remain 'underprivileged' in advanced capitalism – those whose very basic needs remain unsatisfied (minorities and the poor, for instance). Outside the capitalist nation-states the 'underprivileged', those struggling for survival, constitute the mass of people and the mass basis of national liberation movements. Their fight against imperialism and neo-colonialism is one of the most important threats to capitalism's capacity to reproduce itself. Second, there are some among the privileged 'whose consciousness and instincts, break through or escape social control' (for example, students, intellectuals). These forces together, Marcuse believes, do contribute to the crisis development of the system. But they do not constitute an effective revolutionary threat against the whole of society. They are catalyst groups; they cannot transform society alone. Whether or not they will trigger a crisis that eventually radicalizes the mass of working people, who could overthrow the system, is an open question. But it seems, for Marcuse, less rather than more of an open question. Given the continuing presence of acute contradictions, the main question appears to be when. Marcuse does not answer this question and readily admits that no straightforward answer to it can be given.

Marcuse desires a social movement which would refuse to participate in the reproduction of capitalism. His advocacy of a 'great refusal' seeks a world that would negate capitalism, reduce over-development in the 'developed' countries, and pursue a 'pacified existence' – a non-instrumental relation between people and between people and nature. According to most members of the Frankfurt school, the individual is enmeshed in a world where capital is highly concentrated and where the economy and polity are increasingly interlocked; it is a verwaltete Welt, a world 'caught up in administration'. As a consequence, the importance of political economy in the critical project diminished, for it did not provide a sufficient basis to understand the penetration of market and bureaucratic organizations into more and more areas of life. The change in what the critical theorists took to be their object of study demanded the development of concepts and categories. Increasingly, attention was focused on an assessment of the mode in which ideas and beliefs are transmitted by 'popular culture' – the way in which the personal, private realm is undermined by the external (extra-familial) socialization of the ego and the management and control of leisure time. As individual consciousness and unconsciousness were encroached upon by agencies which organize free time – for example the radio, television, film and professional sport industries – the Frankfurt theorists stressed the urgency of developing a sociology of 'mass culture'.

For Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse, in particular, sociology and critique are inseparable: to analyse a work of art, or a particular cultural artefact, is to analyse and assess the way it is interpreted. This entails an inquiry into its formation and reception. Such an inquiry seeks to understand given works in terms of their social origins, form, content and function – in terms of the social totality. The conditions of labour, production and distribution must be examined, for society expresses itself through its cultural life and cultural phenomena contain within themselves reference to the socio-economic whole. But a sociology of culture cannot rest with an analysis of the general relations between types of cultural products (for example Western music or, more specifically, opera, chamber music, etc.), and social life. It must
also explore in detail the internal structure of cultural forms (the way in which the organization of society is crystallized in cultural phenomena) and the mechanisms which determine their reception. Generally, a theory of culture should include, on Horkheimer's and Adorno's account, reference to the processes of production, reproduction, distribution, exchange and consumption. Needless to say, such a theory was never completed (nor was it ever thought that such a theory could be 'finished'). But a large number of contributions was made to the theory of culture and cultural forms.

Before and during their association with the Institute, Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Lowenthal and Benjamin were all concerned with aesthetic theory and the critique of culture. An emphasis on studies of 'mass culture' came, however, in the late 1930s and 1940s. The emergence of an entertainment industry, the growth of the mass media, the blatant manipulation of culture by the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes, the shock of immigration to the US, the inevitable discovery of the glamour and glitter of the film and record industries: together all made imperative the task of assessing the changing patterns of culture. In this chapter I intend to focus attention on the critical theorists' views about these changing patterns. I will also try and locate their studies within some of their general perspectives on aesthetics and culture. It should be stressed, however, that my remarks on their writings in this sphere will be of a schematic nature. Adorno and Benjamin particularly wrote at length on aesthetics and on artistic and literary form. Almost half of Adorno's publications were on music. He analysed the works of several composers, including Beethoven, Mahler, Wagner, Schoenberg, Berg and Stravinski. He discussed the nature of different types of musical instruments, for example the violin and saxophone. He also wrote on a number of cultural critics, for example Otto Spengler and Thorstein Veblen; on literary figures such as Franz Kafka and Beckett; on literary critics such as Lukács; and he published a large volume on aesthetic theory. Benjamin's writings are less voluminous but his breadth of reference was also extraordinary. His essays include discussions of Baudelaire, Brecht, Kafka, Nikolai Leskov and Proust. His books include two major volumes on German literature, two books of general reflections presented as short essays and aphorisms and a great number of reviews, commentaries and critical essays. To assess properly the contributions of either of these writers is beyond the scope of this work.

The works I have listed, however, exclude some of their more general studies on the development of cultural forms in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is these that this chapter seeks to concentrate upon. Even here the range of material they covered is impressive. It includes Adorno's and Horkheimer's major assessment of the 'culture industry' in Dialectic of Enlightenment, which Adorno thought of as the basis of the two writers' 'common philosophy'. (He also regarded his major work on modern music as an 'extended appendix' to this text.) The range of relevant writings also embraces a number of articles by Adorno on 'high', 'avant-garde' and popular culture; a most important essay by Benjamin investigating 'The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction'; essays by Horkheimer on mass culture; studies by Lowenthal on the history of literature and popular literary materials; and, of course, Marcuse's work on the character of art and particular cultural phenomena (for instance painting, street theatre and rock). If the subject matter covered suggests diversity, so do the techniques of inquiry employed. Adorno and Lowenthal, for instance, often utilized content analysis and carried out detailed investigations into the structure of particular cultural products. Horkheimer's approach, like Marcuse's, was more exclusively philosophical and theoretical. Benjamin's approach was unique. He utilized many different styles of writing and drew upon many different modes of thinking (from the Cabbala to Marx and various schools of Marxism). Benjamin often dissented from the opinions expressed by the other Frankfurt theorists. When general statements are made below about a Frankfurt school position I will be referring to the works of the other four writers. The sections on Benjamin later in the chapter highlight why it is necessary to treat his work separately; they are offered here by way of a contrast - essentially, as a point from which the particularity of the other four men's writings can be appreciated.

The concepts of culture and art

Unlike many orthodox Marxists who relegated culture to the superstructure of society and derived an analysis of the form and content of the superstructure from the 'base', the Frankfurt theorists insisted that cultural phenomena could not be analysed within the simple base-superstructure model. They also insisted on the inadmissibility of treating culture in the manner of conventional
cultural criticism, in isolation from its position in the social totality. Any conception of culture which saw it as an independent realm apart from society was to be rejected. Culture could not be understood, as Adorno put it, 'in terms of itself'. To suppose 'anything like an independent logic of culture', he added, 'is to collaborate in the hypostasis of culture, the ideological proton pseudos'.' In fact, the notion of culture employed by Horkheimer and the others was closer to Freud's than to classical Marxist and non-Marxist understandings of the term. For Horkheimer et al. culture emerges from the organizational basis of society as the bundle of ideas, mores, norms and artistic expressions - the heritage and practices of intelligence and art. Within these broad terms of reference, Marcuse, while discussing bourgeois culture, makes the useful further analytic distinction between the spheres of material culture and intellectual (artistic, 'higher') culture. Material culture comprises 'the actual patterns of behaviour in “earning a living”, the system of operational values', and includes the social, psychological and moral dimensions of family life, leisure time, education and work. Intellectual culture refers to 'the" higher values", science and the "humanities", art, religion'. Although several more distinctions will be introduced throughout the chapter, it should be noted that it is easier to discern the notions of culture Frankfurt writers rejected than the ones they accepted. Their own general concept of culture remains underdeveloped. As a consequence I shall employ Marcuse's distinction throughout the chapter as a shorthand for delineating different realms of cultural phenomena (though it should be remembered that this is not necessarily a distinction each writer would have accepted).

Institute members were, however, agreed that the products of intellectual, artistic culture could be regarded as neither simply the reflection of specific class interests nor the output of a wholly autonomous sphere. They were intent on exploring the modes in which cultural phenomena interacted with, and sometimes determined, other social dimensions. Furthermore, they sought to examine in particular detail the fate of 'art', understood in the broadest possible sense, in the contemporary era. For them, art was to be interpreted as 'a code language for processes taking place in society'. Yet, because of its form, as I explain below, it was often thought to be 'relatively autonomous'. Art was unavoidably enmeshed in reality. And just as this reality contained objective contradictions, so art was caught up in and expressed contradictions. But a contrast was frequently drawn between those works which resist assimilation to existing modes of production and exchange and those which do not. In many 'genuine' works of art, they believed, there are both moments of affirmation and negation. In these works society both confirmed itself and maintained a critical image. As Adorno wrote, 'culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against petrified relations under which they lived'. Artistic culture represents the 'perennial protest' of the 'particular against the universal', as long as the latter remains unresolved to the former. The aesthetic may contain a moment of transcendence or it may be integrated into existing conditions of domination.

Affirmation and negation in 'autonomous' art

The meaning and function of art changes historically. But there is a certain unity that underpins authentic or, as Adorno most often put it, autonomous art. The great artists of the bourgeois era, as well as those of the Christian Middle Ages and the Renaissance, had the capacity to transform a particular, individual experience, through the language of music, painting or words, into a universal statement. The work of art has a structure with a signifying function. It presents, or rather represents, the particular in such a way as to illuminate its meaning. Through its form or style (Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse), or aura and new technique (Benjamin), art can create images of beauty and order or contradiction and dissonance — an aesthetic realm which at once leaves and highlights reality. Art's object world is derived from the established order, but it portrays this order in a non-conventional manner. Sensibility, imagination and understanding give 'new sounds, images and words to the taken-for-granted'. The structure of art forms enacts an alternative vision. As such art has a cognitive and subversive character. Although this character was analysed differently by various Institute members, there was general agreement that the 'partisan', emancipatory effects of art are generated by its rejection of the dominant forms of world order; that is, through its very mode of expression it 'opens the established reality' and 'negates reified consciousness'. Art has the capacity to transcend its class origins, while preserving certain conventional images of
reality. It has multiple layers of meaning and the ability to embody and promote truth.

For Horkheimer and Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment the elements in an artistic product which enable it to transcend reality are found in those features which ensure 'non-identity thinking' – the truth-promoting function of art lies in its capacity to undermine the doubtful unity of concept (Begriff) and object, idea and material world. (The notion of non-identity thinking is elaborated on page 215.) Bourgeois art strives for identity – an identity between its image of the real and the existent. It presents itself as social reality. For example, some of Beethoven's music, according to Adorno, expresses reconciliation between the subjective and objective, between part and whole. It represents the idea of an integrated community, the promise of the French revolution. The individual part, the note or phrase, exists as a separate entity, but each part is only fully meaningful in the context of the whole, namely in the structure of the sonata or symphony. Beethoven's music is faithful to his period, to the awakening consciousness of individualistic society. But the image it presents contradicts bourgeois reality: 'it transfigures the existing conditions, presenting them in the... moment of the musical performance as though the community of human beings were already realized'. The promise held out by such a work of art is, as Adorno and Horkheimer wrote, 'that it will create truth by lending new shape to conventional forms'. The promise is both necessary and hypocritical. It is necessary, first, because of its social origins. The patrons of art, whether aristocrats or wealthy buyers in the market, demand new forms to lend dignity and freshness (often conformist) images to the world around them. More important, it is necessary because in its very commitment to style, art 'hardens itself' against the 'chaotic expression' of the existing order and presents individual experiences in new, and truly general, forms. In the enactment of art, objective trends are played through. The promise, however, is also hypocritical: 'the claim of art is always ideology too'. Art legitimates prevailing patterns of life by suggesting that 'fulfilment lies in their aesthetic derivatives'. Nonetheless, in its very failure to establish identity, art preserves – unlike many forms of conventional expression – a critical perspective. The truth-value of art lies in its capacity to sustain a discrepancy between its projected images (concepts) of nature and humankind, and its objects' actuality.

In his own writings Adorno always insisted that art loses its significance if it tries to create specific political or didactic effects; art should compel rather than demand a change in attitude. Hence he was critical of Brecht's emphasis on the 'primacy of lesson over... form'. In so far as art has a true social function it is its 'functionlessness'. Art is most critical, in the contemporary epoch, when it is autonomous; that is, when it negates the empirical reality from which it originates. Autonomous works of art dismantle appearances; they 'explode from within that which committed proclamation subjugates from without'. Social criticism flows from a work's form – not its content. Committed work, such as Brecht's, risks assimilating itself with the existent reality  – in order to be fully comprehended, it must speak in the language of that order. For Adorno, 'every commitment to the world must be abandoned to satisfy the ideal of the committed work'. Art 'must intervene actively in consciousness through its own forms and not take instructions from the passive, one-sided position of the consciousness of the user – including the proletariat'. Adorno's emphasis on form, however, should not be mistaken for a simple insistence on the primacy of style and technique. Rather, form refers to the whole 'internal organization' of art – to the capacity of art to restructure conventional patterns of meaning. Under the present conditions of society, the most 'genuine' forms of art are those that resist pressure, created by the 'rule of equivalence', to identity thinking. The 'truth content' of art derives from its ability to reformulate existing relations between subjectivity and objectivity, and to maintain non-identity. 'Closed aesthetic images', on Adorno's account, preserve a gap between subject and object, individual and society. They make no compromise with a society increasingly dominated by modes of 'thought that collapse into subjectivism (the false view that the subjects' concept produce the world) or objectivism (the false view that the world is a realm of pure objects given independently of the subject). They also challenge, in their very structure, a world of purely pragmatic affairs. Authentic works of art... have always stood in relation to the actual life-process of society from which they distinguished themselves. Their very rejection of the guilt of a life which blindly and callously reproduces itself, their insistence on independence and autonomy, on separation from the prevailing realm of purposes, implies, at least as an unconscious element, the promise of a condition in which freedom were realised.
The truth-value of art resides in its capacity to create awareness of, and thematize, social contradictions and antinomies. A successful work... is not one which resolves objective contradictions in a spurious harmony, but one which expresses the idea of harmony negatively by embodying the contradictions, pure and uncompromised, in its innermost structure.

As such, art is less and more than praxis. It is less because it retreats in the face of practical tasks which need to be accomplished (perhaps even hindering them). It is more for turning its back even on praxis, it denounces at the same time the limited untruth of that fact.

Horkheimer argued, as did Adorno, that art only became fully autonomous when it was separated from the pre-capitalist patronage system which ensured its restricted religious and/or private usage. Horkheimer's emphasis on the critical character of art is, however, somewhat different from Adorno's. Horkheimer maintained that classical bourgeois art 'preserved the utopia that evaporated from religion'. Through art one can conceive a world different from life dominated by commodity production. The beautiful and often harmonious images it projected promised a utopia - a vision of an ideal life - that could motivate thought and a critique of reality. Art provided a medium for critical thinking by upholding images of life which contradicted the existent. But art's affirmative vision inevitably assumed an 'escapist character'. Men and women 'had fled into a private conceptual world' and arranged their thoughts in anticipation of a time in which the aesthetic could be systematically incorporated into reality. Art anticipates the good life. It preserves an ideal in danger of being forgotten. But this is all it can do. To the extent that it suggests utopia can be realized in the aesthetic realm, or that its images are the avenue to an ideal community, it is idealist and false. Bourgeois art often advances one of these ideas.

Marcuse's work examines some of these notions in greater detail. On his account, bourgeois culture led in the course of its development to the establishment of a 'mental and spiritual world as an independent realm of value'; a realm of 'authentic values and self-contained ends' claiming autonomy and superiority from civilization (material culture). The essential characteristic of this world, which Marcuse called 'affirmative culture', is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual for himself 'from within', without any transformation of the state of fact.

Bourgeois artistic culture serves both to project unrealized possibilities and maintain 'harmonizing illusions'. It stands as a record of the revolutionary aspirations of the bourgeoisie - with its demands for new social freedoms commensurate with the universality of human reason - and of the failure of these aspirations to be realized in practice. Bourgeois dreams remain ideals; ideals relegate, in seeming acknowledgement of the reality of commodity production, to the 'inner world' of humanity. In this 'inner world' the individual is exalted and ennobled. 'Freedom, goodness and beauty become spiritual qualities.' Culture speaks of the dignity of humans and preserves beauty for the soul.

The idealism embodied in bourgeois artistic culture is not simply ideology; for it contains remembrance of what might have been and what could be. While 'idealism surrenders the earth to bourgeois society', it preserves, Marcuse contends, the historical demand for general liberation. 'The culture of souls absorbed in a false form those forces and wants which could find no place in everyday life.' It is not that art represents in any clear fashion an ideal reality, but that it presents the existent as a beautiful reality. For Marcuse beauty is 'une promesse de bonheur'. For what is beautiful is first and foremost tenuous. Its sensuousness occupies a position 'halfway between sublimated and unsublimated objectives'. Beauty is representative of both the pleasurable - the realm of immediate gratification and desire (objects of unsublimated drives) - and the forces of fine arrangement and order. Its meaning converges with the notion of 'aesthetic form'. Through aesthetic form (the style and qualities of a work) aspects of the human condition are revealed. In 'music, verse and image' an object world is created which is derived from and yet is other than the existing one. This transformation does not, Marcuse argues, 'do violence to the objects (man and things) - it rather speaks for them, gives word and image to that which is silent, distorted, suppressed in the established reality.' The 'subversive truth of art' resides in its capacity to create a world which has no actuality.

In this universe, every word, every colour, every sound is 'new', different -
breaking the familiar context of perception and understanding... in which men and nature are enclosed. By becoming components of the aesthetic form, words, sounds, shapes and colours are insulated against their familiar, ordinary use and function; thus they are freed for a new dimension of existence. This is the achievement of style... The style, embodiment of the aesthetic form, in subjecting reality to another order, subjects it to the 'laws of beauty'.

To be sure, cruelty, ugliness and pain are not thereby cancelled. But they are cast in a different framework. The horror portrayed by, for example, Goya’s etchings, 'remains horror', but it is also eternalized as 'the horror of horror'.

The artistic transformation of objects aids insight into the conditions under which objects exist. For art, through the power of negation, releases the object from its contingent surroundings. Images are created which are unreconcilable with the established 'reality principle'. Following Hegel, Marcuse maintains that through art, objects take on the form and quality of freedom. Aesthetic transformation releases objects from constraints that prevent their free realization. As such art, and artistic culture generally, is on the side of the forces which dissociate themselves from contemporary material culture. Artistic culture 'withdraws and rejects' the 'rule of equivalence', the world of commodities and the domination of instrumental reason.

The world which art creates, however, remains, despite its objective content and truth, an illusion (Schein). But the images which art projects are not straightforward illusions. For art is itself alienated from an alienated social order. Artistic alienation, as Marcuse put it, 'is the conscious transcendence of... alienated existence - "higher level" or mediated alienation'. It is only through illusion that art opens the established reality to alternative visions and possibilities: it is in this transfiguration that art transcends its class origins and content. Art must, therefore, 'remain alienation'. Marcuse appears to support Adorno’s view that art can only preserve its subversive character by remaining autonomous, although he does stress, more than Adorno did, the direct power of art as negation. Art must obey its own laws and maintain its freedom. In so doing it unites, on Marcuse’s account, with all those forces engaged in the critique of ideology and with the revolutionary goal of 'changing the world'. But it 'cannot represent the revolution, it can only invoke it in another medium'.

Benjamin’s views on the development of art were often at odds with those of other members of the Institute. His analysis of ‘autonomous’ art in terms of its possession of ‘aura’, exemplifies some of these differences. Tracing the beginning of artistic production to ceremonial objects designed to serve in a cult, Benjamin argued that what mattered then was art’s ‘existence’, not its ‘being on view’. Embedded in ritual and tradition, these works had an ‘aura’; that is, a ‘unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be conditioned by a magical authority and authenticity. ‘The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.’ With the separation of art from ritual, art became more and more a product for exhibition and inspection. It gained a ‘semblance of autonomy’. But as long as artists produced works with a ‘unique existence’, aura was preserved; art objects remained embedded in tradition. The age of mechanical reproduction, the age of photography, cinema and other mass cultural apparatuses, detached artistic artefacts from the domain of custom. Through the substitution of a ‘plurality of copies for a unique existence’, enabling the ‘bearer or listener’ to appreciate the work in private, aura and tradition were shattered. Art’s appearance of autonomy disappeared. A sense of art’s images and objects as unique and permanent was replaced by a feeling of their ‘transitoriness and reproducibility’. This shift in perception reflects, for Benjamin, an important change in the masses’ actual and potential consciousness. An understanding of the ‘universal equality of things’ is increased as the authority of fixed or set perceptions, reified notions of historical continuity, is exploded. The function of art radically alters. ‘The instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.’

Benjamin’s assessment of this situation was not without ambivalence. The end ofauratic art (like the threatened end of autonomous art for other members of the Institute), was greeted with ‘a sense of loss’. On the other hand, for Benjamin, ‘the decay of aura’ was related to the growing desire of the masses ‘to bring things “closer” spatially and humanly’ and to control the reproduction of objects. The age of mechanical reproduction ushered in new techniques and technologies which offered possibilities for progressive political change. ‘To an ever greater degree',
he believed, 'the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility'. Following Brecht's lead, Benjamin pointed to film as a medium, the production and reception of which could coincide with revolutionary objectives. He was well aware that the film industry, conditioned by the requirements of capital accumulation, could promote 'the spell of the personality', 'the phony spell of a commodity'. But film, through its technical structure, could produce 'shock effects' and burst everyday perceptions of the world, leading to a heightened presence of mind'. Furthermore, Benjamin stressed that film provided new forms of collective experience.

Mechanical reproduction changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie. The progressive reaction is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional enjoyment with the orientation of the experience. With regard to the screen the critical and the receptive attitudes of the public coincide.79

The new mode of perception offered by film and similar media can turn art toward the interest of the masses and contribute to their mobilization.80

The other members of the Institute were not as optimistic as Benjamin about the effects of new techniques and cultural media. Adorno, for instance, argued that collective experiences in the cinema were 'anything but good and revolutionary'. The laughter of an audience reminded him of some of the worst aspects of bourgeois sadism. He also accused Benjamin of 'the anarchistic romanticism of blind confidence in the spontaneous power of the proletariat'. It was much too simple to think that mechanical reproduction would bring about drastic changes in perception and consciousness. For Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Lowenthal, the new techniques of cultural production and reception had to be understood in the context of the decline of autonomous art and the rise of what Horkheimer and Adorno called the culture industry. For them, the new products of 'mass culture' served to enhance political control and to 'cement' mass audiences to the status quo. In the contemporary world, the moments of affirmation and criticism contained in 'autonomous art' are being split apart. In an epoch in which the individual has 'lost his power to conceive a world different from that in which he lives', negation only survives in works of art which, as Horkheimer commented, 'uncompromisingly express the gulf between the monadic individual and his barbarous surroundings - prose like Joyce's and paintings like Picasso's Guernica'.81 These works are becoming rarer and cannot be found in 'mass culture'. Lowenthal shared this view.82 On Adorno's account, most art and music in the twentieth century has become 'functional' for a world of commodity production (or socialist bureaucratic elitism). It is manufactured for its selling chances and offers little more than entertainment and distraction. Autonomous and critical art still survives in works which consciously or unconsciously reject and react against market requirements and which abandon nineteenth-century naturalism, realism and romanticism. Artistic truth is still conserved by works which express the dissonant character of modern life. Adorno emphasized that Schoenberg's early works, his atonal music, are an important example of this genre. Works like these are 'relentlessly negative'.84 But they are perhaps too negative. The mode in which the critical function is sustained is remote from general popular taste and, as a result, its effectivity is severely reduced. The negative function of art, he thought, increasingly on the decline. Marcuse was of a similar opinion. Advanced monopoly capitalism is incompatible with the progressive aspects of affirmative culture. Artistic alienation is continually threatened and tends to disappear (with many other forms of negation) in the process of technological expansion and capital accumulation.85 The gap between art and reality, so important for the transcendent qualities of art, is closing in ever more realms of artistic culture.

A number of questions arise at this point. How and why have these changes occurred? In what ways has art's style, or form, or aura, been modified by the development of, and developments in, 'mass culture'? What meaning do these changes have?

The rise of mass culture and the culture industry

Irrespective of whether they characterized contemporary society as state-capitalism or monopoly capitalism, the Institute's members thought that developments had taken place which created the conditions for the commodification of major sectors of artistic culture.86 In their discussion of 'mass culture', the Frankfurt theorists agreed on a number of basic axioms. They maintained that:

1. the more severe the difficulties of reproduction encountered by
The term's early usage was ambiguous but its meaning was subsequently clarified by Adorno in an essay published in Dialectic of Enlightenment. The term 'culture industry' replaced the concept of mass culture which Horkheimer and Adorno had employed in The Dialectic of Enlightenment. The profit motive is transferred on to cultural forms; more and more artistic products are turned into a 'species of commodity... marketable and interchangeable like an industrial product';

ever since artists sold their (life and) work to make a living, art possessed aspects of this form. But trade in art did not prevent 'the pursuit of the inherent logic of each work' - art was also a commodity. Today 'cultural entities... are commodities through and through'. The process is exacerbated by increased interlocking between different economic spheres and by the dependence of 'cultural monopolies' on industrial and finance capital. Advertising and banking lay down new aesthetic standards. Even where the culture industry does not directly produce for profit its products are determined by this new aesthetic. The economic necessity for a quick and high rate of return on investment demands the production of attractive packages designed either to sell directly or to create an atmosphere for selling - a feeling of insecurity, or want and need. The culture industry either has to sell particular objects or it 'turns into public relations, the manufacturing of "good will" per se.'

What is the culture industry?
The expression 'culture industry' was used, and used for the first time, by Horkheimer and Adorno in Dialectic of Enlightenment. The term's early usage was ambiguous but its meaning was subsequently clarified by Adorno in an essay published in 1967. The ideas suggested by the notion are compatible with Marcuse's views. The term 'culture industry' replaced the concept of mass culture which Horkheimer and Adorno had employed in drafts of the Dialectic. They felt it was necessary to dispense with the concept of mass, or popular, culture because, as Adorno put it, 'we wished to exclude from the outset the interpretation agreeable to its advocates: that it is a matter of something like a culture that arises spontaneously from the masses themselves.' Such notions are false. Culture today is not the product of genuine demands; rather, it is the result of demands which are 'evoked and manipulated'. However, they occasionally continued to use the term 'mass culture', but always then with the connotation of 'culture industry'.

The phrase 'culture industry', Adorno emphasized, 'is not to be taken literally'. In the main, the sectors of production of the cultural media do not resemble conventional patterns of industrial production. With some notable exceptions, such as the film industry, individual forms of production (namely, creation and composition) are maintained. The term, therefore, does not refer to production in itself but to the 'standardization', the 'pseudo-individualization' (marginal differentiation) of cultural entities themselves - the 'Crimie', the Western - and to the rationalization of promotion and distribution techniques. The development of the culture industry undermines the intelligibility and validity of autonomous art as the distance between classical and standard advertising aesthetics grows. The seriousness and the challenge of autonomous art is further weakened through incessant speculation about its 'efficacy'. The meaning of local and folk culture is also often destroyed, because pride and rebelliousness embedded within it are taken out of context, repeated in special programmes, and often integrated into the latest fashions. Its songs and melodies are recorded; released as discs, they might enter the charts as another new sound - but the sense and feeling they convey radically alter. Most types of folk music, Marcuse notes, are now heard as performances where they once were lived. The 'crying and shouting, the jumping and playing' of black music, for example, now takes place 'in an artificial, organized space'. It is directed to an audience, whether it is in an auditorium or a semi-detached. The culture industry produces for mass consumption and significantly contributes to the determination of that consumption. For people are now being treated as objects, machines, 'outside as well as inside of the workshop'. The consumer, as the producer, has no sovereignty. The culture industry, integrated into capitalism, in turn integrates consumers from above. Its goal is the production of goods that are profitable and consumable. It operates to ensure its own reproduction. The cultural forms it propagates must, therefore, be compatible with this aim. The 'popular culture' it claims to produce masks special interests. But the ideological effects of the culture industry need not be the result of
conscious decision or manipulation (although they sometimes are). As a result of the exchange of cultural artefacts, fetishism is reinforced as ideology, more generally, is sustained. The modes in which this occurs are analysed by Institute members in a number of different ways.

The produce of the culture industry: advertising aesthetics

In the classical epoch of bourgeois art a contradiction existed, the Frankfurt theorists claimed, between the human resources and techniques employed in the formation/composition of a work and the organization and processes of social and economic life which served as the conditions for the creation of that work and, more generally, of exchange value. The contradiction between the forces and relations of production manifested itself in the cultural sphere. The production of autonomous art, according to standards which derive from the laws of form and artistic technique, contradicted audiences' expectations and, in particular, their 'norms of thought' or 'standards of intelligibility' (Adorno). The exchange of cultural products led to familiar difficulties of comprehension. The meaning of artistic production remained obscure. But the persistence of a contradiction between autonomous artistic composition and the prevailing level of consciousness always meant that art might contribute to a crisis of values and attitudes. While genuine (autonomous) art is still created today, the bulk of cultural production serves to mitigate a crisis of this kind. The culture industry gears itself almost entirely to the development of cultural forms which are compatible with the preservation of capitalism. The effects of capitalist contradictions on consciousness, Horkheimer and Adorno suggest, can be managed.

The essay on the 'culture industry' in Dialectic of Enlightenment summarizes some of the major themes of Horkheimer's and Adorno's separate and joint reflections on the nature of mass culture. Their views expressed in this text by no means exhaust their work on the topic. This is especially true of Adorno. In expounding their views I will draw on a number of their individual writings where I think these clarify and develop ideas contained in the Dialectic. Their central concern is to show how the products of the culture industry fall short of claims made on their behalf even by the 'industry' itself. Without regard for the integrity of art, the culture industry leads to the 'predominance of the effect'. Deriving its life and form from extra-artistic technique (techniques of mechanical reproduction), it creates diversions, distractions, amusements - entertainment. Whereas once art had sought to fulfil the idealist dictum - 'purposiveness without purpose' (Kant) - it was now bound by purposes set by the market - 'purposelessness for purposes'.

The fate of culture is a 'symptom' of tendencies in society as well as of institutionalized wants and typical trends in individual identity formation. The desire for distraction reflects needs to escape from the responsibilities and drudgery of everyday life. The lack of meaning and control people experience registers accurately a truth about their lives - they are not masters of their own destiny. They are 'caught' within the present mode of production, with its rationalized and mechanized labour process and all its hierarchies. The pattern of recurring crises of the mode of production, its continuous expansions, recessions and depressions, engenders strains, fears and anxieties about one's capacity to earn a living, employment prospects, the security of family, life, health, old age, etc. Capitalism creates conditions of dependence on the powerful, who can give or withhold things greatly wanted. It also creates dependency needs. Situations continually arise in which people cannot cope. They are often beset by ego weakness and narcissistic defenses which aid them to compensate for their feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. More often than not these feelings are expressions of objective conditions in reality; that is, a reality that is inadequate and quite inferior when measured against its promise. 'Personal problems' are frequently internalized 'public issues' (C. W. Mills). But in the face of the system's pressures many individuals seek to 'hide'. One can 'take flight' and escape into the world of entertainment. It offers fun, relaxation and relief from demands and effort. Temporarily, boredom can also be overcome without labour and concentration (both of which are necessary for the enjoyment of autonomous art). Irrational susceptibilities and neurotic symptoms, ever present within most human beings, are open, as a consequence, to exploitation by the mass media. The 'natural' corollary of capitalist industrial production is the culture industry.

The attempt to escape both tedium and concentrated effort is, however, contradictory. New experiences cannot be won through resignation to managed leisure time. Only thought and effort can lead one out of a life of ennui and exhaustion; for the media through which escape is sought reinforce the very psychological attitudes to which we are accustomed. As Adorno wrote, 'the
modern mass media tend particularly to fortify reaction formations [reaction formations utilize the energy of a repressed wish to constitute a habit and/or set of attitudes in reaction against it] and defenses concomitant with actual social dependence. Its messages appear to offer escape; they suggest pleasure, spontaneity and 'something metaphysically meaningful'. In fact, their form duplicates an 'opaque and reified' world. They do not shatter existing images of reality. They reproduce them. The culture industry stands for adjustment to existing social organizations. Under its auspices 'free-time' experiences all too often serve to sustain capacities for wage labour. How does this situation come about? How are the 'effects' of the culture industry achieved?

The main characteristics of the culture industry reflect the difficult problems it faces. It must at once both sustain interest and ensure that the attention it attracts is insufficient to bring its produce into disrepute. Thus, commercial entertainment aims at an attentive but passive, relaxed and uncritical reception, which it induces through the production of 'patterned and pre-digested' cultural entities. Horkheimer and Adorno analyse these entities in terms of their negation of style; they present little, if any, new shape to conventional forms. The produce of artistic culture is, less and less, divorced from reality. It is art's 'second alienation' (Marx) — alienation from alienation — that is disappearing today. The 'end of art' is threatened. The culture industry's style kills style. Its products fall to come to terms with reality's essence; they have no genuine content; they are essentially mimetic. The culture industry becomes an extension of the 'outside world'. Furthermore, its product reproduces, reinforces and strengthens dominant interpretations of reality; it schematizes, classifies and catalogues for its customers and often represents a spurious reconciliation between society and the individual, identifying the latter with the former. The 'plots', the 'goodies', the 'heroes' rarely suggest anything other than identification with the existing form of social relations. There is passion in movies, radio broadcasts, popular music and magazines, but it is usually passion for identity (between whole and part, form and content, subject and object).

The products of the culture industry can be characterized by standardization and pseudo-individualization. It is these qualities which distinguish them from autonomous art.

Standardization refers to a process that affects the general features as well as the details of a work. Structural similarities arise in cultural forms as a result of the technique of the culture industry — distribution and mechanical reproduction. Popular works, or a successful new work, are imitated under the behest of big business agencies anxious to cash in on their appeal. The material's style is 'plugged' (ceaselessly repeated) and 'frozen' (rigidly reinforced). Yet newly released works of the old style, or new fashions based upon them, must maintain the appearance of novelty and originality: hence pseudo-individualization — 'endowing cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardization itself'. Each product 'affects an individual air'; its actual differences from other cultural entities are trivial.

Not only are the hit songs, stars and soap operas cyclically recurrent and rigid variable types, but the specific content of the entertainment itself only appears to change. The details are interchangeable. The short interval sequence which was effective in a hit song, the hero's momentary fall from grace (which he accepts as good sport), the rough treatment which the beloved gets from the male star, the latter's rugged defiance of the spoiit heiress, are, like all the other details, ready made clichés to be slotted in anywhere; they never do anything more than fulfill the purpose allotted to them in the overall plan.

Within moments of most films starting we can predict quite accurately how they will end, who will win out, lose or be forgotten. The structure of a popular song is well known before the song is actually heard. The first few notes, or phrases, of a hit are enough to tell us what the rest will be like. The surrounding framework of events can automatically be supplied to a detail known about a television show. Magazines and newspapers usually present little news and certainly no surprises. Even special effects, tricks and jokes are all allocated particular places in the design of programmes by experts in offices. The result of standardization and pseudo-individualization 'for the physiognomy of the culture industry is essentially', as Adorno summarizes it, 'a mixture of streamlining, photographic hardness and precision on the one hand, and individualistic residues, sentimentality and an already disposed and adapted romanticism on the other'. As long as a product meets certain minimum requirements, a feature which distinguishes it from others, a little glamour and distinctness, marks of 'mainstream' (conventional) character, it is suitable material for popular presentation.

But it is not just 'the industry's' produce that is standardized.
Dozens of cues are provided to evoke 'correct' responses. For example, in case there is any question as to what type of show a comedy is, laughter is often prerecorded. Continuous commentary is supplied on many radio and television programmes should one be uncertain what to think. Standardization 'aims at standard responses'. Apart from effects generated by promoters, cultural commodities embody 'a system of response-mechanisms which tend to automate reactions and weaken the forces of individual resistance'. Frameworks for, and/or models of, interpretation are offered. These often lead back to familiar experiences; safe grounds for the reception of the culture industry. Programmes watch for their audiences as popular music hears for those who listen.

Despite the repetitiveness and ubiquity of mass culture its structure is multi-layered. In Lowenthal's well-known phrase, 'mass culture is psychoanalysis in reverse'. The culture industry appears to recognize that individuals have multi-layered personalities. This knowledge, far from being used for the purposes of emancipation, is employed in order to 'ensnare the consumer as completely as possible' and in order to embroil his or her senses in the vicissitudes of predetermined effects. A number of examples drawn from Adorno's work on television, astrology and music can usefully highlight this theme.

**Examples: television, astrology and music**

In 'Television and the patterns of culture' Adorno discusses the layers of meaning of an American comedy series. At one level the series of shows presents an entertaining tale about the struggle for survival of an underpaid, young, very hungry school teacher. Supposedly amusing situations arise as she tries, without success, to win a free meal from friends and foes. The very mention of food becomes a stimulus for laughter. The series does not 'push' any set of ideas. Its 'hidden message' emerges as its pseudo-realism promotes identification with the charming and funny heroine. The script implies, Adorno contended:

If you are as humorous, good natured, quick-witted, and charming as she is, do not worry about being paid a starvation wage. You can cope with your frustration in a humorous way; and your superior wit and cleverness put you not only above material privations, but also above the rest of mankind.... In other words, the script is a shrewd method of promoting adjustment to humiliating conditions by presenting them as objectively comical and by giving a picture of a person who experiences even her own inadequate position as an object of fun apparently free of any resentment.

Patterns of reaction are set for the audience without either party's necessary awareness of them. An atmosphere of the normality of hunger (or crime and killing in detective stories and westerns) is established quite easily. Further, the show's set frames of reference suggest and reinforce certain stereotypes (for instance about how 'good girls' behave). The response formations and presuppositions of the culture industry are brought out even more clearly, with much greater detail, in Adorno's discussion of astrology.

The results of a content analysis of the daily astrological column of the *Los Angeles Times*, covering a period of about three months, along with a number of observations on astrological journals, were published under the title, 'The stars down to earth' in 1957. Conventional astrology, Adorno argued, is institutionalized superstition. It is another product of the culture industry to be passively received. Astrologers offer 'authoritative' advice to individuals whose specific situation they know nothing about. Their columns are remarkable for their seriousness and practical attitude toward everyday problems. The emphasis of the *Los Angeles Times* column is always on the capacity of the private individual to 'find the right approach' to particular problems. Although fate is essentially set by the stars, a pragmatic (read 'conventional, conformist and contented') attitude to life is recommended for it can ensure satisfaction and the prospect of high rewards.

Urge to tell off official would alienate helpful partner, so keep calm despite irritation: later material benefits will follow making more cooperative deal at home.

10 November, Aries

Sulking over disappointing act of influential executive merely puts you deeper in disfavour.

10 November, Scorpio

Get away from that concern that seems to have no solution....

10 November, Sagittarius
But the ‘fictitious reasonableness’ of the advice masks the ‘arbitrary and entirely opaque’ nature of his authority. The source of his knowledge is depersonalized; it remains remote and is treated as ‘impersonal and thing-like’. Astrology reflects accurately that the fate of individuals is independent of their will; that the order of life appears as natural. But it does not simply register the dependence of individuals on social configurations beyond their immediate control – it further justifies this state of affairs. If you want to survive and be happy, then astrologists recommend coming to terms with your inner and outer life; they suggest you forget frustrated wants and needs and remember/accept all that cannot be changed – the nature of your job, social hierarchies, family life, etc. Thus, one can come to terms with life, the main stages of which one cannot control. To be ‘rational’ in astrological terms means to adjust private interests to given social configurations.

If one does not heed the stars, then one incurs a number of risks. But help is available. If you submit to the stars, if the astrologer’s advice is followed, if you give in to ‘the absolute power’, pleasure without threat, including sexual pleasure, can be assured. As a necessary result of this, communication with the stars also offers the individual increased security, the comfort of being directed and protected by another and a certain relief from responsibility. At the same time people are continually flattered and made to feel that it is their individual efforts that count! ‘The individual is protected by another and a certain relief from responsibility. At the same time people are continually flattered and made to feel that it is their individual efforts that count!’ The individual is provided with the narcissistic gratification that he is really all-important while at the same time being kept under control.

The columnist is a homespun psychologist. His role, however, is the opposite of an analyst or therapist. He plays up to people’s defences (for instance narcissism), and seeks to strengthen rather than undermine them. The continuous suggestion of threats, of grounds for anxiety – ‘Drive carefully!’ – ensures that the reader will seek help. Underlying destructive urges are satisfied while aid is obtained under the guise of pleasurable life is promised by a ‘superhuman agency’. Individuals are reassured: if fate doesn’t solve your problem, effort will.

Astrology stresses and appears to promote individualism, independent thinking and a concern for play while, at the same time, it strengthens and reinforces dependencies, adjustment to the status quo and the work ethic. The columnist’s approach, Adorno argued, supports what Otto Fenichel calls ‘bi-phasic behaviour’; that is, the development of a reaction formation ‘which embodies contradictory attitudes or actions’. Bi-phasic symptoms, common, according to Fenichel, in compulsive neurosis, are presented as normal in the astrologer’s column. The column takes for granted and reproduces certain antinomies in the psyche of its audience which derive from social contradictions – a world which is a social construct and yet fetishized as a result of exchange.

The general features of the astrologer’s column also resemble the mentality of the ‘high scorers’ on the F-scale (Adorno et al.’s measurement device of implicit pre-fascist tendencies). The columns promote the view that the negative is essentially due to external, natural causes; the conventional is appropriate and legitimate; and ‘everything is basically fine’. Dependency needs as well as compulsive attitudes are presupposed and preserved by the pseudo-rational form of astrology. The psychological syndrome expressed promotes bourgeois ideology. As Adorno put it, it offers the advantage of veiling all deeper-lying causes of distress and thus promoting acceptance of the given. Moreover, by strengthening the sense of fatality, dependence and obedience, it paralyses the will to change objective conditions in any respect and relegates all worries to a private plane promising a cure-all by the very same compliance which prevents a change of conditions. It can easily be seen how well this suits the over-all purpose of the prevailing ideology of today’s cultural industry; to reproduce the status quo within the mind of the people.

Like other mass media products, astrology offers a spurious short-cut both to an understanding of the social order and to an escape into a supposedly different world. Its meaning appears as something new, fresh and insightful. In actuality, it is a revamp of an opaque and reified social structure.

A third illustration of the social meaning of the culture industry can be taken from Adorno’s study of music. The range of his studies in this sphere has already been mentioned. I will concentrate my exposition on some of the distinctions he makes between serious and standardized/pseudo-individualized music. Adorno often explored these differences in considerable technical detail. For the sake of simplicity I will restrict my discussion to his more general statements about divergencies in musical form and the respective ‘response mechanisms’ he associated with different kinds of music.

Adorno thought that many different types of music had been radically altered by capitalist economic processes. The commodification of music had necessarily changed its structure and the
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way it was apprehended. Particularly, mass distribution and new modes of mechanical reproduction (for example radio and film) had led to the corruption of classical music; its original structure was often sacrificed to ensure immediate intelligibility (and, therefore, ease of consumption). The result was often ‘quotation listening’ and the repression of the listener as well as of serious music. Mechanical modes of reproduction and mass distribution enhanced the tendency to fetishize music’s technical structure. Experiences in live concerts were also subject to this process as conductors and impresarios sought to appeal to ever larger audiences. Further, a new variety of music had developed, the structure of which was entirely determined by its exchange value. It was functional for the new techniques of reproduction and for the ‘needs’ of the masses seeking relief and distraction. This type of music Adorno called ‘popular music’, by which he meant ‘light’ music, or music composed purely for entertainment (including jazz, ‘beat’ and film music). Popular music is analysed in juxtaposition to serious music.

The categories of serious and popular music do not simply correspond to notions of classical and non-classical. Adorno stresses that there can be classical music which has many of the features of popular music. He noted, of course, that serious music can be bad. It can also become ‘popularized’ and hence lose much of its original integrity. The differences between these two musical spheres cannot be grasped either in terms of familiar ideas such as ‘lowbrow and highbrow’, ‘simple and complex’, ‘naive and sophisticated’. Once again standardization and pseudo-individualization are the central categories for analysing the difference. The structural characteristics of these different kinds of music are listed in the table on page 101. In various works Adorno traced the history and changes involved in the development from the classical and romantic musical eras to the world of popular music. The history is marked by a series of transitions: from an emphasis on form and the highest technical achievement to ‘structural poverty’; from the development of themes to incessant repetition of opening melodies; from the whole piece of music being the prime unit of meaning to the detail and effect taking on the most significance. In popular music, styles are plugged as much as the ‘personalities’ of the show-business world. Popular music today, Adorno held, is like a ‘multiple-choice questionnaire’ – but without a correct answer. For so long as one chooses, the

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<th>The structure of production and composition of ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ music</th>
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<td><strong>‘Serious’ music</strong>&lt;br&gt;Every part/detail depends ‘for its musical sense on the concrete totality and never on a mere enforcement of a musical scheme’&lt;br&gt;Themes and details are highly interwoven with the whole&lt;br&gt;Themes are carefully developed&lt;br&gt;Details cannot be changed without altering the whole – details almost contain/anticipate the whole&lt;br&gt;Consistency is maintained between formal structure and content (themes)&lt;br&gt;If standard schemes are employed (e.g. for dance) they still maintain a key role in the whole</td>
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<td><strong>‘Popular’ music</strong>&lt;br&gt;Musical compositions follow familiar patterns/frameworks: they are stylized&lt;br&gt;Little originality is introduced&lt;br&gt;Structure of the whole does not depend upon details – whole is not altered by individual detail&lt;br&gt;Melodic structure is highly rigid and is frequently repeated&lt;br&gt;Harmonic structure embodies a set scheme (‘The most primitive harmonic facts are emphasised’)&lt;br&gt;Complications have no effect on structure of work – they do not develop themes&lt;br&gt;Stress is on combination of individual ‘effects’ – on sound, colour, tone, beat, rhythm&lt;br&gt;Improvisations become ‘normalized’ (the boys can only ‘swing it’ in a narrow framework)&lt;br&gt;Details are substitutable (they ‘serve their function as cogs in machines’)&lt;br&gt;Affirms conventional norms of what constitutes intelligibility in music while appearing novel and original</td>
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The culture industry is reproduced. (It should be noted that it is not always clear whether the characteristics in the table describe forms of ideal or of actual types.)

The effects of the different kinds of music were centrally important to Adorno. 'Response mechanisms', he argued, are built into musical form. The table on page 103 summarizes the different responses encouraged and demands made upon the listener by the two respective types of music. Whereas the aesthetic form of serious music had ensured the transcendence of its material preconditions and a contradiction between production and prevailing consciousness, popular music affirms existing norms of intelligibility. The listeners of the music plugged by the culture industry 'become so accustomed to the recurrence of the same things that they react automatically'. Repetition enforces recognition and often then acceptance of the seemingly inescapable. While in great serious music understanding involves a spontaneous act of linking elements together in ever new synthesis, in popular music understanding coincides with recognition. Popular music presupposes and continually reinforces a frame of mind which is one of 'distraction and inattention'. Exhaustion and boredom conditioned by the dominant mode of production is complemented by the culture industry which distracts 'from the demands of reality by entertainment which does not demand attention either'. Popular music is tailor-made for the functions of this 'industry'. It 'fits' well into the status quo's ideological tendencies. Whether heard on radio or in live concerts, popular music's often repeated and 'detachable' themes, exaggerated emphases, sheer volume, etc. lead to 'fetishism in music' and 'regression of the listener'. Irrespective of the intent of composers and functionaries in the popular music world, the music serves to prevent criticism of the social order; it enraptures and has 'a soporific effect'. As set pieces tend to produce set responses, a 'retrogressive and sometimes even infantile type of person' is promoted; responses become impulsive, mimetic and generally child-like. Regression in listening focuses on details and melodies. 'Atomistic' and 'quotation listening' is the counterpart to the 'musical children's language' – structural poverty – of popular music. Relieved of responsibility again, the individual does not have to worry about the 'correct' reactions.

Popular music enhances predispositions to compulsive and irrational responses and, therefore, it increases susceptibility to outside influences. The atmosphere it creates is suitable for the

Differences between 'serious' and 'popular' music in responses encouraged/demands made upon listener

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<tr>
<th>'Serious' music</th>
<th>'Popular' music</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>To understand a piece of serious music one must experience the whole of it</strong></td>
<td>The whole has little influence on reception and reaction to parts – stronger reactions to part than whole</td>
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<td>The whole has strong impact on reaction to details</td>
<td>The music is standardized into easily recognizable types, whole are pre-accepted/known prior to reception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themes and details can only be comprehended in the context of the whole</td>
<td>Little effort is required to follow music – audience already has models under which musical experiences can be subsumed</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sense of the music cannot be grasped by recognition alone, i.e. by identifying music with another 'identical' piece</td>
<td>Little emphasis on the whole as musical event – what matters is style, rhythm (the movement of the foot on the floor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort and concentration are required to follow music</td>
<td>Leads back to familiar experiences (themes and details can be understood out of context because listener can automatically supply framework)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Its aesthetic disrupts the continuum of everyday life and encourages recollection</strong></td>
<td>A sense of the music is grasped by recognition – leading to acceptance</td>
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Pleasure, fun gained through listening are 'transferred' to the musical object, which becomes invested with qualities that stem from mechanism of identification. The most successful, best music is identified with the most often repeated.

Music has 'soporific effect' on social consciousness

It reinforces a sense of continuity in everyday living – while its reified structure enforces forgetfulness

Renders 'unnecessary the process of thinking'
promotions of other goods and services. Additional 'escapes' and 'comforts' are usually on offer. But the gratifications and reliefs available are illusionary as is the 'adjustment' effected by the musical world. In listening individuals are actually subject to the same social forces they seek to escape. This has ramifications for the attitudes of the masses. Listening habits, 'likes' and 'dislikes' which have been enforced upon audiences contain ambivalence. Crazes for the latest fashion/fad contain their opposite - 'spite and fury' - which are easily released. Frequently, when promotion pressure is reduced, revenge is provoked. People 'compensate for the "guilt" in having condoned the worthless by making fun of it' (for example laughing at pictures of old fashions). The tremendous amount of energy (libido) employed in order to digest the goods of the industry can be deflected. But the relaxation of sales pressure on a particular product is made only so as to launch something 'new'. In order to sustain the illusion of satisfaction, the entertainment business has to introduce constantly 'fresh' ideas and 'different' works. The process could, Adorno thought, continue indefinitely. The autonomy of music is vanishing. 'Music today is largely a social cement.'

Examples of modern art which resist assimilation

There were, however, in Adorno's and Horkheimer's opinion, certain types of modern art which resisted assimilation. In 'Art and mass culture' Horkheimer spoke of works which can still shock and provoke; works which reproduce the 'abyss' between the individual and environment.

The works in which the subject cut off from his own development still manages to find expression are those in which the abyss between him and the barbaric environment appears most insistently: poems such as those of Trakl, the Guernica of Picasso, a composition of Schoenberg. The sorrow and the horror which adhere to such works do not correspond to the experience of a subject who turns away from reality, for understandable reasons, or revolts against it; the consciousness to which these belong is cut off from society, thrust back on distorted, outré figures... The latest works of art... relinquish illusion of an existing community, they are memorials of a lonely and desperate life... Insofar as they still represent communication they denounce the dominant forms of intercourse as tools of destruction.

Autonomous art can make the familiar unfamiliar and cast a new light upon it. Adorno agreed in principle with this view. But his analysis of particular works was, as always, more detailed and cautious. This can be seen in his studies of the 'new music' composed, notably, by Schoenberg (and in his writings on Beckett).

The 'new music', Adorno maintained, reveals a mode of composition which continually produced new forms and 'honours the listener by not making any concessions to him'. The dissonance and large intervals which were articulated by the mature Schoenberg during his commitment to free atonality expressed the composer's refusal either to accept the rigid forms of traditional musical structure, or to bow to demands of conventional taste and attitudes. Schoenberg deliberately maintained unresolved tensions and refused to introduce ordering categories which might ease the task of comprehending his works. His music, Adorno noted, often seems 'fragmented and abrupt to the unnaive-naive listener'. But all aspects of his work are 'so totally formed that there is never any confusion'. Although Schoenberg's works sound entirely experimental they submit classicism and romanticism to sustained criticism. In Adorno's opinion, Schoenberg 'liberated the latent structure' of these traditions while 'disposing of their manifest one'. Far from breaking with tradition, Schoenberg continued it. His works preserved 'identity in non-identity'. But while the form of the atonal compositions contradicted prevailing tastes and attitudes, the meaning of the music became more and more remote from the understanding of potential and actual listeners. Thus, the critical impact of these works was diminished.

The transition in Schoenberg's style from free atonality to the twelve-tone technique also reduced the influence of the former. Schoenberg's work developed into a new system. Twelve-tone rows and relations became as explicit as key relations in traditional music. Another false and premature resolution of tensions was projected. Schoenberg's disciples further rationalized the system. It became a new, all-embracing 'fixed idea', hence, 'the bad heir of tonality'. The desire for security was once more manifest. In a social order where security cannot be achieved its expression in artistic forms simply adds to the barriers to self-reflection. The effects of the culture industry are very hard to escape, interlocked as they are with the whole development of capitalist society.
The changing structure of ideology

Summarizing the effects of the culture industry, Adorno wrote, 'it impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves'. The ‘industry’ appeals to, develops from and reinforces a state of dependence, anxiety and ego weakness. The message it conveys is most often one of adjustment and obedience. Its essential content can be reduced to one axiom: since things cannot be other than they are, 'become that which thou art'. Through displaced wish-fulfilment, 'substitute gratification' (Ersatzbefriedigung), the 'industry' seeks to meet individual needs for diversion and distraction. It provides tonics—'pick-me-ups'—for another working day. The 'response mechanisms' embedded in its produce calls for both passivity, susceptibility and a sense of smugness about the individual's actual and potential achievements. Identification with prevailing norms and conditions is inculcated. Horkheimer and Adorno recognized that there is a rationale for light art: it does, after all, keep people going. But its suppression of reason, sensuality and spontaneity promotes only 'pseudo-activity'—marginally differentiated types of social practice. The individual 'is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the general collectivity (the social totality) is unquestioned'. The culture industry is 'anti-enlightenment'.

The transition from autonomous to standardized/pseudo-individualized cultural forms also marks a transformation in the nature of ideology. The critique of ideology, as the immanent critique of an object—a critique which (to put it crudely) assesses an object in terms of its own standards and ideals—is possible only in so far as 'ideology contains a rational element with which the critique can deal'. Capitalist exchange, for example, can be assessed in light of its own, substantial claim to be just. But when people become 'objects of calculation', as the consumers of the culture industry, then the ideology which informs this calculation is no longer simply false by its own standards—for it has none. It represents nothing other than 'manipulative contrivance'. As a joint Institute publication put it in 1956:

The socially conditioned false consciousness of today is no longer objective spirit; it is not...crystallized blindly and anonymously out of the social process, but rather is tailored scientifically to fit the society.

This is the case, the Institute claimed, whether one talks about television, film, radio or newspapers, magazines and many kinds of best-sellers. Ideology is no longer just socially necessary illusion. Rather, it is rapidly becoming a planned construct which duplicates and enforces the status quo.

Further differences among Institute members

It would be wrong, however, to exaggerate the similarity of style and level of agreement reached between members of the Institute on the status of the culture industry. While Horkheimer's individual works often repeated themes discussed above, he rarely explored them in depth. Adorno's work was more sharply focused and deeply intertwined with the categories of Marx's theory of value. His theory of culture was most often couched in terms of an analysis of the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of cultural forms. His writings are rich in detailed elaborations and illustrations. Adorno argued, as he put it in a letter to Benjamin, that autonomous avant-garde art and popular culture are both 'torn halves of an integral freedom, to which however they do not add up'. 'Genuine' art could be preserved as little in the flux of historical circumstances as popular art could be completely dismissed. Despite his negative assessment of many forms of mass culture he did not completely reject the validity of new techniques of production and reproduction. Furthermore, in the 1960s Adorno added significant reservations to any thesis that maintained the total commercialization and reification of culture. In some of his very last essays he contended: 'Society remains class struggle, today as in the period when that concept originated.' The fundamental contradictions of society remain 'undiminished' and, as a necessary result, consciousness is not, nor can it be, totally integrated.

Although Lowenthal raises a number of questions about the legitimacy of distinctions between genuine and mass art, his Literature, Culture and Society and Literature and the Image of Man adhere to many of the same basic theoretical presuppositions as Adorno and Horkheimer. (He argued, for example, that literature designed for mass consumption—for instance, popular biographies of 'stars', politicians and businessmen—reflects a 'command psychology' which seeks to ensure that 'people live in a limbo of
Marcuse's analysis of mass culture also has much in common with the studies outlined above. But he does, of course, introduce a series of original categories – the most important being that of 'repressive desublimation' (the systematic limitation on the scope of desublimation, the reduction of the sensual, pleasurable and erotic to specific sexual experiences). As Marcuse's work is well known and accessible, it will not require detailed treatment here. It might be usefully noted, however, that he has argued, in *One Dimensional Man* and in other texts, that the development of mass culture increasingly establishes a (false) harmony between public and private interests; reinforces privatization and consumption orientations; spreads an advertising aesthetic; undermines indigenous working-class culture; increases the domination of instrumental reason; and manipulates sexuality – leading to the general pursuit of false and limited wants and needs, repressive desublimation.

I shall pursue some of these themes further in Chapter 4, in discussing Marcuse's and other Frankfurt theorists' analysis of the changing basis of identity formation. Benjamin, as has already been noted, defended a rather different position from any of the others. He saw in the new techniques of mechanical reproduction, and in the distraction offered, certain positive consequences. Through film, radio and literature response mechanisms could be learnt which had radical implications. The new techniques could be of assistance to revolutionary struggle. The tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at the turning points of history cannot be solved ... by contemplation alone. They are mastered gradually by habit ... the ability to master certain tasks in a state of distraction proves that their solution has become a matter of habit. Consistent and reliable revolutionary habits could be learnt through a radical politicization of art. Once again following Brecht, Benjamin stressed the possibility of the 'functioning transformation' (Umfunktionierung) of aspects of mass culture; 'the transformation of forms and instruments of production by a progressive intelligentsia – an intelligentsia interested in liberating the means of production'. In contradistinction to the other members of the Institute, the central point for Benjamin is that a writer's production (whether it be of a novel, play or programme) must have the character of a model: it must be able to instruct other writers in their production and, secondly, it must be able to place an improved apparatus at their disposal. This apparatus will be the better, the more consumers it brings in contact with the production process – in short, the more readers or spectators it turns into collaborators. Benjamin took Brecht's epic theatre to be the model for this enterprise. Against the views of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Lowenthal, Benjamin contended that the writer must transform himself 'from a supplier of the production apparatus, into an engineer who sees his task in adapting that apparatus to the ends of the proletarian revolution'. Benjamin rejected the priority of form or style in favour of enlisting both form and content into the direct service of the revolutionary forces.