Changing Series: Narrative Models and the Role of the Viewer in Contemporary Television Seriality

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Abstract

In the past few years television serial narratives have gone through some severe changes in the way they are organized from a narrative point of view, as well as in the way they are perceived by the audiences. Our article originates from the necessity of investigating the products of this new wave of serial production, with the purpose of focusing on narrative formulas and on the relationships that serial products establish with their users. Vast serialized narratives are not just texts anymore, they have become complex universes of meaning that last for long time and that have a strong influence on the audiences. The article aims to investigate serial narratives as usable objects, that are not just seen by the public, but that are part of a complex experience.

Keywords

Narrative Models; TV Seriality; Narrative Ecosystems; Vast Narratives; Viewers Engagement

Full Text:

PDF

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.13125/2039-6597/4

NBN: http://nbn.depositolegale.it/urn%3Anbn%3Ait%3Aunica-17049
This model of television storytelling is distinct for its use of narrative complexity as an alternative to the conventional episodic and serial forms that have typified most American television since its inception. We can see such innovative narrative form in popular hits of recent decades from Seinfeld to Lost, West Wing to The X-Files, as well as in critically beloved but ratings-challenged shows like Arrested Development, Veronica Mars, Boomtown, and Firefly. In trying to understand the storytelling practices of contemporary American television, we might consider narrative complexity as a distinct narrational mode, as suggested by David Bordwell's analysis of film narrative. Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television. In The Velvet Light Trap, n.58, 29-40. Murray, Janet (1997). Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Producers Guild of America (2007). Carlos Scolari tries to conciliate both points of view and this perspective can be the appropriate resolution of the issue, especially taking into consideration the unlimited variety of scenarios in the realm of transmediality. Aspects of intermediality and intertextuality are also discussed in the course. Core sources (alphabetical order). Bolter, Jay David and Grusin, Richard (2000). In discussing television form, one issue I touch on is the question of evaluation, considering how we might look at these transformations through the lens of aesthetic judgment. For some critics, quality is a marker of value, suggesting that these shows are better than others, while for others it serves as a construction of either a class of targeted viewers (“the quality audience”) or a set of textual attributes of high production values and serious themes that might better be thought of as “prestigious television.” The two series bear some interesting parallels and differences that are instructive as to how we might evaluate programs and approach the process of evaluation. Based on conventional narrative logics, Randy’s entrepreneurial spirit and warmth