

The Impact of Print Media on Popular Culture: Umberto Eco's *Number Zero*

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Abstract

In the book published by Umberto Eco in 2015 called *Numero Zero* (Number Zero), on the basis of the assumption that the newspapers are able to establish various perceptions to the public in a conscious way, he has examined what kind of interventions some popular newspaper bosses have realized for the purpose of increasing their efficiencies in the business world within the frame of a fiction. According to Eco; popular culture is not in a sudden and unexpected structure (at least from its appearance) as it is in the cultural understanding of the modernism. By also taking the likes and demands of the wide masses it desires to be expanded into consideration, it aims a consensus between the culture producers and the culture consumers. In this way, it provides an easier and faster acceptance of the messages it sends by the masses. However, the motivation of the culture producers has derived from the market economy. The aimed thing is "profit". Popular newspapers inflict, transform and even make up the news in the cause of this profit. Eco operates by which methods the newspapers perform these destructions and reveals their tactics that direct the readers to certain assumptions with the quibbles. He tries to decipher the codes of the common popular perception delivered to the readers. According to Eco, "newspapers teach people how they should think; unfortunately, all we learn is fake and deformed". Popular culture consists of a reference made by the fake that is replacing the truth to itself as mentioned in the simulation theory of Baudrillard, not a reality away from itself.

Keywords: Umberto Eco – popular culture– media – high culture – Number Zero

Kısa Özet

Kültür, modernizmle birlikte homojen yurttaşlar yetiştirmek adına ulusal bir tarih ve bu tarihin biriktirdiği geleneklerin bütünü olarak tasarlanmış, araçsal bir üst yapı kurumu görünümüne bürünmüştür. Modernizmin yerini postmodern döneme bırakmasıyla birlikte homojenliğin olumlanması, heterojenliğin olumlanmasıyla yer değiştirmiş ve köklerini geçmişten alan/aldığını iddia eden dayatmacı muhafazakâr kültürel algının yerini de köksüz, tam da şimdiki zamana ait bir popüler kültür almaya başlamıştır. İdeal olana işaret eden modernist "yüksek" kültürün, piyasanın işaretiyle hareket eden postmodernist "popüler" kültürle yer değiştirme süreci, kültür üretici kurumların da değişmesine yol açmıştır. "Yüksek kültür" entelektüeller (Aydınlar) tarafından üretilirken/tüketilirken, popüler kültür entelektüel olmayanlar (halk) tarafından piyasa ekonomisi kuralları çerçevesinde üretilmekte/tüketilmektedir. Bu çerçevede kültür sosyal bir statü göstergesi olmaktan, giderek piyasada talep edilen bir eğlence ve boş zaman geçirme aracına dönüşmüştür.

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Popüler kültürün üretilmesi ve yayılmasında en önemli taşıyıcılardan birisi popüler gazetelerdir. Bu gazeteler okuyucularının zihinlerine çeşitli imajlar, görüşler ve algılar göndermekte ve bu gönderilenler aracılığıyla okuyucuların davranış biçimlerinde çeşitli etkileşimler yaramaktadırlar. Umberto Eco 2015 yılında yayınladığı *Numero Zero (Sıfır Sayı)* kitabında gazetelerin kamuoyuna bilinçli bir şekilde çeşitli algıları yerleştirebildiği varsayımından yola çıkarak, bazı popüler gazete patronlarının iş dünyasındaki etkinliklerini arttırabilmek adına popüler kültüre nasıl müdahaleler gerçekleştirdiklerini bir kurmaca çerçevesine incelemiştir. Eco'ya göre popüler kültür, modernizmin kültür anlayışında olduğu gibi (en azından görünüşte) tepeden inme bir yapıda değildir. Yayılmak istediği geniş kitlelerin beğenilerini ve isteklerini de göz önünde bulundurarak, kültür üreticileri ile kültür tüketicileri arasında bir uzlaşmayı amaçlar. Böylece gönderdiği mesajların kitleler tarafından daha hızlı ve kolay bir şekilde kabullenilmesini sağlar. Oysa popüler kültür üreticilerinin motivasyonu piyasa ekonomisinden türemiştir. Hedeflenen şey kâr'dır. Popüler gazeteler bu kâr uğrunda haberleri çarpıtırlar, dönüştürürler ve hatta uydururlar. Eco, gazetelerin bu tahribatları hangi yöntemlerle yaptıklarını ele alır, okuyucuları dil oyunları ile belli çıkarımlara yönelten taktiklerini açığa çıkarır. Okuyuculara gönderilen popüler ortak algının kodlarını deşifre etmeye çabalar. Eco'ya göre "gazeteler insanlara nasıl düşünmeleri gerektiğini öğret"mektedir; ne yazık ki "bizim öğrendiğimiz her şey sahte ve deforme"dir. Popüler kültür, kendi dışındaki bir gerçekliğe değil, Baudrillard'ın simülasyon kuramında sözünü ettiği üzere, gerçekliği yerinden eden sahtenin kendi kendisine yaptığı bir göndermeden ibarettir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Umberto Eco, popüler kültür, medya, yüksek kültür, *Numero Zero*

"Newspapers teach people how they should think."

Umberto Eco, *Number Zero*, p.84

"All we have learnt was fake and deformed."

Umberto Eco, *Number Zero*, p.146

Introduction

One of the most important bearers in the production and expansion of the popular culture is the popular printed media. These publications send various images, views and perceptions to the minds of the readers and they form various interactions in the behavioral ways of the readers by means of them. The media of today form an order of filters in our understanding regarding the outer world and embroider every datum and information perceived by our mind regarding the outside with various inflections, directions or error margins. Within this frame, what is mentioned here is that a person sees even itself within the eye of the media. Our identity, appearance and behavioral ways are encouraged to be structured within the frame of the models presented by the media to us (Mills 1974: 440). The main purpose of the written media in the postmodern period has become beyond information. After this moment; the developments or speculations that are eye-catching, seductive and sensational have a news value. Image and voice have got ahead of the content of the news. Transmission of the events has been replaced by impressing the reader. The autonomy provided to the displayer by means of the manipulation of the indicatives in the media has caused to a structure in which the indicatives wander around as independent on the objects (Featherstone 2013: 41). Baudrillard draws the attention to the eternal and charming images and the excessive information consisting of the flood of simulation provided by the media at this exact meaning. He underlines that those that are imaginary and real have been mixed to each other by means of the aesthetic fascination (Baudrillard 1983: 148).

In the book published by Umberto Eco in 2015 named as *Numero Zero (Number Zero)*, on the basis of the assumption that the newspapers are able to establish various perceptions to the public in a conscious way, he has examined what kind of interventions some popular newspaper bosses have realized for the purpose of increasing their efficiencies in the business world within the frame of a fiction. *Number Zero* having been translated into many foreign languages including Turkish within the same year proceeds from a postmodernist viewpoint and deals with the deformation of the concept of "reality" repeatedly on different patterns.¹

The direct impact of the printed media on the current culture and the ability of being able to re-establish or direct it from various angles stem from the properties of the culture. The properties of the culture that gives opportunities for impressing and being impressed acknowledge a power that is superior to the media.

¹ *Number Zero* is the seventh novel of Umberto Eco and his final novel released during his lifetime. It was first published in January 2015; the English translation by Richard Dixon appeared in November 2015. It is a sprightly satire of the tabloid press set in Italy in 1992.

Culture

Anthropologists developed notion of culture in the second half of 19th Century. (Haviland, Prins, Walrath, & McBride 2008: 103) Sir Edward Burnett Taylor, who then made it into a basic concept, gave the first-ever comprehensive definition for culture. Taylor said, "Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society." (Aktan & Tutar 2007)

Although culture is one of the most frequently used concepts today, it is far from a generally accepted definition. In an academic survey conducted by North American anthropologists A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn in 1950s, they found approximately one hundred different definitions for culture. (Haviland, Prins, Walrath, & McBride 2008: 103) Guvenc cites that a total of 164 different 'culture' definitions take place in an anthology compiled by the American anthropologists in the issue of the culture (Güvenç 1972: 95). Williams claims that the concept is one of the most complex two or three words in terms of meaning (Williams 1983: 87). With its widest scope, culture is the appearance of all the humanitarian attitudes that have not been determined by the biology (Çağan 2003: 23). It is everything revealed by the human and that includes human (Uygur 1996: 17). It is how we live nature. (Storey 2015: ix) Culture comprises of abstract views, values and perceptions related to earth that affect human behavior. It is shared by members of a society, then is turned into behaviors understood by the members of that society. Culture affects societies not with biological transfer, but with learning, (Haviland, Prins, Walrath, & McBride 2008: 102). As a result it is a holistic sum consisting of the tools, consumption materials, the constitutions and documents prepared for various social groupings, the ideas and skills peculiar to human, beliefs and morals and in short, completely those "belonging to the human being" (Malinowski 1990: 39). Within this scope; culture is the "own" appearance of the human in each area of the social life and the expression belonging to himself/herself; because, the culture tells the experiences, life practices and the interest areas of the human attained from the past to the current day (Smith 2008: 39). Similarly; Giddens also defines the culture as the total of the values, norms, produced materials, lifestyles, dressing styles, religious ceremonies, family lives and traditions of the individuals forming a society (Giddens 1993: 31). Culture is the measurement of shared views, values and behaviors. It is the joint decider for what a person can do for his/her society and what his/her society can do for that person. Sharing a common culture may allow people to predict how others would act or would react to others' behaviors in certain situations. Culture is ordinary. It is how we make sense of ourselves and the world around us. It is the practice through which people share and contest meanings of ourselves, of each other, and of the world. (Williams 1958)

The most significant aspect of culture is language. Language uses words to represent objects and thoughts. Also language constructs meaning. Meaning is always a social production, a human practice; and because different meanings can be ascribed to the same thing, meaning is always the site and the result of struggle. (Storey 2015: xi)

Culture to cover everything regarding the soul causes it to be affected from the historicalness of the soul. As the soul is a historical thing, namely because it changes according to the time and place, culture is also not a fixed and single concept, but a concept that shows changes within the time and place and extremely open for evolving and interpretation. Culture is a dynamic system which reacts to actions and

deeds happening in or around it. If a factor within a system is changed or an outer factor applies pressure to one, that system will strive to adjust itself according to this change. Culture is an active process. It does not lie dormant in things. Cultures are arenas in which different ways of articulating the world come into and guaranteed in nature, but is always the result of particular ways of representing nature in culture, suggests that the meaning of something never be fixed, final or true, its meaning will only ever be contextual and contingent and, moreover, always open to the changing relations of power.

Culture has been designed as a national history and the totality of the traditions saved by this history for the purpose of bringing up homogenous citizens together with the modernism and disguised itself to the appearance of an instrumental superstructure institution.

Popular Culture

Together with the replacement of modernism with the postmodern period, the acceptance of homogeneity has replaced the acceptance of heterogeneity and the rootless popular culture belonging to exactly the present time has replaced the patronizing conservative cultural perception having/claiming to have their roots from the past. The process of the replacement of the modernist “high” culture pointing to the ideal one with the postmodernist “popular” culture pointing to the sign of the market has caused to the change of the institutions producing culture. While the “high culture” are produced/consumed by the Intellectuals (Intelligentsia), the popular culture is produced/consumed by the non-intellectual ones (public) within the frame of the market economy rules. Within this frame; culture has turned into a tool of entertainment and also a tool for spending free time demanded in the market in time from an indicator of social status.

The concept of popular culture is an image whose ambiguity is high and that could be used in various meanings by different people simultaneously (Kidd 2014: 5). No consensus could be reached as to the meaning of the concept (Güngör 1999: 9). The invention of the term as a mass culture stems from the occurrence of a middle-class mass together with the development of the industrialization, urbanization and an urban industrial worker class (Storey 2015: 16). Together with the conversion of the middle class consisting of the workers into a middle class having higher and wider purchasing power at the end of a certain period of time, an economic and cultural growth has occurred in the middle class. This transformation has given opportunity for the revelation of a commercial culture (Kidd 2014: 6, 7). Wide acceptance of the definition of the popular culture and also the trendy status of it if the saying is true have occurred in the USA and England at the end of 1950s for the first time (Danesi 2012: 5). The term is especially surfaced in the United States in the 1950s, when it had become a widespread social reality, breaking down differential categories of taste and lifestyle and, consequently, uniting the nation in a populist fashion. Pop culture’s emergence as a default form of culture in that era was due, in large part, to postwar affluence and a subsequent baby boom, which gave people in the mass, regardless of class or educational background, considerable buying power, thus propelling them into the unprecedented position of shaping trends in fashion, music and lifestyle through the marketplace. By the end of the decade a full-blown pop culture, promoted by a savvy media-technology-business partnership, had materialized. Since then, it has played a pivotal role in the overall evolution of American society (and every other modern society). (Danesi 2012: 2)

Some researchers like Rowe approach the popular culture as a free time practice and texts (Rowe 1996: 20). According to this understanding; popular culture is seen as a tool helping the sustainment of the existence of a person by lightening it together with the loss of the hope for liberation against commodification covering all the areas of our lives (Oskay 1977-78). It is like an instrument that produces artificial happiness and that is used to get rid of the negative sides of the reality in daily life instead of describing the existent one (Oktay 1997: 23). The practices of the people except for their business lives are related to the searches of them for entertainment, excitement, aesthetics and satisfaction (Cantor & Werthman 1968: 2).

According to Bauman, popular culture has focused on serving or seducing their customers instead of enlightening the masses or making them gain nobility as different from the modernist culture (Bauman 2015: 18). It emphasizes the instant and one-day one, it makes the experiences and properties invalid in majority and it provokes the single-use ideology in a conscious or unconscious way. It is reluctant to the historical and traditional ones in the meaning of respect (Oktay 1997: 28). Therefore; it is a certain reaction to the "high culture" occurring as a result of the accumulation. The hierarchy between the "high culture" and "low culture" has been demolished in the popular culture period. Anequality has been built between the cultures (Bauman 2015: 15).

According to some researchers; the popular culture has revealed not as giving what the public wants both in cultural and political areas, but as a tool for shaping the demands of the public. In this respect; although the defining power seems to be the public or the consumer in the popular culture, actually the real definer is the industry of advertisement. In other words; popular culture is a design that has been inserted into the circulation after its invention by a minority mass. What makes it popular is the economic and ideological power behind it (Erdoğan 1999: 33). Therefore; the popular culture is everything that has been produced for the public by those taking place in the public, out of public and above public (Erdoğan & Alemdar 2005: 110).

Some researchers like Gans are against the idea that the popular culture has easily been imposed to the masses from the top and they assert that they have been shaped by the audience either indirectly or partially. Within this direction; the mass media consists of the estimators trying to discover what the people want or actually what they will accept in majority rather than being a structure that is carrying out impositions to the people (Gans 2014: 13). The popular culture whose borders are drawn with those prevailing, not those respected is related to the daily life and relies upon the daily life information more than other cultures. It is a rhetoric established with the daily life (Sözen 2006: 56).

In addition; both views accept that the popular culture is based on the ways of production, marketing, distribution and consumption of capitalist goods established around the wide labor division and the production of the cultural "things" by means of the technological devices. Another common acceptance is the claim that the popular culture could only be existent by means of the technological reproduction, serial production, television and press (Ercins 2009: 498). The function of the media is very centralized in the production and registration of the popularity. The culture shaped by the media actually takes the real culture as the basis and adds the concepts it desires in the content of this culture. The distinction of "media culture" and "real culture" has raised the thesis that the media re-fictionalize the real culture in various

ways, change it and use it by shaping. In that case; we could assess the popular culture as both a part of the real culture and a kind of it that has been re-shaped and fictionalized (Sözen 1997: 44)

The function of forming a unity by giving meaning to the society in contemporary societies is carried out by the mass media. These media form a society texture by means of the idea, value, beliefs and symbols. This mass is a structure that has been given meaning by the mass media. Popular culture products are the products formed by the mass media tools (Şahin 2005: 165). Searching for the popular culture away from the mass media will be an insufficient and trivial effort (Güneş 2006: 194). Within this scope; mass media has an efficient role in the issues such as who the people are, who they should want to be and how they should be seen by the outside as well as the fact that they have a role of a kind of filter in giving meaning to the outer world (Mills 1974: 440). Due to these reasons; the concept with which culture is in relation at the highest level today is media. This relation shows itself in the presentation of new lives to the people by the media, formation and sustainment of the images of the modern human belonging to the world. The new symbols formed by means of media direct the lives of the people, they form a certain life style and form a new “culture” way as a process that includes the ideas, actions and artifices. Within this frame, the culture formed by the media as a property of itself appears as a daily culture in parallel with the popular culture (Geçer 2013: 28)

Umberto Eco and Popular Culture

According to Umberto Eco²; the two approaches, one of which is sudden and unexpected and the other one of which stems from the inferior and which externalize each other at first sight both share various validity shares. Eco makes the reader feel the following throughout *Number Zero*: Media makes its references to the public not as based on “reality”, but by designing various messages, stories and ideas that

2 Umberto Eco is an Italian author who is best known for mystery novels that reflect Eco's vast knowledge on subjects such as religion, literature, history, politics and philosophy. In addition to writing novels, Umberto has also excessively contributed to the science of semiotics through his studies, research and other academic works. His literary talents have also made him a philosopher, essayist and literary critic from time to time. Born in the small town of Alessandria in northern Italy, Umberto was the only son of an accountant named Giulio. Umberto and his mother, Giovanna fled to a village in the Piedmontese mountainside during World War II to escape the bombings while his father was called upon to serve in the army. Eco initially received a Salesian education and later entered the University of Turin to study law upon his father's insistence who wanted his son to become a lawyer. However, following his interests, Eco soon switched to studying medieval philosophy and literature. He wrote a thesis on St. Thomas Aquinas and in 1954 earned a doctorate degree in philosophy. During his educational period, Umberto had lost faith in God and left the Roman Catholic Church.

After graduation, Eco joined a state television channel as an Editor for Cultural Programs where he was able to gain experience and learn a lot about modern culture and journalism. A group of avant-garde artists—painters, musicians, writers -; whom he had befriended at RAI (Gruppo 63) became an important and influential component in Eco's future writing career.

In 1956, Eco published his first book, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, which was an extension to his doctorate dissertation. Also in 1956, Eco began his lecturing career at the University of Turin. Next, Eco began working as an editor for a well known publication in Milan named Casa Editrice Bompiani.

Eco's work on medieval aesthetics stressed the distinction between theory and practice. About the Middle Ages, he wrote, there was “a geometrically rational schema of what beauty ought to be, and on the other hand the unmediated life of art with its dialectic of forms and intentions”—the two cut off from one another as if by a pane of glass. Eco's work in literary theory has changed focus over time. Initially, he was one of the pioneers of Reader Response Criticism. Later he moved into the field of Semiotics.

Eco argued that literary texts are fields of meaning, rather than strings of meaning, that they are understood as open, internally dynamic and psychologically engaged fields. Those works of literature that limit potential understanding to a single, unequivocal line are the least rewarding, while those that are most open, most active between mind and society and line, are the most lively and best. Eco emphasizes the fact that words do not have meanings that are simply lexical, but rather operate in the context of utterance.

make it by “itself”; but, these designs do not have the power to build the popular culture by themselves. These designs should be convenient and close to the tendencies in the minds of the public and the easily acceptable designs for them to be a part of the popular culture or for them to be able to form a popular culture as a result. Therefore; there is the condition that the mentioned production should bear the capacity of touching the interest areas and spiritual tendencies of the people for a hyperreality produced by a newspaper and media institutions to be accepted by the people in wide masses. In other words; according to the study of Eco, popular culture is neither a structure that has been produced by a minority at top, released to the media channels and puts all the humans into a passive status, nor it consists of a structure requested by the mere public themselves. Popular culture occurs in the intersection point of this couple. For this reason; it is a joint structure. Information and notification have become away from the essential purpose in this construction carried out jointly (Soygüder 2003: 180). The purpose of the newspaper is not to tell the truth and ‘direct the readers to the true ones’ as carried out by the modernism (Enlightenment), but to stoop their levels. This is a postmodern approach and gives priority to the demands and needs of the market (Eco 2015: 32). According to Eco, media is wicked (Eco 1986: 151).

Hyperreality

According to Eco; the most important impact of the printed media on the popular culture or the most important contribution of it to the popular culture is the hyperreality. The term of hyperreality was firstly used by Umberto Eco in 1975. In the usage of Eco, hyperreality has precluded the fake real (Perry 1998: 1). In addition; the concept has become famous with Baudrillard and has been finalized. Hyperreality for Baudrillard is also beyond the fake to preclude the real. Fake has precluded the real after that moment.

In the thesis of Umberto Eco; when the art and architecture are mentioned; if the Americans do not own the real of what they would like to attain, “they would certainly produce the fake of it” (Eco 1986: 8) or they would make a “real copy” (Eco 1986: 20). Hyperreality according to him is an American reality and the Americans should be proud of it. “Fake” for Eco is an incredible idea and the power or influence it could have is beyond the estimations. According to him; fake has the capacity of being able to produce the real (Massie 2016).

According to Baudrillard, everything is made according to a determined model in the society after industry. Now, the people do not determine the model by considering the real, but they determine the fictional reality by considering the model presented to themselves. The tools such as handbooks, magazines, television and the efficiency of the advertisements give the people the default models representing the reality in every issue and a sign network consisting of these models determine the idea and behavior world of the people. Popular culture presents the reality in “very attractive ways” by the media channels and reflect the negativities in a way that understanding the real reasons will not be possible.

For this reason; according to Baudrillard, a hyperreality is dominant in the post-industry society. Now, the primary source of our knowledge and understanding regarding the world is not the real, but the signs that have replaced it (Baudrillard 2003: 13). There are no proofs that will concretely reveal the reality and they will never exist (Baudrillard 2015: 15). After this moment; the images are not different from

the reality; furthermore, the images have been in a status that they could produce the feeling of reality again. This situation called as “simulacra” by Baudrillard is a situation “that does not hide the reality, but the absence of the reality” in his saying (Baudrillard 2005: 32). The hyperreality built by the simulacra terminates the discussion whether there is any reality behind, presents itself as a “reality” independent of any reality and makes itself accepted. The difference between the appearance and reality has disappeared and this situation has also removed the difference between high culture and popular (lower) culture being a dilemma peculiar to modernity (Şeylan 2009: 303, 304).

The domination of “hyperreality” is existent from the beginning to the end of the book *Number Zero* published by Eco before his death and the hyperreality here is equal to the concept of hyperreality used by Baudrillard afterwards rather than the concept of hyperreality invented by Eco in 1975.³ In other words, Eco being the producer of the concept has accepted the hyperreality in the way it is expressed in the definitions of Baudrillard following his works on the issue.

The first hyperreality in *Number Zero* of Eco occurs with the start out of a businessman called Commandatore (this name is not the real name of the businessman and here, there is a reference to a fraction of the reality) who was low-respected but had a certain amount of capital with his threat of constructing a defamatory and disgracing printed media about the respected finance and politics world for the purpose of making room for himself in the respected business world, because Commandatore does not have any real intention to form such a newspaper. He just arranges an organization as if there were such an existent newspaper, he employs various journalists for this fake organization, rents an office, but no journalists except for the executive editor are aware of the fact that they are actually working in a fake newspaper.

The use of “Tomorrow” as the name of the newspaper has not had the aim of giving the reality of today, but it has been presented as an indicator to the fact that the newspaper has the aim of forming the reality of tomorrow. The newspaper tries to form its own reality and determines the reality it will always form within the direction of the economic and social benefits of its owner. As cited by Baudrillard, if there is no “reality” and if “this reality” is constantly built, Commandatore tries to invent the reality that is best for his own benefits by means of *Tomorrow*. In other words, he uses the newspaper of *Tomorrow* as a tool for building hyperreality.

The executive editor of the newspaper has not actually been informed of the fact that the newspaper will never be published in reality, but by means of reading the intentions, the executive editor thinks that Commandatore has such a plan and positions himself according to this idea. He wants to write a book on the publication of the newspaper for the purpose of being able to document that the fake newspaper is actually existent and therefore, being able to write to his cv that he has had the job of real executive editorship in such a newspaper, but he hires a shadow writer to write this book on behalf of himself. This situation is the second hyperreality in the book because, the writing of a testimony regarding a non-existent structure is planned and there is an attempt to prove the existence of a thing that is ac-

3 Turkish writer Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar wrote a novel nearly twenty years ago Eco founded the concept of hyperreality, named, *Saatleri Ayarlama Enstitüsü (Time Regulation Institute)* about the inner workings of the fictional, Time Regulation Institute, a government office that polices all the clocks in Turkey to ensure they are set to western time, in 1954, before his death in 1962. (Tanpınar 1961)

tually not existent. No worker in the newspaper or Commandatore will try to reveal this lie due to their own benefits. And this is the third hyperreality in the fiction of Eco.

The fourth hyperreality in *Number Zero* is the plan that the publication purpose of the fake newspaper to be published will be defined and announced in extremely idealist and supreme way. In this way, the presentation of the non-existent things as if they were reality will be continued. Consequently; the “real” purpose of the publication of the newspaper will disappear and various hyperrealities will replace it: none of them is the series of hyperrealities produced in a way that they will make reference to one another and none of which are based on any reality.

The fifth hyperreality in the *Number Zero* is an argument suggesting that famous Italian dictator Mussolini did not die the way it was written in history books, but he actually created the perception of him having died for the public by building a simulation around himself. According to this argument, Mussolini was not lynched to death on the soils of Italy, he had a double and this double was the one who received the short end of the stick. This argument also suggests the involvement of the Allied Powers. The Allied Powers’ fear of secret agreements and correspondences between the governments becoming public knowledge in case Mussolini was apprehended by partisans lead to the secret services of the Allied Powers taking no actions despite them being fully aware of the truth. This argument shows the autopsy report of Mussolini as proof. This report states that Mussolini’s face was heavily damaged due to a firearm, which caused a complex lesion and made his face unrecognizable. This made it possible for the holders of this argument to state that the corpse of Mussolini was a fallacy. The same report states that there was no ulcer inside Mussolini’s stomach. However he was an ulcer patient. The autopsy found no traces of syphilis, but according to the aforementioned argument, he had a severe case of syphilis. German clinician Georg Zachariae, who attended to Mussolini in Salo, diagnosed him with low blood tension, anemia, liver fattening, stomach cramps, bad intestines and acute constipation. Astonishingly, the autopsy stated otherwise; his liver, his bile ducts, his kidney as well as his suprarenal glands and his urinary tract were all fine and normal.

According to the thesis suggesting that it was Mussolini’s double who was killed, Mussolini went to Argentina after these events and lived there. This means that the news of Mussolini’s death both in media and on notices given by the state were a hyperreality and nothing more than a hoax. Accordingly, Eco built an interlocking hyperreality and showed that the argument of those suggesting the aforementioned hyperreality creates another hyperreality in and of itself. Eco does not state this directly but shows it to his readers openly. Eco here refrained from making another move and averted a third possible hyperreality and left this for his readers to interpret.

Result

By means of this structure Eco has established, he tries to put forth that the missions such as “freedom for information”, “right for knowing the truth” and “revelation of the truth” used by the printed media to legalize their own existence are actually fictions; because, the printed media uses these ethical suggestions as a shield in the fiction of Eco and actually they permanently transmit fictionalized information

to the society in a way that they will protect the benefits of their own financiers completely. Eco asserts that each claim supported by the newspaper is born from a cause that precedes itself, but these causes are never based on any “reality” even if the past is examined for a long time and the actual motivation is the personal benefits. He claims that the great interest of the newspaper in the “reality” and their missions of “revealing the truth” are actually not different from the effort of trying to produce fake “realities” for the purpose of ensuring their personal benefits and trying to make the masses adopt this.

If the claim of Eco had consisted of only these expressions, we would need to accept him as a thinker accepting a designer minority as the only producer of the popular culture. However; Eco does not stop here, takes one more step and reveals that the printed media is only one of the basic two reasons in the formation of the popular culture and he positions the other reason as a public mass having tendencies peculiar to themselves.

In this respect, it is not functional for the newspapers to make news that are related to only those benefits for the purpose of defending the benefits of their owners; because, the people have various interest areas and several topics about which the people like reading. In the publication of a newspaper, by neglecting these interest areas of the people and the topics they love means that the newspaper will not find any reader, the newspapers should firstly reach a structure that will be read by the masses for them to be able to form a perception within the direction of the benefits of its owners. In this way; the popular culture in Eco is away from being a process only designed from the top and dominated to the lower levels and it covers a wider base. However, the steering wheel is still in the hands of the designer minority.

In *Number Zero*; Eco reveals the tricks the newspapers use when they could not find any news to publish, their methods of whitewashing some events, the false news they invent, lexing the news out of their shapes within the frame of the principle of *schadenfreude* (being happy from the sorrows of others), forming files beforehand about their potential enemies with whom they are possible to encounter one day and using them as a threat, with what ways they try to defame the target people or institutions, how they make hidden regional discriminations, in what ways they give “value” to some insignificant news by means of the force methods by putting them under a headline and the tactics they use to drag their readers towards a certain direction from his own view.

The necessity of transforming the message desired by the newspaper to be given into the shapes that will catch the attention of the reader for the purpose of being able to present them to the reader in the package they want lies under all these efforts. According to Eco, the popular culture does not have any sudden and unexpected structure as it is in the culture understanding of modernism (at least from the appearance). By also taking the likes and demands of the wide masses it desires to be expanded into consideration, it aims a consensus between the culture producers and the culture consumers. In this way, it provides an easier and faster acceptance of the messages it sends by the masses. However, the motivation of the culture producers has derived from the market economy. The aimed thing is “profit”. Popular newspapers inflict, transform and even make up the news in the cause of this profit. Eco handles by which methods the newspapers perform these destructions and reveals their tactics that direct the readers to certain assumptions with the quibbles. He tries to decipher the codes of the common popular perception delivered to the readers. According to Eco, “newspapers teach people how they should

think; unfortunately, all we learn is fake and deformed". Popular culture consists of a reference made by the fake that is replacing the truth to itself as mentioned in the simulation theory of Baudrillard, not a reality away from itself. While doing them all, they have to apply to the interests, weaknesses of the widest consumer masses, what they would like to hear and read, those great exaggerations and sensations for the purpose of drawing the attention and they make references continuously to the popular culture.

In this way; a wide culture which includes messages being easygoing, pleasurable, not tiring the mind of the people and easily understandable, which includes gossip, exaggeration and vulvar language and which is directly adapted to the daily life regarding what they want to happen in "reality", not what is going on in "reality"; because media reaches wider masses when it transmits the things their owners would like to give for profit expectations by means of this language, public and media become the partners producing the popular culture together in cooperation.

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