

Sociology of Consumption and Fashion

What is left of authenticity?

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What is it to be 'authentic'?

What makes something 'authentic'?

“the cult of authenticity pervades modern life”
(Lowenthal, 1992: 184)

“authenticity is a general preoccupation of modern
western culture” (Jacknis, 1990: 9)

“the key to the development of the modern world”
(McCannell, 1999: 145)

“Authenticity influences my decision to support a brand”

So say...



90%

OF MILLENNIALS



85%

OF GEN XERS



80%

OF BOOMERS

Conceptually ‘authenticity’ seems to
constitute an impossible question!

Nobody knows what it is!

Let’s try to approach the idea somehow...

To say that something is authentic,
according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*,
is to say that it is what it *professes to be*,
or what it is *reputed to be*,
in *origin or authorship*.

In an object, what is the authentic element?

For an object, can there be authenticity by itself?

What is that stable inside that is authentic? Who is the 'outside' that observes it?

What about change? When would you know to have 'reached' authenticity?

Were you inauthentic and only then became more authentic?

To be authentic does something need to be benign (person) or good (object)?

How is it that 'authenticity' has been relevant for only 200 years old or so?



LV

FAKE



**THIS IS A FAKE.
SO, WE LOVE IT.**



BACK

In philosophy the paradox is between the
‘essentialist’ vs. the ‘existentialist’
notions of authenticity, but both
seem to constantly hit a wall
if any ‘true’ notion of
‘authenticity’ is to hold

Any notion of the ‘authentic’ is
irreducibly grounded in *Christianity*

(and it works whether we recognize it or not...)

Freedom is ‘given by God’, but once assumed one
can never stop being free all the time!

Being towards ‘Truth’ or God, but there can be no end
(or fixing the Fall) (always remains sinful [St. Augustine])

Problem is we *cannot* have essence, but without
essence there is no ‘true’ comparison

BEING YOURSELF *ALWAYS*
EMERGES FROM THE *OUTSIDE!*

Paradox again:

Consumption is *vain and inauthentic*,
yet there is where we are supposed
to *discover authenticity!*

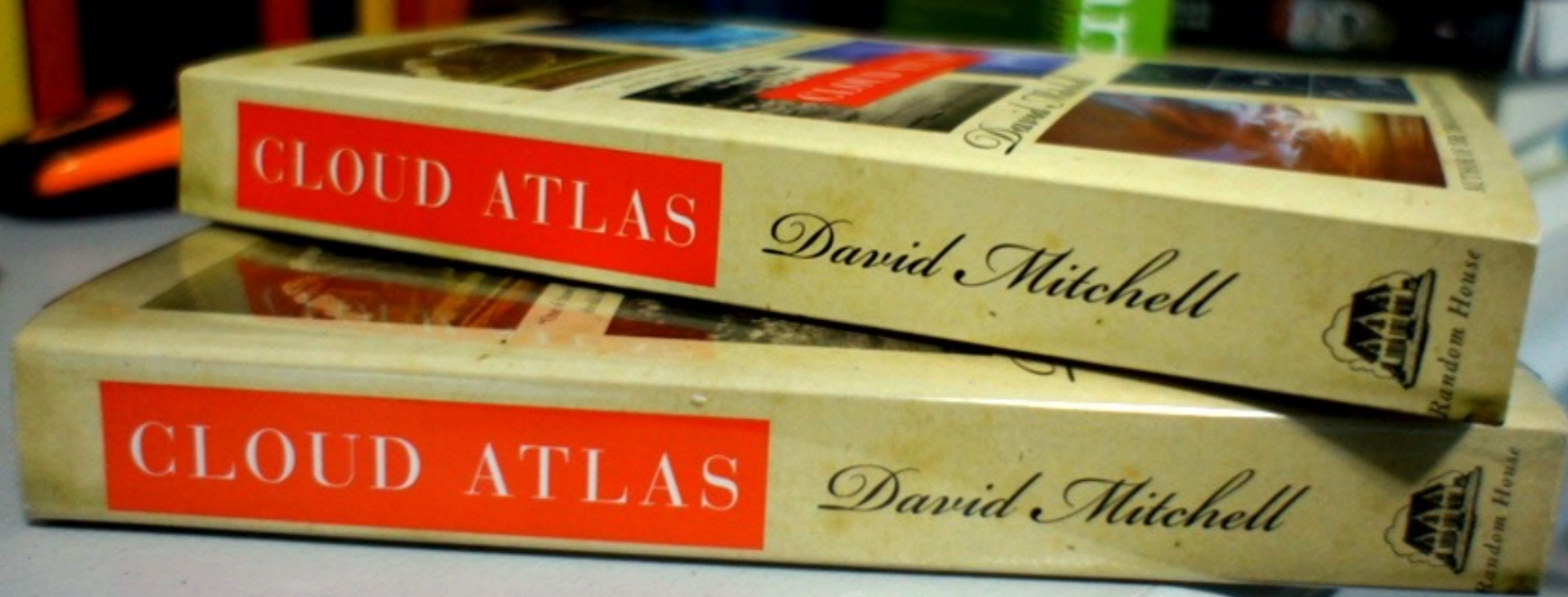


YOGA

**IDENTITY
PROJECTS**

But what is that irreversible moment
that happens precisely in the advent of

production?



CLOUD ATLAS

David Mitchell



Random House

CLOUD ATLAS

David Mitchell



Random House



Collins

Italiar

Paradoxes of luxury (*branded luxury* in particular)

“uniqueness and ubiquity”

“heritage and cutting edge”



Group work

The assigned reading for today was Hietanen et al. (2020)

- What does the paper say about luxury markets?
- What do we learn about the relationship between authentic and counterfeit?

In groups: Discuss these themes for 10 minutes and come up with a question and a comment



Seduced by “fakes”: Producing the excessive interplay of authentic/counterfeit from a Baudrillardian perspective

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Abstract

Authenticity has often been considered to be a key theme in contemporary consumer culture. One of its manifestations is how branded market offerings can maintain authentic meanings, especially in a market increasingly saturated with counterfeit substitutes. By following a Baudrillardian perspective, we focus on fashion objects in the “branded luxury” category to problematize the sanctity of the authentic/counterfeit distinction. We argue that marketing lit-

In a commodity:

Which one is the ‘original’ or ‘genuine’ article?

“The modern sign dreams of its predecessor, and would dearly love to rediscover the obligation in its reference to the real”

(Baudrillard, 2007: 51)

The ‘secret’ – commodity fetish

‘Authenticity’ works in tandem to help
forget production, forget materiality!

Is the search for authenticity in consumer behavior the last grand myth of our times?

Without counterfeit, how can the genuine speak for itself?

“This would make perfect sense as the possibility of *emerging beyond the system* that is embedded in ubiquitous commodities and commodification *is exactly the relation it cannot deliver*”

WE HAVE NO NAMES



BUY AND NAME US