Narrative Function of Public Meeting Places in Uzalo Soap Opera

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Abstract : Soap opera narrative creates a sense of community. Uzalo is a South African local soap opera television series. It is unique because Uzalo tells the story of black people and their everyday struggle centered in KwaMashu township community, which is an excellent example of how moving image culture has contributed in portraying township community that was once marginalized by the apartheid regime in contemporary South Africa. While soap opera importance and promotion of social change and behaviours have been extensively studied throughout history, little research has examined the importance of space and place in its narrative. This study explored the conventional community space and place, the core elements that drive soap opera narrative. By means of qualitative content analysis, the study investigated the construction of public meeting places in Uzalo, using a purposive sampling technique to collect data by choosing episodes. The result indicates that characters convergence in public meeting places in soap opera creates disequilibrium which drives the narrative; reveals that construction of a public meeting place is an important way of creating a minimum of homogeneousness among disparate characters, gives a sense of unified experience drawing on the notion of the particular characteristics or attitude generated from such place. The result shows that the use of camera angles, movements, editing, music and usual tricks (mise-en-scene) applied in the narrative setting function as a guide for viewers comprehension of emotional responses of the story and to connect with the space in which the narrative is set.

Keywords : community, narrative, place, space, soap opera
Conference Title : ICCFMS 2019 : International Conference on Communication, Film and Media Sciences
Conference Location : London, United Kingdom
Conference Dates : May 23-24, 2019