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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE STAR SYSTEM AND THE POPULAR CULTURE

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Abstract

This study includes an examination of the relationship between the popular culture and the star system. The main purpose of the study is to examine the interconnected relationship between popular culture and stars, in other words to examine and clarify the relation of the star system to the economic and cultural field.

The star phenomenon has emerged in America at the end of the eighteenth century, when the middle class, who chose the theatre, ended up thinking of filming. The producers tried to make attractive theatrical actors play in movies and to make the audience close to the cinemas. The star system's foundation has been laid, given the role of a goddess of love or idol to the actors or actresses (Yüksel, 2001, p.23-24). Popular culture is a usage and consumption culture. Other popular are used to create popular such as popular sports, athletes, artists, popular ideas and ideologies, behaviours, magazine heroes. Popular is packaged, and consumers take part in the popular popularization process by applying them to their lives (Erdoğan, 1999, p.3). A material or materialism is sold directly. It is indirect marketing through the media. Non-materials (ideologies) are also sold. Sales are legitimized by production relations. The star, a product of the consumer society, catches basic expectations. This is the inevitable meeting of commerce, art, goddess and merchandise. The star is convincing, makes people buy, and challenges time. It has an important feature of communication which is the "attraction". What is applicable to brands, also applies to stars (Seguêla, 1991, p. 55-58). Stars can be regarded as a popular product because they offer a combination of continuity, permanence and change. The stars can be related

to the popular culture industry, with their own styles and the looks they follow, with the changes they make.

This research is in the screening model. "The screening model is an approach aimed at describing the situation existed before or still existing as the way it is" (Karasar, 1995, p.77).

This research aims to reveal the relationship between the concepts of star and popular culture.

The information that will emerge as a result of this research can be enlightening for the studies in this area, as the concepts of "popular culture" and "star" can be important clues in the search for cultural, economic and social characteristics of societies.

Keywords

Popular Culture, Star System, Image, Icon, Consumption

1. Popular Culture

The term "popular" in linguistic means "what derives from people themselves". Popular was described as the common thing preferred by the public in Cockeram's dictionary in 1623 (Shiach, 1989, p.29). Longman's New Universal Dictionary, published in 1982, lists four meanings for "popular" as below:

1. Of the general public,
2. Suited to the needs, means, tastes or understanding of the general public,
3. Having general currency,
4. Liked or approved in common (Shiach, 1989, p.33).

The meaning of "popular" used in the term "popular culture" meaning "folk culture" in Spanish and Portuguese 'de la gente, del pueblo da gente, do pova' does not mean common, main stream, dominant and being successful commercially. According to Latinian languages and cultures, the term "popular culture" does not mean being given to public but taking its source from public. Popular culture, according to cultural studies theorist John Fiske, is not the hegemony but the opposition to dominant forces and not being a part of them, and it has resulted from social struggle (Lull, 2001, p. 103-104). It cannot be categorized and immobilized but it is communal and mobility is the characteristic of it (Holmberg, 1998, p.2). In popular culture, the meaning of popular is what emerges in daily living space but then it emerges when distributed commodiously by mass media and cultural industry, cultural images and urges (and they can be resistant from time to time) interpreted or used by ordinary people (Lull, 2001, p. 105).

According to Batmaz, popular culture which can be described as daily living culture is the term providing the reproduction of a certain lifestyle ideologically in broad sense while it includes the entertainment providing the reproduction of effort daily in the strict sense. It

establishes an environment for daily ideology in order to become widespread and approved. (Aktaran Oktay, 2002, p. 40).

Approaches to popular culture include multi fields. In political ideology, we can describe popular culture under three main approaches and in different ways.

1. The approaches of the right-wings and ultra-conservationists towards popular culture; this approach deals with popular culture and mass culture in the same way and popular culture is studied between the dilemma of high culture and subculture. Popular culture is the culture of bad taste and interests, therefore it is humiliated. American cultural traditions' approach is in that way.

2. The approaches handling popular culture as a sign of becoming democratic, pluralistic democracy and individual freedom; so this approach admits popular culture as a blessing of democracy without criticism. Many liberal traditions find elements of opposition in popular culture. This opposition and struggle are the readings that people show against media texts.

3. The approaches handling and explaining popular culture in relation with cultural artifacts and property relations; approach of sinking popular culture into false awareness includes the production of materials and ideology and it includes the approaches which assert that there is a connection between substructure and superstructure accordingly (Erdoğan, 2004).

General characteristics of popular culture can be listed as below;

1. It is standardized with formulas and repetitions.
2. It features mostly wishes coming true in other words fantasia.
3. If it includes the benefits of the system and market, it supports fashion, food, fun and collectivity. But if it is against the benefits (like strikes and unemployment), it emphasizes individuality.
4. In order to attain its goal, it does not risk ethical and official issues and it rules out the risk.
5. Unlike folk culture, popular culture does not comprise of cultural sources produced by the using culture.
6. In popular culture it is not only the product which is produced and consumed but also the related meanings with oneself and the others. Personal social status and differences are produced.
7. With created sensitivity and sensuality, the lifestyle and productivity of bourgeoisie are praised and idealized.
8. Ostentation and images are internalized and put front (Erdoğan, 2001).

In order for individuals to grow up in accordance with the system, first of all they should see the world which belongs to others as if it were theirs. In the past, what makes primitive

people adoptable to the society they live in and similar were sacred totem and mythical ideology. The process which enables an individual to make the adoptable to the tribe and society was the duty of mythical rituals. Rituals performed with participation of the other members of society in all areas of society from birth to marriage and from cultivation to hunting made them believe everything was regulated for them and live in a world belonging to them. This harmony and similarity were also required for the acceptance in class society and dominant class ideology. In this case, a new ritual was necessary. "God" and "ritual" came over to make it agreeable for vassal seigneur in the period of aristocracy. In spite of all the status and hierarchy signs, the world belonged to the God not to the sultan, king or pasha according to these rituals and we were all the children of the same God. But in more modern societies the acceptance of dominant ideology in the relations between classes has been provided with daily living clichés under more complex and refined forms. Modern daily life is an optimum environment for us to live the life offered us as if it were our own life with absolute royalty and harmless and unproblematic beings. This environment has been mostly shaped by popular culture. With all kinds of goods, music, movie and games it gives the message of "Do not be disturbed, this is your world, enjoy it" to individuals. Individuals behave accordingly, nevertheless; it is not so because of unconsciousness of the masses or an organized conspiracy. General organization mode of physical life has made this possible. Popular culture has existed as a culture from whose impact is almost inevitable because of the reality it includes. This inevitable impossibility is the reason for changing daily life into "an optimum environment". By this way, mythical rituals that gave the feeling of living in a world regulated for the individual himself took over a new form by secularizing (Aymaz, 2004, p. 80-81).

When the term "Popular" is formed in the direction of opposing to the domination forces, it is determined by these forces. However, they do not completely take the meanings and social solidarity that dominants produce in hand. Popular culture is produced by the conditions of being natural. Classification is not the only way of getting under domination and there may be different public formations in these classes. There is a close connection between class and culture, so the characteristics are based on one another. Besides this situation, there may be confusion between social class and cultural taste. For instance, women may watch a soap opera in whatever class they are. When people and naturals are formed by social solidarity between them, they may easily adapt themselves to popular culture practices. Daily life is created by popular culture practices and the basic characteristic of it is to deny commitment to the power and to use sources of the system in which the weak is powerless creatively. (Fiske, 1999, p. 62-64). Products of popular culture may lead to the feeling of being a part of the society by pleasing the user.

2. Popular Culture and the Relation with Image, Icon, Consumption

According to Cassier, the answer to the question “What is human?” is “symbolizing being”. Every organism has a world peculiar to itself and there are reactions which it give and take in order to stay alive. First of all, human is a being that lives through biological functions. While living, an individual undergoes both quantified changes and qualified changes unlike other living beings. Human has the characteristic of symbolizing. This enables human beings to gain a different view (Özlem, 2000, p. 171-172). Cassier shows social idea and field of ideas as the most distinct field where the signs show up (Özlem, 2000, p. 175). Cultural events get rid of legend, religion, language, art, science, self-oriented, vision and passive captivity of sensory impressions in life-style and they are parts of humanoid universe created according to an original fundamental and man has been living in a symbolic world since he created culture (Özlem, 2000, p. 178). Culture is everything that human does and what makes human (Özlem, 2000, p. 198). The term popular culture and its products may also be named as symbol parts which human created.

An image is in the appearance of recreated or reproduced. Image is an array of appearance or appearances of different and hidden from the place and time – for a few minutes or a few centuries- it first came out. There is a vision in every image (Berger, 1995, p. 9-10). In other words, images are produced in order to visualize the things which do not exist and the stronger the images are, the more credible they are.

Benjamin realized that commodities basically served as images by the masses and what people were looking at were the texts full of activated meanings during reception. (McRobbie, 1999, p.168). Viewers, by associating with the meanings of these images, they process their cultural representations into their own daily lives. People want to be important and consumer goods and images are also the necessary sources in order to direct and change culture. (Lull, 2001, p.106). Images are so immersed in our social life that they are always with us (McRobbie, 1999, p. 33).

The word “icon” derived from “eikon” in ancient Greek means the object which is respected and addicted to without criticism. And the meanings and values of icons are resulted not from themselves but from the lives of the people to whom the meanings are attributed (Oskay, 2000, p. 180).

According to Marshal McLuhan, every age and culture is iconic. History begins with mythology, mythology results in rituals and rituals necessitate icons. Icons are also the cultural codes. They may collect, change and become meaningless. New icons have evidently and largely entered into the world of popular culture (Fishwick, 1999, p. 185, 187).

The meanings attributed to an icon result from the object itself. Individuals giving the meanings to icons and glorifying them are groups. Iconographic meaning is given by the social status of an individual and the society with whom he supposes to be accompanied. The statue of Christ the Redeemer is an icon and the posters and the pins of famous pop singers and actors-actresses are also cultural icons. In a society, where the ideology of consumption is prevailed, countless icons can be produced cheaply and put into the market. A bank is created and formed with iconic images in order for everyone to use when needed. Our identities are also formed according to our social roles. Today, individuals find themselves in an anonymization and to prevent it, they try to get an identity by giving individualism to the objects they possess. However, this identity could be gained with the respect to mass production products which are bought (Oktay, 2002, p. 30).

According to Fishwick, today's secularized popular culture icons keep old and new together at the same time. Social forms of existence make up the meanings of icons. Image is important in the evolution of human consciousness. People of mass modern life also live a modern period life as a myth. Mythology necessitates rituals and rituals keep the icons alive. Fishwick explains this situation by looking at Claude Levi-Strauss; "Meanings and languages of icons have always been the most important power supply for societies. Legends, beliefs and worshipped objects have given power to societies. Icons have necessitated and formed a cult, prestige and a starting point towards a meaningful way." (Oskay, 2000, p. 181).

Fishwick states that today's pop icons take the same place in mass segments and the different layers of society because of the important place of mass media in popular culture's production and consumption in our day (Oskay, 2000, p. 183). Unforgettable but mortal modern icons who are singers, sportsmen and stars return to being mortal when the industrial support behind them is withdrawn but they may be stars again one day and turn into new icons (Oskay, 2000, p. 184). In other words, icons are popularized, existed, turned into unforgettable and glittering objects by industries. When they become forgettable, they are presented again by showing as if they were different. Popular iconology addresses to a "majority" developing in modern societies. It can be said that popular iconology is a sense-making mechanism providing the process of "forgetting mechanism" which is a cultural means suitable for every personality in every new environment and social relations (Oskay, 2000, p. 185-201).

3. The Star Concept and its Characteristics

Having been existed from the times in which capitalist model of production were dominant onward, the star concept emerged in America largely thanks to the efforts to popularize cinema. In America, in the late of 18th century, according to the general opinion of society,

because cinema was thought to reflect the taste of lower classes, it was respected in the least possible level, and because of this, while producers brought cinema to the urban poor, they concerned about the middle class preferring theatre. To undermine this image, producers made sophisticated movies and by starring popular theatre players, they tried to attract audiences to the cinema. By integrating players who were idols of the society or the most beautiful women into cinema, the foundation of the star concept was laid. By this way, the middle class could be attracted to the cinema as the producers wished. While European film industry saw its decline as a result of World War I, Hollywood became a film industry in the U.S.A. Since that day, American films targeted at the middle class have been popular in the world market. (Yüksel, 2001, p. 23-24).

Stars are the distinguished without sovereignty and they have charisma. According to Max Weber, charisma is attributed to human beings and is a trait regarded as extraordinary. Any person with these characteristics is believed to have superhuman and exceptional qualities even if there are some others who could be successful as well. He is believed to have been sent by God and gifted with exemplary qualifications, so he deserves to lead the society. Yıldız doesn't agree with Weber's definition that a leader should be charismatic to lead the society. As for the definition of Alberoni, stars do not fill the institutional areas of the authority and they do not have power of sanction; however, they attract the masses to themselves, and many of them, according to the definition of Panzinin, evoke admiration and interest without any effort. (Kandiyoti, Saktanber, 2005, p. 160).

The areas of stars, cinema, television and music have been established with capitalism, and huge investments, industrial capacity along with standardised system caused the star to be presented as an object. In other words, as it is bound to a certain standard, production and consumption, star system is fabrication. Because of this, a star should have tangible qualities to commercialise and advertise. Because a star has a reciprocal bound with the society, a star can exist only in a society in which he/she is demanded. (Yüksel, 2001, p. 24-25).

A star is like a consumption phenomenon. According to this view, film producers create a star. The reasons of their existence are producers. On the other hand, audiences and consumers are a more important power in creating stars than producers themselves and media texts. (Dyer, 1986, p. 19). A star can exist only with audience. When regarded as a consumption object, film producers can be seen the people who enable the stars to emerge and create them, but along with this, the real reason of the existence of stars are the masses consuming him/her. For the audience, a star leads a life similar to the Gods living on Olympus. They have superior qualities. The audience follow them with great admiration. The world which they witness, make them fascinated towards the stars and instil the idea that "I should be like them". And this thought

keeps the world of the star solid. Audience support the star for the continuation of this world. According to Dyer, there is a connection between audience and the star and this connection is a tangible form of the controversies and rejections everybody has experienced. The people who live through this controversy and experience pressure identified themselves with the star. A star adds values and becomes the symbol of resistance. (Yüksel, 2001, p. 48-49).

4. Star- Popular Icon- Popular Culture Relation

Iconology presents characters of TV series with whom modern mass society can associate themselves, movie stars and the “celebrities” who are associated with being a consumer of a certain product and also iconology hands out those people’s posters. These objects are the iconographic objects that attribute various meanings to social roles. The common trait of past and modern icons is not to see human as a value but to emphasize social roles that human has. While past icons are trying to make sense of the other world notion, modern icons aim at making sense and adopting it to the people by emphasizing that this world has been the best by far (Oskay, 2000, p.188).

Popular culture relieves the pain and angers resulting from adopting the existed beings and prevents the opinion that there is a better life by functioning similar to the catharsis process Aristoteles suggested. Popular culture conducts the relieving process as follows; people use popular culture icons (movie stars, pop music singers etc.) with whom they associate themselves by looking at existing lives in order to make sense of this realism while making sense of external reality. However, it cannot change the eternal reality and it also makes sense of icons without noticing. In other words, existing realism renews constantly. This situation arises from the need of making sense of external realism that human who comprehends the life with its shakes cannot make sense of and change with going into industrial society. When mass culture and popular culture is compared in this respect, popular culture is a whole including objecting to realism even a little (Aydoğan, 2004, p. 37).

The research findings about the reasons for being fascinated by the celebrities and stars by some segments of society;

1. Audience’s being full of desire to become a star,
2. People’s trying to embellish their ordinary and boring lives by basing themselves to a hero,
3. Adopting a star by placing oneself in the star’s position and thus trying to be happy as if it were one’s own success by putting oneself in the star’s place,
4. Having fun by involving in show business which the stars offer them (Yüksel, 2001, p.46-48).

What glorifies a star is being the most listened to, watched and talked about. In other words, a star rises in value as long as he/she is consumed. The star's being consumed most in modern societies gets easier by the star's offering himself as a popular product (Yüksel, 2000, p.65).

Stars are the objects offered to the audience in order to be consumed with the help of media (Yüksel, 2001, s.37). The real reason of their beings is the ones who will consume them (Yüksel, 2001, p.49). A star builds an image (sight) according to the expectations of audience by keeping to social-cultural structure as a consumed object or an image is prepared for the star regarding the same criteria by the star system (Yüksel, 2000, p. 66). Mass media presents them as they like, so the masses find stars attractive and they come out without any coincidence (Büker, Uluyağcı, 1993, p. 14).

5. Conclusion

Various thinkers have made different definitions to the term ‘‘popular culture’’ with their various lifestyles and studying methods. While compiling these definitions under a single definition may hinder realizing important differences, they include a brought part of life. In other words, popular culture is in everywhere from home, work, eating, drinking to everything we see and hear (Erdoğan, Alemdar, 2005, p. 341). When the meaning of ‘‘popular’’ in 1990s is compared with its meaning in 1960s and 1970s, it is a lost field to capital ideology and market in cultural struggle. The dominant popular culture today is a commercial culture that international market economy's production for itself is formed as popularized consumption by considering the facts that are hindered in social process of people and the other wishes (Erdoğan, 2004). While traditional popular culture is a resistance culture describing the struggles of the ones resisting to hegemony, hopes of a better world of the oppressed, today in developed capitalist countries and in the subordinate countries which are struggling to align their lives in accordance with the capitalist system, its life style and thoughts, the opposition has lost its function and has been converted into a means of class domination and it has immersed in mass culture directed by mass media (Erdoğan, Alemdar, 1998).

The objects which have been created by the production studios, namely stars, are subject to go through some stages to gain profit. Viewers, listeners, in its broadest meaning consumers begin to earn their identifications by their respect to mass products which they buy, see and watch.

A material or materialism is sold directly. It is indirect marketing through the media. Non-materials (ideologies) are also sold. Sales are legitimized by production relations. The star, a product of the consumer society, catches basic expectations. This is the inevitable meeting of

commerce, art, goddess and merchandise. The star is convincing, makes people buy, and challenges time. It has an important feature of communication which is the "attraction". What is applicable to brands, also applies to stars (Seguêla, 1991, p. 55-58).

Stars are people attracting the attention of the society and fascinating the masses. They give hope to society by what they are doing and their success becomes the success of the masses. They are the gods and goddesses in the peak, beautiful, attractive and special. They are the projection of the society which they live in. The areas in which a star who is a consumption subject created by the capitalist society have been established, so star system depends on production and consumption and accordingly on culture.

A star who is a popular product presented to audience by media to keep the continuity of consumption-reproduction products and the system takes on the mission of creating and spreading popular culture. While doing this, other popular things – music, cinema, fashion and advertisement industries- are used. A star always points out today by renewing himself and stressing the new. He encourages his fans to consume today, the new, and all the new things about himself. As for the star himself, he is a product which is produced again and again by being consumed. On the other hand, the audience is not a consumption product compared to a star, but rather he is the one who can manage what he cannot and a spectacular being to be admired.

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