Neoliberalism, Food and Women: A Narcissistic Culinary Culture?[1]

Kumru Berfin Emre Çetin[*]
Hacettepe University

Abstract

This paper aims to provide a critique of food cultures in the neoliberal era. I argue that neoliberalism has transformed the ways in which people consume food and the cultural meanings of food and eating. Food and eating have become sources of narcissistic pleasure that are usually accompanied by feelings of guilt and anxiety towards oneself and nature. Middle-class women in particular are engaged in this neoliberal food culture through the discourses of 'healthy bodies', 'organic lifestyles' as well as the 'domestic pleasure of cooking'.

Keywords: *neoliberalism, culinary culture, women, narcissism.*

* Res. Asst. Dr. Kumru Berfin Emre Çetin, Hacettepe University, Faculty of Communication, Department of Radio, TV and Cinema. Ankara-Turkey. E-mail: berfin@hacettepe.edu.tr; befinemre@gmail.com.

Neoliberalizm, Gıda ve Kadın: Narsist Bir Mutfak Kültürü?

Kumru Berfin Emre Çetin
Hacettepe Üniversitesi

Öz

Bu makale neoliberal çağda gıda kültürleri ile ilgili bir eleştiri ortaya koymayı amaçlar. Makalede neoliberalizmin gıda tüketim kültürünü ve gıda ve yeme-içmenin kültürel anlamlarını dönüştürdüğünü ileri sürüyorum. Gıda ve yeme-içme, genellikle kişinin kendisine ve doğaya karşı duyduğu suçluluk ve kaygı duygularıyla birlikte narsist hazların kaynağı haline gelmiştir. Orta sınıf kadınlar bu neoliberal gıda kültürne özellikle 'sağlıklı bedenler', 'organik yaşam tarzları' ve 'evde yemek pişirme hazzı' söylemleriyle eklemlenmektedirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: neoliberalizm, mutfak kültürü, kadın, narsisizm.

Introduction

If we were to re-write the story of Narcissus (the hunter who fell in love with his own image reflected in water) for the contemporary world, then Nemesis, who led Narcissus to the pool, could be represented by the free market, that distributor of fortune in accordance with the degree to which the person deserves it. No doubt, this schematic re-imagining of the ancient myth of Narcissus is an incomplete depiction of the individual who is 'dragged to his own downfall' by the free market economy, for the picture is much more complicated. However, this re-imagining can give us some hints, in the same way that it has inspired psychoanalyists and cultural theorists, in understanding the psycho-social formation of the individual. This paper is interested in the ways in which contemporary food cultures, which are predominantly framed by neoliberalism, construct the *narcissistic self*.

As a theme of academic scrutiny, the nexus of food and neoliberalism, whereby ultimately individual consumers supposedly make informed choices about the array of food commodities presented to them in the market place, is usually looked at through the lens of commodification, agricultural production, scarcity and hunger; that is the political economy of food production and consumption. However, there is an overwhelming cultural economy running through food advertisements and food on television that also contributes greatly to the ways in which we consume food and the meanings we attribute to it. To put it clearly, neoliberalism is rarely seen as a cultural system in the food studies literature. This study can be regarded as an attempt to rethink neoliberalism as a 'cultural invasion' which targets women's bodies through their eating habits and their understanding of food.

Theoretically, this study draws on the psychological accounts of Cultural Studies and the sociology of emotions which attempt to contextualise the individual within a socio-psychological realm. Drawing on Raymond Williams' (1977) concept of the "structure of feelings", "the experience produced by the general organization of society and culture, the mode of production and cultural ideals" (Illouz et al. 2014: 227), I look at the ways in which neoliberalism creates cultural ideals around food, the body and lifestyle. That is to say, neoliberalism engenders particular formations of the self through mobilising particular emotions while repressing others. According to Skeggs (2004a: 5) class formation is a dynamic process that is 'produced through conflict and fought out at the level of the symbolic'. This symbolic field of conflict is also realised through the emotions of embodied individuals who continuously negotiate their subject positions. In this vein, following Skeggs (2004b: 75), I argue that cultural resources for self-making is a class process and in return "making the self makes class". Both Walkerdine's (1991, 1996) and Skegg's (1997) work have demonstrated that middle-class womanhood is idealised as a norm at the expense of the marginalisation of working class femininities. Hence, it is important to reveal the ways in which middle-class femininities are inscribed into the neoliberal cultural sphere and vice versa.

This paper aims to provide a theoretical discussion of the neoliberal framework which is constructed around food consumption and eating habits, and I argue that this particular framework operates not only through behaviours of consumption but also in the field of emotions. I revisit and elaborate on a selection of sources on women, body and lifestyles in order to discuss the ways in which middle-class women are oriented towards a narcissistic culinary culture. First, I focus on the discourses of the 'healthy diet' which discipline bodies, particularly those of women, in the way that opens up new channels of consumption but also engenders guilt. Then, I look at the contradictory aspect of disciplining the body: that is the ways in which the pleasures of eating and cooking are evoked. It is important to see that this neoliberal framework of food and eating is gendered, not only in the way that women's bodies in particular serve as a field in which this framework operates, but also that women themselves are actively and voluntarily engaged in the making of what I call a *narcissistic culinary culture* produced by this framework, led by feelings of guilt and anxiety.

The Guilt: Disciplined Bodies Save Nature

One can argue that the concern with healthy eating, organic and free-trade food, unlike more conventional mass-produced food, potentially comprises notions of the collective as it requires a different style of food production with fairer methods of production and greater concern for the environment and labour. Furthermore, one can even suggest that organic farming, considered as a system of production, might imply a type of communist utopia in which food is not produced primarily for its exchange value but for its use value in providing healthy, environmentally sustainable food for common consumption. Similarly, food activists and many NGOs who fight against unhealthy food contribute to changing eating habits or the regulation of production that benefit both the producer and consumer. However, in order to see how much these "alternative" methods of production and consumption actually produce a strong counter-hegemonic position to neoliberalism, we need to consider the ways in which neoliberalism itself has absorbed their radical potential and incorporated these products into simply another choice to be made within a market economy. As we shall see this expansion in choice to meet concerns over what we eat serves also to increase the level of anxiety that accompanies the buying and consuming of food.

According to Ashley et al. (2004: 201), "[a]nxieties about eating have traditionally been associated with women, and the increased visibility of eating disorders has frequently been the focus of moral panic". As well as being concerned about the ideal shape of women's bodies, the moral panic about eating disorders indicates the subconscious anxiety that sees those bodies as something mysterious and uncontrollable. As Ashley et al. (2004: 201) point out: "While issues of control and discipline are central to understanding eating disorders, they also underpin wider anxieties about the

body". It is no coincidence that postnatal depression is often accompanied by eating disorders as women feel that they have lost control of their lives and their bodies and endeavour to re-gain it by following an eating regime. It is no surprise therefore that as Retzinger (2008: 151) argues, citing a number of sources over several decades (Chernin 1981, 1985; Thompson 1994; Beardsworth and Keil 1997; Counihan 1998; Groesz et al. 2002; Neilson n.d.; Sodolo 2005), feminist scholarship when investigating the relationships between women, the media, self-esteem and body image has focused particularly on eating disorders primarily affecting girls and young women.

There are, however, more dimensions to food anxiety. The healthy diet is not only about the amount of food consumed, but also about the way it is consumed, including its timing, combination and cooking. Therefore "[i]n effect, the health education movement is trying to bring about a change in the moral climate so that individuals assume increasing self-responsibility for their health, body shape and appearance" (Featherstone, 1991: 183). While individual skills and knowhow are imperatives for a sustainable healthy diet, the individual's progress in this area must be monitored by an authority, the professional gaze of the dietician. Whilst disciplining the appetite, which acts as a seductive internal force, is thus a way of controlling bodily pleasure, such discipline is not solely concerned with the suppression of that pleasure. It is also about learning to gain pleasure from food that is *organic*, *pure* and *unindustrialized*, thus returning to the *original way* of human eating and the appeal of food grown in one's own garden. Food regimes of the pre-industrial era are presented as an ideal, a romantic nostalgia that can sooth away anxieties about *polluted* food. Hence, it is not only a sort of 'calculating hedonism', as Jacoby (1980: 63) calls it, but a pedagogy directed at bodily pleasure that teaches us to enjoy the taste of organic produce. One can understand this pedagogy of eating pleasures as a neoliberal governmentality (Dean, 1999), in this case of body politics, although one predominantly governed by the market. Both Michele Obama's *Let's Move* programme and Jamie Oliver's *School Dinners* project reflect the extent to which the pedagogy of the healthy diet attempts to govern people's eating habits.

There are two ways of understanding the contemporary trend in healthy eating, one is our relationship to nature, which is discussed later, while the other has more personal resonances as it is about taking care of the self and respecting one's own body. This is more than just about having a desirable body as might be achieved by the use of cosmetic surgery, it is also about having a desirable body that can be respected because of the knowledge and effort put into achieving it. Hence it requires the possession or acquisition of some sort of social capital for the individual to have the means to achieve the knowledge and means for healthy eating. If you lack that knowledge, then, in Turkey for example, television shows that are presented by health professionals can provide you with more than you need for a healthy lifestyle. After years of television programmes on health issues, the Turkish regulatory body has only just decided to oversee the public discourse on what is a

healthy diet that are disseminated through the media. But the market is always faster than the state! As a consequence of the neoliberal emphasis on the individual, the body has increasingly become a field of marketing contestation. The expansion of fashion and cosmetic markets, as well as the deregulation and marketization of health services in the last three decades, has defined the body as something that can be adjusted and remade, a performance stage upon which the individual can reflect their inner self dependent upon on their own 'free choice'. In this regard, healthy eating, as a choice among many others, can be regarded as a means of body construction, demonstrating a strong commitment to one's own bodily integrity, despite the presence of other indulgent choices such as those encouraged by so-called 'foodporn'. And that is why it appears to be a moral matter, as, for instance, in resisting the temptation to indulge in (both nutritionally and morally bad) binge eating.

As Bordo (1995) points out, advertisements also address women's bodies as a field of control against indulgence as well as encouraging it. This is aptly highlighted by Guthman & DuPuis (2006: 429) who argue how "neoliberalism both produces obesity and produces it as a problem". The obsession with eating healthy and *proper* food, termed orthorexia nervosa, is about to gain the status of an eating disorder, although it is not as yet clinically recognized (Reynolds, 2015). According to a survey carried out in Italy in 2011 (Ramacciotti et al., 2011), women are more concerned than men with healthy eating and women are more prone to orthorexia nervosa along with other eating disorders. The authors also cite survey data from other countries and report, for example, that the prevalence of orthorexia nervosa amongst Turkish medical doctors is 45.5% and for Turkish performance artists is 56.4% (including 81.8% of opera singers and 32.1% of ballet dancers). From their data it would appear that orthorexia nervosa seems to affect middle-class women more than any other group.

There has been an on-going discussion as to whether women should be defined as gatekeepers for the dietary habits of family members (Gifft et al. 1972; Freedman, 1977; Bass et al. 1979; Whitney and Cataldo 1983 cited in McIntosh and Zey, 1998: 135). As McIntosh and Zey (1998: 137) point out present research casts doubt on the inherent power of the domestic role played by women, but it also suggests that women continue to be the chief decision makers regarding food selection for the family (Centers et al. 1971; Davis / Rigraux 1974; Allan 1985)

Certainly, the anxiety about healthy food is now more visible in motherhood practices than ever before, and this implies the extent to which matters of conscience (particularly guilt) and healthy eating are related. Women are expected to be knowledgeable about the nutritional value of the food they give to their children, the best ways of cooking food in order to preserve the vitamins and minerals, and to protect their children against junk and fast foods. Mothers are guardians of their children's healthy eating habits and play a similar role in relation to children that dieticians have to adults.

However, dieticians, unlike mothers, are not left with feelings of guilt when their diet programmes do not succeed.

Similar to the demands for responsible breastfeeding that require mothers to have a healthy diet to produce healthy breast milk, motherhood requires skills in order to implement a systematic approach to healthy eating. Self-aware mothers are overwhelmed with questions such as: Do I give my children the right food? My children love sweet drinks but I know they are bad for them? How do I negotiate the difficult path towards pleasing myself and my family but also providing a healthy diet?

The emphasis placed on free will and choice reinforces anxiety and guilt as it confronts the individual with questions about their own capabilities. Eating healthy food is seen as an individual matter of informed choice rather than one highly influenced by the social, cultural and economic context in which it is made. Individuals are expected to rationally evaluate the options provided and make the right choice in order to fulfil their needs in the best way they can. As a result, providing an *unhealthy* diet for your children is regarded as the individual's own failure, a failure of choice made either wilfully or through ignorance. For many the anxiety of making the right choice for their children's diet is often accompanied by guilt, as there is a feeling that there may always be a better option out there.

Food and eating are also bound up with our relationship to nature. As Retzinger (2008: 151) argues, food serves as one of our most intimate links to the environment and, in this regard, healthy eating is also strongly related to the increasing concerns about the planet's future, environmental disaster, climate change and so on. In this context, the question becomes: "if food was the key to physical health, why not moral health, too?" (Fernandez-Armesto, 2002: 41). Thus it concerns the essential relationship between humanity and nature; in particular, humanity's role in exploiting natural resources, and its greed and ambition to rule nature in the name of *a better lifestyle*. This relationship may seem to be an appropriate one until it becomes associated with the distortion of nature and comes into conflict with the need for healthy eating. But rather than being seen as a problem of a systematic exploitation of nature, the emphasis is focused on the individual's responsibility to oneself and to the planet. Thus saving nature becomes an ethical issue. It is not to be denied that there is an ethical aspect to the relationship between the individual, the natural world and other beings, but the organization of society is also very much a political issue. The production and consumption of food, as well as our relationship with nature, are about how societies are organized. Yet the emphasis on healthy eating and ethical consumption, as a means of saving the planet, makes change become a matter of individual conscience and acting accordingly at the individual level. Neoliberalism replaces organized political action with individual ethics and the belief that acting on one's conscience will produce change. It echoes the neoliberal political imagination as voiced by Margaret Thatcher when she stated that "there is no such thing as society".

There are plenty of terms that are applied to ethically produced food. Terms such as vegan, union-made, dolphin safe and grass fed beef, each address a different sensibility or concern about nature, animals and workers. The price of fair-trade foods, which are typically more expensive than non-fair-trade, implies that it is the responsibility of the middle-class consumer to deal with the exploitation of plantation workers and the environment, as they can afford the extra expense involved. The idea of the consumer citizen stands as an alternative to what has traditionally been described as "political action". Indeed it has to be asked whether this means the politicizing of consumption or whether it is instead consuming politics where ethical consumption has simply become another aspect of the governmentality of food consumption, transforming and subsuming the politics of food into the behaviour of consumers. The emphasis on ethical criteria in deciding how an individual spends their money on food re-defines consumption as a rationale, conscious practice, relying on what Jacoby's (1980) terms a "calculating conscience". It is ironic that the brands that are perceived to be the most ethical are Coca-Cola in the USA, Danone in France, and Nestlé in Spain (Grande, 2007), for whom the calculating conscience of ethical consumers contributes greatly to brand reliability and to eventual profitability.

According to a recent report of the UK Soil Association (2014), four out of five households spend some money on organic food in the UK, with people under thirty-four more willing to buy organic food than older consumers. Although organic produce accounts for less than 2% of the total UK market, it is a growing one and increased by 4% during 2013. The market for organic foods is larger in the USA where they have a 5% market share (Organic Industry Survey, 2014). Despite being a growing market, the nutritional value of organic food and the regulations that govern its production are still a matter of debate. The Soil Association, which regulates organic food production in the UK, reports that in 2013 amongst the reasons people gave for opting for organic food were: healthy eating (55%); avoiding chemical residues (53%); better for nature/the environment (44%); kinder to animals (31%); and more ethical (29%). However for the following year, 2014, ethical and environmental concerns had dramatically decreased by almost 10%, whereas health reasons had increased. The 2014 survey also reports a 17% increase in sales of organic health and beauty sales, alongside a 3.4% increase in vegetables and 4.4% in dairy products. It might seem that the neoliberal "self" is becoming increasingly self-regarding as it becomes more concerned with the look of her body rather than what she as an individual can do to save the planet.

To borrow from Hall and Jefferson (1967: 62-63), we may see that the contemporary concern with healthy eating has initiated a profoundly ambiguous "negative dialectic" that by its "negating" of a dominant culture, but from within that culture, may account for the continual oscillation between two extremes: total critique and—its reverse—substantial incorporation.

Thus alongside the healthy eating associated with the affluent middle class, we find the "neoliberal diet—a pattern of production and consumption of cheap, energy-dense, nutrient- poor, processed edibles that has increasingly dominated food environments" (Otero et al., 2015: 8). But healthy eating too must be seen in the light of the "neoliberal pedagogy of eating" where the state, "alongside capitalism, must be understood as a powerful player in the contemporary foodie boom" since "state initiatives are clearly speaking to citizens as citizen-consumers, telling them how and where to spend their money on food" (de Solier, 2008: 77).

Eating healthily (or not), the future of the planet and of following generations, the relationship between our responsibility to nature, and to the "self" as part of nature, are overwhelmed by feelings of guilt, arising from the heavy emphasis placed on the individual in this neoliberal era in choosing what we consume and the consequences of the choices we make. Hence, guilt and anxiety are essential to the neoliberal formation of the self. Women, because of patriarchal inequalities, are particularly familiar with this formation since feelings of guilt and anxiety are immanent in their gender formation. Individualism is a heavy burden on one's shoulders, particularly when it is not supported by the networks of the collective. However, this is not the end of the story. The dialectics of neoliberalism operate through balancing the feelings of guilt with those of pleasure derived from food and eating, even though in the end we are left with a narcissistic relationship to them.

The Pleasure: Food Indulgence Saves the Self

Celebrating Womanhood in the Kitchen

Food has always been a marker of particular lifestyles and there is nothing new in that. However, contemporary food cultures are distinguished in terms of the ways in which they are integrated into popular culture and consumption. More than ever, since the 1980s, food has become associated with pleasure and identity. Just as nineteenth-century dinner clubs in the US predated the gourmet clubs of the 1950s and 1960s (Collins, 2012: 9), cookery programmes had their predecessors in early television. However, unlike the ascetic methods of Dione Lucas, an infamous early cookery show presenter on 1950s US television, contemporary "cooking shows are about both: the pleasure of creating as well as consumption" (Collins, 2012: 10). Professional cooks, who were once known only to upper-class gourmets, can now gain celebrity status exercising a significant impact upon the food people eat and the way they eat it. One such example is the celebrity chef Jamie Oliver who has launched various social initiatives about food and eating, such as the food served in schools, eventually being awarded the Order of the British Empire in 2003 and voted the most influential person in the UK hospitality industry in 2010. There are numerous examples, particularly in Australia, the USA and the UK where celebrity chefs are powerful enough to implement pedagogies of

eating and cooking not only through the media but also with NGOs and collaborative projects with the state.

Being a celebrity chef is a professionalization of both achieving and judging pleasure. In this sense, celebrity chefs have opened up various ways of celebrating food cultures through the spectacularization of food via the personal use of social media, food festivals, restaurant discovery events and so on.   Cooking and food consumption, as both individual and collective practices, have also been re-defined as leisure activities. This is why, thanks to theme-based food channels, cookery programmes have been re-invented and formatted as lifestyle programmes made available at any time to the enthusiastic viewer. Even though cookery shows date back to 1920s radio programmes, which also served to promote food and kitchenware for housewives through the sponsorship of various companies, food channels on television address different aspects of food and cooking using a variety of formats, and epitomise the extent to which "foodie culture" has penetrated everyday life on a regular basis.

According to Oren (2013: 29) "cooking shows are narratives of control and mastery", especially the cooking competitions, which are usually dominated by the authority of male professional chefs who "trade on displacement, confusion and discomfort as important pre-conditions to [the] productivity" of the competitors (Oren, 2013: 30).   Achieving the perfect dish is a cruelly competitive task that is usually accompanied by some sort of performance anxiety. Culinary pleasures are labour intensive achievements for those who are willing to let their skills be judged by the professionals. While the female home cook of early cooking shows cooked for love, the male professional chef in these competitions cooks for refined pleasure, although "both eschew the definition of cooking as commercial labour" (Oren, 2013: 30). Like disciplining the body through healthy eating, the pleasures of cooking require effort, time, commitment and endurance, all under the judgemental eye of the celebrity chef.

Despite the *hard gaze* of the male professional cooks, a softer regime may be deemed sufficient for women to enjoy the pleasures of cooking. In this regard, everyday cooking gains new connotations and the kitchen becomes a playground for performing both gender and sexuality. Indeed, in the post-feminist era cooking is very sexy! Nigella Lawson successfully embodies middle-class domestic womanhood who enjoys cooking for her own pleasure (Hollows, 2003). She can remain sexy whilst serving the practical, yet sophisticated bruschetta, to her son who has just arrived home starving. Lawson invites women to see cooking as a domestic journey in the discovery of one's hidden pleasures and we can see how a sexy looking woman can transform the most boring culinary chores into a source of pleasure. It is important to see that this sexy performance still articulates a similar pedagogy of the healthy diet, in this case to be learnt from a prominent wealthy upper middle-class TV personality through watching, reading and cooking. Lawson (1999, 2000) can lead you along the path to being a Domestic Goddess or to

learn the Pleasures and Principles of Good Food. Through cookbooks and cooking programmes, the neoliberal market of food and cooking evokes the fantasies of domestic womanhood that is not only sexy but is also skilful, caring, comforting, and feeding. While Nil Karaibrahimgil sings "I can both raise kids and build a career", Nigella Lawson cooks her favourite pasta dish in her satin nightwear. Cooking is very sexy!

The message is clear: women must not only be flexible enough to meet the demands of the neoliberal market but must also learn to enjoy doing it. "Come on", it says, "there is so much fun in buying your own diamond ring, cooking your own favourite pasta, pursuing your own career!" 'Self' is the keyword in this conception of living life as a story of success and achievement. It is fair to say that neoliberalism presents work flexibility as a model of self-sufficiency for women where the Domestic Goddess or Yummy Mummy is the mistress of all (Ringrose & Walkerdine, 2008). This is quite the opposite of the "Jack of all trades, master of none"! Neoliberal governmentality operates in everyday life through fantasies of a particular womanhood that imagines the self as an omnipotent being. If you overcook the pasta or stain your silk nightwear with tomato sauce, then this is because you are clumsy! But you can overcome this. Look and learn and fulfil your destiny as a woman. Neoliberalism seems to remove the psychical and physical boundaries that defined the ideal womanhood of the nineteenth century as the "chef in the kitchen, lady in the parlour, whore in the bedroom", and to fuse them into a single entity.

Eating a Lifestyle

The trends in the consumption of organic food, healthy eating, and the notion of cooking as not only for eating but also for fun, all come along as a package of particular habits, as a lifestyle defined by particular consumption patterns. While food advertising constantly relates food to sexuality and love on the one hand, and addiction and eating disorders on the other (Kilbourne, 1999), lifestyle television programmes and magazines lead the audience to see food consumption as part of enjoying a quality lifestyle. Cultural creatives, foodies and gourmets have established a prominent place for food and its consumption, whetting the appetite of the consumer and developing a market for particular foods. According to Michman and Mazze (2006: 139) these "[c]ultural creatives have a propensity to be affluent, well-educated and believe in environmentalism, feminism, global issues and spiritual searching. Their food habits are characterized by ethnic cooking and the use of natural and health foods". Both foodies and gourmets are assumed to have refined tastes when it comes to food, although the term *foodie* sounds more democratic and less related to social class than that of the gourmet. Foodie also implies more of a passion for food in general, rather than just for its taste (Cairn et al., 2010). There is certainly a strong political dimension involved in a foodie lifestyle, but there is some question as to its nature and effect. In

relation to Australian foodies de Solier writes: The question begs, then, whether this foodie-citizen is a citizen at all, or merely a consumer pursuing their self-interests of lifestylization to the exclusion of other social and political concerns (2008: 78) (see also Miller, 2007). While for many foodies, their interest in food is primarily a project of self-production through gastronomic knowledge and practices, there is a growing awareness of and concern for food politics amongst this lifestyle group.

However, they are far from having their voice heard in the foodie media promoted by public broadcasting (de Solier, 2008) and in many ways the *foodie-citizen* remains as yet a political ideal, rather than a reality, aimed at politicizing foodie identity around environmental and ethnic issues.

The food media, with celebrity chefs in particular, have played a significant role in re-defining the role of food and cooking in the neoliberal market. Each has had their own merits: for example, Jamie Oliver has represented cooking as fun rather than work (Bonner, 2005: 44); Delia Smith has taught the basics of cooking in How to Cook (Bell and Hollows, 2005: 11); and Nigella Lawson has re-defined cooking as a source of womanly pleasure. And all of them have had a significant effect on consumer behaviour. For example "Any ingredient, foodstuff or utensil that Smith highlighted as praiseworthy on one night's show was an instant sell-out in the shops the next day, as consumers clammered [sic.] to follow Delia's advice" (Bell & Hollows, 2005: 11).

The 'Delia effect', which is defined by the Collins English Dictionary (n.d.) as "[t]he way in which food products sell out much more quickly than usual when they are used on television food programmes" (Collins Dictionary, 2015) goes beyond just a craze for consuming food products. It has much more to do with consuming a lifestyle! Currently, it is commonplace to see celebrity chefs having their own brands or promoting particular kitchenware as part of a sponsorship arrangement. This illustrates the celebrity chef's significant role as a gatekeeper in the consumption of food-related products. Also, it contributes to the commodification of the private sphere more than any other consumption practice in the domestic arena, such as decorating and gardening, since cooking and food consumption occur on a daily basis. But the effect goes deeper.

Jamie Oliver-style food activism demonstrates that cookery programmes on television not only encourage consumption but also reinforce particular habits and lifestyles, namely that of the middle class (Lewis et al., 2012: 541). This brings into focus the class nature of food consumption, a way of distinguishing one class from another (de Solier, 2005). For instance, middle-class women with professional careers usually opt for organic food and environmentally friendly cosmetics as their income increases (Michman & Mazze, 2006: 74) because, to echo a well-known TV advertisement, "they are worth it!". However, while the middle class experience the "morality of pleasure as a duty" (Bourdieu, 1984: 367), on the bitter edge of food consumption lies the exclusion of the lower social classes who are unable to equip themselves with

the taste and knowledge required for gourmet food as well as lacking sufficient income to buy *quality food*. Bressi and Nunn (2008: 23) argue that the oft-quoted motto 'you are what you eat' has been loaded with connotations about the 'bad citizen' who consumes cheap and unhealthy food. The pleasure of eating good food is accompanied by a disgust for the ignorant and those who lack good taste, that is the lower class. Clearly "the politics of food is fused with the moral issues that attend the politics of class" (Bressi and Nunn, 2008: 22).

Toward a Narcissistic Culinary Culture?

The emotional baggage that comes with contemporary culinary cultures appears to be loaded with contradictory feelings of anxiety leading to both guilt and pleasure. The neoliberal construction of the self is entrapped between indulgence and discipline and over-concerned with the question of 'how do I feel?'. As Guthman and DuPuis (2006: 427) argue, "[t]he neoliberal shift in personhood from citizen to consumer encourages (over)eating at the same time that neoliberal notions of discipline vilify it". Those who cannot discipline themselves in order to achieve healthy bodies are overwhelmed with anxiety and guilt. Thus do we return to the plight of Narcissus.

Sennett (2002: 220) defines narcissism as "the search for gratification of the self which at the same time prevents that gratification from occurring" and which is not only a possibility of character for any human being but also a state of mind that can be encouraged by cultural developments and can vary in expression from era to era. This is key to understanding contemporary culinary cultures that trigger continuous consumption in the form of overeating, foodie and gourmet lifestyles, but at the same time encourages healthy eating that requires a search for pure, non-toxic, organic food: that is to say the incessant search for self-gratification. It is important to see the interrelation between guilt and pleasure in the making of the narcissistic self. This is also parallel to the cultural mechanisms of discipline and incitement of the neoliberal era which work through bodies and emotions. Further, this narcissistic self holds particular gender and class identities. As Featherstone (1991: 192) highlights: "[t]he tendency towards narcissism, the negotiating, performing self is therefore most noticeable in the professional-managerial middle class who have both the time and money to engage in lifestyle activities and the cultivation of the persona" while "[w]omen are of course most clearly trapped in the narcissistic, self-surveillance world of images" for their bodies are defined as a field of symbolic contest (Featherstone, 1991: 178-179).

One can argue that guilt and pleasure, which call for each other at the end, are dialectically related within the narcissistic self. The self emerges through the tension between them and acts upon the contradictory account of indulging and disciplining oneself. The appetite serves as a suitable playground for these contradictory feelings since it is provoked by images, the smell and

taste of food while at the same time disciplined by all sorts of images of the body, fat (disgusting), fit and slim (desired). Hence what makes the narcissistic self is not only the feelings of anxiety, guilt and pleasure, but the way they are related to one another, in this case, through a negative dialectics.

Neoliberalism's overemphasis on the individual and on the commodification of food at the expense of the environment, other humans and health, along with the continuing presence of hunger and its underlying presumption of access to healthy food as a privilege rather than a right, have clear impacts in the field of culture. At the same time, cultural representations of food and eating, despite their diversity, encourage individuals to partake in a form of narcissism even though this narcissistic culinary culture is an amalgamation of contradictions: anxiety, guilt and pleasure. Middle-class women in particular are invited to take part in this culture through the re-imagining of their bodies as a project of healthy eating, pressurising them into providing healthy food for their children and re-considering the kitchen as a sphere of self-realization.

Notes

[1] I would like to thank my friend Derrick Wright for proofreading and editing this article.

References

Ashley B., Hollows J., Jones S. & Taylor B. (2004). Food and Cultural Studies. London: Taylor and Francis.

Bell D. & Hollows J. (2005). Making Sense of Ordinary Life Styles. In Bell D. & Hollows J. (Eds.), *Ordinary Lifestyles: Popular Media, Consumption and Taste*. Berkshire: Open University Press: 1-20.

Biressi A. & Nunn H. (2008). Bad Citizens: The Class Politics of Lifestyle Television. In Palmer G. (Ed.), *Exposing Lifestyle Television: the Big Reveal*. Ashgate: Hampshire: 15-24.

Bonner F. (2005). Whose lifestyle is it anyway? In Bell D. & Hollows J. (Eds.), *Ordinary Lifestyles: Popular Media, Consumption and Taste*. Berkshire: Open University Press: 35-46.

Bonner F. (2008). Digging for Difference: British and Australian Television Gardening Programmes. In Palmer G. (Ed.), *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ashgate: Hampshire: 25-38.

Bourdieu P. (1984). *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bordo S. (1995). *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cairn K., Johnston J. & Baumann S. (2010). Caring About Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen. *Gender and Society* 24(5): 591-615.

Collins K. (2009). A Kitchen of One's Own: The Paradox of Dione Lucas. *Camera Obscura*, 27(2): 1-23.

Collins Dictionary (2015). Delia Effect. Internet adress: http://www.collinsdictionary.com/submission/11106/The%20Delia%20Effect. Access: 04/05/2015.

de Solier I. (2005). TV Dinners: Culinary Television, Education and Distinction. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies,* 19(4): 465-481.

de Solier I. (2008). Foodie Makeovers: Public Service Television and Lifestyle Guidance. In Palmer G. (Ed.), *Exposing Lifestyle Television: The Big Reveal*. Ashgate: Hampshire: 65-82.

Dean M. (1999). *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. London: Sage.

Featherstone M. (1991). The Body in Consumer Culture. In Featherstone M., Hepworth M. & Turner B.S. (Eds.), *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: Sage: 170-196.

Fernandez-Armesto F. (2002). *Near a Thousand Tables: A History of Food*. New York: Free Press.

Grande C. (2007, 20 February). Ethical Consumption Makes Mark on Branding. Internet adress: http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/d54c45ec-c086-11db-995a-000b5df10621.html#axzz3aqvt47bQ. Access:

Guthman J. & DuPuis M. (2006). Embodying Neoliberalism: Economy, Culture, and the Politics of Fat. *Society and Space*, 24(3): 427–448.

Hall S. & Jefferson T. (Eds.) (1976). *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Cultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

Hollows J. (2003). Feeling Like a Domestic Goddess: Postfeminism and Cooking. *European Journal of Cultural Studies,* 6(2): 179-202.

Illouz E., Gilon D. & Shachak M. (2014). Emotions and Cultural Theory. In Stets J.E. & Turner J.H. (Eds.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Emotions,* Vol. 2. London: Springer: 221-244.

Jacoby R. (1980). Narcissim and the Crisis of Capitalism. *Telos*, 44: 58-65.

Kilbourne J. (1999). *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lawson N. (1999). *How to Eat: The Pleasures and Principles of Good Food*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Lawson N. (2000). *How to Be a Domestic Goddess: Baking and the Art of Comfort Cooking*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Lewis T., Martin F. & Sun W. (2012). Lifestyling Asia? Shaping Modernity and Selfhood on Life-Advice Programming, *International Journal of Cultural Studies,* 15(6): 537–566.

McIntosh A. & Zey M. (1998). Women as Gatekeepers of Food Consumption: A Sociological Critique. In Counihan C.N. & Kaplan S.L. (Eds.), *Food and Gender: Identity and Power*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers: 125-144.

Michman R.D. & Mazze E.M. (2006). *The Affluent Consumer: Marketing and Selling the Luxury Lifestyle*. London: Raeger.

Oren T. (2013). On the Line: Format, Cooking and Competition as Television Values. *Critical Studies in Television,* 8(2): 20-35.

Organic Trade Association (2014). Organic Industry Survey. Internet adress: https://www.ota.com/what-ota-does/market-analysis. Access: 04/05/2015.

Otero G., Pechlamer G., Liberman G. & Gurcan E. C. (2015). Food Security and Inequality: Measuring the Risk of Exposure to the Neoliberal Diet. Simons Papers in Security and Development, No. 42/2015: 1-44.

Ramacciotti C.E., Perrone P., Coli E., Burgalassi A., Conversano C., Massimetti G. & Dell'Osso L. (2011). Orthorexia Nervosa in the General Population: A Preliminary Screening Using a Self-Administered Questionnaire (ORTO-15). *Eat Weight Disorders,* 16(2): 127-30.

Ringrose J. & Walkerdine V. (2008). Regulating the Abject: The TV Make-Over as Site of Neo-Liberal Reinvention Toward Bourgeois Femininity. *Feminist Media Studies*, 8(3): 227-246.

Retzinger J.P. (2008). The Embodied Rhetoric of 'Health' from Farm Fields to Salad Bowls. In LeBesco K. & Naccarato P. (Eds.), *Edible Ideologies: Representing Food and Meaning*. New York: State University of New York Press: 149-178.

Reynolds R.C. (2015/03/25). Orthorexia Nervosa: When Righteous Eating Becomes an Obsession. Internet adress at: http://theconversation.com/orthorexia-nervosa-when-righteous-eating-becomes-an-obsession-36484. Access: 04/05/2015.

Sennett R. (2002). *The Fall of Public Man*. London: Penguin Books.

Skeggs B. (1997). *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage.

Skeggs B. (2004a). *Class, Self, Culture*. London: Routledge.

Skeggs B. (2004b). Exchange, Value and Effect. In Adkins L. & B. Skeggs (Eds.), *Feminism After Bourdieu*. London: Blackwell: 75-96.

Soil Association (2014). Organic Market Report. Internet adress: http://action.soilassociation.org/page/s/marketreportdownload. Access: 04/05/2015.

Walkerdine V. (1991). *Schoolgirl Fictions*. London: Verso.

Walkerdine V. (1996). Working Class Women: Psychological and Social Aspects of Survival. In Skelton C. et al. (Eds.), *Feminist Social Psychologies: International Perspectives*. London: Sage: 145-164.

Walkerdine V. & Bansel P. (2010). Neoliberalism, Work and Subjectivity: Towards a More Complex Account. In Wetherell M. & Mohanty C.T. (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Identities*. London: Sage: 492-507.

Williams R. (1977). Marxism and Literature. Oxford: Oxford University Press.