ABSTRACT

CYBORG IDENTITIES ON A FLEMISH TV TALK SHOW

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In this paper we try out the concept of Donna Haraway’s cyborg to interpret the identities of two “ordinary people,” panelists on Flanders’ television talk show, Jan Publiek. We are attempting to understand what works on popular television shows--what language, what construction of personas must be employed for success via the various technologies of television, also, what appeals to audiences via the mass medium of television. We analyze language as both speech genre (from speech act theory and Bakhtinian language philosophy) and discourse. The two panelists are Rudi, a middle class gay man who appears to have command of commercial and therapeutic discourses, and Simone, an elderly straight working class woman whose verbal ability as hostess seems notable. Both seem to offer identities (gathered from their use of language) that feature odd, postmodern combinations; thus, our recourse to Haraway. In the end, we are hoping to make some suggestions regarding the uses of television for democratic discourse.