

G O T T A S E R V E S O M E B O D Y

Theodor Adorno, popular music studies and commitment

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What a theory regards and disregards determines its quality (Adorno 1978e:460)

It would take an expert to decide who the experts are - and this leads to a vicious circle (Adorno 1993f:112)

If the administered world is to be understood as one from which all hiding places are fast disappearing, it should still be possible for this world to compensate for this and, by virtue of the powers of men of insight, to create centres of freedom as they are eradicated by the blind and unconscious process of mere natural selection (Adorno 1993f:113)

Acknowledgements

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Who needs Adorno?

Academic musicologists interested in 'popular music' face several problems. Firstly, their favoured subject-matter has generally been excluded from (or marginalised within) University Departments of Music, so the struggle to get popular music defined as a subject-area and onto the curriculum in a properly-resourced way has been closely bound up with questions of academic legitimacy. In turn, this issue of legitimacy has been made more problematical because there is no ready-made, consensual (let alone rigorous) methodology for the study of what we call popular music and song, largely because the assumptions, methods and values of academic musicology were formed in a doubly-mediated relation to bourgeois, Western European music, which was (sometimes mistakenly) taken to be largely non-popular or even unpopular.¹ Consequently, musicologists have had to develop their own methods of study and many of them have drawn on some of the work of cultural studies theorists. Of course, such a tactic involves popular musicologists in the issue of legitimacy from another direction - what have people like Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Raymond Williams or Stuart Hall got to do with music? - and it also raises the question of politics, since people interested in cultural studies in general and popular music and song in particular since the 1950s have often come from the political left.

The search for anyone like a role-model within academic musicology has been difficult; so, quite understandably, serious popular musicologists have often placed considerable weight on the work of Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno, who is at least known to academic musicologists of every political persuasion.² But in dealing with Adorno popular musicologists immediately encounter two further problems. Firstly, Adorno has a reputation in anglophone quarters for having been a Marxist; and, secondly, he is notorious for having shown contempt for the commercially-successful music and song of his own day. Therefore, for any serious popular musicologist to avoid Adorno would be seen as both unscholarly and cowardly - look, Adorno may have been a Marxist, but at least he played and composed, and he despised this stuff, so why should we listen to you and not to him? - but there remains the difficulty of trying to recover something useable from his writings. In turn, this intellectual difficulty is linked to the political confusion surrounding the troubled history (and competing definitions) of Marxism in the twentieth century.³

Adorno has been discussed widely amongst anglophone philosophers and cultural critics in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, and he has been described as a Marxist even by a revolutionary socialist like Alex Callinicos (1987:178). However, not everybody agrees. Martin Jay places Adorno in the 'heterodox tradition of western Marxist thought inaugurated by Georg Lukacs and Karl Korsch', but also claims that he 'cannot be fully understood without reference to the often regressively-oriented anti-capitalism of pre-First World War Germany' (Jay 1984:15,17). After criticising Adorno for his 'dense, devious enigmas', Terry

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1. Subotnik illustrates how recently the struggle against empiricism and liberal ideology within academic musicology has begun in earnest, and notes 'what good is freedom of thought if it amounts to nothing more than a freedom to refuse to understand', including refusing to grapple with the work of the 'so-called Frankfurt School' (1991:xviii-xix, 11, 15).
 2. This has not always been true, perhaps especially in anglophone countries. Adorno is said to have 'received a certain amount of fragmentary attention' in the UK in 1952, for example, when he tried to show how Wagner's music 'nurtured the seeds of National socialism'; but even by 1971, of his longer works, only *Prisms* was available in English (Adorno 1967; Weitzman 1971:289,293). The earliest English-language bibliography seems to have been Jay 1973, followed by Pawling 1974.
 3. The best introduction to this troubled and confusing history is Callinicos 1991.

Eagleton (in true Adornian fashion) playfully describes him as one of the "'negative" moments of Hegelian Marxism' and 'an idealist modernist' and a 'Modernist Marxist' (1992:91,159,175; see also Eagleton 1990:341-42, and cf Jameson 1967:42-43). Edward Said thinks of Adorno as 'a creature of the Hegelian tradition' (1991:xiv); and Susan Buck-Morss maintains that both Adorno and Horkheimer 'applied Marx's method to the present' and thereby 'relegitimised Marxist thinking' (1977:ix-x). Gillian Rose, however, believes that the 'idea that Adorno is a Hegelian Marxist is a misleading oversimplification' (1978:142; cf Honneth 1979:46-47,56). Some critics have changed their minds: Paddison once thought of Adorno as a 'classical modernist'; but later he found his 'Marxist analysis of culture' to be an 'essentially Hegelian reading, with an admixture of Nietzsche and Max Weber' or perhaps 'a Hegelian interpretation of Marx filtered through Lukacs (1987:357; 1993:13,121). Berman and D'Amico found 'residual elements of historical materialism' at one point, but wrote about Adorno's 'Marxism' not long afterwards (1991:71,77). Blomster found that the 'mostwidely-accepted view is that Adorno's work embodies a modern manifestation of the Hegelian dialectic', but acknowledged that others found him 'outspokenly Kantian', and influenced by Husserl or even Schopenhauer. In the 1960s, however, a German New Left writer had already characterised him as 'outspokenly pre-Marxist and totally bourgeois'. Clearly, there is some serious disagreement here; and this is particularly ironic given that it was Adorno's 'desire to be viewed as himself', and that he resisted 'relentlessly and often bitterly the attempts to assign him and his work to a given category' (Blomster 1976:83,87 note 16, 110; see also Berman 1977:157). Why are opinions so varied - not to say contradictory - and what is at stake in the effort to define (if there is such a thing) *Adornoism*?

Partly because of the relatively late appearance of much of Adorno's work in English translation, serious anglophone students of popular music and song seem not to have referred to his work before the later 1970s. For example, Chapple & Garofalo (1977:297, 329) cited the *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et al 1964) and *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno & Horkheimer 1986) in order to illustrate their belief that the interests of the post-war US state and US-based Capital were underpinned on a 'psychological basis' by 'authoritarian attitudes' towards 'the traditional family structure' and the 'concomitant sexual organization of rigidity and repression' to which, in this narrative, 'rock 'n' roll' provided a highly-pleasurable relief in the mid-1950s. On the basis of reading Adorno's 'A social critique of radio music' and one essay from *Prisms*, Frith pronounced that not only was Adorno a 'Marxist', but that for all his 'sour view', his was 'the most sophisticated account of mass music from this perspective, particularly on the question of commoditisation, and especially since he came up with impressive-sounding terms such as 'pseudo-individualism' and 'pseudo-collectivism'' (Adorno 1945b; Adorno 1967; Frith 1978:193,194,196).⁴ However, when Frith re-mastered his 1978 book - now using a third Adorno source, 'Culture Industry Reconsidered' (Adorno 1975) - there was a new animus in comments about Adorno's 'unabashed arrogance', his Eurocentrism, his underestimation of 'Americanness', his reduction of consumption to 'a simple psychological effect', and his ignorance of 'rock' 'utopianism' (Frith 1983:43-46,57,264). Subsequent to this attack, Adorno seems to have slipped out of fashion amongst *rockologists during the 1980s*;⁵ but there are re-

4. 'Adorno's is the most systematic and the most searing analysis of mass culture and the most challenging for anyone claiming even a scrap of value for the products that come churning out of the music industry', evidently; though Frith notes Adorno's weakness on questions of consumption, and invokes a snippet of Marx's *Grundrisse* and a popularised fragment of Freud to counter Adorno's 'gloom' (1978:195, 206).

cent signs that he is being read again in the 1990s.⁶

Probably, the respected popular musicologist Richard Middleton has had an influence here. As is now customary, Middleton places Adorno in what Perry Anderson wrote about as a tradition of 'Western Marxism' (Middleton 1990:35; Anderson 1976); yet it is important to recall that, even here, there is an important argument going on, since, apart from Trotsky, Anderson excluded from his conception of 'Western Marxism' many politically-active anti-Stalinists, some of whom also wrote books - Jakubowski for example, and Volosinov too, until he was rubbed out by Stalin. Callinicos believes that 'Academic Marxism' would be a more accurate name for this retrospectively-assembled 'tradition', since its practitioners' aim was 'not to overthrow capitalism, but to study Marxism itself', with the result that their writing is 'incomprehensible to all but a tiny minority of highly qualified intellectuals' (1983:9). This may be too kind, since what held the exponents and fans of 'Western Marxism' together was their reformist compromise with liberal-bourgeois notions of academic 'freedom', even though most of the writers Anderson includes had an affiliation with one nation-based Communist Party or another, and some of them were actually Party apparatchiks. This is not so much of a paradox as it might seem, as we shall see; but how can we understand the appeal of the ideas of practising Stalinists to avowedly non-Stalinist, non-Party (or at least, non-revolutionary) intellectuals in the 1970s or the 1990s?⁷

According to Middleton, Adorno is useful to popular musicology precisely because of his 'Marxism', since he provides part of the basis for 'a historical materialist theory of musical development which in principle rebuts reductionism, both economic and formalistic', and because he also avoids the 'crude class reductionism of many earlier Marxist approaches to the sociology of cultural forms'.⁸ In fact Adorno was nothing less than a 'giant' who had 'many strengths' and who can still help 'us to understand the enemy'.⁹ But it is characteristic of Middleton's rhetoric that the reader is left in the dark about who the 'Marxist' reductionists were, what precisely was 'Marxist' about them, and who either 'we' or

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5. This term has been coined to describe those popular music journalists and critics who believe there was and is something transcendentally important about the music they listened to as adolescents, usually in the 1960s. For an early recognition of what held the *rockologists* together, ideologically - their ambivalence about both Adorno's critique of the 'culture industry' as well as the work on 'youth culture' at the University of Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies - see Gendron (1986:19,34,36 note 3).
 6. Laing (1985:77-78) mentions Adorno in passing; but Street (1986) has no entry for him, and neither does Wicke (1990[1987]). However, Cohen (1991) refers to Adorno and Horkheimer's 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception' and an anthologised chapter from Adorno and Horkheimer (1986); and both these works and the essays collected in Bernstein (1993) are put to work by Negus (1992:70,74). Bradley cites Adorno as a 'major influence' and lists four books and four articles in his Bibliography (1992:18). In turn, Bradley seems to have influenced MacKinnon (1993:10,12,14) and Moore (1993:23-24,189). Padison has recently produced a book on Adorno, claiming he is no less than the 'most influential and controversial of twentieth-century writers on music' (1993:1).
 7. This is not suggest that members of CPs led by Stalinists did not study Marx: of course, they did, in their own way. What I am pointing towards here is the Stalinist residue which was part and parcel of most anglophone appropriations of the work of Louis Althusser, notably the essay on 'Ideological State Apparatuses', which is all that now remains of many liberal academics' previous rhetorical adherence to what they persist in calling 'Marxism'.
 8. Middleton lists seven Adorno texts in his Bibliography, (Adorno 1941a,1967,1973a,1975,1976b,1978a and 1978b), plus Adorno and Horkheimer (1986, mistakenly cited as *Dialectics of Enlightenment*; but unlike, say, Frith, at least he shows some awareness of (and sympathy for) Adorno's uncomfortable political options in the 1930s.
 9. Marsh also refers to Adorno as a 'giant' (1983:169). Weitzman thinks of him as 'one of Europe's leading intellects' (1971:287). Green ranks him as 'perhaps [musical sociology's] most important figure (1988:6)'; and Eagleton believes that he 'should join the ranks of Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin as one of the three most creative, original cultural theorists Marxism has yet produced' (1990:363-64).

'the enemy' might be. Instead, after that gesture he concentrates on cultural theory and specifically musicological matters, stressing Adorno's 'emphasis on the totality' both of 'music' and the 'cultural field in general', his insistence that 'the division of the cultural field into "popular" and "serious" segments is relatively superficial', his belief in music's 'social content', his materialist perspective on the way 'changes in the circumstances of musical production affect musical form' and his assumption that the key distinction to be made within 'music' is between that 'which affirms or accepts the status quo' and 'that which refuses such affirmation'. As for Adorno's picture of a 'totally administered, homogeneous, determining process as the ideal type to which the industry aspires', Middleton implies that this needs to be taken as a polemical and provocative gesture: he didn't mean it literally; and while he accepts that Adorno offered a life-long polemic against twentieth century commercially-successful popular music and song, the positioning of the 'Why Adorno?' chapter at the beginning of *Studying Popular Song*, and the generally sympathetic treatment Adorno receives, suggest that Middleton believes Adorno's perspective remains useful for its provocativeness and intransigence, rather than dismissed for its banal elitism and political fatalism (Middleton 1990:25,34,35,40,45,61,68).

Twenty years ago, when I was writing *One for the Money*, I had a rather different view; but since I hadn't then read more than a few articles I could so easily have been wrong (Harker 1980:26,41).¹⁰⁰ Certainly, Middleton's and Callinicos's recent claims for Adorno gave me pause for thought; and in any case I have a sense that Adorno is making something of an intellectual come-back in the 1990s, so his work deserves serious consideration.¹¹¹ What is generally at stake here, it seems to me, is whether Marxism has always been the same, whether it still exists, and whether it can help us understand either the past or our own times. Therefore, I will be examining many of the major claims for Adorno's significance to cultural theory in general, and to the study of popular music and song in particular, from what I hope will be a consistent perspective - what has come to be known as classical Marxism (Callinicos 1991: 1-3).¹²² In particular, I hope to be able to illustrate in some detail what Adorno actually wrote about culture, music and popular music, and to give some idea as to why he has been taken seriously, before I go on to critique his ideas. Of course, my intention is not to incriminate Adorno with not being a classical Marxist - what would be the point of that, even though many of the works I use here were available to him in the 1920s and 1930s? But what I do hope to show is that if we are to explain how and why Adorno wrote what he did - or why popular music studies seems set on going down one theoretical and political dead-end street after another after the trauma of 1989 - then someone has to carry out the necessary analysis from this critical perspective.¹³³ But

10. Andrew Goodwin's supportive review of Harker 1980 included the comment that the author 'draws on a model which actually has much in common with the better work of the Frankfurt School' (1981:97). At the time, I took this as a compliment, but I may have been wrong!

11. This is a hazardous business, however, since, even in the 1920s, Adorno's prose was difficult to read or to understand (see Appendix).

12. By that term Callinicos seeks to differentiate between those whose theory and practice is based on the work of activists like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and the revolutionary Antonio Gramsci, and those others who adapted to the counter-revolutionary agenda of Stalin, the Stalinists and the Stalinern from the mid-1920s (Callinicos 1991; Hallas 1985; Birchall 1974). I'd like to stress that no prior detailed knowledge of these people's work, or of Adorno's writings, will be assumed here. For the reader unfamiliar with the main ideas of Marx and the classical Marxist tradition, a reading of Marx seems most appropriate. Failing that, Harman 1995 would be a useful preparation; and for those who need their conceptual memories refreshing, a copy of Callinicos 1983 would be a useful text to have handy from time to time!

13. For other recent attempts to apply classical Marxism to issues in popular music studies, see Harker 1992, 1994a, 1994b, 1996a and 1996b.

before I do that I need to say something about who he was, what he did, and how he related to political and cultural issues in his own day, including what he knew of actually-existing 'Marxism'.

Between Hitler and Stalin

When was Adorno a Marxist ?

Theodor (Teddie) Ludwig Adorno Wiesengrund was born on September 11th 1903.¹⁴ He was an only child, and his Frankfurt childhood and adolescence were spent in a highly-comfortable and liberal bourgeois household (Paddison 1993:4). His mother, formerly Maria Calvelli-Adorno delle Piana, was the Catholic daughter of a French army officer from Corsica and a German-born singer, and she had been a successful singer in her own right before her marriage. Teddie's father, Oskar Wiesengrund, was a wealthy wine-merchant in Frankfurt and an assimilated Jew - he had converted to Protestantism. The family appear to have been both cosmopolitan and, in bourgeois terms, highly cultivated: Adorno's maternal aunt played for Adelina Patti, and his own music teacher, Bernhard Sekles, also taught Hindemith. There is, however, no evidence of any public, political commitment of any kind (let alone to Marxism) on Adorno's part during the 1910s, though he was eleven when World War 1 broke out and he was fourteen at the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917.¹⁵ All the same, his youth was lived in 'an atmosphere entirely dominated by theory (political theory as well)'; and he later recalled that his Saturday afternoon discussions about Kant with Siegfried Kracauer from 1918 taught him more than his academic teachers (Mann, quoted in Adorno 1973a:xii; Adorno 1992b:58-59). Teddie attended the Kaiser Wilhelm Gymnasium in Frankfurt, and he went on, at the age of only seventeen, to the recently-established Johannn Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt to read philosophy, music, sociology and psychology. His first journalistic post, however, was as Frankfurt correspondent of the 'arch-conservative Leipzig Zeitschrift fur Musik', but whether Adorno's views were in sympathy with those of the paper is not clear. However, in that same year, 1923 - the year classical Marxists see as decisive for the defeat of the German revolution, and so as the beginning of what later became Stalin's full-blown counter-revolution in Russia - Adorno made the acquaintance of Walter Benjamin, and then that of Leo Lowenthal and Max Horkheimer, all of whom were to become highly influential on his thought (Adorno 1991c:xi). Certainly, Adorno was academically precocious: he published two radical-sounding articles before he went to university (Adorno 1992b:258-266); and he completed his doctorate on Husserl in 1924 at the age of 21.

Apparently, the German Revolution which began in 1918 and lasted until 1923 did not

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14. All empirical information on Adorno's life derives from Wiggershaus 1994, supplemented by Jay 1973 and Jay 1984, unless specifically referenced elsewhere. His officially-registered name was Wiesengrund-Adorno, and that was how he signed his music journalism from the 1920s onwards (Paddison 1993:8; Wiggershaus 1994:41). To Benjamin in 1933-35 he was known as Wiseengrund or even Herr Wiesengrund, but this had relaxed to Teddie some time before 1938 (Scholem and Adorno 1994: 393,397,488,494,549,579,585).
 15. Of course, several famous Marxists - including Marx himself, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky - came from bourgeois backgrounds, but Adorno seems to have been proud of it. According to one account, Adorno 'discovered (not without pleasure) that his Italian ancestors had held a title of nobility' (Buck-Morss 1977:191 note 4); but Morten Michelsen tells me that the Doge of Genoa held an elected bourgeois position, not an hereditary aristocratic one.

encourage Adorno to look towards historical materialism for an explanation of the events which were going on around him as an undergraduate (Harman 1982). In fact in 1924 he was 'close to conversion' to his mother's Catholic faith, into which he had been baptised, though he had been later confirmed as a Protestant (Wiggershaus 1994:72; Jay 1984:19; Buck-Morss 1977:2,192 note 11). However, in 1925 - the same year he became Frankfurt correspondent for the 'mainstream Berlin journal *Die Musik*' - he met the socialist sympathiser and composer Alban Berg at a Frankfurt concert (Adorno 1991c:x,xi,13; Lunn 1982:196);¹⁶⁶ and from January 1925 to 1928 he lived in Vienna (and sometimes Berlin) without having to earn a living.¹⁶⁷ Wherever he went in Vienna Adorno mixed in avant-garde circles. For example, he lived in the same pension as Arthur Koestler,¹⁶⁸ met Hanns Eisler and Georg Lukacs, became the student of Alban Berg and Edward Steuerman and was welcomed into the elite Schoenberg circle (though the latter didn't have a high opinion of Adorno's compositions). From 1927, Adorno spent a lot of time in Berlin, visiting Gretel Karplus; but though he failed to get a music critic's job on the *Berliner Zeitung* he associated with Benjamin, Kracauer, Bloch, Klemperer, Moholy-Nagy, Eisler, Brecht, Weill and Lenya before he returned to Frankfurt. There, as Hitler's Nazis gathered strength from 1928 to 1931, he was associate editor of the Vienna-based *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, an avant-garde publication owned by a music-publishing firm, Universal Edition - though he left when the periodical moved too close to the Communist Party - and he also contributed to a number of other avant-garde journals (Adorno 1991c: xi,12,142 note 24; Buck-Morss 1977: 20,33-34,203 note 144; Scholem 1981:158-60; cf Rose 1978:9). In 1930 Adorno spent some more in Berlin, writing amongst other things a favourable review of Brecht's *Mahagonny* on account of its 'disenchantment from the capitalist order' (Lunn 1982:198; Buck-Morss 1977:127). However, in 1931, when he was 28, he became a *privatdozent* (part of the process necessary for qualifying as a university teacher) at Frankfurt University, lecturing in philosophy; and in that year he also made informal contacts with the Institute of Social Research, whose Director was by then Horkheimer.

In spite - or perhaps because - of these experiences, and aside from the occasional reference to the 'bourgeoisie' and to 'class struggle', as well as to Lukacs' mediation of Marx (he discovered Lukacs' *Theory of the Novel* in 1921), Adorno's writings up to 1931 seem virtually unaffected even by Second International 'Marxism' or by the formulations associated with Stalinism, let alone by the classical Marxist tradition (Adorno 1994:13; 1977a:128-29; Lunn 1982:201; Buck-Morss 1977: 197 note 82,210-11 note 228,211 note 230).¹⁶⁹ However, in September and October 1929 he had a series of 'unforgettable conversations' with Benjamin at Königstein, and these exchanges are usually regarded as cru-

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16. Berg was later condemned by the Nazis as a 'cultural Bolshevik' and suffered a cut in royalty receipts as a result (Adorno 1991c:31).
 17. He later acknowledged he enjoyed a privileged existence, 'with both the element of fortune and of guilt that this involves', including the development of his palate (Adorno 1991c:16; Adorno 1993c:163; Buck-Morss 1977:16).
 18. To Koestler in 1925, Adorno was 'a shy, distraught, esoteric young man with a subtle charm' (Jay 1969:63).
 19. This was not unusual. Peter Wicke tells me that the eclectic use of bits and pieces of Marx was part of Germanophone academic discourse at this period, perhaps especially in Vienna. Evidently, Benjamin and Brecht were discussing the Stalin-Trotsky struggle in 1927 (Scholem 1981:164); but there is no sign of any interest from Adorno. It wasn't that Benjamin didn't try to interest the Adornos in Trotsky's writings. In 1932, for example, he wrote to Gretel that he had finished Trotsky's 'history of the February Revolution' and had almost finished his autobiography. He enthused: 'I think it has been years since I have consumed anything with such breathless excitement. There is no question but that you must read both books' (Scholem and Adorno 1994:393).

cial to Adorno's interest in Marxism (Paddison 1993:34). Certainly, he was keenly interested in Benjamin's ideas about culture and made them the basis of his second thesis and his inaugural lecture. He also used them in his early teaching, though (as Benjamin noted) without troubling to indicate their source in the 'catalogue' (Scholem 1981:179,191). In fact, Adorno's second Habilitation concluded with 'quite a surprising Marxist turn'; but, characteristically, he failed to attribute his new-found materialism to Marx (Wiggershaus 1994:82; Buck-Morss 1977:18-19,268 note 22).²⁰

In 1931, for example, Adorno formally accepted Marx's reproach to philosophers about the need to change the world, but he also wrote - in an apparently precocious 'postmodernist' fashion - about 'the failure of efforts for a grand and total philosophy'. Similarly, while he understood that 'the annihilation of the question' underlying Marx's dictum 'compels praxis', because 'mere thought cannot accomplish this', the form of 'praxis' which he favoured put 'philosophic interpretation' first and foremost: 'The task of philosophy is not to search for concealed and manifest intentions of reality, but to interpret unintentional reality', since the 'text which philosophy has to read is incomplete, contradictory and fragmentary, and much in it may be delivered up to blind demons' (see also Buck-Morss 1977:24-36; Jay 1982:78). He also used some bits and pieces of Marx's thought in the essay 'On the Social Situation of Music' in 1932, though he later insisted he was amongst those who did not 'play the game', and represented himself as having been 'forced into inner emigration before the Third Reich broke out'.²¹ Thus while Anderson claimed (1976:27) that Adorno 'does not seem to have turned towards Marxism until after the Nazi seizure of power in 1933', the fact was that by date he was moving away, especially in terms of method.²² And while he formally accepted that the 'big house' of European bourgeois culture 'has long since decayed in its foundations and threatens not only to destroy all those inside it, but to cause all the things to vanish within it', Adorno's greatest anxiety in the early 1930s was that the impending crisis might do away with what was 'irreplaceable'. Perhaps this was why he felt that 'philosophy must learn to renounce the question of totality', since the working-class might have better politics, but the bourgeoisie had the better art and culture, and he wanted to pick and choose from both (Adorno 1977:124,126,127,129,130; Adorno 1974a:57).

20. He produced his first *Habilitation* (attempting to qualify himself as a university teacher) on Kant and Freud in 1927, but withdrew it before examination, because Cornelius refused to accept it on the grounds that it was a simple repetition of some of his own work, 'embellished with a great many words' (Wiggershaus 1994:82). This was the same Cornelius whom Lenin attacked for his 'explicitly *arch-reactionary* views' and as a 'police sergeant in a professorial chair' (Lenin 1977:14:219,344).

21. Presumably, this 'game' was adherence to the German Communist Party, the KPD; yet Adorno probably saw Marx's *1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* before they were published in Germany in 1932, through his links with the Institute, which had its KPD connections and so received photostat copies of Marx's early manuscripts from Ryazanov in Moscow (Buck-Morss 1977:62,207-8 note 198,215 note 51)

22. Adorno remained 'relentlessly critical of the 1932 article', and for years permission was refused to anyone who wished to reprint it (Adorno 1978a; Blomster 1976:85 notes 10 and 11; Buck-Morss 1977:218-19 note 89). Of course, we need to bear in mind that the defeat of Trotsky and the Left Opposition in Russia in the later 1920s had a bearing on all these issues (see Cliff 1988 and 1993). Like many another, however, inside and outside the various communist parties, Adorno seems not to have been in touch with (or even to have read much by) the surviving members of the classical Marxist tradition (see above, page 8 note 19). According to Adorno's own account in a letter to Benjamin in November 1934, his current project on Mannheim was 'the most strongly Marxist work that I have undertaken as yet', but this did not appear in print until the 1950s, and even then without the Marxist terminology (Buck-Morss 1977:226 note 76). By 1933, Horkheimer was already claiming that the proletariat exhibited 'bourgeois traits' (Slater 1977:115).

The Cafe Marx

One theory about Adorno is that his relationship with the Institute of Social Research made him into a Marxist, but there are some problems with this idea.²³ The Institute was proposed in 1923, the same year as the defeat of the German Revolution; and it was opened in 1924 on the basis of an annual grant of 120,000DM from Herman Weill, a German-born grain merchant who had become a multi-millionaire in Argentina. The impetus came from Herman's son, Felix, a self-styled 'salon Bolshevik' who had inherited one million gold pesos from his mother in 1913, but who had been attracted by left-wing causes from 1918. (He had been briefly arrested for socialist activities in 1919, expelled from Tübingen University and banned from the state of Württemberg.) But while the original conception had been for an Institut für Marxismus to deal with pressing problems such as revolution, party-organisation and immiseration from a historical-materialist perspective, it was actually founded as the Institut für Sozialforschung, 'in the interests of academic recognition' (Slater 1977:1, 149 note 3).

The first Director, Carl Grünberg, was no Bolshevik, since he came from the tradition of Austro-Marxism;²⁴ and he was no fetishiser of democracy either, since the Institute was run under the 'dictatorship of the director' from the very beginning (Jay 1972a:289; Jay 1985:284 note 2).²⁵ Grünberg announced he had no wish to run a 'school for "mandarins"' and he wasn't interested in psychological questions; but the nature of the early research into the history of the labour movement in Germany and elsewhere led to links with David Ryanzov's Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. In fact, the Moscow institution seems to have been Weill's model, and Ryanzov probably visited the Institute not long after it was founded. Whether there was a political connection with Moscow is not wholly clear, but Henry Pachter later recalled that during its 'first decade' the Institute's 'links with Weimar's organised Left, most importantly the Communist Party, were still strong' (Jay 1985:258). However, it was economic and not political patronage and connections - Weill's generous grant, plus further donations from himself and others - which enabled the Institute staff to negotiate with the University authorities from a position of relative independence and which allowed Grünberg the room for manoeuvre to declare himself one of the 'adherents of Marxism' in public, even if his political activity 'never went beyond the boundaries of middle-class reformism' (Slater 1977:2; Wiggershaus 1994:28). So while the Institute was known by its students as the 'Cafe Marx', we need to be clear about the Institute's attitude to Marx and to actually-existing 'Marxism'.

Felix Weill conceived of the Institute as a place which would be able to operate 'independently of party-political considerations' (Slater 1977:1); yet all the full-time staff at the Institute in the early years were 'committed socialists, irreconcilably to the left of Social Democracy'.²⁶ Some of the staff had 'an ambiguous relationship to the German Communist Party, the KPD, yet they had no organisational affiliation' of a collective nature to any

23. The Institute was not known as the 'Frankfurt School' until it returned from the USA to West Germany in 1950, according to Jay (1973:xv note); and even then the name was used mainly by outsiders. So, given the problems set out in Held 1980 and below, I prefer the term 'Institute' or the German 'Institut' here'.

24. A clear understanding of the differences between Second and Third International traditions was and is crucial to an understanding of the twentieth century, as well as to an explanation of Adorno's relationship with aspects of Marx's thought. for the reader unfamiliar with the distinction and its historical consequences, see, for example, Hallas 1985.

25. Grünberg seems to have been appointed because Felix Weill, Horkheimer and Pollock had not yet qualified for a professorship while the University insisted on that rank for the Director's job (Slater 1977:2).

organisation. Weill himself, for example, worked during the 1920s on the periphery of the right wing of the KPD, and was a close friend of Clara Zetkin and Paul Frolich, but he never joined; and it seems that most of Horkheimer's closest colleagues had never been politically active. True, Marcuse had had some practical political experience in the German socialist party, the SPD, in 1917-18, but he is said to have left because of its 'betrayal of the proletariat' (Therborn 1970:66 note 3).²⁷ Langerhaus, Mandelbaum and Biehahn have been characterised as 'Korschists or Trotskyists', and yet Langerhaus (along with Wittfogel, Massing and Gomperz) have also been described as 'either members of or friendly towards the KPD' up until the 1930s (Wiggershaus 1994:30-31,34). According to one account, Grossman and Pollock were Party members, Wittfogel was a KPD candidate in Reichstag elections and Sorge became a 'master spy for the Soviet Union and was executed in Japan' (Tar 1977:17). Whatever was the case, Horkheimer's early sympathy for the politics of Rosa Luxemburg did not long survive her murder in 1919; and the defeat of the German Revolution in 1923 seems to have put paid to any idea of collective involvement in practical politics amongst Horkheimer and his closest associates. Moreover, I have found no evidence that they paid even the slightest attention to Italian fascism (Tar 1977:74).

However, Horkheimer seems to have remained intellectually optimistic about the Soviet experiment until at least 1927 and possibly into the early 1930s (Slater 1977:59; cf Wiggershaus 1994:63); while Gumperz and Borkenau probably kept their KPD cards until the later 1920s.²⁸ Intriguingly, Pollock - whose name 'most frequently appeared in police files' because of his dealings with the KPD Central Committee (Wiggershaus 1994:33) - managed to meet members of the Left Opposition in Moscow so late as 1927, and he was still discussing socialist construction in 1929;²⁹ and Wittfogel got into some kind of 'hot water' in Moscow in 1929. Whether this indicates a connection with (or a sympathy for) the Left Opposition is not yet clear, but it seems likely that at least some Institute staff occupied a minority position on the political left. What we do know is that from 1929 until perhaps 1939 not only did the Institute maintain a political quietism but it also kept an almost complete official silence about events in the USSR. Sadly, this was the time of the disastrous Third Period line that fascism was an inevitable and culminating phase of capitalism, so the Institute's passive acceptance of this line strongly suggests that on international political questions at least they were hegemonised not by classical Marxism (which was, admittedly, a besieged and marginalised tradition at this point) but by one of Stalinism's grossest and most expensive errors.

In late 1920s Germany, quietism was not equivalent to neutrality. Even Felix Weill came

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26. The idea for the Institute might well have been discussed at a 'Marxist Study Week' in 1923, which was attended by Weill, Korsch, Lukacs, Wittfogel, Pollock, Gumperz and others.
27. Marcuse was probably not very active in the SPD, but he seems to have left because of the election of ex-officers onto the Soldiers' Councils and because of the SPD's complicity in the murders of Luxemburg and Liebknecht.
28. According to Adorno, Borkenau's expulsion came in 1929, partly because of the Stalinists' 'social-fascism' strategy, which led to the suicidal declaration that the SPD and not the Nazis was the main enemy (1991b:236). Gumperz left the Institute, became a stock-broker and, in the 1940s, wrote an 'anti-communist' book.
29. Pollock evidently went at the invitation of Ryazanov, who published in the *Zeitschrift* in 1930 and paid a visit to Frankfurt in the early 1930s, before being purged by Stalin. Ryazanov had previously 'constantly clashed with Lenin', but at the Tenth Congress he also had the confidence to tell Stalin "Koba, don't embarrass people. Theory is not your strong point." He also kept in contact with Trotsky and Rakovsky after Stalin had them banished, but he himself was banished to the Saratov region in 1931. According to Antonov-Ovseyenko, Stalin 'had Ryazanov done away with altogether' some time after that (1981:129).

under pressure from a Central Committee member of the KPD, perhaps because his father's death in 1927 left him holding the purse-strings: 'What a pity, Felix, that you never joined the Party. Otherwise we could expel you now'. Such hackish treatment may have influenced Weill to battle with the Faculty, the University and the Minister of Culture to establish a new Chair of Philosophy and Social Philosophy so that Horkheimer could become Director after Grunberg's health took him out of activity in 1928 (Slater 1977:9-10). indeed, these pressures may also have encouraged Horkheimer and his immediate circle of colleagues to shift the Institute's research-orientation away from Grunberg's priorities, with both academic and political effects. Horkheimer brought a 'Hegelianised, Lukacs-oriented Marxism' to the Institute 'with the original contribution of a Freudian approach to social psychology', though Freudian analysis had been officially denounced as 'bourgeois aestheticism' by the Communist Party since 1925 (Buck-Morss 1977:19,21; see also Jay 1982:74-75). Intentionally or not, this shift also had the effect of further marginalising Grossman, a former member of the Polish Communist Party, and someone who is said to have had an unreflective enthusiasm for the Soviet Union right up until the 1940s; though Wittfogel seems to have given up the struggle inside the KPD by 1934 and Paul Massing was lucky to be allowed to leave both Moscow and the Party in 1938. What looks to have been an uneven and messy political split away from Moscow's influence by the Institute is also confirmed by the transfer of the endowment to Holland (and not to Moscow) from 1931 onwards and by the transfer of the publication of the *Zeitschrift* to Paris, where it remained until the Nazi invasion of 1940. Paradoxically, these tactical manoeuvres still fitted the logic of the Comintern's line, since there was no question of staying in Germany to fight;³⁰ and this reorientation may also have encouraged Adorno to make overtures to the Institute in 1931, though he was kept at arm's length for some time.

Later in his life, Adorno was quite open about his own political naivete in the early 1930s: 'I remember my fright when an aristocratic girl of vague origins, scarcely able to speak German without an affected foreign accent, confessed to me her sympathy for Hitler, with whose image hers seemed incompatible' (Adorno 1974a:188). In fact, he blamed himself for not seeing Nazism coming: 'In a real sense, I ought to be able to deduce Fascism from the memories of my childhood'; but while the 'outbreak of the Third Reich did, it is true, surprise his 'political judgment' it did not surprise his vaguely mystical 'unconscious fear' (Adorno 1974a:192). However, even after this revelation there seems never to have been any question of political commitment, but only pity and contempt for those who, like himself presumably, stood by and watched:

No-one who observed the first months of National Socialism in Berlin in 1933 could fail to perceive the moment of mortal sadness, of half-knowing self-surrender to perdition, that accompanied the manipulated intoxication, the torchlight processions and the drum-beating. How disconsolate sounded the favourite German song of those months, 'Nation to Arms', along the Unter den Linden.

Looking back from 1951, Adorno seems to have believed the Comintern's vulgar materialist and economic reductionist line that it was all inevitable: 'Germany's position in the competition between imperialist powers was, in terms of the available raw materials and of her industrial potential, hopeless in peace and war. Everybody, and nobody, was stupid enough to overlook this' (Adorno 1974a:104).

30. In 1935, Dimitrov had pronounced that 'fascism in power is the open and terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinist and most imperialistic elements of finance capital' (quoted in Tar 1977:74-75).

Adorno later claimed that there was no active political option in the late 1920s and early 1930s, certainly not the KPD: 'Anyone who pointed, for example, to the lack of any spontaneous resistance by the German workers was told in reply that things were so much in a state of flux that such judgments were impossible' (Adorno 1974:113). But the intelligentsia proved equally unsatisfactory. The 'political impotence of the Weimar Republic in the face of Hitler' was caused by both moral and intellectual feebleness, if not outright complicity:

how completely the German mind failed against an opponent to whom all the substantial power of the German philosophy of history seemed to have passed. Pedantic punctiliousness in the concrete, wordy conformist optimism in the idea, and, often enough, an involuntary concession of weakness in the assurance that after all things are not yet so bad with our culture...[was] all that German philosophy and science could bring to bear against a man who rebuked them as a sergeant-major would dress down a rookie. Behind their consequential helplessness one could almost suspect the presence of a secret impulse to obey the sergeant-major in the end.

Yet while he sought to differentiate himself intellectually and morally from the 'helplessness' of every other representative of 'German philosophy and science', Adorno, too, failed to act (Adorno 1941c:306). As for the careful and impassioned classical Marxist analysis of the rise of Nazism published by members of the defeated Bolshevik Left Opposition, especially between 1930 and 1933, Adorno (like many another) seems to have remained in complete ignorance of its existence or importance (see Trotsky 1972).³¹

Quietism did not make him immune, however. He was deprived of his right to teach in September 1933, but he was still hoping for a music critic's job on the liberal Berlin newspaper, the *Vossische Zeitung*, late in 1933. In fact, he was quite prepared to describe Muntzel's music uncritically as 'consciously National Socialist' and to refer to Goebell's notions about 'Romantic Realism' (Wiggershaus 1994:157).³² In spite of that, Adorno was formally expelled in the Spring of 1934, but he was allowed to travel to London with the support of the Academic Assistance Council and of John Maynard Keynes, a friend of his father's. From there he moved to study as a graduate student at Merton College, Oxford, with Gilbert Ryle for a PhD supervisor, and he contributed two articles to the Institute's *Zeitschrift* in 1936 and 1937 under the pseudonym of Hektor Rottweiler. For all this caution his reputation at Oxford was as a 'musician' and not as a philosopher, let alone as a political activist, though he privately complained to Krenek that he had to 'Screw back my work to a

31. Horkheimer and his associates were rather more decisive. So early as 1930, a Red Student Group was formed at Frankfurt University to oppose Nazi provocations. However, in January 1933, Horkheimer and Pollock's house was taken over as a barracks by Hitler's SA, though the occupants had been tipped off and Horkheimer and his wife were living in an hotel near Frankfurt Station. For the rest of the semester Horkheimer was chauffeured from his Geneva apartment to Frankfurt University; but in February 1933, one month before the Nazi seizure of power and after repeated warnings from Lowenthal, the Institute was moved to Geneva, making its subsequent closure 'for tendencies hostile to the state' in Germany in March 1933 something of a formality. (The buildings were confiscated on the pretence that they were 'Communist property', but the Institute's library was saved by having been registered under the London School of Economics' name.)

32. In a letter to Benjamin in April 1934 Adorno intimated that he was prepared to accept the situation for 'non-Aryan authors' such as himself, since all that involved was taking a loyalty oath; but he also showed signs of concern as to how long the Nazis might remain in power (Buck-Morss 1977:138). This may have added to the coolness between Adorno and Walter Benjamin which had taken place by 1934, when the latter became decisively influenced by Brecht's activist and internationalist perspective - Adorno thought of Brecht as a 'wild man'. Confusingly, however, in May 1935 Benjamin wrote to Adorno after a 'long interruption in our conversation extending over many years' (Wiggershaus 1994:192; Scholem and Adorno 1994:488).

child's level in order to remain intelligible' (Buck-Morss 1977:138-39; Rose 1978:110). On the other hand he complained bitterly that he was not kept informed about the Institute's movements and that he had been left 'without any indication from the Institute as to where to go or what to do'; and he confided to Horkheimer in 1934 that he felt 'more or less like a girlfriend pressing to get married' for many years. Apparently, he lost no opportunity to undermine Marcuse, Fromm and Kracauer, whom he evidently saw as rivals (Wiggershaus 1994:128,157).

Benjamin, Kracauer, Bloch and Brecht had already left Berlin before April 1933, and Horkheimer and many others left for the USA in 1934; yet Adorno continued to maintain a house in Nazi Germany and to spend all his holidays there. In fact he made frequent trips to visit his family in Frankfurt and Gretel Karplus - whom he married in September 1937 - in Berlin (Lunn 1982:208). Politics, domestic or international, were obviously not a priority. For example, he seems to have been silent about the war in Spain, though he found ample time to worry about furniture. In terms of his academic ambitions, he kept his options open until the Institute itself was settled, but he must have known of Horkheimer's hopes to re-established the Institute in London. However, once the negotiations with the London School of Economics fell through in 1934, other plans had to be made. However, by 1935, with an annual income of \$30,000 and an additional grant from Weill of \$100,000, the Institute's negotiations were successful with Columbia University in New York; though there were hiccups, as when the value of the Institute's assets fell from 3,900,000 to 3,500,000 Swiss francs in 1937-38.

Adorno 'seems to have naively hoped that the Nazis were a passing phenomenon and he might still salvage his career' (Jay 1984:31). In fact, his main anxiety over going to the USA was not political but economic. Horkheimer had to reassure him that there would be the 'adequate basis for your life, which you rightly desire': in fact, 'the opportunities are there in America for you and Gretel to live a really upper-class life' (Wiggershaus 1994:237).³³ Apparently, this was not a concern confined to Adorno, since while the full-time staff at the Institute 'may have been relentless in their hostility to the capitalist system', they 'never abandoned the lifestyle of the haute bourgeoisie'.³⁴ However, at a private level, economic questions became more pressing for Adorno after his emigration in 1938. In January 1939 his father was detained by the Nazi authorities in Frankfurt: 'his office rooms were demolished, and shortly thereafter he lost the rights to his entire assets'. Eventually, Adorno's and Lowenthal's parents escaped via Cuba to the USA, but with that source of income gone, Gretel had to write to Benjamin in May 1939 regretting that she and Teddie were 'no longer financially solvent enough' to support him with cash (Buck-Morss 1977:159,164).

Midnight in the century

Seemingly, it was some time after Hitler came to power when Adorno's intellectual interest in historical materialism was rekindled by his correspondence with Walter Benjamin. In

33. Adorno later recalled rather sourly that 'Currency regulations and special taxes forced the intellectuals literally to emigrate as beggars', so that 'The Nazis' idea that this would keep those they hated from being viewed with favour in the places they found refuge was not far wrong' (Adorno 1992b:71).

34. In fact, Horkheimer and those closest to him exercised a considerable amount of patronage power. Between 1933 and 1942, aside from their own stipends, they spent \$200,000 on 116 doctoral students and fourteen post-doctoral researchers; and even in New York Adorno seems to have been quite accustomed to dealing with housemaids (Adorno 1969:338)

March 1936 Adorno was writing abstractly about a 'true account of the relationship of the intellectuals to the working class' on the unargued premise that such a relationship was necessary and inevitable:

It is not bourgeois idealism if, in full knowledge and without mental prohibitions, we maintain our solidarity with the proletariat instead of making our own necessity a virtue of the proletariat, as we are always tempted to do - the proletariat which itself experiences the same necessity and needs us for knowledge as much as we need the proletariat to make the revolution (1973b:67).³⁵

This was not an argument which might lead Adorno to thoughts of any party affiliation, however: instead, his interest was in the 'further development of the aesthetic debate' which Benjamin had 'so magnificently inaugurated' (Adorno 1973b:67). Politically, he was more pessimistic than ever; but there were obviously still some illusions in the USSR. In 1936, he wrote to Horkheimer that 'In two years at most, Germany will attack Russia, while France and England stand back on the basis of the treaties which have been signed by them'. Consequently he was anxious that 'in the current situation, which is truly desperate, we should really maintain discipline at any cost' and 'not publish anything which might damage Russia' (Wiggershaus 1994:162). Nearer home, Adorno's respect for 'the proletariat' looks to have been purely formal and moral rather than concrete and political, and whenever he wrote about actual working-class people like the 'jitterbugs' (US dancers) his sympathy disappeared: 'For people to be transformed into insects they require as much energy as might well suffice to turn them into human beings' (Adorno 1994:52). Even so, he kept in touch with the Institute in the jitterbugs' homeland and he must have noted that his own ideas and attitudes were converging with those of the Institute's leaders, and especially those of Horkheimer.

There were in fact important academic and intellectual as well as political consequences following on from the Institute's transfer across the Atlantic. By 1937, Horkheimer announced a systematic shift of emphasis away from an explicit if problematical 'Marxism' and ideas about 'class domination' towards an effectively liberal-bourgeois perspective of 'social justice' and methods he liked to call 'critical theory'.³⁶ In December 1937, Horkheimer was stressing to Adorno the need to 'speak extremely scientistically', and to write 'not one word that can be interpreted politically', even though that meant avoiding 'expressions like "materialist"...at all costs'. Instead, a sort of code needed to be developed - 'fascism' became 'totalitarian doctrines', and 'communism' was changed to 'constructive forces within humanity' (Wiggershaus 1994:210). Thus, the post-1937 shift from adherence to 'Marxist Humanism' involved the risk of losing touch not only with any kind of political activism, but with the traditions, theories, methods and conceptual vocabulary of non-Stalinist Marxism, too. According to Jay, 'Adorno's role in this repudiation was crucial' when he crossed the Atlantic to look at the opportunities there in 1937, and when he finally emigrated in February 1938 (Therborn 1970:68; Jay 1972a:291).

We must not underestimate the material and related pressures, however. After all, this was the period described by Victor Serge as 'Midnight in the Century'; so Adorno's emigration and his effect on the Institute's politics came after the defeat of the Left Opposition, the horrors inflicted on the Russian peasantry and intellectuals, the gulags and the early Mos-

35. This was not one of the letters from Adorno to Benjamin which appeared in the correspondence edited by Scholem and Adorno (1994).

36. Simultaneously, and predictably, the marginalisation of the Stalinist Grossman was increasing, since after the first Moscow Trials his politics did little to endear him to the others.

cow Trials, not to mention the Stalinist's too-long delayed efforts at getting an anti-Nazi 'Popular Front' policy in Germany and the disaster of the 'Popular Front' policy in Spain. It is also important to stress that the Institute's policy-shift was driven by disappointment at what looked like the frustration of Marx's hopes for the working class: 'It was precisely when Horkheimer and his colleagues despaired of locating negative tendencies in the present social process that they began to defend the validity of philosophy per se once again' (Jay 1985:284 note 9). But rather than locate the problem in the politics of the reformist or Stalinist leadership of the European working class, Adorno, Horkheimer and the Institute sought to locate the problem in Lukacs' concept of 'totality' and, most of all, inside the workers' heads: Freudian 'psychology was introduced primarily to explain why the Western proletariat had failed to fulfill its historical role' (Jay 1985:109).³⁷ So, we need to respect the real difficulties, but they do not account for Adorno's acceptance of a full-time post at the Institute, or his readiness to take a job in the USA working for \$400 a month alongside the Research Director of the Columbia Broadcasting System, using \$67,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation on a project specifically geared to the needs of the capitalist broadcast system (Adorno 1969:341,343). This project claimed to show 'The Essential Value of Radio to All Types of Listeners'; yet when, in 1937, Kracauer had suggested a critical 'collaborative project with Adorno and Benjamin on "Mass Art and Monopoly Capitalism", the Institute rejected the idea as too costly' (Jay 1985:224).³⁸ At this point, any Marxist credentials Adorno may once have had looked very thin indeed.

By the later 1930s even the formally Marxist term 'proletariat' had given way in Adorno's writings to the idea of 'the masses', whose political ineffectiveness in stopping Nazism Adorno hope to explain by a theory about mass-produced cultural commodities. This theory was itself based on a theory that the increasingly monopolistic form of capitalism - which Horkheimer began referring to in 1939 as 'late capitalism' (Tar 1977:76) - exercised a kind of power unknown to Marx and to any of the members of the classical Marxist tradition. However, while Adorno took elements of Marx's third volume of *Capital* and then followed through the logic of only those elements, he also stood in need of a theoretical explanation of how these powerful cultural commodities worked inside the heads of the 'masses'. According to Rose (1978:91), this is why he 'always defended a strong, orthodox interpretation of Freud, against the late Freud himself' and 'against the neo-Freudian revisionists'. For Adorno, and against Marx, the 'masses' can now be thought of as being powerless in the face of outward threats, mainly because they are *defined* as powerless within their own heads (Adorno 1994:50; Adorno 1941:41); and so in this perspective Marx needed bringing up to date. It was as though Volosinov had never produced a classical Marxist critique of Freudianism in the late 1920s, demonstrating its inductive and unfalsifiable methods (Volosinov 1976), as if Wilhelm Reich had not produced a Marxist-influenced analysis of *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* in 1933 (Reich 1983),³⁹ and as if Trotsky had

37. Both Adorno and Benjamin saw themselves as undermining idealism from within by 'carrying out a dialectical self-dissolution of myth by putting a dialectical construction on the relation between myth and history'; and they did this 'in the light of an "inverse" theology, which saw earthly life from the point of view of those already redeemed, which decoded the elements of a materially distorted life as symbols of hope' (Wiggershaus 1994:211). Neither of them deigned to explain how they got outside 'materially distorted life' in order to offer such perceptions, however, or how they got beyond redemption to wherever it was they thought they spoke from

38. Wiggershaus suggests that the 'Art for Mass Consumption' project was Adorno's idea (1994:213); but we have already seen Adorno's virtual plagiarism of Benjamin's work (see above, page 8), and Kracauer was scathing about Adorno's habit of appropriating other people's ideas (Jay 1985).

never written from a classical Marxist perspective on the struggle against fascism in Germany from 1930 to 1933 (Trotsky 1972). For all that there were alternative perspectives, to Adorno, for all practical purposes, the Stalinern *was actually-existing 'Marxism'*.⁴⁰

By 1938, when the Moscow trials were underway, Adorno had to reconsider his position, but he continued to blame the victims, much as Baudrillard and Lyotard were to do a little later. ⁴¹ The 'masses' could be claimed to have 'regressed, arrested at an infantile stage'. While 'not childlike', they were 'childish': 'their primitivism is not that of the undeveloped, but that of the forcibly retarded'; and what confirms them in their 'neurotic stupidity', apparently, is that 'feeling of impotence' somehow caused by 'monopolistic production' of cultural commodities (Adorno:1978b:286,288). Amazingly, even the 'jitterbugs' seem to have 'regressed' further, and so their slim chance of attaining full humanity has evidently declined (Adorno 1978b:292). ⁴² It was (and was not) their own fault, since Adorno wrote that they had identified themselves with the 'inescapable product' of the capitalist culture industries; and irrespective of whether they were responsible for their own degradation the 'masses' had definitely become perverse, accepting 'displeasure' as 'pleasure'. Apparently, what was at stake now was nothing less than the 'liquidation of the individual' in both the working-class and the petit-bourgeoisie, who had somehow fused into 'the masses', since Marx's precise use of concepts of class and class-relations had been jettisoned somewhere in the Atlantic (Adorno 1978b:274,276). Other small pieces of Marxist luggage survived the voyage, however. According to Adorno, the commoditisation of cultural consumption had led to a situation which could be conceived of as 'exchange-value' taking the place of 'use-value for human beings' (Adorno 1978b:279): for example, the concert-ticket had somehow taken the place of the concert itself.

Of course, from a classical Marxist perspective there are some rather large problems with this partial synthesis of Marx and Freud, not the least of which is Adorno's corrosive and persistent sexism. He persisted with the assumption that the only locus of possible opposition to the status quo was the autonomous male individual produced by the bourgeois family, and his few references to women's oppression were one-sided and often acidic. For example, he wrote that women's emancipation had been 'warped' by the 'continued existence of traditional society', but he blamed that on the 'decay of the workers' movement' and on women themselves. 'Provided only a certain abundance of commodities are granted to them', evidently, women will have a tendency to 'reflect and identify themselves with domination' and the 'defects with which they pay for it, neurotic stupidity heading the list, help to perpetuate this state of affairs'. For Adorno, theirs is a 'sheltered unconscious, unmarred by intellect', so 'Without a single exception feminine natures are conformist'. Gretel, for all her university education and PhD, was apparently no exception, either; and while the couple had no children, her 'career' seems to have been acting as her husband's secretary (Buck-Morss 1977:206 note 188). Adorno felt sure of his ground here since 'the sound of any woman's voice on the telephone tells us whether the speaker is

39. Fromm evidently read Reich in 1932, but according to Slater he failed to understand Reich's method completely (1977:104-5). Reich's book, and his *What is Class Consciousness?* of 1934 were published pseudonymously, and they were both proscribed by the Nazis in 1935 as 'a danger to public security and order' (Reich 1983:20ff).

40. The parallels with ex-left new realists (and, of course, with recidivist Stalinists) in the 1990s are striking.

41. I owe this point to Keith Negus.

42. Sadly, Fredric Jameson sides with Adorno on this question (1967:16-19,25-26,40), and Edward Said openly identifies himself with Adorno's grotesque elitism (1991:3,96).

attractive'; but he did have some sympathy for the 'hen-pecked husband', if not for the gay man, because 'totalitarianism and homosexuality belong together'. (Adorno 1974a:92-93,96,111,173; Jay 1984:93). On the question of race, aside from anti-semitism, he is strangely silent (but see below, pp. 65-66, note 100).

There were, of course, several more problems in Adorno's fragmentary use of bits and pieces of Marx. How, precisely, has 'exchange-value' taken over from 'use-value', and what was the historical, socio-economic basis of this alleged transition? On what theoretical basis can part of Marx's analysis of tendencies within this capitalism of his day be extrapolated while other elements of the theory (and even the method of analysis) are ignored? What had happened to human agency while the objective factors did their deadly work; and how can there be a mechanical connection between commodities and the ways in which people think, feel and act? Even if Adorno could theorise such an effect, on what basis (and to what privileged position) could he himself have escaped? Was he in some mysterious way outside the 'total social process' he had stressed so recently in a letter to Benjamin, while for everyone else what Marx understood as 'relations of production' had suddenly and enigmatically frozen and the 'forces of production' lurched on independently (Scholem and Adorno 1994:583)? In short, had history stopped?

What makes sense of Adorno's theory and of all these questions, it seems to me, is the idea that he was trying to *invert* Marx's metaphorical Base and Superstructure idea from a materialist to an idealist conception, while retaining the radical aura of a Marxist-sounding rhetoric. What he does, usually implicitly, is to marry a static, pessimistic, vulgar materialist and eclectic conception of economics and politics to an equally static, pessimistic and vulgar materialist mediation of Freud, so the one reinforces the other (Slater 1977:95). For Adorno, the subjective factor in history has been, to all intents and purposes, theoretically abolished; and capitalism, as in the most extreme bourgeois fantasy, has outgrown its former contradictions. Or nearly so: the last piece of Adorno's jigsaw-puzzle comes from another direction, in that what little remains of the 'forces of production' (after capitalist commodity-production grabbed a huge share) has somehow been cornered by a remnant of the intelligentsia, just as the 'relations of production' froze, and so the possibility of political action disappeared down the vortex of the 'Negative Dialectics'.

This was an acknowledged perspective in Horkheimer's circle. Horkheimer wrote in 1937 that 'under the conditions of later capitalism and the impotence of the workers' movement before the totalitarian state's apparatus of oppression, truth has sought refuge amongst small groups of admirable men', who 'may at the decisive moment become the leaders because of their deeper insight' (Jay 1985:110; Tar 1977:37). Though it is rather difficult to see how 'truth' got a mind of its own, what such a 'truth' might consist of, or indeed who this self-appointed avant-garde were hoping to lead, the Institute's strategy of hibernation was evidently a conscious political decision, based on something like a Coleridgean notion of a 'clerisy' (Honneth 1979:47,60); and they evidently saw no call to pretend to be modest about their own sense of self-importance.⁴³

Prior to vital historical transformations, the truth can be the preserve of numerically small groups. History teaches that such groups, ignored and proscribed even by the oppositional el-

43. Superficially, and especially in anglophone academic 'common sense', such an accusation is still sometimes levelled at Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, to anyone with even a slight knowledge of how the Bolsheviks operated and of how often Lenin found himself in a minority, both before and after 1917, such a proposition is both lazy and ludicrous (Cliff 1975-79).

ements of society, are, none the less, steadfast and can, on the basis of their deeper insight, take the lead at the decisive moment (quoted in Slater 1977:81).

Thus in a paradox pleasing to one of the self-elected members of that remnant 'only individuals are still capable of representing consciously and negatively the concerns of the collectivity', and Adorno could reconcile himself to a comfortable political quietism (Adorno 1973:190).

In the face of such smugness, Callinicos' idea that 'a structural separation of theory and practice, represented by Marxist intellectuals and the working class respectively' had set in seems over-generous (1987b:179). Closer to home, I think, is Rose's belief that Adorno had already 'adapted features of Nietzsche's philosophy, and developed a sociologically diffuse concept of power which seemed to have absolved him of any further examination of the political process'; and so is her insight that Adorno spent the rest of his life mourning 'the "subject" which had lost its "substance", so his thought remained 'haunted by this ghostly missing agency' (1978:55,142). Even sharper, apart from his respect for Adorno's 'towering contribution', is Dick Bradley's diagnosis of Adorno's susceptibility to 'a particular Hegelian relapse of *Marxism*';⁴⁴ but Bradley fails to press through his important insight that such relapses can be found 'no less in "Stalinist" reduction' than in 'the apparent richness of the Frankfurt School'. It is, I believe, more than a question of a series of 'mis-understandings' 'at the heart of Adorno's "Marxism"' (Bradley 1980:17,30,48-49): the issue seems to be whether he was ever a Marxist at all. Adorno, we should recall, made no such claims.

We need to be clear of course that the only nominally Marxist tradition which was readily available to Adorno was either the Stalinist version or the Stalinoid mediation put about by people who felt attracted to the Stalinist Parties but who couldn't defend what they had done in practice in Spain, in the gulags, or at the Moscow Trials.⁴⁵ And while Benjamin retained some illusions in Stalinism until the Hitler-Stalin pact of August 1939, Adorno was not disoriented by that event, though he was evidently shattered by the intellectual loss represented by Benjamin's suicide in 1940 (Buck-Morss 1977:150,162,164). Adorno rejected the political and ideological dogma associated with Stalinism, yet for the rest of his life he kept coming back to one or other persuasive concept or piece of analysis from Marx. His difficulty, like that of many left-leaning academics and intellectuals today, was in taking Marx's methods of analysis and practical revolutionary conclusions as a whole, and particularly the fundamental premise about the centrality of the working class as the privileged agent of revolutionary change. Then as now there was a strong inclination to pick and choose from Marx, to revise or update him, or even to write him off as a utopian, a hopeless optimist who ought to have known that the 'proletariat' would commit the unspeakable offence of letting the left intelligentsia down yet again.⁴⁶ It seems appropriate

44. Bradley's own conception of Marxism in practice is not beyond criticism, however. He refers to Caudwell as 'the important English Marxist', puts 'the "Stalinist" period' in scare quotes and still refers to 'the Marxist tradition' in the singular, as though it were monolithic. It seems unlikely, then, that Bradley understands what 'a relatively "orthodox" Marxist' perspective might be; but his wrestling with this terminology and these different practices is indicative of the confusions on the Left in the 1980s and into the 1990s (Bradley 1980:9-10,24; Bradley 1992:18).

45. In May 1938, Adorno wrote to Benjamin from New York, noting that 'Several times I have seen Eisler. With great composure I listened to his miserable defense of the Moscow trials' (Buck-Morss 1977:289 note 137).

46. Once again, such strategies have been employed by ex-lefts in our own day as a cover for their subsequent unprincipled opportunism.

then to deal with Adorno's ideas and methods about popular music and song without mistaking him for a 'Marxist'.

Music, 'music', music

The question of how Adorno conceptualised music is not wholly clear.⁴⁷ In 1920, at the age of 17, he had written that 'the art of our time is faced with the question of its continued existence'; and when 'art' survived until the late 1920s, he wrote that 'music, unlike pictures and books, cannot be physically owned', which meant that 'for all its popularity with the bourgeoisie, it has always remained esoteric' (Adorno 1992b:259; Adorno 1994:13; see also Buck-Morss 1977:233 note 3). This is a confusing formulation to a non-Hegelian, mainly because of what it leaves out.⁴⁸ What had happened to musical copyright in sheet music or public performance, and what about music disliked by the bourgeoisie? By implication, Adorno seems to be writing of 'music' as something played in private, on a musical instrument, and not listened to from a recording; and so 'music' appears to have special connections with the members of one leisured class.⁴⁹ But if 'music' is humanly-produced sound, under what non-commoditised circumstances could it be learned or played? In any case, which music ever came into the public domain in a non-commoditised form in the twentieth century, or even in the nineteenth? And if what Adorno calls 'music' 'has always remained esoteric', who could possibly have built the pianos, and tuned or dusted them; and who did all that grubby manual labour while others relaxed at the keyboard (cf Habermas, quoted in Lunn 1982:162)? Could class - never Adorno's favourite sociological or political category - perhaps have a bearing here?

Under the pressure of the Nazis' rise to power Adorno seems to have come under the influence of some more elements of Marx's thought and had begun to tighten-up his rhetoric. In 1932, for example, he wrote that 'under no conditions is music to be understood as a "spiritual" phenomenon, abstract and far removed from social conditions' (Adorno 1978a: 130). Yet his working definition of what constituted 'music' is written about as a fragmented and unequally valuable cultural practice and form. He wrote to Ernst Krenek in September 1932 that

The social question can only be meaningfully posed on the basis of the aesthetic quality question. In other words, sociology should not question how music functions, but how it stands towards fundamental social antimonies, whether it sets about to master them or let them remain or even hide them, and this question leads only to what is immanent in the form of the work itself (Adorno, quoted in Jay 1984:135; cf Rose 1978:110).

So questions of value come first and they are answered by how (or if) the non-verbal content of an elite cultural practice relates to wider social issues. Of course, this means starting with the particular, not the general; and it also appears to mean, equally contrary to the assumptions and methods of classical Marxist analysis, that what Adorno knows as 'music' has the potentiality to have an enormous political effectivity. Cultural products and practices can, so to speak, have an historically significant material power: this part of the 'su-

47. This is particularly odd since twelve of the twenty-three volumes of his collected works are concerned with music (Jay 1984:131).

48. Morten Michelsen points out to me that Hegel thought that philosophy would be hegemonic in an ideal state.

49. Adorno's main objection to the music made by Paul Whiteman's band was the way he felt it 'has become exchangeable as a commodity against abstract units [of exchange] which are utterly foreign to its use' (quoted in Paddison 1993:42).

perstructure' can somehow determine the 'base';⁵⁰ but only a highly-trained musician and philosopher could do the necessary analysis.

Adorno seems to have believed that 'aesthetic forces of production' belong to the 'ideological superstructure', while relations of production belong to the 'culture industry' at the 'base' (Paddison 1993:127). Of course, classical Marxists never deny that culture, ideas and so on have power, but they do stress (against the idealists) that such power is not decisive.⁵¹ Lunacharsky, writing in 1927 (before Stalin defeated the Left Opposition) also hoped that 'Marxist theory and the history of art have completely rejected - and I might hope, buried as well - the view that music, like all art in general, simply reflects like a mirror what takes place in the base, i.e., in the economy' (Blomster 1976:99 note 54). And even earlier than that, Engels, writing to Joseph Bloch in 1890, made the classical Marxist position clear:

According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase (quoted in Eagleton 1976:9).

Sadly, such twisting has been going on for years - aided and abetted by the crudities of Stalinist cultural 'theory' - and it persists in the academy to this day, particularly amongst those who seek to justify an opportunist rejection of their supposedly 'Marxist' past, so even though Adorno seems to have inverted the power-relation in question here, what he turned upside down was wrong either way.

Then there are other problems of mediation, or perhaps of understanding. For all his gestures towards 'totality', even in 1932 Adorno uses terms such as 'light music' and 'vulgar-music' interchangeably, and he takes it for granted that the content of 'vulgar music is the obsolete or depraved material of art music (Adorno 1978a:158,160; Adorno 1974a:205; cf Harker 1985). Meanwhile, amongst the implied opposite of this 'vulgar' music - presumably, *serious* or *sophisticated* music: what I will call, for short, *music* - Adorno offers further distinctions. For him, Weill's *music* 'is today the only music of genuine social-polemical impact' because of a certain quality - its 'negativity'. Moreover, there is no question of a 'total' audience: that also is fragmenting, not only between classes but, in the crisis, within them, too. For example, 'the expropriation of the upper middle class through inflation and other crises has expelled this stratum of society from operas and concerts, exiling its members before the radio' (Adorno 1978a:144,151). However, there was a time when both *music* and the audience for *music* were less fractured and fragmented; and what changed this situation was the advent of total commoditisation:

The islands of pre-capitalist "music-making" - such as the 19th century could still tolerate - have been washed away: the techniques of radio and sound film in the hands of powerful monopolies and in unlimited control over the capitalistic propaganda machine, have taken possession of even the innermost cell of musical practices, i.e. domestic music making (Adorno 1978a: 128-29).

And given that sound film was not developed for public consumption until Al Jolson could be heard on *The Jazz Singer* in 1927, this happened very recently indeed.⁵²

50. A theme which, as Paul Brook reminds me, was taken up by reformist and Eurocommunist mediators of Gramsci in the 1970s and 1980s. For a full account of this mediation see Boggs (1976).

51. See for example Jakubowski 1990, which was first published in Danzig in German in 1936.

But was there something new about the ownership and control of these newer electronic media which had a particular effect on 'domestic music making'? After all, Mozart in the eighteenth century and Laurence Price in the seventeenth both knew about the market for music and song (Robbins Landon 1988; Harker 1987). Sadly, Adorno's writing on this question is particularly opaque. 'The role of music in the social process is exclusively that of a commodity; its value is that determined by the market', he begins in unimpeachably classical Marxist fashion. But then he continues: 'Music no longer serves direct needs nor benefits from direct application, but rather adjusts to the pressures of the exchange of abstract units. Its value - wherever such value still exists at all - is determined by its use: it subordinates itself to the process of exchange' (Adorno 1978a: 128). Had a historically-new form of 'the market' arrived with the wider ownership of radio sets in the early 1920s; ⁵³ and, if so, how was it cemented into place by the 'talkies' later in that decade?

A classical Marxist might well note that these cultural events coincided with the period between the defeat of the German Revolution in 1923 and the onset of the international capitalist crisis of 1929-1932, which culminated, in Germany, with the Nazis' rise to power. So when Adorno implies that this period of defeat for the working class and the left was not only politically decisive but also economically linked to the development of particularly powerful technologies of electronic mass-communication, which were generalised during a qualitatively new phase of the concentration of capital, resulting (in some unspecified way) in 'the total capitalistic propaganda machine', his idealism lurches over into the vulgarest form of materialism. Music is said to have been a victim of this mysteriously and one-sidedly determinist process - a creeping, undialectical, fatalistic and almost Weberian rationalisation of the system ⁵⁴ - after which it 'serves' and 'subordinates' itself; yet there is still some 'music' with 'value' (what I term music) in the world and this, in some unexplained way, escapes both the market and the commodity form. Music has been split, and only music can make a difference.

The coded language of suffering

From this point, Adorno refers to music as that which 'sketches in the clearest possible lines the contradictions and flaws which cut through present-day society' and which is 'able to do nothing but portray within its own structure the social antimonies which are also responsible for its own isolation'. This music will be 'the better, the more deeply it is able to express - in the antimonies of its own formal language - the exigency of the social condition', and thus to 'call for change through the coded language of suffering'. Such music has a social duty - though it is never clear to whom - and so have its producers, performers and

52. Paddison believes that 'the heyday of second Viennese School free atonality pre-1914' was the period which Adorno 'regarded as the radical high-point of twentieth-century music from which composers had subsequently retreated into diverse attempts to systematise their compositional procedures' (1993:5-6,44).

53. Writing in *Anbruch* in 1928, Adorno lamented that 'The family now listened to music on the gramophone instead of actively reproducing it by playing it. The result was to distance the music from the subject, whose role was reduced to passivity, indeed, subservience. The dog listening to his master's voice was the authentic trademark for the gramophone's effect' (Buck-Morss 1977:287 note 107). On January 24th 1938, Adorno wrote to Lazarsfeld: 'I am of the opinion that music undergoes certain qualitative changes on radio, which put the perception of it on a completely new basis' (Wiggershaus 1994:238). Is Morten Michelsen correct when he suggests that the decline in amateur music-making thought to have taken place between 1850 and 1930 had irrevocable effects on concert-hall listening? Had a pre-capitalist remnant been somehow 'washed away'?

54. I owe this point to Paul Brook.

critics, who are, presumably, not subject to the same constraints of commodification and victimhood as the majority, working-class audience. Since 'Theory.. stands in a dialectic relation to praxis, upon which it makes demands and from which it also accepts demands', then it follows that music is under the 'same obligation as theory to reach out beyond the current consciousness of the masses'. Music, in this sense, is a form of political practice; and only that musical practice which, like Weill's, possesses the quality of 'negativity', has any 'value' at all. There is no point, then, in analysing commercially-successful commoditised music, not even 'jazz', which, after early higher expectations, Adorno came to see is simply an 'upper bourgeois form' (Adorno 1935:735-36; Adorno 1978a:130,131,162): its 'vulgar' quality is part and parcel of the 'total capitalistic propaganda machine', and its 'light' character makes it transparent to the sophisticated cultural critic.⁵⁵ Adorno carefully avoids making any such explicit distinction, and so writes of 'music' (when it is not qualified by an adjective) formally as a totality; and this tendency towards abstract totalisation combined with concrete differentiation is a characteristic Adornian tactic. Implicitly, however, 'the masses' can be assumed to be incapable of the same analysis, and so presumably the production of commercially-successful music was a very simple matter indeed.⁵⁶

By the mid-1930s, Adorno had reverted to the idea that music in general was at crisis point.⁵⁷

The leverage of music - what they call its liberating aspect - is the opportunity to feel something, anything at all. But the content of the feeling is always that of privation. Music has come to resemble the mother who say, "Come and have a good cry, my child". In a sense it is psychoanalysis for the masses, but one which makes them, if anything, even more dependent than before (Adorno 1994:50).

Has music disappeared? And is liking - pleasure, or even 'desire' - a problem in itself for working-class people? Adorno privately confided that 'the subject of the "liquidation of art" has for years underlain my aesthetic attitudes', and that his 'emphatic espousal of the primacy of technology, especially in music, must be understood strictly in this sense' (Adorno 1973b: 64). Yet in fact what he attacked was not Marx but the vulgar materialist mediations of Marx's 'base and superstructure' metaphor:

I consider it methodologically unfortunate to give conspicuous individual characteristics from the realm of the superstructure a "materialistic" turn by relating to corresponding features of the substructure in an unmediated and even casual manner. The materialistic determination of cultural characteristics is possible only when mediated through the *total process* (Scholem and Adorno 1994:581-82; cf Adorno 1973b: 71).

Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and the other classical Marxists would have cheerfully agreed. Revealingly, however, Adorno leaves out of this formal totality both human agency and history.⁵⁸ It is as though culture, politics and economics had somehow locked solid, but left Adorno and the Institute magically free.

55. Paddison believes that Adorno used the term 'jazz' to refer to the 'jazz-influenced dance music of the 1920s and 1930s', but he seemed to know what he was doing (1982:210). Hannah Tillich recollected that 'Our friend Teddy played the Threepenny [Opera] melodies on ecstatic evenings - after a good dinner party and many good wines in the city of Frankfurt.' Evidently, Marlene Dietrich's *Falling in Love Again* and Lotte Lenya's songs from *The Threepenny Opera* were the songs of the day, and 'When Teddy sat down at the great piano and let go, we all listened' (quoted in Buck-Morss 1977:211 note 237).

56. Adorno somewhere claims that 'Not only do listening subjects lose, along with freedom of choice and responsibility, the capacity for conscious perception of music, which was from time immemorial confined to a narrow group, but they stubbornly reject the possibility of such perception'.

57. Later, he dated the moment at which 'modern music was going to "settle down" and enter the danger zone of safety' to around 1927 (1956:18,19).

Things fall apart

Writing sociology, during and after Auschwitz

From the late 1930s - certainly from 1939, the year of the Hitler-Stalin pact - Horkheimer began writing about the 'totalitarian states' and the Institute's perspective on Stalinism generally hardened. The move was signalled in his programmatic 1937 essay, 'Traditional and Critical Theory', where he shifted from advocating a balance between theory and empirical research to a retreat into theory, or even more significantly, into philosophy alone (Jay 1985:108; Slater 1974:174; Slater 1977:57). For Adorno, the problem was which currently-available 'philosophy' to use. He seems to have rejected Soviet 'Marxism' without looking for an alternative tradition to Stalinism, but he claimed he saw no hope in idealism, either, since it was 'a philosophy which tries to base such notions as reality or truth on an analysis of consciousness' and which 'starts with the general assumption that in the last instance there can be established an identity between the subject and the object' (Adorno 1940:5). This was a key political problem as well as an intellectual one; and as their perspectives converged, Adorno and Horkheimer could not accept either bourgeois humanism or actually-existing Stalinism as adequate, intellectually or politically. However, they wanted some sort of a relationship with the most advanced elements of the working class, and with the rest of that class too, but they also wanted a special status for themselves as 'those individuals who pronounce the truth' about the working-class and the Party. The problem was, then as now, as Brecht objected, 'You cannot just "write the truth"; you have to write it for, and to somebody, somebody who can do something with it' (Slater 1974:178,203).

However, since Adorno and Horkheimer had chosen to live where bourgeois liberalism was hegemonic and where, paradoxically, their previous anti-capitalist rhetoric made them wary of deportation up until 1944, the care which they and other Institute members took not to give offence to the US authorities was enormous. Lowenthal had to leave behind his collection of radical writings from the German Revolution, since Horkheimer was afraid that if his book-crates were opened by US Customs the Institute's staff would all be immediately deported. So early as August 1935, Adorno was extremely circumspect in his letters to Benjamin, suggesting that 'The fetish conception of the commodity must be supported by the appropriate passages from the person who discovered it', ie Marx (Scholem and Adorno 1994:501; cf 503); and Benjamin's work for the *Zeitschrift* was openly censored because of its Marxist terminology so early as 1936 (Buck-Morss 1977:286-87 note 98,287 note 103). This general adaptation proceeded through the later 1930s. From 1938 both Adorno and Horkheimer were comfortable about seeking funds (however unsuccessfully) not only from Jewish and Christian charities but even, by 1941, from the Rockefeller Foundation too.

Logically enough, this intellectual, economic and political dilemma led Adorno and Horkheimer to question Fromm's attempts to integrate Marx and Freud, and so profound was the intellectual struggle on this question that it led to changes in personnel. Fromm

58. Apart from 1933 there are very few dates in Adorno's writings; and it is interesting that the Institute never saw fit to employ a single specialist historian.

left in 1939, with \$20,000 in return for waiving his rights to tenure, ostensibly because he wished to 'pursue his own clinical and scholarly interests'; but it was probably because the rift caused by Adorno and Horkheimer's insistence on retaining Freud's libido theory in their research framework made genuine intellectual collaboration difficult.⁵⁹ Fromm understood that Freud's theory, with its tendency towards biological determinism and towards the hypostatisation of an immutable human nature, was 'incompatible with his more optimistic reading of Marx'. But Adorno and Horkheimer needed Freud's theory in order to try to justify 'individual, personal gratification as against the claims of the totality'; and so, if they had to choose, they seem to have been quite prepared to jettison Marx rather than Freud. Logically enough, once started down this road, Adorno and Horkheimer continued attacking their former colleague's work, and went on to doubt other more optimistic elements in Marx (Jay 1972b:291-292,349; Slater 1977:89-90,94,117,170 note 123).

Adorno was already on record as claiming that 'men' in 'our epoch' have 'become objects', but where did the 'subject', or what Marx knew as the subjective factor in history, go? Instead of explaining their ideological odyssey, Adorno and Horkheimer now simply started from their doubts about 'the assumption that the proletariat represented, even potentially, a truly universal class in whose name abstract, bourgeois humanism might be transcended', and then moved on to doubts about the idea of universality itself (Jay 1972a:292-93). For once, Marx could be marginalised, since according to Adorno he had 'no psychology at all, and for good theoretical reasons. The world Marx scrutinised is ruled by the law of value, not by men's souls. Today men are still the objects or the functionaries of the societal process' (Adorno 1941b:409). However, this seems to be a mistake: according to Geras (1983), Marx did operate with an implicit - but of course not transhistorical, universal or monolithic - notion of human subjectivity; and, in any case, Adorno's mediation of Marx leaves out of the question what for Marx was crucial, the fact that people *make* history, though not in circumstances of their own choosing. In Marx there was no separation between 'the societal process' on the one hand and men and women on the other. So when Adorno continued to invoke fragments of Marx's terminology and analysis without acknowledging that his overall analysis and method contradicted the conclusions that were then produced, this raises the question as to what, precisely, Marx was doing in this rhetoric at all.

There is in fact something more than usually mechanical and one-sided about Adorno's mediation of Marx in the early 1940s. What we begin to see in the emigrant Adorno is more like authoritarian idealism which, philosophically, formed part of the content of both the Stalinism he formally rejected and of (perhaps not unrelated) Hegelian idealism he partially embraced. Moreover he further underscored his move away from elements of Marx's analysis by pointing out that mid-twentieth century economic arrangements no longer appeared to fit the classical capitalist model. By 1941 he could write, apparently without irony, that there was a 'tendency of present economy to eliminate the market and the dynamics of competition' and that what had arrived to take its place was 'post-competitive capitalism'. By the time of his 'Reflection on Class Theory' of 1942, 'politics took prece-

59. In 1936, Adorno claimed he and Horkheimer were criticising Freud 'from the left'; but by 1940 Horkheimer announced that he was 'not a Social Psychologist nor are the members of our Institute...It appears to me that, in our epoch, men are undergoing much deeper changes than could be expressed psychologically' (Wiggershaus 1994:274). How he knew this, or how he proposed to research it, is not at all clear; but this kind of statement is of a piece with some of his later pronouncements, and especially his evolution towards religion in the later 1960s. See below, p. 71 note 105.

dence over the economy' in his writing, and by 1944 he seemed convinced that 'state capitalism' meant the 'state intervening in the economy so as to contain and displace its contradictions' (Adorno 1941a:29; Adorno 1941c:310; Wiggershaus 1994:319; Adorno 1993e:67). Marx was sometimes allowed to be correct, according to Adorno, as when the former argued that between epochal stages of history the forces of production came into conflict with the relations of production, since such a contradiction can happen, and can in fact become 'flagrant'. However Adorno also believed that twentieth century capitalist social relations had developed in ways Marx failed to predict: 'the forces of production are displaced into high, quasi -privileged spheres, isolated, and therefore even when they incorporate true consciousness, are also partly false. The lower spheres obey the predominant relations of production' (Adorno, quoted in Rose 1978:120). So, 'the masses' are (somehow) more or less boxed-in by 'frozen' relations of production, while the left intelligentsia are (somehow) stranded in a hopelessly compromised and contradictory position, hanging on to the strictly idealist notion that 'forces of production' can be ideas alone.

Adorno is rather reticent about the history of this alleged catastrophe, but we can begin to piece together a fuller sketch of what he appears to have had in mind. A key factor was the development of capitalism into its full-blown monopoly stage, at some point in the 1920s: 'The dependence of the most powerful broadcasting company on the electrical industry, or of the motion picture industry on the banks, is characteristic of the whole sphere, whose individual branches are themselves economically interwoven' (Adorno & Horkheimer 1986:123). As it happens, such a concentration of capital was then largely unknown outside North America and Western Europe, which are allowed in this account to stand in for the entire planet - Mayer wrote about Adorno that 'Europe sufficed for him entirely' (Jay 1973:187; cf Paddison 1993:224) - whereas in *Capital* Volume Three Marx had insisted that what were only tendencies within the capitalism of his own day would work themselves through when the system was truly international. Against Marx, and while appearing to use part of his analysis, Adorno and Horkheimer presume that what hasn't yet happened in Western Europe or North America won't happen anywhere else. According to Adorno (1991b:133), the 'relevance of finance capital' was 'incomparably greater in early industrialism than in later industrialism', but he would have found Lenin for example on the opposite side of the argument had he read *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, first published in 1899.⁶⁰

According to Adorno, then, there had been an objective economic development unknown to and unforeseen by Marx. As it happens, this argument had been pioneered at the Institute by Pollock since the late 1930s and early 1940s; but what Pollock tentatively theorised as 'state capitalist' economics slid into Adorno's writings as though it were an uncontroversial fact. However, Pollock's theory is not the same as that being developed concurrently by Cliff - see Pollock 1978 and Cliff 1988 - since Pollock believed that 'state capitalist' countries had no inherent contradictions, and were in some form of steady-state existence, whether formally totalitarian or formally democratic. In any case there was an argument within the Institute about Pollock's views. Neumann, for example, critiqued what he saw as Pollock's clear departure from Marxism in 1941; but Horkheimer went on regardless, developing Pollock's argument into a general theory of 'The Authoritarian State' in which

60. Adorno read some Lenin in 1936, when he commends him to Fromm, and he also mentions him in a letter to Benjamin (Buck-Morss 1977:149,288 note 120); but other references in Adorno's translated work are very scarce indeed.

'The bureaucracy has taken control of the economic mechanism which slipped away from the control of the bourgeoisie's pure profit principle', especially in the USSR. Fascism, Horkheimer believed, was a 'mixed form' of such a state. However, none of them was completely confident; so the article was distributed as part of one version of a collection of writings which went to a highly 'selected readership' (Wiggershaus 1994: 266,283,284,286; Arato & Gebhart 1978:110).

Adorno and Horkheimer also conceded that there had been a subjective historical political failure. They accepted the European intelligentsia 'did not keep up with the trend towards the culture monopoly' in 'pre-Fascist Europe'; but there is little to suggest that either of them felt any personal political responsibility. Instead there is a characteristically enigmatic aside on how even this disaster 'left intellect and creativity some degree of independence' and 'enabled its last representatives to exist - however dismally'. The 'masses' evidently had no 'intellect and creativity'; and in any case 1933 had marked a watershed after which there was nothing much to be done by anyone. Still the failure obviously troubled them, and in an even more enigmatic appendix Adorno and Horkheimer profess themselves convinced that it is 'better not to know all the answers' or to exhibit the 'clever superiority' of the 'educated' who 'made it easy for the barbarians everywhere by being so stupid' about the alleged impossibility of the Nazis coming to power (1986:132,209). The implication again appears to be that in saving themselves from the Nazis, Adorno, Horkheimer and the others were, in fact, saving that Coleridgean 'clerisy' in the interests of the future of all 'intellect and creativity'. They, and they alone, understood the 'unprejudiced position', typified the 'reasonable men' and thus embodied 'our traditional values and institutions' and perhaps even 'democracy' itself (Adorno et al 1964:1,10,242).

By 1950, Adorno and his collaborators believed that nothing less than a new form of human species had been produced; so the phenomenon of 'anti-Semitism' was written about in *The Authoritarian Personality* as nothing less than a 'social disease', something to be diagnosed 'in the psychology' and then to be treated by 'educational remedies'. According to the authors, the recent past had seen the rise of an 'anthropological species we call the authoritarian type' in an age where ideologies have 'an existence independent of any single individual'; and this personality was held to be 'a more or less enduring organisation of forces within the individual'. Yet as with most theses of this kind, the research was carefully organised so as to *prove* what was intuited by inductive methods, along familiar Freudian lines. The social, while significant, was apparently not crucial to 'diagnosing potential fascism'; and this is particularly ironic given that most of the programme's 'subjects' - like Freud's earlier in the century - were clearly identified as middle class, and not the allegedly fascist 'masses' of Adorno's earlier speculations (Adorno et al 1964:v,vi,ix,2,6,8,18,22-23,228-29; cf Volosinov 1976).

Theoretical practice in the 1940s

During the 1940s, 'the widening gap between the Institute's philosophy of history...and its empirical work' corresponded to a widening gap some of the staff perceived between the capitalist crisis and the working class (Jay 1985:108). Adorno believed that 'the masses' were in an historical and political box, from which they could escape, if at all, only by the work of others; yet in spite of the obvious crisis in social relations - 'the organisation of society still maintains men in poverty', and 'the absurdity of this poverty has become manifest' - there was nothing in practice to be done outside the academy. Practical politics was

not an option, and to 'adapt oneself to what is possible today no longer means adapting oneself at all. It means realising the objective potentiality' (Adorno 1941a:413). But through what means, and with what power, could such a 'manifest' absurdity ever be corrected given that, according to Adorno, Marx's privileged social power, the proletariat, appeared to be irreversibly crippled? The answer appears to have been what was later called 'theoretical practice'.

Ironically, Adorno had no means of discovering how the 'masses' behaved as 'objects', even as audiences, because his abstract theses 'proved untranslatable into testable hypotheses' and because he had come to believe that there was no scientific way to 'measure culture', least of all through the empiricist and positivist methods favoured by his new US colleagues (Adorno 1939:420; Jay 1973:222). Besides, he already knew what was really going on since by 1941 not only had 'the proletariat' become 'the masses' but 'the masses' had become *dough*. 'In our present society the masses themselves are kneaded by the same mode of production as the artifact material foisted upon them.' It followed then, that the 'customers of musical entertainment are themselves objects or, indeed, products of the same mechanisms which determine the production of popular music.' And so, with an impressively Marxist-sounding flourish, Adorno pronounces that 'Their spare time serves only to reproduce their working capacity' (Adorno 1941a:38). The problem was most acute amongst the youth, since 'individuals of the rhythmically obedient type are mainly found' among the 'so-called radio generation', those 'most susceptible to a process of authoritarian collectivism'; but the 'type is not restricted to any one political attitude. The adjustment to Anthropophagus Collectivism is found as often amongst left-wing groups as among right-wing groups.' So there was no hope. 'Indeed, both overlap: repression and crowd-mindedness overtake the followers of both trends. The psychologies tend to meet despite the surface distinctions in political attitude' (Adorno 1941a:40). It didn't appear to trouble Adorno that he had no scientific evidence for his assertions and that, rather like Freud, his methods were unfalsifiable.⁶¹ Neither did it seem to bother him that the research for *The Authoritarian Personality* had not involved sustained study of behaviour in relation to music.⁶²

What seems to be at work here then is an idea about a generalised essence of working-class subjectivity, arrived at not in any kind of materialist fashion, experimentally or theoretically, but inductively.⁶³ And this links to Adorno's peculiar mediation of Marx which, while opposing Stalinism quite correctly on the grounds that Marxism was not a closed body of received truths, does tend to pull him towards a sophisticated form of idealism.⁶⁴ Adorno failed to include a third possibility on his agenda: so Freudianism crept into the

61. This critique, made by Volosinov in Russia in the 1920s, may not have been available to Adorno; but other people in and around the Institute were, as we have already noted, aware of many of the difficulties with Freud's assumptions and methods - see above, p.28.

62. Morten Michelsen points out that the stress on empirical work gave way to an anti-empiricist stress after the publication of *The Authoritarian Personality* in 1950.

63. Adorno later claimed that his experience in the USA (which he knew as 'America') made him recognise that 'empirical investigations are not only legitimate but essential' and 'liberated' him 'from a certain naive belief in culture' by helping him to 'learn to see cultures from outside'. Where he was stationed to gain such objectivity is not clear. However, he also claimed to be still baffled by the 'utter obscurity of what we call musical experience', though that had not prevented him from writing about it for almost half a century (Adorno 1969:344,353,367).

64. C.L.R.James sometimes met Adorno and his colleagues, 'yet they hardly knew what to make of a Black man who shared their enthusiasm for Hegel'. James 'found them interesting, but by no means compelling, since he was in search of more materialist 'fragments of redemption' (Buhle 1988:106; see also Slater 1977:55).

space where the rest of classical Marxism might have been.⁶⁵ For him, the choice was between Stalinism or Adornoism; and the argument was all over bar the shouting by 1942, when he wrote (but did not publish) his 'Reflections on Class Theory'. Apparently he still accepted the underlying persistence of class, while simultaneously insisting that class consciousness and class struggle had waned, and so bourgeois class power had come into its own (Jay 1984:95). Adorno had managed to convince himself, like many another ex-left academic in our own period, that he had become a post-Marxist without having to go to all the trouble of reading much of Marx, let alone having to dirty his hands by trying to put the analysis to the test of practice; and in this context the rightward political odyssey of the Institute's leading staff looks remarkably consistent.

New realism

Serious political and economic questions faced the members of the Institute in the later 1930s and early 1940s. Horkheimer visited California in the summer of 1940, and moved there in April 1941; Adorno followed in November 1941. This move placed them as far away from Hitler's Germany as was possible in the USA, but it's not clear exactly when the Holocaust became known to them (cf Jay 1974:42,44). When Horkheimer had written in the *Zeitschrift* in 1939 that 'those who do not wish to speak of capitalism should be silent about fascism', he took care to do so only in German.⁶⁶ Adorno wrote in 1941 of the 'terrorism of today's concentration camps', of how Spengler 'prophesies Goebbels' and of 'the way Hitler shunts minorities from one country to another'; and he also took part in a research project designed to show that 'anti-semitism is one of the dangers inherent in all more recent culture' (Crook 1994:135,156; Adorno 1941c:309,314; see also Wiggershaus 1994:310). In any event, the pace of the Institute's research seems to have slackened, partly as a result of the forced ending of journal publication in Paris in 1940 but it also because of an unsuccessful decision to play the market with the Institute's funds, which resulted in a further drop in the value of its endowment and 'obscure reductions' in staff salaries. Apparently, an entire wall of Horkheimer's office 'was reserved for Stock Exchange quotations' (Wiggershaus 1994:249-50); so the adaptation to the opportunities of capitalism seems to have begun in material as well as ideological ways!⁶⁷ However, such capital-friendly activities did not free the Institute or its staff from some suspicions. In July 1940, the police paid a visit, allegedly as part of a general inspection, though no other institution seems to have been inspected; and possibly to counter such red-baiting, the Institute's formal links with Columbia University were eventually cut in 1946, though its New York premises had already been turned over to the US Navy for training purposes.⁶⁸

65. For a short explanation of the political and historical consequences of the Left's failure to act on the basis of classical Marxism, see Callinicos (1991).

66. This was to be the last German-language issue of the journal. The manuscript was ready by the end of 1938 but not sent to the printer until September 1939, after the Hitler-Stalin Pact, and then only after Horkheimer's piece had been 'repeatedly subjected to particularly careful review by his closest colleagues'. Evidently Horkheimer and his circle were digging in for a long time in 'this dreadful time of confusion, which may well last for some decades' (Wiggershaus 1994:257-58).

67. As Paul Brook observes, however, Horkheimer was evidently not clear on the practical implications of the analysis Marx set out in Volume Three of *Capital*.

68. Neumann protested in 1941 that 'it was not correct to say that the Institute was made up of Marxists. Some were Marxists, others were not. In any case, none of them was either directly or indirectly affiliated to the Communist Party' (Wiggershaus 1994:255-56). Interestingly, the two alleged 'communists', Wittfogel and Grossmann, did not have offices inside the New York Institute building, and neither did Adorno, who contented himself with dropping by once a week.

The suspension of the publication of *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science* in English in 1942 (after only one year) was for financial reasons, and there were staff cuts too. Apparently, Horkheimer's 'main concern became to reserve a large enough part of the assets early enough to secure his own scholarly work on a long-term basis', if need be at the cost of closing the rest of the Institute. As part of this strategy, he asked Lowenthal to transfer \$50,000 of the assets to a fund of which he, Horkheimer, was the sole beneficiary; and only the Director and Pollock (to some extent) knew what the financial situation actually was. These two old friends set the level of salaries, threatened them (as they did with Benjamin's) and cut them: in Spring 1939 they indicated to Fromm that his salary would stop after October (see above, pp. 27-28). Neumann came under financial pressure, as did Marcuse, who was told as soon as he got to California that his salary was to be cut from \$330 a month to \$300 and then to \$280. Of course, this 'strategy of financial starvation' kept the key power centralised in Horkheimer's hands (Wiggershaus 1994: 261-63, 295, 299), and it may have led to Adorno's agreeing to work part-time on Lazarfeld's Radio Research project at Princeton and Columbia, since even he may have been beginning to feel the pinch at this point (Rose 1978:5). Certainly, after an uneasy Adorno-Lazarfeld relationship developed and the former's research proposal was actually omitted from the budget deriving from the Rockefeller grant', Adorno's dependence on the 'dictatorship of the Director' increased (Morrison 1978). Not surprisingly, there was tremendous personal friction.⁶⁹

Following this period of financial retrenchment, and even though the overall situation began improving from 1942, several Institute staff took the hint. Neumann began working for the US government in Washington as chief consultant at the Board of Economic Warfare, and later moved on to the post of chief economist in the Intelligence Division of the Office of the US Chief of Staff. Cooperation with the establishment paid off. Within three months a grant of considerable size was made by the American Jewish Committee, which was followed by another from the Jewish Labor Committee from 1944 to 1945; and this research was seen and represented as being a contribution to the war effort. Jay believes that members of the Institute were indifferent to the politics of Zionism,⁷⁰ there was an undoubted further shift in the focus of the Institute's work. Long-gone, now, was the attempt to explain what went wrong up to 1923 or even 1933 in Europe. Instead, following Adorno's lead, there was a decided reorientation on the study of so-called 'mass culture' in the USA itself and towards projects concerned to promote tolerance within capitalist social-relations. As a consequence, attention moved further away from sociology towards psychology, away from society towards the individual, and away from any residual ideas about the possibility of revolutionary socialist transformation towards the relationship between 'man' and nature.⁷¹

69. Pollock at least seems to have had a low opinion of Adorno. He wrote to Horkheimer in October 1941 that 'Teddie only has one interest in life, to become a minor gentleman of leisure on the west coast as soon as possible, and what happens to the rest of them is of no concern to him whatsoever' (Wiggershaus 1994:264). According to Jay, 'Even in exile in America, his manners remained those of the cultured Central European haut bourgeois' (1969:62). Adorno's main problem seems to have been his attitude: by June 1941, he was telling Horkheimer that it was 'extremely difficult to remain friendly towards real people'. But first impressions of Adorno himself had not always been good. Donald MacRae, for example, twenty years after the event, thought Adorno was 'the most arrogant, self-indulgent (intellectually and culturally) man I have ever met'; and in 1949 Schoenberg wrote privately about Adorno that he had 'never been able to bear the fellow' (Morrison 1978:331-32; Paddison 1993:328 note 4).

70. In 1943 Wiesengrund changed his name to Adorno officially.

71. Paul Brook points out that much the same thing happened with the 'greening' of disillusioned 1968-vintage 'Marxists' during the 1980s.

As information about Auschwitz and the holocaust was officially released, what the individual members of the Institute did to help the US state's war-effort and afterwards seems consistent with their changing overall perspective. Kirchheimer worked alongside Gurland as a staff member of OSS (the precursor of the CIA) at the State Department, and was later offered a post at the University of California. From 1942, Marcuse worked (reluctantly at first, but for \$4600 per year, which was 40% more than his reduced Institute salary) with the Office of War Information in Washington at the State Department but also (with Neumann) at the OSS, right up to the time of the Korean War, and then took up a post at Columbia University before moving on to Brandeis. Lowenthal also worked as a consultant at the Office of War Information before he became Director of the Research Department at the 'Voice of America' in 1949, when he too got a job at the University of California, and went on to become Professor of Sociology at Berkeley in 1956 (Paddison 1993:287 note 33). In fact, only Adorno and Horkheimer managed to avoid such close cooperation with the US State, mainly because of the latter's tight financial control. Felix Weill's gift to the Institute of a further \$100,000 in the spring of 1945 was a well-kept secret; and from 1946 Horkheimer received offers of financial support from the City of Frankfurt to bring the Institute back to Germany.⁷² Adorno, meanwhile, was engaged as Co-Director of two research projects at Berkeley. They were all doing remarkably well; but this did not prevent Adorno from putting in repeated requests for an increase in his \$400 monthly salary throughout 1944.

However, the onset of the Cold War affected intellectual affairs, too. In 1946 Adorno had advertised his collaboration with Hanns Eisler, another member of Germany's 'homeless left', on a book they co-wrote about film music between 1942 and 1945, on the basis of a \$20,000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to the New School for Social Research (Eisler 1951:v,138). But when the book was published in 1947 - and though he got a warm acknowledgment in the Preface - it appeared without Adorno's name on the title-page, because, as he later admitted, he had become anxious about how both the new German authorities and the US state would view a collaboration with the brother of an unashamed Communist.⁷³ Soon after that, in 1947, Adorno published some of his thoughts about 'the Fascist character even in Wagner's time', as though Wagner's alleged 'Fascist traits' and 'the Fascist implications of his cult of power' were both intentional and contemporary;⁷⁴ and in 1948 he stepped up his attack on 'socialist realism' in Soviet music (Adorno 1947:161). Finally, in 1949 - the year of the Chinese Revolution and soon after the Berlin air-lift - there came a final parting of the ways among the former cadre of the Institute. Grossman (who had been pensioned-off) took up a university chair in what was now the

72. The idea came from the man who had dissociated the University of Frankfurt from the Institute in 1933; and the same official who signed the official invitation had also signed the 1938 decree banning the Institute in Frankfurt!

73. A 1949 East German edition of the book, 'containing politically expedient changes', appeared apparently without Adorno's consent (Buck-Morss 1977:296 note 32). In the 1969 afterword to the German edition of this book - which appeared with his name on the cover as joint author - Adorno wrote that he had no reason to become a martyr for a cause which was not his own (Wiggershaus 1994:390). Eisler's 'semi-voluntary departure from the US' came in 1948, after he appeared before McCarthy's Committee and was allowed to leave the USA on condition that he never returned; and 'little affection seems to have remained between Eisler and Adorno after their return to Europe' (Blomster 1976:106 note 80, 107 note 81; Wiggershaus 1994:389-90). Wittfogel had his China history project sponsored by the University of Washington at Seattle, from 1947, and this may have had a bearing on his willingness to denounce Moses Finkelstein (Finley) in front of McCarthy's Committee.

74. Morten Michelsen points out that Adorno's full-length book on Wagner had been written in 1937-38, though it was not published until 1952.

DDR. Wittfogel, Fromm, Neumann, Kirchheimer, Marcuse and Lowenthal decided to remain in the USA; and Horkheimer, Pollock and Adorno (the 'Extraordinary' professor) went back to Frankfurt in order to re-establish the Institute on the basis of cash from the City treasury, private donations and 200,000DM (plus 235,000DM for rebuilding purposes) from the US High Commissioner John McCloy's funds.⁷⁵ When they returned to what they privately referred to as 'this colony', however, both men took care to retain their US citizenship.

The music of the spheres

Most if not all of Adorno's ideas about cultural and artistic value seem to have been cemented into place long before he returned to Frankfurt, and perhaps even before the war began. However, he had run into serious problems about the 'totality' of music. He wanted to argue that the 'diverse spheres of music must be thought of together', not least because the neat parcelling out of music's social field of force is 'illusionary'; but he also argued that the 'unity of the two spheres of music is...that of an unresolved contradiction'. So, there are two 'spheres' of 'music', but they must not be separated - or, at least, separated in the elitist way favoured by the bourgeois 'caretakers of culture' (Adorno 1978b:274-275). Again, Adorno appears to accept the abstract and formally Marxist idea of unity in contradiction, but concretely he is pulled towards the bourgeois musical agenda; and consequently, as soon as he moves from the general to the particular, he feels (to adapt his own phrase) the 'field of force' of his own class culture.

Adorno was in no doubt that the music consumed by 'the masses' is rotten in terms of its content: 'there is nothing more to decompose in the lower music. The forms of hit songs are so strictly standardised, down to the number of beats and the exact duration, that no specific form appears in any particular piece'.⁷⁶ And yet, for all his private sensitivity about vulgar materialism, in his published writings Adorno seems to be claiming that the content of this music is related to the allegedly direct and automatic effects of 'the masses' exposure to it, against which, evidently, they neither have, nor wish to have, any defence (compare above, p. 26). Moreover, the other 'sphere' of music - *music*, or what Adorno now refers to more openly as 'more important music'- has a 'field of force' whose poles have been so to speak reversed;⁷⁷ and so 'the masses' are 'not merely turned away' from it and by it but they are also (and, by implication, as a consequence) 'confirmed in their neurotic stupidity'. Meanwhile, the other ideologically-magnetic 'sphere' of music actively helps 'the masses' to 'overcome the feeling of impotence that creeps over them in the face of monopolistic production by identifying themselves with the inescapable product'. In this way, and without the implicitly beneficial effects of 'more important music', 'the masses' fall prey to the 'jitterbug', a dance 'stylised like the ecstasies savages go into beating the war drum', with 'convulsive aspects reminiscent of St. Vitus' dance or the reflexes of mutilated animals' (Adorno 1978b:286,288,289,292).⁷⁸

75. Even in 1949, Adorno had to draft a denial of being an apologist for the Russians, but he took care to prevent the publication of an interesting-sounding article by Max Bense about 'Hegel and the Californian Left' (Wiggershaus 1994:405-6)!

76. Philip Tagg points out that Adorno's notion of 'form' was notably ethnocentric in any case.

77. As Richard Holland points out, this idea has a precocious 'Star Wars' quality about it!

78. In 1946, Adorno wrote of all 'jazz' as a 'style of dance music', characterised by 'machine-like' 'ground beats'. Peter Wicke tells me that similar rhetoric was used by the Nazis about jazz and that Adorno had to seek to dissociate his own work from fascist propaganda after the war.

But what of 'serious' music - music itself - and particularly in the USA? Here, Adorno felt able to call on fragments of Marx once more in order to address the fact that quite a lot of people (perhaps not even members of the working class) went to hear, say, a Toscanini concert. 'The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket'. Nothing good could come of it, of course, for all Adorno's rhetorical nod to Marx. 'The more inexorably the principle of exchange-value destroys use-values for human beings, the more deeply does the exchange-value disguise itself as the object of enjoyment' (Adorno 1978b:278,279). Rather than deal with concert-goers in class terms, as petit-bourgeois, or even bourgeois, say, Adorno chooses to lump them in with 'the masses', and this amalgam is acted upon by a seemingly autonomous force whose name, but not whose content, derives from Marx. What Marx thought of as classes have, somehow, fused:

The masochistic mass culture is the necessary manifestation of almighty production itself. When the feelings seize on exchange-value it is no mystical transubstantiation. It corresponds to the prisoner who loves his cell because he has been left nothing else to love (Adorno 1978b:280).

Not only does such a formulation make a mockery of Marx's assumptions, methods and attitudes - not to mention his political practice - but it also, and worryingly, bears a striking resemblance to a form of vulgar materialism which could have fitted equally well into left bourgeois snobbery or Stalinist reductionism. Once again, Bradley puts his finger on part of the problem: 'Either Adorno is arguing that a real need for "things cultural", an "aesthetic" need, perhaps, exists in everyone in our time, but is not capable of satisfaction through cultural commodities, because their *commodity-status has destroyed their cultural meaning*; or he is saying that a "*false need*" for these commodities, despite their objective "untruth", has arisen and poses as the true need for culture which is either buried irretrievably beneath it or extinguished in some way'. In fact, as Bradley also notes, 'Adorno says both these things, or vacillates between them' (Bradley 1980:33-34; cf 48-49).

The suspicion that Adorno wants to have everything both ways seems to be reinforced by one of his few passing references to history (albeit only musical history). He claims that, 'After the Magic Flute it was never again possible to force serious and light music together' (Adorno 1978b:273). In other words, the historic split between music and the rest of music corresponded, in his perspective, with the defeat of the old French ruling class by a bourgeois revolution; and even then, there were already two 'spheres' to 'force' together. So Beethoven, presumably, represented the last great flourish of 'serious' music in the 1820s, which then went on to wither because of its separation from 'light' music, until that in turn began to 'decompose'. It is difficult to avoid the thought that Adorno had in mind some pre-1789 Golden Age for musical totality which corresponded, curiously, not only to a pre-industrial but even to a pre-bourgeois-democratic form of society. That, if anything, is the class-based historic totality which underpins his writings in the period up to his emigration. According to Jay, in fact, the 'only musical subject he ever took seriously was the bourgeois one whose disintegration the late Beethoven was the first to record' (1984:146). Moreover, Adorno was so sure of his theory - and so sure of his Eurocentric, ethnocentric, class-centred, capitalist culture perspective - by 1941 that he expected his readership to agree that empirical research into musical taste and practice (as opposed to research into 'personality') was utterly unnecessary:

It would be valuable to study exactly what laymen call a melody. It would probably turn out to be a succession of tones related to one another by simple and easily understandable harmonic functions, within the framework of the eight bar period (Adorno 1941:28note).

Music as 'social cement'

By 1941, Adorno wrote about the 'two musical spheres as though they were a commonly-accepted fact: 'Popular music is 'usually characterised by its difference from serious music'. Yet each 'sphere' was not uniform in terms of quality: 'we are not concerned here with bad serious music which may be as rigid and mechanical as popular music'. This 'bad serious music' was also part of the problem, and this is why music in Adorno's day was 'largely a social cement' (Adorno 1941a: 17,21,39). The problem with music in the 'popular' 'sphere', however, was that it was uniformly bad, mainly because of its 'fundamental characteristic', 'standardisation'; and this quality, apparently, had a life and powers of its own:

Structural standardisation aims at standard reactions. Listening to popular music is manipulated not only by its promoters, but as it were, by the inherent nature of this music itself, into a system of response-mechanisms wholly antagonistic to the ideal of individuality in a free, liberal society (Adorno 1941a:22).

There is something, then, *in* this music with aims, intentions and powers over the 'masses', but not, of course, over the critic who can see that 'The whole is pre-given and pre-accepted, even before the actual experience of the music starts', and that 'In popular music, position is absolute. Every detail is substitutable - it serves its function only as a cog in the machine'. Such music is 'predigested': 'The composition hears for the listener'; and so, presumably, by-passes the conscious brain to have physiological effects. 'This is how popular music divests the listener of his spontaneity and promotes conditioned reflexes' (Adorno 1941 a:18,19,22). Such low-flying behaviourism might have made Pavlov wince, yet as Richard Holland points out it is strangely reminiscent of much Christian fundamentalist propaganda about the 'Devil Music' in our own period. On this question the academic empiricists were well to his political left, and Adorno's contempt for audience-research evidently made Lazarsfeld very angry indeed.⁷⁹

What was afoot in the 1940s market-place was what Adorno called 'pseudo-individualisation', by which he meant some force capable of

endowing cultural mass production with the halo of free choice or open market on the basis of standardisation itself. Standardisation of song hits keeps the customers in line by doing their listening for them, as it were. Pseudo-individualisation, for its part, keeps them in line by making them forget what they listen to is already listened-to for them, or 'predigested' (Adorno 1941a:25).

Instead of focussing, as would a classical Marxist, on what contradictions there might be in this situation and on what human agency might do, Adorno starts from the assumption of monolithic stasis and *defines* the listeners as politically impotent. The channel of music is blocked, and those who 'ask for a song of social significance ask for it through a medium which deprives it of social significance' (Adorno 1941 a: 40). History, then, must certainly have stopped: capitalism was triumphant, and there was no hope, especially in the proles:

The sentimentality of the common people is by no means primitive, unreflecting emotion. On the contrary, it is pretense, a fictitious, shabby imitation of real feeling, often self-conscious

79. Lazarsfeld wrote to Adorno: 'You make statements about what people do "in America", although you have had personally hardly any experience, and even if you had, you could neither prove nor disprove such kind of generalities in which nowadays not even travelling journalists indulge any more'; and even when he was sent to listen to some musicians, 'when they opened their mouth Adorno would tell them what idiots they were' (Morrison 1978:338,348). In 1939, Adorno had claimed that his 'ultimate aim' was to 'study the listener' (Buck-Morss 1977:301 note 103)!

and slightly contemptuous of itself. This fictitiousness is the life element of the fascist propagandist performances (Adorno et al 1946:132).

By the mid-1940s Adorno was quite confident that he had privileged access - presumably, on the basis of the work which was to go to form *The Authoritarian Personality* - to what was happening inside working-class audiences' heads. When radio-listeners heard music, that music 'ceased to be a human force and is consumed like other consumers' goods. This produces "commodity listening", a listening whose ideal is to dispense as far as possible with any effort on the part of the recipient'. Then, in case this might appear to be overly nuanced and slightly dialectical and without the slightest trace of argument or empirical evidence as to how this may work, he continues: 'The listener suspends all intellectual activity when dealing with music and is content with consuming and evaluating its gustatory qualities - just as is the music which tasted best were also the best possible music' (Adorno 1945:211). But *music* was actively resisted by the 'masses' whose 'pleasure' 'always' involved listening only to music which encouraged them in their desire 'not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown. Basically, it is helplessness. It is flight; not, as is asserted, flight from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thoughts of resistance'. What political hope could there be when 'mass culture discloses the fictitious character of the "individual" in the bourgeois era', on the one hand, while on the other, 'Self-preservation in the shape of class has kept everyone at the stage of species being' (Adorno & Horkheimer 1986:144,155)?⁸⁰ And what was the point of contemplating theories of class or class struggle, since bourgeois ideology had become all-but hegemonic?

And as for 'art' after Auschwitz, well, there was some, but it was difficult to write about in conceptually-clear terms:

Every work of art still bears the imprint of its magical origin. We may even concede that, if the magic element should be extirpated from art altogether, the decline of art will have been reached. This, however, has to be properly understood. First, the surviving magic trends of art are something utterly different from its manifest content or forms. They are rather to be found in traits, such as the spell cast by any true work of art, the halo of its uniqueness, its inherent claim to represent something absolute (Adorno 1945a:680).

The references to 'magic', 'spell' and 'hail' seem to derive from Benjamin's mystical writings. In fact after Benjamin's suicide in 1940 Adorno's writing tended not only to stress his mentor's ideas about 'redemption' and 'utopia', but also to suggest a political strategy based on the possibility of 'reconciliation' (Buck-Morss 1977:89) - yet what Adorno seems to be suggesting here is that these qualities exist not so much in *music*, but between what is empirically observable and a rather different kind of listener, one who is not 'kept in line' and who can discern the 'absolute' when it manifests itself to him.

There is something particularly ironic in the way Adorno differentiates his mystical claims from those of others: 'Today it is only the hit composer and the best seller writer who prate about the irrationality and inspiration of their products'. There is also something extremely odd about the way in which he jumps from subjectivity to an almost Puritan stress on the virtues of hard work and on a particular conception of correctness: 'Those who create works which are...truly antagonistic to the sway of cultural industry and calculative manip-

80. Five hundred copies of an internal Institute mimeograph of this book were published as *Philosophical Fragments* so early as 1944. So hypersensitive were the authors that the 1947 edition appeared with a range of euphemisms: capitalism became 'existing conditions'; capital became the 'economic system'; 'capitalist bloodsuckers' became 'knights of industry'; class society became 'domination' or 'order', and the ruling class became simply 'rulers' (Wiggershaus 1994:401).

ulation, are those who think most severely and intransigently in terms of technical consistency' (Adorno 1945a:681). But it did seem to matter where and under what conditions *music* was heard, since 'under present radio auspices' it serves to keep listeners from criticising social relations to such an extent that Adorno feels quite comfortable in posing the question, 'Does a symphony played on the air remain a symphony?' without, however, suggesting what else it might be.⁸¹ Was there, perhaps, something wrong with listening to music in the home, precisely because it represented a threat to other forms of listening and of class-based collectivity? If 'Retrogressive listening to a symphony is listening which, instead of grasping the whole dwells upon those melodies, just as if the symphony were structurally the same as a ballad', isn't this not only hypocritical - where, after all, did many of the tunes for bourgeois symphonies come from, in Vaughan Williams' century as much as Beethoven's or Mozart's - but also *authoritarian* (Adorno 1945b:209,212,213)? Just because listeners appear not to conform to Adorno's particular historical and class-centric way of listening, why are they wrong? Adorno has no need to pose such a question since, implicitly, he and his clerisy were already safe in their padded sphere, fragmented from a previous totality of listeners.

Appropriately, perhaps, in Adorno's book with Horkheimer the notion of 'totality' in relation to listeners is cavalierly ignored. On the one hand, 'culture now impresses the same stamp on everything', while on the other, 'once the trained ear has heard the first notes of the hit song, it can guess what is coming and feel flattered when it does'. Moreover, 'Talented performers belong to the industry long before it displays them; otherwise they would not be so eager to fit in'. So while 'mass culture discloses the fictitious character of the "individual" in the bourgeois era' - and since, as Marx would have agreed, 'The principle of individuality was always full of contradiction' - those possessed of the 'trained ear', somehow managed to maintain their own individual wholeness intact (Adorno & Horkheimer 1986:120,122,125, 155). Their job, seemingly, was to endure, to cling on to their own and as much as possible of other people's creativity and intellect and to keep it away, wherever possible, from the nasty influences of commerce - and of the commercial customers - until history started once again.

Yet Adorno and Horkheimer did not feel themselves to be completely alone: their splinter of the fractured and fragmented 'totality' was also inhabited by those who, since just after 1918, had produced radical music' expressly 'formulated 'to provide an 'antithesis against the extension of the culture industry into its own domain'. This music - music itself - found the 'monopolistic means of distributing music...almost entirely at the disposal of artistic trash and compromised cultural values' and so was 'forced into complete isolation during the final stages of industrialism'. 'From the middle of the nineteenth century on, good music has renounced commercialism altogether', and the 'consequence of its further development' had twin effects. On the one hand, the newer 'good music' had 'come into conflict with the manipulated and, at the same time, self-satisfied bourgeois public', who

81. In his 1941 article on the 'Radio Symphony', he apparently took the position that 'symphonies broadcast on radio only represented an image of the live performance, just as a film was merely a picture of the live performance' (Wiggershaus 1994:243). Consequently, he believed that the radio industry's claim to be bringing serious music to the masses was questionable since they did not get what he called 'the undistorted original'. Predictably, he went on record as claiming that 'The only people able to use radio sensibly are specialists...Armed with the score and a metronome, they would be able to follow the performance and expose its errors irresistibly' (quoted in Wiggershaus 1994:244). How he could ever be sure of grasping any 'original' let alone ridding it of the distortions brought about in its inevitable mediation isn't at all clear, and neither is it obvious how a live concert performance could be free of mediations.

used their economic clout to marginalise the 'pathetically small number' of connoisseurs whose seats at concerts were taken by 'all those who could afford the price of a ticket and wished to demonstrate their culture to others'. This helped to ensure that the general public 'remains totally cut off from the production of new music' as well as being (from what it could hear, presumably) 'alienated by the outward characteristics of such music', since the 'dissonances which horrify them testify to their own conditions; for that reason alone do they find them unbearable'. So music is 'inextricably bound up with...the division of all art into kitsch and the avant-garde, at a period when 'kitsch - with its dictate of profit over culture - has long dominated the social sphere'. Thus the 'avant-garde' is necessarily 'cut off from official culture' and from 'the masses'. So now, once more, 'the possibility of music itself has become uncertain' (Adorno 1973a:5,6,8,9,10,112).

This sad situation has implications for Adorno's explicit and implicit conception of both musical and social totality. Music is defined as being not what is heard by electronic means - 'man in the age of the omnipresent radio and jukebox has forgotten the experience of music altogether' - and, in any case, according to Adorno, music was never the product of any social group other than the bourgeoisie: 'Music down to this very day has existed only as the product of the bourgeois class, a product which, both in the success and failure at its attempts at formulation, embodies this society and gives aesthetic documentation of it' (Adorno 1973a:130). This totality then becomes to look very odd indeed, since

The proletariat was never permitted to constitute itself a musical subject; such a creative function was made impossible both in terms of its position within the system - where it was nothing more than an object of domination - and through the repressive forces which formed its own nature (Adorno 1973a:130).

Only once, 'in the realisation of freedom and not under any system of domination' did the proletariat achieve a creative function; but the defeat of the Russian Revolution did not leave behind it anything which was unarguably *music* of another, proletarian sort: 'within the existing order there must be grave doubts regarding the existence of any type of music other than bourgeois' (Adorno 1973a:130).

Adorno was apparently arguing that 'bourgeois' music is a wholly separate sphere, which operates irrespective of 'the class membership of individual composers - or even their categorisation as high or petty bourgeois'. So while the 'sphere' of 'popular music' does exist it has no contemporary connection, dialectical or otherwise, with the music produced by the bourgeoisie. These two 'spheres' orbit within a wholly abstract conception of 'totality' and, appropriately, with no apparent dialectical gravity to allow them to interact. At the same time, somehow, their orbits have come into collision, with the objective forces associated with 'popular music' impinging on, and threatening to destroy, the subjective powers of what remains of *music* within the bourgeois 'sphere'. But instead of trying to tackle the dangers of an explosive collision or seeking to change 'spheres' - or even trying to help improve 'popular music' - Adorno seems to have dug himself in for the battle of attrition within bourgeois culture. Until that struggle had been won by 'Radical music' and analogous cultural products, the other struggle - in effect, the class struggle - was at best premature and possibly self-defeating. Therefore, in his post-war writings Adorno admitted that 'considerations concerning the revelation of truth in aesthetic objectivity make reference only to the avant-garde',

The philosophy of music is today possible only as the philosophy of modern music. The only hope is that this culture will herald its own demise: it only contributes to the advancement of barbarism, about which in turn it becomes enraged (Adorno 1973b:10-11).

Quite how this was to come about - musically, let alone politically - is left characteristically vague, even to composers. Schoenberg, for example, noted that the book 'is very difficult to read, for it uses this quasi-philosophical jargon in which modern professors of philosophy hide the absence of an idea' (Paddison 1993:288 note 41).

There are however some further scholarly problems here. For example, 'how can Horkheimer and Adorno continue to practise a critical theory of society when reason itself is identified with the urge to dominate?' (Callinicos 1989:96). How have they escaped bourgeois hegemony; and what precisely was the world-historic defeat suffered by the working-class? Had history really stopped, and stopped for good? Were there no more contradictions within capitalist social relations? Did the intelligentsia and the bourgeoisie ever monopolise artistry and brain-power? Had labouring and then working-class women and men never shown any signs of a creative function? (Where, after all, did all those bourgeois composers find their fine tunes; and who made their instruments, their clothes and their meals?) And why should the capitalist crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s be the only one to rattle the bourgeoisie's cage: was that (as the Stalinists used to believe, and any surviving orthodox Trotskyists presumably still do) the final crisis of capitalism? In some intriguing ways, Adorno's political defeatism in the 1940s looks remarkably modern; so we will do well to bear in mind the similarities between his period and our own as we pursue his intellectual odyssey through the 1950s and 1960s.

Neither Washington nor Moscow but...

The Cafe Max

Adorno took up his post of Assistant Director and 'ad hoc professor' at the reconstituted Institut für Sozialforschung in 1950, but he returned to the USA for a short visit in 1951, and in 1952 he went back there again for about a year to act as scientific director of the Hacker Foundation in Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, in order to secure his US citizenship. Horkheimer, who was in Frankfurt from February 1950, was sufficiently well-regarded in Cold War West Germany to be appointed Director of the Institute, Head of the Department of Philosophy and University Rector in 1951, the same year in which the West German state began to ban the Communist Party, the KPD. The authorities may have had some anxiety about Adorno's political reliability, and he still believed that McCarthy's Committee was a potential problem; yet while he could cheerfully castigate Freud for 'blaming the "socialists" for what their German archenemies did' before the war, he had for a long time expressed his dislike of the USSR. In 1953, presumably to help remove any official doubts, he contributed two articles - 'Nannied Music' and 'Eastern standards of culture' - to the anti-communist, CIA-funded magazine, *Der Monat*. In the fall of 1953 Adorno returned to Europe and 'in addition to my activity in the Institut für Sozialforschung received a full chair of philosophy and sociology in the University'.⁸² After that he never returned to the USA and he even allowed his US passport to expire. So while his warm feelings towards 'America' - by which he presumably meant the United States - included 'intellectual gratitude', it was probably somewhat more comprehensive than that, since his job remained

82. This was confusingly called a 'regular extraordinary' professorship.

his only contribution towards 'political enlightenment' (Adorno 1969:365,366,370; Adorno 1978c:129; Jay 1973:248). In any event, by 1955, when Adorno had been promoted to the Co-Directorship of the Institute, its nickname was no longer 'Cafe Marx' but 'Cafe Max'.

After settling permanently in Germany in 1953, Adorno claimed (as Walter Benjamin had once also done) to be 'interested not in men, but in things'; and while he criticised colleagues' efforts to integrate Marxism and Freudianism, he also acknowledged that this registered 'more intransigently the split that has actually taken place in reality' (Adorno 1992b:236; Jay 1973:286,339 note 185; Held 1980:111). For his own part, he was coming into open and explicit disagreement with several more key elements of classical Marxism, including the theory of value, the theory of class-consciousness, the general theory of capitalist development and perhaps most importantly of all the theory about the strategically vital role of the proletariat (Held 1980:72; Adorno 1974:113).⁸³ He might drop stray hints about the need for 'an explicit theory of society', even one 'far transcending the range of psychology', but he was no nearer developing one, and he had no confidence in anyone else doing so either (Adorno 1978c:134; 1974: 114-15). Logically enough, perhaps, and beginning with a pilot study in 1954, he was not above accepting financial support from the Mannesmann corporation, a founder-member of the Anti-Bolshevik League and a former financier of the Nazi Party, in order to help it discover what its workers thought and what they wanted. According to Adorno, the project 'went splendidly', and the 1955 report indicated that 'Where things are more or less right, a bond with the company forms'. He had previously resented such dependence in the USA, where he wrote that it was 'made unmistakably clear to the intellectual from abroad that he will have to eradicate himself as an employee of the super-trust into which life has condensed' (Jay 1969:65); but he became 'uneasy' about the consequent further support from the Rationalisation Commission for German Industry, which funded research assistantships in industrial sociology. Horkheimer, however, had no such qualms, and was happy with work which did not drain Institute assets and which 'served the practical purposes of German industry and government administration' (Wiggershaus 1994:479-87,492).

By the mid-1950s, Adorno continued to claim that he was above the struggle, since there was no longer (if there had ever been) any clear political side for him to *be* on. In the 'open-air prison which the world is becoming', there are 'no more ideologies in the authentic sense of false consciousness, only advertisements for the world through its duplication and the provocative lie which does not seek for relief but commands silence'. Yet while he felt sandwiched between 'European dictatorships of both shades', Adorno's bitterness about the KPD's attitude towards Stalin's Moscow Trials of the late 1930s became uncharacteristically unambiguous: 'the forced confessions of the supposed traitors in Russia and the satellite states behind the iron curtain...far from disillusioning Communist followers in the free world often seem to cast a magic spell and to be swallowed hook, line and sinker' (Adorno 1967a: 34,129; Adorno 1957:88). In practice, of course, that 'spell' was broken not by West German academics but by workers and intellectuals on the streets; yet one year after the Soviet-led suppression of uprisings in Hungary and Poland and Khrushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing some of Stalin's crimes (in which Khrushchev had been an enthusiastic participant at a high level), in the middle of the mass exodus from Communist Par-

83. The later Adorno is credited with having said that 'economics is simply repulsive' (Tar 1977:122 note 28,146).

ties which followed both events and four years after a major industrial struggle in East Berlin itself, Adorno felt able to write in ways which effectively chimed in with the interests of Washington's foreign policy. He continued to pontificate about 'the pattern of modern mass delusions', and to lament that 'no new and higher form of social organisation appears on the horizon'; so it is difficult to refute Brecht's accusation that Adorno and the Institute 'had defused Marxism, and thus contributed to the evils of society which it sought merely to diagnose' (Adorno 1957:61,83; Rose 1978:127). In 1956, as if to prove Brecht right, Adorno was arguing like any good bourgeois liberal that 'The abundant ironic quotation marks in Marx and Engels are the shadows that totalitarian methods cast in advance upon their writings, whose intention was the opposite', even though they also contained 'the seed from which eventually came what Karl Kraus called Moscauderwelsh [Moscow double-talk]' (Adorno 1991b:94). This claim is particularly interesting given that Adorno and Gershon Scholem's edition of Benjamin's letters had been accused of having 'deliberately distorted Benjamin's texts, censored his letters, used financial means to pressure him and smeared his relationship with Brecht', specifically for the political 'purpose of minimising Benjamin's adherence to orthodox Marxism' (Jay 1969:66).

In the later 1950s, however - especially after Horkheimer retired in 1958, and Adorno took over as Institute Director - Adorno began to clarify his attitude towards the 'dictatorships of the East' (Adorno 1959:34). Interestingly, he tried to make a scholarly distinction between what he understood as 'Marxism' and what had happened to theory and practice in Stalinist Russia: 'A vacuum was created by the quiet rejection of Marxist theory', he wrote, as 'a result, on the one hand, of the history of German Social Democracy and, on the other hand, of the confiscation and demagogic falsification of dialectical materialism by the Russian dictatorship' (Adorno 1959:38).

Yet 'dialectical materialism' was, in fact, the Stalinist name for their form of 'Marxism'; and it was, in practice, notably different from what Marx knew as historical materialism (Callinicos 1983). Besides, Adorno offers no explanation of how 'dialectical materialism' could be 'confiscated', let alone of what the consistent or serious anti-Stalinist left intelligentsia might have been doing during the alleged theft. He was also happy enough to use bits of Marx and Engels against Lukacs, as when he noted that 'What Engels wrote' about realism in his own day was 'implicitly against all the art tolerated in the Eastern bloc since Stalin' (Adorno 1992b:132); yet his continued silence on what he thought of Marxism in the period 1917 to 1928 and his refusal to have his 'Marxist' writings reissued must surely be highly significant. However, Adorno's knowledge of Marx may not have been very wide or deep: in 1959, he wrote of Marx's work as a place where 'one need only rummage around for a passage that has made a special impression to be reminded of the proverbial needle in the haystack' (Adorno 1992b:25). Given all the other adaptations to Stalinist mediations of Marx, it now appears that Adorno's grasp of classical Marxist methods and concepts had never been particularly firm.

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s Adorno hammered on about the USSR. Politically, he criticised Bloch for being 'unconcerned about what has become of the Revolution' and about 'what has happened to the concept and possibility of revolution under altered technological and social conditions'; but at the same time he denounced what had happened in the 'Eastern satellite states', where 'the revolution was carried out in the form of an administrative act' (Adorno 1991b: 214,248). Culturally, he railed at the 'unrelieved sterility of Soviet claptrap', at the way in which the regime and its 'communist clerics' had

'degraded the philosophy it proclaimed to the level of a mere instrument in the service of its rule', at the 'imbecility of boy-meets-tractor literature', and above all at Lukacs, who argued for so-called 'Socialist Realism'. He also ridiculed those who denied that 'contemporary Russian society is oppressed and exploited': 'Stalin only needs to clear his throat and they throw Kafka and Van Gogh on the rubbish-heap' (Adorno 1991a:216,228,236-37,239; 1992a:152,173,175; Adorno 1974a:207). Not that he went unanswered: writing from Budapest in 1962, Lukacs satirised Adorno's comfortable abstentionism:

A considerable part of the leading German intelligentsia, including Adorno, have taken up residence at the 'Grand Hotel Abyss'...a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity. And the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainment, can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered (Lukacs 1971:22).

Politically, of course, it was a stand-off. Since Lukacs offered Stalinism and Adorno offered nothing but 'intransigent thought' the exchange left everything as it was, and so capitalism and liberal bourgeois ideology, east and west, remained largely untroubled.⁸⁴

The working class after doomsday

In spite of all his Cold War rhetoric, however, Adorno still turned his attention to the 'disillusioned consciousness' of the working class who, because they 'envisaged no real power to alter everything fundamentally - as expected in socialist theory', seemed to contradict Marx's analysis of their power and their role (Adorno 1959:38). He held on to a weak notion of class - 'as a matter of economic and social fact', the 'crucial role in the struggle against increasing concentration of economic power will have to be played by the working-people' (Buck-Morss 1977:184; cf Adorno et al 1976:84) - and he still thought that capitalism was the basic problem. Yet at the same time he made an 'explicit renunciation of any connection' with working class parties, and then damned the 'artificially integrated fascist masses' in his own 'satanic society' for good measure (Anderson 1976:43; Adorno 1978c:123; Jay 1977:131). If anything, after Auschwitz and the partition of Germany, in what he too now liked to call 'late capitalism', his position on 'the masses' hardened. He 'ruled out the possibility of any collectivity being on the side of truth' and he 'located the residue of...progressive social forces in the critical individual'.⁸⁵ The working class which had at least had a chance of stopping Hitler had disappeared; and what remained in the 'present phase consists so far only in the dissolution of the subject, without yet giving rise to a new one'. So while 'individual experience necessarily bases itself on the old subject, now historically condemned, which is still for-itself but no longer in-itself', all there was to do was mourn, and to await (so to speak) the Second Coming (Adorno 1973:292; Adorno 1974a:15-16, 17-18,27-28).

Abstractly, Adorno still wished to dissociate himself from those who showed 'contempt of the masses as such'; but concretely he did not dissent from Le Bon's 'well-known characterisation of masses as being largely de-individualised, irrational, easily influenced, prone to violent action and altogether of a regressive character', because 'human beings are not yet human beings' (Adorno et al 1976:78). On the whole, therefore, he preferred Freud's

84. See Cliff 1988 and Callinicos 1991.

85. Paul Brook points out that there are echoes here of Marcuse's privileging of students as the political vanguard, and of the whole ultra-left concept of universities as potential 'red bases' during the 1960s and early 1970s.

perspective on the problem: 'Instead of inferring from the usual descriptive findings that the masses are inferior per se and likely to remain so, he asks in the spirit of true enlightenment: what makes the masses into masses?' (Adorno 1978c:121; cf Adorno 1974a:27). Sociologically and politically, 'After Doomsday' the critic's role was not therapeutic but pathological. Everyone was 'boxed in' by a 'stabilised system' which even showed signs of beginning to 'petrify'; and so political commitment was impossible, since Adorno was amongst those who 'want nothing to do with goalers, nor to fall foul of thieves' (Adorno 1974a:52,54,197,201,202,217). His opinion of the actual working class had never been very high, but now it became acerbic: 'the moment simple folk are forced to brawl amongst themselves for their portion of the social product, their envy and spite surpass anything seen amongst *literati* or musical directors.' In the end, therefore, he felt that 'glorification of splendid underdogs is nothing other than glorification of the splendid system that makes them so. The justified guilt-feelings of those exempt from physical work ought not become an excuse for the "idiocy of rural life"' (Adorno 1974a:28). He knew there was suffering and hypocrisy - 'While the policeman beats up strikers with a rubber truncheon, the factory-owner's son can drink an occasional whiskey with a progressive writer'⁸⁶ - but his preference was to 'ponder the grimly comic riddle: where is the proletariat?' or to wax sentimental about creature comforts (Adorno 1974a:186,194).⁸⁷

Like any other elitist liberal - or, for that matter, any loyal Stalinist - Adorno started from the assumption that there were still 'masses' rather than only ways of seeing people as 'masses'; but he did not believe that it was the intelligentsia's role to advise on how might they be liberated, or even on how they might liberate themselves - how they might actually become 'different without fear'. Instead, time and again he finds himself pulled back to the traumatic period leading up to 1933 when the German working-class (under Stalinist or Social Democratic leadership) failed to stop the Nazi rot. But instead of concentrating on the crazy zig-zagging policy of the Stalin's Comintern or on the futility of parliamentary cretinism, he continued to blame the victims: 'It may well be the secret of fascist propaganda that it simply takes men for what they are: the true children of today's standardised mass culture, largely robbed of autonomy and spontaneity'. In a 'thoroughly reified society, in which there are virtually no relationships between men, and in which each person has been reduced to a social atom', the quelling power of the 'psychological *status quo*' is such that even 'the psychological processes, though they still persist in the individual, have ceased to appear as the determining forces of the social process'. How far is this from the notion of 'human nature' or even of sin?⁸⁸ It's as though - as he writes somewhere - Adorno believed he was living through the 'final results of the competitive process' (my italics), in an 'infernal machine that is history' where 'Not only in the development of forces of production but also in the increasing pressure of domination does quantity change into quality'. Though he retained a vestigial hope that 'Socialised hypnosis breeds within itself the forces which will do away with the spook of regression through remote control' and 'in the

86. Horkheimer was the son of a millionaire Jewish textile-manufacturer from near Stuttgart, and had been trained for a career in industry (Buck-Morss 1977:9); but who the 'progressive writer' may have been is not clear.

87. 'What does it mean for the subject that there are no more casement windows to open, but only sliding frames to shove, no gentle latches but only turnable handles, no forecourt, no doorstep before the street, no wall around the garden?' He also had an affection for slippers, for the 'faded splendour of the *train bleu*' and for the 'voluptuousness of travel', perhaps to Paris or Nice, but not without the support of that useful person, the 'subordinate' (Adorno 1974a: 40,110,119,163).

88. See Callinicos 1987: passim.

end awaken those who keep their eyes shut though they are no longer asleep', his tone is far from confident (Adorno 1974a:51,103,234; Adorno 1978c:134,136,137). Was another 'spectre haunting Europe', or is this a slightly secularised representation of the Last Trump?

Adorno was writing in messianic mode during 1951: 'the only philosophy which can responsibly be practised in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate things from the standpoint of redemption'; so 'Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light'. This was, apparently, the 'only philosophy', and it was impossible to put into practice, since, as Adorno acknowledged, it 'presupposes a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence'. As a consequence of this frustration, his political quietism sometimes deploys a martyr-like rhetoric: 'For the intellectual, inviolable isolation is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity. All collaboration, all the human worth of social mixing and participation, merely masks a tacit acceptance of inhumanity'. The process simply had to be endured because the 'overwhelming power of high capitalism' not only produced a society seemingly 'intent, by a deathly elimination of tensions, on making a noteworthy contribution to entropy,' but had also put paid to the alternative, activist possibility on the part of those possessed of a 'Romanticised concept of the proletariat'. Having, as Benjamin did, effectively defined himself as 'a person who had left his class without belonging to another one', as well as feeling boxed-in between Hitler and Stalin, Adorno now felt boxed-in between Marx, Hegel and Nietzsche (Adorno 1974a:26,123,247;1991a:123,131; Adorno 1992b:230). Power seemed to be everywhere and nowhere. Yet, ironically, Adorno could be taken as still accepting the Stalinist's Third Period line, in which fascism - that allegedly culminating and inevitable historical phase in capitalism's history - had not yet passed. On this basis, idealist and Stalinist ideology and rhetoric, which do have quite a lot in common, philosophically and politically, could be said to have converged.⁸⁹

Adorno's position in the mid-1950s was characteristically moral and legal, rather than political: to him, all culture 'ekes out its existence only by virtue of injustice perpetrated in the sphere of production, much as does commerce.' He also (and famously) pronounced that 'To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric', only to contradict himself a little later: 'The statement...does not hold absolutely, but it is certain that after Auschwitz, because Auschwitz was possible and remains possible for the foreseeable future, lighthearted art is no longer possible' (Adorno 1967:26,34; Adorno 1992b:251). On the other hand he was quite clear that the proponents of the *embourgeoisement* thesis were mistaken: 'the socialist theory of society never imputed class consciousness to the workers as a fixed characteristic, but the theory, rather, sought itself to produce it' (Adorno 1959:47). This is true, but through what agency? With the KPD banned and even non-revolutionary socialists under pressure, Adorno felt free to lament another 'vacuum', that of a classical Marxist Bolshevik Party, in which it would be his concrete duty to play an active role. Because his own generation of socialist and Stalinist intellectuals had failed; because Nazism had triumphed in Germany; because the NSPD had smashed the working class and so had to be defeated by a coalition of capitalist states; and because, in his eyes, the resulting post-war working class was demoralised by its previous beheading, it was 'no longer in command of any authentic

89. According to Adorno's late 1950s research student, Habermas, 'For me there was never a consistent theory. Adorno wrote essays on the critique of culture and also gave seminars on Hegel. He presented a certain Marxist background - and that was it' (quoted in Wiggershaus 1994:2).

experience' (Adorno 1994:92). So anti-Stalinist radical theorists found themselves isolated: 'The more systematically every chance to improve matters is wasted and compromised by usurpers, then the greater are the efforts made to hammer into a helpless mankind that nothing can be other than it is and that the basic categories of present conditions are those of life itself, true and immutable' (Adorno 1994:255). Consequently, what Adorno now sought to hammer into his students and readership was that even Marx had been effectively relegated to a 'secular pantheon', a 'wax museum of great men'; and what had to be faced, evidently, was 'the absolute negativity of the world, the world of Auschwitz' (Adorno 1976a:113; 1994:264). History remained stalled and, paradoxically, 'men' were spiralling back into a hopeless vortex of political and cultural regression. It's almost as though Adorno's unstated premise was that unless 'men' could somehow go back and change the history of the 1930s and 1920s, then there could *be* no future worth having. Practical political activity was, at best, dangerous, and, at worst, potentially fatal; but this did not solve Adorno's political or philosophical dilemma: 'Having long since abandoned Lukacs' faith in the proletariat, having nothing but contempt for Mannheim's intellectual class with its implied role of advising the politically powerful, Adorno offered no real alternative which transcended idealism'. As he wrote himself, his was a thought which 'seeks refuge in texts' (Jay 1985:72-73; Adorno 1991b:111).

All that is solid melts into airs

During the 1950s, Adorno was able to concentrate on problems in the philosophy of 'art': 'in high capitalism, with the complete hegemony of exchange-value and with the contradictions arising out of that hegemony, autonomous art becomes both problematic and programmatic at the same time'. He still accepted that 'the contradiction of all autonomous art is the concealment of the labour that went into it' and even that that 'concealment' involved the suppression of 'the division of labour in society, the separation of physical and mental labour'; but as usual this gesture towards classical Marxism is largely formal and abstract because what Adorno's prose ignores or even conceals is the class society which forms the material basis for producing so-called 'art'. Once again, Marxist phraseology is wedded to an undialectical, ahistorical, universal idea about the monolithic, static and non-contradictory 'complete hegemony of exchange-value'. But where, outside the head - or even inside it - does a term like 'complete hegemony' make any kind of sense? (cf Held 1980:135) And if it is 'complete', how can it have 'contradictions', let alone any which 'art' - 'autonomous' or not - can exploit? In any case, isn't the idea of 'autonomous art' equally undialectical, ahistoric and monolithic - another 'totality' in fact - for all Adorno's formal gesture towards its own 'contradiction'? How, precisely, did 'art' get free? A passing reference to something called 'over-determination' suggests an answer: Adorno was well on his way to some form of culturally-conservative Olympian *dominant specularity* (Adorno 1974a:147; Adorno 1991a:83,103).⁹⁰ Given that 'The greatness of works of art...consists solely in the fact that they give voice to what ideology hides', and their 'very success moves beyond false consciousness whether intentionally or not'; it required a master of 'critical thought' to rise above everyday ideology to 'discover how the entirety of a society, con-

90. For other links to Althusser, see below pp. 57,74,78. As Callinicos comments, such a position looks like a 'defensive attempt to preserve fragments of high culture from the advance of the culture industry and kitsch', rather than a 'rounded analysis of Modernism' (1989:158). People simply weren't to be trusted: in 1954, Adorno was already feeling under pressure to tell people 'How to look at television' (Adorno 1993a).

ceived as an internally contradictory unity, is manifested in the work of art, in what ways the work of art remains subject to society and in what way it transcends it' (Adorno 1991b:39).

Yet even now, in amongst Adorno's idealist rhetoric, there are oddly persistent echoes of Marx:

Works of art owe their existence to the division of labour in society, the separation of physical and mental labour. At the same time, they have their own roots in existence; their medium is not pure mind, but the mind that enters into reality and, by virtue of such movement, is able to maintain the unity of what is divided (Adorno 1991a: 83)

Of course, for a classical Marxist this is a problem, since if the continued production of 'art' depends on capitalist social relations, where would it come from in a socialist society? Would it, as Adorno sometimes hints, simply wither away, rather like the state was supposed to do? And what is also significant about Adorno's way of reasoning here is that he does not start from the totality - rather, he ends there, via the strange route of 'mind' coming from somewhere 'into reality'. Where was it before; how did it get outside, and is the 'unity' maintained in 'reality' or in 'mind'? Is the totality only an idea (and an abstract one at that) because the material totality is fractured and fragmented? 'Society is one', he wrote, and 'the world gains its unity from inconsistency' (Adorno et al 1976:76,77). But what is this saying more than that the world is characterised by its own internal contradictions? Without pausing to clarify his position, Adorno continues:

It is this contradiction that forces works of art to make us forget that they have been made. The claim implicit in their existence and hence, too, the claim that existence has a meaning, is the more convincing, the less they contain to remind us that they have been made, and that they owe their existence to something external to themselves, namely to a mental process. Art that is no longer able to perpetrate this deception with good conscience has implicitly destroyed the only element in which it can thrive (Adorno 1991a:83).

Aside from the continued, implicit polemic both with 'socialist realism' and with Brecht's theatrical methods and techniques, what Adorno seems to be suggesting here is that 'art' should disguise the 'separation of physical and mental labour' he began by acknowledging. Physical labour - artistic work, even - has to be hidden and with a 'good conscience', but from whom, and for whose benefit? As a result, he comes dangerously close in such formulations to the classically idealist notion that reality can and will change only when 'mind' changes, and not before.

Where and when, then, was this 'totality'? I believe the answer is in Adorno's implicit insistence that the music of the bourgeois era, notably between Monteverdi and Beethoven, was closest to his own conception of what he calls 'autonomous art' - *art* itself (Adorno 1967:137; see also Subotnik 1976, Subotnik 1977 and Paddison 1993:225-32). Adorno apparently did believe that 'art' got free. Writing of Liszt's *Dante* symphony, he says: 'Few documents could demonstrate more tellingly how inaccurate it is to assert that mass culture was imposed on art from outside. The truth is, it was thanks to its own emancipation that art was transformed into its opposite' (Adorno 1991a:107-8). Once more he gestures towards a formal totality, but only a few pages before he had been writing as though not all 'art' had been penetrated and transformed into kitsch:

The ear...is unconcentrated and passive. Unlike the eye, it does not have to be opened. Compared to the eye it has something dozy and inert about it. But this doziness is overlaid with the taboo that society has placed on it. Music has always been a stratagem for outwitting this taboo (Adorno 1991a:100).

But which music has survived the 'complete hegemony of exchange-value', where and how, is both problematical and irrelevant, since for Adorno 'the question of authenticity is as fruitless here as elsewhere.' 'Just as the overwhelming power of high capitalism forms myths that tower above the collective conscious, in the same way the mythic region in which the modern consciousness seeks refuge bears the marks of that capitalism: what subjectively was the dream of dreams is objectively a nightmare' (Adorno 1991a:123). The 'totality', then is either split in three - capitalist myths, other myths which form a 'refuge', and wherever it is that Adorno exists in order to observe these regions - or there is a material unity, a totality (however fractured), though most people refuse to acknowledge that they live in it.

The music that sets you free

According to Adorno, what could put people's heads in touch with their bodies and so with their subjective powers is, of course, *music*, because 'the promise contained in the age-old music is the promise of life without fear' (Adorno 1991a:151). Here he 'takes over directly Hegel's conception of art as a mode of cognition, arguing that it is not primarily concerned with pleasure, usefulness' or even beauty, but 'with revelation of the truth'; and so, according to Adorno, Max Paddison believes, the forms of art 'record the history of mankind more importantly than do documents' (Paddison 1993:218; cf Adorno 1956:29). But where *in* 'this emancipatory music' does that 'promise' reside, and how can anyone prepared to listen with attention hear it? In the early and middle 1950s Adorno addressed himself to the issue of musical meaning, and to the idea that music might be a specific form of language:

Music resembles a language. Expressions such as musical idiom, musical intonation, are not simply metaphors. But music is not identical with language. The resemblance points to something essential, but vague. Anyone who takes it literally will be seriously misled (Adorno 1994:1).

The problem with such formulations, of course, is that only someone who knows the truth can judge whether someone else has been 'seriously misled'. What, then, is this truth?

Music resembles language in the sense that it is a temporal sequence of articulated sounds which are more than just sounds. They say something, often something human. The better the music, the more forcefully they say it. The succession of sounds is like logic: it can be right or wrong. But what has been said cannot be detached from music. Music creates no semiotic system (Adorno 1991a:1).

But if tonality does not quite generate concepts it may at least be said to create lexical systems'; and there was something which could be called a 'language of music' even though it is 'quite different from the language of intentionality'. How does Adorno know that? Because *music* contains a *theological* dimension: 'What it has to say is simultaneously revealed and concealed. Its Idea is the divine Name which has been given shape. It is demythologised prayer, rid of efficacious magic. It is the human attempt, doomed as ever, to name the Name, not to communicate meanings.' And how can that 'Idea' become manifest? Only by *playing*: 'Interpretation is essential to both music and language, but in different ways. To interpret language means: to understand language. To interpret music means: to make music'. Only then, apparently - given that form can 'only be the form of a content' - can 'content' be reached, and 'what is essential in a work of art, what makes it into such a work: the shaping of the work, the tension between its content and its form, be experienced, physiologically and mentally' (Adorno 1994:2,3,6; Frankfurt ISR

1974:101).⁹¹

What can be known about this 'content' other than its relationship with 'form' and with practice? How, after all can the subjective experience be compared, scientifically? And is Adorno really suggesting that 'art' can, given appropriate attitudes and practices, really determine it? 'What will become of the sociology of music does not, of course, depend solely on the refinement of its methods, but especially whether it is based on meaningfully posed questions and whether it is guided by a really revealing theory of music and of its existence within the societal totality' (Frankfurt ISR 1974:115). Conveniently, how and where playing *music* takes you through 'form' to that elusive 'content' cannot be rearticulated into language. Understanding *music*, then, was either a talent or an act of faith, and it was that faith, if anything, which had a relationship to the 'societal totality'. Apparently, 'We must discover how the entirety of a society, conceived as an internally contradictory unity, is manifested in the work of art, in what way the work of art remains subject to society and in what way it transcends it. In philosophical terms, the approach must be an immanent one.' However, 'Social concepts should not be applied to works from without, but rather drawn from an exacting examination of the works themselves' (Adorno 1991b:39). Quite how 'the works themselves' were to be isolated in order to be studied in such ways, however, is a procedure known only to Adorno!

The problem for popular musicologists today, of course, is that Adorno never actually bothered to show us how to do this for popular music and song. According to his perspective you had to reject apparent alternatives, such as 'jazz', which 'seems anarchistic' but is not, since 'All mass culture is fundamentally adaptation', unbeknownst to the 'compulsive consumers of the mass media and other regimented joys'. Instead, what you had to do was to hang onto those genuine 'works of art' whose 'greatness...consists solely in the fact that they give voice to what ideology hides. Their very success moves beyond false consciousness, whether intentionally or not' (Adorno 1993e:58; Adorno et al 1976:74; Frankfurt ISR 1974:113; Adorno 1991b:39). This meant, as in all Adorno's correspondence with Walter Benjamin in the later 1930s, that technology could be a problem: 'In music up to the electronic period, the intrinsic technique - the sound structure of the work - was distinct from its performance, the means of reproduction'; but in the era of early 'rock 'n' roll', 'The mass product is the thing itself', and the 'commercial character of culture causes the difference between culture and practical life to disappear' (Adorno 1993b:155; Adorno 1993e:53). Benjamin was over-optimistic because

If works of art become their own reproduction, it is then foreseeable that reproductions will become works. With the absolute acoustic realisation of a composition through electronic means, indeed, perhaps even by means of recording on wire or tape, doubts are registered regarding the writing down of a manuscript score: as if one could make music as directly as one paints a picture and the significant intermediate level, notation, could be bypassed as though it were an ornamental formality (Adorno 1977b:83).⁹²

Was he seriously suggesting that 'art' and its 'content' led a privileged existence only in older forms of technique? Scores went through the mechanical process of printing; so why does he appear to fetishise 'the manuscript score', and argue against the 'general attitude taken towards the score today? He claimed this attitude was 'rooted in the positivist view', where 'the score is nothing more than instructions for performance', or even as 'a system

91. There are echoes of this mysticism even in Middleton 1990.

of signals, the goal of which is communication and "information" (Adorno 1977b:86); but following this line of argument also meant arguing for an alternative, historical conception of *music's* artistic peculiarity.

There was, Adorno wrote, something not unlike the classical Marxist conception of combined and uneven development at work within all *art*: 'the history of music does not run absolutely parallel to the other arts. "Non-contemporary" works still survive in a way that would never be tolerated by the most progressive forms of painting'. Perhaps he is implicitly operating with a concept of *music* which is split, within the greater split between 'art' and 'kitsch', and within the 'societal totality', fractured as that was. Yet it is difficult not to feel that what Adorno did was to conceive of the 'totality' either as a total abstraction, or as a series of Chinese boxes from which he has escaped but very few others have managed to do so. At any rate, he makes a distinction between the 'Non-contemporary works' and 'modern art', the 'essence' of which 'enters into the power of negation, into the prohibition on its own name', so that 'the variety of life is salvaged in obscurity, happiness in asceticism, reconciliation in dissidence (Adorno 1994:130-31,193). As for the 'Non-contemporary' *music*, stuff like the *Missa Solemnis*, the strategy is somewhat different:

To speak seriously of this work can mean nothing less than, in Brecht's terms, to alienate it; to break through the aura of irrelevant worship which protectively surrounds it and thereby perhaps to contribute something to an authentic aesthetic experience of it beyond the paralysing respect of the academic sphere (Adorno 1976a: 113).

So, 'modern art' has powers of its own - including the power of baffling the 'naive ear' and the 'outraged philistine', but not, of course, the 'true interpreter' (Adorno 1974b:370,372,373) - and the older 'art' needs protection, even from professional musicians. According to Adorno, 'social progress', which

has turned practising musicians into protected union members for whom each minute is costly, becomes a hindrance to artistic progress in that it prevents that kind of working through of compositions that requires squandering time probably as much as great architecture requires squandering space (Adorno 1974b:377).

In this way of seeing, presumably, the pyramids are well worth the incidental cost of a system based on slave-labour; yet someone who had no institutional patronage, and who had to earn a living as composer, like Hanns Eisler, had written only recently of the way in which he felt like 'a regimented employee who can be discharged on any pretext' in 1940s Hollywood (Eisler 1951:55; cf Jay 1969:66).

By 1960, Adorno claimed to have identified 'a development whose implications have only now become fully apparent' and from which 'Mahler drew the consequences':

It is the perception that the Western idea of unified, internally coherent, as it were systematic music, whose unity is meant to be identical with its meaning, is no longer viable. It has become incompatible with a situation in which people are no longer in command of any authentic experience of such a meaning in their lives. It is incompatible with a world which has ceased to provide them with the categories of unity in happiness, leaving them only with

92. Adorno was writing in 1958, a year after stereophonic recordings were available in the USA and in the very year that they reached Europe; and he may also have known about RCA's experiments with tape-cartridges. EMI had demonstrated stereo recordings in London in 1955, and the first stereo tapes were available in the USA in that same year, as was a home stereo-recorder. In fact, most major recording studios had been recording in stereo from 1955, a year after the invention (in the USA) of the tape-cartridge. Adorno probably also knew that the capture of the German Magnetophone - first developed in Germany in 1934, and marketed by AEG/Telefunken in 1937 - had been a strategic priority for US troops in 1944, given the primitiveness of the US Army and Navy's 1943 Magnetic Wire recorder.

standardised compulsion (Adorno 1994:92).

Since 'meaning' no longer corresponded to 'unity' - revealingly, Adorno fails to deny that it once had, but fails to say when and where this may have been - Schoenberg and his school were, quite correctly, the enemies of the ornamental, the comfortable enjoyment of an art that committed you to nothing, that relied all too complacently on its own stability while lapsing inexorably into the merely sybaritic. Their polemics were directed at hacks in every realm not just in journalism, against everyone who offered his own individuality, which was the same as every other, in the marketplace. The complacent conciliatoriness of the Viennese softened the brutal demands of material production and hence created a space in which the intellect could move and thrive. But it also infected it. This is why true intellect had to rebel and defend itself against the circumstances that had given birth to it. For otherwise, by colluding with society, it would ultimately have betrayed itself and sold out to the unsavoury materialism of industry and the needs of the cultural consumers (Adorno 1994:203).⁹³

There was, then, no 'unity' between 'intellect' and 'society', either. Instead, 'intellect' had, as it were, to struggle to free itself from the 'unsavoury materialism' of that 'society', in order to get away from what Adorno now openly called 'bourgeois music':

Bourgeois music was decorative, even in its greatest achievements. It made itself pleasant to people, not just directly, to its listeners, but objectively, going far beyond them by virtue of its affirmation of the ideas of humanism. It was given notice to quit because it had degenerated into ideology, because its reflection of the world in a positive light, its call for a better world, became a lie which legitimated evil (Adorno 1994:257).

This music and (as, once again, with Althusser) this humanism had become the enemy, as had Stalinism, popular music, and so on. It's as though, on opening yet another Chinese box, Adorno continued to find others.

The pleasures of paralysed virtuosity

No direction home

By the early 1960s, wherever he looked, East and West, Adorno saw only a 'culture industry that buttresses the state of mind of people so as to be better able to exploit it' ; and while he retained his formal and abstract general sympathy with the plight of 'people harnessed between their jobs and the reproduction of their working energies' and acknowledged occasionally that the 'culture industry' was not utterly hegemonic, he could find no actual, concrete working class to support, let alone to lead. 'Sociology's abandonment of a critical theory of society is resignatory: one no longer dares to conceive of the whole since one must despair of changing it'; and so he admitted that he had been forced back to the position of left-wing Hegelianism in the face of social reality (Wiggershaus 1994:570).⁹⁴ On the other hand, he writes about the 'kind of reservation' some people have about the products of the 'culture industry', and how 'the real interests of individuals are still strong

93. Yet again, as Paul Brook points out, there is a link here to Althusserian 'theoretical practice'.

94. In 1963, Adorno is paraphrased as saying that 'in spite of all of Hegel's conservative traits, he had placed at philosophy's disposal the means with which it could manoeuvre in freedom, with which a philosophy became possible that was no longer plagued by a fear of lacking foundations and a need for a secure standpoint, a philosophy that no longer claimed autonomy' (Wiggershaus 1994:535).

enough to resist, within certain limits, total inclusion'. Occasionally, he even goes so far as to hint at the abstract possibility of hope: 'the ideology of the culture industry contains the antidote to its own lie. No other plea could be made for its defence'; but three pages later he reverts to a characteristic end-of-history fatalism: 'the culture industry is not the art of the consumer but rather the projection of the will of those in control onto their victims' (Adorno 1993c:170; Adorno 1993b:157,160). He was clear about the justification of his own work - 'There is no more emphatic argument for the rights of critics than their abolition by the Nazis' - but he was acutely aware of the gap between himself and those who got their political hands dirty in the struggle, so there was a tendency to exaggerate political differences with someone like Brecht: 'what he justified was not simply, as he long sincerely believed, an incomplete socialism, but a coercive domination in which blindly irrational social forces returned to work once again' (Adorno 1976b:18,27,148-49; Adorno 1978d:311). Even now, Adorno had no theoretical explanation for the counter-revolution in Russia and no conception of the regime's *class nature* (Cliff 1988).

The split between theory and practice seemed wider than ever. On the one hand, only artists 'represent theory and all consciousness that points beyond the blind coercion of material circumstances' (Adorno 1991b:150); but on the other hand,

The shadow of the antiquated, the splenetic mood of dogged blindness with which it burrows into a world of its own, is something which overwhelms all art nowadays which bears witness to the absolute negativity of the world, the world of Auschwitz (Adorno 1994:264).

Politically, since engagement with the 'world of Auschwitz' meant inevitable contamination, there was still that question-mark over the future of 'art', not least because the processes of learning from it had become so arcane. Kracauer was convinced that these factors were closely connected and he could not accept Adorno's declaration that 'there is after all a definite outlook in his writings which, of course, is accessible only to those absorbing his production in its entirety'.⁹⁵ He upbraided his former pupil: 'You curse the "bürgerlich Gesellschaft", reject Communism, frown down on Social Democracy, etc.: what do you suggest should be done in terms of social change, other institutions?' But Adorno's '(pitiable) answer was: I know and say what is bad; is this not enough?' Kracauer's summary judgement seems apposite: he castigated Adorno for 'excessive formalism, indifference to the concrete, and an arrogant disregard for the contradictions of his own position' (Jay 1985:226,227,230); yet because his was basically an idealist perspective, and while he was acute enough about other people's idealism, Adorno's position was unassailable on its own terms. The 'social apparatus has hardened itself against people', he wrote, so it was necessary to 'imagine a totality' as something that 'could be completely different' (Adorno & Scholem:1988:3-4,7).

'Art', according to Adorno, 'is the negative knowledge of the actual world', but a work of art 'only becomes knowledge when taken as a totality, i.e. through all its mediations, not through its individual intentions'; so the 'meaning of a work of art is something which has to be produced, rather than just copied' (Adorno 1992a: 160,168,317). He was arguing, at this time, against Lukacs' adaptation to Stalinism and against 'socialist realism' in general; and, ironically, this meant that Adorno was often pulled towards open idealism: 'Within the all-embracing blindness and delusion the only things which inhabit their rightful place in society are those which have broken with communication, instead of seeking to discov-

95. This is still not possible for anglophone readers, even if it were desirable.

er its genuine or supposed laws' (Adorno 1994:320). But at the same time, and rather conveniently, he accepted that Stalinism had somehow captured both the language of Marxism and the perspective of class, nomatter in how distorted a fashion. He had claimed and could have no rights in that territory - on that 'sphere' - because though he understood that contemporary Russian society is oppressed and exploited', the political reality was that while 'Lukacs never quite manages to dispel the illusion that its contradictions are non-antagonistic in nature', there was still no third position in sight (Adorno 1992a:152,161,175). However, rather than push through insights shared with classical Marxism, Adorno accepts his own era's bourgeois common-sense that the choice was either Washington or Moscow, or else political quietism.

In fact, Adorno had no intellectually coherent alternative conception of his own historical period. The furthest he got was a sustained doubt about the validity of his own early 1930s 'error' in adopting a mechanically materialist method of cultural analysis, when by treating Marx's 'base' and 'superstructure' conception as much more than a suggestive metaphor he had failed to understand that not only the economic 'base' had an effectivity in both cultural and political terms (Adorno 1976b:233).⁹⁶ But sometimes, with this rudimentary self-reflexiveness at work, Adorno's applications of fragments of classical Marxism produced impeccably classical Marxist conclusions.⁹⁷ For example, his critique of the 'flat identification of the concept of musical production with the precedence of the economic sphere of production, without considering how far that which we call production already presupposes social production and depends on it as much as it is sundered from it' (Adorno 1976b:233), would not, so far as it goes, have greatly troubled Marx, let alone Trotsky, Jakubowski or the revolutionary Gramsci. Sadly, to Adorno - as to millions of workers in today's eastern Europe, as well as to a few ex-Lefts in western academies - the apparent rejection of the Stalinist mediation of Marx looked to be the rejection of Marxism itself.

The screeching retinue of Elvis Presley

Adorno's *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* was published in 1962, the same year that The Beatles had their first successful UK record. After a long time dealing with *music*, he felt he had to address the phenomenon of Western mass-produced and mass-consumed music, and this raised the question of 'totality' once more. So he began with a formal acceptance that the 'sociology of music' needs to offer 'knowledge of the relation between music and the socially organised individuals who listen to it'; but he soon shifts focus, resolving this implicit totality into two parts, and sets himself up as the unelected and unaccountable judge and jury as to when works have been analysed 'with different degrees of accuracy'. What he understands as 'society' is, apparently 'irresistably turning bourgeois', and 'the exchange and performance principles' have become 'victorious', so he concentrates on are the alleged effects on individual listeners. The 'good listener' may be 'presumed to be growing rare and threatening to disappear', while the 'emotional listener' flourishes in places like the USSR, where music is mass-produced, tailor-made for this type': indeed its 'musical ego ideal is patterned after the cliché of the violently oscillating, now ebullient, now melancholy, Slav'. In the West, Adorno proposes that the 'entertainment listener' - sometimes 'the extreme entertainment listener' - is characterised by 'his

96. Adorno seems not to have read Jakubowski (1990).

97. By 1964, Adorno seems at least to have opened Marx's *Grundrisse*, which had been available in German since 1953 (Adorno 1992b:49; Lunn 1982:12). See also Adorno et al 1976:14,25,28,37,42.

misrelation to the subject matter', and by what Adorno (somehow) knows about his subjectivity: 'his inner realm itself stays altogether empty, abstract and indefinite. Where this attitude is radicalised, where artificial paradises take shape as they do for the hashish smoker, powerful taboos are violated'. 'He' is, in short, a 'self-conscious lowbrow who makes a virtue of his own mediocrity', and his psychological peculiarity is a weak ego' (Adorno 1976b:1,3,6,8,15, 17, 18). There is, however, no empirical evidence of any kind to support such generalisations.

Adorno's method is to work from an allegedly known subjectivity towards the 'song-hits', and his theory is that such music has not only an '*effect*', but even a 'social role', that of 'patterns of identification', which relates to David Reisman's sociology:

The hits not only appeal to the "lonely crowd" of the atomised; they reckon with the immature, with those who cannot express their emotions and experiences, who either never had the power of expression or were crippled by cultural taboos (Adorno 1976b:26,27).

From the subjective he shifts to the supposedly objective social situation, with his traditional nod towards a fragment of Marx:

To people harnessed between their jobs and the reproduction of their working energies, the hits are pureyours of an ersatz for feelings which their contemporaneously revised ego ideal tells them they should have. Socially the hits either channel emotions - thus recognising them - or vicariously fulfill the longings for emotions (Adorno 1976b:27).

Such an audience will even defend itself angrily against knowledge of its own condition: 'Any musical reminder of themselves, of the doubtfulness and possible uplifting of their own existence, will embarrass them. That they are really cut off from their potential is the very reason why it infuriates them to be reminded by art' (Adorno 1976b:28). To Adorno, 'pop music is an ideology': it is 'objectively untrue and helps to maim the consciousness of those exposed to it, however hard the individual crippling effects may be to measure'. It is 'planned idiocy' which 'virtually tests what mankind will put up with, what threadbare, noncommittal intellectual contents can be imposed on it'. However, this music is 'not ideology pure and simple, it is ideological only insofar as it is false consciousness' (Adorno 1976b:30,37-38,53, 63); so it has a history and a politics too.

As ever Adorno is not very forthcoming on such matters, but there are hints: 'There were times far into the nineteenth century when it was possible to write decent popular music, but 'its esthetic decay is as one with the irrevocable and irrelative dissociation of the two realms' of popular and serious music (Adorno 1976b:22).⁹⁸ So, what had been 'spheres' were now 'realms', and the familiar notion of orbits becomes that of a kind of continental drift, which also has a political correlate:

In the nineteenth century and as late as the twentieth - in other words, at the high-tide of liberalism - free institutions were more progressive than the ones steered by public officials; but today, under the conditions of monopolistic mass consumption, the allegedly free market serves to stragulate what may be stirring (Adorno 1976b: 131).

This had political consequences, since Adorno felt it all had to do with ideas about the nation: 'music has national elements to the same extent as bourgeois society as a whole. Its history, and that of its forms of organisation, essentially occurred within national boundaries'. In fact, it 'is only since the rudiments of bourgeois nations exist that national schools

98. Adorno's fixation with the writing and interpretation of notated (rather than performed) music is rarely highlighted by supporters or critics, but this stress is surely wholly inappropriate for commercially popular music (Adorno 1982:172; cf Gendron 1986:30-31; Middleton 1990: *passim*).

with full characteristics have unfolded'. Indeed, the historical development of this situation has, apparently, been led by *music*: 'There is no question that since 1945 the modern movement has liquidated national differences'. Culture of an appropriate kind can still have political effects and then, presumably, economic ones too; and so, logically enough, the critique of culture is pre-eminently political. His difficulty here - apart from an uncharacteristic acknowledgement of his own earlier mechanical materialism (Adorno 1976b:155,157,174,233) - is that the actually-existing world was based on rather different general politics, and included a very different musical politics, so the critique of actually-existing music had to deal with popular music too.

Adorno admitted that it was 'far more difficult to see why one popular song is a hit and another a flop than why Bach finds more of an echo than Telemann; but he expected his readership to know who Telemann was, and to agree with his own sour dismissal of 'the screeching retinue of Elvis Presley': 'It is the banality of present-day popular music - a banality relentlessly controlled in order to make it saleable - which brands that music with its crucial trait. That trait is vulgarity'. He also expected agreement that popular music was 'the dregs of musical history', and that it was 'so crudely simple' (Adorno 1976b:3,13,27,28). In other words, he felt able to rely on a like-minded audience of vulgar snobs, who were worried, as snobs always are, about the power and popularity of such music.⁹⁹

It is not only the interested parties, the producers and distributors of pop music, who manipulate the way it is heard; it is the music itself, so to speak, its immanent character.

It sets up a system of conditioned reflexes in its victims, and the crux is not even the antithesis of primitivity and differentiation (Adorno 1976b:29).

He recognised there were contradictions: 'The subtly habit-forming effect contrasts oddly with the crudeness of the stimuli themselves'; and he understood the producer of such music had to 'write something impressive enough to be remembered and at the same time well-known enough to be banal'. So he could not insist that all the talent went into 'serious' music: 'there is still some good bad music left today, along with all the bad good music. Under the pressure of the market place much genuine talent is absorbed by popular music and cannot be entirely crushed even there' (Adorno 1976b:30,31,32). Could the frozen ice-cap of Cold War social relations be melting, even in Frankfurt?

When it came to a discussion of the music officially-sponsored in the East (and supported by the East's allies in the West), however, Adorno's tactics reverted to an assumed notion of totality which was also, even monolithically, one of utter difference at one level and almost complete convergence at another. He writes about the East's 'dogmatically frozen social theory' (its vulgar materialism) in a manner which seems designed to appeal to sophisticated Western Cold Warriors:

'The more puzzling the relation of music and specific classes, the more convenient its dispatch by labelling. All we need to do is take the music consumed by the masses, willy nilly, and equate it on the basis of its alleged closeness to the people with true music'. But he then goes on to note that such a tactic is carried out 'regardless of the similarity between the alleged Socialist Realism of official Communist music and the dregs of the late Roman-

99. In the 1960s Adorno wrote that 'No one who did not as a young man fall in love with the coloratura soprano during the performance really knows what an opera is', but he made differently sexist claims in relation to the 'more or less pretty pop singer' (Adorno 1992b:33-34; Adorno & Bloch 1988:2).

ticist music from the capitalist countries of the fin de siècle'. Then, having formally suggested a contradictory totality, he shifts attention back to the East in another gesture to Western liberals: 'An equally simple measure is to seize the authority of famous music from the past for one's own authoritarian requirements...and any recalcitrant individualists among composers are shown the knout with a mien of comradely solicitude' (Adorno 1976b: 55-56). The next move is to suggest that 'In our time, with music directly involved in social struggles by partisan propaganda and totalitarian measures, judgments about the class significance of musical phenomena are doubly precarious'; but he then takes the opportunity to draw further out from the actual situation into a focus which may be formally based on a conception of totality, but which is effectively abstract. Instead of 'searching for the musical expression of class standpoints one will do better so to conceive the relation of music to the classes that any music will present the picture of antagonistic society as a whole' (Adorno 1976b:65,68). He does not deny class exists, but he tries to downgrade its significance:

Authentic music, like probably any authentic art, is as much a cryptogram of the unreconciled antithesis between individual fate and human destiny as it is a presentation of the bonds, however questionable, that tie the antagonistic individual interests into a whole, and as it is finally a presentation of the hope for real reconciliation. The elements of stratification touching the several musics are secondary in comparison (Adorno 1976b:68-69).

It was as though his ideal music was somehow magically free of class struggle, and because of this it could prefigure a better kind of society.

There is, then, something allegedly deeper than class even if, ironically, Adorno's method of pointing towards it is a combination of vulgar materialist reflectionism and essentialism:

Music has something to do with classes insofar as it reflects the class relationship in toto. The standpoints which the musical idiom occupies in the process remain epiphenomena as opposed to that phenomenon of the essence. The purer and more unalloyed its grasp of the antagonism and the more profound its representation, the less ideological the music and the more correct its posture as objective consciousness (Adorno 1976b:69)

In fact, 'It is by the anti-ideological resolution of conflicts, by a cognitive behaviour without an inkling of the object of its cognition, that great music takes a stand in social struggles...by enlightenment, not by aligning itself, as one likes to call that, with an ideology'. Yet since 'The end of music as an ideology will have to await the end of antagonistic society', the alignment of non-alignment and the ideology of the non-ideological have, effectively, separated both 'great music' and Adorno from helping in that process, or even from taking a position on what the implicit underlying problem - beneath class and class struggle - might be (Adorno 1976b:69,70). His left-wing critics were quick to point out that the bourgeois music Adorno liked was built on 'the economic exploitation of the lower classes'; and so his kind of sociology of music tended to 'prostitute itself as the apology of an art of domination, thus becoming one-sided in the worst possible sense' (Blomster 1976: 110 note 95); and the logic of this retreat into quietism seems to have been an adaptation to the ideology of human nature, or even towards a highly idealised conception of Nature itself.

This does not mean that Adorno has nothing further to say about officially-sponsored music, East and West, but his comments and critique turn away from art towards a conventional, liberal-bourgeois commentary on what is wrong about how *art* is administered equally badly in both blocs:

The world's division into a few great power blocs can, of course, be musically traced in the

crudest style differences. The reasons have nothing to do with art. Faced with the suppression of modernism in the realms of Soviet power, the West officially had to discard the shackles which cultural conformism had kept on music until they were dictatorially ordered in the East. The cultural Iron Curtain is so much a requisite of our modern bloc society that any relaxation of the taboos on modern music - as occurred in Poland, for example - instantly acquires a political aspect (Adorno 1976b: 174-75).

Presenting an apparent stasis as an actual one is undialectical and ahistorical (and politically disabling), especially on the basis of only a formal, abstract notion of totality; so perhaps this is why fragments of classical Marxist theory and (for once) method occasionally break through:

Sometimes musical productive forces will explode the circumstances of production that have been sedimented in taste: jazz, for instance, which swept all nonsyncopated dance music out of fashion and demoted it to the realm of nostalgia. Conversely, circumstance of production may shackle the productive forces, and in modern times this has become the rule. The music market has turned down progressive music and thus called a halt to musical progress (Adorno 1976b:220).

But such comparative theoretical sophistication - married, as it is, to a uncharacteristically positive attitude towards jazz (cf Frankfurt ISR 1974:113)¹⁰⁰ - soon relapses into Adorno's accustomed preference for cultural pathology: 'A critical sociology of music will have to find out in detail why today - unlike a hundred years ago - popular music is bad, bound to be bad, without exception' (Adorno 1976b: 225). Adorno 'was never fully comfortable discussing the intellectual content of music' (Blomster 1976:98). Instead, he relied on a consensus - 'There may in fact be very great difficulties in developing in thought the objective content of a late quartet by Beethoven, but the difference between this content and the content of a pop-song can be stated in concise and mainly technical terms' - and on the arbitrary assertion that 'Whoever listens to Beethoven without hearing anything of the revolutionary bourgeoisie, the echo of its slogans, the cry for their realisation, and the demand for that particular totality, understands Beethoven just as little as one who is unable to follow the purely musical content of his compositions, their inner history, by means of which the themes themselves are treated in them' (Adorno 1972:125; Blomster 1976:73). The similarities with Cecil Sharp are remarkable (see Harker 1985). As for music itself, Adorno remained only abstractly hopeful:

Ever since music has existed, it has always been a protest, however ineffectual, against myth, against a fate which was always the same, and even against death. Nor does it lose its anti-mythic status, even when, in a state of objective despair, it makes the cause of despair its own. However feeble its guarantee that there is an alternative, music never abjures its promise that one exists (Adorno 1994:151).

So, for Adorno, '*authentic*' works of art are nothing less than 'the unconscious historiography of their epoch' (Paddison 1993:218).

100. In 1967, Adorno pronounced that it was 'difficult to isolate the authentic Negro elements in jazz', since the 'white *lumpenproletariat* also participated in its prehistory'. However, he also maintained that 'Anyone who allows the growing respectability of mass culture to seduce him into equating a popular song with modern art because of a few false notes squeaked by a clarinet; anyone who mistakes a triad studded with "dirty notes" for atonality, has already capitulated to barbarism' (Adorno 1967:122,127). Quite how he proposes to identify 'authentic Negro elements', or lumpenproletarian essences for that matter, is highly unclear (see Tagg 1989).

Optimism of the intellect, pessimism of the will

By the mid-1960s, in what bourgeois sociologists and politicians proclaimed to be a contradiction-free post-war capitalist world, the *embourgeoisement* theorists were winning the argument. Adorno now insisted that 'society' was 'irresistably turning bourgeois'. At the same time, he continued to lambaste 'The totality of the middle class' which 'turned its back on humanity through ravenous industry, imperialism, and, finally, fascism' during the 1930s (Adorno 1965:17). Ignoring classical Marxist theorisations of the Long Boom,¹⁰¹ and separating-off his own insights about the 'fraud currently perpetrated under the word "communication"' by radio and other media, his focus returned more and more to Auschwitz, and even to the 'dark drives of the intelligentsia before 1933', as though errors made then had irreversibly undermined Marx's optimistic nineteenth century analysis. Of course, even though his own mediation of Volume Three of *Capital* had not prevented his own demoralisation, Adorno was perfectly capable of criticising other writers for failing to grasp the importance of Marx's later work, especially those who are 'only too willing to grant depth to the young Marx, in order to be able to escape the critic of political economy'. He professed himself to be living in a world 'similar to hell', but there are signs, in what we now know was the build-up to the events of 1968, of a rather uncharacteristic self-reflexivity breaking into his rhetoric (Adorno 1986a:5,68,100; Adorno 1992b:43).

He understood that 'there is horror because there is no freedom yet'; but he also knew that intellectuals were not beyond criticism: 'Practice is what is put off and cannot wait; this is what ails even theory'. Occasionally, he seems to have grasped his own inconsistency: 'Whatever an individual or a group may undertake against the totality they are part of is infected by the evil of that totality; and no less infected is he who does nothing at all'. But rather than do something - or at least, something else - Adorno preferred to argue that, since 'Auschwitz demonstrated irrefutably that culture has failed' he was justified in concentrating on theory, because a 'new categorical imperative has been imposed by Hitler upon un-free mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen' (Adorno 1990:218,243,245,365,366). What he does not and cannot do is to explain how this 'theory' or these 'thoughts' can result in concrete action that is not, in some way, self-defeating; so while he might have agreed with Lenin that practice without theory is blind, he would have experienced some difficulty with the dialectically-related notion that theory without practice is impotent.

The question of power may even have seemed irrelevant, given that Adorno was living in a kind of unresolvable limbo. He recognised, abstractly, that there was a possibility of a mistake on his part, since in 'a state of unfreedom no one, of course, has a liberated consciousness'; but those really to blame were the ones guilty of having 'irresistably downgraded' that theory 'to a servant's role' (to whom or what is not clear) and not, of course, the theoreticians. Such critics, with their rhetoric about the unity of theory and practice, offered a form of 'materialism' which Adorno felt was 'no longer a counter-position one may take' (Adorno 1990:3,95,143,197). In other words, one of the justifications implicit in his own mediation of Marx was the fact that he could cut out unwelcome bits because they, too, had been hopelessly compromised by their association with Social Democracy or Stalinism. Even in 1967, he still hadn't forgiven those in the 1930s who adopted the 'sil-

101. The classic full-length analysis is in Kidron 1968; but the analysis was a collective effort by contributors to the British classical Marxist journal, *International Socialism* during the 1960s and even earlier.

ly mode of thinking that considered fascism beaten in advance because the strongest battalions in the world were against it', despite that fact that many of those 'silly' thinkers, and large parts of those 'strongest battalions' - that is, Communists loyal to Stalin - had been amongst the first to be murdered by Hitler (Adorno 1992b:252).

The gradual chiming-in of Adorno's rhetoric with that of Western bourgeois ideology became rather more obvious in the late 1960s. Thus, while he continued to deplore 'unfreedom' in the West, it was as though people in the 'Soviet and Chinese empires' were, so to speak, even unfree-er (Adorno 1969-70:151). Certainly, he reserved all his venom for the USSR and its allies: 'On the threadbare pretext of a dictatorship (now half a century old) of the Proletariat (long bureaucratically administered), governmental terror machines entrench themselves as permanent institutions, mocking the theory that they carry on their lips. They chain their vassals to their most direct concerns and keep them stupid' (Adorno 1990:204). This is not, yet, the fashionable early 1990s liberal (and, of course, ironically, the late 1920s-1950s Stalinist) idea that Lenin led to Stalin, but it is remarkably close. Instead of analysing and historicising the situation, Adorno prefers to attack the idea of 'Universal history' which must be both 'construed and denied', since 'No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism', whereas the path from 'the slingshot to the megaton bomb' looked clear enough. This, apparently, is 'the horror that verifies Hegel and stands him on his head'. As for Marx's optimism, 'After the catastrophes that have happened, and in view of the catastrophes to come, it would be cynical to say that a plan for a better world is manifested in history and unites it'. If history has any unity, he goes on (ignoring problems of teleology), it is that given by 'suffering'; and, overall, it does look like the vacuum left by driving out most of Marx had let Nietzsche in. Unless, of course, what Adorno was arguing for was a somewhat delayed collapse of capitalism - a kind of Fourth Period, so to speak, after the military defeat of fascism - which simply had to be endured: 'society is as transparent, and its apologia as threadbare, as those who see through it are bound to die out' (Adorno 1990:268,320; Held 1980:205).

Adorno wrote about what is, ultimately, an infinite regression to an almost Biblical Fall, which happened in or around February 1933, since when society had entered an infinite vortex on the way to another, unknown and unnameable dimension. This, presumably, is why 'Philosophy, which once seemed obsolete, lives on because the moment to realise it was missed. The summary judgment that it had merely interpreted the world, that resignation in the face of reality had crippled it in itself, becomes a defeatism of reason after the attempt to change the world miscarried' (Adorno 1990:3). So, if the philosophical totality consisted of only Stalinist vulgar materialism on the one hand and idealism on the other, then Adorno still felt he had to adapt in some ways to the latter, in spite of what he had called its conservative traits. Consequently, Adorno's philosophical development looks more like a kind of infinite regress towards Hegelianism, by means of a strange kind of formal and abstract dialectic which so to speak, all but reverses history - or which enters a wholly new historical dimension, bouncing off all the known alternatives that actual history presented on the way, back through Auschwitz to 1933, from 1933 to 1923, from 1923 to 1917, and then, through late Marx to early Marx, and from Marx the pupil of Hegel and then, presumably, into infinity.¹⁰² For him, 'inner and outer life are torn apart' (1967-68:1:70), and this affected his everyday actions.¹⁰³

By 1967, Adorno's position on 'the masses' was hopelessly contradictory. On the one hand, he wrote, they 'are not primary, but secondary': 'the customer is not king, as the cul-

ture industry would like us to believe, not its subject but its object' (Adorno 1975:12). On the other hand, he held a rhetorical sympathy for the 'masses' and retained a faint glimmer of hope: 'If the masses have been unjustly reviled from above as masses, the culture industry is not among the least responsible for making them into masses and then despising them, while obstructing the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit'. From his privileged position in one of the group of states which remained formally bourgeois-democratic, he felt able to patronise working class people from above and to hope for 'the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. These, however, would be the precondition for a democratic society which needs adults who have come of age in order to sustain itself and develop' (Adorno 1975:19). The problem was - as for the radical-liberal Leavisites in Britain - in a naughty world like this, where were such paragons to be found? ¹⁰⁴

As an institution, Adorno is dead

Formally, Adorno accepted that society remained characterised by 'class struggle today just as in the period when that concept originated'; yet there is something peculiarly ironic in the fact that he also pronounced that 'The only totality the student of society can presume to know is the antagonistic whole, and if he is to attain to totality at all, then only in and through contradiction' (Adorno 1969-70:149; Adorno 1967-68:1:74). As it happens, this thought is perfectly acceptable, as a general abstraction, to classical Marxism; and, as a matter of history, those real antagonisms actually broke out into the largest mass strike in history, with political and economic repercussions which were to last well into the 1970's (Harman 1988). So, for all the alleged power of the 'culture industry' and hegemony of bourgeois ideology, 1968 forced even Adorno to think about class once more: 'The fact that one cannot speak of a proletarian class consciousness in the foremost capitalist countries does not itself contradict - contrary to common opinion - the existence of classes'. He believed, in general, that 'Men are still dominated by means of the economic process', since 'Industrial labour has become the model of society everywhere, crossing all borders of political systems'. But rather than follow these ideas through in relation to what Marx's analysis suggested might occur in a general epochal sense, once capitalist social-relations had become universal, Adorno prefers to smear him with a vulgar determinism he never espoused: 'It was far too optimistic on Marx's part to expect that the primacy of the forces of production would inevitably arrive and necessarily explode the relations of production'

102. He also saw a parallel in general politics, from the 'the moment of the bourgeois revolution' when 'humanness strikes out far beyond the particular interests of the bourgeois class, and at the same instant is mutilated by particular interests', up until 'The imperialism of the later nineteenth century, which transposed [sic] the class struggle into a struggle between nations or blocs, down to the current opposition between highly industrialised and undeveloped peoples' (Adorno 1992b:164,166). But how this worked, unlike in Marx's accounts of the 1840s and 1870s, or Lenin's analysis of the 1890s and early twentieth century, is left characteristically vague.

103. In 1967 he called for a proper enquiry into the shooting of a student protester by Berlin police, but refused to cancel his lecture in order to discuss what else might be done. The SDS leaflet castigated him for his 'sophisticated despair' (Wiggershaus 1994:619-20).

104. 'The latest crisis of the individual is based on the fact that the new methods of production are making the qualities society once demanded of the individual, and perhaps the category of the qualitative itself, superfluous'. But according to Adorno, this had been the case so far back as 1938, for all his protests that 'Every line of mine opposes' the patronising of the 'clean-cut cliques and individuals who administer them and then deride them for being "the masses"', (Adorno 1992b:241, 245; Adorno 1978b:299).

(Adorno 1968:5,6,7,9). Of course, outside Second International and Stalinist frameworks nobody professing to be a Marxist saw anything at all 'inevitable' about the revolutionary transformation of society, not least because of powerful countervailing tendencies analysed by Marx, but also, and ironically, because of the subjective factor in history.

For Adorno, however, even in 1968, 'Marxism' was still only 'the dogma of a society that was approved as a state religion'. But since he was on record as believing that even theory would turn into real power as soon as it took hold of the masses has been stood on its head by the course of world events, it followed that Marx had to be critiqued and revised. So, if 'the organisation of society prevents the simplest knowledge and experience of threatening events and of essential critical ideas and theorems - whether it does so automatically or intentionally through the culture and consciousness industry and through its monopoly of opinion'; and 'if (what is much more serious) it paralyses the very faculty of imagining the world otherwise than it appears overpoweringly to those of whom it consists': then 'the fixed and manipulated state of people's minds becomes a real power, the power of repression, which its opposite, the free spirit, once aimed at eliminating' (Adorno 1968:10). It never seems to have occurred to Adorno that the 'free spirit' was trying to square a philosophical circle by attempting to enforce a class-based notion of quality, and by combining a mediation of Hegel with an even cruder mediation of Marx. Nor did he stop to wonder how he himself got free to make statements about what lesser mortals believed: 'To recommend the acceptance of jazz and rock-and-roll over Beethoven does nothing to dismantle the affirmative lie of culture'. Instead, at a time when 'relations of production' were 'everywhere sick, damaged, full of holes, being as they are objectively anachronistic', subjectively he believed only a handful of intellectuals could see 'the present form of socially necessary sham' as a sham, even though 'However unbreakable the spell', he claimed he believed 'it is only a spell' (Adorno 1986b:441; 1968:13,14-15).

It is beyond irony then that when thousands of students decided to break that 'spell', and when some of them accused Adorno and Horkheimer of 'betraying the activist imperative of their work', Adorno pronounced that he 'should not want to deny the impulse of subjective weakness inherent in the confinement to theory'. He also sought to distance himself from this unpleasant activity: 'when I made my theoretical model, I could not have guessed that people would try to realise it with Molotov cocktails' (Jay 1972b:348; Jay 1973:279; Adorno 1993d:171).¹⁰⁵ Ironically, Adorno accused his students of a relapse into idealism. 'There has recently been a recrudescence of enthusiasm for the beauty of street battles among militant students - all of this from the vantage point of studied ignorance. This is a reprise of futurist and Dadaist actions' (Adorno 1986b:441). Possibly (as with the leadership of the French CP), there was some workerism involved in Adorno's attitude to his West German students: perhaps he believed with the Stalinists (and against Marcuse) that

105. Horkheimer (who had also rejected the Algerian struggle for liberation in the 1950s) shouted at students in 1967 when they marched on an anti-US demonstration about Vietnam during 'German-America Friendship Week' (Jay 1973:352-53: note 30). By 1970, Horkheimer was barking: he thought that Kaiser Wilhelm II's warning about the 'menace of the yellow race' should 'be taken very seriously today', and professed himself concerned that sociology 'has still insufficiently noted that fact that the development of man is bound up with competition, that is, with the most important element of the liberal economy'. He had begun to think more warmly about his father, an industrial tycoon, and he was even contemplating the convergence of his own perspective with that of the 'founder of Christianity' even before he renounced all his earlier work and sided with the Pope against the Pill (Wiggershaus 1994:432; Therborn 1970:86-87; Slater 1977:106; see also Slater 1977:88-89; Tar 1977:178-79). At least Adorno referred to 'America's helplessness in the Vietnamese guerilla war' in 1969 (Adorno et al 1976:50-51).

it was not their historical role to offer to substitute for a prostrate working class (Harman 1988). Instead, students needed to understand that if there was to be a world 'after the abolition of scarcity', then, given the 'catastrophe which is world history', they should come in from the streets and stick to their sociology books: 'Dismissed alike by the leaders of the totalitarian and the led of democratic countries, the ivory tower has assumed an eminently enlightening function in that it reflects the tenacity of mimetic impulse, which is an impulse towards identity with oneself'. Only there, apparently, lay hope: 'Correctly understood - and speaking from the perspective of possible freedom - true consciousness refers to the most progressive consciousness, which is one that is aware of contradictions within the horizon of possible reconciliation'. Somewhere far enough away, it was possible for Che Guevara to be seen as a '*bona fide* radical'; but in Adorno's own back-yard in the developed West, 'the anarchy of commodity production and the brutality of those who run it' made no sense whatever of the student struggle (Adorno 1986b:153,274,303,306). Instead, they should listen to their professors, and, like them, combine the abstract with the abstract, theory with theory!¹⁰⁶

*Within the closed system, as Adorno envisaged it, of either Hitler or Stalin, either the extreme form of liberal capitalism in crisis or vulgar materialism, it still seemed necessary to cling on to his notion that 'Ideology is a socially necessary illusion, which means that if necessary it must be the shape of truth, no matter how distorted' (Adorno 1986b:331). But how then would he explain his own ability to look on 'Ideology', as it were, from outside; and what precisely made any change in ideology possible, let alone 'necessary' ? About other people's illusions and contradictions, of course, Adorno remained as clear as ever: 'the very intelligentsia that pretends to float freely is fundamentally rooted in the very being that must be changed and which it merely pretends to criticise'. In fact he was especially hard on 'the liberal' who 'sees no way out' and so 'makes himself the spokesman of a dictatorial arrangement of society even while he imagines he is opposing it' (Adorno 1978e:464-5). That such strictures might apply to himself is a thought not openly entertained since, for him, 'theory was itself a form of *praxis* in an era when no historical subject could be located' (Jay 1977:134). Everyone's 'mental imprisonment' was 'exceedingly real', except his own (Adorno 1978f:504). But times had been changed by activity, and Adorno's quietism not longer fitted his students' experience. On January 31st 1969, Adorno mistook a group of students looking for a meeting room for people intent on an occupation, and promptly called in the police to evict them. Then, in March 1969, history caught up with him. *Der Spiegel* reported that*

After the distribution of a leaflet "ADORNO ALS INSTITUTION IST TOT", three young revolutionary females from the 'Basisgruppe Soziologie' circled around Professor Adorno, at first waving their bouquets of flowers, then kissing him, exposing their breasts, and confronting him with an erotic pantomime. Professor Adorno...tried to protect himself with his briefcase, and

106. Adorno seems to have believed that action - any action - would be either useless or counter-productive, because Marx's stress on the unity of theory and practice had led to the disaster of Stalinist Russia where 'The only meaning that praxis retained was this: increased production of the means of production' (Adorno 1993d:172). It is symbolic of his one-sided understanding of what happened in the 1920s in Russia that the only reference I have so far found to Trotsky in Adorno's writings appears to come from *Literature and Revolution*, and looks to have been made because Trotsky 'argued that it is inconceivable that there will ever be proletarian art; rather, what will supplant the art of the bourgeoisie is socialist art'. This fitted Adorno's contention that 'art in the emphatic sense of the term has so far thrived under bourgeois auspices'; but it is notable that this reference appeared in print only after Adorno was dead (Adorno 1986b:241; see also Eisler 1951:ix). This was at least consistent. Apparently, the *Zeitschrift* 'did not relate either way to the Stalin-Trotsky debate' (Slater 1977:63, see also 68-70).

then left the lecture hall. He has since announced that his lectures and seminars on "Dialectics" would be indefinitely postponed (Paddison 1993:289 note 52; cf Jay 1984:55).

This send-up left Adorno 'unnerved and humiliated' (Jay 1984:55); yet up until his death from a heart-attack while on holiday in Switzerland in May 1969, he seems not to have changed his bizarre dog's breakfast of ideas and methods. The world was fractured and fragmented, and so 'Important works of art' (and, by implication, of criticism) 'are the ones that aim for an extreme': 'they are destroyed in the process and their broken outlines survive as the ciphers of a supreme, unnameable truth'. Moreover, 'It is well known that great works' of 'art' (and of criticism) 'can be recognised by the gap between their aim and their actual achievement', and that 'Authentic expression probably only exists as the expression of negativity, of suffering', in a world 'similar enough to hell, dipped as the world is in a gloomy flood of nonsense, the fallen form of language' (Adorno 1994:226,235; Adorno 1986a: 100). According to Adorno, only art in general and music in particular might help; but there was no point in harbouring the illusion that the 'recipients' of art could necessarily comprehend or articulate the 'effects' of their exposure: 'Rather, the effects depend on innumerable mechanisms of distribution, of social control and authority, and finally on social structure, within which the determining relations can be ascertained'. And if 'works of art of the greatest dignity' do not 'attain any important social effect, this is a social fact just as much as the opposite case', this should be seen as the result of the various inadequacies of the potential audience. Because the 'social content of works of art sometimes rests precisely on the protest against social reception, particularly to conventional and hardened forms of consciousness', then presumably only a stand-off is likely. Given his belief in the 'split' between the intelligentsia and the 'masses' and the 'split' of 'productive forces' (outside commodity-production) wholly in favour of the former, plus the equally imbalanced 'split' between mental and manual labour, even if what Adorno now called the 'deepest relations between art and society' were 'the relations which crystallise in the works themselves', what possible difference could that make, except to confirm the 'splits' themselves? But if 'one of the duties of sociology of art' was to 'be effective as social criticism', isn't there a duty on sociologists to be clear about how their work might actually prove to be 'effective' (Adorno 1972:121-126)?

The giant despair

Their authoritarianism and ours

Adorno's position was thoroughly elitist, abstract, quietist and ineffective - even 'narcissistic' - and 'there are moments of uneasiness in working on Adorno, when one finds in his position the imprint of that "authoritarian personality"' (Kuspit 1975:325; Blomster 1976:109). So, far from it being surprising that there seem to be links between Adorno's perspective and that of people like Louis Althusser, what is surprising is that the connection has not been made systematically before.¹⁰⁷ Subotnik noted apparent links to Foucault's attitude to history (1978:36-37,41); and Marsh laments how Adorno, perhaps unwittingly, 'slips into the the very domination he criticises' (1983:157). Jay, also, notes an apparent link to the work of Derrida, Foucault and Lyotard in the 1980s (1985:134-135).¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, Said appears to be moving in this direction in the 1990s: he wrote

107. For Benjamin's links with 1930s 'proto-deconstructionist' figures in Paris, see Jay 1984:21.

that Adorno and Horkheimer's 'totally administered society' bears a close resemblance to Foucault's 'disciplinary society', where 'defiance, delinquency, criminality, and, in short, all forms of transgression serve two purposes: one, to be incorporated by the system, thereby confirming its power; two, to incriminate the system both for its inhumanity and for its inevitability' (Said 1991:50-51; cf Jay 1984:22,88). Eagleton, too, notes how Adorno's thought strikingly prefigures that of the post-structuralists of our own day', especially since his implied dialectical opposite of 'ideology' is not 'truth or theory, but difference or heterogeneity'; and he also suggests that the 'parallels between deconstruction and Adorno are particularly striking' (1991:126,141 note). There may well be a good political reason for such correspondences.

Berman has recorded how Adorno's (and others') 'monolithic cultural despair' had a deleterious effect on sections of the US New Left, especially those who 'embraced a mystique of post-modernism'; and he is open enough to admit that writers like Foucault offered 'a generation of refugees from the 1960s a world-historical alibi for the sense of passivity and helplessness that gripped so many of us in the 1970s' (1991:28note,33,35). What Adorno shared with the Left Bank PCF 'anti-Stalinists', semi-anarchists and *flaneurs* of the 1940s and 1950s and so with the Althusserian clones of the 1960s, was an incomplete break with the agenda, methods, assumptions, mediations of Marx, plus an adaptation to the intra-Party separation of mental and manual labour which characterised their openly Stalinist comrades. And this is partly why, I believe, even in principled anglophone academic circles Adorno's curious relationship with Stalinism has often been represented as his partial adherence to 'Marxism' (eg Berman 1977). At a more general political level, it seems to me, that form of internationally influential defeatism going under the brand of 'postmodernism' is a logical development of several of Adorno's positions, which accounts for his apparent modernity.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps he never really went away. Moreover, as with Adorno it looks to be no accident that such politics and 'theory' - of course, it isn't theory any more than it's genuinely critical, since its proponents know the Truth - grew out of a particular defeat for the Left: the defeat of actually-existing Stalinism. And this is why I believe Richard Middleton is absolutely correct to resist such blandishments.

The homeless left and popular music studies today

While he mistakes him for a 'Marxist', it's important to acknowledge that (unlike some other critics) Middleton is not uncritical of Adorno's 'Marxism'. He notes that Adorno 'reduces the possibility of *struggle* over the specific uses and meanings of musical materials and forms' and that 'competing "viewpoints" are dismissed as "regressive" or "false"'. Quoting Bradley, Middleton points out that 'within a Marxist framework, production and consumption *cannot* properly be given the near-identity which Adorno attributes to them', and that, for Adorno, 'the audience - indeed, the entire production-consumption process - has become an abstraction, resting on "an idealist inversion of the abstract and the concrete"'. Middleton also distances himself from the assumption that 'individuation' in art is to be found 'only in the esoteric discontinuities' of what was then known as 'modern art' and from the 'fruitless' search for 'an authentic *individual* productive subject in popular music'. Adorno 'absolutises a specific musical ideal as the condition of productive musical work

108. Foucault regretted his ignorance of the Frankfurt Institute's work in 1983 (Wiggershaus 1994:4).

109. Keith Negus notes certain parallels here with Baudrillard's approach. It is also interesting to consider how Adorno's critique of bourgeoisification relates to that of the later Lukacs (cf Lichtheim 1968:16-17).

as such - at least under capitalism'; and he draws his criteria for value from a particular, historical musical tradition - the so-called 'music of thought'. So there is a question-mark over Adorno's alleged concept of *totality*, since he regards 'other forms of music as either primitive in comparison or as corruptions' of his favoured tradition. On a more general level, Middleton is concerned about Adorno's apparent belief in the 'end of history'; and at one point he suggests that his 'utopian critique' begins to look like 'spiritual determinism, autonomy like repression', and thus opens him up to the accusation of being in the 'grip of German idealism which, from Kant, reckoned the essence of art to be its *disinterested* quality'. Yet in spite of all this and more, apparently, Adorno remains a 'giant', though one who - not unlike Bunyan's Giant Despair - is in constant danger of 'a collapse into idealism' (Middleton 1990: 35,39-40,42,55,59,60).

This critical ambivalence seems to derive from the fact that Middleton agrees with some other bits of Adorno's general analysis. For example, while he concedes that Adorno's account of popular music in the 1930s and 1940s 'made *some* sense', he rounds out this one-sided position with the (classical Marxist, Gramsci-like) objection that 'What is missed is that alongside an increase in centralised control has been persistent dissent; domination - social, economic, and ideological - has been maintained only through struggle'. Yet Middleton fails to respond to his own important questions as to why Adorno did not look at '*conflicts* between institutions, genres and styles during the 1890-1930 period', before pronouncing on its allegedly 'pre-digested' character, or do some systematic fieldwork before handing down the fiat that 'the composition hears for the listener'. Why, he asks, did not Adorno analyse 'specifically the Tin Pan Alley songs which *break* with aspects of the standard conventions' and why did he not feel the need to provide concrete examples of the analysis of particular songs (Middleton 1990:37,38,45,52,62)? Moreover, Middleton is surely correct to write that:

lack of analysis of specific songs in Adorno's writings means that it is impossible to know whether he is talking about real pieces or, more likely, ideal types. In fact, there seems to be a kind of *Ur*-pop song in Adorno's mind to which no actual song, however standardised, could totally conform (Middleton 1990:54).

Sadly, however, instead of following through the logic of this line of questioning, Middleton piles one unanswered question on top of another. He notes Adorno's failure to venture into 'working-class black dance-halls, bars, churches' or 'into the whole network of subterranean currents beneath the bland surface of the metropolitan musical mainstream'. He laments Adorno's use of a particular historical conception of a standard which unproblematically underpins his use of the concept of standardisation; and where he should also have analysed why Adorno felt comfortable in using such methods without allowing for 'the possibility of *contradictory* meanings in the actual practice of real listeners', or at least have mentioned this issue in passing, Middleton lets him almost entirely off the hook. Similarly, while understanding that Adorno knows that 'the meaning of musical works is *immanent*', especially in the early part of his book Middleton himself gets pulled in that direction in his own examples of musical analysis, since he shares the same underlying assumptions that the meaning inheres *in* the text and that the critic's job is to find 'it' (Middleton 1990:38,54,58,59).

There are also, I think, some other (usually tacit) areas of agreement between Middleton and Adorno. For example, not only did the former agree that the 1930s saw 'the machinery of "mass culture"' working to 'considerable effect' - taking it for granted that there was something wholly different about electronic means of communication - but he also holds

a notion that there are '*spaces*' within capitalist social relations; and so, for all his defensive caveats, Middleton allows the majority of Adorno's so-called 'Marxism' to go uncriticized. For example, he lets pass an example of Adorno's vulgar reflectionism, and leaves unchallenged Adorno's implicit and unargued assumptions about Beethoven's alleged timeless novelty and un-predigestedness, and about the irrecoverable banality of some popular music. Middleton also seems to believe in a 'collective mind', and he shares a remarkably Adornian conception of 'correctness' within differing kinds of musical practice. At times, there are even examples of an (updated) gnomish prose - 'We can accept that ...consuming subjects are not necessarily unitary conformists so much as sites traversed by conflicting interpretative schemas' - and so it is the less surprising that he can see 'a certain potency in the post-modernist position', not least because whatever that position turns out to be 'takes the dominant system as given' and permits only 'guerilla activity which exploits fissures and forgotten spaces *within* the hegemonic structure'. Moreover, while Middleton clings on to the conception of hope, he does so in a very hesitant and populist fashion: 'the "people", condemned by Adorno to inertia while the processes of rationalisation work themselves through to their totalitarian conclusion, might find that, drawing on old, collectively used methods, they can *act*, if only in compromised, ambiguous forms'. So, for all the clever critique, Adorno gets pride of place in *Studying Popular Music* because he 'helps us to understand the enemy' (Middleton 1990:35,39,40,50,55,56,60,62). It seems appropriate to ask, then, who Middleton thinks 'the enemy' is, who 'we' are and what 'we' have to *do*.

Unlike Adorno, Middleton is refreshingly clear and open about his own political and intellectual formation, particularly about the influence of the 'turn to Gramsci' which was so visible in British cultural studies around 1980. He is also aware of how such a perspective might look 'conservative' in the 'babble of subsequent intellectual fashions' after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the subsequent implosion of the former USSR. But, as in Adorno, there is little or no analysis about what might have caused such a series of historic events; and while there is a continuous undertone of mourning for those bits of the 'Gramscian' project which had unmistakably run into the political sand, there seems no will to go over the ground, and to look for theoretical and political mistakes. Instead, on a scale comparable only to one of Adorno's rhetorical flourishes, we hear of 'the end, in the sphere of culture, of the abstract "revolutionary subject" whose political demise has been widely remarked': 'Peasants, workers, oppressed minorities, bohemians, *lumpen* sub-cultures: all have been tried; there are no revolutionary subjects left to *wheel* onto the stage' (Middleton 1990:v-vi,169). But could it be that the idea of a *wheelable* working class comes from another, and a less politically comforting, direction? Who, apart from dyed-in-the-wool Stalinists (and possibly a few middle-class 1960s sectarians) ever thought that proletarians were manipulatable in such a manner? And in what sense, and from what precise perspective, were either the Stalinists or the revolutionary workers and the Bolshevik Party of October 1917 - let alone the increasingly restive workers of Europe, North America, South Africa, South Korea and the rest of the world in the mid-1990s - 'abstract'? Is the problem in the real world, or, as with Adorno so often, in the head?

Sometimes, Middleton hints at why his confidence and optimism had adapted to Adornian depths, but only by implication and, not unlike Adorno, only by displacement of the error: 'With the dethronement of the grand subjects of history - from God and Reason to the Proletariat, the West, and even, dare one say it, the Body (life-force, sex, instinct...) - we are surrounded by gods that seem to have failed'. It seems fair to ask, then - and especially if

we don't feel included in that rhetorical 'we' - who precisely are 'we'? Could it be, for example, that what failed was not the politics of hope, but the politics of believing in 'gods' - *any* kind of gods - who promised to sort things out from above but who, in the end, let 'us' down? It seems no accident that there is an echo in Middleton's rhetoric of the famous *The God That Failed: Six Studies in Communism*, edited by Richard Crossman; but what Koestler and the other contributors to that book were disillusioned with was not classical Marxism: they, like Adorno, had retreated from a form of Stalinism which they had mistaken for Marxism. It is particularly ironic, then, that Middleton gives the last word in his text to a political perspective which argues for 'the continuous building of *alliances*, both within individual subjects and between them', when that, in another idiom, is the basic (and basically wrong) idea which informed the disastrous 'popular front' politics of the Stalin-tern of the 1930s (Middleton 1990:292). Fortunately, however, that enemy - with its paradoxical and highly ironic appropriation of bourgeois ideology dressed up in a Marxist-sounding rhetoric - is less dangerous now, outside the imploding Soviet empire.

Of course, none of this is Richard Middleton's or even Theodor Adorno's fault: this is basically a political rather than a moral question, either side of 1989, and one which concerns many people in the socialist and even ex-revolutionary Left. However, what needs to be faced is that after 1989 there is no plausible link (or, for that matter, 'articulation') to be made between a passive loyalty to Moscow rather than Washington - however gestural, coded or downright Aesopian - and the wish to hang onto some kind of academic left face. But if you believe, as many ex-left academics do, that they have been *through* Marxism, or even (according to their own lights, and those of their peers, whether holding a party card or not) been *Marxists*, then it must be quite difficult to accept that what needs to be done is a patient unravelling - a sort of ground-clearing - of all the left-sounding mediations of Marxism, back from the unmistakable realities of 1989-1991 and after, through the dead-end streets of *Marxism Today*, *Screen*, *Screen Education*, and then on through the CCCS books, CCCS Working Papers in Cultural Studies and CCCS Stencilled Papers, to the Euro-Gramscianism of the 1970s (including much that appeared in, or under the aegis of, *New Left Review*, or its analogues, such as *History Workshop Journal*), back to the crossroads of 1968, 1956, 1936, 1932, 1928, 1924 and so on, at least so far as 1917, noting how Adorno got most of it wrong on the way. Of course, this is not a search for an 'authentic', water-pure political faith, because classical Marxism is a method of analysis in order to act on the world, not a religion; but it is a tall order, and it is far easier (not to mention better for your career-prospects) if you don't have the appetite, or the mental flexibility, or perhaps the intellectual (let alone political) honesty for the work. In that case, however, we need to be aware that academics and intellectuals are no freer than they were in 1934, even though we aren't trapped between an easily-identifiable Hitler or Stalin. The pull, now, is being made by an older 'enemy', Hegelian idealism; and of course

if you rewrite Hegel in terms of Marx, the proletariat will always play the role of the 'negation'. But it will never be quite as pure a negation as you want: rather than present itself as the absolute other of the system, it will reveal itself, not least at times when the class struggle has been tranquillised, as part of the system itself, as an effect of the process of capital. The political reality of the proletariat will fail to live up to its philosophical idea; and then it is always possible to abandon the proletariat and shift the idea somewhere else (Eagleton 1992:92),

all the while defending the liberal bourgeois cultural heritage, and so to some extent the bourgeois ideology which it helps to perpetuate. If the generation of 1968 is not to repeat the mistakes of most of Adorno's generation, then, it seems to me to be important to bear

in mind Benjamin's admonition of sixty years ago: 'the revolutionary struggle is not fought between capitalism and mind. It is fought between capitalism and the proletariat' (1973:103).

Appendix

Adorno's writing has been particularly difficult to translate, not least because his German prose is poetic and enigmatic (Subotnik 1991:295 note 6; Paddison 1987:360-61; Adorno 1991c:xvi). His style can be irritatingly opaque and his writing has been described as a 'hermetic cipher' bordering on 'mannerism', and even as an 'atonal music of thought' (Krenek, quoted in Paddison 1993:19; Blomster 1976:96). This is not accidental, since he was always particularly reticent about publishing a reasoned and explicit account of his perspective on anything - politics, perhaps, most of all. According to Paddison, however, Adorno was 'anti-systematic but not unsystematic' (1991:268). So it's usually clear what he is against, but his preferred writing style and his habitual choice of fragmented forms contribute to the difficulty of understanding what he was *for*. At the heart of this difficulty are his so-called 'Negative Dialectics', which he used, according to Rose to confront the problem he saw when 'concepts, as ordinarily used, are distorting' and so 'masked social reality' (1978:11,26). This was a technique involving 'dramatising' his ideas, of 'presenting them as if they were absolutely and literally true', so as the better (he thought) to 'undermine' them. Of course, the user of such a tactic also risked being accused (like many a low-flying 'postmodernist') of hiding timidity, inaction and banal mistakes behind an ironic rhetoric; but Adorno was convinced that reproducing what he wanted to criticise involved the danger of confirming or sanctioning it, something he wished to avoid at all costs. Rose feels that this method is a 'criticism of society which is positive (determinate) in that it aims to present knowledge of society'; and that there is a coherence to it. There is in fact a kind of 'modernist' strategy at work using 'exaggeration', 'fantasy', 'shock' and 'provocative formulations' so as to produce what is, in effect, an 'anti-system' of 'anti-texts' (Rose 1978:12, 150). Above all, perhaps, Adorno felt pressured by the 'binding obligation to be sophisticated', and it shows (Adorno 1974a:73).

In his late forties, Adorno explained his polemical strategy with uncharacteristic clarity: 'When philosophers...engage in conversation, they should try always to lose the argument, but in such a way as to convict their opponent of untruth'. His own version of 'Dialectical reason...when set against the dominant mode of reason', might look like 'unreason'; but his was an age when the philosopher had to appear mad since, as in the Middle Ages, 'only fools tell their masters the truth'. He hoped his dialectic 'advances by way of extremes, driving thoughts with the utmost consequentiality to the point where they turn back on themselves, instead of qualifying them': to eliminate mistaken ideas, to blow them up with their own explosive charge, so to speak. He also hoped that such a method did not lead to infinite regress: instead, 'Properly written texts' should look like 'spiders' webs: tight, concentric, transparent, well-spun and firm' (Adorno 1974a: 70,72,73,86,87); but quite who or what the 'spider' might be generally remains unclear. In any case, by 1951 Adorno's perspective often seems mystical in a Benjaminian way. According to Siegfried Kracauer, Adorno's 'negative dialectics' made him 'dizzy', since they hung 'in mid-air': he 'wants to eat his cake and have it', since not only did his 'advance have a retrogressive character' but his whole method was 'a fraud' (Jay 1985:196,227,232). Gunter Mayer, too, called

Adorno's method a 'dialectic of stagnation' (Blomster 1976: 107 note 81).

It is true that Adorno's 'deliberately paradoxical, polemical and fractured prose' makes it both 'eminently quotable and egregiously misconstruable' (Rose 1978:ix), and I have no privileged access to what he *really* meant, even assuming he knew himself. Consequently, my method here has been to look for *patterns of thought* in his translated writings on questions which interest those of us who are unashamedly classical Marxists - especially his ideas about Marx's analysis of capitalism, the working class, the role of intellectuals, what Marx called the subjective factor in history, the revolutionary party and the Soviet Union - and to see whether those ideas change over time. I am aware, however, that the 'demand for continuity in one's train of thought tends to prejudge the inner coherence of the object, its own harmony' (Adorno 1991b:16); so I have deliberately struggled to read Adorno against the grain.

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