41
HIGH ART VERSUS LOW ART

John A. Fisher

Hamlet versus Bugs Bunny; string quartets versus rap music; J. Alfred Prufrock versus Sam Spade. Such contrasts instantly evoke a familiar cultural divide, typically expressed as the distinction between 'high' and 'low' art. In spite of its familiarity, however, there are many different intuitions about what the general contrast is. Is it a contrast between *art forms* (e.g. poetry versus video games) or between genres within art forms (e.g. avant-garde novels versus romance novels), or is it a distinction between *individual works* in the same art form or genre (*Moses and Aaron* versus *Turandot, Lawrence of Arabia* versus *Plan 9 From Outer Space, I'm Looking Through You* versus *Louie, Louie*)? The fuzziness of the distinction raises a number of basic questions: Do the terms express one fundamental distinction? Is that distinction theoretically coherent? Does it mark significant aesthetic differences? Finally, what is the relation of this distinction to the concept of art?

A paradoxical distinction

'High art' is the clearer half of the contrast. In typical use it certainly refers to paradigms of art: *Hamlet*, Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Beethoven's *Eroica*, *Swan Lake*, the paintings of Cézanne – indeed, museum paintings generally, classical music generally, poetry generally and so forth. Now, if 'high art' denominates the central cases of art and if by being central they delineate what it is to be art, it is natural to think of the term that contrasts with high art as denoting objects that are not really art, that are labeled 'art' only at best in a non-literal sense: art by courtesy only. In short, there is natural line of thought that suggests that the distinction between high and low art approximates the art/non-art distinction.

But then is low art *non*-art? As Ted Cohen wonders:

> If the distinction between high art and low art is like the distinction between art and non-art, then why do we need *both* distinctions? Suppose I am already lumbered with an art/non-art device, shouldering it because I cannot seem to get along without it. Why do I also drag along a wedge for separating high art from low art? What extra work does it do?
>
> (Cohen 1993: 152)

In spite of what he clearly sees as a puzzling relation between the two distinctions, Cohen contends that each distinction seems logically distinct and indeed indispensable.

One point seems clear: even though 'high' and 'low' read as adjectives of contrasting quality, we should not equate the high/low distinction with a third distinction, that between *good* and *bad* art. Although 'high art' certainly brings to mind canonical works in various art forms, there is much high art – paintings, poems, chamber music – that is uninspired, mediocre, minor, derivative and so forth. Conversely, it does not seem plausible that *all* 'low art' could turn out to merit the status of art but be all bad. *If* rock music is low art, then *some* recordings or performances – for example, by the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix – are surely successful and important examples of art. Thus we cannot equate high art with good art and low art with bad art.

The distinction between high and low art is narrower than a distinction between high and low *culture*. Herbert Gans defines 'taste cultures' as "values, the cultural forms which express these values ... and the media in which these are expressed ... and insofar as ordinary consumer goods also express aesthetic values or functions, furnishings, clothes, appliances and automobiles" (1974: 10). He then defines a 'taste public': "users who make similar choices of values and taste culture content will be described as publics of an individual taste culture, or *taste publics*" (ibid.: 11). Gans claims that there are *five* taste publics, defined by a combination of aesthetic values and socio-economic position: high culture, upper-middle culture, lower-middle culture, low culture and quasi-folk low culture. He thinks of each public as preferring and consuming different art forms. For example, he claims that very early on television began catering extensively to the low culture public by featuring Westerns and situation comedies (ibid.: 92).

Gans's analysis suggests that the high/low art distinction is based on distinctions of taste. Cohen (1999) supports the idea that there are high and

low audiences. However, he does not accept that high art is more important than low art, nor that an individual work cannot appeal to both high and low audiences. He suggests, for example, that many of Hitchcock's movies have a 'bilateral' capacity to appeal to both audiences.

It is plausible to think that, in fact, there are several overlapping but different distinctions that can underlie ordinary uses of 'high art' and 'low art.' One is a distinction between two classes of *media* or of art *forms*, for instance, between oil painting and television (media) or abstract paintings and television situation comedies (forms). This suggests that the distinction is an offspring of the modern system of the arts. According to Kristeller (1992), eighteenth-century thinkers for the first time grouped the arts together into a separate and coherent group of activities and artifacts with a distinctive character. This group comprised: painting, sculpture, architecture, music and poetry. Obviously, such a grouping was the foundation of the notion of art with a capital 'A,' which developed at the same time.

Since the eighteenth century new media have developed for a mass society: mass-produced books and visual prints, photography, motion pictures, radio, television, sound recordings, computers, the Internet and so on. The technological and social changes during the last two hundred years have also led to a proliferation of art forms and genres, from Ukiyo-e prints to radio soap operas to horror movies and rock recordings. High/low construed as a distinction between groups of forms or genres, comes to this: certain traditional forms, those associated with the modern system, are thought of as high art, whereas the new forms tend to be thought of as 'low.' For example, at first movies were regarded as a low art form compared to theater. Under this reading, it becomes clear why the high/low art distinction seems so closely related to the art/non-art distinction.

The second way of framing the distinction is more fine-grained; it is a distinction that classifies works *within* a pre-existing medium or art form. Starting with the contrast between folk or popular culture and aristocratic culture before the eighteenth century, consider that with wide distribution and accessibility of cultural artifacts the taste and values of popular audiences came to play a significant role in the various art forms already in place. This led to the development of new sub-forms (penny novels, romance novels) as well as genres of standing art forms that appealed to popular taste (naive/folk painting of the nineteenth century, motel painting of the twentieth). In the twentieth century this has fueled a tendency for the most sophisticated instances of an art form to become much more difficult (as in the work of Joyce and Pynchon) as other works within the same art form appeal to a very broad audience (e.g. mass-market romance and gothic horror novels).

Some theorists (Levine 1988, Novitz 1992) write as if the high/low distinction is a twentieth-century bias. However, there has always been a tendency to rank and to divide art forms into higher and lower. Ranking the arts was a common activity of thinkers from the renaissance through the eighteenth century. Leonardo, for instance, argued that painting was the supreme art, superior to poetry, music and sculpture (Kemp 1989). Equally important was the influential distinction in the classical rhetorical tradition between high, middle and low styles. Dionysius of Helicarnassus, for instance, divided styles into the elegant, the middle and the severely plain (Wimsatt and Brooks 1957).

The history of rock and roll music illustrates the continuing tendency to subdivide and rank genres. Young consumers of rock music today distinguish many genres just within electronic pop music: jungle, house, deep house, tech house, drum and bass, ambient, breakbeat, downtempo, trance, and they do so to embrace some and reject others. They regard some forms of pop music as superior and ultra-sophisticated and other forms as beneath contempt (consider the common view of disco). Such hierarchies may function to create a distinctive identity and to provide a means for fans to distinguish themselves (Bourdieu 1984) from others who prefer a different type of music. So, relative to classical music and its audience, all pop genres may seem low art, whereas to fans of electronica, mainstream rock may seem hopelessly naive and common compared to their music.

No doubt the implied value difference between high and low disturbs modern egalitarian thinkers. Where does this hierarchy come from? It could lie in the different audiences meant to receive the different styles or forms and the differential status of these targeted audiences. Alternatively, it could lie within ourselves and refer to those aspects of spectators that are presupposed by a given text or artwork. Comedy, as a stimulus to laugh, has always been cast into the realm of lower art. Plato suggests in Book X of *The Republic*, that it appeals to certain human weaknesses. Yet comedy is arguably as important and valuable as other more 'elevated' forms of performance or writing (Cohen 2001). Rock music has also been attacked because of the perception that it appeals to inferior aspects of the listener. As Shusterman notes, for some, "the problem with rock is its deep appeal to 'sensuality' and 'sexual desire'. . . . It is not only not reasonable, it is hostile to reason" (1991: 206).

It is plausible to conclude that the value difference implied by the high/low art distinction has been influenced by our tendency to grade the types of cognition and character involved in appreciating various genres and forms. As such, it appears to presuppose questionable traditional ideas about the value of various mental states and attitudes.

Is the high/low distinction real?

In spite of the fact that the high/low distinction in various guises runs deeply through our cultural life, some thinkers have questioned whether it is philosophically legitimate. Two questions can be raised: Are there two distinct classes of cultural artifact? And if there are, is there in fact a distinct difference in aesthetic value between the two classes?

Before formulating the various positions on the distinction, we should note that because it sounds less pejorative, theorists often speak of 'popular' art rather than low art and accordingly they contrast high art and popular art.

Kaplan (1972) finds many characteristic differences between popular art and high art. Popular art is dominated by a need for familiar forms, an intolerance of ambiguity, a tendency toward easiness and emotional indulgence. In spite of all this he thinks there "is a time and place even for popular art. Champagne and Napoleon brandy are admittedly the best of beverages; but on a Sunday afternoon in the ballpark we want a coke or . . . beer" (ibid.: 62). We might call this the 'tolerant hierarchical' view: there are two characteristically different classes of works: art and popular art; the former is superior to the latter, but the latter has its place. By contrast, critics of popular art (discussed later) accept that there are two groups of art forms with significant differences, but they find popular art to be essentially flawed. We can call their position 'intolerant hierarchicalism.'

Cohen (1999) agrees that there are two classes of works, but he is more than simply tolerant of them. He finds that neither has superior value. Suppose then, one thinks there is a sort of hierarchy, yet each group meets important but different aesthetic needs (recall comedy and tragedy). We might call such a position 'pluralistic hierarchicalism.'

Novitz (1992) rejects all these positions because they all suppose that there are two or more classes of art works that have significant aesthetic differences. In particular, he denies that there are any substantive aesthetic differences between popular artworks and high art. It is merely a matter of social convention to differentiate them. Call this the 'conventionalist' position. Novitz notes that the customary way of ascribing a higher status to high art and a lower status to popular art is to argue that there are systematic differences between works in the respective categories. Yet, "there are neither formal nor affective properties which distinguish the high from the popular in art" (1992: 24), nor is there an essential difference in the way works are produced, such as the difference between the individual genius and a production team.

Since there is no substantive aesthetic difference between low and high artworks, Novitz suggests that the distinction is artificial and constructed to

serve a political function, namely to make art that avoids political, moral and economic issues, in short, *high art*, the only acceptable art. High art is art that does not threaten the interests of the dominant classes. Levine too suggests that the distinction is of recent origin and has a social function. He points out that Shakespeare and opera were enjoyed by all classes in the nineteenth century (1988: 88). As against this free exchange of cultural products between all classes, cultural products came to be removed, rescued from the marketplace and placed in concert halls and museums that "resembled temples, to be perused, enjoyed and protected by the initiated" (ibid.: 230). Levine's account suggests another way to put conventionalism: works in themselves are neither high nor low, instead high or low depends on how artworks are regarded and treated. Indeed, it is clear that works migrate between the categories. Not only have plays and operas migrated from popular to high, but also works by Mozart, Beethoven, Leonardo and Monet have moved out of concert halls and museums to movie soundtracks and T-shirts. In Levine's view, high art's lack of 'accessibility' is not so much a matter of its intrinsic features but of the required patterns of behavior that have become gatekeepers for entrée into the temples of culture.

Even if there is some truth to this as an historical account, it does not support conventionalism for works produced *after* the social development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries of contrasting 'high art' and 'low art' ways of treating works. It is plausible to expect that these high and low contexts and patterns of behavior have greatly influenced the aesthetic character of subsequent works deliberately created for one context or the other, thus making possible genuinely different classes of works, most prominently avant-garde art.

Mass art

Noël Carroll (1998) argues that the key theoretical concept is not popular art but *mass art*. He thinks of mass art (art that is mass-produced and distributed in multiple quantities) as a *species* of popular art, which he defines as either the art of the 'common people' or "art that is liked by lots of people" (Carroll 1998: 185). He notes that societies throughout history have had popular art. In contrast to traditional popular art, he proposes that something quite distinctive has occurred in industrial societies over the last two centuries, amounting to the creation of a new sort of art characteristic of mass, industrial society.

The most prominent forerunner of Carroll's idea is Walter Benjamin's account of the effects of mass reproduction on art. Benjamin (1969) argued that the capacity to reproduce artworks photographically had altered the

nature of art, erasing its *aura* by removing its uniqueness and inaccessibility (mass art is by nature widely available in multiple reproductions or copies). Benjamin thought that the new forms of mass art, for example, movies and photography, were appropriate to a new historical era. He proposed that they were able to foster new and potentially progressive forms of consciousness. For example, movies, he thought, function very differently from stage performances. The camera's independence from the actor both removes the actor's aura and gives the audience a valuable critical distance that it previously lacked when faced with live actors. Movies, then, not only express the next epoch in consciousness but are also potentially liberating.

Carroll's theorizing begins with the many criticisms of popular and mass art that have been offered by prominent twentieth-century thinkers (see also Shusterman 1992):

1   *Massification.* In order to appeal to a mass audience, the mass work must gravitate "toward the lowest level of taste, sensitivity, and intelligence" (Carroll 1998: 23). This is not compatible with distinctive expression (unique expression flowing from a personal vision), yet distinctive expression is what art should aim at.
2   *Passivity.* Genuine art is art that requires active spectatorship. But mass or popular art, in order to generate broad appeal and accessibility, abets passive reception. It is easy and safe.
3   *Formulaic.* A common complaint is that popular or mass art is highly formulaic, whereas real art is original in its conception and in its goals.
4   *Autonomy.* Many theorists view the arts from the perspective of political theory. Adorno, for example, held that a central function of art is to provide a critical perspective on society; its goal should be liberation from the social, economic and political realities. To that end, it needs to be free from commercial pressures (Gracyk 1996, Carroll 1998). But to be popular, arts such as pop music and jazz have to sacrifice their autonomy. They must mix structural predictability with a dash of what Adorno called 'pseudo-individualization,' in the form of passages of improvisation (1976: 31). The end result reinforces the economic system and social reality rather than encouraging a more radical and liberated consciousness.

These objections tend to criticize mass or popular art relative to *genuine* art. They urge that either mass artworks are not genuine art or that they do not perform the same valuable functions as genuine art. One prominent tendency of the critics is to deny the status of art to all popular art. But as Shusterman notes: "what philosophers need to consider . . . is the validity of

arguments claiming to show that popular art is *necessarily* an aesthetic failure" (1992: 337, emphasis added). Against such a strong claim, Shusterman and Carroll remind us that there are counter-examples of popular or mass art that are not, for instance, any more formulaic than examples of high art.

Carroll proposes three conditions that are individually necessary and jointly sufficient for something to be mass art. It must be:

1 a multiple instance or type artwork;
2 produced and distributed by a mass technology;
3 "intentionally designed to gravitate in its structural choices (for example, its narrative forms, symbolism, intended affect, and even its content) toward those choices that promise accessibility with minimum effort . . . for the largest number of untutored (or relatively untutored) audiences" (Carroll 1998: 196).

The first condition contains two claims about mass artworks. By using the term 'artworks,' Carroll literally means to define mass works as art in the same way that string quartets and sculptures are art. The artifacts in question also have to be capable of having multiple tokens, such as copies of a novel or screenings of a movie. Since string quartets, novels and cast sculpture are capable of multiple instances, it is the second and third conditions that distinguish *mass* art.

The second condition requires that the work be mass-produced *and* mass-distributed. This eliminates multiple-instance traditional art. It also rules out traditional popular art: "mass art is popular art, but a noteworthy subspecies, distinguished by its reliance upon mass delivery systems capable of reaching non-overlapping receptions sites simultaneously" (Carroll 1998: 199). Thus pop recordings qualify as mass art, whereas a live performance of a computer-composed string quartet would not. Indeed, a rock concert, although a paradigm of low or popular art to many thinkers, is not mass art for Carroll. Even though a rock concert is the product of advanced electronic technology, it is not delivered to multiple sites simultaneously.

The third condition reflects the influence of popular taste on mass art. Carroll allows that some avant-garde artworks could meet the first two conditions (avant-garde films and novels). What rules them out as mass art is the third condition, which turns a common complaint about mass art – its easy accessibility – into one of its defining characteristics. Carroll notes that to make a work broadly accessible, it must be constructed to avoid the difficulties and challenges of avant-garde art. It must incorporate content that has broad appeal.

Carroll's theory raises many questions (Fisher 2004). The first condition will be troubling to those who doubt that works of mass art, as this term might *normally* be understood, are genuine art. This condition claims that it follows as an analysis of the concept of mass art that *all* mass artworks are art. However, it is unclear that typical speakers possess a concept of mass art for which this strong claim is true. The conceptual situation is not parallel to that in which a philosopher proposes an analysis of the concept of art. This is because, in contrast to 'mass art,' typical speakers plainly possess the concept of art along with intuitions about how to use the term 'art.'

Carroll is, of course, free to introduce a new concept, 'mass art,' defined his way, if it is theoretically illuminating. But this leads naturally to the question, *which* items of mass culture are works of mass art, that is, which mass-produced items are multiple *artworks*? Carroll suggests that "roughly stated, the extension of the items that I intend my theory to capture includes: popular commercial films, TV, commercial photography, pop music, broadcast radio, computer video games, comic strips, world wide web sites, and pulp literature" (1998: 173). The problem is that the first condition of the analysis gives no guidance on how to identify the particular items of mass culture that are mass artworks. There are many multiply instanced artifacts that appear to meet conditions (2) and (3) but are not obvious examples of art: talk radio shows, ads on TV, designer table-settings, board games and automobiles.

Do we not need more than the definitional truth that mass artworks are artworks? To have an informative explanation of what mass art is it appears that we need a way of identifying which mass-produced multiple artifacts count as mass art. There are a number of replies that Carroll might make to this challenge (see Carroll 2004). He might hold that there is really no problem. He might remind us that surely *some* members of the set of mass aesthetic artifacts are artworks – many movies, *some* commercial photos, *some* video games, *some* television ads and so on. Accordingly, although mass artworks are artworks by definition, it is not necessary for the theorist of mass art to determine which products of mass culture are mass artworks; his focus is rather on noting the way art has expanded to include mass culture. Still, do we then have a determinate idea of what mass art is if we have no working grasp of how to pick out the items that constitute the extension of the concept?

What would be most attractive would be to set out a list of mass art forms – such as movies, rock music and comics – that spell out extensionally what mass art is; it would be a distinctive set of forms or genres. A work would be mass art and therefore art if and only if it is an instance of one of these forms. This strategy brings its own problems, however. Are

all movies art? No less an authority on trashy movies than Pauline Kael denies it: "we may be in danger of forgetting that most of the movies we enjoy are not art" (1970: 89). Carroll appears to want to say, contra Kael, that most (perhaps all) movies are art, although not often good art. He even proposes a bleak parity of artistic quality between traditional art and mass art: "any classificatory theory is going to track primarily the merely competent or worse, since most mass art, like most art, is not superlative" (Carroll 2004: 64). A greater difficulty is that even Carroll would concede that not all ads or TV programs or web pages are art. Yet, since he wants to say that *some* are, it appears that a list of media forms will not suffice to capture mass art. Clearly there are many mass artifact *types* that have some instances at least that can reasonably be regarded as art: video games, commercial photography (journalistic, fashion), ads on TV and so on. Hence these instances would be mass art, but in the case of each form, many if not most instances are not plausibly regarded as art at all. We might wonder why this would not be true of movies as well. Moreover, why should we exclude consideration of the many other mass artifact types such as automobiles, clothing and games, which might also contain instances of mass artworks?

It is clear that having left the realm of traditional high art it becomes difficult to understand how we ought to assign the status of artwork to artifacts. It seems equally clear, however, that most of our culture's creative products and some of its best, are to be found in popular culture and mass entertainment. We need an account of art that grounds its extension to such products; yet it must be an account that differentiates between mass-culture products that are not artworks and those mass-culture products that are artworks (even if poor ones). Such an account would have to correctly capture traditional and avant-garde artworks while also finding the defining characteristics of art in some of the products of mass culture. This is a serious challenge to theories that claim to have a definition of art because such theories have usually been concerned only to account for high and avant-garde art and have not been tested on the products of popular culture. Carroll proposes that his own general account of art, which holds that the right sort of identifying narrative establishes that something is an artwork, is able to satisfy the requirements of this problem: "it is by identifying narratives that I promise to distinguish mere mass-media products, like Fox's *O'Reilly Factor*, from genuine mass artworks, like HBO's *Six Feet Under*" (2004: 63).

The property of mass art that most closely fits stereotypes of low art is the third condition requiring undemanding accessibility. Carroll theorizes that this is a necessary design characteristic required to achieve mass popularity. But this alleged difference with high art is not as obvious as many

assume. Undoubtedly, each genre makes *different* demands, but it can be questioned whether serious art forms on average make more demands on their audiences than popular art forms (Gould 1999). There are, of course, obvious differences that do not necessarily imply aesthetic value, such as the difference in length between the average rock song and the average piece of classical music. But length is not everything anyway: both techno pop music and minimalist art music pieces tend to be long with slowly evolving repetitive structures, yet neither would be regarded as difficult. Moreover, while being formally simple, rock songs may make greater demands on listeners in terms of the extreme emotions expressed and the sheer power and discordance of the sounds than the average piece of chamber music (Gracyk 1996). Are the demands, intellectual and emotional, of a Hitchcock or Kubrick movie or a Hannibal Lecter novel easy? Are the lyrics of pre-1968 Bob Dylan any less demanding than the average poem? Is Auden any wittier than Lorenz Hart or Cole Porter?

Two points might be made against such counter-examples. First, works of popular art have several levels. Although there is always more to analyze in any Hollywood movie or pop song, the average viewer does not have to think about those levels to enjoy it. Second, highlighting the very best examples of mass art does not refute the notion that *on average* mass art is easier and more predictable than high art. Yet, it is suggestive that *Seinfeld* was one of the most popular shows on television even though it was based on imaginative, even absurdist premises (e.g. the backwards episode) that were arguably as original as the average new play or literary novel.

Entertainment

In the end, arguably the most illuminating way to understand the distinction between high and low art is to see it as a reflection of the distinction between serious art and entertainment (Shusterman 2003: 290). The claim is not that low art can be equated with entertainment. Much art is not entertainment and much entertainment, for instance, amusement rides, slot machines and professional sports, is not art. But some works of popular culture that by general acclamation are now regarded as important art (*David Copperfield*, *Sergeant Pepper*, *The General*) were primarily created to be entertainment. Still, their origin as entertainment makes them suspect from the perspective of art. It is not clear whether entertainment seems suspect because as a commercial enterprise in a mass society it is thought to appeal to undiscerning audiences or because it is structurally compromised or because of the sorts of goals and intentions that are necessary consequences of making an artifact primarily to provide entertainment. Entertainment

works might be regarded as *lower* because they were made for unsophisticated consumers or because they tend to be elementary in form and content or because the intended effects of a product qua entertainment are viewed as worthless or even undesirable. This last reason, unlike the other two, has to do with what entertainment is rather than how it has to be fashioned in order to function as a commercial enterprise in mass society.

Any of these characteristics might be reason to place the status of entertainment products below that of works produced explicitly as art, but how would it create a category of low art? There are two sorts of cases of entertainment that might provide examples of low art: (1) works that are primarily entertainment products but also are in forms and genres such as movies, rock music, situation comedies and detective novels that strike us as relevantly similar to or derived from self-conscious art; and (2) artworks in more traditional art forms that are significantly influenced by entertainment values, that is, they are made less difficult or more pleasurable by the inclusion of elements designed to make them more broadly popular. For example in serious jazz or classical music we might think of the inclusion of virtuoso high notes or fast runs or the staging of an opera in a sensational contemporary setting. In both sorts of cases it is natural to view the product as art but to also take account of the influence of entertainment in its construction. If this is right, we would have an explanation of why, as noted earlier, the high/low distinction can be found between works in the same genre as well as between different forms and genres.

Why might the effects of entertainment be thought to be negative? Although utilizing the same mental capacities and skills as high art, the goals of entertainment, from the perspective of the audience, are primarily pleasure and diversion. Of course, pleasure per se is not necessarily bad. But there are different sorts of pleasures: the valuable pleasures of great art and intellectual life, the necessary pleasures of biological and social life and then there are the frivolous pleasures (fun) of entertainment. The latter, it might be assumed, are not intrinsically valuable and may indeed be instrumentally negative by diverting us from the necessary affairs of life or by affecting audience members in various negative ways. If a case can be made that counts against the pleasures of entertainment but not against the pleasures of art, then we would have grounds for a distinction between high art and entertainment artworks, especially those that depend primarily on the pleasures of entertainment.

While accepting that this is the basis of our assumed cultural hierarchies, Shusterman (2003) rejects the positions of those thinkers in the Western tradition who criticize pleasure and entertainment in contrast to the more spiritual realm of art. Defending pleasure in general and finding aesthetic

pleasure spread across the alleged divide between art and entertainment, he attempts to undermine that distinction: "most pleasures of beauty, art, and entertainment are not only valuable without being everlasting but are more valuable because they are not" (Shusterman 2003: 307). If Shusterman is right the implied value difference between high and low art (entertainment) does not survive philosophical scrutiny.

Attending to low/mass art

Whether it is justified or not, entertainment and mass culture are being taken more and more seriously by artists and art theorists. This will have far-reaching effects on aesthetics. It is no exaggeration to say that crafting a theory to fit avant-garde artworks, such as Duchamp's urinal, *Fountain*, has been the major preoccupation of art theorists in the twentieth century (see Dickie 1969). Attempting to accommodate mass-art forms may be the next major preoccupation of theories of art.

See also Definitions of art (Chapter 18), Ontology of art (Chapter 19), The aesthetic (Chapter 20), Taste (Chapter 21), Aesthetic universals (Chapter 22), Value of art (Chapter 23), Humor (Chapter 36), Film (Chapter 46), Photography (Chapter 47).

References

Adorno, T. (1976) *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, trans. E. B. Ashton, New York: Seabury Press.
Benjamin, W. (1969) "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. H. Zohn, New York: Shocken.
Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
Carroll, N. (1994) "Identifying Art," in R. Yanal (ed.) *Institutions of Art: Reconsiderations of George Dickie's Philosophy*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
—— (1998) *A Philosophy of Mass Art*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
—— (2004) "Mass Art as Art: A Response to John Fisher," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62: 61–5.
Cohen, T. (1993) "High and Low Thinking About High and Low Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51: 151–6.
—— (1999) "High and Low Art, and High and Low Audiences," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57: 137–43.
—— (2001) *Jokes: Philosophical Thoughts on Joking Matters*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Dickie, G. (1969) "Defining Art," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 6: 253–6.
Fisher, J. (2004) "On Carroll's Enfranchisement of Mass Art as Art," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 62: 57–61.
Gans, H. (1974) *Popular Culture and High Culture*, New York: Basic Books.

Gould, T. (1999) "Pursuing the Popular," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57: 119–35.

Gracyk, T. (1996) *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock*, Durham, D. C.: Duke University Press.

Kaplan, A. (1972) "The Aesthetics of the Popular Arts," in J. B. Hall and B. Ulanov (eds) *Modern Culture and the Arts*, 2nd edn, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kael, P. (1970) "Trash, Art, and the Movies," in *Going Steady: Film Writings 1968–1969*, Boston: Little, Brown.

Kemp, M. (ed.) (1989) *Leonardo on Painting*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kristeller, P. O. (1992) "The Modern System of the Arts," in P. Kivy (ed.) *Essays on the History of Aesthetics*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press.

Levine, L. (1988) *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Novitz, D. (1992) *The Boundaries of Art*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Shusterman, R. (1991) "Form and Funk: The Aesthetic Challenge of Popular Art," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 31: 203–13.

—— (1992) "Popular Art," in D. Cooper (ed.) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Oxford: Blackwell.

—— (2003) "Entertainment: A Question for Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* 43: 289–307.

Wimsatt, W. and Brooks, C. (1957) *Literary Criticism*, New York: Knopf.

Further reading

Adorno, T. (1995) "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening," in A. Neill and A. Ridley (eds) *The Philosophy of Art: Readings Ancient and Modern*, New York: McGraw-Hill. (A good introduction to Adorno's critique of the culture industry.)

Brantlinger, P. (1983) *Bread and Circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay*, Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press. (An extended treatment of critiques of mass culture that interprets it as a symptom of social decay.)

Shusterman, R. (1992) *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, Oxford: Blackwell. (Chapters 7 and 8 offer a treatment of the high/low distinction from the point of view of pragmatism.)