

Mass Media and the Semiotics of Popular Culture

The paper attempts to define and describe the principal characteristics of popular culture in western society, as well as its close relationship with the mass media. As the spread of contemporary popular culture implies the use of mass media, the paper attempts to provide an insight as to how characteristics of popular culture are shaped into media content. The paper represents a middle ground among the theories of popular culture and takes all of its various expressions into account – both those which appeal to baser human instincts and those which provide a highly aesthetic experience – i.e., both media spectacle and true art form. Society is viewed as both a consumer and a producer of popular culture, which does not exclude the possibility of capitalist cultural production. Finally, the paper attempts to provide an answer to the question what makes popular ‘popular’ and supports its conclusions with examples of some expressions of popular culture; for instance, television, film, music and language.

Key words: mass media, popular culture, semiotics