Discourse, dialogue and characterisation in TV series

Carmen Gregori-Signes
Miguel Fuster-Márquez
Sergio Maruenda-Bataller
(eds.)

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Introduction

Popular culture has undoubtedly been influenced by TV series, shows and sitcoms ever since television became a commodity in middle-class households. Such series epitomise the rich, diversified heritage of twentieth and twenty-first-century consumer culture, reflecting in one way or another the social and political scenario of their time. The ideas and concepts beneath successful series are the product of the times; and it is also the politics, financial demands and established ethos of such times that determine and often limit the direction of the show and the type of discourse it assimilates.

The fact that, in recent times, streaming services such as Netflix or Amazon have, following the footsteps of long-established public or cable channels such as HBO, ventured into producing their own original series or miniseries goes to show the extent to which (digital) TV series (DTVS) have gained momentum and are currently one of the most profitable initiatives in the entertainment industry. Substantial investments into quality script writing, casting, special effects, directing, editing, and marketing, among other procedures, have ultimately delivered to the public all sorts of audio-visual fictional narratives that address the concerns and interests of a highly diversified viewership whose interest is constantly under the scrutiny of production companies. This cultural phenomenon has caught the attention of scholars who, from a range of disciplines, have approached the multi-signifying discursive significance that fictional DTVS, as stories and products, have in current society.

This book aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on the so-called field of "Television Studies" through a number of critical essays that offer distinct critical approaches to a selection of fictional (digital) TV series, thus evincing the extent to which these types of narratives that are so embedded in popular culture today may be studied from multiple approaches. Chapter one, written by renown scholar Monika Bednarek, exemplifies how corpus techniques, specifically keyword analysis and lexical profiling, can be put to use for the analysis of the presence and use of

Australian Aboriginal English (AAE) lexis in the Indigenous television drama series *Redfern Now*.

In chapter 2, Miriam Fernández focuses on economic precarity and psychological disability in the series *Mr. Robot*. The author explores what may be characterized as the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The series' setting and characters prompt questions related to the concept of "narrative prosthetics" that reveal alternative ways through which to reflect and comprehend the notion of vulnerability.

Also immersed in discourses relating to posthumanism and the possibility of human and robot interaction is chapter 3, by Paul Mitchell, with his analysis of the series *Real Humans* and *Humans*, Swedish and British-American productions respectively. Mitchell draws on the work of Kathleen Richardson and Donna Haraway in order to reflect on how current anxieties regarding the connections between humanity and roboticism disrupt and challenge our conceptions of our species' ontology and sexuality.

Following up, chapter four, is Gustavo Rodríguez Martín's examination of terms of address in the hit series *Breaking Bad*, a show which has often been credited for its magnificent script and character development through dialogue. The author focuses on the different forms of address that the characters use to name the protagonist, Walter White. The analysis proves that the choice of terms of address is a stylistic device which helps the audience understand their relationship with the protagonist.

In a similar way, Ana Belén Cabrejas, in chapter five, approaches the discursive construction of the celebrated character of Daenerys Targaryen from HBO's *Game of Thrones*. Using Bucholtz and Hall's identity model, the chapter examines the rhetorical devices and strategies that are employed by Daenerys when addressing her troops and her subjects (military harangues), which are instrumental in the shaping of a unique identity that allows the speaker to reaffirm the conventions associated with such register while at the same time distinguish herself from male leaders. The author reinforces her arguments by the employment of corpus techniques (UAM Tool) to offer quantification.

Using corpus pragmatics methodologies, Manuel Rodríguez-Peñarroja, in chapter six, resorts to a case-study approach of the episode *Nosedive* of *Black Mirror*. The study focuses on the representation of complimenting acts and laughter in an effort to evaluate the interactive dynamics between the collective sender and audiences.

In chapter 7, Daniela Landert shifts the attention onto multimodal frameworks by analysing the verbal, visual strategies and resources involved in direct characterisation. Specifically, she considers how characters appear on scene for the first time – that is, how they are first introduced to viewers, a crucial moment for the vectorizing of how these may assimilate and relate to the character and to what he/she represents.

In chapter eight, Laura Álvarez Trigo, ventures into the terrains of identity politics by focusing on how identity markers such as gender and race define and articulate human relationships and interactions in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*. The discussion

is then taken to the level of fan theory so as to assess how meanings created through affect transcends the representations on the screen.

Lastly, Laura Mercé Moreno-Serrano addresses the growing influence of feminist thought and theory in recent times, taking *Big Little Lies* as a paradigmatic example of the extent to which gender-based issues such as domestic violence have gravitated toward the centre stage as a topic of interest in television series. The chapter aims to shed some light into how the series reflects the dynamics between wife-beaters and victims of abuse from a Feminist Critical Discourse approach.

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As examples of influential popular culture TV series epitomise the rich, diversified heritage of twentieth and twenty-first-century consumer culture, reflecting social and political scenarios of our times. Ideas and concepts beneath successful series are examined in the selected peer reviewed papers written by scholars in this volume. Discourse, Dialogue and Characterisation in TV series aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on the so-called field of "Television Studies" through a number of critical essays that offer distinct critical approaches to a selection of fictional (digital) TV series, thus evincing the extent to which these types of narratives that are so embedded in popular culture today may be studied from multiple approaches.

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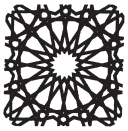

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