CRITICAL
APPROACHES
TO
MASS
CULTURE

Critical approach to popular art, mass art.

impossible to define a critical method → analyse, interpret + evaluate works of popular art.

- in what does the 'art' object consist?
- is it 'art' or 'lit' in any recognized sense.
- what is the character of our response? amenable to critical evaluation at all?
- is the status affected by its function in our society.
- what is an appropriate critical vocabulary?

questions preliminary to the development of an aesthetic, a critical approach.

- why do we think pop art to be an art at all?

  functions - to persuade, amuse to make money, etc.

  - the language, the terms in which they communicate are imaginative terms - whatever else, they work as art

  - advertising: the most extreme case.
    visual + verbal 'icon'
    persuasive rhetoric
    complex metaphor, analogical structure.

  - arouses deep feelings, makes it in a world of images, a source of images, become.

- return the ad to its function?
- contamination of experience? no.
- art, yes: a kind of bastard art
  - the official art of a capitalist society.

- what is the art-object or artifact?

pop song.

lit. crit: the lyrics.

- important: at different times.

Yellow Yellow - Oldenburg.

- metaphorical
- cabalistic - drugs
- inaudible.

- yet important: meaning worked; an artifice
- The musical texture + delivery.
  - not strict musical composition.
  - tone instrumentation. The 'message' of the voice used, inflection.
  - The performer, his image carried as an intrinsic line in the song.
- makes money
- 'looked' up for a mass market
- response; visceral, loose not shaped responsively.

(alt) —

– the pop song.

function :– to play back emotions as they are experienced

– to locate the fans + attach them to the market.

– as a 'context' for interpersonal relations.

but also : an imaginative structure of a theme + an experience

a complex 'artefact'.

authenticity/exploitation.

the Beatles, Dylan, Dave Dee, Troggs, Who, Stones + Boppers.

ephemerality.

- the enduring work of art.
- the rapid, built in obsolescence of pop songs.

- art works not as stable + enduring as that: genres certainly not
- in fact, a selective tradition
- in pop, the full spectrum, any form of which any quality.
- ephemerality not limited to pop. may be a new phase, a new 'kind' of art, →
  emphasis on the spontaneous, the fragmentary, the unfinished,

"happenings"

"eclipse of distance"

"the ravages of direct, unmediated experience"

- the collapse of high culture & pop culture
- exchange of terms between. between the 2.
  - cinematic effects in the novel.
  - literary effects in pop fiction
  - the search for 'pop genres' as a mode of covering high culture.
  - transvaluation of forms

"immediate experience"

Is the object / object, or a whole artistic process?

the individual work / the whole body of songs, words, etc.

↳ genre criticism.

unsatisfactory in several ways.

(1) the individual quality of poetic works.

(2) the contact between genres + media.

the genre - that which is outside the poetic work + carried as a mythic structure, + as a 'type'.

The Vertin
The Complete Thriller } Film

an art of myths, of types?

not modern art, but
ancient + medieval art.

The cycle The epic etc.
poem

particular qualities:
Chandler.
Bogart.
Gunfight, High noon,
Cheyenne.