

## THE SOAP OPERA AND ITS PLACE IN MASS MEDIA CULTURE (DEFINITION OF THE VALUE MESSAGE)

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*Abstract.* The soap opera is a genre that has a place in television documentaries. It is a family series consisting of aired episodes sequentially depicting both the storyline and the corresponding dramatization. From the point of view of the production process, the soap opera represents the collective work of a production crew reflecting, on the one hand, a certain hierarchical level of personal relations (director — cameraman — editor — screenwriter) and, on the other hand, the work on the television script. Actors' performances enhance the final character of the media product, they can be a guarantee of eventual success or failure on the media market. The contribution addresses the outlined issues related to the acting cast, managing the production apparatus of a television series. We will put the craft aspect of television production in context with social-psychological factors specifically in defining the acting performances of television characters. Our aim is to provide a media image in the form of making accessible the key message of the soap opera as a television product of postmodernism.

*Keywords:* soap opera, acting performance, social psychology, television production, postmodern culture.

### *Introduction*

Soap operas form an important part of the programming mix of commercial television. Commercial broadcasting depends on private suppliers for advertising revenue. Advertising generally conveys messages through the dissemination of media content. Evidence of this is the following statement: “*Advertising, as part of the media environment, strongly influences opinion formation. The average consumer perceives the media as a modern authority.*” (Baláž, 2008, p. 108).

We will discuss the link between soap opera and advertising later in the contribution. The emergence of the soap opera is linked to the development of color television (Rusnák, 2010), which dates back to the 1950s in the context of the American company CBS Broadcasting Inc. In the late 1960s, *The Forsyte Saga* (1967) was produced in the UK, and in Czechoslovakia it was broadcast in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It was a series of family-oriented stories reflecting the level of strained relationships between two brothers over a woman they both fall in love with (*Sága rodu Forsytů*, 2003-2024). In the context of the soap opera as a television genre, identical titles such as family saga, soap opera, family soap, romantic drama may appear. The university teacher and dramaturge Ľudovít Labík places the documentary soap opera in the group of entertainment genres (entertainment). According to

him, the documentary soap opera oscillates between the traditional soap opera and the documentary film with "real people" as protagonists (Labík, 2012).

At the centre of the soap opera there are life stories interwoven with the difficult fate of the main characters, often struggling to survive. The media creators are trying to reach a selected target group of television viewers with this phenomenon. Through soap operas, television audiences try to take a break from family and work problems and to absorb other ideas by also empathizing with the character of the actor in question. Often they try to understand her/his world, which practically replicates everyday ordinary life situations. Escapism plays a very important role here, its effects on society are justified especially in the sphere of influence (transmission of media content). Escapism represents an important principle of creation and reception of media content influencing the thinking, ideals and way of life as well as everyday life of contemporary populations (Pravdová, 2011). The recipient develops cognitive skills through exposure to television media products. The way media events are presented can to some extent help her/him to solve specific problem situations in her/his life.

#### *Methodology*

The contribution defines the social-psychological significance of the soap opera as a genre of popular culture. It defines the interrelationships between the respective acting characters, specifically the key factors influencing their significance. We also note the structure of the soap opera characters and the criteria for arranging them into a synthetic whole. First of all, we will define the thematic area of soap opera research in the form of defining the value message for the public, then we will specify the different contexts related to the production of these soap operas based on psychology and music, and then we will proceed to establish general criteria in the form of clarifying the strengths and weaknesses of the soap operas. In this contribution, we will mainly work with a comparative method, the purpose of which is to contribute to the comparison of the different soap operas on the basis of criteria related to the cradle of the creation of the above-mentioned soap operas, content relevance and acting performances. The analysis will be based on personal knowledge.

#### *Socio-psychological meaning of soap operas (distribution of media content to the television recipient)*

The soap opera is a television series that reconstructs stories from people's lives, the content of which explores typical family problems, most often

involving love relationships. Television soap operas generally present family ties, patterns of cohabitation, value orientations and the relevant contexts of the postmodern era (Orban, 2016).

The production of soap operas is characteristic of countries in Latin America, South America, Spain, Italy and Turkey. The cradle of the emergence of soap operas is related to Latin America, incidentally, these are places where there is a clear economic-cultural rupture between the world of poverty and the world of wealth (Rusnák, 2014). The peak of the mentioned genre was in the mid-1990s, when the Slovak media market was dominated by television products such as *Manuela* (STV), *Esmeralda* (Markíza), *Divoký Anjel* (STV), *Sladká Lucia* (Markíza), while in the Czech Republic *Kassandra* (TV NOVA) and *Vypožičané životy* (TV NOVA) were successful in terms of viewership. The programming mix is influenced by external stimuli related to the needs of the recipients. As regards the programming mix of the Slovak TV stations, the above-mentioned television products had their own dedicated time slot, which was situated in the early evening hours (approx. 16:30-17:00 TV Markíza). Soap operas were very popular with the television audience at that time. This was a female audience located in the middle age groups and especially in the post-working age.

Reactions to this television genre are varied. Part of the mainstream audience despises soap operas because they consider them to be incredibly stupid, long, boring and embarrassing "piss-ups" of TV actors without a shred of talent. A certain group of viewers seeks out this genre for its easy reception, non-violent way of storytelling and absence of violence (Malíček, 2008). Soap operas are gradually undergoing a social transformation depending on the established values of the postmodern era, mostly reflecting public opinion's attitude towards gender stereotypes (attitude towards sexual minorities, etc.). In this context, we mention the contribution of media expert Alexander Plencner, in which he introduces us to the cause of media stereotypes. They are related to the way of looking at individual social events through the eyes of public opinion and their interpretation in the mass media. The media use stereotypes to present simplified images of reality, namely, they bring a certain group of people closer (Plencner, 2011).

Many times, in addition to watching the soap opera plot, listeners also do their normal household chores — ironing, cooking and cleaning. Here, the television medium fulfils the status of a backdrop diversifying the recipient's time. In connection with this genre we would like to mention an interesting episode. More than twenty years ago, in one of the

American countries, because of the evening broadcast of the romantic soap opera *Esmeralda*, they had to postpone the evening holy Mass to an earlier hour. The grandmothers became totally addicted to this thrilling series, not wanting to miss a single episode. Addiction to media content is a significant phenomenon of postmodern society. There is a logical principle declaring that the more the audience becomes addicted to media content, the stronger will be the influence of the media on the audience itself. An example of this is popular soap operas, which predominantly cater to the expectations of the older age group (Hradiská, 2009).

The soap opera production crew consists of the main organizers participating successively in the film work, namely the producer, the music dramaturge, the scriptwriter, the director, the costume designer, the editor and the sound engineer. All the aforementioned persons will be introduced by the announcer during the opening theme song of the soap opera. Let's take a closer look at the main mission of the production crew. The film producer is responsible for the artistic rendering of a mass media work, assists in the creative process, usually performs an administrative function, specifically being present at the conclusion of important contracts. The music dramaturge selects the appropriate song for the television broadcast according to the musical genre. The scriptwriter is involved in the creation of the subject matter in the form of the text of the mass media work. The idea must have a head and a heel, only then we can sell it, this is a very important criterion in the film industry. We know the literary, technical and spot script, which is the most used in television documentary practice. On the shoulders of the director lies the final responsibility of the realized film work, she/he intervenes in its dramatic structure, that is, she/he exercises coordinating supervision over the entire production and acting team. The costume designer builds the scenic or costume sets in a television environment. The film (television) editor and sound engineer belong to the category of ancillary work providing the overall visual and craftsmanship of a mass media work. The production crew is generally represented by a manager who coordinates the organizational aspect of the production of the TV show. Together with the dramaturge (editor) and the director, the production crew represents the main management that is responsible for the production of the respective TV show (Hudíková, 2007).

Due to their success, some of the soap operas were also published in book form, namely by screenwriters Delia Fiallo (1924–2021) as *Esmeralda* (1999), *Kassandra* (1999), and also *Manuela* (1996). These genres also represented a key source of

livelihood for Slovak dubbing actors (for example Zita Furková, Elena Podzámska, Dušan Jamrich, Marta Sládečková, Eva Rysová (†), Eva Matejková). The dramatic construction of a television series unfolds through the actions of the characters, specifically each character fulfils a particular contextual role, whether major, minor, positive or negative. The director casts the actor according to the psychological state of her/his personality (which is associated with qualities such as persuasiveness, composure, rehearsal, author's note); in general, the principle is that characters with weaker acting performances tend to be eliminated during the course of the film's plot (directors simply let them die in the story, author's note). Typical examples of weaker acting are the characters of Graciela from the soap opera *Esmeralda* (1997) and Fedra from the soap opera *Rosalinda* (1999), played by actress Nora Salinas. The director prepared a cruel fate for the aforementioned characters, so that they succumb to a serious illness in both TV series. Of course, demographic factors such as the age and gender of the applicant also play a role in the casting of the actors. In the soap opera *Manuela* (1991) we met an acting couple with a big age difference; it was the then 28-year-old Grecia Colmenares (as Manuela, the protagonist of the story) and the 43-year-old Jorge Martínez (as Fernando, Manuela's husband). A similar situation occurred in the soap opera *Medzi láskou a nenávisťou* (2002), which starred the then 28-year-old Susana González as Ana Cristina and her great love, her husband, the then 42-year-old César Évora as Octavio Villareal. The film's aforementioned characters were excellent in their roles, despite their considerable age differences. As they say, love blossoms at any age, this phenomenon is symptomatic of love romances.

Psychological and demographic factors influence the plot structure of a television series. The film's plot structure is composed logically, consisting of an introduction, a core and a conclusion. The aim of the introduction is to bring the recipient into the action through familiarization with the story; the first few seconds are crucial here. In that time, the recipient can be gained as well as lost. In general, the logically proven principle applies. Filmmakers try to capture the attention of the television viewer through not too complex messages, but a simple story and an emphasis on traditional human values (Kasarda, 2013). In the opening passages, filmmakers work with the flashback method, a retrospective return to the past, the purpose of which is to briefly capture important events taking place in the past (for example in the soap opera *Esmeralda*, the flashbacks reflect the circumstances of the birth of the main characters — the clash of rich

and poor, the soap opera *Kassandra* — the main character is born in a rich family, but her possessive step-grandmother throws her to the Roma in a camp). The core of the TV story unfolds from the opening. The core of the story is reconstructed by the plot in the form of expressing a kind of contradiction, a conflict between the TV actors. Life brings many vicissitudes, twists and turns, (wo)man as a human being is unstable in her/his thinking, she/he can easily be manipulated by someone. The filmmakers are also inspired by this phenomenon when creating the relevant plot structure. The function of the plot can be the infidelity of the main characters, the murder of minor characters, a fake bank fraud or other misunderstandings. The plot has to be suspenseful to have the appropriate pizzazz. In terms of content, the soap opera copies ordinary life situations: "*Elements motivated by real life are included in soap operas for the sake of diversifying the plot, updating it and increasing dramatic tension. Exaggeration, hyperbole, and considerable emotional undertones are used to give the stories a sentimental or even lascivious quality.*" (Žilková, 2004, p. 127) The mastery of the success of a television series lies in a compelling story full of dynamic relationships.

#### *Structure of television characters and their arrangement criteria*

The main characters have to overcome many obstacles in order to reach their desired happiness. The happy ending comes only at the end of a TV story (for example the wedding of the main characters of soap operas, when there is also a standing ovation). The television soundtrack (soundtrack) describes the course of the plot of a television series, and can usually have a rising (contradiction, conflict) and a falling (calming) tendency. The character of the soundtrack depends on the individual plot situations, for example accident, murder, love relationship, love for children and elders, etc. The structure of the performing characters of soap operas is generally identical in character, we encounter character types such as the pest (for example serial killer Marcial as actor Alberto Estrella in the soap opera *Medzi láskou a nenávisťou*, mafioso Sebastian as actor Enrique Rocha (†), also involved in the white meat trade-prostitution in the soap opera *Cesty lásky*, transgendered thug Demetrio as actor Guillermo Garcia Cantú in the soap opera *Macocha*), donor (for example, the saving of a life was depicted in the soap opera *Macocha*, the mother Carmela, played by the actress Margarita Isabel, decided to donate a kidney to her son Angel, played by the actor Miguel Ángel Olivares Biaggio; similarly, the character Jasmin, played by actress Liliana Ortega, stood in the shot just

to save her love in the soap opera *Yago, syn džungle*), the helper (this role was portrayed in the soap opera *La Tormenta* by the character of the healer Sibyla, played by actress Margalida Castro, in the soap opera *Mariana, dcéra noci* by the character of Isidro, played by actor José Carlos Ruiz).

The length of a single episode is 45 minutes. Soap operas are set in the seaside environment of exotic countries, surrounded by luxurious villas of the upper social strata of the population, who also own cars of the latest fashion. In comparison, it is interesting to follow the development of the characters through the exploration of the relationship between the rich and the poor. The rich, as they say, have a bed of roses, they don't have to exert themselves, hard work doesn't mean anything to them, they just live a hedonistic lifestyle without any responsibility. A typical example is the Montalbán family from the American-Venezuelan soap opera *Rebeca* (2003), in which the main character, twenty-five-year-old Eduardo (played by actor Ricardo Álamo), lives a carefree life without any responsibility. He just enjoys all the trappings of the world. His world is cars, women, beaches, etc. In the first aired episode, the show's father Sergio (played by actor Victor Cámara) chastises him by stressing that he should finally finish university, start working and start a family. The series character Eduardo goes through a real self-reflection, takes his father's words to heart, but life later deals him a hard blow: 2 marriages fail, his little daughter goes blind, his several-month-old son dies, he can't be with his true love Rebeca (played by actress Mariana Seoane), he finds himself broke one day. Rebeca is the opposite of Eduardo, she is as poor as a church mouse, and she also works two jobs just to support her seriously ill mother and sisters. The love of her life is Eduardo. As they say, opposites attract, an example of this couple. In the end, everything is settled and Eduardo and Rebeca's love prevails. In this context, we would also like to mention the Mexican soap opera *Esmeralda* (1997), starring the main characters Esmeralda (played by actress Leticia Calderón) and José Armando Peñarreal (played by actor Fernando Colunga). Esmeralda is a blind girl living in a poor shack who wears the same clothes over and over again, namely a green skirt and blouse. Her close friends are a healer, the midwife Dominga (played by actress Raquel Olmedo), the gravedigger Fermín (played by actor Noé Murayama (†)), the village fool Melesio (played by actor Ignacio López Tarso (†)) and the doctor Lucio Malaver (played by actor Salvador Pineda), who teaches her to read and write. One day at a waterfall, he meets the wealthy doctor José Armando, son of the wealthy landowner

Rodolfo Peñarreal (played by actor Enrique Lizalde (†)). A spark jumps between the youngsters; they fall in love and marry against the wishes of José Armando's parents. As they say, the enemy never sleeps. Things begin to spark between the couple because of Esmeralda's newborn child. José Armando doesn't believe it's his own son. The doubt has been bred in him by his father, Rodolfo Peñarreal, who has never reconciled himself to the fact that his son has taken a poor blind country girl as his wife. One day, in José Armando's absence, Rodolfo takes Esmeralda against her will to Lucio Malaver, who abuses her. José Armando does not want to divorce her at any cost because he perceives that Esmeralda is innocent. He sends her for an abortion, but she radically disagrees. Only after this step, he finally leaves her. In the end, it turns out that Esmeralda's son is his. He wants to return to her, but she does not forgive him easily. In this series we experience another paradox, in that Esmeralda is in fact the daughter of the wealthy owners of the Casa Grande Peñarreal estate and José Armando is the son of a simple peasant. The children at the birth were switched with the assistance of Dominga and the maid Crisanta (played by the actress Dina de Marco (†)). The confusion of social roles is often applied in the plot construction of a family series. Soap operas are mostly set in the parlors of the family home or living room, where important conversations about the family and work matters of the performing characters take place. Occasionally, the storyline is also set in the kitchen environment, where intrigue is usually conducted and gossip is stirred up. Mostly the servants are involved. Gossip is a constitutive element of soap operas, usually fulfilling the status of intimate conversations, and usually has a synchronic and diachronic function linking the different types of episodes (From, 2006).

A remarkable specificity of soap operas are also the depicted fashion accessories of the main characters fulfilling the status of symbols, for example for Esmeralda it was emerald earrings, for the main character of the soap opera *Praveň lásky* (2001), Alfonsina (played by the actress Adela Noriega) it was a necklace of her late father Rigoberto (played by the actor César Évora), in the soap opera *Ked' budeš moja* (2001), the main character Paloma (played by actress Silvia Navarro) wore a watch from her beloved Diego (played by actor Sergio Basañez) as a farewell gift... Most listeners associate TV characters with the symbols mentioned. Symbols play an important role in television production, because they express the character and social status of the performing character (Švec, 2011). Television symbols are tangible artifacts that contribute to the exorability of a series' narrative

by the recipients. The status of symbols is also fulfilled by the following associations, for example the blind girl (Esmeralda), the mutilated/disfigured face (Lucio Malaver from the soap opera *Esmeralda*, Isabel Guerrero from the soap opera *Manuela*), the evil stepmother (the soap opera *Macocho*), etc. The aforementioned television characters are terrifying for underage viewers and those of a weaker psychological nature. In spite of this remarkable phenomenon, they are etched in our minds forever. Viewers who are familiar with the characters and conventions of a particular soap opera judge a television program by general impressions and not with reference to external reality (Chandler, 2007). The evaluation of media content from the perspective of the recipients is therefore subjective. Soap operas have the character of a great epic work between a novel and a novella. The soap opera is a media product that is characterized by an overdimensionality of artistic elements. Žilková notes a remarkable fact: "*Some experts clearly condemn the soap opera and rightly criticize its often kitsch sound and shape. They do not even consider it a genre of pop culture and automatically classify it as kitsch or a decadent form of art*" (2004, pp. 197–198). The soap opera is also closely related to folk prose, specifically in its thematic message intended for a defined target group of recipients: "*From today's point of view, the soap opera can be regarded as a kind of contemporary fairy tale for adults*" (Žilková, 2004, p. 202).

As they say, soap operas are soap operas all in one piece, there is a unified approach in the stylization of the storyline. They are tailor-made stories designed to satisfy the information hunger and sexual curiosity of the recipient, we speak of the so-called symptoms of uniformity (Stadtrucker, 2006). Often in soap operas we observe several lascivious and satirical scenes. Most of the time they relate to the excessive promotion of sexuality (erotic scenes), which we have particularly encountered in soap operas *Cesty lásky* (2003). We would like to state that the broadcast of this soap opera during prime time (the main airtime on TV Markíza) violated important ethical principles relating to the protection of minors under 18. Programmers or other components of the programmer service which could endanger the physical, psychological or moral development of minors or disturb their mental health and emotional state may not be broadcast between 6.00 a.m. and 10.00 p.m. (Porubcová, 2007). This principle also applies to commercial media. Throughout the course of the soap opera *Cesty lásky* (2003), prostitution was seen as a common way of making a living, sex scenes were practically the order of the day (naked, provocatively dressed female characters), and there

was often a rape motif and associated screams. Murder was considered something normal, for some characters it was a deviation (for example Enrique as the actor Abraham Ramos). The aforementioned soap opera had a decadent effect on the television public. The violation of ethical principles of morality and decency was also encountered in soap operas of the American-Venezuelan production *Rebeca* (for example a bar environment), the Mexican production *Ked' budeš moja* (during the opening credits a love act was depicted), the Colombian production *Doña Barbara* and *La Tormenta* (the main protagonists as actresses tease the attention of men by dressing provocatively). There is a devastation of moral values, and television creators are often unaware of its unfortunate consequences in the form of the premature sexualization of adolescents and the manifestation of aggressive youth behavior. This is also the construction of the plot. This is a common phenomenon in the Latin American environment. The dramatic action of soap operas is often enhanced by erotic innuendo, sexual scenes and vulgar language, which at the same time form the gross of the plot and the main principle of construction. This phenomenon also copies ordinary human life, in which we encounter fabricated negative sexual situations pushing the boundaries of responsibility for the performed actions in the recipient (Moravčíková, 2013). In soap operas we also observe the promotion of occult practices, spiritualistic séances, the moment of interpreting the future through tarot cards, the use of various incantations against evil forces namely the series *Kassandra*, *Odplata*, *Manuela*, *Esmeralda*, etc. Also, in some of them there are superstitions related to pouring water, bypassing the kupa — the well-known Turkish series *Tisíc a jedna noc (Binbir gece)*, in which, moreover, Islam is constantly presented in a positive way. Reincarnation was encountered in the soap operas *Odplata* (starring Helena Fontana and Valentina Dias as actresses Maria Elena Doehring and Gabriela Spanic) and *Túžba tela* (starring Pedro Donoso and Salvador Serinsa as actors Andres Garcia and Mario Cimarra). The subliminal use of alternative methods can endanger children's psyches, which often cannot distinguish fiction from reality. An important principle applies here. Much of the concern about the negative effects of the media is fuelled by children's perceptions of vulnerability to the effects of the media (Giles, 2012). The occult is a practical source of unscientific knowledge.

The recipient of television content has to be selective; what is important here is to have developed a sense of rational reflection, which is what media literacy courses under the banner of the fight against

misinformation are designed to do. At present, they are mainly addressed to seniors. The aim of media literacy is to contribute to the correct interpretation of media content in audiovisual or print format. The plot of soap operas is structured in a way that provides a behind-the-scenes view of the relationships between the characters involved. Functional dialogues move the plot forward, practically avoiding the prescribed machinery, the basis of the television character is to be natural. The actor must feel like a fish in water. Psychologically, the right actor is confident, piercing, goal-oriented, and able to empathize with any role: "In an actor's work, then, the first place belongs to naturalness, and the work itself rests on the intuition of the actor's feeling, which opens up the widest possibilities in our art." (Stanislavskij, 1997, p. 213) A good actor/actress serves the audience, so he/she must be characterized by a collective spirit. In certain cases, the actor/actress is embodied by familiar film props such as a cigar, a whisky, snooker, a sombrero. The aforementioned props have appeared in Mexican (*Esmeralda*, *Cesty lásky*) and Colombian soap operas (*Odplata*). In some soap operas, the performers have presented the art of singing during serenades; an example is the character of Adriano, played by actor Alejandro Ruiz Márquez, from the soap opera *Esmeralda*, Diego, played by actor Sergio Basañez, from the soap opera *Ked' budeš moja*. The setting of the film series is also extremely important, the scenes can take place indoors (the space of a family home, a workplace — a bank, a trading company) and outdoors (the open air, the street, a railway station) with the open sky. Individual episodes used to be filmed in Mexico, specifically in the entertainment district of Xochimilco (*Esmeralda*, *Macocho*, *Rosalinda*), Guadalupe (Virgin Mary — the miraculous image that appeared to Juan Diego in soap operas *Ked' budeš moja*, *Cesty lásky*, *Macocho*), Hidalgo (the building of the former Franciscan convent of Yexthó in Mexico — *Esmeralda*), in the city of Leon in the state of Guanajuato (*Medzi láskou a nenávisťou* — shots of the center, the church, the workers' shoe factory), Miami (*Rebeca* — luxurious villas of the rich), the city of Tlacotalpan in the state of Veracruz (*Cesty lásky* — shots of the port). The Argentine capital Buenos Aires was the setting for the soap operas *Manuela*, *Divoký Anjel*, *Sladká Lucia* and *Yago, syn džungle*. In Caracas, the Venezuelan capital, the soap operas *Kassandra* and *Záhadná žena*. It should also be noted that a few episodes of the soap opera *Právo na lásku* were filmed in European capitals such as Prague, Vienna and Rome.

Marketing products are also placed in the soap opera. A typical example is the soap opera *Ked'*

*budeš moja*, in which the maids often worked with Ajax cleaner when cleaning the premises. This is a form of covert advertising. The television series is closely related to advertising, which provides the television with appropriate revenue specifically in product placement (Hasák, 2012). This is a common phenomenon in popular culture. Soap operas also play a special role in love-oriented musical compositions. They are linked to the individual performers in the TV series. Musical songs have their justification. Sound design is also extremely important in the making of a television film because it affects the overall aesthetic of the film, which also affects the television audience emotionally (Stutterheim, 2023). In terms of content, the musical compositions suggest themes related to tragic love (examples are the song *Llenando de amor* for Adriano and Graciela from the soap opera *Esmeralda*, the song *Sobre Fuego* for Rosario and Armando from the soap opera *Skrytá vášeň*), with the joy of a sincere, pure love relationship (the song *Quisiera* from the soap opera *Keď budeš moja* for Paloma and Diego and the song *Que me faltas* from the soap opera *Doña Barbara* for Santos and Maricela), with memories of youth, specifically the years in the war (the song *Llegaste* from the soap opera *Skrytá vášeň*, symbolizing the friendship of Pepita and Martin). The musical compositions enrich the plot of the TV series with their meaning.

In soap operas we often encounter unfinished questions, an example is the unfinished part of the story from the soap opera *Skrytá vášeň* about the origins of Ruth Uribe, played by the actress Ana Lucia Dominguez (we didn't find out who her biological father was, only in hints, author's note). Similarly, the main character Milagros, played by actress Natalia Oreiro from the soap opera *Divoký Anjel*, never learned who her biological mother was. Media makers have overestimated the abilities of the recipients by this unconventional phenomenon. The recipient has to figure out the ending, there is nothing else left. Television also contributes to the creation of particular models of socio-cultural reality through the so-called chaotic. Media products often lack logic, order, compactness and the ability to convey relevant knowledge to the public (Pravdová-Ungerová, 2024). Certain soap operas have been made into sequels. A great example is the soap opera *Skrytá vášeň-príbeh pokračuje* (2022), filmed almost twenty years after the first version aired. The television recipient gets lost in the plot in places; the vast majority of characters from the first series are no longer mentioned, which is a shame. Virtually everything is based on new storylines, and many of the performing characters feel

redundant to the recipient. The television footage was broadcast in high HD (high quality picture and sound quality). Also, during the broadcast we encountered modern technologies and gimmicks that were designed to satisfy the needs of the television recipients.

### Conclusion

The soap opera as a genre reflects postmodern values associated with consumerism. In terms of content, it tries to reflect the entertainment elements by using unconventional situations of a humorous nature. It has a lengthy plot, often uninteresting, just to satisfy the demands of the media market. Nowadays, the emphasis is not on the quality but on the quantity of the media product, as the question of making a profit is at the forefront. In general, media content is not governed by a doctrine that guarantees value. Commercial channels broadcast programmers with a view to viewership (Solík — Višňovský — Lalahová, 2013).

We live in a globalised society in which advanced modern technologies are constantly being promoted. Within the analysis we have noticed criteria related to the structure of the film characters, the acting environment, the musical component moving the plot forward. The media production reflects the relationships between the acting characters of the television series, which are to some extent marked by the atmosphere on the film set. From a psychological point of view, it is interesting to observe the individual conflict situations between the performers, namely their development, gradation or possible ways of coping. The principle of gradation (escalation of the action) is also represented by the soundtrack (the so-called television soundtracks). They are improved by music dramaturges who are responsible for selecting suitable music (or jingles) for the television broadcast. The structure of the actors' characters is determined by psychological and demographic criteria. In this context, the criteria of actors' temperament, their character traits, language skills and aesthetic peculiarities (appearance) are monitored. The essence of an actor's success is to attract the attention of the television recipient with the appropriate qualities: persuasiveness, charisma, eye-catching appearance, etc. Even older age is not an obstacle to the creation of the plot of a television series. Even the issue of plot construction (for example the way in which individual events are portrayed, author's note) of soap operas contributes to its production in

both a positive and a negative sense. The positive aspect of soap operas is related to the dissemination of faith (especially Catholic faith), the values of marriage and family, and the presentation of the mysterious corners of the cinematic environment. Positive values cultivate the mindset of the television recipient or motivate him/her to do good in his/her environment.

Recently, we've also encountered a decadence of values in family series. Soap operas can also spread negative messages related to murder and the promotion of sexual and occult practices. These negative qualities destroy the psyche of the human individual, especially

the child recipient, by leaving indelible traces in him or her. In general, the recipient can become a slave to various addictions. It is necessary to look at soap operas through the lens of balance, through rational criticality, not only to highlight their pitfalls but possibly to make constructive suggestions for their elimination. In this case, the media public should do more to educate the critical and vulnerable target group of children and young people, and possibly the elderly. The television recipient should be able to critically understand the relevant media content through a clear deciphering of the value message.

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### **Орбан Кароль**

#### **Мильна опера та її місце в масмедійній культурі (визначення ціннісного послання)**

*Анотація.* Мильна опера — це жанр, який має місце в телевізійній документалістиці. Це сімейний серіал, що складається з послідовно випущених в ефір епізодів, які відображають як сюжетну лінію, так і відповідну драматургію. З позиції виробничого процесу, мильна опера являє собою колективну роботу знімальної групи, що відображає, з одного боку, певний ієрархічний рівень особистих стосунків (режисер — оператор — монтажер — сценарист), а з іншого — роботу над телевізійним сценарієм. Гра акторів підсилює остаточний характер медіапродукту, вона може бути запорукою успіху чи провалу на медіаринку. У розвідці розглядаються окреслені питання, пов'язані з акторським складом, управлінням виробничим апаратом телевізійного серіалу. Ми розглянемо ремісничий аспект телевізійного виробництва в контексті соціально-психологічних чинників, зокрема у визначенні акторської гри телевізійних персонажів. Нашою метою є створення медіаобразу у формі доступного викладу ключового меседжу мильної опери як телевізійного продукту постмодернізму.

*Ключові слова:* мильна опера, акторська гра, соціальна психологія, телевізійне виробництво, постмодерна культура.