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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

On average Americans eat 3.6 cans of spam per second and six million pounds of aerosal cheese per year; a fact revealed in Jane and Michael Stern's Encyclopedia of Bad Taste. Michael Stern, explaining why the anthology only deals with American 'bad taste' admits to being unqualified to comment on foreign customs - "We wouldn't write about bad taste in Ireland because we don't know that country. Maybe there isn't any" (25). It is my intention to set the Stern's mind to rest. ALthough the craze for aerosol cheese hasn't gained currency here (yet!), Ireland is no longer a provincial ethnocentric island but part of a global network just another sector of McLuhan's 'global village'. Clement Greenbert substantiates this by saying that kitsch has become the first ever, universal culture - "Today, the Chinaman, no less than the South American Indian, the Hindu, no less than the Polynesian, have come to prefer, to the products of their native art, magazine covers, rotogravure sections and calendar girls". (14, p. 26).

Anyone who has attended N.C.A.D. for any length of time will attest to the fact that kitsch and 'bad taste' is rampant in Ireland. Travelling up and down Thomas Street for four years, being constantly accosted by the numerous Virgin Marys garnished with nimbuses of fairy lights, not to mention the infamous sacred Heart with the holographic eyes and the numerous plastic leprechauns in the shop windows, have instiled in me the belief that we, as a nation, have extremely 'bad taste'.

However it is not my intention here to castigate the aforementioned tacky appurtenances which are, after all, only harmless ornaments. My talking point here will be the kitsch phenomena of Daniel O'Donnell and bungalow bliss, both of which are frequently spurned as being 'bad taste'. Although numerous catelogues of kitsch, like the aforementioned have been compiled, there has been relatively little investigation into the repercussions of kitsch and its rationale, and it is this that I intend to remedy.

The phrase 'mass culture' involves a double inflection, on the one hand it points to the culture of the majority of the people, most of the time, and on the other it points to culture mass produced by industrial techniques. Political democracy and popular education broke down the old upperclass monopoly of culture, consequently many authorities inculpate democracy for the prevalence of kitsch. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, claimed that vulgarity through levelling, was the price that had to be paid, for an otherwise beneficial system (22 p. 27). He points out that in aristocratic ages, the object of the arts was to manufacture as well as possible for a limited number of fastidious customers. In democracies however, a more expeditious way of earning money is to manufacture with the greatest dispatch at the lowerst rate, as Dwight McDonald says, "mass culture's most distinctive mark is that it is solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like chewing gum" (22, p. 57). Other critics share de Tocqueville's sentiments. José Ortega y Gasset sees 'the coming of the masses' as responsible for the "horrors of the California roadside architecture" (28, p. 42). According to him,

the only hope for the salvation of 'true culture' is the rebuilding of the old class walls and the bringing of the masses, under aristocratic control once more.

Similar ly, Edmund Burke bemoans the erasure of old class barriers, for him democracy has ensured that learning has been "trampled under the hooves of the swinish multitude".

It is my argument here that neither national character nor political system is to blame for the prevalence of mass culture and its ramificaiton 'kitsch', which is after all, only made viable wherever the appropriate technological apparatus emerges. All culture is ideological, i.e. it governs the way people perceive things, and as such, mass culture becomes a tool of legitimation. If we attend to specific examples of mass culture in Ireland, namely the kitsch phenomena of Daniel O'Donnell and 'Bungalow Bliss' I hope to prove that both serve to consolidate the prevailing capitalist relations of production. And it is within this context that the writings of Theodor Adorno have proved to be indispensable. Adorno's conception of the role of mass culture was first shaped in the period of Nazi Germany, where he witnessed Hitler's successful manipulation of mass communications. Exiled in America from the mid 1930's through to the '40's he experienced at first hand the burgeoning of consumer society and the triumph of capitalism. Cultural criticism and ideological critique becomes inextricably linked for him. Thus he dispells any assumption that mass culture is a spontaneous expression of the people, disengaged from societal or political influences.

Therefore, in Chapter Two, I will elaborate on Adorno's theory of 'the culture industry', which is crucial to my subsequent analysis of Irish kitsch (in chapter 3). In this chapter I will also examine Banjamin's more optimistic beliefs which run counter to those held by Adorno. In the end I opt for Adorno's theories (for reasons that will be revealed) which are relevant within an Irish context.

Finally in Chapter Three, I intend to apply an Adornian line of thinking to Irish culture. However rather than juxtaposing this negative view of mass culture with a positive view of the folk or tribal culture which it supplanted, I intend to show that 'national Irish culture' was also an ideology, in this case, buttressing catholic/nationalist values.

However before embarking on this exploration I want to examine the reasons why something which has mass appeal incites so much disgust. Heraclitus, sixth - fifth century B.C. claimed that the majority "follow the bards and use the multitude as their teacher, not realizing that there are many bad but few good. For the best choose one thing over all others, immortal glory among mortals - while the many are glutted like beasts" (6, p. 2)

In this my first chapter I want to examine how cultural values such as these are established.

CHAPTER ONE

Kitsch and 'Bad Taste'

In his anthology on kitsch, Gillo Dorfles alleges that the word derives etymologically from the German verb 'verkitschen', meaning 'to make cheap'; he substantiates his theory by referring to Ludwig Giesz, who sees the word 'kitsch' as meaning 'artistic rubbish'. (9, p. 9) Dorfles defines kitsch as "something with the external characteristics of art but which is in fact a falsification of art" (9, p. 12). Clement Greenberg throws further light on the subject by listing its components as "popular, commercial art and literature with their chromeotypes, magazine covers, illustration, ads, slick and pulp fictions, comics, Tin Pan Alley music, tap dancing, Hollywood movies ... " (14, p. 25).

The above citations inculpate the machine for this vulgarization of the art-work; it is clear that the begetters of these theories argue that art - as against kitsch - will result when a single brain and sensibility is in full command rather than say, a technological apparatus. Greenberg explicitly connects the emergence of kitsch with the industrial revolution which urbanized the masses and established universal literacy. The ability to read and write was no longer the preserve of the genteel, the only market for formal culture. The peasants who settled in the city as proletariat and petty bourgeoisie became literate for the sake of expediency but they did not acquire leisure and luxury, prerequisites for the enjoyment of high culture. Losing, nevertheless, their taste for folk culture and discovering a new capacity for boredom, the new urban masses set up a pressure on society to provide for them a kind of culture fit for their consumption. Greenberg sees the upshot of this as the onset of an

"ersatz culture", in other words kitsch, "destined for those who, insensible to the values of genuine culture, are hungry nevertheless for the diversion that only culture of some sort can provide" (14, p. 25).

There are conservative critics, like José Ortega y Gassett who deplore this 'ersatz culture' for what it represents - to cite Ortega y Gassett 'the triumph of hyperdemocracy'. His argument is that the masses no longer respect the values of the culture-bearing elite (including himself) but supplant these values with their own 'common place'values. This is expressed clearly when he says, 'the mass believes that it has the right to impose and give force of law to notions born in the cafe' (28, p. 45). In his writings he describes what he sees as the dilemma of the present-day writer, who has to accede to the fact that the average reader, if he reads, does so with the view, not of learning something from the writer but rather of pronouncing judgement on him. For Ortega y Gassett, 'there are no longer protagonists; there are only chorus'. (28, p. 42).

Dofles alleges that the central and most important factor in the identification of kitsch is the attitude of the individual. According to him, the concept of 'Kitschmensch' or 'kitschman' has been extended to refer to the person of 'bad taste'. It is the 'problem of individuals who believe that art should only produce pleasant, sugary feelings: or that art should form a kind of condiment, a kind of background music, a decoration, a status symbol, even as a way of shining in one's social circle, in no case should it be a serious matter, a tiring exercise, an involved or critical activity" (9, p. 15).

At this point I feel it is necessary to question Dorfles' use of this dubious phrase 'bad taste', and to try and explore the way in which 'taste, bad and otherwise, and cultural values are established.

In his preface to 'Distinctions' Pierre Bourdieu queries the 'ideology of charisma', that doctrine that regards taste in legitimate culture as a gift of nature, an opinion that is enunciated in the writings of Ortega y Gassett, where he divides the public into two antagonistic castes, 'some possess an organ of understanding that others have been denied'. Thus, the latter are 'unworthy of artistic sacraments' (28, p .31). The music of Stravinsky or the plays of Pirandello have the sociological power of obliging the public to see themselves as they are, as the 'common people', or in Gassettian terminology 'a secondary factor in the spiritual cosmos'. Bourdieu makes it clear from the onset that this notion of taste, as an endowment, is a myth. While differentiating between 'the popular aesthetic' and the 'pure aesthetic', the 'pure gaze' and the 'naïve gaze' Bourdieu reveals that the different cultural stances coincide with the educational level and the social origin of the holder of the attitude. Consequently tastes function as markers of status, as Bourdieu states: 'social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed' (5, p. 6)

In order to apprehend what constitutes the specificity of aesthetic judgement Kant distinguished 'that which pleases' form 'that which gratifies' and more generally strove to separate the concepts 'disinterestedness' (a prerequisite for the impartial contemplation which is demanded by all apprehension of the beautiful), the 'interest of the senses', which defines 'the agreeable', and the 'interest of reason, which defines 'the good'. Similarily Schopenhauer establishes an opposition between 'the sublime' and 'the charming', the latter being that which appeals directly to the will. Dutch still-life paintings particularly incur his wrath. With their toothsome arrays they titillate the appetite thereby eliminating the possibility of aesthetic contemplation. 1. By the same token 'the charming' in historical painting and in sculpture consists in naked figures, whose position and drapery are calculated to inflame the passions of the beholder. With the emotions of the recipient aroused, the possibility of aesthetic contemplation is at once annihilated and to quote Schopenhauer "the aim of art is defeated" (5. p. 487).

However, inspired encounters with works of art, such as those prescribed by Schopenhauer and Kant, are only possible for those who possess the cultural competence, acquired by explicit learning or simply by regular contact with art works, and the wherewithal, which by removing economic necessities and practical exigencies make disinterested investments feasible. Dwight MacDonald argues that the attitude of the masses, both to old and new art styles, remains dependent on the nature of the education afforded them by their government. Explaining the prevalence of kitsch in Soviet Russia, he claims that the populace have been 'conditioned to shun

'formalism' and to admire 'social realism' (14 p. 27). Greenberg, on the other hand, sees affluence and a congenial lifestyle as prerequisites for the apprecation of high culture.

He compares the conjectured response of a Russian peasant to a painting by Rebin (a leading exponent of Russian academic kitsch) to the reaction of a cultivated person before a Picasso. Rebin's ability to render his subject matter so realistically and the profusion of self-evident meanings in his work allow the peasant to identify with it immediately, without any exertion. What is more Rebin heightens reality and makes it dramatic with histrionic sunsets, exploding shells, running and falling men. In contrast to this, the values which the cognoscenti derives from a Picasso are obtained at a second remove, as the result of reflection upon the immediate values left by the plastic values. In the words of Greenberg, 'it is only then that the recognizable, the miraculous and the sympathetic enter' (14, p. 28) The values belong to what Greenberg terms 'the reflected effect'. In a Rebin on the other hand, this 'reflected effect' has already been included in the picture, ready for the spectator's unreflective enjoyment. His uncomfortable living conditions and laborious lifestyle are not conducive to the peasant's appreciation of Picasso.

Greenberg surmises that as long as Western art was endeavouring to perfect its technique, victories in this realm could only be signalized by success in realistic imitation, thus the masses could still find in the art of their masters objects of admiration and wonder. He encapsulates it thus - 'Art becomes caviar to the

general when the reality it imitates, no longer corresponds even roughly to the reality recognized by the general' (14, p.29). However it is only when the general become frustrated with the social order administered by those in control, that they begin to criticize their culture. According to Greenberg this resentment towards culture is to be found where the dissatisfaction with society is a reactionary one which expresses itself in revivalism, puritanism and fascism. Greenberg points out that when a political regime establishes an official cultural policy, it is for the sake of demagogy. If kitsch was the official tendency of culture in Germany, Italy and Russia it was not because their respective governments were controlled by those of plebeian tastes, but because kitsch is the culture of the masses in these countries like everywhere else. The advocacy of kitsch is just another of the inexpensive ways in which totalitarian regimes toady to the prejudices and passions of the mob - in the words of Greenberg, 'Kitsch keeps a dictator in closer contact with the soul of the people' (14, p. 30).

Similarly, Alexis de Tocqueville asserts that in democratic nations where 'the general mediocrity of fortunes, the absence of superfluous wealth, the universal desire for comfort, and the constant efforts by which everyone attempts to procure it' exist, the taste for the useful predominates over the love of the beautiful. (22, p. 27). This attitude which concerns the 'use of art', is typical of our age, according to Dorfles. Adorno recognizes it too when he declares that the prestige seeker has replaced the connoisseur and the work's social rating becomes its use value - the only quality that is enjoyed (3, p. 158). Bourdieu agrees.

According to him working class people expect every image to perform a function, if only that of a sign, and their judgements make reference to the norms of morality or agreeableness. The result is according to Bourdieu a 'systematic reduction of the things of art to the things of life'. 2 Nothing is more alien to popular consciousness than the idea of an aesthetic pleasure, independent of the charming of the senses. Bourdieu corroborates this by divulging the results of a survey. Discussing judgements on the photographs most strongly rejected on grounds of futility, he mentions that the comments on the close-ups of pebbles and a piece of bark in particular, always end with the reservation 'that, in colour, it might be pretty'. It is worth noting here, that Kant considered colour and its penchant for seduction, subsidiary to form.

On the contrary, the 'pure gaze', made viable by affluence and edification, implies a break with the ordinary people attitude towards the world. One can agree with Gassett when he attributes to modern art a "systematic refusal of all that is human" by which he means the passions, emotions and feelings which ordinary people put into their ordinary existence and consequently all the themes and objects capable of evoking them (28, p. 32). Rejecting 'the human' clearly means repudiating what is generic and immediately accessible. Thus one finds the higher the level of education and affluence, the greater is the proportion of respondents, who when asked whether a series of objects would make beautiful photographs, refuse the ordinary objects of popular admiration - a first communion, a sunset or a landscape as 'vulgar' 'a bit wet' or to quote Gassatt 'Naïvely human', and the

greater is the proportion who assert the autonomy of the representation irrespective of the thing represented (5, p. 35).

Suzanne Langer sums the situation up by saying that in the past, the masses did not have access to art, music, painting, books, "but now that everybody can read, go to museums, listen to great music ... it has become dear that great art is not a direct sensuous pleasure. Otherwise like cookies or cocktails, it would flatter uneducated tastes, as much as cultured taste" (5, p. 31). I agree. Today, a statistically significant part of the population is confronted with the choice between looking at the 'old Masters' or a t.v. show, between reading Tolstoy or a detective novel, between going to the cinema or to a concert. 'Good art' competes with kitsch, serious ideas compete with commercialized formulae. However it is its facility of access, which sells kitsch to a wide audience. In the forthcoming chapter I want to elaborate on Adorno's theory of the 'culture industry', where he argues that these commercialized formulae are administered from above as an instrument of social control, and they merely induce individuals to conform to existing society.

CHAPTER TWO

Dialects of Culture

Section I: Adorno's Theory of 'The Culture Industry'

In his book Bread and Circuses, Brantlinger cites the concept of 'negative classicism' as the comparison of modern society with Roman imperial decadence. He validates his definition by quoting Salvador Giner, who says "Of all the contributions made by Roman thought and imagery to what would later become the mass society outlook, the most important was the belief that the multitude must be fed bread and cheap entertainment, if it was to be kept quiet, submissive and loyal to the powers that be" (6,p. 22) Theodor Adorno subscribes to this theory, when in conjunction with Horkheimer, he writes "The curse of irresistible progress is irresistible regression" (3, p. 36)

The gladiatorial games have now been supplanted by what Adorno dubs 'the culture industry'. The administration of a standardized culture, made possible by modern technology in the age of advanced capitalism, is part of a machination to mollify the general public, deflecting the proletariat from its revolutionary goal. An apostle of Marx, whose aphorism - "the ideas of the ruling class .... are the ruling ideas" (19, p. 3) - impregnates the theory of the 'culture industry', Adorno points out that the basis on which technology acquires power over society, is the power of those whose economic influence over society is greatest. He comments "a technological rationale is the rationale of domination itself" (3, p. 121). James Monaco endorses this argument in How to Read A Film, by referring to film the historian Peter Cowie. According to Cowie, by 1936 the two most powerful banking groups,

Morgan and Rockefeller, had major holdings in the eight American film companies. Similarily the Deutsches Bank took control of the U.F.A.[3] after the war. (24, p. 207) Marx and Engels proposed that 'ideology as false consciousness' was the reason behind the submission of the people. Many people merely accepted the inevitability of the new capitalist order, merely assumed that the ruling material force was tantamount to the ruling intellectual force.

One of the factors to blame for this modern vitiation of culture is what Adorno termed 'instrumental rationality', that is the worship of technique, the paramountcy of the effect over the work itself. Adorno claims that in the period from Romanticism to Expressionism, the detail asserted itself as a vehicle of protest against the structure of its repository. In music the single harmonic effect cancelled the awareness of form as a whole, in painting individual colour was emphasized at the expense of composition and in the novel, psychology overshadowed structure. Adorno's sympathies lie with the insurgents, who today have been made subordinate to the formula, which replaces the work. As a result of this supremacy of the formula, all that is made available is the sterotype. The hit songs, stars, soap operas are rigidly invariable types and the details of any of these are merely readymade cliches that just confirm the work by being its constituent parts. As Adorno says, once the trained ear has heard the first notes of a hit song, it can predict what is to follow. Furthermore, he casts aspersions on Orsen Welles, notable for his break with the seamless narrative construction of films, saying that when he deviates from the norm, he is forgiven because his

innovations are regarded as "calculated mutations which serve all the more strongly to confirm the validity of the system' (3, p.129).

For Adorno, authentic culture is the perennial protestation of the particular against the general. He alleges that "the great artists" were never those who embodied a wholly flawless and perfect style and he endorses this by saying that Mozart's music contains "objective trends which represent something different to the style which they typified" and that Schönberg and Picasso "have retained a mistrust of style" (3, p. 130). This homage acts as a foil to his condemnation of jazz, castigating it as he does, in the words of Nietsche, as "a system of non-culture to which one might even concede a certain 'unity of style', if it really made sense to speak of stylized barbarity" (3, p. 127). The compromise reached between the rule and the specific demands of the subject-matter was, according to Adorno, "what alone gives essential meaningful content to style" (3, p. 130). To strive for this reconciliation today is futile because there has ceased to be tension between the general and the particular. They are reciprocal, to quote Adorno - "in the culture industry, every element of the subject matter has its origin in the same apparatus as that jargon whose stamp it bears" (3, p. 129).

Adorno diagnoses the situation as being that man himself has become an interchangeable part in the whole cultural process - "man as a member of a species has been made a reality by the culture industry - now any person signifies only those qualities by which he can replace everybody else" (3, p. 145) This notion

that the individual has become expendable, the premise that people behave think and treat others in a 'thing-like' way exemplifies one of the most negative aspects of capitalism - 'reification'. Lukacs developed his definition of reification - "a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a 'phantom objectivity'" (20, p. 83) from the Marxist theory of 'commodity fetishism'. In a society based on private property and the division of labour, producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products. People exist for one another merely as representatives and owners of commodities. As Marx says "a ... social relation between men ... assumes ... the fantastic form of a relation between things" (22, p. 77) Social reality is constructed through human relations. The individual in capitalist society, finding him/herself alienated, is therefore unable to be completely aware of the constructs of social reality. Because of this, the individual is left vulnerable to laws and pressures which seem to be natural forces.

Andreas Huyssen, writing on Adorno, sees the culture industry as an outcome of a fundamental transformation in the 'superstructure' of capitalist societies. This change, completed with the stage of monopoly capitalism, calls into question the Marxian separation of economy and culture as base and superstructure. He claims that Marx's supposition reflected its era, with its free market ideology and its belief in the autonomy of culture. However 20th century capitalism has reunified economy and culture, by subsuming the cultural under the economic. All culture is standardized, organised and administered for the sole purpose of serving as an

instrument of social control, bribing the masses into political acquiescence.

For Adorno, even high art is permeated by the textures of mass culture. He was particularly critical of Wagner, not only because he was advocated by Hitler and incorporated into the fascist culture machine, but because he (Adorno) connected Wagner's aesthetic innovations to features of the modern culture industry. However, Adorno does acknowledge that Wagner was a precursor of 'the great artist', Schönberg, and the turn towards atonality, the ultimate achievement in musical modernism (in Adorno's opinion), is latent in Wagner's composition techniques. Adorno encapsulates it thus: "All of modern music has developed in resistance to his predominance - and yet, all of its elements are latently present in him" (15, p. 35). Nevertheless, this does not redeem him in Adorno's view.

An anathema to Adorno was Wagner's leitmotive, which he saw as being akin to advertising - designed to be easily remembered by the forgetful. The audience of Wagner's marathon operas were thought of as being unable to concentrate, hence, the music thundered at it in endless repetitions, to hammer its message home. Adorno sees the leitmotive as deteriorating further with Hollywood film music, its sole function here being to announce heroes or situations, thereby helping the spectators orientate themselves more easily. However, Adorno's main objection was that as a composer, Wagner conceived his music in terms of the gesture of striking a blow and "democratic considerations towards the listener is transformed into connivance with the powers of discipline". By interpreting Wagner's motions as a conductor

thus, Adorno establishes that the audience becomes "the reified object of calculation by the artist". (15, p. 36) It is here that the parallels with the culture industry emerge: both prohibit individuality, both engender a deferential audience.

It is the very repetitiveness and ubiquity of modern mass culture and the ensuing automatic reactions that motivates Adorno to say that "the breaking down of individual resistance is the condition of life in this society" (3, p. 138). Huyssen discusses a psychoanalytic parallel in the concept of the decay of the ego. The decline of paternal authority in the bourgeois family has led to a change in personality type, based on allegiance to external standards, rather than in the liberal age, on the internalization of authority. This internalization of authority is held as a necessary ingredient for the later rejection of authority by a strong ego.

At this stage, I intend to elaborate onsome arguments that run counter to those held by Adorno, arguments that ascribe political potential and positive attributes to mass culture.

Section II : Benjamin versus Adorno

Walter Benjamin, Adorno's colleague at the "Frankfurt Institute for Social Research", took a very different perspective to the one held by his associate. Benjamin was resolute in his insistence that art must be industralized if it is to reach and respond to the needs of the masses. He applauds technical reproduction for its ability to put the copy of the original into situations which would be out of reach of the original itself. In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", Benjamin illustrates this verity by citing the examples of "a choral production resounding in a drawing room". (4, p. 217) To recreate an oeuvre in such a way jeopardizes the authenticity of the work and more importantly, what Benjamin describes as 'the aura', is undermined. Deriving originally from art's association with religious ritual, 'the aura' is, according to Benjamin, that air of magical authority and authenticity attached to high art. However the technique of reproduction detaches the art form from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for unique existence, permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder/listener in his/her own situation. Benjamin reserves the realm of the 'optical' for the original, which is always at a distance, demanding contemplation, absorbed attention, a fixed gaze. The copy is, however, assigned to the realm of the 'tactile' being as it is, close at hand, it can be handled, touched and manipulated (33, p. 55). In this way, Benjamin associates the copy with 'the true' and the original work with 'the false', thus reversing the traditional terms of discussion.

When Adorno claims that authentic culture is the perennial protestation of the particular against the general (See Page) he is commending the singular and the unique, in other words 'the auratic' that Benjamin denounces. For Adorno the aesthetic basis of art is its "practically useless, imaginative element"; he rejected the notion of a politically committed art and literature and the avant-gardes attempts to dissolve the boundaries between art and life: "It is not the office of art to spotlight alternatives, but to resist by its form alone the course of the world, which permanently puts a pistol to mens heads ...." (16, p.129). Huyssen exonerates Adorno's scepticism by pointing out that at the time, life itself had become art "in the fascist aesthetization of politics as mass spectacle" (15, p. 34). Simon Frith alleges that for Adorno, art was a utopian protest against reality, "the source of human hope, the inspiration to the struggle for social change" (13, p. 194).

Benjamin's opinion runs counter to that held by Adorno. For him 'auratic art' by inculcating submissive attitudes towards the art work and by extension towards the existing social order served the cause of political reaction. Cinema, by contrast, potentially inaugurated an era of mass appropriation of art; by losing its 'auratic', ritualistic aspect, it had become more susceptible to becoming a means of political transformation. The conditions of mass spectatorship, the discussion of issues which viewing films encouraged, the fact that cinema required no specialized skills for its appreciation, produced in his view, a new sort of social and political experience of art. Also film, by providing a series of 'shocks' (i.e. sudden shifts in camera position, close ups,

birds eye views, changes in the tempo of editing and the scale of objects) produced a mode of 'distraction', which instead of being antagonistic to thought and reason, made possible a heightened presence of mind and cultivated an 'expert' audience, able to examine and criticize film and society (16, p. 125).

Benjanim deploys a concept of 'criticism' drawn largely from Brecht. Brecht's aim was to develop a form of theatre where the spectator would not be "a simple consumer, he must also produce" (19, p. 182). At the centre of Brecht's aesthetic was the notion of 'distanciation'. By punctuating the dramatic flow with interruptions, exposing lighting sources, letting the actors address the audience directly and elsewhere making it clear that they were merely quoting lines, Brecht ensured that the audience retained critical detachment. By denaturalising theatre, Brecht hoped to denaturalize society, showing that it too is 'made' and capable of being changed. The spectator instead of being enabled to have an experience is, in the words of Brecht, "forced ... to cast his vote" (19, p. 183).

However Brecht did not share Benjamin's enthusiasm for the cinema. His criticism of conventional theatre - that it was no more than an opiate inducing "hypnosis, undignified intoxification and befuddling of the senses" (19, p. 182), was, in his opinion, even more applicable to cinema. He particularly objected to the fact that the camera imposes its vision on the spectator, yielding only a fixed viewpoint. Indeed the attitude of the mainstream director could be summed up in Abel Gance's comment, "For me a spectator who maintains his critical sense is not a spectator. I wanted the audience to come out of the theatre amazed victims"

(19. p. 183). Adorno himself subscribes to the effectiveness of this strategy when he writes in Minima Moralia, "Every visit to the cinema, leaves me, against all my vigilance, stupider and worse" (16, p. 125). Benjamin's eulogy of cinema was strongly criticized by Adorno, who saw it as at best "enchantingly wrong headed" and at worst, "identification with the aggressor" (19, p. 184).

This view of mass culture as a field of one - dimensional manipulation, a mere expression of ruling-class interests has been supplanted by a more multi dimensional approach to mass culture. Where as Adorno, when analysing popular music, television or cinema, limited himself to arraigning their ideologies and retrogressive effects on consciousness, recent studies of mass culture show how social struggles and conflicts enter into works of popular entertainment. Culture for latter-day theorists is a 'contested terrain', structured by the culture industries and the state cultural apparatuses, but also by "the symbolic forms and practices of the subaltern classes" (8, p. 253).

Huyssen is one such theorist. For him, the theoretical snag in Adorno's writings is that he never asks himself whether perhaps there are limits to the reification of cultural commodities. In the posthumously published draft Schema der Massenkultur, Adorno recognises that there were limits to the reification of the human spirit, demonstrated by the fact that mass culture has to re affirm its control over us by constant repetitions - "The hopeless effort of repetition is the only trace of hope that the repetitions may be futile, that human beings cannot be totally

controlled" (15, p. 26). However, as Huyssen points out, Adorno has overlooked the "mesh of repression and wish fulfilment, of the gratification, displacement and production of desire" involved in the reception of cultural commodities (15, p. 24).

There are those who even endorse the qualities of conventionality, superficiality and obviousness, abhorred by Adorno. John Fiske, argues that it is precisely these features which enable the text to be taken up and used in the culture of the people, allowing them to produce their own meanings of/from it. Fiske sees popular culture as a "resource bank" from which different, widely divergent readings can be made (10, p. 106). He cites Ian Ang who has shown how Dutch Marxists and feminists find in 'Dallas' meanings and pleasures that are relevant to them, reading its representations of the excesses of patriarchy and capitalism as critical of both!

As a supplement to this, a similar vein runs through the writings of Tanya Kiang on Irish postcards. Kiang identifies two dominant genres in Irish post-card imagery - the traditional 'view card', dominated by the John Hinde studio, and the newer 'mood photography'. The motivation for this new aesthetic is the increasingly fragmented nature of the tourist market. No longer dominated by retired Irish Americans, the new tourist mix of younger Americans and European students are generally considered to be more visually sophisticated, reflected in the inclusion of the artists name, where previously only the studio was credited.

(To paraphrase Fiske, in aesthetics, the uniqueness of the text is displaced onto the individuality of the artist). It is Kiang's theory that these photographs, more sublime than charming, promote a passive reading. This is correlative to Benjamin's theory that 'auratic art' engenders submissive rather than assertive attitudes towards the artwork. By being taken at dawn or dusk, by ommiting the human or cultural elements, the 'mood' aesthetic casts the landscape as something quite alien and uninhabitable, totally removed from social issues. Thus, imaginative involvement by sender and recipient is curtailed. Kiang opts for the see-through romanticism of the John Hinde variety, which she sees as "more liberating", (because it allows for a more active appropriation and imaginative involvement) than a "paralysing aesthetic gloss" (17, p. 25)

Fiske would agree. According to him the accessibility of the text does not necessarily mean the passivity of the reader. Because the reader/viewer knows the conventions, they are situated in a more democratic relationship with the work than the followers of the 'pure aesthetic', as Fiske says "the authored text does not allow its readers such an empowered or productive reading position" (10, p. 109). In a similar vein, Simon Frith alleges, referring to Adorno, that for one to claim to understand the meaning of a cultural object, for anyone other than oneself, is wrong; the meaning is as much the creation of the consumer as the producer (15, p. 195). This is what Huyssen means when he criticizes Adorno for overlooking the "mesh of repression and wish fulfilment ..." involved in the reception of cultural commodities.

However I would argue that such a positive reading cannot be made of the mass culture that has burgeoned in Ireland. Adorno formulated his theory of the 'culture industry' while he was in exile in America during the '30s and '40s. There he witnessed the proliferation of mass culture, the rise of the consumer society and President Roosevelt's use of the radio for political persuasion. Culture was used to induce consent to the forms of capitalist society. This is where the importance of Adorno's theory lies for me. I do not see either Daniel O'Donnell or the phenomenon of 'bungalow bliss' as the culture of marginalized youths or of an oppressed race, as defenders of mass culture might allege for some of its other aspects. Neither do I see them as having the potential to be forces of social opposition, as Benjamin might have done, or as Kiang might (if she expanded her theory beyond the analysis of postcards). Instead, I see them in an Adornian light, kitsch, that functions as a force of social conformity.

Section III: Kitsch as Woman

One of the most salient features of Adorno's theory of the 'culture industry' is that it excludes from the outset the interpretation that mass culture is a culture that emantes spontaneously from the masses. Thus, by inferring that it is administered and imposed from above, it annihilates the traditional assumption that kitsch culture is essentially 'feminine', i.e. inferior, counterfeit, sentimental. By this reading, kitsch is seen to be the antithesis of high culture, which has been traditionally affiliated with manhood and masculine virtues i.e. it is scientific, contemplative, qualitative.

Huyssen illustrates this dichotomy by comparing Flaubert, the modernist writer par excellence, with the heroine of his great oeuvre Madame Bovary. Emma Bovary is positioned as a reader of tawdry literature in the authors words, her temperament was "more sentimental that artistic" (15, p. 46). The kitsch she wallows in complies fully with its definition in Knaur's Enclyclopedia: it is "a realization of artistic motifs falsified by stylistic hypersentimentality" (9, p. 200). Flaubert describes her reading-matter thus: the novels were "full of love and lovers, persecuted damsels ... horses ridden to death on every page..." (15, p. 46). However, as a novel, Madame Bovary, is constructed with a high degree of self-consciousness. In the prologue to the novel, Flaubert is quoted as saying it is a work of criticism, or rather of anatomy". Huyssen describes Flaubert as "objective, ironic and in control of his aesthetic means", the novel is a modernist "exploration and encounter with language" (15, p. 53).

This generdering of kitsch as 'feminine' is closely linked to the emergence of 'the masses' as a revolutionary threat in the nineteenth century century; part of the throng were women, also demanding their rights. Mass culture emerged as an apocalyptic concept, the undoing of true culture or civilization. Huyssen points out that during the second half of the 19th century, there was "a chain of effect of signification", from the inferiority of women as artist (sic), hence her exclusion from high art and its institutions, to the association of women with mass culture, to the identification of women with the masses as political threat .

Christa Wolfe is quoted in Huyssen's book as saying, "Aesthetics ... is invented not so much to enable us to get closer to reality, as for the purpose of warding it off". (15, p. 46). As I have asserted in Chapter one, the 'pure gaze' implies a break with the ordinary attitude towards the world. Both Kant and Schopenhauer disapprove of facile pleasure i.e. a pleasure that is reduced to mere pleasure of the senses. Similarily the autonomy of the modernist art-work is always the result of a resistance, to the lure of mass culture, and an abstention, from the pleasure of trying to please a large audience. Furthermore, Huyssen argues that there are obvious analogies between this modernist insistence of purity and autonomy in art, Freud's privileging of the ego over the id (and his insistence of stable ego boundaries) and Marx's privileging of production over consumption. The lure of mass culture after all, has traditionally been described as the threat of losing oneself in dreams and delusions, and of merely consuming rather than producing.

According to Huyssen, documents from the late nineteenth century continually ascribe pejorative feminine characteristics to mass culture. He cites Michael Georg Conrad's journal Die Gesellshaft (1885) a harbinger of 'die Moderne' in Germany. In the editorial Conrad castigates the popular family magazine and spurns the kitchen, which he sees as being the site of mass cultural production. He writes that the kitchen personnel "has achieved absolute mastery in the art of economizing and imitating the famous potato banquet ... it consists of twelve course, each of which offers the potato in a different disguise" (15, p. 50). Here again the implication is not only that kitsch is standardized and imitative but that this is because it originates in the female artistic sensibility. Further more in the nineteenth century this 'effeminate' culture represented a threat to the bastion of manhood. For Nietzsche, Wagner became the paradigm of the decline of genuine 'masculine' culture in the dawning age of the masses and the subsequent feminizaiton of culture. Huyssen quotes him as saying, "The danger for artists ... is women, adoring women confront them with corruption ... soon they consensend to the level of the woman" (15, p. 51) The theatre in bourgeois society was one of the few spaces which allowed women a prime place in the arts, precisely because acting was seen as imitative and reproductive. Brantinger cites Nietzsche as saying, "the theatre is a form of demolatry in matters of taste, ... this is precisely what is proved by the case of Wagner, he won the crowd, the corrupted taste" (15, p. 59). Wagner, it is implied has succumbed to adoring women, by transforming music into mere spectacle, theatre, delusion.

I want to point out that it is primarily the visible and public presence of women artists in 'fine art' today that makes the old gendering device obsolete. Kitsch is no longer considered as something that emanates solely from women but, in an Adornian sense, it imposed upon them from above. My argument is that the old terminology can be applied to an Irish context, namely to the cult of Daniel O'Donnell. In a recent controversy O'Donnell's albums were ousted from the U.K. country album chart.4 It aroused such choler in his female devotees that one woman in particular "got something in the region of a thousand signatures" (7, p, 4) on a petition to have him re-instated. Nietzsche's attack on what he perceives as Wagner's 'feminization' of music "his inifite melody" (15, p, 51) could be equally applied to the music of Daniel O'Donnell. In the subsequent chapter, I will analyse the negative effect of both this infinite melody' and the lyrics which embelish it, on the listener. Nietzsche's criticism of Wagner's compositions that "one walks into the sea .. and finally surrenders oneself to the elements without reservation" (15, p. 51) is indeed applicable to O'Donnell. According to Nietzsche however, Wagner signified the emergence of the actor in music. As we all know O'Donnell is also an actor; his image has been carefully manipulated by a commercial network. It is my argument here that his image is one that deliberately preys on the quintessential feminine qualities of sentimentality, emotionalism and tenderness. Flaubert says of Emma - "In the music class, the songs she had to learn were compositions in which silly words and shoddy music could not conceal the attractive phantasmagoria of their sentimental substratum". In an Adornian sense the fault lies not with women, they are merely victims of an administered culture.

1. Daniel and Auntie Jane. "The danger for artists ... is women, adoring women confront them with corruption ... soon they condescend to the level of the woman". Nietzsche. My argument is that it is the woman who is being beguiled.

CHAPTER THREE

Tribal Culture Vs. Mass Culture

Section I Indigenous Irish Culture

Section II The Phenomenon of Daniel O'Donnell

Section III The Phenomenon of Bulgalow Bliss

Section I: Indigenous Irish Culture

"The vices of Irishmen are of English culture; their virtues are the homegrowth of the heart - the nation's heart". -

Gustave de Beaumont, The Nation 1845.

Before embarking upon an exploration of the response to foreign mass culture in Ireland, I feel it necessary to unearth some of the roots of what is called 'Irish national culture. In doing so, I want to point out that this culture was not an expression of the national consciousness but was taken up by the Nationalist movement to further its own cause. It is widely acknowledged that 'modern' Irish culture originated in the 1830's and 1840's especially with the cultural nationalist project associated with the Young Ireland movement of the 1840's and its newspaper 'The Nation'. David Lloyd remarked that this crusade "inaugurated a cultural tradition that conceives the responsibility of literature and of other cultural forms, to be the production and mediation of a sense of national identity" (2, p.242).

The nineteenth century witnessed the infiltration of foreign mass culture into Ireland. The abolition of the taxation penalties on the press in the 1850's ensured the expansion of the popular press. Abetted by the rapid increase in literacy, as the century progressed, it brought to Ireland ideas and images which had been produced in the first instance for Britain's working class. Following the opening of the first music halls in London, in the

early 1850's, Dublin soon followed this commercialization of public entertainment when Dan Lowry opened his Star of Erin Theatre of Varieties in 1879. Even English field sports began to gain currency, one of the reasons why the Gaelic Athletic Association for the Preservation of National Pastimes (G.A.A.) was established in 1884. The response by both the cultural nationalists and the Catholic Church to the changing patterns of mass culture in Ireland can be measured by the declaration of Archbishop Croke (the G.A.A.'s first patron) in 1884: - "England's accents, the vicious literature, her music, her dances and her manifold mannerisms ... (are) not racy of the soil, but rather alien, on the contrary to it, as are for the most part, the men and women who first imported and still continue to patronise them" (31, p 22).

Subsequently, the newly triumphant tenant farmer class and their clerical collaborators began to cultivate a more particular sense of Irish culture. The Catholic Church's time-honoured aversion to the revival of the Irish language subsided. It was not the decline of Irish as a vernacular (by 1850 only 5 per cent of the population were monolingually Irish anyway, a proportion reduced to 0.5 per cent by 1901) that prompted this volte-face, but the greater access to mass popular literature and mass culture in general challenged what Rockett describes as, "the Church's hegemony over Irish Catholics as the primary reservoir of ideological engagement" (31, p.22). Thus traditional Irish culture could provide a bulwark against new influences, while the resuscitation of the Irish language (one of the goals of the Gaelic League, founded in 1893) might even make the new popular press incomprehensible to the working classes!

Despite these stalwart attempts, mass culture was finding appreciative partakers in urban Ireland. "The Leader' acknowledged this when in 1908 it noted that "suggestive and imported 'musical comedy' draws crowds to the theatres in dirty Dublin, but filling the Rotunda for one night occasionally is a big proposition for a branch of the Gaelic League" (3, p. 23). However, the Dublin music halls were only one element of the church's concern - by the 1890's sexually explicit reading matter was becoming more readily available for all classes. The Catholic Truth Society was founded in 1899 with the aim of combating "the pernicious influence of infidel and immoral publications by the circulation of good, cheap, popular Catholic literature" (31, p. 23). Vigilance committees were formed to campaign against the availability of popular English Sunday newspapers (of which 40,000 were being sold in Dublin alone (31, p. 23). It is evident that the campaign for a separate cultural identity had shifted towards outright hostility to imported mass culture.

By 1921 with the settlement of the Anglo-Irish war imminent, such Catholic groups as the Irish Vigilance Association and the Priests Social Guild set the framework for the moral media legislation which was to be enacted by the new state. A conference on film censorship held in December 1921, concomitant with the Anglo Irish Treaty, indicates clearly the attempt by those concerned with media morality to set the agenda of the new state. One of the main proposals that emanated from this conference - that films only be released with general or universal certificates, was the policy that was enacted for the first four decades of national film censorship. As a result, during that time about 3,000 films

were banned and some 8,000 films cut as film censors equated Irish adults with children.

This social and cultural policy of protectionism waxed during the first four decades of the century. Independence was confirmed during 'the Emergency' (1939 - 45) but at the price of the country removing itself one degree further from the modern world. This is best typified by Eamonn de Valera's 1943 St. Patrick Day's soliloquy in which he eulogized "a people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit - a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with .... the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens ... " (32, p. 4).

However the Dutch rural sociologist, Lifering observed that this official preference for the values of rural life did not actually correspond to the preferences of ordinary Irish people. He told the 1960 Muintir na Tire rural week ... "My Irish experience has taught me that the wish to share in modern development and in urban culture is strong among the rural population here. I do not believe that it is a coincidental feature that Ireland has the highest rate per head per population in Europe for cinema-going. The rather limited interest of people in Gaelic culture is a sign in the same direction. Urban influences in daily life, in the recreational pattern for example, like modern dancing and sport-mindedness, are not typically rural (32, p. 18).

While de Valera was uttering his utopian vision, 25,000 of those same athletic youths and comely maidens were emigrating every year. From America, emigrants sent home money, the images of success, proof of the efficacy of America's myths and dreams. In the words of Fintan O'Toole ... her "heroes flickered on the silver screen or wrestled with each other across the pages of the cheap cowboy novels, which replaced the thousands of books banned by the censorship board" (26, p. 8). When Sean Lemass superseded de Valera in 1959 the economic penury made the demolition of economic barriers crucial and the "first Programme for Economic Expansion" an immediate requisite. Ireland threw her arms wide open to America for capital and cultural guidance.

2. "a land .. whose fields and villages would be joyous with the contests of athletic youths and the laughter of comely maidens". Eamonn de Valera St. Patricks Day, 1943.

Section II: The Phenomenon of Daniel O'Donnell

If in the early years of the century, Orientalism was pivotal to the emergence of modern art (fashion, ballet, decorative art) the period of consolidation was characterized by Americanism (cinema, architecture and applied art). Peter Wollen substantiates this by quoting Oskar Schlemmer's diagnosis of the atmosphere at the Bauhaus: "The artistic climate here cannot support anything that is not the latest, the most modern, up-to--the-minute, Dadaism, circus, variety, jazz, hectic pace, movies, America, airplanes, the automobile. Those are the terms in which people here think. That Americanization stood for true modernity is irrefutable. Wollen endorses this. In the Soviet Union the term had a pronounced utopian ring. The avant-garde stage company Feks issued a typical proclamation - "Yesterday, European culture, Today, American technology" (33,p.42).

When Pirandello wrote in 1929 that "Americanism is swamping us. I think that a new beacon of civilization has been lit over there" he could be describing the attitude in Ireland three decades later. With the demise of a peasant society went its culture and a new symbolism would need to be forged to express the confidence, the acquisitiveness and the unashamed display of the magnificance of money, that would inspire economic growth. America played the role of Belisha beacon and seldom were her auspices more apparent than in the progress of country n' western music in Ireland.

The seeds of the Irish country n' western industry had been inseminated with the 1935 Public Dance Halls Act which sought to

regulate dances by making it necessary to obtain a licence to hold them. Although it immolated the cross-road dances, thereby ousting traditional Irish music from the mainstream of popular music, it did however make public entertainment more amenable to clerical supervision. For the first time in rural Ireland music became a business and dancing a saleable commodity.

To this day there is an indissoluable link between the country 'n' western industry and Fianna Fail. The leading country 'n' western DJ, Paschal Mooney, is a member of the party's national executive, the music's biggest promoter, Donie Cassidy, is a Fianna Fail senator. This connection reached its apotheosis in Charles Haughey's recent description of Reynolds, Flynn and Co. as "the country 'n' western alliance". Indeed, our new Taoiseach is renowned not only for his large chain of ballrooms but for his appearance on television in a cowboy suit and stetson, singing 'Bring your Sweet Lips a Little Closer to the Phone". Twink, reminiscing about her 'show-band' days, said, "The ballroom owners decided what the punter wanted to hear in their area. They had it all worded out to a fine art" (26, p. 26). This liaison between our leading political party and the vogue for country n' western undoubtedly buttresses the Marxian saw, "the ideas of the ruling class are ... the ruling ideas". Furthermore, the ruling ideas of nationalism and ethnocentricity that characterized the politics, and therefore the culture of yesteryear have been supplanted. Fintan O'Toole substantiates this notion. He sees Haughey's achievement as that of bridging the gap between the rhetoric of Fianna Fails national aspirations and the realities of a materialist culture. However, "there is for Albert, no gap ...

Albert Reynolds will be the first leader of Fianna Fail to have a background not in 'clash of the ash' ... but in the 'flash of the cash'" (27). It is my argument here that country 'n' western music, and the phenomenon of Daniel O'Donnell, (fulfilling as he does, all the criteria delineated by kitsch) are conducive to the preservation of the status quo.

Adorno's most searing criticism of popular music can be implemented, when looking at O'Donnell. Adorno recognised standardization as being the fundamental characteristic of popular music which extends from the most general features to the most specific ones. He mentions the platitudinous themes "mother songs, home songs ... lament for a lost girl". O'Donnell constantly recapitulates these inanties when he croons, 'A Country Boy like me', 'My Donegal Shore', 'Take Good Care of Her', 'Old Loves Never Die'. More important than these lyrical formulas is the reiteration of what Adorno terms "harmonic cornerstones" - the beginning and the end of each part must beat out the standard scheme (1, p. 302). With O'Donnell these 'harmonic cornerstones' are further emphasized by being clad in the same lyrical apparel each time, so, when one hears "and I need you, honest I do", for the twenty-fifth time (he actually repeats the phrase twenty-five times in the song), it is not so much the words but the underlying tune that automatically springs to mind. This device guarantees that regardless of what aberrations occur along the way, the hit will lead back to the same familiar experience. This is what Adorno interprets as "mere musical automation". The listener can supply the framework automatically. Every detail is suitability; it serves its function only as a cog in a machine. Adorno sums it

up thus: "position is absolute". He compares this to the compositions of Beethoven, where "position is important only in living relation between a concrete totality and its concrete parts" (1, p. 303). In classical music the musical detail leads to the exposition of the whole whereas in popular music the relationship is fortuitous. In popular music the detail has no bearing on the whole which appears as an extraneous framework.

Listening to popular music is therefore manipulated not only by its promoters but by the inherent nature of the music itself into a system of response mechanism wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individualism in a free liberal society. The perpetual recurrence of the same variations ensures that the listener is always on safe ground. Greenberg defines this as "the special aesthetic quality of kitsch" which "predigests art for the spectator and spares him effort ... (it) detours what is difficult in genuine art" (22, p. 61). When O'Donnell sings,

Well I don't care if the sun don't shine
I don't care if the bells won't chime,
Just as long
As you love me,
And, I don't care if the tops don't spin
I don't care if the gins won't gin,
Just as long,
As you love me
So darlin, let it rain
let it snow
let the cold

North wind blow

just as long as,

you love me.

North or South

East or West

You know I will,

Stand the test,

Just as long as,

you love me.

(A musical passage, unembellished with lyrics follows).

not only is effort otiose in following its schematic configuration, but, the musical passage, positioned as it is between this verse and another that is musically and lyrically isomorphic, appears merely as a deviation from the norm, or what Adorno terms 'a parodistic distortion of the simple' (1, p. 305).

These musical disparities fall under Adorno's category - "pseudo - individualisation", which he sees as being the necessary correlate of musical standardization. Adorno, with his characteristic scepticism states that "standardization of song hits keeps the customers in line by doing their listening for them ... pseudo - individualization ... keeps them in line by making them forget that what they already listen to is already ... 'predigested'". He castigates jazz, his pet hatred, for fostering the "myth of pioneer artisanship" (1, p. 308). However despite the prevalence of worried notes, dirty notes and improvisations in jazz these are not grasped as musical events in themselves but are corrected by

the ear to the right note. In the words of Adorno, they demand to be perceived 'as a stimulus which carries with it the unambiguous prescription to substitute for it the right detail, or rather the naked scheme' (1, p. 309). This is how, in Adorno's opinion, popular music plunders one of spontaneity and promotes conditioned reflexes.

Simon Frith, in his analysis of country 'n' western music, endorses this argument further. He regards it as a form of family entertainment and a vector of a conservative message. Its lyrical emphasis is on people knowing their place. According to Frith, 'country music tells it like it is but the possibilities of improvement rest on individuals, on luck, hard work, blessings from God'. O'Donnell delivers a similar reactionary vision when he whines, "little congregation praying for guidance / lead us not into temptation" or "This world's a strange place to live in / and the Lord works in so many ways". Frith elaborates by claiming that the conservatism of white American country music is a feature of its form, as well as its content: 'changes in instrumentation have been slow, each move - to drums, to electric amplification - has been hard fought, and there is a much greater emphasis than in black music on songs', even 'non sung sounds' have 'individual vocal qualities' (13, p. 183). Country 'n' Western music has responded to social change by digging its toes in, emphasising in its ideology rural values, as Daniel demonstrates when he warbles 'I miss the countryside so fair and the good folk that live there'. Luke Gibbons has pointed out that the social upheaval wrought by the modernization process, is responsible for the greater popular reliance on traditional outlooks and explanations, relieving as they do "the tensions consequent on rapid

transition".

Fintan O'Toole has remarked how in the dance halls, "both sexuality and music were muted, tamed and controlled" (26, p. 9). It is my argument here that the question of sexuality is intimately involved with that of labour. Gramsci, an advocate of Fordism, saw the new labour discipline, with its regulated workdorce, performing segmented and standardized actions, as a blow against sexual pormiscuity. The new (assumed to be male) worker would want easy and accessible, monogamous sex, a women to return home to, 'sure and unfailing'. In a comparable vein, Daniel O'Donnell eulogizes the monogamous relationship when he sings, "you by my side/thats how I see us/ we're on our way to say I do". When Gramsci praises the new form of sexual union 'shorn of the bright and dazzling colour of the romantic tinsel of the petit bourgeois and Bohemian layabout', (33, p. 44), he might also approve of the lyrics of O'Donnell, where all traces of the 'element of animality in man' is eliminated. After all the exaltation of passion cannot be reconciled with a rationalized system of production.

If kitsch is, in the words of Greenberg, "vicarious experience and faked sensations, ... the epitome of all that is spurious in the life of our times" (14, p. 25) a 'Leavisite' approach to the critical analysis of mass music is valid. The Leavisite approach stems from the comparison of mass cultural objects (standardised, escapist, effortlessly consumed) with works of art (unique, challenging, instructive). Mass music is condemned as being worthless because there is "nothing essential in the music itself which belongs either to real emotion, or to an inner unmistakable vitality" (13, p. 192). The argument here is that mass art is

produced for profit and the pursuit of profit determines form and content and is the source of its inauthenticity.

From our stance, as students and pedagogues of art and design, it is easy to dismiss the Daniel O'Donnell cult as being testimony to the ubiquity of "kitsch-man" in Ireland. One must delve deeper, however, and ask why this music maintains its hold on people. Adorno attributes the appeal of popular music to "the present mode of production and to the rationalized and mechanized process of labour, to which directly or indirectly masses are subject" (1, p. 309). When not in the factory or at the office people want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously - as Fintan O'Toole so aptly puts it "the three chord trick of country 'n' western is simple, immediate and leaves the mind free to pursue the courtship rituals of the dancefloor" (26, p. 47).

Furthermore, Adorno sees emotional music, typified by Daniel O'Donnell, as "catharsis for the masses". The function of sentimental music lies in the temporary release given to the awareness that one has missed fulfilment. So when Daniel sings "Oh I know its not right, reminiscing tonight ... for the girl I dream of, has another man's love, far far away on a Donegal shore", he is inviting his audience to weep. To paraphrase Adorno, sentimental music has become the image of the mother who says, "come and weep my child". It is catharsis that keeps the masses, all the more firmly in line. Adorno sums it up: "one who weeps does not resist anymore than one who marches. Music that permits its listeners the confession of their unhappiness, reconciles them, by means of this 'release', to their social dependence" (1, p. 314).

Section III The Phenomenon of Bungalow Bliss

Bungalow of Dreams

Our little love nest
Beside a stream
Where red, red roses grow
Our bungalow
of dreams

Far from the city
Somehow it seems
We're sitting pretty in
Our bungalow
of dreams

Just like two love birds
We'll bill and coo
I'll whisper love words
For only you

A bit of heaven
Beside a stream
I know you'll love it so
Our bungalow
Of dreams

Bix Beiderbecke c. 1928

(Although this could almost be attributed to Daniel O'Donnell c. 1992)

As I have previously asserted, the sixties was the decade dominated in Ireland by the influx of foreign money, industry and culture. Most indicative of this demise of a peasant society was the proliferation of private Cars. In 1960 sales ran at 32,000, up 40 per cent on 1959 and more than 53 per cent on 1955. (32, Pg. 10). The sixties was the decade which witnessed the building of the first shopping centre (in Stillorgan, Co. Dublin, in 1964) and the advent of television (and the subsequent introduction of sex to the country) [5] The popularity of country'n'western, the music of the white middleclass Americans, among the rural Irish in general, is indisputable. It is my argument here that the phenomenon of 'bungalow bliss' is the embodiment of the spirit of Irish country 'n' western - the transplanting of a foreign idiom to Irish soil. Both of them help maintain a conservative society, operating along capitalist lines.

The bungalow both in name and form originated in India. Yet through the name stems from the Hindi or Mahratti 'bangla', meaning 'of or belonging to Bengal', the dwelling it came to describe was primarily European. King states this clearly in 'The Bungalow - 'The Production of a Global Culture" when he writes that a 'bungalow' was 'the most usual class of house occupied by Europeans in the interior of India'. With the growth of industry and capitalism in 19th century Britain and the exploitation of colonies aboard, King claims that the bungalow became a 'symbol of imperial power' (18, Pg 14). Furthermore, he claims that it was the first house type to break regional boundaries and become part of an international, capitalist, urban culture, creating as it does, an infrastructure for further production and consumption (18, Pg. 259).

By analogy, Greenberg maintains that kitsch has become the first universal culture ever beheld - 'it has gone on a trumphal tour of the world, crowding out and defacing native cultures in one colonial country after another' (14, p. 26).

Analysing imitation and authenticity in American culture, Miles Orvell claims that from the onset of machine production in the 1840s, individuals at every level of society sought an elevation of status through the purchase and display of goods whose appearance counted for more than their substance. Trade catalogues from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century unabashedly proclaimed the excellence of their ersatz fabrications. Among the wares elaborated upon by Orvell are linoleum, invented in 1863, patterned to look like marble, wood, parquet, carpet and mosaic, hollow concrete blocks cast in metal moulds and made to resemble stone and asbestos shingles that "harmonize with the natural surroundings" and are as "durable as stone" (29, Pg 50). Imitation became an ethos.

A similar situation transpired in Ireland, concomitant with the economic boom in the sixties and upon entry into the EC in 1973. With money came class distinction and with class came status. A medley of bungalows and mansions faking "Dynasty' or "Dallas" (Pg 11, p.11) burgeoned throughout the countryside, supplanting the archetypal thatched cottage. What had been a symbol of stability, the 'cosy homestead' for one generation became a symbol of stagnation for the next. Fintan O'Toole encapsulates the general feeling in this way "..... uniform and classless, it (the cottage) was too clear a reminder of where they were coming from to be

allowed to remain, to be cherished as a quaint national characteristic" (26, p. 33).

However, the simplicity of the thatched cottage did not result from a conscious choice on the part of its originator - it was dictated by force of circumstances. Assembled from indigenous materials, it reflected both the poverty and the social uniformity of society. Variation was largely a reflection of indigence in different degrees. Variables included such basics as size of house, composition of walls, whether stone or mud and size of windows if any.

For a generation that was learning the game of money and status, America furnished the images they employed in their houses. In the words of Fintan O'Toole, "picture windows that had looked out on the Nevada sunshine had to content themselves with a view of bleak bog". The bungalows originating in Southern California "were astonished to find themselves in the Roscommon hills"(26Pg 34). As for the 'Southfork-like' edifices, they are the palpable manifestation of the Irish cattle-owners' proceeds from the EC's predilection for beef and his subsequent identification with the rancher (26, p. 34). Hence, imitations of the "High Chaparral" embellished with white picket fences, Mexican verandas and wagon-train cartwheels on the wall; houses which, in the words of O'Toole, could "only have been conceived in the midst of a cowboy fantasy" exacerbate what David Norris diagnoses as "the architectural acne spreading over the face of rural Ireland" (Pg 11, p. 16).

However it is bungalows, by their sheer quantity - by 1892 they had become the biggest single category of new housing, surpassing even

urban estates and accounting for 40 per cent of all houses built (26, p. 33) - which most undermine the physiognomy of Ireland. Often incongruous with their geographic and cultural environment, they have been classified as the 'screw-you' style of architecture, the whole purpose of their construction being to "cut a dash on the landscape" (11, p. 8). The Irish worker, having been confined to minimal building material for so long revelled in materials now available to him. Coloured plaster, red and yellow bricks, multi-coloured concrete blocks and kaleidoscopic tiles have become standard ingredients, often appearing on the same house. This is architectural kitsch, defined by Vittorio Gregotti, as being that which is "effete in terms of principle but fresh in terms of effect" (9, p. 263). In fact, Gregotti could be speaking directly about the bungalow phenomenon when he writes "a multiplicity of decorative treatments speak with a babel of tongues and wealth and luxury are reflected in a despairing use of allusion, in a desperate search for personal identity" (9, p. 268).

There is no need to elaborate on the overt kitschiness of the Irish bungalow and its incongruity with the environment. The individuality invested in the facade is necessary if only for practical reasons - i.e. if one is to find one's home in the midst of all the other bungalows, which are identical in plan and layout.

The homogeneity of Irish bungalows can be attributed to Jack Fitzsimons and his book of standard designs Bungalow Bliss. Catering for those who wish to qualify for state grants but who, because of limited means, cannot afford to engage a professional advisor, it has gone into nine editions and five reprints, selling

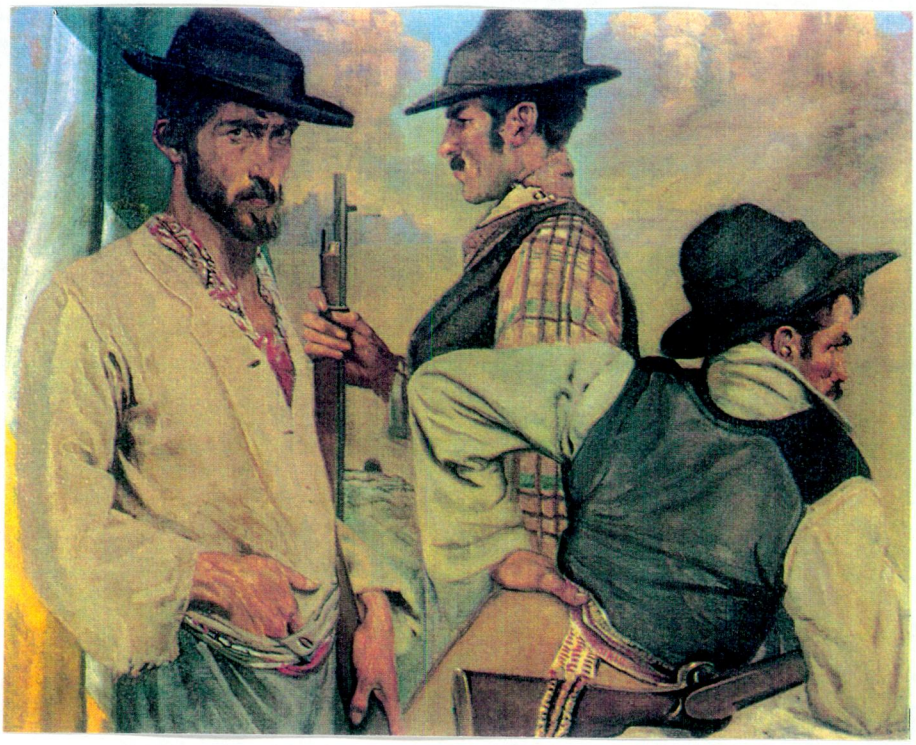
in the region of 150,000 copies since 1971.

Fitzsimons pays tribute to the bungalow, saying that when people contribute to the design of their homes "individual and social well-being" (11, p. 33) ensues. He compares this sort of dwelling favourably to blocks of flats based on Le Corbusiers principle of "functionalism" that "a house is a machine for living in". Based on dogma, this type of utopian design in his view only generates social problems, becoming "a barrier to personal fulfilment and a burden on the economy" (11, p. 33) incarcerating people as it does in dwellings not of their own choosing.

However, the introduction to Bungalow Bliss, which vindicated itself by saying that although "each house has a basic version, as each family is different, each location and each site is different ... the house plans have been designed so as to be flexible..." is reminiscent of Adorno's critique of popular music and what he terms 'pseudo individualization', i.e. the endowing of cultural mass production with a halo of free choice. Adorno sees not only 'options' among different types of popular music and different bands as falling into the category of 'pseudo individualisation, but also any improvisation or deviations from the rhythm within the musical passage itself falls into the same category. When he speaks of the "fundamental identity of the material and the great similarity of the presentations apart from their emphasized distinguishing trademarks" (1, p. 309) he could just as well be criticizing the Irish bungalow.

So, despite Fitzsimons, assertions, It is clear that

different coloured bricks, assorted windows, pillars and other common features of the bungalow, constitute but a veneer of originality and the semblance of choice. In an Adornian sense this illusion of individual achievement, this cloaking of standardization serves merely to mollify the masses. He writes that "concentration and control in our culture hide themselves in their very manifestation ... unhidden they would provoke resistance" (Pg. 1, p.307). In his thesis on the 'culture industry' Adorno castigates city housing projects, designed to commemorate the individual "as a supposedly independent unit in a small hygienic dwelling" (3, Pg. 120) - they only make them more conducive to the omnipotence of capitalism. The inhabitants as producers and as consumers are drawn into the hub in search of work and pleasure, all the living units forming part of an orderly network. The analogy with the phenomenon of bungalow bliss is clear. Most often, bungalows take the form of ribbon developments on the outskirts of Irish towns, their inhabitants commuting daily to their place of work, complying with the model of social organisation provided by Fordism, where the order of the machine and assembly line is extended to the sphere of private life. What better place than an Irish bungalow, which after all "stimulates individual and social well being" to cultivate a stable labour force, the "permanently well adjusted complex" (33, p. 45) essential to capitalism.



3. 'Men of the West' by Sean Keating, illustrative of the Irish farmer's identification with the rancher. Joan Fowler cites Robert Ballagh as saying that these lean, square-jawed men "are more reminiscent of being west of the Rio Grande than west of the Shannon". (12, p. 16)

4. High Chaparral, Westport, Co. Mayo
One of the phenomena of Modern Ireland is the proliferation of vast mansions faking 'Dallas' or Dynasty' on the outskirts of so many provincial towns - the 'palazzi gombeeni' as one Dublin architect has scathingly described them.

5. Bungalow, Glencar, Co. Sligo.

6. Bungalow, Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny
An example of 'pseudo-individualization'. The combination of textured plaster, applied ashlar mosaic and interlocking roof-tiles cannot disguise the fact that this bungalow is structurally isomorphic to the one above.

7. Bungalow, Athleague, Co. Roscommon. This complies with the definition of architectural kitsch provided by Vittorio Gregotti - "effete in terms of principle but fresh in terms of effect".

CONCLUSION

One misunderstands contemporary society if one thinks of culture as leisure, entertainment, escape, all that is not 'real life'. Frederic Jameson substantiates my argument when he says "culture, far from being an occasional matter of the reading of a monthly good book, or a trip to the drive-in, seems to me the very element of consumer society itself ... everything is mediated by culture, to the points where even the political and ideological 'levels' have initially to be disentangled from their primary mode of representation which is cultural" (8, p. 23).

Every society produces ideas, beliefs and values which enable it to judge and situate itself in relation to other groups and societies. These beliefs and preferences are often embedded in peoples consciousness and represent what the members of society accept without too much thought; as well as what they are prepared to fight for when threatened.

This interpretation of 'ideology' becomes more intelligible if we attend to the specific example of indigenous Irish culture. As I have shown in the foregoing chapter Irish folk culture (the thatched cottage, the language, gaelic sport) was not a spontaneous expression of the people or in the words of Simon Frith, "created directly and spontaneously out of communal experience" (13, p. 196). It was a culture that was championed by the nationalist movement for its own ends; it played a primary role in the affirmation of national identity. The immense popularity of Anglo-American mass culture certifies that this notion of Gaelic culture as an effusion of the people, is a myth.

Similarly, this triumphant mass culture is also and 'ideological apparatus'. King draws attention to the impact of transnational capitalism on national development, a phenomenon which is not only a way of organising labour and capital but which is also "a set of ideas about the world and a global culture who subscribe to them" (18, p. 260). Adorno's conception of 'the culture industry' provides us with a model of a capitalist society which mobilizes support for its institutions from below. Accepting this theory as I do, I see the kitsch phenomena of 'Daniel O'Donnell' and 'bungalow bliss' as being more than just a yardstick against which one can define 'good taste' and urbanity. Both help maintain the status-quo.

As I have shown both the lyrics and music of O'Donnell induce passivity. His music is truly worthy of it's epithet 'easy listening'. By having inbuilt sensory neon signs which flash how sad! how romantic! this type of kitsch makes effort and imagination redundant. Adorno encapsulates it thus - "regressive too, is the role which contemporary mass music plays in the psychological household of its victims. They are confirmed in their neurotic stupidity ... the sickness has a preserative function" (16, p. 126). By analogy, the bungalow is a standarized form of housing, promotive of the nuclear family. Commuting daily to their place of work, the inhabitants are merely part of a methodical system. One of the salient features of 'ideology' is, in my opinion, its invisibility and as such people cannot see the process that is being enacted upon them. However as Adorno says 'control' in our culture hides itself. Therefore 'pseudo individuality' is rife, "from the standardized jazz improvisation to the exceptional film star whose hair curls over her eye to demonstrate her originality" (3, p. 142).

As I have asserted in chapter one it is its facileness, its usability, that popularizes kitsch. People who lead tedious lifestyles do not need their culture to be challenging as well. However as Adorno says, the escape from everyday drudgery which the 'culture industry' promises is like the daughter's elopement in the cartoon - her father is holding the ladder in the dark. (3, p. 142).

Michel Peillon has predicted that "the foreseeable future for Ireland is a capitalist one and the presence of other social projects has no challenge to the hegemony of the bourgeoisie" (30, p. 59). Certainly there has been no opposition from the owners of bungalows or the fans of O'Donnell.

FOOTNOTES

1. We recall at this point, Plato's prejudice in favour of what he called 'the noble senses' i.e. vision and hearing. Similarily Kant spurns the taste of the tongue, palate and throat as being mere pleasures of the senses. Despite Schopenhauer's qualms about Dutch still-lifes, painting fruit was admissible because he regarded it as a further development of the flower, as a beautiful product of nature in form and colour exerting no pressure on the viewer to think of it as edible!

2. John Fiske makes reference to David Halle's study of the paintings hanging in the homes of different classes in and around New York to give further examples of popular functionalism and bourgeois aesthetic distance. In both upper, middle and working class (mainly Polish and Italian) homes, the most common genre was landscape. But the landscape in the working class homes were either painted by family members or friends, or were of the homeland - they wre relevantly connected to peoples lives and served as reminders of family membership and histories. The landscapes in the upper middle class homes bore no relationship to family origin, and were chosen by aesthetic criteria rather than those of relevance of function.

3. U.F.A. ... (Universum - Film - Aktiengesellghaft)
The most prestigious German film company. Bought in 1927 by Alfred Hugenberg. From then on the political and social activities of the NSDAP (National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei) were captured by UFA newsreels and shown to the public on a large network of UFA cinemas.

4. The Country Music Association caused consternation within the country music fraternity in May 1991 when they advised that charts were to be selected on the basis of musical content rather than artist. Daniel O'Donnell was dumped from the U.K. country album chart. In response to mounting criticism Entertainment Research and Analysis intervened. The result was that all six of Daniels albums were reinstated. Alan Reynolds (no, not Albert Reynolds) producer of some of "Nashvilles outstanding recordings for the likes of Don Williams, Kathy Matea "was strong in defense of Daniels music; he had this to say 'Daniels taste in music follows a purer stream of country music than several of the names that moved into the charts when Daniels albums were originally banished. (7, p. 5)

5. Fergal Toibin quotes the T.D. Oliver J. Flanagan's absurd claim that "there was no sex in Ireland before television" which he told the nation on " The Late Late Show".

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