

PROGRAMS WITH CRIMINALISTIC CONTENT IN THE AUDIO-VISUAL AREA OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA: TYPOLOGICAL AND DISCURSIVE PARTICULARITIES

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Abstract

Constantly, commercial television channels expand their niche of contents that deal with crime, as this visual product sells well. Although during the last years the interest of the viewers has focused mainly on entertainment shows, the rating of the crime programs remains constant. In the audio-visual space of the Republic of Moldova, the access to this category of programs is ensured by the local television channels, especially by the channels that broadcast a foreign television product, especially from the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, one fact is undisputable – the television content that registers high ratings satisfies certain demands and needs of the public and therefore the popularity of criminal-themed programs is motivated by certain needs of the television audience.

Keywords: *television, program, criminal, product, rating, public, audience.*

Russian channels offer viewers a wide range of violent and sensational programs, which for some channels, such as NTV and Ren-TV, represent the basis of the daily television program. Most of these shows represent projects that are achieved according to various scenarios in the form of the documentary film or of the documentary – investigation, in which the central role belongs to the plot and the result of the narrative structures. Viewers are systematically exposed to operative news regarding the crimes committed in the country or in the Russian Federation, as well as the information about the crimes committed in the past. The cases are carefully presented and there is an essential accent placed on details. Nevertheless, this kind of programs did not ever face any crisis of popularity. On the contrary, the reasons for the popularity could be found in the origin of the human nature, since people have always had an inexplicable attraction to cruelty, violence and the spectacle of death. A long time ago, the fights

of the gladiators in Ancient Rome were highly popular and later on, during the middle ages, hundreds of people gathered in the town square to witness the public execution of citizens. The exacerbation of violence and death in television programs also seems to be encouraged by the contemporary public who ensures a significant popularity to these programs. The interest for TV violence is also triggered by the characteristics of the images which, by means of the effects that they convey, become attractive for the public. Researcher J. Goldstein stresses the significance of the context in which violent actions take place. He states that “the public has always enjoyed watching effervescent images about the war or crimes and this becomes two times more attractive and the viewer feels safe in a familiar company” (GOLDSTEIN, 1998). Some researchers (S. Feshbah, R.D. Singer) even validate the positive effect of television violence. At the basis of his hypothesis, Feshbah places the individuals’ feeling of frustration which occurs due to their day to day failures and this represents a good reason why people may become violent to those around them. Therefore, “if the feeling of frustration does not warn out, it can represent a strong stimulus in the initiation of antisocial behaviours, and watching programs with a violent content neutralises these feelings and the violent behaviour becomes a symbolic one, without being produced in reality” (FESHBACH, 1986). On fact is however undisputable – all television contents that score high ratings satisfy certain needs and requirements of the public, and therefore the popularity of the programs with a criminal topic is augmented by certain needs of the television audience. People are

concerned with the problem of criminality because the survival instinct is a primordial one. The more information he has on the criminal situation from the environment in which he lives, the easier it will be for the individual to avoid certain dangers and to ensure his security.

From a conceptual perspective, the programs about criminality represent those television programs which approach different crimes as subjects. Therefore, the journalism's area of interest on the topic of criminality includes the following events: crimes, robberies, rapes, aggression, corruption, financial fraud, ecological crimes, political crimes, past crimes (serial killings), car accidents and other offences. Like any other television product, shows on criminality aim to:

- Inform the public about these kinds of events since the main purpose of mass-media is to inform its audience about everything that is going on in the society;
- Warn people about the consequences of breaking the law. Television satisfies the individual's need for security, offering him all the necessary information about the events in the world of crime;
- Morally educate the public by presenting the horrors which take place in the criminal world, the miserable life of offenders, drug addicts and prostitutes and the consequences of adopting some illegal behaviours. By systematically influencing the audience, criminal programs form the necessary settings for it and teach the required behavioural rules, which can contribute to the reduction of the number of offences in the country;
- Focus the attention of the public opinion on the problem of criminality and to determine the behavioural involvement of the audience;
- Offer support to the state's law enforcement bodies in their activity to identify and find offenders, witnesses and other possible victims;
- To accelerate the financial income of the commercial television station.

The problem of the typology of the programs about criminality entered in the interest area of the researchers together with the imperious development of different formats, with more and more complex and hybrid compositional structures, all having the same purpose – to make the most of

the scripted possibilities of television to transform new information into a sensational show. Therefore, the Russian researcher Е. Долгина makes a difference between the following programs on criminality: operative chronical, talk-show which resembles a trial, journalistic investigations, documentary programs. Among these, the operative chronicles play a major role in the niche of the criminal programs since they represent information and documentary frameworks from the daily activity of the forces (prosecutor's office, police, road police, border police, anticorruption police etc.), as well as the review of various traffic events. Usually, from these programs, the viewer finds out information about: road accidents, assaults, robberies, apartment thefts, drug and cigarette smuggling, attempts of illegally cross the border, blackmail, procurement, kidnapping. The shows "Echipa 902" (NTV) and "Unitate de gardă" (Canal 3) represent good example for the aspects mentioned above.

At the same time, the programs which imitate the court of law record a growing popularity, sometimes based on real situations, just that the heroes are replaced by actors. However, in most cases, the sceneries in these talk-shows belong to television people and therefore:

- they contain details invented by the editor in order to increase the attractivity of the content;
- they are written by people who do not possess solid knowledge in the field of jurisprudence and that is why sometimes different kinds of errors occur. But this aspect especially questions the informational value of these television products not their recreative value: «До суда» ("Until judgement", NTV), «Суд присяжных» ("The judgement of the jury", NTV), «Прокурорская проверка» ("The prosecutor's evidence", NTV) «Федеральный судья» ("Federal judge", Первый канал), «Суд идет» ("Court hearing") (РТР), etc.

Another type of content is presented by the program – reconstruction, a documentary show in which significant crimes which took place decades ago are being artistically reconstructed. The script structure combines both artistic elements (shooting with actors) and the inherent characteristics of the analytical genres (interviews with the investigators,

prosecutors, witnesses, offenders as well as operative filming, archive materials etc.). Therefore, viewers have the chance to see the ways in which crimes are committed and the stages of the criminal investigation. The most representative moments of the investigation are artistically reconstructed. Actors are placed in the role of the victims and of the aggressors and their actions replace the actions of real heroes. These frames are usually presented in black and white images, in order to render the spirit of the past. All the stages of the investigation are chronologically restored, from the committing of the crime to the catching of the criminal. We exemplify the aspects mentioned above with the help of the show "The case investigation...with Leonid Kanevsky" broadcasted on NTV Moldova channel.

Also, a growing popularity is recorder by the journalistic investigation programs in which there are some journalists who investigate the different types of fraud: financial fraud, power abuse, malpractice, ecological crimes, scandals in the political environment, etc. Usually, this type of program represents some documentary films about the most representative criminal records of recent times. This genre of journalistic investigation is represented by programs such as: «Специальный корреспондент» ("Special correspondent", Russia), «Честный детектив» ("Honest detective", RTR Moldova), «Профессия репортер» ("Profession: Reporter, NTV) and others.

In the broadcast grid of various television stations one can also find analytical shows about criminality, their goal being to highlight events from the criminal environment, as well as the analysis of the causes and consequences of criminal behaviours. This category is represented by the show «Человек и закон» ("The individual and law", PRIME TV).

Equally, the broadcast grid of television stations also include legal education shows, shows in which field specialists, usually lawyers, offer viewers advice regarding problems from the different fields of law and

it analyses legal issues. As an example, we can offer the show "The advice of the jurist" (Publika TV).

From a discursive point of view, the television contents that approach the criminogenic aspect of social life organise its discourse on two directions: to inform and to impress. Due to the fact that the fictional area narrows sharply, scenery procedures are necessary in order to compensate for the fiction deficit. According to researcher Jean Baudrillard "the viewer's perversity consists in the fact that he does not want the real event, but its spectacle" (BAUDRILLARD, 1996). In this way, the histories taken from reality and who are not always dominated by the spectacular element are framed in epic structures in which the accent is set on the organisation manner of the television discourse. The plasticity of the verbal discourse extends up to the point in which a planned intrusion in the area of fiction is achieved, which offers the textual aspect a literate advertising character. This phenomenon facilitates the borrowing of elements from other functional styles, including the colloquial one. In the structuring of the imagistic-verbal discourse it is usually used to combine language units with neutral load with words and expressions marked stylistically in order to enhance expressiveness. An ordinary practice relates to the valuing of phraseological units, idiomatic expressions, proverbs and sayings, diminutives, jargons and slangs. Often, one uses the technique of the direct quote (poets, writers, philosophers) or of the indirect quote (fragments taken from songs or micro-passages from well-known artistic productions). Therefore, the transfer of events from the informational area into the informational-expressive sphere represents a procedure characteristic for the programs with a criminalistic content.

In the language sphere, from a morphological perspective, the nominal category placed highest in the context of violence is represented by nouns. Here are some examples: «убийца» (murdered), «смерть» (death), «бесы» (demons), «мясник» (butcher), «душегуб»

(killer), «кровь» (blood), «мечь» (revange), «лезвие» (knife edge), «палач» (executioner), «пленница» (prisoner), «осужденный» (convict), etc. A smaller usage space belongs to the category of the verb, being represented by the following verbs: «убить» (to kill), «зарезать» (to kill), «взорвать» (to explode), «застрелить» (to shoot), «уничтожить» (to eradicate), «задушить» (to strangle), «захватить» (to capture), «похитить» (to steal), «раздавить» (to crush), «грабить» (to rob) and others. The adjective category is reflected in contents in a lower extent, being used to externalise the appreciative nature of the discourse with the help of concurrences such as: «дерзкое ограбление» (“impertinent robbery”), «неведомый убийца» (“unknown killer”), «таинственный убийца» (“mysterious killer”), «чудовищное преступление» (“horrible crime”), «кроважидные преступники» (“bloody criminals”), «окрававлённый нож» (“bloody knife”), «зловещее преступление», (“hateful crime”), «изуродованный труп» (“deformed corpse”) and others.

On the same note, we specify that a language characteristic is related to the abundant use of proverbs and phraseological units as a beginning technique: «Клятву скрепляют кровью» (friendship is sealed with blood), «Тише едешь дальше будешь» (go slower, get further), «Седина в бороду бес в ребро» (“He has got grey hair but he is looking for trouble”), «бесплатный сыр только в мышеловке» (“For free, cheese represents a trap”), «дело пахнет керосином» (“It smells like trouble”), or the partial change of phraseological units: «Сердцу можно и приказать» (“you can sometimes dictate to the heart”), «У страха глаза сужаются» (“The eyes of fear are narrowing”), «хотели как лучше а вышло даже хуже чем всегда» (“They wanted the best, but it turned out worse than usual”) and others.

Another discursive strategy relates to the generous usage of jargons and slang units. Since these television contents clarify in an extended manner the criminal world, the

pretentious expressions characteristic to the specific language of certain social categories are suitable for these kinds of discursive structures. Examples such as: «кинуть»(to betray), «лечь на дно»(to hide), «братва»(brotherhood), «дать дуба»(do die), «гудеж»(drunkenness) «бабки»(money), «врубиться»(to get to the essence), «калбасится»(to party), «вышка»(death penalty), occupy a relatively vast space in the composition of the programs, being supported, in the enhancement of expressivity by diminutive lexical formations: «уколчик»(little injection), «скандалчик» (little stir), «ментенок» (small police officer), «дельце» (some small chore), and others. In other cases, the discourse of the journalist contains presuppositions: «левый сосок был отрезан, вероятно ножом» (“the left nipple was cut, probably with a knife”), «на полу валялась окровавленная палка, вероятно орудие убийства» (“on the floor there was a pole full of blood, probably the weapon of the crime”), «у девочки было вырезано сердце, по всей видимости ножом» (“the little girl had his heart pulled, probably extracted by a knife”) and others. At the same time, it is worth mentioning the fact that special attention in the conception of the discourse is attributed to the details regarding the committing of the crime: «недолго думая, задушил обезумевшую от ужаса женщину бельевой веревкой» (“Without thinking too much, he strangled the frightened woman with a rope”), «голова погибшего была буквально разможена многочисленными ударами от тупого предмета. На шее затынут шнур от электроприборов, а в ухо была воткнута вязальная спица» (“the head of the victim was destroyed. The neck was wrapped with an electric wire, and there was a knitting needle staked in the ear”), and others. Usually, in the contexts in which the technique of the concrete detailed is used, one can also attest various figures of speech, with the purpose of amplifying the expressivity of the language, for example, the paraphrase: «Я покончил бы с собой пусть меня научат» (“I would kill

myself, teach me how"), or the antonomasia: «новые Раскольниковы» ("the new Raskolnikov"), «новый ворошиловский стрелок» ("the new sniper of general Voroshilov"), «неудачный Отелло» ("an unlucky Otello").

The manifestation space of the linguistic units placed in contexts that refer to violence extend even beyond the actual contents of the programs. They can be observed in the headlines of the editions, with the purpose of attracting the attention and the interest of the viewers. We offer some examples of show headlines: "They were investigating the case... with Leonid Kanevsky", (NTV): «Господин отравитель» ("Mister killer"), «Билет в преисподнюю» ("Ticket to hell"), «Маска смерти» ("The death mask"), «Влюбленный маньяк» ("A serial killer in love"), «Убить в полнолуние» ("Murder on the night of full moon"), «Метатели ножей» ("Knife throwers"), «Абсолютное зло» ("The absolute evil") and others. It is obvious that the adherence to the spectacular is inherent for this type of programs which "sell emotions at a very reasonable price" (БОК, 2002). This is why the programs take the shape of sensational shows which satisfy the viewers' demands for "theatrical representation". In this context, we subscribe to the words of researcher C. Cannon who stated that these ways of lively presenting the information turned into "a terror" (CANNON, 1995) which shocks even more than the events which take place in reality and which are basically the protagonists of the reportages.

The discourses which accompany the contents with a violent character are also inserted into humoristic contexts, in the cases in which the committed violent actions do not present a serious, irreversible character. This discourse organisation technique is used when the journalist - author or reporter wants to mock the offender, presenting a slight irony towards him or the situation created. In programs with criminal subjects the discourse is usually placed in a humoristic context. Here are some examples: «необычному

преступнику и почет особый» ("to an incredible criminal and an interting welcome") «генерал поддельный, но удостоверение настоящее» ("a fake general with an authentic certificate"), «не бросил своего боевого друга в беде, и набросился на обидчика своим естественным орудием - бутылкой» ("he did not leave his friend in need and he attacked the offender with his own weapon - the bottle"), «Гуляли так, что дом рухнул» ("they partied until the house broke down"), «В драке дед Матвей оказался слабее, теперь молодого соперника ищет милиция. А девушка осталась в избе у Матвея, видимо кулаки у мужчины не самое главное. Значит есть еще у ветерана порох в пороховнице» ("The old man Matvei lost the fight, and his rival is being searched. The girl stayed in the old man's hut. It seems that there is still dust in the old man's shotgun), and others.

It is obvious that, when writing the verbal discourse, the authors pay very much attention to the exploitation of stylistic procedures, responsible for the expressivity of the presentation. When details are described the stress is placed on the fetishism of the means of expression by constantly using proverbs and phraseological units, as well as jargon and slang, whose usage is augmented exactly by the topics of the programs. At the same time, presenting the details with the help of humour represents, in our opinion, a procedure intentionally used to distract the viewers' attention from the severity of the incident, since humour distinguishes and relaxes. The events become less dramatic in the conscience of the viewer than they are in reality and the predilection for viewing such programs grows.

In conclusion, we stress the fact that the programs with a criminalistic content represent a source of violence. The shows of the local broadcasters are mainly focused on foreign movies and serials, which enter the autochthonal sphere of the audio-vision on the retransmission path. A specific particularity of the programs with a documentary content, oriented towards the mediatisation of real violence, is the organisation of the sceneries according to the

principles of cinematographic art, therefore using imagistic and verbal discourse procedures and techniques borrowed from the film art. The discursive violence from criminal shows is situated in the contexts of social prevention, emotional exaltation and humoristic.

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