

Aesthetics and Fantasy of Kemalist Nationalism in New Media

Ivo Furman & Can Sungu

Goldsmiths College, University of London & Berlin University of Arts

i.furman@gold.ac.uk, can@cansungu.com

Turkey as a developing country has been experiencing profound change in the past 30 years; it is becoming increasingly wealthy and unequal. The rise of a Islamic middle class and the electoral victories of the Islamic Justice and Development Party (AKP) have destabilized the social hegemony of the secular middle and upper classes, leading to a situation that can perhaps be best characterised by the term *Kulturkampf*. Our argument here is that the emergence of a conservative and entrepreneurial Islamic middle-class rivalling the economic and political power of the secular classes has caused social antagonism to be displaced onto the cultural sphere. The new public spaces (private television, radio and the internet) created by the processes of neo-liberalization have become the virtual battlegrounds for the ongoing culture wars between the two groups.

As part of this paper, we intend to analyse what we have labelled as 'Pop-Kemalism' and can be described as the proliferation of commercial nationalist symbols in public space. What is remarkable about this phenomena is that the explosion in the amount of nationalist symbols is an entirely civilian based initiative. While nationalist symbolism until the early 1990s was exclusively regulated by the state, what characterises the present is the decline in official nationalist iconography and proliferation of commercial nationalist iconography. Drawing from the work of Appadurai (1996,2006), Bauman (2001) and Hage (1998,2003), we want to argue that the re-emergence of nationalist imagery can be seen as a reaction to the effects of globalization or what has been termed as 'liquid modernity'. Adding to this, the return of the nationalist symbol within the modality of the civilian Mustafa Kemal Atatürk can be understood as a dialectical reply to the cultural politics of the veil. Contrary to popular opinion, what we hope to demonstrate using the work of Žižek is that (re)popularisation of nationalist symbols, rather than constituting a legitimate basis of resistance is actually symptomatic of a post-political situation that helps sustain and replicate the effects of neo-liberalisation.

The second part of the paper will be devoted to two primary themes. Firstly we will analyse how cultural production acts as a virtual 'screen' for the reproduction of particular subjectivities. To demonstrate this point we will be using a sketch from the Turkish secular comedy series 'Olacak O Kadar', to demonstrate how cultural productions act as phantasmic screens for the reproduction of particular subjectivities. In other words we will be discussing the aesthetics of Kemalist nationalism. Secondly, following the work of Jodi Dean on this topic (2009,2010) we will be discussing how the subjectivity sustained by the politics of Pop-Kemalism is co-opted into the profit-making mechanisms of new media. Here, we will be discussing how the structural architecture of new media spaces intensify subjective insecurities and re-format user activity into corporate profit.

INTRODUCTION

Turkey as a developing country has been profoundly effected by the processes of neo-liberalization and globalisation since the September Coup of 1980. The gross domestic product (GDP) has been growing at an average growth rate of 4% per annum since 1981, alongside a steady increase in income inequality (GINI Index). This means that Turkish society in the global era is becoming increasingly wealthy and unequal. Having one the worst income distributions in the OECD, the neo-liberalisation of the Turkish economy has intensified the gap between the rich and the poor to dramatic proportions. At the same time, the processes of neo-liberalisation transcribed in the form of International Monetary Fund (IMF) policies have resulted in the emergence of a conservative, Islamic middle-class whose interests are represented by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has been in power since their landslide election victory in 2002. While representing the interests of the Islamic conservatives in Turkish society, the AKP has also remained friendly to international capital and finance. The main result of this duality is that the successive AKP governments have destabilized the social hegemony of the secular middle and upper classes, leading to a situation that can perhaps be best characterised by the term *Kulturkampf*. This conflict, what Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes as 'the battle between state capitalism and global capitalism,' can be conceptualized as the cultural version of similar ongoing conflicts in European states such as Germany and France that have strong statist traditions.¹

Formerly, the social hegemony of the secular class in Turkey had been guaranteed by the military-bureaucratic machine of the Turkish republic. This relationship, aptly described as 'crony capitalism' (Singh & Zammit, 2006; Morck, Wolfenzon & Yeung, 2005; Oba, Ozsoy & Atakan 2010), was characterised by the legitimization of the Kemalist bureaucracy as the sovereign representation of the nation in exchange for the right to maintain a exploitative relationship within the population residing within the territorial confines of the nation-state. In short, the system of hegemony within the confines of the Turkish nation-state depended on a relationship in which the bureaucracy allowed the continuation of the financial dominance of particular groups in exchange for the same groups bestowing political legitimacy to the regime. This exploitative structure was then secured and naturalized through the educational and disciplinary institutions such as the military and mandatory schooling. Kemalism as the official state ideology served as the mechanism through which the system of hegemony was legitimized. The legal, educational and religious institutions of the Kemalist state functioned as the disciplinary institutions through which the multitude residing within the confines of the Turkish state were re-constituted as Turkish citizens into the aforementioned system of sovereignty. In other words, the principal role of institutions in nation-building was to create a

¹ Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2011), "Epistemologies of the South: Reinventing Social Emancipation ", Critical Theory Summer school, University of London - Birkbeck, unpublished.

'people' to fit a state.² The same can be said of Kemalist politics and its official political representation of the Republican People's Party (CHP). Sinan Ciddi (2009) demonstrates that the so-called 'centre-left' CHP, rather than attempting to politically orient itself to the demands of its constituency, has rather attempted to re-orient its constituency to the party's official line. It is this logic of attempting to create a citizenry to fit a particular mould of hegemony and sovereignty that resulted in the numerous military coups of 1960, 1971 and the socio-political turmoil of the late 1970s. What these efforts demonstrated symptomatically was the radical incompatibility of the Kemalist notions of sovereignty with the multitude residing within the territorial confines of Turkey.

In this context, the coup of 1980 can be understood as the most thorough and engrossing attempt to maintain this particular relationship of crony capitalism as the total socio-political horizon of Turkish society. The social fragmentation combined with a period of severe economic decline during the 1970s had resulted in a situation in which both the financial and the bureaucratic elite were rapidly losing ground to increasingly radicalised challenges from both ethnic minorities and unrepresented political factions. As such, the only way of re-securing hegemony was through the implementation of a military coup. However, in contrast with the coup d'états of 1961 and 1970, the coup of 1980 attempted to implement a total replacement of both political and civil institutions that functioned as centres of social antagonism. As Öktem (2011) points out, this led to the destruction of trade unions and associational life. At the same time, due to the state of bankruptcy, the inward-looking corporatist economy had to be opened up to international capital. Therefore the results of the coup of 1980 both opened the way to a swift transition into an export-oriented economy and prepared a social tabula rasa for the neo-liberalization of Turkish society. Politically, what we have witnessed between then and now is the transition from a politics of confrontation between the immanent Islamic and the entrenched secular classes to one of uneasy co-existence.

Yet as put forward by Sedef Arat-Koç (2008), the present condition of *Kulturkampf* is the cultural dimension of the unfolding dynamics between elites created by state capitalism and the emerging elites created by neo-liberalisation. Her argument is that the emergence of an Islamic rival to challenge the economic and political power of the dominant secular middle-class has resulted in a "cultural turn" in Turkish society; this means that the emphasis of distinction has shifted from the accumulation of capital to the accumulation of culture. With the emergence of cultural capital as the field for a 'politics of resentment' (Atasoy, 2008), new media spaces created by the Internet have become the principle battlegrounds for the enactment of a *Kulturkampf* between the newly emerging neo-liberal Islamic elite and the old, entrenched secular elite. In short, the transition from open political confrontation to uneasy co-existence has relocated the antagonism between these two groups onto the cultural sphere.

At the same time as the displacement of social antagonism onto the cultural sphere, Turkey has made a rapid transition into a consumer society. Our argument is that the integration of Turkish society into the global economy has changed the ways in which both the secular and the Islamic classes express their identities. The phenomena of what we shall call 'Pop-Kemalism' is one of the facets through which this transition can be observed. 'Pop-Kemalism' or the popularisation of Kemalist nationalist symbolism through images of a 'civilian' Mustafa Kemal Atatürk must be viewed within the same context as the emergence of the veil as a cultural symbol representing the youth of the emerging Islamic class (Göle, 1996).³ As others

² For more about the current state of religious and ethnic minorities that were excluded in the process of nation-building, see Çağatay, 2006; Kasaba & Bozdoğan, 1997; Oran, 2005; Özkırımlı & Spyros, 2008; Sarioglu, 2008.

³ See Appendix I.

have pointed out (Hart, 1999; Özyürek, 2006; Türkmen 2000; Navarro-Yashin 2002) Pop-Kemalism can be seen as the dialectical reply to the cultural politics of the veil.

POP-KEMALISM

Until the military intervention of 1980, Kemalist symbolism was under the strict supervision of the state. This meant that the images and physical materiality of this symbolism was regulated by the state. As the emergence of Pop-Kemalism demonstrates, what has happened in post-1980 period is that the state authority over regulation of nationalist symbolism has declined. As Özyürek (2004) points out, the official state imagery of Atatürk in the pre-1980 period was a stern and distant figure. This image was under the sole proprietorship of the state and tended to have relatively few variations. However, from the 1980s onward a new kind of Atatürk imagery emerges in direct correlation with a decline in the more traditional imagery. This new kind of imagery tends to display Atatürk as a typical middle-class secular Turk, often enjoying or participating in regular, daily activities dressed in Western leisurewear.⁴ We had already suggested that this transition in the aesthetics of nationalist imagery can be understood as a dialectical reply to the cultural politics of the veil. On top of this, what needs to be added is that the proliferation of such images are symptomatic of the decline of state authority over public space. While Kemalist symbolism and images had hitherto enjoyed an almost uncontested dominance over the organization of public space, what the emergence of Pop-Kemalism demonstrates is that there is a desire to signify nationalist imagery beyond the spaces dominated by the state. What this means in turn is that the state is no longer the sole organizer and producer of space in the Turkish public sphere. To explain the heterogenization of public space in Turkey, we need to turn to some international developments to help illuminate this issue.

During the global neo-liberal transition from the late 1970s onwards, or what Zygmund Bauman has described as 'liquid modernity' (2000, 2006a, 2006b), the social institutions that constitute disciplinary society and consolidate the sovereignty of the state are put into crises.⁵ This means that one of the consequences of neo-liberalisation is a retreat of state authority and regulation over public space and the explosion of new hybrid spaces. At the same time, the public spaces created and regulated by the state are increasingly commercialised through economic processes such as privatization. Therefore one of the main results of the transition to liquid modernity is that the spatiality of social fabric has become increasingly hybridised.

Coming back to Turkey, what we see is that the coup of 1980 was the event that effectively plugged Turkish society into the on-going global dynamics of post-modernization and neo-liberalization. To put it in Hardt and Negri's words, what the coup of 1980 did effectively was to open up Turkey to the 'the general crises of institutions'.⁶ In this context, what is remarkable about the emergence of Pop-Kemalism is the ad-hoc and performative rituals built around these images. As the boundaries between institutions and public space are increasingly becoming oblique and porous, disciplinary practices that were once exclusive formations of institutions begin to seep out onto the increasingly hybrid public space. As Yael Navarro-Yashin (2002) has aptly pointed out, these rituals which lack some sort of institutional regulation are themselves increasingly ephemeralized. Yet, although these rituals have become increasingly hybridised in their form, they still at the same time possess a structural homology in that they reproduce nationalist ideology within non-institutional environments. If we are to accept this observation, what needs to be answered next is the

⁴ See Appendix II.

⁵ For more on the effects of globalization and neo-liberalisation, see Appadurai, 1996; Dirlik, 2000; Hardt & Negri 2000, 2004; Harvey, 1989; Jameson, 1991.

⁶ Hardt & Negri (2000: 197).

following question: is the emergence of Pop-Kemalism symptomatic of a form of politics that is attempting to resist the de-stabilizing flows of neo-liberalism?

An initial analysis of Pop-Kemalism would suggest that the re-emergence of nationalist symbols is a political expression of disenfranchised multitudes trying to resist the hybridizing consumerist flows of neo-liberalisation. As Esra Özyürek describes it, “[i]n the 1990s Kemalist politicians and intellectuals frequently reflected on the meaning of this new Atatürk imagery. They contrasted the interest in the leader with the hatred people elsewhere were displaying toward other state leaders at the time and took the difference as a sign of the strength of Atatürk's principles. (...) Many politicians and intellectuals describe the recent interest in Atatürk as a kind of resurrection (*yeniden diriliş*) or an awakening (*uyanış*).”⁷ In other words, many politicians and intellectuals view Pop-Kemalism as a re-invigorating of Kemalist politics within the cultural sphere. In this view, the secular classes of Turkish society have increasingly resorted to the symbolism of Kemalism as preserving their identities within a rapidly changing social landscape. Therefore Pop-Kemalism is to be conceptualized as a legitimate political expression of the marginalized multitude.

There are two main problems with such an analysis. Firstly, the re-emergence of nationalism symbolism does not necessarily mean that the multitude residing beneath the layer of cultural and political representation is fully 'covered' by this new phenomenon. Much rather, Pop-Kemalism as a form of cultural politics is conducted by a much smaller socio-economic group who claim to stand for the greater social being. Secondly, and more importantly, such an analysis assumes that the cause-object of desire – which, in this instance is a 'return' of bureaucratic authoritarianism – is legitimate precisely because of the existing desire to implement against the neo-liberal regime. The risk with such analysis is that it can legitimize authoritarian and fascist desires simply because they take a stance against neo-liberalisation. What is even more problematic is that such an analysis does not account for whether Pop-Kemalism actually stands for any kind of progressive or emancipatory politics at all. Contrary to such a viewpoint, what we would like to argue instead is that the symbolism of Pop-Kemalism, rather than constituting a legitimate political expression, constitutes the condition of impossibility of political change within contemporary Turkish society. To put in stark words, the return to an isolated, economically bankrupt state-capitalist organization of society can only exist as a fragment of imagination, only as part of ideological fantasy. What Pop-Kemalism effectively demands is the removal of the antagonism (neo-liberalism) while retaining the productivity and profits provided the same system. As such, the desire to remove the antagonism is in fact an impossible desire because the removal of the obstacle would actually cause the dissolution of desire itself. To put in other words, the necessity for Pop-Kemalism to exist is based on the existence of neo-liberalism. It is the precisely within this ideological horizon that the imagined obstacle constitutes the very limit to political change. As Hardt and Negri aptly point out 'increasingly, any attempt at isolation or separation will mean only a more brutal kind of domination by the global system, a reduction to powerlessness and poverty’ - therefore the expression of desire as such, rather than being emancipatory, forms the conditions for both the impossibility of change and the further intensification of the neo-liberalising social effects.⁸

Therefore what needs to be differentiated is between an actual politics of change and a fantasy of politics. Our argument is that the phenomena of Pop-Kemalism, rather than a representation of a legitimate desire for emancipatory politics, in actuality functions as the ideological fantasy that allows for the disenfranchised secular classes to participate in the

⁷ Özyürek (2006: 94)

⁸ Hardt and Negri (2000: 284)

production of neo-liberalisation. If we are to agree that the mechanism of fantasy allows to function as if we are not being exploited/resisting, this means fantasy is the primary mechanism through which ideology operates because it normalises antagonistic relationships. Žižek writes:

The standard notion of the way fantasy works within ideology is that of a fantasy-scenario which obfuscates the true horror of a situation: instead of a full rendering of the antagonisms which traverse our society, we indulge in the notion of society as an organic Whole, kept together by forces of solidarity and co-operation.⁹

So in essence what this means is that we psychologically pacify and adjust ourselves to systems of exploitation through fantasy. However this fantasy is never complete, nor final. Rather there exists a traumatic kernel of the Real residing beyond our fantasmic realities that constantly returns to disturb and overturn the fantasy. It is because of this potentiality of disturbance that we often find ourselves in situations in which the process of identification is foreclosed insofar as it remains a constant incomplete. The paradox is that although the activity makes us feel incomplete, we still keep on doing it, simply because we believe the opposite of what we know.

POST-NATIONAL SUBJECTIVITIES AND THE NEW MEDIA

Thus far we have identified neo-liberalisation and the decline of the Kemalist nation-state as the two dynamics that have reshaped the way in which we discuss Kemalist nationalism today. The third dynamic that needs to be discussed is the impact of new and hybridised spaces on Kemalist identity and nationalism. What characterizes the effect of these spaces on Kemalist identity is what Žižek describes as the decline of symbolic efficiency. The concept of declining symbolic efficiency as developed by Žižek, describes the decline of meta-meaning, a situation in which the symbol loses its power to signify the same in different contexts. Within the pop-Kemalist fantasy which equates sovereign power with the state, the decline in state having the authority to say the final word on social formations equals the decline in symbolic efficiency that renders the possibility of fantasy. In other words, our argument is that the creation of new public spaces existing beyond the authority of the state create an affect of symbolic decline upon Kemalist identities. However, the decline in the power of a symbol to foreclose meaning does not necessarily equal a nullification of the desire for the symbol to assert its power. This situation of unsatisfied desire results in the creation of a subjectivity in which the Kemalists know what they believe is impotent but still want to believe in it. A subjectivity characterised by the existence of unsatisfiable desires, pushes to find some sort of satisfaction. But since these desires cannot be satisfied, this psychological mechanism rather than dissolving the desire, ends up intensifying the existing desire itself. Therefore, the impact created by these new spaces ends up intensifying the desire for Kemalist identities to enunciate the re-assertion of the power of Kemalist symbolism.

The expression of this reflexive loop between unsatisfied desire, failure and intensification of desire is what Jodi Dean (2010) identifies as the logic of the drive: 'drive is quite literally the very 'drive' to break the All of continuity in which we are embedded, to introduce a radical imbalance into it.' Our argument is that communicative capitalism is a formation that relies on this imbalance, on the repeated suspension of narratives, patterns, identities, norms, etc''. Drawing from this statement, we introduce our second argument: being the principle location for the consumption of culture, corporate media spaces such as Youtube rely on the creation of content for profitability. Therefore content creation depends on the need for a subject to

⁹ Žižek (1997: 5).

comment and assert itself in an online environment. It is only the unsatisfied user that possesses the desire to comment. By capturing this reflexive loop, these corporations profit from the heightening of subjective dissatisfaction. The more dissatisfaction, the more commentary. So then our argument is that the business model of new media causes the further intensification our feelings of dissatisfaction in order to reproduce itself and create profit.

To demonstrate the intricate relationship between ideological fantasy, drive and the reproduction of space, we wish to turn to a video, uploaded to Youtube on the 11th of August 2009.¹⁰ It is a part of a weekly comedy show, *Olacak O Kadar*, which was broadcast for 22 years on Turkish television channels until its final season last year. The show consists of sketches that aim to confront contemporary issues in Turkey through political parody. At the same time what makes this show so popular is because it acts as a screen onto which ideological fantasy is projected. In other words, the production of shows similar to *Olacak O Kadar* function on the boundaries of the 'objectively subjective' by taking actual events and explaining them on a subjective level. It is precisely the process of rendering the Real of an event into a particular symbolic reality that in turn enables the subject to reproduce ideological fantasy. In exchange for maintaining a space from which ideological fantasy can be reproduced, new media spaces such as Youtube extract profits from the interaction of the subject with the digital object. To demonstrate this relationship, we will now firstly turn to the aesthetic dimension that functions as the screen on which ideological fantasy can be reproduced.

AESTHETICS AND FANTASY OF KEMALIST NATIONALISM

All of *Olacak O Kadar* sketches are written by the creator of the show, Levent Kirca who also plays a part in every sketch and takes on the mission of “delivering the message”. He functions as a sort of a messenger who picks up the fundamental message of the sketch and says the last word after everyone laughed enough and the time has come for telling a couple of serious words. His mission is also accomplished in this sketch by mentioning the key point to be ashamed of: “Look whom you made me draw as the culprit! It is us who are guilty!”¹¹

Revealing the details of the dramatic structure in the parody allows us to understand the aesthetic dimension to Pop-Kemalist symbolism. The criticizing humour of the parody is driven by the encounter/ interaction of the positive and negative stereotypes. The stereotypes are built on pre-figured cultural codes, preconceptions and images and tend to be mainly used by mass media to communicate the message in a quick, easy understandable and effective way. In other words, the stereotypes are the images of a simple sampling method which underlies the social, ethnic and physical differences in a society in order to define easily who is “me” and the “other” or “the good” and “the bad”. This sketch utilizes the power of stereotypes to have a clear distinction between two poles: the secular, western oriented and well-educated people and the people of a corrupted society who become greedy tricksters.

The characters are positioned in a strict hierarchy which has a determining role over the construction of the fantasy. The good, the citizens of Turkish nation stay at the lowest level in the hierarchy and are the victims of the bad, or the corrupted state. The commissar functions as a moderator who is supposed to represent “the utopia of a well-functioning state” which has to be fair, righteous and respectable. Therefore the potent authority of the commissar is unconditionally accepted by the citizens who believe in the police by solving the weird case. The good victim-subjects are whom the audience supposedly identifies with. Whereas the inmates of *Susurluk* case (a key case which exposed the secret connections between the

¹⁰ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZqwkB2Y-20> (Search for “*Olacak O Kadar Robot*”).

¹¹ See Appendix IV.

government, the police and the army) were freed, the writers have to stay under arrest. Instead of a health service that a state has to offer to its citizens for free, the doctor demands from the patient's relative an extra payment; or the tenant is forced by the landlord to pay the rent on dollars. In short, the social system does not function anymore. The jailer, the doctor, the landlord and the congressmen all form the core of the fantasy describing the corrupted, declining state services. What the Kemalist fantasy explores and materializes for the audience is the fantasy that various social groups have destroyed the state. These groups which perhaps stand as a loose analogies for the impact of neo-liberalisation on the housing, justice, health care and political system, constitute the persona non-grata of the Kemalist subjectivity. It is against these people that Atatürk emerges as the object that can restore the grip of the 'good' in the aforementioned contexts.

What makes Atatürk more than a superhero is that he is accepted as a father figure, as the father of the Turkish nation. As the master signifier, he comes back to bring the responsible persons to account, to punish them for what they did to Turkey, the country that he entrusted to his followers. Things might be bad right now, but Atatürk will return to punish those responsible for the situation. However, the bizarreness of the situation is that Atatürk is dead and he will not return to punish anyone. Hence to impart a fetishistic quality on Atatürk, the Kemalist subject makes a split between knowledge and belief: 'I know very well, but nonetheless I believe...!'. As such, the figure of Atatürk functions as a fetish that allows the subject to overcome the contradiction between their experience of the real and their beliefs. Žižek, drawing upon the Marxist notion of commodity fetishism suggests that the fetish is 'the embodiment of the Lie which enables us to sustain the unbearable truth', the object that obfuscates the initial antagonism.¹² Therefore, the fetish functions as the object that can sustain and reproduce both ideological fantasy and the subjectivities associated with the fantasy.

Atatürk as the fetish elicits particular forms of attachment on behalf of the subject. These attachments, namely paternal and erotic, are related to way Atatürk is constituted as an aesthetic object. As the paternal father that saved the nation, Atatürk is imagined to be a perfect and an immortal father. He is dominant but in a bittersweet way, he is educating, leading, caring, loving and protecting. His charisma is irresistible and he has an aura that might be uncanny or frightening sometimes.¹³

Atatürk as a charismatic masculine figure functions as the epitome of the Western masculine type - golden blond hair, a square face with blue eyes and long eyebrows and a robust and athletic body. The outfit also represents a modern Western man. The black tuxedo, the fine varnished shoes and a hat.¹⁴ In addition to this, the feminine fantasy suggests an image of Atatürk as a good lover, a very polite, romantic and - platonically - erotic gentleman. This element of eroticism elicited through the partial unveiling of the desire object. We never get to see or experience Atatürk in full, rather the parody uses dramatic effects such as footsteps, or shadows to heighten a sense of eroticism on behalf of the subject.

The music is also important to note in the intensification of the affect. During the whole sketch, we hear a particular song which repeats every time when Atatürk enters in. It functions as a leitmotiv, as a repeating theme, in order to intensify the moments of crescendo. This song is the remix version of the 10th year march of Turkish Republic which was very popular in 1990s Turkey. It was widely accepted as a symbolic song of Kemalist euphoria, a song that signifies a victory within the Kulturkampf between the Islamic and secular elite.

¹² Žižek (2001: 165).

¹³ The Turkish saying "He is a man whose shadow makes you yellow" is literally used in the sketch.

¹⁴ See Appendix II.

The song is only a trivial aspect of the whole concept of the Pop-Kemalism that suggests a modern interpretation of Atatürk as a civil person (like one of us) instead of his military identity as a great soldier/ leading general. The remix version made the 10th year march possible that its bureaucratic and military associations vanish and it becomes an ordinary/ daily use among the Turkish folk during the football matches, family celebrations, school ceremonies and TV shows.

So far, we have demonstrated how imparting fetishistic qualities on the symbol of Atatürk, allows the nationalist subject to both mediate a normative relationship with social reality and sustain fantasy. But then, if this identity is based on an unsatisfiable desire, what is happening in actuality is that the fetish is sustaining a subjectivity of dissatisfaction. Here the key question is, if a particular fantasy is making someone increasingly unsatisfied, then why don't they confront it? To explain this, a reference to the work of Lacan is useful. In his studies, Lacan noticed that some of his patients were very aware that the symptoms making them unhappy. Yet these patients stubbornly chose not to confront these symptoms despite his repeated attempts. This caused Lacan to think about the following question: “why, in spite its interpretation, does the symptom not dissolve itself; why does it persist?” (Žižek, 1989: 74). Here, the concept of 'enjoyment' (jouissance) takes a central stage, the subject enjoys his symptom, it has become mark which distinguishes him as a self from others. Therefore the reason why Kemalist identity has such a strong grip over Turkish identity is precisely because the subjective feeling of dissatisfaction created by the identity allows the subject to differentiate itself from imaginary others.

We had already discussed how new media becomes spaces of cultural consumption by capturing the unsatisfied subject. Content within these spaces is created through the harnessing and intensification of the unsatisfied subject's reflexive drive. The commentary formed around the object of the video is a demonstration of the relationship between drive and content production.¹⁵

The way in which unsatisfied desire is intensified is through the act of the comment. All the users address some indeterminate other but yet at the same time the users really believe that their comments are making a difference. The addressing of indeterminate others is the primary mode of commentary in online spaces. For example, user shaolinfelix comments that “is it possible to pray when you are a slave, so go pray to Atatürk, this nation is going to get cold feet over it's religion because of bastards like you, don't forget how it felt to be invaded, no need to talk about Atatürk, you too would have been born, but you would have not known who your father is, you bastard”. Or another user, TheDavulunsesi suggests that “it is really today that we can understand much better the importance of this supreme person. I wish colourful dreams to the naïve people who are still sleeping”. The important question to ask here is: who are these users addressing? Or to put it in another way, who are the people that these users imagine themselves answering to? What we see at work is the gaze of an indeterminate other. It is determined by what Jodi Dean (2009) has called the 'fantasy of abundance':

Not only are people accustomed to putting their thoughts online but also, in so doing, they believe their thoughts and ideas are registering – write and tell me what you think! They imagine themselves as brave participants in a combative arena or prostrate confessors acknowledging their shortcomings. One believes that one's contributions matters, that it means something to and within a context

¹⁵ See Appendix III,

broader than oneself. Contributing to the information stream thus has a subjective registration effect detached from any actual impact of efficacy.¹⁶

Speaking out to indeterminate space is inter-passive in that we experience a registration effect in the act of commenting. But at the same time the act of commenting does not change the real condition within which we exist. So while the possibility of commenting intensifies the subjective feelings of unsatisfied desire, it does not alter the overall relationship between the subject and the symptom.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be made from our analysis:

- In the post-1980 period, the neo-liberalisation of Turkey has resulted in the decline of bureaucratic power. Rather than withering away alongside the power of the state, Kemalist nationalism has now become the main principle signifier of identification for the secular class in Turkey. Rather than symbolizing a politics of change and resistance towards neo-liberalisation, the return of nationalist symbols in public space are symptomatic of the current impossibility of constructing a new politics of resistance. In other words, Pop-Kemalism is part of the process that replicates and intensifies the effects of neo-liberalism in Turkey. Therefore Pop-Kemalism, in actuality functions as part of the ideological fantasy that normalises antagonistic relationships.
- The psychological mechanism behind the replication of post-modern subjectivities is fantasy. Olacak o Kadar as a cultural production functions as a screen from which Kemalist fantasy is reproduced. The reproduced fantasy masks the impossibility between the desire of the subject and object-cause of desire. Within the aesthetic dimension, Atatürk functions as the fetish figure that sustains and reproduces the fantasy. However, the impossibility of relationship between the subject and the object-cause of desire (or what Žižek describes as the Real) keeps on disturbing the power of the fantasy. As a result of this, the subject feels the urge to constantly re-enunciate the relationship towards the object-cause, yet at the same time the process of identification is foreclosed insofar as it remains a constant incomplete.
- New media has become the pre-eminent battleground for the Turkish Kulturkampf. Our argument is that the spatiality of new media captures and intensifies the dissatisfactions of our subjective experience. This means that as a battleground for culture wars, new media heightens the feelings of dissatisfaction without providing a winner. This situation of inter-passivity is created by the production of commentary towards indeterminate others. This commentary is in turn co-opted by corporations responsible for the production of new media spaces into profit.

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¹⁶ Dean (2009:30).

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APPENDIX I



Young Turkish women dressed up with Atatürk paraphernalia and taking part in a demonstration called the '*Rally for the Republic*'.

APPENDIX II



The civil imagery of Atatürk as a western modern man

APPENDIX III

Comments on Youtube for the video “*Olacak O Kadar Robot Resim*” (Screen-shot from Youtube, last accessed: 28.8.2011)

Top Comments

paylaşım için çok teşekkürler. Umarım burada verilen mesajı anlarlar. Çok sağol.

ATAM İZİNDEYİZZZ

[korayqry](#) 1 year ago 24

sexy girls olarak değiştirilsin bu başlığın adı. o zmaan daha çok izlenir belki anlayana..

[fatih227](#) 1 year ago 17

All Comments (36)

[see all](#)

Respond to this video...

hakikaten bugün o yüce insanın kıymeti hala iyi anlaşıyor, uyumaya devam eden saf insanlarda iyi uykular, renkli rüyalar dilerim

[TheDavulunesi](#) 2 months ago

Ben Atatürkçüyüm. Atatürkçü, gerçekçi ve bilimsel olur. Levent Kırca'nın iyi niyetine teşekkürler ama biraz abartmış.

[ElderScrolls7](#) 2 months ago

ossstt köpeklere ne mutlu maymunum diyenlere

[Antimirik](#) 4 months ago

bugün daha da bir anlamlı

[Sosyalist1919](#) 7 months ago

atasını bilmeyen götlere sokam eşek gibi biat edeceksiniz atatürke işine gelmeyen siktirip gider arabistana.sike sike onun resimlerini göreceğün onun getirdiği marşı okucak sınız eşekler gibi

[mantus2008](#) 7 months ago

[@Kemalist36](#) git gerçek babanın kimliğini araştır anan seni kimden peydahladıysa soysuz piç

[isalpha](#) 7 months ago

[@isalpha](#) senin ananın çürük amına çakayım orospu cocuğu piç kuru su ibne

[Kemalist36](#) 7 months ago

[@Kemalist36](#) ırkını genetiğini siktüğün orospu çocuğu

[isalpha](#) 7 months ago

Gozlerim doldu

[abelardo2017](#) 7 months ago

Bokunu cikartmislar artik

[bilgisayarmuhendisi](#) 8 months ago

1 2 3 4 [Next](#)

[View all Comments »](#)

APPENDIX IV

Transcript of the video “*Olacak O Kadar Robot Resim*” (Translated and transcribed by the authors)

INT. POLICE STATION – NIGHT

Music (10th year’s march) - fade in

The people are chatting and discussing.

THE POLICE OFFICER: Please explain your complaints to the commissar.

Music (10th year’s march) - fade out

THE COMMISSAR: Please be quiet, calm down and wait for your turn. You, sit there and wait also. Now, please tell the stories one by one. Meanwhile our artist is going to draw the profile of the criminal. We’ll identify and catch the culprit as soon as possible. So go on and tell us!

The people are standing in line. The jailer sits down.

THE JAILER: I’m a jailer in a prison, Mr. Commissar. Writers and journalists stay on the block to which I am assigned. So I was on my night shift...

Dissolve to flashback

INT. PRISON – DAY

The writer walks up and down in the prison. He sees the jailer coming.

THE WRITER: Hey jailer! I heard that they freed the inmates from the Susurluk case!?

THE JAILER: Yep, right. that’s right. The whole block was freed.

THE WRITER: Fancy that! They’re free and we’re still here.

THE JAILER: Right, they didn’t write anything like you did.

The jailer and the writer look to the shadow coming towards to them.

Music (10th year’s march) - fade in

VOICE OVER - THE JAILER: And at that moment he came in like a giant. “Open the door!” he shouted. I thought if he made it in, he must be dangerous. So I opened the door. He said “Release them!”

Music (10th year’s march) - fade out
Dissolve out

THE COMMISSAR: Could you please try to describe him?

THE JAILER: His face had sharp contours.

THE COMMISSAR: (to the artist) Sharp contours. Did you get that?

THE ARTIST: Yes I did, sir.

The commissar stands up and walks over to the people who are waiting.

THE COMMISSAR: Ok, I understand. So you, go on!

THE DOCTOR: Sir, I'm a doctor at a hospital. On that day, a patient had to be discharged. But the relatives couldn't pay bill...

Dissolve to flashback

INT. HOSPITAL – DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

THE DOCTOR: Look, I can't release your wife if you don't pay.

THE PATIENT'S WIFE: Oh please doctor, don't do that! How can we find that much money?

THE DOCTOR: (to the patient) Until you find it, I'm taking your wife hostage.

Music (10th year's march) - fade in

The door opens up. A light shines into the room. Everyone in the room looks frightening to the direction of the light.

THE DOCTOR: And then he entered in. There was a copy of the Hippocratic oath hanging on the wall. He threw it on the desk. He turned to patient's relative and said "You are allowed to go." I was speechless and couldn't say a word.

Music (10th year's march) - fade out

Dissolve out

THE COMMISSAR: Ok, ok I understand. Hmm, this is a weird case. Let's see how that picture looks!

The artist stands up and shows the doctor his picture.

THE ARTIST: Yes, sir. Please take a look.

THE DOCTOR: He had a frown on his face.

THE ARTIST: Wait a minute, I'm drawing the brows.

THE DOCTOR: Exactly, that's him!

THE COMMISSAR: Ok, ok, fine. I understand. Madame, please take a seat.

The woman sits down.

THE LANDLORD: Thank you, Sir. Thanks.

THE COMMISSAR: So, please tell us.

THE LANDLORD: Sir, I have a couple of flats to rent. So, I rent them out on dollars just like everyone else these days. I was trying to collect the rent from a tenant of mine...

Dissolve to flashback

EXT. STREET – DAY

The tenant and the landlord are discussing in front of the house door.

THE TENANT: Have a mercy please! Since the dollar value has doubled, I can't pay my rent. What can I do?

THE LANDLORD: That is not my problem. Find the money or go out of my flat!

Music (10th year's march) - fade in

They see something is coming towards to them and look frightening-

THE TENANT: Oh shit, what's happening??

Music (10th year's march) - fade out
Dissolve out

THE LANDLORD: "Hey lady! You're living in republic of Turkey!" he shouted at me. He had coloured eyes. Blue eyes.

THE COMMISSAR: (to the artist) He had blue eyes. Got it?

THE ARTIST: I heard it, Sir. I'm drawing them.

The commissar invites the congressmen to come in.

THE COMMISSAR: Dear congressmen, what is your complaint?

THE CONGRESSMAN: My colleague and I, we were having a discussion about the current issues of the country...

Dissolve to flashback

INT. OFFICE – DAY

THE CONGRESSMAN I: Ok, right. I also wish to have it like that. I also want to retire earlier. I also want a salary raise. But won't we get a negative public reaction?

THE CONGRESSMAN II: Forget the reaction, mate! Look, they were talking about a social revolution and nothing has happened. We won't try to pass the bill by itself. Instead we will disguise it in a larger proposal...

Dissolve out

THE CONGRESSMAN II: He slapped me very hard in the face. I can still feel the pain...

The artist shows the picture to the congressman.

THE CONGRESSMAN II: It looks like him!

The commissar takes the picture out of artist's hand.

THE COMMISSAR: Give me that! Oh, no! That's him, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk!

All characters want to take a look at the picture.

THE CONGRESSMAN I: Atatürk?!

THE COMMISSAR: Yes, the man himself.

THE CONGRESSMAN II: But why would our leader do these things to us? Anyhow, isn't he dead?

THE COMMISSAR: This means he can't rest in peace. He is coming back to question what we turned Turkey into!

THE CONGRESSMAN II: Right...He is back to find who is responsible...

THE ARTIST: Look whom you made me draw as the culprit! It is us who are guilty!

Dissolve to found footage – Atatürk is speaking
Music (10th year's march) - fade in

VOICE OVER (ATATÜRK'S VOICE)

Turkish nation works hard! Turkish nation is intelligent! How happy is the one who calls themselves a Turk!