

POPULAR ARTS AND DETECTIVE FICTION

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The term “the popular arts” cannot be used accurately to describe a cultural situation in western civilization prior to the late 18th century. Obviously, there had always been two artistic traditions – the high and the low comedy in Greece, the drama and the circuses in Rome, medieval cathedral plays and street fairs, Renaissance court-dramas and tavern farces. The 18th century thus saw the establishment of a triple artistic tradition ---the folk and high art of the past, plus a new popular level of art [2, p.15].

The existence of what is now called “the entertainment industry” can be easily recognized as early as 1750, when marketable cultural goods began to be manufactured in quantity to meet the needs of the mass public. By middle of the 20s 75% of American adults possessed a high school education or even better. This mass society had much more leisure time, much more disposable income and needed a new art, which was neither folk nor elite, to use the one and fill the other. Popular arts (culture) was also a product of modern technology and its new techniques for duplicating and multiplying materials along with much more efficient methods of production and distribution.

The popular artist had to make his own tradition by investigating his market, calculating its desires, and evolving devices (many of which he adapted from folk art) for reaching it. He became a kind of professional, who created for profit the kind of art that the public wanted [2, p.176].

Popular art is a folk art aimed at a wider audience, in a somewhat more self-conscious attempt to fill that audience’s expectations, an art more aware of the need for selling the product, more adjusted to the median taste. It is an art trying to perfect itself, not yet complete not yet mature. Elite art is produced by known artists within a consciously aesthetic context and by an accepted set of rules. Elite art is exclusive, particular and individualistic. Popular art is neither complicated nor profound. It confirms the experience of the majority, in contrast to the elite art, which tends to

explore the new. For this reason, popular art has been an unusually sensitive and accurate reflector of the attitudes and concerns of the society for which it is produced.

The relationship of the popular artist with his public is neither direct nor critical, for between him and his audience stand editors, publishers, sponsors, directors etc.

One of the most popular genres of the popular arts is the detective story, which, however, developed only after the establishment of the police as an official social agency. Detective fiction, according to Scaggs J. is a genre of fiction in which an investigator or a detective – either professional or amateur—investigates a crime, often a murder. This genre deals with crime, its detection, revelation of the criminals and their motives. It has always attracted the reader's attention. Detective fiction is based on the feeling of the ordinary people that they are as intelligent as the detective. Such a feeling makes them extraordinary and leads them out of their grey ordinary lives [3, p.93].

The detective mystery can be divided into 6 fairly clear categories: the older tradition of detection, the "private eye" story, spy novel of international intrigue, the domestic sentimental mystery, the Gothic-suspense school and the recent "black humour story". There is no doubt of the permanent popularity of such books. One of every four books published and reprinted in the USA each year is a detective mystery; they make up half or more of the books stocked by the 50000 central libraries in the country. Of all varieties of popular literature, the detective mystery and its variants undoubtedly occupy first place with the mass reading public.

Even more popular is the American type of detective fiction – the hard-boiled detective fiction. Although this subgenre of the crime fiction shares to some degree its characters and settings with the classical detective story; and the hard-boiled formula resembles the main outlines of the classical detective story's, the American hard-boiled detective fiction has its own peculiarities. Hard-boiled detective fiction can be recognized by four main elements: the situation, the settings, the characters, and the action. It is a gritty detective story with a street smart professional investigator at its core. These realistic novels are generally set in a world permeated by violence and corruption. Hard-boiled fiction used graphic sex and violence, vivid but often sordid urban backgrounds, and fast-paced, slangy dialogue [1, p.147].

The hard-boiled detective brought a revolutionary change to the development of the whole detective genre. Representatives of the classical detective story paid little attention to the fact that the central event in the detective story – the murder or crime – is a dramatic event, or even a tragic one. Everything is imbued with drama – from the very murder to its solution. In the hard-boiled detective story the conflict of the detective with the environment is the main one. In the process of overcoming this conflict the detective comes to the solution of the mystery.

The popularity of the detective fiction as well as its hard-boiled subgenre is reflected not only in the increasing number of publications of the works themselves, but also in terms of growth of related publications: advertising in newspapers and magazines, critical articles, bibliographic compilations, etc.

The persisting popularity of the detective fiction contributes to the **topicality** of our investigation. Despite the existence of numerous studies of the genre, our study is still relevant, as the genre is permanently transforming, changing and improving.

Література

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