

MASS LITERATURE AND BEST SELLERS: DEFINING ELEMENTS

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ANNOTATION

Popular literature includes those works that are intended for the masses and those that are popular with a wide audience. It can be distinguished from fiction in that it is intended primarily for entertainment. In this article, we tried to explain what mass literature is and the types of mass literature.

Keywords: *popular literature, bestseller, fantasy, science fiction, paraliterature*

Popular literature, unlike high literature, generally does not aim for a high degree of formal beauty or refinement, and is not designed for longevity. The growth of popular literature went hand in hand with the spread of literacy through education, aided by technological advances in printing. With the Industrial Revolution, literary works that were previously produced for the consumption of a small, well-educated elite became available to the general public and even to the majority of the population.

Popular literature is usually tendentious, both consciously and unconsciously. It reflects and stimulates the prejudices and limitations of its audience. Most of the literary conflicts that engulfed totalitarian countries during the 20th century were directly caused by the relentless efforts of the state to reduce elite literature to the level of popular literature. The great proletarian novels of our time were written not by Russians but by African Americans, Japanese, Germans, and—the most proletarian of all—a German-American living in Mexico, B. Traven. State control and censorship may hinder literary development, perhaps distort it a little, and may completely destroy authors; but, whether in the France of Louis XIV or in the Soviet Union of the 20th century, they cannot be said to have a fundamental influence on the course of literature.

Bestsellers are often produced in paperback for the mass market and are easy to find in grocery stores, newsstands, airports, train stations, and used book stores. Low quality paper helps keep them cheap.

Paraliterature has its own code of reading and features that distinguish it from literature, which is why it has long been called devaluing names: “four-penny novels.” In fact, it unites all created works that do not meet the requirements of literary circles, in particular, for two reasons. First, it is defined by its content: tales of implausible adventures. Here we must use this qualifier in its most banal meaning: inconsistent with the average value of the events of reality and the horizon of expectation of a given social group. This criterion, applied radically, as a rule, reduces to not all literary production oriented towards fantasy, science fiction, imagination. Psychologically inconsistent characters.

This literature develops in the nineteenth century with industrialization. According to Jean-Yves Mollier, mass culture, or crowd culture, as that term was used at the time, must have originated in the West, in Great Britain, France and the United States in the second half of the 19th century. Of course, this has affected how popular culture has developed, other countries are affected, diseases are less pronounced. Mollier notes that the completion of the reform of universal education is of paramount importance for the development of mass culture. France, Great Britain and the United States have experienced this reform in various forms and laws. As regards the former, the reforms took place between 1833 and 1882, the dates of the adoption of the fundamental school laws by François Guizot and Jules Ferry. They pursued the same goals as in other countries: to reduce the number of illiterates in the country and to increase the level of school enrollment. The petty bourgeoisie, which has grown considerably during this period, constitutes, as Mall I recalls, a new group of readers. These representatives of the bourgeois class are educated and have higher economic capital than the proletarians, but their tastes differ in many ways from those of the traditionally ruling class of society. Rather, the petty bourgeoisie chooses art forms that are equally suited to the proletarian elite.

New technologies and new means of spreading industrialization allow the development of new technologies in several sectors and, in particular, promote the dissemination of literature through the creation of printing machines, capable of printing a significant number of novels and newspapers. This new technology makes it possible to achieve sales figures that were previously unattainable. The construction of railroads also promotes the spread of newspapers and works of art, as they allow much more efficient travel to distant places. As a result, we consider it important to emphasize the ability of the culture of our country to embrace almost the entire population, all the inhabitants of the country in which it has settled. "Thus, short texts published in newspapers, feuilleton novels are very popular with the petty bourgeoisie, who find pleasure in interesting and accessible reading. In the early twentieth century, the success of these collections at a lower price prompted publishers to create collections such as "popular book or my favorite book" to group popular novels into their sub-genres: crime, horror, fantasy, etc. Since the genre was more popular, the popular novel combines a wide variety of forms, from Edgar Allan Poe to Jules Verne and Howard Phillips Lovecraft.

In the United States, these inexpensive books are known as cheap books. These books were also very successful, as evidenced by Jacques Portes: the popularity of cheap books, dime novels that could be found everywhere in train stations and kiosks was huge after the American Civil War. Some collections have published thousands of titles - the Buffalo Bill character alone was the subject of almost two thousand pamphlets between 1876 and 1930.

Thus, inexpensive collections are very successful on both continents, uniting the interests and financial possibilities of a new audience. The mass culture phenomenon also gained momentum with the rise of film and radio, especially in the United States. Portes thus argues that before the 1930s, nothing could resist cinema as a phenomenon of mass culture. "Cinema is so popular that it influences all other arts, including literature. Popularity also affects musical products. In the very early 1920s, almost one hundred million records were released, which allowed access to a wider audience. In the United States the increasingly school-going generation of the 1960s share this popular culture and further develop it by taking it abroad. As Jean-François Sirinelli puts it: almost mechanically transported to the Old Continent.."

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