but in new creative ways. Did my informant really need to learn this craft if he wanted to print books? The answer is no, as modern technology can create books for you. My informant saw the value itself in learning this old craft, and he wanted to be a part of an older tradition. He showed me one of his books with great pride, pointing out the details and the quality of the material. One can argue that the culture of creativity is not a constant construct; the members need to sustain themselves through different symbolic forms of identification; the creativity has to be nurtured and cultivated. This culture of creativity seeks to internalize itself, to objectify itself; it seeks its realness by taking up concepts of authenticity and individuality in the material properties of the objects that are remoulded and reassembled. It is the everyday world which is being re-beautified, remade according to an aesthetic craft that revalues the worker's body and knowledge: skills, dexterity, perception, labor time, ingenuity and appreciation of the knowledge of other cultures, places and times. Labor is being aestheticized and rebeautified as much as the book.

Aestheticizing Creativity

Sennett is reluctant to use the word "creativity" in his book. The word appears as little as possible: he argues that this is a conscious choice, made in regard to the word's large, inherent measures of Romantic baggage. I wanted to use the word "creativity" as much as possible in this chapter; I even put the word in the chapter's title. This is because I believe the Romantic links "– the mystery of inspiration, the claims of genius" (Sennett, 2008, pp. 290) to be a significant reason for the Bobo embrace of craftsmanship. As a subculture, they are developing their own aestheticized versions of creativity and craft, transforming work and objects into styles to be cultivated and consumed.

Craftsmanship is being re-marketed. It is being revisited and reenobled as a lost art, a suppressed art. Indeed, craft and creativity are being aestheticized in many ways, through interior design and through transforming customers into production spectators, who watch the process of making coffee as an art, an art of the senses that works not with paint or sculptures but the nose and tongue. It is here in these less noble regions, one might even say more animal senses, that a sensual aesthetic is being reclaimed in the mundane world. The mundane becomes a spectacle of intensity, of the work, knowledge and machines that merge to create new arts of pleasure.

Whilst walking around in the hip quarters of Paris; the area around Canal St. Martin and in North Marais, you will notice a lot of newly established boutiques, cafés and lunch places. They all feel strikingly unique, but share some aesthetical similarities in furniture and decoration. Unpainted plywood is the most obvious common denominator. Many tables, chairs and benches are manufactured out of this cheap material. Some of the places have their counters and even their walls covered in plywood. The material is paradoxical for it is mass produced in factories but used in ways that have a quite homemade appearance. It is as if the barista himself carved out the plywood and crafted the furniture. Plywood is cheap, sturdy yet versatile and comes in various thicknesses, colors and sturdiness. It is in remaking the common everyday mass-produced items of modernity that individuality emerges. It is not a rejection of mass production but it is appropriation. Plywood is often dismissed as mass produced timber, which it is. However, in so many cafés it was reworked by craft handiwork into a new object of beauty for walls, benches, tables and floors. It is durable forms of mass production that are being appropriated to assert an economy of beauty where that which is economical is beautiful in its simplicity, functionality and durability.

Some of the entrepreneurs I spoke to actually had a very active role in the renovation, remodeling and redecoration of their shops. They took much pride in this, and also had various form of solidarity created through the skills and labor of other similar entrepreneurs. There is the work of building something yourself but also a sense of a cultivated simplicity, and of industrial straightforwardness and sturdiness. It is a celebration of minimalism, of usefulness, of unadulterated goodness. There have always been shops, restaurants and coffee bars, but the aesthetic of consumption has been remade. Something else is being consumed along with coffee and gourmet hamburgers, namely a new way of being a person, a modern creative subject that demands caring products. These products care for consumers in the sense of being durable, functional, economical, practical and good quality. Together, these assembled attributes promise to improve the quality of life; in a way they have a utopian dimension. They articulate what Bloch (1986, 2000) and Lefebvre (1971) call everyday utopian forms.

In one of these plywooded stores, this one functioning as a bookstore/art gallery with trendy lifestyle magazines and art prints, I found numerous DIY (Do-It-Yourself)-furniture books. Here you can read all about how to build beautiful chairs, shelves, closets and tables using step-by-step instructions and specific drawings. Some celebrate a naïve simplicity that seeks

to rethink everyday taken for granted materials that are dismissed as crude or not beautiful. For example, you can pour cement into a bucket and then add three wooden sticks. When the cement has congealed, you have a beautiful, artisanal stool. These books offer templates that reproduce established innovations by others but they also encourage you to create your own designs by remaking everyday junk. This is partly similar to how Hebdige (1988) talks about punk making jewelry out of used safety pins and razor blades and dress out of plastic garbage baggage.

These are almost surrealist attempt to redefine the boundaries between the beautiful and ugly, junk and treasure, the discarded and the useful. In these creative forms of modern bricolage, mass-production is being individualized. The focus is on recrafting the materials of the everyday world, on re-exploring its lost possibilities and tangents. In these creatively reused scrap a new artifact is born that is handcrafted and thus perceived as nobler. These quite conceptual plywooded stores, with their DIY aesthetics, feel homemade and down to earth. But at the same time they seem a bit pretentious and speculative, a high-end form of surrealism brought into the everyday so as to disrupt by using it against itself. This novel aesthetic becomes copied and it seems like it is everywhere; this form of individualism is now being mass-produced. One could also argue that individualism is being recrafted and re-objectified in new kinds of labor that take the surreal experiments of the art gallery into everyday life.

The Bobos embrace the DIY-aesthetic, and I have seen some quite creative solutions when it comes to furniture in both public and domestic spheres. I have, for example encountered a shelving system based around pipes sticking out of the walls. These kinds of solutions celebrate creativity; they celebrate shortcut ways to achieve a creative off-kilter aesthetic. One Bobo interior furniture shop that I visited offered designer coat racks that appeared to be plumbed directly into your water mains. These are actually fake taps on fake pipes crafted to give your home a more infrastructure feel, and they can be purchased for 119 euros. The previously hidden world of pipes that lay concealed in cement wall is now transformed into sculpture to be displayed. The pipes and taps come in different colors to suit any home. This kind of commodification is a bit more problematic in that it does not treat actual infrastructure as sculpture, which would be much more the ideal, realizing the perfect economy between function and form, practical and art. Yet these new commodities do capture the way that industrial infrastructure has become art, and this is part of an

aestheticization of everyday life that redefines what is art and beautiful. The latter are to move outside of the art gallery and museum, to be relocated and rediscovered in the mundane of everyday life. Art involves often the transference of one medium into another medium, the body and cloth into sculpture or paint. Here there are new kinds of transference being played with where one medium and function takes over the role of other mediums and functions, one grafting itself on another. There is a certain kind of what Michel Serres (1982) analyzed as parasitism in all of this.

In *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige (1988, pp. 112) has some interesting remarks on the graphics and typographies of the punk aesthetic in the 1970s. He writes about how the subversive and anarchic elements of the movement were expressed through two different typographic models. One of these typographies is the ransom note, where each letter has been cut out from a range of sources, like newspapers etc. in different styles and typefaces. Another typography Hebdige presents is the spray can textured flowing script, resonating graffiti. These calligraphic styles were present in fanzines, posters and record covers, products and cultural commodities aimed at the punk subculture. I have an interesting find on the subject, mirroring those of Hebdige. I have noticed that a lot of the products aimed at the Bobo consumer, whether it is lemonade, books, restaurant menus or beers are set in typefaces that are similar to each other. They often look artisanal, nostalgic and home crafted.

Symbolic Resistance to Mass Culture

The modern day Bobo culture is in contrast to the Punks of the 1970s for it not a subversive counterculture in an anarchic sense. This does not mean that there are no resistances and they comparable in other respects. Modern day Paris is a capitalist metropolis, where many constantly find themselves surrounded by what they regard as “worthless” mass-produced artifacts, food and culture. Sennett (2008, pp.11) suggests that the ways in which the craftsman is working can give people a new anchor in material reality. The Bobos tackle the experience of a loss of value and meaning by recreating individuality grounded in practices of creativity as the true site of authenticity. This authenticity is experienced and realized through new alternative value structures of everyday life that redefine economies of pleasure.

The Bobo's cultural constructs a pursuit of authenticity for rediscovering and regrounding the self in the valuable experiences of creativity, of laboring with materials in novel ways that is also a familiarity and love for them and for the work of crafting the world. It is the mass production of pleasure, experiences and goods that Bobos contest and remake through their various creative practices, through creating an alternative community that seeks to control the conditions of its own cultural reproduction. The Bobo posit their lifestyle as a social and cultural movement that is partly opposed and is partly in a parasitical relationship to the industrialized production of culture, goods, personhood and experiences. Creativity and the redirection of the mundane everyday is being celebrated through a pursuit of an artisan lifestyle that involves more than just the craft of working with materials such as food, music and plywood, for it is also the crafting of a new world that sees the worker and his or her labor. The worker is not to be hidden from his products but is to be rediscovered in a love for the art of work, because work and production are also being aestheticized.

There is an aestheticization of everyday life that seeks to revalue the minute of all everyday experiences from drinking coffee, eating a hamburger, sitting in a chair or reading a book. All of these everyday activities are minutely re-evaluated with respect to their ethics, sustainability, reliability and pleasurable-ness. The maximization of pleasure, which is such a large part of capitalism and utilitarian humanitarianism is reclaimed to be redirected into an aesthetic ethic, where pleasures are economized, reduced but so as to be maximized in their quality and intensity. This minimalist aesthetic seek less quantity for more quality, it sacrifices one to intensify the other. Some of this is not new and has been part of popular counter-culture movements for a long time. This is being renewed and reinvented by Bobos within an alternative culture of politicized styles. There is a politics of consumption that is also a form of caring for the world, its resources, materials, workers and consumers. There is a social philosophy in all of this, which uses objects to materialize an alternative economy of pleasure and production that obeys an ethics of care.

The creative practices involve an attention to detail, craft and produce, and I believe the motivation is not merely snobbishness to ennoble the self. What the Bobos experience and truly desire is this re-ennobling of everyday life, which is experienced as threatened from all directions by alienation from low quality, mass produced commodities. It is not the generic nature of many commodities, which turns Bobos against them even though they are critical of many brand names. A new discerning consumer is cultivated, and artificial brands and

labels do not capture this consumer. Instead this discerning consumer and craftsman knows how to focus on region, climate, soil, altitude, rain and an array of other details that affect the quality of raw materials. It is the production of consumption and desire that is being resisted and reclaimed. As I already mentioned, the Bobos prefer their coffee hand-brewed and from a micro roaster. When they are asking for an ecological tomato from a certain farm, they are not just showing off, they are opposing the disposable society and the hothouse culture of production. The focus is on the individual craftsman but also the individual region and even farm. One also finds here a focus on other craftsmen who inhabit other specific milieu and know how to effectively utilize their natural strengths for the goal of improving the quality of life.

The designs of the plywooded stores of North Marais stand in stark contrast to the generic and sleek interior of Starbucks and H&M. This contrast is a cultivated one, meant partly to feature the goods and activities as what is being consumed in the store rather than the décor of the store. But this is also not totally truly for the minimalism of some stores is the aesthetic, this stark uniform background does feature the workers, their activities and their products. Bobos utilize what they see as a marginal aesthetic, a subversive aesthetic that seeks to divert the dominant culture, and to mark out new material realms of existence. They are exploring the tensions between mass production and the cultural value of individualism and creativity. Through their practices they are commenting on and objecting the industrialized production of culture, and they reverse this by making industrialization provide the material for unique aesthetic experiments in the mundane. A utopianism comes to inhabit the mundane, in the self that Lefevre and Bloch analyzed, namely the forms of transcendence that are made to inhabit the possibilities of mundane material reality.

Chapter 4:

Exoticism and Normality

In the introduction to his book *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, Graham Huggan (2001) argues that the meaning of the concept ‘exotic’ is more often than not misunderstood. The notion is frequently perceived as a quality naturally found in specific places, objects or people. In contrast, Huggan (ibid. pp.13) suggests that exoticism better describes “a particular mode of aesthetic perception - one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery”. In this chapter I will examine the Bobo fascination for all things exotic not just as meaningless exotica, but as a step in the development of new forms of cosmopolitanism. For much of modernity, the primitive and the orient were not just symbolic opposites to be opposed but also to be embraced, as part of a process of western society’s interrogation of its truths and identity. I will explore the incorporation and reformulation of exoticism within everyday cultural practices where it is a part of the stylization and aestheticization of everyday life. Rather than primitivism being rejected this imaginary construction of otherness is used to re-distance and re-embrace the mundane.

The Secret Temple of Exoticism

Ida, a Danish expat living in Paris once told me about a rather strange place that reminded her “much of a secret portal to the old colonial era”. She explained how she had heard of a vast indoor jungle, where people could come and dance to African rhythms in the orange light from heat lamps. This place instantly caught my interest, but I did not know where to find it, so I eventually gave up. A month later, a Sciences Po² student named Thomas said he wanted to show me a very Bobo bar with a colonial theme. I accepted without hesitation, as I realized this had to be the mythical place that Ida had been talking about.

I meet Thomas in one of the northeastern arrondissements. We walk through the night in a deserted area, until Thomas suddenly stops in front of a high brick wall, decorated with a

² Institut d’études politiques de Paris.

huge urban wall mural. Partially hidden in the shadow I see a heavily built dark-skinned man with a solemn face, looking from one side to the other while nodding discretely to us. “Attendez”, he says and disappears for a short while. When he returns, he mumbles “Allez-y” and we enter a pitch-dark backyard with lush shrubbery surrounding it. I stop for a second to make a remark on the surroundings, but then I hear a rather aggressive “Shhhh!” from whence we came, and the light from a flashlight hits my eyes. Thomas explains to me that the place would have to close down if the neighbors start complaining about the noise. I follow Thomas towards the pink lights by the entrance.

There is a huge contrast between the silent backyard and the commotion from partygoers inside. We find ourselves immediately in a slow-moving line, inside the hall. The walls are covered with red floral wallpaper. There are high ceilings, and above us hangs an impressive chandelier that lights up the little room. Framed photos of smiling African politicians posing formally are hanging on the wall. To our right is a valet wardrobe that everyone must pass on the way in. I notice a collection box on the desk with the word “DONATIONS” written in chalk. This can be interpreted as a caricature of western aid towards impoverished African nations. Thomas tells me that the donations are only voluntary in theory, and he points discreetly at a man to our left. He is watching the queue of people attentively, leaning on a cane. This dark-skinned man is impeccably dressed in his tailored suit. He has a large grey beard, sunglasses with thick framing and a beige fedora hat. A bit anxious, I stick a bank note in the box thinking that it is better to pay too much than too little. My anticipation grows as we enter through the double doors.

Africa in Europe

On the other side, we find ourselves in what can only be described as part jungle and part large-scale bungalow. Green plants are covering most of the sand-colored walls from the floor to the roof. The wooden floor creaks under our feet. We are neither outside nor inside. A young woman with an Afro hairdo is passing me in a hurry, pushing a wheelbarrow full of empty half-liter juice bottles of an exotic brand that I have never heard of. When I look around, I see young people lounging around on wooden benches, drinking from these same kinds of juice bottles with straws. “What is the deal with the juice?” I ask Thomas. He answers that it is “an African thing” and that the place takes pride in its selection of fruit cocktails. The bar is covered by a thatched roof, and offers in addition to cocktails a wide variety of (quite expensive) imported African beers. When I stand in line to buy a bottle, I

realize that all the employees on duty tonight are of African descent. In these liminal zones that are betwixt and between cultures, times and places, there is a world of momentary experiential pleasures that can be shared across the racial divide. The colonial encounter is partly being restaged and reformulated.

I do not see this place as an attempt at going back to a pure African past, a customary realm of tradition, but as a celebration of the possibilities of a modern Africa that has surpassed its dictators. Rather than a communication of the Back to Africa theme, Africa is being imported into Europe so as to explore its possibilities, so as to explore an alternative African modernity. Africa is still being embraced and celebrated as offering a world of sensual rhythm but this is not the beat of traditional drums but of a global music scene where African musicians borrow on western styles to create a new kind of African music. Hebdige (1988) notes how African drums and music; the voice of Africa, was silenced whenever possible in the British colonies in the West Indies. The preservation of African traditions like drumming has, Hebdige argues, often been understood as a symbolic threat to law and order. He claims the church, the colonial authorities and even some post-colonial governments declared African drumming subversive because it hinted of “unspeakable alien rites, they made possible illicit and rancorous allegiances which smacked of future discord. They hinted at the darkest of rebellions: a celebration of Negritude” (ibid. pp. 31). In this club, not only music, but also beer, fruit cocktails and food are being brought to the scene. These commodities act as sensual portals, portals into new worlds of experience, where the “primitiveness” of African offers new ways of not being at home. But it is also Africanness which is being remade, and it is the history of its remaking which is being quoted in donation boxes, election posters and smartly dressed ticket staff. Africanness is being remade yet again as a realm of sensual excess, as a vector of modernity gone astray. Hebdige claims that in the contemporary performing of African music, the drifting continent, the Lost World, is restored and given “a privileged place within the black mythology” (ibid.).

A Culture of Display

In the corners of this big bungalow, I notice several small platforms with exhibitions of the type you can find in cultural historic museums. One of them exhibits a scene from an African school in the countryside. It is complete with a blackboard, teacher's desk and a globe. Here, it is the colonial pedagogic culture that is being caricatured but also mocked for also written on the blackboard is the code to the Wi-Fi network that the club offers its

patrons. African is presented as something to be displayed by the West, a curiosity, and as something to be transformed through schools and a western education.

I learn that in the daytime, the club functions both as a café and as a form of museum for Franco-African culture. The people behind it call it “a temple dedicated to exoticism” for the curious voyage lover. People are invited to both explore and appreciate unknown and strange cultures, “sometimes underrated and often marginalized”. The club takes a certain pride in helping to preserve and promote the patrimony of its talents, making this a “new source of revenues and knowledge”. What is happening here is not isolated, for it is part of a growing tourist and Internet culture that has popularized other cultures but, more than this, that has also popularized the critiques of colonialism and of a western curiosity. This curiosity is not repressed or denied but exists in quotation marks as also something to be displayed. There are so many displays going on here; that of African culture, and the display of western ways of presenting Africanness, of helping Africans. There is a display of the internalization of western culture within modern African nations, for the focus is not on untouched customary African cultures. Rather, the focus is partly on African modernity, such as African schools, politicians, political parties and campaign slogans. It is African modernity that is up on display but also critiqued as in need of being reinvented through new portals.

Thomas and I move on to the next room, where the festive atmosphere is considerably higher. The combination of numerous roof windows high above us, and the solid pillars of wood scattered around the room which contains even more climbing plants, give the impression that we are in a jungle near the equator. Life is teeming with growth and movement. The only thing breaking this illusion is the checkered floor and several vintage velvet sofas that hint to a colonial heritage. Some of the furniture is upholstered in a leopard fabric indicating the way in which modernity was localized in Africa whilst Africanness was also correspondingly modernized and commodified. There are also a variety of old-fashioned school chairs, but it is Saturday night, so all of them are taken. The school chairs indicate the paternal pedagogic logic of colonialism and this is what revelers are also revisiting. Lanterns are hanging from the ceiling, together with a selection of fabrics depicting several of the Francophone, African politicians. A fake tiger skin hangs on one wall. In one corner of this elaborate showcase, there is a small DJ booth with an adjacent very small, sweaty and crowded dance floor. The DJ is playing a mix between African tunes and modern RnB chart hits. The clientele is mostly white and trendy people in their twenties,

with an exception of a couple of confused tourists. In a way we all become cultural tourists in this exotic, romanticized conception of Franco-African culture and its relationship to its past. This past exists as something to be quoted, mocked, satirized, embraced and internalized, like it is a tangled space of ambiguous ambivalences.

To my left, I notice a separate area. In the center, there is a vintage barber chair, and above it hangs a banner indicating that you could get your hair cut. A person is actually sitting in the chair in the middle of a nightclub, while an attentive hairdresser is giving him a haircut. None of them seems to pay much attention to the surrounding people, who are drinking, talking and dancing. On the wall in this little salon, there are posters with stylized paintings of African individuals in profile who display the various types of hairstyles for customers to choose from. A couple of customers are standing in line, waiting for their turn to have a makeover. The culture of being served and groomed in the colonies seems to be displayed as a culture of racial servitude. The vintage chair, décor and staff seem to hint to a past colonial culture but this only exists in quotation marks, as the barber and hairstyles are of a hip modernity that transcends the hairstyles of white colonists and their African staff. The hairstyles point to a new African identity and it is this that is being performed for all to witness. It is the crafting of new identities that is being displayed. The self does not emerge from some shop already groomed; rather it is grooming and crafting the possibilities of the modern self that are displayed. Also, what is partly being displayed, is that Europeans have gained their identity from their servants that is being performed and how the lowly work of this servitude can be re-embraced as a domain of pride. It can be glamorized, projected and made part of global elite forms of consumption that appreciate attentive care, skilled groomers of identity.

This display of the cutting and grooming of hair re-enacts the spectacle of production outlined in my previous chapter, where the customers are witnessing the roasting process of the coffee beans. It is the act of crafting that is on display and celebrated. In a strange way, this mirrors what the Centre Pompidou in Paris also sought to do when it displayed the hidden infrastructure of the building and sought to make that into a work of art. There is a common aestheticization of what was lowly, hidden and worked in the background. In this case it is the preparation of the self, its hidden forms of grooming and the craft involved in that. There is a celebration of menial skilled work that elevates it in the same way as Africanness and the primitive are elevated. In all of this, that which is subordinated,

marginalized and hidden becomes the focus of a new culture of display that redefines race alongside other redefinitions occurring within popular culture. One redefinition is merged and made to carry others, and this ambiguity is the aesthetic power of what is being performed.

The bar closes at two o'clock, so we leave a little earlier in order to avoid the crowd. The moment we step out into the dark backyard again, a man appears and commands us to stop and wait in silence. He tells us to remain quiet until the people exiting before us are safely out on the street again. Someone further ahead signals something to our man, and he guides us through the backyard ally with a flashlight in his hand and out onto the empty street. The colonial culture of servitude does not disappear but is merged with a culture to protect our potentially illicit pleasures. It is the illicit pleasures of the marginalized, their hidden nature and the supervision needed to protect them that are being displayed in this careful orchestrating of movements, of customers and staff. The wider culture of Paris is against our pleasures; it wants its order and quietness that the excesses of immigrant Africans threaten to disturb. We are white European patrons but we are resituated and made to participate in a clandestine world of racial pleasure. This is also the voyeurism, it is not just in the club, but also in the way patrons are taken, or smuggled into and out of the club, almost as illegal immigrants. This is implied in our clandestine entry into this hidden world of pleasure and our clandestine exit. It is also Africans living in France who are displaying a new way of remaking their clandestine pleasures, of mainstreaming Franco-African pleasures in a way that captures the clandestine as part of their character or nature.

“Are you there Africa with the bulging chest and oblong thigh? Sulking Africa, wrought of iron in the fire, Africa of the millions of royal slaves, deported Africa, drifting continent are you there? Slowly you vanish, you withdraw into the past, into the tales of castaways, colonial museums, the works of scholars; but I call you back this evening to attend a secret revel.” Jean Genet (Hebdige, 1988, pp. 30)

The Logic of Exoticism

The African themed nightclub shows that exoticism has a certain appeal among segments of the Bobo culture. The “secret revel”, the nightclub, invokes a strategic form of exoticism. It is partly other times and other places that are being commodified as part of an exploration of alterity. Here, the sensual experience consists of visual as well as sound sensations; there is

the mock animal fur, posters, the tropical jungle, the percussive vibrations of drums and African world beat music. There is also tropical warmth and humidity provided by the artificial heat and light of electric lamps. Together with the packed moving crowd, we sweat as if we are in the tropics and drink fluids accordingly. This voyaging to another place is a mock form of voyaging; it does not seek to reproduce an original primitive experience but to play with caricature; our caricatures of Africa and primitives. However, it also displays and mocks the boastful caricatures of African politicians who are featured in their suits, sunglasses, military uniforms, and false smiles and promises. It is the act of caricature that is being celebrated as a self-conscious human experience that needs to be kept in check by always being itself exaggerated so as to be recognized as inherent in processes of idealization. This rooting of idealization in material places, times and objects is equated with a colonial heritage and its claiming and possession of Africa. However it is also equated with modern ways of travelling to other places and times through the virtual portals of the Internet and of science fiction narratives. Both of which are often merged.

It is modern ways of travelling into imaginary terrains that are here made the basis for going out and having an alternative experience of reality. The club, the weekend and the night as times and sites of alterity for other drunken experiences, movements and relationships are likened to a travel into the alterity of another continent and historical period. It is also the virtual portals of the Internet and science fiction narratives that are equated with colonial travels, tourism, and a voyeuristic consumption of primitiveness. To some extent the latter (tourism and consumer voyeurism) are being played with as a new form of colonialism. However, this modernization and commodification of Africanness and its modernization also stage a desire to voyage beyond colonial identities, narratives and personalities so as to invent new Africans for modernity and a new modernity for Africans.

The assortments and arrangements of the exotic are impossible to unpack unless we look at how exoticism is collected to be displayed. Edward Said (2003) wrote about how exotic images are perceived through colonialism and texts like for example the works of the Orientalist writers Hugo, Nerval and Flaubert. Such works are based on “a free-floating mythology of the Orient, an Orient that derives not only from contemporary attitudes and popular prejudices but also from what Vico called the conceit of nations and of scholars” (ibid. pp. 53). The Orient is perceived as one culture, when in fact it is many. He illustrates the meaninglessness of this simplifying logic by pointing out that within Orientalist circles

an expert in Islamic law is considered as much of an Orientalist as an expert in Chinese dialects.

Said argues that to a certain degree, societies are deriving a sense of their identities negatively. He is using an analogy of an agrarian group living on some acres of land. This group of people will set up boundaries between their land and “the land of the barbarians”. The members of the group will identify themselves as non-barbarians as much as they will positively identify themselves as belonging to their own community. Said’s claim is that what makes the members identify themselves as not-foreign is their imagined and inaccurate image of the territory beyond. This is what he calls *imaginative geographies*, and he argues that imaginative space is more powerful to the mind than the objective space. It is this act of imagining and positioning others in categories that is embraced and restaged as mixture of history and caricature, which produces new hybrid skills, identities, pleasure and experiences that are still in a process of becoming. It is the contemporary restaging of African modernity that is being explored as a space of liminal becomings, where the spectacle is not just African primitiveness but its uncompleted, misdirected and renewed processes of modernization.

The Exotic North

The exoticism like that of the African nightclub is not the only kind of otherness that Bobos appropriate and appreciate. I have visited a beautiful Swedish themed café that serves Swedish open sandwiches and Nordic salads. The café is also offering a rather interesting selection of gimmicks to make the place seem more Scandinavian. It is wonderfully furnished with minimalist Swedish furniture, and the lunch menus range in size from “liten” (Swedish for “small”) to “viking”. To make this cultural image complete, all the baristas are blonde Swedes who look like they could have come straight from the set of an Ingmar Bergman movie. It is obvious that they are playing with the aesthetic; there is some kind of playful ethnic theatre unfolding here. While I pondered whether the ethnicity of the all-Scandinavian staff really is coincidental or not, I stumbled upon a job advertisement on the coffee shop’s own Facebook page. It was written in Swedish and addressed to “Scandinavian people”. It said that the employee they sought needed to be service minded and have laughter on his lips. A person might be the most service minded and laughing person in the world, but unless he or she is able to understand and read Swedish he will not be considered for the hiring, he would not even know about the job opening in the first place. This apparent

linguistic discrimination is a good indicator of how far the establishment is willing to go in order to maintain its performance of ethnicity.

Also what is being marketed in this café a certain kind of tourism without needing to go abroad, a cultural tourism that explores other cultures in the middle of Paris. But it is not only this, it is a culture of also living the world with quotation marks, not get rid of the quotation marks that are the caricatures and stereotypes but marking them so as to accentuate them. It is living the world in its kitsch forms, enjoying them as styles in their own right and it is here that this lower middle class sensibility begins to approach the aesthetic culture of the upper classes which as Bourdieu (2010) notes is an awareness of styles, their history and relationships. It is here that cultural entrepreneur poach on middle class knowledge of art and style but so reinvent their appreciation of it.

These two places are selling more than African imported beer and Nordic open sandwiches. What they are selling is cultural images that are often the simulated realization of other realities. This commodification of otherness substantiates Huggan's (2001) claim that cultural difference has an aesthetic value. During my fieldwork I was surprised by how Nordic symbols were being appropriated. I stumbled upon a very cool establishment selling vintage Scandinavian design furniture. The entrepreneurs behind the shop had landed on the name "Nordic Market". Their Bobo target group is able to read English, and the name is good, but it did not feel "Nordic enough". Thus the name is written in stylized Nordic letters: "Nørdik Mårket". In fact, to a Nordic person "Ø" and "Å" are not simply cool ways of writing "O" and "A", and the stylization renders the shop name meaningless in every aspect other than the purely aesthetical. The Nordic letters and names are present in many hip business establishments in the French capital. In their ambitious attempts to find lines of flight to become something else, these are mere experiments in creating a new language that is obeying Scandinavian rules of grammar, spelling and meaning. It is the design aspects of Scandinavian culture that are being appropriated and marketed as high-end minimalist aesthetic. There is a utopian futurism in Scandinavian design and it is the alterity of the future as much as the alterity of a primitive past that is being revisited.

The fetishizing of Nordic letters might sound a bit strange. Camille, one of my informants, told me that she was exceedingly happy when one of my visiting Norwegian friends added her as a friend on Facebook, after a party in my Parisian studio apartment. She told me that

the reason for her celebration, apart from the widening of her social network now also being digitally affirmed, was that her new friend had a Nordic name, containing among other the letter “Ø”. Camille is obsessed with everything Scandinavian, and has seen every film ever made by the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman. Her second favorite TV show (after *Twin Peaks*), is the Danish cult series “*Riget*” by Lars von Trier. Most of her perceptions of Scandinavia have been crafted from such iconic cultural commodities, with Scandinavia becoming an imaginary geography. When I showed her a photo of my Norwegian apartment, she exclaimed in joy “Oh, it’s so Scandi!” She is not the only one of my informants that experienced a Scandinavian crush. Marcel the barista told me about his dream of moving to Oslo, mainly because of romanticized notions of Norwegian coffee and the music scene.

I soon realized that Scandinavia is perceived as a really trendy place, many “with-it” people loving Nordic minimalist fashion and furniture design. Murphy (2013) reveals how certain elements of Swedish design reflect and enact a social democratic ideology, based on the notion of ‘care’. He looks at design discourses that speak of how good design should not be expensive and exclusive. Swedish design is portrayed as a medium for a more beautiful everyday world that should be transmitted alongside products that also deliver simplicity, functionality, economy and quality. Murphy also points to the value structures articulated in Swedish design, the cultural geometry. These include the straight line and the simple curve. The straight line represents “human capacity to craft more efficient shapes than are often found in nature” (ibid. pp. 123). Opposed to the more natural “primitive” cultural geometry, the straight line of Swedish design is mirroring the rational social democracy, a project of providing order to the flowing vicissitudes and arbitrariness of social and economic life. Swedish design seeks to aestheticize everyday life, it seeks to bring beauty to the masses. It does not treat art as in opposition to geometry or economy. Instead it is part of the rationalization of everyday life, where geometry becomes beautiful and the beautiful becomes geometrical. Here the art of reason becomes the reason for art. The masses have a right to beauty just as they have a right to a certain living standard that must be provided by the welfare state but also by good design. The latter must be beauty to the masses in an economically affordable form that does not compromise on function, durability and simplicity. It is the crafting of this worldview in Swedish design that attracts Bobos.

Boboisation

Whilst interested in exoticism, Bobos have also become a new form of the exotic. The term *boboisation* has become synonymous with the specific forms of gentrification they bring (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, 2013). They generally inhabit the multicultural and lower class areas of Paris, and regard the marginality of those areas and their inhabitants as synonymous with what they seek. One example is the street that I lived in during the six months of my fieldwork. In this rather seedy area you can witness gentrification in process. Among drug dealers, beggars and prostitutes, the Bobos are strolling around casually, taking pride in the fact that the surrounding milieu does not bother them. These petty bourgeois bohemians are open and tolerant with difference. They articulate a cosmopolitanism and their fascination for all things exotic produces a certain kind of gentrification that is not a form of assimilation. Instead their own Bobo marketing of the exotic exists along other exotic performances of marginalization. In my old street, trendy burger joints and chic Bobo bars pop up in between the existing shisha bars, Indian restaurants and Lebanese soup kitchens. One form of the exotic feeds of another, but more than this, the exotic culture of street food, drink and clothes is being rebadged and moved up the class structure. Not all the way up to the top, but more to those who are, like the Bobos, relatively low in economic capital whilst claiming high forms of cultural capital.

Gentrification is occurring throughout Paris, but it takes different forms. While the traditional bourgeoisie still lives on the left bank and in the western parts of town, the Bobos are moving east and north, where they traditionally do not belong, into houses which are not expensive, but have character, charm and what one might say the exoticness of another time, and so can be done up. The Bobos are awfully aware of this gentrification process and how it is a self-sustaining and self-fulfilling process where their mutual investments reinforce each other by moving up prices in the areas they buy into. My informant Aurore has moved together with her girlfriend. She still keeps her old apartment in the far north of Paris. She claims the flat is located in a rather bad area, but does not want to sell the apartment just yet, as she is waiting for the *boboisation* to reach her home. When it does, and she knows it will at some point, she plans to sell and get money to buy another apartment together with her partner. Bobos are not wealthy investors but astute businesspersons who pride themselves on their knowledge of financial possibilities.

Normal is the New Exotic

The exoticism of the Bobos is also visible in another way; as a style, revealed in how they choose to dress. The classic Bobo attire is chic and casual with a rather minimalist color scheme of black, grey and navy. However, it turned out that some of the Bobos were more experimental in fashion than others. Style is a fluid concept, and the aesthetics of the Bobo is always changing. These changes are never arbitrary; the style is changing along certain lines. Before starting my fieldwork, I was prepared for a variety of different challenges. How was I going to get in touch with the Bobos, and would they even bother to talk to me? What I did not anticipate was that the spring of 2014, the period of my fieldwork, coincided with the emergence of the so-called normcore³ aesthetic, which could possibly make the Bobos difficult to spot.

Normcore is a certain ironic aesthetic or style of dressing that aims to be as normal looking as possible. It is a form of “stylized blandness” (Duncan, 2014), or a plain anti-style. For the normcore people, exclusivity and high fashion brands are out, while practical clothes like fleece jackets, caps, unflattering jeans and sensible sneakers are in. Jerry Seinfeld in the early 1990s, during the golden age of the television hit show “Seinfeld” is often credited as the big fashion icon of this style (ibid.). Neutrality and plainness with a twist of irony is replacing the “compulsory uniqueness” that for so long has dominated the fashion scene.

This rejection of expensive brands and the embrace of simple *Monoprix*⁴ clothes might not be the first thing that comes to our minds when we think of Bobos. However, on one occasion during my fieldwork I almost missed out on a treasured Bobo informant because I was fooled by an anti-fashionable and average-looking style. Albertine, the professional crossword maker and author I introduced in the previous chapter is a good representative for this acting and stylizing of an aesthetic of the basic. It is another aesthetic of minimalism that both celebrates it but parodies it. The first time we met, at a mutual friend’s engagement party, I failed to recognize Albertine as a Bobo. She wore a quite bland grey cardigan and blue jeans. I wanted to uncover how average French people regarded the Bobos, and when I confronted her with some of the typical apprehensions, she surprisingly told me that she in

³ The term *normcore* was coined by the New York based trend-forecasting group K-Hole (Mullins, 2014).

⁴ Monoprix is one of the biggest French retail chains, selling groceries, household items and clothes.

fact was a Bobo herself. As she outlined her interests, hobbies, profession and family background it gradually became more evident that she really was the Bobo she claimed to be.

With the emergence of the normcore aesthetic, spotting Bobos can prove to be an increasingly difficult task for non-Bobos. The ability to spot requires knowledge and an attention to very subtle detail. So why is it that some Bobos, typically known for being highly concerned about both quality and exclusivity, all of a sudden seemed to embrace the normcore style? Paul Mullins (2014) claims in his blog article “Radical Banality: The Materiality of Sameness” that the performative aspect of normcore and acting basic leads commentators to understand the phenomena as forms of hollow theater.

“Some consumers may imagine themselves to be capturing normality, but the acting basic parroting of the mainstream has its own insulting pretentiousness. Flustered by the whims of fashion, foiled by class-climbing, and eager to appear stylish without conscious reflection, the bourgeois appear to mimic normative styles that will somehow relieve their sense of inauthenticity” (Mullins, 2014).

The Bobos are mimicking the mainstream, but this is going both ways. Hebdige (1988) claims that entrepreneurs often tend to commodify new popular aesthetics, thereby offering it to the mainstream. To the Bobos, *mainstream* is almost a derogatory term, yet at the same time they copy elements of mainstream culture and transform it into an aesthetic style. When the mainstream appropriates Bobo aesthetics, the aesthetic expression loses its symbolic meaning as transgression, as exotic forms of marginality. The Bobos seeks to reverse this process so as to copy and divert the mainstream and in doing so implying that it does not recognize its own exoticness, its own strangeness. Here it is also the act of mass reproduction that is being aestheticized. This echoes the pop art of Andy Warhol, where the motif is repeated over and over. The society is mass-producing not just products but also people and it is this tension between an industrial production of people and the cultural value of individualism that is being playfully explored through the normcore aesthetic. Mass production is being individualized and individualism is being mass-produced.

What happens to the semantic meaning of the mainstream plain aesthetic when the Bobos appropriate it through their ironic aesthetic parody? When the mainstream is made to exist as one style amongst many global styles and perhaps the strangest of them all because it does

not recognize its own exoticism, the Bobos of Paris partly emerge from the scenes of an old American sitcom and cheap supermarket clothing stores. They also play with the cultural geometry of Swedish design and the primitiveness and modernity of Africa. They recreate Swedish themed cafés and modern minimalist furniture whilst also visiting African colonial themed nightclubs for experiences of excess. Paradoxically their embrace of the normcore style belongs to this same kind of exoticism. But here the fascination is not based on distance in geography, culture and time, rather the normcore is an attempt by Bobos to explore how the familiar is really strange, how the familiar needs to be decontextualized so as to be properly understood as a form of everyday life that has not become fully conscious of its own possibilities.

Far from all Bobos wear cheap plain bland *normcore* clothes. Sometimes, they wear very expensive clothing but then often clothes that are plain, minimalistic or understated. Style of clothing is one of the ways in which the Bobos explore their identity. By wearing typical high end prêt-à-porter clothing brands like for example APC they send out a signal that “Yes, I have a lot of money, and I invest in classic garments of high quality that last several seasons, which means that I’m also very eco-friendly”. There is a critique of mass production and the disposable society that mass-produces inferior products with a short life span. Hence, there is an interest in the moral economy of Swedish design that seeks to produce beautiful durable cheap products. Environmentalism is embraced as a moral value to be lived in a new way, and has become an aesthetic of everyday life. Bobos are trying to transform capitalism, to create a more ecological version of capitalism that uses its industrialism and science to craft a new art of living. The Bobo’s play with self-presentation, and the normcore or acting basic style is appealing to their individuality, transforming mass-produced normality and banality into a style. The trend almost provides a blank canvas where the Bobo can express all of his or her creativity and intellectual grandeur as a parody of processes of normalization. The appeal might also be partly nostalgia, as the typical normcore reeks of the 90s with its turtleneck sweaters, white sneakers and high-waisted pants. There is the distance of another time that sustains this caricature of normalness, where normality is made exotic. Here, the bland and functional are reinvented, they are resituated to become part of high art, an anti-aesthetic that is still aesthetic.

Chapter 5:

Eating Images

“The gastronomic meal of the French is a customary social practice for celebrating important moments in the lives of individuals and groups, such as births, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, achievements and reunions. It is a festive meal bringing people together for an occasion to enjoy the art of good eating and drinking. The gastronomic meal emphasizes togetherness, the pleasure of taste, and the balance between human beings and the products of nature.” (UNESCO, 2010).

The French take eating seriously. The above quote was part of the argumentation when UNESCO added French gastronomy to their list of “intangible cultural heritage”. The art of cooking and eating is an integral part of French national culture and identity. Yet there are also provincial celebrations of regional specialties that no longer compete with each other but exists as global icons like foie gras, ratatouille, confit de canard, boef bourguignon and, of course, snails. Paris is the capital of the country, and is often perceived as the nation’s gastronomical capital with somewhere around 40 000 restaurants (BBC, 2009). Indeed, the city of Paris is renowned for having one of the world’s most exquisite food scenes. People from all over France, Europe and the world flock to the city of lights to try some of the French cuisine, a phenomenon referred to as *gastro-tourism*.

The French have introduced us to important status distinctions such as *haute cuisine* and gourmet food, which sometimes seems to be seeking a hegemonic hold over what is legitimate gastronomy. Recent developments in popular western culture indicate an ongoing broadening of the culinary highbrow discourse. Indeed, many food critics talk of a food revolution going on which is driven in part by the mass popularization of gourmet specialties on one side, and the elevation of street food and everyday popular cuisine into a gourmet art form on the other side. The media is playing an important part in creating a new culture of eating, in popularizing new arts for eating. The same thing can be said for the ever-increasing mass of specialty coffee shops that serve breakfast and lunch for an increasingly discriminating clientele. This new generation of “tasters” is often more educated and can be demanding in seeking out new kinds of experiences that have a particular shape and character.

Today, many kinds of food that were earlier frowned upon, like pies, hamburgers, hot dogs, and fish and chips, are enjoying a new won respect among *les connoisseurs*. There is a process of appropriation, where lowbrow food is being borrowed, ennobled and re-dignified. This appropriation is part of a process of changing class relations. The cultural capital and distinctions of haute cuisine that had previously belonged to the upper classes are now being contested and redefined. New palates are being created that ennoble other kinds of bodies with the fine gradations and the distinctions of an ennobled palate. Those lower down in the class hierarchy are challenging the sensitive gradations and the knowledge that informed the sensuous palate of the bourgeoisie. They claim a more knowledgeable cosmopolitan palate that puts the bourgeoisie palate alongside others, making it compete with ennobled street food, with gourmet hamburgers.

In earlier chapters, I argued that the Bobos cultivate a wide-ranged set of aesthetic dispositions and symbolic practices; they are what Peterson (1992) calls omnivorous cultural consumers. This is not because they consume everything, but because they selectively appropriate from a wide-ranging palate so as to create a new model of cosmopolitan identity. This chapter will focus ethnographically on the Bobo's production of a culinary sensuality. I will explore new consumptive practices in the domain of food and drink as part of the Bobo project of aestheticizing everyday life, or perhaps more accurately, *re-aestheticizing* it in new ways. One can argue that this approach creates new arts for living life by making the living of life into an art, a sensuous art. Here the body and knowledge are not opposed because this is an informed palate that takes pride in its detailed knowledge of what it consumes. Thus the body is also consuming this knowledge, reaffirming its internalization when it drinks coffee beans from a specific farm in Kenya's Nyeri district.

Gourmet Street Food

"Gourmet" is a French word originally meaning "wine taster", but today it means something like "connoisseur of good food", a knowledgeable person with a discriminating taste when it comes to food. More specifically, a gourmet invokes a person who does not eat primarily for nourishment, but looks down on this unthinking indiscriminating plebian approach to food. The word "gourmet" today is heavily connoted with highbrow, refined and expensive food traditions, of the type you often find in elegant restaurants with white tablecloths and polished waiters. *Gourmet* as a practice is part of class distinctions that naturalize and

individualize class by internalizing its articulation as a noble, refined taste (Bourdieu, 2010). The term gourmet *street food* is almost a contradiction in terms, a class contradiction if you like, for it brings together cheap plebian food with that of a high brow palate. The contradiction is often deliberately being played as part of a micro-process of class warfare that the petty bourgeoisie wages against its superiors by challenging their distinctions, by challenging their basic understandings of taste. Food becomes part of the semiotics of class relations, it materializes practices and forms of knowledge that re-order the world by bringing gourmet into the street, whilst street food is moved into the restaurant.

Restaurants with different takes on street food are currently popping up in all of the hippest Parisian neighborhoods, a food trend that is also visible in other parts of the world. Much of this street food has its origin from other cultures outside of France, and is enthusiastically imported and celebrated. For instance, the man behind one of Paris' most renowned, prestigious and high-end restaurants recently opened up a gourmet kebab restaurant. Tiny and exclusive French dishes are replaced by Middle Eastern street food, but with a gourmet twist: the herbs are carefully selected, all the vegetables are ecological, and the meat comes from the best butchers in Paris, grilled on open fire. A Parisian newspaper reviewed the opening of the restaurant and commented that the Kebab is going through a *chic* makeover (Leblanc, 2013). Trendy burger restaurants are, as I have showed, also flourishing all over town and they ironically call themselves *d'ateliers du hamburger*, "workshops of the hamburger", so as to distinguish themselves from lowbrow burger places like McDonalds and similar fast food restaurants. The first time I went to try a burger in one of these burger ateliers, I ended up in an *atelier du Hot-Dog* by mistake. Through these *ateliers*, *these new workshops*, food is recrafted, reworked as raw material that will deliver something beautiful, so that what was previously regarded as low class trash food is now transformed into something sensuously beautiful to smell, taste and look at.

Among the African hairdressers, art galleries and drug dealers of the 10th arrondissement, between the Canal Saint-Martin and Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis, you can find a very trendy restaurant that serves one of the lowbrow food dishes that have gained new won respect from Bobos; fish and chips. This originally working class dish was imported from England, where it is increasingly difficult to find. It is not hard to find in some part of Paris even though customers are not in its country of origin. What is special about this particular Bobo restaurant serving fish and chips is its surrounding environment and the way it is being

marketed. The restaurant has a catchy, unpretentious English name: “The Sunken Chip”. While the original fish and chips was often served on dirty docks in English harbor cities and is still today often sold in shabby street stalls, this newly opened restaurant evoked a strong air of *cleanliness*. As soon as I entered, I noticed white metro tiles covering the walls from floor to ceiling. The tables are in solid wood, the walls are plain and light cream. Completing this austere minimalist décor, customers sit on plain wooden benches and classroom chairs. The only prominent colors in the room are from the mono-colored red and yellow ketchup - and mustard bottles. These have no labels, just simple, clean bottles.

The minimalist décor accentuates the strong right angle geometry of the tiles, tables, benches and chairs. It creates a sense of order and discipline; that a rational aesthetic now controls the cooking process to perfection. The heat of the oil, the thickness and consistency of the batter, the quality of the fish and potatoes, and the cooking time are all precisely controlled to deliver fish and chips as never before. The décor reinforces the sense that this is a workshop that merges rationalism with aesthetics, knowledge and control with sensuous taste.

“Backwards Africa” is not being reinvented here, but seedy Englishness is. Both become resources that have hit upon unique and original cuisine (also drinks, music, fabric design) whose possibilities can be refined and elaborated in more controlled environments, by global craftsmen who seek to resurrect local knowledges, practices and tastes. These local practices, knowledges and tastes are being relocalized and globalized. Perhaps more accurately, they are being globalized in multiple local ways, by new local craftsmen, who seek out local exotic aesthetics. Here they often render the familiar exotic, alongside making the exotic familiar.

Le Fooding

One of the most important promoters behind the emergence of the gourmet street food-trend is Le Fooding. This is a food movement founded in 2000 that involves food guides, food apps and gastronomic events (Gopnik, 2010). According to its founders Alexandre Cammas and Emmanuel Rubin, Le Fooding seeks to open up French cuisine: to break it free from its traditional conventions and codes. There are clear parallels between the Fooding ideology and the typical values of the Bobo. The word Fooding is a contraction between the words “Food” and “Feeling”. The use of two English words to create a new word in French culture symbolizes this strategy of using the familiar outside in new ways so to be break away from the conventions and patriotism of traditional French cuisine. It is the remaking of French

taste through a new way of traveling outside and then coming back. Here we should also note that the “outside” is not just there but is also what is being reinvented, it is being cut up and rejoined for strategic meaningful purposes.

According to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, French food is divided in two blocks (Gopnik, 2010). There is the bourgeois Michelin guide on one side, which is a gastronomical institution with more than a hundred years of cultural experience. On the other side, you find the Bobo Le Fooding, which is a much newer guide born out of challenges and a desire to change Michelin gastronomy, judging it to be outdated. According to Le Fooding's primus motor Alexandre Cammas, the movement emerged as a response to French cuisine becoming trapped in a *museum culture*, and not being a part of its own time. This rigidity was partly reinforced by tourism, Cammas sarcastically commented how each year, millions of tourist travel to Paris, to "experience gastronomy in a kind of perpetual museum of edification" Cammas (Ibid.). He argued that traditional French dishes like *foie gras* and *poulet de bresse* were “mechanically copied over and over—it’s not living cuisine. In a living cuisine, things move and mix together, and that’s what makes the cuisine of tomorrow” (ibid.).

Le Fooding has certain politics to it, in that the movement seeks to *shock the bourgeoisie*. At one of Le Fooding’s gastronomic events, a young chef gathered different vegetables on his plate, which was meant to symbolize the religions of the world, and on top of this small mound he placed a giant French fry shaped like a cross. The symbolism here is that one vegetable cooked so as to symbolize French culture occupies the dominant religion of taste. It presides with its sacredness over less differentiated cuisines, tastes and raw materials. Positioning themselves as the leftwing revolutionaries of food cuisine, Le Fooding wants to “wrench the entire culture of good food in France from its historic place, on the nationalist right” (Gopnik, 2010).

Le Fooding has become a Bobo bible. There are many similarities between the philosophy of the food movement and Bobo values. The Bobos want to distinguish themselves from previous generations of bourgeoisie. They are more open-minded and adventurous, something that their love for everything exotic indicates. Le Fooding positions itself as a reaction against "an overly European, tradition-minded approach to food". Its explicit mission is to "break down French snobbery" (ibid.). Bourdieu’s work has shown how taste and the aesthetic have always been domains of class tensions, distinctions, hegemony and

resistances. The Bobos articulate a conflict not between the top and the bottom, the bourgeoisie and the working class, but more between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeoisie having its encompassing aesthetic perspective, which puts one style alongside another style, appropriated by the Bobos, who use it to challenge bourgeois aesthetic sensibility as not true to itself, as trapped in fixed forms and rituals of taste. The Bobos assert themselves as the true relativist comparers of taste because of their love for local skills, knowledges, practices and taste. As fellow craftsmen, they know what it is like to work, love, know and shape sensuous raw materials. More than voyeurs, they seek to identify themselves with an open horizon that appreciates the art of human labor, the pleasure of work within the work of pleasure.

I have mentioned that food trucks and gourmet burger restaurants are popping up in Bobo neighborhoods. These are constantly being mentioned and reviewed by *Le Fooding*. Journalist Adam Gopnik (2010) of *The New Yorker* tries to explain the socio-cultural tensions in this food movement:

“*Le Fooding* was to cooking what the New Wave was to French cinema. The hidden goal was to Americanize French food without becoming American, just as the New Wave, back in the fifties and sixties, was about taking in Hollywood virtues without being Hollywoodized—taking in some of the energy and optimism and informality that the French still associate with American movies while reimagining them as something distinctly French”

In its attacks upon traditional French gastronomic culture, *Le Fooding* accuses many food critics of just being conservative and patriotic. In reality, French cuisine is much more diverse than this cultural dichotomy allows for. However it is necessary to ask why this dichotomy is being formulated and put into circulation, what sort of work is being done by its symbolic content. This would treat the dichotomy not as an accurate representation of reality but as a vehicle for something. I want to suggest that there is a certain transformation of taste that has a class aspect. It is not a clear-cut conflict between working class and dominant class, or even between ethnic groups that have a class basis. It is a conflict between sections of the middle class, and in particular there has emerged an educated and skilled section of the petty bourgeoisie that celebrates its knowledge and skill as forms of cultural capital that surpasses both the aesthetic grand tastes of the bourgeoisie, and its ethical consciousness. The Bobos discover quality by seeking out local forms of beef, pork, chicken, eggs, and vegetables with ecological credentials based on not harming animals,

environment or consumers with chemicals, hormones and forced feeding. A new ethical consciousness mediates a new economy of pleasure, a new way of circulating and producing desires. The local exotic tastes that are found around the globe are recrafted and merged with ethically sourced products to produce something new and ambiguous.

A Process of Appropriation

All of the examples above document in perhaps a fragmentary way an appropriation process unfolding in the French capital amongst certain social classes. A rather explicit example of the Bobo's cultural appropriation of lowbrow food is in the unexpected "Big Mac Tribute". This is a gourmet burger that is currently being served in one of the hippest gourmet burger restaurants in Paris. Between three slices of freshly baked brioche buns are two juicy pieces of meat from cows that has been grassing outside all year. There are also quality salad leaves, nine months matured cheddar, onion slices and what is ironically called "big mac" sauce. The latter is a recreation of the big mac sauce, as imagined by the chefs. To some extent, this tribute makes fun of the original that it pretends to copy, for the burgers are non-comparable in terms of taste and quality. The Big Mac has become a symbol of fast food capitalism. In fact, there exists a concept in economic theory called "The Big Mac index"⁵ that measures purchasing power and standards of living in different countries by the ability to purchase a Big Mac. The Big Mac is here the measuring index for a bio politics that compares and evaluates working class living standards in terms of a shared material existence.

The improved burger is a hyper aestheticized display of Bobo practices for recrafting everyday tastes. While a tribute is supposed to pay respect to something; this product strips the Big Mac of its original materiality, reconstitutes its material form into a symbolic structure, a hollow shell to be refilled with other meanings and materiality. The Big Mac hamburger of capitalism is often the subject of popular environmental critique for its nutritional quality, lack of animal welfare, wasteful packaging and poor labor relations. The new burger is made at a small restaurant run by food enthusiasts who take the quality of their craft; food, seriously. The burger is reborn in a Bobo light, and the symbolic icon is filled with Bobo values; ecology, nutritional quality, animal welfare and craftsmanship.

⁵ *The Economist* invented this concept in 1986 to estimate the value of currency in a given country (The Economist, 2015). By comparing the prices of a product that is essentially similar world wide, the Big Mac, is able to measure purchasing power in an economy. Even though the Big Mac Index initially was meant as a way to make exchange-rate theory easier to graspable by using humor, it has today become a global standard.

The symbolic act of re-dignifying the burger is part of broader practices. It is partly an example of what Hebdige (1988) wrote about when the Punks made trash, in this case trash food, into objects of beauty, giving objects such as razor blades and safety pins new meaning as jewelry and ear rings. Something similar is happening to the Big Mac when it is re-dignified by Bobo practices. The Big Mac tribute can be seen as an attempt both to participate and aestheticize the protest against capitalism, its killing of people through poor nutrition and chemical additives, destruction of the environment, callous disregard for animal welfare, and dreadful employment conditions. The Big Mac Tribute is an ironic play that quotes and seems to reproduce capitalism's products and forms of consumption but with new meanings and products that valorize quality, health, environmental sustainability and the art of cooking. The tribute could be regarded as a symbolic ritual of rebellion that uses plebeian food to level out other symbolic hierarchies affirmed by a tradition of French cuisine. But, this needs to be qualified for, for the Bobos can also be accused of creating new symbolic hierarchies of taste, like fish and chips and burgers that the working class cannot afford, and which are instead directed at those new sections of the middle class which are like themselves, rich in cultural capital and comfortable but not rich in economic capital.

This cultural appropriation is related to, but not exactly the same as other forms of cultural appropriation that globalize the local. For example, the high-end European fashion house, Kokon To Zai, is currently selling sweaters with a design collected from a traditional Inuit jacket. A Nunavut family has claimed that the company has "stolen" the design from "a caribou skin parka originally made to offer spiritual protection to an Inuit shaman named Ava" (CBC, 2015). In Australia, Australian Aborigines are also concerned with how sacred secret designs that belong to particular clans, moieties or other social groups get appropriated in mass manufactured goods that print these designs onto items like cups, tea towels and t-shirts.

The Bobos are doing a different form of appropriation in that they are not a single global industrial or retail complex distributing the local around the globe. Instead, they are scattered local entrepreneurs and craftsmen who share a common philosophy to work, environment and taste that celebrates other local cultures whilst borrowing in a local way from them. It is the art of working other people's artistry, knowing their knowledge, reskilling their skills, reworking their work, recrafting their craftsmanship. There is no desire to get rid of work,

especially work that involves local or unique knowledge, skill and tastes. Indeed there is empathy and identification with this informed kind of work and an attempt to copy it. However they do not seek to copy it in a pure way, but in a faithful way that can perfect and redevelop the possibilities of what is being copied through modern craft labor. It is the dignity of work as a sensuous, knowledgeable, aesthetic activity that is being affirmed as a diffuse ideology that binds together a diverse group of entrepreneurs and workers in a style and in a movement. For there is a politics of culture, work and environment that celebrates the workshop and craft as the sites of creative labor for process of self-realization that overcome alienating forms of production. This is capitalism, or a fraction of it (its petty bourgeois fraction), struggling to overcome those forms of alienation that overly separates the act of production and consumption.

The challenges to *haute cuisine*, to what is regarded as high-quality cooking, comes by embracing burgers, hot dogs and fish and chips. It involves embracing and reworking the dishes traditionally eaten by people of the lower social strata. Some, like fish and chips, have partly disappeared amongst the lower social strata, even amongst Catholics on Friday⁶, as the cost of fish has risen. This might be suggested as one reason for why it can be adopted and appropriated by wealthier Bobos, but it does not explain their adoption and celebration of hot dogs and burgers, which are still very plebian foods. Can this appropriation be some form of parody or theater, a play with class symbols of inversion? It can be argued that it is another manifestation of cultural tourism. What is being sold is the experience, not just food, but the experience of the alterity of lowliness, the exoticness of plebian tastes. But what is also involved is a process of aesthetic inversion that operates as a symbolic protest against established regimes of taste.

Camille claimed that Bobos were implicitly saying “I am not bourgeois, look; I am eating a burger!” Yet, the burger is expensive and stylized with gourmet cheese, ecological greens, hormone free meat; “they won’t go to a McDonald’s or KFC”. This is not a naïve admiration and romanticizing of lowbrowness, for mass produced burgers are avoided and rejected, as they do invoke an aesthetic of disgust in the products they use and in how they use them. Bobos are continuously seeking to recraft the mass produced so it no longer compromises quality and ethics. They seek to dignify and ennoble lowly plebian tastes

⁶ Canon Law forbids Roman Catholics to eat meat on Fridays, and meat is often substituted with fish (Foley, 2005).

through astute choices of bread, meat, vegetables and sauces that are combined in creative skillful ways that warrant putting powerful political prefixes like “gourmet” in front of them.

A new culture of consumption, taste and morality ties together teachers, students, artists, craftsmen, shopkeepers, hair dressers, musicians, IT workers, and small business persons. There is a new mediating palate and aesthetic being created between street food and high-class restaurant food, and between the working class and the upper bourgeoisie. This new palate celebrates relatively inexpensive quality food. It distinguishes itself from the low end of street food that might be fatty, full of carbohydrates, chemicals, salt, hormones, artificial colors and flavors, and other things considered bad for health. Bobos do not seek out the super cheap but seek to blend quality and low price, to discover those prices that can economically deliver quality. There is partly a critique of capitalism in the sense that it is seen as callously poisoning and killing people with its cheap products. Resistance is formulated as creating more informed food practices that bring the knowledgeable skilled worker back into the kitchen and the processing of food and drink. The desire to return to craftsmanship is part of a desire to improve the quality of life, to subject everyday life to processes of beautification as part of an ethics of care.

Bobo Omnivorousness

Tak Wing Chan and John H. Goldthorp (2006, pp. 3) offer an analysis that is relevant for explaining the Bobo celebration and appropriation of lowbrow food:

“Rather than cultural stratification mapping straightforwardly onto social stratification, the cultural consumption of individuals in higher social strata differs from that of individuals in lower strata chiefly in that it is greater and much wider in its range—comprising not only more ‘high-brow’ culture but in fact more ‘middle-brow’ and more ‘low-brow’ culture as well. Thus, the crucial contrast is not that of ‘snob versus slob’ but that of cultural omnivore versus cultural univore.”

The concept of the omnivorous consumer is meant to challenge the highbrow - lowbrow dichotomy by pointing to a certain cosmopolitanism that appropriates products and pleasures produced by diversity of others. A well made street kebab can be recognized as high status by most Bobos, but you would not find a Bobo eating a chicken burger at KFC. The qualities defining food as high status in the omnivorous axis is connected to certain properties such as the freshness and quality of ingredients, the ethnic distinctiveness of the food, and the

cultural skill in cooking and serving it. Johnston and Baumann (2007) identify two dominant, socially constructed frames: authenticity and exoticism. Authenticity, they claim, is a criterion so frequent in gourmet food journalism that it appears to almost be an essential part of the culinary discourse of omnivorosity. The qualities associated with authenticity include handcraft, local settings, anti commercialism, integrity and closeness to nature. On exoticism, they note how food is classified using a scale or different degrees of exoticness. It is not purely either exotic or nonexotic.

“the omnivorous paradox: increasing openness to formerly 'illegitimate' culinary forms as per a democratic ideology of inclusivity, combined with adjudication criteria that redraw boundaries around a relatively narrow number of legitimate culinary options, implicitly articulating an ideology of status and distinction.” (Johnston and Baumann 2007, pp. 178).

The lowbrow and middlebrow are no longer symbolic opposites to be opposed. They become embraced and merged to create a new aesthetics of taste and a politics of style that helps to reformulate Bobo identity. New styles, tastes and consumptive practices mediate new symbolic boundaries and understandings that serve to place Bobos partly by defining them in terms what they are not. But the Bobos do not just affirm themselves through negations, they do not just affirm group identity and self-realization through the symbolic boundaries provided by oppositions. For they also realize themselves by embracing and internalizing material practices, tastes, skills, and aesthetic forms irrespective of their culture and history as long as they articulate an ethics of care with respect of humans and their world.

The *boboisation* of the northern arrondissements in Paris does involve social-spatial process of gentrification by petty bourgeois young people settling in areas traditionally inhabited by the working class, immigrants, and the “low life”. The Bobos are not just gentrifiers of houses and shops but also of everyday life: clothes, music, food, coffee and bars. The Bobos role as *gastronomical gentrifiers* is part of a broader process of exploring and colonizing new sensuous terrains; often those traditionally belonging to the “exotic cultures” of ethnic groups and the lower social classes. The omnivorosity of the Bobos is partly a symbolic act of resistance against the bourgeoisie that can partly involve the bourgeoisization of lower class food.

The Aestheticization of Everyday Life

The merging of exoticism and authenticity within everyday cultural practices like eating is an important symbolic aspect of the Bobo stylization and aestheticization of everyday life. Their aesthetic approach is agitated by an attempt to create a new habitus, to instruct new habits of tastes, ways of perceiving, knowing and judging. Food is a necessity, yet the act of eating is often ritualized with food becoming a symbolic medium of identification for internalizing certain ways of being a person. Bourdieu (2010) argues that turning the meal into a social ceremony is a way of denying the primary meaning and function of gastronomic consumption. Instead, it becomes an affirmation of aesthetical refinement, a way of stylizing life and tastes. A new discerning and creative consumer is being cultivated. It can often be a celebration of a sensitive sensuousness, the body that knows how to appreciate the finest details and widest selections of tastes. This is what Bourdieu calls the naturalization of distinctions, and life becomes an aesthetic project to be staged and performed as a style that can be reappropriated, or reinternalized. Writing about the class aspects of food, Bourdieu (ibid. pp. 199) discusses how the working classes is often caricatured as just being concerned with “being and substance”, whilst the bourgeoisie understands itself as introducing into food “the categories of form and appearance”.

Bourdieu seems to claim that the lower class shows less interest in aesthetic practices, preferring substance and function, while the bourgeoisie is rather highly concerned with form or style. Thus the working classes are supposedly more concerned with food as a nutritious substance rather than as an aestheticized visually pleasing *authentic* or *exotic* “pieces of art”. There is some truth in the latter but this kind of characterization is also how the middle class regards the working class and its desires and pleasures.

The hip and trendy burger joints also often exist alongside third wave coffee bars. They can offer artisanal burgers and beautiful coffee with quite generic milk froth designs in espresso cups. These are the masterpieces of Bobo everyday life, where the aesthetic moves out of the art gallery to inhabit mundane existence. This resonates well with the themes I explored earlier on craft. These practices revalue the minute of all everyday experiences, seeking to intensify them, improve their quality and well being, and to beautify them. The taken for granted objects of everyday life are revisited and reevaluated with respect to their ethics, sustainability and pleasurableness. Mike Featherstone (2007, pp. 64) regards the aestheticization of everyday life to be a symptom of postmodernity:

“If we examine definitions of postmodernism we find an emphasis upon the effacement of boundary between art and everyday life, the collapse of distinction between high art and mass/popular culture, a general stylistic promiscuity and playful mixing of codes.”

The Bobos of Paris are quality-oriented and self-conscious consumers. Their cultural and symbolic capital puts them in an interstitial position where they try to set the agenda for not so much a new standard of taste as new ways of evaluating taste. Their gastronomical repertoire spans across socio-cultural strata, they are *gourmet omnivores* who poach food styles from the lower classes so as to ennoble and refine plebian dishes, transforming them not so much into *haute cuisine* as making them cool. They seek to outmaneuver the upper classes in taste and discrimination by taking on the bourgeoisie’s claims to a panoramic vision of taste. Bobos cultivate a new kind of cosmopolitan culture in the lower ranks that prides itself on its openness to other tastes: working class, peasant societies, ethnic minorities and other cultures. These are not just copied but reworked in innovative ways that celebrate the craft of the original being reborn within the craft of modern artisans. It is the art of labor and the art of human taste that are being studied and reworked. This is the paradoxical aspect of the Bobos, they embrace knowledge, a detailed knowledge of raw materials and processes of transformation but they do not create their identity just at the level of knowledge. They embrace the work of labor. It is work that is reaffirmed and revalued as: informed labor, dexterity and skill, and the pleasure and art of being producer. Through being informed producers, fellow craftsmen, they are allowed to be informed consumers, appreciators of what other craft. There is reciprocity of consumption and production amongst Bobos that binds them together despite their diversity.

“A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his *modus operandi*, and to which he must subordinate his will. And this subordination is no mere momentary act. Besides the exertion of the bodily organs, the process demands that, during the whole operation, the workman’s will be steadily in consonance with his purpose.” (Marx, 2007, pp. 198)

Conclusion

“What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals, or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?” Michel Foucault (in Rabinow, 1984, pp. 350)

Throughout this thesis I have attempted to explore the spectacular practices of a group of producers and consumers. One resonant motif has been how ethics, aesthetics, values, perceptions, ideas and concepts are constantly being embodied in everyday practices that often give old objects, habits and values new meanings. The Bobo movement has advocated aestheticization and this thesis explores the various forms it takes including redefining everyday-seeming, servile forms of work into an art of labor and skilled production.

Stylized versions of craftsmanship as well as creativity are cultivated and celebrated within the framework of this culture. The craftsman is in a way transformed into an artist. Craft is often associated with art, but often ranked lower, as just good labor. Sennett (2008) argues that there is no art without craft; if a painting only exists inside an artist's head, it is not a painting. He argues that craftsmanship is found everywhere in our society, everybody participate in the craftsman's work, whilst professional artists “form a mere speck of the population” (ibid. pp. 65). By revaluing the work of labor as involving knowledge, dexterity, subtle tastes and learned forms of perception, work can be transformed into a spectacle of organized purposeful movement that produces beauty. This is what many Bobo bars, cafes and restaurants strive for when they put on display their workers, machinery and the processes of producing sensuous pleasures. They do not seek to hide the infrastructure of production and work but to celebrate it in a way that redignifies work but also the mundane pleasures of everyday life. These spectacles are both complicit in capitalism and a critique of it. There is no desire to give up machinery or business enterprises so as to return to some pure rural retreat of subsistence labor. Instead modernity is embraced and selectively used to move away from cheap, disposable, low quality goods that damage people, animals and environment so as to find a more ethical and beautiful version of modernity. It is there, within these redeemed forms of modernity, that Bobos search for a more authentic self that re-crafts the self by remaking its everyday pleasures, work activities and environment.

Otherness is cultivated among the Bobos, whether it is based on ethnicity, style, food or letters. I have observed people re-dignify but also caricaturize their ethnic identity, in a performance where ethnicity becomes style, a performance that embodies artistry. Interestingly, also sameness and normalness can be cultivated as styles within this movement. A caricature of normalness is made exotic, the bland and functional are reinvented to find their hidden beauty, they are resituated to become part of if not high art, an anti-aesthetic that is still aesthetic. It is an art that mocks art, and seeks to democratize the aesthetic within a structure of class relations. The Bobos are not anarchists or some pure form of working class resistance; they are of the petty bourgeoisie, which is often dismissed for its reactionary conservatism. They are a new fraction of the bourgeoisie that challenges bourgeois taste as ethically hollow expensive pleasures. Instead Bobos seek an economy of pleasure where ethics, sustainability, morality, animal rights, the environment and workers are part of the moral calculus, are part of the ethical arithmetic that makes something beautifully sensuous. It is this re-embodiment and rematerialization of value that Bobos produce in everyday life – as work and consumption.

The Bobo exoticism can lead to gentrification, and not purely a spatial gentrification of neighborhoods. They are drawn to the exotic, which they appropriate and revalue, and this includes the exotic of lowliness and disreputable marginality. They are the gentrifiers of everyday life, exploring and colonizing new sensuous terrains in fashion, music, nightlife, furniture, books, colors and materials. They express pride, craftsmanship and an ethics of care in their transformative labors. Thus Bobos embrace exotic and lowbrow food, and what they internalize along with the food is a way of recrafting cosmopolitanism and redefining class. Distance, in space, culture and society is being re-measured in this process of appropriation and transgression.

By selectively combining and choosing from a global environment they create new forms of alterity, new travels for the self beyond its boundaries. Embedded in this, there is a celebration of the ability to oversee styles, to place them alongside each other, and to appreciate them. In many ways the Bobos are contesting the haute bourgeoisie's claim to legitimate taste. They seek to democratize access to the hierarchy of taste by redefining it outside of class, yet there is also an embrace of this taste aristocracy.

The Bobos of Paris are informed consumers, but sometimes their idealistic values are incompatible with their more hedonistic tendencies. At one lunch place I visited, they had a sign that read that all their drinks, meals and ingredients were organic, except their coffee. Most ecological coffees are perceived as having an inferior taste compared to the often non-eco branded specialty coffee. I was told that this is due to an idea that eco branded green coffee beans are sold for a fixed price, regardless of quality, while a non-eco coffee farmer is paid in regard to the quality of his beans. The Bobos value both ecology and quality, and sometimes one must be sacrificed. The fact that quality is chosen in this instance is not surprising because this economy of value attaches great importance to improving everyday experiences.

The concept of the omnivorous consumer challenges the highbrow-lowbrow dichotomy, with the Bobo gastronomical repertoire spanning across socio-cultural strata and ethnic-racial divisions. They are not simply consumers that maximize pleasure but also cultural omnivores who seek new forms of tolerances and acceptability in their selective choices. When they embrace a plebian dish, a working class jumper, African music or a tropical fruit they deliberate seek to reframe normalness into fashion, beauty or something exceptional.

They seek to transform and rework everyday life by reintroducing back into it what it takes for granted just as much as what stands outside it. This spectacularization of the everyday and the mundane transforms everyday life into a work of art. Food, style and work are re-crafted, reworked as raw materials that will deliver something beautiful. Individuality emerges in this remaking. Taken for granted objects become the masterpieces of everyday life, where the aesthetic moves out of the art galleries to inhabit mundane existence – a beautiful cup of coffee, a lovely slice of cake, a functional simple chair. It is no wonder that Parisian Bobos are drawn to Scandinavian modernity which also sought to redesign everyday life with a new economy of value that democratized beauty.

Perhaps this is why I was drawn to Parisian Bobos, they mirror and transform Scandinavian modernity, they are part of Scandinavian modernity becoming globalized and merged with other global movements – climate change, environmentalism, anti racism and workers rights. There is a global concern with redesigning modernity, not rejecting it, but creating new ethical versions that articulate a politics of change and activism through everyday practices. The political is located not in pure ideology but in the ideological

articulated as concrete practices. Politics here is not so much a struggle against institutions and protests on the streets, but more in creating a new art of governing the self as both worker and consumer. It is this art of everyday life that is being recrafted by a new kind of young adults, by new kinds of entrepreneurs, that trade in other values alongside money, that seek a new economy for everyday existence.

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