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From the demonization to the “celebration” of youth voices? Evidence from Greek audiovisual fiction

Adult-centered pop culture, like audiovisual fiction (e.g., TV series, TV commercials, films), tends to devalue, or even demonize, youth voices through three key mediatization patterns: “youth as universal stage of life”, “youth as incomplete adulthood” and “youth as social risk” (Stamou forthcoming). These patterns, rather than being antagonistic, are usually drawn upon all together, shaping hegemonic discourses, through which youth voices are represented as homogeneous, as “divergent” from the standard (adult) language, and as a social problem, respectively.

Yet, more recently, cases of media “celebration” of youth voices have been detected, with the aim to exploit their indexical values for marketing (e.g., Mutonya 2008). In this case, youth is not viewed as a biological stage of life but as a lifestyle, knitted to the so-called discourse of “perpetual adolescence” (Gennaro 2013). In light of the above, in this presentation, I draw evidence from recent Greek audiovisual fiction (TV series and commercials), with the aim to discuss concrete examples in which characters of children and older women are represented as endorsing youth voices, so that more fluid age boundaries have been shaped (e.g., identities of adult-like children and of youthful adults). The analysis shows that crossings (Rampton 1995) into “Greek youth language” by non-young characters are framed as humorous, while they are interpreted as unexpected or exaggerated on the part of their fictional interlocutors. In conclusion, the recent mediatization pattern of “youth as lifestyle” seems to recycle rather than to challenge hegemonic demonizing constructions of youth.

References

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