

© Erkki Karvonen, PhD.

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Tampere, Finland. E-mail: erkki.karvonen@uta.fi. This article was originally published in: Finnish Papers Presented at the IAMCR Conference, Brazil 1992. University of Tampere, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. Series B 37/1992, pp. 24 - 40.

Popular Culture and Mastery of Life

Abstract

In this online article I study people's use of popular fiction to clean up or order their minds. People use popular fiction to restore their cognitive and moral order that is confused during frustrating and chaotic everyday life. The restoration of cognitive order gives a feeling that "everything is all right" and that "nothing is out of place". Therefore people can use popular fiction to master their lives. In my explanation I apply **Mary Douglas's** notion about cultural order and disorder, or "*purity and dirt*" as she also puts it. **Umberto Eco**, **Janice Radway** and **Margareta Rönnerberg** are scholars, who have dwelt upon the opposition between chaotic, insecure everyday life and ordered, familiar and safe life that popular fiction offers. Eco even says that popular culture offers nowadays the only occasion to relaxation. He also points out that the need for pacification is not universal and ahistorical. Early bourgeois society was so loaded with redundancy, that there was actually "a hunger for information", i.e. a hunger for something new. On the contrary, nowadays there is a hunger for redundancy because of the continuous information overload. In the times of high modernity accelerating regeneration and constant de-traditionalisation revolutionises all the traditional structures of life. In this situation iterative, ritual popular culture appears as one of the few "places" on earth where people can really relax.

Contents:

1. Introduction.

Part I

2. Durkheimian basis for the study

2.1. Durkheim

2.2. Carey: a ritual approach to communication

2.3. Douglas: cleaning as ritual ordering

2.4. Moscovici on "social representations".

3. Phenomenology: cognitive order and satisfaction

4. Radway, Eco and Rönnerberg on popular culture

4.1. Radway

4.2. Eco

4.2. Rönnerberg

5. Conclusion to Part I

Part II

6. Popular culture in late-modern society

6.1. On terminology

6.2. Time as infrastructure of social life

6.3. Conclusion: popular culture and late-modern society

References

1. Introduction

The "uses and gratification" paradigm in mass communication studies has a well-known slogan: "Ask not what media do to people, but ask what people do with media" (See Blumler & Katz 1974 and Rosengren, Wenner & Palmgreen 1985, 11). The uses and gratification paradigm was one of the early responses to the mainstream mass communication research that studied mainly the effects mass communication has on the audience. The uses and gratification paradigm included criticism of a stimulus-response model of communication effects and a functionalistic way of thinking applied within the mainstream. In contrast to that, the uses and gratification paradigm tried to answer such questions as "Why people do read newspapers and watch soap operas every day?" ; "What is the satisfaction or gratification they derive from those products?". These questions rapidly lead to the problem of need satisfaction: The mass media products do satisfy some social and psychological needs. When using mass media, people are satisfying their needs by acting in an intentional, conscious and rational way.

The uses and gratification paradigm, however, has its own shortcomings. For instance, to what degree is behaviour really rational and conscious? The theory is based on a number of psychological and social needs that seem to be fixed, universal, ahistorical human traits. We can claim that these needs are only scientific abstractions. Moreover, the need satisfaction explanation is too easy a way out of the problem. When we are explaining why people watch soap operas on TV or read news, we can insist that there is a need for amusement and that there is also a need to obtain information. Is there also a need to smoke cigarettes, drink beer and listen rock and roll music? Actually, we can construct a never-ending list of needs that explains our everyday behaviour.

In this paper I do not propose to swallow the uses and gratification discourse as such, but I only apply the point of view it poses in broad lines. I shall try to explain "uses" through some kind of "gratifications" or "satisfactions", but my theory is an attempt at a culturally, socially and historically concrete explanation about using popular culture.

In brief, my main thesis goes as follows: **people use popular fiction to clean up their minds**. This must sound very curious, but I hope make sense of it in the forthcoming presentation. My explanation applies for instance Mary Douglas's notion about cultural order and disorder, or "purity and dirt" as she also puts it.

People use popular fiction to restore their cognitive and moral order that is confused during frustrating and chaotic everyday life. The restoration of cognitive order gives the feeling that "everything is all right" and that "nothing is out of place". Therefore people can use popular fiction to master their lives. I must add that this kind of use is, of course, only one possible way of using popular culture. It is easy to imagine for instance that people seek excitement or "something new" from popular culture products.

My presentation is divided into two parts. Part I deals with overall theory of popular culture and recreation. Part II attempts to contextualize the results of Part I in the historic and social macrostructures.

PART I

2. Durkheimian basis for the study

I propose to search for a basis for this study on the Émile Durkheim's magnum opus *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1976, 1912). As a classic of sociology Durkheim has influenced several social thinkers, including communication theorist James W. Carey, cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas and social psychologist Serge Moscovici. I present first some crucial quotations from Durkheim and then go on to examine Carey's, Douglas's and Moscovici's conceptions.

2.1. Durkheim

The most fruitful starting point to understanding Durkheim as a cultural theorist is to see that he has three factors in his conception. There are not only "world" and "consciousness" about that world, but there is also a third, intermediate factor, which can be labelled as culture. Therefore, everyday understanding of the world is possible only by means of cultural concepts and that is why the shape of the "world" depends on cultural order. There is no direct route to reality, rather only the culturally mediated way is available to us.

Mythology is the intermediate being that contains the cultural order: common beliefs, shared cosmology, moral system etc. The crucial question is: How does cultural order stay alive in the stream of time? Durkheim answers that culture exists only as far as it is continuously re-made, re-produced, re-presented. Thus the *ritual* aspect in society is very important in Durkheimian conception. The notion of "collective representations" is tied to a reproductive or ritual view of society.

"Everything is in representations whose only object can be to render the mythical past of the clan present to the mind. But the mythology of a group is the system of beliefs common to this group. The traditions whose memory it perpetuates express the way in which society represents man and the world; it is a moral system and a cosmology as well as a history. So the rite serves and can serve only to sustain the vitality of these beliefs, to keep them from being effaced from memory and, in sum, to revivify the most essential elements of the collective consciousness. Through it, the group **periodically renews** the sentiment which it has of itself and of its unity; at the same time, individuals are strengthened in their social natures." (Durkheim 1976, 375 - my emphasis)

We can say trivially that popular culture is entertainment or recreation for people. If we take "recreation" literally as "re-creation", it is a reproductive concept:

"The representations (...) are as necessary for the well working of our moral life as our food is for the maintenance of our physical life, for it is through them that the group affirms and maintains itself, and we know the point to which this is indispensable for the individual... (a rite) has its share in the feeling of comfort which the worshipper draws from the rite performed; for **recreation** is one of the forms of the **moral remaking** which is the principal object of the positive rite. After we have acquitted ourselves of our ritual duties, we enter into the profane life with increased courage and ardour, not only because we come into relations with a superior source of energy, but also because our forces have been reinvigorated by living, for a few moments, in a life that is less strained, and freer and easier. Hence religion acquires a charm which is not among the slightest of its attractions." (Durkheim 1976, 382 - my capitals)

"So everything leads us back to this same idea: before all, rites are means by which the social group reaffirms itself periodically." (Durkheim 1976, 387)

Durkheim states here in a functionalistic manner that rituals are means by which the social group reaffirms, renews and reproduces itself periodically. But there is also a non-functionalistic and an individualistic aspect in Durkheim's view. Durkheim talks about individual *recreation* and moral *remaking*, which are the effects of participation into the ritual. Therefore we conclude that people can use those rituals to get satisfaction, to recreate (re + create) themselves and to renew their cognitive order.

Finally I would point out that Durkheim does not make a clear distinction between cognition and communication, between thought and its expressionⁱ. Therefore Durkheim is near de Saussure's semiological thinking here. On the other hand, Durkheim does not make a distinction between cognitive and moral order: so the orders of "is" and "ought" fall in some degree together. The French word "conscience" covers the meaning of the English words "conscience" and "consciousness". The French word is at the same time moral and cognitive by nature. (See Lukes 1973, 4).

2.2. Carey: a ritual approach to communication

James W. Carey (1975, 1989) states that there have been two alternative conceptions of communication. He labels these definitions as 1.) **the transmission view of communication** and 2.) **the ritual view of communication**ⁱⁱ. Carey defines these conceptions as follows:

(1.) "The transmission view of communication is the commonest in our culture, perhaps in all industrial cultures, and dominates contemporary dictionary entries under the term. It is defined by terms such as imparting, sending, transmitting, or giving information to others. (...) The center of this idea of communication is the transmission of signals or messages over distance for the purpose of control. (...) Our basic orientation to communication remains grounded, at the deepest roots of our thinking, in the area of transmission: communication is a process whereby messages are transmitted and distributed in space for the control of distance and people." (Carey 1989, 15)

(2.) "The ritual view of communication, while a minor thread in our national thought, is by far the older of those views, old enough in fact for dictionaries to list it under 'Archaic'. In a ritual definition, communication is linked to terms such as sharing, participation, association, fellowship, and the possession of common faith. This definition exploits the ancient identity and common roots of the terms commonness, communion, community, and communication. A ritual view of communication is not directed toward the extension of messages in space but the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs." (Carey 1989, 18)

Carey argues for the latter, cultural, definition of communication. For example: we do not have to think that reading a newspaper is only sending and receiving information. We can also see reading a newspaper as a situation in which nothing really new is learned, but in which a particular view of the world is portrayed and confirmed. News reading, and writing, is a ritual act and moreover a dramatic one.

"We recognize, as with religious rituals, news changes little and yet is intrinsically satisfying; it performs few functions yet is habitually consumed. Newspapers do not operate as a source of effects or functions but as dramatically satisfying, which is not to say pleasing, presentations of what the world at root is." (Carey 1989, 21).

The indebtedness of Carey's ritual view of communication to Émile Durkheim's sociology is apparent. Carey states explicitly: "writers in this tradition often trace their heritage, in part, to Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*". For Durkheim a myth is composed of the fundamental beliefs of society concerning what the world and the man is at root. A ritual, then, incarnates those underlying expectations and beliefs into visible form. Every representation within the culture is an embodiment of mythology, or shared beliefs or "the ideal society".

Carey: "This projection of community ideals and their embodiment in material form - dance, plays, architecture, news stories, strings of speech - creates an artificial though nonetheless real symbolic order which operates not to provide information but confirmation, not to alter attitudes or change minds but to *represent an underlying order of things*, not to perform functions but to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process." (Carey 1975, 6).

To sum up Carey's view we can say that he thinks communication is mostly *confirmation* of the already existing cultural order and that *information* about something totally new is only a minor treat in communication. The old mass communication paradigm is concentrated on the information aspect and that is the point where it goes wrong.

2.3. Douglas: cleaning as ritual ordering

"...Mary Douglas falls generally within the Durkheimian tradition in the social sciences. She emphasizes (...) the collective nature of human existence; she is concerned with questions of moral order; she pays attention to the ways in which rituals dramatize moral order." (Wuthnow et al. 1985, 79).

In her book *Purity and Danger* Douglas (1966, 1988) takes ordinary plain dirt as an example of disorder and purity or cleanliness as example of cultural/cognitive order. She defines "dirt" as follows:

"...We are left with very old definition of dirt as matter out of place. This is a very suggestive approach. It implies two conditions: a set of ordered relations and a contravention of that order. Dirt, then, is never a unique, isolated event. Where there is dirt there is a system. Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements. This idea of dirt takes us straight into the field of symbolism and promises a link-up with more obviously symbolic systems of purity." (Douglas 1988, 35).

From this point of view what is dirty is relative. It is not earth per se that is dirty, but earth in the wrong place or out of place:

"...it is a relative idea. Shoes are not dirty in themselves, but it is dirty to place them on the dining table; food is not dirty in itself, but it is dirty to leave cooking utensils in the bedroom, or food bespattered on clothing; similarly, bathroom equipment in the drawing room, (...) out-door things in-doors; upstairs things downstairs..." (Douglas 1988, 35-36)

If dirt is the by-product of ordering and classifying, and society is the source of rules and categories, then dirt is very much a normal part of social life, like crime and deviance. The presence of order (society) makes disorder possible.

Douglas (36) states that perceiving is not a matter of passively allowing an organ to receive a ready-made impression from without, like a palette receiving a spot of paint. On the contrary perceiving is governed by a pattern-making tendency, called *schema*ⁱⁱⁱ.

"In a chaos of shifting impressions, each of us constructs a stable world in which objects have recognisable shapes, are located in depth, and have permanence. In perceiving we are building, taking some cues and rejecting others. The most acceptable cues are those, which fit most easily into the pattern that is being built up. Ambiguous ones tend to be treated as if they harmonised with the rest of the pattern. Discordant ones tend to be rejected." (Douglas 1988, 36).

For Douglas cognitive order is not purely cognitive issue, but has also moral dimensions:

"It is not that scraps of food are clean when on the plate and dirty when on the table, but that they *should* be on the plate, and *not* on the table. There is a moral dimension to reality that makes the question of classification, and misclassification, also a question of right and wrong. The moral order is coterminous with social reality such that things have at one and the same time a factual and moral existence. When we say 'that's the way things are', we are not making a factual statement about the mechanical appropriateness of nature, but a moral evaluation of that order." (Wuthnow et al. 1985, 87).

The establishing the social/moral order simultaneously produces or constitutes disorder: order and disorder are in internal, constitutive relation with each other. The prevailing social order always produces its *anomalies* or the *other*. From this point of view crime and dirt are at the same phenomena, because both represent something out of place. And when things get out of place the normative and legal order is challenged and society re-establishes that order by taking ritual action. Society starts to clean up dirt or crime or dissidents. May I remind you of Stalin's, Hitler's and Pol Pot's large scale "cleanings" (purges). Other societies have their witch-hunts and Congressional investigations for un-American activities.

Popular fiction genres like adventure stories and crime fiction are about re-establishing social order or "cleaning up" society. Ironically those stories themselves have been considered as dangerous "rubbish" or "trash" by moralizers. In the United States moral majority movements organized trials against "child distorting" popular fiction and so there arose self-censorship arrangements like *Hay's office code* (movies) and *Comics code* (comics)^{iv}. Until today the "rubbish" type discourse has been quite central in discussion about popular fiction. However, contemporary cultural studies cannot take moral discourse for granted, but it takes the discourse itself as an object of the study. We must keep in mind that social pathologies (disorder) are not pathologies as such, but pathologies that prevailing order produces.

2.4. Moscovici on 'social representations'

To continue this study of the Durkheimian tradition, I turn next to Serge Moscovici's (1984 and 1988) notion of "*social representations*". The term "social representation" is a transformation of Durkheim's term "collective representation". Durkheim's term suggests that there is something that is homogeneously shared by all members of a society. This is not true in contemporary industrial societies and so Moscovici substitutes the word "collective" with "social" which is to emphasize plurality of representations.

The classical notion of "collective representations" is defined by its opposition to "individual representations". According to Moscovici (1988, 221) this opposition is irrelevant. Other

dichotomy cognition vs. communication is also irrelevant for Moscovici. We all constitute "a thinking society". Social groups and networks converse more or less publicly to make sense of different concerns and problems. Moscovici (1988, 215) refers to Hannah Arendt: "Thinking is a practice that takes place among men rather than as the performance of a single person". Social representations/ ideas circulate in the society: thinking is in fact re-thinking of material of social origin. Representation is really re-presentation or even recycling of social ideas. Social representations may be located in the minds of men and woman, but simultaneously they may be located "in the world", i.e. in spoken and written texts, films, images etc.

Moscovici's notion of social representations comes close "common sense" or "popular culture". "Social representations (...) concern the contents of everyday thinking and the stock of ideas that gives coherence to our religious beliefs, political ideas and the connections we create as spontaneously as we breathe." (Moscovici 1988, 214). For instance, scientific theories like psychoanalysis or Marxism are *not* social representations as such. Yet they can become social representations when people popularize them as their common sense. Social representation is the *image* that ordinary people have of psychoanalysis, African people, the Wild West, the European Community, computers etc.

For Moscovici "thinking society" means expressly the process where people continuously make new matters into their own common sense. This kind of familiarization is a central purpose that social representations serve in general. "To answer this question, I proposed the hypothesis that all representations arise from our *need to turn the strange into something familiar*. (Moscovici 1988, 234 - emphasis).

Living in the world forces us continuously to encounter unfamiliar, new, strange things. These things may be catastrophes, political revolutions, new technologies, miracles of science or the creations of artists and novelists. To make of these novelties their common sense, people meet each other in the street corners, in the bars, at the party and keep talking on those subjects. This "thinking society" tries to make strange things familiar by anchoring them to an already existing knowledge or social representation. For instance AIDS is a strange disease and so people try to make sense of it by thinking it as something like tuberculosis, plague or leprosy. And so they suggest comparable remedies for it.

An unfamiliar situation is cognitively unstructured; the strange is experienced as not fitting the structure of the matrix of the life space, as not fitting one's expectations. This non-fitting is not a purely cognitive matter, because "cognition is inseparable from its affective basis" (Moscovici 1988, 234). This strangeness therefore makes people feel insecure and feel that they cannot manage or master the situation. On the contrary, in a normal familiar situation people feel like they are at home. The home is a familiar and safe place that you already know thoroughly; it requires no efforts to learn something new and so you can relax there. We can say that home is the social space where our mastery of life is at its best.

Popular culture is by definition popular, commonsensical and familiar to people. Thus, when people are "in" popular fiction, they feel they are at home. On the contrary art is by (modern) definition something new, strange, unfamiliar and understanding of it demands effort.

According to Moscovici social conceptions, images, words and other expressions are at first strange novelties, but in the process of familiarization they can become self-evident and

trivial. Words turn into clichés and conceptions acquire an impersonal character: They are now everybody's and nobody's property and repeated continuously in daily exchanges.

3. Phenomenology: cognitive order and satisfaction

Now I propose to extend the theoretical basis to the phenomenological area so that cognitive order becomes defined by the concept of experience^v.

Edmund Husserl's later phenomenology is often called "genetic phenomenology". Husserl found his earlier phenomenology unsatisfactory because it remained static and in his later phenomenology Husserl tries to explain the genesis of understanding mind.

The ability to understand the world arises from experiencing it. Experiences are stratifying in the mind to constitute "sedimentations". These sedimentations are generalizations or typifications^{vi} of the cases that appear in the world, and understanding always uses these typified structures when comprehend something^{vii}. For instance, when you comprehend or interpret something in the world as an apple, you apply cognitive structures that define what kind of being an apple in general is. Cognitive structures contain overall criteria for things in the world and those criteria have also a normative character. If something turns out to be not normal and typical, it may be conceived as a failure, bad or wrong (*schlechte*) reality as Hegel puts it.

According to genetic phenomenology, cognitive structures originate from earlier experience, that is to say, from subjectively encountered past. The mind formulates a generalization or a rule on the grounds of former experiences and that generalization is also projected towards the future. Husserl talks about predelineation (*Vorzeichnung*) to express that the human mind delineates the world to be continued in future as it was in the past. Cognitive structures are therefore "structures of expectation". The word expectation is suitable here because it has also a normative connotation: I expect you to behave like a gentleman there! Similarly we expect that the world will behave as it has behaved until now.

Husserl talks about "fulfilling the meaning-intention" (*Erfüllungen von Bedeutungsintentionen*). By this he means that consciousness is always directed towards world through the particular cognitive structure that supposes that thing in the world is as its concept defines it. Consciousness gathers evidence from the object to verify the hypothesis (e.g. "this is an apple"). When the evidence fits the hypothesis, it can be said that the intention is fulfilled or satisfied^{viii}.

But of course the world refuses to be always as it used to be in the past. Thus the intention is not fulfilled or satisfied; things tend to be "out of place", life does not go as expected. Our everyday life (or world, or apartment) is always going a little bit "out of place", it does not maintain the desired order. There is always a possibility to feel that life is "chaotic" (in disorder), irritating and frustrating. We can become angry or be unhappy. Normally we interfere in the world and try to change it by practical action as desired: we clean up the world^{ix}. But sometimes we do not do this, because we have no power left or because the matters are too big to manage.

Now we are coming to the point. When we are tired, we can leave this imperfect world behind us and move to the world of popular fiction. And in that world everything is in order, almost

at the end of the story. We really relax because everything goes as expected, as we want it to go.

I am suggesting here that the consumer knows beforehand what kind of film or book he/she is going to watch/ read. The familiarity of the chosen product depends on how tired a person is. The most secure choice is to choose a book he or she has already read once. It is fairly secure to choose a book by the same author or from the same series. The commercial or artistic genres help both producers and consumers, because they make consuming and producing predictable.

Stephen Neale (1980, 19) quotes Christian Metz in his book about cinematic genres:

"The cinematic institution is not the cinema industry, (...) it is also the mental machinery - another industry - which spectators 'accustomed to the cinema' have internalised historically and which has adapted them to the consumption of films".

Neale concludes that an essential part of the genre is located in the minds of the consumers as a set of expectations:

"On the other hand there is the fact that genres exist not simply as a body of texts, or a body of textual conventions, but also as a set of expectations." (51, my capitals) And: "Any genre is, simultaneously, a coherent and systematic body of film texts and a coherent and systematic set of expectations." (54-55)

4. Eco, Radway and Rönnerberg on popular culture

4.1. Radway

In her article *Phenomenology, Linguistics, and Popular Literature* (1978) Janice A. Radway uses the distinction made by the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty: the empirical use of language vs. the creative use of language. This distinction does not suggest that there is an absolute gap or opposition between different uses of language. Rather it suggests that there is a continuum, and "empirical" and "creative" refer to the extreme ends of this continuum.

The empirical use of language refers to the older sediments of language. When we use language empirically, we use the established, taken for granted expressions, we follow the rules and norms, we fulfil the customary expectations, we reveal only the generally accepted meanings of the words etc. The creative use of language, then, breaks a large number of rules and norms: it stretches the meanings of words metaphorically. This kind of usage arises from the situation where ordinary, old words "are not enough" to express the desired content. If the author does not make entirely new words, he or she must use old ones in a creative way. "The speaker must 'deform' the familiar words of the language he speaks in order to force them to secrete a meaning they have never had before." (Radway 1978, 92).

Merleau-Ponty is careful to stress the fact that language can never be reduced to either one of its two saussurean aspects (*la langue* vs. *la parole*). The only place where the language as a system can come into existence or change is in real speaking/ writing events. But we cannot argue that speech events are the chronological antecedents of the language system, since there can never be a speech event which does not use the elements of that system. Both aspects of the language are conditions for each other.

Neologisms come into being in speech events, but soon they become established and stratified as a part of language institute. It is the fate of creative expression to become part of normal generally accepted usage of language (empirical use of l.).

Janice Radway sees a direct parallel between the empirical use of language and formulaic popular literature.

"It is possible to think (...) of the 'popular' author as one who arranges the common elements of the literary text into familiar sequences which depend upon generally accepted, well-known meanings, providing the reader with the expressions he anticipates." (Radway 1978, 96)

"Texts (...) are truly 'popular' and 'of the people', in the sense that they operate almost entirely within the linguistic and literary competencies and expectations of the mass of the readers. As a result, these readers find such works truly pleasant to read because they *reaffirm* the validity of the strategies and conventions that they, as readers, have for making meaning of the world. Popular texts can therefore be accurately described as entertainment - precisely because they enable their readers to deny, even if only for a short while, the problem of an unavoidable *disordered* and alien world." (ibid. emphasis mine)

"To read an empirical text, then, is to reaffirm what we already know as members of a culture; it is to underscore the accuracy and efficacy of our everyday strategies for comprehending the world." (ibid.)

4.2. Eco

In his book *The Role of the Reader* (1979) Eco has an essay labelled *The Myth of Superman*.

Eco thinks that people purchase popular detective books not in order to gain some information but in order to gain redundancy, to read one more time what they already know and what they want to know again:

"A novel by Souvestre and Allain or by Rex Stout is a message which informs us very little and which, on the contrary, thanks to the use of redundant elements, keeps hammering away at the same meaning which we have peacefully acquired upon reading the first work of the series (...). The taste for the iterative scheme is presented then as a taste for redundancy. The hunger for entertaining narrative based on these mechanisms is a *hunger for redundancy*. From this viewpoint, the greater part of popular culture is a narrative of redundancy." (120)

"Paradoxically, the same detective story that one is tempted to ascribe to the products that satisfy the taste for the unforeseen or the sensational is, in fact, read for exactly opposite reason, as an invitation to that which is taken for granted, familiar, expected." (120)

"The attraction of the book, the sense of repose, of psychological extension which it is capable of conferring, lies in the fact that, plopped in an easy chair or in the seat of a train compartment, the reader continuously recovers, point by point, what he already knows, what he wants to know again: that is why he has purchased the book. He derives pleasure from the non-story (if indeed a story is a development of events which should bring us from the point of departure to a point of arrival where we would never have dreamed arriving^x)..." (119-120)

Then Eco (121) comes to defend our right to be lazy and our right to escape when we are *not* at work:

"Is it also natural that the cultured person who in moments of intellectual tension seeks a stimulus in an action painting or in a piece of serial music should in moments of relaxation and escape (healthy and indispensable) tend toward triumphant infantile laziness and turn to the consumer product for pacification in an orgy of redundancy?"

According to Eco we want no alien characters or unfamiliar plot structures. What we want is to meet our familiar fictional friends like Sherlock Holmes, superintendent Maigret etc.

"Proof of this is when our favourite author writes a story in which the usual character does not appear and we are not even aware that the fundamental scheme of a book is still like the others: we read the book with a certain detachment and are immediately prone to judge it a 'minor' work, a momentary phenomenon, or an interlocutory remark." (118).

When searching reasons for the pacification use of popular culture Eco comes to describe the differences between the early bourgeois society and the late-modern society (or latter day modernity). Eco argues that the old bourgeois society was "loaded with redundancy" and therefore informative texts (even in entertainment) were highly respected. Conversely, in contemporary society there is "a continuous load of information" and a loss of redundant, familiar things. In this situation "narrative of a redundant nature" appears as "the only occasion of true relaxation offered to the consumer". "High-redundancy messages" have a special enchantment in contemporary society.

Eco (121) describes contemporary advanced, modern (or late-modern) society as follows:

"In a contemporary industrial society, instead, the alternation of standards, the dissolution of tradition, social mobility, the fact that models and principles are 'consumable' - everything can be summed up under sign of a continuous load of information which proceeds by way of massive jolts, implying a continual reassessment of sensibilities, adaptation of psychological assumptions, and requalification of intelligence. Narrative of a redundant nature would appear in this panorama as an indulgent invitation to repose, the only occasion of true relaxation offered to the consumer. Conversely, 'superior' art only proposes schemes in evolution, grammars which mutually eliminate each other, and codes of continuous alternations."

Therefore, it is popular culture that offers the only occasion of true relaxation. Conversely, "superior" art offers no relaxation but hard work to do.

4.3. Rönnerberg

I have used the Finnish translation of Rönnerberg's book "Skitkul! Om sk. skräpkultur" [Crap! On so-called rubbish culture] (Rönnerberg 1990). Rönnerberg argues in her book against the discourses that dominate the discussion about culture for children and popular culture. The English quotations here are my translations.

"...popular programs do not usually contain great passions or new conceptions, but rather they are old and familiar, *safe* and *entertaining*: they offer some kind of emotional security (..) when the viewer has nothing better to do and when the world around her/him is often chaotic and difficult to understand. In that situation it is nice to meet the unchanged hero, who does what he always used to do. The watching child is looking forward very excitedly for the hero to do his typical 'trick'. And the child would

be very confused and disappointed if the 'trick' did not appear this time - but this is of course something that never happens. (...) The success of the serial depends therefore on its ability to offer automatic associations and to *fulfil expectations...*" (Rönnerberg 1990, 80)

Rönnerberg (34-35) talks about "the culture of expectations" and about "the culture of safety". Children do not really remember or recall what happened last time in the TV serial, but they know what used to happen in serials and they also recognize the familiar elements when seeing them.

"Recognizing is like unconscious memory that makes us feel safe and homelike - it is very important notion that makes us able to understand the enchantment of 'rubbish' in the insecure world. (...) The children (...) choose the culture of safety instead of the culture of problems."

5. Conclusion to part I

Almost every thinker discussed before mention the opposition between chaotic insecure everyday life and the ordered safe life that popular fiction offers. It seems to me that people can use popular fiction to restore their cognitive and moral order that is confused during frustrating and chaotic everyday life. And this recreation, moral remaking, reproduction, reaffirmation etc. of cognitive order gives the feeling that "everything is all right" and that "nothing is out of place". Therefore people can use popular fiction to get feeling that they are masters of their lives. There is no reason why this feeling should be considered false and negative. It is the cognitive order itself that produces disorder and bad feelings and the pressure to put the world in order. If the cognitive order is responsible for all this, why, then, should we change the world to get satisfaction? Is it not better to give to the cognitive order what it wants in fictional form?^{xi}

In my presentation the concept of time is crucial. All the words beginning with re- are the outcome of defining culture, communication, consciousness and social life as duration *in time*. All these structures do not continue their existence in time without active maintenance, reproduction or repetition. We can define the concept of reproduction as "keeping on existing in time". From that point of view we can see almost everything as ritual: when I meet somebody and say "good morning", I thereby ritually reaffirm the existing social relation. For instance Anthony Giddens (1979) stresses the dimension of time in his "structuration theory". Among others Tove Holmqvist (1989) sees television watching from the ritual point of view.

Above Umberto Eco refers to the social-historical conditions when explaining "the pacification use of popular culture". In contemporary advanced societies there seems to be more good reasons to seek pacification from rituals than in the traditional societies. The early modern society doesn't offer informative shocks, continuously altering standards, rapid change or "progress", which make our life insecure. This leads to the question about modern and post-modern (or late modern) living conditions. The problematic of time is also closely tied to historical stages of western culture. That is why I next try to contextualize socially and historically the notions presented here about the pacification use of popular culture.

PART II

6. Popular culture in the late-modern society

6.1. On terminology

Concepts like modern, modernity, modernism and post-modern, postmodernity, postmodernism are frequently used in contemporary discussion within social sciences. By *modernity* I refer to the epoch that follows the 'Middle Ages' or feudalism or which came into being with the Renaissance. The term modernity refers to the cultural and social conditions that changed with the rise of capitalism: modernity is contrasted with the traditional order and it is characterized by innovation, novelty and dynamism. *Modernism* is often used as an aesthetic term, which refers to twentieth century avant-garde movements. We can also talk about *modern theory*, which refers to the theoretical discourses that arouse with Descartes and are still effective in western thinking. The post-modern theory can be considered as a critique of the grounds of modern theory. Moreover, there is a plain term *modern* (and *post-modern*) that refers simply to the mood, state of mind or way of experiencing of people who live in certain conditions. (Best & Kellner 1991, 2-4, Featherstone 1988 and Wolff 1988).

Postmodernity, then, is an epoch that follows modernity and the term refers to a variety of economic, political, social and cultural transformations. "...the prefix "post" signifies that which comes after, a break or rupture with the modern which is defined in counterdistinction to it. (...) postmodernity is to suggest an epochal shift or break from modernity involving the emergence of a new social totality with its own distinct organizing principles." (Featherstone 1988, 198).

I am not so happy with those conceptions that see almost complete breaks in western tradition. I prefer to use term *latemodernity* that emphasizes the continuity of logic and principles of modernity. Modernity is now really mature; it has developed its principles to the extreme end. And in these conditions people are about to think and feel in a new way that is against modern ideals. In these conditions antimodern (or postmodern) thinking and feeling is awaking.

6.2. Time as infrastructure of social life

In the sociology of time there is a crucial distinction between circular (or cyclic) time and linear time (See Hassard 1990). In the primitive societies or in the Middle Ages the time conception is/ was circular. The rhythm of social life was based on rhythm of natural and biological events: sun rises and sets, and tomorrow it does the same; after summer it will be winter, and after winter it will be summer. When time is considered as cyclic, there is no progress, but an endless repetition of cycles. The horizon of expectation of people is: nothing is going to change; there is nothing new under the sun.

In the Middle Ages there were already some "islands" of strict linear time, but linear time became more general only along with the capitalistic development. Where the cyclic time was organic, linear time is mechanistic: it is based on rhythm of machines and therefore it is not dependent on natural or biological rhythms. The linear time conception makes possible the notion of progress. Everything is developing, i.e. not remaining the same. Time runs forward

and you have to hang on. Time also became insufficient economic good ("time is money") that you have to spare, and that is why people are hurrying all the time. (See Frykman & Löfgren 1984, 26-37).

The Enlightenment project can be characterized as an ideal and a demand for progress. One of the meanings for English word "progress" is "moving forwards". To progress means to develop over a period of time to a stronger, more mature, or more desirable state. Not only should the societies develop better, but the individuals should also progress in their projects (actually, all we "moderns" have a career to look after.).

In the early days of western modernity progress or change or "moving forwards" was not very fast. But nowadays the speed has increased and it is increasing all the time: society is speeding up its development and there is no sign of "putting on the brakes". The late-modern society offers and demands every day something new to comprehend, to learn or to master. And in relation to this everyday experience the pacification use of popular culture becomes important.

6.3. Conclusion: popular culture and late-modern society

In modern culture art is defined as progressive: the ideal work of art leaves behind the old conventions and searches for something new. An artist is a pioneer who wanders at the frontiers of representation. The great men (and women) are frontiersmen and explorers, who symbolically struggle near the ultimate edge of human capacity.

Therefore the cultural production that does not reach towards the unknown, but keeps on the familiar, is in modern evaluation nothing but "rubbish". Popular fiction is not progressive, but regressive: it is going in the completely wrong direction because it is not going forward, but coming back to the familiar. Popular culture is not struggling towards the unknown, towards the future. In fact, it is not at all struggling: it takes the easy way out and it does not face the problems. People who read popular book or watch popular film do not develop themselves and are degenerating rather than going forward.

However, people know better than the critics what they need. People's life is full of "informative shocks" (Eco) and their main work is to learn all those new matters that must be learned. People are desperately seeking rest, the time when they don't have to continuously develop themselves. In that scenery familiar and repetitive popular culture have a special enchantment for people. Popular culture offers one of the few "places" on earth, where people can really relax (i.e. not develop, not make efforts, not make progress).

This late-modern situation and experience constitute a new basis for discussion about popular culture. Now popular culture is valuable, because it allows escape from every day life and its demands for efficiency. Therefore "escape" is not necessarily a pejorative term, but a positive, emancipatory term. Escape means resistance against too demanding a system; escape is an escape from jail towards freedom.

REFERENCES:

- Bartlett, F.C. Remembering: a study in experimental and social psychology. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge 1932.
- Best, Steven & Kellner, Douglas. Postmodern Theory. Critical Interrogations. MacMillan. Houndmills etc. 1991.
- Blumler, Jay G. and Katz, Elihu (ed.) The Uses of Mass Communications. Current Perspectives on Gratification Research. Sage Publications. Beverly Hills and London 1974.
- Carey, James W. A Cultural Approach to Communication (orig. 1975). In: Communication as Culture. Essays on Media and Society. Boston 1989.
- Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger. (orig. 1966). An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. Ark Paperbacks, Routledge & Kegan Paul. London 1988.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. Introduction. In: Husserl, Intentionality and Cognitive Science, ed. Hubert L. Dreyfus, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London; England 1984.
- Durkheim, Émile. The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. (Orig. Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse, 1912). George Allen & Unwin LTD. London 1976.
- Eco, Umberto. The Myth of Superman, In: Eco, U.:The Role of the Reader, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1984.
- Featherstone, Mike. Pursuit of the Postmodern: An Introduction. Theory, Culture & Society. 5(1988)2-3.
- Frykman, Jonas and Löfgren, Jonas. Den kultiverade människan. LiberFörlag. Stockholm 1984.
- Giddens, Anthony. Yhteiskuntatieteen keskeisiä ongelmia. (orig. Central Problems in Social Theory, 1979). Otava. Keuruu 1984.
- Hassard, John. Introduction: The Sociological Study of Time. In: The Sociology of Time, ed. by John Hassard. MacMillan. Houndmills etc. 1990.
- Heidegger, Martin. Being and Time. (orig. 1927). Transl. John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson. Basil Blackwell. Oxford 1987.
- Holmqvist, Tove. Teve som ritual. Symboliska påståenden om social skiktning i 12 fiktionsprogram. Centrum för masskommunikationsforskning Stockholms universitet. Stockholm 1989.
- Karvonen, Erkki. Odotuksen struktuurit ja populaarikulttuuri. Fenomenologinen ja postfenomenologinen kehittelmä intentionaalisuuden strukturaalisesta teoriasta; tämän sovellutukset viestinnän teoriaan sekä populaarikulttuurin tutkimukseen. [*The Structures of Expectation and Popular Culture. A Fenomenological and Postfenomenological Explication of Structural Theory of Intentionality; its Application to Communication Theory and to Study of Popular Culture.*] Unpublished manuscript. University of Tampere, Dept. of Journalism and Mass Communication. Tampere 1992.
- Lukes, Steven. Emile Durkheim. His Life and Work. A Historical and Critical Study. Penguin Books. 1973.
- Lyotard, Jean-Francois. Tieto postmodernissa yhteiskunnassa. (orig. La condition postmoderne). Vastapaino. Tampere 1985.

Moscovici, Serge. Notes Towards a Description of Social Representations. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. Vol. 18(1988). ss. 211-250.

Moscovici, Serge. The Phenomenon of Social Representations. In: *Social Representations*. Ed. by Robert M. Farr & Serge Moscovici. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge etc. 1984.

Neale, Stephen. *Genre*. British Film Institute, London 1980.

Radway, Janice A. Phenomenology, Linguistics, and Popular Literature. *Journal of Popular Culture* 12(1978):1 summer.

Rosengren, Karl Erik, Wenner, Lawrence A. and Palmgreen, Philip (ed.). *Media Gratifications Research. Current Perspectives*. Sage Publications. Beverly Hills, London, New Delhi 1985.

Rönnberg, Margareta. Siistiä! Ns. roskakulttuurista. (Orig. Skitkul! Om sk. skräpkultur) Like Kustannus Oy. Helsinki 1990.

Schutz, Alfred. *Collected Papers I*. Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1962.

Searle, John. *Intentionality. An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge etc. 1983.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Fontana/ Croom Helm. London 1976.

Wolff, Janet. The Politics of Postmodernism. In: *Vanhasta uuteen: kynnys vai kuilu? Tekstien välisistä suhteista*. Toim. Pirjo Ahokas ja Veijo Hietala. Sarja A no: 16, Turun yliopiston taiteiden tutkimuksen laitos [University of Turku, Dept. of Arts]. Turku 1988.

Wuthnow, Robert et al. *Cultural analysis. The Work of Peter L. Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault, and Jürgen Habermas*. Routledge & Kegan Paul. London etc. 1985.

ⁱ In German it is possible to make distinction between "*Darstellung*" vs. "*Vorstellung*" when speaking about "representations". *Vorstellung* means "idea, notion, conception" i.e. something cognitive. "*Darstellung*" means also public or external "presentation".

ⁱⁱ See also Williams (1976, 62-63). In his "*Keywords*" Williams sees the "unresolved" ambiguity in the word "communication". On the one hand communication has an old meaning "share" (communion) or "to make common to many", which refers to a common or mutual process. On the other hand the word has more modern and technical meaning "transmit", which suggests a one-way process.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is interesting that Douglas refers already at that time (1966) to Bartlett (1932), who is now accepted as a forerunner of cognitive science.

^{iv} For instance psychiatrist Fredrick Wertham wrote in 1954 a book named "*Seduction of the innocent*" against adventure comics. In Sweden medical scientist Nils Bejerot wrote similar book against comics. Symptomatically Bejerot orientates himself later against other social pathology, namely against drug abuse.

^v This section of the paper is based on my licentiate thesis (Karvonen 1992). In the thesis I have broadly discussed phenomenological theory.

^{vi} This is the term used by Alfred Schutz (1962).

^{vii} Phenomenology here comes near to cognitive science and its notion of schemata. See Dreyfus 1984.

^{viii} John Searle (1983) uses the expression "satisfaction" and "conditions of satisfaction" in this context.

^{ix} This leads us to Heidegger's (1987, 225-) notion of "care" (*Sorge*). It belongs to the ontological character of the human being that we have to "take care of things". The world does not stay in order by itself, but we have to work to restore the world. The notion of care comes close to concepts of "reproduction" or "maintenance" that refer to keeping something "alive" in time.

^x A story defined as "a development of events which should bring us from the point of departure to a point of arrival" fits well with the central principles of modernity (progression). Jean-Francois Lyotard (1985) talks about "the great stories" which serves as a legitimization basis for knowledge. One central story of modernity is the Enlightenment story. Lyotard conceives "the postmodern" as unreliability towards the great metanarratives of modernity.

^{xi} The western answer has been: Change the world! Conversely the orient answer has been: Change your mind so that you can accept the world such as it is! The western slogan mirrors the modern relation to nature, and the orient answer reflects the non-modern attitude to nature.