

THE LIMINALITY AS MEANS OF MASS MEDIA FOR TRANSFORM OF A DAILY EVENT IN RITUAL

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to underline the effective used of liminality by mass media for transform in ritual a daily event. Theoretical background is constituted by concept of liminality which was launched by Arnold Van Gennep and was developed by Victor Turner (who has named the concept of the liminality – liminoid). In this framework, the study proves that in contemporary society, mass media are committed as responsible for mediatization of rituals in distinctive ceremonials: social, political, religious, and other. When people are watching television, they are introduced, by the media, in a liminal space, where they get to be members in the act of rites of passage. From the moment when their attention is enthralled by what is on television, people are induced in an ambiguous state; they are separated from reality. The media creates for each important ritualised ceremonial, the necessary time, in order to create a subjection of the public. In the contemporary society our basic activities are, in fact, rituals.

Keywords: liminality, mass media, liminoid, rites of passage, ritual

Introduction

The term “liminality” was first time introduced by Arnold Van Gennep (2011), a French ethnologist from the twentieth century. Years after the research of Van Gennep, Victor Turner (1969) has seen the liminality as a form of rituals in everyday situation: when we are going to school or to work, taking an exam, entering into a new building in order to achieve something or even for people who are staying home, we always pass through liminality. Victor Turner introduced in his research “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow and Ritual” the modern concept of liminality named as liminoid. He suggested that the liminoid is the threshold state in the modern society and the liminality is only used in the traditional way. However, the liminoid was rarely understood by the media theorist.

Turner has guaranteed that liminality can be seen in every aspect of our life. However, liminoid remained unused by numerous scholars, they preferred to use the Van Gennep's form even in our current days.

Liminality through Mass media

Following this concept, Professor Mihai Coman (Coman & Rothenbuhler, 2005; Coman, 2008) referred to the liminality as an active threshold state in mass media. His study approached the classic media as television, radio and printed press because it tends to become more personal than the internet and the smart phones (new media). In the mass media, the liminality is functioning as a universal tool starting with public media consumption, the interaction of the journalists in the newsroom, the story behind the press with the role of the television in the society and how it affects the public.

The television is in a strong bond with his public through mass media. But, how the liminality is taking place on television? For example, through television the journalist is making his public to enter into a liminal space in order to identify the viewer as an observer and participant. A ritual behavior is marked by the clothes that the journalists wear in different events of the day. On September 2015, the Romanian Politician Corneliu Vadim Tudor, who was the President of the Greater Romania Party had died. At his funeral, many people from the politics and media attended the mourning ritual dressed in black. During the week with the funerals, the media was filled with information in the memory of Vadim Tudor. Also, the printed press had portrayed the politician as a great man and a talented poet. In that week, the mass media created different shows in his memory and put the audience under crape.

Another form of media consumption is marked by the media broadcasting which appears every day or every week, depends on the news. The news starts every day at the same time. This news is correlated with symbols in order for the audience to understand. When people are watching news on television, they are obligated to enter into a liminality space (Panea, 2001; Panea, 2013). From the moment when people are starting to watch the news, they are becoming more aware with what is happening in their society and they are escaping from the rituals. It may seem that the media rituals are creating and changing the person's mind at the same time. The audience is receiving from the news messages that have the purpose to integrate them into the liminal space. The media rituals create the society's behavior. Our life is coordinated by the television and it can have the power organize our time. Another interested aspect of the power of television is how we organize our space in a

house in order to create a comforting zone for us when we are watching television. These entire aspects in our life are representing behaviors created by the media through rituals. The television was the center of the mass media until the internet took the power (Voinea, 2013; Borkowski, Zacharski & Kaszyca, 2014).

In the past years, the internet became an important part in our life sustained by the necessity of information. In our present, people are using the internet more often than the television. On Internet, they can inform faster with the news and they can watch their favorite shows without any disturbance. From the moment when the media presents a ceremonial, the people that are using the television or the internet are introduced to liminality. The mass media attract people through different news or shows into a mediated ritual of manifestation, where they encounter with different emotions as ambiguity, curiosity, misunderstanding; emotions that are sometimes representing a threat to social stability (Negrea, 2013; Ferencová, Jeleňová & Kakalejčík, 2015).

The internet has integrated the television alongside with forms of social media: Facebook, Twitter, and others. Even if the internet is representing a common thing in our life, the television is the one who can dictate as how to organize our home in function of his utility, for example: the TV must stay in a special place, but the laptops, tablets or smartphone are the ones who don't allocate space. Liminality can be generated by the mass media in the television's rituals, or through internet. However, the mass media is producing rituals in any form. But, the daily news are the ones with major impact on the audience. Starting with routine news about some normal situation and ending with nonroutine news that can affect the activities of the journalist. The ceremonies are divided by two steps: past events that are allowing us to remember the lost time and the restorative events like ceremonial, commemoration, etc. (Vlăduțescu, 2013a; Vlăduțescu, 2013b; Budică & Dumitru-Traistaru, 2015). The news is divided in three acts: Contests, Conquests and Coronations. (Dayan and Katz). The three steps are not in fact a homogenous ritual. When media are putting these steps in light, they become rituals. However, the Contest is regarding a political visit, for example, the visit of the Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis in Serbia. The Conquest is represented by the sports accomplishment: "Simona Halep after she won to Jelena Jankovic, became WTA 2". Not every event of Contests and Conquests can be a media event. The Coronation is a homogenous ritual and it represents a royal wedding, such as Prince William and Kate Middleton, which took place on April 2011 in front of 1900 guests.

Some ceremonial events are mediatized much more than the others; it depends on how the people are seen by the society. If a person who is not a name in the society has an accident, he will maybe be a short subject in the mass media, but we can't say the same thing about a public person. In 2014 Michael Schumacher had a skiing crash and was seriously injured. The news about Schumacher shocked the world and media exploited the news many days of the ski crash. Even now, in 2015, Schumacher did not recover and the journalists are making efforts to find new information about the racing driver's condition. The media put Schumacher's fans into liminality and it keeps them in the ritual until the driver will recover. In the present, in Romania are increasingly more and more news about what happened in 1990 when the 'Mineriada' or the Miners' Riot took. The violent demonstration of the miners consists in killing of four people and approximately 1000 people were injured. After almost 25 years, on October 16, the military prosecutors changed the legal classification and conduct to find the persons who are responsible for the violent demonstration in the central Bucharest University Square on June 13, 1990. These riots created a liminal space marked in two phases: the first threshold state was taking place on June 13-15, 1990 when the miners took the streets and attacked students and professors. At that time, the events that were produced in Bucharest were shown in the entire country through mass media. Romanians were attending a ritual marked by violence and fear. The exit from the threshold state took after the riots were finished.

The second phase of liminality started when the people had begun to find the persons who are guilty for what happened. Years after years the response remained unclear and the victims along with their family didn't leave the liminal space. After 24 years, the process has just begun and Ion Iliescu, the former president of Romania is charged with crimes against humanity. In this case, the media assist in the process, hoping that it will end soon. This means that the people will leave the liminal space when the process will have ended. The mass media created the threshold state through the mediatized the "Mineriada" event, consisting in remembering the facts that took place in 1990 every year, especially in 2015. Because of this, Romanians were caught in this dramatic liminal period for more than 20 years.

A liminal configuration can be a global social change which is a result of the combination between agents and persons of "dis-membering" (an existing social structure) and of "re-membering" (new structure). The ritual process is in fact a social change. The "re-

membering” is based on three factors: values-the root paradigms, institution-the formulative efforts and actors-the transformative agents (Shinar 1996).

In autumn of 2014, in Romania had the presidential election. There were two rounds, on November 2 and 16. The fourteen runners for the presidency had their campaign without serious conflict. On November 2, Victor Ponta and Klaus Iohannis won the most votes and both passed in the second round with an aggressive campaign. However, in this round two, the conflicts about the elections in Diaspora exploded and large protest were taken against Ponta’s government. On November 16, 2014, in the day with the election, the protests broke out in the cities with large communities of Romania from Diaspora: Paris, London, Munich, Stuttgart, Vienna, and others where the Romanians communicated their disappointment concerning the obstruction of the voting process. In solidarity with the protests from Diaspora, there was organized a series of street demonstration in major cities from Romania: Cluj-Napoca with 10000-15000 people, Timișoara 5000, Bucharest 4000, Craiova and Sibiu 2000 each other and in Arad 1000. The group of protesters was formed by students, intellectuals, young people who demanded a fair election. The polls were closed after 9 pm resulting the violent dispersal of Romanian voters. In those moments, the media created the liminality and maintained the people into it until the results. The rituals had sustained a state “of dismembering” that generated lack of trust from the people to a new order. The crisis in the campaign for presidency in November 2014 was to introduce chaos into the Romanians group. A considerable approach and interests of young people in politics was generated by the media with the help of the Internet, especially Facebook. The media involved Facebook to develop the people’s attention and introduced them in the liminality. The threshold state in the November’s campaign put Romania under ambiguity and maintained it a long period, which was seriously shaken by the violent demonstration against the powerlessness of freedom to vote (Stănescu, 2015).

Romanians who live outside the country are inevitable put in an exile from Romania, so they become involved with the mass media who is the one who is keeping them close to their roots (Călin, 2015; Teodorescu, 2015). The media: television and internet becomes ritual factors for the Romanians’ social group outside Romania. The relationship between the Romanians and the Romania’s media is remained closely even they work in another country. In the crisis of presidency election or in the stunned news where the former King Michael of Romania has withdrawn his grandson Nicholas of his royal title, the media is connected the people that are in or outside the country. Media is generating rituals every day in different

forms in order to create history. If in the past, the history was created in silence, nowadays, we can say that the media is taking us on an everyday journey (Smarandache & Vlăduțescu, 2013; Smarandache, 2015; Smarandache, Vlăduțescu, Dima & Voinea, 2015).

Conclusion

Liminality has become more than a simple concept in our society. Every day when we are watching television or using the internet, we enter in a liminal space. Mass media is creating rituals in function of the events that are happening in the country. The ritualized ceremonial is coming from the industry of sports, politics or education. In the past years, in Romania happened many events and the journalist were there to notice to the entire country the how the history is written. On November 16, 2014, at the election for the presidency, the media was there and with the help of the internet presented the chaos that was at the polls. Many people from the major cities of Romania went to a street demonstration to be in solidarity with Diaspora. The fear, the waiting and the ambiguity of the day marked the people's mind and changed the order into chaos. After the exit polls, the liminal space ended and people were introduced to another form of liminal space: waiting for the media to present the new president and to hear his speech. We can see how the media is coordinated us from a liminal period to another. Mass media is transforming simple or complex ceremonial into rituals and its public becomes a participant or partner.

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