



Influence of Mass Literature on the Reader's Consciousness

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Abstract

This article studies the characteristics of mass literature influence on the reader's consciousness. Based on the generalization, study of the domestic and foreign scientists' works on present topic and the analysis of the books of certain genres, its specific traits and the role in the modern historical and cultural process and the life of the society have been revealed. The concept of "mass literature" has been revealed. The ideological-thematic content and structure of women's novels, detectives, thrillers and action novels have been analyzed. The main principles and tools of presenting the reality in the mass literature's works have been defined. The great attention is given to comprehending the author's concept of being and personality. Detailed analysis was conducted on the writers' philosophic and aesthetic opinions and their ideas on the constant human categories and values. The article establishes the content of genre and style-specifics of women's novels, detectives, thrillers and action novels. It highlights formula-approach, sample-orientation, cliché and patterns of the plot of the mass literature's works. Its negative and positive influence on readers' consciousness has been revealed. It is underlined, that the mass literature's works, on the one hand, create certain complexes in a person, act as a reason for the aggravation of his aggression and inadequate actions and promote the passiveness of his consciousness; on the other hand, they have learning and educating functions and have a psychotherapeutic influence on people.

readers. It includes melodramas, romance (pink), spy, criminal and costume-historical novels, thrillers, action novels, fantasy, etc.

Researchers define mass literature as "a relatively versatile concept, which signifies the lowest level of literature and includes the books, which are not the part of the official literature hierarchy of their time" [1]. Its specific characteristics are the sketchiness of the plot, stereotyped ideas and topics content, cliché in the elements of the artistic shape, which include "a completed context of emotions and moods" and recreate "psychological and ideological stereotypes" [2]. Mass literature follows the principle of repetition and serial stamp, because "the author's" affirmation is always determined by the principle of coherence with the expected by the audience and not by the attempts of independent exploration of the world" [3]. So, for example, the basis of a pink novel's plot contains of a story of a woman, who, after multiple difficulties, gains much desired women's happiness by the side of a handsome, strong and wealthy man. The titles of such books often contain words like "love", "heart", "kiss", etc. Women's novels have a happy end. The tragedy is not allowed in them, because it does not correspond with the expectations of the readers' audience.

In the novels of criminal content, in contrast to the classic detective, the episodes of pursuit, violence, fights and shootings prevail. Author's attention is concentrated not on the process of solving the committed crime, but on the grasping moments of the trial. The plot of the criminal novels develops mostly in the two storylines – of the criminal and of the detective, who not only oppose each other but are, in fact, almost competitors. Basically, they compete in dexterity, power, craft and courage.

Mass literature's works are commonly standardized in the approach for presenting the events, the reality and the information translation. They operate with a simple technique. The authors do not strive for novelty and experiments. Mass literature is "traditional, conservative and oriented at the average language semiotic norm, because it is addressed to a

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Introduction

In the last decades, mass literature ("para-literature", "pulp fiction", "trivial literature") gained high popularity among the

large readers'... audience". It has "strict genre- and thematic rules, which are the formal and content-defining models of prosaic novels" [4].

Mass literature's works often have stereotyped characters. They "almost always serve a certain plot function and do not leave the frames of a certain image" [2].

Mass literature's works have formulated language. Each genre has its range of style clichés. For example, action novels use slang, vulgarisms, jargon and argot lexicon. The speech of women's novels characters is high in sentimental and exalted statements.

The mass literature presents the simplification of the artistic idea. They gain a trivial, primitive nature.

Another common trait of the mass literature is the predictability of topics, plot twists, conflict situations and ways to solve them. Basically, the reader initially knows how the story will end and how the characters' destinies will resolve. It is explained by the fact that the writer regards the expectations of the audience – his potential recipients. Mass literature has the goal of satisfying the demands of a wide range of readers, which explains its wide distribution and enormous recognition among the people of very different generations and social statuses.

Melodramas, romance (pink), spy; criminal, costume-historical novels, thrillers, action novels, fantasy, etc. are the object of close attention of the researchers. Mass literature is studied in the works of Strecher, Elite, Swirski, Barsch, Gans, Chernyak, Kibalnik and others [5-11]. These works comprehend the phenomenon of mass literature and reveal its nature and specifics. The researchers reveal the factors, which define the development of such genres as detective, melodrama, thriller, action novel and fantasy. The research works define the role and the characteristics of mass literature's works functioning and analyze its artistic uniqueness. The great attention is aimed at studying the plot and compositional organization of detectives, melodramas, thrillers, action novels and fantasy, the specifics of their language, style, forms of author's presence and character systems.

The significance of present study is defined by the necessity for deep comprehension of the characteristics of mass literature influence of the readers' consciousness. Such analysis would allow significantly expanding the knowledge about the nature of such popular genres as detective, melodrama, thriller, action novel and fantasy and defining the extent and the types of their influence on the psychology of a personality.

The results of the study have theoretical and practical significance. They may be used in the research of tendencies and patterns of the modern literature's development and of a writer's creative laboratory. The obtained conclusions lie in the field of interdisciplinary studies. They facilitate the expansion of the knowledge about the factors, which define the process of personality's development and motives of people's actions.

Method

During the study historical-functional, comparative-typological, psychological, hermeneutical and receptive methods and complex approach have been used. They allowed, firstly, to assess the nature of the mass literature's works; secondly, to thoroughly study the characteristics of the influence of women's novels, detectives, action novels and thrillers on a person's consciousness and actions; and thirdly, to understand how the readers perceive mass literature and which feeling and associations it arises in them.

Based on using historic-functional method, the characteristics of the creations of modern writers have been revealed. It promoted the comprehension of the reasons for the distribution and wide recognition of the mass literature's works. The role and the significance of such genres as women's novel, detective, thrillers and action novels have been revealed.

Comparative-typological method allowed revealing the patterns of the mass literature's works. As a result of its implication the specifics of the composition, plot organization, ideas and topics content of women's novels, detectives, thrillers and action novels have been established.

Psychological method helped understanding the characters' inner world, their personality and behavior motives. Based on its implication, the characteristics of the authors' paradigm of personality and studied authors' attitude towards the reality they present have been revealed.

Complex approach helped comprehending the factors, which defined the development and shaping of the main mass literature genres. As a result of its use the tools of actualizing authors' ideas, the character systems have been studied, the principles of creative writing structure and its issues have been revealed.

Hermeneutic method allowed understanding the specifics of the content of romance, detective and action novels and thrillers. Its implication provided the comprehension of the author's paradigm essence and understanding of the essence, given in the books.

Using receptive method provided an opportunity for complex study of the reader's reaction to the world presented by the author. As a result of its use the influence of mass literature on a person's consciousness and mind have been studied. The receptive method allowed revealing, which feelings and associations are evoked by the plot of such genres as romance, detective and action novel and thriller.

Results

The influence of mass literature on the reader's consciousness

Mass literature, which has a goal of satisfying the demands of a wide range of readers, has an enormous influence on their

consciousness. Its influence manifests in negative, as well as in positive sense.

In the opinion of the researchers, mass literature primarily promotes the standardization of thinking. By suggesting certain stereotypes, it robs the readers of an opportunity for versatile and deep assessment of various situations [12].

An example for this is women's novels. They create a certain model of women's behavior. By describing the fate the female protagonist, the author not only tells an entertaining story of her life but also reveals, which is the true essence of each woman's being. The pages of the women's novels tell which values the women should have in order to reach the harmony in life and gain her true "self".

The main values in such novels are the family and matrimony. The whole plot of women's novels is built on the female protagonist's search for her "other half". Marriage is the core and the ultimate goal of her life. A desire to enter in a relationship with a man directs the woman's actions and motivates her behavior.

Family creates the basis of the protagonist's being. This concept is perceived by her consciousness as the true essence of a woman's life. The protagonist sees the only and true path of her self-actualization as a personality in creating a family. In the women's novels this concept is related to the categories of happiness, harmony and love. Therefore, the authors suggest the readers certain representations and stereotypes about general human and constant values, about the nature of female "self" and about a woman's social role. Creative and professional self-actualization of a personality plays a secondary role in the women's novels. The authors do not show the complexity and variety of the human feelings. These books do not reveal the characters' inner world richness.

In the women's novels love is presented only as feeling, which binds a woman and a man. It is more similar to lust, which makes the characters to attract to each other. The novels do not show the depth, strength, magnitude, beauty and controversy of this feeling. Love in the women's novels is defined by the human's sexual nature. Describing the protagonist's destiny, the authors almost never note her relationships with her relatives and the surrounding world. Love is weakly linked with the concepts of humanity, compassion and respect.

Therefore, the protagonist's evolution proceeds only in one direction. Upon revealing a quality, which is interesting to the opposite sex, she starts to develop it in herself and assert herself by it. Essentially, love does not solve its main function, which is to change and improve the world, spiritually enrich a person and evoke an urge for creation. This feeling serves as a certain tool for reaching the set goals. Love presents as a guarantee for marriage and creation of a family.

In the women's novels happiness is viewed together with the concept of a union of two people. It is associated with a marriage. Creating a family becomes the highest representation of happiness.

Harmony is perceived by the women's novels as the character's awareness of the mutual interest and love towards each other.

Beauty is mainly limited to the appearance of the characters, described in the book. The authors almost do not show the inner world of the characters.

The beauty is presented in the women's novels as certain given, which is initially present in a woman and a man. The protagonist is not always aware of her attractiveness. Often she reveals it after meeting a man.

Mass literature develops a passive perception of the reality. Authors of romance and criminal novels practically provide the complete answers for all of the essential questions. By doing so, they reject the readers an opportunity for independent search and discovery of the solutions. Mass literature's works often become guidelines of sorts, a rule-book or an instruction. The readers use them in the life situations.

Mass literature, which is aimed at a being entertaining and vivid, uses such events, as burglaries, murders, political scandals, love dramas and catastrophes, as the plots. Criminal and action novels and thrillers are full of cruel and violent scenes; that, undoubtedly, has a negative effect on the reader's mind and especially on the minds of morally vulnerable social classes. Firstly, they develop an indifferent attitude towards the surrounding people and the world. They begin to be indifferent to the events and loose the sense of compassion and empathy. Secondly, they get guidelines for committing a crime or an act of violence. Thirdly, the readers' consciousness experiences the substitution of values. The priority goes to a person with his individual needs. A personality, which is able to commit anything for its interests, becomes an ideal. Fourthly, a thought about the primary need for satisfying one's lowest urges appears in the readers' consciousness.

The influence of mass literature's works on the human behavior

Mass literature promotes the development of consuming approach to life. Basically, it leads the reader from the reality into the dream world, thus convincing him that everything will come true and he just needs to wish it.

The images of supermen, provincials, who conquered the capital and became successful businesswomen, and glamorous beauties, destroy the aesthetical values, ideals about true beauty and representations of morality. Because often such characters plot, smoke, drink and swear, while they solve the problems by using physical force. It is the root of the readers' developed stereotype about rudeness, vulgarity, tackiness, impudence and slack being the sign and the necessary attribute of success. Action novels are an example of this. Their characters are often well-behaved and low-educated people of huge strength.

Using their physical advantage, supermen and superwomen act disrespectfully and boldly. They frequently show complete disrespect towards the surrounding people and demonstrate

unfounded aggression. They do not maintain the moral norms of the behavior. Supermen and superwomen do not have high life ideals. General human are not significant to them. They defy the laws. The main argument and mean of solving all problems in the action novels is force. It results in the negative influence on the readers' minds. As stated by the researchers, the process of perceiving a book includes a process of the recipient's identifying with the characters, which, in turn, creates the aggravation of the aggressive urges [13].

Scenes of violence have an influence on the mental processes and the readers' mental state. Their influence frequently manifests on the unconscious level, thus causing the changes in the people's behavior and reflecting on their axiological and moral orientations.

Action novels might become a reason for people's aggressive attitude towards animals. Wishing to try the methods and tools of violence, described in a book, the readers begin to torture their pets or stray cats and dogs in the streets.

Scenes of cruelty reflect on the people's well-being. While remaining under the impression from what they have read, they might feel mental discomfort, fatigue and moral over-exhaustion, especially of the victim of violence was the character they liked.

Detectives have a negative influence on a person's consciousness. "By evoking a positive attitude towards aggressive and violent forms of behavior" in combination with thorough description of "the technique of committing crimes", these book might "facilitate a certain categories" of readers "in committing a law-defying action" and become a reason for inadequate reactions and deeds [13].

However, the emotions, evoked in during the reading of a detective and action novels, not necessarily manifest in a person's actions or behavior. They might accumulate in the reader's soul, thus causing a significant damage to his mental state and inner world.

Thrillers contribute to the increase of a person's aggression. By describing various methods and tools of negative influence on people, they change the reader's moral affirmation, causing an urge to turn somebody's life into a nightmare and to fill it with terror and fear. The thrillers, in which the maker of the performed villainy remains unpunished, have the strongest influence on a person's mind.

In the opinion of the researchers, action and detective novels and thrillers complicate the process of interpersonal communication. By influencing a person's subconscious, these books cause irritability and intolerance to the opinion of the others. Moreover, they draw the reader in with their charged plot, making him reinforce his negative emotions and aggression again and again and raising a wish to recreate the characters' actions in order to become equally special, not similar to others and able to rule the world with the fear and the force. In turn, a person's negative attitude causes the corresponding reaction from the surrounding people. As a result, there is a secluded loop, which promotes the

consolidation of the wrong moral affirmation in the reader. Being the carrier of the negative thinking, he feels the hostility of the others towards him. His aggression increases, as well as his estrangement from the world and the society. Gradually his personality experiences dissolution, moral and spiritual degradation.

The influence of mass literature on the reader's psychology and sub consciousness

Sometimes thrillers become the reason for insomnia and people's unfounded fears. By describing the fear, experienced by the characters, these books have a strong impact on the mind and the subconscious of a person. People start to fear the ordinary things (e.g. the darkness, people walking behind them, lightning, etc.), while being under the impression from reading a thriller.

Mass literature often causes inferiority complex and lowers people's self-esteem, convincing them the necessary attributes of a successful person are wealth, physical strength in men and attractive appearance in women.

External allure and sexuality serve as the basis for the relationships of the female protagonist of a women's novel and the surrounding people. These books frequently propose a thought that these qualities are a certain guarantee of a personality's social success and of a woman's finding of happiness, harmony and love.

Therefore, the women's novels often cause the complexes in the readers' consciousness. By comparing themselves to the protagonist, they become disappointed in their own appearance. The inconsistencies, that they reveal, lead to pessimism and low self-confidence. Some readers start seeing themselves as unworthy of love and happiness. A fight against the imperfections of the appearance either become a core goal, or leads to a personality seclusion and its estrangement from the world, or becomes a reason for envy and aggression towards successful and beautiful women, some of whom might be the close people.

Action and detective novels have similar influence. The images of supermen, who are able to jump from any height, run on the roofs, walk through the burning fire, overcome a dozen of enemies by themselves and escape any pursuit, cause the dissatisfaction with themselves in the readers' consciousness. This is the root of occasional unfounded aggression, rudeness and use of force on the weaker people.

Remaining under the influence of the read books, men, and especially young men and adolescents, sometimes do inadequate and cruel things, thus trying to get a little closer to their ideal and to become as strong and brave.

Mass literature decreases "the ability to think and use deep associations and perspective imaginations" [4]. Authors of romance, detective and action novels and thrillers do not present the reader with complex philosophical, ethical and aesthetical issues. The attention is focused on the twists of the characters' destinies and sharp plot turns, which aim at pleasing the reader.

Mass literature “replaces the true picture of the world with its simplified patterns” [14]. It gives the reader completed formulas and answers. The content of mass books is characterized by the shallowness and easiness to perceive. The final of romance, detective and action novels, thrillers and fantasy is always predictable and the characters are understandable and recognizable.

Shallow reading and lack of thinking about the books content leads, on the other hand, to immaturity of human consciousness, and on the other hand, to gradual loss of his skill to express and experience deep feelings.

According to various researches, mass literature “appeals to the cultural memory of an averaged reader, to the cultural field, related primarily to the cinema and television, and to the well-known literature texts” [4].

Therefore, a person gradually loses the habit of “detached mental effort”. Mass reader prefers illusions over the reality. He is not interested in the life truth or global and social problems of the modern time. The reader is indifferent to the reality with all its controversies and shocks. He prefers to remain “in the state of calm semi-dream”, in “the light drowsiness”, which allow him to distract himself from the routine problems and life difficulties [4].

The level of reader’s aspirations gradually lowers. His expectations are mostly limited to getting the pleasure and entertainment. “Even in the reading of the most educated and literarily qualified groups” the “orientations on the naïve-adaptive type of cultural behavior” and consumption start prevailing, along with the refusal to analyze the reality and the predisposition towards “escapism, approximation of the tastes and nostalgia for “other” – either past, or fictional- life” [15].

Mass literature leads a person from the reality and the problems of the routine life. The reader either becomes a spectator of the described events, which do not disturb his tranquility and do not affect his mental state, or dives into the atmosphere of the fascinating adventures, seeing himself as a superhero. According to H. Marcuse, a human becomes single-dimensional. He loses the ability to think, compare and perceive the reality in all of its variety and complexity.

Mass literature gradually turns the reader into a “passive consumer” and spectator, “who is trusted to experience the feelings of other people” [4].

A person seizes to reflect. His creative and analytical thinking weakens. He stops being able to see the problems of the reality in their integrity and connectivity, in the context of the unity of past, present and future.

Mass literature creates a thought about the reader’s omnipotence in his consciousness. It creates an illusion that everything in life depends on the person himself but “with regard to the fact that the subject himself is limited to one dimension”, in which only one of his qualities is actualized (e.g. attractiveness in the women’s novels, power in the action novels, etc.) [16].

Mass literature promotes the development of the passivity in a personality. It might become the reason for a person’s irresponsibility to his actions and relationships with other people. For example, the women’s novels present a thought that each woman has to wait for the appearance of a strong man in her life, who she will be able to interest in herself. Women’s novel allows the readers to see their own dissatisfying situation either as temporary, or as a result of the lack of a real man in their surroundings. These books do not say a word about the need of spiritual and moral growth and active position of a personality. According to Ulybina, women’s novels “work as prosthesis, which recreates a model of the reality”, because they recreate the readers’ “fantasies” and confirm “their pathological perception of the reality and of themselves” [16]. Therefore, they basically distort the reality, because the reasons for loneliness may be different and are defined by multiple various factors.

Positive meaning of the mass literature

However, despite such negative influence of mass literature on people’s minds and spiritual world, it has a certain positive meaning. By describing standard routine situations and the ways of solving ordinary problems, the authors enrich the life experience of the readers. For example, women’s novels provide interesting information for the women about types of plots, which are often twisted by the closest friends, acquaintances and colleagues. Such information is useful, firstly, for finding the correct solution and the exit from an equal or similar situation; secondly, for better understanding of the various forms of human behavior and explaining the motives of their actions; and thirdly, for expanding the knowledge about human psychology and their underlying desires.

In the words of a well-known scientist and writer A. Zinovyev, “by compensating the feeling of helplessness of an average person, mass culture creates images of supermen, who overcome those obstacles that in reality are impossible to overcome and who win in situations, in which an average person would definitely loose. Supermen do not go to work from nine to five, do not tremble in front of the bosses and are not afraid that tomorrow they will be fired without any explanation... They do not have problems of paying monthly bills. Supermen solve the social problems by themselves in a simple and understandable way – most frequently, by physical force. These fictional stories do not decrease the stress, but at least temporarily, before sleep they bring the feeling of sweet drowsiness” [17].

Discussion

Mass literature might have a positive influence in a stressful or critical situation and even help to avoid suicide. For example, reading women’s novels, where the characters overcome multiple obstacles but, at the end, reach the desired goal and become happy, helps women, who are disappointed in love or in their career, to save the faith in a bright future and accept the current situation as temporary and passing.

Mass literature sometimes serves as a wonderful way of entertainment. By attracting the reader with an interesting plot, it can distract him from other negatives forms of spending the free time.

According to B. Dubin, mass literature's works serve as "instrument of primary socialization" [18]. They help a modern person to adapt to the conditions, in which he is living.

Mass literature brings people pleasure. Diving into the world, which is shown in the books, and solving the repeating plot twists, the readers feel joy and satisfaction of being familiar with the "rules of the game", started by the author [19]. They feel competent, educated and intellectually developed because they are able to predict the following set of events. Therefore, mass literature increases a person's self-esteem. It gives the reader a feeling of his significance.

Mass literature has psychotherapeutic effect. With its positive content it gives the reader a thought about the necessity to have faith in wishes fulfillment and in positive life changes.

Mass literature has educating and explorative functions. It often becomes the popularizer of other artistic works and films. Mass literature deepens the readers' knowledge on psychology of interpersonal relationships, types and motives of human behavior. For example, a detective reveals the state of character before and after crime commitment. Women's novels allow better understanding of "female" logic. Fantasy expands the readers' representations of the surrounding world.

Mass literature recreates the picture of the modern life. Its characters "act in recognizable social situations and typical setting and face the problems, which are close... to the reader" [4]. Therefore, it promotes the expansion of a person's representations of the world.

Mass literature broadens the readers' horizon. It presents the "rights and rituals of people, etiquette and political conditions of a certain country" [20].

Conclusion

Mass literature is incredibly popular among the readers, which is explained by its entertaining plots and easiness of perception.

Mass literature is a relatively complex concept. It has various influences on the inner world of a personality. The nature of this influence is controversial. Mass literature's works, on the one hand, promote the standardization of thinking and narrowing of a person's representation of the reality, and on the other hand, they evoke light feeling in the reader's soul and thus make him see the world in a positive way.

Mass literature has a strong influence on people's consciousness and mind, changing and replacing the system of social values.

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