

Where's high? Who's low? What's new? Classification and stratification inside cultural “Repertoires”

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Abstract

This article uses a micro-qualitative approach to explore the apparent rise of eclecticism among the new upper middle class. It proposes an observation of six individual cases chosen from a Québec (Canada) sample made up of members of these higher categories of the status scale who are avid consumers of art and culture. This analysis of individual cultural repertoires, which takes into consideration the set of obvious items in relation to their uses – practical as well as symbolic – bears mainly on the principles of classification, hierarchical ordering and legitimation applied when dealing with the various components of repertoires. This leads to distinctions between different forms of cultural eclecticism on the basis of socio-professional domains and different meanings of these eclecticism practices at the level of the individual. It also leads to a test of the relevance of the high/low distinction on which most of the research on this topic has been based. Is this distinction the most useful one for evaluating the real degree of openness of people, and of their tastes? In this regard, we consider the role of the old/new distinction, which is rarely taken into account but which appears, on the ground, as an equally strong structuring and discriminating principle in the area of taste.

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In the matter of tastes and cultural practices, the general tendency is toward eclecticism. The critical fortune of the omnivore thesis in the field of cultural research is one of the many manifestations of this development (see [Peterson, 2005](#)). The apparent rise of this eclecticism, as recorded in research trends, undoubtedly constitutes one of the most unexpected findings in the sociology of taste of the last decades. This finding, obtained mainly by means of macro-quantitative approaches, blurs the expected relationship between social position and cultural

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practice on which the sociology of taste has relied from the time of Thorstein Veblen up to that of Pierre Bourdieu. This finding contradicts, as it were, those spontaneous and more learned sociologies that posit a direct link between popular tastes and the working classes on the one hand, and between cultivated tastes and the leisure classes on the other. Recurrent throughout the First World, this finding is particularly fascinating insofar as it concerns primarily those circles most likely to enjoy a cultivated relationship to culture, that is, the new highly qualified and educated socio-professional elites. The (growing?) hybridization of popular and cultivated tastes among our elites should lead us to expect, at the very least, a deflection of, a shift in, and/or a reconfiguration of the traditional markers of cultural legitimacy: Where's high? Who's low?

While the finding of highbrow eclecticism appears solid at the macro and decontextualized level, its interpretation remains problematic. This interpretation can range from the most positive – emancipation from cultural, traditional or arbitrary hierarchies – to the most pessimistic: cultural decline, “the decivilizing” process. Moreover, the contrast between North American and European perspectives on this issue remains striking. Are we dealing, in effect, with a groundswell which, affecting the entire range of social groups – but primarily their elites – constitutes a new principle of distinction and legitimacy, as is suggested by Peterson and a number of North American researchers following in his wake? Is this not, rather, a localized phenomenon confined to a few elite fractions, as some European researchers would have us believe? (Donnat, 1994; Van Rees et al., 1999; Van Eijck, 2001; Neuhoff, 2001)? Is this finding of eclecticism not quite simply the result of a change of theoretical and methodological perspectives (Bellavance et al., 2004; Lahire, 2004)? Does this change not also stem from the loss of the distinctive value of “classically cultivated” art genres, now that other cultural products seem to offer a better “symbolic yield?” The meaning of this change remains, furthermore, highly sensitive to the criteria chosen to define the phenomenon: are we dealing with the truly omnivorous, with eclecticism in the strong sense of the term—involving, in accordance with Peterson's canonical version, a model of taste claimed and assumed by individuals, and calling into question the traditional mode by which symbolic power (snobbish, pedantic or purist) is exercised; or, on the other hand, is this a weak, superficial form of eclecticism (passing knowledge), without any repercussions for the real distribution of symbolic power? Do some forms of eclecticism, whether strong or weak, remain, despite everything, more legitimate than others? For if everyone has managed to diversify his or her repertoire, the upper classes have nonetheless maintained a still-privileged access to the diverse expressions of “high art.” In short, were it only a matter of measuring the relative extent of this or that segment of a regional cultural market (American, French or other) from a strictly quantitative perspective, the superiority of the macro-quantitative method could still be justified. But the question raised by contemporary research is clearly more ambitious, for it is generally a matter of evaluating the transformation of the models of taste within contemporary Western societies in relation to the structure of power.

In this article I use a strictly micro-qualitative approach to explore the meaning of this apparent rise of eclecticism among members of socio-professional categories closely associated with the higher ranks of the status scale. For this purpose, I am proposing a contextualized observation (francophone Québec at the turn of the millenium) of six individual cases (men of the baby-boom generation) chosen from a sample of 86 avid consumers of art and culture. The intention is not, of course, to use these few cases to choose, once and for all, from among the contradictory hypotheses advanced to explain the phenomenon. My objective, which is more modest, is to observe *the other side of the coin* through the disaggregated individual accounts of these six participants.

The article stresses analysis of the repertoires of *taste* of individuals (rather than groups). At the same time, it takes into consideration the set of items (practices, works and any other meaningful object included in the repertoire) – rather than a single item (music, for example) – in relation to their uses, and not only practical uses but (for the most part) symbolic as well. With regard to this last point, observation bears mainly on the principles of classification, hierarchical ordering and legitimation applied by our participants when dealing with the various components of their repertoire. This exercise is based mainly on a consideration of “natural” categories (as opposed to “official” or “scholarly” categories) used during the interviews.

This exercise is conducive to testing, on this terrain and scale, the relevance (and solidity) of the high/low distinction on which most of the research we have mentioned has been based. Is this distinction the most useful one for evaluating the real degree of openness (or closedness) of people, and of their tastes? In this regard, we will consider the alternative role of the old/new distinction, which is rarely taken into account but which appears as an equally strong structuring and discriminating principle in the area of the expression of tastes. Part I presents our field of inquiry and the particular features of our sample. Part II describes the interview strategy, as well as the methods adopted for transcribing and reconstructing the narratives that emerged from them. Part III justifies our case selection and presents our observation, as such, of the six individual repertoires. The conclusion highlights the advantages of our approach in relation to current debates about the exact meaning and scope of cultural eclecticism among the new elites.

1. The field of inquiry and the sampling strategy

The six cases selected were taken from an inquiry conducted by means of semi-directive interviews with a population generally perceived, via surveys, to be the main consumers of “cultivated” art and culture, that is, socio-professional milieus said to be “highly qualified”: business people and upper-level managers of private and public companies, professors, researchers and professionals from scientific fields and higher education, members of the liberal professions, intellectuals, cultural professionals and artists.¹ The strategy initially consisted in diversifying the sample in terms of membership in five distinct professional milieus.² In addition to exercising one of these types of professional activity, the informants were nonetheless supposed to meet two other baseline criteria: they had to hold a university-level degree (since a degree is generally considered to be a factor that cannot be ignored in “cultivated” cultural consumption); and they had to claim a pronounced interest in at least one form of artistic practice (the invitation that was sent out explicitly called for “heavy consumers of art and culture,” leaving it up to the participants to interpret each term of the statement). The inquiry thereby made it possible to delimit a segment of the population whose level of belief or trust in the value “art and culture” (independently of what one might have included under this designation) was likely to be high or very high relative to that of the Québec population as a whole. The interview approach led us to explore, within one and same group of consumers/believers, variations in taste (on the two planes of items and practical and symbolic uses) in terms of diversified professional

¹ Nearly 100 interviews lasting on average one and one half hours were conducted between 1999 and 2001. Eighty-six of these were analysed. The six interviews selected for this article were generally longer (2 h on average, with most lasting longer).

² More details on this sample can be found in Bellavance (2004).

paths. This initially led us to juxtapose (and reflect) the increasing parallel complexity of professional paths and repertoires (and trajectories) of cultural tastes. In this regard, the interviews enabled us not only to gather exhaustive information on the whole range of the individuals' past and present cultural consumption, bringing us up against the "chaos of items" and their multiple uses; they also provided precise information on the social trajectories of the individuals, particularly professionals, obliging us to take account of the multiplicity of affiliations and socializations, whether simultaneous or past.

This led us to restructure the initial sample around three main domains corresponding to more general professional and cultural socialization models. These three domains closely reflected the categories used by Peterson and Simkus (higher managerial, higher technical, higher cultural) in their 1992 article. Higher managerials ($n = 28$) include informants from the administration and business management milieu as well as members of liberal and cultural professions with "commercial" or entrepreneurial profiles. Higher technicals ($n = 29$) include mainly members of the techno-scientific and scientific milieus along with members of related liberal professions (e.g. health professionals). Higher cultural ($n = 29$) include artists (many university professors), professional mediators (e.g. gallery operators and art critics) and intellectuals with a professional involvement in the arts (e.g. teachers, critics, and activists).

These groups, on this aggregated scale, are distinguished from one another by general trends in cultural consumption. Overall, the practices of the first category focus mainly on cultural outings (shows, museums, cultural tourism, etc.) and their tastes prove to be both more conservative and more popular; the second category, more classical with respect to tastes, reveals a propensity for serious leisure practices; the last group, whose cultural consumption practices are heavily determined by their professional involvement, attest to specialized and informed tastes, in tune with current trends in their specialty areas.

Despite these differences, the three groups nonetheless display a set of affinities that distinguish them from the rest of the population. The criteria of degree level and position occupied inevitably set them apart from the general population. Moreover, having been selected for their avowed penchant for the arts, the members of the sample distinguished themselves from their professional milieu by two traits that were not initially taken into account but that emerged strongly during the analysis: a generally early socialization in the legitimate arts³ and membership in a household without young children (who raise a number of obstacles to participation in cultural life).⁴ From this perspective, this fraction of the elite represents a subcategory of the "leisure class", the "new creative class" (Florida, 2002). This is not only the most highly educated fraction but also the most urban one and the one with the greatest investment in the new globalized cultural economy (their consumer habits often take place in foreign countries). The theme of *creativity*, associated with that of *diversity*, emerges on the narrative plane, moreover, as a guiding thread running throughout the whole set of stories, independently of professional domains.

A final feature of this ultimate *creative* class fraction has to do with its singular "geocultural" position. Although much of their cultural consumption involves other countries, they are nonetheless rooted mainly in Québec, a Canadian province where French is both the *lingua franca* and the official language, and where French Canadians, who are a minority in Canada as a

³ Two thirds of our participants were introduced to some form of art in childhood (before the age of 12) and more than eighty percent were introduced to art before reaching adulthood (18 years of age).

⁴ Four out of five participants do not have young children.

whole, constitute the major ethnic group. While one could consider our group as primarily representative of a new transnational culture class, the abovementioned ethnolinguistic and political factors are likely to affect the composition of its repertoires (open not only to two languages but to two cultures) and the group's status (a dominated minority in Canada as a whole, and a dominating majority within Québec). Since interviews were conducted mainly in French, the perspective privileged in this inquiry is necessarily that of Québécois, for the most part French Canadians. However, this majority is weighted in the sample by a significant minority (25%) of people stemming by birth or affiliation (through parents and spouses) from other ethnolinguistic groups: English Canadians, Hispano-Americans, Anglo-Americans and French-speaking Europeans exhibiting various degrees of mastery of French and English, with many being demonstrably polyglot. All of this invites us to consider more closely the issue of status groups in relation to that of cultural identity, understood in a broad sense. This class (ultimately more upwardly mobile than frankly dominant) from a hemmed-in Québec minority, but one that is nonetheless in the majority and relatively dominant on its own territory, remains subject to two influences, one French (and more widely European) and the other Anglo-American, which together affect lifestyles, institutions and the economy as much as they do the structure of cultural supply and demand, in the strict sense of the term. The status of this group in relation to its repertoire remains, therefore, more uncertain than that of those national elites (United States, France, Germany) that have so far supplied most of the pertinent observations in the debate about tastes, whether eclectic or not. This situation could prove to be the driving force behind cleavages and hybridizations that would be perfectly improbable in other contexts, where the true centre of cultural authority would be less contested.

2. Data collection and analysis

The raw material was interesting, however, not so much for the exact social status or cultural identity of our participants as for the accounts they gave of their tastes. The interview guide initially led the informant to highlight the respective roles that different art forms play in his life (his repertoire), and then had him articulate the reasons for his choices (his taste). The guide also included numerous questions designed to bring out the relationship of this repertoire to the individuals' environment, professional or other. These individual accounts constitute the empirical basis of the inquiry. They enable us to consider the whole set of cultural items (as opposed to one or several defined in advance) that are significant for the individual, and to observe their possible combinations.

Moreover, we strove to take into account the various modes of our participants' cultural activities, that is, their *practical uses*: cultural outings, serious leisure practices, professional and volunteer activities, patronage, militancy and cultural activism, etc. At the symbolic level, we devoted special attention to the principles of *classification*, *hierarchical ordering* and *legitimation* that the participants resorted to during the interviews in order to describe and justify their preferences. To this end, reconstruction relied mainly on "natural" categories, as opposed to the "official categories" (stemming primarily from cultural markets and institutions) on which more "scholarly" studies, based usually on the secondary processing of survey data (and nomenclature), remain highly dependent.

The main idea was to thereby establish, for this population, the *boundaries* and *scales* it deems relevant in matters of taste, as well as the main reasons adduced in support of this judgment. Consequently, this did not mean taking it for granted that the distinction between cultivated genres (serious, ascetic, major, etc.) and popular genres (entertaining, hedonistic,

minor, etc.), as indexed on the *high/low* scale, is the most relevant one. This classificatory ritual undoubtedly has an empirical basis relative to markets and institutions: the popular genres correspond, “in most respects,” to the commercialized or mediatized art forms generated by “mass audience” cultural markets; the cultivated genres stem from the more long-lasting actions of traditional cultural institutions. Still, we are not dealing here with discrete entities but with continuous evaluation procedures – changing and interactive (involving consumers and producers over time) – that come into their own at very local levels. The distinction proves, moreover, to be all the more hazy in a context marked by the convergence of commercial and institutional strategies within the arts sector, as is the case in Canada and Québec. The boundaries between high and low are not fixed but “loose” (Lamont, 1992). Cultural legitimacy has, therefore, no fixed or *a priori* universal anchor point. Never definitively established, it is necessarily a *dynamic* experience. The interview relationship provides an opportunity to observe this classificatory dynamic in motion.

The *high/low* distinction undoubtedly remains an ongoing and powerful classificatory ritual when it comes to the expression of tastes (DiMaggio, 1987). Still, other systems can be just as encompassing and classifying in the expression of tastes. This is the case with the distinction between old (traditional, established, conformist, etc.) and new (modern, up and coming, rebellious, etc.). This second distinction, which cannot be reduced to the first, reflects divisions that are not so much socioeconomic as generational (young people/old people); moreover, pointing to specifically cultural tensions between tradition and modernity, it appears to be just as broad in scope as the first. Its link to social stratification may not be as obvious, but this dynamic axis, which is more temporal than spatial, assumes an importance of its own when we take an interest in the evolution of the social stratification of taste, or in change, as is the case with the omnivore thesis. In Bourdieu’s work (1984), the old/new distinction remains overdetermined by the high/low dimension: the ruling figures remain solidly anchored in the “seniority” of social origin. But how do things stand in a society where change, or the capacity to adapt to change – rather than tradition, heritage or allowance – becomes the condition of “reproduction”?

In this paper, I examine the relative strengths of these two systems—high/low and old/new, by constructing a theoretical “taste space” based on their intersection (see Fig. 1). Note that I took it for granted, to start with, that “high” items closely corresponded to the repertoires defended by the major cultural institutions, be they traditional or contemporary, while those from the “low” register corresponded to those that go by way of the market or the mass media. This led us to distinguish, on a theoretical plane, four sub-spaces corresponding to types of taste repertoires: “classical” items (located above the *x*-axis on the “old” side) associated with the repertoire of high Western culture; “contemporary” items related to international “edgy” art practices, located above the same axis on the “new” side; traditional-style (or heritage) popular items from a local (“folk”) repertoire; and modern and urban popular items relayed by the most recent globalized culture industries (“pop”). Note that the distinction local/international underpins this two-dimensional space, introducing a third dimension that is harder to depict.

Insofar as it does not take into account the practical and symbolic uses of the item, this first classification obviously comes with a disclaimer. In fact, classifying individuals and groups on this basis alone seemed to be extremely risky. Observation of particular cases will enable us to explore the distortions that such a model can undergo when we try to apply it directly to individuals. It will also allow us to bring out the parallel complexity of social statuses and taste repertoires, two phenomena that could conceivably be very closely connected. The write-ups of our participants’ narratives have been structured to bring out this twofold complexity.

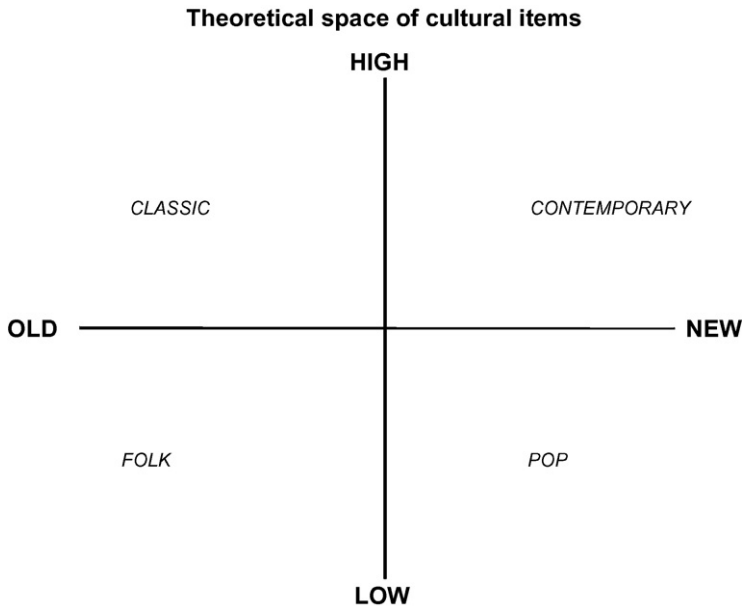


Fig. 1. Theoretical space of cultural items.

3. Six figures of contemporary eclecticism

The six cases selected for this study are associated with each of the three professional domains described above. We began by selecting cases whose professional success was obvious, and their apparent level of eclecticism high. This eclecticism is revealed not only with regard to the composition of their repertoires, which make room for both “popular” and “cultivated” items, but also by a strong claim of possessing this “quality”: all acknowledge themselves to be eclectic and open to some degree or other, with most of them emphasizing the scope, variety and diversity of their tastes in the course of the interview. For each of the three domains, we chose two cases that contrasted with one another in terms of their cultural repertoires and social biographies, but that had highly similar sociodemographic profiles: men between the ages of 39 and 46 who, at the time of the interviews, belonged to the same generation (the baby-boomers) and were all at just about the same stage in the human life cycle. This enabled us to see more clearly how forms of eclecticism varied in accordance with professional domain, independently of age or sex. This choice also made it possible to consider the meaning of eclecticism within one age group whose influence is generally considered to be decisive for cultural evolution. The drawback of this decision is that it undoubtedly excludes other groups whose influence is no less decisive: women of the same generation, particularly, as well as younger or older age groups.

These cases clearly belong to that fringe of the population that a standard survey would include in one and same group of “highbrow omnivores.” From the highbrow side, they are an integral part of the high culture audience and their level of consumption is, moreover, very high. From the omnivore side, they claim to have a pronounced interest in one or more forms of “popular” culture. In addition, their eclecticism is conveyed by their “cosmopolitanism”: trips

and stays abroad, which are central to their behaviour, become occasions for various forms of cultural tourism; all of them are also fluent in more than one language. All six live in large urban centres, most in Montreal, Québec's largest city and one of Canada's main economic and cultural centres. One lives in Ottawa, the capital of Canada, located on the border between Québec and Ontario. In order to take the ethnolinguistic factor into account, we also retained, alongside four cases stemming from Québec's French-Canadian majority, two cases originating, more or less, in immigration. The first, a European whose mother tongue is French, has been living in Québec for over a decade. The second is an English Canadian born in the province of Ontario, who settled in Montreal some 15 years ago. He can be described as "almost an immigrant" insofar as many Canadian citizens may now have the impression that they need a passport to cross the (symbolic) border between Canada and Québec.

We will present, in order, the cases associated with each of the three professional domains mentioned above, without presuming, however, that this sequence is the most pertinent one. A large part of the exercise will consist, in effect, in flushing out other possible principles of affiliation, and other efficient forms of socialization. After briefly positioning each couple of individuals in relation to the general trends of the affiliated sociocultural domain, the write-up adopts a structure designed to bring out the parallel complexity of the social trajectory and the repertoire of taste. Thus each account begins by presenting the socio-professional trajectory and cultural environment (past and current) of the individual that are pertinent to an understanding of his repertoire. We strive at this point to bring out not only the multiplicity of professional experiences (including training) that may have an impact on individuals' repertoires, but also the influences exerted by all those persons who constitute, or have constituted, their proximate environments (parents, spouses, children and the whole set of significant individuals in their professional and extraprofessional milieus). The second part of the account deals exclusively with the analysis of the repertoire, items, uses and justifications. We point out, among other things, the relevant "evolutions" or "developments," which may result in the emergence of a certain number of "trajectories of taste".

3.1. *Higher managerial world*

Our first two repertoire cases are, of all the six, the least representative of their sub-group. Even though, like the majority of the higher managers, they attest to practices focused mainly on cultural outings (shows, cultural tourism), their repertoires are distinguished from the former by the importance they attribute to clearly contemporary items, alongside popular and/or traditional ones. They appear, as a result, even more eclectic and nonconformist. But the modes of this nonconformist eclecticism are substantially different. The first, a corporate patron, has a profile closer to the reference domain. His capital structure – higher economically than it is culturally, to follow Bourdieu's terminology – corresponds to the general profile of a milieu where access to cultivated items is most often inscribed within the framework of "business relationships" that foreground the worldly and instrumental dimensions (see also Erickson, 1996; Ostrower, 1998). The repertoire of our second case, on the other hand, betrays a more complex structure: more akin to artistic circles on the cultural plane, and to the world of science on the socio-professional plane. In this case, one must expect to find a structure of "multicultural capital" (Bryson, 1996) or a multi-file repertoire. By virtue of this fact, this case represents a real exception, not only in this sub-group but also in the sample as a whole. Despite their particularities, these two cases do not appear to be any less well adjusted to their professional domains. They are much better adjusted, in fact, than many individuals encountered in these domains, where many people

(particularly women) severely criticize the lack of interest in the arts, if not the general lack of culture, in their work environments.⁵ Most of the art lovers in this group, without seeing themselves as veritable “outcasts,” do nonetheless think of themselves as “rare birds.” Our two cases – rare birds among the rare birds – are in this respect doubly exemplary. Moreover, they are undeniably proud of this fact.

3.1.1. *An omnivorous neo-philanthropist*

Our first is a chairman and director general of a major Montreal advertising and public relations firm that has close ties to various levels of government. Born into a modest French-Canadian background, he is the owner of a company that he himself founded and now enjoys a very high income (the highest, in fact, of all those we met). In this respect, he corresponds to the image of the North American self-made man. Still, he did take a “classical” path (private college) and holds an undergraduate university degree. With less formal schooling than the other cases, he is also the oldest (46). And his interest in culture and the arts is, moreover, more recent: he claims to be “still learning,” “an adolescent” in the evolution of his cultural life, “at a crossroads,” waiting to “discover a passion.” His tastes are changing, too, in part because now that his business is well established, he has the financial means to gain access to forms of art that are farther from his initial interests, and from Québec (in New York and Los Angeles). And now that his two children are in their teens, he has more free time. He is worried by the fact that they are interested only in multimedia games and is distressed by their lack of interest in the arts. His own interest in this area remains largely dependent, he says, on the opportunities provided, on the one hand, by two people close to him—his wife (an amateur painter, a “calm” person with a penchant for the arts) and his older brother (a music lover whose profession “leaves him more time in which to develop an interest”) remain his main “references” in art matters. On the other hand, there is also the business environment: his access to high culture is, in fact, conditioned to a large extent by his involvement in corporate patronage activities that are neither entirely philanthropic nor disinterested. At the time of the interview, he enjoyed a considerable yet discreet influence on the country’s private and public cultural grants and awards system (from popular festivals to advanced arts sectors). But this did not prevent him from feeling uneasy about the political uses to which culture is put in Québec. He particularly regretted the uses of it made by the (then sovereigntist) Québec government, whose desire to affirm Québec identity “in the broad sense (...) perhaps leads us to neglect major works.” Although a defender of (and a concerned stakeholder in) the constitutional status quo, he was no less worried by the “multiculturalist and multiethnic” approach of the Canadian government which, in his opinion, is impeding the development of Québécois (French-Canadian) culture in Canada.

This case is the one that undoubtedly most closely approximates the omnivore model that Peterson and Kerns (1996, p. 906) have seen taking shape within the new business class. At the level of items, his repertoire proves to be the least exclusive or selective of all. It includes, liberally and in an uncomplicated fashion, the highest and most advanced (highbrow contemporary music, avant-garde theatre, baroque music formations) as well as the lowest: the

⁵ The gender distinction emerges quite powerfully in this sub-group: on the one hand, some stress the distinction between men’s arts (action, adventure, etc.) and women’s arts (sentimental, calm, sensible, etc.); on the other hand, the practices of businesswomen are clearly more autonomous than those of their male counterparts, who are often following in the wake of their more culturally active wives. This led us to seriously consider, for this milieu, the hypothesis of a “civilizing influence of women” (to the extent, it goes without saying, that the arts are a true testimony of civilization).

individual in this case is a fan of stand-up comics, appreciates “highly commercial” sentimental music (Aznavour, Luis Miguel) above all else, buys paintings with an “industrial” feel and claims a place for graffiti as an art form in every sense of the word. But there is still one line he apparently will not cross, “anything but country music”. Even so, we see here the first outlines of a form of eclecticism, a cultural choice for which he has clearly assumed responsibility. As he puts it, his “cultural activities are very broad in scope,” like his sporting activities, which run the gamut from the “extreme” and “polluting” (motocross) to the ecological (salmon fishing), or to the “*distinguished like golf, which requires impeccable trousers, a matching cardigan and shined shoes. (...) So it’s the same thing at the cultural level.*”

His use of the various items remains, moreover, a highly contrasting one. As he said himself, looking back over the past decade, his repertoire has been “50% classic, 50% discoveries.” These categories do not, however, overlap the conventional ones. Indeed, to his way of thinking, his “art discoveries” do not concern only creation or the avant-garde but encompass, rather, the entire range of things he knows little or nothing about—yet. For him, the “classical” covers, for the most part, the “commercial,” as shown by his explanations of his preferences in painting (he collects figurative and traditional canvases by local painters)—“the painting I would call commercial is made up of classical scenes.” On the other hand, the type of painter he admires is “classical” by virtue of being “very commercial,” “almost industrial.” These paintings are “interesting” because they “go anywhere,” employ “current techniques” and are “easy to recognize.” “*The great majority of people, regardless of age, social class or income, would feel comfortable with a painting like that.*” The *commercial* overlaps the *classical*, which itself overlaps the category of mass media. Our respondent’s preferred *commercial–classical* painter therefore receives “extensive media coverage.” On a less traditional (albeit industrial) note, this same respondent will display real admiration for some maverick sculptor (who is nonetheless a mass media figure), in part because he briefly did sculpture in college, but mainly because he is fully cognizant of the sculptor’s audacity in using mass media. But it is for urban graffiti, which he considers an art form in every sense of the word, that he currently feels the “strongest curiosity” and greatest “admiration”—“we are not far from the day when we will go to see it in museums.” In the wake of a visit to a New York gallery devoted to this form of art, he foresees that it will soon be “exploited” and put to “commercial use,” a positive development, he thinks, that “will help them” by eliminating “the rebellious dimension from this new form of expression” and make it possible to focus on “creation” and “creativity” rather than “delinquency.” Thus it is not the subversive side of this art form that holds his interest. What he is looking for in fact, and what he subscribes to, are (on the contrary, and on a more *sporting* and *entrepreneurial* note) “success stories”—like that of the *Cirque du soleil*, for example, an “exceptional showcase for homegrown talent”; or those of dance, song, theatre direction and artistic direction, which also prove that, in Québec, “we’re doing big things.” In these “success stories,” national identity⁶ and international prestige are inextricably entwined.

His access to highbrow culture, to the “discoveries” aspect of the repertoire, remains highly conditioned by diversified philanthropic activities. His real interest in art and artists – whom he does not always understand very well, whom he admires without being able to (or wanting to) identify with, but who are “causes [he] holds dear” – remains in this respect inextricably bound up with business relationships. Thus he will support this or that contemporary music ensemble (even if, he hastens to point out, “it is not music”) or some Baroque ensemble, because it enables

⁶ “National identity” here refers to Quebec identity, not to that of Canada [Trans.].

him to “combine the useful with the pleasurable”: “*you give to a good cause, you converse with guests, and you see a show.*” He is not so much interested in “the product itself” as he is in the “ambiance” or person of the artist. From this perspective, he clearly justifies his support for his “discoveries” in business, rather than art, terms. These people are, in effect, “daring individuals, entrepreneurs, go-getters” who “go off the beaten paths,” “people who give of themselves,” and “that’s what it takes!” With hindsight, society comes to realize that this is about “art discoveries” rather than “confrontation”: “*It’s not opposed to what exists. It’s an affirmation of what can occur.*” If he feels bound by a “moral obligation” to follow the whole of contemporary music, which he has taken under his wing, this is because, as a responsible businessman, he has a role to play: “the business community lends a helping hand” because “we all feel guilty.” But considering himself fundamentally different from the artists, he is not without condescension when he speaks of them: they “*are people who, deep down, are isolated, uncomfortable with success, with spreading success or disseminating their art.*” He is, on the other hand, “*fundamentally comfortable in a team, surrounded by others.*” He is not an individualist, nor is he afraid of success, and sees himself as all the more atypical as a member of the art audience. This audience, “let it be said without meanness,” is a “*population of younger people, most of them women, with probably lower income,*” and with more free time for “developing an interest, a habit or a knowledge of something.” And, once again relying on a sporting metaphor, he says, “*it’s like gymnastics, you feel the benefits and you want to go further each time.*”

Thus, in the matter of legitimization, we must look for the main reference and anchor points not in the world of art, but in the domains of sports and business. From the sports side, the effect produced by culture is compared to that “of endorphins after physical exercise,” “relaxation,” mental and physical “well-being.” In actual fact, our respondent’s sporting activities are gradually giving way to his taste for art, signalling a new stage in his life cycle: “As you get older, you devote less and less time to sports activities, migrating instead to more cultural things.” From the business side, in the same breath he makes the “curiosity” that steered the development of his cultural leisure the source of that “success in advertising” that “resides in a knowledge of people”: “*you have to expose yourself to a lot of things to see where tastes and interests are headed. . . , or to be better able to foresee behaviours. You have to be curious.*” This taste (which he does not necessarily share but which “interests” him just the same) illustrates the existence of a purely relational use of the *tastes of others*, in a way that is both objective (an interest for the items in others’ repertoires) and subjective (a real interest in others). This relational use is at the core of business relations that are “a sport all to themselves.”

3.1.2. A (NEW) creative entrepreneur

Our second “upper manager” defines himself as a high technology entrepreneur. As the principal shareholder in a company he created along with friends and family, he works at the heart of the new knowledge-based economy (design and development of application software). Although he was born into a well-off French-Canadian business family, his profile is more consonant with that of a scientist (university degrees in mathematical physics and computer science). Moreover, his company’s product (multilingual translation) directly converges with the field of cultural production, adding another layer of complexity to his genuine socio-professional status. Forty-one years old at the time of the interview, he represented one of the rising stars of a new heavily subsidized industrial sector whose “venture capital” was then sustained, moreover, by a public discourse particularly favourable to creativity and innovation. Unlike the preceding respondent, his family background has had little influence on his repertoire: being more autonomous, he is the member of the (childless) couple who sets both the direction and tone.

Although he had “classical” tastes in adolescence (justified by an early identification with rigorously and scientific reason), his current repertoire developed mainly after his arrival at university, which coincided with his arrival “in the city” (Montreal). This episode exerted an upward influence on his cultural “standard of living” (he comes from a region with few cultural resources). “I take an interest in everything. It began at university.” At that time, he became a “specialist in free cultural activities,” and “caught up” by rubbing shoulders with avant-garde artists and (Québécois) singers whose lyrics often had a separatist flavour. Unlike the preceding account, backed up by sports and business metaphors, this one looked to science (innovation, experimentation, research) and politics (national identity, independence, revolution). But this political and scientific commitment was not without humour or irony: a “sceptical” activist and committed “miscreant,” he has joined a movement that publicly denounces, in a darkly ironic yet amusing manner, false beliefs and New Age spirituality (*Les Sceptiques du Québec*).

This type of repertoire is less reminiscent of Peterson’s omnivorosity (as exemplified by the previous respondent) than it is of the *edgy-trendy eclecticism* (“branché”, i.e. “connected”) that Olivier Donnat (1994) has seen taking shape in France, specifically among those minorities who are the most well-informed and endowed with cultural capital.⁷ But it does allow us to observe an initial “contemporary” repertoire – placed firmly under the sign of innovation and information, and oriented toward the whole range of highbrow avant-garde works, “the modern elite,” in his own words – superimposed on a second repertoire, this one placed under the sign of tradition and national identity, open in a selective (and discriminating) fashion to popular culture. In short, he says, “popular culture for identity (and emotion), contemporary art for discovery.” “Connected”, rather than classically cultivated, he remains in other respects relatively distant from literary culture, which he considers “too slow” for someone like himself who is “too speedy” and defines himself, on the contrary, as a “visual creature.”

His main repertoire remains steadfastly contemporary, comprising the many forms of “current” art, forthrightly opposed to “contemporary” art, which he deems to be outmoded, old hat or old school: conceptual art, installation and performance; electroacoustic music; new dance and experimental theatre; “interactive multimedia arts.” This interest in novelty, developed in relation to his scientific interests, is largely justified by his “identification” with the issues of discovery and innovation: “being able to recognize rules in order to free oneself from them” and “finding one’s style.” The concept of “creative work” is what makes this rapprochement possible. *Creative work* excludes neither learning nor even imitation: “there are recipes, but you have to create them. And it is for this reason that gastronomy is ultimately an art form” (switching, as it were, to a whole other vernacular and commercial register, which is thereby rehabilitated). It is by copying that you end up finding, for it is impossible to simply copy: “we’re not reproducing machines; we end up putting something personal into it.” This is, moreover, what distinguishes human beings from “robots.” This penchant for the art of research, or creative work, is also associated with the quest for a “free and fleeting lifestyle” based on “lived (or ‘live’) experience” in opposition to the “material” object and the “eternal masterpiece.” As opposed to “the ‘object,’” our respondent privileges “process” and “interactivity.” He can thereby appreciate not only pieces that have been disparaged due to their originality, but also those that he himself expects to detest, sometimes even dragging friends along to see them, to

⁷ According to Donnat, this group of highly educated, urban and often single individuals of middling age represents between 2% and 8% of the population (depending on what one takes into account: effective behaviour or level of information).

generate “interaction” and “the debate that it’s likely to cause”: “*There’s an interesting side to be seen in the things we don’t like so much.*” Criticism seems to be an integral part of his lifestyle, and is not directed only at others. Indeed he often employs it against himself and his own (creative) taste for novelty—a “real mania” that has led him to deprecate the work of Québec artists that he in fact appreciates. “*Molinari in Montreal makes things that look very much like those of Mondrian (. . .) so I have a tendency to find Molinari less pleasurable.*” This taste, this mania – viewed as a distortion of science – drives him to “categorize” not only art but everything else as well: fish, when he does deep-sea diving, and plants, when on excursions in the woods: “*it becomes less poetic. . . I’m almost sorry for knowing too much about it.*” This taste/mania is justified, however, by the importance of having a broad general culture, of mastering cultural information and being able to recognize and distinguish between cultural forms. He has to “know the secret of the pyramids.”

This taste/mania for novelty does not rule out traditional items, whether classic or popular; it simply uses them in a more discriminating manner. Our respondent’s “classical side” will therefore incline him toward forms that are updated (Greek tragedies staged in new ways) or intimate (small mediaeval music ensembles instead of great names in well-established symphony music). His “popular side” will prefer Québec songs with strong lyrics (as opposed to those of Céline Dion), jazz in “small Parisian clubs” (rather than at large free festivals) and “erotic” comics (which have reconciled him with the genre as a whole). But his relationship to Québec songs and films remains motivated largely by the issues of identity politics – “*I feel as if I’m doing something patriotic by buying local products*” – and associated with a struggle against uniformity and globalization: “*it’s for this reason, by the way, that we have to have a revolution.*” Preserving the culture is no longer enough: one has to go on the offensive; it’s a question of emancipation. In his eyes, culture is politics and “Communism is not dead”: “*the Chinese are still communists and they make up one fifth of humanity!*” On an equally political note, he attributes the current success of the comedy industry in Québec to the failure of the collective striving for national independence: you take refuge in sarcasm, “it’s better to laugh than to cry about it.”

This is where his tolerance breaks down. His adherence to the values of creativity and modernism have led this respondent to draw very sharp boundaries—on the one hand between artists who create (including lyricists) and those who do not (simple performers like Céline Dion, as well as stand-up comics); on the other hand, between current art (necessarily international) and traditional art (necessarily local). This gives rise to a hierarchy, with international artists at the summit and new local comics (who are often young) at the bottom. Between the two, however, there is room for negotiation. Traditional art, which is most often national or local, “is not intended to be innovative, but wants to preserve a tradition”—which is not “uninteresting,” even if it is “always the same.” This holds for popular foreign songs heard abroad as much as it does for Québec songs, except that, since he stems from “*Québec culture, a Québec singer will not get on my nerves quite so quickly; I find something of myself in the work.*” This form of negotiation can even lead to a justification of the place of “commercial” art, the “*fast food of art,*” the “formulaic side” (we cannot do without). Our respondent’s ambivalence with respect to the character of Céline Dion is typical. On the one hand, the commercial success of this (local yet international) performer compels a certain degree of respect—“in the showbiz category, it’s good, well done, professional.” On the other hand, what he admires about her is not so much her talent (“she’s a robot”) but her management skill (a real “gambler”), and at this point his argument assumes a more cynical cast: “*I don’t like it very much but I can admire the business side of it.*” Ultimately, all this is “a form of art ecology” – “*It takes a little of everything: popular;*

elitist, good, bad” – in which there is even room for local stand-up comics: this “ultimate form of art” expresses, in fact, a “national reality” and, by virtue of this, a certain (scientific) truth. On the one hand, “the public at large does not see art where it actually occurs.” “They start way off-base,” they take “imitators” (or performers) for artists. On the other hand, “humour is a very popular art form, we’re very strong on that score,” on what “engages with the society” by reflecting “the failure of our collective aspirations.” But these arguments do not, for all that, take away all ambiguity, reluctance or inconsistency: “*I try to see in the tea leaves all sorts of things I’d like to see, but that aren’t really there; but so what. . . this is part and parcel of reflecting on art.*” Aware of how his tastes have developed, he acknowledges that he is very “fast food” with respect to art forms he knows less about, like film and jazz: “*you go after well-known and well-recognized things and, after, you refine your tastes. You evolve and you become more selective; there are things you liked at the outset that you no longer like afterwards.*” Film and the (free) outdoor shows of the Montreal Jazz Festival belong to his “popular art” *side*, and prove to be key factors in sociability and communication, the “common denominator,” without contradicting the rule of distinction. “This is neutral ground,” “there’s always something to say,” “it’s less boring than talking about the fine summer you had”; it is “*what I want to share with the people whose cultural activities are less varied than my own*” (his brother-in-law, workplace colleagues and wife). For him, popular art forms play (in reverse) the same role of “symbolic tokens” that highbrow forms played for our first respondent, and are accompanied by the same condescension (directed at other targets), a form of tolerance without recognition (they are less cultivated because their tastes are less diversified) that upholds an asymmetrical relationship. Like the preceding case, this one demonstrates that a single repertoire can reconcile numerous items with various uses, and whose application varies in accordance with their context.

3.2. Higher technical world

Compared with the preceding repertoires, the two following ones have numerous traits in common. Moreover, they also show themselves to be more consistent with the general profile of the professional affiliation sub-group: the same classical tendency at the level of the repertoire of taste; and the same level of serious leisure practices (generally musical) that is at once (quantitatively) high and cultivated (it goes far beyond simple dilettantism).⁸ The emerging taste model is, in fact, the one that best corresponds to the canonical model of Bourdieu’s *héritier*: endowed by the family with substantial cultural capital (equally artistic and scientific) that is convertible to economic capital, the members of this group seem to share the same system of classical disposition/predisposition, a veritable cultivated *habitus*. This *habitus* emerges with particular clarity among university professors who, generally older, are also more “purely classical” (a good many polyglots make it incumbent upon themselves to, among other things, read the classics “in the original”). This classical bent nonetheless appears considerably inflected, given the age and position occupied: young scientists and those in the new “applied” careers are more open to the current pop genres. In this world, the rise of the knowledge-based economy seems to distort the model, with the increasingly greater number of overlaps between the scientific and business worlds reflecting back on the repertoire. Moreover, the early specialisation in science careers is often put forward as a reason for a lack of interest in art and

⁸ Some informants had musical training, while others developed ambitious practices as self-taught individuals. In most cases, they sought to maintain and develop their competencies and knowledge.

culture. The classical heritage remains, despite everything, the prime reference for these young applied scientists; as a result, their repertoires could be characterized as “neoclassical.” Our two cases belong to this sub-group of neoclassical technoscientists. However, if the first does so “from above,” as it were (taking into account a classical ideal and strongly affirmed humanist values), the second does so “from below” (taking into account a strong attraction to popular cultural outings and a less obvious relationship to European humanism). Still, both demonstrate no less the considerable impact that the new cultural markets may have on the trajectory of individual tastes, whose development would otherwise have been clearly more classical. They also suggest the forking that may occur in the “pure” classical model, due to the influence of the science/technology coupling as it thrusts its way into the framework of the postindustrial economies (Bell, 1999).

3.2.1. *A neoclassical from above*

Our first higher technical is a decorated professor/entrepreneur who, shortly before the interview, was given an award in recognition of his contribution to the field of biomedical technology. Like our creative entrepreneur, he works in another (non-cultural) sector of the new economy. In tandem with his main academic career, he acts as a business consultant (specializing in patent sales) and is a shareholder in a spin-off. As with the preceding case, this double status (professor/entrepreneur) initially makes it difficult to identify his exact socioprofessional status. A francophone from an European background, born into a family of cultivated scientists – father is an engineer and a voracious reader; mother a mathematics teacher and a pianist endowed with perfect pitch – this 41-year-old father settled in Montreal in his late twenties, in order to pursue postdoctoral studies. To do this, he had to cut short his first career as a member of an electropop band (in the style of *Pink Floyd*, *Tangerin Dream*, Mike Oldfield, *Vangelis*, and Jean-Michel Jarre) that had already produced several albums (another level of complexity). His current partner, who is of Slavic origin (her English is better than her French) is, like him, associated with the world of technoscience (engineering). She collects works of art and involves him directly in her cultural consumption (he accompanies her on trips abroad, where he takes part in the purchase of contemporary works made using traditional techniques). Without having much of an influence, their two children (14 and 15 years old) still play a role insofar as, like our first businessman, this one is very concerned about his children’s behaviour. His repertoire is principally influenced, however, by two main areas of interest. The first of these is the experience as a self-taught composer and performer (on synthesizer) that he has acquired as a member of his band, and that he has continued to build on (learning, for example, the rudiments of harmony by reading a work of Schoenberg) as he pursues his career (his business furnishes him with the money he needs to buy increasingly expensive musical instruments and software). He is now planning to take music theory courses at his university. His second main area of interest is a Western esoteric association with a longstanding tradition; he has long been a member (since his university days) and, on occasion, composes “hymns” for the group. During the interview, he made use of this hidden affiliation to shed light on his approach to culture, in the broad sense of the term. Claiming to be closer, in matters of taste, to the world of lawyers (who “possess a general culture”) than to that of scientists, the only colleagues with whom he “can still share” these tastes, he says, are “*either Europeans or Québécois above the age of 45.*” In the name of humanist values, he rails in a particularly virulent manner against two main targets. The first of these is the instrumentalization of science, from which he draws his income, and which he identifies with North American values (he nostalgically evokes the humanist scientists of old Europe). The second target of his ire is the deterioration of the cultural level, in Québec as in the

Western world as a whole—his favourite targets being Céline Dion (whom he compares to a product of the pharmaceutical industry), rap (violent and aggressive) and the comedy industry (vacuous and stupid). Still, this does not prevent him from appreciating certain comics, singers or rappers who, although sometimes very much products of the media, have remained more critical and intellectual, and been able to “lift themselves above the common run of mortals.” And he still “finds it hard to admit that all tastes are acceptable”: “*Out of politeness and tolerance, I will say that each person has the right to express himself. Except that this genre has been foisted upon me as the norm, as the one and only criterion at the present time. From time to time, I’d like to see more subtle things.*” In his opinion, the cultural situation operates in two different gears, and it is a “permanent struggle between two poles”: on the one hand, we have “a rich and *diversified* musical life,” while the other presents us with “a crude and aggressive humour, an impoverished language.” “It was much better before,” he says, and attributes the present state of affairs to the media. He sees “no solution” to mass stupefaction, consumerist society and the law of least resistance. “It’s a global phenomenon.”

This repertoire – focused on popular and classical music, is nonetheless exclusive in many respects (our respondent’s lack of interest in film, theatre and music, and even in painting, to which his wife wants to initiate him; his condemnation of several styles of current popular music) – is initially enlightening with respect to the influence that commercial cultural markets (as opposed to traditional cultural institutions) can have on this segment of highly qualified milieus remote from the habitual artistic and academic channels. The knowledge and competencies of our respondent have, in effect, developed, and his classical taste has even become more pronounced, in a close relation to the “music boom” of the 1970s. “*I came to classical music from electronic music. (. . .) I’ve always had a penchant for the classical. So when I had to leave the group, I began to compose pieces with a more classical flavour.*” “*And now there are things that are clearly in the classical style. I say in the “style” because I don’t have the training.*” His family background is, however, not completely foreign to this development (the parents are clearly “cultivated”). The classical taste is, as it were, already there, and is only asking to be developed. The new music market will give him the opportunity.

The case is interesting, moreover, because our respondent’s taste seems to have “evolved” from the *bottom* (if we keep to the conventional categories and items) towards the *top* (if we take it for granted that the “classical style” is necessarily the “highest”): indeed, it goes from the rock world of the 1970s through a “classical style” of music (synthesizer compositions inspired by Ravel and Debussy). The rock movement it came out of is not, for all that, the most typical of popular musical expression of the period; moreover, our respondent’s current repertoire privileges grand manner classical music “up to Schoenberg” by excluding the whole range of no less “highbrow” musical research that precedes (Baroque music) or follows: “*We’ll see later, when we have the time!*” However, he acknowledges that he is “*less conservative and more open in music*” (which is his base) than in less known areas. This holds as much for cinema (which disturbs him) as it does for Marcel Duchamp and his offspring. The latter (summed up as an “overturned urinal”) is the most directly opposed to his conception of art (work, creativity, the expression of feeling): he does not see the work in it, there is no creativity, and he does not feel anything. He believes, nonetheless, that in music it is possible to deal with all the genres: it is a question of “finding the keyhole,” but, he hastens to add, “you can search for a long time.”

His secret affiliation casts light on a good part of his approach to culture. This secret society, a “society within a society” associated directly with the Enlightenment Century, features a secular liturgy (a “sacred theatre”) which, without directly interfering in our respondent’s autonomous

taste, explains his general relationship to the world. This esoteric fraternity overturns the structure of exoteric (profane) hierarchies: “the masters become servants”; “boundaries are abolished”; “this closedness allows for openness,” etc. The symbolic references to diversity (open/closed; excluded/included; compartmentalized/decompartmentalized, etc.) all pass through this symbolic filter. The alternative recourse to such a social/symbolic structure, modern yet classical, within the domain of postindustrial technoscience (and postmodern culture?) demonstrates the paradoxical coexistence of social temporalities that may not be, finally, so divergent. In any case, it explains or justifies our respondent’s relationship to music; this structure is, in effect, of the same order (classical/alternative). It is as if one were advancing toward the future by walking backwards.

3.2.2. *Neo-classical from below*

Our second case is a project leader in a large environmental organization within the Canadian federal civil service. With degrees in biochemistry and the physical sciences, he is located further down on the status scale. Of the six, he is the one with the lowest income; his degree level (master’s) is lower than that of his predecessor. He is also the youngest of the group (39 years old). But he is single without children and money is not a problem for him. Born into a comfortably well-off French-Canadian family (his father is the sales director of a multinational corporation) with a traditional make-up (a stay-at-home mother), he received, from early childhood until the end of adolescence, a classical (private) education as a pianist, which enabled him to consider a career in music—which he nonetheless gave up in favour of science. In tandem with his main career, he would subsequently become a chorister in a large symphony orchestra (for close to a decade). His workplace is located in a heritage and tourist centre (Old Montreal), and this is conducive to visits to nearby cultural centres (museums, exhibition centres, galleries, and . . . tourist traps). More so than the others, he practices his cultural activities alone, and with complete autonomy. Just like the others, he is not (or does not consider himself to be) a great reader (whereas, in fact, like most of those interviewed, he reads much more literature than the average person). This young scientist currently describes himself as a dabbler, curious and eclectic. “I like different styles and I’m curious about different forms of art in general.” “Everything interesting to see” in Montreal, or elsewhere, is on his “list.” But he particularly likes “the diversity of expression at the musical level.” If his system of preferences remains, despite all, classical, dominated by a musical domain in which he could have become a professional, he explores well beyond this range: the large outdoor music festivals, which set the pace for Montreal’s summer season, are opportunities for him to “make discoveries.” He stresses the importance of “open doors” for “access to culture,” to the greater benefit of all Québécois.

This case of eclecticism shares a number of traits with the preceding one, but differs in other respects. On the plane of similarities, he, too, privileges modern art forms that are already considered classical (Ravel and Debussy in music, Impressionism in painting), while showing himself to be deeply involved in pop music (world music in his case, as opposed to alternative rock). Like the preceding case, he demonstrates a nearly professional capacity in music. Here again, one finds a more general form of classical disposition/predisposition, which is more reminiscent of the “enlightened eclecticism” identified in France with regard to musical practices (Coulangeon, 2003) than it is of indiscriminate omnivorousness. In both cases (post)modernity appears to strongly inflect the natural, classical bent.

Although marked by our respondent’s musical training (continued through his current listening practices), this repertoire is no less open to the field of contemporary popular music.

In this case, it is a matter mainly of “world music,” which our respondent has learned about mainly by attending large urban festivals. Unlike that of our first respondent, who is little inclined to this type of outing, his musical passion appears both less exclusive and less esoteric. Partial to outings of all sorts – museums, cultural tourism, large-scale events with extensive media coverage (*Cirque du soleil*, musicals, etc.) – his activities have led him to give up his active involvement with singing and the piano. In this respect, his repertoire follows a different bent than that of his predecessor—from high (classical training) to low (world music and popular festivals). On this plane, he distinguishes himself from our first respondent as much by the privileged place he attributes to non-Western items as by the exoticism of his lifestyle. Trips abroad also play a significant role in his openness to cultural matters, just as events on the local musical scene do with respect to his openness to the world at large (*Scène tropiques*, *Nuits d’Afrique*). His eclecticism is mirrored by an anthropological (as opposed to aesthetic) interest in world cultures (African masks and other art forms, ethnic music and dance, non-Western films). Cultural tourism occupies a large place in this repertoire. It seems to be an integral part of a lifestyle enjoyed not only on trips abroad, but also at the local level of the city. Indeed, this presents itself, in the individual’s repertoire, in a twofold manner: in the registers of the spectacular and the vernacular, as an ambient value and as a resource (or market) for cultural opportunities.

This openness to urban and global diversity, whether modern or postmodern, nonetheless demonstrates reluctance at two levels. On the one hand, like the preceding respondent, he demonstrates an irritated indifference when faced with certain contemporary art forms deemed too intellectual (abstract art, avant-garde theatre), where emotion is not on the program. This art is perceived to be a threat or an impediment insofar as it calls into question the structure of emotion and intellect that is essential to his cultural experience. Here, the classical register once more assumes the full range of its importance. Our respondent, who generally presents himself in a light manner (he defines himself as a “dabbler”) stresses the complex structure of emotions and cognition experienced through classical music. He uses the clash between emotion and cognition to explain his incomprehension when faced with these overly intellectual arts that “say nothing,” and whose “approach [he] does not understand.” Classical music, on the other hand, elicits the strongest emotions and, what is more, “emotions that he understands” (and is able to anticipate): he will, therefore, more fully appreciate what he knows best (concert pianists, choral works that he has already performed), for he is capable of recognizing their level of difficulty (he is less assertive with respect to other instruments) and can compare interpretations. One can love (or appreciate) only what one has learned to know and recognize (or anticipate).

On the other hand, he seems very embarrassed with regard to that segment of Québec work deemed “too local,” or “not exportable” (the Québec accent in particular). This final level of exclusion is probably expressed less in terms of frank aversion than of embarrassment, and it conveys a final vestige of snobbery in this rather “cool” humanist neoclassicist. It could also stem from the irritation of a well-raised and well-educated young Québécois, undoubtedly nationalist and cosmopolitan, who deems it necessary to adjust to, or has chosen to adapt to, an arbitrary and external (as well as financially fatal) cultural situation to which he remains subject as a member of a hemmed-in minority. As with our first two businessmen, his admiration for Québécois artists remains directly linked to the promotion of Québec identity. To his way of thinking, the big-name concert performers (but also hit films, theatre pieces, musical comedies, the *Cirque du soleil*) make it possible to restore national pride at the international level: these artists prove that “we can export (ourselves).”

3.3. Higher cultural world

The two final cases undoubtedly represent but a fragment of the innumerable possible declensions of eclecticism in professional artistic milieus. The subsample, voluntarily skewed in favour of the world of contemporary visual art, is no less characteristic of milieus where the consumption of arts and culture is determined mainly by professional uses. The taste model thus corresponds more closely to that edgy-trendy form identified by Donnat: a form of “connected” *connaissanceurism* radically different from the classical erudition conditioned by the strategic role played in these careers by the acquisition of recent or “up-to-date” cultural information.

As with our higher manager, hybridization here is particularly high on the border separating the high and the low, while divisions are very marked on the old/new scale, but acting this time in reverse fashion, with the group distinguishing itself by the preponderance of contemporary/current items. Several participants highlighted, however, the lack of eclecticism in their milieu, directly targeting the “snobbery” they attribute to unbridled “specialization,” itself associated with a certain modernism (self-referential formalism or classic modernism are the favourite targets). As with the preceding group, one observes a significant difference in accordance with age and position held: the younger one is, the more *connected* one is, while the older overwhelmed mediators become involved more often “out of a sense of duty.” The two cases selected are from this category of mediators. They illustrate very well two other recurrent phenomena specific to these milieus which are permanently immersed in a specialized cultural world: the first, a “second degree” practice in the face of the items of commercial popular culture; the second, which in more than one respect amounts to *disconnection*, the phenomenon of “cultural overdose” which has led several to voluntarily limit their cultural consumption (a matter of preserving their availability) and to want to “get out of culture.” studies

Our first case is another university professor from an English-Canadian background, a francophile who is quite comfortable in French. This 45-year-old presents himself as a specialist in “popular culture and the North American urban culture industries.” More specifically, he is a historian and theoretician focusing primarily on corporate Hollywood films and, secondly, on various forms of popular music (blues, jazz, rock and, more recently, easy listening, dance and film music). His professional profile – characteristic of the cultural studies movement – is strongly consonant with his repertoire: “*The fact that there are almost no boundaries between my personal and professional interests is ideal, almost utopian!*” His parents, who are middle class but liberal (his father is an Anglican pastor who plays *Hello Dolly* style music on the trumpet, while his mother is a school librarian), had a decisive influence on his choice of career: when he was about 18 years old, they gave him a book on the semiotics of cinema, which he has read and reread many times since. Today, his wife (who holds a doctorate in art history) has a more direct influence on the content of his repertoire. Having no children, they go out often and make many trips abroad (particularly to London); she is mainly the one who introduced him to contemporary visual art, which constitutes the other component of his repertoire. Through her, he has come to develop “a sort of mini career” as an art critic (video art, performance, installation). This last domain, which he defines as that of “post-contemporary multimedia,” now constitutes the milieu where most of his friends are found. This parallel career is facilitated, moreover, by his background in cinema and semiology: “*All of today’s art critics read film theory or semiology. I was already familiar with these, so I could use them fairly well. I’m a little lacking in the history of visual art, but that’s not hard to learn.*”

Inseparable from his professional status, this example of a repertoire is interesting, first of all, in that it combines two types of items that are far apart on the high/low axis: in the first of these, a

“low-middlebrow” type that is central to his repertoire, our respondent has developed an undeniable erudition; meanwhile, the use made of the second or parallel (or more discreet) item, which is of the “highbrow” type, is more worldly and uncertain. Compared with our four other examples of repertoires, this one stands out by virtue of the importance it attributes to “second degree” items; not only does it include works, artists, products and cultural practices, but it draws on the names of magazines, critics and theoreticians, all of which are central but would remain hidden in standard survey research. Our respondent’s account of his tastes thus alternates unceasingly between the stance of the researcher and that of the amateur.

At the level of obvious content, “genre films” from the great era of Hollywood cinema – genre films and star vehicles as opposed to *auteur* films (which our respondent is fond of, but more as an amateur than as a connoisseur) – take up the foreground. These are his “classics,” those with respect to which his erudition has truly developed. “Film noir” constitutes the irreducible core of his favourite genres (“it’s my primal scene”). Gangsters and gamblers had a strong influence on him in his early teens when, as a card player and avid TV watcher, he identified strongly with such characters. He adores the atmosphere of these “pessimistic films with an ‘existential’ vision of the world” that have changed the history of cinema. “Since that time, cinema has become much more *serious*.” Our respondent’s musical tastes resonate strongly with the world of cinema (he collects film soundtracks and has over 500 CDs in the genre). The cinema also determines his taste for this type of (easy listening) music, “which does not require much attention.” With respect to jazz, a field in which he used to be a connoisseur, the only music he has kept is that “which you can put on as background music” (like in the movies) while you’re doing something else, “like the background music of a good film, or of a lifestyle.” His current penchant for dance music (disco, salsa, reggae, ska, funk, etc.) is owing to the ambiance of the bars and discotheques of North American cities (also discovered through film noir). His musical tastes prove, on the other hand, to be more unstable than his film tastes, and subject to pronounced evolutions—shifting from the alternative rock of the 1970s to 1980s punk, before settling on ambient music with urban and cinematic flavours. Moreover, he confesses to a growing lack of interest with age: “at 45, one is no longer so involved in music,” it “fits less into our lifestyle”; “*if I’m more involved than most of my friends, it’s because I have students and I make an effort.*”

The contemporary art items – which are more recent, and in which he has not (yet) developed so much erudition – could depend in part on this transitional phase in his life cycle. But they could also be owing to his early identification with genre films and their characters (Humphrey Bogart). These serve indeed as the guiding thread in a narrative that helps him to explain his presence in a milieu where “he considers himself an impostor”: “*it’s like a game; I publish in art magazines because they pay better than scholarly journals.*” A regular visitor to contemporary art galleries, he is nonetheless beginning to know and recognize himself in them (“to start with, I find people there who are like me”) while maintaining, with respect to this art “which does not seek to be popular,” a relationship that is ambivalent – critical, or indeed cynical (“most of the works seem to me to be rather empty by comparison with what people say about them”) – and, especially, less scholarly and more worldly. First a gambler and gangster, and now an “impostor” in the world of contemporary art, he has adopted an approach stemming primarily from a search for ambiance and a lifestyle (bohemian, existentialist, urban). His milieu is the one that organizes “the best parties in the city.” And it is also the one in which he can meet “certain types of (potentially interesting) people” who resemble him, and whom he depicts in a precise manner: they are “*people between the ages of 35 and 45, who probably have a master’s degree or doctorate, and who think they’re younger than they really are; they like good music but are more or less well-informed, and live a more or less bohemian lifestyle (. . .) anglophones or francophones, they like*

to associate with the other side of the linguistic divide.” Still, his attraction to this milieu does betray a real fascination with this *not-so-popular art*. Its appeal is rooted, on the one hand, in its “multimedia” side, its hybrid, polymorphous and elusive character: “*an incredible pluralism (in which) everything is permitted, more or less; you can’t say ‘it’s this or it’s that,’ because it can be anything whatsoever.*” The appeal is due also to this art’s “postcontemporary” dimension, as opposed to the *contemporary classics* of the first avant-gardes, which were formalist and prescriptive and at odds with daily life. “*Contemporary (current) art is [on the contrary] fascinated by daily life and tries to understand it; it’s less philosophical and less moral, and invites us to look around us at daily life in all its banality, where we may be able to discover dimensions that are somewhat magical or philosophical.*”

This openness (more vernacular than frankly populist) to a certain urban and “postindustrial” modernism has, as its counterpart, the exclusion of numerous items, not only from the “high” genres – “serious” music (classical as well as contemporary), theatre, songs with strong lyrics (including Leonard Cohen), literature (with the notable exception of hardboiled fiction or the *roman noir*, in connection with films), dance (except for dance music) – but from the “low” genres as well (naïve art, Celtic music, blockbuster films, etc.). With this respondent, each aversion to an “art genre” implies, moreover, a very deliberate rejection of particular types of people: the mass audiences for those “humanist” or sentimental films (*Life is Beautiful*) that no longer interest him; blues “purists” who are “too hooked on the past”; or those of contemporary jazz, pushed into a “dead end” by the “demon of innovation”; Celtic music—“I don’t like it, nor do I like most of the people who do,” who are “too tied” to their roots. In short, he expresses a deep aversion to an entire Western heritage, whether folk or “old modern,” as well as to those who subscribe to it (the extra-Occidental field is, in his case, completely ignored).

The most original feature of this repertoire stems, however, from the intervention, in the course of the interview, of specifically theoretical items. In this respect, the “Pierre Bourdieu” item plays a role as important as the cinema item. On the one hand, it helps him to explain and justify his contradictions: with respect to (contemporary) art, for example, which is both “an opportunity to meet like-minded people” and “a means of distinguishing oneself from others.” Moreover, he shares Bourdieu’s skepticism with regard to the potential for democratization in the arts: “all attempts at this have failed,” there is no point in repeating them. And, like Bourdieu, he doubts the legitimacy of such democratization: “there are all sorts of good reasons not to visit contemporary art museums.” On this last point, he is clearly opposed to the cultural goodwill of our other cases. This Bourdieu-style critique is inflected, however, by a seductive irony and an amorality that would bring him closer to a Baudrillard, whose apoliticism and aesthetic nihilism he shares: “*Art is not very important; whether we are talking about contemporary art, stamp collectors or a group of Star Trek fans, they are all merely occasions for meeting similar people.*” The convergence of French Theory items (as constructed in America) and items from North American popular culture (as interpreted by the *Cahiers du Cinema*) is based, as it were, on a twofold bias – populist (*à l’américaine*) and elitist (*à la française*) – whose inconsistencies our respondent sometimes reveals (*I’m inconsistent*), while adapting quite well to them. In fact, all of this is finally a question of education: “*It’s a question of education. People don’t have the knowledge of art history they need to understand the works. What exactly is it that’s missing from their lives? Why would it be better for society to provide them with this education? Would it make them better?*” He is unable to answer the question. To draw large audiences, museums must do all sorts of things that no longer have anything to do with the role of the museum. “*You can always have rock music bands, or you can have parties or clowns for children. This will draw people in, but are we still dealing with a contemporary art museum, or something else?*” When all is said

and done, this yields a new populist/intellectual cocktail, a mixture that shows, paradoxically, a real search for compatibility between two models of taste and legitimation (populism and elitism) that are apparently opposed on the high/low axis. The case demonstrates, moreover, as with our first creative entrepreneur, the perfect compatibility of the pattern of distinctiveness (snob or purist) and omnivorousness (in this case, closer to pop art than to popular culture).

3.3.2. *We're not a bunch of snobs here!*

Our final respondent is a senior officer in the Canadian fine arts system. Also forty-one years old he was born into a cultivated middle class French-Canadian family (his father is a cultural manager with degrees in fine arts and commerce; his mother is a ceramicist and an accountant), whose members themselves come from middle or working class backgrounds. He received a classical education (with the Jesuits) and did art history studies at the master's level (without completing the degree program) before veering into cultural administration, like his father. For a time, while engaged in these studies, he pursued a commercial art career (in photography). He personally knows many artists, including a number of Canadian art luminaries; he travels in international contemporary art circles and is in daily contact with artists (he sometimes works setting up exhibitions). His circle of close friends, whom he has known since adolescence, includes influential political personalities from the world of culture. He describes himself as a "little scrapper" (leaning against a painting depicting just such a concept in his office) and considers himself to be more of a (cultural) entrepreneur than an art theorist. From this "sporting-entrepreneurial" angle, he is undoubtedly closer to our first businessman than he is to our preceding scholar. While his profession exerts a direct influence on his cultural consumption, his close family also contributes significantly to the diversification of items in his repertoire. His spouse, who works in the communications sector, had a long career as an actor and has kept up contact with the world of artistic theatre. Their two children also spur them on in a good many of their activities: his 8-year-old son, an opera fan, *obliges* him to attend the sort of shows that he would not go see on his own; his 5-year-old daughter, at her grandfather's urging, draws extensively and, being fond of art museums, forces her father to visit exhibitions that he would not otherwise see. He also goes to the public library weekly on behalf of his children. His speech is marked, moreover, by virulent denunciations of the snobbery of the cultural milieu. His preferred targets are the publicly owned stations (that he used to listen to frequently) and the "self-referential" aesthetic magazines (although he founded one himself in a previous life). Contradictions remain, therefore, and he acknowledges a number of "small snobby and purist traits," flushed out throughout the interview. He falls back on this aspect of his character to justify his preferences for original works (over reproductions) and his own collection (some 40 works, a good many of which are in storage and "not even framed," due to lack of time). And it is for this same reason that he will not allow himself to take family or travel photos ("it's not doing photography"). And there is another contradiction as well: although he likes taking risks, he needs "references"—his mother for film; his wife and their childhood friends for theatre; his work colleagues (who are mostly women) for dance and opera, which he knows less about. However, things may be, neither he nor his colleagues could be suspected of being snobs. "*The education we had told us to respect all professions. And that's something that helps me in my management techniques. As far as I am concerned, the guy who looks after the photocopy machine is as important as my senior consultant, and I respect both of them. Both professions have a role to play, that's what I was taught, and it's what I believe. I may be quite a snob with respect to certain art forms, but I am certainly not a snob with the guy who operates my corner grocery store, because he's very important to me. We're not a bunch of snobs here. We're people*

who work in art because we like and respect it.” His account of his “personal tastes” is built around the same theme.

This repertoire is interesting primarily because it is structured around three relatively compartmentalized repertoires (professional, familial and personal), without it being possible to say exactly which one predominates. In fact, our respondent’s “personal tastes,” which he regrets not being able to “develop further,” seem to be as submerged by his professional life as they are immersed in his domestic life. At the professional level, the repertoire, which is focused on the most specialized forms of contemporary art, remains subject to “corporate criteria” that he only partially shares; susceptible to “overdose,” he avoids all art openings. At the time of the interview, he was deeply concerned with the “demographic crisis” in the arts and the congestion of a funding system (that he deems “paternalistic”) overwhelmed by an influx of young “professional” artists looking for recognition (an “overloaded system” that he would like to see decentralized and “re-engineered” by the market). At the family level, and in the opposite direction, his wife and children encourage him to go to the theatre and opera, as well as to the most traditional museums, to public libraries and “even to certain agricultural exhibitions.” His “personal tastes” seem to be evolving toward popular culture, toward soft-rock commercial radio or Québec songs (which he firmly supports in the name of identity-related values), with local comics (them again) taking up the foreground; toward the corner Super Video Club (he is one of their best customers); toward bestsellers both past (Dumas) and present (Alexandre Jardin, John Irving); and much more toward television than the other participants (*téléromans*, miniseries, nature documentaries). Being more of a *cinéphage* (film cannibal) than a *cinéophile*, he has tastes that seem to go in all directions: from European cinema (at his mother’s urging) to Bollywood (but not Hollywood, denounced on behalf of identity-related values). In visual art, an area in which he is much better informed, his real tastes remain harder to define (partly because of his public servant’s duty to be circumspect). Describing himself as open with respect to areas he knows less about, he admits to being less adventurous in the domain in which he specializes. Somewhat in the manner of our first case, he has a tendency to be more interested in the artist’s personality than in his or her work. He acknowledges a certain interest in the work of “autodidacts” (as opposed to “naïve” artists, it must be said) and dreams about organizing an exhibition for artists of this kind, although this does not mean that he believes the genre should be subsidized (contradicting his institution’s position in this matter). He somewhat promotes a “young Québec painting” which is often more figurative than its elders but just as “professional” (the defence of the genre is associated, as it were, with that of the “status of young Québécois artists” in opposition to older formalists who are usually Canadian). His defence of this young Québec painting is not so much about aesthetic criteria as it is about a nationalist profession of faith: “*Nobody will ever stop me from working to develop a Québec culture that retains its distinctiveness, that is part of my fundamental values.*” His penchant for these young Québec artists thus takes as its model not art history but a particular segment of Québec cultural production, that of the (young) song with strong lyrics, in the pop vein. This painting genre, which he opposes to “modern classicism,” also clearly takes precedence over the new multimedia installations favoured by our preceding respondent. Being less intellectual, the new artists are, in his opinion, “much less snobby” than their elders. Our respondent’s defence of this “not snobby” *genre* and of these “very pop” young painters is based, moreover, on two inextricable levels of justification, pertaining to emotion and communication: our respondent appreciates these “after-modern” (as opposed to “postmodern”) works because they “convey an idea, an emotion” and “convey them to me.” All things considered, “a fine landscape is a fine thing” at all times. He has much more difficulty, on the other hand, with the young comics (even

though he listens to them regularly on the radio): more empty and absurd than crude, they give him “nothing but a passing pleasure” (something he can get without any complications during a good meal with friends). He prefers the older comics, who are more political and subversive. Still, the exact nature of his “personal taste” remained elusive throughout the interview, for both the interviewer and himself. He concluded, moreover, with a declaration of intention and the expression of a particularly significant desire, “namely to have (or put aside) time” in which to develop his personal taste. *“I feel like having more time (to see the things I truly love) (. . .) to exert control over my professional life so as to develop a more personal life, to go to film festivals and [to take in] dance and music, which I miss a lot. I feel like having a job that will allow me more personal freedom.”* This declaration conveys a belief shared from the start by all our participants: that “taste” is not a personal thing so much as a thing that develops (in certain conditions) and deserves to be developed (not so much for oneself, but as something in itself and for others).

4. Conclusion

Without being strictly empirical realities, these six observations are nonetheless not concepts in the strict sense. On the contrary, they are transitory figures that result from the interplay of symbolic boundaries and scales that are momentarily crystallized during an interview. They are caused in part by an interview situation that forces people to explain themselves. They still illustrate entirely real “possibilities,” far more numerous than the few alternatives that arise from purely macro-quantitative observations. The advantageous position they occupy in the social space suggests that these several possibilities of eclecticism, though perhaps in the minority or exceptional, are not without influence on cultural evolution. These cases exhaust neither all the possible figures of eclecticism nor all the figures of hybrid repertoires. The sampling would reveal many other equally unique cases of this widespread tendency, for the hybridization of popular and cultured genres within repertoires is not the exception but the rule. As Lahire has shown (2004, pp. 103–195), by relying solely on items, ordered from top to bottom on this unique scale of legitimacy, everyone quickly becomes eclectic. This small sampling no doubt does not allow for empirical generalizations that would identify one, let alone more than one, model of truly “dominant” taste, developing on a unique slope, omnivorous and open, or purist and snobbish, for example. On the contrary, observation brings to light a process of dynamic structuring of tastes based on a field of multiple and divergent forces, the result of which is necessarily more uncertain. It demonstrates, above all, that the two main models advanced to explain the cultural behaviour of the elite are not mutually exclusive: the logic of distinction may well survive the rise of omnivorousness. In this regard, it is symptomatic that the most pop-oriented of our cases, our “Pop Scholar”, appears the most elitist. These two logics are reconcilable in a single individual, who furthermore may very well accommodate himself to this apparent incoherence. He may claim it as a mark of pride, or even superiority. For many people, cultivating one’s taste thus means learning to diversify it. It is also a sign of creativity or flexibility. Without being statistically representative, these cases remain exemplary of the complex and dynamic relationships that are maintained by the people who are the best disposed in the face of the arts and culture; they bring to light, within the irreducible core of believing consumers, the great instability of the boundaries between types of art, as well as the multiplicity of the hierarchical principles and legitimizations one may base them on. These few cases therefore suffice to relativize the unilateral meanings that one may be led to attribute to eclecticism in general, based on strictly macroscopic and behaviourist observation. In this regard,

the micro-qualitative approach presents several advantages; and it does not prevent methodological and theoretical considerations of a general import.

First, gathering together all the items of the repertoire and doing so in the terms of the person who makes use of them, allows us to identify those that are the most significant in his eyes. And this leads to the re-establishment of a coherence that, on a macroscopic scale, would escape the researcher's attention. A person may be "profound" in one genre and light in others; it all depends on context and circumstances. In addition, this approach restores the diversity of genres operating within the conventional categories of art. By requiring one to think about these in conjunction with their uses, it leads to a subtler interpretation of the deductions that, supported by these categories only, indexes them unilaterally upward (opera and serious music) and downward (easy listening, dance music, mainstream cinema). It also becomes obvious that legitimacy is not only exercised "top down" but also operates "bottom up": among our participants, there is no systematic aversion to popular art forms that would lead to an immediate lowering of their value; indeed, the cultivated forms of art are not necessarily invested with the strongest index of legitimacy. Immersed in the local popular culture (to which they belong), our six cases seek to adjust themselves to it or to rehabilitate it; often, their true taste inclines in that direction, "legitimacy" being tantamount, so to speak, to "popularity." Observation furthermore demonstrates the potential importance to classification of very "minority" (and scarcely popular) forms of art, like contemporary art and urban graffiti (both of which encompass many variants), that completely escape the large pre-coded, panoramic surveys. From this point of view, it is obvious that neither cultivated nor more popular culture is limited to its most traditional forms.

In this regard, the distinction *old/new* is at least as discriminating as the *high/low* distinction. Throughout this study, the two axes were found to overlap in the natural speech of those interviewed. Some associated the traditional with the popular, others the classical (and old) with the elevated style. Some pieced together heterodox categories from these two axes ("discovery" art) or distorted the sense of the conventional categories (assimilating classical with commercial, industrial and media-based). Furthermore, it is impossible to know which of the two orders truly predominates. One must therefore wonder whether, instead of a single unassailable system of distinction "of last resort," there would not rather be a variety of relatively antagonistic and overlapping systems referring to diverse registers of legitimacy (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991). Analysis thus gives rise to a third system, one that overlaps just as much with the preceding ones, dividing local and international items. The traditional one is not only below but perhaps most of all "here," artistic excellence necessarily being "international." How do we deal, then, with a local item that has become international (Céline Dion)? No doubt, this feature is not independent of the specific geocultural situation of the members of our sample. This distinction would perhaps assume lesser importance, or would be less obvious, in the contexts of countries where the centre of cultural authority is less problematic and the cultural field is, so to speak, less open (to the four winds) and more autonomous; local items would then be able to present themselves as legitimately universal from the start. By the same token, this nonetheless underscores the fact that the structure of national cultural fields is not (or is no longer) strictly national; items' national origin may thus prove more decisive than their social (class) properties. Our French-Canadian participants, beyond their multiple divergences of taste and political orientation, thus mobilize the arts and culture in favour of a logic of affirmation that patently has more to do with identity than status, the national question strengthening or overdetermining, no more and no less, the social question. The *habitus*, if there is one, could itself prove first a national matter and take on meaning only through comparison at the international level. The singular instability of Québec's cultural identity and its nationalist thrust might, in this way, be only a special instance of the new

situation in which the majority of national elites are placed today, including those of the more “culturally” dominant countries. Opening the cultural field thus invites us to consider the national roots of theories heretofore advanced to account for the phenomenon of eclecticism. This realization likely has different meanings according to the contexts on the basis of which it is interpreted. What is at the top in one world may be at the bottom in another; what is new here may be old there, and vice versa. In the end, this geocultural dimension reminds us that the elites’ cultural and social mobility is directly linked to their geographical mobility. From this perspective, cultural or cultivated tourism stands out, in this sample, as a status marker that is clearly more categorizing (and unifying) than the properly artistic taste for this or that art form, or for particular combinations of art forms.

The diversification of repertoire items and the overlapping of hierarchies do not necessarily abolish the processes of ritualizing the symbolic boundaries between “art genres.” From this standpoint, the diversification of what is offered seems to lead less to the abolition and more to the multiplication of boundaries between “genres.” Thus, this process of symbolic classification again lends itself to the work of discrimination, enabling the hierarchization of art genres as a function of types of people. It allows individuals to place (and affiliate) themselves within a heterogeneous social space that they themselves have helped to construct and that, furthermore, is not limited to their immediate environment. In it, the absent are as important as the co-present, so to speak, the dead as important as the living. Although centred on the individual, the micro-qualitative approach is, from this angle, no less globalizing: in particular, it makes it possible to restore the roles of the majority of groups initially excluded from the analysis. In fact, close observation identifies all those who intervene in the life of an individual in the course of his existence, in order to shape the trajectory of his taste. These figures, to whom the participants attribute positive or negative values, are in fact the markers of an internalized legitimacy struggle being carried out within repertoires. As *Lahire* (2004 and this issue) notes, this struggle opposes the individual to both himself and others.

This detailed method also makes it possible to take simultaneously and dynamically into account the double complexity that today affects both social status and cultural repertoires. Making it possible to keep two generally disjunct perspectives together, it leads beyond the apparent behaviour of cultural consumption to inscribe overlapping social trajectories within cultural practice. From this viewpoint, analysis demonstrates that these individuals, without being art producers in the strict sense, are nonetheless not simple consumers of cultural products and leisure activities. These members of a potentially liberal “new creative class” are in fact highly involved in culture, not in parallel with their professional activities but through them. The many overlaps between cultural practice and professional practice are not limited to the sort of informants associated with professional cultural milieus. They are also true of all the others. Thus, our six cases participate or have participated simultaneously or successively in various other professional worlds: the non-professionals conceal secret affiliations with the worlds of art; the cultural professionals do not develop independently of the world of science and business. In some cases, official professional status is even deceptive. Is the high-tech entrepreneur with an array of science degrees who develops multilingual translation software part of the business, scientific or cultural world? Just what world does the award-winning professor-entrepreneur belong to, pursuing a mini-career as an alternative/classical composer? These overlaps are all the more inextricable when one considers not the particular position (at the time of the interview) but the career, fields of study and previous professional training. The multiplicity of professional socializations and affiliations is thus a phenomenon of general import that immediately makes it difficult to accurately assign individuals to a single professional realm. The multiplicity of

professional experiences supports the internal diversification of the repertoires and principles of legitimization of the various items. Furthermore, extra-professional affiliations have their importance; the conjugal bond in particular can be decisive not only in the milieus that are the furthest from the professional cultural pole, but within them as well (the case of our upper-level bureaucrat in fine arts is an example of this). Besides, the various forms of socioprofessional and less formal *exogamy* and *heterogamy* invite a broader analysis of the relationships between the formation of taste and eventual systems of “multiple affiliation” (De Singly, 2003). These affiliations, which may be overt, discrete or even secret, increase as soon as one considers a person’s entire social trajectory.

In this way, observation makes it possible to define the large diffraction between aggregate and disaggregate scales. An individual’s apparent status frozen at a given moment in time does not guarantee his cultural identity on the move. The three cultural–professional worlds, despite the distortions they are subjected to by various other factors present or past, no doubt retain a decisive influence on the formation and stabilization of “taste patterns” that more or less transcend the individual. They favour three forms of eclecticism – omnivorous, enlightened and creative/connected – that are quite distinct models of the “mixing of genres.” The first, more opportunistic, is evidently linked to “business opportunities.” The second strongly upholds the belief in the supremacy of the intellectual functions of culture. The third, on the contrary, could be associated with the reconfiguration of the legitimate cultural field in view of the rise of the culture industries. However, these “models” do not correspond to status groups (in the Weberian sense), social classes (in the Marxist sense) or socioprofessional categories (in the sociodemographic sense). They coincide more closely with Bourdieu’s notion of a “field” whose boundaries would clearly be “looser.” Based on this, one could no doubt choose to emphasize the features of each of these realms in order to demonstrate their specific coherence and relative impermeability: from this angle, these realms would appear like fields of symbolic issues relatively independent of each other, at once regulatory frameworks of practical uses and autonomous prescribers of taste, each living on its own planet, so to speak. Yet, one might just as well seek to demonstrate their fluidity. Above all, it remains to be determined whether the tendency is to weaken or on the contrary to strengthen these cultural/professional “taste patterns.” Obviously, this does not depend solely on the dynamics internal to each of these fields.

To accentuate the variation of individual and collective tastes, as we have up to now, does not prevent us from pointing out, in conclusion, an invariant. Despite everything, our individuals share one and the same belief in the value of “art and culture.” As Bourdieu would say, they unite (or gather) around a single issue that divides them. However, analysis of the classifying dynamic in movement calls into question the transcendent principle of a “pure taste for pure art” that the same author placed at the top of the pyramid of cultural legitimacy, to attach it to a uniform lifestyle or class *habitus*. Examination shows rather, through the diversification of lifestyles and the distortion of the *habitus*, the sharing of a wholly different, possibly strange, but clearly more unifying belief: taste is something that “is developed” *relationally* and that, for the most part, deserves to be (our pop scholar, more Bourdieu-like, is nevertheless more uncertain).⁹ Is it a metamorphosis of the same principle of cohesion (the autonomy of art, disinterested pleasure) or a truly alternative principle? Another order of legitimacy may in fact be taking shape here. But its criteria remain to be found, no doubt at the risk of being just as hotly disputed.

⁹ Although he too recognizes the importance of “education.”

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