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ON TWO WAYS OF NATURALIZATION OF THE CRIMINAL NOVEL

A few remarks presented in the paper deal with the most general principles used by the examined readers in reception of a criminal story. The respondents' answers gathered in free interviews show different points of reference against which the read message was situated. Those different points focussing reception marked their characteristic means of text naturalization, making it understandable and acceptable. The paper concerns the fragment of empiric researches on social reception of the criminal story. The author conducted 80 free interviews with socially differentiated readers (mainly with regard to their educational background) of two novels representing this kind of literature - a Polish novel written by J. Edigey and an American novel written by R. Chandler.

Two principles seemed to play a particularly essential role here. A part of the readers related the read text to reality, another part gave it the meaning and cohesion mainly through relation to genre patterns. The former received and evaluated the literary fiction in the categories of "truthfulness", "reality", "authenticity". The events and characters were interpreted in mimetic categories. The readers expected a "true-to-life story", without "fantasy" in which the events and characters would be represented realistically. In the world of fiction they looked for the real world and found it. If they failed in their efforts their evaluation of the novel decreased rapidly. This mimetic style of reception was common in the group of the readers with the lowest level of education.

A majority of the readers with secondary education also represented this attitude. The use of realistic convention in relation

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to the reality unknown to the reader constituted for those receivers an essential complication connected with the credibility of the presented reality.

Chandler's novel was given the lowest estimation in the group of the readers with the lowest level of education. The difference between the cultural experiences of the transmitter and the receiver created an essential barrier in reception:

"The action takes place in the surroundings which are unknown to me. The reality of the book is so small. How can it be so? I can't compare it with anything [...] it seems to be a fable" (woman, 33, elementary education, office hand).

A decisively higher evaluation of Edigey's novel with the simultaneous realization of his inferiority to Chandler as far as the value of his fiction goes, especially in creating the character of the main hero the writing abilities, is connected with the earlier mentioned preference for the things which are close, personally known to the receiver. In a number of cases the readers from this group tried to make in relation to Chandler's novel a characteristic attempt at "naturalization" of the alien, distant reality which disagreed with their own experiences through looking for similarities, analogies and accentuating them. The readers tried to find similarities between their mother-in-law or a co-worker and the eccentric millionaire or a singer from a posh night-club.

Eliminating the features of the characters and the situations which were most individual or culturally conditioned the reader exposed their "universal" or at least typical dimension:

"In this American family the situation was just like in ours, the old hag hated her daughter-in-law, keeping her son under her thumb. The daughter-in-law is just an average girl which we see around here. She wanted to catch a rich husband. She was not in love" (woman, 18, elementary education, tailor).

In those very cases the mechanism of verisimilitude become active through generalizations, cultural stereotype. This style was at the same time connected with the readers' discovering of the novel didactic functions as if confirming them:

"Such true stories are very instructive. They show that it doesn't pay to do something over the dead bodies of others. The author showed it very well, how it is when people don't want

to work honestly. It may be a good warning for the young ones" (woman, 59, elementary education, seamstress).

The reception in mimetic categories which is particularly sensitive to falseness may also explain why in this group of the examined people a certain feeling of manipulation manifested itself caused by too "idealistic", "sweet", "showy", picture of militia. The realistic convention of the novel strengthened the readers' tendency to compare the presented picture with reality. Evaluating the way of militia actions presentation, the characters of militiamen, the ways in which they acted, the receivers stressed their falseness, their "propaganda" character:

"I have never read any Polish thriller in which the militia wouldn't win in the end. They are always the best, nothing bad can be said about them. They can't be presented in any other way" (man, 26, basic professional education, watchmaker).

"Those militiamen will never hit anybody, will always do everything according to the law, they never drink, one has to make a myth of them in the society. It makes me furious, in life all this is different more brutal on here they are all so delicate and omnipotent" (man, 35, basic professional education, fitter).

The way in which Edigej presented investigation procedures - "dehumanized", technicised and anonymous evoked the readers' evident protest. The character of the man responsible for investigation - onedimensional, very positive, not individual and as if closed in the professional role did not gain the sympathy of the readers, either:

"I like reading about a man who must shave, have breakfast, care for his own matters, date some girl or go for a vodka - Marlowe is just this kind of man - here we have only demons for work. They don't see anything outside their work, always polite, delicate, drinking coffee and thinking about their duties" (man, 27, elementary education, stoker).

At the same time we witness here a seemingly paradoxical shift - criminals gain the sympathy of the group of the readers critically evaluating "the investigating party" with all accompanying it. Criminals being the weaker ones here, lonely with no support in society and at the same time given human features, vices and temptations which the pattern characters lack, become closer to the receiver as doomed in confrontation with a huge and strong system:

"I may be silly but I preferred the bandits. All are against them - the militia with all their technical potential mass-media. They are hunted down. If the bandit hadn't killed anybody then I sympathized with him, everybody wants to have an easier life, nobody is a saint" (man, 39, basic professional education, electrician).

For the majority of receivers looking in the relation for the true reflection of reality what counts is mainly connected with the acting people, facts, events. The literary side of the novel, the writer's technique used for the construction of the plot, this realization efficiency, inventiveness or originality are of secondary importance for the evaluation of the novel. What is most important is in the first place "truthfulness". The rules connected with the genre, literary fiction are respected as long as they do not disturb in witnessing "life".

In case of readers with university education the norm of relating the read text to reality undergoes a clear reduction, although, also here one can find numerous traces of reception organized around this norm. However the directive of relating the text to genre patterns dominates here. The novel reaches a certain autonomy, it need not be governed by the rules of reality, remaining in a looser relation to it, respecting its own principles. The reader accepts the function here more often sometimes only expecting it to have certain features of probability. The conditions of literary values are essential. Simultaneously they are conscious of the convention of this genre:

"It's not important if it was true, what is important is that it holds together and is logical" (man, 26, high education electric engineer).

"It's hard to ware together with heroes since one is all the time conscious of the happy end" (man, 32, high education, mechanic engineer).

"One can read a number of such reports, court procedures and that is it. In the book there must be a wider background, something more than the facts. If the crimes are presented without the literary values they are not interesting, one has enough of them" (man, 39, university education, economist).

Those readers treat such kinds of relation with a certain distance. They are emotionally less engaged. Seeing the conventiona-

lity and limits of the presentation they accept them with the air of tolerant slight. It is connected with the strict separation of this type of relation from "serious" literature. The reaction of this group of readers strongly stressed by some of the receivers to the mythologizing of militia, mainly constituted in laughter, mockery irony:

"They try to show militia as sisters of mercy after a psychology course, a charity institution employing well educated ladies. It makes on laugh. When you observe the authors' efforts to show militia without any fault you have a good time. I read some fragments to my wife to make her smile. It also makes you angry a bit as being so incompetent" (man, 33, high education, researcher).

The attitude of some distance is revealed in the evaluation of criminal novel itself as a worse or better realization of a certain convention. Reconstruction centered around this principle points to some features characteristic of the aesthetizing style of reception with the attention centered on the relation itself, lack of instrumentality, and a certain degree of autonomy.

From the point of view of those basic concretising directives the reception of a criminal story by readers with university education is closer to its "natural" classification, more preoccupied with the peculiarity of the genre; the reception of readers from the group with lower education level more often goes beyond the possibilities resulting from narrowly understood genre patterns. This type of reconstruction in which the reader receives the message in mimetic categories simultaneously presenting "experiencing" attitude concentrating his attention on particular stories of some definite people, on dramatized details of everyday existence appears most often and at the same time it seems to be most natural for the majority of the examined people.

Thus understood it is closed to what J. Ortega y Gasset described as humanistic point of view, the acceptance of which in the contact with the works of art he considered in proper and which R. Hoggart considers most characteristic in relation to popular arts.

The reader expects here a univocal lacking ambivalence presentation of motives and people's features of character as well as a lucid definite ending, not only in relation to the work as a who-

le, but also in relation to individual plots and characters - it is connected with looking for some definite norm of human behaviour and a more general moral rule concerning social order.

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O DWÓCH SPOSOBACH RECEPCJI POWIEŚCI KRYMINALNEJ

Artykuł prezentuje fragment badań nad społeczną recepcją powieści kryminalnej. Autorka zajmuje się dwoma regułami, przy pomocy których badani dokonywali w akcie lektury "oswojenia" tekstu, jego "unaturalnienia" - po pierwsze, poprzez odnośzenie go do rzeczywistości, po wtóre, poprzez umieszczenie go w świecie konwencji literackich.