

## LIAM DEE

### **Creative Accountancy: the Supposed Contradiction between Art and Commodification**

“The books guiding the world today are not novels and poetry, but those of accountants.”<sup>1</sup>

“As business, art will continue as long as it pays and as long as its smooth functioning lulls everybody into believing that art is still alive.”<sup>2</sup>

“[William] Blake’s criticism goes far beyond the professional complaint: the Imagination which, for him, Art embodies is no commodity, but ‘a Representation of what Eternally exists, Really and Unchangeably.’”<sup>3</sup>

The above quotations together represent a consistent thread that runs from the genesis of a modern conception of both Art<sup>4</sup> and capitalism to now: that the relationship between the world of Art and the world of commodities is antagonistic if not downright antithetical. Indeed such a relationship is actually constitutive for Art; its identity of subjective, creative, spontaneous life-affirmation is reinforced against the negative example of the objective, impersonal, unimaginative, administered, and lifeless commodity. The existence of a very lucrative Art business has posed an obvious problem to this identity, a contradiction that has been conventionally solved through two solutions. The first, represented by Adorno, is to see this business as either an imposition of an alien force or else non-existent: the trade only taking place with the degraded simulacrum of Art, never the authentic essence. On the other hand the successful co-existence of Art with business can be seen as indicative of the

subjective, creative, spontaneous life-affirmation of commodification in general, the indisputable subjective freedom of Art being used to prove the subjective freedom of the market. Neither of these solutions, whether in extreme or watered-down forms, gets to grips with the depth and extent of the Art market, nor the reificatory consequences of commodification.

It is my contention that the prevalence of Art commodification is a function of the social ontology of Art, which is fundamentally one of reification not ineffable liberated spontaneity. Indeed it is the ability of Art to be so successfully commodified, from the refined auction houses of the High Art market to the frantic sweatshops of the “culture industry,” and still maintain the aura of autonomous individual expression so vital to bourgeois legitimation, that makes Art such a special case study for the intricacies of commodification in general. To make sense of this complex entwinement we need to examine the historical circumstances of the initial binary opposition, an opposition crucial to the very genesis of not just modern aesthetics but modern economics as well.

### **From the Tasteful Society to the Invisible Hand**

To justify the autonomous status of the new bourgeois “civil society” which reflected and reinforced the autonomy of the bourgeois subject, eighteenth-century bourgeois intellectuals needed to find a new principle of moral order beyond feudal theology and monarchy.<sup>5</sup> In reconciling the ostensible contradiction between free individuals and a unified society, bourgeois moral philosophers rejected the extremes of Thomas Hobbes’ authoritarianism and Bernard de Mandeville’s selfishness<sup>6</sup> and instead sought a model of non-domineering holism in the realm of taste, beauty and aesthetics.

The debates over political autonomy and order resonated with the seemingly more abstract epistemological debates over the relationship between the sensory and reason, both seeking a way to understand the subjective manifold within objective unity.<sup>7</sup> Thus, with the objective unity of the British aristocratic order waning in the late seventeenth century, a new harmony was sought within the cacophony of the material world, inspiring John Locke's efforts to find experiential, rather than innate, limits of understanding.<sup>8</sup> This search for empirical order would reach its sceptical apotheosis in the work of David Hume in the eighteenth century.

Hume's epistemology denied the existence of abstract ideas and based all judgement in the sensory realm of individual passions.<sup>9</sup> Yet, despite pushing empiricism to the sceptical brink, Hume was not prepared to leap into the abyss; among his attempts to unify processes of judgement he invoked "taste" as a concept grounded in the sensate but still capable of providing a general standard of beauty.<sup>10</sup> Hume's empiricism would later influence Kant<sup>11</sup> and his more rigorous conception of "aesthetics," though both "taste" and "aesthetics" would still refer to a general sensual cognitive capacity that was not restricted to Fine Art until the nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Hume would also influence Adam Smith who, as a professor of moral philosophy, sought to mitigate the more reductionist individualism of Hume while embracing the principle of beauty as a unifying force discerned through individual taste.<sup>13</sup>

Thus it was that in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* Smith grounded the harmony of the civil society market in what could be called "aesthetic utility:" an appreciation of the "fitness for use" in a commodity that was neither a totally relativist, nor a monolithically imposed, value. Focusing on the beauty of the commodity Smith could invoke the "manifold unity" of taste to demonstrate a balance

between the autonomous subjectivity of use value and the standardising objectivity of exchange value.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately the discontinuity of the emerging category of Fine Art from other commodities created a weakness in Smith's happy marriage: "The division of labor... vastly increased the accumulation of commodities, but it did not necessarily increase their fineness; it rather exposed the apparent aesthetic inferiority of [general] commodities to works of art."<sup>15</sup> The demand for "unfine" commodities undid the certainty of Smith's formulation and it is unsurprising that in his later work, *The Wealth of Nations*, use value was simply collapsed into exchange value as an "invisible hand;" explicit questions of individual utility, taste, and beauty quarantined from economics within the discourse of aesthetics.<sup>16</sup>

### **Reification in a World of Free Choice**

This assumed, yet enigmatic, subjective essence in the working of the market has made any attempt to talk of the domination of subjectivity by a reifying commodification<sup>17</sup> tenuous, to say the least. The notion that our separation, under the division of labour, from the products we make,<sup>18</sup> gives these commodities a mystified autonomy at the expense of our own subjectivity—reduced to cogs in the assembly line or consumer demographic statistics—runs against the ostensible axiomatic freedom of workers and consumers within the commodity market. It is made even more problematic by loose and sloppy conceptualisations of "total reification" whereby all vestiges of human subjectivity are lost to, and substituted by, the administrative apparatus of State and Business.<sup>19</sup> Simply inverting the subjectivist ideology of market ideologues does not get us any closer to understanding the interaction of the subjective and objective of the commodity relationship that Smith abandoned for the anodyne fantasy of the "invisible hand."

On the one hand reification is an inescapable component of human epistemology in the sense that we cannot immanently render an *a priori* meaningful world in an unmediated fashion. Via phenomenal apperception we “create” categories and “things” to make sense of sense data. These “things” are abstractions but they are treated as autonomous of our cognition as a means to deal with the ungraspable autonomy of the noumenal world as well as to provide the security of normative closure.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, commodification is a particular form of reification where the autonomy of the abstraction is neither absolute nor uncontested. For one thing there is the structural necessity within capitalism for a never-ending expansion of commodity relationships,<sup>21</sup> both quantitatively/horizontally (an expansion of the production and consumption of existing commodities into “emerging markets”), and qualitatively/vertically (an expansion of that which constitutes commodities, such as genetic material), which means that “total commodification” would spell the demise of commodification. Regardless of this scenario there is also considerable resistance, both explicit and implicit, to the drive to align human subjectivity to the rationalism of the commodity process from the macro scale of State regulations to the micropolitics of office sabotage and consumer boycott, not forgetting the background radiation of general irrationality like consumer whimsy. However, not all of these “counter-mediations” to the narrative of commodity reification are necessarily antithetical to commodification, and those that are, are usually too diffuse or contradictory to pose a threat. Thus commodification is a negotiated process that still manages to reproduce a “‘phantom objectivity’... that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.”<sup>22</sup>

## The Cult of Art Mystique in the Laboratory of Dialectical Critique

If this seems reasonably uncontroversial it is worth pondering how often the aporetic nature of commodification is exaggerated and misunderstood, nowhere more so than in relation to Art. Ever since the bifurcation of Fine Art and “unfine” commodities in Smith’s time, the notion that there is an inherent “market irrationality” in Art has become almost common sense. Though it would seem the height of aestheticist naivety to claim that this irrationality is fundamentally antagonistic to exchange value it is remarkable how our knowing winks or casual shrugs about the Art market always come with a caveat about *some* “priceless” element of Art, whether this be the ineffable remainder of *différance* or merely the indeterminacy of creative self-expression. Even the most rigorous theorists of commodification have found their scalpels of critique rusted with awe when it comes to the subject of Art.

Though famously depicting a communist end to the alienating exclusivity of Art,<sup>23</sup> Marx himself was never able to integrate Art into his commodity analysis, largely leaving its “disproportionality” to under-theorised ruminations that basically recycled Romantic mystique.<sup>24</sup> Louis Althusser, who had no qualms about extending his vigorous structuralism over the top of the mystifying subjectivism of Genius,<sup>25</sup> still believed in a fundamental “internal distantiation” of Art from the ideological effect emanating from commodification and “State apparatuses.”<sup>26</sup> But nowhere is the mythos of an unreifiable essence of Art more telling than in one of the dourest exponents of the “melancholy science,”<sup>27</sup> for Theodor Adorno’s work is also ostensibly the most rigorous dialectical critique of the relationship between Art and commodification.

It is not as if Adorno was unaware of the fact that Art “is inextricably entwined with rationalization...[:]”<sup>28</sup> “As long as art takes the form of works, it is

essentially things, objectified in accordance with a law of form.”<sup>29</sup> Indeed he comes down heavily on those who would treat Art as an “enduring abstract essence”<sup>30</sup> and thus mystify its production: “What is wrong with the aesthetics of genius is that it denies the importance of the moment of making or fabrication (*téchne*), overemphasizing the aspect of art’s absolutely primordial status and viewing art as *natura naturans*.”<sup>31</sup> More importantly this fetishism of subjectivity is seen as a direct outcome of reification—the illusory preservation of spontaneity to cover the tracks of assembly-line routinisation: “Radical reification produces its own pretence of immediacy and intimacy.”<sup>32</sup> If this were not enough, Adorno even goes so far as to regard Art as an analogue of the processes of commodification, both in terms of never-ending novelty<sup>33</sup> and a fundamental otiosity that is equated with the way a commodity only exists for exchange value.<sup>34</sup> Indeed there are moments when Adorno admits that there is more than just an analogous relationship: “Offering art for sale on a market...is not some perverse use of art but simply a logical consequence of art’s participation in productive relations.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, “it becomes impossible to criticize the culture industry without criticizing art at the same time.”<sup>36</sup> On the strength of this, one can only agree with Fredric Jameson’s assessment that Adorno’s dialectical critique of Art is as strong as the rest of his work and that it “challenges the conception and ideal of philosophical aesthetics.”<sup>37</sup>

Yet even while celebrating this critique Jameson is forced to admit that Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory* is based on the assumption that everyone knows what Art is.<sup>38</sup> This would seem to run counter to the explicit anti-absolutism of this work: “The concept of art balks at being defined.... Nor can the nature of art be ascertained by going back to the origin of art in order to find some fundamental and primary layer that supports everything else.”<sup>39</sup> Yet having placed these admirable warning signs

around the ontology of Art Adorno does not really unpack the definitional difficulty except to note general effusiveness and, indeed, uses this conceptual amorphousness to draw a veil over an assumption shared with Althusser: that there is “true” and “authentic” Art.<sup>40</sup>

For an avowed critic of “the jargon of authenticity,”<sup>41</sup> this belief in the truth of Art cannot be proffered without caveats and Adorno is thus at pains to stress that “True art challenges its own essence, thereby heightening the sense of uncertainty that dwells in the artist.”<sup>42</sup> Yet an essence, no matter how partial, compromised, or uncertain is still an essence. Rather than making the dialectical components of Art equal partners, Adorno plumps for a mere Aristotelian revision of the Platonic hierarchy of form and manifestation, where form remains as the ontological core but manifestation becomes an indissoluble, though still secondary, aspect.<sup>43</sup> Adorno may defend his veridical conception of Art by claiming that “truth exists only as a product of historical becoming”<sup>44</sup>—but *which* truth is the one that has emerged from the “historical becoming” of Art, the one avowed by the bourgeois aesthetic ideology of autonomous expression, or the one avowed by the daily commodification of Art?

Adorno’s invocation of “essence and appearance”<sup>45</sup> parallels a contrast he shares with Althusser between “knowledge” and “pleasure,”<sup>46</sup> where the latter is the domain of utility, instrumentalism, materiality and all that is compatible with the logic of the commodity, and the former is not. If there is any doubt about the constitutive nature of this divide for Art Adorno spells out the consequences clearly: “What ordinary language and conformist aesthetics have termed enjoyment of art... has probably never existed and will probably never exist.”<sup>47</sup> To Adorno “true Art” has no use value, providing none of the easy sensual charms of mere entertainment and thus exhibiting a “haughty refusal to be serviceable to anything or anybody.”<sup>48</sup>

Indeed such is the otiosity of Art that it takes on metaphysical dimensions. Adorno speaks in a removed way about “what is commonly thought to be the spiritual essence of art”<sup>49</sup> but never refutes this common conception except where it becomes the indefensible absolutism of “pure spirituality.”<sup>50</sup> Despite his abovementioned warnings about negating the materiality of Art for a mystification of Genius, Adorno himself claims: “To put the accent on the artefactual aspect in works of art seems to imply that the way in which they came to be is important. It is not. The emphasis must be on their inner constitution.”<sup>51</sup>

This “otherworldliness” makes “true Art” and the capitalist world not just different but inherently antithetical: “By congealing into an entity unto itself—rather than obeying existing social norms and thus proving itself to be ‘socially useful’—art criticizes society just by being there.”<sup>52</sup> The “non-identical” aspects of Art are aggressively opposed to the repressive identification of the commodified “outside world”<sup>53</sup> and Adorno chastises Benjamin for effacing “a modernistic conception of art [i.e. ‘true Art’] that is *unideological* down to its *innermost core*.”<sup>54</sup> Even if Art fails to resist the administered world, its antagonism to the commodity is felt in its very defeat. The essence of Art is never transmogrified into a commodity; it is at worst *destroyed* by commodification: “Unfortunately these trends [the appetite of commodification], *external to art as they are*, do nothing to diminish our doubts about the future of art.”<sup>55</sup>

Adorno’s grim predictions for the future of Art are sustained in direct proportion to the Edenic purity of his ontogenesis of Art. Though he acknowledges the modernity of “true Art,” this modernity did not herald the bringing-into-being of Art, but merely enabled the (partial) liberation from “its one-time ignominious relation to magical abracadabra , human servitude and entertainment, for it has after

all annihilated these dependencies along with the memory of its fall from grace.”<sup>56</sup>

These mystical prelapsarian overtones are based in Adorno’s own reification of Art as an autonomous essence of subjectivity<sup>57</sup> that encounters sociality and materiality as alien but inevitable (in our flawed world) impositions.<sup>58</sup>

Without lingering too churlishly on the professed “materialism” of Adorno’s aesthetics<sup>59</sup> it is perhaps not surprising that neither the phenomenology of “true Art” nor the actual workings of commodity production is examined in any detail under his theological narrative. Did Adorno experience Kafka through a unique manuscript, Schoenberg and Beckett through personal, unpaid performances? Adorno simultaneously naturalises the inescapable commodity form of “true Art”<sup>60</sup> and makes it antagonistically peripheral to some eternal spirit of “true Art” to explain away the commodified manifestation of an intrinsic “anti-commodity.” The unsatisfactory nature of this resolution occasionally strikes Adorno: “It is possible that completely non-ideological art is entirely unfeasible.”<sup>61</sup> *Possible?* If anything the phenomenology *and* historical ontology<sup>62</sup> of Art, “true” or otherwise, would make any “essence” that of commodification, turning Adorno’s dialectic on its head so that the ideological hot wind of “subjective autonomy” becomes the “appearance.”

The problem with Adorno’s analysis, as with Adam Smith’s two hundred years before, is that he presupposes the relationship between subjective contingency and objective commodity logic, taking us straight to the metaphysical clouds of reification without explicating the ground level links to the actual process of commodity production. “Concern with the social explication of art has to address the production of art rather than study its impact.”<sup>63</sup> Yet even in *The Culture Industry* Adorno’s analysis of Art production is nominal to say the least. Adorno himself admits that when he uses the term “industry” he is referring to a more “sociological”

understanding of standardisation and distribution rather than the actual production process.<sup>64</sup> As a consequence it is difficult to work out exactly where “the culture industry” begins and “true Art” ends,<sup>65</sup> or even to be sure what a “commodity” amounts to for Adorno. In claiming that “art may not be outrightly consumable like a commodity”<sup>66</sup> Adorno overstates commodification to assembly-line, low-quality mass-production, ignoring the fact that exchange value does not need to squash all inscrutable elements of use value to be enacted. Only by analysing the banal details of the Art market, from Adorno’s “true Art” to mass culture, can we understand how the subjective uncertainties of Art are not absolutely negated by, nor counteract and exceed, the rationalism of commodification.

### **Use, Exchange and Aesthetic Value**

Undoubtedly the properties of the Artwork that determine its contradistinction to the commodity cannot but problematise the Art market. These properties are best summarised as uniqueness, which Benjamin singles out as a key component of the “aura” of Art<sup>67</sup> and an enigmatic use value of signification which must always be in excess of the supposed instrumentalism of “communication.”<sup>68</sup> As Adorno puts it, “It is precisely for this reason that we speak of ‘meaning’ rather than ‘purpose’ in art.”<sup>69</sup> Starting with the problematic use value there is indeed a form of economic otiosity in Art that is anathema to the demands of commodification. The fact that use values have to be made commensurate with a uniform, abstract exchange value in a commodity relationship means the aesthetic depth which comprises the use value of ‘cultural commodities’ is always under pressure to be flattened; aesthetic complexity slows down exchange as it demands time to be interpreted, i.e. “used.” Kroker and Weinstein<sup>70</sup> evocatively paint the consequences of such commodification as “a

cultural economy drained of media (as simulacra of communication) and bleached of meaning, like the skeletal remains of dead cattle under the withering desert sun in all those faded westerns.”

### **Arts and Statecraft**

Yet the surplus of meaning that retards the commodification of Art objects is not just left to evaporate as waste. A common solution is to have this surplus bought by the State to maintain the integrity of supposedly “non-commodifiable” Art and the fetishised bourgeois values they represent—to maintain its sacred core without challenging the profanity of capitalism. This includes the actual State purchase of Art for public galleries (and more mundane government buildings), grants for Artists and Art publications, regular State-sponsored prizes, subsidised Art schools, stipulated air-time for Art programmes on public broadcasting and certain exemptions for Art from regulations governing communication,<sup>71</sup> all of which are aimed not simply to preserve Art, but to preserve its mystique and sense of autonomy. Yet at the same time such government patronage gives Art a para-commodity status and props up and stimulates the “private” Art market. It also institutionalises an “Art world” of rules and legitimation<sup>72</sup> bounded by the *quid pro quo* of the Art bureaucracy to increase control—the networks of “rights and responsibilities” built up between Artists and government agencies turn the former into *de facto* bureaucrats—while sanctifying autonomy.

To see this as a challenge to capitalism is, to put it mildly, rather short-sighted; despite the fact that elements of the ruling class will always complain about money spent on “useless” Art, they will never totally deny government funding to the Arts, just to those elements that seem overtly to threaten their extreme bourgeois

views (whether that be heteronormativity or just Protestant workerism). A good example here was the 1989 attack by the conservative Republican senator, Jesse Helms, against the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the American federal government agency responsible for grants to Artists. The accusation was that this agency was wasting tax-payers' money supporting homosexual "pornography" like the work of the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, though rather than demand the abolition of the NEA Helms merely advocated that standards of "decency" be part of the process of awarding grants.<sup>73</sup> Though Bourdieu and Haacke<sup>74</sup> make much of the subsequent (failed) attempt to abolish the NEA in 1993, what should be seen as remarkable is that any State support of Art existed, and continues to exist, at all, under populist *laissez-faire* regimes like those of Ronald Reagan and George Bush,<sup>75</sup> especially the "indecent" works of Artists like Mapplethorpe. Given the cheap political capital that could be generated from stripping all the money paid to "snobbish Art elites" and giving it to "ordinary, hardworking citizens" in tax cuts, the ubiquity of government "handouts" to Artists and Art institutions may seem like a simple case of *noblesse oblige*, where a straightforward social good is nurtured for its own sake. But there is more at stake here than the amorphous concerns for "cultural vitality" that adorn Art ministry websites.

The situation is comparable to the industrial reforms undertaken by the Victorian British State. Here the modern State, in introducing regulations on the working day and prohibitions on child labour against the wishes of powerful captains of industry, was overseeing "the general interest of capital... by overcoming the petty concerns of individual capitalists."<sup>76</sup> Left unfettered, the primitive accumulation of industrialism would immiserate the workers to such a point they would either die *en masse* or revolt. While neither of these scenarios would be wanted by exploitative

industrialists, market pressure would fundamentally constrain them from being able to do anything about it. The intervention of the State for the betterment of the general bourgeoisie also occurs where the “irrationality” of Art must be preserved from the “aesthetic immiseration” of rampant commodification. Though the ineffable value of Art as a locus of bourgeois identity might be irrelevant to bean counters and “moral guardians,” there are enough members of the ruling class, corporate as well as State, to make sure such narrow bigotry does not impair the overall integrity of bourgeois hegemony.

### **Modern Patronage**

From the foundational “economy” of direct State funding, Art’s problematic relationship with commodities can be advanced. Such an advance usually takes the form of government incentive schemes to promote the corporate sponsorship of Artists and Art events: to subsidise corporate subsidies. An example of such an incentive is to make donations to approved Art projects tax-deductible,<sup>77</sup> a mechanism which still keeps the State-legitimated “Art world” intact via legislative and bureaucratic designations of what constitutes Art.<sup>78</sup> With or without the incentive of tax reduction, there is a substantial and long-standing tradition of plutocratic contributions to the Art community.<sup>79</sup> Martorella<sup>80</sup> claims that a distinctly corporate patronage of Art is a fairly recent phenomenon, originating in the 1960s. Yet the stage had already been set by the “philanthropy” of individual tycoons. “Robber barons” like Andrew Carnegie and Nelson Rockefeller, whether from petty vanity or a recognition of responsibility to the high values of the bourgeois society that had given them so many opportunities (or a combination of both), started foundations to support the Arts.<sup>81</sup>

On the one hand this arrangement is patronage, as acknowledged by Martorella<sup>82</sup> who, with disarming candour, compared it favourably to the aristocratic patronage of the tyrannical de Medicis. Donations are often framed in terms of “corporate citizenship”<sup>83</sup> which, translated from Kushner’s economese of “stakeholder management rationality,” is the general sense of patrician responsibility to the larger social structures, however “irrational” they may appear in terms of immediate profit. At the same time this is sponsorship, in the modern sense of commercial advertising, for the sake of public relations or brand recognition, a relationship much more in keeping with valorisation and commodification. Whether it be restrained “prestige marketing” to the haute-bourgeoisie audience of Fine Art like opera, more overt promotional “tie-ins” to fashionable contemporary Art,<sup>84</sup> or simply the publicity that comes from the general aura of an Art “event,” Art sponsorship makes good business sense. The aim is a kind of “halo effect,”<sup>85</sup> associating corporations with the inalienable humanism of Kantian aesthetics as well as the more modernist values of innovation.<sup>86</sup> In effect it is the closest apparent nexus between these strands of rationalist and aesthetic modernity without the *apparent* relative integrity of each being overtly compromised by the other.<sup>87</sup>

### **The High Art Market**

Having been eased into the world of commodities Art can be exchanged within capitalist markets as a more-or-less straightforward commodity, but with its “irrational” properties either quarantined by ruling-class largesse or actually defining the value-regime of the High Art business. This specialised market deals with the particular delicacies of the Artistic commodity by making irreducible uniqueness a primary value. This accords with a pre-existing economic logic of rarity, which

immediately frames the circuit of exchange in terms of affordability. At the same time the value of inimitable authenticity facilitates a level of autonomous production fundamental to the aesthetic identity of Art as spontaneous subjectivity. The consequence of this for the Art market is a longer and slower cycle of valorisation exacerbated by the slow, uncertain accrual of value due to the enigma of excessive signification. Wu notes an Art collector's opinion that Art provides "reasonable prospects for long term capital appreciation, at least equal to inflation."<sup>88</sup> But even here the reference is to times of high inflation and in relation to "safer" works like accepted "masterpieces." In general Bourdieu's rule that "the hierarchy according to commercial profit... coexists with an inverted hierarchy according to prestige"<sup>89</sup> holds. This further differentiates the Art market, discouraging those looking to Art solely to make a profit, which can be seen in the fact that non-State Art buyers are not fundamentally in the "Art business," reproducing their capital elsewhere; the Art-dealing profession, like auction houses and consultants, swims in the wake of these buyers. Well-established finance companies and banks make up the core of serious "private" Art consumption in many countries<sup>90</sup> and even the maverick tycoons and aristocratic connoisseurs who get involved do so through large pre-established fortunes. Voracious competition does not allow a company the luxury of waiting for Art to be produced by independent, whimsical Artists, enduring the overheads of expert consultancy, security, etc., and then waiting, and hoping, for a return on their investment worthy of making Art their business *per se*.

While all this ensures some maintenance of "consecration," to use Bourdieu's<sup>91</sup> term, it is not enough to guarantee the preservation of excessive signification. For this to function within the market due deference to "cultural capital"<sup>92</sup> must be acknowledged. Money alone is not sufficient to ensure acceptance;

there must also be a knowledge and “appreciation” of this sacred bourgeois realm and its surplus of meaning. Certainly such knowledge can, to some degree, be bought through the hiring of Art experts and, more directly, in the actual purchase of Art *bestowing* cultural capital. However Art is not so easily rendered to the absolute whims of the purse, a good example being former entrepreneur Alan Bond’s purchase of Van Gogh’s *Iris*, where this acquisition did little to dispel the image of a vulgar parvenu trying to purchase elite credibility.<sup>93</sup> It is this cultural capital which acts as the re-territorialising brake on the potential disintegration of Art under the centrifugal force of its myriad forms. Just as tariffs give some stability and regulation to trade flows, so the exclusivity of cultural capital functions to slow the exchange of Art down to a rate that differentiates it from the terminal velocity of other commodities.

While the abstract norms of the Art market do much to secure its borders, the material particularities of each Art medium have important consequences for the experience of commodification. On the one hand, in this age of ephemeral information commodities which allow for increased velocity of exchange, the Art object’s “object” status, which must be maintained for the sake of authenticity, creates a striation that mediates exchange. This works to preserve the differentiation of the market for paintings and the “plastic” Arts. Indeed in terms of the latter the “object-ness” of sculptures and three-dimensional installation pieces is such as to prohibitively mediate exchange, even for the specialised Art market.<sup>94</sup> However, for those forms, like literature and music, whose artefactual status is less secure, this restriction to commodification starts to erode. These forms leave themselves open to the “mechanical reproduction” Benjamin<sup>95</sup> saw withering the aura of Art by virtue of performative immanence, in the case of music, and the pre-eminence of content over form (or at least the pre-eminence of “style” as form), in the case of literature. These

properties create a vulnerability to the mass duplication of recording and printing technology that, though slightly mitigated by the privileging of live performance or rare editions, inevitably erodes the value of uniqueness.<sup>96</sup> In this case it is only the discernment and taste of cultural capital, as a mode of consumption, which maintains some privileged market presence and prevents these Art forms from sluicing straight through to the mass entertainment mill.

### **The Culture Industry**

Yet even at this apparent core of commodification—Adorno’s much maligned “culture industry” where the heat and pressure of reification should break down any aura of irreducibility—the sophisticated handling of Artistic commodification does not end. Corporate cultural production cannot and, despite jeremiads to the contrary, will not dispel all traces of autonomous production and excess signification: “even in conglomerated culture, some of the constituent mediums may retain traces of their previous autonomy and of properties not entirely assimilated.”<sup>97</sup>

To reiterate Ryan’s inclusive definition of Art as that which is “specifically signifying in character,”<sup>98</sup> it is important to note that any differentiation between popular culture and High Art is primarily a function of the shifting, fluid contradictions between the urge to commodify and the need to preserve a semblance of sacred inalienability. Indeed elements of such “inalienability” are an inescapable part of cultural commodification, even at the “entertainment” end of the spectrum.

Though, as mentioned above, the means of production and reproduction fundamental to commercial film and television studios, publishing houses and record companies inevitably degrades the value of originality, there is a remainder of unique specificity that must be maintained. For an audience to consume, say, a band’s new

album there must be some difference from the previous album. Planned obsolescence, which is vital to high product turnover, cannot be achieved with cultural commodities by the exact replacement of products that have been “used,” like shoes or a chocolate bar. Though the culture industry can rely on a certain degree of technological innovation in the commodity form (vinyl to compact discs, video tapes to digital video discs, etc.) to promote the cycle of consumption, such technological change takes research and development time as well as the lag necessary to entice and appease jaded consumers, who will only buy the same album in a different format so often. Thus the culture industry must turn to its “content providers” to provide fresh signifying material, a guarantee of originality that transcends the absolute formulaic standardisation envisioned by critics like Adorno as choking “consistency.”<sup>99</sup> It is able to transcend because although the captains of the culture industry can administer production they cannot fully control it. Some level of autonomous production must always be catered for, an acknowledgement not simply of the specialisation of signifying labour but, more importantly, of the semblance of subjectivity necessary for even the minimal integrity of Art:

Every book must have an author, every score a composer, every film a writer, director and cast of actors, unlike cans of peaches, lines of cars and shirts on a shop rack where the direct producers of these commodities are entirely unknown to their purchasers. Artists must be engaged as *named, concrete labour*.<sup>100</sup>

Thus Art is preserved in some form, indeed nurtured, on the assembly line of the culture industry, though the reificatory balance between sacred aura and commodification is definitely tilted towards the latter. The culture industry is undoubtedly an orbit closer to the centre of commodification, but to see this as absolute commodification—the Manichean Other of Art—is to not only to ignore the

complex layers of this particular commodification but also to mistake the dynamics that mediate commodification as negating reification.

Indeed the undoubted subjective instability of Art, far from threatening the capitalist productive apparatus, or even being something to be overcome and negotiated, can be seen as a vital, though complex, ally in the advance of the commodity regime: “The bourgeois form of rationality has always needed irrational supplements, in order to maintain itself... Such irrationality in the midst of the rational is the working atmosphere of authenticity.”<sup>101</sup> Though Adorno could not bring himself to admit the total complicity of Art irrationality he was well aware how important the foundational mythos of spontaneous freedom was to a bourgeois hegemony ostensibly based on principles of liberty and democracy. The eighteenth-century schism between aesthetics and economics was as much to preserve a domain of “irrational” subjective freedom<sup>102</sup> from the commodity calculus as it was to preserve this calculus from the contradiction of “irrational” use value. Yet the phenomenological absurdity of this division has not exposed the ideological absurdity of freedom in a world dominated by technocratic rationality. The subjective aporias of Art commodification become the legitimating “authentification” of the commodity process itself as they “prove” how compatible the irrational use value of Art is to the exchange value of the market in a way that Smith was too cautious to propose. That this “irrationality” never totally exceeds the rationality of exchange value gives the lie to this cosy marriage of human subjectivity and market objectivity, but as long as Art remains an uncontested cipher for such subjectivity it will never be exposed.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Rolland Munro, “Zero and Literature: Introduction” (*Journal for Cultural Research* 8.2, 2004), 99.

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984 [1970]), 26.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963 [1958]), 55.

<sup>4</sup> Though attempts have been made to neutralise the loaded conceptual baggage of Art by re-conceptualising it as a lower-case general category for the “enormous array of social activities which are wholly or in part specifically signifying in character” (Bill Ryan, *Making Capital from Culture: The Corporate Form of Capitalist Cultural Production* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992], 10), such functionalism can never totally elide Art as the term for the mystical bourgeois values and products of the “creative genius.” The upper case designation used by me is to prevent such an elision. This does not contradict Ryan’s definition per se, which I use for an inclusive definition of Art including popular culture; it merely reinforces the social stakes of the level of Art signification.

<sup>5</sup> John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 304.

<sup>6</sup> Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 34; D. W. Hamlyn, *The Penguin History of Western Philosophy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), 207.

<sup>7</sup> Guillory, 305.

<sup>8</sup> Hamlyn, 168-170; Christopher Hill, *The Century of Revolution* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1961]), 178-179.

<sup>9</sup> Hamlyn, 190 and 199.

<sup>10</sup> John Armstrong, *The Secret Power of Beauty: Why happiness is in the eye of the beholder* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), 120. The process whereby differing individual passions become unified in taste is not detailed by Hume except as a natural, consensual deference to those with a greater acuity of sense and delicacy of imagination, an acuity of which even a “peasant or Indian” has a primal vestige (David Hume, “Of the Standard of Taste” in John W. Lenz, ed., *Of the Standard of Taste And Other Essays* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1965], 14). Individual difference thus becomes hierarchical, though, like the idealised bourgeois civil society, it is a hierarchy of natural talent rather than aristocratic privilege.

<sup>11</sup> Hamlyn, 218.

<sup>12</sup> Aesthetics, as the science of sense-perception, was actually birthed from within a German rationalism that was relatively independent of British empiricism; indeed it started from the opposite polarity of abstract reason. In fact the term *aesthetics* would not become common currency in English until a century after Alexander Baumgarten introduced the term *aesthetica* in 1735. See Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry: Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten’s Meditationes philosophicae de nonnullis ad poema pertinentibus* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 78; and Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1983 [1976]), 31. The rationalising imperative that would see aesthetics become the relatively exclusive domain of Art was not nurtured by rationalists like Baumgarten and Kant but by the Romantics, who saw this isolation as the way to protect Art from the depredations of economics (Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 57), a feeling that was mutual for economics, as will be shown.

<sup>13</sup> J. M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27; Guillory, 305 and 310.

<sup>14</sup> Guillory, 310-311.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 315

<sup>17</sup> “Commodification” will here refer both to the mundane actualities of the capitalist production process as well as the broader reifying consequences of this process. These two aspects cannot really be separated for the replacement of human agency with the autonomy of the commodity is not just some vague alchemical ontological process but a function of the well being of products mattering more than workers.

<sup>18</sup> In exchange for a wage, or grant in the case of this article, the intellectual property rights belonging to Macquarie University (Macquarie University “Postgraduate Research Student Assignment of Intellectual Property Rights” <http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/policy/IP/studentproc.htm> [2000, accessed 1 November 2005]).

- <sup>19</sup> Even Bewes, who is very conscious of deconstructive subtleties, claims that “reification is fast approaching the stage of totality; probably it arrived there long ago” (Timothy Bewes, *Reification or The Anxiety of Late Capitalism* [London: Verso, 2002], 266-267).
- <sup>20</sup> Graham Cassano, “Reification, Resistance, and Ironic Empiricism in Georg Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money*” (*Rethinking Marxism* 17.4, 2005), 580; Friedrich Nietzsche, “On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense” in Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, eds., *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 148.
- <sup>21</sup> The impetus to produce has no end-point other than the open-ended realisation of profit, and it is an impetus driven not only by the Cult of Profit-for-Profit’s Sake but by the attempt to overcome the general tendency of the rate of profit to fall (Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 3 The Process of Capitalist Production as a Whole* (New York: International Publishers, 1967 [1894]), 211-213). That this impetus comes from within the productive apparatus can be seen in the tendency of overproduction (or “underconsumption” according to mainstream economists) to be the constant cause of economic crisis (Francis Green and Bob Sutcliffe, *The Profit System: The Economics of Capitalism* [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987], 64; Evan Watkins *Everyday Exchanges: Marketwork and Capitalist Common Sense* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998], 15).
- <sup>22</sup> Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (London: Merlin Press, 1968), 83. Contrary to the common perception of him as a pessimistic totaliser, Lukács neither posited his use of “reification” against some Arcadia of pure, unmediated immanence nor declared “commodification” a static totalisation (Bewes, 176; Lukács, 203).
- <sup>23</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology, Part One* (New York: International Publishers, 1970 [1947]), 109.
- <sup>24</sup> Guillory, 321-322.
- <sup>25</sup> Aaron Ridley, “What is the meaning of aesthetic ideals?” in Salim Kemal *et al.*, eds., *Nietzsche, Philosophy and the Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 132.
- <sup>26</sup> Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971 [1966]), 204. This “distantiation” is the fact that we “feel, perceive, see” rather than “know” through Art, supposedly making Art less susceptible to the “givenness” of ideological “reality.” Sprinker’s defence of this dualistic thinking, that it is based less on bourgeois aestheticism than natural “modalities of presentation,” is itself based on an ideological “given” (Michael Sprinker, *Imaginary Relations: Aesthetics and Ideology in the Theory of Historical Materialism* [London: Verso, 1987], 269). For a more detailed critique of the exclusivity of Art to sense-affect and the meta-rational/ideological purity of sense-affect see Wolfgang Iser, *Undoing Aesthetics* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997) and Geoffrey Waite, “A Short Philology of Visceral Reason (A Red Mouse’s Long Tail)” (*Parallax* 11.3, 2005). Althusser’s bourgeois aestheticism can be seen more clearly in the rather under-theorised assumption that “internal distantiation” is only a quality of “authentic” Art, “not works of an average or mediocre level.” (Althusser, 204)
- <sup>27</sup> Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan, 1978).
- <sup>28</sup> Adorno, 80.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.
- <sup>32</sup> Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 2001 [1991]), 42.
- <sup>33</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 31.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 336.
- <sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.
- <sup>37</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1996 [1990]), 128.
- <sup>38</sup> Jameson, 132. Perhaps as an act of damage control Jameson claims that Adorno lays out his assumption “scandalously,” as if it were a deliberate act of provocation rather than an unreflexive repetition of bourgeois aestheticism (*Ibid.*).
- <sup>39</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 3.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 5.
- <sup>41</sup> Theodor Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity* (London: Routledge, 2003 [1973]).

<sup>42</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Hamlyn, 61. This is also Hegel's dialectic, where the Absolute Idea of Art is kept from totally floating away into the Platonic ether by the ontological necessity of sensual appearance, but where this appearance is still 'deceptive' and 'fleeting' (G. W. F. Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (London: Penguin Books, 1993 [1886]), 10-11. Adorno's own latent Platonism bubbles to the surface when he approvingly invokes Plato to maintain that "what is objectively and intrinsically untrue cannot also be subjectively good and true for human beings" (Adorno, *Culture*, 105).

<sup>44</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 83, emphasis added. Actualising these resistant spiritual elements can only be done in dialectical unison with objectified form (*Ibid.*, 79), yet we have already mentioned the hierarchical nature of this dialectic and, in any case, we are still waiting for the revolutionary actualisation.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, emphasis added.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> It is worth noting how often Art is depicted as if it was an autonomous thing: "Art responds to the loss of certainty...." (*Ibid.*, 24); "art emancipated itself from cuisine and pornography...." (*Ibid.*, 18)

<sup>58</sup> "Art...is different from empirical reality" (*Ibid.*, 3).

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>60</sup> For example, in defence of the conventional spectatorial form of Beckett's plays that divides consumers (audience) and producers (performers): "[theatre] productions that do away with curtains are trying to achieve the impossible by means of a cheap trick" (*Ibid.*, 121). Perhaps more telling is the way Adorno admits that Art needs the rationality of "the newest administrative standards...[and cannot] possibly oppose this *en bloc*" (Adorno, *Culture*, 121). Here administrative rationality is conflated with a kind of "natural organisation."

<sup>61</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 336.

<sup>62</sup> Raymond Williams locates the origin of the concept of Art directly *within* the modern rationalisation process that separated and reified various skills (Williams, *Keywords*, 40-41). For a good analysis of the fundamental difference between ancient *ars*, "primitive" sacred objects and our modern "Art" see Larry Shiner, *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 19-27 and 270-273. Both provide far better materialist histories of Art than Adorno's tale of a transhistorical essence waiting to purify itself.

<sup>63</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 324.

<sup>64</sup> Adorno, *Culture*, 100-101.

<sup>65</sup> Many Artists who shared the same "High Art" status and autonomy of production as Kafka, Beckett and Schoenberg are condemned for their proximity or similarity to mass culture (Adorno, *Culture*, 80; Theodor Adorno, *Prisms* [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981 (1967)], 150). I will use "Culture Industry" more specifically to describe the studios, publishing houses and record companies associated with popular culture.

<sup>66</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 24.

<sup>67</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (London: Fontana, 1973 [1955]), 215. This "aura" is all that aids a reificatory distance between ourselves and the objects we create and consume, much like a religious feeling of awe: "The aura is appearance of a distance, however close the thing that calls it forth. In the trace, we gain possession of the thing; in the aura, it takes possession of us" (Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* [Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1999], 447).

<sup>68</sup> Though this use value is, in essence, the same as Bourdieu's concept of symbolic value/capital it perhaps better distinguishes the symbolism of Art from the symbolism of advertising copy or street signs, though these are not mutually exclusive. Indeed I mark the "instrumentalism of communication" as "supposed" in recognition of the excessive signification (*différance*) of all communication, though Art's excess is distinct in being socially sanctioned.

<sup>69</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 219.

<sup>70</sup> Arthur Kroker and Michael A. Weinstein, *Data Trash: the Theory of the Virtual Class* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 30.

<sup>71</sup> For example the American Supreme Court exemption of Art from obscenity laws (Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995], 7).

<sup>72</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 287.

<sup>73</sup> Bourdieu and Haacke, 2-5. It is not an insignificant point that the law Helms helped pass to institute these standards was ruled unconstitutional by a Federal District Court judge (Bourdieu and Haacke, 6 n4): the judicial antibodies of the State rushing to counter overzealous moral reterritorialisation and reinforce the sacred autonomy of Art.

<sup>74</sup> Bourdieu and Haacke, 5 n3.

<sup>75</sup> Likewise in Britain under Thatcher, where contempt for the "middle class titillation" of Art was often expressly voiced and substantial cuts were made to the Art budget (Larry Elliott and Dan Atkinson, *The Age of Insecurity* [London: Verso, 1999], 109, 148; Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000], 14), and yet Art "welfare" continued, with over a billion tax pounds spent on the Arts in the late eighties (Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* [London: Michael Joseph, 1994], 508).

<sup>76</sup> Peter Ray, "Determined to be Different: Social Constructionism and Homosexuality" in Suke Wolton, ed., *Marxism, Mysticism and Modern Theory* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 146.

<sup>77</sup> Rosanne Martorella, "Art and Business: An International Approach on Sponsorship" in Rosanne Martorella, ed., *Art and Business: An International Perspective on Sponsorship* (Westport: Praeger, 1996), 4.

<sup>78</sup> Such proscriptions benefit corporate donors who look to them as a means of "legitimizing some artists and arts organizations over others" (Rosanne Martorella, "Corporate Patronage of the Arts in the United States: A Review of the Research" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 19) thus guaranteeing the recognition and legitimacy of their own patronage.

<sup>79</sup> Of course this varies greatly across countries. While in America it has been greatly encouraged (Martorella, "Corporate Patronage," 18) countries like France have traditionally been averse, though this has recently changed drastically (Bourdieu and Haacke, 14).

<sup>80</sup> Martorella, "Art and Business," 3.

<sup>81</sup> Martorella, "Corporate Patronage," 18.

<sup>82</sup> Martorella, "Art and Business," 3.

<sup>83</sup> Roland Kushner, "Positive Rationales for Corporate Arts Support" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 240-1.

<sup>84</sup> Chin-tao Wu, "Embracing the Enterprise Culture: Art Institutions since the 1980s" (*New Left Review* 230, 1998), 37, 55-6.

<sup>85</sup> Victoria D. Alexander, "Monet for Money? Museum Exhibitions and the Role of Corporate Sponsorship" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 215.

<sup>86</sup> Wu, 31.

<sup>87</sup> As Alexander (215) notes, to a large extent it is not in the interest of corporate donors to "dumb-down" the content of the Art they sponsor as they gain from its refined aura of irreducibility.

<sup>88</sup> Chin-tao Wu, "Corporate Collectors of Contemporary Art in Britain" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 96.

<sup>89</sup> Bourdieu, 115.

<sup>90</sup> Annette Van den Bosch, "Art Audiences and Art Funding: Contemporary Relationships between Art and Business in Australia" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 182; Wu "Corporate Collectors", 96; Patrick Zambianchi, "Art Patronage Among Banks in Italy" in Martorella, ed., *Art and Business*, 157.

<sup>91</sup> Bourdieu, 122.

<sup>92</sup> i.e. The knowledge of the norms of Art and the requisite attitudes and dispositions that increase status and augment, though they are not reducible to, economic capital (Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984 (1979)], 114).

<sup>93</sup> Robert Hughes, "The Anatomy of a Deal" (*Time* [Australia] 4.48, 1989), 69.

<sup>94</sup> Wu, "Corporate Collectors," 98. This "object-ness," however, at least gives a commodity-form to the Art work, a boundedness that enables valorisation, even if the "object-ness" mediates exchange. Also big, spectacular, unwieldy installation pieces, such as Damien Hirst's formaldehyde animals, operate as "loss leaders" in the same way *haute couture* does for the fashion industry (Julian Stallabrass, *High*

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*Art Lite: British Art in the 1990s* [London: Verso, 1999], 184). So even here there is an aid to commodification.

<sup>95</sup> Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 215.

<sup>96</sup> For the effect this has on exchange value one need only look at the phenomena of “budget classics,” where the ease of mass reproduction has flooded the market with cheap compact discs of classical music (n.a., “One successful selling trick is to cut the price by two thirds”

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2002/07/17/1026802712240.html> [2002, accessed 27 January 2004]).

<sup>97</sup> David E. James, *Power Misses: Essays Across (Un)Popular Culture* (London: Verso, 1996), 9.

<sup>98</sup> Ryan, 10.

<sup>99</sup> Adorno, *Aesthetic*, 67. The three-minute pop song structure, the two-hour feature film length, etc., are not rigid dictates but inevitable outcomes of the demands for stability and regimentation in commodity production. The demand of distributors for predictable output and turnover disciplines form, a discipline even built into the modes of reproduction, such as the particular finitude of the compact disc (Mark Hosler, “Hey Sony—What Makes Those CD’s So Darn Popular, Anyway?” <http://www.negativland.com/minidis.html> [n.d., accessed 8 August 1997]). The elasticity of these standards can be seen in the variability, not just in content but in form as well.

<sup>100</sup> Ryan, 45. It is small wonder that so much more surplus value is extracted from reproduction workers—those that manufacture the reproductions of Art products—for their abstract labour-power leaves them open to the extra exploitation needed to compensate for the unpredictability of Artistic labour (Ibid., 114).

<sup>101</sup> Adorno, *Authenticity*, 38.

<sup>102</sup> A “special domain of creativity, spontaneity, and purity, a realm of refined sensibility and expressive ‘genius’” (James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988], 23).