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Types, Genres and Formates

In the beginnings of television era, when the medium was just looking for means of expression and essentially its own identity, four field of tv creativity appeared:

1) **political-news program** with the editorial staff of television newspapers

2) **artistic program**, which includes literary dramatic broadcasts (original television plays, taken theatrical performances, broadcasts from theaters, television theaters of poetry, small short stories for good night, literary programs, etc.), broadcasting of entertainment programs (variety shows, songs, competitions), music broadcasting (opera productions, television concerts, ballet productions, operettas, music bands, etc.) and film broadcasting

3) **program for children and young people**

4) **television film production**

Such a division is, of course, completely outdated from today's point of view and reflects the vision of television production in 1963. However, it is valuable because it indicates the **incomprehensibility and very difficult definition of television types and genres**. It combines thematic orientations with formal production methods, mixes genre with individual art types. Can't a program for children and young people be an art

film? Is it possible to include entertainment programs under an art program? And why is there no distinction between original and adopted work?

Since then, television has created its own key to classifying a variety of works intended for broadcasting. **It is necessary to accept television as a reservoir of specific communication procedures and at the same time borrowings from various art types, which it has drawn in, absorbed and changed with its centripetal force.**



The problem of categorization of television production

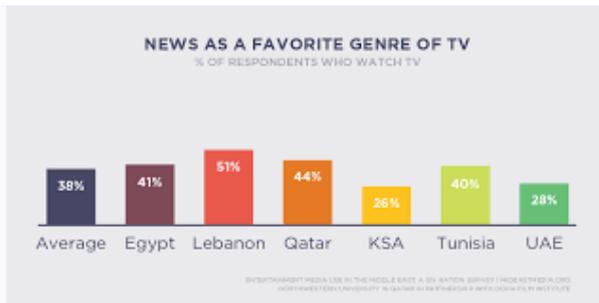
Television is neither theater, nor literature, nor film, nor photography, nor fine arts, nor music, but in every piece of its work it somehow touches all these art forms. Somehow it parasitizes on them, but at the same time he develops them.

Therefore, in my opinion, it is not possible to apply to it in full force and systematic evaluation criteria and aesthetic or genre categories of the mentioned types of art, it is necessary to create its own categorization. It is true that **television is closest in form to film**, but let's not forget that it **took over technical principles and some genres from radio**. Yes, it can be said that television broadcasts theater, music, film. However, species categories generally conceived in this way say nothing about the specificity of the form in which they do so. There may be no such difference if the television broadcasts Czech "National" Opera *The Bartered Bride* (by Bedřich Smetana)

live from the National Theater or from a recording three days later. There may be a small difference in the viewer's perception of the current event and watching the can of time, but a fundamental shift will occur in the principle by which television gave him an insight into the National Theater. **His vision will not be theatrical.**

The so-called The theatre "peephole" principle, surveillance from one place in a row and the possibility of peripheral monitoring of the whole is replaced by three to five cameras capturing five different angles of view, different proximity, different sizes of images and the same volume. It is true that this fragmentation and polygonal television synthesis of reality can be an added value, for example, when watching sports matches in a stadium - there can be close-ups, even repeated and slowed-down ones, a real spectator gain. But in the case of theater, where we see Jeníček (the main character in the opera) from one meter and he sings for the audience at the gallery or at a classical music concert, where we have the opportunity to watch the sweat on the nose of the first violinist thanks to cameras, the television principle of recording **denies the art as such**. And I'm not talking about the technical problems of the aspect ratios of old films (4: 3) and new standards (16: 9), their enlarging and trimming the edges of broadcasts, and other interventions in the work itself.

What happens when the same *The Battered Bride* is staged by television in his own studio? It will mean that it adapts it to television shooting, forces the actor to lose his expression, perceive the presence of several cameras shooting from different, even completely opposite angles and probably the scene, its scenographic solution will look different. **It will still be *The Bartered Bride*, in a new production for a different type of perception.**



What is natural for television?

The complexity of things arises from the nature of television.

It is at the same time a broadcaster and a receiver of content (which, however, he must process in his specific way) and at the same time the creator of his own, original television reality.

During the decades of television existence, it has shown what suits it:

- a) direct transmission (live – on air) of anything as a principle,
- b) emphasis on timeliness and speed, news forms,
- c) variety of grandeur in entertainment programs and at the same time civil sobriety in dramatic programs,
- d) cyclical areas for story development.
- e) short TV stories
- f) an hour-long TV movie
- g) a talk show with one to three guests
- h) various types of competitions in the studio
- i) endless series
- j) blocks of fairy tales for children
- k) educational position of interpretation of anything
- l) journalistic and documentary forms
- m) programs building on the interactivity of content and viewers - direct inquiries, etc.)
- n) live broadcasting of important, crisis or just interesting events.

In this tangle of methods and ways of communication, **television is the strongest.** At the same time, it is still better to go to the cinema where it was intended, to the theater for opera or comedy and for a concert in the concert hall.

Thus, **we cannot apply the laws of literary genology to television production, but also the analytical tools of theater or film studies.** But we need to somehow orient ourselves in television production, somehow hierarchize it, primarily because of the definition of broadcast windows.

Let's use the typology of the British classic of television theory John Williams for the first excavation:

- 1) News and Public Affairs
- 2) Features and Documentaries
- 3) Education
- 4) Arts and Music
- 5) Children's Programs
- 6) Drama
- 7) Movies
- 8) General Entertainment
- 9) Sports
- 10) Religion
- 11) Publicity (internal)
- 12) Commercials (WILLIAMS 2008, p. 78–83).

In this key, these are **very general frameworks** that, as a whole, **define the diversity of television production.** Here, too, it is possible to ask whether entertainment of all kinds does not permeate children's programs, for example, or how it is possible to separate Arts and Music from documentary forms. But let's answer authoritatively: **these are the kinds of television production. Let us not apply to them only content, only formal, only technical, only aesthetic criteria. Television needs a combination of everything, just as broadcasting itself is a mixture of everything.** A similar list can serve as the drawers of an antique secretary who is still somehow holding together.

Example: Roger Waters' concert clearly belongs to the Arts and Music category, a documentary about him into documentaries when he arrives in Prague, he will be grabbed by an intelligence communication modem, and if it turns out that the performer

is a believer, he will fall into the Religion drawer. Then we combine all these shows with theming or bridging, we advertise as an event long in advance, and we have Roger Waters lovers glued to the screen all evening. Thus, the word species could refer to the most general category of television production, which combines content, form and communication mode and is the first point of reference where to resort to a given work or product in the categorization.

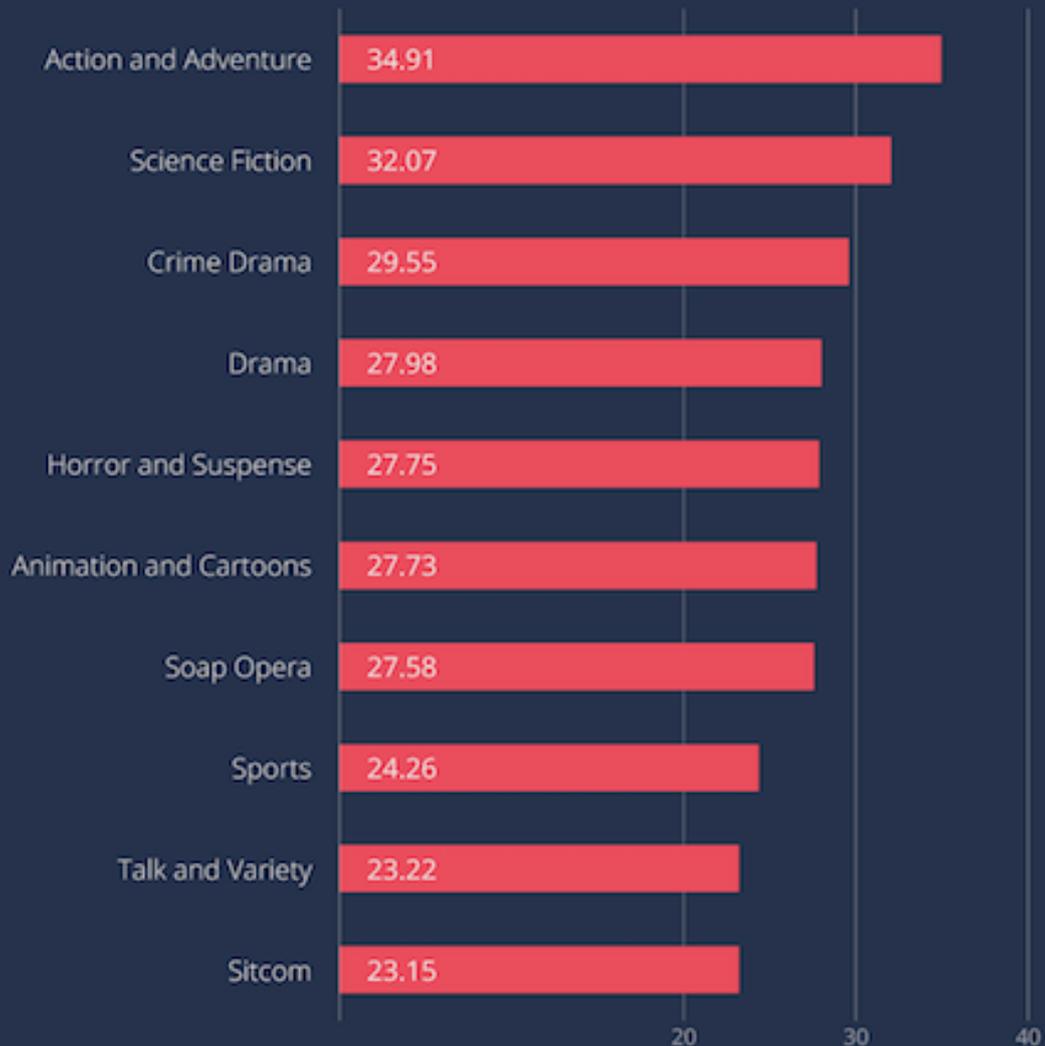
In addition to species, we can also divide programs according to type and typology. Then we will use the word type. It will be a narrower angle of view of television production, far more specific, with clearer parameters. The type must always be viewed in terms of the purpose for which we use it:

- 1) **program type:** differentiation rather in terms of program-content options
- 2) **schema type:** differentiation rather in terms of formal-scheme options.

The boundary between them is very weak, we distinguish between these two types only by the emphasis on purpose.

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Program types, genres

When examining program types, the concept of genre will inevitably come to us, however we may have said that we cannot apply the methodology of classical genology. Even in English terminology, the word "**genre**" is actually commonly used

for program types. Let's first look at the "program genres" of selected European televisions:

BBC:

- Fiction
- Light entertainment / Sitcoms
- Music
- Sports
- News
- Information
- Infotainment / Human Interest
- Arts / Humanities / Sciences
- Education
- Religion
- Others
- Presentation

We see that this is a variation of Williams' television types, but they only **concern the content.** Under Education, of course, we can also see the form, but in this case it is really the content of educational blocks (for schools, language courses, etc.).

German television ZDF has the genres / types described as follows:

- Sponsorship messages
- For children
- Program presentation
- Advertising
- Sport
- Journalism - Society
- Education
- Economy, social sphere and environment
- Foreign policy
- Internal policy
- News
- Magazines
- Theater and music
- Afternoon series and series (cycles)
- Entertainment programs spoken
- Entertainment
- Feature film
- Dramatic production
- Children youth family
- Culture and science

And for the interest of Polish television TVP as follows:

- Current Affairs (Journalism)
- Educational programs
- Entertainment
- Information
- Documentaries
- Advertising
- Sports
- Religion
- Theater
- Classical music
- Children and youth

I consider Victoria O'Donnell's table from 2007 to be the most valuable, which looks at these divisions from a much finer perspective. Distinguishes genres, subgenres, format, characteristics, content and cast. Let's take the genres of comedy and talk show as an example.

Genre: Comedy

Subgenre: Situation Comedy

Format: 30 minutes, usually filmed before a live audience and edited later

Characteristic: Provokes laughter through jokes, humor in dialogue, or slapstick. Domestic or workplace setting.

Characters: Ensemble actors, one or more Leads, often stereotypical, guest star.

Plot: A dilemma or test is solid by the end of show. Learning or moral growth.

(O'DONNELL 2007, s. 101– 109)



Format

The English word "format" is used in the O'Donnell table. Here it was intended as a synonym for the form, ie what the parameters of the show are: "length 60 minutes, filmed with a live audience, 5 days a week".

In media terminology, however, we use the word format, which is **more than just a formal description of the program, it includes internal characteristics**. In the world of radios, the type of radio is even considered a format, because, as we have said, the broadcasting scheme itself is a product that defines the appearance of the whole station. If a radio station broadcasts only classical music, its broadcasting scheme will be a format, ie a product. A typical example of a **television format** is the programs *Want to be a Millionaire* or *SuperStar (Pop-Idol)*, **following the same form on all televisions that have purchased and listed their license**. As well as *StarDance*, *Mail for You*, *Party*, *On a Stand*, *Therapy*, *Family Secrets*, and many more. The advantage of the formats is that they are already established and their possible shortcomings are eliminated. They have been tested on television and their effect is obvious. They have precisely defined production processes. The format buys television on a contract basis; will be available a bible format in which everything is described in the smallest detail - for example, what tendency the seats in the studio should have, how many plasma screens should be there, what color the chair should be, etc. The rights owner can check at any time whether these rules are followed, or allow their adaptation to the specific conditions of television or the national circuit. In the case of the format *The Greatest Czech*, on the other hand, the adjustment to the Czech environment was a condition, we could hardly present the competition under the name *The Great Brittons*.

The art of the adaptation in this case was the choice of communication style, which was rather combative in the original, conciliatory in our country. The

Pop Idol (*American Idol*) was similarly adapted into the form of the Czechoslovak *ČeskoSlovensko hledá Superstar*. Format development is a very expensive and uncertain investment. However, a successful format is a selling commodity that can bring significant profits to a television (producer). Most often, the formats are not developed by the television itself, external manufacturers come with them.

They offer them

- in literary form
- in literary form with a sample realized work
- as a finished format ready for broadcasting.

The implementation of the accepted format can be in the production of television or so-called turnkey, supplied by the licensee.

Phillipe Perebinssoff from the University of California deals with, among other things, the parameters of various formats and assumptions of their success. It divides formats into two basic types:

- **when the concept dominates** (the framework is given and the actors are selected for it - as was the case in the *Millionaire* or *The Greatest Czech*)

- **when the star dominates** (it creates the format, everything depends on its abilities and the concept adapts to it)

It also very inspiringly discusses the key elements for the success of the format:

- **Conflict** - The essence of attractiveness

- **Durability - Persistence** (ie long-term provenance, for example, *M.A.S.H.*, *The Simpsons*, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire...*)

- **Likeability - Pleasure** (function of familiar faces, or identification with a specific star - Bill Cosby, Martin Sheen, Whoopi Goldberg, Alan Adla)
- **Consistency - Consistency** (exact fulfillment of the format)
- **Professional Staffing - Professionalism** (at the highest level)
- **Timing** (meaning not only in the broadcast schedule, but also the appropriate launch time in season , in counterpoint against some social events, etc.)
- **Trend Awareness - Awareness of the trend** (do not buy formats that are already obsolete)
- **Adequate Budget** (a condition necessary to fulfill the form of television 99 contracts)
- **Salability** - Sales profit by advertising times)
- **Getting Crossover Viewers - Viewers across** (either clearly identified target group or the intervention of all)
- **Voice of Authority** (Best advertising is recommended)
- **Innovation and freshness** - coming with improvements and adaptations)

(PEREBINSSOFF - GROSS - GROSS 2005 pp. 134-150).



It is necessary to orientate oneself in the clutter of various television productions. **It is difficult to apply categories from other types of art and communication to it, it is necessary to accept television principles as an**

independent world. We distinguish the most general types of television production, then types (according to the purpose, schematic or program) and, in the most specific form, formats. These categorizations are important for the possibility of compiling a broadcasting scheme, then the production plan from it, and the possibility of selling advertising time or formats themselves.

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The Greatest Czechs according to TV poll (2005):

1. Charles the IV (Czech king and Roman Emperor)
2. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (the first President of Czechoslovakia)
3. Václav Havel (theatre playwright, the dissident in communist era, and the first president of Czech Republic)



RECOMMENDED MATERIALS AND SOURCES:

O'DONNELL, Victoria: *Television Criticism*. London: Sage 2007

PEREBINSSOFF, Phillipe – GROSS, Brian – Cross, Lynne S.: *Programming for TV, Radio, and the Internet*. Oxford: Elsevier-Focal Press 2005

ŠTOLL, Martin: *Is Kafka a Greater Czech Than Freud? The Global TV Format 100 Great Britons in Czech Translation. (A Case Study)*. In: *Czech and Slovak Journal of Humanities*, N. 1/2017, p.68-87

WILLIAMS, Raymond: *Television. Technology and cultural form*. London and New York 1999/208