

Theodor Adorno & the Frankfurt School

ZUR 393k: Effects of Mass Media

Outline:

1. 1940s music industry
2. background to the Frankfurt School
3. key themes in FS writings
4. concepts from Adorno

1. Background:
US Music Industry in the early 1940s



The music industry in the U.S. in the late
1930s and 1940s

Duncan MacDougald

"The Popular Music Industry"
in *Radio Research, 1942 - 1943*

Radio research,
1942-43
*Paul Felix
Lazarsfeld*

"The object of this study is to contribute information about the way in which the popularity of hit songs is *determined by* the agencies controlling the popular music business."

"The making of the majority of 'hits' is largely predetermined by and within the industry ... not by the spontaneous, freewill acceptance of the public based on the inherent merit of a given song."

Duncan MacDougald

THREE key players in the music industry

I. Song writers or song-writing teams



Cole Porter



Harold Rome



Alan & Marilyn Bergman

Given “rules” to write by:

1. the melodic line must be simple and easy to play
2. the lyrics should either be “romantic” or “original” and tell an appealing story
3. the melody of the chorus should be 32 bars long
4. the song title should appear preferably in the song’s opening line or at least three times in the song

2. the publisher

Role: audition a new song and judge its hit potential



Leo Feist



Broadway @ 49th, NYC

Publisher's judgments based on:

1. how closely the song matches earlier songs
2. the reputation (and past # of hits) of the writer(s)
3. how well the song matches the style of potential performers (big bands, orchestras, celebrity performers)
4. ...if a song looks like a potential hit, publishers can engage in a bidding war

60 music publishers in business in the early 1940s.

Just 15 of those publishers produce 90% of all hits.

Eight of those 15 are owned or controlled by motion picture companies.



3. the song plugger

Role:

a. to persuade popular bandleaders and singers
to perform a song

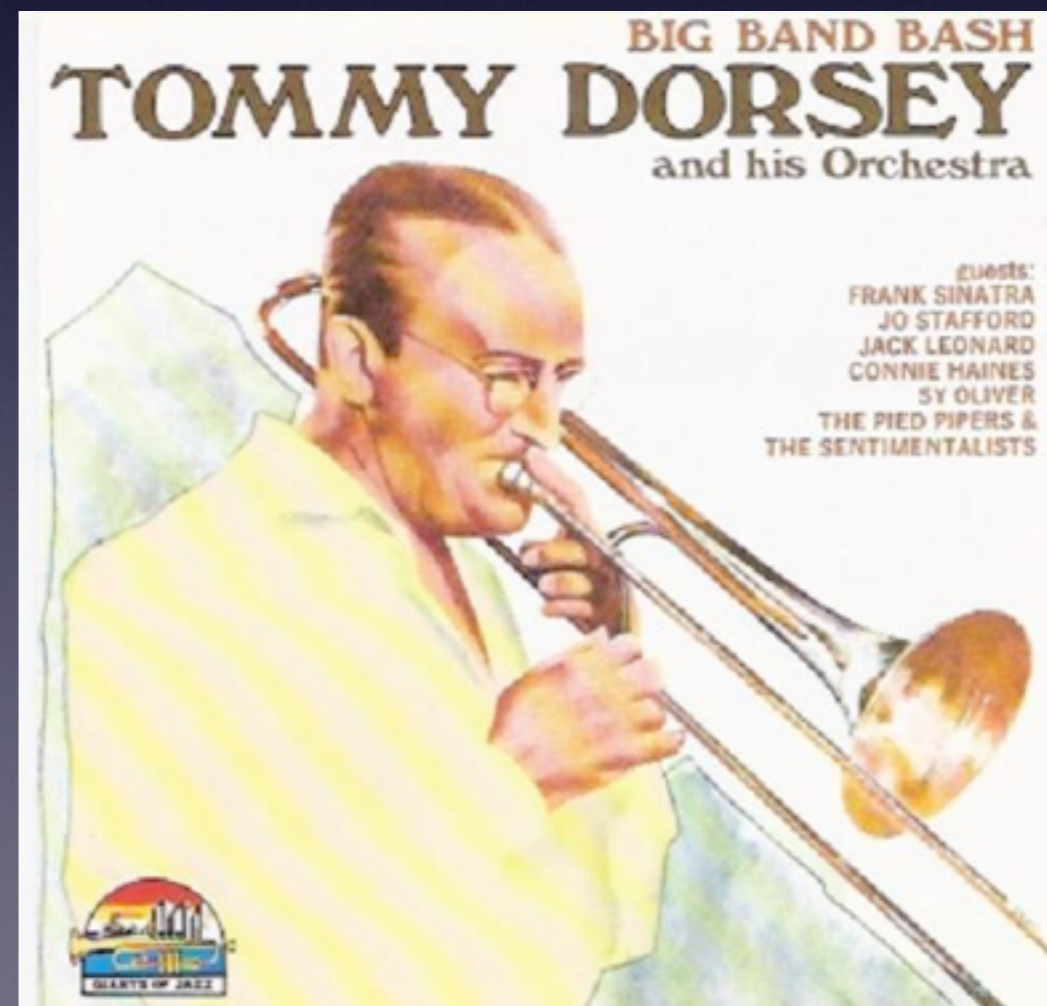
b. to persuade radio stations to give it airtime.

(ideally 3-8x/night for 8-10 weeks)

- 3-7 pluggers working for each publisher
- 35-40 songs published each week

Tommy Dorsey Band

<u>Song Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Top Chart Position (# of Weeks)</u>	<u>TOTAL # Weeks on Chart</u>
"YOU"	5/1936	#1 (1)	10



#1 Hit Songs from 1936, 1937, 1942

<u>Song Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Top Chart Position (# of Weeks)</u>	<u>TOTAL # Weeks on Chart</u>
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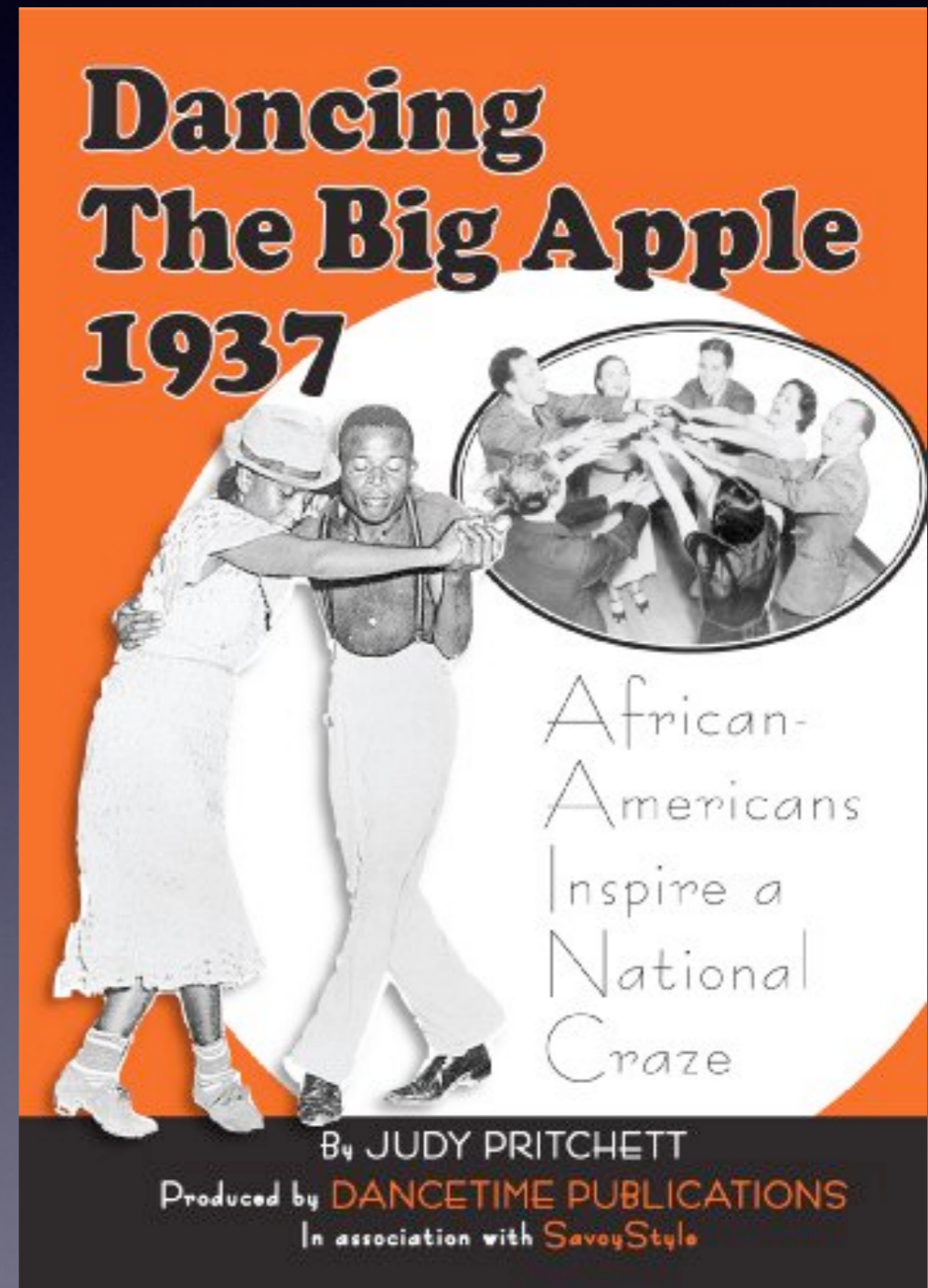
"THE BIG APPLE"	9/1937	#1 (2)	7
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Sample lyrics:

If you don't then your name is mud
If you don't you're a social dud
Everybody's learning how to do "The Big Apple"

It's easy to dance your cares away

The most important thing is just to let yourself go.



<u>Song Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Top Chart Position (# of Weeks)</u>	<u>TOTAL # Weeks on Chart</u>
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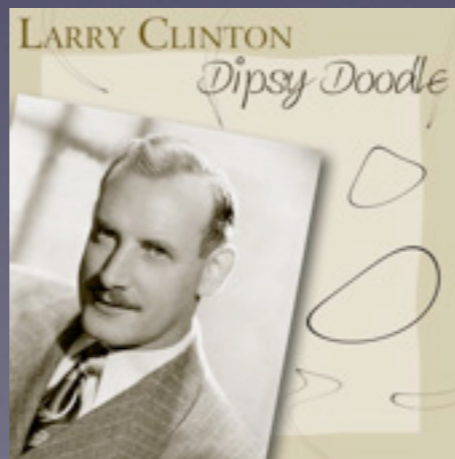
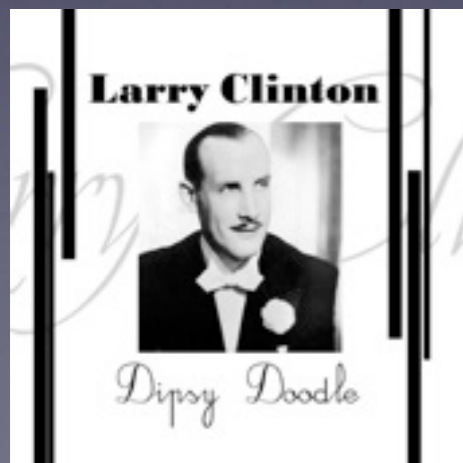
"DIPSY DOODLE"	11/1937	#1 (6)	15
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Sample lyrics:

When you think that you're crazy,
 You're the victim of a dipsy doodle.
 But it's not your mind that's hazy,
 It's your tongue that's at fault, not your noodle.

You'd better listen and try to be good.
 And try to do all the things that you should.



comparisons with current music industry

- In 1940s: 15 major music labels in US
- In 2010: 4 major labels--worldwide

9.62%



UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

29.85%



19.13%



29.29%

2013

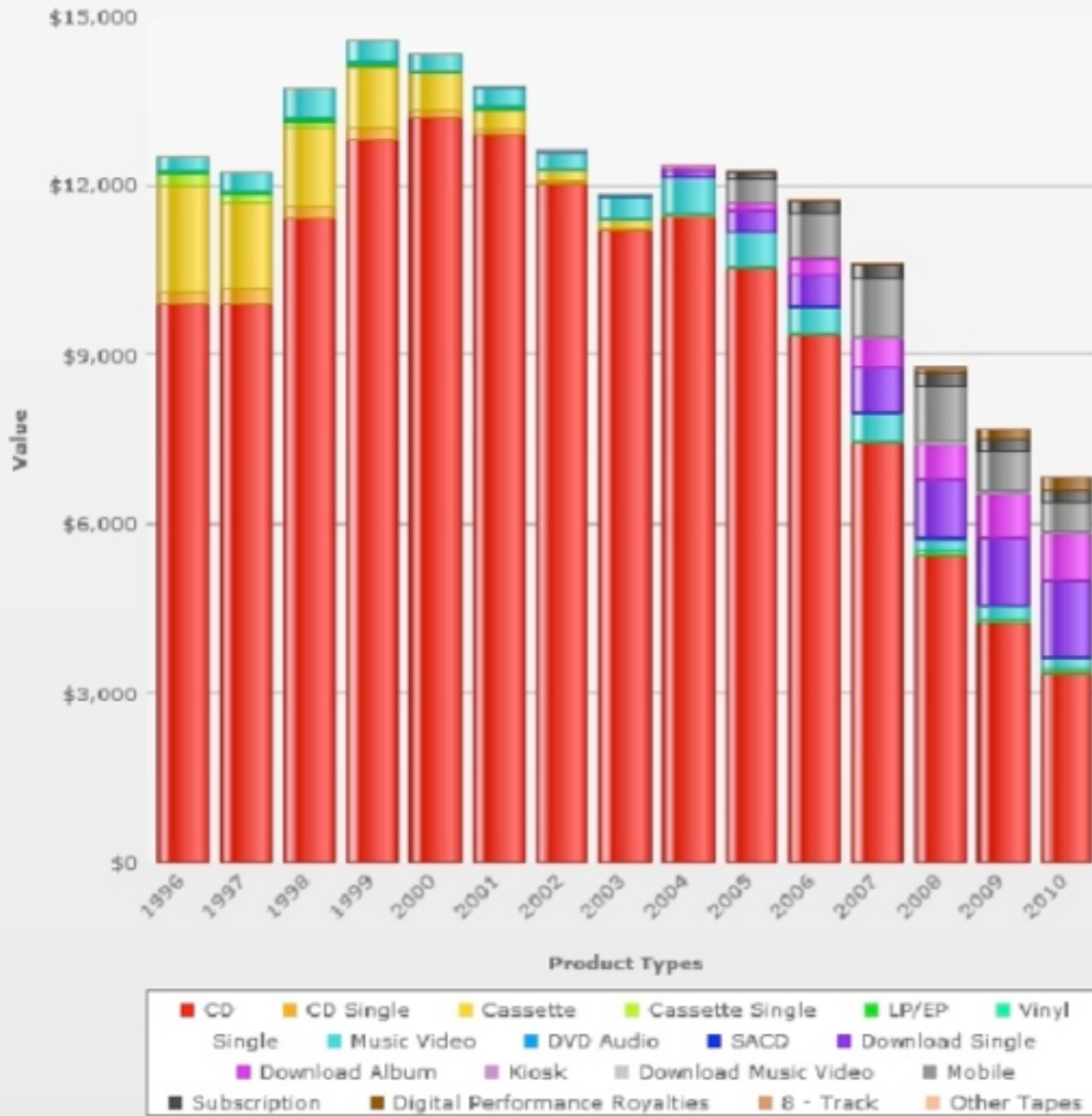


WARNER MUSIC GROUP

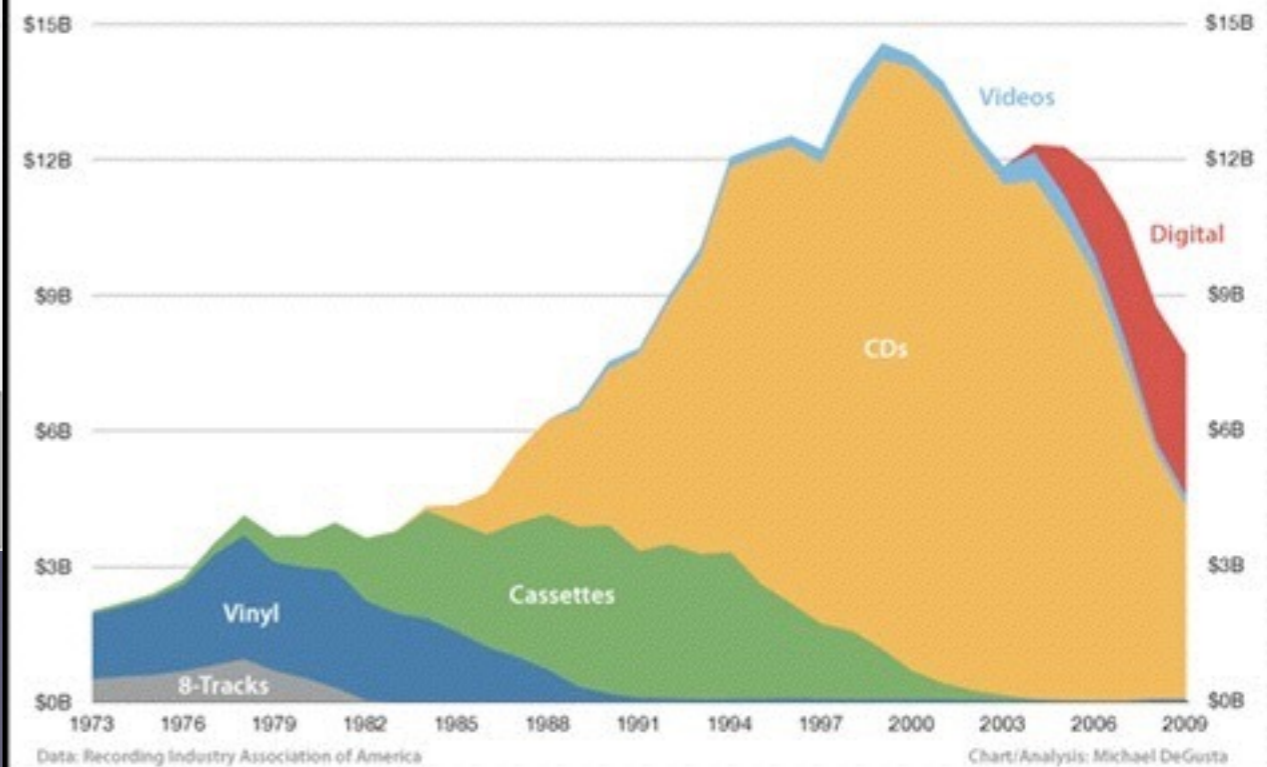


SONY MUSIC

Dollar Amount of Units Shipped - in Millions of Dollars
(1996 to 2010)



US Recorded Music Revenue - Unadjusted Raw Dollars



Medialoper Bebop Episode 23: Zen Arcane

Posted by [Jim Connelly](#) in [Podcasts](#) on Nov 18, 2011

The REAL Death Of The Music Industry

[MICHAEL DEGUSTA](#) | FEB. 18, 2011, 12:13 PM | [▲ 210,102](#) | [💬 175](#)

2. background to the Frankfurt School

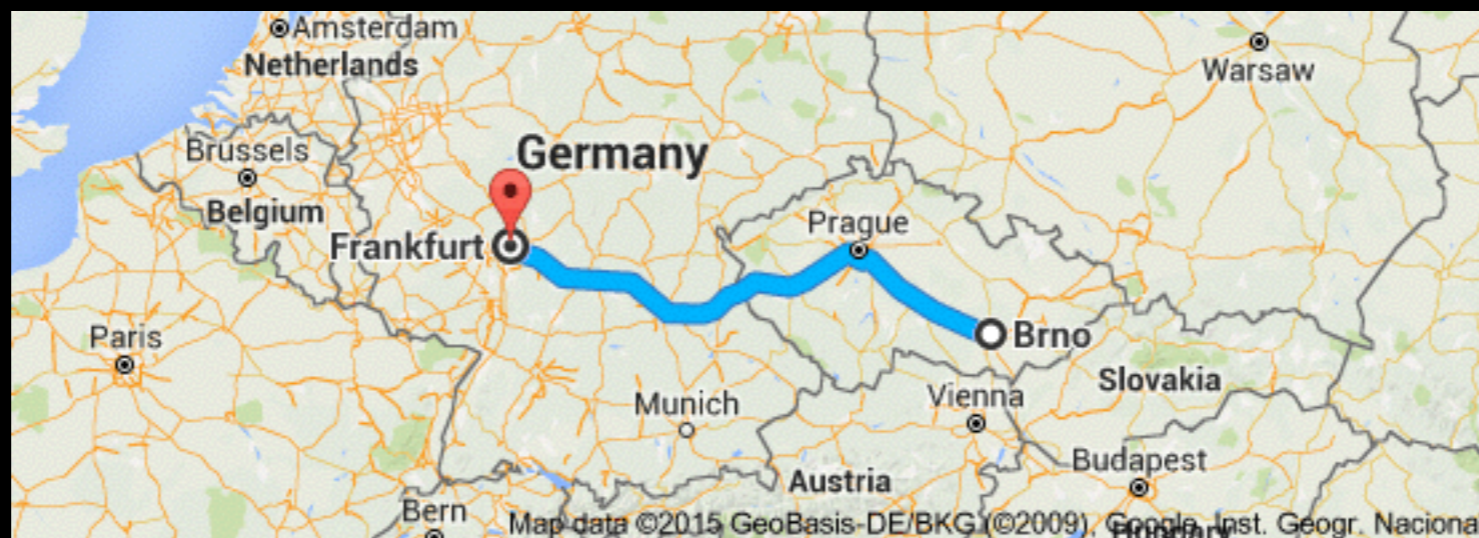
Frankfurt School



- the original institutional locus in Frankfurt, Germany (Institute for Social Research)
- a body of work (and a shared theoretical perspective)
- individuals who adopt that theoretical perspective

continuing significance of Frankfurt School

- one of the first sustained, critical analyses of the impact of the changing media landscape
- reminder that political/social events shape scholarship



Frankfurt School

- "critical theory of society" -- theory that could explain both the functioning and the effects of mass media in modern culture.
- claims "POWERFUL EFFECTS"
 - on society as a whole
 - on individuals within that society

Institute for Social Research

(founded 1923)



Felix Weil, first director



Max Horkheimer
(director, 1930 - 1950s)



**Theodor Adorno affiliated in late 1920s;
formally joins in 1938**



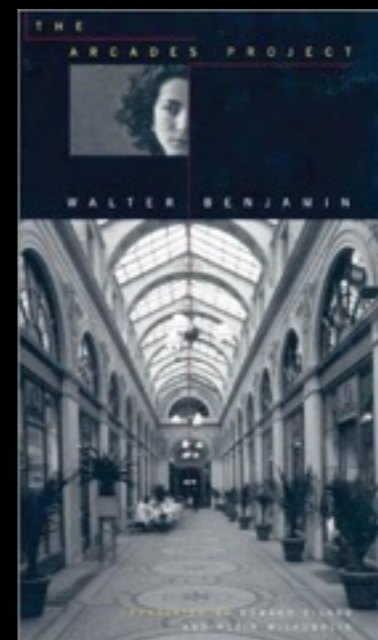
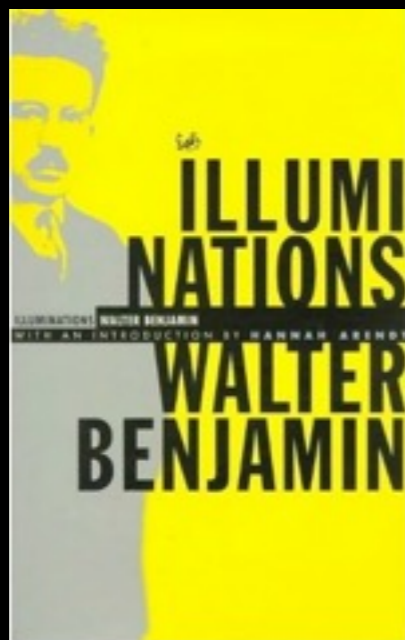
- 1936: Frankfurt School relocates to Columbia University (NYC)
- 1941: Horkheimer and Adorno move to UCLA
 - *Studies in Prejudice* (1950)
- 1953: return to Germany
- Leo Lowenthal remains in US (Stanford & UCB)



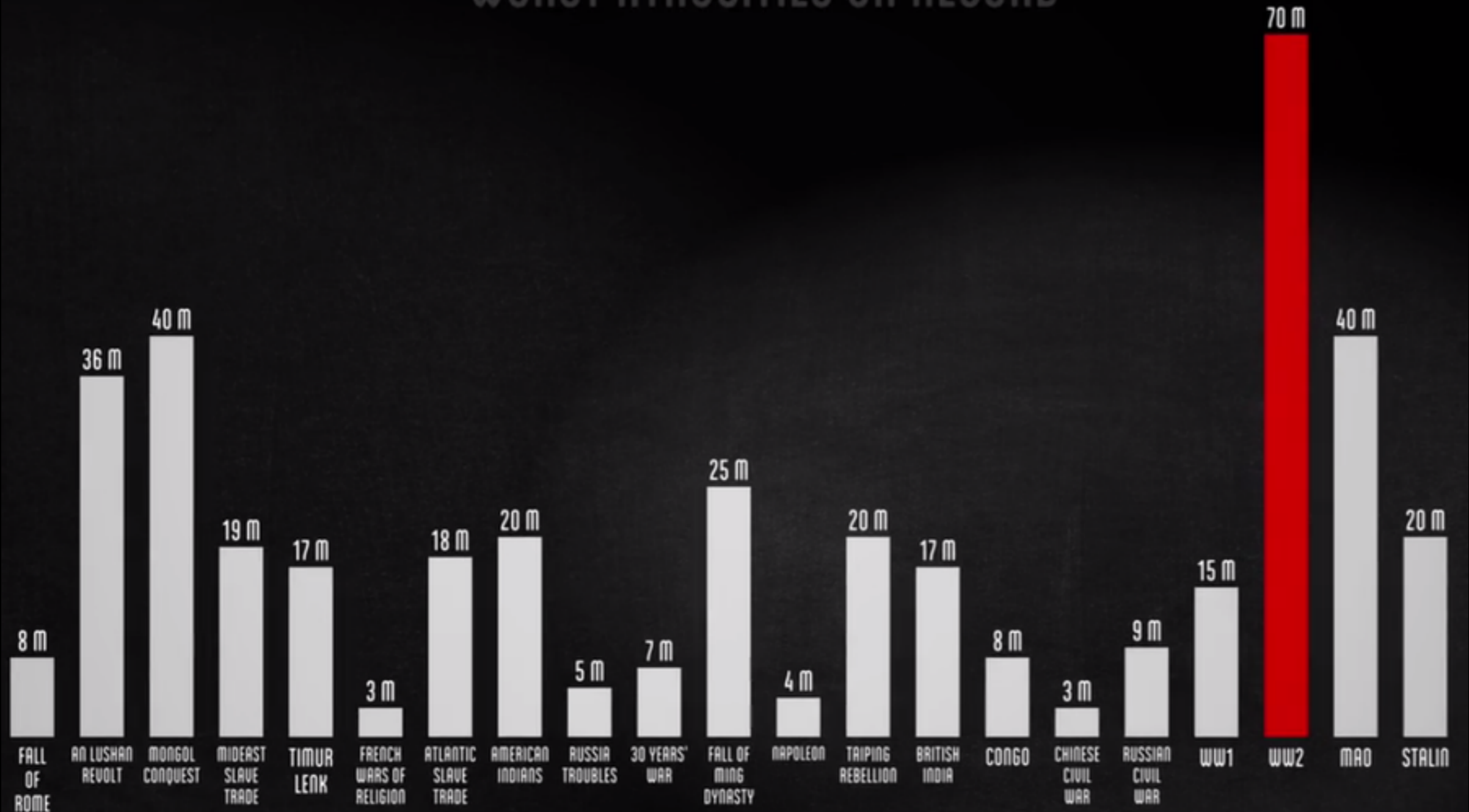
Walter Benjamin (1892 - 1940)



“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”



WORST ATROCITIES ON RECORD



<http://mic.com/articles/120271/this-incredible-visualization-shows-just-how-many-people-died-in-wwii>

Deaths of Jews in the Holocaust

Poland	3,000,000	90% of all Jews there
Germany	210,000	90% of all Jews there
Czech.	155,000	86% of all Jews there
Holland	105,000	75% of al Jews there
Hungary	450,000	70% of all Jews there
Ukraine	900,000	60% of all Jews there
Roumania	300,000	50% of all Jews there
Russia	107,000	11% of all Jews there

Total number of European Jews killed = 6 millions

Added to this must be those other groups murdered in the death camps such as gypsies, the physically disabled, the mentally disabled and those involved in resistance movements against Hitler.

#1 Hit Songs from 1936, 1937, 1942

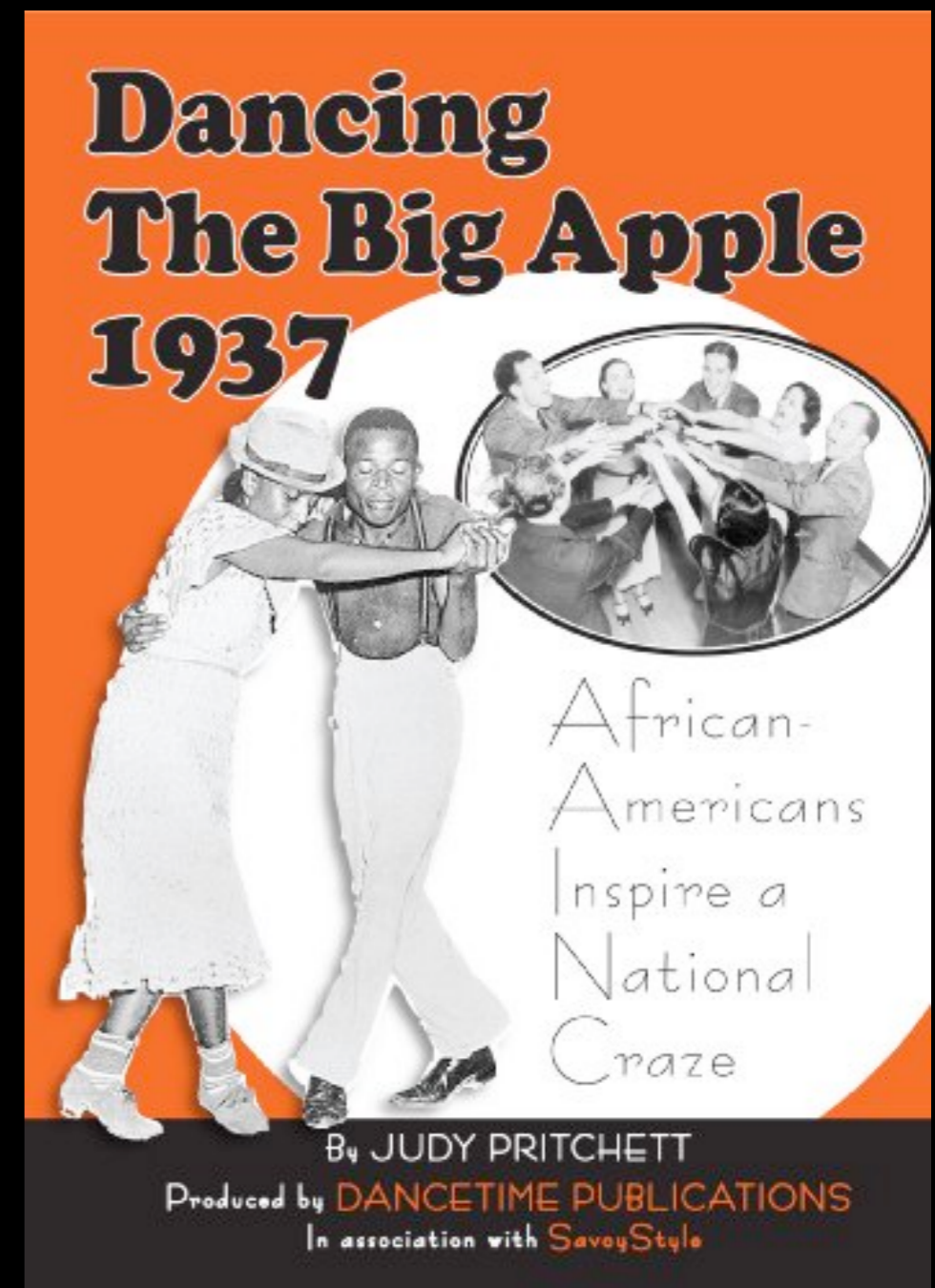
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Sample lyrics:

If you don't then your name is mud
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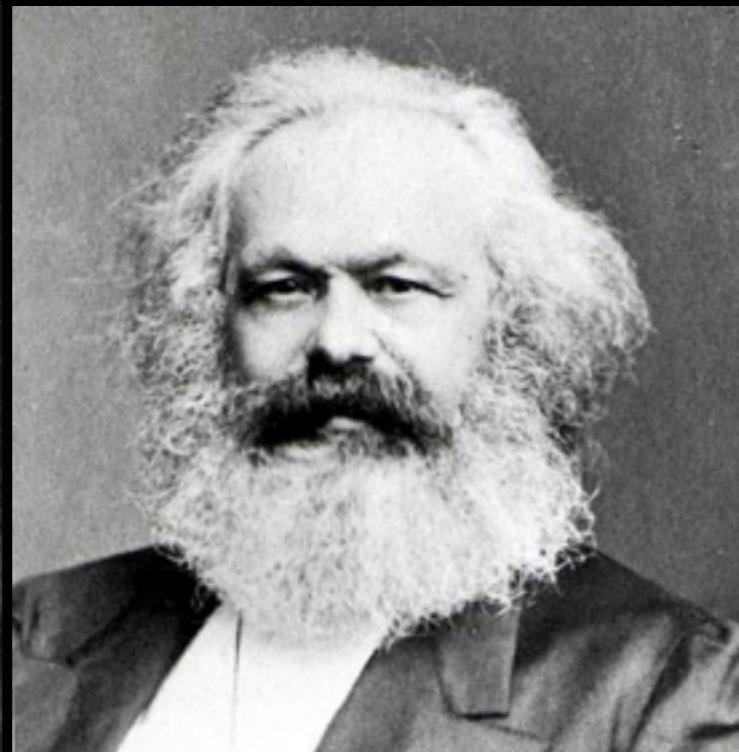
The most important thing is just to let yourself go.



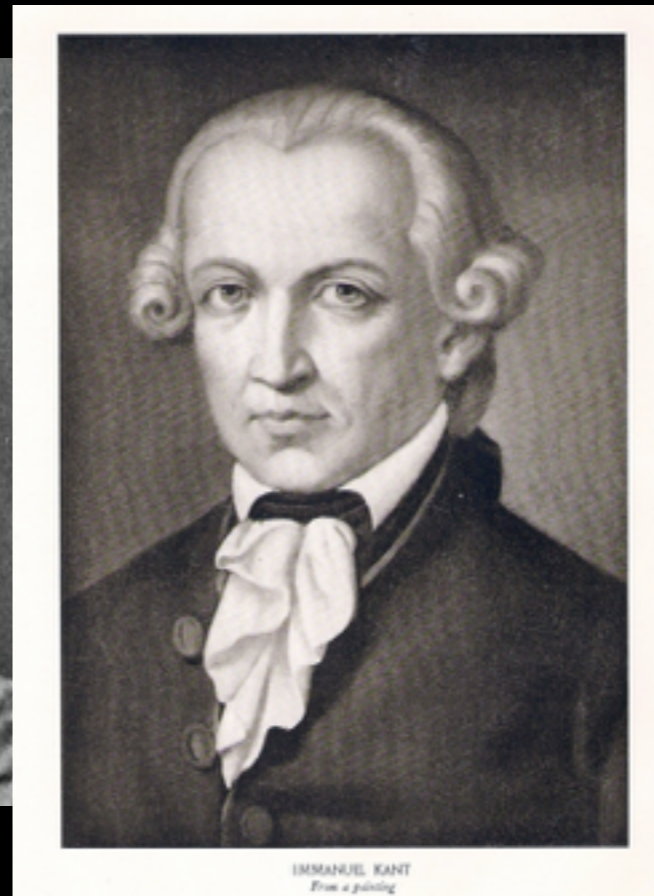
Frankfurt School Influences



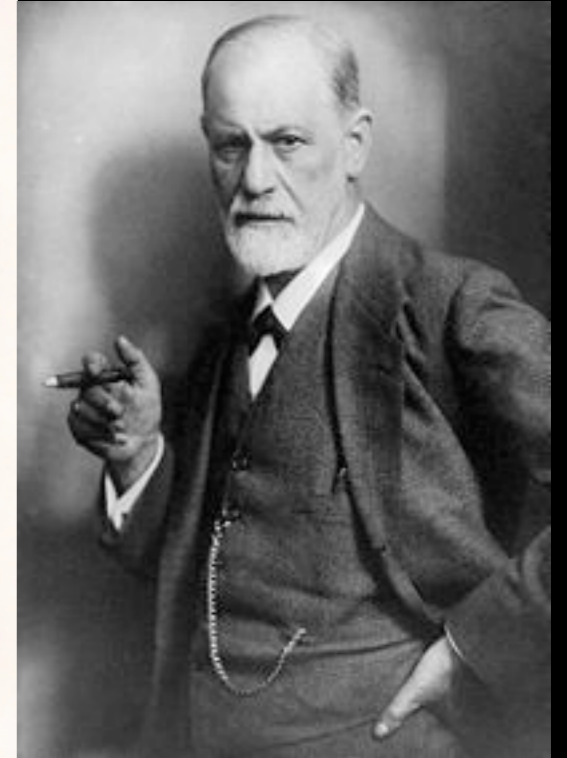
Hegel



Marx



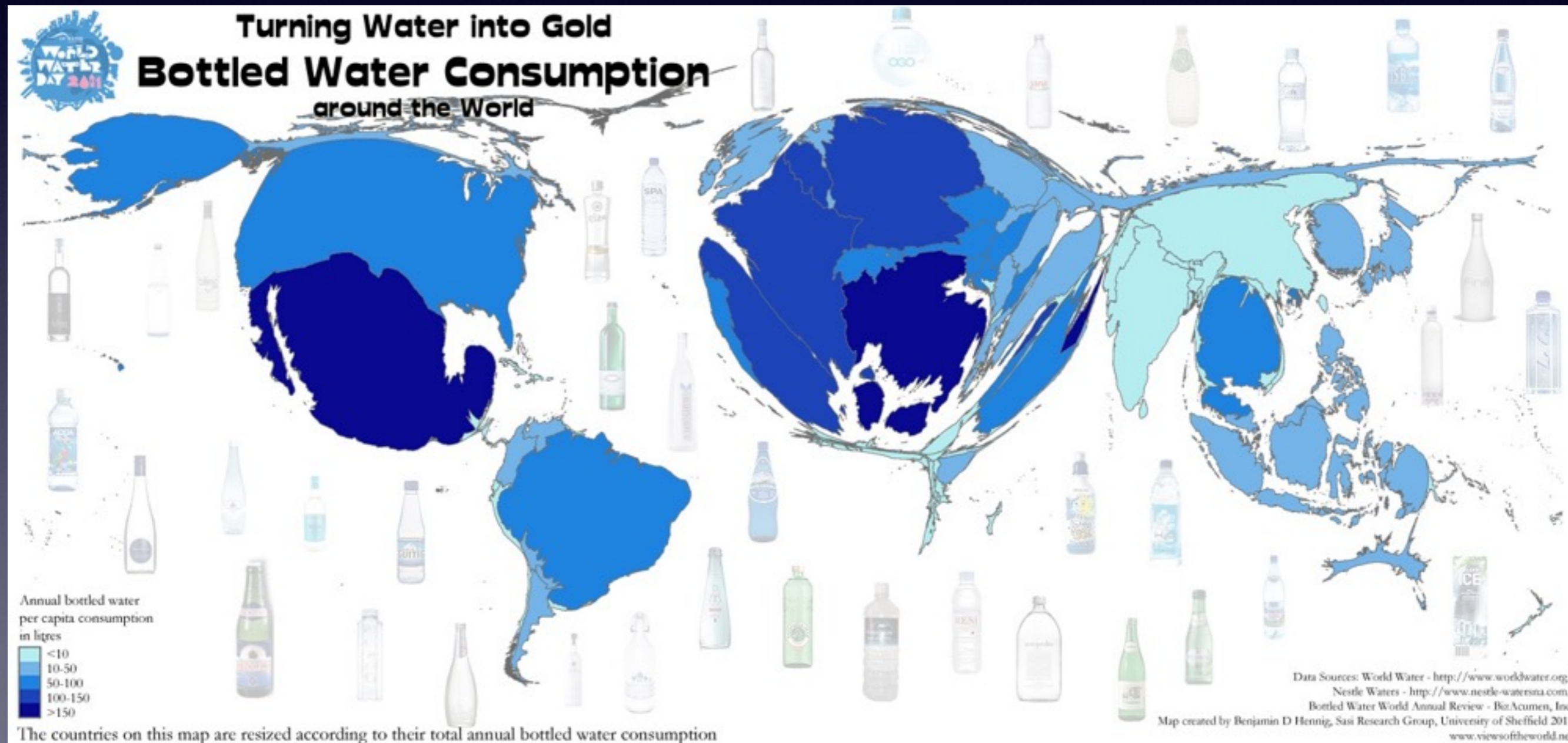
Kant



Freud

FS used critical theory to:

- critique the compulsive force of commodity-driven society



FS used critical theory to:

- understand the rise of fascism in Germany



FS used critical theory to:

- attempt to understand the tendency of the intelligentsia in the US to defend the status quo
 - “it can happen here too”



3. five important themes in Frankfurt School writing

Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

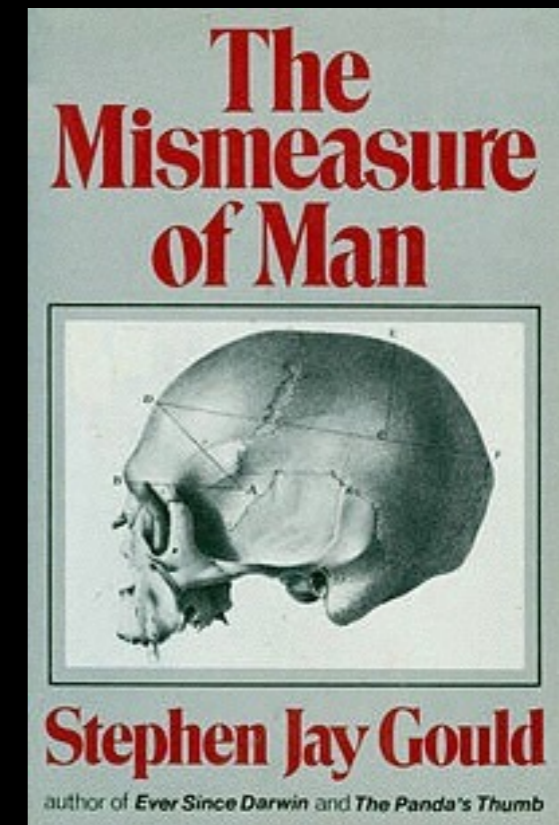
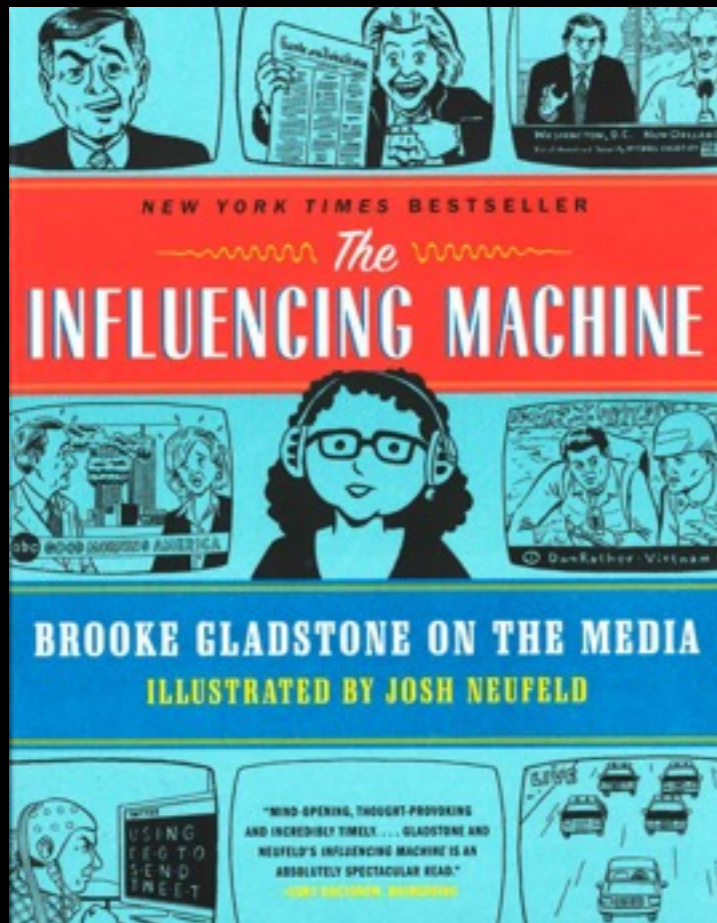
1. skepticism toward classical Marxist emphasis on class struggle as the mechanism of social change



Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

2. critique of the value-free claims of
positivist (empirical) sociology

(see opening pages of “SCRM”)



Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

3. tried to address the social and psychological basis of modern authoritarianism



Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

4. question Enlightenment rationality or instrumental reason

“Critical theory can be understood as a sustained reflection on the dialectical relationship between reason and freedom.”

(M. Groden et al., *Contemporary Literary & Cultural Theory*, 192)

Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

4. question Enlightenment rationality or instrumental reason

- domination of nature
- domination of humans/“human nature”

(see Adorno, “OPM,” pp. 37-39)



SAMSARA food sequence



Benissa Yassine

Subscribe 127

490,317

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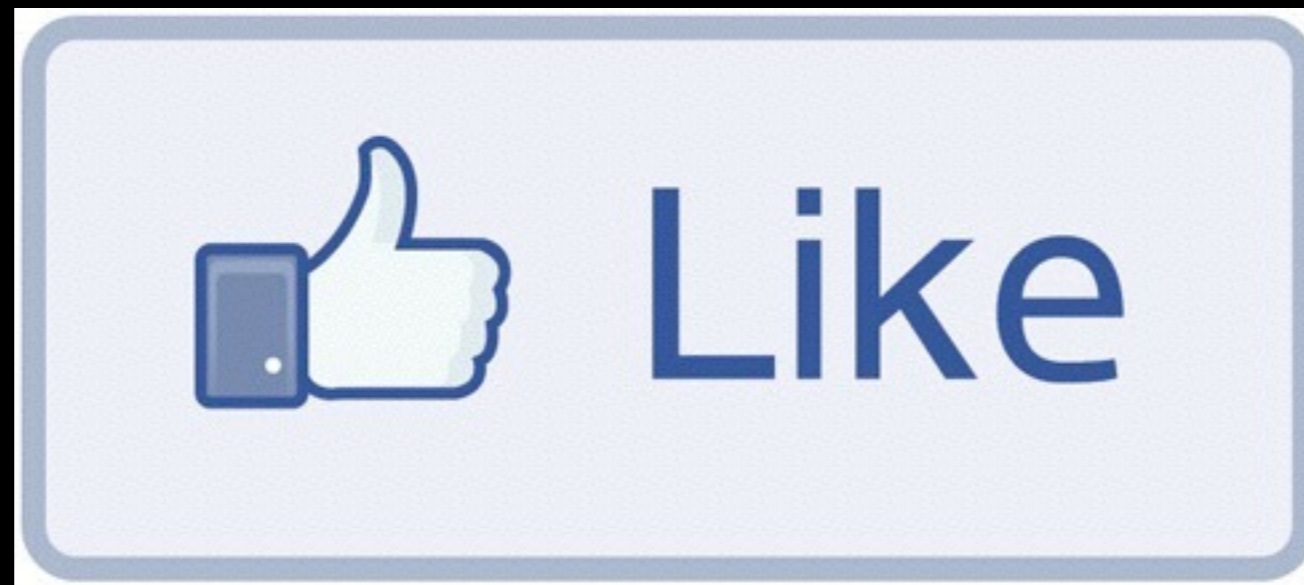
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[https://
www.youtube.com/
watch?
v=k56NBsZXjr8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k56NBsZXjr8)

Five important motifs/ themes in FS writings:

5. relationship between critical theory and
aesthetics





making aesthetic judgments

4. concepts from Adorno

Theodor Adorno

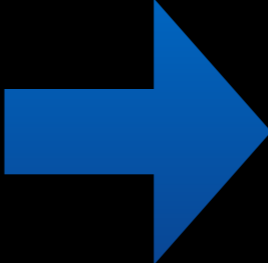
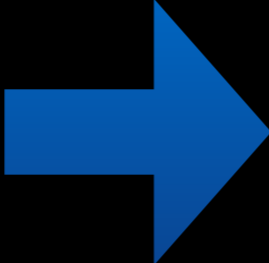
“On Popular Music” (1942)

“A Social Critique of Radio Music” (1945)

“The Culture Industry” (1944)

Adorno's analysis of popular culture

Concerned with media effects on two levels:

- PRODUCTION  TEXT
- TEXT  AUDIENCE

PRODUCTION

(music/entertainment industry)

- monopolization
- “Films, radio, television make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part. . . . Under monopoly all mass culture is identical” (“The Culture Industry” 349).

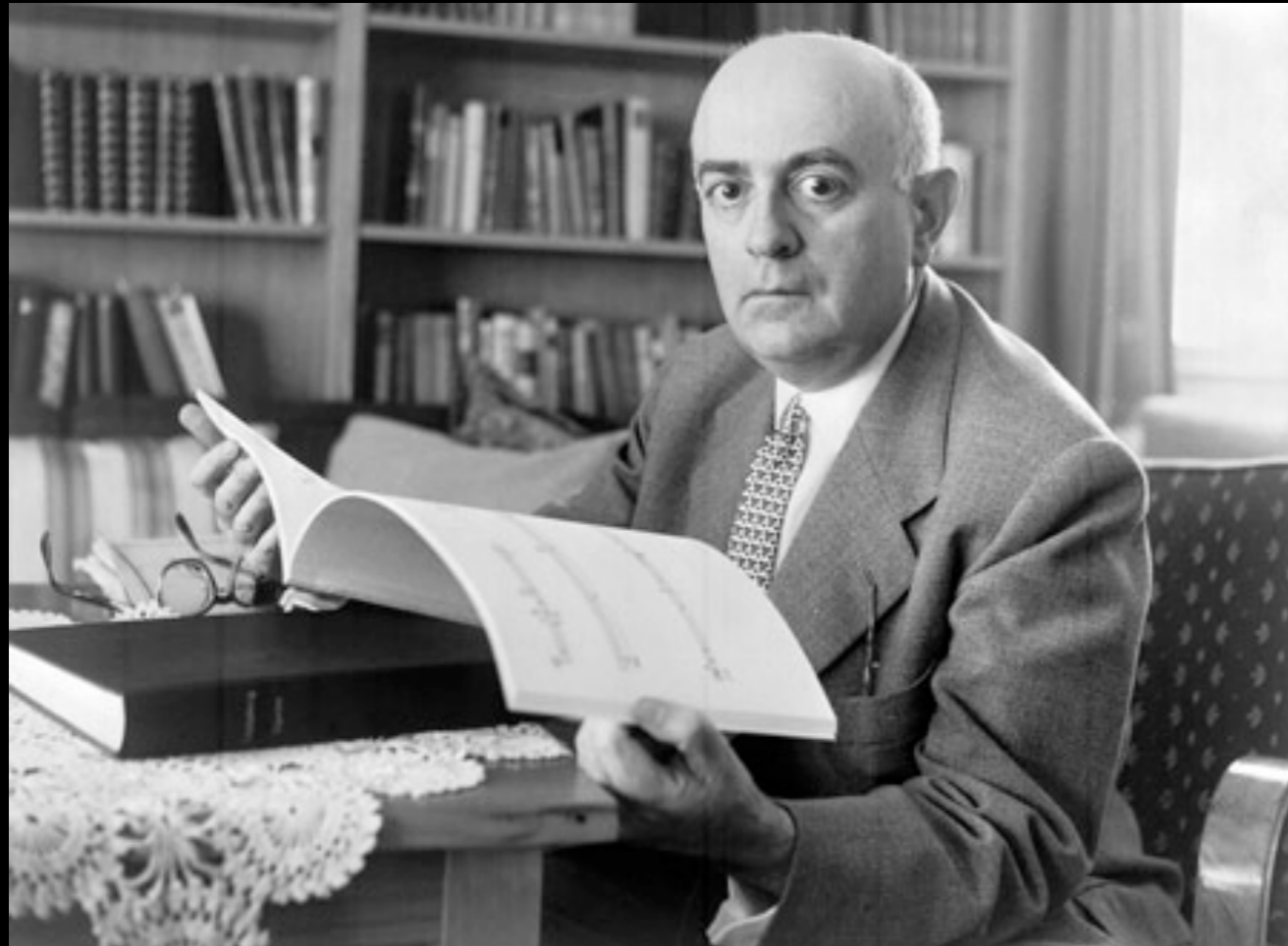
- structural standardization
- repetition
- pseudo-individualization
- “glamor”
- baby talk



CONSUMER (Audience)

“structural standardization aims at standard reactions”

(Adorno, “OPM,” 21)



work and leisure

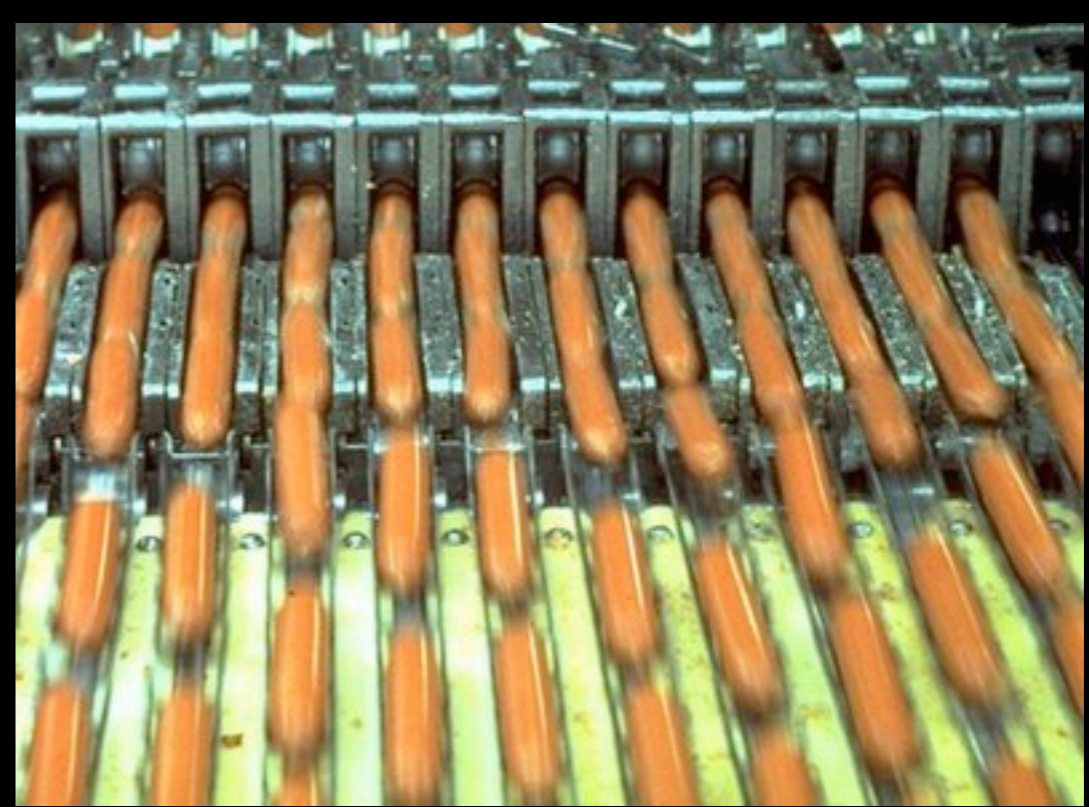
“Amusement under late capitalism is a prolongation of work. . . . [M]echanization has such a power over a man’s leisure and happiness, and so profoundly determines the manufacture of amusement goods, that his experiences are inevitably after-images of the work process itself”

(Adorno and Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry,” p. 361).

“The paradise offered by the culture industry is the same old drudgery.”

(“The Culture Industry,” p. 365)

FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA PRESENTS
KOYAANISOQATSI
LIFE OUT OF BALANCE
WITH GOREY BEGGIO WITH PHILIP GLASS AND MUSIC BY RON TRICKLE



- explicitly critiques the rationale that media simply give the consumer what s/he wants
- “The people clamor for what they are going to get anyhow” (OPM, 38).



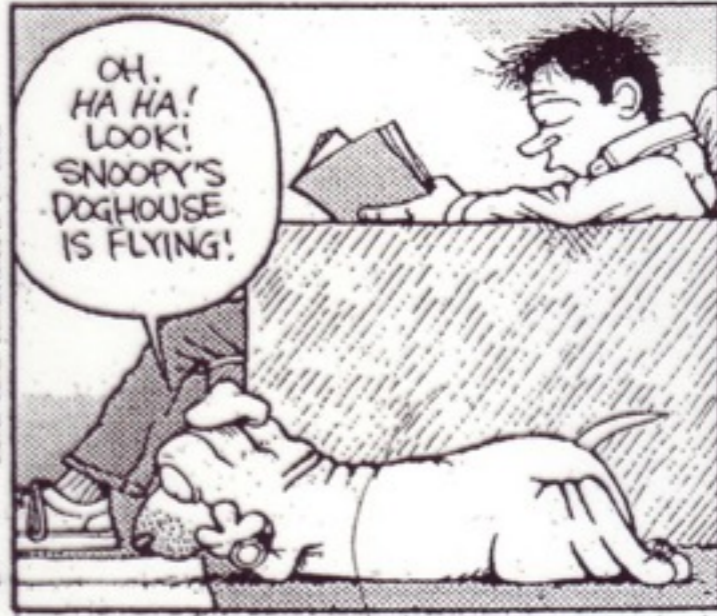
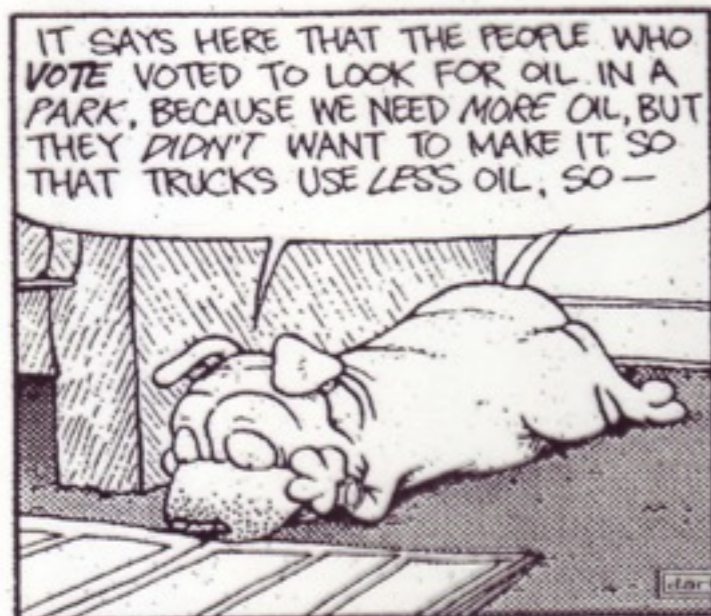


Entertainment and Pleasure

“Pleasure hardens into boredom, because if it is to remain pleasurable it must not demand any effort”

(“The Culture Industry,” p. 361)

GET FUZZY Darby Conley



"Pleasure always means not to think about anything, to forget suffering even where it is shown.

Basically it is helplessness; it is flight; not--as it is asserted--from a wretched reality, but from the last remaining thought of resistance"

("The Culture Industry," p. 367)

“What is decisive today is ... the necessity inherent in the system not to leave the customer alone, not for a moment to allow him any suspicion that resistance is possible.”

(“The Culture Industry,” p. 365)





“The most mortal of sins in this culture is to be an outsider.”

(“The Culture Industry,” p. 371)

ostracism

AN UNFORGETTABLE COMEDY FROM THE DIRECTOR OF "CRUMB"

Accentuate
the
negative.



a TERRY ZWIGOFF film

GHOST WORLD



GHOST
WORLD



Daniel Clowes



UNITED ARTISTS FILMS AND GRANADA FILM IN ASSOCIATION WITH JERSEY SHORE PRESENT A MR. MUDD PRODUCTION A TERRY ZWIGOFF FILM "GHOST WORLD" THORA BIRCH
SCARLETT JOHANSSON BRAD RENFRO WITH ILEANA DOUGLAS AND STEVE BUSCEMI PRODUCED BY JEN BARBARA A. HALL WRITTEN BY PIPPA CROSS JANETTE DAY EDITOR MARY ZOPHRES
COSTUME DESIGNER CAROLE KRAVETZ PRODUCTION DESIGNER EDWARD T. McAWOY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY AFFONSO BEATO EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS LIANNE HALFON JOHN MALKOVICH RUSSELL SMITH
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"RYAN GOSLING EST ÉLECTRIQUE"

20 MINUTES

↑↑↑

THE PLACE
BEYOND THE PINES

PAR LE RÉALISATEUR DE *BLUE VALENTINE*

RYAN GOSLING

BRADLEY COOPER

EVA MENDES

et **RAY LIOTTA**

SIDNEY KIMMEL ENTERTAINMENT présente une production ELECTRIC CITY ENTERTAINMENT en association avec VERISIMILITUDE en film de DEREK CRAWFORD. RYAN GOSLING, BRADLEY COOPER, EVA MENDES et RAY LIOTTA «THE PLACE BEYOND THE PINES» ROSE BYRNE, MARISHA ALI, BRUCE GREENWOOD, COSTUME CINDY TOLAN, PRODUCTEUR ASSOCIÉ KATE McNEILL, CRYSTAL POWELL, MUSIQUE MICKI MAZUR, MONTAGE GABRIEL WILFER, VISUAL MIKE PATTON, COSTUME ERIN BENACH, DÉCOR INGAJ WEINBERG, VOIX JIM HESTON & RON PIZANE
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Political potential for popular culture/popular music ?

See Adorno on “social cement/psychic adjustment”
“OPM,” pp. 39-42

Political potential for popular culture/popular music ?

“Theodor Adorno: Music and Protest”
B. Ricardo Brown

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-njxKF8CkoU&feature=related>

Reception of FS Writings

- many FS writings left untranslated from 1930s to 1950s
- surge of interest in late 1960s and 1970s
 - Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*

Two Primary Critiques of FS

- viewed as conservative and elitist
- critique of FS view -- total encapsulation of the audience / false consciousness
 - “retreat to the Grand Hotel abyss”

“Spontaneity is consumed by the tremendous effort which each individual has to make in order to accept what is enforced upon him. . . . In order to become a jitterbug or simply to ‘like’ popular music, it does not by any means suffice to give oneself up and to fall in line passively. To become transformed into an insect, man needs that energy which might possibly achieve his transformation into a man” (OPM, 48)