

Research Paper

MAKING OF GENRE FICTION A DIDACTIC BRANCH OF STUDIES IN CONVENTIONAL LITERATURE VIS-À-VIS CONVENTIONAL FICTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores a comparative study of genre fiction and the literary fiction with an aim to attest the former's merit and purpose as that does the latter. All studies, learned scholars, teachers and learners bear no distrust in the merit and purpose of the literary fiction but they all do with the genre fiction with the aspersions of a junk or a pastime etc and make it remain trash and discarded genre of literature. The paper is an exercise to evince its merit in terms of didactic worth. Salman Rushdie's *Shame*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* and Alexander McCall Smith's *No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency* can be considered for testing the point or any genre fiction can be an ideal example in this respect.

To begin with the genre, genre fiction is a fiction like one of the conventional fiction. The contemporary era and the era's earlier call it by number of titles but it is popularly known as popular fiction in the publishing world. To brief it, the fiction genre has its origin in the popular culture or in the tradition of the age of *the Æsop Fables*, *the Arabian Nights*, the sagas of mediæval Ireland, *the Bible*, *the Ramayana*, *the Mahabharata*, *the Divine Comedy* and the Anglo-Saxon epic *Beowulf*. The author/s of the times used to carry out the popular subjects in order to gain wide readership usually with the subjects of gods or heroes as a eulogy in order to exploit the interest and belief part of the audience. That later developed in to the popular tradition. Popular fiction writer and expert Elizabeth Lowell comments on the journey of popular culture as, "Ancient myths newly reborn, telling and retelling a simple truth: ordinary people can do extraordinary things." Lowell evidences that today the popular fiction writers are re-bringing the ancient myths or telling or retelling a common life of common people in an uncommon style and doing things in style the stalwarts referred

to earlier. So is the popular fiction emphasising on the subjects of readers' interest.

Lowell's observation of life is sure to gain wide social acknowledgement for life as possibilities than defeat and despair which the latter being though part of life cause to destabilise the subsistence. Owing to this, Lowell observes a stanch faith and verve in the genre, than of tragic, disillusionment and discouragement of the literary fiction. Possibilities help individuals going on with positive morale. This is what the popular fiction purports to do and its writers. Rowling, Doyle and Smith also corroborate with Lowell in this regard by bringing out this very motion of life. The BBC comments, "...McCall Smith's writing offers an escape to a place that celebrates moral certainty, warmth and compassion". To be precise, the genre fiction may not be comparatively as high and serious in nature as the literary fiction but it is unquestionably not a 'pastime' or an 'escape' fiction. It is crafted in such a way that it keeps up the momentum of life going in an optimistic way than pessimistic. If the fiction would have been merely the entertainer as charged it would have

succumbed to time much earlier. Critics may call it 'escape' or 'daydreaming' but it is surely never an escape from life. It transcends as a transitory. In fact, dream is believed as a mark of positive life and defeat and despair as cynicism. The genre books provide tangible solutions in the unpredictable life by keeping up the readers hope and confidence in themselves and their actions.

Let us know what Wikipedia views the popular fiction, "Formulaic, commercial, sensational, melodramatic, and sentimental. ... the readers of genre fiction—the mass audience—are supposed to have less educated taste in literature than readers of literary fiction. ... essentially, thought to be the literature that appeals to the mass market." Wikipedia claims that the genre fiction aims only at the less literate readers whose sentiments to be aroused easily in terms of appealing the mass readers, but it fails to seize for long the serious and rational readers who might discover it fleeting in terms of easing life with its emphasis largely and solely on entertainment factor. With the opinion noted by Shelly Thacker Meinhardt, the point proves evident, "Popular fiction is the fiction of emotion. Its primary purpose is to evoke feelings. The writer's goal is to entertain the reader. Any consideration of self-expression—if one exists at all—is purely secondary." Meinhardt particularly underlines here that the popular fiction is a fiction of emotion with its primary purpose of evoking feelings. The writer has only the goal to entertain the readers. He holds no self-expression as such in the face of readers' taste and failure to it, a ditch off from the industry; he might hardly get a second chance to set state aright. All his self-expression in way of thoughts, feelings and philosophy remain secondary and should not crop up in the expression in keeping of the readers' interest.

The acrimony between the two genre writers sees a shocking height countering each other with unwarranted reactions. They show the other's vulnerability as a frail genre. According to the critics of serious literature, the genre fiction inculcates frugality, meanness and

spongy handling while the writers of genre fiction equally term their own brethren for their failure as non-competent in the genre fiction. They assume themselves with the thorny challenges to meet the readers. Only success of the fiction acknowledges the existence of the writer. Failure in terms of readers' expectation in whichever genre or subgenre handling offers no room for the writer. Lowell comments, "And if you can't live with that, I'm sure there's a very nice conference on literary fiction next door." The writer needs always to be conscious of his readers' taste and cater accordingly. Per contra, a serious literary author can change his subject and genre, failing one. Unlike serious fiction, in similar circumstances the genre writers are shown a door heading to the literary fiction. What is seriously considerable here, the genre writers view the literary fiction as simpler and unchallenging job than that of genre fiction. The treatment, a failed genre writer gets, is very resentful. This is extremely equally sarcastic for the serious authors and the genre writers both. The genre writers need to be always obsessed with their fiction; they should not let it pass by even with a minor neglect. Meinhardt wants the writer to be market savvy for his existence and fully aware of the readers and their changing tastes. Further he suggests the writers to bend and to overlook the rules of fiction writing before he is broken out keeping the interest of the readers. Else there shall remain no place for him in the genre fiction.

CONCLUSION:

Critics of serious literature, who are the prime concern, readers and their reviews of the conventional fiction, refuse to deem the popular fiction deserving to be a literary genre. Still there are intellectuals and scholars like Nurit Tirosh, senior librarian at the Hebrew section; Haifa University Library intensifies the strong views on the genre. He wants the genre to be treated as a special branch of legitimate studies of literary research in all universities as is carried in some of the American universities. Its molest for its origin to its development and to the present status is unjustified and

dishonorable. This deliberation on the genre fiction with its origins in the masterpieces of literature convincingly assures readers that the genre fiction can stake an equal place in the mainstream literature of the world.

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