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ABSTRACT

The Mediation of Art Through The Mass Media

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Seeking answers to the debates between those who support the Frankfurt School's idea of a "culture industry" and those who find this belief a serious error, this thesis examines certain aspects of the conditions of the fine arts through the mass media, in a so-called mass culture. This examination is pursued through two case studies:

1. Musical languages through the cinema. The history and interpretation of Argentinean tango and its cinema image are examined.
2. Architecture in photographs—an art through another art. Ancient Greek buildings in postcards.

Through this analysis certain critical assumptions, attributes and oversimplifications about such a culture theory will be tested and questioned. If for Adorno taste is nowadays outmoded, for Bourdieu it works unconsciously, with no conscious control. If the "mass" lacks the knowledge required to analyze, think about and finally understand something of art, the media can provide programmes dedicated to the analysis of artworks and therefore knowledge concerning art—both object and concept. Reproduction and mediation are widely condemned but on the other hand, artworks are reproduced and mediated anyway—it is immanent in their character. Artworks are intended for many and therefore are already their own reproductions. Through the artwork's immanent mediation, its every element becomes its own other—changing both its sensual and objective arrangement.

Great works remain eloquent, even when reproduced or mediated. Aesthetic experience is only genuine when intimate: if philosophical analysis can account for the introduction to aesthetic experience, mediated knowledge from other institutions, including the media, can be seen as the actual invitation to it. The Adornian aesthetical experience—the possibility promised by art's impossibility—can indeed be preserved through such mediation. Through the media, the audience can glimpse art's ever broken promise of happiness and that glimpse can be stimulative.

Reproductions carry the images of the artworks in various environments and conditions, underlying their autonomous character. During mediation, the social function of artworks may again be underestimated but their birth and value as social objects is boldly stressed. The initiated eye/ear can find the social in the autonomous reproduction or the autonomous in the mediated sociality. Because a sufficient amount of time has passed from the time of Adorno's writings, the experience of the viewers has been enriched both through their many media viewings and through their tourist wanderings. Both mediated and direct experiences have been added up to shape the contemporary audience's understanding and response to the media messages.

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Note

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Heraklion, Crete,
Postcode: 71410,
Greece

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Glossary

Greek Words Used in the Thesis

Από μηχανής Θεός: Mechanical structure representing God that appeared during ancient Greek tragedies in order to provide solutions and give advice for difficult situations. The phrase is used in modern Greek to express the sudden, easy solution to a difficult problem.

Κατεξοχήν: Mainly / Mostly

Εκάστοτε: Each time (adjective)

Introduction

We live in a world where Art is coming to visit us in our houses. Through television, photography, film, and so many other media of mass communication aesthetic pleasure is something everyone is able to enjoy. The question is phrased instinctively: do we?

Do we appreciate the mystique of art or do we just receive its trivial and worn out images and sounds? The issue whether the reproduction and mediation of art *is* a blessing or a curse has occupied many people but the discussion has not yet reached a satisfying outcome. Many will say that the fact that everyone can now have access to some of art's masterpieces is a triumph of the democratization of culture and a breakthrough of the human spirit. Art is seen in a different way—its expressions and values widespread, its perception possible because analyzed in detail.

But where lies the mystique of art if everyone can demystify it?

Some will say that ignorance is preferred from unsystematic and rapid knowledge. The mediation of art has led to its transformation so that the lower classes will find no difficulty in accepting an obvious message. The original work of art is equaled to its reproductions and its presence in our houses is seen as its stagnation and its underestimation to the things of life, to the common surroundings of a common person, to the furniture of his house. *“With its liquidation of its opposition to empirical reality art assumes a parasitic character.”* For this theory, such concepts as “adaptation”, “standardization” and “mimicry” are closely associated with modern culture, characterizing it as a “mass culture” or a “culture industry”. *“It is baby food: permanent self-reflection based upon the infantile compulsion towards the repetition of needs which it creates in the first place”*.² In some cases, this theory concludes, it is better to preserve an aristocratic attitude than a democratic one. The realm

of art is indeed one of these cases.

The screen visitor does not knock on one's door and very few can forbid or control his entrance. The repetition of vast amounts of images and sounds is responsible for the recent man's apathy to accept or ponder on anything new. However, every work of art is a new, original expression of something, perhaps previously unknown. If the masses are unwilling to concentrate on a new endeavour, then what is the point of allowing them to quickly cast an eye on art's techniques and practices?

*"It is better to look at a real work of art once a year, or even once in a lifetime, and really see it, really feel it, really assimilate it, than to have a reproduction of it hanging before one continually"*³ But the experience of the same work of art differs when seen under different circumstances and each time a person stands in front of the same painting a new aspect of it will be revealed to him.

Reproduction can be seen as a hint and a promise of the original work, as the invitation to search, find and stand in front of it. Every kind of introductory process functions selectively; there is no possible way that every aspect of the message will be analyzed in detail. If one out of a hundred viewers of an art program discovers the world of art, then the attempt is successful and the target directly met.

Reproduction can be also seen as a decay of the original work's aura and in this case, we should be embarrassed of its consumption. If one out of a hundred frequent concert-goers or museum-visitors decides one day to sit on his couch and listen to/watch a radio/television program instead of visiting an exhibition the attempt will be proved wrong and the target intact.

Is it not possible to share the best of both worlds? One could watch an art program on Monday and visit an exhibition on Tuesday—the one does not exclude the other.

In an attempt to find an answer to the above questions, I will examine some of the aspects of the fine arts as mediated through the mass media.

The first part and chapter function as an introduction to the theories and ideas about the art and culture of the last century. In the second part of the thesis, containing chapters two and three, I will try to give the background of the characteristics of the actual process of mediation and examine the first case study paralleling it to this mediation process. The

second part of the thesis, containing the fourth chapter and the one concerned with the mediation of Argentine tango music through the cinema examines another aspect of such art mediation—mediating already known art forms and practices and the possible inconsistencies of and alterations in such a mediation.

I hope that the conclusion will come, in the end, to form a strong and tested argument primarily concerned with the mediation of the fine arts through the mass media, and stretching out to include wider concepts such as the nature of the culture characterized as mass—a characterization questioned throughout the thesis.

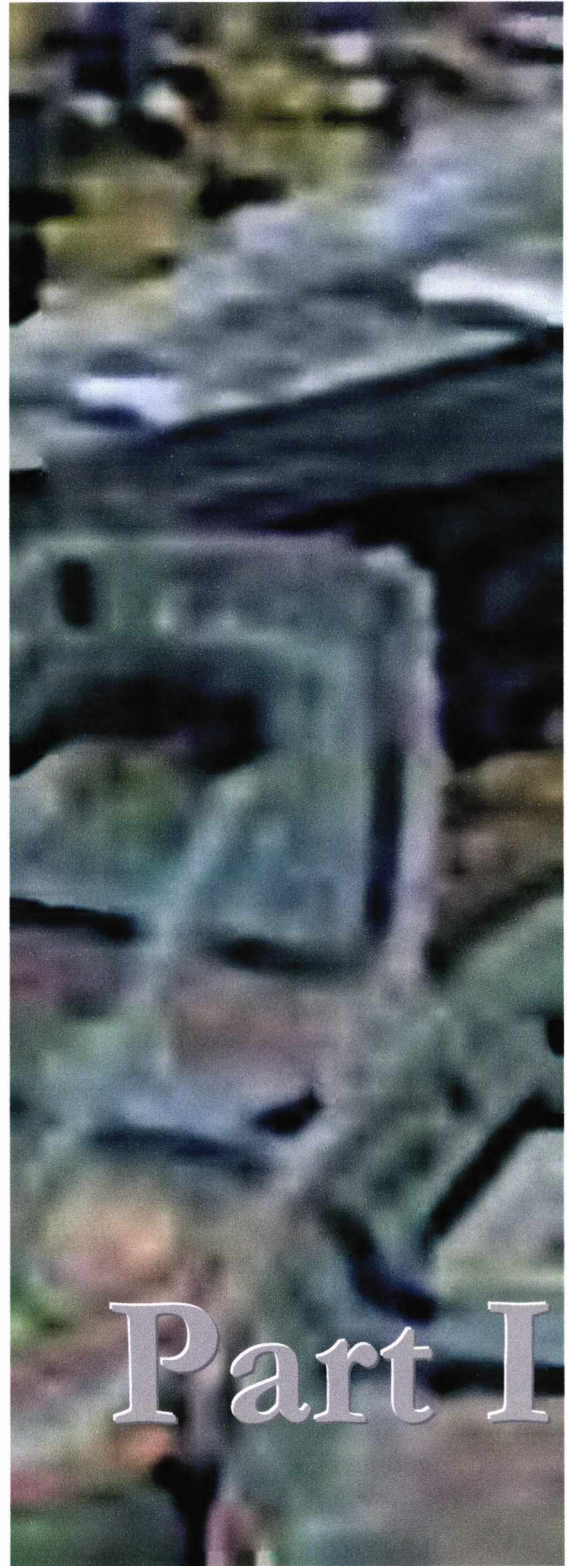
Painting 1: Monet, *Bathers at La Grenouillère*, 1869, oil on canvas, 73 x 92, The East Wing, National Gallery of London



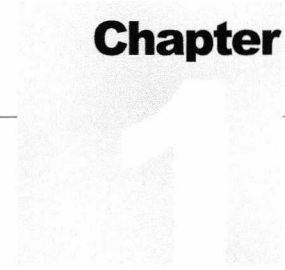
¹ Adorno, Theodor, W., “The schema of mass culture”, in *The Culture Industry*, edited by Bernstein, J., M., London: Routledge, 1991, p. 56

² Adorno, Theodor, W., “The schema of mass culture”, in *The Culture Industry*, edited by Bernstein, J., M., London: Routledge, 1991, p. 58

³ Mumford, Lewis “*Art and Technics*”, Columbia University Press: New York, 1952, p. 108



Part I



Mass Society & its Culture

Almost every society has succeeded in some areas and failed in others. It is difficult—if not impossible—to claim that there were actually completely successful or unsuccessful societies, if we see them in their time and place.

They all had something to offer to their people and a way of confronting with everyday problems, with or with no results. However, every society should be placed in its own era and be judged according to the needs and demands of that specific era, of that specific period of time. The “ideal” society of ancient Athens would not in most cases be able to deal with recent problems.

Nowadays, we live in a new kind of society; a society called “mass society”, already an important focus of European social philosophy and literature by the 1930s. Edward Shils supports this characterization in the sense that *the mass of the population has been embodied to society**. In previous societies large groups of people remained “outsiders”, did not take part in any of the society’s activities. Today, even the most geographically isolated person is an active member of the society, enjoying its benefits and disapproving of its failures, or at least watching and trying to understand what is going on around him. Modern society is characterized as “mass”, because it is open to everyone, accessible to all its citizens, open to the masses.

* For more details of this opinion, see Shils, Edward, “Mass Society and its Culture”, Daedalus, 1960

1. Mass Society

In a mass society, the institutions and the channels through which communication is made have a mass character in the sense that they are addressed to a huge in number audience or crowd. National boundaries have partly been vanished or are of no use, as communication is now international and the world is turning surprisingly quickly into a global village.

Many intellectuals agree that “mass society” is more or less a catastrophic way of organizing our lives, a type of society that will not only fail in creating the kind of environment we deserve to live in, but will even create more problems than the ones mankind already has to face. We live among more people than ever—Lasswell describes them as *puzzled, uneasy or vexed at the unknown cunning which seems to have duped and degraded them*. Lippmann, Mannheim, as well as the Frankfurt School will add that in “mass society” citizens might be mobilized, placated or suppressed via centralized media; that they might actually turn into passive, non-thinking viewers at the mercy of ruthless communicators¹.

“Mass man” is being influenced by the media and is uncritically adopting whatever is being offered to him, thinking that if the media have broadcasted it, it would have been met with social approval. People living in “mass societies” are therefore from infancy socialized to a common, symbolic, “mass” environment, consisting mostly of mass-produced images and messages under centralized control. They are just an indifferent, depersonalized crowd, a “mass” of homogeneous persons, the passive audience of mass media. They are simply maniac consumers, weak viewers of vast amounts of information, vulnerable servants, satisfying “mass society’s” wishes and demands.

McQuail claims that the citizens of such a society have lost every consciousness of themselves and every feeling of personal identity and are incapable of acting as a group, with any organized way, so as to set and try to satisfy their goals and ambitions. They just stay and watch what is going on around them without being able either to participate or to criticize—by approving or disapproving—of it. The worst is not that they do not take

actions in order to meet their aims, but that they do not have any particular aims to meet.

A simple but strong argument could be raised against all these pessimistic opinions and beliefs. We live in a world full of changes. The last generations have seen and survived through cataclysmic changes. Changes of values, changes of ideologies, changes of societal symbiosis, changes of lifestyles. As Marx said, as time goes by, what was considered as a source of doubt and disbelief turns into a positive value. Who does not wish for changes nowadays?

That is what we have come across today: a general, concrete form of change. The media are transformed into big industries; a huge audience is created. People are asked to conceptualize and live with the uncountable transformations and consequences of globalization.

In this climate of complete and continuous change, “mass society” seems to be a rather coherent concept, another change among the changes, the new lifestyle. As a new and untested concept, it has been criticized, disapproved, even condemned. Nevertheless, it is the faith of every new societal organization, of every original human effort to be condemned before being recognized and accepted. There have always been reactions, critiques, disbeliefs. The fear of anything new makes people old-fashioned and superstitious. The ancestors of the same open-minded man now sitting on his desk studying his precious books had once express their strong disapproval of books by burning them. In its early infancy, typography was considered a work of the devil, something evil that would harm the pure souls of young people. Instead, it was the first step towards knowledge and education, the only way towards an open and creative spirit.

In fact, there are many reasons to confirm the useful character of “mass society”. The industrialization of mass media reduced the cost of communication so much that almost everyone can now have access to huge amounts of information. According to Katz, in many cases television can provide the kind of total, immediate and unmediated participation in a live event—like President Kennedy’s funeral for example—defining and uniting a community. It can also reinforce values, change opinions and sometimes change the world.

The idea of a major societal transformation, transcending boundaries, with

increasing numbers of people in contact and interaction will lead to the eclipse of ^{the} elite by mass political and economic power, with a resulting increase in the centrality of mass media and public relations for societal control.

It is true that the mass media are one of the main substances of mass society. Whether the recent western societies are still characterized or labeled as “modern” or we are now approaching their “postmodern” period, even if we accept that they are developing towards a new and transformed kind of modernity, we can not reject the fact that mass media, both in their old and new forms, influence—if not play a significant role in shaping—their cores. Nowadays it is clear that mass media do not simply reflect social reality, they are an undisputed part of its creation; they mold reality as well as distribute it.

Whether we see mass society as a horizon broadening or as a masked deprivation of freedom, mass media have played a crucial role in its emergence; not to say they were actually one of its creation factors. The transformation of the mass media into huge industries is one of the three main characteristics of mass society. The other two are globalization and media compatibility. “*The development of the media was interwoven in fundamental ways with the major institutional transformations which have shaped the modern world*”². The fact that we cannot visualize or think of a world without mass communication underlines its importance to the shaping of social reality and justifies Thompson’s beliefs.

The argument that mass media are interwoven with social life lies beyond the shadow of a doubt, unquestionably stated in the recent theories, unarguably discussed among intellectuals and between friends. The issue is to what extent this involvement takes place, how will its far-reaching consequences affect the society we live in, our notion of the public sphere, our everyday lives.

Two out of the three distinguishing factors of mass society are related with the mass media; no wonder Thompson uses the phrase *the media* to refer to mass society’s concept. The institutions and actions through which communication is succeeded nowadays are of a mass nature, in the sense that they are addressed in a quantitatively huge audience. Mass media created this audience for mass society. The two are strictly interrelated, the one emerging from the other, the one born for the satisfaction of the other’s needs. The mass, the concept of a homogeneous crowd, stems from the notion of the passive media audience

and lends its name and theories to the society that gave birth to it.

The media draw the boundaries for the new society to appear and develop. The society forms the media context, provides the media with images and notions, with rules and values. The media create mass opinion as the final determinant of political and economic action, its impact upon events becoming the characteristic of current age. The society trusts the media for its citizen's knowledge and opinion. Mass society trusts mass media for the public's socialization.

Mass society seems to be a fearful concept but the pure and simple reality. A threat for our individualism or a chance to develop human nature as a *zoon politikon*, a social animal. A contradictory subject, at the very least. Many theorists tried to analyze its characteristics, its mysterious nature. There have been many suggestions, many possible future effects but no satisfying outcome. Their tries seemed like red flags to other theorists; more analyzing came out, the conclusion constantly out of reach. Probably because there is not one. It is a matter of perceiving the concept of society and one's role in it.

Gronbjerg believes that the movement toward a "mass society" constitutes an expansion in the concept of citizenship beyond basic political rights to include social and economic rights. This expansion of citizenship, in Gronbjerg's terminology, constitutes part of the process by which the "center" incorporates the "periphery" ³. Edward Shils seems to share this opinion, stressing the fact that the citizens are now being offered a feeling of contact to the society as a whole and a sense of relativity with their fellow citizens.

Nevertheless, how was "mass society" created in the first place?

"Mass society" is linked with the emergence of modern class society with its basis no longer in the notion of "the people" but in "the mass". The social, political and ideological conditions necessary for the emergence of such a society were created during the latter half of the nineteenth century due to the rapid industrialization of the west European capitalism. *"The development of the capitalist division of labour, large-scale factory organisation and commodity production, densely concentrated urban populations, the growth of cities, centralised decision-making, a more complex and universal system of communications and the growth of mass political movements based on the extension of voting rights to the working class are the ideal characteristics of mass society."*⁴

The emerging bourgeois ruling class was seeking a way to legitimise its domination

both on aristocracy and the proletariat. The term “mass” is employed by anti-capitalist, former aristocratic ideologies against the practices of commerce and industry. The first theories of mass society are, therefore, defences of the dominant political class (either aristocracy or bourgeoisie) against the working-class movement and in favour of the maintenance of the elite decision-making.

Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America* (1835-40) has often been cited as the first sociological critique of mass society. For him the individualism, materialism and social instability were the results of an all-pervasive egalitarianism. The stratification of the different castes and classes had for de Tocqueville to be maintained if social stability and progress ^{were} to thrive once more. These ideas were shared/embraced by Nietzsche, Elliot, Gasset and many other important theorists/critics of the time.

For the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research mass society is dominated by “barbaric meaninglessness”—the purveyor of which is the “culture industry”. The term “culture industry” first appeared in Horkheimer’s and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) during their years in exile in the United States and clearly suggested domination from above, although their theory was still based on a passive, homogeneous and irrational working class.

The question we should ask ourselves, however, is what do we expect of a society. How would we organize a society in order that we would be satisfied and the society useful? We would definitely organize it in such a way that *every individual, man or woman, embarking on life, finds himself with virtually equal means for the development of his various faculties and for their employment through his work* ⁵.

The accomplishment of such a task will certainly be a work of centuries.

There is no doubt that a *good society has no architectural design. There are no blueprints. There is no mold in which human life is to be shaped.*

An “ideal” form of societal organization may appear for a little while in a particular place. *A design of a personal plan for a new society however is a pleasant form of madness; it is an imagination to play at being God and Caesar to the human race.*⁶

Mass society has succeeded in shaping a civic formula of common life, democratizing art and culture, scientific and technological breakthroughs. The matter is not whether mass

society is a useful concept or not, or whether it has brought about important changes of cultural production and distribution; it is whether we discover and take advantage of its—even few—benefits. Whether we like it or not, mass society is a concept we are going to deal a lot with in the not too distant future. We may as well make the best of it.

Any other perspective is rather futile and utopian, a nostalgic cry or a selfish demonstration of a past elite in danger...

2 Art & Culture

Man, that inexhaustible hero... A meddling intellectual, a resourceful traveler or a relaxed householder, he is constantly searching for something, constantly longing for the new and unknown, something to make a difference in his historic walk of existence. Through Zarathustra Nietzsche will call him "*greedy like a flame*". Man is, indeed, never satisfied. He cuts the Apple from the Tree of Knowledge, opens the bag of Aeolus, setting the winds free.

Man is a creator. He molds societies, civilization, culture. An ensemble of traditions, meanings, values, customs and beliefs in a specific social formation forms a culture. Culture is the inheritance of intellect: science and art, the ideas, the morals, the rules, the values, the whole amount of past voices and new expressions. What outlines the foundation of a society forms its culture.

Williams defines culture as *the shaping and generalization of a spirit that impregnates the whole lifestyle of a particular nation*. Everything that is born by the creative spirit. Everything that emerges from the intellect or the hands of the human being. Culture saw shape in Simmel's cultivation—self- and by groups of individuals—and in Marx's division between proper and mental labour in a given social formation.

It was after capitalism's creation of a big market, competition and large-scale industrial division of labour, which forced individuals into a new form of dependence—that mechanically objective dependence—that Marx's concept of commodity fetishism emerged. Simmel's "tragedy of culture"—the increasing split caused by the relations between objective and subjective culture—and Weber's imprisonment of the individual in the iron cage of modernity—as well as his notion of "rationality" that penetrates all social spheres—were passed on to Lukács and helped him indicate the crisis of individuality. Central in this is the world of commodity exchange, which, according to Lukács, results in the deactivation of individuals. In the Frankfurt School of Social Research, these findings saw shape in a newly born notion of a culture industry created for and addressed to masses of passive consumers—art and culture were paralleled to and equaled with commodity goods.

How is art connected to culture? What is art?

“In order to define art correctly, Leo Tolstoy will say, it is necessary first of all to cease to consider it as a means to pleasure, and to consider it as one of the conditions of the human life... Art is a means of intercourse between man and man.”⁷

Art is, therefore, included in culture but ^{not} all culture is art. Art is a human activity, it emerges from the intellect or the hands or the combination of the intellect and hands of the human being, but the very art needs to fulfill some conditions to earn the label of “high art”. The essentials of a genuine work of art are, according to Tolstoy, the transmission of real feeling and adequate form.

“To evoke in oneself a feeling one has once experienced and having evoked it in oneself then by means of movements, lines, colours, sounds or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling that others experience the same feeling - this is the activity of art.

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on other feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them.”⁸

Does this mean that art is a kind of language? A language of feelings and emotions? Languages are formed to meet the need for communication—is communication the reason why art was formed?

Although many academics would argue that art is a form of symbolization and representation of nature, that its goal is pleasure—satisfaction, not communication—there seems to be a strong impact of the work of art on people. We tend to connect that impact with feelings, emotion, and sentiments. We have learned to interpret art as the language of feelings and emotion.

It is beyond the shadow of a doubt that some people can perceive the “meaning” of art—if there is such meaning—can find some hidden messages under the specific colours of a painting or the melody of a concert. Unquestionably, some of the listeners of a music performance will be moved by the music, will find themselves *feeling* something in particular, joy or sorrow or even indifference. But is this feeling the one that the composer was feeling at the time of the composition or is it just a memory of a feeling once felt that the music brings back to existence? Is it communication or interpretation that takes place in a musical

hall?

There can be no satisfactory proof that the feelings felt by people listening to a piece of music are the same with the ones felt by its composer. There can be no proof but one is not needed. For I believe that the meaning in art is exactly that procedure of *feeling* something, even if that is not the actual message of the work. People communicate differently with the language of art—and if this was not the case, there would be no need for the emergence of a new form of language. The need for a different kind of language—if we take discursive languages as the standard ones and the first to appear—illustrates that there are some human experiences that cannot be expressed through verbal communication. There should be something different between the way that the alphabet describes and the score expresses, or musicians would not write in scores, but in scripts.

What the listeners of a musical piece feel is, on the other hand, related to their experiences and their capacities of feeling. Different people feel different feelings with a different way, because human feelings are connected with human experience. People who have different experiences of joy or sorrow feel joy or sorrow differently. Nevertheless, even people who share the same kind of past experiences would not react in the same way to the same kind of feelings. One may be able to let himself be carried away by the feeling of sorrow expressed in a piece of music while someone else might not be willing to. Tears in the eyes, sadness or declaration of how moved one is, are not ways to test if communication between the composer and his audience has been successful. We cannot be aware of the thoughts that each one of the listeners carry home and ponder on. There is no possible way we can be sure that the meaning of the music was passed, that the message of the composer was heard. Then, how can we be sure that there is a message?

I have claimed that there is no need for the listener to understand the meaning of music for the composition to be aesthetic and the listener satisfied. However, if we want to believe that art is actually a kind of transmission of feelings, there should be a message carried, a meaning, something the composer needs to express. If the message is understood or not is another matter. Not all spoken meanings are understood. Why should the meanings of art be an exception?

In Tolstoy's definition of art that *it is a means of union among men joining them together in*

the same feelings one could add that a group of men in front of a painting might be united under the same feeling—and feelings are internationally common—but the way each one of them will experience that feeling and the depth of it varies according to one's culture and previous experiences.

The highest art, however, is comprehensible to all and, according to Tolstoy, art that does not affect normal people is not art. What base is there then in the recent theories about mass culture and its art?

3. Mass Culture

Some decades ago the phrase “mass culture” seemed at least strange or ironic—some people continue to face the concept with the same disbelief and sarcasm of those who saw it for the first time printed and threatening on a book’s page. At those times, the thought of a culture that was created for all and appealed to all was equal to absurdity. The products of culture could only appeal to a specific group of people, the selection of whom was based on wealth and origin, or at least education and the specific form of aesthetics developed by it.

On the contrary, mass culture includes the whole amount of products offered to humanity as a whole, from farmers to intellectuals and from factory workers to academic professors.

The civilization industry was born with Gutenberg and the invention of printing, or even sooner, but was strengthened and developed in capitalistic societies, which means rather recently. The most important reasons for its creation are to be found in the lower classes’ rise since the beginning of the previous century, in their energetic participation in public life and in the broadening of the consuming information market. Mass communications played an important role for the development of mass culture, as did the form of the modern society. It is in this society that culture was to undertake the deepest changes and formations as far as its institutions, mechanisms, and patterns of production were concerned. Its nature and character were never to be the same again.

The modern cultural products are in their majority produced in the organizing borders of mass communications. The mass media are nowadays the strategy control units of cultural production, deciding not only what and in what extent will be produced, but also and most importantly every new endeavour, every breakthrough.

The result of these new institutions and processes is mass culture. The products of this culture are mass-produced—they are products offered exclusively to mass markets. Tried and commercially succeeded formulas are repeated, the cultural conservativeness does not allow for true and pure spiritual creation. Mass culture gives its audience what it wants, because this strategy sells. As Milan Kundera has said, mass culture is “*the translation of*

popular ideas' stupidity into the language of beauty and emotion".

Meanwhile, it is the same culture that ennobles the struggle for survival, illustrates the mythical dimension of reality and underlines its value, its meaning and singularity. Modern culture proclaims the existence of a better world; it ensures the instantaneous getaway from reality, showing the utopian image of ideal life. It ensures everyone's getaway from the office to Van Gogh's "*Landscape with Cypresses*" and from everyday routine to Vivaldi's "Four Seasons".

One among the most important and influential critiques of mass culture is the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research. Among its members are well-known mass culture critics such as Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, Lowenthal, Habermas, etc. According to their views, genuine art (high culture) becomes a commodity and proudly takes its place among consumption goods. It is another product of the culture industry, aiming to easy amusement and entertainment, a way to pass one's free time without worrying about work and mechanization. This is the main role of the entertainment industry: to provide goods for the masses' easy amusement, and by blurring fact with fiction provide them with ways to escape and totally forget their real lives. Art and culture have become industries obeying the same rules of production as any other producer of commodities.

Adorno states, "*The culture industry is the purposeful integration of its consumers from above. It also forces a reconciliation of high and low art, which have been separated for thousands of years, a reconciliation which damages them both. High art is deprived of its seriousness because its effect is programmed; low art is put in chains and deprived of the unruly resistance inherent in it when social control was not yet total.*"⁹ Although such a critique should be placed in its own time and place, some academics find it "*uncomfortably timely*"¹⁰, the effects of the culture industry being uncannily the same nowadays. The stressing of the difference between "*pseudo-individuality and individuality, pleasure and happiness, consensus and freedom, pseudo-activity and activity, illusory otherness and non-identical otherness*"¹¹ is indeed Adorno's achievement.

Of course, much has changed from the time of Adorno's writings. Even if a kind of transformation of culture to cultural resources has indeed taken place due to their mediation through the mass media, some crucial exaggerations and a profound mistake can be found in all these condemning theories of mass culture, including Adorno's: the word

“mass”. The estimation that the receivers of the media messages are simply a homogeneous crowd can be seen as a simplification process from which all the forthcoming accusations of modern culture arise. Had this idea of a “mass” audience, “mass” media or “mass” culture been dismissed—as will be attempted throughout this thesis—no culture critique would be the same. This overemphasis on the culture industry’s goal of homogeneity sickly haunts every critique of modern culture, secretly implying its stagnation.

Mass culture welcomes so many generous thanks and so many disapproving arrows as all the rather recent phenomena, which gained important social dimensions in our century. Many voices are heard throughout the world both from its supporters and its enemies. The truth is that the culture of mass society mirrors the world around it and mimics it, and as a result it also seems now “*small*” and then “*big*”^{*}, now underestimating life to everyday routine to purify our sensitivity the next moment and enlarge our experience with new, unimaginative art forms.

The Reality...

Reality is complex in its simplicity.

Man’s truth is created by the complexity of the human mind—it is the same mind that will later decode and discipline this truth under its own personal emotions and instincts. The interpretations will each time be different—not once will they be the same—even if made by the same person. At different times the experiences, the emotions; even our knowledge about the subject will be different. The reason why we want to decode the particular truth will be different. So will the desired result.

No previous culture had so many critics. No culture of the past has been the subject of so many books. The previous cultures were followed by chronological adjuncts that put them at their place on the bright cultural walk of humanity. Modern culture, however, is never found alone. It is always accompanied by the word “mass”. Not recent, not modern,

* I am using a phrase from a poem by Yiannis Ritsos “the world the big the small”

not even of our time. Just mass. There is always the threat of the comparison between this culture and “the classic, genuine art”. Whatever subject we study, we always hear about cultural consumption, standardization and commercialization of art, disappearance and destruction of the authentic popular culture. Like a thought wandered or a tide of aphorisms.

So many times have we met the mass culture’s accusations that we already brought out a verdict of guilty? With no afterthought, we paid no attention to the advocate’s arguments. Every notion followed by the word “mass” is collectively doomed. The mass culture is guilty of mummifying the genuine art.

It is true that in our days, we witness standardization both to the general characteristics of cultural products and to their specific details and this fact undoubtedly proves their mass nature. Subjects and techniques are repeated; the art of the past centuries is adapted. The result of this standardization and pseudoindividualism is for the culture industry a mix of photographic accuracy and individualistic substitutes, sentimentality and a fixed romance, as Adorno so characteristically stresses.

The mass society’s culture is created for the masses and is addressed to the masses. Novels, records, films, comics, television and radio serials are some of this culture’s products. They are products that put art at common sight and access, expanding the cultural area, that was once strictly limited between painting and literature. They are products that are adjusted to the understanding abilities of the lower audience and the middle class. They are mass products that offer emotions and passions, predefined in accordance with the result they are meant to cause.

It is true that nowadays the reason for creation is not the inner need to express oneself, but the effect of the product on people. Modern culture is addressed to a dissimilar audience and “creates” products based on the “common preferences” of its consumers. Kraus’ complaint that “*a pen that writes for readers is allowed to serve only the mood of the readers*”¹² is an unwritten command and an inviolable rule for young journalists, while the movies are for Howe just a comment on our experience and assistance for us to adjust to it.

The fact that films are produced in a way that either adjusts or overestimates their viewers’ lives is a common knowledge. What some theories seem to wonder on is whether

the cinema is another form of modern art or just another form of business! “*Movies and radio need no longer pretend to be art*”, claim Adorno and Horkheimer. “*The truth that they are just business is made into ideology in order to justify the rubbish they deliberately produce. They call themselves industries; and when their directors’ incomes are published, any doubt about the social utility of the finished products is removed*”.¹³

No one denies that the viewer of a movie knows with certainty the way it is going to end. A specific line of an actor during the first part of the film shows the way—and it is obvious, if we ponder on it for a second—towards the death of a close friend or the husband in the second part. The plot is always similar. Everything is so well organized and predefined that what will puzzle the audience will not be the actual death, but the way this particular death is directed, the actors’ outfit or the objects near the scene—everything that makes this specific death different from so many other film deaths they have witnessed.

The repetition, the identical scenes and the resemblance of most of the recent movies is a common truth between the viewers, who are nowadays visiting the cinemas not only to watch a film, but also to admire the modern technology of effects and try to guess the end of the film during the first few moments.

This is the mass culture’s reality, a reality that is not restricted in a film’s scenes. Adorno also condemns modern music with monotony, saying that it satisfies the listener’s wishes only to deny them later.

Film, music, literature, even painting use tested and already succeeded motifs—nobody doubts that. The identical rhythm of popular songs, the similar subjects of best-sellers, the preferable subjects of painters and the weakening of abstract art, even “Titanic’s” success are proofs of the above claim. Mass culture is formed by the mass’ preferences.

Is this the reality created by mass culture?

... *and its Myths*

If we accept Rousseau's point of view that the spiritual inventions aim only to

applause, our answer will be negative. This reality is the result of any culture, not necessarily mass culture. “*If the painter didn’t care for flattering the human passions, the viewers would soon be disappointed and would not want to see themselves in a light that would make them despise their being any more*”.¹⁴ The writer always followed the audience’s preferences. “*A theatrical writer that would want to oppose to the audience’s preferences*”, quoted Rousseau in a letter to D’Alembert, “*would soon write only for himself*”.

It would be romantic—if not naïve—to assume that art was so pure, that the artist was driven only by his desire for creation, with no consideration of the audience’s reaction. Besides, we all recognize the vanity of an artistic nature, the desire for recognition and appreciation of his artistic work. “*Theatrical art cannot be seen away from the audience’s reactions*”¹⁵, claims Adorno. A work of art is commercial from the moment it is meant to impress the audience and not give the artist’s emotions a particular shape and form.

Some people say that commercial signs of a work of art are visible from the moment it is exhibited or even from the instant that it is created to be sold and it is not just an expression of the artist’s inner need for creation. The opinion that mass culture is responsible for commercialization and standardization of art is rejected as **myth one**.

Reality suggests that mass culture works as an obstacle to the authentic, noble development of art, surviving only as “*its parasitic outgrowth and vulgar reflection*”¹⁶ as Mac Donald would put it. In contradiction to the difficult in sense work of art, the easy access, understanding and enjoyment that mass culture has to offer, make it popular. Readers prefer mystery novels than Dostoyevski or Tolstoy—no doubt why. The less you think nowadays, the more you exist. Mass culture pushes art aside.

Sontag rejects this argument, saying, “*The preference that many young artists and intellectuals have for popular art is not a new type of philistinism or a kind of renunciation from culture. The truth is that there are new criteria for beauty, expression and taste. The new type of sensitivity is provocatively pluralistic*”.¹⁷

Nobody denies the existence of new criteria, new creation techniques. Their existence is an inevitable technology outcome, a sign we are moving on from one era to another, a definition of the human spirit. Times are changing and everything changes with it. Different times, different aesthetics—it is time’s nature to leave its own seal on human creation. Man

used to paint tries to hunt—techniques and needs of survival—, later he tried to picture the holy creation. Today it is values, ideas and ideals he puts on paper—techniques and needs of the spirit. At this period, man may have a difficulty in following the cultural progress. The restoration of older art, the art he has already understood and accepted, is enough for him.

We do not live, however, in “*these neatly separated worlds*”. Williams argues that “*many of us go one day to the circus, one day to the theater, one day to the football, one day to a concert. The experiences are different, and vary widely in quality both between and within themselves. Do we in fact feel that our capacity for any one of these things is affected by our use of the others? ... The threat does not come only from mass culture?*”¹⁸

Besides, from the privileged aspect of the new sensitivity, Sontag will say, the beauty that stems from a machine or a solution to a math problem or even at the personality and the music of Beatles is equally accessible. So, does mass culture actually push genuine art aside or is it just the **second myth** of modern art?

Some people will say that the reasons why we disapprove of and reject mass culture stem from the fact that it is so easy of access and so familiar to so many people. Large stratum of the population, who were once unaware of art, have turned into cultural consumers.

“*Why do we deny to the people who are destined by their nature to do nothing else than cry and die a passing recreation that helps them endure the bitterness and dullness of their being?*”¹⁹

The question was worded by D’Alembert in a letter to Rousseau, in which he requested for a theater building. The answer came many years later from Umberto Eco. “*It wouldn’t be purposeless if, at the base of the aversion to mass culture, we searched for an aristocratic root, a contempt that in appearance only turns against modern culture while the true target is the mass. Deep inside there is always the nostalgia of an era when cultural values were a class legacy and were not disposed indiscriminately to everyone. Should we perhaps admit that a stylistic solution is valid only when it represents a discovery that quarrels with tradition and therefore there are only few selected ones that sympathize with it? If we admit something like that, from the moment this stylistic element succeeds in entering a wider encirclement and penetrating into new bounds, does it instinctively lose its whole power or does it get a new function?*”²⁰

Every time we read in the texts of Mac Donald that “*all the great past cultures were elite cultures*”, we cannot but nod with agreement to Eco and oppose the also poor argument that many of the most important works of humanity were made in periods of oligarchy or dictatorship or that a big part of major Greek poetry was written during wars. It would not be wise to repeat the conditions of creating those works of art aiming at new creation. It would not have any result, simply because a war cannot ensure Solomo’ s birth the same way a revival of cultural elite cannot ensure the existence of important artists.

Unless we accept the term “I’ art pour art”, with any cost that this might have for human civilization, Art for art or **myth No three**.

Arendt’s reality identifies *the goods offered by the entertainment industry* with any other consumer goods, basing it on the fact that they are consumed the same way by society. “*Those who produce for the mass media loot the spectrum of the past and the present culture hoping to find appropriate material, produced for consumption*”... “*The biotic process of society will literally consume cultural objects, will eat them up and destroy them*”.²¹

Arendt defines the cultural object as the object that lasts. “*This durability is the exact opposite of its functionalism*”. No authentic work of art can therefore be lost. Even if we admit the danger of art to be transformed into a consuming object and be produced to cover the mass needs for entertainment, we should not underestimate its durability. Despite Adorno’ s opinion, we all need entertainment and we all entertain ourselves with the same things. Culture is not threatened as much by those who entertain themselves on their free time, as by those who prefer educational programs only to improve their status quo.

The products of culture industry may be quickly consumed, but this does not mean that there are no significant art creations that will remain intact through the centuries. There is no persuasive evidence that the persons capable of understanding and enjoying genuine cultural creation stay away from it influenced by the products of mass culture. The arguments on the mass consumption of art form another myth of mass culture, **the fourth one**.

The issue concerning the artist’s attitude towards the popularization temptations has occupied many people. Dewie will say that the indifference for communication with the direct audience characterizes all the artists who have something new to say. According to

Garnham, they lie between the Scylla of elitism and the Charyvdis of false popularization; between giving to the audience what they think will benefit it and giving the audience what it wants. Does this mean that every possible combination is out of the question? If the artist works for mass culture, are his creative talents inevitably limited? Why could not these talents be expressed in the mass medium that attracts him? Shils asks the same questions, defending mass culture. Some artists may prefer the pure and simple reality of mass culture and the possibilities for good life it has to offer. Arendt claims, "*The often reported artists' and intellectuals' disposition is partly due to their weakness to be heard and seen in the stormy uproar of mass culture or penetrate its noisy vanity*". Why should it be more difficult for the artist to resist to the mass culture's temptations "*than it was to avoid the most affected temptations and the most insidious noises of the culture's snobs in a refined society?*" The creative artist can resist any kind of temptation when he is concentrated on refined cultural production. Doubts outline **the fifth myth** of mass culture, the myth of the artist's weakness to produce art in the limited mass culture's bounds.

Is it true that mass culture tends to downgrade the existed good taste, that it just corrupts and spreads specific types of expressions and shapes, borrowed or violently removed from art? It is an argument we have also come across. It is one of the points of Mac Donald's critique for which very few people have arguments or doubts. Mid cult is considered guilty of "snatching" the avant-garde's discoveries and "vulgarizing" them in consumer products. When the mass culture products are simple transformations and restorations of an old type of art, they are nothing but bad imitations and copies. Despite the outer harmony of style, they are basically faked. Beautiful, but faked.

Why isn't the elegance of art sometimes enough? Dali's poster in a little girl's room—a girl who in other times could never be aware of and appreciate the uniqueness of the painter's expression—may lower the girl's and the parents' desire to stand in front of the original, but definitely proves a slight familiarization with the art of painting and its representatives. Shadows are not successful in the poster, colours are not beautifully mixed and the background is almost dull, but the girl can admire the tiger outrunning time and imagine the getaway. Isn't that the whole meaning of art? To set the rules and the places for getaways from reality?

It's the same girl who will later stand with mute awe in front of the genuine painting and will recognize the style, the technique and the childish getaways.

Myth 6: the vulgarization of art. As long as its embodiment in consumer goods does not happen violently and for social and economic reasons—meaning offer of prestige at a satisfactory reward. A Beethoven's symphony "adjusted" for a movie soundtrack is an obvious example.

Adorno and Horkheimer share a different point of view. *"The culture industry can pride itself on having energetically executed the previously clumsy transportation of art into the sphere of consumption, on making this a principle, on divesting amusement of its obtrusive naïvetés and improving the type of commodities"*²². In an era where the masses are pleased with the paroxysm the animated cartoons force upon their weak heroes and not with Picasso who does not offer entertainment and cannot whenever be an object for easy pleasure, art has ceased to communicate with man... *"The culture industry as a whole has molded men as a type unfailingly reproduced in every product"*²³ ... *"The deceived masses are today captivated by the myth of success even more than the successful are. Immovably, they insist on the very ideology that enslaves them"*²⁴ ... *"Even today the culture industry dresses works of art like political slogans and forces them upon a resistant public at reduced prices"*²⁵ ... *"The movie-makers distrust any manuscript which is not reassuringly backed by a best-seller"*²⁶. *"No independent thinking must be expected from the audience: the product prescribes every reaction"*²⁷. Modern songs have long ago adopted the principle of not having any particular meaning. Like good preceptors and ancestors of psychoanalysis equaled this meaning with the monotony of sexual symbolism. As far as animated cartoons are concerned, *"they were once exponents of fantasy as opposed to rationalism. All they do today is to confirm the victory of technological reason over truth"*²⁸.

The conservatism's negativity to accept or even ponder on anything new. *"Every change of cultural instruments appears as a deep crisis of the last cultural ideal"* Eco will say. A reality that underlines any such denial, writing the word "myth" besides it. **Myth seven**, that is.

The arguments against mass culture aim at shaping the myth of its leading manners, surrounding it with the shadow of disbelief and rejection that possesses its critics themselves. Extreme praises, on the other hand, and unrestrained tries for defending the new type of culture can be seen as enthusiastic impulsiveness of a progressiveness willing to

accept anything new. Progressiveness that unwittingly or deliberately forms the **eighth myth** of modern culture, the one of its holiness and uniqueness. Accessible culture is sinless. It is not so. Many people claim that a wide progressiveness is closely related to the culture industry profits. The thought has a base and an undoubtful truth.

Some people talk about “enforcement” of mass culture, about a try for guidance of the mass through this culture. Those words are adequate to shape another myth of mass culture, the **ninth** and the most humiliating for the man nowadays. He is seen as a passive receiver, who accepts and consumes everything. With no critical ability, no attitude—positive or negative—towards something he sees, hears or watches. He just watches. Sitting on a chair in his house, he watches a theatrical performance of Brecht or a modern revue. Sitting on a couch in his living room—the place from which he welcomes television—he watches Renoir’s paintings or a carpet auction. Wearing his slippers, he watches the most grandiose architectural buildings or the hotels where people with high taste and income sleep. With the same passive attitude.

*“Mechanical reproduction of art changes the reaction of the masses toward art. The reactionary attitude toward a Picasso painting changes into the progressive reaction toward a Chaplin movie... Although paintings began to be publicly exhibited in galleries and salons, there was no way for the masses to organize and control themselves in their reception.”*²⁹ It is impossible to control the masses while watching television. It is also impossible to control the emotions and feelings of the people admiring a painting or a theater play. Why do we sentence them to passive attitude and low mental ability and do not believe in the strength of their critical thought?

The basic problem is that we equate the audience with the mass, an impersonal and homogeneous crowd. Critics do not talk about humans, but about a shapeless and undistinguished mass with specific and unchanged characteristics. Most of the times the audience is not included in the critics. This obvious underestimation of the audience leads to the false interpretation of its reactions. There is no common way of getting in contact with a message and realizing its meaning and therefore there is no common way of broadcasting it, so that it will be accepted in any case by anyone. Every person has the right to adopt or reject any information that gets to him.

The faceless mass allows for the recent society’s critics to talk about faceless people.

The word mass and any word originated from it lead to misunderstandings, not results. Maybe there lies the origin of the myth making moving around mass culture: at its name, its characterization as mass.

The same name that made modern culture known forms its bigger unmentionable myth. The culture itself is drowning it and at the same time revealing it. From this stem all its other myths. The **tenth myth** of faceless culture supports its facade.

Mass Culture's Reality

Mass culture is a vivid reality. The issue is what is the definition of this culture.

If the phrase "mass culture" is used to name the culture addressed to a big part of the population, its truth and existence are beyond the shadow of any doubt. It is common truth that modern culture is accessible to all the social strata and all the persons in any of these strata. So "*as the mass of the population is being awakened, when curiosity is being stimulated, sensitivity and moral ability is starting to develop a more delicate perception, appreciate more the most general aspects of the particular performance and the more versatile at its aesthetic expression*". Anyone can have an aesthetic perception of today's culture and art and it is his personal choice either to admire the classic creations or entertain himself with the most popular and less genuine cultural creations.

If, however, with the term "mass culture", we equal stagnation of art and as synonymous phrase we use the phrase "culture industry", the doubts of its existence are getting stronger, shadowing the truth and creating the suspicion of a myth. "*Why should it be modern culture's fault? Maybe our cultural traditions have already come to their zenith. In political philosophy we don't have an Aristotle, a Hobbs or a Bentham, but such teachers are rather few in the human's history*". A comparison between recent artists and the important people of the history of the humankind is rather purposeless. The absence of such great men in the 2/5 of the century is not a proof of a general decline of the cultural products' quality. Anyway, high culture was never the culture of a whole society.

Wherever there is position and opposition there can be no reality. One person's

reality is denied by the other as a myth. Even the suspicion of a myth can shadow reality. The term “mass culture” is a term full of suspicions.

If the critics of modern culture claim that its defense is equal to the existence of the profits from the entertainment industry, its supporters claim that the instantaneous denial of the new culture is due to the feeling of threat it causes to the past “owners” of high culture.

A progress crisis or a dead end? A reality or a myth? A praise for the spread of culture or a nostalgic grieve of the lost privileges? A vicious circle.

Man is always hovering between the nostalgia of the past and the charm of the new and unknown. It seems to be the curse of the creative mind always to doubt its own creations. There is always a decline before the recovery, a death before a new start. In order to get back its lost kingdom, Jason had to regain the Golden Fleece. In order to raise human culture, man may have to endure its previous decline—a decline that could drift man to his personal fall. As long as he remains the inexhaustible hero he was before the fall, his culture will survive and thrive through the centuries for the next generations to come and continue creating and criticizing.

4. Criticism & Taste

Why should we criticize everything that is offered to us? Why could we not just choose among them the one that suits our taste and let other people choose whatever they want? Why do we keep placing labels on top of things, distinguishing among them, setting hierarchies, preferences, ideals?

Some people would say that many of us need the assistance, because we cannot decide which film to see or which performance to attend, because of our lack of knowledge or the lack of time to try and find out by ourselves. Therefore, everything is already served for us and the only thing left to do is find a companion to share the experience. The “good” films are already pointed out and the others are not given half a chance. Nobody ever doubts about the claims’ truth. The word is printed and signed by someone who is supposed to know better than you. Besides, *the magic of the printed word transcends reason*³⁰. Nevertheless, why someone else decides on which films you will like and which you surely will not, how come all the viewers have the same taste with the critic—these are questions nobody seems to wonder on.

What about the value of the independence of the human consciousness? Where is modern man’s individualism if he rejects a composer because a critic did? It should be one’s personal choice which film to see or which composer to listen to. One’s own way is the best way to look at things and art is created by the artist’s own way of creation to be interpreted by the viewer’s own way of perception. There is no other way of decoding art—if art can be decoded that is—than one’s own way. Why do people trust a critic’s belief about a play if beliefs vary according to one’s experiences and character? Some would answer this question impulsively: “they have similar taste”.

In his essay “On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening”, Adorno claims that the concept of taste is in modern culture outmoded. *“The familiarity of the piece is a surrogate for the quality ascribed to it. To like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it.”*³¹ Taste is for Adorno manipulated in a modern mass culture.

Taste is so complicatedly formed... a mixture of social origin and education, a class

distinction, as well as an amalgam of experiences, expectations and emotions. Taste functions below the level of consciousness, with no will control. It definitely requires knowledge of the subject talked about—you cannot agree with someone if you have no idea what he is talking about. However, if asked why they did not watch a particular film, people would say, “Because I read bad critiques about it”.

“*Taste functions as a sort of social orientation, Bourdieu will say, a sense of one’s place, guiding the occupants of a given place in social space towards the social positions adjusted to their properties, and towards the practices or goods which befit the occupants of that position*”³² In short, there is one opposition in which every one of us knows what side he is in, “*the opposition between the elite of the dominant and the mass of the dominated, a contingent, disorganized multiplicity, interchangeable and innumerable, existing only statistically.*”³³ From this fundamental opposition stem all the rest, temporal and spiritual, material and intellectual etc. Critics take the one or the other’s size depending on the medium in which they are working and readers/viewers/listeners just decide once and for all and thereafter they buy the same magazine/watch the same program/listen to the same radio station, which critic serves their “taste”. The magazine/television or radio program sells, the readers/viewers/listeners are satisfied and the critic’s plain job is to disapprove of any artist who dared challenge the classic style of genuine art.

However, art is the opposite of “predictable”, mimesis is not art. Originality is art. Authenticity is art. Unpredictable is art. However, we cannot deny the existence of a *language* of art, a particular code or cipher through which the artist tries to communicate with other people. A work of art has meaning only for those who possess knowledge of the code, the language of art. Decoding means communication and therefore consumption. In this sense, the masses cannot consume art, because they are not able of decoding it, they do not possess the language of art. The cultural competence is acquired through education or social origin and the anonymous homogenous mass lacks both education and social background. The mass stops at the primary meaning, the meaning it can grasp based on its previous experiences, but the signified meaning, the secondary meaning, remains unnoticed.

“*An art which ever increasingly contains reference to its own history demands to be perceived historically; it asks to be referred not to an external referent, the represented or designated reality, but to the universe of past and present works of art*”³⁴ Do the uneducated lower classes possess that kind of knowledge? Do they

understand the significance of historical aesthetic perception—the perception, which is *differential, relational, attentive to the deviations, which make styles*³⁵? It is doubtless that not everyone can attain a completed grasp of works of art that only have meaning in relation to a specific history of an artistic tradition. The historical cultural competence is acquired by constant contact with works of art and many people simply cannot have that kind of contact.

If we define *contact* as direct, face-to-face communication, then the above claim is straightforward. Not everyone has the opportunity or the financial capacity to visit museums frequently and go to concerts or theater performances. The word *contact*, however, does not exclude mediated forms of communication, like the media. Not everyone has the opportunity to have direct contact with works of art, but everyone might watch/listen to a television/radio program on Impressionist painting, buy a poster or receive a card of it. Nowadays, more people can have access to art and therefore, more people are able to acquire the language of art.

Although this fact definitely decreases art illiteracy, it seems to perform a reduction of the things of art to the things of life, stressing function over form, the things represented over representation itself. Mediated contact with works of art usually means illustration of their uses and value—as decorative objects (painting) or as an aesthetic means of communication (art cards). This is not to say that there are not good art programs or pure aesthetic media images, but rather that for people who have no prior cultural competence, the idea of pure aesthetic pleasure is difficult to capture. Nevertheless, this might be healed through time or with a new way of mediating art.

According to John Walker, anyway, the idea that the fine arts are exclusively concerned with aesthetic pleasure and not with any practical functions is a dubious one. He sets the example of architecture, an art that is primarily concerned with housing (practical function) and then beauty (aesthetic pleasure). He continues claiming that all forms of art are concerned with function as well as form and that only after the existence of museums did the cliché “art for art” occur. Before, it was art about the world. “*Displayed in museums and galleries, works of art are detached from the religious and secular contexts in which they previously fulfilled social functions*”.³⁶

Not all works of art need to be placed in a particular history and art tradition to be understood or appreciated. Artists are autonomous creators; they tend to reject the a priori interpretation of their work. The placing of works of art in particular historical and traditional

contexts is only a way of organizing and setting ways of interpreting art. It is not the only way of perception and therefore, not the only way of art pleasure. Most importantly, one need not “understand” a work of art in order to enjoy its aesthetic content. Who can tell which is the best way of perception—is there a best way of enjoying art? Art is viewed first instinctively and then intellectually. People enjoyed art long before starting placing its creators in their time and place.

*“If formal explorations, in avant-garde theater or non-figurative painting, or simply classical music, are disconcerting to working-class people, this is partly because they feel incapable of understanding what these things must signify, insofar as they are signs”.*³⁷ However, art is created to express something that will stimulate or contradict one’s expectations. It is supposed to visualize part of one’s experience or form another part of it. Art is inseparable from one’s experience and this is the way we should look at it: as a part of our life. There is something signified in a work of art but the artist would find himself more successful if that hidden meaning is transformed in accordance with one’s experiences and adopted as one’s own thought viewed by the artist’s eyes and given form to by his hand. Aesthetic experience should be one’s own experience translated in a beautiful form.

Additionally, *“knowledge by experience feels and deplors the essential inadequacy of words and concepts to express the reality “tasted” in mystical union, rejects as unworthy the intellectual love of art, the knowledge which identifies experience of the work with an intellectual operation of deciphering”.*³⁸ The lack of systematic knowledge does not prevent anyone from enjoying cultural pleasure and aesthetic beauty. It is true that those who were born in a family deeply concerned with art are from infancy familiar to its techniques and practices and this familiarity gives them the chance to both get in direct contact with the works of art and at the same time manage to keep their aesthetic pleasure away from the intellectual decoding. But the fact that television brings certain aspects of high culture into one’s home can be seen as the chance of those who do not have such a social origin to get familiar with art history and tradition. Both the people born in an art-loved environment and those who are transferred in that kind of environment through television enjoy the benefits of knowing by experience. Although the instant decoding of a work of art might still occur, the intellectual criticism is in general avoided.

*“Critique tears art to pieces”, Hans Keller would say. “But most people in their senses prefer to travel without a travel guide—because they object to having the beauty spots picked and, by implication, evaluated for them”.*³⁹ It is true that the magic of a self-discovered composer is not comparable to a “list of the

composers you should know to be considered intellectual enough". The understanding of music, and any form of art, is first instinctive and then intellectual.

The lovers of art will argue that in criticism they find support for their opinions. Nevertheless, "*criticism has become so self-contradictory, that if we exclude from the domain of art all to which the critics of various schools themselves deny the title, there is scarcely any art left.*"⁴⁰ Art does not need background knowledge to be appreciated. "*What do critics explain? ... If a work is a good work of art, then the feeling expressed by the artist transmits itself to other people.*"⁴¹ Since feelings are common between all people and the language of art is a global heritage, translations are not needed. On the other hand, what seem to be appreciated in works of art are the individuality and uniqueness of the idea and the form in which it is embodied, as well as the clearness and sincerity with which the artist presents that idea. Those qualities seem to be tampered with when analyzed or criticized and the point is for them to remain intact.

Art expresses the unknown. Paintings picture what cannot be seen otherwise. Great music consists of sounds that have not been heard before. Things that cannot be expressed in words are painted or composed. How easy or manageable is it to criticize a painting or a composition through words?

Hans Keller would comment on a composition through another composition. That is not to say that art should not be talked about or even criticized. But words should be generous when describing art. Labels and categorizations are not good enough. When we talk about subconscious expectations or past experiences, when we talk about representations or symbols, generalizations are not valid. Because what would mean nothing to one person could represent the world for another and that is not something a critique or a theory will decide. Critiques or theories could provide the guideline for the understanding of a work of art, but the last word will be said by the same person who will stand in front of a painting/building/statue/piece of music and will discover the equivalence with his life.

This is the main reason why the distinction between genuine art and mass culture has so little value nowadays. The same work of art could inspire both dominant and dominated, both the elite and the masses.

"*Light music is music whose seriousness remains unnoticed*", Hans Keller will say. What if we have not noticed the seriousness of modern art, in general?

On the other hand, although we may agree with Keller that the critic profession is phony, we cannot forgive modern man for being so easily misled. One may be influenced, but one should always respect one's own idiosyncrasy. Art should be viewed through one's own eyes and modern man should always have his eyes open.

5. Modern Art and its Aesthetics

The concept “mass culture” carries with it certain suspicions and myths that cannot be overcome easily and effectively. The word “mass” alone is dealt with disbelief and sarcasm and is generally avoided. The Frankfurt School created the phrase “culture industry” in order to avoid the misunderstandings that surrounded the mass’s homogeneity. Nevertheless, this term did not manage to solve the problems either. The aristocracy of every society, the intellectuals and all the upper classes people instantaneously rejected any culture that is followed by the word mass—the word industry was not to have a better fate. It was rejected in the spur of the moment—the pronunciation of such words is only allowed among the people of the working classes.

Modern art has seriously challenged classical art and its aesthetics. The seniority of form over content has drastically changed the essence and meaning of art—its logic and interpretation processes should also change to form a completely new aesthetic theory. Artworks are not conceptual, but are logical. Most of them resemble a syllogism based or originated in empirical reality. Their logical consistency seemed relatively acquirable when artworks represented or reflected on reality—with modern and abstract art the assumption is that there is no connection with the empirical world whatsoever and therefore no meaning or content. Form is the only artistic element that remains in modern aesthetics. Or is it?

That art seems to be losing all possible hints of the relation to the empirical world does not mean that it actually loses its inherent logic—even if it is a logic of the illogical, the unconscious or the dream. The meaning of the artwork is its totality—the synthesis of its elements to form a whole. While the artworks of the past indicated their meaning, artworks today enunciate their meaninglessness. As Adorno significantly pointed out in his *Aesthetic Theory*, the fact that modern art negates meaning makes it meaningful precisely because of its decision to negate meaning: the negation of meaning has in itself a logical thought originated in individual consciousness, influenced and given shape in a given society and that process is by itself meaningful. All artworks acquire meaning in their being individual reflections on the social.

Art has, from its infancy, been both autonomous and social. As well as an individual expression, art manifests social need. Art is closely related to expression. Expression’s

essence depends on a subject. Artworks are created by individual artists whose idiosyncrasy is inspired by unconscious collective forces. The autonomy of art is unbrokenly related to the social.

As the conversion of the autonomous and the social does not always come out as beautiful, so art is not exclusively associated with pure beauty. Aesthetics is not, therefore, another word for the theory of the beautiful. The concept of beauty is only one among the many elements that constitute the sphere of aesthetics. Art reflects life and life includes beauty and ugliness, laughter and pain. Even cruelty becomes one among art's imaginary themes: wars and sociopolitical disasters, hunger and death have inspired many important artworks. The melancholy of art lies exactly in this paradox: through the beauty of the bloomy rose, its future wilting is implied. The depiction of the young coheres to the older, a baby to a body, birth to death. Artworks are meant to live for eternity but the portrayed will not. Natural beauty is interlocked with art beauty. Their reconciliation, however, is tied to the momentary. The exact next instant, something in nature will have changed; it is the specific moment that the artwork managed to capture on canvas/stave/stone or stage.

The historical ephemeral is valuable in art as it provides information on the particular era. Art requires knowledge in order to be perceived but it also entails knowledge.

The categorization of modern art as false or deaestheticized seems to underestimate if not totally forget the changing light through which societies are seen when examined as continuations of previous social norms or as regressive revolutions and complete transformations of them. Through the first glimpse, only the façade of a given society can be grasped. Retrospectively, societies can only be judged in comparison to the specific sociohistorical circumstances that determined them; they converge with temporal and spatial idiorhythms to set lines and boundaries as well as let individualisms and idiosyncrasies emerge. Through them—the tempo-spatial boundaries and idiorhythms and the emerged individualisms—art arouses as a plight of expressiveness and truth.

In the set borders of new societies, new art arouses. Different from the old and already approved artistic forms, new art defines change. That change is what the word modern entails. The already achieved aesthetic standards are put to the test. Even if, for Adorno, the new is necessarily abstract, this abstractness is in a sense a reflection of the

existing social conditions, which proves its interesting value. Tradition develops parallelly to economic and social structures anyway, insofar as it follows historical movement. Art should be allowed to move forward as well. If, modern art's abstractness by turning into a cipher becomes for Adorno irritating, it is modern art's aesthetics that come to provide the unanswerable question: why should there be a specific meaning in art? Why should there be a message carried, something that needs to be understood or identified?

If modern art has redefined subjectivity, it is because its former character limited its possibilities of expression. Illusionless? Perhaps, but at least experimental. Mimesis in art implies staticity in society. If mimesis suggests non-individualism, then surely experimental procedures would amount for creativity and individual effort towards uniqueness? If Monet and Pissarro belong to the same art school, their popularity is hardly comparative, precisely because the first, unlike the latter, can be conclusively reduced to the school—and this is a point shared with Adorno. If the first is by many claimed to be the creator of the specific artistic movement—at least its naming—the latter created impressionistic but at the same time Pissarrarian artworks. They both created impressionistic expressions, only different ones.

“New art is so abstract as social relations have in truth become”.⁴² This argument is not necessarily true. Art is a reflection of society, not a sheer portrayal of it. In order to reflect on something one needs to form an opinion about it beforehand. Adorno thought of his society as only interested in exchange rather than use value and wrote the—uncompromising with the usual book standards—difficult to be deciphered “Aesthetic Theory”, offering it as a challenge to his readers. Why could modern artists not offer non-subjective, indeterminate of what they are and of what purpose they are artworks as a challenge to their audience? Unlimited individualistic imagination should be allowed to the creator as well as the beholder of the artwork. Art is social but at the same time, autonomous and this autonomy should be able to be expressed in *multiple* ways.

Something will always survive of the pre-existing tradition, although art is not a practice of clinging to past but of expanding, progressing, evolving existing techniques and practices, materials even. Individuation is essential to art as is the conformism to its functional purposes. Architect Frank O. Gehry may have become extremely successful with his seemingly dancing buildings—Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, futuristic Vitra Design Museum and more recently

Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles—but such art fundamentally entails the danger of turning into kitsch. For Adorno, Gehry's creations might as well be kitsch. Is modern art's deformed replication equated to its uniqueness or its deaestheticization? Does experimental modern art consciously reject or at least is developed in opposition to the embracing and adoption of uncritical existent aesthetic patterns? Or is it just that modern art fails to subjectively or even metaphorically depict the depictable?

It is true that art is indissolubly connected to imagination but it is equally true that the artist's imagination cannot completely encompass his completed artwork's imaginative—and able to be imagined in a hundred ways—projection.

The modern art's prioritizing form over content is not adequate enough a reason to condemn it for standardization. Form has always been the central concept of aesthetic theory, presupposed for the coherence of artworks, the element that makes an artwork appear eloquent. It is through form and not content that the beholder appreciates art—through form and not content are Van Gogh's paintings of boots, chair and sunflowers appreciated. It is different forms of the same content that Monet produced in his series of water-lilies paintings.

*“On no account does an artwork require an a priori order in which it is received, protected and accepted. If today nothing is harmonious, it is because harmony was false from the beginning.”*²³ It is through the breaking of the formerly existing schemata, patterns and techniques that the pioneers of science, politics and culture emerged—it is through the breaking of the formation of the preceded art that great artworks emerge. Modern art seems to desire change, forwardness, purchase^{on} the yet unseen.

How are, however, both modern and classical art seen through the media?

Does the mediation alter the message carried?

How are the material, the form or the unity of the artwork seen through another medium?

It has always been customary to regard the fine arts as high culture and the mass media as low culture. The distinction was always clear: appreciation of the fine arts was primarily associated with the taste of the upper classes, while appreciation of the mass culture was primarily associated with the lower classes. There was no confusion, no question raised, the matter was cut and dried.

Although this distinction is permanently drawn between the fine arts and the mass media, influences are two-way between them—the media are influenced by fine arts and art is

influenced by the mass media. Interactions are visible and deeply drawn. Mass culture uses art and the other way around.

For many people, mass culture just created new forms of art and altered the way of looking at art forms. Mass culture is for them the expansion of art to include a wider spectrum of formulas and ideas, new creation techniques, new methods and inspirations. The useful character of mass society as far as art is concerned is for them rather obvious.

Photography made great historical buildings and paintings accessible. The history of art was broadened beyond national or cultural boundaries. Any one of the mass society's citizens can now create his personal museum of art copies and photographs, a museum with no walls or restrictions, constituted by the collection of his preferred past or recent art forms.

Theatre plays can now be watched through television by people who would never have had the opportunity to actually go to the theater. The atmosphere and the feeling of the actor performing in a stage in front of you for you cannot of course be reproduced, but the truth that many people discovered the theatre through mass media could not be underestimated either. Shakespeare is easier and more comprehensive if watched in the TV screen and the Hamlet's monologue might even be more effective, because its dramatic tense would be emphasized.

The social destination of literature changed. It used to be an institution for the maintenance and conservativeness of tradition; it now is a critical word and a search for new ways and forms of expression. The writer is now a kind of prophet, a lonely voice, not someone memorizing and reproducing his societal tradition. His rights over his work are now recognized and his spiritual property protected. The enormous number of books printed underlines the freedom of expression and the intellectuality of the recent man.

For others, mass culture just pushed art aside. *"True, in the face of the culture industry art maintains that dignity; it enrobes two measures of a Beethoven quartet snatched up from between the murky stream of hit tunes while tuning the radio dial".*⁴⁴ Photography captures a false perception of the work of art—the angle from which the photograph is taken deprives the viewer of the numerous other possible angles he could have watched it from in direct contact. The no-walls-museum of modern man is worthless, because the authenticity and uniqueness of the

works of art—all the features that define them as works of art—are lost.

Theatre plays lose many of their characteristics if watched in the TV screen. The camera operator turns into the director, the person who decides what you are going to pay attention to and for how long. The image of the whole stage is rarely shown. The viewer is doomed to watch the play through the eyes of the camera operator.

In an attempt to find out more about the condition of the fine arts, when mediated through the mass media, I will examine some of the ways in which old forms of media are mediated through the new mass media. The approach adopted involves an analytical and theoretical study of Media Communication and Culture. Seeking answers to the debates between those who support the Frankfurt School's idea of a "culture industry" and those who find this belief a serious error, I will try to examine certain aspects of the conditions of the fine arts through the mass media. This examination will be pursued through two case studies:

1. Musical languages through the cinema. The history and interpretation of Argentinean tango will be examined in a parallel way with its cinema image.
2. Architecture in photographs—an art through another art. Ancient Greek buildings in postcards.

Traditional and pre-existing aesthetic patterns should be criticized, according to the current situation: nobody suggested that the past artistic practices should a priori be adopted just because they used in some place at some time be regarded as valuable. Mahler used in his own time be scandalous, Monet's paintings used in his time be considered just impressions of paintings, Van Gogh oversimplified—they all were radical in their time but developed to be great artworks some years later.

The examination of different forms of art through different forms of mediation is, I believe, a way of coming to a valid conclusion to such a long argued debate concerning the character of modern art in a so-called mass culture. It is hoped that through this kind of analysis certain critical assumptions, attributes and oversimplifications of such a culture will be tested and questioned.

The particular case studies were chosen to include two completely different types of artworks through two completely different types of media: classical—and therefore

timeless—architectural art, such as Knossos and the Parthenon, mediated on quasi-mass media such as photographs and postcards and a traditional/cultural/historical musical language—associated with a particular space and time—such as the Argentine tango mediated through the characteristically related to the “culture industry” medium of film. These two case studies—covering both authentic timeless art works such as the Parthenon and less recognized or appreciated cultural objects such as the tango—will try to tempt the concept of ahistoricity or aspatiality associated with “mass culture”. Does “mass culture” remove art and culture from “*the realm of genuine spontaneity by predetermining its character*”?⁴⁵ Does it de-historicize and/or de-place art so that it can easily and effectively be offered to the world? Is Mona Lisa de-historicized/de-placed/displaced on the T-shirt?

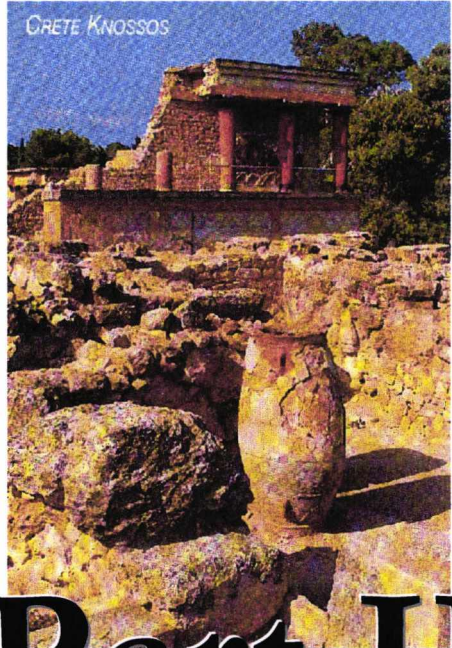
Forms of both classical and modern art will be examined when mediated through both mass media (film) and less mass-oriented media (postcards) so as to allow for an adequate study of mediated art through various angles and therefore conclude to a strong argument on whether or not the “authenticity” of art is destroyed in the process of its mediation and distribution to the wide audiences of the mass society.

The wide difference between the two case studies was intentionally chosen—was never attempted to be bridged—to stress the resistance to homogeneity and standardization that mass culture is so criticized about and imply a separation and examination of both “authenticity” in art (Knossos)—although the term “authentic” remains questionably valid throughout the thesis—and spatially rooted, modernized but less “authentic” art forms such as the tango music and dance. Tango music seems less “authentic” than Knossos because it is constantly changing; an “original”, “genuine” or simply standard form never having been set or required.

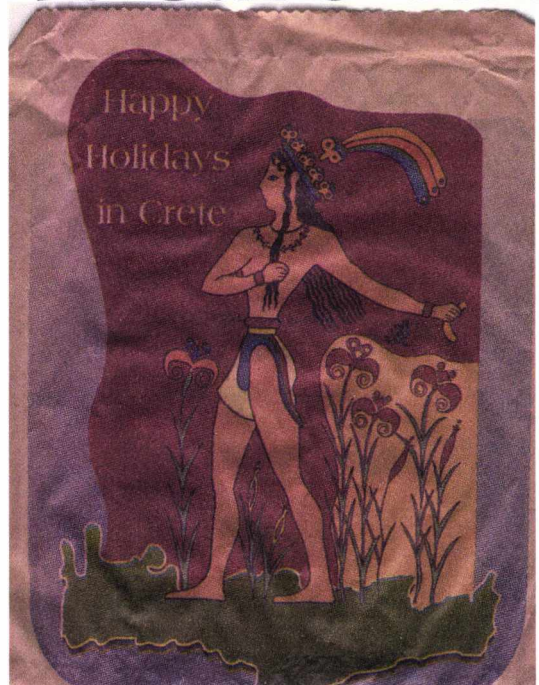
6. Notes

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Part II



Art through the Media

More people than ever before are aware of the fine arts today and this fact is mostly the outcome of mass media communication. Even if we accept the broadening of education and the undoubtedly more chances for travel and leisure that the modern society offers to its people, we cannot overlook the truth that most of us have gained our knowledge via television art programs rather than by direct contact. Even those who have already had an aesthetic background cannot in most cases remain uninfluenced by the images and ideas of the mass media.

With the media and through them cultural products become cheap, available, understandable even. Mass media “mediate” between the relatively small number of specialized cultural producers—including artists—and the very large numbers of cultural consumers who did not have the chance to access art before. This fact led to a democratization of culture.

The media are nothing more than vehicles or channels transmitting information that preexisted to a huge audience. The problem arises from the moment that quantitative success is starting to be measured. Since media communication can be a source of profit, it is only natural that the people behind it will try to raise that profit to the highest possible extent. That will instantaneously mean that the media content will be shaped in such a way that it could appeal to the biggest amount of the population. Bearing this fact in mind, the media content is believed to be low-to-medium in character.

That does not mean that minority tastes—the tastes of the educated elite—are not catered for. On the contrary, this audience is welcome, too. However, it is because of the limited time this particular group of people spend in front of their TV set that their taste is taken account of in such a limited extent.

One way or the other the role of the media as far as the distribution and understanding of art is concerned is rather obvious. It is self-evident that they interact, they borrow each other's uses and techniques, each exhibiting characteristics reflecting the other's influence.

Art uses mass culture in many direct and indirect ways. Whether the artist's attitude towards mass culture is positive, negative or mixed, its influence is always noticeable. He will either try to secure the identity of his art by stressing the materials used and the processes acquired by the specific art or use the representations found in the realm of the mass media to form a new kind of art. Lichtenstein was not the only one who tried to translate mass culture into pop art or paint a sarcastic painting out of another painting. Hamilton tried to comment on the everyday world of the bourgeoisie through his paintings while Warhol used exactly that sameness, ordinariness and anonymity of the mass culture to create works of art. *"By adopting a distanced but amused, a detached but ironic attitude towards mass culture, the artists who exploited it as a source material were able to assimilate it into the realm of fine art without relinquishing their "superior" viewpoint".*¹

Mass culture uses art in various ways and fields. Advertising is only one among them. Art is mediated through the mass media—its images becoming backgrounds in films, its compositions adjusted to form its soundtracks. Pictures and photographs of paintings are sent as post-cards or are seen printed as a book's cover. Posters and representations of paintings are hung in one's wall, illustrating one's aesthetic taste and knowledge. The same painting is seen in a museum, in a book's page, on a bedroom's wall, as an art-card outside a corner-shop, or in a photograph taken by someone who has visited the museum. Is it the same?

No, in the sense that only one of them is the "authentic" painting—the creation of an artist—, while all the others—even the closest one—are simply reproductions of the original. The paradox is that nowadays the series in which we come across these two has

changed. Usually, it is the reproduction that we come across firstly and then—if ever—the genuine painting. The way of seeing art has therefore changed. Nowadays we look at a painting having already seen some of its reproductions. It is as if we already know the painting and we now come close to it to examine its form and actual nature.

Many things have changed in the way we approach art after its mechanical reproduction. For better or for worse, the only certain thing is that the change has occurred. In the next subchapters I will try to examine the ways this change has affected art, bearing always in mind the still unanswered question whether art's nature is actually altered or just shaped in a different way.

How are specific forms of art—like music, painting, theatre and architecture—affected by their mediation through the mass media? What is the character and purpose of such mediation? The answer will arouse, I believe, unbiased through the analysis of the chosen case studies. For now, let us examine the outcomes of previous endeavours on the subject.

1. On Mediation

It is common knowledge that art—like everything else—is mediated through the mass media and thereby becomes accessible to bigger amounts of the population than ever before. In what way though? Is mediated contact with a work of art compared with the direct contact of museum viewing or concert-going or is it a completely new way of seeing art?

The way in which the fine arts are represented by the mass media of film and television has aroused many complaints and stimulated many theories of our times. Many would say that mediated art is not respected the way it should be. It is already mentioned that the mass media are used to make profit and that is something we should always bear in mind when referring to them. The aim is to attract and please large, varied audiences. It is a rather difficult aim, as the tastes vary and so is the way of entertainment. Mass media aim to please and entertain more than to inform. Even the informative programs of television are usually directed in a pleasing way. Theater practices and techniques are used in news programs and talk shows. The host waves his hands, smiles and says hello to the camera as one would to his best friend.

The mediation of art is something mass media should do in a very careful and thoroughly pre-examined way so as to satisfy the educated elite and to please the mass audiences. Intellectual difficulty must be avoided and hinted at the same time. The target is never directly met and to be candid maybe not studied enough. Mass audiences are larger than the educated—it is these audiences that mass media try to attract at all costs.

Art programs are therefore from the first instant doomed to form a specific guideline, to use specific words and images and avoid others, to show art in a pleasing way. The result is obvious. Not enough time is allowed for the viewer to study the image, as an image display for more than a few seconds would bore the middle class audiences. One could tolerate this inadequacy of time, thinking that mediated art is not supposed to take the place of direct contact with works and in that sense whoever is interested in studying the image shown should visit the museum where it is displayed. True, but one of the main advantages

stressed in favour of mediation is that it allows access of art to people who would never otherwise have the opportunity to see it, including people who cannot afford visiting other countries just to study a painting displayed in their national galleries.

What seems to be a usual complaint is that it is not always clear that the work shown in the TV screen is the original and not a reproduction, but since the image that arrives in one's house is a reproduction, is it really that important if it is a reproduction of the original or a reproduction of a reproduction? The TV image would definitely be closer to the original if the camera looks at the original and even for psychological reasons the viewer wants to be certain that what he sees is a painting painted 100 years ago than a simple photograph of it. The way he will look at the painting would differ in each case.

Photography though is in itself an art. After the development of printing, Lewis Mumford says, painting was about to follow the same path. Claude Monet, Gustave Courbet and many other realistic painters of the nineteenth century can be seen as mere transcribers of nature. They continued what the Dutch realists had started during the seventeenth century and started what photography was to continue afterwards. Their paintings can be seen as the first colour photographs. Photography can be seen as the mechanical innovation and improvement of their paintings. For even in photography, not everything happens automatically. One might not need a skilled hand, but the eye is still required. The eye, the taste, the interest in the subject, the captured moment, many of the main features of realistic painting are included in photography. Human choice is still there.

From the photographic painting to the photographs of paintings much has changed. A large part of our experience of art has been captured and shown. Experience that could not be explained in words and is therefore shaped into an art form is visible to anyone interested or present. However, the problems that arose due to the wide distribution of art are crucial for both art's nature and future. The rare painting has become a common sight through its reproduction and so many images flood into our houses that we—the viewers—seem unable to see and understand them all. Repetition empties art of its meaning and the result is that we only *“half-see, half-feel, half-understand what is going on”*.² This half-understanding of the world around us and the false realization of art is mostly seen in TV audiences.

Mediation of art through television is a different matter. Details of the work are

shown, but the work as a whole does not appear on the screen for more than a few seconds. The camera cannot be static. It needs to prove its abilities and strange techniques. So does the cameraman or else he will be fired.

The camera roams about the image not taking account of the viewer's desire. It could not satisfy the desires of every viewer anyway. The angle shots are used primarily to underline the camera's capacities than reveal the paint surface or try to show the painting from every possible light or angle.

In the case of mediating music through the radio, the cinema or television, *"the romanticizing of particulars eats away the body of the whole... Because they were originally defined only as moments of the whole, the instants of sensory pleasure which emerge out of the decomposing unities are too weak even to produce the sensory stimulus demanded of them in fulfillment of their advertised role"*.³ The mediated parts sound as completely different compositions from the unified one and that might diminish their aesthetic value or the unique character of the completed work. In some cases, however, this part mediation and the uses of short leitmotifs—parts of already existing works—can stress or revive the genius of past and forgotten pieces of music. For Adorno, Mahler is an example of how this last endeavour can find its takeoff in music, as *"everything with which he occupies himself is already there. He accepts it in its vulgarized form; his themes are expropriated ones. Nevertheless, nothing sounds as it was wont to; all things are diverted as if by a magnet. What is worn out yields pliantly to the improvising hand; the used parts win a second life as variants. Just as the chauffeur's knowledge of his old second-hand car can enable him to drive it punctually and unrecognized to its intended destination, so can the expression of a beat-up melody, straining under the pressure of clarinets and oboes in the upper register, arrive in places which the approved musical language could never safely reach. Such music really crystallizes the whole, into which it has incorporated the vulgarized fragments, into something new, yet it takes its material from regressive listening."*⁴ It is this second life as variant that the already existent music earns through mediation. In the different settings of the media through which they are heard, musical works are reborn and with a new character of their own enrich musical experiences by underlying the uniqueness of musical language. As will be shown in the fourth chapter of the thesis, Argentine tango music was reborn and reintroduced to wider audiences through the Argentine post-dictatorship cinema.

Most importantly, as Benjamin stresses, “*even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happened to be*”.⁵ It is true that a reproduction of a work of art does not denote its history, does not show the changes the original work may have suffered in physical condition over the years or the various changes of its ownership. However, it is this fact—the impossibility to reproduce all the features of a specific work of art—that enables us to appreciate the genuine painting even after having seen a hundred reproductions. On the other hand, if we accept the fact that the time and space in which the work of art was inspired and performed has equal value with the inspiration and performance itself in its final interpretation, it is as if we are accepting the hypothesis that people from different societies and cultures cannot appreciate art that was performed outside the habitus of their lives. The social role of art is crucial, but so is the mere aesthetic satisfaction it offers, even if the receiver perceives a different meaning or adjusts the meaning to his different experiences and ideas.

It is perhaps a second chance to view art differently, away from its time and society, alone and independent from theories and practices of the past, away from labels and titles that art historians would give. “*The knowledge, the explanation never quite fits the sight*”⁶ anyway. What we see in a painting is firstly accepted instinctively, as an aesthetic form and afterwards, if ever, intellectually in the form of reflection, interpretation and perception. The two might contradict, the sight escaping the impact of knowledge and resting on recognition of previous experience or simple aesthetic attraction. Our beliefs, experiences and ideas might meet and welcome a painting before our knowledge will.

There is no need to know who owned a painting to appreciate it. Secondly, this way of looking at art does not allow one to appreciate a painting because of its owner or history. In his “*Ways of Seeing*” John Berger stresses the case of Leonardo Da Vinci’s cartoon *The Virgin and Child with St Anne and St John the Baptist*. This cartoon became famous because an American wanted to buy it for two and a half million pounds and now the National Gallery sells thousands of its reproductions! That painting became impressive not because of its aesthetic meaning, but because of its money value.

“*This is the real secret of success. It is the mere reflection of what one pays in the market for the product. The consumer is really worshipping the money that he himself has paid for the ticket to the*

Toscanini concert. He has literally "made" the success which he reifies and accepts as an objective criterion, without recognizing himself in it. But he has not "made" it by liking the concert, but rather by buying the ticket."⁷ Exchange value has come to influence aesthetic value.

Seeing a work of art in accordance with its history was one of the reasons why the common people never had the chance of appreciating art. The history of art was the heritage of the educated and not all had the privilege of education. Art was made unnecessarily remote—only the selected few had the chance to understand it. Only later—and reproduction had a lot to do with it—did it become clear that art is not about decoding but about communication. Was there a code in art, only the few would be able to read it anyway? Not in recent times, when some selective information is available through such institutions as the media for the whole of the population: including those that never had this chance in previous epochs. Nevertheless, the code of art—if there is one—is individualistic and adjustable. *"In the end, the art of the past is being mystified because a privileged minority is striving to invent a history which can retrospectively justify the role of the ruling classes, and such a justification can no longer make sense in modern times."*⁸

The historical conditions in which a work of art was produced may not be visible or stressed today through its reproductions—although some information is provided through its mediation—but that does not show the way to the decay of its aura. For aura consists of much more than the work's history. The *unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be*⁹ is what Benjamin refers to as the aura of natural objects. The masses may strongly express their desire to bring things "closer", but that does not imply that they take every reproduction as a reality and every reality as able to be reproduced. It does not imply that the masses equate the uniqueness of every reality with its reproduction. Furthermore, we have previously rejected the existence of the masses as a homogenous crowd and generalizations about the indifference of their attitude are not accepted.

Repetition is, though, a powerful enemy. It decreases the meaning and originality of a painting to an often seen picture. The content is so commonly known that it is gradually diminished. *"There are paintings by Van Gogh and Matisse and Picasso that are descending the swift slippery slope to oblivion by reason of the fact that they are on view at all times and everywhere."*¹⁰ Such works of art are too constantly present to preserve the mystique of art's rarity. Habit leads

to underestimation or even overlook.

In the same sense however, why were the people on whose walls paintings of landscapes hung able to appreciate the uniqueness of the nature portrayed? They passed these paintings as they went to bed; they saw them under stress, frustration, anger. The paintings were as close to them as their furniture or clothes. Does habit imply the overcoming of the uniqueness of reality? Landscapes or still life are reproductions of nature on canvas. Does their possession imply the willingness to deny nature or equal it with its reproduction?

Undoubtedly, a painting mediated through television enters the houses of millions of people who will see it as a feature of their house. The question is not whether people ceased to look at a painting as a means of aesthetic beauty or furniture. The statement is that this might always be the case—who can guarantee the past way of seeing as compared to the recent one? One cannot control the media audiences' attitude the same way that one cannot forecast the thoughts or feelings of a painting's viewer.

The uniqueness of a particular work of art when placed in the fabric of its tradition may have lost its meaning through mediation. Even if different people would see a work of art under different traditions, mediation expanded the proportion of people that will see the work and therefore the traditions under which it will be interpreted, constantly removing it from the conditions of its creation. Its use value is forgotten or overlooked, its ritual function underestimated or erased. Art is mostly viewed through its aesthetic function.

The distinction between distraction and concentration that Benjamin makes is a clear one. *"A man who concentrates before a work of art is absorbed by it...In contrast, the distracted mass absorbs the work of art."*¹¹ It is true that one cannot concentrate on something that is offered to him for a few seconds. Concentration implies time, patience and eagerness to learn or understand. Art demands our fullest attention, our most individualized response, or it does not convey its inner mystique to us. *"What we settle for are the bare sensations; and that is perhaps one of the reasons that the modern artist, defensively, has less and less to say."*¹²

However, the offer of an image for a few seconds invites the viewer to search for the original and concentrate on that. The mediation of art through the mass media can be seen not only as an offer of genuineness at low prices, but also as an invitation to the world of art and its representatives. It is up to the viewer whether he will accept the invitation or just

ignore it. Either way, the collection of reproductions one has in his head after watching an art program is a first step towards the realization of what art has to offer.

Certainly, when we see a painting hanging on a museum's wall we have the choice of passing it quickly or spending hours concentrating on it. Will we give it just one look or our whole attention? Questions and choices like these are not possible when seeing a mediation of a work through television or film. The period of time you are going to spend looking at the images offered is predefined, standard and unchangeable. The way you are going to see them is decided, too. The viewer has no choice than seeing the images from the angle that the camera sees them, and that fact also applies to photographs and books' illustrations. The only choice remaining is whether you are going to stay and watch or not. The choice of subject or the angle of view is non-existent.

Then, that is always the case with images. "*Every image embodies a way of seeing*"³—the photography the photographer's way of seeing, the painting the painter's way of seeing, etc. That does not mean, though, that the viewer always shares the creator's way of seeing. Our perception of an image has a lot to do with our way of seeing, even if that is a different one. Through mediation, the viewer is confronted with two ways of seeing an image. The creator's, whose seeing is reflected in the choice of subject and the photographer's /director's, whose seeing is shown in the way he chooses to reproduce the initial image. Even a detail of a painting varies from the painting as a whole and the reproduced image carries a different meaning. The way a medium mediates art might transform, restore or enhance a work's meaning and value. The way the viewer is going to receive the final image is entirely up to the combination of his knowledge of art and experience of life and its images—the combination of all the factors that constitute his way of seeing.

The consciousness of individuality—a concept that Keller would stress in his every word—should be awakened and strengthened when looking at a work of art. A painting is an image of how the painter saw the world. What we see when looking at it is a metamorphosis of the world through the painter's eyes. We see—with our eyes—through the creator's eyes. If we know some things about him, we might find it easier to put ourselves in his shoes and try to perceive his point of view. If we know nothing of the painter and his life, our eyes will adjust the image to the images we have seen up to that

point. Either way, our seeing will come before our thinking and our perception is likely to be influenced more by the former than the latter. Words we might overlook. Knowledge might be formed in the way that suits our thinking. Nobody, however, questions vision. “I saw it with my own eyes”, we say, and that statement is adequate to indicate that something is true. The same applies to hearing and musical scores.

That the meaning of a work of art changes through mediation and reproduction is quite obvious. The message is the medium, McLuhan would say. The message changes according to what the program wants to say, the medium’s characteristics, what is seen before, after or besides the work.

Certain aspects and details of the work of art can be isolated and stressed by its reproduction, details that might be inaccessible without the presence of the lens—either photographic or film. The details of an ancient Greek building or the pyramids cannot be seen by the naked eye, simply because they are some meters above one’s head. Photographic reproduction can, according to Benjamin, capture images that escape natural vision. Quick movements and tiny objects are seen and studied and this resulted in the painters’ painting them differently because they have viewed them differently.

A reproduction of a work of art might be a first acquaintance with that work—the next meeting might occur in the museum or gallery, in a concert or a library, in the physical place of a building etc. However, “...*the uniqueness of the original now lies in it being **the original of a reproduction***”¹⁴. Its content is already known. What we pay attention to is now the form of the painting, its colour and substance, things that are not visible in a reproduction. “*The meaning of the original work no longer lies in what it uniquely says but in what it uniquely is.*”¹⁵ In the uniqueness of its existence. Its value depends upon its rarity and mystified past, rather than its actual aesthetic context.

Yet “*that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art... the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced.*”¹⁶ Does reproduction reactivate the work of art or does it rather enlarge its influence and fame?

Authenticity is not reproduced and that is why the original work of art is seen as

unique and irreplaceable. The reproduction's aim is to make the original known, not replace or underestimate it. The two are distinct and completely separated. The qualities of the authentic work of art cannot be found in the reproduction and the reproduction brings about independent aspects of the work that might not be noticed otherwise. Each has its pros and cons and no one is replaced by the other. Recent films try to reattach art in the domain of tradition and that is what I will try to illustrate in the chapter devoted to Argentinean tango through the cinema. The act of making many reproductions may result in offering substitutes—a plurality of copies—for a unique existence, but at the same time it underlines the uniqueness of that existence, giving everyone a chance to get in touch with it. In addition, in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it simplifies—without underestimating—the work so as to stop being a product of the intellect that only an intellectual could decode, but a product of the human spirit that any human could feel and enjoy. Seeing art in their own situation and place, common people realized that it is not a privilege of the few, but a human expression they could in fact have access to. What the mediated work of art *“lost in uniqueness it gained in intimacy and variety and wide distribution.”*¹⁷

Even after stressing the negative points of media mediated art we cannot overlook the fact that it is exactly through that practice that knowledge concerning the arts of the past reached a larger proportion of the world's population than in any previous time. While before the emergence of the media it was art about art or art about the rich, it is now art about the world or art about anyone interested. Copying made art accessible to the less rich before but it was never so easy for the poor to see a Van Gogh painting than after the entrance of the TV set in our houses. Bruegel and Hogarth might produce paintings for the wealthy and prints based upon their paintings for the wider, less affluent public, but how many prints could they produce? The time-consuming and limited copying was replaced by the instant pushing of one button so that unlimited images will enter into our houses. We are nowadays supplied by more images than ever before, with auditory and visual masterpieces, that appear and disappear more quickly than an eye's blink.

All transmitted works of art can be reproduced and this fact changed their impact upon people profoundly and forever. That is not to say that one will not stand in awe in

front of a genuine painting after having seen some of its reproductions. In the actual material of an original painting, one might even notice the way it was drawn, the painter's movements and gestures. The possibility that one out of a hundred viewers might discover a tenth of art's world might even ^{be}worth the while. If we learn to apply art to our own lives, we might even be able to look at its representations with a critical approach.

The millions of art reproductions and images constitute a museum of the imagination, a museum-without-walls, as Malraux defines it in his *"Voices of Silence"*. This museum just extends the process of the physical museum and makes available to the individual the art of all times and of all people. He sees and collects substitutes instead of originals, but his knowledge and experience of art is expanded outside the geographical limits of his country and the economic boundaries of his income.

Does mechanization actually threaten to dispel the mystique of art? "...if camera obscuras can be used by artists then why not computers?"¹⁸ Walker asks. In *"Visual Communications and the Graphic Arts"* Estelle Jussim adds that *all reproduction is a translation from one medium into another*. The point is that art is meant to be untranslatable, vague.

In *"The Mechanization of Art"* Wind claimed that reproductions have fostered a rawness of vision, a crudity of taste, which influences the way traditional works are perceived. His point is that the original painting often appears dull and even pale when seen in flesh after a garish reproduction. In *"Ways of Seeing"* Berger will state that art reproductions transform the uniqueness and the meaning of the originals by making them *the prototypes of reproductions*. Walker certifies, *"No reproduction can yet rival the sensuous materiality of colour and pigment typical of a modern oil painting"*.¹⁹ Where lies the truth? Is Benjamin's *aura* of the work of art preserved, its uniqueness and authenticity secured or does the transformation of art's nature that takes place through mediation completely change the way art is experienced? Is the impact of art lessened, strengthened, or remained the same?

2 Reproductions

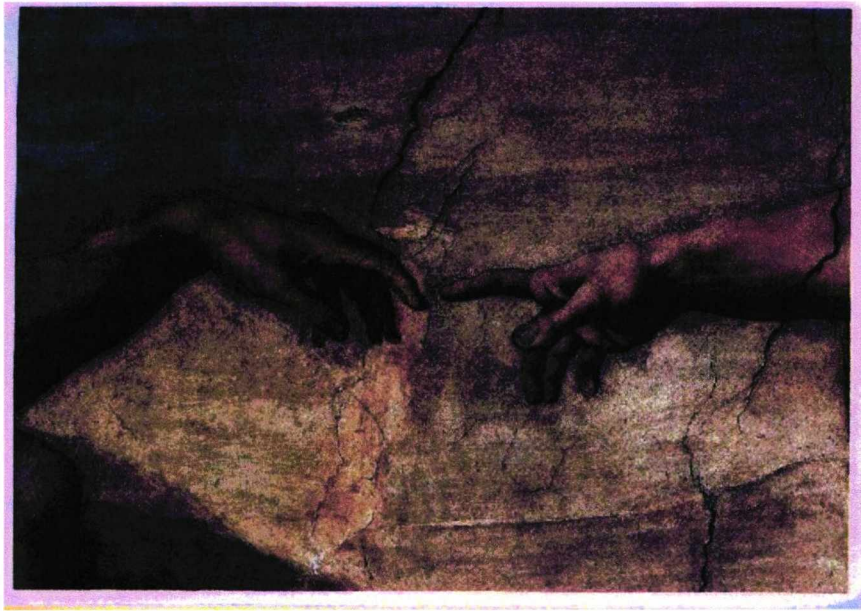
Certain details of a painting can, if mediated, transform the work into a totally different entity. The image above suggests the portrait of a woman gazing at a lake, while the whole painting, below, contains a completely different subject matter.



Painting 2-1: Morisot, Summer's Day, Detail

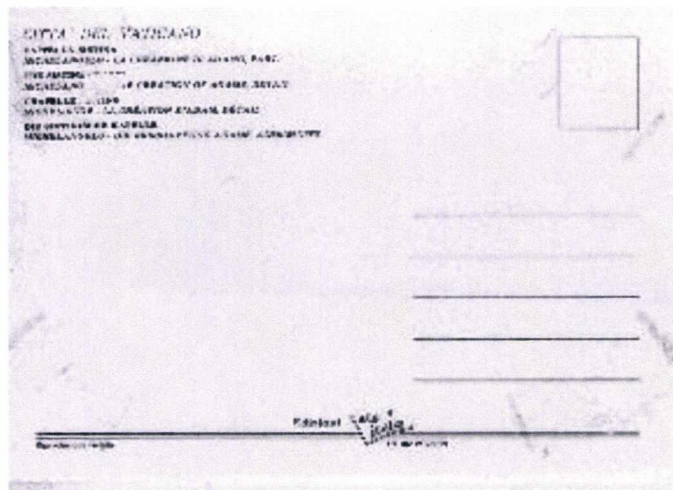


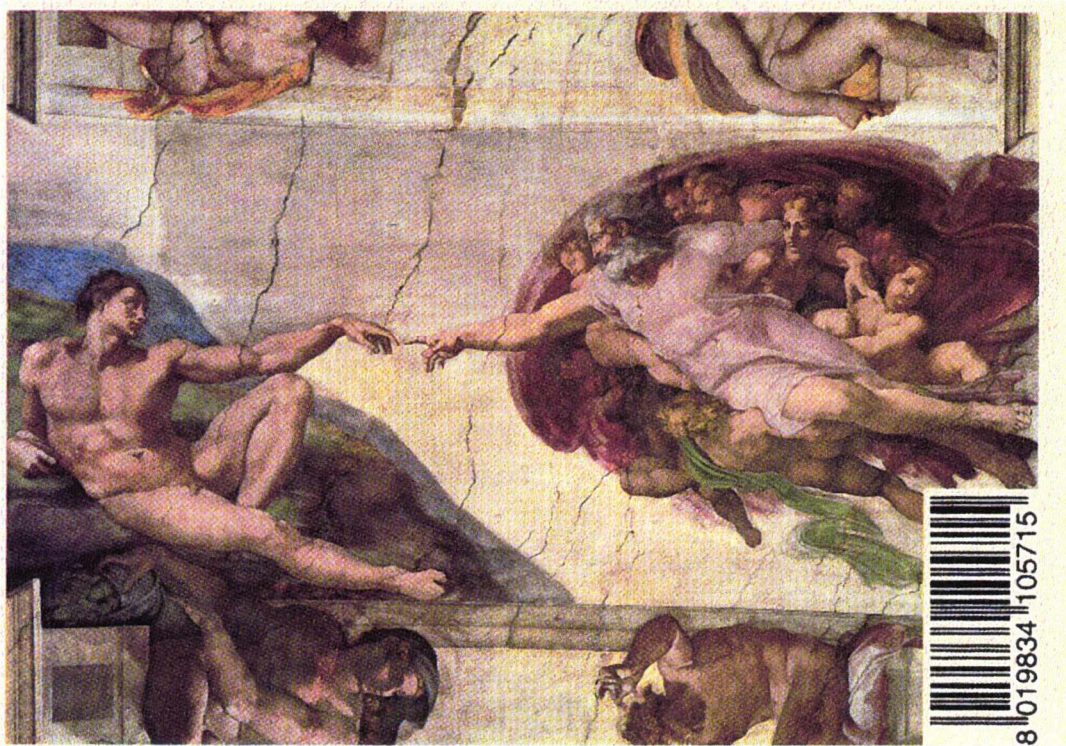
Painting 2-2: Morisot, Summer's Day, whole painting, oil on canvas, 1879, 45.7x75.2 cm, The National Gallery, London



Postcard 2-1: Michelangelo, The Sistine Chapel, The Creation of Adam , detail

Someone that is not familiar with or has never visited the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, Rome, when coming in touch with the above image, appearing on a postcard, might think that this is in itself a painting. Of course, the information about who the artist is and where this painting can be found are instantly available to the receiver of this postcard—as all this information is typed on its backside, but the image seems altogether misleading.





Postcard 2-2: Michelangelo, The Sistine Chapel, The Creation of Adam , detail

Even in front of this postcard, carrying a bigger part of Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel, the receiver cannot in any sense grasp the greatness of the Chapel. Again appearing as a work in itself, the above image, only by implication suggests the continuity of the work. The unfinished bodies above and below the centralised image of the creation of Adam suggest the existence of other persons and images on the vertical side of the painting. The horizontal subject matter of the image seems, again, completed. Only the visitors or the educated fans of the Sistine Chapel will know that it is not.

This fact brings us to terms with the difference of the tourist/visitor in terms of status, character, knowledge and perception of media messages. The tourist of the Vatican does not go there as a naïve uninformed passerby. Carrying guides and being formerly informed by other institutional media including books or TV programs, the tourist carries a totally informed, curious mind, anxious to get in face-to-face contact with the already

familiar and admired subject, take pictures or buy postcards of it. The tourist-character first learns, then visits, takes the souvenir as a trophy for reminding to oneself and the others of his achievement and finally returns home.

Among the Good, the Bad and the Dopen of the mass culture—sarcastically referring to the Intellectuals, the Media and the Masses—the tourist manages to sustain a unique position. This fundamental difference—the unclassifiable of the tourist character—will form the basis of an argument against the characterization of media audiences as passive masses.



Postcard 2-3: Michelangelo, The Ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican, Rome

The above postcard of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling succeeds in suggesting the greatness of the artist and the authentic uniqueness of the room. However, it is the postcard below that manages not only to imply, but also emphatically show the greatness of the Sistine Chapel and the genius artist.

One should not overlook, however, the importance of all the previous postcards in showing aspects of the work that could not have been noticed otherwise. When in the Sistine Chapel, it is impossible to see the creation of Adam in such detail as shown in the first postcard, as the image is several feet above one's head.



Postcard 2-4: Postcard showing an aspect of the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican,
Rome



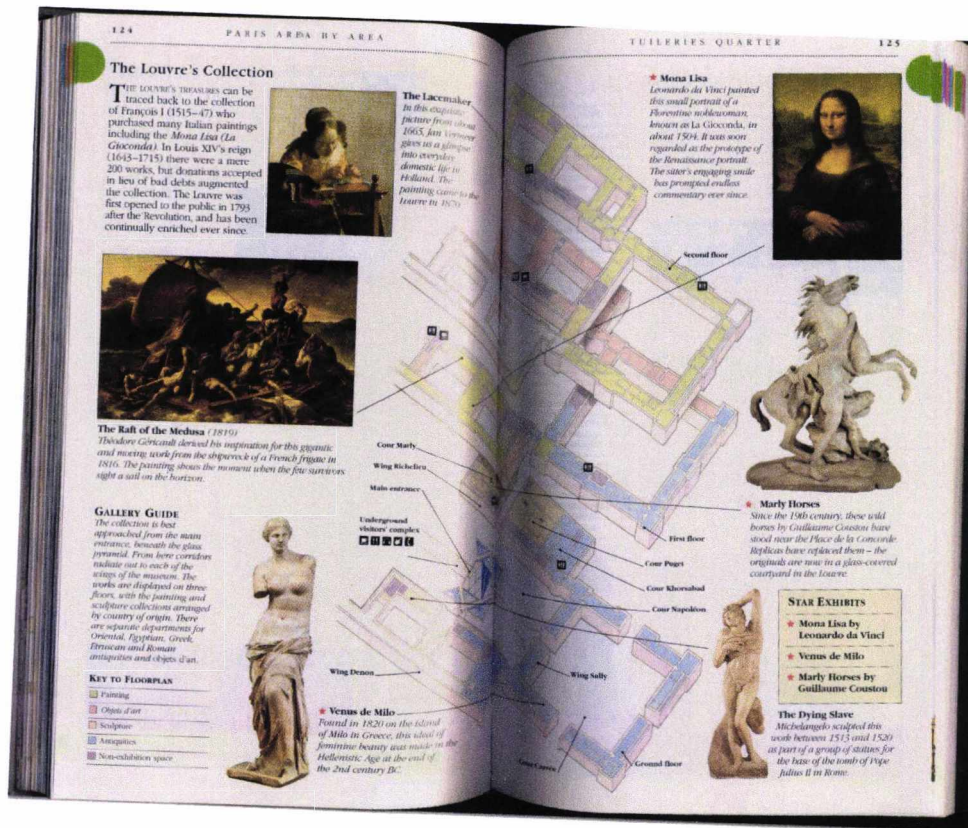
Photograph 2-1: Mona Lisa in the Louvre, Paris, Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, February 2001

Many critiques of mass culture argue that through the media the work of art cannot be seen *with* the respect it deserves: it is another quick image among the many the audiences today come across, a psychological vehicle for the spectator set in motion by the culture industry, as Adorno so characteristically stresses in his “Aesthetic Theory”. The above photograph shows that even direct contact with the work in a museum/gallery can transform a painting into a commodity.

This case—the crowd in front of the painting of Mona Lisa—can be also seen as another example of inviting the people to the museums through the frequent mediation and storytelling around a painting. So many stories have been heard about this particular painting, so many times has one seen one of its reproductions—as a poster, a postcard or on the T-shirt—that one feels obliged to go and see it once in Paris. The problem is that most people visit the museum to see the much talked about painting and nothing else—only a small number of them might actually pay some attention to the other exhibits.

The more advertised the work, the more people go and see it. The more the museums by certain tricks underline the significance of this work and place it over other

works the more the crowds will buy the particular postcard, poster or T-shirt. It is a strategy based on advertisement and profit, but then again, it does invite people in museums and it does sell more or less informative guidebooks. Even if one buys the book for the illustrations, there is the chance that he might actually read the text accompanying them.



Picture 2-1: One of Paris's travel guides, showing the Louvre and listing its star exhibits, the exhibits a tourist should not miss (in the yellow box at the bottom right)

Therefore, even outside mass media mediation and in the safely "aura"-preserving museum walls, "authentic" works of art can lose their expressive character. When advertised, they can attract the interest and flashlights of the tourists, but their aesthetic value is given and stressed through the particular advertisement and not through their particular artistic style, idiosyncrasy or content. Of course, this content and style attracted the interest for the advertisement in the first place.

By advertisement, I do not only mean through techniques and practices of the media; even the museum's tactics are considered to promote specific works of art instead of others. Museums do tend to favour and stress the aesthetic value of specific works of art by keeping the specific exhibits behind glass, for the fear of being environmentally destroyed—as in the case



Picture 2-2: The Picasso room in Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid.

of the Mona Lisa in the Louvre—or in a different room even—as in the case of Picasso's Guernica in the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid. The rope around the painting delimits the distance one should keep from the painting and simultaneously adds to the painting's fame, by marking it as holy and unique. No visitor is allowed to come too close—that alone is a reason for a tourist to photograph it with really powerful camera zoom lenses so that he can later print the image and show it to his friends as a proof of his wealth and intellectuality—attributes simultaneously connected with traveling.

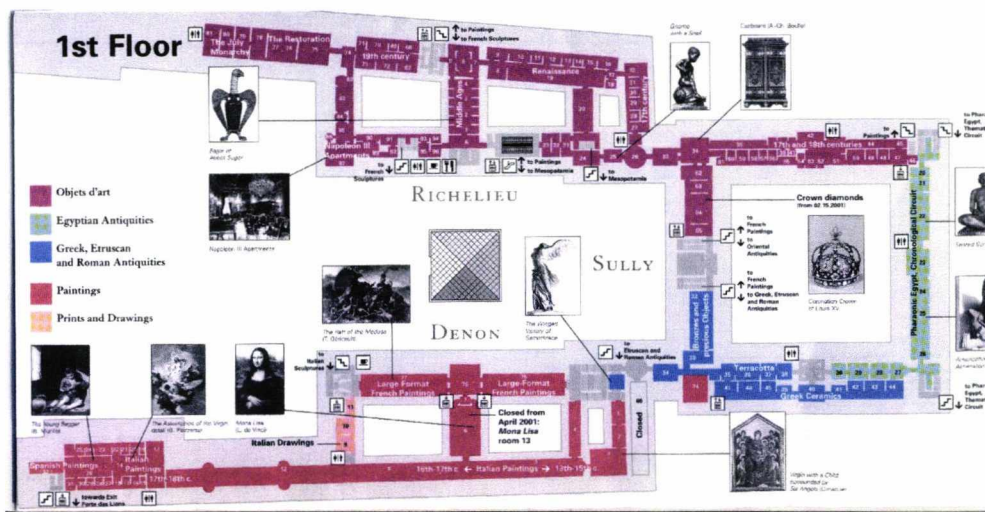
So many times has one come across people holding companion guides while standing in front of the actual, the original painting, that one instantly brings the role of the tourist in mind. The museum/gallery visitor, having glimpsed at the painting hanging in front of him, seems absorbed in reading its artist's biographical note or possible inspirations. Exactly like a tourist would do in front of a site.

Having already been thoroughly informed about the museum exhibits—everything that is worth seeing is predefined and pointed at by the guides and critics—they visit the museum searching for the rooms that these specific exhibits are (which is not difficult to find, as shown in picture 2-3) and then go and photograph themselves in front of Mona Lisa or Venus de Milo. Such photographs function as certificates of cultural status.

Especially in such vast museums as the Louvre in Paris and the Prado in Madrid, where one needs several hours in order to view every exhibit—even if that takes the form of just passing by it—the visitors tend to decide on where they would like to go (which floor, which historical era) and what they would like to see in the chosen museum (the

specific exhibits), before the actual visit. Even those visitors that visit the place determined to see everything in it, do not arrive there uninformed. Even if in some instance they do, there are plenty of guides and plans handed out at the site's entrance to help them throughout their visit.

This is the tourist's ritual: to visit a well-known site, go through it following the appropriate guide and then photograph oneself in front of it. Additionally, as if this was not adequate a proof of their actual visit, tourists tend to buy postcards/guides/posters to carry back and hold as a trophy, brought from their imaginary-invaded country/city/site.



Picture 2-3: Plan of the first floor in the Louvre, Paris

The museum industry can easily be compared to the tourist industry and that to the “culture industry”; and this comparison will be adequate a proof that every consequence of a possible alteration in viewing or creating art does not stem from mass culture alone.

Could its receivers, namely the tourists, be linked and/or compared to the masses, the notion of the mass itself—as a homogeneous and passive crowd—would be seriously tested. As already mentioned, tourists visit sites well informed, exactly in the opposite state of mind than the naïve and unable to reject anything that is being offered to them mass consumers. Surely, everyone in an audience crowd—a crowd that could most easily be characterized as a mass—cannot be a tourist. Issues of class, wealth and habits again arise

that distinguish between the tourist and the non-tourist but tourists can most definitely be included in an audience, crowd or mass. It is the sheer existence of tourists and non-tourists among the crowd consisting the mass that instantly questions its homogeneous character and even its entity and essence.

A deeper analysis of the above argument will be pursued during the examination of the first case study of the thesis: the mediation of Greek architecture on postcards.



Picture 2-4: Plans and guides of museums and galleries

3. Notes

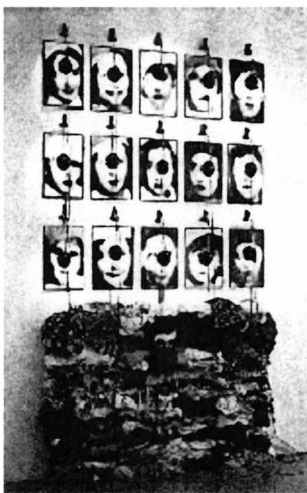
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- ¹ Walker, John A., *Art in the age of Mass Media*, London: Pluto Press, 1983, p. 16
- ² Mumford, Lewis, *Art and Technics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 98
- ³ Adorno, Theodor, W., "On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening", *The Culture Industry*, edited by and 37
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 52
- ⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction", included in "*Illuminations*", p. 222
- ⁶ Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 7
- ⁷ Adorno, Theodor, W., "On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening", in *The Culture Industry*, edited by Bernstein, J., M., London: Routledge, 1991, p. 34
- ⁸ Berger, John, "*Ways of Seeing*", London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 11
- ⁹ Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction", included in "*Illuminations*", p.224
- ¹⁰ Mumford, Lewis, *Art and Technics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 102
- ¹¹ Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction", included in "*Illuminations*", p.241
- ¹² Mumford, Lewis, *Art and Technics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 99
- ¹³ Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 10
- ¹⁴ Berger, John, *Ways of Seeing*, London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972, p. 21
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 21
- ¹⁶ Benjamin, Walter, "The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction", included in "*Illuminations*", p.223
- ¹⁷ Mumford Lewis, *Art and Technics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, p. 88
- ¹⁸ Walker, John, *Art in the Age of Mass Media*, London: Pluto Press, 1983, p.69
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 73

Architecture in Postcards

1. Photography

An art, a social practice, another eye..

Nowadays the themes that could constitute a photograph are innumerable. Anything can be photographed. From a social event to a drop of a liquid. Photography may function as documentation, as evidence and

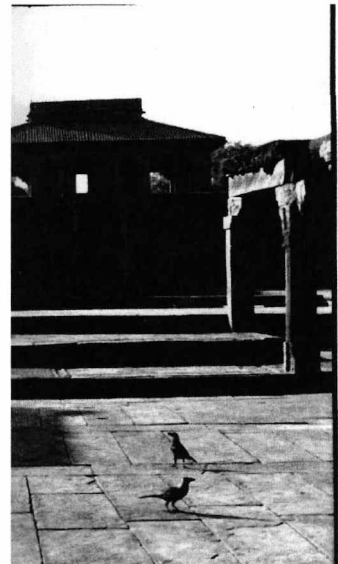


Photograph 3-2 Christian Boltanski,
Sans Souci, 1991

approval of specific social rites, as capture of something considered beautiful. Beautification and truth telling are the main attributes of photography. A record of the world that surrounds us, its evaluation and approval or disapproval. Henri

Cartier-Bresson would stand for hours in front of a particular scene, waiting for the right moment that the click will be heard and the moment arrested.

Photograph 3-1: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Temple, Fatehpur Sikri, India 1966



Christian Boltanski would use photographs of people he does not recognize to form one of his exhibitions. Dead or alive, it does not matter. Time will pass eventually and its cruelty will not have mercy for the living. Policemen keep photographs in files, we all carry our photograph in our ID card and passport.

Photography is all around us. In the magazines we browse, in the newspapers we read, on buses and walls, in our minds. It follows and proceeds us. It catches our attention in a way reality has never managed to. Just because it is something seen from a different point of view than our usual viewing it. Photography has indeed created another way of looking at things, especially unfamiliar or distant things we now seem to gaze upon as quite normal or at least neutrally.

Details, close-ups, distances and strange shapes, whatever the eye misses or forgets to look at in the eternal movement of things around it, photography catches and offers for humanity to gaze at. *"We have no idea at all, Benjamin says, what happens during the fraction of a second when a person steps out. But photography, with its devices of slow motion and enlargement, reveals the secret. It is through photography that we first discover the existence of this optical unconscious."* The camera enlarges vision, shows hidden aspects of the commonly seen to the world. The visible but unseen.

As Benjamin mentioned in his "Small History of Photography", we know that people walk, but we do not have the slightest idea about what is going on during that fraction of time that intervenes between two steps. Photography preserves appearances, it can preserve that fraction of a second we want to see but cannot, it seizes the moment and keeps it on paper for us to examine it later. It is not that we were not conscious of that fraction of time between our two steps; it is just that we had never seen it before.

Police filing, war reporting, military, pornography, documentation, family albums, postcards, anthropological records, news, portraits are only some of photography's functions. Anything that is concerned with appearances and requires immediate testimony can give rise to a snapshot. That, however, does not mean that a photograph is always telling the truth.

It is true that photography has direct access to the real, but reality is not always easily or correctly perceived by the human eye. Photography can falsify if technologically tampered with, but even a simple snapshot can create an image that the eye perceives falsely. An optical illusion can be intentionally or by mistake captured by the photographic lens.

Nancy Rexroth's mother seems like slipping downwards towards the viewer; while what really happens is that the wind is blowing her hair. The eye cannot see the wind and the mother seems ^{to be} flying.

The optical unconscious



Photograph 3-3 Henri Cartier-Bresson, *Behind the Gare*
Saint-Lazare, Pont de l' Europe, Paris, 1932

The optical illusion



Nancy Rexroth *My Mother*, Pennsville, Ohio, 1970

Photograph 3-4: Nancy Rexroth, *My Mother*, Pennsville, Ohio, 1970

Different ways of seeing, individual ways of seeing form the art of photography. To be considered a work of art, a photograph should be beautifully composed, seeming simple and candid and at the same time revealing things the individual eye wouldn't have noticed otherwise. Even when showing disorder, more complex forms than everyday life, unpleasant issues like the poor or homeless, photography beautifies. A photographic eye can discover the beauty in ugly things and show it to the rest of the world. Beauty can be the result of time, patience to catch the right moment, taste and skill, as well as the contrast, colours and shapes shown. The photograph's referent need not be beautiful for the photograph to be a work of art. Beauty lies in the technique, the originality, and the pathos of the photograph. It is not a question of what it shows, the stress is put on the way the subject is shown.

*“Photography’s realism creates a confusion about the real which is analgesic morally as well as sensorially stimulating. Hence, it clears our eyes. This is the fresh vision everyone has been talking about.”*² There can be no doubt that we see the world differently after the invention of photography. The eye vision has



Photograph 3-5: Robert Doisneau, The home of Mme Lucienne, concierge, Rue de Menilmontant, Paris, 20th arrondissement, 1953

become broader, stronger, and able to focus on details and keep on paper what it wants to look at later. Most of the people living in developed countries own a camera. A plastic eye that accompanies one in his trips, one lets it see what he sees and he then sees it through its way of seeing. Through the lens. The photograph arrests reality, but the individual is involved in that the cropping of reality through the lens was his choice. A photograph is reality seen through the photographer’s eyes.

What is photographed seems to be acquired by the owner of the camera/picture. Through photographs, one sees reality, one has the chance to hold in his hands and ponder on persons, experience, information. Most people own photographic dossiers—albums—and try to collect as many photographs as they can, to classify their experience through its existing pictures, to create a chronological file of events, beloved persons and memories. One takes good care of beloved persons’ photographs, framing and putting them in a safe place, one cries when he accidentally loses them or cannot find them, as if one lost the person photographed, even if he is already dead. Time passes and the only thing one can be positive of concerning his past experiences is the moment those photographs were taken or given to him. Photographs cease to be an instrument of memory, helping, reinforcing it. They are starting to function as *an invention of it or its replacement*³. The way you remember a specific place is the way you have seen it in its photograph—with the same light, always the same time of the day, seen from a specific angle, unchangeable. The people are standing in a particular spot, laughing. They all look at you. You do not remember their profiles, have you ever noticed them? Who took the photograph? Was it you? How did you look at the time? Everything that a photograph does not confess it is hard for one to remember.

One photograph allows for several interpretations, because it carries with it several meanings. The interpretation may vary in varied contexts. It would be different every time the

photograph is seen in different places, with a different use each time. Magazines, albums, walls, boxes, every time a photograph is reproduced and put in another context, its meaning seems altered.

As Bourdieu suggests, photographic practice is determined by its family function and is ordinarily associated with the high points of family life—it cannot therefore free itself from the occasions that determine it and become transformed into an autonomous practice.

Different social classes own different types of cameras and take different photos, while practicing at different degrees. For the peasant, Bourdieu tells us, *“the meaning of the pose adopted for the photograph can only be understood with relation to the symbolic system in which it has its place, and which defines the behaviour and manners suitable for his relations with other people...striking a pose means respecting oneself and demanding respect”*.⁴ It is true that the taking of a photograph is a choice involving *aesthetic and ethical values*. Photographic practice is nowadays accessible to everyone, but each one is practicing it in accordance with the rules of a social etiquette that defines what is worth photographing and what is not. The meaning and themes of photography are therefore directly related to the structure of the particular social group and its position within the society’s general structure.

People with different social backgrounds would take photographs for different reasons. For protection from the failures of memory, for showing others, in order to express themselves, because it feels quite creative, because it offers them social prestige in the sense that they can have evidence for something admirable that they might have done, or because they think of picture-taking as a game. All take pictures of and within the contexts of their family. *“It is via the family group that the primary function of photography becomes the responsibility of the photographer, who is asked to solemnize important events and to record the family chronicle in pictures”*.⁵ The family album expresses for Bourdieu *the essence of social memory*.

2 Postcards

What is a photograph except a capture of a movement, its stasis so that we can observe it patiently, without any hurry or horror, taking our time? What is a postcard except a predefined stasis of something worth seeing—or so it is socially believed—by a professional photographer? What is their differences and/or similarities, where lies the line that sets the distinction between them?

They both offer their viewer the power of possession. The photographer places his photographs in albums or boxes, defines their size and order, decides which ones are going to be seen by others and which are to be destroyed. The holidaymaker shows his collection of postcards with pride, hiding the ones that are only meant to be seen by him, in the privacy of his room when alone.

It is the memories of the objects photographed/captured, which are maintained and reinforced every time one looks at a photograph. Places, faces and events are transformed into objects and are offered for the viewer to gaze upon. The power of this gaze is unrestricted. The historian standardizes an age's standards by looking at the images of its people. The traveler characterizes a town's beauty by sending a postcard of its centre to a close friend.

The object photographed is subject to change, transformation and, most importantly, death. In our memory, the place we visited last year is beginning to fade, but the postcard we bought from it is always there to remind us of its existence. One's face is altered with the passing of time, but the photographs that others took of him are there to remind him of his youth. Postcards and photographs function as little reminders of past times, beloved persons and lived experience. As we move away from the moment photographed, chronologically as well as geographically, the nostalgia of the experience lived starts to arise. The photographs one took while one was at the place photographed reinforce the memory of contact and presence. And although the postcard of a favourite landscape can not stand for a living proof of one's actually being there, it reminds one of thoughts and feelings one had when standing in front of it with actual awe. When holding that one postcard one almost holds the place itself with all the links it

might have with one's body, memory and brain. It is true that the meanings of that particular place might never be fully revealed to you, but the trace leading to your personal experience and memory you possess. Although with the process of distancing the memory of the landscape is replaced by the memory of the postcard gazed at, the power of memory-possession remains within the viewer because he does not realize the difference mentioned. However simple and one-angled his memory might be, it is enough for him to remember.

Postcards bought—the souvenir

With the existence of postcards, recollection is secured, and so is “authentic” experience. “*The souvenir both offers a measurement for the normal and authenticates the experience of the viewer.*”⁶ If I obtain a postcard of a place, it means that this place actually exists and my experience is and will remain—while looking at the postcard—“authentic”. The postcard is taking me from event to memory and then to desire. Desire to maintain the memory, desire to go back there again one day.

“*The souvenir distinguishes experiences*”:⁷ We do not buy souvenirs of events that we know we will be experiencing again. We desire souvenirs of unique, unimaginable events or places, places we are only allowed to visit once in a lifetime, either for financial or for social reasons. A postcard of the Eiffel Tower denotes the lived experience of the photographer but its strongest function is that it guarantees the eternal repetition of this experience to its possessor. Its value is acquired by means of its relation to a particular location, without which it is meaningless. “*The souvenir speaks to a context of origin through a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessarily insatiable demands of nostalgia.*”⁸ Its function is within us, psychological, rather than practical.

Certainly, the postcard is never adequately satisfying. The postcard of the Eiffel Tower is nothing more than a representation of the Tower in another medium, a sample, an imitation, an image through another person's eyes—the photographer's eyes. It is not even taken/made/chosen by you. It is made by someone else. For you? For all the tourists that visit Paris. Even for the Parisian to send to a friend that lives outside Paris. Even for a French student

who studies in England. For everyone.

The experience to which it is related though is uniquely personal. It will still bring back a now distanced past experience. Different for you, different for the French student in England. That difference, that partiality is the very essence of its power, the very reason that makes the postcard a trophy and the buyer its possessor.

Postcards work with dimensions. The monumental is reduced to a two-dimensional surface, to an image that can be easily watched, studied, shown, discussed. Or privately viewed by the individual owner. For a moment, the postcard moves art/history/geography into a single house, under the look of the owner's eye. *"That remarkable souvenir, the postcard, is characterized by a complex process of captioning and display which repeats this transformation of public into private. First, as a mass-produced view of a culturally articulated site, the postcard is purchased. Yet, this purchase, taking place within an "authentic" context of the site itself, appears as a kind of private experience as the self recovers the object, inscribing the handwriting of the personal beneath the more uniform caption of the social. Then in a gesture, which recapitulates the social's articulation of the self—that is the gesture of the gift by which the subject is positioned as place of production and reception of obligation—the postcard is surrendered to a significant other. The other's reception of the postcard is the receipt, the ticket stub, that validates the experience of the site, which we now can name as the site of the subject himself or herself."*

The postcard therefore "authenticates" the past. The present is in a way set back for the past to be brought forward. It is as if the definition of authenticity cannot be found in relation to the present time. The "authentic" is something distant and remote, captured in a postcard. The postcard defines the "authentic". The transformation of materiality into meaning has been successful and the meaning is no other than authenticity.

A postcard from an "authentic" building such as the Eiffel Tower or the Parthenon would even lend authenticity to the abstract system of modern objects, as Jean Baudrillard writes in *Le Système des objets*. The objects and scenes a tourist has searched for and found in a foreign country are gathered and included in a postcard of that country and by buying that one postcard, the tourist tames the cultural other, the object of the postcard. The tourist takes the postcard with him as a trophy of the invaded country, something exotic and foreign, but at the same time, something gazed upon and admired—a part of one's experience.

The fact that the postcard is small enough to be put in an envelope or even in one's

pocket stresses its advantages as a souvenir. Its size, price and minimum weight allow the tourist several purchases and leave no room for complaints regarding possible carrying or storage difficulties. Postcards have been seen on office-boards, on desks and walls or in books as bookmarks. By putting a postcard of an authentic object on one's wall, one gains prestige and simultaneously puts some "authenticity" in his modern world, just by gazing every now and then at the "authentic".

Collecting postcards from different parts of the globe almost feels like holding the world in our heads through the anthology of images, as Susan Sontag would say, like collecting miniatures of the world's truth and habits or like acquiring bits of the world. This kind of power, the power of owning specific parts of the world through its images, is not offered when collecting photographs. Photographs may function as souvenirs of trips or of everyday life, but the fact that you took it yourself reduces its power of possession, although at the same time increases the sentimental bond that would later help forming a memory of that now past instant. With a postcard, you possess the image someone else saw, the antiquity or work of art of someone else. With the photograph, —you being the photographer—you acquire the printed version of an image that was yours beforehand, seen through your own eyes before being captured by the lens.

Creating a continuous personal narrative of the past: that is what the photograph is taken for. Evoking a memory of past experience, reconstructing the past using its remains: that is what the family album is treasured for. Compact cameras are nowadays thought of as an easy, quick way of note taking or keeping a diary. One takes snapshots to look back at one day.

Modern cameras offer the photographer a technical liberation that allows for great spontaneity. The pictures taken can therefore be seen as testimonies of the eye's experiences, personal documents of lived moments. A photograph can even count as evidence, because in principle, it cannot lie—unless it is technically falsified. A trace of an event, testifying that it really happened, a photograph proves existence. Nobody can ever deny that the thing photographed has been there. The photograph can be seen as a *certificate of presence*¹⁰, guaranteeing the certainty of the event's existence, its authentication.



Photograph 3-6: Daniel
Canogar

Photography falls into the category of allographic works—using Nelson Goodman’s terminology—in the sense that it is communicated via a code which is not precise in itself and is subject to interpretation. As Christian Boltanski has said, *“The big problem in art is being able to tell the story of your own village, while at the same time having your village become everyone’s village. I want to be faceless. I hold a mirror to my face so that those who look at me see themselves and therefore I disappear.”*¹¹ The way one is going to accept the photograph seen is subject to his personal past experiences, beliefs, as well as his social background. A photograph contains multiple meanings and requires interpretation. A postcard is seen in relation with the place and time of its production, interpreted with the help of the text accompanying it.

A snapshot is connected to past experience in the same way that a postcard magically transfers us to the place once visited. However, a photograph would most often include the visitor in its image, the traveler standing in front of the monument, along with many other tourists that just happened to be there. It is this crowd that lowers the viewer’s gazing satisfaction, as it is absolutely clear that this same monument is visited and viewed by others at the same time he is viewing it. The collective gaze, however undisturbed it may be, cannot offer the complete silence and spotless sight of a monument looked at by one alone individual. The feeling of the viewer when alone can be expressed differently than when in front of others. The site gazed upon seems more sacred, almost untouched by humans, intact, offered to him as a gift-image.

The privilege ^{of} being the one viewer is enhanced in the postcard. Although huge numbers of people have access to the same postcard that you are watching and although many of its copies are still unsold and easily viewed in shopping windows of corner shops, the illusion that you are the only person viewing it is maintained. As you hold it in your hands, no other human figure is near so that your eye appears to be the only eye resting on it, viewing, gazing, and capturing the image in the shells of memory and ^{the} unconscious.

Many holidaymakers like to stand in front of a great historical monument and pose. The image was created in the subject’s mind before being captured. Everyone has been photographed in the same way in front of the same monument. Landscapes and monuments appear in holiday snaps as decorations or signs. Holidays are made for photographers. There are specific places and antiquities, which one must be photographed with. These kinds of snapshots

often relate to postcards, as the former take the aesthetics and subjects first introduced by the latter. In front of a most celebrated monument—shown in some of the area’s postcards—the holidaymaker poses. One can see the queue of people who want to be photographed in the same scene, taking an identical posture with the one photographed before them.

*“It is always as if, by obeying the principle of frontality and adopting the most conventional posture, one were seeking as far as possible to control the objectification of one’s own image.”*¹² They would then show this photograph to all their relatives and friends, proving their actual visit to the specific place, testifying the “authentic” lived experience. They pose in front of the lens happy and proud, standing in the one way they would like to be seen in, chest out, wide smile. In front of the lens one poses. One should always smile in front of the pointing camera. Several selves fight to survive but only one may let itself be seen, the socially approved image of the satisfied citizen. It is not me who is photographed; it is the self I want others to think is me, the socially transformed face of a suppressed personality. The more I try to seem someone non-different from the rest of the people photographed, the more inauthentic this photograph would be. For I—and maybe some close relatives—can tell that the one in the photograph is not me. How authentic is then the photograph of a person posing for others to see his picture?

A photograph is closely related to its referent, to the thing shown in it. A person, a landscape, the photograph speaks about something, resembles that specific thing for which it speaks, it shows that thing to the world, it maintains and secures the captured moment for the others to see it. It seems as if in a specific crucial moment something let itself be seen and remained there forever. If the stasis of the person photographed in front of a landscape/monument is inauthentic, the photograph will not account for an authentic picture of an authentic landscape/monument, but for the inauthentic/common picture of a person posing. In a postcard, that kind of inauthenticity is not involved, because the hypocrisy of people is absent. People are usually absent from postcards and that gives the latter the unlimited power of authenticity and—as mentioned above—the role of a trophy. A photograph *cannot say what it lets us see*¹³ but the role of a landscape postcard is exactly that procedure of introducing us to the place shown.

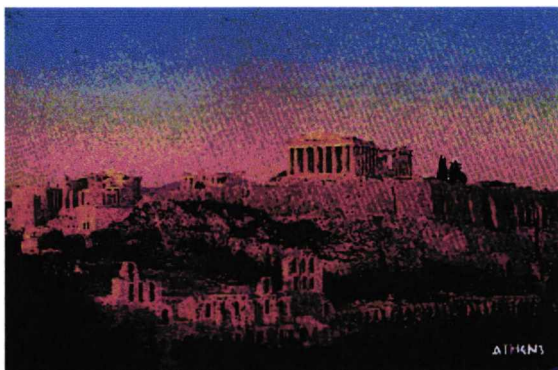
Or it seems that way. The photograph is taken by one person. The postcard is produced by many of them—editors, producers, photographers, etc. If the actual presence of a human

being is not seen, on a postcard—his figure is not included in the image—the presence of his thought and brain is self-evident. A postcard is designed, pondered on, discussed about. It is wholly and unquestionably manmade. The cultural truth shown on a postcard might therefore be the cultural half-truth that the producers want to let being seen. The introduction to the place shown might be misleading. It depends both on the caption and the montage of the images shown. Do they cover the whole range of authentic features of the place? Could they?

One might at this point argue that the same could be the case for photography. The photograph is also produced; its theme is also designed in the mind of the photographer, pondered on and discussed about. The photographs that are to be published in a magazine or newspaper for instance are taken in the same way that the postcard-photographs are taken. The photographer works under the instructions of his editor. On a postcard, however, the limitations are various. If for the magazine-photographer the purchased photograph is specifically requested by his editor, for the postcard-photographer the discussion is much more detailed. Moreover, the chosen photograph will often be tampered with, as well.

The sent postcard—the message

The fact that the postcard is sent through the mail limits its possible size and shape. The size of a postcard is predefined, set, because the holes of post boxes are set and so is the size of



Postcard 3-1: A postcard from Athens, Michalis Toubis Editions



Postcard 3-1: The message at the back of the postcard

envelopes. The postcard’s original function is to transfer an image and a message from the

sender to the receiver through the post. The whole procedure of the postal delivery makes it cut and dried: the size is fixed, the address written on the special space provided and the stamp attached. The postcard travels from its home country to its destination carrying an image, a message and the proof of its origin: the stamp and the seal of the local post office.

The receiver's pleasure stems equally from the three characteristic attributes of the sent postcard. The pleasure—both entertaining and informative—of viewing the image, the pleasure of reading the message on the other side, written from a friend's hand, and the pleasure arising from the knowledge of the fact that this piece of paper has traveled a lot of air miles to come and meet him. The local stamp and the postal seal make the latter perfectly clear. The receiver holds a cultural product of a distant place mixed with the personal message of a friend. It is an enjoyable present—soon to be past—experience that the sender wants to share with the receiver. The image—usually a photograph of the place visited—is something worth gazing at that the sender wants to show to his friend.

A loved landscape or a beautiful image is sent and shared between friends and colleagues, between people who share some interests and maybe belong to a society or a specific group, (cinema goers, museum regular visitors, theatre friends etc.). Sometimes the message is typed because it is the same for all the recipients. Other times the postcard is sent in an envelope,

Postcards 3-2 & 3-3: Postcards sent in an envelope—Sketch: Bilbao: Railway Station of Santander, original by Luis Luengo, Dora's Arte Editions, Photograph: Arriara Theatre, Bilbao, MB Editions



the latter carrying the stamp and the postal seal. The image is enclosed for the receiver to be its only viewer, the postman being unable to take a glimpse. The text is addressed to the recipient, but his address and full name are visible only on the envelope.

Still, there is an image and a message sent and they are both addressed to a specific recipient, no matter where the stamp and the seal are. Of course, the role of the postcard is diminished from a complete communicative medium to a simple image—could not a photograph replace it if accompanied by a letter?

Anyhow, not only the picture, but even the hand-writing on the reverse of the postcard confess some things about the sender—person or institution—and the place visited or invited at.

Apart from a greeting or general communication medium, postcards can also function as invitations to places, events and experiences.



Postcard 3-4: Postcard sent from China,
Wuxi Foreign Affairs and Tourism Boat Co., Jin Yan Wuxi China

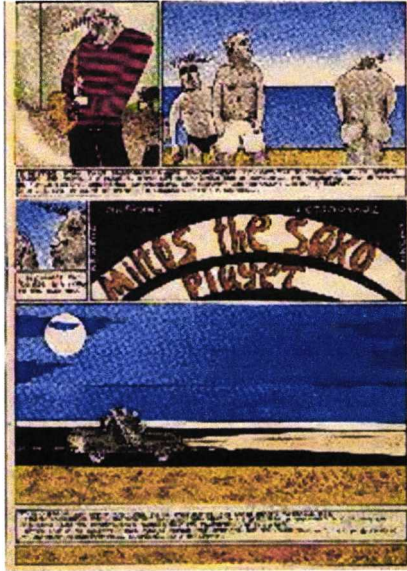
The postcard as a collection item

When collected, postcards are taken out of their original function and use. They are not sent, but are kept as souvenirs or collectable items. They are searched to be bought and cherished when finally owned. They become private possessions, their owner's capital, his little treasure. In every one of them one part of the world is present, a past experience or wish, something personal and therefore sacred.

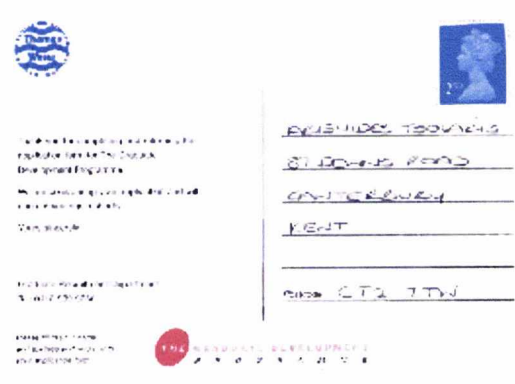
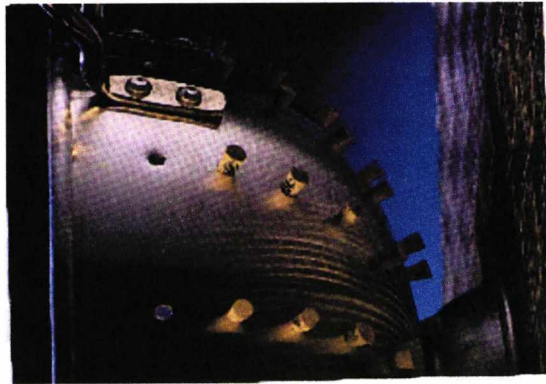
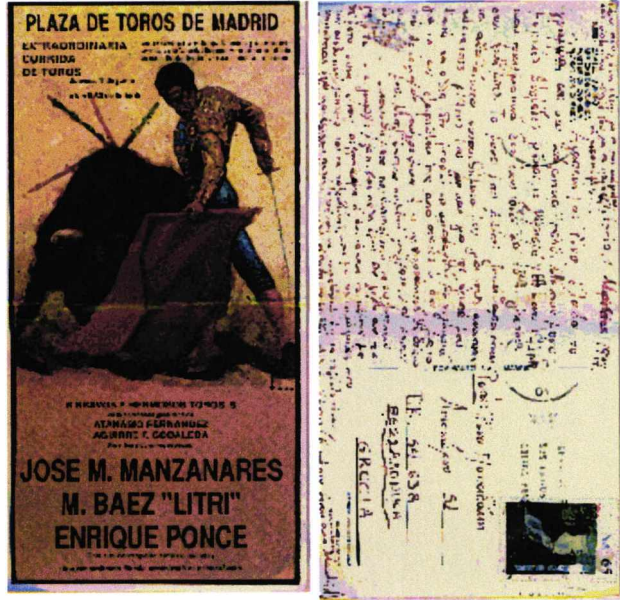
Through the postcard purchase the commodity is transformed into a collector's item, as Benjamin would say. Collecting dead past experiences and images is a common practice among

Postcard invitations

Postcard 3-5: An impersonal invitation to a comic exhibition



Postcard 3-6: A personal invitation to Spain from a friend



Postcard 3-7: An invitation to a job interview

individuals and a postcard both awakens memory of the places visited and is neutral enough—unlike the snapshot that contains the person—to be exhibited/shown. This way moments of past life are preserved and relived, while discarded, unconnected possessions are kept together—different postcards of different places are kept in the same box/album—trying to connect the passages of one's life, create its narrative. The collected items keep their place in the collector's home, like the rest of his furniture, becoming a montaged but unified everyday image of his surroundings.

“A unique bastion against the deluge of time”¹⁴, the collection serves as a defense against the destructiveness of time. A collection can be interpreted as a desire for immortality, as the collector relives all his past moments through his collected items and this cyclical reliving seems to set death away. A local shelter from the fear of death or time's irreversible feature of passing, a collection serves as a comforting friend and a way to forget the unforgettable. What one collects is bits and pieces of his past, in a anxious attempt to save the past and prevent the coming of the future. *“As one becomes conscious of one's self, one becomes a conscious collector of identity, projecting one's being onto the objects one chooses to live with. Taste, the collector's taste, is a mirror of the self.”¹⁵* What Jean Baudrillard has named the *personal microcosm* is made clear in Baudelaire's “Spleen II”

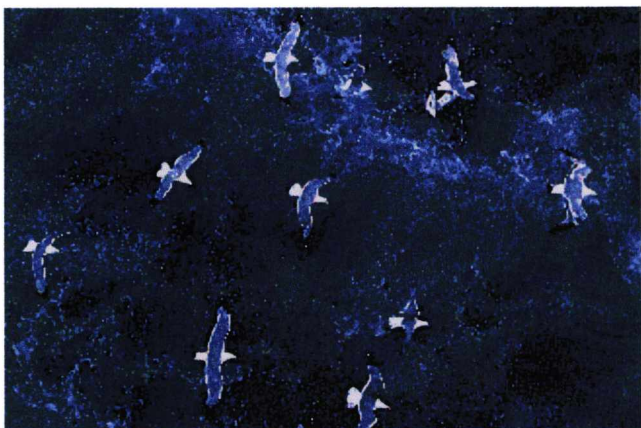
*I have more memories than if I had lived a thousand years.
A Chest of drawers littered with balance sheets,
With verses, love letters, romantic songs, law suits,
With a thick plait of hair wrapped up in some receipts,
Hides fewer secrets than my own sad brain.*

Powerless before the passing time, one collects oneself. Postcards then, when collected, are parts of one's self. Their private display form Stewart's *derealizations*: they create a boundary between life and death and they simultaneously underline and preserve the owner's dependence on his past.

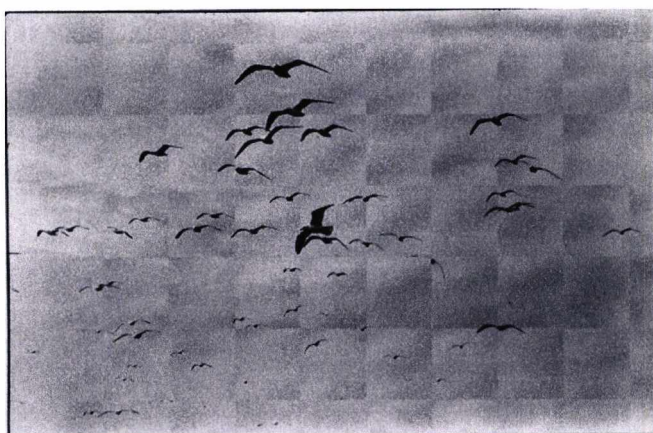
Postcards can function both as souvenirs, evoking the past and softening one's nostalgia and as collection items, building a new timeless world for the possessor to fight his fear of death and relive his past life. Is then a collection of postcards a collection of cultural images or a collection of souvenirs and memories? Is it perhaps the ordering and maintenance of past things or the creation of a whole new world of the earth's images? *“Postcard collecting implies, at least at the*

outset, a sense of identity strongly rooted in a specific place, a home"¹⁶ The earth is every individual's homeland.

Some collectors insist that they still remember precisely where each of their collected items was acquired and exactly under what conditions they managed to possess it. Therefore, even if the item is not directly linked with the collector's past experiences, the whole procedure of chasing and at some time acquiring it makes it genuine in one's past. The moment of its acquisition becomes memorable. The item reminds exactly that procedure of its purchase. Either way, the collector lives in the objects he collects because there his past is safely kept.



Postcard 3-8: A postcard from Greece (photography by Pierre Couteau)

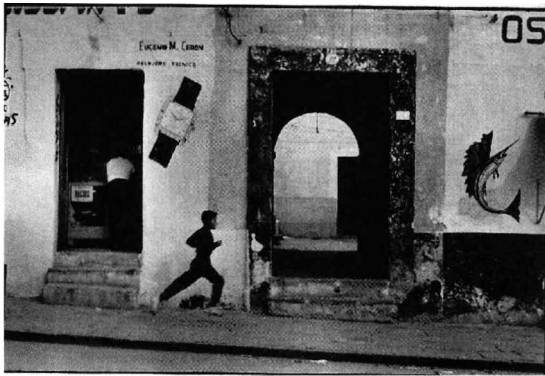


Photograph 3-7: A photograph by Henri Cartier-Bresson

Henri Cartier-Bresson, Gulls over the English Channel, 1960

Postcards and photographs—the distinction

“The photograph mechanically repeats what could never be repeated existentially”¹⁷, Roland Barthes states. True, as the second of an image—an image only lasts a second—passes with the click of the camera and the moment ends. The eye blinks, the gesture changes, nothing remains the same. It is the lens, the click that captures time and the produced photograph is that selected second shown on a piece of paper. The past second remains on paper. Past time stays and proceeds in time. The past is seen by the future.



Photograph 3-8: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Acapulco, Mexico,

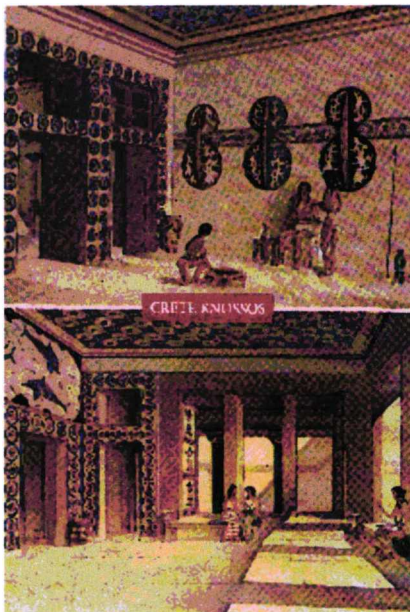
By shifting reality to the past, the photograph suggests that it is already dead. This is the melancholy of photography itself. The passing of time, the capturing of a loved moment on paper, but its final escape through one's fingers. We are not able to hold time, but we can arrest one or several of its moments and produce it on paper. Black and white, coloured, it does not matter. The moment escaped us. So has time, the beloved who are now dead, our life lived. With the advent of photography we learned that time is ruthless. We now know that in this very way our life to be lived will escape us as well. A photograph of a passed moment is a source of our future melancholy. *The photograph is at the same time a pseudopresence and a token for absence.*¹⁸

Looking at a postcard of a place would certainly remind us of the time we were there, but the fact that our face is not seen reduces the pain. The alteration of our appearance through the years is not seen either, and the melancholy transforms itself to longing and desire for another visit to a loved place.

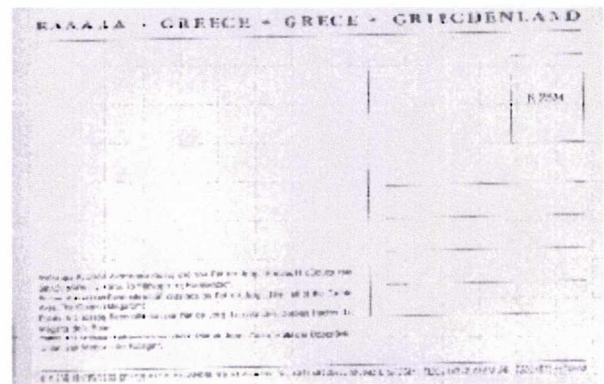
A postcard, however, is not necessarily a photograph. Drawings, sketches, collage, advertisements have found their way on the surface of a postcard. Landscape postcards are only one category of widely produced postcards. Portraits, works of art, famous photographs, film scenes, consuming products and everything that needs to be visible can be seen on a postcard.

Contrary to photographs, where, according to Barthes, there are three practices

related to—“*To do, to undergo, to look*”¹⁹—the postcard does not leave many choices to the individual. When photographing one can be the object and creator, the *operator*, the capturing eye. Alternatively, he can let himself be photographed, seen as the *spectrum*, gazed at, preserved. Or he might just look, examine, glance, be a *spectator*. The act of photographing is *an event in itself*²⁰, it allows you *to interfere with, to invade or to ignore what is going on*. With a postcard, things are totally different. It is only the view which is offered to the *spectator*, it is the information given—underneath the image or at the other side of the postcard—that describes the picture looked at, it is the eye and not the hand that has the crucial role. The choice is not yours. You chose a place you want to look at when alone, you choose the angle you want the photograph taken from, but there are only three existing postcards taken from that angle, showing that place, and you have to decide which one it is going to be amongst them.

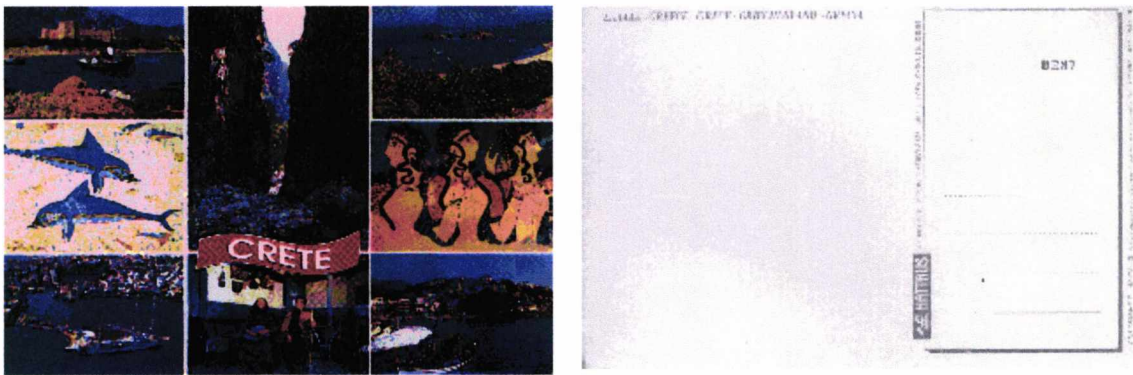


Postcard 3-9: A postcard from the Palace of Knossos, Crete. Adam Editions



Postcard 3-9: The back of the postcard

The postcard is produced, the snapshot is taken. On a postcard meanings are easily manipulated. The image seen is pre-examined, studied in its last detail and approved of by a group of people—editors and producers, the people who are responsible for the postcard’s production and distribution to the public. There are examples of postcards propagandizing or trying to sell a created image of a place in order to attract tourism. Nationalistic self-promotion is commonly seen on postcards, while the realities put on paper are synthetic and if not false, then preferably composed.



Postcard 3-10: A postcard from Crete, Haitalis Editions

Images are brought together according to a new law, the law of attractive appearance and cultural promotion. The only defense the user has against these produced images is **selection**. The buyer always maintains the choice of selecting one or more out of the hundreds produced, or even none.

The above postcard is an example of a composed image of Crete, suggesting the island’s natural beauty (beaches), and its cultural significance (pictures from Knossos). What this postcard clearly states is that this place is worth visiting, while at the same time the producer is trying to indicate the guaranteed authentic experience of its potential visitor—the elderly people dressed in a traditional way suggest exactly that authentic experience. The flowing name of the island written in the middle of the postcard unifies the images and states the desired invitation. All these—beautiful landscape, cultural significance and authenticity—are to be found in one island: Crete.

Photographs are in many cases produced and not simply taken by one person. Complex

situations like a specialized magazine shooting or a photograph purchased for a specific reportage can be compared and almost identified with the techniques and practices used in the photography used on postcards. The statement that the postcard is produced while the photograph is taken is made with the notion of the snapshot in mind.

Barthes makes the distinction between the studium and the punctum, between the general interest one might have for specific kinds of photographs and the singular, unique attraction one might find him caught at when looking at a photograph. The studium is concerned with general subjects such as like/dislike, questions of taste, the broad interest about particular ages and the practices used then—the clothes people were wearing, their pose in front of the lens, etc—the interest one shows for news photographs or historic shots of important events and persons.



Photograph 3-9: The studium –concerning architecture—in Florence

Photograph by E.Papadaki

The studium in postcards

The informative character of these postcards is quite straightforward.

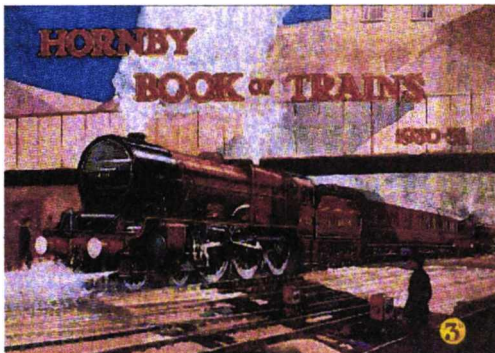
The clothes people were wearing, the way they used to travel—who used to travel by which way—the way certain services and goods were advertised etc, are things we can easily and effectively study while looking at the images on the postcards.

We might even say that these postcards have a historic character in the sense that they give us some information about the past.



Postcard 3-11: Aeroplane series

From an original in The Robert Opie Collection at the Museum of Advertising & Packaging, Gloucester



Postcard 3-12: Hornby Train Series

From an original in The Robert Opie Collection at the Museum of Advertising & Packaging, Gloucester



Postcard 3-13: Motorcycle Series (B)

From an original in The Robert Opie Collection at the Museum of Advertising & Packaging, Gloucester

Does the Barthesian punctum apply in postcards?

What if someone had traveled with the specific train

or

once owned the specific motorcycle?

Do postcards ever function as a trace of memory, a wound or a trauma?

The punctum applies only to a particular person at a particular time when looking at a particular photograph. It is a specific interest for a specific human being or site, the strong heartbeat one experiences when looking at a photograph. The first instant attraction to an image, its embracing by the eye, not a simple interest expressed, but a *wound*. Barthes is looking for a photograph in which he can find his mother and he finds it in an old picture of his mother-as-child, he knows it at the very instance he glances at it, the punctum struck him.

Does the idea of a punctum apply in postcards? What kind of interrogation takes place when looking at a photograph and what when viewing a postcard? Do we, the *spectators*, see the evidence shown from the viewpoint of pleasure or in relation to what we romantically call love, death, memory, nostalgia, pathos? There are particular postcards and photographs that are viewed for pleasure or from general interest. There are some postcards and photographs that are looked at when longing for a trace of memory, when wanting to reconstruct one's past experiences. We might love a particular photograph or postcard because it reminds us of something once lived, something of our own selves. However, can a postcard be connected with pathos, with that notion of a strong connection, which the anticipated essence of a photograph could not, in Barthes's mind, be separated from? A snapshot, from the first glance, consists of pathos. Is the postcard in any sense related to it? Postcards are firstly seen in the context of a studium. Punctum comes later—if ever—in the sense of nostalgia.

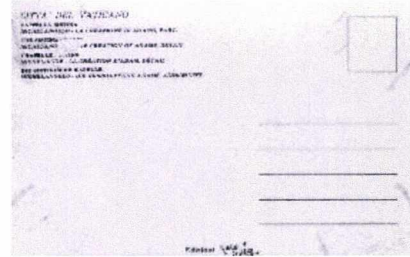
The trade in postcards, some books of postcards or a town's history seen through postcards are some ways to prove the statement above.

Both photographs and postcards block memory. In the not too distant future after they have been taken or bought, memory starts to consist of their images. We remember the pictures, not the actual experience. Its capture and reproduction, its stillness, its faded colours. Its movement and vividness escapes us, because these are elements we have not seen/examined/gazed at.

Are we no longer able to conceive duration? A photograph arrests an image's pause, it freezes the image. Time changes the faces of the image's participants; its protagonist is now dead. Duration does not exist, only elements of time caught in pictures.

The Parthenon remains the same for centuries. The first postcard of it seems identical with its most recent one. The shooting angle of the camera may be different. Duration was

nevertheless caught in the postcard. Some postcards manage to capture duration. The next generations that will visit some of the buildings shown today on postcards will find them exactly the same, intact and remote, away from the decay of time.



Postcard 3-14: A postcard of Michelangelo's, *The Creation of Adam*, detail, The Sistine Cappelle, Vaticano, a.t.s., Italy

The photograph sometimes makes appear something we would never see in a real face. In its two-dimensional surface things are simple and easily studied. We have all the time we need to watch, examine, calculate and come to conclusions. We do not have that same luxury in real life or in cinema, where the frequency of the images is so rapid we cannot even distinguish one scene from its proceeding one. The postcard sometimes makes appear something we would never see in a real place. It mimics the techniques of photography—its close-ups and zooms—and gives us images of a painting's detail or a building's painted roof.

*"Since photography authenticates the existence of a certain being, I want to discover that being in the photograph completely, i.e. in its essence, "as into itself"...beyond simple resemblance, whether legal or hereditary. Here the photograph's platitude becomes more painful, for it can correspond to my fond desire only by something inexpressible: evident yet improbable. This something is what I call air (the expression, the look)"*²¹ One photographs or keeps photographs of the beloved silhouette, the desirable place to be, the loved landscape. It is these favourite objects one wants to look at several times, every day, examining, questioning, giving answers to his own questions. It is these photographs that will always be somewhere handy—enlarged and framed, valuable—and will later constitute one's memory and form *one's* nostalgia.

Anything that means something to the photographer can be photographed. Even an empty room will later give rise to the nostalgia of the period living there. Not all photographs can be reproduced in a form of a postcard.



Photograph 3-10: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris & the Eiffel Tower, 1985

None of these photographs of Paris could be seen on a postcard. The first is not showing what Paris is proud of—the Eiffel Tower—and the second contains too many characters to be considered neutral enough and function as a postcard. No tourist would appreciate either the clouds hiding Eiffel Tower or the crowd in Notre-Dame. The producer would never show anything that would disturb the potential visitor of Paris—let alone bad weather or big crowds.

According to Benjamin, the portrait was the focal point of early photography. According to many camera-holders it still is. The *aura* of the photograph *emanates in the fleeting expression of a human face*.²² Postcards do not normally include the *human countenance* and are therefore mostly concerned with exhibition rather than cult value.

*“In the operating room I am the one who changes focus, who makes the close-ups and the medium shots. In the theater, Antonioni has already chosen what parts I can watch, the camera looks for me and obliges me to look, leaving as my only option not to look.”*²³ However strange, the same applies to the relation between a snapshot and a postcard of the same place. Through the lens of my camera, I am the one who changes focus, who makes the close-ups and the medium shots, who decides what the final shooting should include. When seeing a postcard the photographer/painter/producer has already chosen which part of the image I can watch, his camera looks for me and obliges me to look, leaving as my only option not to look. Another person has created the postcard for you, but you are the creator of the snapshot. The postcard is made by an objective recorder; a



Photograph 3-11: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Paris seen from Notre-Dame, 1955

photograph is taken by an individual eye. There is nothing that should not be seen or recorded by the individual eye, there are only some things that are to be photographed by an objective recorder and even those would be shown in certain ways.

The postcard is not connected to the self and the punctum the way the photograph is. It is a souvenir of a place visited, of a loved work of art. The photograph is a souvenir of one in past times and at the same time a sign of time's distortion and final stab in the back. A capture of time denotes the end of time. As the photograph remains to eternity, its referents already gone, it reminds you of the past time, of time's characteristic attribute of passing. The postcard remains interesting for generations and generations, while the snapshot is worth seeing only till the time you can recognize the faces involved in its composition. The unknown face requires no sympathy—with the exception of Boltanski's exhibitions, where the unknown applies to the general and the general includes us.

Posters & postcards

Informal invitations, mass media

Posters are seen everywhere. We are haunted by them; we notice them when walking on the street, when waiting for our bus, when looking around us. The poster came to give a new relation between the text and the image, the line and the circle having a crucial role in the presentation of the information. Created in France by Edouard Manet and other important personalities of the time, it surrounded the streets and walls as an informal invitation to various events. Pictures, text, subtitles and explanations of pictures became its inseparable elements, the pictures having the initial role. Not a lot after its first appearance, the poster started being one of the main informative mass media, taking its place near television and the press.

Postcards are seen outside corner-shops, in every corner of a tourist place, everywhere. We see them when wandering around in a newly visited city, we stop and have a look at them,



Poster 3-1: Poster for the 1909 exhibition of the New Artists' Association, Munich



Postcard 3-15: A postcard from Crete, Drossos Editions

we buy some and send them to friends and relatives. Why don't we send them some of the photographs taken in the same places? It is quite common that some of our snapshots would be in the place shown in the postcard. How do we choose which postcard is to be sent to which person?

"Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, TV, literature, magazines, records and videos, which construct and reinforce that gaze".²⁴

Postcards and tourist posters are definitely among the influential elements of the tourist gaze. Posters are supposed to inform the tourist of the natural or historical attractions of the place visited—and so are postcards. Both posters and postcards should include pictures of the most celebrated places, as well as the less known spots which are worth seeing. Posters and postcards give **information** about the place, guiding the tourist's gaze and programming his trip so that he does not miss a single attraction.

This task is performed by the editor of the poster/postcard, bearing always in mind the country's specialization in providing particular kinds of objects to be gazed upon. As stated above, while contrasting postcards to photographs, there are only some "correct" ways in which an image is given on a postcard or a poster. By using specific images in postcards or posters, they manage to insert them in the tourists' minds—the same images are seen everywhere, repetition is a form of learning, a strong one—so that when the tourist returns to his home country he will take these images with him—he will take or send some postcards of them anyway. This fact allows for the images to be seen and copied by other potential tourists, the gaze being endlessly reproduced and recaptured. *"Over time, via advertising and the media, the images generated of different tourist gazes come to constitute a closed self-perpetuating system of illusions which provide the tourist with the basis for selecting and evaluating potential places to visit".²⁵* The posters/postcards are produced with one direct target: for the profitable tourist gazes to be both generated and maintained. Places and objects that everyone knows about are photographed/sketched/painted and then formed to

appear on a postcard/poster. Their producers try to catch attention of huge crowds, so the poster's/postcard's design and final appearance are shown in a way that it attracts the **masses**.

It is a kind—though a peculiar one—of advertising the places and the images commonly seen there. The relation with advertising implies a relation with different forms of **mass communication**. The poster has, as I mentioned, taken a place near the mass media. It is the postcard we are not yet sure of where to classify.

However, postcards are addressed to the masses, they are **accessible** to huge numbers of people and cannot escape one's gaze. At the moment, we know that postcards are similar to posters in the way they are meant to:

- ↳ Attract the gazes of the masses
- ↳ Give information—more information than the photograph if we take into account the description of the picture shown which is typewritten on the other side of the postcard
- ↳ Include text—usually the name of the thing shown is typed on the image
- ↳ Are easily and broadly accessible
- ↳ Are produced and distributed
- ↳ Use some features and techniques of the mass media, such as manipulation of meanings, promotion of certain ideas etc.
- ↳ The user's only choice is selection or to avoid looking

Is a postcard a mass medium?

Both the collective and the romantic gaze mentioned by Urry are to be found in modern postcards. After all, if a postcard is a mass medium, it should try to satisfy the whole range of its potential *spectators* or gazers. Although the collective gaze is most commonly found because it is sought by more travelers—to see the most celebrated and famous sites is one of the most important reasons for traveling—there would be some deserted landscapes or some beautiful sunsets for the romantic gaze to be rested upon. On the other hand, a postcard almost always allows for the romantic gaze. After the purchase of the souvenir, the possessor/owner has all the

time to look at it and admire it in the loneliness of his room, when away from the others' gazing, when alone. Still, the personal moments, the feelings and sentimentality when viewing a place are better captured by one's own camera, through one's own eyes, than by the purchase of a postcard of that place. The postcard is addressed to the "many" while the romantic, intellectual traveler just wants to capture the personal experience.

Another feature of the postcard is that it actually **enters one's house**; one does not have to leave his house to experience the tourist gaze. The postcard comes to invade your privacy, imitating television; it gives the receiver images from all around the world. The "post-tourist" (Feifer) enjoys the authenticity of another country while sitting in his room. The only difference being that the image is addressed to him personally, his name is written by the hand of a friend on the other side. Even in the case of typewritten messages addressed from museums for instance to their regular visitors, each name is visible on the envelope and the receiver reads the message personally.

That brings us to the question asked earlier about the way we decide which postcard is to be given to which person. If a postcard is a mass medium, if it is addressed to a quantitatively huge crowd, then it should not have some kind of aspect that would be of particular interest to a specific person. It would make the same impression on all the people of a specific social background, and because the buyer is himself a member of a social group, most of the people he is related to would put themselves in the same social structure and therefore be attracted to the same kinds of images/postcards he is interested in. Then, how come we are always standing for hours in front of a dozen of postcards, indecisive, problematic, looking for a particular postcard for a particular person?

One distinction we make is between the people that like the *collective gaze* and those that prefer the *romantic* one. We can distinguish between those that travel a lot and those that do not. The latter would probably not mind if they receive a common image of a much-visited place, since they have never been there. Then there are the ones that like possessing something sacred, whom you send a postcard of an antiquity, the persons who want to learn more and more each day, whom you buy something informative to broaden them, the aesthetically settled ones, for whom you select something beautiful, to make them finer and finally but most importantly the bored ones, whom you select a postcard different from the rest, unique.

Is there such a thing as a unique postcard?

Unique in the sense that they would not have seen it before somewhere else, that it would *strike* them as different, even if it is absolutely normal for the inhabitants of the visited country. There are no such things as unique postcards, as there are no unique posters. There is no point in producing a unique postcard because the editor would not be certain it is going to be purchased by many people and therefore the **profit** he would make is questionable.

Postcards are related to both posters and photographs.

You may find anything on a photograph, but only that which may interest everyone can be seen on a postcard. Trying to attract and satisfy everyone and therefore gain more profit, as everyone would like to buy what you offer—if you have made it satisfying and pleasing enough—is the main target of the mass media.

If the aims match, so should the categorization and the names. A postcard should be included in the term mass media. But what about that personal touch that a postcard has when sent to someone, what about the hand-written message on the other side, the stamp, the miles it has traveled in order to arrive in the hands of the specific person now holding it? How can that characteristic be excused in a mass medium?

Well, even if it is selected by a single person and received as a gift from another one, the postcard still is at the same time viewed by millions of other gazes, informing and influencing them. However, specific postcards are addressed to specific persons, carrying more or less personal—definitely not mass—messages. Some of them are even purchased to form collections.

Although it is said that *“postcards are organized in series, and their very seriality negates their individual mnemonic properties”*²⁶, the fact that they are thought to function both as souvenirs and collection items decreases the truth of this statement. As souvenirs, their mnemonic role is quite straightforward. As collected items, it is precisely the memory of their acquisition moment that makes them unique and for that very reason they are cherished by their possessor.

What about sent postcards? They cannot be kept as souvenirs because theoretically the receiver has never been at the place shown on the postcard and therefore it reminds him of nothing. They can be part of a collection if that collection existed before the postcard was sent. The sent postcard can then find its way in the collection’s album. It might have been sent from a

friend in order to take its place in the album anyway. Close friends know the existence of our collections and some times help us enrich and complete them.

The only thing that a sent postcard reminds its receiver of is its sender or the moment of receiving it. In this way, the mnemonic properties of the postcard are visible even when the postcard is sent. That brings about the most common postcard dilemma. Which side of the postcard is more important to the possessor—the side with the illustration or the hand-written message of a friend? The illustration is important for the collection of a series of postcards and for the maintenance of the memory of a place visited. The message is equally important, being perhaps from a close and beloved friend, a favourite institute's secretary; containing an invitation to an event or some interesting information.

On the other hand, the side with the message also contains the stamp and the seal of the local post office, that is the evidence of the cultural other, the place where the postcard was bought. What if the receiver is a collector of stamps? Does he tear the stamp off or does he maintain the appearance of the postcard, as close to the condition it was when he got it as possible? Maybe it is up to the collector's principles or set of priorities whether to keep the postcard as sent or not, but from all this discussion one thing emerges as a clear outcome: postcards, whether purchased or received, maintain some aspects of personal communication.

We cannot speak of a face-to-face communication but we certainly cannot prove of an quasi-mediated interaction and therefore a mass media communication. Communication through the postcard is definitely mediated, as something interferes between the sender and the receiver, but the fact that the receiver has the option to answer/respond in the same way as long as the emphasis on the **hand-written** message on the back side—at least the recipient's address is in most cases handwritten—do not allow for the characterization of the postcard as a mass medium. Whatever its function, either as a souvenir, or as a collection item or even as a received message from a friend, the postcard keeps characteristics closely related to the **individual**. It is precisely these characteristics that do not meet the conditions needed for the postcard to be considered as a mass medium.

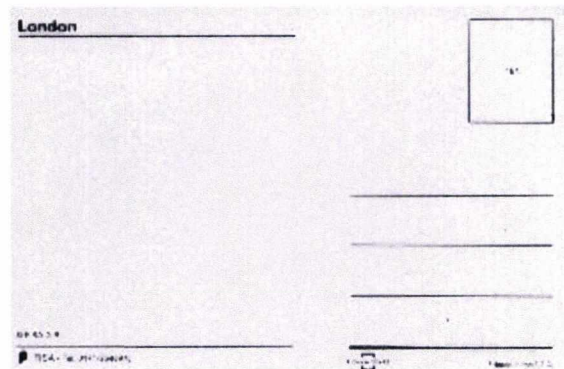
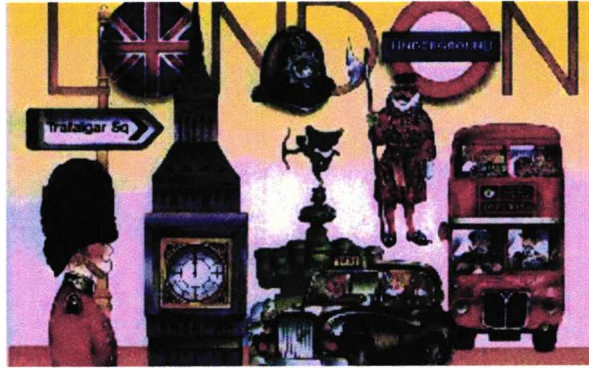
Postcard 3-16: A postcard from London, FISA



This postcard characteristically shows the way postcards are used by holidaymakers. To send some images of the visited place and at the same time make some comments of the place and their stay there.



The image of London on this postcard consists of the combination of its characteristic buses and taxis, the Piccadilly Circus, the traditional outfits, the underground sign, Big Ben and all those features that the tourist cannot miss.



Postcard 3-17: A postcard from London, FISA

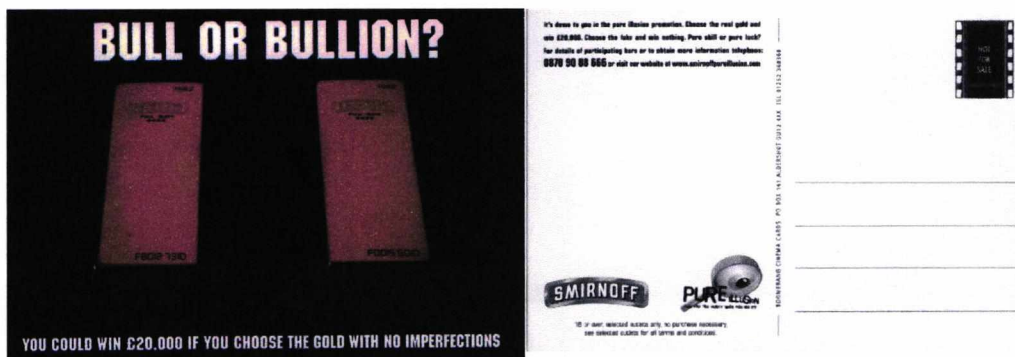
On the back side the word “London” above the space provided for the message clarifies the illustration and stresses the unity and undivided character of the various images on the front side. This typed word stresses the fact that the message was produced in that place.

However, we cannot overlook or just forget the **mass** characteristics of the postcard, as well. Undoubtedly a try to attract the gazes of the masses, easily and broadly accessible because mass produced and distributed, the postcard walks all the way in the side of the mass media to give information—text and images included—and even manipulate meanings and promote certain ideas, leaving the user with the one option of avoid looking or be very careful in his selection of where to look and what to believe.

Postcards' images only show what the producer wants to let be seen. The more aesthetic aspects of what is beautiful, fashionable or a national pride can be seen on most postcards, while the life of the poor or less attractive neighbourhoods is never shown. A postcard should be informative as well as beautiful, preferably more beautiful than informative. The eye rests on the beautiful while the mind is fed with the informative when hungry. A mind is not always hungry while the eye always needs to rest.

The camera's perspective is not entirely objective. Symmetry, colour, vivid street life and other unwritten rules that need to be obeyed for a postcard image to be popular and therefore profitable predefine the photographer's moves and possible shoot angles. Neither the photography nor the buyer sees the real from their own, individual angle. The viewer should see a particular image and the photographer should do his best to provide that one image.

It is by now made clear that the postcard uses the techniques and practices of the mass media while at the same time keeping a personal character. It could be said that its mass communication's characteristics are involved in the process of its production and distribution



Postcard 3-18: An advertisement on a postcard; the backside of the postcard still advertising the product

but stop at the moment of purchase. Since bought/received, the postcard starts working as a small personal narrative of a past moment (souvenir/ collected item/message from a friend) and is kept and displayed by the individual.

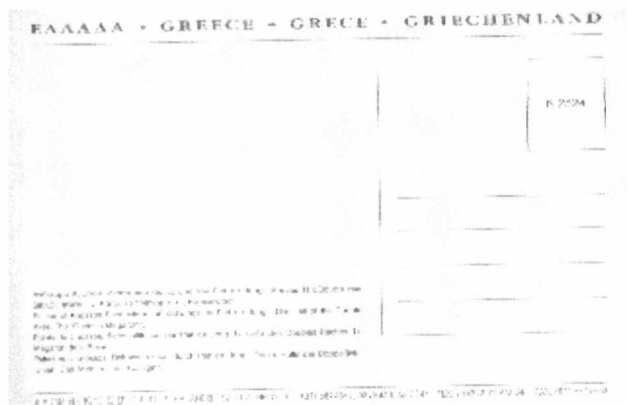
Although the evidence is not enough for the postcard to be included in the term “mass media”, it is not possible to set a clear distinction either. For the purposes of this research the postcard will be referred to as a **quasi-mass medium**, in the sense that it can function as a mass medium, but only in a specific context and only when particular circumstances occur.

3. Reading postcards

The text—both typed and handwritten—on the back of a postcard

The image on a postcard does not stand or travel alone. It is not an isolated structure; it is in communication with at least one other structure—namely the text. The text—usually typed on its reverse—accompanies and describes it. It comes to “*sublimate, patheticize or rationalize the image*”.²⁷ Replying to the question *what is it that is shown* the text helps the reader to choose the correct way of perception, guides both his gaze and his understanding of the image. Sometimes a word appears on the illustration, a colourful, attractive font, functioning as information and decoration at the same time. A word that combines the images seen or defines the place where the photograph is taken.

The information that is typed on the backside of a postcard refers to the place where that postcard is taken from, it describes the image seen, it is the postcard’s caption. A characteristic example of a text appearing on the back of a postcard can be seen here. It gives us the information we need in four languages. The name of the place where the postcard is taken from is typed with capitals on the upper possible point and underlined, the characteristic description of the image seen on the front side is typed with a smaller font at the bottom left—again in four languages—and the editor’s name and address is typed underneath using capitals—this information is given only in English and separated from the rest of the text with a line. It seems as if those lines—one underneath the place’s name and one separating the editor’s name from the rest of the text—are intentionally placed at the specific points in order to stress the specific information typed there. The country where the postcard is taken from is the most important feature of the postcard for the buyer-sender or the receiver. The name and address of the editor, on the other hand, is a perfect



advertisement for the postcard's producer. The fact that this information is given in English—and not in Greek, while Greece is the particular postcard's country of origin—underlines the function of the postcard as a quasi-mass medium. As English is the language understood by the most potential tourists of Crete, it is sensible that the advertisement will be in English—so that it is understandable by the biggest possible audience.

The information typed on the back side of the postcard is given in the same way that news stories are written, in the way the twentieth century's reader is used to find information in newspapers. We might even say that it uses the pyramid structure in the sense that the most important information is given first, while the others are meant to follow according to their significance or importance. The details are given last—and so are advertisements. The specific postcard's typed information answers the questions of where and what is seen, while the questions of who, when, why and how it is seen are to be answered by the sender. That is one of the reasons why the word “quasi” comes to be added in front of the characterization mass medium for the postcard. Personal information comes to be added to the information already given by the producer and that is an unforgivable task for a mass medium.

The text written by the sender of the postcard and addressed to its receiver forms another kind of text—different from the typed words the producer has approved of appearing on the back of the postcard. This text forms a specific message, written by the hand of the postcard's buyer and sent to a known person, usually a friend. In this sense, the postcard functions as a **communicative medium**—a medium that interferes between the sender and the receiver with the function of transmitting a message. Although we cannot characterize this type of communication as a face-to-face one, we cannot overlook the maintenance of a personal character in the process either. The message is often handwritten—its reader can recognize the handwriting of its sender. But even when the message is typed or when there is no message at all transmitted by the postcard—in the case of a postcard that is sent in an envelope accompanied by a letter—the postcard still functions as a communicative medium in the sense that it provides the receiver with information and is personally addressed to him—his name appears on its reverse or on the envelope.

This type of communication, which can be characterized as **mediated communication**, stands in-between the face-to-face communication and Thompson's

quasi-mediated interaction.²⁸ Of course, the subjects communicating are in different places—separated by a greater or smaller distance—and the variety of symbols they can use is not half as broad as in a case of a face-to-face communication. The clothes the sender is wearing, his smell, the sound of his voice or his body movements are not visible to the receiver, who is bounded to understand/interpret/accept the message sent, using the one and only symbol available: the common language the message is written in. At the same time, however, the message is addressed to a specific receiver—his name and address written on the postcard. While in mass communication messages are sent to complete strangers in a one-way communication, in the case of the postcard, the receiver is specified.

However, while the text—both typed and hand-written—on the back side of a postcard stresses the role of the postcard as a communicative medium, the illustration appearing on its front side makes the complete difference. When in a shop, postcards are always seen and judged by their illustration. It is the picture one looks at and buys on a postcard, not the space provided for the message, even when the particular postcard is meant to be sent to someone, which is not always the case because postcards, as I have mentioned above, can also function as souvenirs or collection items. In the two latter cases, their communicative character does not play much of a role because they are never used in that way. They are seen and appreciated as **autonomous structures**, as aesthetic objects or as little reminders of past experiences. The postcards and the images shown on them are related to the things signified; they refer to them and maintain them for their buyer.

Both the image and the text are interpreted by the receiver according to his own subjective and idiosyncratic experience. Similar interpretations of the same postcard are hard to find, unless we accept Fish's notion of *interpretive communities*²⁹, and therefore the idea that the stability of interpretation among different readers can be found if they belong to the same community.

According to Heidegger's *Being and Time*, "Whenever something is interpreted as something, the interpretation will be founded essentially upon fore-having (Vorhabe), fore-sight (Vorsicht), and fore-conception (Vorgriff)." An interpretation will never be a simple understanding of a particular message sent to us. The understanding will take place next to our previous understandings of previous messages and will be influenced and shaped by

them. Certainly, partly agreeing with Fish, social conditions predefine our evaluations but they are not alone in influencing and firmly shaping them. The interpreter is operating under a set of assumptions—there is no doubt about that. Some of his beliefs are not individual or idiosyncratic but communal and shared with others. But the prejudices, desires, expectations and unconscious dreams one might be influenced by when interpreting a message are by no means pure societal influences. For which society are we talking about anyway? Is it our hometown, our country, the global village?

4. The postcard's message

The postcard—like all communicative mediums—consists of a source of emission, a channel of transmission and a point of reception. As the source of transmission we can see the staff working for the production of the postcard, at the point of reception we can place the public and finally the transmission channel is no other than the postcard itself. The postcard can therefore be seen as a complex structure of connected messages with the image as its centre and the accompanying of the text, the caption, and the name of the place/thing shown.

The message is carried from the production source to the receiver through the medium/channel of the postcard. From the object to its image and caption there is of course a reduction—but is there a transformation?

The postcard does not carry reality, but an image of it. When that image is a photographic one, it can be seen as Barthes saw it: as the perfect analogon of reality. In this case the message does not need to be decoded simply because it does not contain a code. Its imitative character allows for it to be perceived and understood by anyone. The message is therefore transferred without being transformed.

Or almost so. For Barthes all imitative arts and all the forms of mass communication comprise two messages: a denoted and a connoted message. The denoted message is the analogon itself. But the connoted message is *the manner in which the society to a certain extent communicates what it thinks of it*.³⁰ In the case of photography—including photography on postcards—the first message—that of the reality's analogon—leaves no place for the development of the second message—the connoted message—and because of that the photograph is considered rather objective.

On a postcard, however, the imposition of a second meaning on the photographic message is believed to be rather unavoidable. This fact becomes obvious when we consider the procedure of choice, technical treatment, framing and captioning of the image. Whatever is shown can be seen as an accepted carrier of associations of ideas and the image's falsification through technological means is quite common. How then can a postcard be both objective and technically falsified?

One might answer the question by saying that whether objective or falsified, the postcard's perception and acceptance or rejection is dependent on the cultural and educational situation of the reader, his *idiolect*, as Barthes would say. The devil's advocate would reply that this is exactly one of the reasons why a postcard's photographic image is falsified: in order to be able to meet the supposed knowledge of its readers half way. In this sense the photograph on a postcard may not only be technically falsified, but in most cases is also so carefully selected as to reassure man about what he already knows, giving him no information that would shock or surprise him. The signification of the image on a postcard is unquestionably intentional.

How is then the image on a postcard altered or preserved? How transformed is a message when mediated through the quasi-mass medium of a postcard? These are questions, which I will try to answer in the next part of the chapter, through a study of the mediation of architecture through postcards.

5. Architecture in postcards

Architecture

Architecture has long ago found its *place among* the high arts, while it never abolished the certain features that distinguish it from them, maintaining with this way its unique, genuine character. These features include the synthesis of utility or function with aesthetic interest, its highly localized quality, the feature of technique, as long as architecture's character as a public object and its continuity with the decorative arts.

It is precisely these features that make architecture one of the most preferable themes on postcards. It is because our concept of beauty in buildings cannot be separated from the functions they fulfill that we prefer to buy postcards of buildings when traveling. With this choice we manage to keep a souvenir both of the beauty of the foreign place, as for instance of a beautiful public building, and of its habits and way of life, as this particular building the postcard of which we bought may be a house of parliament or a building concerned with the political or everyday life of the visited country.

The highly localized quality of architecture—the particular monuments, landmarks,



Postcard 3-19: The statue of Eros at the Piccadilly Circus, London Postcard

Company

sacred spots one observes when walking on the streets of a town—can provide the visitor of a place with a unique aesthetic experience. The postcard of that street—if bought after the walk—can provide, as well as the aesthetic experience, memories of thoughts and feelings felt when walking on that street. The postcard of that street does not function only as a souvenir of the buildings and statues seen there, but also as a souvenir of *my* being there, as a souvenir of *my* past experience.

Even if one can find postcards of London in Manchester, it is questionable that the tourist would buy a souvenir of some place he had never visited. He could not send

a postcard of London from Manchester anyway, because the postal seal would betray him. The function of a postcard as a souvenir is to be added in the narrative of *my* life as a short period of *my* being there, in London, and this fact gives it a highly personal character. Perhaps in the case of postcards as collection items, the importance of the aesthetic beauty of the postcard is bigger than your never being in the place shown. In the case of postcards-as-souvenirs and sent postcards however, the actual presence in the place shown plays the most important role in deciding which postcard to buy. Either way, you may be able to find postcards of London in other English towns but it is not possible to buy a postcard of London in Madrid or Rome.

The postcard of the statue of Eros at the Piccadilly Circus in London characteristically proves the function of a postcard as a souvenir. The statue is “framed” by its location in the particular social setting and this setting is what provides it with meaning and cultural value. Its highly localized quality is straightforward: there is no second copy of the statue anywhere in the world. Its authenticity makes it a classic London view site. Its existence at the particular spot—the spot being strictly related to the statue and vice versa—lends some authenticity to the place, making it classic, too. The spot then characterizes the whole city, becoming one of its main collectors of tourist gazes. The statue becomes the city’s symbol. “Classic” London includes one of its images.

The highly localized quality of architecture is at a great extent responsible for the obvious preference that postcard producers show for it. Tourists buy those postcards because they are connected both to the place visited and to memories of themselves when being there. This fact is not inseparable from architecture’s character as a public object, being a work commissioned for a site of open public access. “*Architecture is public; it imposes itself whatever our desires and whatever our self-image.*”³¹ Architecture is seen; it cannot be ignored or simply passed by. “*You must take endless precautions, in Paris, not to see the Eiffel Tower*”³², Barthes states. You cannot miss a monument. It is there in front of you. Unless you live in the specific town and you are used to the specific monument’s sight.

The feature of technique and architecture’s continuity with the decorative arts play less of a role on the depiction of a building on a postcard, although both features are important in the sense that the viewer recognizes the aesthetic principles that stand in all decorative arts and admires/studies/disapproves of the technique used.

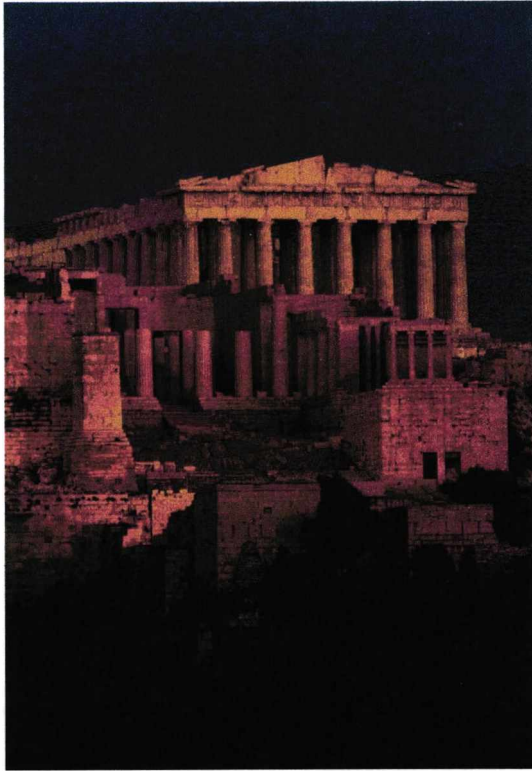
Whether we agree with functionalism—and see form as inseparable from function—or with the theory of space—and experience architecture as an experience of space—, whether we see it through Hegelian eyes—as an expression of its time—or through the theory of proportion—as a harmonious order, giving specific rules and principles for the combination of its parts—the experience of architecture is an engendered pleasure. Even if one disagrees with all the theories stated above, as Scruton does, because function is not the only essential feature of a building, because the theory of space does not bear in mind the importance of light or material, because if buildings manifest the spirit of their epoch then there is no distinctive factor that determines which are the good and which are the bad examples, because proportion is rather a quasi-musical notion or for whatever other reason, the architectural object remains an object of pleasurable attention. Architecture—and this is a point shared with Scruton—can be perceived imaginatively, depending on the viewer’s conception of the architectural object.



Postcard 3-20: The Parthenon on a postcard,
Athens, Haitalis Editions

To search for the “correct” experience or the “appropriate” is to search for the significance in buildings: that is what most tourists do when wandering around a firstly visited city. The appropriate is found as a combination of taste molded through education and the primitive expression of aesthetic choices. Either a conscious choice, for which one can argue about, or an unconscious one, deriving even from one’s effort to restore the continuity with his mother’s breast—as Melanie Klein would say—one is asked to find the appropriate for him building and then buy it on a postcard.

How can one find something appropriate in a building? Buildings are not representative of some idea, they do not express any thought and are definitely not related to any aspect of truth as we know and understand it. A building is a public object looked at by every passerby. Perhaps what is appropriate of a monument on a postcard is its value as a public representation of human life: appropriate for the tourist, that is, in that it is seen as a trophy from the visited country. He managed to acquire something sacred and authentic, because it is part of the difference and therefore uniqueness of the visited place, and that is why he sees it as a trophy. It is true that buildings function and should be seen in relation to the people who they are lived



Postcard 3-21: The Acropolis, Athens, Toubis S.A.
Editions

with in an eternal process of interaction.

Seeing architecture on a postcard cannot be compared with immediate experience. The architectural object is not only an image. A person's movement through a building or his listening to its sounds—echoes, murmurs, silences—contribute to his impression of the whole. The only thing a postcard can capture of a building is its image.

However, as stressed before, it is not the complete experience that we try to maintain through the purchase of postcards—it is the memory of that experience that we want to carry home, of which the postcard is a perfect souvenir. On the other hand, even our visual experience can refer to the other senses, remind us of them and in this sense maintain them.

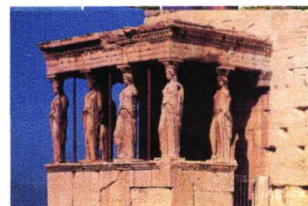
Again, Scruton's observations are quite helpful in providing evidence of our point. *"As many critics have pointed out, materials and forms are often endowed with a visual appearance that "translates" their functional and tactile qualities...I may see a shape as "hard" or "soft", as "welcoming", or "hostile"...it must be possible to see not only colours and shapes, but also such properties as warmth, mass, solidity and distance"*.³³ And continuing ... *"we must allow precedence to the visual aspect in architecture: it is this which forms the basis and the necessary precondition to all the other parts."*³⁴ With the help of his notion of imaginative attention, it seems as if we could derive not only pattern, but also colour, light and material through a single image.

Unfortunately, though, this is not precisely the case. No matter how hard we try, the image of a three-dimensional building on a two-dimensional piece of paper cannot offer the same experience with our actual presence in front of it. The echoes will never be heard—only the memory of them can survive on paper.

What if the postcard does not show the image of the whole building but only one part of

it, a detail? Can we still understand the unity of the building's meaning? How easy is it to combine the images of the building's details with its image as a whole? How significant is a detail used at random, outside of any governing conception or design? In architecture, the meaning stems from the whole object, not from any of its parts.

Of course, there are genuine parts that contain architectural meaning, like one Caryatid for instance, and can be viewed—should be viewed—and studied individually. Nevertheless, we cannot appreciate a whole building when we only have seen a specific part of it, because there might be a case where a detail is of outstanding beauty. Scruton is wrong in insisting that details are *“the only thing which an architect can enforce”*³⁵; it would be preferable if together with the postcard of a building's detail, we also buy the postcard of the whole building. Sending a postcard of an architectural detail could be quite misleading for the receiver, had he not ever seen the architectural object as a whole.



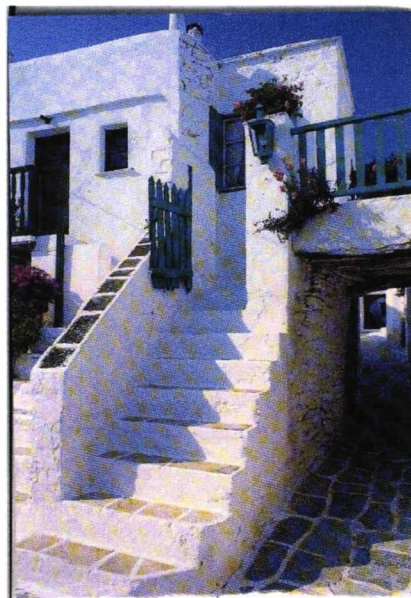
Postcard 3-22: The Caryatids,
Toubis Editions

But are all forms of architecture shown on the surface of a postcard?

High Art & Vernacular Architecture

Architectural history is mostly concerned with a few select cultures, leaving aside the houses of a place's inhabitants and quoting only the palaces of their kings. What about vernacular architecture then, the anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous or rural architecture? According to Rudofsky, *“lately the charms of “picture-postcard towns” and the “popular” architecture of “fairy-tale countries” have proved of considerable attraction”*.³⁶

The statement's truth can also be understood if one takes a look at the architectural images seen on



Postcard 3-23: Vernacular architecture in
Folegandros island, Nafsika Editions

postcards. The world's most famous monuments are always there, accompanied by less known local monuments of the particular places visited.

Vernacular architecture is rarely seen on postcards, unless in the case of much visited places or “particularly interesting local architectural practices”. Interesting for the tourist that is. Meaning different from the commonly seen.

A local house of a Greek island's inhabitant can be seen on a postcard, because the particular architectural style is not met anywhere else. The producer of the particular postcard will possibly think that since this style is related to the place's idiosyncrasy—meaning that in combination with some other factors it constitutes the island's identity—it might be of interest to the tourist that visits the place. His choice to travel there was made bearing in mind this genuine character of the island—including the original architectural style—and that is what he would want to remember after leaving.

Of course, postcards also show aspects of the place's everyday life—including local people and architecture—so that the tourist could feel like taking a glimpse into the local community's habits and lifestyle. However, in terms of the quantity of monuments on postcards in comparison to the number of all the other images of a place, it seems like the medium of the postcard offers the tourist a chance to chose between and closely study many images and aspects of art architecture and only a few images of standard or “typical” local lifestyle.



Postcard 3-24: Glimpsing at life in Rethymno, Crete, Greece, through a postcard, photo by Pierre Couteau, Mantzios Editions

Monuments...

Monuments are made to last and remind us of the time they were built. The word's root is the Latin "monere", which means to remind. Monuments are therefore, apart from items of information, maintainers of memory. They function as souvenirs of past times, just like postcards function as souvenirs of past experience. The difference being that monuments evoke both personal and the society's memories, while the postcard reminds its possessor of his own past experiences when being at the place shown. When sent, the postcard may remind its owner of nothing but a friend. It is not nostalgia that the sent postcard evokes.

On a postcard, monuments can be seen as reminders of past times on a souvenir. It is at least strange—if not a total exaggeration—to say that a postcard of a monument is a reminder of a reminder. Even so, it is one's own personal reminder of a visited society's reminder.



Postcard 3-25: The Eiffel Tower, Paris, Editions "GUY"

If Connerton is right in saying that "our experiences of the present largely depend upon our knowledge of the past and our images of the past commonly serve to legitimize a present social order"³⁷ then the importance of monuments as far as their ability of preserving the past is concerned is quite straightforward. They function as traces or marks, something that our predecessors left behind, helping us appreciate and maintain social memory.

Monuments enhance the significance of particular locations and enter the consciousness

of the people who live around them, they represent a highly visible past, they were created to make that past broadly known. Postcards show whatever their producers think would give prestige to their countries—whatever they think would make them look both aesthetically attractive and culturally significant. Monuments are one of the best cases that could make this aim easily and directly met, as they are seen as high status sites. The Eiffel Tower is for Barthes a universal symbol of Paris and therefore it is everywhere on the globe where Paris is to be stated as an image.

Monuments are shown and seen as major signs of people and places: they *belong to the universal language of travel*.³⁸ Certain of them are known and seen through their images in the mass media. The visit to the actual place is then translated as an attempt to see and admire the original referent of a familiar image, the true monument seen already on paper or screen. The Eiffel Tower, the Acropolis, the Pyramids are monuments everyone has heard or seen something about, because there is hardly any schoolbook, poster, postcard or film of the specific countries that does not hold one of their images. To enter into one of those monuments is thought of as to enter into a historical or aesthetic sacred. This idea gives travelers the sensation of a power of intellection, as in front of the monument they try to remember and combine all the things they have heard and seen about the particular monument and then *understand* it. “*To enter a monument is to solve, to possess it.*”³⁹ However, it is broadly believed that the commissioning of statues and memorials proclaims the manufacture of a national cultural identity. Is then the entrance to a monument similar to an entrance to the country’s cultural identity?

Cities are socially produced—their buildings, streets and surroundings being social statements. But how is art connected to the social?

According to Warner, the Statue of Liberty is identified with an American ideal of democracy. “*The sensual pleasure of the eye, when looking at the specific statue, is therefore, dependent not upon aesthetic delight but upon the psychology of vision.*”⁴⁰ We are looking at Democracy itself.

Why should a monument be something specific? Why should it *represent* something?

A monument is a translation from the natural world to the world of human culture. Its most important feature is that it embodies some of the most basic beliefs in society. It takes a lot of imagination to take part in a process of recreating a past that is beyond recall and of making it play an important role in the present. That, however, is what we are called to do when standing

in front of a great monument of the past or when holding one of its images on a postcard.

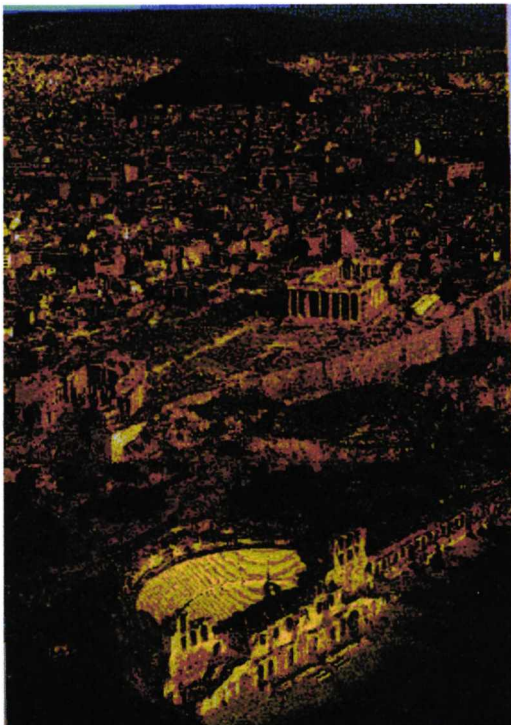
Mediation through Postcards

Because of the monument's usually huge size, it is obvious that everything cannot be viewed at the same time or from a single vantage point. Not on a postcard, not even in the case of immediate experience. The viewer is obliged to move around in order to view the entire construction and come to appreciate the monument as a whole. In this sense, the details shown on postcards are rather valuable, because the eye cannot see some of the monument's highest parts. Although a single snapshot on a single postcard cannot show the monument in its entirety, although one's movement around it is necessary for a whole view and that is translatable to different snapshots from different possible view-angles, if we see a postcard as a souvenir it does not need to include all the possible views of the monument because one's movement around the

place will be memorable and reminded at when looking at the postcard.

Another common practice on postcards is the viewpoint of great distance. From this particular shooting angle, the view is unrestricted. The eye could never catch it in that way and so the camera is in a sense showing its powerful features and techniques. These kinds of shots are popular with the tourists because it is something they themselves would never capture with their cameras, not being provided with the same technological means.

Rarely a snapshot would give its viewer an idea of the city as a whole. A familiar landmark or building might help the holder understand



Postcard 3-26: Acropolis from a viewpoint of great distance,
Haitalis Editions

which city the photograph is taken from. Some postcards, however, manage to present a view from a vantage point outside the city or from a high point within it, transforming the city into a distinctive map-like image. Although the snapshot might catch an incidental moment of a city's life, this kind of postcards re-present a city as a unified icon, as it might always be that way. Seeing the city as a map, distinguishing its streets, squares, monuments or public spaces, people not being visible, offers the viewer a kind of power and possession. When looking at a snapshot taken on the street, everything seems around you, you become part of this interactivity. The postcard of a high point, however, provides you with the illusion that you are the only viewer; that this view is offered to you alone.

This kind of image—an image of a city from a very high point—is believed to emphasize the unified concept of the city and provide the viewer with its heart and spirit. It can even be seen as a pattern of an ideal city. Benjamin's *flaneur* would recognize some familiar places and buildings when looking at Paris from the Eiffel Tower. The Greek *flaneur* would recognize the familiar buildings and places on the above postcard.

The postcard view conveys ideology as well as information. A postcard is an ideological statement, trying to agree with or provide evidence for Barthes' notion of "*An Empire of Signs*". The image on a postcard is trying very hard to include all the characteristic, "classic" (as the image of the statue of Eros on a postcard described above) features of the specific town. It is trying to make one thing clear: Barthes' *possibility of a difference*.

It is the difference the postcard shows. The difference of this village/town/country is shown in comparison to the next village/town/country. Something "original" and distinctive is searched and then photographed. The views on postcards are views chosen to make the difference visible and unarguable.

On postcards, monuments are practically without function: the Eiffel Tower or the Statue of Liberty are primarily structural beings, stripped of any use and value. "*They are in the first place expressions of identity*".⁴¹ The postcard deprives any image it carries from any possible use or function it might had. Although there were many uses of the Eiffel Tower proposed by its engineer—such as observation, communications or meteorology—none of them was ever ascribed to the building. Still, the Eiffel Tower can be seen as an engineering marvel, while on a postcard it only is a Parisian symbol. The statue of Liberty is on a postcard identified with an

American ideal of democracy; its colossal size cannot be appreciated on paper anyway. The Acropolis is seen as a sign, trace or mark of human democracy, while the Pyramids are seen under the spectrum of mystery. Is that all that is carried by a postcard of their images?

The two-dimensional is for architects the first step towards creation, the capture of an idea on a piece of paper. Architects draw their imaginative building on paper before constructing it on land. They even stand in front of a structure of their liking and sketch some of its lines on paper, in order to be able to maintain and study its image. For architects the two-dimensional is the study of the final structure, its primal being. Postcards, however, are made for ignorants.

Monuments are given meaning by their viewers and it can change according to what they see or want. *“The Statue of Liberty does not record the past, except for the allusion to the Declaration of Independence. It anticipates continuously a future that is always in the process of becoming: hence Liberty’s determined step forward, her lamp held up to illuminate the space we cannot see, the time to come. She expresses intention, more emphatically than act; we are all subjects of incorporation in that regard. We all hope to be free, we could all be free”*.⁴² Freedom is different from the one person to the next. One’s idea of freedom may be one is having a day free from work or one is taking a divorce. The idea of the anticipated future may be common to all those people standing in the crown of the Statue of Liberty, but exactly what each of them is determined to make out of that future is another matter. As we place our heads in the hole made as Liberty’s head at a paper imitation of her we are the ones who step forward, waiting for the future.

Can a postcard maintain that feeling or even reproduce it?

On posters, in films, on books and in newspapers the Statue of Liberty has been used for many different purposes. To provide a classic American image, to legitimize political campaigns, to seal a statement with moral dignity. On a postcard, Liberty is seen as identification of the city and by extension the nation. It is seen as a symbol and since there is no other feature near it—text or image—to set the meaning; it is up to the viewer to interpret it according to his own needs and values.

Public statues are not always innocent representations of an important person or idea. *“The city carries a story, the city presents a lure into its own version of the past; you could say it tells tales; that it lies”*.⁴³

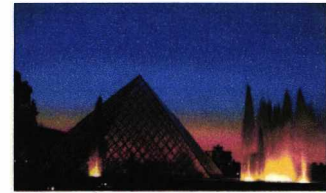
The city lies through its public buildings and statues, architecture tells the tale. On a postcard then, which necessarily carries a selected piece of the city’s architecture, propaganda is commonly and very easily met. In that sense the building we see on the

postcard is not always a symbol of the city’s ideology, it is sometimes an image that the city is trying to sell at the time of the postcard’s production. Can the Pompidou Centre or I. M. Pei’s projected pyramid for the Louvre be seen as a real identification with Paris? Nevertheless, at the time being these buildings are the ones that proclaim the city’s pride and are often seen on postcards.

Even if for Warner the statue of Nike represents a town’s victory, its fortune or *tyche*, its triumph, if the statues of angels are seen as success, glory, reputation or fame, she concludes with William Gass’ quote that monuments are for rent. There is no set meaning. The interpretation depends on the viewer. The word she places in her female statues and maidens is “listen”. They are encouraging us to find our own meanings through their marble bodies. It is not that there is not a correct way of seeing them. “Nike” is a town’s *tyche* and a body with flying wings will continue to symbolize triumph. But we can see it as our own personal triumph at our own personal achievement. Postcards can help make that personal interpretation ours. They still carry Eros as a classical London image, but at the same time they carry our own personal notion of Eros or the feelings we felt when being in front of the statue.

Of course, a postcard view of a monument or public statue embodies a relation to the city these architectural objects are taken from. A monument can even be seen as a device of social control, a way to make people forget some aspects of their history and remember others. As I have already stated above, monuments stand in a complex relation to time, stating a past far from neutrally. The whole procedure of choosing which aspects of a nation’s history are going to become a monument’s subject clearly shows the “contribution” of the political and civil society to the production of meaning and social value.

Postcards’ producers tend to select safe aspects of history for public consumption. Even



LE PALAIS DU LOUVRE

Postcard 3-27: The pyramid of the Louvre, Editions “GUY”, Paris

on postcards, monuments and heritage culture can be seen as devices for social control. *“Just as monuments construct hegemony, so heritage sites construct a past which conveniently fits civic aspirations and serves social stability”*.⁴⁴ Postcards show only what the country is proud of showing.

The Albert Memorial, designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, was part of a construction of a history (presenting Albert as progressive and interested in the catalogue of the Great Exhibition of 1851—interested in industry and design, that is—) but has become a convenient landmark for people walking through the park. *“But this fading into the urban landscape itself contributes to a depoliticisation of Albert”*.⁴⁵

In order to satisfy the tourist that searches for the romantic and the poetic in a country—and therefore on the postcard of that country that he is going to buy and take home with him—the postcards’ producers do not hesitate to use technical falsification of particular photographs.

The night view of an archaeological site is one of the romantic images provided for tourists. In the postcard shown the moon is unarguably placed through a technical elaboration on an already existing photograph, while the light spread over the hill might have been tampered with, as a final addition on the image. The postcard suggests both the romantic aspect of Acropolis and its significance as a work of art made during Pericles’ “Golden Age”, continuing to offer its light to the world of civilization and democracy.



Postcard 3-28: A night view of Acropolis, Haitalis Editions

The transmission of charisma

Through sacralized amulets, *“the virtuous monk transfers his goodness to the amulet, which is received by the layman who believes in the monk’s attainments”*.⁴⁶ The same kind of transmission of charisma seems to apply to the monument-on-postcard purchase.

Monuments are sacred objects for the societies they were built by, one of the reasons

being their successful maintenance of social memory. In the same way, the Buddhist sacred objects are reminders of the Buddha's victories over desire and ignorance. The doctrine of presence is visible in both cases. The monument stands on the land in order to be seen and evoke memories of or thoughts about past times. The Buddha statue stands in front of the believers for them to see and worship its referent.

Both monuments and amulets are thought of having been sacralized. Spiritual virtues and energies are transferred to them by the cultural surroundings or charismatic monks, charging them with efficacy. Charisma is thought to have been transmitted to them.

Charisma can be understood as a gift of wisdom or knowledge, healing or prophecy etc. Weber defines it as *a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities*. But how can a monument be charismatic?

Tambiah tells us that in Buddhism charisma can be concretized and sedimented in objects, these objects functioning as *repositories of power*. If this transmission of charisma can apply to culture as well as religion then monuments can hold the same kind of sacredness and power that religious images and statues hold. Monks are approached by laymen, to whom the amulets are given as a blessing. Could a monument be seen as a blessing of the culture that built it to the cultures that will follow it?

Amulets function as reminders of the monk's virtues; monuments function as reminders of the particular culture's achievements. If the amulet embodies the monk's virtue and power, the monument embodies the culture's significance and prestige.

*"It is inevitable in the Thai case that this process of vulgar materialization, this law of gravity, should have further consequences. One is that the amulet moves from a context of donation and love to a context of trade and profit: it is converted into a highly salable good and enters the bazaar and marketplace".*⁴⁷ The same can be proved to apply to monuments, as well. Miniatures of the Eiffel Tower are sold in little shops on the Tower and throughout Paris. Its image has become very popular in the media of advertisements, catalogues, magazine articles, books, etc.

*"The propensity to accumulate amulets increases, in the simple arithmetical calculation that the more you possess, the more clout you have".*⁴⁸ Similarly, the more monuments you have visited, the more intellectual you are supposed to be. As if their charisma balanced back at you. What sacred little

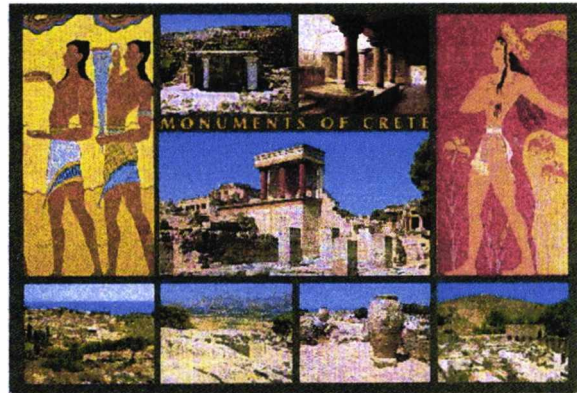
objects can a visitor of a monument carry home, other than the monument's miniatures or postcards? And what better proof is there that one actually visited the pyramids than a postcard sent from that place to a friend? It is sealed by the Egyptian post office and carries an Egyptian stamp, while one's handwriting appears on the back. It is definitely Egyptian and one was definitely there to write the message and send it from the local post office. Postcards can be seen as carriers of the monument's cultural charisma and transmitting it to their gazer.

For Marx, the possession of goods is an indicator of social-class status. For modern societies, the possession of postcards of different monuments is an indicator of cultural status.

6. Knossos on Postcards

Postcards of Crete

Of all the Cretan monuments that are commonly shown on postcards from Crete, Knossos always takes the biggest and most important role. It is this particular monument—Knossos—the postcards of which I will try to examine in the next part of the chapter. It is my hope that this kind of examination will provide some valuable clues about the mediation of architecture on postcards and the mediation of art through a mass medium—quasi-mass medium in this case—in general.



Postcard 3-29: Monuments of Crete with Knossos as the main one,
Toubis S.A. Editions

Knossos on Postcards

Knossos is one of the main tourist attractions in Crete. There is hardly any tourist that visits the island and does not stop to admire and take pictures of the specific archaeological site. Many of them buy postcards of it to send to friends or carry home with them. We have already answered why they prefer to buy a postcard than take a snapshot: the photograph on the postcard is quite a good one, while their camera might not provide the same result.

At the entrance of the archaeological site of Knossos, along with the guide books written in several languages, there are displayed hundreds of postcards for the tourist to gaze upon. Some of them are going to be shown and examined in this part of the thesis. The question is familiar: what aspect of Knossos do postcards show and in what way? What is the message they are trying to pass across the countries of the visitors?

There is no such thing as a neutral image. No image is innocent, meaning candid and pure: a sheer representation of reality. Even when nothing else interferes, the image is not an honest moment-teller. The camera intervened between the eye and the mind—the outcome is

not what the eye saw but what the camera captured. On the other hand, the eye that chose the angle from which the photograph was taken was not yours—the choice of subject and shooting angle was not yours. Since two ways of seeing are never completely identical, the image someone else provides for you to gaze upon might never agree with your vision.

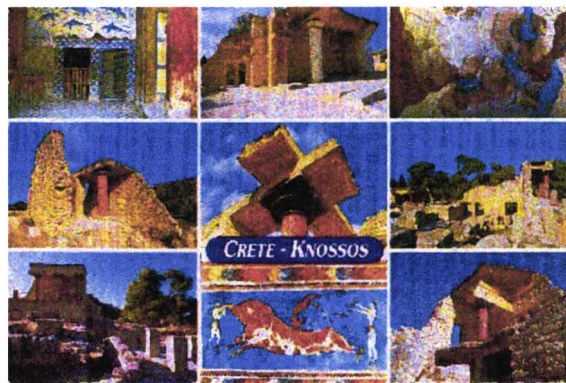
What kind of image of Knossos do the postcards' producers offer for the tourist?

How objective or candid can it be?

What kind of mediation takes place between the eye that rests on a postcard and the knowledge that this particular postcard provides?

The multiple images

One of the most common postcard images is the multiple image—a synthesis of many photographs to form one image. The example shown characteristically shows a multiple postcard of Knossos, consisting of pictures of both the exterior and the interior space of the buildings. We can distinguish the



Postcard 3-30: A multiple postcard of Knossos, Marmatakis Editions

famous iconography on the walls of the palace in three out of the nine photographs shown on the particular postcard. The pictures of the wall paintings form a kind of triangle, leaving the rest of the photographs to fill in the gaps. The remaining six photographs show the characteristic red columns of the palace photographed from different shooting angles and with different perspectives, the central picture being taken under the column looking upwards to stress the superiority and imposing character of the whole construction. The presence of the words “Crete - Knossos” exactly underneath the specific column proves the above statement.

All these images are characteristic images of Crete and specifically Knossos: that is what the two words are there to remind the viewer of. The way these words are put together is not accidental. Only a small dash separates them. In this sense, Knossos becomes a characteristic view of Crete and Crete becomes undivided from one of Knossos' images. The two coexist and

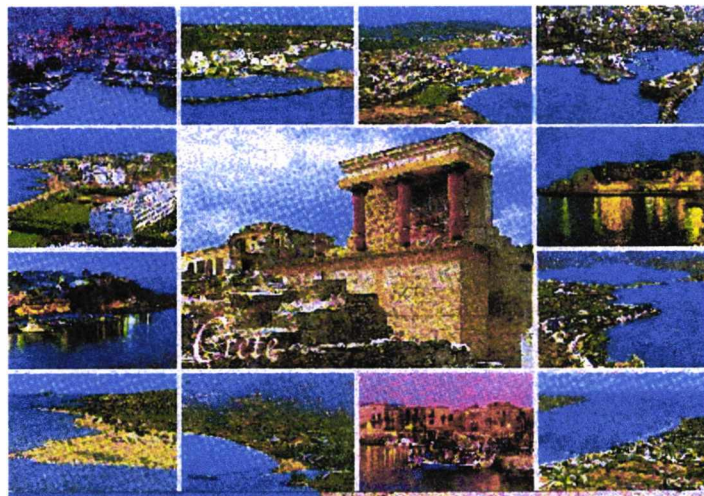
interact. The informative character of the bringing together of the two words is self-evident: even those people who did not know where Knossos is, will not have any doubt after receiving this postcard. Knossos is in Crete, there is no doubt about that any more—the two words are too close to be imagined by themselves after having been seen together.

Many postcards of Crete have that same aim: to connect Knossos with the island's natural features and memorable places. Knossos should be made undistinguished from the island; every time one thinks of the former, the latter should not escape him as well and vice versa.

This connection of the island to the archaeological site has many advantages. Crete simultaneously acquires a cultural character that puts it among the most important European cultural places. The myths about the Minoan Palace—including the story of the Minotaur—arouse the imagination and curiosity, while the fact that this Palace inspired one of the first civilizations in Europe increases the interest for both the building and the people who had lived there.

The colossal of the Palace of Knossos and its relationship with Crete makes the island more broadly known and that, apart from cultural significance and high prestige, brings more potential tourists and therefore more profit to Cretans.

Not only words, but images too have been combined to set this connection clear.



Postcard 3-31: A synthesis of Cretan images on a postcard, Adams Editions

In this multiple postcard the word “Crete” is typed on a photograph of Knossos. The image of Knossos is the biggest one, put at the very centre of the postcard, with the word “Crete” typed on it, while all the other photographs—showing some of the island’s beaches, as well as some of its most known ports and towns—are smaller, set around it, functioning almost as a frame for the main image: the one taken from Knossos.

Again, the cultural value of the island seems more important than its natural beauties. Although one might argue that the images of the island’s beaches and towns are much more in comparison with the one photograph from Knossos, or that the blue colour of the sea makes a good and distinctive frame, nobody can deny the importance of the main image on the particular postcard.

The image of Knossos lies right in the middle as the main attraction of the island, while all the others function as simple additional beautification.

Knossos is one of Horne’s “*dreamlands*”, a relic of a previous declaration of reality that we cannot altogether understand, a monument that can be turned into whatever dreams our age or society requires.⁴⁹ Each individual interpretation begins with the help of the provided

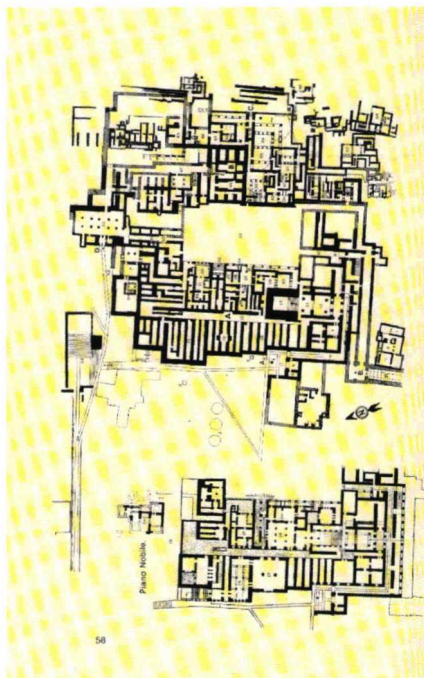


Figure 3-1: The map of Knossos as appearing in the guidebooks

guidebooks. There are explanatory cards positioned in front of each room of the palace, describing its function and displayed items. Tourists are told what they are seeing. Postcards provide all the information they need on their reverse. *“The fame of the object becomes its meaning; what finally matters may be a souvenir postcard, perhaps even the admission ticket, kept for years afterwards with other mementoes of passing visions of how life might have been”*.⁵⁰

The route around Knossos is predefined: the guides follow a specific path and so should the visitors; the explanatory cards are numbered anyway. The tourists cannot see the rooms or storage places, the wall paintings or the remaining items in a random order, but rather through a well established one. The ritual is set and the pilgrims should follow the unwritten rules of discipline

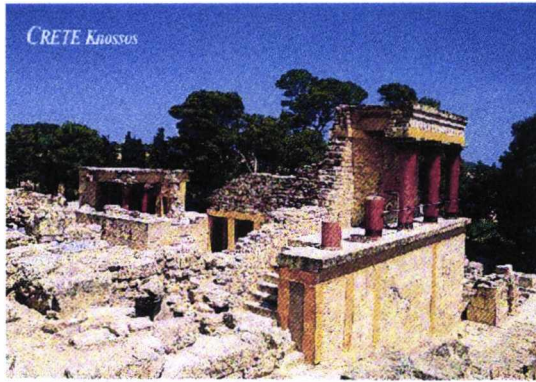
and respect. The ceremony of seeing the site may be interrupted only by the process of photographing. It is because photography has been included in the ritual, being the only part of the ceremony where the tourist truly participates. But is photography part of the ceremony or an implication of its coming to an end?

The guides make pauses for the tourists to take photographs; it is rude for the click to be heard while they are talking. At the end of each session of showing and describing, there is some time for the photographs to be taken and the click heard. The guide will wait for some time in front of the next room to be shown for the tourists to take some pictures and follow the next narration.

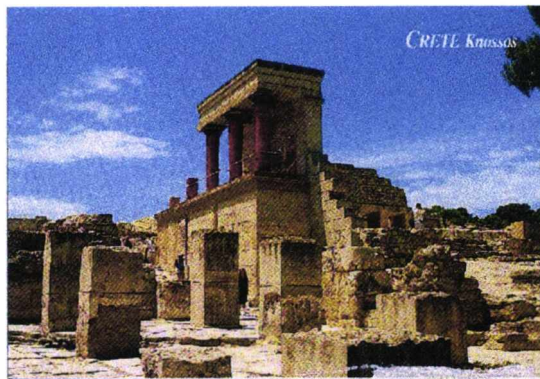
The sense of awe and pilgrimage is maintained throughout the voyage to the dreamland of Knossos. The guides are saying in different languages that here is the beginning of civilization, one of the first written languages appeared in these walls by some of the people you can see painted on the walls there, and there sat their king, while here is where the queen had her bath. The monument becomes sacred, its image on a postcard remains authentic and by acquiring it the visitors feel powerful and authentic themselves, just like the layman who got the amulet of a charismatic monk. The charisma of Knossos is transformed through its postcards and souvenirs and the possessor of the latter feels like he possesses the former as well.

The multiple images of Knossos on postcards have exactly that aim: to offer the tourist all the images he did not have time or failed to photograph and to make him feel like the possessor of their charisma. They are acquired at the end of a pilgrimage—at the exit of the site, where many shops and kiosks hold hundreds of them—and they are bought from an ancestor of the Minoan people, a Cretan person. The magic is maintained in the postcard: the authentic charisma is there.

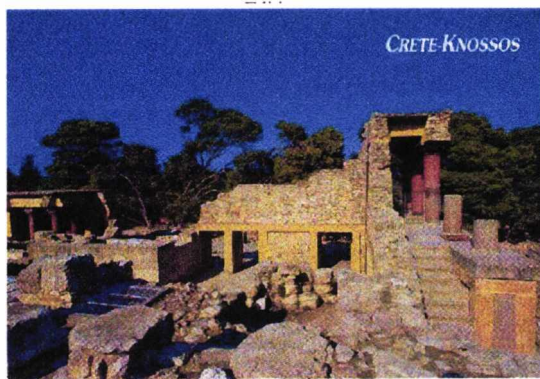
What if it is true that mediation distorts or hides some aspects of the Knossos Palace—what if the image we see on a postcard is a fake?

The Familiar Image -The Red Columns

Postcard 3-32: The red columns, the Palace of Knossos. West portico of the North Entrance Passage and North Lustral Area in the background, Adams Editions



Postcard 3-33: Different shooting angle, The Palace of Knossos. West portico of the North Entrance Passage with the relief fresco of the charging bull and the Pillar Hall (Customs House), Adams



Postcard 3-34: Another photograph of the same part, Marmatakis Brothers

There are specific parts of Knossos that are always shown whenever there is the slightest mentioning of the Palace. They are images that no tourist would overlook—all of the visitors will buy them on postcards or at least photograph them. The reference goes about any part of the Palace on which the characteristic red columns of the Minoan civilization are visible. Is it because these columns are better preserved than any other part of the Palace? Is it because of their bright colour or their fame?

Tourists are familiar with these images of Knossos' red columns—the red columns are the symbols they have registered of the Palace and these symbols blind them to its other parts. There is no need for the postcard producer to search for other possible shooting angles for his photographer to photograph from, since this aspect of the Palace, as long as it contains the familiar, will be bought anyway.

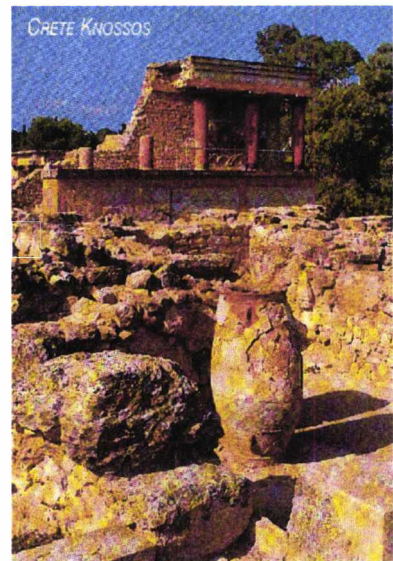
When tourists buy admission tickets and souvenir postcards of Knossos, they are buying a reminder of the most universal of the European concepts of mythology and prestige. What they want to be visible on the postcards they buy is the colossal of the famous “labyrinth” and the power of king Minos. A well-preserved part of Knossos Palace may arouse the imagination in such a way

for the viewer to see the remaining part of the building in connection to its past glorification and mythic size. The particular parts of Knossos shown on postcards are either very well preserved or restored by Evans in such a way as to be easily connected to the drawings of the Palace as it was before its destruction. The images on postcards are therefore chosen in order to maintain the myth of the Minoan civilization and culture.

There are many ways to view Knossos Palace. One might do little more than register the stereotype “palace” and buy a postcard as warranty that it is “authentic”. One might pay his respect to the famous king without knowing what exactly it is that he admired about him. Another visitor might, instead, study Knossos as an example of art and architectural

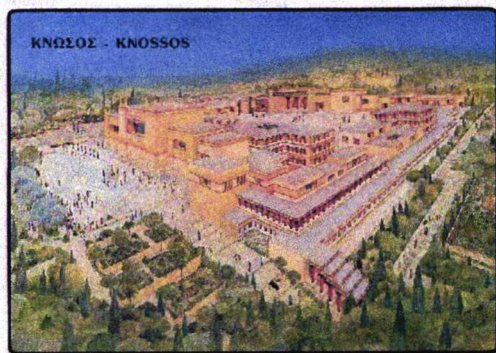
styles. Someone else might even look at it with nostalgia of a lost elegance or a symbol of how power can be materialized and broadly shown. On a postcard, however, Knossos is shown with the special glamour of mythology and the magical glow of all the stories heard about it. It is shown with a respect not given to ordinary objects, illuminated with meanings that justify power or claim prestige. With the images of the best preserved or restored parts of Knossos the postcard producers hope to give a hint about the huge construction of the Palace and stress in that way that the notion of the “labyrinth” was not accidentally *used* to describe it. The myth remains for the tourist to explore and understand it. It is the myth that will call him to Crete and Knossos anyway. Architecture is deprived of every function and use on the postcards. It is only important as long as it stresses the mythic aspect of the Palace—its size.

The fact that some parts of the Palace are easily—or more easily than others—imagined in connection to its past structure is very important for postcard images. It is vital for the postcard receiver firstly to recognize the place shown and secondly to understand the reason why this particular postcard was sent to him, to understand the mythic notion of the labyrinth stereotypically associated with Knossos. The tourists should learn how to read some cultural stereotypes and particular images of particular sites provide them with the guidance they need

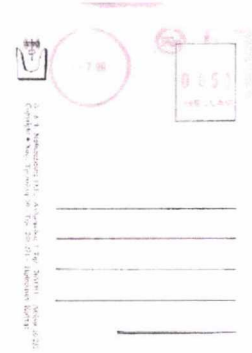


Postcard 3-35: The Palace of Knossos.
View from N.E. The West Portico of the
North Entrance Passage in the
background, Adam Editions

The task of imagining how the Palace was like after having seen some of its most familiar remaining aspects is one of the tourists' favourite games. That is the reason why postcards like the one shown below are very popular among tourists. Like in front of a puzzle, the visitors are trying to reconstruct in their minds the lost Palace of king Minos and for a moment imagine how living there would have been like.



1
ΚΡΗΤΗ-ΚΡΗΤΗ
Country: Reconstruction of the palace
Country: Reconstruction of the palace
Country: Reconstruction of the palace
Country: Reconstruction of the palace



Postcard 3-36: Knossos: Reconstruction of the palace, Mathioudakis Editions

There are, of course, other ways for the viewer to imaginatively reconstruct the Palace of Knossos as it was before its destruction. Other kinds of images are offered as a guide to the tourist, such as:

The Viewpoint of Great Distance

As said above, images taken from the viewpoint of great distance offer the viewer a unique feeling of possession and power, in the sense of the illusion of being the only, the privileged gazer. It seems like being on an imaginative hill just above Knossos, or in a balloon flying right above the place. The view is offered to the privileged viewer alone. Only people with a particular income can fly in balloons anyway. Those people that are able to take some time off work, only the rich and intellectual enough can afford the “Grand Tour”, can search for a place with a unique view, go and admire it and then get the postcard. Only people of a particular cultural status can afford going to a place just to be there, do what one is supposed to be doing

in the specific place, get the appropriate souvenir and return home. These images are mainly offered to and appreciated by the “Grant-tourists”.

Provided with a map-like image of the place, the viewers are able to imaginatively reconstruct a plan of *what* the building’s shape might have been like. Those opportunities of successfully combining one’s general knowledge about the place, the image offered and one’s imagination are treasured for the relative freedom of perception that they offer. The ruins of Knossos can arouse many already known myths, which could be added to or interpreted by the viewer’s own unconscious desire or dream.

Images like the one shown below aim at preserving the myth of the Palace’s huge size and its king’s unquestioned power and domination over the rest of the island’s kingdoms. The particular postcard shows an image of the remaining labyrinth, recreating in the viewer’s mind all the myths and well-known stories about Ariadne, Theseus and the man-eating Minotaur. The view of Knossos as seen from an imaginary hill or from a flying balloon is one among the “romantic” gazes. Distant and untouchable, it is offered as a gift to the gazer, reintroducing the notion of the labyrinth and underlying Minos’ power. The ruins of any old palace underneath one’s feet cannot but create the illusion of strength and uniqueness to its possessor. The ruins of Knossos palace seen from a great distance cannot but strengthen the myth of its colossal size, maintaining and reinterpreting the myths heard about it some hundreds years ago.



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ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ, ΠΡΟΤΕΚΤΟΡΑΤΟ ΜΝΗΜΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΧΡΕΤΟΤΑΤΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΡΜΗΝΕΥΣ ΜΝΗΜΕΩΝ

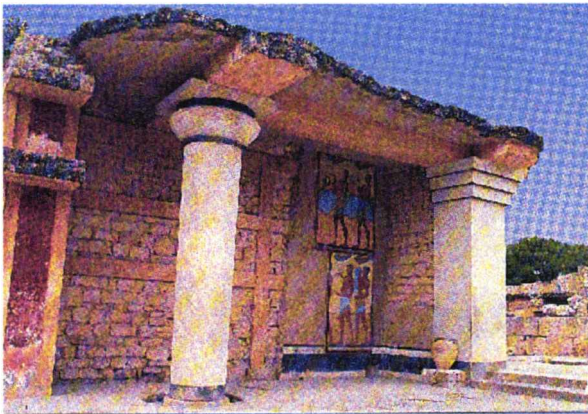
Postcard 3-37: An image of Knossos taken from a great distance, Mathioulakis Editions

The two sacred Minoan symbols on the back of the postcard illustrate the hinted maintenance and transformation of charisma from the authentic place to the possessor of the postcard.

The Wall-drawings

The wall-drawings of the Palace illustrate the Minoan usual ceremonies, games and rituals. Today the viewer gazes at them from the point of the Barthesian studium. What did the people living here used to wear? What were they like? Their haircuts, their skin colour, even their pose provide archaeologists with information about the Minoan way of life.

To preserve a myth, one should firstly preserve the appearance of the people that created it. No wonder wall-drawings are so commonly found on postcards. It is not only the people and ceremonies, but also the drawings on the walls of the king and queen's rooms that are shown and given great significance.



Postcard 3-38: The Palace of Knossos. The South Propylon with replicas of sections of the Procession Fresco, Adam Editions



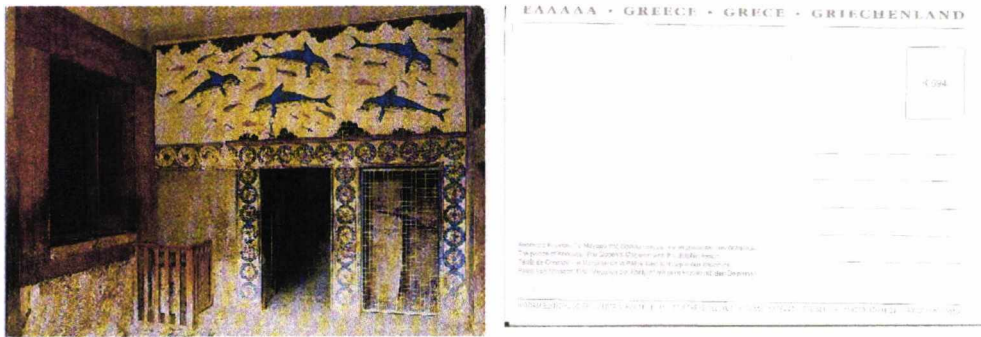
Figure 3-2: The same drawing in a holiday leaflet

Again, the transformation of charisma is visible. If one possesses a postcard of the drawings on Minos' bedroom, one might for a second imagine his habits and personal taste and even imagine himself in the king's shoes.

What these images suggest is the preservation and great appeal of the Minoan myth. Through the souvenir and the postcard, this myth is refreshed and relived. Their significance is in giving to their buyers/receivers/viewers an aspect of how the Minoan civilization was like. Their objective character is self-evident; they are, after all, images captured by the photographic

lens of an individual. This fact alone reveals the necessarily selective character of the postcard, its introductory role, its function as an invitation to a firstly seen, unique world. Unique, because every viewer would see it in a slightly different way.

The King and Queen's Rooms



Postcard 3-39: The Palace of Knossos. The Queen's Megaron with the dolphin fresco, Adam Editions

What postcards like the ones shown on this page invite to, is the rooms of Minos Palace, Knossos, and consequently to the Minoan civilization in general. Why invite? Because, showing images of a particular period can be seen as a process of introducing the wall-drawings or the royal architectural sequence of the time and period written at the backside to a wide audience.

Just like parts of paintings on postcards can intrigue the viewer into trying to find and see the whole painting or more works of the same artist, parts of architecture on postcards can function as an invitation to the place shown, so that the interested person could come in direct contact with the architectural site. At the same time, as paintings on postcards can be pursued as souvenirs or collection items, so postcards showing architecture or parts of a place already visited, can function as reminders of past experiences and be bought to keep and cherish, to look at and remember. These postcards can also be shown to relatives and friends, while telling the narration of one's time at the place shown.

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ΑΝΑΓΡΑΦΗ ΣΤΑΘΕΡΗΣ ΤΙΜΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΗΣ
ΤΗ ΔΕΞΙΤΕΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ
ΚΑΤΑΝΟΜΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ. ΤΙΜΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ
ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΡΑΧΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΣΤΑΤΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ

Η ΔΕΞΙΤΕΡΗ ΚΑΙ ΤΗ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΚΑΤΑΝΟΜΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΑΔΟΣ. ΤΙΜΗ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΠΡΟΚΑΤΑΡΑΧΗΝ ΤΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΣΤΑΤΙΣΤΙΚΗΣ



Postcard 3-40: The Palace of Knossos. The throne room with the Griffin Fresco, Adam Edition

7. Gazing at postcards

What interferes then in the viewer's field of visual perception? Which are the fundamentals of visual perception, the basic features of understanding vision? Is a simple figure—an object—versus a simple ground—the earth—enough for decoding vision? Is the mere object as distinguished from its general background what we see? Is absolute simultaneity the main visual characteristic and how far does it distinguish vision from the always-arguable perception?

How do we see a postcard?

Reflexive immediacy. Do we see it as something reminding us of our past, attaching it to our life's narrative? Do we connect it to our past experiences and practices, to our childhood or more close past? Or do we see it as a strange conflation of objects and thus a creation of new images?

Mechanical Seeing.⁵¹ Do we perhaps scan it mechanically, trying to return to the already known and therefore already tested and approved? Do we try to connect it to the myths about our ancestors and ourselves, the myths we have inherited? Do we find its interpretation in the unconscious memory of our personality?

The Gaze. Do we gaze at the postcard? If so, is it Urry's *Tourist Gaze* or Lacan's gaze, the gaze of a viewer who blocks the light and produces the shadow? Either way, something escapes our vision. Outsiders in the first case (foreigners, strangers), obstacles in the light's way in the second, we block our own vision.

The Voyeur. Duchamp's viewer is named voyeur.

"It is Sartre's chapter on "The Look" that, inadvertently of course, tells us quite a lot about Duchamp's "voyeur". For here is the passage where Sartre, arrested in front of a door just like Duchamp's participant in the Etant donnees, depicts himself poised at a keyhole that has become nothing but transparent vehicle

*for his gaze to penetrate... he has become a self that exists on the level of all other objects of the world... and is a self that is defined by shame.*³⁶²

The gaze, then, exists in the dimension of the existence of others. The absence of the Other's gaze defines one's gaze. In so far as the Other's gaze appears, in so far as the Other's gaze surprises one, because it discovers him at the keyhole, one's gaze disappears. Is this how one sees postcards? Like Duchamp's voyeur? The postcard gazer is definitely not looking



Postcard 3-41: Peeping through the postcard: Andros, Greece.

through a keyhole, but his gaze could be seen as directing itself through the open window of a local house. The postcard's frame can be seen as the window's wooden glass casing. Through the glass, the self-contained autonomy framed by the casing/frame uncovers a secret world. It is a world that might remind one of his past or be a totally new, firstly seen image, a world that might unconsciously transfer its gazer to the already known, or to wholly unimaginable new surroundings. It might be something that he once dreamed about and finally found, something he now gazes at with Urry's or Lacan's gaze. It might be a combination or none of the above. Of course, one interprets this just seen world by means of experience and practice. However, to be discovered at the window case is to be discovered as a body. It is to see and understand oneself in relation to others and in their



Photograph 3-12: Peeping through the lens, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Seville, 1933

distance. Sartre's shame equals with the gazer's becoming conscious of the differences and similarities between himself and the viewed, his conceptualization of his image as a foreigner, a peeping Tom.

The difference being that when looking at a postcard one is not afraid of losing the image. No matter how many twinklings of the eye, no matter how many times one blinks, the postcard will always be in front of him, he might as well carry it with him. On the contrary, an instant later the

window will be closed and the image lost. Only when the shop is closing does one find himself in the same hurry to glance at the image on a postcard. Still, the next day it will be at the same place and it can be his.

Through the photographic lens, one might see himself peeping through a peephole, as well. In this case, the observer maintains the hurry of the peeping Tom, because the photographing objects might be on the move or just not want to be photographed. Interfering in their privacy, the lens looks at them from a distance, observing, capturing. It is the click that disturbs the subject's thinking and gazing. He would prefer the image without the disturbance of the click—a postcard?

The condition of the window implies a boundary between the perceiver and the perceived. At a window, the viewer loses his sense of touch, smell and hearing. Because mediated, the image seen is distanced from one's body; the use of media to explain and reflect the world sets people back and only lets them appear in the background as observers. *"Mediation must be thought about as multileveled with as many gray zones as clear ones. My perspectives on the world are never as immobile as the metaphor of the window suggests. More often than not I imagine myself to be beyond the constraints of the frame"*.⁵³ Before one buys the postcard of Knossos Palace one was actually walking through its rooms and corridors.

The similarity between seeing through a window and seeing a postcard lies on the element of time. Both the window and the postcard freeze viewers into fixed positions of images that they cannot change. Even this fact, however, apply only in the case of sent or already bought postcards. The window offers only one view. The postcard producers offer a variety of postcard views to choose from.

How can one connect a closed window to a postcard?

One can in addition argue that Sartre's gaze is defined by the subject sustaining himself in the function of desire. Desire is formulated in the domain of a lonely, romantic peeper. As long as one is discovered, the gaze does not end but the desire does and therefore the subject dismisses both his implied role and his seeing.

*The Vision's "Other Scene"*⁵⁴. Following one of Freud's analyses of the dream being a fantasy stored in memory and suddenly aroused, do we view postcards in relation to our own cultural

aspirations? Is our visual perception of the postcard structured as Lacan's "*belong to me* aspect of representations"? Do we see the postcard as something both outside ourselves and ours, as something we were meant to find because we were once dreaming of it?

"The eye", Lacan tells us, "*is only the metaphor of something that I would prefer to call the seer's 'shoot' (pousse)—something prior to his eye*".⁵⁵ The pre-existence of a particular gaze is for Lacan proven by the fact that the subject sees only from one point but is looked at from all sides. One's gaze slips, passes, is transmitted; one sees *outside*, perception is on the objects that it apprehends. "*The privilege of the subject seems to be established here from that bipolar reflexive relation by which, as soon as I perceive, my representations belong to me*".⁵⁶ Whatever aspect of the world appears to the subject, therefore, is in accordance to his representations. The way Lacan compares the note in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Le Visible et l' invisible* about the turning inside-out of the finger of a glove with the inside-out structure of the gaze reveals the importance of the unconscious as well as of consciousness in the perception procedure.

What determines the repetition automatism that works to restore, to find the "*belong to one representations*" is one's trauma. The traumatic event, the Lacanian *tuche* can be seen therefore as of determining value as far as vision is concerned. Because the object-signifier will be looked at with the examining look of whether or not it could stand for the missed encounter, for what the gazer has lost. It is this object that if found would be seen as a "*belong to one aspect of representation*"; it is this gap that one is searching to fill with substitutes and interpreted-according to will signifiers.

Lacan gives the term "automaton" to indicate the mechanical and almost without thinking aspect of the searching for the missed encounter, the anxiety as well as the role of chance in the whole procedure of filling the gap and finally finding the lost encounter or one cut to the measure of the subject's desire.

If for Rosalind Kraus the optical unconscious is seen as "*a projection of the way that human vision can be thought to be less than a master of all it surveys, in conflict as it is with what is internal to the organism that houses it*"⁵⁷, then it might be said that there is hardly any visual experience without this optical unconscious, without memory, expectation or the search for your belonging and fulfilling

representations. People do not see, they *behold*. The seen is adopted by the seer and added to the narrative of his life as something met in the process of looking for the missed encounter.

The image on a postcard then—as any other image—is seen during the returning to one’s personal trauma, during the procedure of narrowing the gap, recognizing perhaps some “*belong to one representations*”. Through the possession of a postcard’s image the gazer can therefore easily and safely return to his trauma. People do not exhaust the experience of a postcard by just looking at it once. Similarly, the experience of a photograph is not exhausted in one and only look of it. One always returns to the same photograph as one always returns to his trauma. Wittgenstein has asked the question: “*Do I really see something different each time or do I only interpret what I see in a different way?*”⁵⁸

The producer of the photograph/postcard is seen as the mediator of the subject’s trauma. Can he create or generalize the desires and missed encounters of the postcard buyers? If so, is that what the mass culture is about?

“*How one casts his gaze around the world depends both upon his knowledge of the world and on his purposes—i.e., on the information that he seeks.*”⁵⁹ When scanning a picture, Hochberg believes, the interpretation of the viewer depends on his ability to fit each view into some “mental map”. Whether we agree or not with this idea of a mental map, one thing emerges as a clear outcome: the picture as we perceive it is not on the retina of the eye, but **in the mind’s eye**⁶⁰. Whether we call it “*belong to me representation*” or a part of one’s actual or invented “*mental map*”, the outcome remains the same: what is perceived depends on the observer, on what he anticipates or searches for and on where he looks. An image on a postcard is seen as such with a *paradoxical trick of consciousness*⁶¹, a learned ability to see something as there and not there at the same time—as in front of him and in another country. However, if there is no such thing as the right perception, if Nietzsche is right in characterizing it as a *self-contradictory absurdity*⁶², then there is not one correct way of interpreting an image; the “appropriate” or “right” way is within the gazer.

Recasting the window comparison, we can now see it as multidimensional, as a membrane dependent on the viewer. The viewer can make use of the window to see, to feel and to imagine, as the postcard-buyer can make use of the postcard-image to see, to feel and to remember/long for. The message cannot be manipulated in such a degree as to distort the notion/image carried. Even if it was, there are also other media, other forms of communication

among the hundreds of postcards produced providing us with information in order to enhance or negate what has been presented to us.

If images are connected to the unconscious or to the viewer's trauma, then no viewers, and no producers either can control perception.

8. Afterthoughts

Architecture in two dimensions is believed to underestimate the building, not showing some of its greatest features such as its size, material and changes caused by the different angle of the light during the different seasons or times of the day. On most of the produced postcards, such characteristics as exact dimensions, material or alterations caused by lighting are not noticeable. Due to this fact, such media are condemned of being unable to offer an “authentic” or close enough representation of the art shown.

Many critiques of mass culture rushed to conclude to the standardization of art and culture, to its stagnation and mummification, as even the authentic fails to appear as authentic through the media. Let alone the creation of modern art works. Those are before their completion doomed to copy the standard practices and techniques created and distributed through the culture industry. The media are in many ways interwoven with the everyday life of the individual and therefore what appears to be the case in the media industries can be generalized to include the whole sphere of the society and its culture.

The two-dimensional character of the postcard, however, cannot by itself be evidence adequate enough to justify such condemnation of its character and tactics. Architects draw before they build and even sketch lines on paper when in front of a great building or monument. For the music to be heard there was a musician who produced it first on paper. For the building to be created there was an architect who saw its appearance on paper beforehand. Architecture on paper has existed long before the appearance of photography and the postcard and that did not erase it from the category of art or condemned it to standardization.

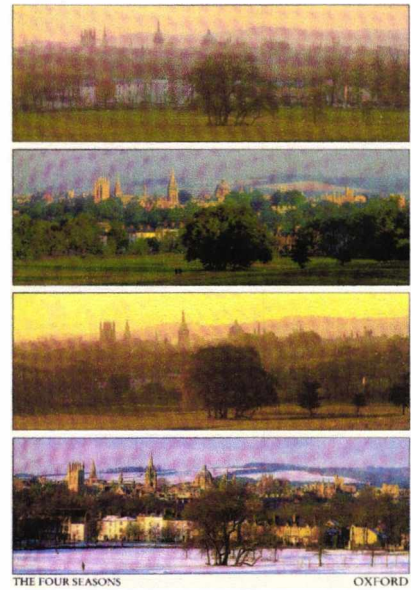
As far as the inability of the postcard to show some of architecture’s basic and most important features is concerned, one can argue that those features that are not shown are often suggested or implied. The size of the painting/statue/building is often typed on the backside of the postcard showing it; the material can be implied on the two-dimensional paper by its shading or lighting effects—often the description of the material is also included in the information typed on the backside of the postcard. The changes in the appearance of the building through the different light or season effects can be traced through more than one postcards, as there are

aspects of the same building photographed by day or night time, in winter, autumn, spring or summer.

When mediated, architecture is photographed/ shown under the supervision and approval of a producer, a person in charge. Specific shooting angles are required, the photographer works under specific guidelines of what and how to photograph. There are favourite buildings shown and “classic” images of those buildings that are sold and reproduced in a vicious circle that never stops. However, there are other aspects shown and other ways to get familiar with or learn more about the architecture shown.

It is true that some images sell more postcards than others but there is no doubt that other images—less familiar or even unknown images—have been seen and bought on postcards. As this chapter unfolded, there became obvious that certain images are more popular than others—as they are meant to attract the “tourist gaze”—and almost equate themselves with or act as a symbolization for the place shown. What the red columns are for Knossos, the university is for Oxford. What Plaza de Cibeles is for Madrid, the Eiffel Tower is for Paris.

One cannot visit one of these cities without visiting the corresponding monument and usually the visit ends by a look at the little shop situated near the exit. It is, as I have already pointed out, the tourist’s little ritual: to travel somewhere, visit the well-known sites and the famous monuments and buy himself a souvenir to remind oneself of a past experience and show to the friends and family. The more familiar the image on the postcard, the more proof that one has visited the place. The famous monument on the postcard also lends some of its pride and cultural status to the visitor—only cultural people visit cultural sites—and consequently to the receiver of the postcard. So everyone is happy: the producer sold many postcards, the tourist bought himself a souvenir that not only proves his actual visit to the place shown but also makes him appear with a certain status. Such charisma of the monument is transcended not only to the tourist, but to the receiver of the sent postcard as well.



Postcard 3-42: Oxford, the four seasons, View from South Parks, Oxford Views, The Oxford Photo Library

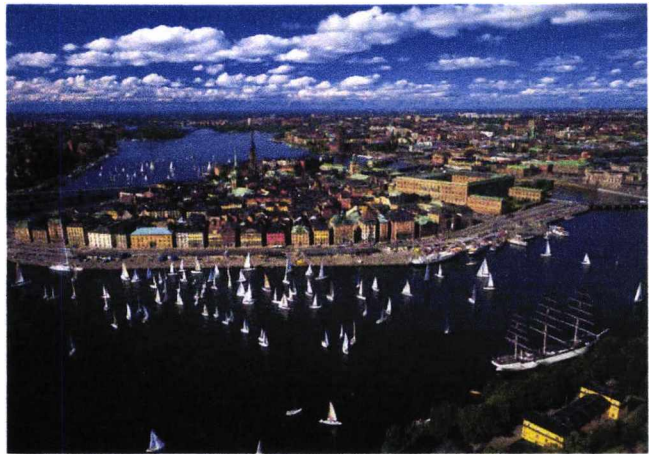
Not only monuments,



Postcard 3-43: A souvenir from Spain, Madrid, Plaza de Cibeles, Edition

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but also viewpoints of a city can function as familiar and therefore highly sought after and much respected, bought and traveled images. On the postcard shown below, a viewpoint of Stockholm, taken from a high point in the city, offers the tourist/viewer the illusion of a pseudo-Grand Tour and simultaneously—as the Grand Tour is associated with a certain financial and cultural status—the illusion of his being one among the few privileged.

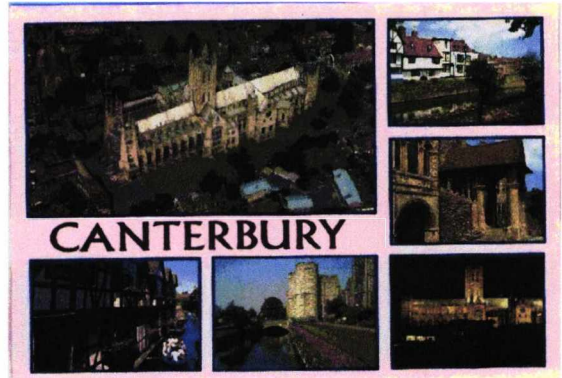


Postcard 3-44: High above the Old Town and the Royal Palace, Stockholm,

photograph by Per-Erik Adamsson, UpSide Cards, 1992

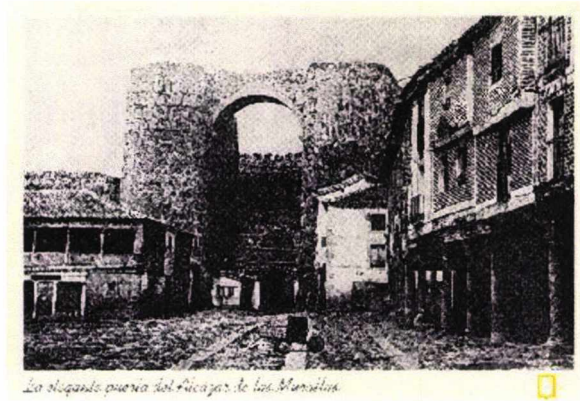
The acquired postcard functions as a certificate of presence and by extension a certificate of status quo and cultural intellectualism.

On the standardized paper of a postcard—fixed size, standard reverse—the architectural images work as souvenir items,



Postcard 3-45: Canterbury, J. Salmon LTD., Sevenoaks, Kent

collection items

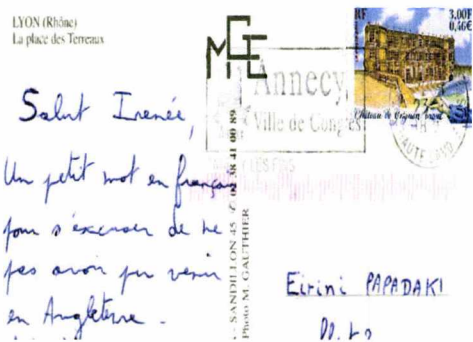


Postcard 3-46: Avila, FISA—ESCUDO DE ORO, Barcelona

or an aesthetic way of communication.

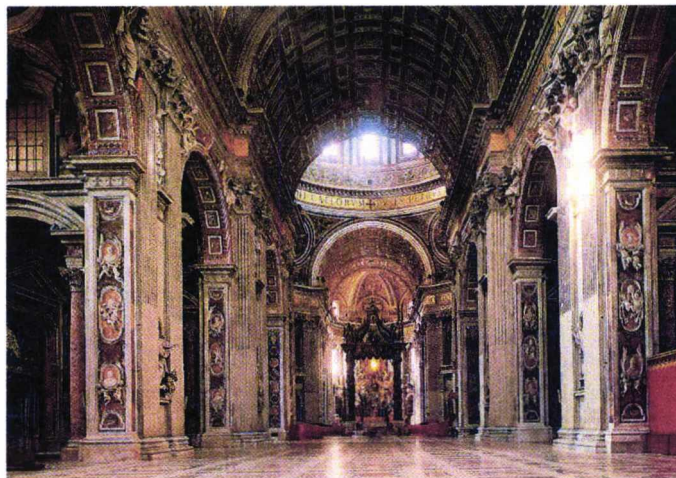


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Postcard 3-47: A sent postcard from Lyon, photography by M. Gauthier, Sandillon Editions

Although many underestimate the value of images seen on postcards, nobody can deny that they can sometimes provide images that the individual eye or camera could not ever capture. A simple example would be the case of the Vatican, Italy, where the use of photographic cameras is strictly prohibited. Still, with the purchase of a postcard the visitor has the advantage of maintaining the images seen, both for showing to his friends and family and for his own personal souvenir, reminding him of a little past experience. Although many would still argue that the purchase of postcards seems like admitting that one needs guidance to define which images are worth remembering and which not, in cases like the Vatican it still is a great deal for someone that will never go there to receive such a postcard.



Postcard 3-48: Inside of the Vatican, Italia editions

Photographs and drawings/sketches of buildings and monuments on postcards cannot ever maintain on paper all the elements that make them unique and admirable. In some cases, they are even seen as a reduction of the architectural art on the two-dimensional surface. However, the particular architectural style is still more or less by each viewer understood and appreciated and the experience of being there reminded.

After all, postcards are informative media and they function selectively. Their character is an introductory one: they introduce to the viewers the place shown. The information typed on their backside can be seen as the preface of an acquaintance, the main part of which remaining to be written by the receiver, if he decides to actually visit the place shown. In this sense, postcards can be seen as invitations to the place shown, much like paintings on postcards can be

seen as introductions to the particular artist/period or the actual painting shown.

This selective information can sometimes promote, advertise or generally praise a specific architectural site. On the next postcard's backside London's Royal Albert Hall is characterized as "a much loved Hall, in the form of an oval ampitheatre" that "hosts balls, boxing matches, meetings and the Promenade concerts founded by Sir Henry Wood in 1895".



Postcard 3-49: A postcard of the Royal Albert Hall, London, photograph by Adam Woolfit, Capital Cards, Cameramen UK Ltd.

Comments are common on the backside of a postcard; they often function in an advertising way: after all, they are trying to sell an image. Comments, however, do not only promote specific architectural sites. They also sell ideas, symbolizations and cultural resources.



Postcards 3-50 & 3-51: Promoting Greece as "the inspiration of the Gods" and London as the "Theatreland",
Toubis Editions, Athens, and London Postcard Co. respectively

On the postcards shown above, specific places are connected to specific ideas, the connection point being the comment typed in the middle. These comments are usually surrounded by multiple images that are carefully chosen to justify the proposed claim.

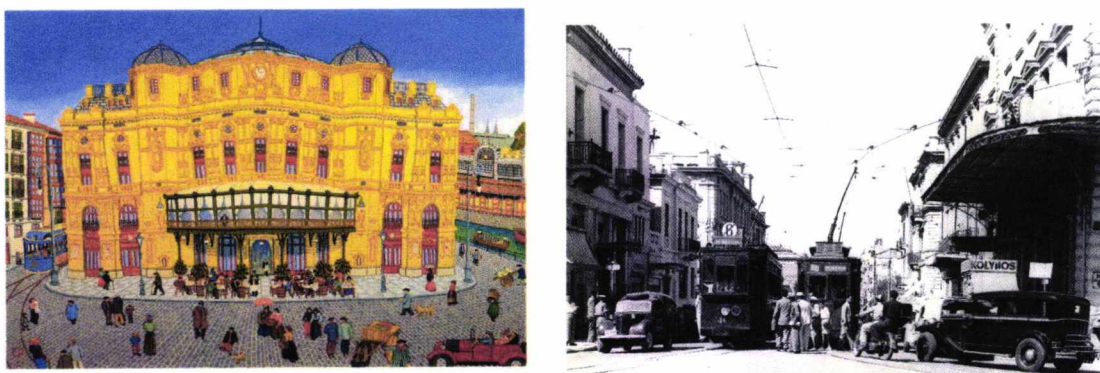
Although it is exactly this promoting character of the media that aroused most of its categorizing critiques, it can be argued that because of the vast amount of images available, the tourist-purchaser has many options to choose from. One can choose one or more among the images for sale, one or more of the available gazes, one or more of the promoted ideas.



Postcards 3-52 & 3-53: Different ways of viewing Chania, Mantzios and Adams Editions respectively

The postcards shown above carry two completely different images of the port of Chania, Crete. The first can be seen as an example of the romantic gaze, while the second as an example of the comic one. This latter example might very well be suitable for children to hold as a souvenir or send to one of their friends, or even for parents to send to their children who for some reason have stayed in the homeland.

Some postcards imply the historical interest of a place by showing aspects of its past.



Postcard 3-54 & 3-55: Past aspects of Bilbao, Spain, and Athens, (during the '50s) Greece, by Argitaratzailea/Editorial and Fistiki Editions

People find looking at those aspects of a place's past interesting, as they provide them with a good chance to find the studium in them and in some rare cases even the punctum of a

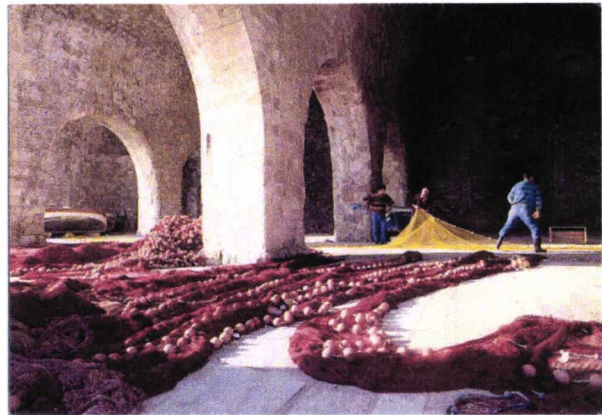
past memory or trauma might strike them.

One can choose among the viewpoint of great distance—and imagine himself as a Grand-tourist—



Postcard 3-56: Heraklion seen from above, Adams Editions

or the “window-gaze”—and imagine he is secretly looking through a local window into the real life of the visited place.



Postcard 3-57: Fishermen in the Venetian shipyard of Heraklion, Crete, photo by Pierre Couteau, Mantzios Editions, Athens

Furthermore, because one knows that through the postcard one is getting only a selective part of information, he can then search and find more about the place/painting/era that interests him.

One should, undoubtedly, start somewhere.

Isn't an image of the desired object good enough a beginning?

For the tourist, of course, it is a completely different story.

If we parallel the tourist industry to the culture industry, we can see that the similarities are many and crucial. In both cases, there are the producers and distributors of the information, in both cases the media are involved, mediating this produced information and in both cases, there are the elite and the masses, respectively rejecting or accepting such information. As said before, however, among the good, the bad and the dopen of the culture industry, the tourist is unclassifiable.

The postcard is the quasi-mass medium through which the information is distributed. The tourist industry is equated to the culture industry. The postcard receivers, the people that receive the mediated information can be seen as the masses—the receivers of the culture industry's products. But the tourist?

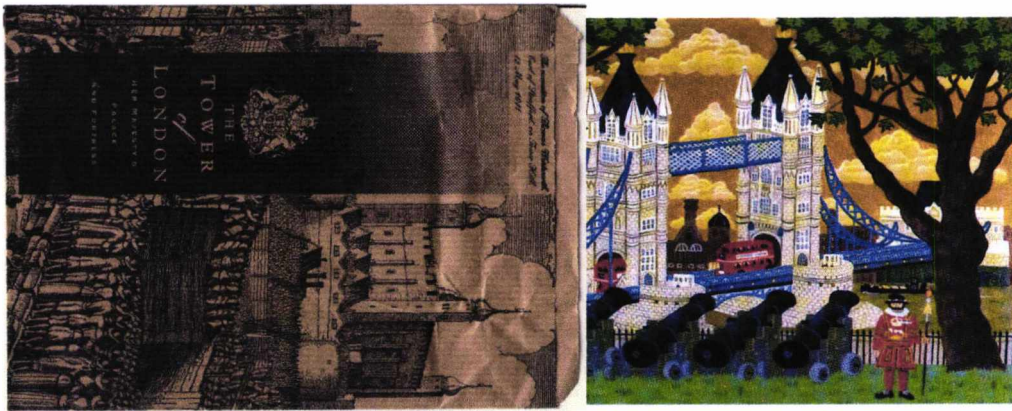
Where is the tourist to find his peer group? Not among the elite of the intellectuals, for they possess a strictly limited circle and only few can be allowed to enter into such a circle. Only the locals that have been brought up and raised among the architectural sites and the admired monuments can be compared to the elite that owned great paintings. Compared yes, but never equated. Both know and value the history and special character of the work of art. Both feel privileged and their privilege comes with birth: the former are lucky enough to have been born in the admired place, while the latter are lucky enough to have been born in a wealthy and cultural environment—so wealthy and so cultural, that it can offer them the ability to not only have access to but own art. Both can come, at times, to ignore the work of art, taking it for granted. The locals pass it every day on their way to work. The wealthy often come to see the painting hanging on their wall as a part of their house, like furniture.

The tourists cannot be seen among the masses, for they have seen and admired the works of art in both direct and mediated ways and have—most of them—formed a justifiable opinion about them. They cannot, of course, be seen among the bad of the producers either, because they have no connection to the production process.

Failing to classify the tourist among the existing pattern of the culture industry proves crucial in questioning the notion of the mass culture. The masses of the tourist industry—the receivers of the postcard—receive information from the media—in this instance the postcards—but they also receive information from the source itself: the person who sent them

the postcard would come back and tell them all about the place shown. The notion of the homogeneous mass is questionable in this sense, as the tourists and their close family and friends cannot be seen among the passive consumers of a mass environment. If, however, the mass is not constituted by a homogeneous crowd, its reactions and tastes cannot easily be formed or manipulated.

It can be argued that the tourist industry borrows and mimics the tactics of the museum industry—or is it the other way around? The visit to the museum and the visit to the monument



Postcard 3-58: The Tower Bridge, Reproduced from the original oil painting by Andrew Murray, Andrew Murray's London, postcard bought from the monument shop after the visit

start similarly and end in exactly the same way. They start with an introductory guide, they continue in a ritual following the numbered rooms and the guidelines of where to go and what to see in what order and end in the exhibition/monument shop, where souvenirs are bought.



Postcard 3-59: A postcard bought after a visit to the Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

Even the paper bag that the postcard is put on can function as a souvenir of such a visit and that can be the case for both museums—permanent and temporary exhibitions included—and architectural sites—monuments included.

Either way, the image that the producer chose is carried, but the way it is going to be perceived depends on the viewer. The way the viewer is going to decode the image depends on his own personal aspirations, as he searches for his belong-to-him-representations. Once found, no producer could advise him on how to interpret or perceive them.

Whether authenticity can be argued about or not, whether something that is considered to be authentic can be authentically reproduced or not—and these are questions that will be discussed about in the next part of the thesis—the outcome of this case study is that it does not make any difference. Even if one thinks of Knossos as an authentic architectural as well as archaeological site, nobody thinks he is back to the site while looking at the postcard. Even if authenticity was in a sense important but was lost during the reproduction process, it is still preserved in the site. The reproduction cannot but be seen as an introduction to that site and its authenticity.

Selective and introductory information cannot but be seen as a first step towards the education of the public in a general sphere. It is up to the audience to decide whether or not they are going to enhance that knowledge, in which direction and in what way.

9. Notes

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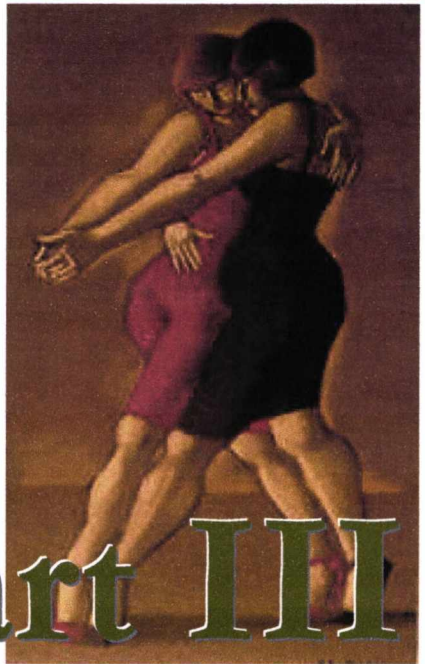
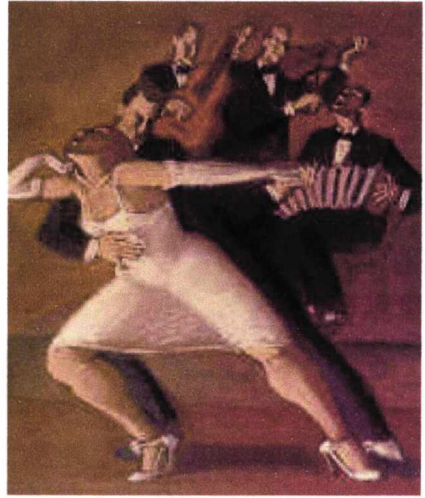
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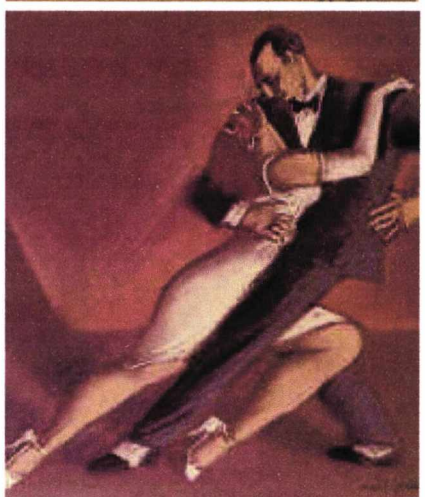
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Part III



Authenticity

The blanketing of origins and the dismissal of the value of authenticity are among the basic categorizations of modern art and mass culture. The obsession about the origin of an artwork, its date, author or signature—the obsession about the mythological object—by referring to ancestry refers to the self, the ego and the birth of human beings: that is, it refers to one's identity conditions. As long as the ancient Greek buildings are still visibly valuably unique, civilization and the spirit of democracy can be traced back to their origins. As long as their authenticity is maintained, so will the high values that came into existence in their societies.

An object, however, does not have to be authentic to be desirable: reproductions and mediations of authenticity, as long as they carry the charisma of the original's image, can be pursued and valued in the modern society. That is the magical function of the postcard, on which architecture is functionless. This functionless attribute of the artwork is what gives it prestige on the postcard: its image is desirable precisely because it has survived and in its usefulness can function as a sign of prior existence.

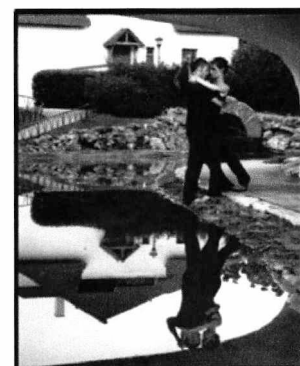
Less "authentic" artistic and cultural forms such as tango music will be examined in the next part of the thesis. Although authenticity as a concept is in itself questioned—who and in what terms decides which and in what way is considered "authentic"—the examination of an art form less concerned with such notions and more associated with the messages it carries, can pose some interesting questions for this thesis.

How important is this notion of authenticity anyway in an era of eternal circulation of images, sounds, experiences, smells and tastes? Where lies the beginning in an experience that determines itself as continuous? Continuity cannot remember its beginning or forecast its route. The finish seems either an illusion or too distant a task for one to engage oneself with it at the time. Aesthetic experience is, itself, continuous. As the gaze is continuous, so is its surrounding universe. As experiences are as many as innumerable, so are artworks. There are the ones the gaze has classified, named and put in museums and the ones the gaze has not yet discovered. There are those that have completely let themselves be captured by the gaze and those that decline surrendering. Which are named authentic?

Music Through the Cinema

1. Musical Languages Mediated

Setting a firm definition or even description of the notion of music is more than a complicated issue. So is clarifying which kind of sound combinations is to be included in such a definition or where exactly lays the musical meaning. Between the Platonist view that musical works are universals—that they exist everlastingly—and the modern notion of *Werktreue* there have existed various different opinions and even more centuries. Aristotle thought of works as essences exhausted in performances and score-copies. Then we have the nominalist view, arguing that works as such do not exist—only performances of works and score-copies exist—or the idealist view—the work being identified with the idea in the composer’s mind.¹



Photograph 4-1: Alain Beaupre, teacher of Science and Photography, world traveller and tanguero

¹ For a more detailed historical trace of a definition and use of the work concept see Goehr, Lydia, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works, An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, pp. 13-43

Cage's "organization of sound"—using his equivalent for music so as to distinguish his understanding of the concept in opposition to the restriction to sounds of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century instruments—promises new sound experiences using any and all sounds that can be heard. The entire field of sound and the entire field of time are in the hands of the organizer of sound (the composer) to use in any combination and any continuity. Any sound is acceptable and the audience's expectations shattered. Why should one expect something of music anyway? ¹

Along with the notion of "the culture industry", such music types as popular or folk music, jazz or the blues have been irreversibly excluded from any such discussion right from the beginning. Taking into account the modern age separation between the elite and the masses, it is easy to conclude that due to the elite's possession of the "intellect"—and therefore the right of judgement—, the power—and so the ability to easily and effectively express that judgment—and the means—the places and institutions in which such judgments are made—, the dispossessed—not to use the negatively charged term "the masses"—are deprived of many of their intellectual or conscious choices and [are] doomed to liking standardized forms of cultural expression, including standardized art and therefore standardized and uninspiring music.

What counts as "good" music is once and for all decided in terms of classical or "serious" music. Many academics wonder if different kinds of music are equally "good"—but is that the issue? Why can't each listener define his own personal "goodness" in music and equally enjoy more than one type of works?

There is an implication that through the media both traditional high culture and folk culture are to be decreased, minimized and shattered, so as to be easily acceptable by the mass audiences. The purpose of mediating art through the mass media is only commercial and therefore the viewer's/listener's creativity is unwelcome. Standardization is the one and sole aim; homogeneity and anonymity are what such mediation is after. Spontaneity and individuality are totally dismissed. Although there is an important difference between the conservatives and the radical critics of mass culture as far as its origins are concerned—the former attributing it to the rise of the political, economic and cultural power of the inadequate masses, the latter to the inconsistency of the market mechanism—they all agree in many respects of criticism.

After modernity and globalization, the assumption turns imperialistic: the flow of cultural

products is described to be one-way, from the west to the rest of the world—or from the elite to the masses. However, the interplays and intercultural cross-fertilization of local and international sounds are self-evident. The cultural imperialism thesis wrongly assumes the inauthenticity of the west culture in comparison with the authentic local ones and at the same time implies the passivity and surrendering of the local traditions in front of the west imports.

The mass culture debate can be called partly responsible for the distinction between “serious” and “popular” music, between “west” and “world” music; or this gap between “serious” and “popular” music, “west” and “world” music can be seen as interpreted by the mass culture critique—it is a vicious circle. Discussions are originated concerning the different purposes of creation on the part of the artist—be it unique for “serious” and traditional for “west” music while commercial for “popular” and influenced for “world” music—, the quality of the works—be it inferior for “serious”/“west” music and poorer for “popular”/“world” music—etc. The analysis in the first chapter has clearly characterized these aspects of mass culture critique as some of its myths—the aim is not to repeat these opinions here. What, however, seems interesting to ponder on for a moment is the actual criteria that set the firm boundaries between “serious” and “popular” music and those that each work has to confront if it is to be recognized as of a “higher” quality. The absence of commercial pressures, the unique creative potential of the artist, the possibility of creativity in complete antithesis to standardization are some of the characteristic attributes of “serious” music. In contrast, “popular” music inhibits the growth of “serious” music—especially due to the former’s vast quantity in the mass media—and, as it is imposed from above, it is difficult to control. The music’s standardization and its audience’s passivity are always the main verdicts against “popular” music.

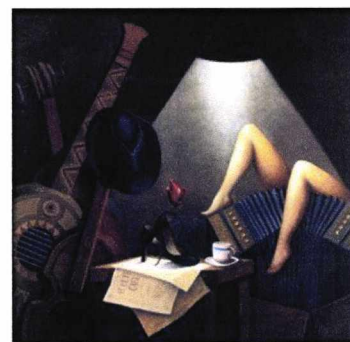
Adorno, like many other sociological critics of mass culture associated with the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, equals jazz with “standardized” music, music mainly aiming to market profit. His criticism and ideas are analysed and dismissed by many members of the academic community. I have already translated this opinion as a try of a past elitism—of which Adorno most definitely is a member—to preserve the economically isolated intelligentsia they were used to possess. One could, however, give Adorno’s criticism some justification. His was a timely, not timeless, interpretation of the changing character of music, set and evolved during the

thirties and forties. According to this view, music loses status if mediated. The examination of the mediation of a particular musical language—the tango—through the cinema will hopefully show that this is not so.

Many would argue that the tango is not a characteristic example of a musical language. In fact, it does not even belong to the category of “serious” music; it does not meet the criteria of the European classical tradition. On the contrary, it used to be performed in Argentinean cabarets, danced to by the lower classes. That fact alone is adequate to erase its mentioning next to serious, classical music. It should be put in the category of “popular” music, lower art.

Even if one accepts the distinction between lower and higher types of art-works, one could argue that nowadays, famous quartets and violists, such as the Kronos Quartet and Gidon Kremer perform tango music right after works of Beethoven or Schubert. Tango is performed in concert halls and danced to by famous ballet groups. What this transformation suggests is that the tango is starting to be appreciated. My point will be that this appreciation was partly originated or at least enhanced exactly by the tango’s frequent mediation through the media and especially the cinema.

Bourdieu would argue that the tango is “in a process of legitimation”, meaning it has dramatically changed from a forbidden dance of the poor to music fit for scholarly treatises. Perhaps it is the time when tango music, finally seen as a derivative example of a musical work, may cause the expansion or modification of the work-concept so as to be included in it. My argument will be that this legitimation began to



Painting 4-1: El Ultimo Café,

by Huan Carlos Liberti



Poster 4-1: Poster of the film “El Exilio de Gardel”

take place after the tango started to be mediated through the cinema—that the particular medium has much to claim for the tango’s wider approval as an art form. From the moment the tango’s audiences extended from the lower Argentinean classes of cabaret-goers to the higher European status groups of cinema-viewers there seems to be a change of the way the tango was viewed. Fernando Solanas’ films *Tangos: El exilio de Gardel* (1983) and *Sur* (1988) had probably a lot to do with tango’s legitimation process. Solanas was not the only Argentinian who was exiled in Paris, but he formed part of the expatriated Argentine community there between 1973 and 1984 and that probably had a great deal to do with promoting the tango in Europe.

The Parisian members of the upper classes that watched and enjoyed those films had to justify their tastes; so approval of such music meant classifying it under the title of “serious” music. Film was by then a cultural product that could easily be included within the orbit of high or elite culture. But tango music? The process of tango legitimation involved its meeting the traditional criteria of high-status, “serious” music, the criteria of excellence set by the same social group. If one could find some “artistic” features in tango, one was able to justify his liking for the particular kind of music and so freely enjoy it.

What however is the reason that members of upper class groups begin to appreciate particular types of music such as the tango and participate in its legitimation? Is it a change of content through their mediation? Does it have any relevance to Jameson’s notion of “cognitive mapping”², the process by which Argentinians set their musical image onto the screen of the socio-political space and its interface with the world? How can the local be linked to and appreciated by the global and at the same time not be stripped of its “cult value” or “aura”, screening, according to Benjamin, only “exhibition value”?

My assumption would be that these films, set in a period of democratization and delayed entrance into modernity, demonstrate a new kind of aura; their tango soundtracks enriching this cult value with their nostalgic music and lyrics, and the always attractive notion of an originally distanced culture.

2 The Cinema

Ways and Character of the Movies

Film is the seventh art, some say. If so, its most significant difference with the others is its attracting both the upper and the lower classes; the fact is that everyone cares for the movies.

In my view, music has much to gain when mediated through the medium of film. There are more and easier ways to enter to the movies than to the art of music. This fact simultaneously means wider audiences for music. The question is: has music lost something—its status, its unique character—during this kind of mediation?

The similarity between the music hall and the cinema is the wide audience attending the performance. In both cases, the viewer is seated among friends and complete strangers, usually in amphitheatric halls, holding the already purchased ticket in his hands, viewing the performance of his choice. The difference being that the cinema viewer enjoys a more general freedom of behaviour—one is allowed to laugh aloud with a film's jokes, but not whistle the tune or tap his feet in the melody of a concert. The viewer should sit as quietly as possible in a concert performance but such a sitting in a cinema room would probably just underline the film's failure or indifference.

Is there such a thing as a "serious" film performance? Do people who attend to serious music evaluate lighter or film music? Well, it depends on the movie: its director, its significance and wider approval, its critics and mostly, on the people that have already seen and liked it. There have been instances of "serious" films, of film masterpieces and genuine film art. Still, the audiences were again allowed to show their feelings—be they of joy or sorrow—without shame or restrictions. Is this fact due to a difference in audiences or is it due to the general difference between the medium of music and the medium of film?

I will consider it to be the latter, although a small difference between the audience that sits in a concert hall and the audience of a movie still remains visible—the lower classes being nowadays in the process of learning how to appreciate concert music, but still not enough representatives appear to sit in the concert halls. The main difference of film and music is film's

combination of sound and sight on a screen. The film's characteristic value is exactly this projection of reality into a screen. The photographic nature of film cannot but parallel it with reality—a photograph is seen as the cropping of reality on a piece of paper.

The fact that film can be seen as a projection of reality on screen is not to say that film is only or mainly capable of depicting reality. Film has proved able to depict the fantastic as readily and effectively as the natural. As photographs are not copies of reality, so films are not sheer projections of it.

Films, like photographs, are manufactured, made by a human being with the help of a machine, namely the camera. Using the camera's technical features, the human eye chooses the view-angle of the shot and the hand proceeds in taking all the necessary steps in capturing it. The view seen is a human's choice—its capture then is made possible by means of the camera. As in the photograph, so in the screen the framing of a piece of reality and the dismissal of all the rest that could otherwise be seen is made by the photographer/cameraman. The paper/screen is the framing of the picture seen. That is something the audience should be aware of: what is projected in the screen of a cinema is not reality as it is, but reality as the director of the film saw it at the time of the production of the particular film. The viewers see what a single human being saw and the tense used is always the past one. What we see someone has *already* seen and projects it on screen for us to see it as well. Like the composer who has already heard the melody played, the film director knows the meaning of each scene towards the climax, as well as the ending.

The film's promise of "*projected visibility*" and "*ontological equality*"³ is a promise of permitting the audience to see the projected world and at the same time equate the viewer with the actor, implying the similarities of their lives, as they live in the same world. What follows from this promise is the idea that one is simultaneously present and absent when watching a movie. One feels present as living in the world screened and absent as not being there—in the movie—and not being able to affect or change the ending. What is seen is something already done—a past action that nobody has the power to change.

Cavell defines film as "*the succession of automatic world projections*"⁴. The word "succession" indicates the motion, the cutting of the pictures etc., while the term "automatic" implies the mechanical feature of photography and at the same time the possibility of generating new

instances and the implication of something happening of itself—giving the viewer no possibility or power to interfere. The notion of “world projections” implies the viewing of the world, with the ontological view that photography promises.

This view, however, of something passing—when one is deprived of the chance to participate or do something about it—generates the human nostalgia of the past and a sense of human mortality. Film functions as “*the wish for the magical reproduction of the world by enabling us to view it unseen*”⁵ This spectator’s gaze allows one to escape from responsibility into fantasy and by peeping on others’ lives forget his own.

“*A medium is something through which or by means of which something specific gets done or said in particular ways.*”⁶ In the concert hall, the context of music is constructed by the musicians and reconstructed by the audience. On screen, another medium mediates between the construction and reconstruction of the musical context; the cinema generates, controls and negotiates musical meanings. Although the dominant culture attempts to appropriate much space in the cinema industry for its own purposes, there is, nevertheless, some space left for the “marginal” or the cultures of the “others”. Is the space left for the tango mediation enough for its understanding by the European audience? How does a musical genre already containing specific national, ethnic or class associations adjust to the global realities of moving pictures—how does “authentic” sound adjust to the specificity of a film’s scenes?

3. Music Through the Cinema

The aural supporting the visual

As visual perception is believed to be faster and more reliable than aural perception, a film soundtrack, according to film theory, can only function either in a parallel way or in counterpoint to the visual image. Because sound is closely related to the sensations and image to the intellect, it is said that “*sound can only reinforce or alter what is already there*”.⁷ Consciousness precedes perception in the act of vision and translates images into information. Music comes to enrich this information with feelings, moods and the inherent rhythm of movements. Therefore, music restates, duplicates or underlines what the pictures suggest. Walt Disney’s cartoons can be seen as the best examples of music’s restatement of moods of the pictures it accompanies. The beat of this music matches to the physical action of the movie’s characters. The term “mickey-mousing” has therefore come to mean the split-second synchronizing of musical and visual action. Music accompanies the image, not the other way around.

In *Introduction to the Sociology of Music* and in his collaboration with composer Hans Eisler *Composing for the Films* Theodor W. Adorno reverses the terms of the nineteenth century’s equation of sight with objectivity and sound with subjectivity. The ear, being passive, can more easily resist the rationalization of commodity culture and dismiss non-objective perceptions. The eye is usually selective but through modern times fooled in front of the mass culture’s images.

Why can there not be a mutual transmission of information and feeling by both image and sound? Why is music condemned to follow image, restating, echoing, or altering what has already been presented? Does film music add any new values and attitudes to the visual image? If the image affects the music then music should affect the image, as well.

Music can be an interactive agent in a film’s narrative, not only reinforcing but also equally attributing towards a climax, be it through suspense or emotional mechanisms. The relations between music and listener might be more complex than those between image and viewer, but then music retains the power to deceive and deception is one of film’s main goals. For Adorno and Eisler film music can be seen as a drug, as it turns the spectator’s attention away from the

technological basis of film and binds him to the movie through the affect of identification. The illusion of reality could not possibly be achieved without the help of the soundtrack. Music evokes unconscious associations with reality and the world so that, when listening to it while watching a film, one feels part of the film's reality.

Does, however, the cinema audience hear the film music? Although the experience of the film is not carried by music alone—as would be the case in the concert hall—the visual and the aural interact and therefore the music is definitely heard. One would immediately sense the absence of music in a filmic context and, additionally, some times music carries the weight of dramatic development.

Music can acquire such uses as marking the entrance of a character—and accompanying him during his every appearance—, providing emotional colouring or enriching scenes with rapid physical action. In the first case music functions as an imagined window to the character's inner self, giving the audience some clues about his personality and character, while in the second and third example it sets the conditions for the engagement of the viewer in the film's narrative. In cases where the film score includes songs with lyrics, however, narrative continues within the lyrics, the action freezing for the duration of the song but the narrative continuing, perhaps by offering to the audience an insight into the characters' thoughts or feelings.

Music can deepen the effect of a scene; it can highlight and bring an aspect of the story into sharper focus. Epic films such as *Spartacus*, *Cleopatra* or the most recent *Gladiator* generally require more music than usual, especially when showing scenes of landscapes, riots, battles or protests, ceremonies etc. The same seems to be the case with adventure or science fiction films. When the action is momentarily postponed—as in the *Gladiator* gazing towards his burnt house—music is needed to maintain a kind of dramatic connection—perhaps giving a personal statement on the personality of the protagonist. When physical action is intense—as in adventure films—music functions as an emphasizing tool, inviting the viewer to engage in the action sequence. When an alien form of life or something different and unfamiliar is introduced on screen—as in science fiction films—computerized electronic music comes to stress the visual indefinable or unspecified. When questions of identity or confused consciousness of a society arise in films, the local, communal music of this society comes to define the cultural context in which the narrative is set and unfolded. Tango music in post-dictatorship Argentine cinema

functions as a smoothing drug, a memory everyone should hold to, a way to overcome the tragedies and move on to shape a healthy, collective Argentine identity.

Due to the process of association, regular moviegoers have learned to decipher particular music types in particular ways. In an ambiguous scene, music gives the clue about what might have happened or what is about to happen. The music in Hitchcock's *Psycho* "describes" the knife entering into the flesh in the shower-scene, as the audience never actually sees it happening. There is, therefore, music that accompanies something that is apparent on the screen—an action or a character—and music that is suggestive of something that is not apparent. Electronic music have come about to symbolize the alien and foreign in Hollywood film scoring. Music contributes to creating the specific atmosphere required for the perception of a specific scene.

Tango, however, is equally music and dance; it is as much music as it is performance. The reason why we can characterize tango dance as a form of art is obvious: tango is an intentional activity made by an artist: the choreographer. Fantasy tango—in complete opposition to salon tango—is constructed according to some aesthetic canons, in order to be attractive, appealing, as well as expressive. If tango dance is a form of art however, then one could talk about it using such aesthetic or artistic terms as style and technique and could expect of it such features as decipherability, expressiveness or psychological reality. Consequently, the spectators of a tango performance should be able to find its movements understandable⁸. McFee argues that such an understanding is possible, although difficult. "*In art, there is no such thing as "natural"—only the more or less familiar*". Surely, people are more familiar with the ways and character of such expressive arts as painting or literature than with those of music or dance. Still, the applied techniques, the combinations of movements and the results seen through the practice of the art of dance could give the spectators some guidelines of comparison and understanding. Through time and practice, through observation and experience, dance turns into a combination of understandable movements to form a totally decipherable aesthetic experience.

This is not to say that one should know the technique to understand the dance. There is no chronological order in which distinguishing a technique and understanding the dance should occur. They can happen at the same time or at any time in the process of watching so that the dance can establish its connection to expressiveness. Unquestionably, in cases where there is no

individual style—or technique, but technique can be seen as a characteristic of style¹⁰—in the dance, one can speak of an empty or non-artistic dance. The demand for originality is fundamental in all forms of art—including dance.

How however could one understand the psychological reality connected to dance—the thoughts and ideas of the creator choreographer? The details of the origin of the work should not be forgotten; the background of its creator and the conditions of its production should be investigated and examined. How else will the spectator be able to see the implicit intentions, thoughts or even the unconscious ideas of the artist and take them into account in the perception of the work?

Of course, whether or not the thoughts and ideas of the artist at the time of the creation are essential for the perception of an artwork is another issue. In either case, each spectator's experience of the same work depends on the concepts available to him at the time as well as to his own unconscious thoughts or traumas. On the other hand, why should there be one correct interpretation of a work of art and why should this one specific interpretation be adequate or essential for the appreciation of the work? Again, the answer to this question has been sought by many academics for much time, resulting in two symmetrically different theories: the intentionalist and the anti-intentionalist theory. As the name suggests, the intentionalist theory argues that the intention of the artist is always relevant to the perception of the work of art, while the anti-intentionalist theory suggests that it never is.

Why, however, should the artist's intention be either always or never essential to the understanding of his artwork? There may be cases where the knowledge of the production conditions or the background of the artist can indeed give some valuable information for the perception of the work, but there also may be cases where this knowledge is not necessary.

Furthermore, why is the intention of the artist sought in his background and society and not in the actual work produced?

4. Searching for the Tango in Argentina

Looking for origins and characteristics

For a satisfying tracing of the possible changes or inadequacies of tango mediation through the European cinema, it is first necessary to follow its roots and history in its country of origin: Argentina. The parallel comparison between tango in Argentina and tango mediated in Europe will demonstrate the difference—if any—of the status and perception of tango music after its cinema mediation.

Why is tango music labeled as “mysterious”, “untamed”, “wild”, “primitive” and “passionate”—is it before or after its mediation that it acquired these characteristics? How is exotic culture reproduced and consumed through the cinema? Are the Argentinean emotional and expressive practices maintained in the films about tango or are they isolated and transformed into different “cultural” patterns of behaviour? What about its macho connotations? Is the tango included in the exoticization of unfamiliar objects for European elite consumption? Moreover, why is it so popular? Is it because the cinema world moulds it in the shape of the viewers’ desire, transforming its characteristic values and attitudes?



Photograph 4-3: Buenos Aires during the early 19th century

How is the tango viewed in its country of origin—Argentina—after its mediation? And what role has this cinema mediation played in the tango’s characterization as a symbol of Argentinean national identity?

Tango is a dramatic expression—including music, lyrics, dance and performance—that originated in the Rio de la Plata region of Argentina and Uruguay towards the end of the nineteenth century. It was born in the periphery of the city and

Photograph 4-2: Capture, Photograph by Alain Beaupre, a teacher of Science and Photography, a world traveller and a tanguero



slowly but steadily moved into the Middle and High Class Argentinean Home. The next stop of this pilgrimage was Europe.

Manifesting the sadness of the immigrants in Buenos Aires, the tango was born in the bordellos. The tight embrace and indicative footsteps of the tango scandalized the public in the way waltz had some years ago. Thought to represent the process of seduction, the tango performance has gone through major adjustments as it was adopted and legitimized by the upper classes and the Western world. Tango arrived in Paris in the early 1900s as a scandalous and fascinating dance. From the brothels of the South American harbours to the cabarets and ballrooms of Paris, London,



Photograph 4-4: Tango in the streets of Buenos Aires,
Photo by Sandra Sue

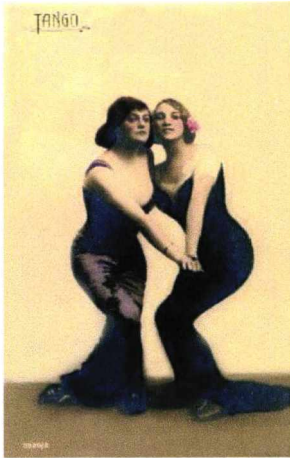
New York and the European cinema, it had to redefine its moves and character in order to be approved of. Europe was conquered and fascinated by a “cleaned-up” version of the Argentine tango. The scandal remained, originating now not in its content, but in the tango’s class origins.

The tango rhythm borrowed musical characteristics from many nations: the African beat drums, Indian rhythms with the early Spanish colonists and other influences, including Latin. Some say that the term tango comes from the Latin word “tangere” (to touch). All those influences and rhythms were accompanied by the bandoneon (an accordion-like instrument imported to Argentina in 1886, perhaps from Germany).

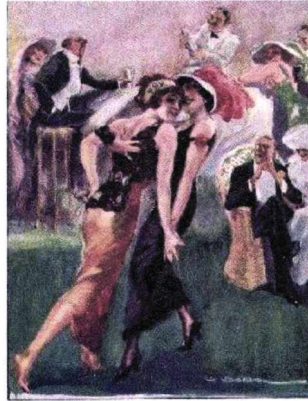
During the period of Argentina’s fast development between 1880 and 1930, the very rich had the habit of going to Europe once a year. Most of the Argentine elite of this period owned homes in Paris or London. These wealthy families introduced Argentine tango to the Parisian nobility through parties and other square dances.

Tango made an instant impression. As Argentineans that lived in Europe were of very wealthy origin, the Parisian elite embraced the dance and introduced it to their entertainment events: shows, recordings and broadcasts. Everyone started giving parties with Argentinean orchestras and even women’s fashion had to change to adjust to the moves of the tango. Roberto Firpo created the typical tango orchestra; rhythm played on piano and double bass, melodies played on the bandoneon and the violin.

From Paris, tango spread to the other big capitals: London, Rome, Berlin were soon introduced the new dance craze. Among the Charlestons, shimmies, one-steps, and bostons, the crowd asked for a tango. *“Even the Americans were doing it, although some ladies were given to wearing “bumpers” to protest themselves from rubbing a bit too closely against their male partners”*.¹¹



Postcard 4-1: French Postcard, 1910, F. Baker

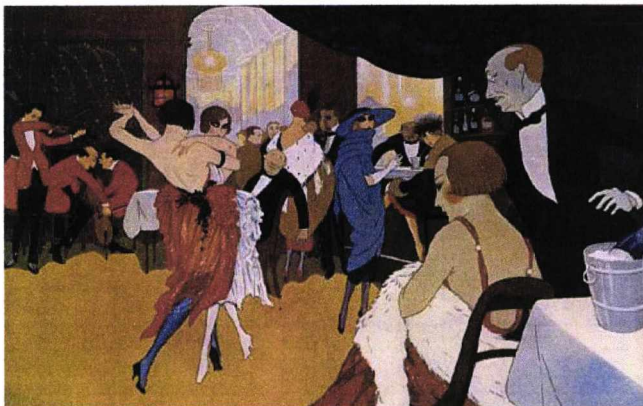


Postcard 4-2: American Postcard, 1910, F. Baker Collection

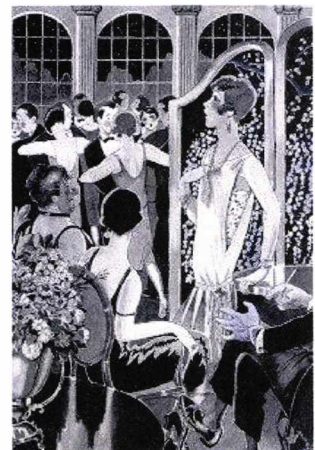


Drawing 4-1: 1921, by Rafael Penagos

Born in the Argentinean bordellos, the tango had come to epitomize the glamour and elegance of high society. Having emerged from an intermingled cultural brew among the immigrants from Europe, Africa and other unknown ports that had streamed into the outskirts of Buenos Aires during the 1880s, it turned to be danced to in social gatherings by the European elite.



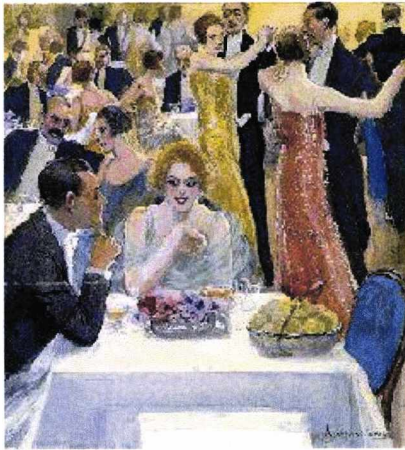
Drawing 4-2: 1920, En el cabaret, by Lorenzi



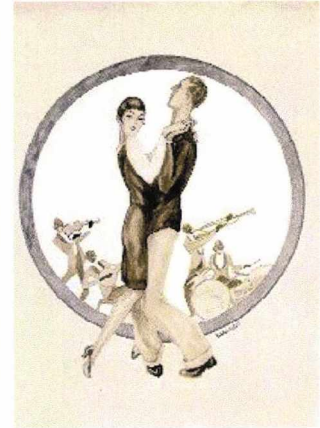
Drawing 4-3: 1925, by Francisco Ramirez.

During the 1930s, the Argentinean masses regained a good measure of their political freedom—after the sudden military coup in Argentina in 1930. By that time, tango had started to be associated with Argentinean everyday life, being turned into a symbol of the people's solidarity as individuals and as a nation. It is this period that marked the history of tango music with such musicians as Fresedo, de Caro, Pugliese and Anibal Troilo.

The influence of some wealthy intellectuals who began writing new lyrics for the tango, shifted tango towards a more romantic and nostalgic musical genre. By 1946, when Juan Peron rose to power, the tango had reached its climax of popularity. Juan and Evita Peron embraced and evaluated its musical characteristics until Evita's death, in 1952, when American pop music and rock invaded the international musical scene.



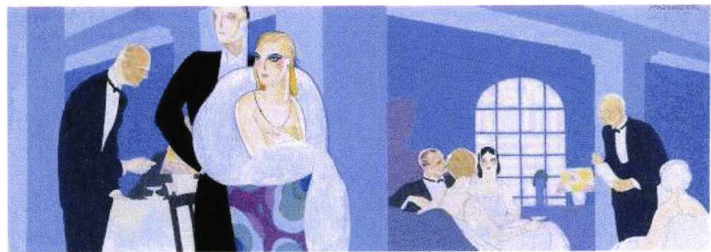
Drawing 4-4: 1925, by Lozano Sidro



Drawing 4-5 & 4-6: 1926, by Salvador Bartolozzi



Drawing 4-7: 1927, by
Federico Rivas



Drawing 4-8: 1930, by C Masberger

According to Savigliano, tango's last popular boom was in the 1940s, and then little by little it lost its popularity during the 1950s. Most recently, it has coexisted with North American popular music and other Latino musical genres "*as a relatively more intellectualised, refined and/or ghettoised musical taste*".¹² Where is this transformation attributed?

It was the cinema that came to reinforce the image of the tango in Europe. During the 1930s, sound cinema arrived and everyone started going to the movies. Through the cinema tango was "*packaged and distributed*", "*readdressed to the world market*"; it "*emerged as a symbolic expression and ended up as a sign of status. It became an "exotic" good in the political economy of Passion: appropriation, accumulation, marketing, packaging, commercialisation, distribution, and consumption of the wealth of exotic feelings, that is of the Passion of the Other/Otra.*"¹³

It was during the most recent military government (1976-1983) that the tango re-arrived, as a dance and as a philosophy, in Europe. The exile Argentinians used tango as their main symbolism in films and various shows. The tango had captured the gazes once more. Did, however, some crucial tango characteristics go under severe transformation? If so, which of its faces suffered the most alteration: music, dance, lyrics, performance or philosophy?

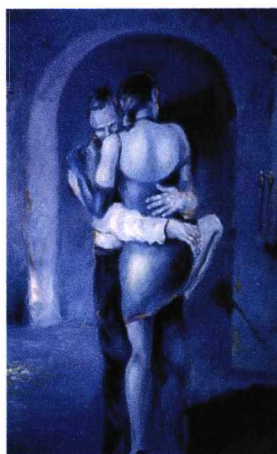
The lyrics in Argentina mostly expose the miseries of everyday life. From approximately 1918 to the 1930s, the tango lyrics were more or less associated with the loss of the singer's lover or the need to find a new love. The tango lyrics in Argentina spoke of the immigrants' sorrow—frustrated love, fatality or hurt destinies. The titles in the first tangos referred to characters in the world of prostitution. After the approval of both the Argentinian and the Parisian elite, however, a new perspective on love was introduced in the tango lyrics.

*"Vengeance and resentment were transformed into melodrama and nostalgia, and the ruffianesque characters blended into romantic heroes. Tango, in its lyrics and choreography, became more polished, and the musical time slowed down and became more sentimental."*¹⁴

The bitterness, anger and sadness of immigrants and newcomers were transformed into nostalgic cries of a better past. The tango lyrics—heard and made popular through the popular theatre—had to be able to speak to the European, as well as the Argentinian elite, without offending or discomfoting them. The sad tango cry remained, but rather than hatred it now expressed nostalgia.

What is sung however in a tango is not necessarily what is danced, while the music may

have some associations with both. *“Submissiveness and confrontation, silence and noise, quiet torsos and relentlessly moving legs enact episodes of power, simultaneously, in displaced dimensions”*¹⁵. The lyrics may have been polished to speak of sentiment and emotion, but the footsteps remained quite aggressive and uncompromisingly difficult to learn. Somehow, the exotic had to be preserved.



Painting 4-2: Tango Embrace,
by Christina Bergoglio

Tango started as a dance: a tight embrace that scandalized and shocked its first audiences. *“Guapos struggled for some maleness, fighting over women who were scarce in fact as well as in imagination. Urbanization and industrialization had left their women behind, and these civilizing projects were being instigated by other men. Urbanization and industrialization wore a face, that of those wealthy men looking lasciviously at their poor women. These wealthy men paid to embrace poor women, being unable to touch the women of their own class without commitment.”*¹⁶ After the arrival of the European immigrants in Argentina, the women seemed even fewer and more difficult to attain—let alone keep. The lyrics spoke of the women left behind, but the loneliness and lust of the immigrants were evident in the dance.

The tango dance was intricate, legs intertwined and all of the movement was from the waist down. The macho identity started to come into existence. Different races, classes and ethnicities struggled to survive and attain the unattainable embrace of a woman. So, apart from the sexual choreography, tango dances sometimes represented a duel—a man-to-man combat between challengers for the favours of the woman.

*“If properly danced, the upper body is stiff, the look between the dancers intense but distant.... The male controls with his eyes. Yet...It is she who dances.”*¹⁷ Strange as it may sound, the woman had the initiative of the dance. It was she who had the first move and the characteristic sudden movements that define the tango dance. It was perfectly allowed, as dance was seen as a “play form”, where social norms were not applicable. There were no rules in the tango dance and all the norms of society and culture were sacrificed in the name of lust, power and sexual desire.

Through the European screen, the erotic stereotyping of the tango dance seems to leave its tragedy aside. The long-lasting conflicts over race, class and gender that played an important role in shaping the tango dance in Argentina are framed in the cinema world. The associations that usually occur through tango mediation are those of eroticism, sexuality, primitiveness and

blacks. The tango embrace, however, is *“the embrace of dominators and dominated (class-, race-, and gender-wise) struggling with and clinging to each other; trying to hold each other in place while dancing displacements.”*¹⁸ The inconsistency is too big to be ignored.

The musical features also changed after tango’s mediation. The musical time was slowed from 2 x 4 to 4 x 8. The Argentinean and Parisian male elite wanted the music sentimentalized and slower, in order to be more accessible, easily and willingly danced by their women.



Postcard 4-3: A
European couple
dancing the tango

5. The Films

The Hollywood Mainstream & Post-dictatorship Argentine Cinema in Europe

“No homeland can survive being processed by the films which celebrate it, and which thereby turn the unique character on which it thrives into an interchangeable sameness.”⁹ Can Argentine tango music overcome the standardizing process of the culture industry and preserve its uniqueness?

Many Hollywood mainstream films have included tango music in their soundtracks or tango dance among their main scenes. Tango music and images—and even the word “tango”—promise sexuality and exploitation, liberality and freedom offered by modernity. The multiplicity of meaning is in more cases underestimated or even ignored. Films like *Last Tango in Paris*, shown in New York’s Film Festival in October 1972, provoke the spectator and wrongly associate tango with outrageous sex scenes and sexual desire only. Although the tragedy and despair of the film meets the tango’s history halfway, it was the hypnotic excitement, the primitive force and the explicit eroticism that made an incredible impact on the audience.

More or less apparent, there are some correct tango associations. Paul (the forty-five-year-old ex-patriate American played by Marlon Brando) is established as the dominant character right from his first meeting with Jeanne (the twenty-year-old French bourgeois ♀ played by Maria Schneider). “*What do I care*”, he says when Jeanne returns to give him her key of the apartment in Paris they both want to rent. “*Take off your coat. Come help me*”. Paul is the one who sets the rules and controls the terms of this relationship, as, traditionally; it is the man who leads in the tango.

The characters through the tango and in the apartment escape from their lives, like the immigrants in Buenos Aires through the tango and in the brothels escaped from their loneliness. The tango is heard and danced while Paul and Jeanne are two complete strangers—they do not even know each other’s name. Jeanne pulls the trigger and shoots Paul the very instant she pronounces her name. It is no fun now that they know each other.

Additionally, it is the woman that the viewers watch—as in the tango—as she provides the spectacular moves and unexpected ending. Although seemingly led by her male partner, it is she who dances the tango.

Bertolucci himself has characterized this film as a film about two lonelines. *"I wanted a very emotional music score"*²⁰, he says. In fact, originally Bertolucci wanted Piazzolla to collaborate with Barbieri on the score. Bertolucci's first tango was featured in the *"Partner"* (1968), when Pierre Clementi enters a society party and parodies the guests by performing a solo dance.

Post-dictatorship Argentine films can be seen as "marginal", cult films, in terms of content, box office failure or ironic readings. Music in this context offers a sense of accessibility, connecting the world on screen with the real world. Exoticism and its accessibility through film—that which is outside one's own culture—is what makes these films culturally interesting. These films work to rebuild a discourse of national identity, provide a historical account of what had happened and had been left unsaid. *The Unspoken* is bluntly put on screen. The wounds and problems the dictatorship had caused are experienced or at least analysed by the protagonists of each film.

Some films just imply the problems, choosing the artistic—or perhaps less dangerous because less evident—way of a symbolism/metaphor. Jeanine Meerapfel in *"La Amiga"* (1988) chooses the blatant way of describing and showing Europe on screen how an Argentine woman loses her son by the dictators. Fernando Solanas in *"Sur"* (1988) chooses a less evident way of setting the problem: he uses a love story enriched by the male's memories of his neighbourhood as it was before the dictatorship to provide some insight into the dictatorship's cruelties. *"Allegory, however, directs the spectator to understand how the personal is political and how the particular is historical, because every element in the social fabric is an interwoven part of the whole"*.²¹ The local issues *"Sur"* deals with cannot but be seen as equivalent to larger tensions in Argentine society.

Both films use tango music as their main soundtrack theme. In both films, tango music is heard while the protagonists (Raquel and Floreal respectively) gaze throughout the city of Buenos Aires, in a symbolical act of introspection. In its attempt to find an international discourse system to communicate memories and hardships to the world through such a highly international cultural phenomenon as the movies, Argentine post-dictatorship cinema from 1983 onwards uses the international language of music: tango music.

According to Simon Frith, the experience of music is an experience of placing: *"the cultural placing of the individual in the social"*.²² It is true that the experience of music can stand for or symbolize the experience of collective identity. Showing Argentine landscapes while playing

tango music, these films have managed to reconstruct the threatened Argentine identity and perhaps a kind of personally felt patriotism for any Argentinian watching. With the help of music's identifying function, such films strive to shape popular memory, to organize the audience's sense of time and—because of their focusing to the specific film and its timing—offer the illusion of living within the shown moment. The particular images are associated with the particular music and this association becomes so familiar—because frequently repeated—that it is taken for granted and never questioned.

Adorno, writing in the 1930s and 1940s, could not have anticipated the extent to which popular music such as tango would come to be used by its consumers to connote identity, opposition or authenticity. Such music, when used in an appropriate context, seems to invite levels of emotional engagement in ways that enable individual viewers to construct and register difference—in terms of identity and taste. The Frankfurt School's characterization of the audience as a passive mass can in this sense be questioned—if not totally dismissed.

The purpose was to create a cinema that would awaken consciousness, would worry and shock, would define profiles of Latin American identity and would show the way from the dictatorship to democratization. This political and cultural cinema's images were enhanced and underlined by tango music. This music was able to construct a place—Argentina—involving notions of difference and social boundaries and consequently evoke collective memories and present experiences of place and identity among the film audience. Tango was also capable of relocating the audience, introducing it to the place of the film's story and inviting it to participate in its narrative—both through the aroused emotions and the imagination.

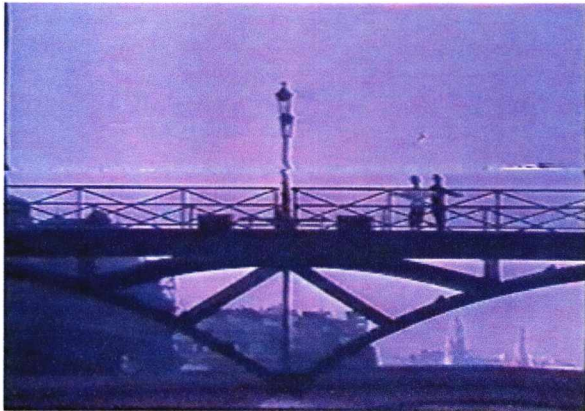
Tango music, as almost every other musical genre, makes its first appearance during the opening titles, giving the audience a great deal of information on what they should expect of the film right from the outset. In *Sur* the viewer comes to meet the major character during the opening titles. He is seen walking back to his home, in a neighbourhood of Buenos Aires, after several years in prison, while the opening musical score helps bring some aspects of his character out. Tango music is equated to the protagonist's inner feelings and character and consequently to every Argentinean's inner feelings and character.

“El Exilio de Gardel”

The opening of this film is a tango on a Parisian bridge. A vibrant, loud tango, that continues in the streets of Paris. It is an introduction to the setting of the story and at the same time the whole story itself: Argentine tango in Paris.

The audience suddenly sees a group of people performing in the streets of Paris: another tango and the audience hears the lyrics: “So there is where our story begins... the tangos of the exile of Gardel...” It is these street performers that are going to tell us the story.

The camera zooms in a face and the audience is introduced to Maria, the storyteller. She begins the narration: “My name is Maria. I am nearly twenty. I came with mama eight years ago. And I am still here. Maybe that is why I need to tell you about mama’s life here in Paris, capital of all exiles, all miracles, all sorrows...”



Scene 4-1: Argentine tango in Paris, opening of the film “El Exilio de Gardel”



Scene 4-2: The street performers in “El Exilio de Gardel”. The girl in the blue sweater is the story-narrator, Maria

The audience is then introduced to the other characters of the story: Geraldo—a friend of Maria’s father—, El Negro and Susana—a couple waiting for a baby—, the musician Miseria, Alicia and her children, Juan Dos—composer of the “Tanguedy” and Marianna’s lover—and finally Marianna, the protagonist of the Tanguedy and Maria’s mother. The Tanguedy is a performance they want to do, a tango performance combining tragedy and comedy, associated

with the exile of Gardel[✧]. Maria is now starting to describe how “...there, in Paris, the city of light, they all began living a dog’s life”. The audience sees two people in a dog costume walking in Parisian streets. When the head of the costume is removed, we see Juan Dos in the costume.

PART I

“Misericordia en Paris”

The music starts again and the song goes “...and so we find them in the station—the heroes of the exile of Gardel”... The personalities of the characters start to unfold. Geraldo is talking about his books that are probably going to be burnt; Aldira wants to return to Argentina. Juan Dos is talking with his mother on the phone. He is laughing, but he does not have enough change for the children to talk to the grandparents. Marianna is talking with her parents on the phone—she is crying, as something has gone wrong and she cannot yet return to Buenos Aires. Along with the characters of the story, the audience comes to meet the everyday problems of exile.

“Tanguedia del Angel”

The next scene is a rehearsal of the Tanguedy. A famous French actress has come to see it. “Is that the tango?”, she asks. “It’s wonderful”. The Parisian elite is introduced to the tango. “...a bit incomprehensible...” she continues, “but when it is ready we will show it to the world”. Pierre and the rest of the group are thrilled. If she helps them, they could do their tanguedy. Angel, the director of the show, quits. They could not possibly make it on time, and he cannot handle “another failure”. As he goes, his hand falls over his shoulder. Like a plastic doll, he broke.



Scene 4-3: Angel’s hand breaks

[✧] Gardel was not, of course, exiled.



Scenes 4-4, 4-5 & 4-6: "Is that the tango? It's wonderful!" Scene from "El Exilio de Gardel", where a famous French actress was invited to see the rehearsal of the tanguedy.

"La Poetica de Juan Uno"

Pierre and Juan Dos are talking about the tanguedy. It is dark and they are returning home.

Pierre: What gave you the idea of a tanguedy?

Juan Dos: Well, you know, in Buenos Aires I was in a dreadful mess. Separated from my wife, no work, banned from the radio, etc. Then Juan said: "If you were a sax player, stay here. But with a bandoneon? Go to Paris!" I said: "What will I do in Paris?" Juan said: The tanguedy. The exile of Gardel". "What is that?" I said. "What is the tanguedy?" "Something that tells what is happening in Buenos Aires". I said: "It's a terrible risk. They will massacre you".

Pierre: And what did he say?

Juan Dos: He said: "Living is always a risk. We are both in danger. Living here is a risk. But going away is a risk, too. The important thing is to always be united. Here and there.

We have to invent a poetry, a culture of risk”.

In Juan Dos’ house, the walls are covered with photographs, including great Argentine composers like Anibal Troilo. “It’s an anthropology of Buenos Aires”, Pierre says. They put on some music, a tango named “The exile de Juan Uno”. Juan Dos opens a suitcase. “This is the truth”, he says. “The poetry of Juan Uno, our tanguedy”.

Juan Uno, however, writes illogically, on tissues in bars and restaurants, scattered phrases, drawings and messages that have to be put together. “We have to find the meaning”.

PART II

Cartas del Exilio (Letters of Exile)

The performers on the street are dancing again. It is always the same song, but it now contains lyrics about the letters exchanged between the exiled in Paris and those that remained in Buenos Aires. Maria starts talking about the over 400 Committees that had been formed in Paris and used to organize meetings in various theatres of the Parisian suburbs. One of those meetings is presented to the audience. Someone asks why people were not concerned with the Argentine tragedy any more. Someone else suggests they should do something positive. The tanguedy?

Aldira reads her grandmother’s letter and announces that she is returning to Buenos Aires to see her.

Uno in Buenos Aires

Finding an ending for the tanguedy proves very difficult for Pierre and Juan Dos. Juan Uno changes it every day, “as he understands the vastness of exile”.

Meanwhile, and while listening to a tango played by Juan Dos in bandoneon, Marianna announces that she is leaving. “I am leaving you, the tanguedy, the exile”... Juan Dos stops playing the bandoneon for a while. “You can’t”, he says. “We will do the tanguedy, ...we will go home together”. “Don’t give me that story”, Marianna says. “Go and tell it to Gardel”. Juan Dos starts playing the bandoneon again and the audience sees them dancing an imaginative tango in the streets. Are they in Paris or Buenos Aires?

Maria starts talking about the Christmas of 1979, when Juan Dos’ mother came from Buenos Aires to see them, to bring them money and hope for their tanguedy. However, nothing

goes as planned. The woman loses the dollars and everything goes still.

The next scene is a performance of the Juan Dos quintet. They are playing “The Exile of Gardel”. Their audience starts feeling discomfort. “As if he is in exile”, someone says. “We cannot be here”. Many leave the room. Marianna fights with one of them and calls him a “fascist”.

Eran Dos Exilios (There Were Two Exiles)

The show needs an end, but exile continues. Juan Dos is trying to persuade Pierre that as long as the south is unending, so will their tanguedy. “Everything has an ending”, Pierre says.

PART III

Tango

The street performers are still singing. Maria continues the narration. Geraldo once said to the nostalgic Marianna: “The country we left no longer exists... We have to find a purpose.” And later: “Exile is absence. And what is death if not a prolonged absence? Who of us hasn’t died a little during these years? Who hasn’t lost his dreams and hopes?”

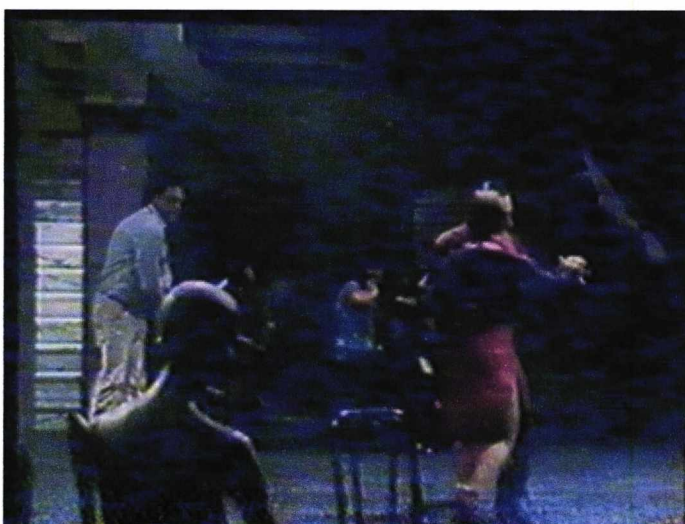
Meanwhile, and while the tanguedy is supposed to be on in ten days time, everybody leaves. Alicia, Juan Dos’ ex-wife, goes to Barcelona, where she has found a job. She takes the children with her. Juan Dos’ mother returns to Buenos Aires.

Milonga Loca

We see a small part from the tanguedy. Plastic dolls in human dimensions are sitting everywhere among the characters of the story. Is this indicative of their emptiness or passivity? Three tangos are danced. The characters have a disagreement during the rehearsals. Juan Uno had sent something for them. They expected to find tanguedy’s ending. It is not there. Pierre’s heart breaks. While he is carried to a hospital, his body also breaks to parts of a plastic doll’s body.



Scene 4-7: Dancing the tango in front of dolls-viewers



Scene 4-8: The tanguedy rehearsals

La Melda del Nudo (The Return of Gardel)

While trying to phone back home, Marianna and Juan Dos see a strange man coming towards them. He is wearing a long, black coat and a hat. He manages to put them through to Argentina for free. They talk to Juan Uno. He still does not want to give them an ending for the tanguedy. The telephone call is finished and the strange man approaches again. This time they

recognize him: it is Discepolo. “Juan Uno is just scared”, he says. “Fear paralyses. But the tanguedy will be our revenge”.

From a parked car on the same street Gardel comes out. He sings a tango with these lyrics:

“Life is a wandering bohemian,
I am Buenos Aires anchored in Paris
Pursued by worries and pressures
I invoke you from this faraway land.
I look at the snow falling forever
from my window over the boulevard,
and the red lights shining out
look like strange, bright eyes.
Far-off Buenos Aires, how lonely you are.
It’s 10 years since I felt your shore.
Here in Montmartre, sentimental quarter
I feel memories and daggers in my heart.
How your Corrientes will have changed
Suipacha, Esmeralda, your suburbs.
Someone told me you were blooming
and a star of streets met in Diagonal.
You don’t know how I long to see you..
Here I am without money or hope.
Who knows one night if death will find me
and goodbye Buenos Aires I won’t see you again.”
He dances with Marianna as the tango ends.

La Ultima Tanguedia (The Last Tanguedy)

“Ah...these tangos!” A man is talking about Gardel, remembering the incident when he first met him. Lots of people are around him. Among them, Pierre, Juan Dos and Marianna. The audience understands that this is the first formal judgement of the tanguedy. These people have

all seen it and they are now discussing it.

First Person: "I am not sure whether it would appeal to our audiences" someone says.

"It's a bit ethnic".

Second Person: "Yes, the music, the characters, even the tango... are a bit too Argentine."

Third Person: "Will people understand?"

Juan Dos: "What do you want then? An Eskimo tango?"

Second Person: "Don't be like that..."

Juan Dos: "I'm sorry... this is our exile, from the Southern Cone, the River Plate..."

Someone: "What?"

Marianna: "He said the tanguedy comes from the South, the river Plate..."

Someone else: "But that means nothing to us".

First man: "We are not used to these dramatic forms... but that is no reason to reject it".

Someone: "Pierre, what is it about?"

Pierre: "It's a tanguedy... It's a piece the author conceived without consulting anybody."

Someone else: "So why invite us?"

Someone third: "If we judge by what we are used to, we can't understand it".

Another person: "I liked it. But the end... I didn't quite understand."

Pierre: "The end is a risk we have to take".

Yet another person: "In France we want people to do what's expected".

Someone: "Do you believe that, Natalie?"

Someone else: "I am interested. I'd like to take it to the Picardy Festival, in Amiens..

When they finally are alone, the group discusses the problems and difficulties of showing their tanguedy in Paris.

Juan Dos: "They won't understand a thing. They can't feel it, because they don't know us, or our history".

Pierre: "Audiences are audiences".

Juan Dos: "There is no ending, if there is no return".

Pierre: "No, you have to resist".

Juan Dos: “The tanguedy has formed its ending and the two Juans are useless.”
And just like that, Juan Dos shrunk.

PART IV

The street performers are singing: “...looking for a solution and an end...Europe has given us solidarity”...

Maria’s narration continues. Aldira and those who accompanied her come back from Buenos Aires. The audience is shown images of Argentine demonstrations in Paris, trucks full of plastic dolls. El Negro’s and Susana’s child is born—her name is chosen to be “Victoria”.

Solo (Alone)

Juan Dos learns from his father (on the telephone) that his mother passed away. He sees and hunts her image. During a sad tango we see him leaving (in an airport). The stairs he is on end up at childhood memories. The lyrics of the tango go:

“Alone and abandoned like a zero, alone,
who’s been pushed aside and survives alone?
Far away and lost like a dog, I search for oblivion
Dragging my bones
Alone and without a cent, ready for suicide
I only have a tango to tell of my exile.
Far from my life, with no port for a haven,
I’m drifting and given up for dead.
Alone and persecuted in my Buenos Aires
Roaming with no purpose like a shot in the air.
Alone, confused, I feel like nothing.
And if I’m not mistaken I am going crazy.
Alone and hidden with all our history
Which they have forbidden but is in my memory.
Alone, exile is alone like a zero, alone...
Resisting alone,

Hang my heart up in the wardrobe,
My poor heart full of holes
Alone, like a zero, alone...”

Juan Dos leaves for Buenos Aires. Maria is searching through her father’s things. Her mother, Marianna, tells her that she is leaving. Maria does not want to go with her. She says she is staying with Teresa. Geraldo gets a telephone call from his daughter’s kidnappers. A fast tango is heard. They all run. Pieces of paper are scattered all over the place.

The camera zooms on Maria’s face for one more time. Another tango is heard.

“For you who stayed,
For Gaby, Tito and Diego,
For you, who are exiled,
In your neighbourhood or your wardrobe
For you who stood it all
And talk to the walls
For you, who bore it all
Gangs, faces and searches
For you who disappeared
For “yes, but...” or “you never know”
For you, whom they humiliated
And set free naked
For all of you this is my song
Looking for your roots
Children of exile
Inside your country and outside.”

Volver (Return)

San Martin visits Geraldo. “We must return”, he says. Carlitos puts on a record. Is all this in Geraldo’s imagination? Probably. The tango goes...

“To return, with witted brow and the snow of time silver on my temples.
To feel that life is a fleeting moment, that twenty years is nothing,

that my tired eyes search for you in the shadows calling your name.
To live with my soul anchored to a sweet memory that brings back tears.
I'm afraid to encounter the past that comes again to haunt my life.
I'm afraid of the nights full of memories that imprison my sleep.
But the wanderer who flees must some day reach an end.
Yet while the dead hand of oblivion has destroyed my aspirations,
I still clutch the straw of hope which is the fortune of my heart".

The tango in the Parisian bridge starts again. But this time the dancers are separated, rather than united. Maria's words come as a panacea to the audience's sadness and a kind of catharsis. "I learnt through exile and pain how much there is to live for. No suffering is in vain". As she returns to her friends to continue her street performance of another tango story, the audience sees two persons in a dog costume wandering in Paris.

The story of "El Exilio de Gardel" is the story of exile—the difficulties and miseries exiled people face in the foreign land. The anticipation of "return" is the one hope these people hold on to, in order to endure and overcome these difficulties. The tanguedy can be seen as a short sketch outlying the history and culture of Argentina. It is their attempt to introduce their country to the world and at the same time a try to remember and preserve what is theirs: their music, their culture, their tango. In this light tango is seen as a cultural object similar to Lydia Goehr's musical works.

Following Goehr's tracing of musical meaning through the centuries, one thing emerges as a clear outcome: that musical practices get shaped in particular historical moments—but is the understanding of the particular historical moment essential for the understanding of the musical work? Perfect compliance with the original score of a musical work or even a reproduction of the original historical settings do not guarantee the authenticity of the work, according to Goehr; at least not as long as it carries the baggage of a romantic aesthetic. "*The Werkstreue ideal is*", in this case, "*at best being employed anachronistically*"²³, she argues. This is where Hollywood movies go wrong. Films that simplistically equate tango with passion and sexuality have not adequately searched or understood its complex, cultural significance for Argentina.

This approach implies a strict relationship between the work of music and the different

practices within which it functions. The work of art is seen as deeply socialized/historicized and is comprehended by reference to the particular society/period it was born. The tracking of the changes of the musical concept as societies and historic periods change can prove that the claim is actually well established and therefore valid.

This is not to say, however, that musical works are only expressive or representative of the specific historical moments in which they were born, but rather that they can survive and be appreciated through timelessness. None of the musical meanings developed and composed through a specific period and in a specific society are absolute, even if the rules of interpretation and perception are clearly stated. “*Music can transcend time and culture*”²⁴. Cross-cultural communication is possible, because some elements in the human psyche are common. Individual consciousness is developed through the group consciousness of the society one lives in, and that group consciousness is developed through the universal consciousness of humankind. One, however, should have some kind of knowledge of where particular types of music started from, what set the conditions for their birth and development. How these works emerged and what association they carry or bring to the listener’s mind is a totally different issue.

The equation of a musical work with its notation (Goodman, 1976), its characterization as a descriptive historical language simultaneously decreases the value of music as an art form. But the message carried depends on a great extent on the medium of mediation. McLuhan would say that *the medium is the message*. The medium of music may carry descriptive—historical or cultural—information, but the way it is structured also denotes aesthetic value. In fact, a musical composition is judged for its aesthetic attributes, not its informative character. For music the higher the aesthetic value, the higher the musical value. For language on the other hand, the more information carried, the more the receiver understands, the more successful the language.

Music for the unfamiliar listener carries symbolical, not literary meaning. A particular rhythm is not equal to a particular phrase; imagination plays a major role in *decoding* the musical message. The listener’s thoughts and experience would give the specific rhythm its specific meaning—or none at all. That, however, would mean that musical language is unsuccessful, incomplete or rather vain. What Trevor Wishart would warn listeners about is the danger of notation banishing “*the direct, unique, sound-experience from the realm considered as music and reversing our appreciation of a sound-event*”. “*We are only to respond to it as an attempted realization of a conglomerate of Ideal*

*(i.e. non-existent) sound events approximated by proper attention to the notes, the counting, and the “correct” instrumental timbre production. A musical performance is transformed from a unique trans-linguistic communion, where success or failure is directly internally verifiable for each listener, to a particular approximation to a notated Ideal form where success is validated by reference to this external form and hence taken out of the hands of performers and listeners alike and delegated to the scribehood’s musical branch. Music comes under direct scribal jurisdiction”.*²⁵

Do we want to learn the musical rules that will guide us towards what we *ought* to perceive—or what the composer wants us to perceive—from each work of music? That would mean that music would sacrifice its power to arouse creativity and imagination and its feature of pure aesthetic value for acquiring the unwavering, unfailing label of a language. Better music would be more complex music or music with originally difficult notation. What about the unadulterated notion of simple harmony, the aesthetic beauty of a pure tune?

Even then, when rules are established for realizing and understanding what a specific form of music or what a specific composer tells through his music, the case remains unclear. Even when communicating through a specific language, set and well known for both the receiver and the sender, to understand the complete specificity and absolute meaning of the message passed, their “horizons of meaning” need to overlap (Gadamer). Is that ever possible?

Furthermore, after Freudian psychoanalysis and the much-stressed importance of the unconscious, how can anyone be sure of what a composer wants to say or imply? The intention of the music proves very difficult to determine, even for the composer himself. Music is indeed indented sound; it indicates but mostly and for most people symbolically, not literary.

The music composed before 1800 has provided the world with a standard repertoire of musical masterpieces, as Goehr argues. Following this musical practice, classical music became the category under which all “serious” music was to be classified.

Many would argue that anyhow, music is a symbolic mode able to communicate feelings and emotions. If for Hanslick music expresses only the dynamic properties of feelings, and not all aspects of them, for Langer the distinction that exists is between implicit and explicit aspects of ideas or knowledge. Music is only capable of implicitly expressing something and mostly the inner. Is music, then, a close mode relevant only to emotive experiences and the inner world or is it—as John Shepherd puts it—“*an open mode that, through its essentially structural nature is singularly*

suited to reveal the dynamic structuring of social life"²⁶, and therefore the outer world, as well? Is it in pure musical terms that we understand music?

Lydia Goehr tries to find an answer through a historical exploration of musical tradition and culture. She defines the musical work as an "*open concept with original and derivative employment*"²⁷, a concept "*correlated to the ideals of a practice*", "*a regulative*", "*projective*" and "*emergent*"²⁸ concept. An open concept is one that does not correspond to fixed or static essences, does not accept a precise definition and stays incomplete in the possibility of being modified. Continuity, transcendency and flexibility are the main characteristics of an open concept. Its definition might undergo alterations through time but its identity is not altered. A work of music then, has no fixed definition, but, Goehr continues, one can find paradigmatic examples of such a work, examples that play a particular role in the practice in which they exist—at least for a given time.

Can tango music be seen as an example of a musical work? Yes, such music can effectively be regarded in terms of works, if we extend the concept's employment to the specific cultural setting. A tango composition can be classified as a work of music, if one can identify composers, represent the music in adequate notation, specify instrumental specifications etc. Specific properties of tango music such as dancing or sometimes including lyrics cannot exclude it from being a work. Its derivative or challenging character justifies its failure to stand in close conceptual immediacy to work-music. In any case, when an example falls under a concept and lacks some characteristic attributes of that concept, it is the user's task to try and decrease the inconsistencies so that the example is embraced by the concept. Composers and various performers have in practice illustrated the employment of tango under the work-concept by introducing tango music in their performing program. The argument that tango music is placed under the concept of popular music cannot make much of a difference, as it is possible for one example to fall under two concepts—in many cases this double musical facet occurring deliberately on the part of the composer.

In accordance with the openness of the work-concept, if certain derivative examples or practices particularly composed to challenge the work-concept influence in any way our current understanding of the original work it is time for modification or expansion of the concept. Derivative examples such as tango music can and may cause an expansion of the work-concept so as to include them. Accommodation of new examples and ideas is a common challenge

among composers and is perfectly allowed, as long as an acknowledgement of the original work-concept has been given. Without the original example, derivative examples cannot have any force—the aim is not to doubt the work-concept but to challenge and expand it. Goehr's chase is towards a neutralization of the work-concept, not a dismissal of it.

The distinction between identity conditions and ideals is another important point Goehr makes. Perfect compliance with scores, for instance, is an ideal, in a performer's attempt to produce a perfect expression of a given work of music, but cannot be sufficient in defining the music as a work of art. Ideals cannot easily be seen as identity conditions. Cage's works cannot therefore be excluded from the category of musical works, just because their composer does not produce "adequate" scores. The discussion about ideals guides us to the implicit, conceptual understanding of musical practice and that means looking at a musical practice in historical terms.

The concept of a work as a regulative concept is seen as a form of guidance "*through pronesis and example*"²⁹, not as a demand of following strict, set rules defined from practice. Guidance is a form of supervision. One's beliefs and ideas are welcome, as long as they do not break the constitutive rules.

The projective and emergent character of the musical work is for Goehr quite clear. In order to come into existence the work has to be projected, it has to appear in scores and performances—otherwise only the regulative work-concept exists. The concept of a musical work emerged out of the already existing concepts of composition, performance and notation—continuity is vital for an open concept, as mentioned above—at about 1800.

Tango music can be included in the category of musical works and can be compared to their cultural character. In the particular movie ("El Exilio de Gardel"), the culture and history of Argentina are sketched in the tanguedy; the tanguedy tells of the Argentine culture and history. A cultural and historical object, tango needs to be preserved and performed to the world as a part of Argentine national identity.

As explained already, the understanding of tango by the audience will not, in any case, be complete. The horizons of meaning between the Argentine director and composer and the European audience will not, in most cases, overlap. They will not overlap even between the two friends who saw the movie and are discussing about it afterwards. Personal experiences, social

and cultural backgrounds, even the state of mind at the time the movie was watched would come to play a role in the interpretation of the tango. If one also takes into account the Freudian practice and findings or the theory of music talking to the feelings and emotions, it becomes clear that no interpretation will ever be completely the same.

The conversation between Juan Dos and Pierre right after they have shown their tanguedy to an audience of critics **Juan Dos**: “They won’t understand a thing. They can’t feel it, because they don’t know us, or our history”. **Pierre**: “Audiences are audiences”) underlies exactly this difficulty of people—from a specific social and historical setting—to understand what other people—from a different social and historical setting—are saying.

However, comments like “But that means nothing to us” or “In France we want people to do what’s expected”—said from French critics right after they saw the tanguedy—imply a kind of indifference or unwillingness of the west to try and understand a different culture. It is only natural that they cannot possibly understand the aspect of the tango associated with Argentine culture the same way an Argentinian would understand it, but dismissing any culture that does not comply with their own is another issue.

In my view, post-dictatorship Argentine cinema had exactly that purpose of showing to the rest of the world their tango as a cultural object. The viewer is identified with the exiled heroes, not the French critics, and is asked to try and understand. Through the identification with the characters of the story, a major social issue is explained to the viewer.

Through the medium of film, such understanding is more possible. In the help of the music, the image comes to stress the tragedy of the tango by showing a crying face. Being at the same time present and absent in the unfolding of the movie, the viewer is explained the story from the inside. The European’s pseudopresence in the Argentine cultural setting gives him a better chance of expanding his horizons of meaning than a sitting in a tango performance or a concert hall.

“*Sur*”

This is the story of Floreal, a political prisoner returning home at the end of the military dictatorship at 1983. From the first moments of the movie, the spectators realize that this is a movie of memories and looking back. The film is mostly set in a neighbourhood of Buenos Aires—Floreal’s old neighbourhood—where the protagonist returns to find that everything has changed: many of his friends have died during his absence, his wife, Rosi, has had an affair with another man, the meat-packing and distribution industry he had worked for has been decimated.

During Floreal’s walk in the deserted nighttime streets of his neighbourhood and throughout the film, the theme music is a series of nostalgic tangos of love, exile and return. The story is told to someone (maybe Solanas, as we only hear his voice) by El Negro, a dead friend who reappears to explain what had happened during the time that Solanas was in exile and Floreal in prison.

El Negro: Así que vas a hacer una película de amor. (So you will make a love film)

Solanas: ¿Qué decís? [...] Pero ¿de dónde lo sacaste? (What do you say? ... but...how did you make such a conclusion?)

El Negro: Vamos... Si de ida o de vuelta, nuestras historias eran siempre historias de amor. (Let’s go...Ok, whether while going or while coming, our stories were always love stories.)*
(0:05)

El Negro is therefore functioning as the narrator, although the director himself interrupts



Scene 4-9: Scene from the film “*Sur*”—Floreal is returning to his neighbourhood in Buenos Aires



Scene 4-10: The Table of Dreams in Café “*Sur*”

or adds bits and pieces in the narration. El Negro accompanies Floreal in his homecoming walk and explains the facts that occurred before and after his death, tango melodies accompanying both of the characters and their conversations in this journey to the past.

As the title “Sur”(south) suggests, Solanas is interested in mapping a geopolitical space, which can only be defined in contradiction to “el Norte” (the north). It is no hint that the south is related to Argentina and the third world, while the north refers to the British economic imperialism and respectively any kind of domination. The “Proyecto Nacional Sur” aims to develop an autonomous political unconscious of the South, underlying the desire for economic independence, nationhood and a strong need for the emergence of a distinctive Argentine identity. All these dreams and plans, thought of and organized around “The Table of Dreams” at the café Sur are talked about along with the tender presence of a tango.

The tango is used as a cultural icon, an identifying characteristic of the geopolitical space Solanas is trying to set—namely the “Sur”. It functions as a sign of cultural autonomy, a tradition that managed to survive and thrive both through the military dictatorship and the foreign domination.

If one pays attention to the lyrics just before the final tango in “Sur”, he might sense a bitterness characteristic of the traditional Argentine tango, denoting nationhood.

Mi barrio era así, así, así...	My neighbourhood was like this, like this, like this...
Es decir, qué sé yo si era así...	That is to say, how do I know if it was like that...
Alguien dijo una vez	Someone once said
que yo me fui de mi barrio.	that I left from my neighbourhood.
¿Cuándo, pero cuándo?	When, but when?
Si siempre estoy llegando.	If I am always arriving.
Y si una vez me olvidé,	And if I forgot once,
las estrellas de la esquina	the stars of the corner,
de la casa de mi vieja,	of my mother's (old woman's) house,
titilando como si fueran	twinkling as if they were
manos amigas, me dijeron,	hands-friends, told me
«Gordo, Gordo, quedate aquí»	“Fat man, fat man, stay here”. *(1:48)

Like the love story of Rosi and Floreal, so the tangos in “Sur” function as an allegory of exile and return. At the same time, tangos define themselves as classically associated with Argentine’s everyday life (as they are heard while Floreal meets Rosi and during normal conversations between friends), political and cultural autonomy and practice (they are also heard when the “Proyecto Nacional Sur” is thought of or discussed). Tango is heard during Floreal’s retrospect of the past and Emilio’s anticipation of a better future—it is indissolubly connected with Argentine development as a nation. The tango is in this way connected to the Argentine identity.

Furthermore, *“identification with the tango is in itself an archetypal process of cognitive mapping by which people process “raw” experience and symbolize their own lives in relation to the shifting social structures of the city. ...The city, taken as a sort of symbolic mind map, can thus chart not only the shifting social structures of urban and suburban space but also its point of interface with a wider world system of migrating populations, where the barrio is only a displaced home pointing inexorably towards another lost place of origin (Italy, Spain, Eastern Europe...).*³⁰

The film is entirely dominated by tango music. Heard on numerous occasions throughout the unfolding of the plot, from the narration of the love story of Floreal and Rosi to Floreal’s wandering in the deserted streets of his neighbourhood, among flying scattered leaves and pieces of paper, the tango, as an old aesthetic form, presents the nostalgia of old times by talking about past, memory and absence. In the street, around the railway station, and most importantly during glances through the windows of buses and trains towards areas of Buenos Aires, it accompanies the characters in their journey to the Argentine past and underlines a wish and a plan for a better future.

The lyrics of the tango heard during Maria’s journey on a truck towards the endless road down South to Patagonia and a new life compare her sadness with the sadness of a guitar without chords (“más triste que guitarra sin cuerda”) and speak of a desire to find a place where life and desire would be possible (“Quería venir al Sur. Poder encontrar un lugar donde la vida, el deseo fueran posibles...”).

The film borrows a kind of cult value from the nostalgia and melancholy confessed in these tangos. It is the decaying aura of old times—the kind of aura old black and white

photographs have—and the strange play between memory and time, enhanced by the originality of a music born and composed in the country the images of which appear on the screen. The music of “the other”—meaning exotic/foreign for the Western audience—embraces the film with the aura of the different, the unfamiliar and the authentic.

<p>San Juan y Boedo antigua y todo el cielo, Pompeya y, mas alla, la inundacion, tu melena de novia en el recuerdo, y tu nombre flotando en el adios... La esquina del herrero barro y pampa, tu casa, tu vereda y el zanjon y un perfume de yuyos y de alfalfa que me llena de nuevo el corazon.</p>	<p>Ancient San Juan and Boedo streetcorner, the whole sky Pompeya and farther down, the floods Your loose hair of a bride in my memory and your name floating in the farewell The blacksmith's corner, mud and pampa, our house, your sidewalk, and the ditch and a scent of weeds and alfalfa that fills the heart all over again.</p>
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<p>Sur... paredon y después... Sur... una luz de almacén. Ya nunca me verás como me vieras, recostado en la vidriera y esperándote... ya nunca alumbraré con las estrellas nuestra marcha sin querellas por las calles de Pompeya. Las calles y las lunas suburbanas y mi amor en tu ventana todo ha muerto, ya lo sé...</p>	<p>South, a large wall and then... South, a light from a general store... Never again will you see me like you used to (see me) reclined on the glass window waiting for you... And never again will I lighten with the stars our walks without quarrels on the evenings of Pompeii... The streets and the suburban moons, and my love on your window, all is dead, I know that now...</p>
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<p>San Juan y Boedo antigua, cielo perdido, Pompeya y, al llegar al terraplen, tus veinte años temblando de cariño bajo el beso que entonces te robe.</p>	<p>Ancient San Juan and Boedo, lost sky, Pompeii and reaching the embankment, your twenties trembling with affection with a kiss I then stole from you.</p>
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Nostalgia de las cosas que han pasado,	Nostalgias of things that have past,
arena que la vida se llevo,	sand that life swept away,
pesadumbte del barrio que ha cambiado	sorrow for the barrio that have changed,
y amargura del suego que murio.	and bitterness for a dream that died. ... (0:02, 1:18) *

“Sur” uses black-and-white film inserts to give the impression of Floreal “remembering” or imagining. It is *an attempt to* present the character’s unconscious to the audience and at the same time a hint of the Argentinean political unconscious. *“The black-and-white silent film at once highlights the filmic, and its running at the wrong speed, typical of the attempt to show early snatches of film on modern equipment, suggests precisely the mechanical medium, the “apparatus” of film, just as the stuttering suggests the effort required to translate political thought into discourse”*.³¹ Solanas uses music and black-and-white images because he feels that film alone is not adequate a medium to produce and represent reality. Yet, even with the help of other mediums such as music and photography, there are still gaps and silences that cannot be fully reproduced. Bearing this fact in mind, the audience should come to the conclusion that there is only one aspect of reality shown on film and even this one is not perfectly represented. *“By scanning the film for those gaps, it becomes possible to discern inhering within them a “No” which could counter the inaugurating and prohibiting “Non” of the social symbolic and its violent extension in military law. The film can only point to the necessary effort to think through these gaps in representation, the impossible attempt to trace out the incomplete and unrepresentable blueprint which they would form could they but be linked together”*.³²

Subsequently, there is only one part of the tango music heard in films and even that one part is not fully covered. If the viewers tried to trace all the gaps and silences each tango film tried to cover, they might find a hint of what tango music is actually about.

The music in “Sur” is mostly diegetic, an orchestra appearing most of the times a tango is heard. The audience knows the music is in Floreal’s imagination, but they, too, see the singer and the bandoneon. It is *an attempt of the director* to put the audience in the protagonist’s shoes.

* Music by: Anibal Troilo, Lyrics by: Homero Manzi, Translated by Maria Papadaki and Maren Ortiz Zarragoitia.

Vuelvo al Sur,
 como se vuelve siempre al amor,
 vuelvo a vos,
 con mi deseo, con mi temor.

I return to the South,
 like one always returns to love...
 I return to you,
 with my desire, with my fear.

Llevo el Sur,
 como un destino del corazon,
 soy del Sur,
 como los aires del bandoneon.

I carry the South,
 like a destiny of my heart,
 I am from the South,
 like the melodies of the bandoneon.

Suego el Sur,
 inmensa luna, cielo al reves,
 busco el Sur,
 el tiempo abierto, y su despues.

I dream of the South,
 immense moon, the sky reversed.
 I look for the South,
 the open time and its thereafter.

Quiero al Sur,
 su buena gente, su dignidad,
 siento el Sur,
 como tu cuerpo en la intimidad.

I desire the South,
 its good people, its dignity.
 I feel the South,
 like your body, in intimacy... * (1:52)

Sur speaks of nostalgia and coming back, searching for an understanding of the past that would bring new hopes for the future. Nostalgia and homecoming are important aspects of the tango. Its birth, at the bordellos of Buenos Aires, was the birth of a dance and a form of music able to manifest the sadness of its immigrants. It was nostalgia and homecoming that the tango confessed back then—nostalgia of the lost homeland—, it is nostalgia and homecoming that the tango demonstrates in “Sur”—nostalgia of a past neighbourhood and Argentina. It is this nostalgic characteristic of the film that gives it a kind of cult value and appreciation among

* “Vuelvo al Sur”, (“I’m returning to the south”), 1926, Music by: Astor Piazzolla, Lyrics by: Fernando E. Solanas, Translated by Maria Papadaki and Maren Ortiz Zarragoitia.

academics.

Tango is a dance form and consequently a “play form”, in the sense that social rules or connotations that apply outside dance do not necessarily apply inside. Dance provides an arena of pushing back boundaries between male and female, dominant and dominated. Dance is not normal behaviour.

This is the first film Solanas directs in his country, Argentine, after his return from his exile in France. While in France, he directed and distributed *“Tangos: El Exilio de Gardel”*, and it was these two films that introduced a different kind of tango in Europe, Piazzolla’s “Tango Nuevo”.

The music – Astor Piazzolla

“El Exilio de Gardel” and “Sur” were for many people introductions to the tango as a new form of music, a music both associated with Argentina but at the same time a music worth listening to; not a dance music, but an orchestral one—or a music to perform to. Solanas’ winning the best director award at Cannes in 1988 was due



to this successful combination of art and politics. The soundtrack’s tango music was part of this success. Piazzolla’s “Nuevo Tango” was starting to be appreciated as an art form. The music for “Sur” stands alone, like the film scores of Copland, Prokofiev and John Williams.

“Sur” is the 56th film Piazzolla’s name is associated with, his first appearance being in 1935, in a film called “El Dia Que Me Quieras”¹ (John Reinhardt, USA). At that time a teenager; living in New York, he appears very briefly playing a newspaper boy. Carlos Gardel, a great figure for Argentine tango music, both wrote the music for and starred in the film. Twelve years later, in 1947, the Piazzolla Orchestra appears on a scene at a ballroom playing a tango (music by Daniel Lopez Baretto) in the film “El Hombre del Sabato”. The first film featuring Piazzolla’s own music is released in 1949 and is entitled: “Con Los Mismos Colores” (Torres Rios,

Argentina).

In 1954, “Suceso en Buenos Aires” is produced (Cahen Salaberry, Argentina). Noteworthy of this film is the opening theme by Piazzolla (as the camera shows Buenos Aires from above). It is the song “Nonino”, which a few years later would form the basis of composing “Nonino” and its most famous film “Adios Nonino”. This is interesting to point out, as it is an instant where a well-known and lately much appreciated music work is inspired and born from a movie soundtrack. That is only a proof that Piazzolla considered film music as valuable and imaginative as any other type of composed music. In this same year, Piazzolla decided to clarify his hesitation between the bandoneon and the piano and moved to France, having won a scholarship granted by the Paris Conservatory. It was his teacher there, Nadia Boulanger, that persuaded him to develop his art starting from what was more his own: tango and bandoneon. Boulanger was a teacher who encouraged many of her students, among whom Piazzolla and Copland, to find individuality in their compositions. Most of them did. Both Piazzolla and Copland came to be seen as perfect ambassadors of their countries’ mythic self-image. Both used popular rhythms and traditional idioms in their music. Both wrote music for concerts as well as film scores.

Known as the leader of the orchestra that provided musical accompaniment for the singer Francisco Fiorentino in 1944, the launcher of one of the most elaborate orchestras in 1946, the creator of the Octeto Buenos Aires in the 50s, it was the creation of the Quinteto Nuevo Tango² in 1960 that aroused a warm enthusiasm around Piazzolla’s name, especially in such types of public as university audiences. In 1965 Piazzolla and his quintet perform at the Philharmonic Hall of New York. During the same year, he recorded in Buenos Aires a series of compositions of his after poems and texts by Jorge Luis Borges with the singer Edmundo Rivero and the actor Luis Medina Castro. It was the year Piazzolla introduced “Verano porteño”, the first of the very important tangos, which would give form to the Cuatro Estaciones (Four Seasons) and one among the most favourite classical guitar works.

Many films and documentaries were to follow, their soundtracks’ containing some vintage

¹ aka, The Day You Love Me

² The Quintet consisted of a bandoneon, a piano, a violin, an electric guitar and a double bass

Piazzolla music. In some of these films, the music is not only composed but also interpreted by Piazzolla and his quintet. After the film “Tangos: El Exilio de Gardel” (Fernando Solanas, Argentine/France, 1984), the soundtrack of which won the 1985 Cesar (French Oscar-equivalent), three films were produced containing Piazzolla in their soundtracks, the importance of whom lies in the fact that they were produced and distributed outside Latin America:

1. “Henry IV” (Marco Bellochio, Italy, 1984) with Marcello Mastroianni and Claudia Cardinale. “Oblivion”—later to be included in the repertoire of famous violinists such as Gidon Kremer—was the theme song of the movie.
2. “Raw Deal” (John Irvin, USA, 1986). Although Piazzolla is listed among the music credits, this film simply contains as background Grace Jones’ “I’ve seen that face before”, a disco version of Piazzolla’s “Libertango” with lyrics.
3. “Frantic” (Roman Polanski, France/USA, 1988). Again, this film contains as background Grace Jones’ “I’ve seen that face before”.

The assumption is, then, that the audience watching “Sur” in 1988 was already familiar with the tangos of Astor Piazzolla. At least the French cinemagoers would have been aware of the Cesar-winner composer. After all, it was only the previous year that a recital by the quintet in New York’s Central Park was committed to record. The tangos in “Sur” are interpreted by Anibal Troilo, (the bandoneonist that had accepted young Piazzolla in his orchestra back in 1939 and had played the role of his tutor), and sung by Roberto Goyeneche.

Although “Sur” is among the last films the soundtracks of which are entirely by Piazzolla, there are some very important films that came after that. “Citizen Langlois” (Edgardo Cozarinski, France, 1994) for instance, a documentary film about the founder of Cinematheque Francaise, in which Kronos Quartet accompanies the music of Piazzolla. Another example would be the commercially popular “12 Monkeys” (Terry Gilliam, USA, 1995), which features an adaptation of Piazzolla’s “Suite Punta del Este”³ as its theme song. “The Tango Lesson” (Sally Potter, UK, 1997) contains Piazzolla’s “Zum” in version by Osvaldo Pugliese and “Libertango” both in the original Piazzolla version and in the version recorded by Yo Yo Ma.⁴

³The music of the film is written by Paul Buckmaster

⁴A more detailed list of the known movies featuring Piazzolla’s music can be found at: www.piazzolla.org

The Mediation

Listening to “Vuelvo Al Sur” or “Sur Regreso al Amor” in a concert hall or through one of Yo Yo Ma’s CDs containing the specific musical works, one *feels* the melancholy of the tango. It is through the musical language of feelings and emotions that the audience perceives Piazzolla’s tango music. Even if the listener has not seen the film, he would probably successfully characterize the music nostalgic or sad. Bitter even.

However, for the audience that listens to these tangos while watching the film the case is completely different. Specific images accompany the melodies, giving them specific meanings and attributes. The tangos do not just express nostalgia, sadness or bitterness; they express the nostalgia of the exiled returning home, the sadness of facing things changed while one was absent, or the bitterness of the citizens in a country just surviving over a period of military dictatorship. The music is associated with the specific film’s theme and images. Floreal’s wandering in the empty streets of Buenos Aires, among flying papers and leaves, in the foggy atmosphere of his beloved past neighbourhood will always tie “Sur’s” soundtrack with return. Of course, the title and lyrics of some pieces also associate tango with return.⁵ Through the soundtrack of a film, however, music is generally more easily viewed as having social or historical characteristics. While watching a film, the viewers forget their own personal lives and get cognitively involved with the characters’ stories.

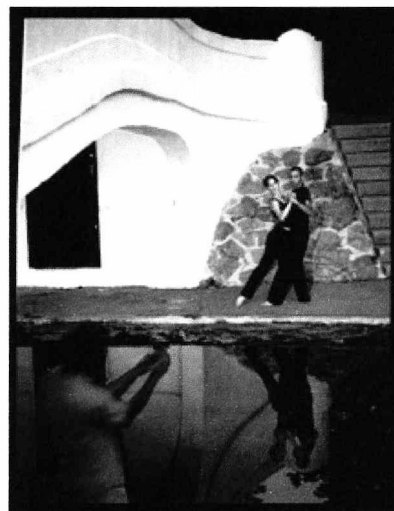
Watching all these post-dictatorship Argentine films featuring tango music over images of Buenos Aires and its history, the European audience justifiably associated tango with this town and culture. Tango was in that way seen as a cultural icon, referring to Argentine society. It was both challengingly attractive and reasonable enough to map this distant culture within the boundaries of the known and so exotically different tango. Soon this popular music was to be attributed with the burden of being the symbol of Argentine national identity.

As already explained, it is film’s promise to offer such “projective visibility” and “ontological equality” to the audience, so as to transfer them to the world seen on screen. Consequently, agreeing with Savigliano, it takes three to tango: *“a male to master the dance and confess*

*his sorrows; a female to seduce, resist seduction and be seduced; and a gaze to watch these occurrences. ...The gaze—a spectator by nature—will always be placed “up-down”, a location from which everything is reduced to miniature dimensions”.*³³ Firstly, it was the gaze of the male Argentinean elite that began to transform the tango characteristics as danced and sung in the underworld of Buenos Aires. When the same elite demanded an active part in the dance and started dancing with the milonguitas, the tango started to slow down. The later participation of middle-class dancers resulted in bland tango music. Through its cinema mediation, the tango became exotic—its choreography, lyrics and music constantly changing so as to be increasingly accessible, yet exoticised. The politics of tango cannot be split from the presence of a spectator. The gaze integrates, adapts and rethinks the seen.

The audiences’ gaze is responsible for shaping a great deal of the scandal concerning the tango steps. For Savigliano, it is the audience’s imagination that places the colonizing gazer in the *compadritos*’ shoes. The colonized female dances the tango with the male colonizer—the colonizer dominating with desire, the colonized resisting with passion.

Even before seen on screen, the tango was gazed at. The only difference between the passer-by’s gaze in the streets of Buenos Aires, the gazes at females dancing the tango in Argentine cabarets and the gaze of the European film audience is that the last gaze is only allowed through a mediator. The cinema acts between the Argentine tango and the European cinema viewer in order to explain, bring the former to the knowledge of the latter. Mediating is communicating. Tell the story, as one knows it—the outcome depending both upon the mediator and the receiver. What this fact suggests is that tango music might have been taken away from its real context even if it had never appeared on screen. The inconsistencies might have been fewer had the receivers met the tango in Argentine streets, but the fact is that a large audience will



Photograph 4-5: *The Stranger*,
Photograph by Alain Beaupre, a teacher of
Science, a world traveller and a tanguero

⁵ eg. “Vuelvo al Sur”, “I return to the South”

only come to know tango through a mediator. It is up to the mediator to tell the story right.

Is there such thing as a right story? Not in the case of music. As said before, the musical meaning lies in a great extent on the perceivers, their tastes, knowledge and experience. The director perceived tango music before mediating it to his film audience. In the case of Argentine directors telling the story of their country the effort is not to vulgarise or “inauthenticize” but rather preserve tango music.

Through such films as: *“Tangos: El Exilio de Gardel”* (Fernando Solanas, 1984), *“Sur”* (Solanas, 1988), *“Ultimas imagenes del naufragio”* (“Last Images of The Shipwreck”, Eliseo Subiela, 1989), *“La Historia Oficial”* (“The Official History”, Luis Puenzo, 1986), *“Camila”* (Maria Luisa Bemberg, 1984), *“Hombre mirando al Sudeste”* (“Man Facing Southeast”, Eliseo Subiela) and other less popular films that were produced during the second half of the 80s, like *“La Sagrada Familia”* (“The Holy Family”, Pablo Cesar), *“Geronima”* (Raul A. Tosso), *“Perros de la Noche”* (“The Dogs of the Night”, Teo Kofman), *“Otra Historia de Amor”* (“Another Love Story”, Amenco Ortiz de Zarate), and *“Miss Mary”* (Maria Luisa Bemberg) tango was seen as Argentine’s cultural resource. It is important to point out the fact that all the films mentioned are directed by Latin American directors, although some of them have been distributed with the help of European producers. In all these films, tango is associated with the social and political facts of Argentine’s history. Through allegorical configurations places, situations, events and most importantly the tango acquire historical meanings, equaling themselves with the nation and culture of Buenos Aires.

Films directed, produced and distributed completely by Hollywood, however, rarely



Scenes 4-11, 4-12 & 4-13: Scenes from the film “The Scent of a Woman”

address the issue of the socio-political associations of the tango with Argentine. Films like *“Last Tango in Paris”* (Bernando Bertolucci, 1973) stress the commercially popular tango image of

passion, exotic dancing and emotionally extreme situations. In films like *“Schindler’s List”* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), the audience often does not realize the existence of John William’s tango music as the main soundtrack theme. When not danced to, tango is not a very popular film theme. It is the dance that attracts the attention of both producers and mass audiences. In cases like these, mediating turns into appropriating. If the mediator has not understood how the story goes, what are his chances of passing the message correctly to the audience? The tango is disseminated and transformed into just another recognizable cultural resource—Latin American related. In films like *“The Scent of a Woman”* the tango is shown as a dance, concerned with the attractiveness and erotic nature of the woman.

If the socio-political meanings of the tango and its associations of gender and class are not really visible on a recent Hollywood film, if its unique character and nature has been accepted as



Scene 4-14: Macho associations in the film *“Tango”*

just a symbol of a foreign culture, if its lyrics and music are transformed so as to be liked by the European cinema audience, what is maintained in tango’s mediation? If something is maintained in the tango mediation through the cinema is its macho cult.

Maintained or again transformed? Bitterness for the loss of love and companion, the longing for a woman was what the tango was about—although generally not admitted. The macho men were more interested in the judgments of their male peers—male friendship playing a much bigger role than erotic passion. This fact is ignored in recent tango films. Male dancers rarely dance together over a female.

It is the female dancer that legitimizes the need for leadership.



Scene 4-15: Tango choreography stressing the macho character of the tango

She, seeming helpless and desperate, asks for the male's guidance. The steps of the female may seem to follow those of the male dancer, but it is the woman that has asked to be guided in the first place. In many recent movies, this female role is often underestimated or even ignored.

When abroad, Argentines look at the tango as a shield against the dissolution of identity—internationally, tango has come to be the symbol of Argentinean identity. The cinema has played a big role in this evaluation of a local music into a national symbol. Tango gained a different kind of recognition and popularity in its country of origin, Argentina, after having been approved of on the European screens. Local dancing styles were influenced by the European judgement—the local reception of tango was dramatically affected by its external interventions.

Tango

However, in 1998, there came director Carlos Saura with the film “Tango” to show that the music has lost none of its meaning or significance. Saura has set out to celebrate that the tango is an Argentinian national treasure, not just an exotic dance.

In ‘Tango’, the main character is Mario Suarez (Miguel Ángel Sola), a divorced middle-aged tango artist whose recent car crash has left him walking with a cane. Mario moves out of his Buenos Aires apartment to live on the set of his new film, which is to be a series of dance pieces representing the place and significance of the tango in Argentinian history. At this point the similarities with the past Argentine films of the 80s start to be clear.

The audience follows the film's production process and Mario, the director, falling in love with the girlfriend of one of the film's sponsors, a local man of influence. Some unexpected dance schemes—the old tango maestro and a teenage girl, a dozen pairs of men, Suarez's ex-wife Laura (Cecilia Narova) and his lover Elena (Mía Maestro), and even a threesome involving both women and a man—are suggestions of how the tango used to be, when danced in the streets of Buenos Aires by the passer-bys.

Subjects as the natures of life, cruelty and growing old, are discussed between Mario and Elena through a meal. As the plot goes on, Mario is proved to have other weaknesses, as well. By correcting a dancer in the fight scene as to the correct way knives are concealed, held and

employed in a battle, the audience understands by his expression that this might actually be a memory from life.

The importance of this film lies in the fact that Saura draws the audience's attention into the tango itself. Film cameras reflected in the mirrors form an integral part of Mario's studio set and show artistic scenes of tango dances. Saura, as Solanas many years before, plays between planes of reality, jumping between film, dream and the tango dance. Most crucially for this research, the director seeks to document tango's place in the 1990s. Mario at some point complains to his associates that there is very little footage of the classical tango artists around and through his mouth the message is passed: the tango Europe knows is not the real tango.

As evidence to support the argument, the audience is provided with a dance of the immigrants, a stark evocation of Argentina's days of military rule, of torture and the fates of the disappeared, all in dance scenarios. Saura stresses these moments in Argentine history as something that must never be forgotten. This interpretive piece about anxiety and terror in the days of the junta successfully places tango back in its socio-political associations.

This mediator knows what he is talking about. The film—although commercially not very popular—was nominated for the best foreign film at the 1998 Oscar awards. That might mean that some have actually received the message and that tango has gained back its lost aura.

6. Criticism

Adorno and Eisler in "Composing for the Films"

"Composing for the Films" is a classic study of the difficulties and limitations of the existence of music in film. The purpose here is not to diminish or dismiss its significance, but to set the limits of its practical application in modern films or music scores. As said before, criticisms are timely, not timeless interpretations of changes and societal situations.

Eisler composed a number of scores for commercial movies, working under very difficult conditions. At the time, movie-industries had developed their own music departments. It was the director and the producer of the film who had the last word over which piece of music was going to be used, in which scene and how. From the composer only a blueprint was required—a framework which the director can work on and fit in a given scene. That meant that, due to the director's cuttings and formulations, the score was distorted. The main value of the film composer those days was the ability to be adaptable, to conform to the director's wishes and visions. What the director visualized, the composer had to adapt to.

Adorno, on the other hand, member of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, believed in Critical Theory and condemned modern standardization. He spoke of the dangers of a "mass culture" and the homogeneity of the modern cultural forms, including music. What this thesis chapter aims at is to prove that music still is the memory and anticipation of collectivities, and not some product of a culture industry aiming only at market profit.

The first exaggeration of the book is in the first few lines of the introduction. "*The motion picture industry cannot be understood in isolation, as a specific form of art; it is understandable only as the most characteristic medium of contemporary cultural industry.*"³⁴ Such exaggerations as "*all art has become entertainment*"³⁵ are visible throughout the book. Many standard practices of the film score are criticized: the leitmotif—whose classical function has been reduced to a level of "*musical lackey*", being extremely and inappropriately used to identify characters, places or events—the employment of *melody and euphony* for their immediate, easy understanding, *unobtrusiveness*, as the practice that the viewer should not be aware of the music, *visual justification* of the reason the

audience hears music—imposed from a fear of silence—, *illustration*, where because of the need for hyper-explicitness music mimics visual incidents, *geography and history*, where music moves, along with the costumes, the spectator to the setting, *stock music*, which wears the much-used music out, *clichés*—standardized details—and *standardized interpretation*.

There are, however, movie instances where leitmotifs are used in an imaginative and concrete way; melody and euphony can and have in some instances produced an effect of neutrality. Unobtrusiveness and visual justification are practices that are no longer particularly popular, the audience having come to terms with both diegetic and non-diegetic music, both justifiable and completely unjustifiable musical sources. Illustration is widely used in comedies or animated films but has not spread to other genres such as adventure or science fiction films. The transformation of the viewer to the setting of the narration does not happen biased, but rather naturally through the musical score. There have been cases—as with Piazzolla and the tango tradition—where genuine and interesting musical languages are discovered through the medium of the cinema. Much-used stock music can, but need not necessarily be worn out, while clichés and standardized interpretations can pass as normal only to uneducated or not frequent cinemagoers.

The analysis of the usefulness and limitations of the new musical resources in music for films in the third chapter of the book needs no further discussion. The listener of a modern film score is indeed stimulated to grasp the scene in itself; he hears the music and sees the scene from a fresh point of view, with no existing associations whatsoever. It is true that the shocks that modern music can create—in terms of such emotions as fear or anxiety—could hardly—if ever—been evolved from traditional musical forms.

The criticism of Adorno reappears in the fourth chapter. Seeing the cinema as “*a pseudo-democratic luxury, which is neither luxurious nor democratic*”³⁶, condemning the composer to produce, under the strict guidelines of the director, “*what everybody else produces*”³⁷, leaving no room for the freedom or fantasy of the artist, characterizing the taste of the audiences as static and intolerant of anything new, all this enclosure of every film and music co-existence into a trashcan cannot but be mistaken. What about all the artful examples of music accompanying images, Herrmann accompanying Hitchcock and so many other important composers that have produced significantly powerful film scores like Copland, Steiner, Korngold, Rozsa, Williams, Piazzolla?

The assumption is that this mistaken estimation of the value—or non-value—of film music can be traced back into the mistaken characterization of the audiences as masses. In the first chapter, this characterization was seen as the tenth and most important myth of the so-called—also mistakenly—“mass culture”. This “*illiterate, intolerant and uncritical public taste*”³⁸ Adorno and Eisler are talking about simply—as will be concluded in the last chapter of this thesis—does not exist. If, however, the audiences are not “masses”, but groups of people with varied interests, varied background and different education, they cannot easily be manipulated by such media as the cinema.

The claim that film music has no association to aesthetics whatsoever, that music through the cinema has just an oversimplified or neutralizing function as the composer is in most cases guided by the director, has, I believe, underestimated the introductory power of the cinema. The film can introduce the music and the composer to a wider audience. In the case of Piazzolla, such films as “*El Exilio de Gardel*” and “*Sur*” can and did indeed introduce “Nuevo Tango” to the European audience and invite them in the concert hall to hear Piazzolla’s chamber music. This is not a case of liking the music because one recognizes it, as Adorno argues in his essay “*On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening*”, as even if the audience of these films had already known tango, it would have been in the form of a salon-dance. Piazzolla’s “Nuevo Tango” was just starting to be introduced through such films. Additionally, had the music been “*perceived purely as background*”³⁹—remained unnoticed—the soundtrack of these films would not have sold so many copies. Of course, any standardized kind of music sells, according to the Frankfurt School. Not every piece of music invites so many people in the concert hall, however. People went to see Piazzolla in a concert after hearing his music on film. Piazzolla’s “Nuevo Tango” succeeded in both selling albums and inviting people in concert halls.

The need for structural unity and the practices of montage may indeed limit free inspirational composition, but that does not mean that under these circumstances it is impossible to compose good film music. Great painters have created specifically requested portraits and many of those are today included among the world’s masterpieces. What stops composers creating musical masterpieces under pressure and specific demand?

Furthermore, the unity of the music and image is no longer demanded at all costs, although in most cases music needs to be justified by the film plot. Images without music—

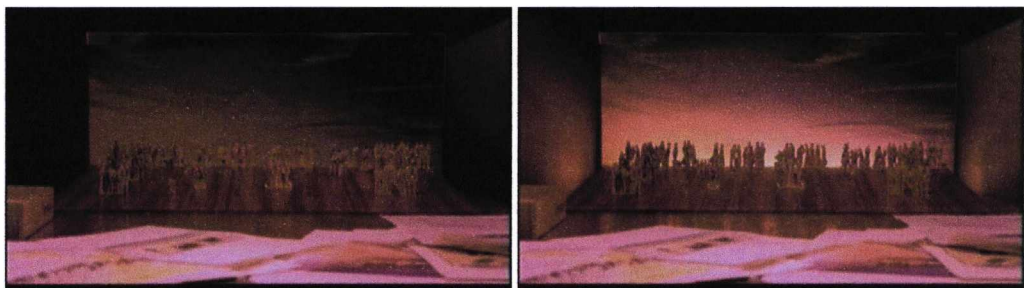
silences—are common in modern films, while music without images or unfolding around a still image can often be seen in film introductions—where a black screen is accompanied by the main film score—or in instances where a close-up shot of a character’s face is enriched with musical melodies.

As said before, the aim here is not to undermine the book’s importance but rather to question its exaggerations and show that in many instances film music can actually “*sparkle and glister*”⁴⁰. The cinema can accurately and effectively mediate musical languages like the tango and transform specific stock music to cultural resource.

Of course, we have so far analyzed only films directed by Argentineans and produced by Europeans. Hollywood has not been part of the discussion, except from the reference to some correct tango associations that films like “*Last Tango in Paris*” or “*The Scent of a Woman*” bring out. The question here, however, is whether or not musical languages can accurately be mediated through the cinema. Furthermore, music composed for or used in the films mentioned is reused by such film directors as Sally Potter in “*The Tango Lesson*” or the Hollywood produced “*12 Monkeys*” etc.

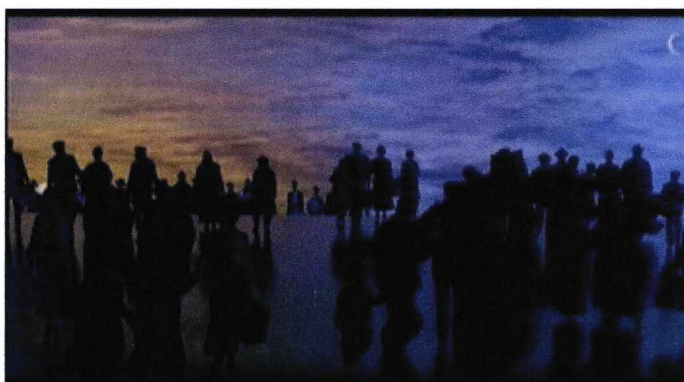
According to Adorno and Eisler, music is not accurately mediated through the cinema. It could not be, if the producer’s aim is neutrality or standardization. That would mean that music loses its socio-historical associations and coherence when mediated through the cinema.

Or does it?



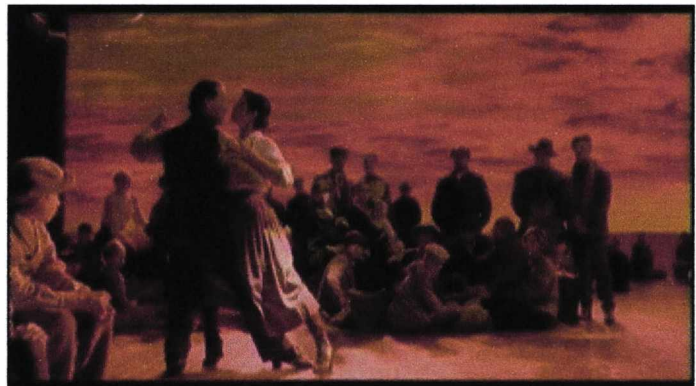
Scenes 4-16 & 4-17: Planning the tango performance in “Tango”

The pictured arrival of the immigrants in Buenos Aires and the association of the tango with its correct cultural connotations prove otherwise.



Scenes 4-18, 4-19 & 4-20: The arrival of the immigrants in Buenos Aires
in the tango performance of the film *"Tango"*

Film can rescue particular cultural objects from oblivion and place them in their historical/cultural context for the individual viewer to come to know and appreciate them.



Scenes 4-21, 4-22 & 4-23: Immigrants are dancing the tango in "*Tango*"

Still, even if the tango is placed in its correct cultural setting, how can one be sure that the audience will understand the particular set of associations and dismiss any former perception they might have already shaped of the music?

According to Adorno—and if one takes into account his idea of the passivity of the masses, “*which makes the consumption of light music contradict the objective interest of those who consume it*”⁴¹—one can be certain that they will not even try to. Even if the audience claims it realized the musical cultural object, its claims are for Adorno illusory, being copied from the standards. “*The liquidation of the individual is the real signature of the new musical situation.*”⁴² It all still emerges from the overemphasis on the realization of the audience as a group of homogeneous people, namely “the mass”.

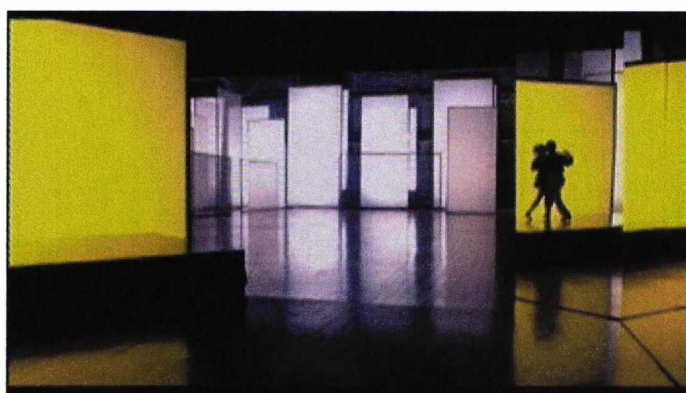
Otherwise, the tango was always explained by a mediator and realized through this mediation. It was the immigrants who added together various dance attitudes of their countries and formed a musical amalgam that was to be known as the “tango”. In the first instance, the wealthy Argentines brought the tango to Europe. It was through their mediation that the Europeans came to terms with the new musical language. It is up to the mediator to mediate the message objectively and without prejudice to the receiver. The Argentinean elite did not do the job right. What Europe was introduced to was what the Argentine elite would prefer the tango to be: elegant and aristocratic in its seductiveness, cleaned up from its black and depressive origins and enriched with foreign associations such as square party-dances and big orchestras.

In some films, such elite opinions come to be seen. In “*El Exilio de Gardel*”, someone, in an attempt to explain his negative opinion of the protagonists’ tanguedy, says, “*In France, we want people to do what is expected*”. Then, the answer comes from another critic: “*Do you really believe that, Natalie?*” The audience is offered two contradictory opinions and can choose the one with which he will identify with—although most will most certainly sympathize with the protagonists. The irony here lies in the fact that the one person who expresses culture industry’s main axiom (*we want people to do what is expected*= homogeneity and standardization) is the only one of the critics the audience (the supposed “mass”) comes to know as an individual—by her name.

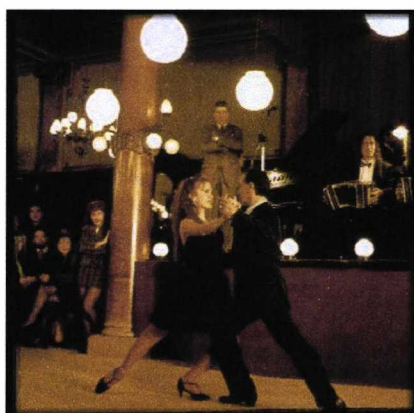


Scenes 4-24, 4-25, 4-26 & 4-27: Dancers in black and white to suggest the complex origin of the tango, in the film "Tango"

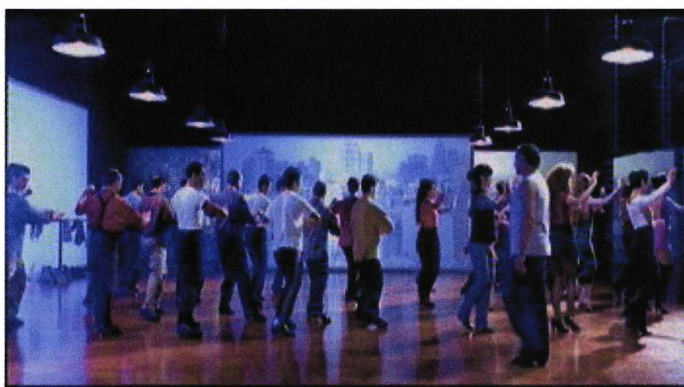
The idea of the mediation, therefore, is not in itself repulsive. A message is carried through a medium anyway. It is the specific medium in the specific mediation that is objected to; it is film mediating music that is condemned. It is McLuhan's opinion that the medium is the message combined with the Frankfurt School's equation of the film with the most unworthy form of the entertainment industry that set the specific problem—its roots again stemming from the idea of a “mass” audience. Had the audience been seen as a group of individuals gathered together in a cinema hall for a common reason—to watch a movie—the perception process could not have been evaluated. It would have been an individual matter—different for each viewer—depending on issues of previous experiences and social/educational backgrounds, Freudian ideas such as unconscious influences and traumas, etc., impossible to measure.



Scene 4-28: Imagining tango in “Tango”



Scenes 4-29 & 4-30: Scenes of salon tango in “Tango”



Scene 4-31: Learning to dance the tango in a room
where projected images of Buenos Aires appear, “Tango”

Another important issue that arise from this kind of discussions is what happens in cases when the audience is not at all aware of the musical language mediated—which might be the case with tango music. How is the new musical language introduced to them?

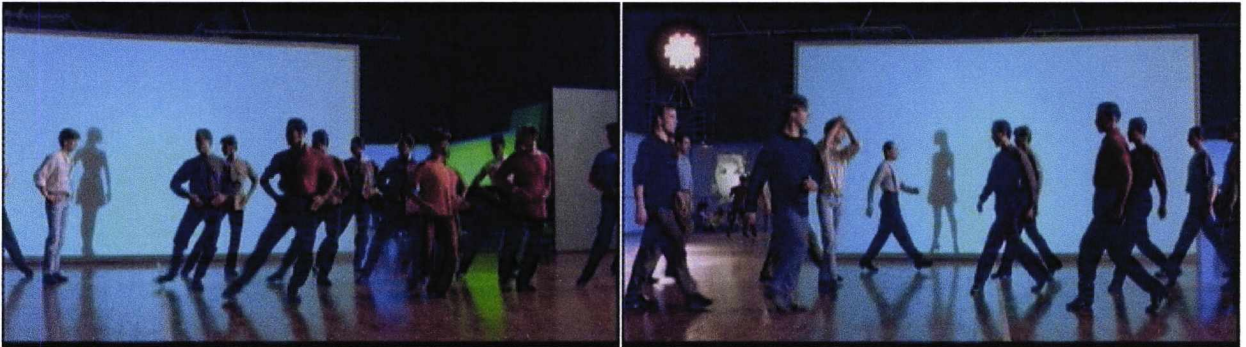
A mediator cannot in most cases be totally objective. His background knowledge will come to comment—enhancing or diminishing—the transmitted message. In the case of the medium of film, with its promise of “*projected visibility*” and “*ontological equality*”⁴³, the viewer is at the same time present and absent in the unfolding of the plot. Identifying himself with one or more of the characters, the viewer has the illusion that he is actually participating in the story’s narration, while at the same time manages to escape the cruel and routine-like everyday life. Having seen tango in an Argentinean’s shoes, however, is a completely different story than just having been explained its cultural significance. Is this the way for wider audiences to embrace and perceive distant cultures?

In this case, it is exactly the opposite of Adorno’s justifying one’s liking of a specific piece just because he recognizes it. One’s liking of the tango is rather justified on the terms of it being exotic and culturally distant, unknown and therefore interesting.

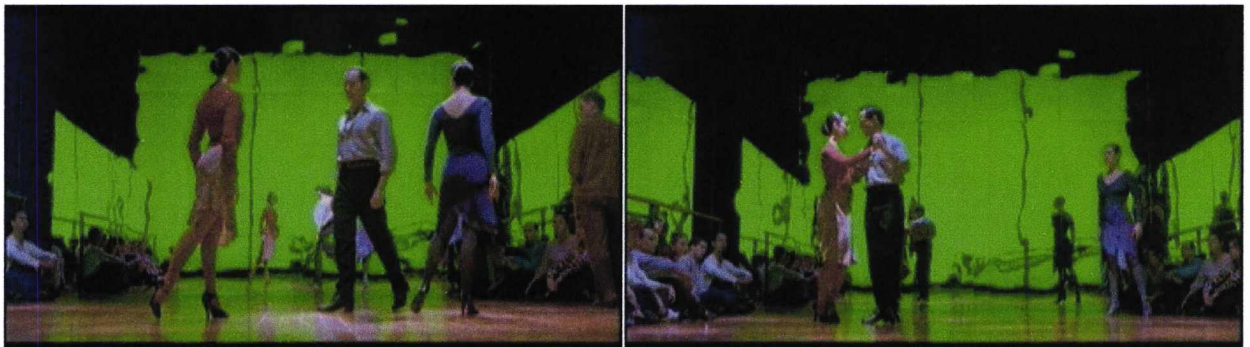
Even if already known, it is not only the familiar and recognizable that are shown through the screen of a cinema hall. The informed viewer can broaden his knowledge, try to decode the possible underlying suggestions or even test the film’s appropriate reference to the known subject.

Issues like the importance of the woman’s presence in the tango, unusual or not widely

known tango dance patterns, such as trio or group dances, woman-to-woman or man-to-man dances, fight dances, etc. might not be seen otherwise but might be shown in a film about Argentine tango.



Scenes 4-32 & 4-33: The underlying guiding presence of a woman in “Tango”

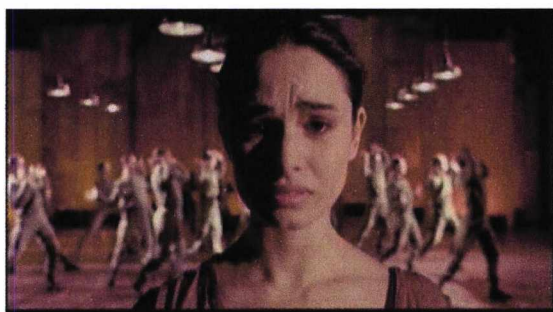


Scenes 4-34 & 4-35: Tango trio danced in the film “Tango”



Scenes 4-36 & 4-37: The two women of the protagonist’s life dancing the tango together, phantasy tango in “Tango”

Furthermore, such social tragedies like the Argentine military dictatorship and the adjusting of the cultural objects to such brutal transformations are not only seen but also emphasized and through the music dramatized in a film.



Scenes 4-38, 4-39, 4-40, 4-41, 4-42 & 4-43: Hints of the Argentine dictatorship tragedies in a tango choreography of the film *"Tango"*.

Again, the question asked in the third chapter about the way the audience gazes and sees cultural objects—and hears in this instance—can be asked here.

How do we hear and see tango through film?

Reflexive immediacy: Do we hear and see it as something reminding us about our past, attaching it to our life's narrative? Or do we hear and see it as a strange conflation of objects and thus a creation of new images and sounds?

Bearing in mind the particular character of the film as a mediating medium, it is common that audiences connect to the story's characters and therefore live the story with them, sympathizing with them, crying with them over the death of a beloved other character, loving and hating with them, totally identifying with them.

The assumption is then that the viewers attach the film's images—and by extension the tango—with the narratives of the characters' lives and by association their own.



Scene 4-44: The gaze through the esoteric with the help of tango music. "Tango"

Mechanical Seeing/Hearing: Do the film viewers perhaps scan the images mechanically, listen to the film music as a distant background, listening to it according to formula, and indeed debasement itself, with no resistance or consciousness (borrowing Adorno's ideas) trying to return to the already known and therefore already tested and approved?

This kind of seeing/hearing/perceiving is implied in both “El Exilio de Gardel” and “Tango”. It is the critics’ reaction towards the tanguedy (*we want people to do what is expected*) in “El Exilio” and the producers’ unwillingness to contribute to a performance that reminds to the audience things that ought to be forgotten or at least left unsaid—the dictatorship—in “Tango”.

The Gaze: Do audiences gaze at the passing film images?

The Voyeur: It is through the screen keyhole that the viewers gaze at the film images and listen to a film’s music and sounds. Interfering in the characters’ privacy, the viewer looks at them from a distance, observing from a fixed position that cannot change.



Scene 4-45 & 4-46: Gazing—as though from a keyhole—in “Tango”

The Vision’s “Other Scene”/The Music’s “Other Sound”: Do the audience perhaps see film images in relation to their own cultural aspirations, or as Lacan’s “belong to me aspects of

representation”?

This last assumption would surely dismiss Adorno’s notions of regressive listening and the audience’s rejection of the possibility of a conscious perception.



Scenes 4-47 & 4-48: Gazing at tango dancers during the rehearsals of the “Tango” performance

In “Transparencies on Film”, Adorno equates the movement of interior images in film to the visible world in painting or the acoustic in music. “*As the objectifying recreation of this type of experience, film may become art.*”⁴⁴ With the use of flashbacks and the function of the narrative as looking back, remembering and homecoming, Solanas tries to work with interior images but does not stop there.

The way a listener accepts or perceives sound and music depends on a great extent on his consciousness, background, education, etc. Adorno believes that the culture industry changes the audience’s consciousness for its own purposes. This assumption, however, would immediately imply that this consciousness is not only very well known, but also easily and effectively transformed and changed. How, however, can anyone be completely certain that the horizons of meaning between the culture industry and the audience always overlap; that the message is not only passed but also embraced and accepted?

It is believed that music is not able to express thoughts or discoveries of the human mind. That it is a symbolic mode formed to express feelings and emotion.

Nevertheless, as Goodman puts it, works of art *need not arouse emotions to be aesthetic*⁴⁵. If that was the case, he continues, art would be *a poor substitute for reality*. This claim would be valid if we were suggesting that the target of art is to arouse emotions, to reproduce

emotional experience. What is said, instead, is that art aims at communication and that because of its uniqueness—and therefore its inability to express all human experiences, such as clear thoughts or scientific knowledge—chooses to talk about feelings and emotions, because that is what it knows more about. It need not arouse emotions, although in most cases it manages to do so. Its purpose is to describe the emotions felt by the artist—the feelings felt by the viewer/listener/performer of the work of art need not however be the same. They cannot be, because each of the persons will interpret the message according to his own cultural and personal background, which will always be slightly different. Even the interpretation of the same person will vary every time he comes back to ponder on the same work of art.

So, is there a special aesthetic emotion or feeling occurring in aesthetic experience? Even if there was, we would not be able to understand the way it works or the reason for its particular behaviour.

Goodman illustrates the main problem: we do not seem to understand that in aesthetic experience the emotions function cognitively. “*Cognitive use involves discriminating and relating them in order to gauge and grasp the work and integrate it with the rest of our experience and the world*”.⁴⁶ If good judgment and perception are involved in aesthetic experience, the assumption will be that they function unconsciously. People listening to a performance of a work of art may be tempted to compare it with other performances of the same work of art or with other works of the same composer, but it is questionable if they will start thinking about the possible differences or similarities between the particular piece of music and their personal lives. That might be the case with a theatre play or a film, but in music the main means of knowing that seem to occur are feelings. This is not to say that musical listening is a passive activity, excluding perception, interpretation or combination of experiences. Rather the opposite is the case. In music, however, even the combinations, comparisons or relations of the work with one’s personal life occur in terms of feelings and emotions. Mainly feelings are combined, compared and related to the listener’s personal life. Music speaks about feelings to the feelings.

A more close examination would show that this is not necessarily so. In “*The beautiful in music*” Eduard Hanslick states that an art aims, above all, “*at producing something beautiful,*

which affects not our feelings, but the organ of pure contemplation, our imagination".⁴⁷ That would mean that the process of perception of a musical performance involves *an act of intuition*, a rapid judgment, *a mental inspection of a succession of musical images*,⁴⁸ it therefore involves both the intellect and the emotions. In the act of listening, our emotions *are* aroused, but apart from the aesthetic, a logical relation is involved. The listeners of a musical performance do not understand the actual process involved, as they let themselves be carried away by their aroused emotions. The rapidity of the judgment accounts for our not noticing it and its unconscious nature diminishes its significance while underlying the importance of the feeling. For the simultaneously—or so it seems—aroused feeling is strong enough to clear one's mind from any thought or other sensation.

The understanding of the emotion the composer expresses is indeed a form of perception. Even if the sorrow of a piece of music arouses sorrow of the same or of different kind or pity for the fellow human being or comfort for one's own good luck, it involves understanding and interpreting, but it involves furthestmost *feeling*. If nothing is felt, if one leaves the musical hall with a sense of indifference, there can be no connection or integration of the music and his personal experience or the rest of the world. It is believed that music, in contradiction to the other forms of art, primarily affects the senses, then arouses the emotions and lastly reaches the intellect. The intellect might in fact be reached after the performance, when one will sit and talk about the music heard or just think about it.

The emotions are often affected by the comparisons, contrast and organization involved in the cognitive process. If, at a moment of feeling sadness while listening to a sad tune, we make an attempt to combine the sadness of the music to the sad instances of our lives we might feel even sadder or we might just feel pity for the sadness of humankind. It depends on the sorrow we have felt or seen during our lives. But if we try to think of possible reasons that might have aroused the sorrow of the tune we will end up feeling comfort, because we were never confronted with these kinds of situations. Feeling is a matter of character and mood anyway. "*For, in reality, there is no causal nexus between a musical composition and the feelings it may excite, as the latter vary with our experience and impressibility*".⁴⁹ An optimistic person feels sorrow differently from a pessimistic one and our

mood at the moment of the perception will determine our emotion.

It might in fact be argued that music cannot evoke emotions, because emotions are not isolated from the mind and cannot, therefore, “*be evoked by an art which is incapable of representing the remaining series of mental states*”.⁵⁰ How can an art incapable of expressing definite ideas be able to express definite feelings, if the two are inseparable? Hanslick’s answer is that *music represents only the dynamic properties of feelings*⁵¹. But these properties are sometimes adequate for the listener to unconsciously perceive a notion and find himself carried away by an emotion, even if it is an emotion completely different from the one the properties of which were musically described. If music is a descriptive as well as a representational form of symbolization, then misunderstandings should be allowed and forgiven, as they are allowed and forgiven in discursive languages. The “different” perceptions are undoubtedly more frequently seen in music, but this might simply be because music is more frequently concerned with the emotions. Such abstract patterns would often lead to misunderstandings even if described by the definite form of speech we like to call language. Furthermore, people are not familiar with musical practice the way they are familiar with the use of their language.

Even if feelings and emotion were the basis of a perception of a musical performance, there are not the only ones that take place. Emotions are not so sharply separable from other elements of cognition and therefore there can be no “language of emotions”. But if preciseness is not our mere consideration and a language of emotion would mean a symbolic mode *capable* of arousing emotion or a mode *mainly concerned* and *mostly expressive* of emotion, would that symbology be music?

Some academics believe that music carries an outer social meaning—a meaning that through symbolic communication originates in consciousness and depicts the social stratification of a specific society. After all, music, as sound organized by humans, “*cannot have meaning without associations between people*”⁵². In a common cultural context, specific musical rhythms can evoke specific feelings, although perhaps not for the same reasons. “*Under certain conditions, the sound of music can recall a state of consciousness that has been acquired through processes of social experience.*”⁵³ In some villages of Crete, traditional music played in the streets by walking musicians invite people to a wedding or a social event. Unquestionably, the

social interaction is accountable for much of the particular structure of an individual's mind; that is an unchallengeable fact. To what extent however can society shape or give the guidelines for shaping one's personal way of looking at things and how easily does each person accept these "instructions"?

It is not a question of accepting or rejecting a social norm; it all takes place through an unconscious procedure that systematically builds an individual's mentality and psyche from the moment he is born until his death. The interactions between the individual and the social motivation, taking place from one's infancy, are impossible to control or even evaluate. One is born in a specific social setting of which he is grateful—he will undoubtedly carry a specific history with him, as well as specific rules and attitudes towards the world, inherited *from* his ancestors and analytically presented by his surroundings.

Does that mean that one can perceive the musical compositions of a specific composer only if he is a member of the same society that influenced and shaped his music?

Whether the audience of a film sees its soundtrack as a language of music and emotions or a social/historical/cultural object, whether this audience gazes at the moving images or peeps through the screen keyhole, whether it identifies with the characters or just mechanically scans the offered pictures, what all the above discussion points at is exactly this two-points situations. The audience either...or... Nevertheless, if the outcome of these close examinations is not clear, how clear can the culture industry's-developing consciousness be? How can an unclearly reacting audience be characterized as a homogeneous mass?

7. Afterthoughts

In cases of musical languages mediated through the cinema, the concept of audience perception is difficult to analyse. How can one talk about correct or right perception when that inevitably implies the absolute overlapping of the message sender's and the receiver's horizons of meaning? Horizons of meaning hardly overlap in literary discourse, let alone music.

The cinema—unlike the postcard—does not function as an introductory medium, offering selective information about a cultural object. On the contrary, the cinema usually deals with already known objects, projecting them on screen for the audience to come to terms with them. During the examination of the particular case study, it becomes clear that through the cinema the tango appears with a new face: an orchestral, rather than a dance one. It is legitimate and valuable, seen as an artwork even.

The tango—unlike painting and architecture—is not generally considered as a work of art, its authentic image/sound is not sought or tried to be maintained. Nobody was ever worried whether tango is projected “authentically”, exhibiting genuineness, originality or cult value. Nobody was ever worried whether the tango's “aura” is maintained or transformed. Does the tango have an aura? Is there such an object as an authentic tango?

During its historical progression, the tango has been constantly changing, people not even being sure of where it started from, where its roots are or who had the initial idea or the concept of such a musical performance. People are not even sure of where the basic ornament's—the bandoneon's—origins are to be found. Tango was formed by the immigrants—from the combination of many backgrounds, habits and musical pasts—and developed in a country host to many nationalities and brought-along cultures. The tango was formed by the blend of those brought-along cultures on the set Argentinean grounds. Influences both from all the present foreign cultures and the developed Argentinean character can be singled out of the tango nature. After all, the authentic tango is an amalgam of all those influences.

Following the tango's development in Argentina and its appearance and triumph in

Europe, one cannot stop noticing the changes and transformations in its lyrics, dance and overall philosophy. The tango can be seen to have periods just like painting does. The classical tango can be distinguished from the refined European tango and the latter bears no similarity with Piazzolla's Nuevo Tango or the modern tango of the twentieth century.

Having been developed through many historical and social phases, the tango has acquired many faces and has slowly but steadily been turning aside its "authentic", classical form. The new form is just the evolution of the tango, not its stagnation or standardization. The drifting away from its authentic form does not destroy its aura; it just produces new tango patterns and musical experiences. As cubism did not destroy classicism or romanticism in painting, as Picasso did not take away any of Michelangelo's art, so Piazzolla and the New Tango did not take any of the classical tango's value away. If the Impressionists in Paris created just "impressions of paintings", if Fauvism's artworks were defined as the creations of monsters, then modern tango can be seen as the evolving tango character—not recognized or much appreciated at its beginning, but later played in great theatres and concert halls, performed by famous performers and listened to by well respected audiences. What was created, appreciated and loved by the masses of the Argentinean lower classes has now come to be listed among the kinds of music in the performance of which an educated western intellectual would sit. This new appreciation of the tango can be seen as the outcome of its cinema mediation, particularly in films directed right after Argentina's dictatorship and distributed in Europe.

The authentic, therefore, is not, for this thesis, considerably important, as the loss of the art's aura has not been proved, but rather questioned. Authenticity is not crucial in a discussion concerning mediation anyway precisely because the media mostly have an introductory character, transmitting selective information about a selected object. As seen in the case of architecture mediated through postcards, no tourist imagines he is back in Knossos when looking at a postcard of the place. In the case of the tango mediated through the cinema, authenticity is even less important, as the authentic tango is hardly ever talked about.

Nevertheless, the critics of mass culture implicitly or explicitly talk about authenticity and originals—why? One reason might be that those of them that, like the heroes of "El Exilio de Gardel", found themselves in exile felt the need for origin. Adorno's theory of a culture industry can in this sense be compared to Juan Uno's culture of risk—the culture rapidly

formulated in the exile land as a shield against nostalgia, homesickness and the fear of a possible dissolution of identity, the loss of oneself in others.

The exiled Argentines' misery in the foreign land can be compared to the Frankfurt Institute's exile in the United States during the Second World War. The mass culture critique can be paralleled to a kind of tanguedy: something that tells what is happening to not one form of art—the tango and Argentina—but the whole sphere of the world culture. Western classical art seems to be absorbed by the culture industry—cut in the shape of modern American art—the same way the Argentinean tango seems to be lost in the vast mosaic of French art and culture.

Watched by plastic dolls in human dimensions—a visualization of the masses—cultural objects are easily and passively consumed, their value mummified. The critics of the tanguedy are in the shoes of the culture's distributors—the media? Their reactionary judgment seems similar to the one the producers in the media industry themselves would have. Questions like whether the object would appeal to the audience can be translated to be: will we be able to increase the ratings? The comment that the tanguedy is “a bit ethnic” can be seen as a fear of attracting specific rather than wider target groups, which decreases rather than increases the number of people that would actually watch the program.

The ignorance of the critics/media producers is also implied during the discussion in “El Exilio de Gardel”. The question “what?” after *the attempt* of the creators of the tanguedy to explain the origins and development of the tango through the Argentine history and culture proves the argument right. The reaction, when the story is finally told, is characteristic: “But that means nothing to us”. Insofar as the program attracts a wide spectrum of attention, its meaning is irrelevant. When a specific object means nothing to the people that are supposed to see it—the Argentine tanguedy to the French public—what is the point of showing it to them? Who, however, decides what has and what lacks meaning for an audience? This is where Adorno and the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research come to give an answer to the question; this is where the culture industry is conceived. The producer decides what the mass will consume; through the mediation only one thing can emerge: standardized, stagnated art and culture.

“In France we want people to do what is expected”. This phrase summarizes the axiom and core of the culture industry: people should do what is expected—the masses are only expected to consume whatever producers produce.

There are, nevertheless, other ideas attributed to the critics of the tanguedy, ideas that the Frankfurt School has not very frequently analysed. "If we judge by what we know, we cannot understand it". This phrase suggests the realization that unfamiliar or distant objects can be hardly understood if judged with the familiar and known forms, but it also implies an inclination to try and view the object through a different light, from a different perspective. It actually seems to suggest that if one really wants to understand the performance of the tanguedy, one should try to see it through this different angle, underlying but not simultaneously rejecting that difference.

The conclusive afterthought is offered through Pierre's character. "Audiences are audiences", he states, answering Juan Dos' complaint that the critics did not understand a thing, that they cannot feel the tanguedy because they are not familiar with the Argentine history. Audiences are audiences, and this wise statement is offered from an outsider—Pierre is not Argentine, but French—, someone freed from the sentimental bond tying one to his homeland with hard, asphyxiating memories and anticipations. Pierre takes his country for granted because he has always lived there. From his mouth, the conclusion comes unbiased. Audiences are audiences and the critics of the tanguedy—the producers in the culture industry—are themselves placed among those audiences. Some just want to be entertained; others realize the difficulty in the perception of the different but are willing to make the effort, while another part of them actually dismisses the object on the grounds of its unfamiliarity. However, it is obvious that this formation of the audience can hardly be described as a mass, a homogeneous crowd.

Audiences are always audiences and they have always been such. From the moment theatres were built, many would have preferred the performances entertaining, but surely, some valued their informative character, as well. From the first mechanically reproduced work of art many people would have preferred the realistic symbolization rather than a more complicated one, but surely, some valued the aesthetic context in addition to the actual theme of the artwork.

Both the culture industry and the tanguedy imply the danger the particular culture faces when caught in the world's cultural mosaic. It might shrink, break off or simply be fitted in the limited space left for it, as all the relevantly big spaces are already taken by the dominant cultures of the dominant countries. However, unlike "El Exilio de Gardel", the mass culture critique has not offered many options for improvement, many hopes for maintaining the art of the other, as well as one's own.

In complete antithesis, the mere existence of those post-dictatorship Argentine films proves the risk worth taking. Juan Dos' complaint is that the critics cannot understand the feeling, the history—the true value behind the tanguedy. The lack of understanding is in many cases due to the lack of knowledge. Otherwise, the social and cultural background of the individual is at stake—but that is not something knowledge cannot improve. Through the films mentioned during the study of this second case study, the audiences are learning the essence of a distant culture, following its history and being provided with a hint of the feeling associated with it. Again, the tango—exactly like architecture on postcards—is transformed into a cultural resource, associated with and symbolizing a particular place—Argentina. It becomes a symbol and as a symbol it brings particular ideas in mind: the exotic, the distant, the other and at the same time the erotic, the power of the woman over the macho man, the struggle and mixture of many different ethnicities to form one culture.

Through such films audiences not only come to see more aspects of the cultural other and realize the value of difference, but they also succeed in associating the tango with its country of origin and understanding the turning point that stigmatized its existence: the arrival of the immigrants in Buenos Aires. The learning will in some point turn to knowledge, knowledge that would definitely challenge Juan Dos' and Adorno's complaint.

As Solanas' "Sur" is a story of memories and looking back, Adorno's "Minima Moralia" includes nostalgic comments and implications of the sadness of the exiled. In "Sur" Solanas is trying to map a geopolitical space, which can be defined in contradiction to "El Norte". Throughout the mass culture critique, Adorno and the other members of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research are trying to map a cultural space, which can be defined in contradiction to the culture industry. Adorno's "Aesthetic Theory" can be seen as a refusal of a country that it depicts as a completely commercial order—the USA in comparison to Germany and Europe. Sur's place among the dominant areas can be seen in comparison to the high art's value among the mass culture: precious and difficult—but worthy—to be maintained. El Norte is seen in a parallel line to mass culture, as Sur can be seen in a parallel line to the culture and art of the individual. Adorno praises the autonomous cultural unconscious—it is the autonomous geopolitical unconscious that Sur is trying to preserve.

As already suggested, the critics of mass culture implicitly or explicitly talk about

authenticity and this discussion can be seen as having direct connections with the need to look back and find their origins, with nostalgia for their homeland and anticipation for their return. The black and white film inserts that Solanas uses in “Sur” as well as the nostalgic commitment to the past that the theory of mass culture entails arouse a different kind of aura around the tango and the art of the past respectively. The aroused aura of the past proves to be a shield against the dissolution of identity, against forgetfulness and devaluation of one’s culture into the mass culture’s overvaluation.

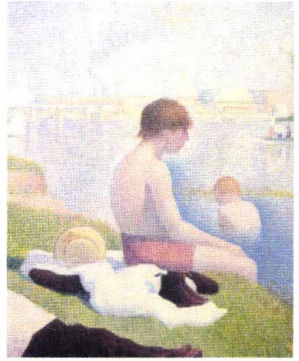
What the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research failed to imply, unlike the post-dictatorship Argentine cinema—is that the mediated or reproduced art is only one part of art seen. However, as tango dance is not socially normal behaviour, philosophy is not exactly literary speaking—in order for a theory to make its point heard, former philosophical exaggerations are answered to with more exaggerations, generalizations are dropped by oversimplifications etc. Adorno actually emphasized the critical role of exaggeration in cognition and therefore, out of respect to his major contribution to critical theory, we, his modern readers, should resist the need to qualify his extremes and modify his exaggerations. The only point he and his colleagues exaggerated inexcusably about is the characterization of the modern media audience as a mass. It is precisely this characterization that this thesis guns for.

8. Notes

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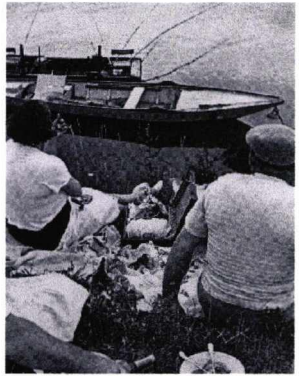
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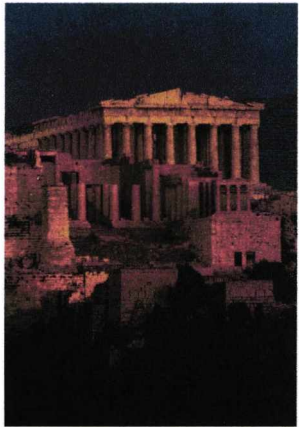
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The Outcome

1. On Art

The concept of art refuses definition. Through the centuries its historical characteristics change, its materials and aesthetic elements change, even its essence changes when compared to its historicity. Many artworks became artworks only by negating their origin and thereby any definition that was given to them. Attempting to find definitions for art is useless, as they all will in the future be dismissed in the process of realizing more creations as artworks.

Historicity is, however, immanent in art. Artistic processes correspond to social developments and social developments inspire artistic processes. The empirical world motivates art, is commented by art—beautified or rejected by it. Art has a double character: it is at the same time autonomous and socio-historical. It cannot be perceived strictly aesthetically, as in that way it is only misperceived. Through its mediation art's social character is stressed—its connection to a specific community emphasized.

For psychoanalysis artworks are unconscious projections of the artists, their realized daydreams. Inspired by "*the fantasy of omnipotence*", art in Freud cannot be separated from such notions as unsatisfied libidos and unconscious traumas. For Freud the work of art only exists in relation to a maker or after the making, an observer. Kant on the other hand,

distinguishes art from desire and consequently the empirical world. Adorno, contrary to Freud and Kant suggests that artworks imply in themselves a relation between interest and its renunciation. In recent societies, Adorno believes that art has two possible fates: either to be seen as a “*reified, hardened cultural possession*” or to be consumed as a “*source of pleasure*”.¹ As seen throughout the thesis, the main critique of recent culture—mass culture or the culture industry—is the equalization of everything offered—including art itself—to consumer goods, products produced and distributed only for amusing/entertaining the masses.

*“Those who have been duped by the culture industry and are eager for its commodities were never familiar with art: They are therefore able to perceive art’s inadequacy to the present life process of society—though not society’s own untruth—more unobstructedly than do those who still remember what an artwork once was.”*² This named “*deaestheticization*” of art is the core of the Frankfurt School’s critique against mass culture. Through the media, art is argued to have become standardized, mummified even. The hardest categorization however, comes to characterize the media audiences as passive masses, simple consumers of whatever is being offered to them. Only the elite of the intellectual social sphere is believed to be able to distinguish art from cultural commodities and amusing kitsch.

The first thing one notices when concerned with such a critique is that it is drawing a complete, wide line between classes, tastes and aesthetic judgments. Groups of audiences are formed and filled with characterizations. The intellectuals are seen as the good and tasteful people that form such critiques in a genuine attempt to let other people know, spread the word of the danger so that somehow, someday, something could be done to prevent the forthcoming disaster of art’s stagnation. The media and the people working for them are seen as the bad and tactless distorters of art; their sole aim is to transform art into cultural commodities, popular images and sounds that would appeal to the greatest possible audience. Last but not least, the masses: the passive consumers of those commodities produced and distributed by the media, the dopen, uncritical crowds with no taste, belief or opinion. The distinction between the Good, the Bad and the Dopen of the mass culture’s critique is the first point this thesis is trying to question.

As already argued in the first chapter, there are several ways in which the elite of each

period saw or handled works of art similarly to the ways recent media audiences do. There is no evidence that the lower social classes are unable of perceiving artworks or that the elites always do. The very notion of perceiving an artwork contains, in itself, as already implied throughout the thesis, an insoluble problem. If there is no right perception of artworks, there should be no possible way to realize, test or judge people's reactions to them.

Aesthetic sublimation is one way of viewing art—identifying oneself (when a viewer) with the artwork. For the Frankfurt School, art has become a thing among things, a psychological vehicle for the spectator, a commodity, something to be sold, bought and consumed. Even if there is such an idea as freedom in art, one cannot possibly ignore the fact that artworks were once created to serve external goals, social or theological functions or rituals, events externally radiated from society. Art was never freer in terms of aesthetics, content and placing than it is today.

If, on the other hand, some kind of knowledge is required for the viewer to both perceive and enjoy the artwork, then its mediation should do no harm. Getting to know works of art through several institutions—including the media—can provide the audience with all the introductory background needed for a closer examination of the artwork when in direct contact to it. *"If all feeling related to an aesthetic object has an accidental aspect, usually that of psychological projection, then what the work demands from its beholder is knowledge, and indeed, knowledge that does justice to it: The work wants its truth and untruth to be grasped".*³ This process however requires much research and appreciation of the particular sociohistorical background of each artist and each work, for which the overloaded modern man's program would not easily leave enough space. It would be much easier if someone else would do the research for the viewer and then the viewer could choose and study the bits and pieces that interest him/her: That is what the media do today. They offer introductory information on the art and culture of the past, in an attempt to lure people into the world of art and its interpretation procedures. Once the necessary starting knowledge has been acquired, further research can be done by the particular interested individual so that the whole sphere of the art that talks to him will be embraced, appreciated, perceived even.

Having followed some critical analysis of important artworks of the past could help

one appreciate more artworks in the future. Because of art's spiritual character, it is at the same time intuition and thought, experience and reflection. Through the reflective process, knowledge is valuable for the art lover to come to understand something of the art seen.

Knowledge does not include everything: pain, suffering, joy, the sensual cannot be studied; ~~they~~ can only be experienced. Only those that have experienced pain, suffering, joy can sense pain, suffering, joy in an artwork. Each will experience the sensual in art in a different way, depending on the source and strength of their past sensual experiences.

If knowledge was adequate ^{to} a tool for understanding art, that would imply the existence of an artistic code, a code that could be deciphered and learned through education. Aesthetics may provide some guidance towards the understanding of the notion of the artwork, but each particular one cannot be perceived by the general aesthetic rule alone. Rules are for generalizations—perhaps valid for schools and genres of art but not particular artworks. Artworks entail elegant balances between detail and unity, the individual and the social: canons could apply, but only at risk of breaking that balance and consequently the coherence and actual meaning of the artworks.

Intuition—the overwhelming feeling in front of a particular artwork—cannot be relieved through aesthetic theory. Although the history and theory of art can and does indeed help during the reflection process—after the actual contact with the artwork—the fact is that intuition transcends knowledge: chronologically as well as dynamically. If art is a kind of language, it is feeling that it communicates. Indeed, a special kind of feeling, aesthetic feeling, overwhelms every beholder of an artwork the very minute he understands something of the language of art. Its understanding, however, does not come from education alone. Oral skills are acquired through experience—practical communication. It is the written skills that are mostly learned in classrooms—and even those require practice. As one need not know how to write to be able to speak, so one need not have studied all available aesthetic theories to be able to enjoy and appreciate a particular artwork. Furthermore, the child firstly understands and practices oral communication and then goes to school. Familiarity with artworks—through their frequent mediation through the media—has at least explained that this fearful indeterminacy is inherent in art and not attributed to the inability of people to understand it. The decrease of fear can increase

interest.

Even if there were a code for understanding art, the case would be that every society would manage to decipher the preceded artistic language of previous epochs and not have a clue about the most recent one. The change, anyhow, immanent in every newly formed society, arouses the fear for the new and unknown. It takes time and open-mindedness to come to accept it—let alone try to understand its practices. There have always been pioneers that took the first few steps on a firstly discovered route—all the others were just their followers. In art, as in society, the change amounts for new experiences and practices. For modern society, the change came from the rapid industrialization of the west European capitalism. For modern art, the challenge is both to reflect on and remain autonomous from that social change. Modern art needs to be reborn anew from the conflict with the social change and the inner need for replacing exhausted and obsolete procedures.

Many artistic schools of the past tried to fight semblance—it is modernism that was funded in and developed through the absence of representational objectivity. Nevertheless, some degree of external imitation still remains, although the reference back to the empirical world need not be evident in the artwork for it to be eloquent, illusionary, a genuine premise. Meaning does not predominate in the semblance character alone. The artworks' essence is concealed in the factual and summoned into its appearance. Bringing artistic elements together into an eloquent relation does not presuppose semblance with the empirical world. In fact, redemption of semblance and fidelity to expression have always been central to aesthetics. Artworks speak through a nonsignificative language. Expression is fundamentally imitation, but the expressionless can also be expressed—perhaps through an alienated or completely modified from the existent form.

The art of the “culture industry” has been characterized as calculated, amusing, aiming to entertaining the masses. The truth remains that the entertaining character has always been a fundamental layer of art. Musical works were composed and performed for the amusement of the elite of the eighteenth century, used as backgrounds for social events, hardly noticed or appreciated. Art is believed to be seen as a source of pleasure only by those that are not familiar with art's techniques and practices—the biggest part of the population of every society so far has found itself in that place. Art should be seen as the

substance of personal experience and the only thing required for this task is intuition and knowledge. As the enigmaticalness of artworks remains bound up with history, it is history one should know to come closer to understanding them. Today, democratized, free from the connection to social origin, knowledge is wider available for wider spectrums of the world's population. If the "masses" were once alien to art, they now have a bigger chance of receiving the knowledge they were once forbidden to have. The unmusical can, therefore, easier turn into initiated and actually hear the "language of music".

The indeterminateness of artworks—their enigma, according to Adorno—comes back again and again in the form of retrospection. Aesthetic theory has deciphered and can interpret archaic images and traditional art—their language has come to be familiar. Following the aesthetic language of the past, new artworks strengthen it to the point of its total reinvention, so that it becomes alienation and needs further studying and decoding. Modern art has only started to be deciphered by aesthetic theory. Philosophical reflection can solve modern art's enigma, but it will take some time before this language becomes familiar again. The truth content of art—and that is not necessarily identical to the artist's intention—cannot be immediately identified.

That modern art constantly invents new artistic procedures and new ways to express what no significative language was ever able to express does not mean that modern art has failed its inner character. Technological requirements need not stop, and might even inspire, the individual makers produce great artworks. Art need not in this respect be left behind; its concept is indeed an open one, it should expand to make room for this transformation. The transformation of the object in art implies the transformation of its concept and character anyway. There are no second-rated or bad artworks—such characterizations are adequate to erase them from the realm of art. For an artwork to be named such, it must have met some standards and been immediately included in art's history.

If artworks have become things among things in modern times or not is an issue much discussed nowadays. Appearance does play a major role in artworks from the ancient times. Art's transcendence often had in the past centuries broken or veiled meaning. Artworks have always had the immanent character of being an act, a capture of something momentary: the beauty or ugliness of nature. They are believed to try and preserve

something that has already vanished. They are associated with *apparition*, the heavenly vision, the *από μηχανής Θεό*. If in every genuine artwork something appears that does not exist, then why should modern art be seen as standardized on the grounds of its talking an un-significative language?

As already argued, art is the reflection and truth of society: to experience it means to become conscious of its character as an instant reflection on a given sociohistorical norm. If artworks can be seen as allegories, why can modern artworks not just function as reflections on modern society: either descriptions or reactions to it? The reality of the artworks is their historical content—modern artworks are historically related to modernity and yet not deciphered.

If for Adorno taste is nowadays outmoded, for Bourdieu it works unconsciously, with no will control. If the “mass” lacks the knowledge required to analyze, think of and finally understand something of art, the media can provide programs dedicated to the analysis of artworks and therefore knowledge concerning art—both object and concept. Reproduction and mediation are widely condemned but on the other hand, artworks are reproduced and mediated anyway—it is immanent in their character. Artworks are intended for many and therefore are already their own reproductions. Through the artwork’s immanent mediation, its every element becomes its own other—changing both its sensual and objective arrangement.

Great works remain eloquent, even when reproduced or mediated. Aesthetic experience is only genuine when intimate: if philosophical analysis can account for the introduction to aesthetic experience, mediated knowledge from other institutions, including the media, can be seen as the actual invitation to it. The Adornian aesthetic experience—the possibility promised by art’s impossibility—can indeed be preserved through such mediation. Through the media, the audience can take a glimpse of art’s ever broken promise of happiness and that glimpse can be stimulative.

Although Benjamin’s notion of the loss of aura has become a slogan for the deaestheticization of art, it nevertheless fails to underline the dialectic process between an artwork and its mechanical reproduction. Through the examination of the two chosen case studies, an effort is made to realize the conditions of the fine arts if reproduced/mediated

through the mass media, an effort to see mediation as an introduction to and reproduction as a promise of the original artwork.

2. On Mediation

The media are the main agents of the democratization of art and culture—the question remains: is it only with an eye on profit and at the expense of art’s coherence, truth or legitimation that they mediate art?

Today audiences firstly come to see the mediations and reproductions of an artwork and afterwards—if ever—the genuine work, the genuine becoming the prototype of the reproduction. However, all the information that is mediated through the media can be accumulated to form a base and a core of constantly expanding knowledge. Any art program need not be seen as the full story told, but rather as only the beginning of a story, the plot and ending of it remaining to be determined by the audience. It is up to the viewer to collect as much information and knowledge for him to come closer to perceiving something of art.

Art through the media is not appropriated, but mediated. Media function as mediators in the sense that they go between art and audience in order to explain, bring the two parties together, set a common set of rules and norms through which communication is going to take place. Most of art’s elements can be mediated through various media without being decreased or minimalized. Beauty, expression, truth, coherence and meaning, all aesthetic aspects of art are in more or less evident ways mediated nowadays.

In the second chapter of the thesis the importance of scale during this kind of mediation became self-evident. The size of the reproduction in comparison to the original, the parts that are cut off from the edges, the different—or non-existent—frame can make all the difference in the artwork’s perception. This is only one among the many inconsistencies that can occur during the mediation of art through the mass media. Inconsistencies, however, are part of almost any mediation. Even in face-to-face communication, except from rare cases, the receiver never gets the message exactly as the sender had in mind. Different social statuses, backgrounds and education levels between the people trying to communicate make it almost impossible for their “horizons to overlap”. The problem gets even bigger when a mediator is involved. The receiver gets the information as the mediator understood it, not as the sender conceived it. The only possible precaution the receiver can take is being aware of the existence of such

inconsistencies—try and spot them.

If all kinds of mediation entail certain inconsistencies, the question should change from “has art lost something during its mediation through the media?” to “to what extent are the media oblique concerning the mediation of art?” What is the special character that the media attribute to art during its mediation? The measurement of the obliqueness of the media during the mediation of art is observed through the examination of the two chosen case studies—architecture on postcards and tango through the cinema.

Unquestionably, the original experience cannot in any way be compared to the mediated experience. The aesthetic intuition seems to slip away through the mediation. The observer who contemplates art needs to find something objective in it: only through direct contact with the artwork can the observer add something to the work and through this dynamic process see something objective in it. During its mediation, the artwork is explained, analysed even—and that diminishes the observer’s chances of adding something to it and by consequence find the subjective links with his conception of life and by epagoge the artwork’s absolute objectivity. Art’s culmination only takes place through the return of the observer’s gaze by the artwork. Only through immediate aesthetic experience can the artwork be transformed into a heavenly envisagement and reveal its concealed truth to the beholder. The dynamism of art can only be implied through its mediated stance. This implication can be seen either as an underestimation of art’s energetic character or as a praise of art’s dynamic unfolding of meaning through its stasis.

Although it is obvious, after the examination of the case studies, that it is not exactly preservation of art that is taking place during the mediation of art through the media, it is not the loss of aura, art’s vulgarization or inauthenticity either. Although, following the democratic approach, the participation of the viewer during the mediation process cannot be proved, the defusing of the viewer cannot even be thought of. Despite inadequate evidence and in the name of the urgent need for great art’s preservation the media have been sentenced to standardization? But as noted in many parts of this thesis, art in modernity was already taken away from context to blame it all on the media. The media just play the role of the scapegoat until the line with modernity is drawn.

Art’s mediation has not changed its character in any sense. Great artworks can survive with or without advertisement. Modern works are not frequently reproduced or even glanced at

by the media because their coding remains a mystery while media stories prefer happy endings. Whatever the character of the mediator, classical art of the past remains classical. Modern artworks are still compared and criticized in terms of the golden triptych of natural harmony, some form of semblance with the empirical world—even if that is restricted in some modern artworks to material—and universal beauty. The classical ideal remains classical, while the modern initiative is praised for its freedom. Even after its mediation, classical art amounts for the overwhelmingly beautiful, while modernism has come to represent not the stagnation, but the salvation of art. It has, indeed, freed art from the domination of content and material and marked the premises for art's primal experimentation with form—its basic element since its birth. It was religion and the practical functions and goals that art had to fulfill that had for so many centuries enchained form with content and limited the possibilities of artistic expression. Today the chains have been broken and art is set free and unbridled to reach its summit or tolerate a possible fall.

The mediation of art through the mass media has, of course, had some consequences on the way art is gazed at, on the way people perceive aesthetics. Such mediation stresses the social rather than the autonomous character of art. Connected to something particular the indeterminate is easier to be accepted. Seen as cultural resources, artworks can attract much wider audiences than oblations to specific individual geniuses ever could. But how big is this obliqueness—does it in any way distort the essence of art?

Art's social character is inherent in every artwork—every artwork entails a spirit, entwined with the history and the society that embraced its formation. It comes into existence as a reflection on the empirical given established as it is by its surrounding sociohistorical context. In the same context the personality of the artist developed. It is through the collective that the individual spirit emerges. The understanding of the social is, then, essential for the understanding of the individual. In a sense, the historical and social conditions through which the artwork emerged should be known for its objective character to be suggested.

However, the knowledge of an artwork's surroundings does not guarantee the objective perception of the artwork. Art, and aesthetic experience, is perceived empirically rather than logically. Knowledge, therefore, although able to provide the boundaries in which the artwork is to be perceived, is not essential or adequate for aesthetic experience. An artwork can transcend

its epoch anyway—its eloquence can speak through feeling rather than intellect. Analysis has always been regarded as essential for aesthetic experience and as a weapon against philistinism. Philistinism however has been considerably reduced in modern times. The media have come to play the role of the mass educators, mediating general information on the whole social sphere. Through the media and the democratization of knowledge, general cultivation has been increased. In the developed world nowadays, art has come to be included in the sphere of everyday interestedness: politics, social themes, sports, etc. News about issues of art—including new artists and exhibitions—are included in the news and have a special place in the newspapers. People are informed on art in the same way they are informed about international relations. In both cases, one is interested or not interested about the issues concerned with the subject. Preexisting knowledge about the subject can in both cases provide some answers for the posited questions. But unless one feels the particular artwork, what he knows about the universal concept of art could not substitute for its aesthetic experience. Every artwork is a historiography of its epoch—and in this sense, the knowledge of the specific social characteristics that determined this epoch could amount for the artwork's successful decoding and understanding. Every artwork is, at the same time, an autonomous individual conception—if great, its pioneering character may bring out the best of the preceding tradition and dismiss the rest, inventing new patterns and schemata of expression and in this sense outrank the existing society of the time. If an artwork is inherently social and autonomous, only general aesthetic knowledge when combined with immediate aesthetic experience can light the route towards artistic reflection and close conception.

The media cannot by character distribute or reproduce aesthetic experience. What the media can mediate is some artistic knowledge accompanied with and enriched by the appropriate artworks—or more precisely their images and sounds. Such mediated knowledge can help grasp the notion of aesthetics in art but cannot by any *means* stand in for aesthetic experience. Mediated knowledge is introductory knowledge, inviting to, rather than replacing direct experience. In the case of art, mediation provides introduction to aesthetic theory and invitation to art exhibitions and events. The case seems to be slightly different for reproductions.

3. On Reproductions

Mechanical reproductions of artworks, as seen in the second chapter, challenge the artworks' character as unique, heavenly existences. Paintings on multiple posters and postcards, through TV and as aesthetic decorations in films are said to decrease the essence of art, redetermining it as another thing among things, another commodity for the consumers to purchase and hang on their walls. Musical works can also be reproduced in the comfort of one's house, by simply pushing a button and are therefore themselves been seen as transformed to consumer goods, offering entertainment at a certain price. Art has through its reproductions become as familiar as all the things surrounding us, resetting its valued rare images as common things: standardizations.

Reproductions of paintings are published in great numbers by museums and other institutions and academies for their visitors to buy. In the same fashion that a tourist buys souvenirs of a visit to a culturally or historically charged place or monument in order for him to remember what he saw, to freeze the experience into the souvenir and by looking at it in a sense relive it, a museum visitor buys souvenirs of a visit to an art exhibition to remember what he saw, to freeze the aesthetic experience into the souvenir and by looking at it in a sense revive or relive it.

Again, through the artwork's reproduction, an introduction is given to the beholder in terms of what the artwork accounts for, what its form and content is, including a hint and a promise of its aura and the aesthetic experience it can offer. The aura, the artwork's breath and gaze, cannot be mediated or reproduced and so cannot aesthetic experience. An image of the artwork is available to remind the visitor of the artwork that spoke to him, functioning as a souvenir for a past experience. As a gift to a friend, it can invoke the desire to see the artwork shown, live the aesthetic experience that the image hints and promises. As souvenirs and invitations, the reproductions of such artworks as paintings on postcards, posters or in other forms cannot be seen as underestimating or standardizing the specific artworks. By reflecting on or longing for aesthetic experience, one does not foreshadow art—one just tries to come to terms with it.

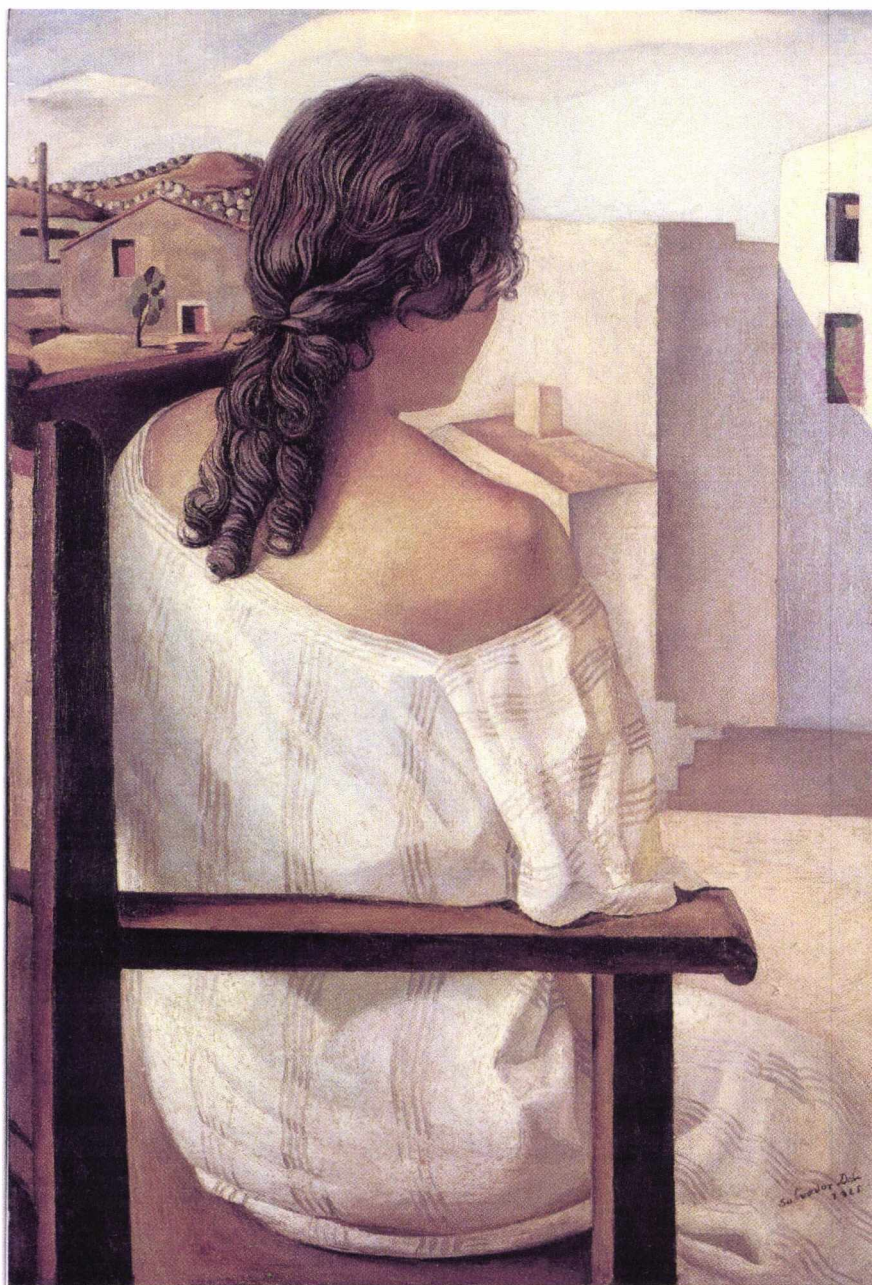
Such reproductions differ from art's mediation in that they do not so much place the artwork in its place and history, but rather stress its autonomous character. On a piece of paper, an image cannot tell its whole story. It can suggest or imply the artwork's beauty, its content and form, but in no way can it show the artwork's expression, truth or objective meaning. Not the colours, not even the subject matter is seen objectively: Zoomed on faces or other details, the produced images can even distort the artwork's coherence.

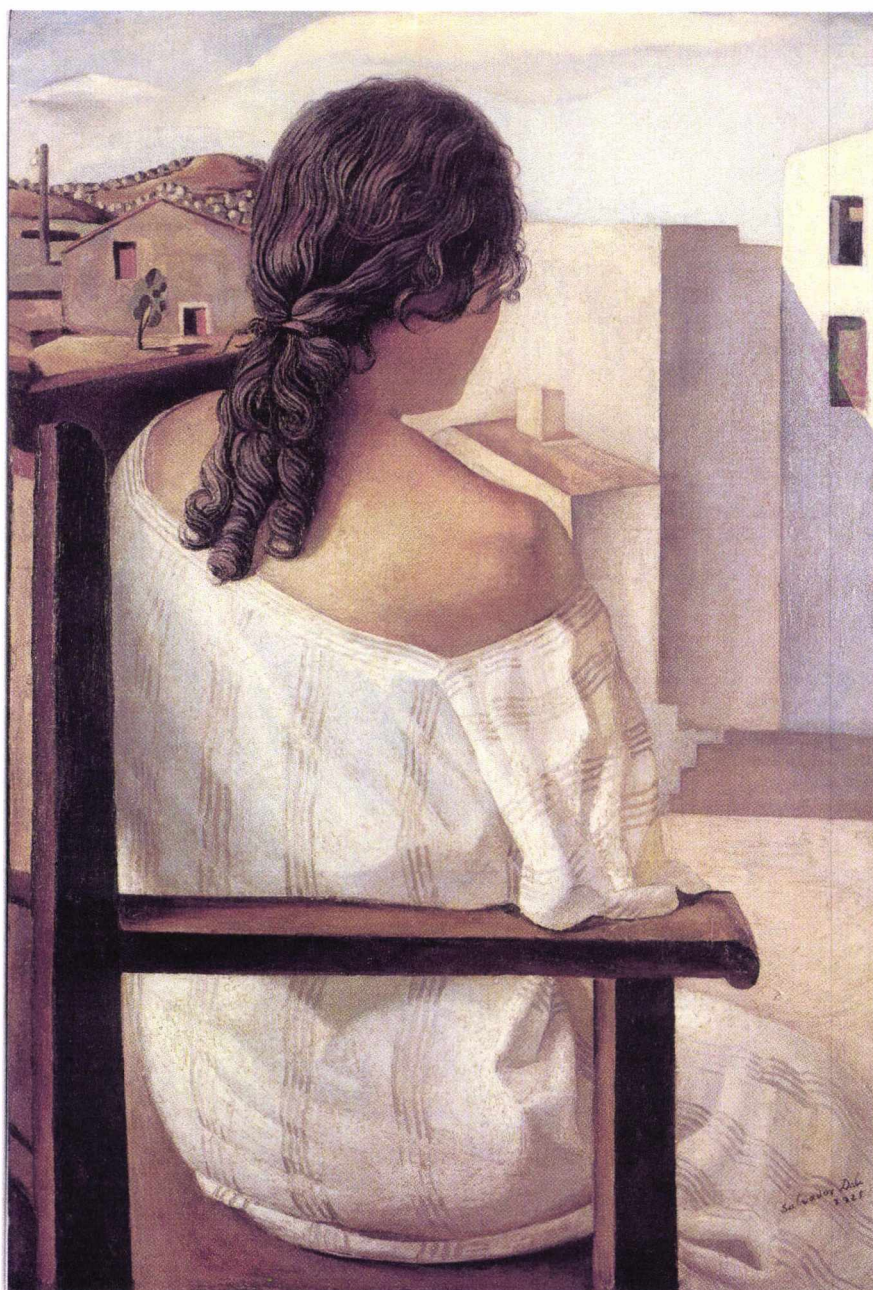
Again, reproductions should only be seen as hints and promises of the original artwork rather than its replacements. No such image can stand in for the actual artwork or function as its representative. The only share reproductions could have on art is to function as mementoes for aesthetic experience, arousing or reinforcing reflection on the already seen artwork.

On reproduction, the artwork is not connected to its society or history whatsoever. Its details are stressed over its unity; the particular is highly valued over the universal. In case of artworks in the scale and greatness of Michelangelo's work in the Sistine Chapel, such differences in scale between the artwork and its reproduction become self-evident. The particular is preferably shown over the universal exactly because the particular speaks to more people in a better way than the universal. Among the postcards of the Sistine Chapel shown in chapter two those that are focused on details of the work are much more familiar images nowadays than those that entail the whole four walls and ceiling of the Chapel. It is much more difficult to conceive the aesthetic implications through the complete image of the Sistine Chapel and much easier through a simple formed image with a specific content. Coherence and unity of the work are indeed challenged but then the image on the postcard is, as already argued, just a memento or a hint of the original artwork. Through its reproduction, art decreases in essence. It indeed comes to be compared to the common things of everyday life but only to invite people to the unique indeterminateness of the determinate in art. For art to be able to hint its monadic, sui generis character, it has to come down into the sphere of everyday life and allow it to be regarded as a thing. Only to promise its dynamism does art come at a standstill.

Disconnected from its time and place, traveling air miles on a postcard or hung on a bedroom's wall in the form of a poster, the artwork loses its aura but gains a chance to be eloquent to all the social strata of the population and at the same time preserves its autonomy. Reproduced artworks are sociohistorically displaced and virtually κατ' ἐξοχήν autonomous.

Reproduced artworks are sociohistorically displaced and virtually κατ' ἐξοχήν autonomous.





Dalí Muchacha de espaldas Museo Reina Sofía

Language on reproductions functions as a mediator—the few words on this reproduction mediate information on the artist, the title and the place where the original is to be found. The social is in this way stressed over the autonomous.

4. The Case Studies:

Only through its autonomy does art become social.

Through its opposition to society, it underlines its autonomous character.

When one of the two faces of art is boldly stressed over the other—when the social character of art is stressed over its autonomy via its mediation or when, on the other hand, the autonomous character of art is stressed over its sociality through its reproductions—does art come to be entombed in the pantheon of cultural commodities?

Art's social character can only be grasped by its interpretation. It is inherent in the artwork but only knowledge can bring it out. On Picasso's *Guernica* suffering and pain are drawn. But in order to determine it is war pain, one should be aware of the history of the period the particular painting came into existence—the Spanish civil war and the events in Guernica. Pain is an individual element. Connecting it to social circumstances makes it virtually social.

When mediated as social, art's autonomy is hinted. While mediated as social, art is for the initiated also reproduced as autonomous. Through its reproductions, the appearing autonomous art is only connected to the social with knowledge links. On the reproduction, art is with the help of language mediating its social face. On the front or backside of a reproduction, language becomes the mediator of the artwork's name, address and creator. For the initiated intellectual art cannot in any form become a commodity: One can sense the hints and promises of the original. But for the rest—the masses—the case is different.

On the front of the postcard, the artwork is reproduced; through the use of discursive language on the front and backside of the postcard, the artwork is mediated. As seen through the examination of the first case study, the acquired postcard functions as a certificate of presence and by extension a certificate of status quo and cultural intellectualism. It is cherished and held as a valued memento, fighting forgetfulness and preserving remembrance. The tanguedy can be seen as of exactly the same valued importance of a fight against forgetfulness and a wish of preserving remembrance. As can the whole critique of the Frankfurt School against modern culture be seen: as a nostalgia for the past and a wish of preserving the already gone.

I. Architecture on Postcards

Art is still in modern culture valued and highly distinguished in relation to cultural products. Van Gogh is not compared to Mickey Mouse as graphic value cannot be compared to charismatic objects. Lichtenstein may have adopted the bubble-technique of the cartoons and adjusted it to painting, but the difference between the brush and the pen still remains visible. That the appearance of bubbles over a character's face manifestly succeeded in giving the beholder a hint of the character's inner thoughts or feelings lies beyond the shadow of a possible doubt. The typed information on the postcard or its backside functions in a similar sense: to give the beholder a hint of the object's character in a very limited space. The difference of course is still great: the bubble in cartoons directs towards the inner, while the typed space on the postcard's backside mainly describes the outer.

In terms of cultural discourse, Mona Lisa on a postcard would sell a lot, because it is recognizable and memorable because provenly great. Architectural landmarks on postcards function in precisely the same way for precisely the same reason: they are both recognizable and memorable. In terms of modern practices, it is also the transcendence of the object's charisma that the purchaser bears in mind while choosing the memorable aspects of the visited place. The social character of art is preferred during the process of its mediation: recognizable because connected to the social objects are more popular among tourists than seemingly autonomous artworks.

The tourist not being able to be classified among the masses—at least as seen and conceived by the Frankfurt School—presents the question: does such a mass exist in modern society? What characterizes the notion of the mass is the homogeneity of its members, as well as their passive and easily manipulated attitude towards life and the world. Failing to classify a big part of the modern society's population—namely all those able to travel—is consequently a failure to see the whole of the modern society's population as a homogeneous mass. It is, in a sense, a questioning of the whole concept of a mass culture.

The tourist has in previous pages been compared to the museumgoer. It is in a similar process that the tourist and the museumgoer visit the place, lead their way around the site and leave, overwhelmed by the experience and carrying little mementoes to preserve its

unforgetfulness.

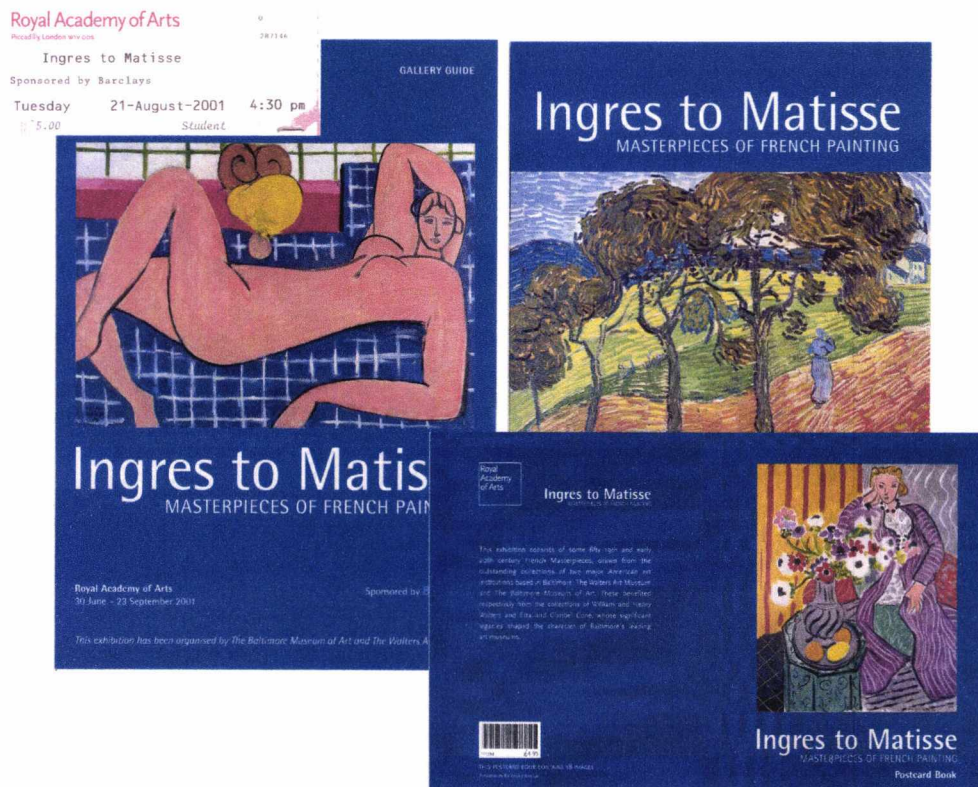
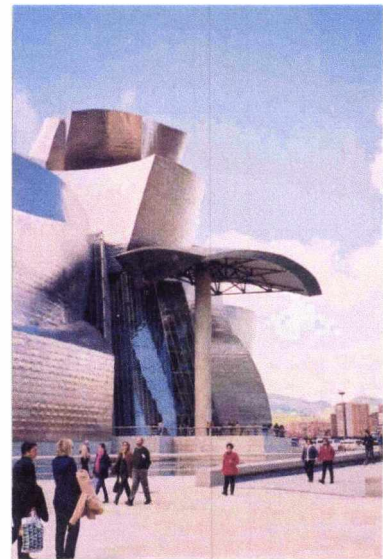


Figure 5-1: Souvenirs and mementoes of one's visit to an exhibition would include guides and postcard books



Figure 5-2: Various museum guides from Spain

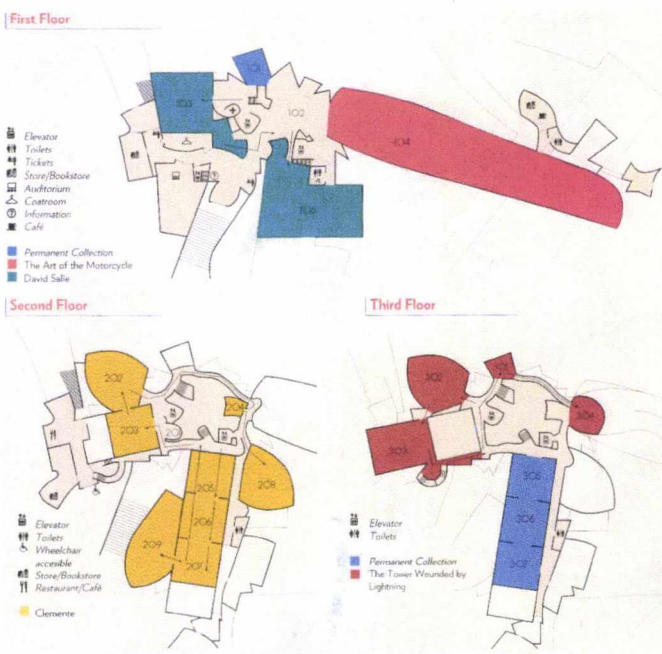
The museum buildings have in our times become worthy to be visited themselves: a museum of modern art is likely to be lodged in a modern structured building.



Photographs 5-1 & 5-2: The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao, Spain,

Photographs by Eirini Papadaki, April 2000

To visit such museums and walk around the buildings is an aesthetic experience itself, as



the architectural creation that houses the collections can be seen as an artwork in itself. The experience continues inside, not only through the exhibits, but also due to the building's architectural character and rooms.

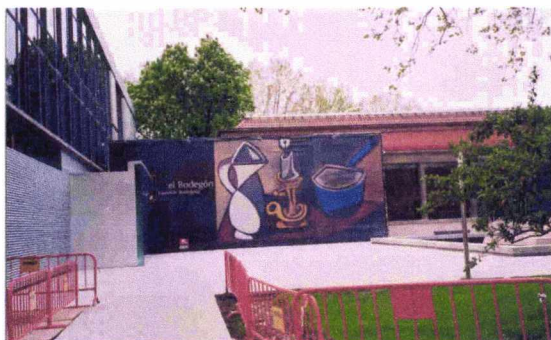
The museum becomes a city's landmark—it appears on the postcards as much as the city's monuments do. It is recognizable, unique, and memorable. A work of art itself, it is meant to house and

exhibit other artworks.

The building does justice to and prepares the visitors for the artworks they are about to see.

Along with the tourist, the museumgoer is offered a new landmark—something in front of which to be photographed, something to seal the experience, something to talk about. The tourist and the museumgoer share similar attitudes during their close observation of artworks: at the same time present and absent, informed by guidebooks and other institutional media, the tourist/museumgoer lacks both the passivity of the mass and the aesthetic initiation of the intellectual. However, frequent traveling/museum-going can cause one to develop a certain intuition for artworks—intuition can turn into and even transcend knowledge when it comes to aesthetic experience. Armed with such intuition, people could “sense” art even through its mediation or reproduction.

Art can be reproduced and mediated outside the media: the following photographs show reproductions of artworks outside and around museums, in characteristic parts of Bilbao, Madrid and London respectively. Images of artworks can be seen anywhere. Sounds of compositions can be heard anywhere: artistic images and sounds encompass the living world.



Photograph 5-3: “Museo de Bellas Artes”, Bilbao, featuring Picasso’s *La cacerola esmaltada* (Musee National d’Art Moderne, Paris), Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, April 2000



Photograph 5-4: “Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia”, Madrid, Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, April 2000



Photograph 5-5: Advertisements of the exhibition "The Dali Universe" at the County Hall Gallery, London,
Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, December 2000



Photograph 5-6: Reproductions of Dali's *Space Elephant* outside the County Hall, London, Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, December 2000



Photograph 5-7: Reproduction of Dali's *Space Venus* outside the County Hall, London,
Photograph by Eirini Papadaki, December 2000

The association of artworks with cultural objects during their mediation is condemned and so is their loss of aura through its reproductions. But is a painting not interdependent to the one hanging besides or on the opposite wall in the museum? Even in their original form, artworks accept and impose influences to nearby objects, situations and ideas. Since the existence of other objects in close gazing distance from the artwork is uncontrollable, so are the associations that might occur to the *ελάχιστε* beholder.

In the museum walls, each painting is classified under the realm of painting and art under the realm of human creation. Eras and countries meet under the same building for the autonomy of art rather than its social character to come out. Art histories and movements emerge and the outcome is not the history of art—for there is hardly a sufficient enough historical coherence in museums—but the essence and enigmaticalness of art itself. The eclipse of coherence points to the final acceptance of art's indeterminate character, while the plethora of artworks implies the interminable ways and techniques of expression. The absolute heterogeneity of the museum's exhibits underlines the absolute heterogeneity of the aesthetic creations. Questions of origin, representation, ownership and symbolization are answered by experts and this information is typed on the etiquettes set besides the artworks and inside the guides accompanying the exhibitions—just like information is typed on the backside of the postcard.

In Malraux's museum without walls, more artworks than ever can be collected. In fact, all the artworks that can be photographed and reproduced can be added to the imaginary museum to form a collection of all "beautiful", "enjoyable" art—in quotation marks, because determined by the establisher's/collector's taste. Douglas Crimp's objection⁴ that photography is the only thing that constitutes the imaginary museum's homogeneity—being the *vehicle* by which art objects enter into the museum—and since photography itself enters into the museum this homogeneity is doomed and shuttered, can in a certain sense be overruled. Photography having entered into the museum without walls, its coherence is not threatened because there was no certain coherence in the first place, even before the acceptance of photography in the museum. The exhibits in the imaginary museum are linked to one another with the one strong link that ties together the exhibits in any museum: that of the aesthetic realm.

The issue is not whether or not all artworks can be joined together under a single label and if that label can be the realm of art, but whether or not the subject can distinguish between high

and lower art, whether or not aesthetic experience can be appreciated or valued nowadays. If the death of the subject and the end of individualism as such have in fact befallen, if every single beholder of every single artwork—the original, its mediations or its reproductions—can be fitted in the “mass” of the modern society, there is no point in creating museums and organizing exhibitions in the first place. Be it the opposite and the individualism salvaged, one would be able to recognize Jameson’s *pastiche*—“*in a world in which stylistic innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum*”²—and modern *schizophrenia*—the peculiar relations of the individual with time, the maze of the signifier losing its signified and thereby being transformed into an image. The transformation of reality into images and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents would be conscious—is it?

It is true that modern reproduction techniques make artworks accessible, familiar even. Such familiarity transcends the reproduction and invites to the original. The past mystery, uniqueness—the authenticity of artworks—is no longer art’s one admiring aspect. Things and art, as Benjamin has showed, have been brought closer to everyday life—both “spatially” and “humanly”—and the past aesthetic distance minimized. Through photography, the aura of the work might not have been captured or maintained, but in most cases it is hinted or implied. The postcard purchaser/museumgoer has been in direct contact with the work, has sensed the aura. The reproduction only functions as a memento of the experience or—for the unfamiliar receiver of the postcard—as an invitation to it. The reproduction of the artwork on the postcard and the mediation of the friend’s experiences when there go along the recreation, hint and promise of the aesthetic experience.

In Baudrillard’s “society of the spectacle”, every object turns into a commodity: a readable one through its price. The message of the object is simplified into its exchange value until the message evaporates into the medium, is absorbed by the medium; “*it is the medium that imposes itself its pure circulation*”³. This is Baudrillard’s *ecstasy of communication*. Modern man is seen as a “*pure screen, a switching center for all the networks of influence*”⁴. Is it only the *experts*, Walter Lippmann’s *insiders*, specialists who talk about their specialties only—people having the privilege of knowing how things really work and of being close to power—that consciously perceive the image transformation of reality and its consequences? If this is the case, then Mannheim’s notion of the

elite still applies today: blood, property and achievement are still adequate means for someone to determine and perceive aesthetic value—only this time through its mediated images and sounds. Following Mannheim, are we moving towards the *proletarianization of the intelligentsia*—and does that immediately imply a decrease of the value of cultural goods, according to Mannheim’s sociological law that the social value of cultural goods is a function of the social status of those who produce them?

As, according to Gramsci, one simple interpretation is never adequate enough, so is not a simple answer to that question. Intellectuals try to explain—but for whom? Who are these interpretive efforts addressed to? To students? Then the future recipients of the media messages would not be eligible candidates to form a passive crowd or a mass. But critical theory appeared in the writings of Marx and reached a summit point during the 30s when the Frankfurt School of Social Research and their followers developed it. If addressed to that period’s scholars, today’s recipients of the media messages would not be eligible candidates to form a passive crowd or mass either. Could time heal wounds and reassess the mediating/reproducing process?

What intellectuals can do—it even can happen through the media—is try to restore lived historical memory and subjectivity—the fundamental components of meaning in representation. Both case studies successfully concluded in confirming the high possibilities of such a task. Classical monuments and archaeological sites on postcards and certain instances of the mediation of musical forms through film can succeed in telling other stories than the official ones produced by institutions of power. Even the latter ones are only introductory ones—and this point is repeated and repeated throughout the thesis because it is an essential precondition needed to be understood before the notion of mediation is to be analysed. Opening the culture borders to include the “other” culture, the one that has remained outside, as inferior or irrelevant, could expand both the culture’s and its receivers’ horizons—as the second case study tried to show. The pictorial capture of other cultures through postcards and the colonized or “foreign” cultures through film could result in wider European audiences’ understanding and accepting other intimate experiences as intelligible.

So, what is that *libidinal*, according to Freud, bond that unites the masses into being largely de-individualized, easily influenced and of a regressive nature? *“The libidinal pattern of fascism and the entire technique of fascist demagogues are authoritarian. This is where the techniques of the demagogue and the*

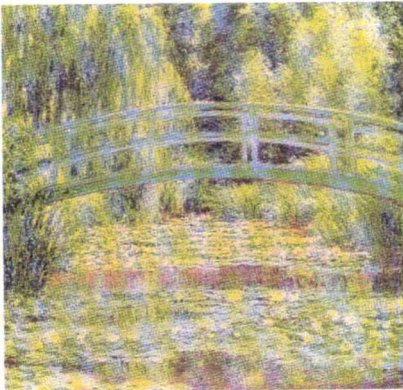
hypnotist coincide with the psychological mechanism by which individuals are made to undergo the regressions which reduce them to mere members of a group".⁸ Guided by a leader seen as the primal father, the masses can be, according to this theory, and are indeed easily manipulated. Through a process of identification with the leader and among themselves, the mass's followers see the leader as their collective projection, an idealized personality they are meant to obey. Resembling the mass psychologically, the leader can guess the needs and ideals of the following crowd, merely satisfy and re-supply them. The mass can be carried into irrational behaviour by an orally effective and able to befool leader. The issue is: is Marcuse's *one-dimensional man* one among the followers of an invisible leader? Can that invisible leader be iconographically captured in the shape of the media? Finally, is recent society functioning in the shape of a fascist one?

Media practices and images can and do function as screeners, suppliers and maskers of audiences' unconscious dreams, needs or wishes. But which is the libidinal bond that unites and transforms the audience into a mass? Under which realm are they identified? Is it their constant receipt of information, images and schemata? Their being recipients more than senders of messages? What is their common goal? Is it their dismissal of all goals?

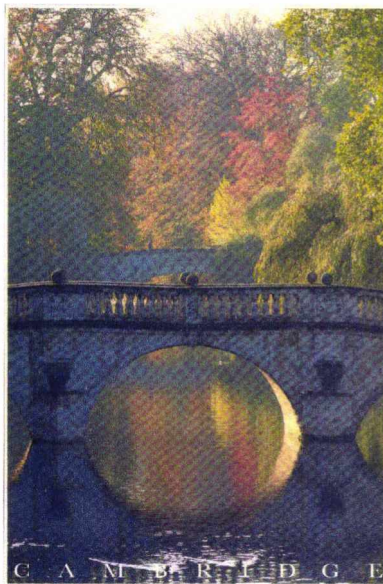
There seems to be no connection to the masses today other than their being characterized as masses and their connection to media messages. This, however, is a characteristic feature of the recent society, not its people. All members of a particular society are connected and identified under the name and character of that society but does this fact instantly transform them into a mass? People form peer groups that act as groups, under the same initiative and towards a same target—but masses? And who is then outside of the masses other than the intellectuals that created the concept of the masses in the first place? After all, from the moment that the media entered into the everyday life of the individual until today, much has changed. Even media fashion has come to be outmoded. People today respond to rather than accept media messages.

Postcards are souvenirs, rather than accepted statements. Even if a certain statement is entailed in the postcard, that does not necessarily mean that the receiver is uncritically going to adopt this statement or that he will not understand or respond to it: comment on it. Connecting images of reality to artistic images is not a twofold operation: artistic images are not unconditionally connected to reality. Abstractness of art does not necessarily point to the

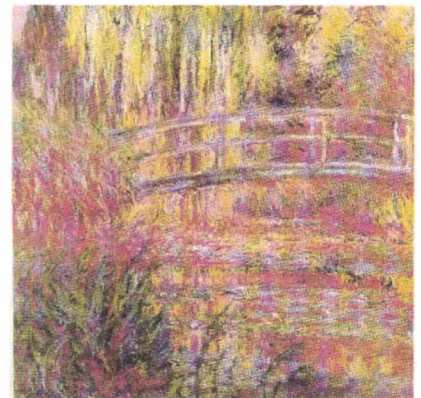
abstractness of real or social relations. The receivers of the postcard do realize that by looking at the postcard they do not automatically by a magic way enter into the appearing object—they seem capable of distinguishing between the original artwork and its mediation/reproduction or purposive resemblance. So why are they so widely condemned for acting under complete guidance and accepting whatever is offered to them?



Painting 5-1: Claude Monet, *Le Pont japonais et l'étang des nymphéas*, Giverny, 1899, Philadelphia Museum of Art



Postcard 5-1: Clare College Bridge, The Cambridge Portfolio, Photograph by Tim Rawle



Painting 5-2: Claude Monet, *Jardin et pont japonais*, 1900, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Does Baudrillard's notion of a recycling of culture epitomize the repetition through mediation and reproduction of cultural images and sounds—their reuse and constant altering shape? Are these reused images decreased to just signs, references or signals and do they preclude culture and knowledge? In addition, are the audiences' preferences, tastes and choices organized in a way that they would just function as a series of responses to stimuli? For Baudrillard the answer to this questions would be a bold and unarguably strong “yes”.

As far as the outcome of this thesis is concerned, culture is not recycled but mediated through the new media. It was a new process during Adorno's and Baudrillard's time—they saw it as a threat to the norm of traditional art and its aesthetics—but as times moved forward, there

is a need that so should art and people's understanding of art—its aesthetics. These mediated images are seen and conceived as just images—no viewer is deceived there—, as signs, yes, but as signs pointing to the original. Architecture on the postcard might have lost its original function but it earns the new function of hinting and promising its past function, of pointing to the original. Such images do not preclude knowledge and culture: they entail knowledge—it is, in fact, typed on the backside of the postcards—and they introduce the gazers to culture: they point to it. In this sense, they can function as references of culture.

Still, the biggest and most crucial question remains this: are the audiences' preferences, tastes and choices organized in a way that they would just function as a series of responses to stimuli? Can the audiences of the new media be characterized and referred to as the masses?

The examination of architecture mediated on postcards proves that the answer to the above questions is also negative. The masses are consisted of homogeneous and passive consumers, while the gazers of the postcards can belong to at least four categories: the intellectual elite of the initiated—those that by all means would realize the value or non-value of the aesthetic object—, the local elite of the initiated—those that by intimacy would take the value of the artistic object as granted—, the anonymous recipients of the sent postcard—those that would be introduced to the artistic object by the mediated information on the backside of the postcard and might never understand or appreciate its aesthetic value—and the tourists—those that have been in both sides, both present and absent when in contact with the artwork. If the intellectual elite of the initiated and the local elite can be summoned up to be included in the same group—those that for some however different reason are well-informed of the sociohistorical and aesthetic value of the object—the anonymous recipients—who for our purpose are the audiences of the mass media—cannot include the tourist, for the latter has already had the aesthetic experience that the former might never be entitled to. At the very moment, however, that a third party comes in to play the game changes. As long as the third party of the tourists comes to play along with the elite and the masses and cannot fit in any of the two parts, the initial distinction—the distinction between the elite and the anonymous audience—is deeply questioned. If a distinction is questioned, so are its distinctive parts. If the distinction between the elite and the masses cannot be seen to exist in our society, then the elite on the one hand and the masses on the other cannot be seen as cut and dried entities in

themselves. Either the elite or the masses as concepts and entities do not any more exist. Because distinctions are still made in terms of blood, property and achievement, the assumption is that the troubled concept in this case is the notion of the mass.

II. *Musical Languages Through the Cinema*

Mediation can be seen as de-fetishization. For Lukács the appearances of reality are first recognized as such, then detached from their context and finally related to the social. It might even be seen as an alternative of a critical theory of culture when in the role of the mediator is someone with adequate knowledge and critical capacities. Grounded in the nature and character of the mediated object, such mediation could in the form of Adorno's micrology—through the intensive, critical examination of single artworks—give an idea of art and culture's historical unfoldment and therefore the knowledge and ability to enjoy aesthetic experience. Once more, I see mediation of art as an invitation to aesthetic experience. Even the doubtless unity and identity of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*-artworks can be stressed via mediation.

But is the relation of the mediated object and the subject a dynamic one?

The problem remains in the audience's character: are they fragmented subjects, lacking intersubjective knowledge? Is the individual powerless over his "second nature"—those natures that, according to Benjamin, are developed after industrialization—and does that powerlessness instantly determine him as passive? Do modern audiences work towards their self-mediation and de-fetishization and towards developing a collective consciousness? Adorno insisted on seeing as possible only parallel, incomplete micrological mediation, exactly because he could not see the practical self-mediation of the addressees as possible. The cognitive character of the artwork becomes, according to Adorno, negative—functioning as a critique of society—and its mediation should, also, be negatively charged; the perception of such mediation should be negatively charged. For Adorno, mediation towards identity falls apart. In the same sense, through his negative and pessimistic critique, Adorno is able to express the harmony and unity of critical theory. By combining immanent critique—addressing and mediating critically genuine artworks—and transcendent critique—denouncing the mass character of the culture industry,

Adorno was able to develop a critical theory of negativity full of and determined by aphorisms.

But how is the inaccessible unconscious of a personality understood—let alone manipulated? Benjamin, following Brecht, insists that film produces a kind of distanced estrangement on the part of the audience that leads to a critical attitude towards what is seen. Does that mean that a film cannot in any way influence an individual?

For Benjamin, all art and culture is functionalized. It first served cult and religious functions; it developed to serve the dogma *l'art pour l'art*. What is the function art serves today? Benjamin says “exhibition value” has replaced cult value. If this is the case, the new means of reproduction, the new media, cannot be seen as the causes of the decline of the aura—rather the general decline of the community and its reformation as a society of commodification are to blame. What Adorno called the fake, artificial aura of the industrial age can today be seen as the hint and promise of the original experience. From the 1930s till today, from the emergence and shocking domination of the mass media until their being seen as the media through which one kills one’s free time, much has changed. Audiences evolved into interpreters and society into a media school. The new media literacies have finally been noticed—distinguished from the traditional oral and written literacies—and even perceived. Benjamin’s *flâneur* is no longer shocked or haunted by the modern images; he is used to filmic effects and computerized backgrounds. Emerging from a mute acceptance of such images and effects, he now has the knowledge—shaped through experience—to tell his opinion and form his taste.

It is through experience that individuals acquire all cognitive knowledge anyway. Thinking comes after the experience: it is precisely experiences that arouse thoughts, outline wishes and determine taste. Everything a subject knows or understands is put together through experience of different kinds of social mediation. Even society is experienced—lived even. Ancestors mediate previous societies; societies mediate the historical progress of humans. The new media mediate their interaction. In this sense, art and culture can be seen as Baudrillard’s *absolute merchandise*, the absolute object with the most mediating potentials.

Again, like the postcard, the tanguedy—and all films aimed at a reconstruction or a mediation of a past culture—entail a sense of longing: testimony, remembrance, nostalgia and escapism. Just like Baudrillard’s *bygone object*, architecture on the postcard and tango through film are purely mythological in their reference to the past. Knossos and the tango no longer have any

practical function—Knossos does not roof a king any more as tango is not merely associated with immigrants' nostalgia of their homeland—but exist solely in order to signify indices and instants of past cultures.

Longing is a word that could be used as a justification for all the culture industry's exaggerations. Mass culture's critique can be seen as a Frankfurt School's testimony of how the things used to be in Frankfurt, Germany, before modernization. Such a critique can function as a remembrance of such a time, a realization of the nostalgia of the Frankfurters in America and, in case of the least adjustable ones—Adorno himself—a desperate attempt to try to escape the foreign and return to the homeland.

5. Epilogue

Even if this thesis succeeds in questioning the homogeneous character of a recent so-called mass and gives a possible justification of the mass culture critics' way of thinking, it cannot prove media's complete innocence. The mediator can influence the story to such an extent as to appear different—and so can the media.

The answer is to spot the inconsistencies inherent in story telling, understand the new literacy of the media. At the very moment that the audiences started to realize that media images just reflect on reality—they do not in any sense transfer reality in one's home—the so-called manipulative techniques of the media would be eliminated. Audiences are audiences, but there exists the hope that through extended practice they will come to a concrete understanding of the media's character. Experience shapes knowledge and knowledge cannot coexist with the notion of the mass. The mass accepts media messages, while an initiated audience responds to them. It is the hope and expectation of this thesis that knowledge and understanding will come by experience and through time. Because a sufficient amount of time has passed from the time of Adorno's writings, the experience of the viewers have been enriched both through their many media viewings and through their tourist wanderings. Both mediated and direct experiences have been added up to shape the present audience's understanding and response to the media messages.



6. Notes

¹ Adorno, Theodor, W., *Aesthetic Theory*, edited by Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, London: The Athlone Press, 1997, p. 15

² Ibid., p. 16

³ Ibid., p. 15

⁴ Crimp, Douglas, "On the Museum's Ruins", *Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, London: Pluto Press, 1983, pp. 43-55

⁵ Jameson, Frederic, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society", *Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, London: Pluto Press, 1983, pp. 111-125

⁶ Baudrillard, Jean, "The Ecstasy of Communication", *Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster, London: Pluto Press, 1983, p. 131

⁷ Ibid., p. 133

⁸ Adorno, Theodor W., "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda", *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato & Eike Gebhardt, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978, p. 123

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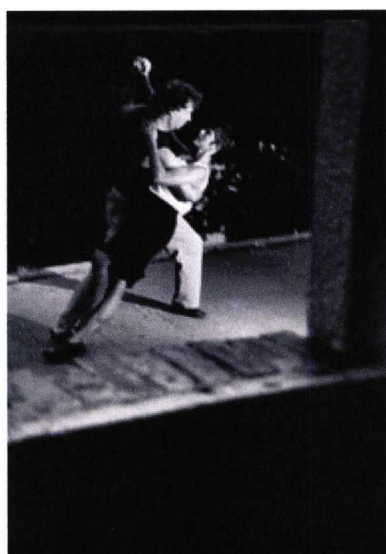
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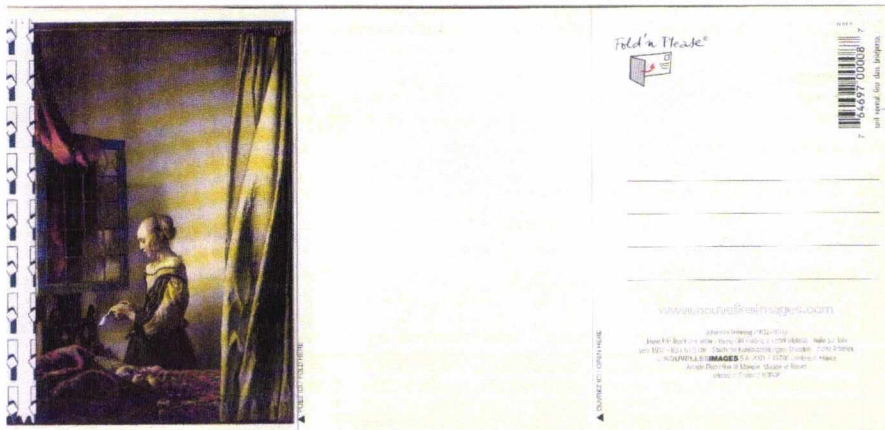
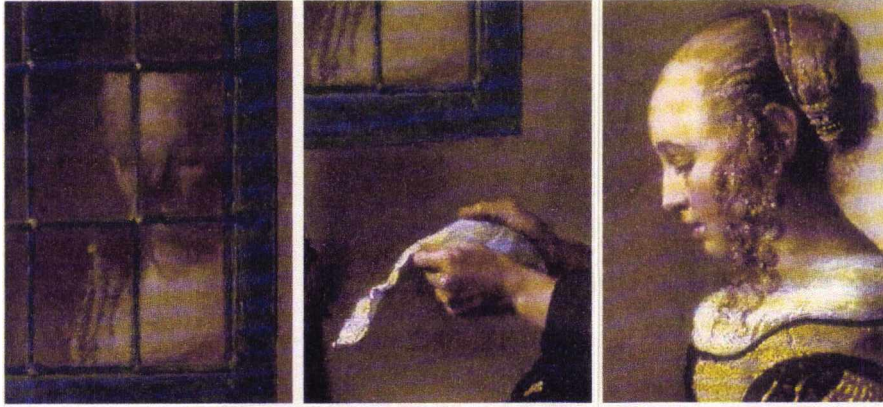
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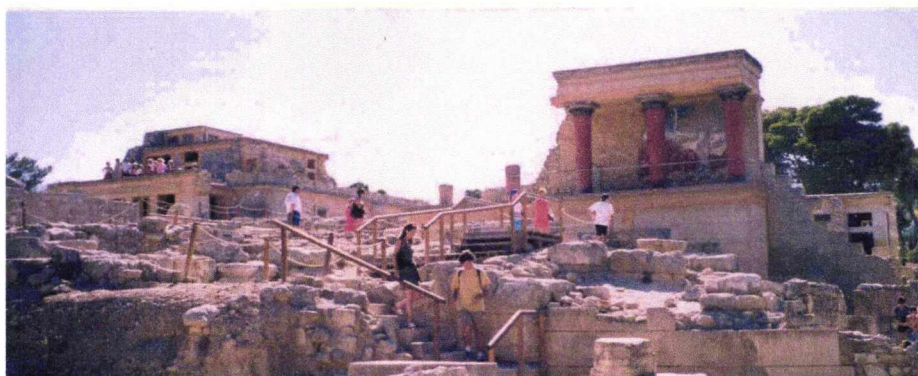
Appendix





Postcard A-1: Johannes Vermeer ,
 “Jeune fille lisant une letter”
 (Young Girl reading a Letter)
 —details on a folding postcard.
 This postcard carries more images
 and is quite bigger than any other
 postcard. This fact gives it a type
 of uniqueness, a certain oddness
 that distinguishes it from the rest.
 When folded, it is the same size as
 any other postcard, complying in
 this way with the medium’s norms.

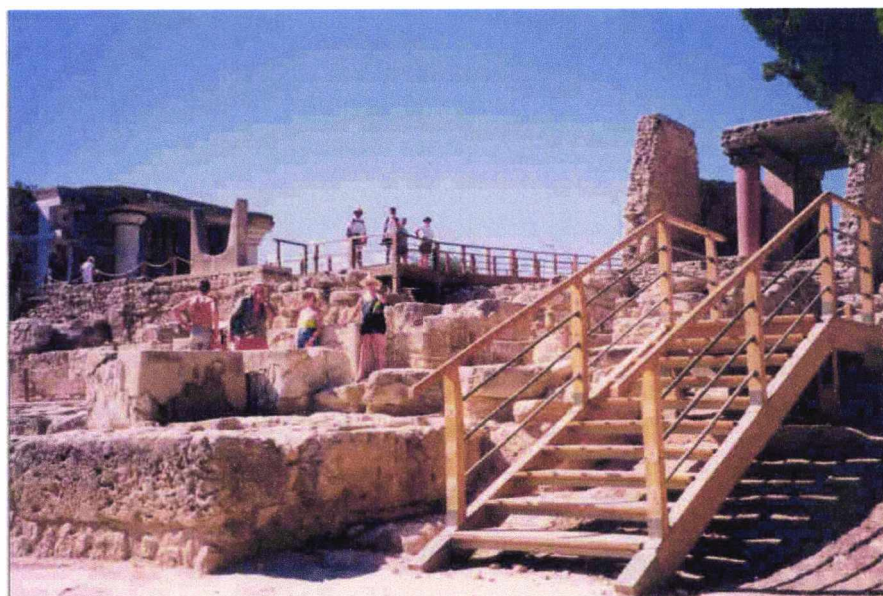


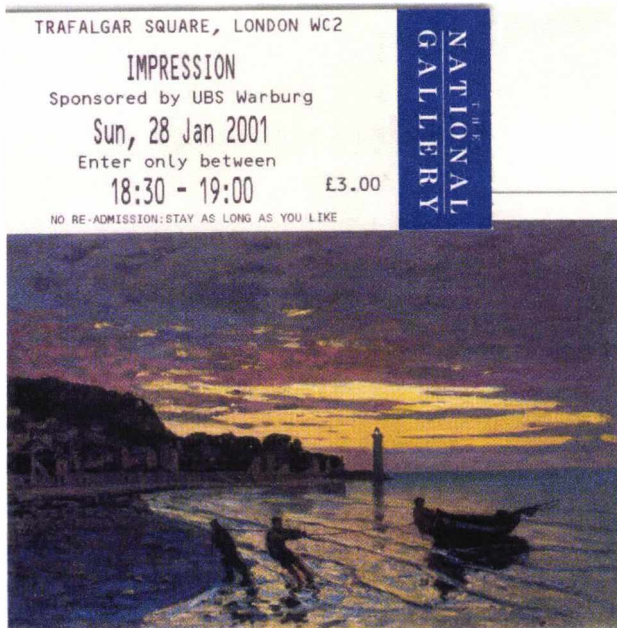


Photograph A-1 and A-2: Photographs of Knossos, E. Papadaki, summer 2000

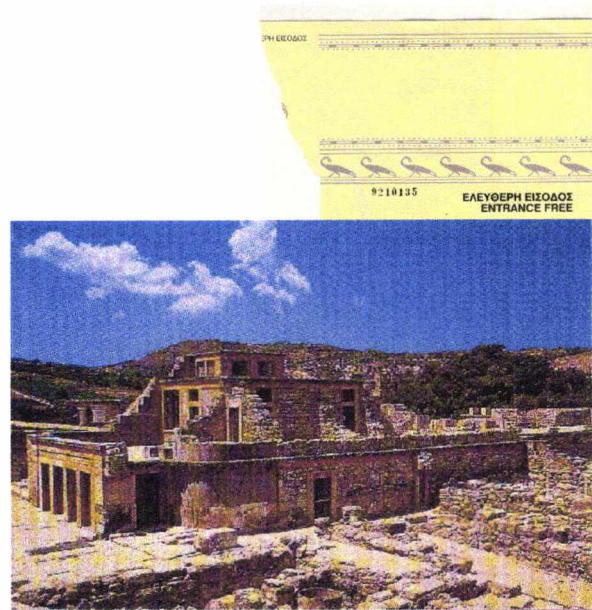
On photographs, Knossos divides its authentic charisma to many people—those that are looking at the photographs do not in any sense feel privileged or special. There are many people walking through the site, many gazes have already seen, admired and rested on Knossos for the gazer to feel anything but one amongst them.

Furthermore, the sky is not perfectly blue on the first photograph, while on the second part of the wooden staircase—put in convenience of those who wander around the site—is visible. It has never appeared on a postcard. The shooting angle would have been totally different if the photograph was predestined to appear on a postcard.





Postcard A-2: Ticket and postcard of an exhibition, kept as souvenirs or mementoes of the visit.



Postcard A-3: The ticket and a postcard of Knossos—souvenirs after a visit to the site



Postcard A-4 and A-5: Different aspects of Chania, Crete, on postcards.

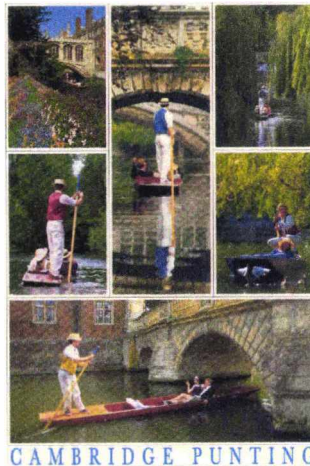
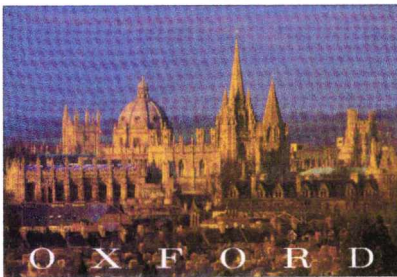




Postcard A-6 and A-7: Promoting Crete as a travel destination.



Postcard A-8, A-9 and A-10: Promoting Oxford as a University City, Shanghai as a traditionally Chinese one and Cambridge as a romantic getaway town.





Postcard A-11, A-12 and A-13: Vernacular Architecture in Crete and Folegandros respectively, and an old man having a traditional Greek meal. On the backside of the last postcard it says:

“The Gods of the Sun,
the Sea and Hospitality
have chosen Greece.
Why not you?”

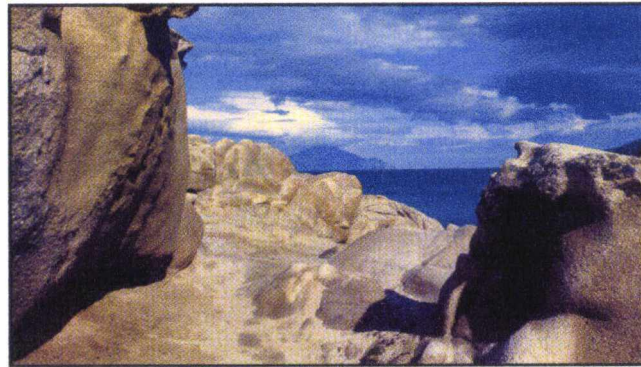
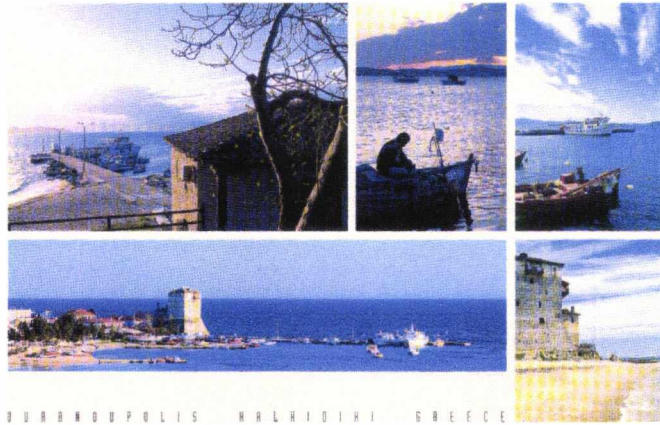


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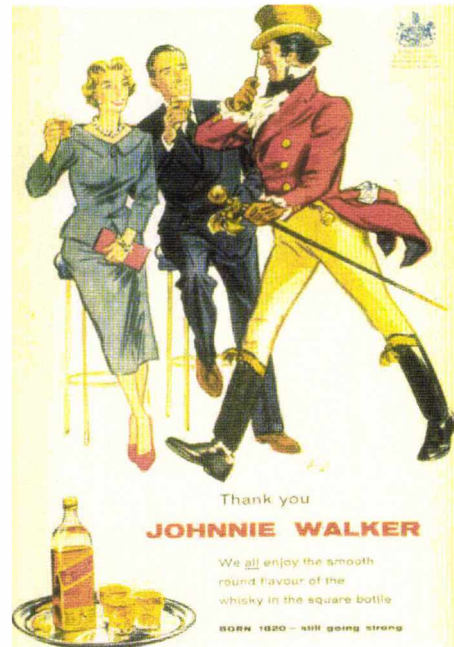
The gods of the sun,
the sea and hospitality
have chosen Greece...
Why not you?



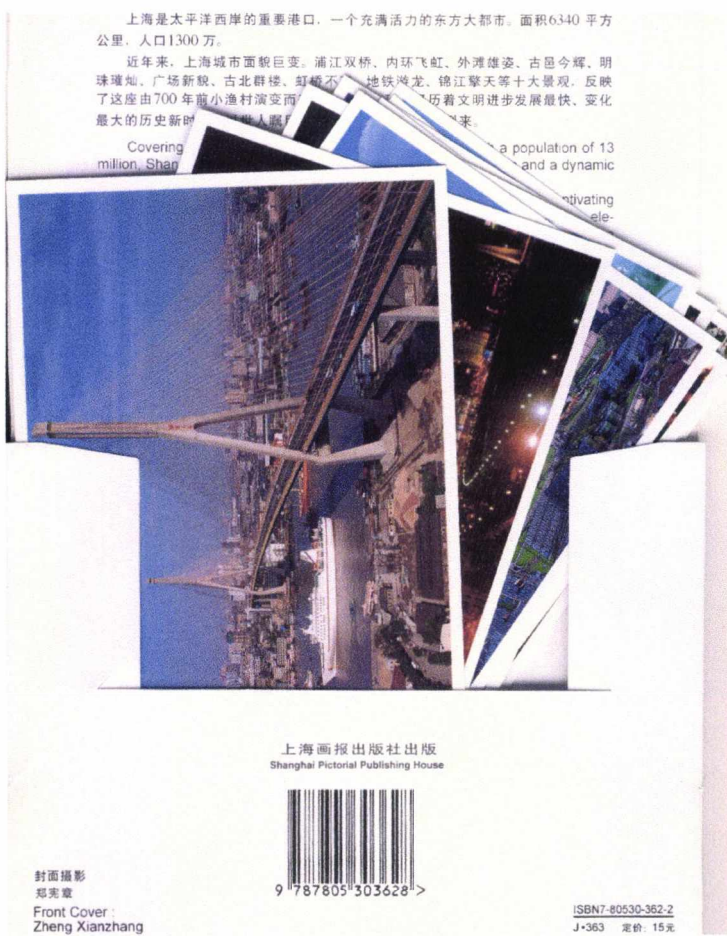


Postcard A-14, A-15 and A-16: Postcards attracting the romantic gaze in Halkidiki, Greece (14 and 15) and Vasto, Italy (16)

Postcard A-17 and A-18: Postcards as quasi-mass media: not only monuments, places of interest or works of art, but also advertisements and fairy-tales can be found on their surfaces.

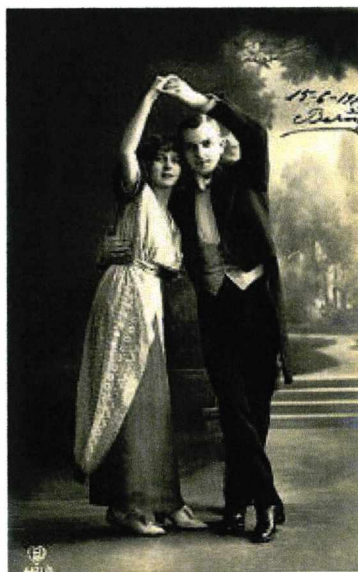


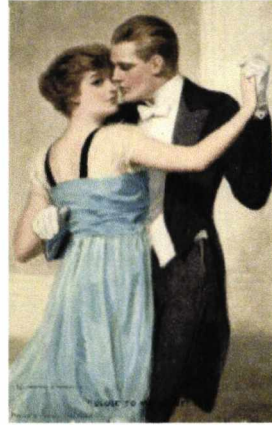
Picture A-1: Postcards from China





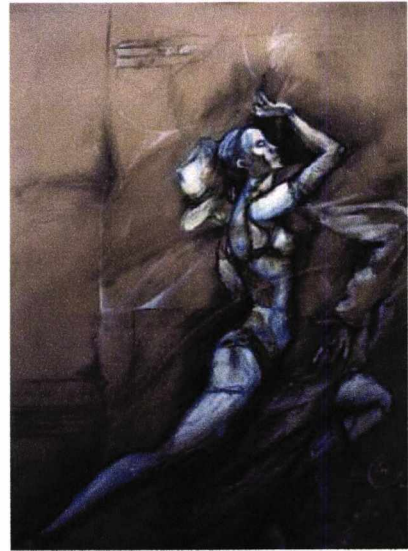
Postcards A-19, A-20, A-21 and A-22: Tango postcards—European couples dancing the tango





Postcards A-23, A-24, A-25, A-26 and A-27: European couples danced a refined tango, slowed down and polished so as to be possible and appropriate for the ladies of the upper classes to dance to it.





Paintings A-1 and A-2: Paintings of tango dances by Christina Bergoglio



Photographs A-3, A-4 and
A-5: Photographs of the
Argentine tango by
photographer Sandra Sue



Photograph A-6: Reflections of and gazes at the tango

Triptych, photograph by Alain Beaupre

Film Scene A-1: Scene from the 1988 Marcos Zurunaga's film "Tango Bar"



the plethora



Postcard A-28: Various postcards on a postcard

the gaze