

INTRODUCTION

Until recently, the divide between film and television from a production perspective had been clear. In the 20th century, and for much of the 21st century, television and film production, particularly from a screenwriter's point of view, were seen as two different sectors of the industry. The financing models, production processes and scripting techniques were vastly different for these two media. The dominance of the western film and television industry and its influence on the orthodoxy of screenwriting has also meant that for too long American and British models of production and writing have been the most accessible.

The rise of streaming platforms, such as Netflix and Amazon Video, together with the higher quality of the TV shows of some cable channels, have broken down the lines that once separated various territories of production and distribution, and now audiences have access to an array of international productions of both cinema and television that they otherwise would not have been exposed to in traditional broadcast and distribution models. This globalisation and democratisation of the media has given accessibility to television shows from other countries, besides the anglophone ones.

Not only that, the lines that once separated film and television as different mediums of storytelling have also been broken down and a convergence of film and television is now being witnessed across the world. From a screenwriting perspective this has also impacted the creative writing process and even the terminology we now use in describing the scripts for these productions. The term teleplay has seen a decline in its general usage, with the term 'screenplay', a term once reserved for film productions, becoming ubiquitous across the forms. It is this convergence and changing paradigm in screen storytelling that has resulted in a slew of new avenues of research for screenwriting scholars.

This was the theme of the annual Screenwriting Research Network Conference held in Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan in September 2018, which hosted hundreds of delegates representing Universities across the world to discuss, not only the forces behind this shift in how we perceive and engage with television and film, but the challenges that writers face when writing for television over film, or vice versa. The theme invited wider-ranging discussions that explored the implications of adaptation from one platform to another and how this informed the writing of a wide range of international case studies.

In celebrating the vivid discussion and debate which emerged from the conference, as well as the exemplary research which made it such a success, we have curated a collection of these papers in a special edition of *Comunicazioni sociali. Journal of Media, Performing Arts and Cultural Studies* to speak to the cultures of television screenwri-

ting which exist around the world, which no longer sit in isolation from one another, but rather inform and inspire. This collection, together with issue 2 of volume 10 of the *Journal of Screenwriting* (edited by Steven Price, Craig Batty and Eva Novrup Redvall) is, we think, a testimony of the richness and variety of contributions in this conference.

We could divide the contents of these papers into three main areas. On one side, there is the adaptations from cinema to TV series and vice versa.

The essay *From Television to Cinema and back to Television Again (25 Years Later): Twin Peaks' Ambivalent Scriptwriting Approach*, addresses the tension between cinematic and televisual storytelling by exploring *Twin Peaks* and the celebrated movie *Fire Walk with Me*. In the essay, author Marida Di Crosta shows how complex, multi-layered and rich in different aspects are the relations among the three different seasons of the TV series and the cinema prequel that was released in 1992, with no box office success. She reappraises the latter screen work as an attempt to “intensify and extend within the feature film format, the experience of a continuing story allowed by television”.

The subject of adaptation between the two media is a complex area of investigation and this is explored in María Noguera and Pablo Echart's essay, *Creative Strategies in the TV Adaptation of Fargo: Narrative and Aesthetic Features*. The article deconstructs the televisual adaptation of the acclaimed Coen Brother's film *Fargo* with reference to characterisation, “narrative and visual echoes” and the genre conventions which framed both the television series and its source screen work. Noguera and Echart demonstrate the television adaptation's autonomy as a standalone work, that, while also establishing a dialogue with its cinematic predecessor, has been received both as a good adaptation and as an excellent TV series in itself. Noguera and Echart argue that, opting for developing original plot and characters, the authors of the series “create the impression that viewers will see a new story. Thus, while the film tracks the tragic downfall of an ordinary man, the series focuses on his growing sense of empowerment as he flexes his capacity to do wrong”. But nevertheless, the series still bears a striking resemblance to the original movie, that they trace down to four important dimensions: “the recognizable universe, the dramatic development of characters as variations on types, the emphasis on certain narrative and visual echoes, and the use of the expressive possibilities of landscape”. All this “makes it easy for the viewer to surrender to the dramatic power of the series, and easier still if (s)he is familiar with the subtle affinities between *Fargo* the series and the original film”.

On the area of the relation between the two media, is also another essay. D.T. Klika writes about a staple of television storytelling, the sitcom. In her essay, *Caught in the Second Act: The Relationship between Film Comedy and the TV Sitcom*, Klika compares the sitcom form with the film comedy and posits that the structure of the sitcom mirrors that of the second act of a comedy film. Characteristic of the sitcom is the fact that the main character is entrapped into some kind of need, and this builds a tension that is renewed in every episode. Klika uses the case study *The Ghost and Mrs Muir* (a film made in 1947 in UK and a TV series produced in 1968 in US) to demonstrate this connection between film and this specific televisual form of storytelling.

A second area is the intercultural problems that appear in adaptation of a story (be it a novel, or a film or a TV series) in two different countries.

In this line, the next two essays continue to investigate the subject of adaptation with a particular focus on Italian television. In *The Italian storytelling approach to TV seriality compared to the US method. A case study*, Paolo Braga considers the Italian school of screenwriting for television in comparison to what he calls “The North Ame-

rican narrative method” to showcase the differences between the American series *Red Band Society* and the Italian adaptation *Braccialetti Rossi*, both adaptations of an original Catalan series, *Polseres Vermelles*. Two adaptations with a quite different reception: extremely successful the Italian one, quite unsuccessful the American one. The differences are many, and for sure they depend also upon the single and specific authors (screenwriters, producers and directors) who have worked on them: the “fairy tale” quality of the Italian version, its stress on the importance of friendship and solidarity, whilst the American one is much more based in actions of single characters, who do not live as a “team” and do not share so much as the Italian ones. While the Italian version has made illness the real antagonist of the kids, thus proposing a very specific, but nevertheless universal story, the American one has bended the conflicts to a more generic soap opera style: love story lines and problems with sex. In *Red Band Society* the hospital looks more like an occasion to create an arena where kids have to stay and to confront adults, than a place where you have to confront illness and suffering. Braga’s analysis, as the reader will see, is extremely interesting, on many levels. For sure, this case study will help to define some of the unique attributes of Italian television production from a writing perspective, by comparing its (sometime successful) deviations from the so called ‘orthodoxy’ of the universally dominant US writing school.

Eleonora Fornasari’s *Adapting Pippi Longstocking: The 1969 Television Series Moves from Sweden to Italy* details the challenges of translating the Swedish work of literature and 60s television series to an Italian audience, and recounts how Italian national broadcaster, RAI, expanded the series further by drawing on two Swedish movies from the franchise. This analysis explores how the dramaturgy of the story was impacted by this addition of episodes but also how the thematic ideas of the original story were changed. The essay includes a very interesting exploration in the tradition of Italian literature for children, that was very different from the themes and tones of Astrid Lindgren’s novel. So the changes from the Swedish books to the Swedish series, and the small, but very significant adaptation (Fornasari stresses the importance of changes in the words of the song in the title sequence) are a crucial element to accompany the travel to a new country of the original series.

Bart Nuyens’ comparative study of *The Bridge*, the American remake of the Swedish/Danish television series *Bron/Broen* analyses and tries to understand the differences of the shows through an investigation into the productions and the receptions of the series. His essay, *Co-productions and the Logic of Negotiating Stereotypes: Bron|Broen and The Bridge*, combine a textual analysis that focuses on national stereotyping with a detailed inquiry into the production process of the two seasons of the American remake *The Bridge* and the four seasons of the original series, that was – differently from the American one- a coproduction between the two countries involved. The original *Bron|Broen* was a TV series conceived originally in Sweden, but that soon required a strong and equal partnership with Danish talent to be developed and produced: this explains an important part of the quality and interest of the TV original show, in which the bridge of the title becomes a clear metaphor of an intercultural exchange. This did not happen with the American version. The essay examines “how and why the writers, producers and directors address the transcultural audiences in their texts and paratexts, in order to cope with national stereotypes”. By comparing the production method, the composition and workings of the writers’ room, the cultural stereotyping practices and the critical reception of the two, Nuyens draws some conclusions about the effects of production methods on the ethics of the screenwriting process.

The last three papers deal with different theoretical challenges that regard both the writing for cinema and television.

Moving to German television, Carmen Sofia Brenes' *Identity, Time and Free Will in Stories. A Poetical Study on the TV Series Dark* employs Paul Ricoeur's understanding of the concept of interior time to deconstruct the first season of the German television series *Dark*. The analysis uses a novel approach to understanding characterization, character transformation and human identity by employing time in a structural context. Something which has been a longstanding narrative trope in cinema – the roots of the essay go to Aristotle's *Poetics*, that is a specialty in Brenes' approach – but one that is now more frequently employed in television storytelling, especially in those kind of “complex” narratives that tend to be more frequent in cable TV and in the TV series of the new OTT platforms.

Enrique Fuster's *Illuminating the Inciting Incident and the Lessons Learned along the Journey* challenges the terminology surrounding the inciting incident of screenplays and provides a revision of how we define and describe these early stages in screen works in a way that is applicable to both feature films and television series. He does that through a careful analysis of what some of the main screenwriting experts say about the *inciting incident* (also called inciting event, catalyst, big hook, among other terms); he underlines the limitations of the various approaches and tries to arrive at a new view of the topic. His conclusions are certainly interesting, also if maybe people will not agree at 100%. For example, the “theory” of the inciting incident is surely applicable to mainstream movies, but it is understood also by those who propose it, that other kind of movies (more artistic/independent etc. like *L'avventura*) normally do not follow this rule... but, for sure, discussion is welcome...

Finally, Marco Ianniello's *The Leftovers (Reheated): Examining the Layering of Story and Character Archetypes in the Television Drama Series: The Leftovers*, examines Mittell's poetics of ‘complex television’. It reconsiders Mittell's observations of post-1990s television with a focus on *The Leftovers* and investigates how archetypal story structures function in long form contemporary television narratives.

Ianniello challenges some of the basics concepts of Mittell's well known book, *Complex Television*. While Jason Mittell suggests creators of complex television are “working against conventional narrative practices” (31), Ianniello argues that screenwriters are in fact *embracing* conventional narrative practices through intricately engineered long-form storylines and character journeys, which employ archetypal storytelling paradigms. Ianniello refers especially to Christopher Booker's, *The Seven Basic Plots* and to the book of John Yorke, that proposes a fractal structure for long form TV series.

According to Ianniello, “while one can observe unique facets to television storytelling models, there is value in observing the universal literary and cinematic storytelling models at play, particularly from a screenwriting practice perspective”.

Mittell's notion of “narrative complexity” truly warrants further investigation and unpacking: yet the analysis carried out by Ianniello aims at showing that at the core of *The Leftovers* “are conventional structures and archetypes at play. They are interweaving, scaffolding and at times cycling from episode to episode providing intricate foundations to the long form story”.

Although Mittell asserts: “We cannot treat a (television) text as a bounded, clearly defined, stable object of study” (7) and he elaborates “The serial text itself is less of a linear storytelling object than a sprawling library of narrative content that might be consumed by a wide range of practices, sequences, fragments, moments, choices and repetitions” (*ibid.*). Ianniello argues that contemporary, “post network” television dra-

ma series is first and foremost about *linear storytelling*. “A series may have temporal disruptions, such as flashbacks, flash-forwards or fantasy departures, however, it is far more frequently being created as a complete story to be experienced as a whole. Episodes function like chapters in a novel, not to be viewed out of order but sequentially”. Whilst viewers may choose to binge or savour a series, or depart after the pilot episode, a TV series is conceived, created and distributed as a linear story. And this is particularly true if the point of view is “from a screenwriting practice perspective”.

Each of these articles meets the challenge outlined earlier and provides valuable insight into the differences between the mediums of film and television, whilst also addressing what unifies them as a singular form of storytelling. They showcase the cultural differences which inform the writing of these international works while elevating our perception of the craft of screenwriting within these avenues of screen production. In a time of big changes, these essays can offer very useful tools and insights to understand what is happening and where we are going.

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