
FROM DOCUFICTION TO DOCUSOAP: WHEN TELEVISED FORMAT TRANSFERRAL RESULTS IN A CHANGE OF GENRE

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the initial format transferral of the long-running British police procedural *The Bill* onto Italian television screens as *La Squadra*. When employed within the ambit of televised broadcasting, the term format or 'format production' refers to a copyrighted television programme licensed to be produced and broadcast in a country other than the one in which it originated. In the early episodes which preceded and brought about the format transferral, the institutional incumbents in *The Bill* are portrayed as professionals rather than individuals with private and domestic lives, hence leading to the label 'docufiction'. The Italian format equivalent, on the other hand, while maintaining the structural features required by the 'format container', is virtually devoid of procedural elements and the institutional incumbents are systematically foregrounded as individuals, men and women whose private lives often heavily influence and condition their institutional roles and duties. The strong emphasis on 'domesticity' in *La Squadra* would therefore appear to justify the label 'docusoap'. In order to demonstrate that format transferral has effectively brought about a change of genre, a number of non-dialogical features will be examined and the analytical tools provided by Goffman's (1974: 517-518; 1981: 144-145) "participation framework" and the sequential and inferential turn-taking dynamics of Conversation Analysis will be employed to investigate the canonical tripartite structure of the investigative interview and to illustrate the inconfutable differences present in the original format and its Italian format equivalent.

1. Introduction

1.1. Terminological issues

In recent years much research in the field of televised and cinematographic productions has concentrated on the linguistic and technical investigation of dubbing and subtitling. Conversely, despite the increasingly globalized film market, very little work has been done on the transferral of format productions from one cultural and linguistic context to another.

As the world of format and format transferral is still to a great extent uncharted territory, and in order to achieve an acceptable level of clarity, a number of terminological issues need to be addressed before proceeding with the bulk of the research.

The term 'format' upon which this work of research hinges can in fact be defined in two partially overlapping manners: 'format' is the word employed to define the charac-

teristic features of a given televised production. When we speak of a 'quiz-show format' it is evident that we are referring to a programme which contains all the necessary ingredients of the quiz-show: it will thus present a host or 'quiz-master' who asks the questions, guests or contestants who provide, or attempt to provide, the answers, buttons to be pressed, obstacles to be overcome, and all this in a context in which competition is a prime factor and reward is the driving mechanism. Likewise, a 'police-show format' will present a number of recognizable characteristics: representatives of the law engaged in the pursuit and apprehension of law-breakers, criminal enigmas to be solved, fast car chases and often dramatic, breath-taking action.

In the international context of televised broadcasting, however, the term 'format' or 'format production' takes on a further acceptation and refers to a copyrighted TV programme licensed to be produced and broadcast in a country which differs from the one in which it was originally created. The advantages of importing ready-made formats are clear: the programme is already a tried and tested success in its 'home-country' and thus judged as having a good chance of being equally successful elsewhere; the annual programming schedule can be organized well ahead of time as the viewing slot, running time and number of episodes can be pre-established.

The format analysed in this paper is that of the long-running British police procedural *The Bill*. Again, the label 'police procedural' needs to be clarified as it effectively situates *The Bill* within a specifically recognizable subgenre (among the many subgenres such as 'hard-boiled private eye fiction' or 'Golden Age detective fiction' which make up the generic category of detective/police fiction). The boundaries which confine each subgenre and distinguish it from others must, however, never be considered wholly 'water-tight', as each subgenre tends to reiterate features found in other subgenres within the generic category of detective/police fiction. Indeed, though referring to crime fiction in literature, Scaggs (2005: 2) states: "One of the defining characteristics of crime fiction is its generic (and sub-generic) flexibility and porosity".

The police procedural subgenre to which *The Bill* belongs does, however, possess certain foundational traits and can be defined as follows:

The term procedural refers to the methods of detection employed, the procedures followed by policemen in real life. Where the classic detective solves mysteries through the use of his powers of observation and logical analysis, and the private investigator through his energy and his tough tenacity, the detective in the procedural story does those things ordinarily expected of policemen, like using informants, tailing suspects, and availing himself of the resources of the police laboratory. This qualification almost automatically suggests another one: the policemen in the procedurals almost always work in teams, sharing the responsibilities and the dangers, and also the credit, of the investigation, with the result that the resolution of the mystery is usually the product of the work of a number of people instead of the achievement of a single protagonist as in the classic formal-problem tale and the hard-boiled private eye story (Dove 1982: 2).

As the protagonists of *The Bill* do effectively do 'those things ordinarily expected of policemen' and work in a team, the label 'police procedural' would appear to be appropriate.

1.2 Aims and objectives

When transferred onto the Italian Rai Tre network, the British police procedural became the Italian *La Squadra*. When a format production is transferred, though certain structural features of the original format container are maintained in order to make the imported product referable to the original, considerable changes must be made in order to allow the format equivalent to fit into the cultural and linguistic reality in which it now finds itself. Such modifications can result in a change of televised genre if the specificity of target language and culture differs from that of the source country in which the format was originally produced. “Whenever we watch television drama there is a constant negotiation between the fictional relationships of the programme and some implicit perception of ‘real life relations’” (Hurd 1981: 56).

In her study of the birth and development of the Italian *poliziesco*, Buonanno (2004: 68) identifies a number of traits which over the years, from the mid-fifties to the late nineties and beyond, have come to characterize what she refers to as “*una formula all’italiana*”¹. These traits serve to create a verisimilitudinal framework within which the characters and narrative can develop and provide the necessary degree of culture-specific authenticity and realism.

The terms ‘authenticity’ and ‘realism’ are not merely neutral concepts as they are often understood to be, but rather “active signifiers or producers of meaning which [...] are active at the level of consumption, the knowledge which a viewer brings to a programme, a knowledge of other productions, forms and genres, and the general level of cultural knowledge about both television and the police” (Hurd 1981: 55).

Buonanno individuates three foundational aspects (Buonanno 2004: 70) which contribute to the national character of the Italian *poliziesco* and which are all present in *La Squadra*.

1) The use of humour often employed to de-fuse particularly intense dramatic moments; this humorous vein is usually embodied by one specific character and serves to underpin what may be identified as a national trait, i.e. institutions and institutional figures are not to be taken too seriously, as Buonanno (*ibid.*: 71) states:

Il poliziesco italiano sembra riflettere una particolare propensione nazionale a prendere le distanze, facendone motivo di sorriso o di riso, dai rappresentanti dell’autorità e del potere istituzionale².

2) The importance awarded to the family, the home environment, and to human relationships as opposed to merely professional ones:

Rispetto alla riflessione teorica sulla scrittura e la riscrittura dei generi ciò che si

¹ An Italian formula (all translations in this paper are my own).

² A specific national trait would appear to be mirrored by the Italian detective/police fiction: that of distancing oneself from those who represent authority and institutional power by turning them into a source of amusement or mirth.

vede all'opera, infatti, è l'influenza di un fattore culturale di specifica marca locale – l'importanza della famiglia e del privato nella tradizione italiana³ (*ibid.*: 72).

3) The police officer in the Italian procedural is an ordinary person, 'one of us', and therefore not above bending the rules if this suits his own ends or those of the institution he represents:

Se formalmente rappresenta le istituzioni, di fatto l'eroe del poliziesco televisivo rappresenta l'uomo comune, e la sua vittoria sul crimine diventa credibile perché, in qualche misura, siamo noi stessi a realizzarla per suo tramite⁴ (*ibid.*: 74).

Thus, the thin line which separates 'good' from 'bad' and places criminals and institutional incumbents on opposing sides of the barricade is often rather tenuous. The Italian police officer is far removed both from the tough 'cop as hero' to be found in the American procedurals of the eighties, and from the infallible upholder of the law to be found in British procedurals from the classic *Dixon of Dock Green* to *The Bill*, object of this research.

Examination of a number of the manifold non-dialogical and dialogical features present in the British format and its Italian format equivalent illustrates how the foundational traits of *The Bill*, institutionality and procedurality, become domesticity and individuality in *La Squadra*. Thus, whereas *The Bill*, due to its depiction of 'a day in the life of a British policeman' may be considered as 'docufiction', the Italian format equivalent with its foregrounding of the personal, individual, and emotional tends towards 'docusoap'.

The corpus covers 15 episodes of *The Bill* broadcast from the autumn of 1998 until the spring of the following year – episodes aired at the time when Rai Tre first began to consider importing the British format – and 15 episodes of *La Squadra* from its inception in January 2000 to the summer of the same year.

Analysis will cover three non-dialogical aspects (the credit sequence, the third story line and the layout of the interview room) as these underline, on a visual semiotic level, the way the institutional role of the police officers in the original format gives way to the foregrounding of individuals in the Italian production, and procedure to high-running emotions and domesticity. The dialogical activity pertaining to the interview room scenes has been selected as the locus for linguistic analysis; the highly procedural formal interview characterized by asymmetry and pre-allocation of speaker roles in which the footing taken up by the lay participants and the institutional incumbents reflects the obligations and constrictions imposed by real-life police interviewing procedure contrasts sharply with the anomic, highly-charged

³ With regard to theoretical considerations on the writing and re-writing of genres, what can in fact be observed is the influence of a cultural factor with a specific local identity – the importance of the family and of the private sphere within the Italian tradition.

⁴ Although he officially represents the institutions, in reality the hero of televised police fiction embodies the man-on-the-street and his victory over crime becomes credible because, to a certain extent, it is a victory which we ourselves achieve through him.

interrogations which take place in *La Squadra*, again underlying the genre-switch which occurs at the time of format transferral.

The methodological tools employed in the linguistic analysis of the interview room scenes are those of Goffman's "participation framework", together with those offered by Conversation Analysis with particular regard to question/answer adjacency pairs and the dynamics of turn-taking in an institutional context.

2. Non-dialogical features as markers of genre change

2.1. *The credit sequence*

The credit sequence shown at the beginning of *The Bill* provides the viewers with what is effectively a short story of police procedure and in this manner it serves to encapsulate the programme content and genre. In rapid succession we view a patrol car pulling over at what would seem to be the scene of a traffic accident, we then witness an anonymous police officer typing a report into the computer, a report steeped in numerous true-to-life procedural acronyms such as R.T.A (road traffic accident), A.R (accident report), IC 1 (identity code for white male), etc.; we then view another anonymous police officer speaking into a microphone – presumably to other patrol cars – in the highly technical radio control room, the pinpointing of the crime scene on a wall map, the handcuffing of a suspect, the interview room with a close-up of the audio-tape running, suspect's name on label, a computer screen with the crime report, a 'mug shot' of the suspect with his fingerprints pinned to the bottom, and finally the closing and locking of a cell door; the loud thud and the 'finalistic' turning of the key constitute the last scene in the opening sequence, the end of the story, the closing of the case, and clearly the 'victory' of the police institution. In the opening credits of *The Bill* we are not shown any of the actors who take part in the procedural, nor do the names of the fictional police officers or of the actors who play them appear; the cast 'role call' is relegated to the closing sequence.

The opening credits of *La Squadra* present a completely different picture: we do not witness the unfolding of a procedural 'story', but rather the foregrounding of each individual police officer. The first scene shows an anonymous, masked police officer running down a dark alley with his gun drawn; we then view, in rapid succession, a close-up of the gun and a gun sight, the feet of a dead body in the mortuary with a cardboard toe-tag, followed by successive close-ups of the nine fictional police officers, protagonists of the series, in the course of their duties (either wielding guns or driving patrol cars). As each actor/character appears, his or her real and fictional names scroll across the centre of the screen in large letters. This foregrounding of the nine members of the team, both in terms of the close-ups and the names which are scrolled at the very beginning of the programme, clearly focus on the individuals who make up the team: no reference is made to any form of procedure and the brief scenes which represent the masked policeman running down a dark alley, the close-up of a gun, and the cadaver in the mortuary, prepare the viewer for a fast-paced, action-packed police procedural. Unlike the opening sequence of *The Bill*, there is no reference to institutional law and order. From the

very first elements presented to the viewer in the opening sequences, it may be posited that the British series and its Italian format equivalent each focus on a very different aspect of the fictional police force, institutionality in the former, individuality in the latter, an impression further confirmed in the following two sections.

2.2. *The third story line*

The original format container presents three storylines: a main crime story which runs over several episodes, a secondary, minor criminal event which is dealt with in a single episode, and a third, 'internal' storyline which, as will now be illustrated, is completely modified at the time of transferral.

Paul Marquess, series director of the episodes of *The Bill* present in this corpus, clearly states "we don't go home with our characters" (Tibballs 2004: 15), thus emphasizing the lack of domesticity in the British procedural and the production team's strong desire to remain solely within the professional and institutional sphere. In *The Bill* the third storyline centres on friction between colleagues or divisional ranks at Sun Hill police station. Professional envies or misunderstandings are dealt with in each episode, but such bad feelings remain within the confines of the police station and touch upon the professional role of the institutional incumbents. The third storyline in *La Squadra* is of a wholly different nature and possesses all the personal and emotional elements which characterize soap-opera type productions. *La Squadra* audiences know everything about the fictional incumbents' personal lives; the police officers are regularly shown in their home environment and the 'internal' storyline focuses on some personal, emotional or family turmoil one of the institutional incumbents is going through, and the help, support and advice provided by his or her colleagues. This emphasis on domesticity again leads to a different characterization of the very nature of the two formats: while *The Bill* effectively illustrates 'a day in the life of the British policeman', *La Squadra* portrays a day in the life of nine men and women who battle to carry out their professional duties despite the encroaching interference of everyday life. The Italian police officer is 'one of us' doing the best s/he can in adverse conditions; the British policeman or woman is an institutional hero carrying forth a battle of justice against crime without any interference from domestic or personal situations.

2.3. *The interview room as the semiotic embodiment of an activity type*⁵

Courtrooms and interview rooms, together with other institutional spaces such as medical surgeries or classrooms, constitute a form of "ritualized space" (Goodrich

⁵ In Levinson's words an 'activity type' can be defined as: "[...] a fuzzy category whose focal members are goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded, events with *constraints* on participants, setting, and so on, but above all on the kinds of allowable contributions. Paradigm examples would be teaching, a job interview, a jural interrogation, a football game, a task in a workshop, a dinner party, and so on." (Levinson 1992: 69). And as Fairclough states: [Activity types are] "distinctive categories of activity, which are recognized as distinct within a particular social order in a particular institution [...] for instance, in police work, activity types would include making an arrest, entering a report, interviewing a suspect, and so forth" (Fairclough 2001: 123).

1988: 148), in that both the discursive and non-verbal activities that take place there are framed by procedural and normative features which cause them to differ considerably from those relative to mundane conversation taking place in non-institutional spaces.

Within the framework of conversation analytical research, the issue of the context in which a given speech-exchange takes place assumes considerable importance. Indeed, for a given context or setting to be considered “procedurally consequential” (Schegloff 1992: 111) to the discursive interaction taking place therein, such relevance or consequentiality must be characterized by the particular features of the exchange being analysed. In this study the relevance of the interview room as a context-of-speech is rendered demonstrable by the characteristics of the investigative interview as a specific form of speech-exchange: the adversarial and asymmetrical nature of the police interview, in which discursive rights and obligations are pre-allocated and access to turn-type and turn-content is pre-ordained, all qualify the investigative interview as a distinct discursive activity-type which takes place within the specific setting of the interview room.

In the fictional world of television format, the interview room acquires even greater significance as it must not only be immediately recognizable as such for the television audience, as a means of confirming the viewer’s “heritage of realism” (Hurd 1981: 56), but must also constitute the physical embodiment of the activity taking place therein.

When analysing the genre-switch which occurs at the time of format transferral, the aim is to illustrate the quasi-documentary feel which characterizes the British procedural, together with the emphasis placed on procedure and ‘due process’. These are the aspects which should transpire from the physical layout of the interview room.

In *The Bill* the interview room is a well-lit, neutral space. The walls are covered in light blue, sound-proof panelling with a broad white metal strip placed more or less at shoulder height. Several neon strip-lights illuminate the entire room creating an impression of ‘transparency’ and open-space and detracting from any feelings of oppression or claustrophobia. The interview table is made of clean, unscratched, dark wood and is attached to the wall; above it, fixed to the wall, embedded in the metal strip, and recurrently present in the camera shots, is the recording device connected to a tape recorder placed on a low table to the right of the interview table.

Two black leather and wood chairs are placed on each side of the table: although they are of an ‘institutional’ mould, they appear comfortable and well-padded and differ considerably from the stark metal chairs habitually found in an interrogation setting. A further physical pointer to the procedurality of the setting is provided by the fact that the institutional incumbents and the lay participant always adhere to a set seating order: the suspect sits on the left side of the table next to an empty chair, occasionally occupied by a relative, in the case of minors. The detainee’s place at the table is not fortuitously allocated as, taped to the table in front of his/her assigned place is an A4 sheet of paper typed in bold print which, though there is never a camera close-up that would enable us to read it, we can surmise to be the official ‘Notice to Detained Persons’ which by law has to be placed within reading distance of the

suspect. The two police officers sit on the right hand side of the table, the primary interviewing officer faces the detainee, the secondary interviewing officer (when present) sits next to him. On the wall, on the institutional incumbents' side of the table, is a round white plastic 'button', known as the 'panic button', which the investigating officers can press should the detainee become aggressive or be in need of medical attention, a detail which again closely reflects procedural reality. Although these episodes of *The Bill* were filmed before the current No-Smoking ruling came into being, neither the institutional incumbents nor the detainee are ever shown smoking; there is consequently no evidence of dirty ashtrays or cigarette packets which would detract from the clean, professional atmosphere of the interview room.

With regard to proxemics, on the basis of the four spatial categories – Intimate, Personal, Social and Public (E. Hall cited in Gordon & Fleisher 2006: 37) – the investigative interviews in *The Bill* take place between the maximum limit of Personal space (from 0.45m to 1.22m) and the mid-range distance of Social space (1.22m to 3.65m). At most, the institutional incumbent will place his arms on the table, lean forward slightly, perhaps jut his chin out, to press home a particularly salient point, but he does not invade the detainee's Intimate space, nor does he ever stand up, walk around to the other side of the table or exert any form of physical pressure on the suspect. Moreover, the investigating officer maintains a level tone of voice: he never shouts, nor does he vent his anger or frustration by banging on the table or by means of other physical manifestations.

The interview room in *La Squadra* is reminiscent of the kind of room in which so-called 'third degree' interrogation takes place, and which most of the television audience have had occasion to view in tough American cop series over the last few decades. The main feature of the room is the large rectangular neon light placed in the centre of the ceiling which illuminates the interview table and chairs leaving the rest of the room in total darkness. The table is long and rectangular, it is made of dark wood and occasionally the camera close-ups show the scratches and cigarette burn-holes which pit its surface. In most cases there is only one blue plastic institutional chair, placed at the short end of the table, on which the suspect sits. The chair is visibly hard and uncomfortable as the suspects are often shown shifting around in an attempt to find a comfortable position.

Although occasionally another plastic institutional-type chair is placed on one side of the table, the institutional incumbents, two of whom are in most cases present, rarely sit down. The attitude and movements of the police officers are always, to say the least, oppressive and coercive. They circle around the table, lean across and speak into the suspect's face; one of them regularly stands behind the suspect, overshadowing him in a threatening manner while the other fires questions at him leaning over the other side of the table. From the point of view of the proxemic categories mentioned above, the institutional incumbents in *La Squadra* most often place themselves in the Intimate space (from physical contact to 0.45cms) or, at most, in the Personal space (0.45cms to 1.22m).

The walls of the interview room are either panelled or painted black: it is impossible to say which as our general impression is that the interview table is suspended

in a dark, menacing void. To make matters worse, the neon light shines down on the table through a dense fug of cigarette smoke as the institutional incumbents light one cigarette after another and often puff the smoke into the detainee's face, an ashtray overflowing with butts is regularly present on the table. The total absence of any recording devices, whether audio or video, not only underlines the lack of any form of procedural ruling and legislative overhearing audience, it also deprives the investigative interview of its place within the 'chain of justice' leading from the suspect's apprehension to his trial and eventual imprisonment. The non-observance of procedure such as a monitoring device embodied by the tape recorder serves to render the interviews in *La Squadra* even more anomic and isolated, and consequently the moment of capture and interrogation becomes the moment of conviction.

The general impression of the interviews or, as we shall see, interrogations in *La Squadra*, is that they are suspended both in space and in time: there is no procedural 'opening' and 'closing' process as we find in *The Bill* where the tape-recorder, whether verbally mentioned or merely framed by the camera, serves to underline the fact that there is a judicial 'overhearing audience', that the interview normatively fits into a legal process and is duly monitored and controlled. In the timeless, suspended atmosphere of the interview room in *La Squadra*, emotions are palpable; the police officers manifest anger and contempt, the suspect is often seen sweating, wringing his hands, even crying, the police officers shout, swear and bang on the table – we are far removed from the aseptic, procedurally regulated atmosphere of *The Bill*.

3. Interview room scenes: from procedural realism to raw emotion

3.1. Investigative interviews in *The Bill*

Interview room discourse touches upon two intersecting planes of reality, primary and secondary (Gibbons 2003: 78). Primary reality is constituted by the interview room itself and the participants present there, the 'here and now' of the interview; conversely, secondary reality regards the reason 'behind' the interview, the *actus reus* (the criminal misdemeanour) and the *mens rea* (the criminal intent). In *The Bill* the predominantly institutional aspect of the primary reality clearly carries considerable semiotic weight, the audience is led to concentrate on the procedurally-regulated behaviour of the participants, both discursive and non-verbal, and on the interaction taking place in the interview room. Though the secondary reality is clearly the reason for the interview, the focus of the fictional interviews in *The Bill* is on the manner in which it is presented within the primary reality. In *La Squadra*, the use of flashbacks and other narrative techniques to reconstruct the criminal deed, together with the palpable emotional involvement of the institutional incumbents, place primary and secondary realities on an equal footing and, more often than not, secondary reality progressively invades the interview room.

The investigative interviews in *The Bill* adhere to the structure of 'real-life' police interviews as illustrated by Heydon (2005), Gibbons (2003) and Auburn *et al.*

(1995). Furthermore, they follow the official guidelines laid down by the Police and Criminal Evidence Act – PACE (1984 c.60) – which stipulate that all formal interviews with suspects must be tape-recorded and that all suspects must be cautioned at the time of arrest. The most prominent aspect of procedural realism concerns the use of the tape-recorder which may be seen as a physical representation of the legislative overhearing audience. It underlines the fact that the interview is merely a part of the long procedural itinerary which spans the time from the moment investigation begins and the suspect is apprehended to the moment the suspect, if guilty, will appear in court. “The tape-recorder is accorded a *persona* by all of those present” (Russell 2002: 114). Such rigorous procedural veracity serves, yet again, to enhance the docufiction tenor of the British police procedural.

The interviews in *The Bill* have a tripartite structure with a procedural ‘opener’, an information-gathering phase, and a procedural ‘closer’.

In the opening and closing phases of the fictional interviews a series of formulaic utterances are employed to ascertain the suspect’s personal details and inform him/her of his/her legal rights. These utterances are worded according to set (authentic) institutional formulas and the wording does not vary. During these two phases of the tripartite framework, the police institution adopts the roles of author and principal as it detains authorship and responsibility for these formulas, the investigating officer that of animator as he merely reads or recites the standard formulas. The script assigned by the police institution is thus not assigned to an individual but to a role.

The following examples illustrate procedural openers and closers present in the corpus:

DC Duncan Lennox	for the benefit of the <u>tape</u> Mr Glover↓(.) can you speak into the microphone↑
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Table 1. Procedural opener from ‘Badlands’

PC Eddie Santini	17.10↓ taped interview with↑ (0.2) say your name Jason↑
Jason Jeffries	Jason Jeffries↓
PC Eddie Santini	= <u>officers</u> present↓ PC Santini
WDC Liz Rawton	=DC Rawton
PC Eddie Santini	= <u>also</u> present ((nods at Julie))
Julie Craven	<u>Julie Craven</u> (.) a colleague of Jason’s↓

Table 2. Procedural opener from ‘The party’s over’

PC Dave Quinnan	hhh. interview terminated at 14.32↓
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Table 3. Procedural closer from ‘Puzzled’

The middle stage of the interview or ‘information-gathering’ phase again follows consolidated real-life investigative interviewing procedure. The questions asked are all of the ‘open’ non-coercive type (open information-seeking questions, *wh-* questions, polar alternatives or *either/or* questions) and conform to the Home Office model for correct investigative interviewing established in 1991 and known by the mnemonic PEACE: (Planning and preparation – Engage and explain – Account – Closure – Evaluation). Apart from the initial (P) stage, and the final (E) stage which concern the police officers’ work before and after the interview has taken place, the three middle stages reflect the macrostructure of the fictional interviews to be found in the British format.

As the aim of a procedurally correct investigative interview is to obtain a full, un-coerced confession – “[...] such a confession will be most effective, useful and believable if it is produced spontaneously by the suspect with no prompting or leading by the interviewers” (Shuy 1998: 24) – and as all the discursive interaction which takes place inside the interview room is monitored by the tape-recorder as an embodiment of the legislative overhearing audience, the most recurrent participation framework in the middle section of the fictional interviews in *The Bill* is one in which the institutional incumbent adopts the roles of author and animator, leaving the principal role to the suspect who can confirm or disconfirm the information requested, and thus assume the consequences of his or her utterances.

The question/answer chain rule, typical of institutional interviews, is strongly adhered to throughout all the fictional investigative interviews in *The Bill*: turns are pre-allocated, the police officer asks the questions, the lay incumbent answers, and we are in the presence of what Frankel (1990: 258), albeit in the context of medical interviews, refers to as a “deference structure”: “The obligation to respond, insofar as it characterises and constrains the speaking opportunities of one member of a dyad and not the other, may be treated as a kind of sequential deference”.

WDS Liz Rawton	could you tell us about this <u>morning</u> please↑
Anya	when I wake up there’s a fire on the bed (0.2) my friend she break the <u>window</u> ↑
WDC Liz Rawton	what’s her name↑
Anya	her name is <u>Maya</u>
WDC Liz Rawton	where did Maya go↑
Anya	th-there was a car (.) sh-she said come with me Anya (0.2) but I <u>don’t</u> go with her↑
WDC Liz Rawton	what did it look like↑
Anya	I don’t wait to see (.) there was a <u>fire</u> yes (.) we may be ki::lled because of thi::s ((sob)) we may be <u>ki::lled</u> ↑
WDC Liz Rawton	we’d better get the FME ((forensic medical examiner)) (.) interview terminated at 11.05

Table 4. Example of the ‘information-gathering’ stage from ‘Under duress’

In the fictional interviews from *The Bill*, the constant presence of a legislative overhearing audience, the adherence to the Home Office PACE and PEACE codes of practice, the formulaic utterances employed in the ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ stages of the tripartite interview structure, together with the ‘information-gathering’ question typology and the non-coercive participation framework adopted throughout, all add credence to the idea that we are in the presence of a docufiction steeped in both institutional and procedural correctness.

Such strict observance of procedural norms and frameworks could, however, make the British format appear rather dull and devoid of dramatic impact. It would be misleading at this stage not to mention two particular ‘strategies’ which are occasionally employed to step up dramatic tension and make the long interview room scenes less monotonous. The first concerns those moments in which the institutional incumbents step outside procedure by switching off the legislative overhearing audience embodied by the tape recorder, the second regards the provision of non-type-conforming responses by the suspect.

A) *Stepping outside procedure*

Although the bulk of the official literature regarding the implementation of the PEACE and PACE codes of practice suggests that all formal ‘real-life’ police interviews are now conducted along procedurally correct lines, Baldwin (1993), in his study of 400 video and audio-recordings of formal investigative interviews taken from four different British police stations, claims that this does not necessarily mean that the suspect was treated in a procedurally correct manner for the entire period of his detention, the taping device is only employed during the formal interview and coercive methods can, and according to Baldwin are, employed before and after the tape is switched off.

To a certain extent, Baldwin’s doubts regarding the constant and consistent application of procedural norms, find a reflection in this fictional data; although in the main the fictional investigative interviews in *The Bill* are carried out along procedurally correct lines, there are a few occasions in which interviewing is carried out after the tape-recorder has been switched off, hence outside the legislative framework.

DS John Boulton	is that it↑(2.0) that’s <u>all</u> you’ve got to say↑(3.0) ok↓ fine↓((turns to speak directly into tape-recorder)) interview terminated at 16.45↓ oh↑ eh (.) by the way (.) you didn’t have the necessary <u>visas</u> to live and work in this country↑(0.3) well↑ (2.0) did you↑
Maya	what do you <u>thi::nk</u> these people <u>are</u> ↑ do you <u>really</u> thi::nk they let me <u>go</u> ↑ if you send me back you might as well <u>kill</u> me↑
DS John Boulton	so (.) you <u>haven’t</u> got a <u>visa</u> ↑ well now (0.2) that could be <u>rea::lly</u> inconvenient↓
Maya	=the boss (0.2) he was called Ursin
DS John Boulton	=Ursin↑ you’re sure↑
Maya	=I know hi::m (0.2) and a man called Yavas

Table 5. Example of stepping outside procedure

In the above excerpt we have a clear example of an institutional incumbent ‘stepping outside’ the legislatively-monitored framework in order to obtain the answers which were not forthcoming throughout the regular interview. The interesting aspect of the above extract lies not only in its extra-procedural nature, but also in the fact that the standard information-eliciting question typology present in the ‘procedural’ interviews undergoes considerable transformation: Boulton employs two formulations to press home his coercive line of questioning:

“You didn’t have the necessary visas to live and work in this country”, only after a pause, which does not bring forth the expected answer, does he add the tag “did you?”

“So, you haven’t got a visa”.

Formulations belong to a ‘confirmation eliciting’ line of questioning, and are far more constraining than the information-seeking questions found in the standard suspect interviews in *The Bill*. It would appear that on the rare occasions in which the investigative interviewers in the British procedural break the institutional mould, they do so by switching off the legislative ‘overhearing audience’, embodied by the tape-recorder, and by employing coercive linguistic structures not present in the standard interview. Thus, there is a direct correlation between the framework of the interview: procedural vs. extra-procedural, and the linguistic devices employed in this context. It must be remembered, however, that such rare, coercive exchanges only occur on the infrequent occasions in which the institutional incumbent ‘steps outside procedure’ and merely serve to accrue the dramatic impact of the interview room scenes without detracting from the overall procedurally-correct line which the series adopts; such interrogation-style tactics simply serve as the exception which proves the procedural norm, and thus underline the fact that there is a marked linguistic difference between ‘investigative interview tactics’ and ‘interrogation’ tactics.

B) Non-type-conforming responses: evasion as a resistance strategy

In his study of polar interrogatives, Raymond (2003: 946) defines type-conforming responses as “responses that conform to the constraints embodied in the grammatical form of the first-pair part”. He goes on to illustrate that nonconforming responses constitute a dispreferred option as, on the one hand, they forfeit the alignment required both by the activity-type preference and the polarity preference of the preceding interrogative and, on the other, they are only employed ‘for cause’, that is, when the respondent finds fault with the terms and constraints embodied in the grammatical form of the interrogative; furthermore the provision of a nonconforming response will necessarily alter the sequential consequences of the question/answer adjacency pair.

In the episodes from the British format which make up the corpus, in order to alleviate particularly monotonous question/answer sequences, the lay incumbent occasionally provides non-type-conforming responses as a covert evasion tactic. The most recurrent nonconforming response to the institutional incumbent’s questions is: “I

don't remember". The following three extracts are taken from three separate episodes of *The Bill*:

DC Duncan Lennox	hhh. where were you at two fifteen today (.) mate↑
Mick Glover	((surly, uncooperative tone)) hhh. can't remember

Table 6. Example 1 of a non-type-conforming response

PC Luke Ashton	so↑ Gavin (.) what did he <u>look</u> like↑
Gavin	sorry↓ can't remember

Table 7. Example 2 of a non-type-conforming response

DC Tom Proctor	<u>look</u> (.) we want <u>names</u> ↑
Steve (no surname provided)	well hhh. <u>I don't remember</u>

Table 8. Example 3 of a non-type-conforming response

Drew's (1992: 484) study of "I don't remember" as a response to questions in the context of cross-examination calls attention to the fact that not only does such a response allow the respondent to neither confirm nor disconfirm what is proposed by the question, but also qualifies the information requested as unimportant and unmemorable, and the stance of the suspect as an innocent and unconcerned party who has no viable reason to remember such details: "It is this reflexive relationship [...] which can provide for the witness' claims not to remember certain details as displays of innocence".

In all three of the above extracts, the suspect produces his nonconforming answer as a dispreferred response, aware that he is not providing the required information. This is made evident in the first extract both by the suspect's tone of voice and by the audible outbreath with which he prefaces his answer. In the second and third excerpts, the answer is prefaced by "sorry" and by "well" plus audible outbreath which again underline such awareness.

This focus on the switch in question typology, from information-eliciting to confirmation-seeking, which occurs when the interviewing officer steps outside procedure, together with the non-type-conforming responses by the lay incumbent to allay the tedium of a number of interview room scenes, illustrate how certain linguistic devices are occasionally employed in the British format to privilege dramatic tension over procedural veracity.

3.2 Coercive interrogations in *La Squadra*

As previously mentioned, when investigating the credit sequence and third 'internal' storyline, the nine fictional institutional incumbents in the episodes from *La Squadra* which make up the corpus all benefit from individual biographies in that

they do not possess one all-encompassing identity, that of a police officer. They are also known to the public as individuals with their strengths and weaknesses and their matrimonial or sentimental problems. Thus they differ from their far more numerous counterparts in *The Bill* whose identities are defined solely by their roles within the police station, and by their relationships with their colleagues.

The reason for mentioning the focus on individual biography in *La Squadra* stems from the fact that each interview room scene in the episodes which make up the corpus constitutes a specific form of ‘emotional investment’ for one of the police officers involved. Each case not only involves the institutional incumbents as investigating officers, but also affects at least one of the officers involved on a more human and emotional level. During the course of the investigation, or at some prior point, they have established an emotional bond (not necessarily positive) with one of the lay incumbents involved in the case. This emotional investment, present in the interview room scenes, compared to the procedural asepticity to be found in *The Bill*, again suggests a genre-switch from docufiction to docusoap.

The investigative interviews to be found in *La Squadra* lack any procedural tripartite structure; there is no legislative overhearing audience to ensure adherence to codes of practice, the question/answer chain rule typical of institutional contexts in which discursive rights and obligations are equally distributed is flouted in favour of a series of coercive narrative devices which turn the procedurally-regulated interviews we have illustrated in *The Bill* into violent, emotionally-fraught interrogations. Such lack of procedural correctness is evident in the following extract:

Francesca	per <u>quanto</u> ancora mi farete le stesse domande↑ (for how much longer are you going to ask me the same questions?)
Agente De Pretis	per un bel po’(2.0) tu pensa a rispondere→ (for quite a while, just concentrate on answering)
Francesca	e quando mi darete finalmente un avvocato↑ (and when will you finally give me a lawyer?)
Agente De Pretis	quando confesserai (0.2) vuoi <u>davvero</u> andare avanti altre dodici ore così↑ (when you confess, do you really want to go on like this for another 12 hours?)

Table 9. Lack of procedural correctness in *La Squadra*

A) The sequencing of events as “experienced narrative”⁶ (Auburn et al. 1995)

In the following interrogation the accusatory details are listed as though the police officer himself had witnessed each event. The coercive force of his account, together with his aggressive body language (pacing up and down, shouting into the

⁶ In an ‘experienced narrative’ “Events [are] reported from the perspective of a person who was at the scene. This device of giving a detailed narrative of events is often used as a warrant for the accuracy and truth of events. [...] The accounts take the form of a narra-

suspect's face, banging on the table), force the suspect to confess. The violence of the scene is palpable and there can be no claim to procedural correctness. Again we are far removed from the procedurally-regulated interviews in *The Bill* with the legislative overhearing audience embodied by the audio-tape, the adherence to 'due-process' and the restrained discursive and physical mannerisms of the institutional incumbents.

Sovrintendente Amato	=Io dico che quella notte è successo <u>qualco:sa</u> che ha spaventato Carmela (0.4) <u>qualco:sa</u> che l'ha spinta a fuggire (.) ha rotto il vetro della finestra ed è scappata→ (I'm saying that something happened that night which frightened Carmela, something that made her run away, she broke the window pane and ran away)
Enrico Basile	non è andata così (.) Vito (that's not the way things went, Vito...)
Sovrintendente Amato	=Vito era l'unica persona che Carmela conosceva (.) per questo è andata da lui (0.4) ma <u>è da voi</u> che stava scappando (.) perché SIETE STATO VOI a violentarla↑ (Vito was the only person Carmela knew, that's why she went to him, but you're the one she was running away from, because YOU'RE THE ONE who raped her)
Enrico Basile	NO↑
Sovrintendente Amato	=e quando l'abbiamo trovata (.) per paura che scopriremmo tutto (.) l'avete convinta ad accusare Vito (and when we found her, for fear that we would discover everything, you convinced her to accuse Vito).
Enrico Basile	=Io non l'ho <u>violentata</u> ↑ lei è la luce degli occhi miei (0.4) io la [amo] (I didn't rape her, she's the light of my life, I love her)

Table 10. Interrogation as “experienced narrative”

B) Scaffolding and sequencing the narrative

The following excerpt is an example of joint narrative; the suspect provides the information on the basis of the sequencing formulations employed by the police officer. The most significant aspect of this interrogation is that the suspect perceives the institutional incumbent's utterances as an integral part of his own account, not as something to be responded to. The repeated use of *and* and *so* are employed here as “topic developers” or “topic sequencers” (Johnson 2002: 103) and their use reflects

tive where actions and events are carefully placed in sequence to one another and where details, in terms of what was experienced, are inserted into the narrative. It is as though the richness and complexity of detail act as a warrant for the victim in the account to have undergone the experience directly, and the account is a description of that experience as an unadulterated memory” (Auburn *et al.* 1995: 367).

the manner in which they are adopted in evidentiary interviews with young children due to the child’s inability to produce extensive narrative.

Umberto Di Gioia	Lele doveva finire di imbiancare I bagni (.) >io mi sono assentato< e al ritorno l’ho trovato che stava a zero (.) abbiamo cominciato a discutere (Lele was supposed to finish whitewashing the toilets, I went away and when I came back I found that he hadn’t done a thing, we started to argue)
Ispettore Guerra	=e gli hai detto che sarebbe stato punito (and you told him he would be punished)
Umberto Di Gioia	lui diceva (.) tu chiudi un occhio (.) che tene fotte (0.4) non ci si può comportare <u>cosi</u> ↑ (he told me to turn a blind eye, what do you care, you just can’t behave like that)
Vice Questore Cafasso	= quindi l’hai colpito (so you hit him)

Table 11. Joint narrative in interrogation

C) ‘Active animation’ in the interrogation

As is evident in the excerpt below, this interrogation is structured in a more canonical ‘televised’ manner by means of flashbacks and the visual reconstruction of the crime scene. Here the secondary reality of *actus reus* and *mens rea* totally invades the interview room. The atmosphere in the interview room is palpably emotionally-charged; the crude violence shown in the flashbacks is something we never witness in the primary reality of the procedurally-regulated interview room scenes in *The Bill*.

Vincenzo De Mola	((glazed, far away look in eyes)) l’ho colpito due, tre, <u>quattro</u> volte (0.4) ma quel bastardo non ne voleva sapere di morire (.) meglio così almeno il dolore l’ha sentito fino in fondo↓ (I hit him twice, three, four times, but the bastard seemed to have no intention of dying, just as well he felt the pain right to the end)
((we are back in the garden centre, De Mola is leaning over Lucci’s body, rivulets of blood are running across the floor. De Mola looks up with a manic smile on his face and reaches for a pair of shears))	
Vincenzo De Mola	((voice off – overlaps the scene we have just described – <i>Dies Irae</i> in background)) lo sapete che le piante urlano↑ <u>noi</u> non le possiamo sentire (.) ma loro urlano (1.0) >anche Santo urlava< (.) allora gli ho cacciato le sue stesse dita in gola e poi ho cominciato a divertirmi→ (do you know that plants scream? We can’t hear them but they do scream, Santo was screaming too, so I stuck his own fingers down his throat and then I started to have fun)
((back in interview room, close up of Cafasso’s stunned expression))	

Table 12. ‘Active animation’ in interrogation

4. Conclusions

The aim of this research has been to examine the transferral of a format production from the setting in which it originated into a wholly different cultural and linguistic context. It has been shown that though a number of non-dialogical and dialogical features pertaining to the original 'format container' are effectively transferred, they undergo such considerable adaptation that the television audiences in the two nations are presented with a very different product. The institutionality and procedurality which characterize the British procedural *The Bill* give way to individuality and domesticity in the Italian *La Squadra*. It can thus be claimed that transferral has resulted not only in the modification of certain key features of the format but in the overall nature of the televised product. The British docufiction becomes a docusoap on the Italian television screens.

When a format is transferred into a different cultural, linguistic and social context, certain characteristics must necessarily be adapted to make it recognizable to the local overhearing audience, and to fit their expectations of what pertains to their target community. The strong emphasis on institutionality present in *The Bill* – a marked trait of British culture – is not a salient aspect of Italian culture, especially that of southern Italy where *La Squadra* is set. Individuality and domesticity are, on the other hand, traits which an Italian audience will recognize as their own. It is therefore not surprising that the main thematic thread present in the British format has been supplanted by a theme which is more familiar and recognizable to the Italian viewers and which undoubtedly reflects a particular aspect of Italian society.

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