

## Dossier

### FoxCrime and the *CSI* Franchise in Italy.

#### Who Said Crime Doesn't Pay: Introduction

*Kim Akass and Janet McCabe*

Unease has long surrounded US television exports flowing into foreign territories.<sup>i</sup> Traditionally viewed with some suspicion, as somehow threatening national broadcasting sovereignty,<sup>ii</sup> representing the homogenising forces of American capitalism,<sup>iii</sup> US TV imports remain subject to national import schemes as well as sustained critical opprobrium.<sup>iv</sup> A vibrant field has, however, grown up in parallel, which has sought to make sense of the implications for a national broadcaster buying in US TV fictions.<sup>v</sup> Imported US content has always played a role (however minor) in foreign TV markets; but with 24hr programming schedules voracious for content, and the proliferation of channels seeking survival in a congested and highly competitive television environment, US acquired programming has become a vital strategy for commercial and/or satellite/cable networks attempting to carve out a niche. Time and again, we see how a high-profile US signature series/serial can help build a reputation for a non-US channel<sup>vi</sup> – giving it brand recognition<sup>vii</sup> and making visible certain audience identities.<sup>viii</sup> Furthermore, such acquisitions have something important to tell us about how a broadcaster manages its corporate hegemony (broadcasting remit, scheduling policy)<sup>ix</sup> as well as about regulatory practices (government legislation, censoring bodies), cultural trends and definitions of the nation.

In April 2008 we were invited to speak at the Triennale di Milano, as part of a two-day conference entitled 'lo schermo Globale: presente e futuro della televisione' ('The Global Screen: present and future of television'); and our paper focused on how the acquisition of US forensic crime series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (2000-present) contributed to the re-branding of the UK's fifth terrestrial channel. Few would dispute that the *CSI* franchise – *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*, *CSI: Miami* (2002-present), *CSI: New York* (2004-present) – has done more than any other to build the Five brand with UK audiences. But it was our contention that Five encloses its US imports within its corporate remit – its economic plans, its scheduling needs, its marketing strategy, its broadcasting policy – as it uses them to make sense of and manage that very remit. The *CSI* franchise, along with other high profile US series like

*Prison Break* (2005-present), *The Shield* (2002-present), *House* (2004-present) and *Grey's Anatomy* (2005-present), have, we argued, been institutionalised by Five as a distinctive feature of its quality brand label. We do not wish to imply that these texts *are* quality; but rather that in analysing how series like *CSI* are perceived and known, it is possible to discern the powers and practices at work within which a notion of quality institutes and defines an identity for Five in terms of market influence, cultural prestige and a strong channel brand.

Alongside our presentation, there were others by Paolo Acquaviva and Dadà Isola from Fox Channels Italia, and a contribution from scriptwriter and noir author Sandrone Dazieri. Moderated by Italian TV critic and media scholar Aldo Grasso, the roundtable aimed to discuss branding and global TV fictions. As we spoke about the UK experience, charting how the *CSI* franchise went from being essential to the re-launch to embodying the Five brand, Acquaviva and Isola described how crucial *CSI* had been to the creation of FoxCrime, a thematic satellite channel dedicated entirely to the crime genre (better known in Italy as 'giallo' [meaning, 'yellow']). Launched on 31 October 2005, as an entirely new channel, FoxCrime bought *CSI*, along with *Law&Order* (1990-present),<sup>x</sup> for its reputation – television product with prominent enough visibility to sell a corporate ideology, perpetuate its values, generate its 'aura'. As the identity of the channel developed, other products like documentaries and Italian murder mysteries were introduced, but the US crime series dominate: these shows command in primetime, form the backbone of the schedule and enjoy a high profile on the official FoxCrime website.<sup>xi</sup> US series – others include *Criminal Minds* (2005-present), *Boston Legal* (2004-present), *Numb3rs* (2005-present), *Dexter* (2006-present) and *Shark* (2006-present) – enrich the channel brand; and so successful has the idea of Italian FoxCrime been that it has since been exported abroad, to Bulgaria, Portugal, Russia and Japan.

What emerged as the speakers spoke side by side was a tangled dialogue of cultural and intellectual paradox. (It was, for example, fascinating to see how FoxCrime adopted an ironic tone when selling *CSI* as quality TV, emphasising the glamorous US stars like Gary Dourdan (the actor who plays Warrick Brown) as part of the channel's hip and stylish appeal, while Five repositions the same US series as a more exclusive and artistic product for a UK market.)<sup>xii</sup> It is the paradoxes created in and through the juxtapositioning of competing discourses, of liberal intellectualism and institutional pragmatism, of creative ambition and material reality, of global (US)

cultural practice and local (Italian) cultural traditions, and between the different ways in which FoxCrime is read and understood, which we want to pull out here. In the attempt to reproduce the paradoxes that those voices betrayed, and to make visible *what* is said is invariably determined by *how* it is said (interpretative criticism, business rhetoric, marketing presentation), we felt it important to find an appropriate way to communicate that dialogue in tact (as it were). The dossier format allows us to best replicate what Aldo Grasso intended, to locate ways in which intellectuals, be they scholars, programme managers or fiction writers, can actively intervene in material realities. What follows gives us a flavour of that dialogue, as we reprint a transcript of the presentations given by Acquaviva and Isola, followed by commentaries from Grasso and Stefania Carini seeking to locate the ambition of FoxCrime within a longer history of the crime genre in twentieth-century Italy. We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our grateful thanks to Stefania Carini for her invaluable assistance in assembling this dossier, as well as to her and Chiara de Togni for translating the FoxCrime transcripts.

### **FoxCrime in Italy**

*Paola Acquaviva*

*Dadà Isola*

Fox International Channels currently operates 12 active brands for the Sky broadcasting digital satellite television service. Of those channels, eight are *factual* (Cult, History Channel, National Geographic Channel, National Geographic Adventure, National Geographic Wild, National Geographic Music, National Geographic Channel HD and Next: HD in high definition), while the remaining four are *entertainment*. From the beginning FOX's strategy has been to ensure a complementary and harmonious relationship between the channels despite differences in identity, targeting and scheduling.

In 2003 Fox International Channels launched the FOX-branded general entertainment channel in Italy. With its first channel, Fox, entirely dedicated to TV series, it was a pioneering venture. It was an innovation at the time, creating a place for those fans of TV series not served by current scheduling on broadcast television.

FoxLife was launched next in 2004. Its basic programming aimed to appeal to women through its image, expression and use of language; and its scheduling included television series, reality-shows, docu-fictions and original Italian programming.

Two years later, in 2006, fX was launched. A male focused platform broadcasting Italian and US movies, TV series and erotic programming from Playboy TV.

And in 2005, FoxCrime, the flagship channel of the entire Fox Group, was launched.

### **Creating FoxCrime**

*Paola Acquaviva*

Fox is at the root, the founding brand of all our channels. We knew that we had treasure in our hands, but also felt the necessity to clearly separate and personalise FoxLife and fX – the two channels already in our possession.

This thinking led to the creation of FoxCrime, a brand new channel very different in concept from the other two, because it is monothematic and has a clear and strong destination. The starting idea is simple: the crime genre. It is one that has long been popular, both in literature and film; but not until the creation of FoxCrime had there been a satellite network solely dedicated to this genre in particular. Despite the lack of programmes featuring crime on Italian television, and because of the way they were scattered across different channels, we sensed that the genre would find an audience. Our decision was to gather together crime shows on one groundbreaking channel that would be unique in Europe. There are other examples of crime channels around the world, but none of these had the same variety across their programming schedule as FoxCrime.

Our aim was to create a space that showcased the best of what the genre had to offer; and in so doing we mixed together different sub-categories of the genre: detective, noir, mystery and crime.

US TV series are the staple of the channel, but it also airs Italian productions, cult and vintage series, exclusive European series and documentaries.

The Italian Fox Group exclusively conceived of the channel, which has been exported and launched in other countries, such as Portugal, Russia, Bulgaria and Japan.

### **Communicating the FoxCrime Brand**

*Dadà Isola*

Like our other channels, the key was to identify a strong brand, which would convey the authority of the channel with respect and fidelity for its products. We also decided to use an ironic tone to communicate the brand to our audience.

We wanted the graphics to balance the presence of the core Fox brand with generic crime symbols like gun-smoke, blood and the atmosphere of a police station. We then worked to find a signature for the channel, a catchphrase as effective as HBO's 'It's Not TV. It's HBO'. 'FoxCrime. Nato per il crimine' ('FoxCrime. Born for Crime') was chosen as the final slogan; it worked for the launch and is still working as it expresses the channel's mission to show crime in all its forms.

We also made a short promo for the channel. Showing a convict digging a hole inside his cell with the words 'Channel under construction' written on a sign, with a radio broadcasting, 'Dal 31 ottobre parte FoxCrime! Non perdetelo! E adesso un breve spazio pubblicitario' ('On October 31st FoxCrime will start airing. Don't miss it! And now, a commercial break'), it aired on a loop for 15 days before the launch. (The commercial break was real, backed as it was by our official sponsor Citröen C1.)

It was a groundbreaking commercial operation because we were advertising our own channel; but at the same time we were linking our brand to that of our sponsor.

During the launch phase, we also wanted to raise awareness of what was simultaneously happening on the other Fox channels, as they aired shows that would eventually come to FoxCrime. We broadcast the following promo: 'Vuoi continuare a vedere questa serie? E allora trovati dal 31 ottobre sul canale 112. Ci saranno i migliori telefilm e programmi su crimine e investigazione come *CSI*. Dal 31 ottobre sul canale 112 c'è FoxCrime' ('Do you want to keep watching this series? On 31 October tune in to channel 112. You will find the best series and programmes about crime and investigation, such as *CSI*. From 31 October FoxCrime will be on channel 112').

We also initiated an advertising campaign, both in print and on posters. Here we kept the message simple: 'Siamo arrivati. Piacere, FoxCrime. E' nato il primo canale completamente dedicato al crimine' ('We've arrived. Nice to meet you, FoxCrime. The first channel dedicated to crime is born').

We then created a web site for fans and sent a 'Killer Kit' to our clients containing a box with a torso target and fake gun – branded FOX – with a blank cartridge.

Finally we held a press conference to launch the channel.

## Products and Identity

*Paola Acquaviva*

The programmes were phased into FoxCrime in two stages.

In order to consolidate the channel we began by airing the two most important crime series in the world today: *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Law&Order*.

In the second, and more ambitious phase, we started to air other TV products that could open new horizons, both for us and for our audience.

One of the most emblematic titles for us was *Dexter* (2006-present), the content of which had generated public controversy. For this reason alone the series premiered on a US cable channel rather than on network. We also aired Canadian black comedy *'Til Death Do Us Part* (US title: *Love You To Death*) (2006), a kind of modern *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1955-62) directed by, and starring, as the Grim Reaper, John Waters. It is a grotesque and tragicomic series, a round-up of stories about marriages that end with one spouse murdering the other.

We also invested in Italian productions, such as docu-fiction *Commissariato* (2006), set in the Rome-based Trevi Campomarzio police station depicting the daily routines and problems of the officers.

Famous Italian people and actors took part in the FoxCrime project, like Giancarlo Giannini, Michele Placido, and writer and author Carlo Lucarelli. The latter was involved in the so-called 'pills', in which Lucarelli explains the secrets behind writing suspense and mystery in the crime novel.

The last FoxCrime Production is *Donne assassine* (*Women Murderers*, 2008), an eight-part series – and based on the Argentine format *Mujeres Asesina* (2008). Each one is a crime movie based on actual events; and depicts women playing the unconventional role of murderer instead of the stereotypical victim.

We gave new life to less well-known TV products, which in turn grew in popularity as they moved from FoxLife to FoxCrime. We also managed to associate the language of the channel with the placement of a product in the programme schedule.

For instance *Law&Order* was first aired on the private broadcaster Rete4; but the US crime series had a vague and uncertain identity – and it could even be said that it did not have one at all. When it aired on FoxCrime, the identity of *Law&Order* was firmly embedded into the channel brand and its language, so that the series acquired fresh potential. On the one hand, FoxCrime takes possession of the series; but on the

other, there seems to be a spontaneous synergy to that process. *Dexter* is a good example; in fact the identity and nature of both channel and show perfectly merged, maybe because the US series was a new product, something never before seen on television, and a programme that we were the first to air in Italy.

At the beginning, the channel brand was defined by the TV series. But in 2007 we turned the tables, introducing new spots and commercials, which claimed that the TV series like *CSI* were famous thanks to us: ‘Se sono diventate delle star è tutto merito nostro! FoxCrime. Nato per il crimine’ (‘TV series are stars thanks to us! FoxCrime. Born for crime’).

### **The *CSI* brand**

#### *Dadà Isola*

Fox’s vocation, since its inception in 2003, was to offer its viewers the very best of international TV series. At that time, *CSI* was well known as a groundbreaking series, both in its narrative style and visual effects.

*CSI* was first scheduled on Telepiù, a digital satellite television service. When Sky Italia was created, from a merger with Telepiù and Stream TV, it renewed the *CSI* franchise. Along with *CSI*, Fox gained broadcasting rights for the lifetime of *CSI: Miami* and *CSI: New York*. It seemed natural to us to create a solid base for a channel whose mission was to satisfy the differing demands of our viewers, representing, as they do, different demographic targets with different viewing interests.

*CSI* was one of the titles central to the channel’s developmental phase, important because it has been one of the most famous and long-lived TV series ever. We had already bought the series, but we used it in a completely new way as we put it inside the FoxCrime frame. The importance of *CSI* strongly affected the creation of the FoxCrime brand; and at the same time the product produced remarkable results thanks to its new collocation with the channel. In fact, *CSI* first aired on Fox, then FoxLife, and finally FoxCrime, where it found incredible success: it was final proof of the importance of the FoxCrime channel.

At the core of the FoxCrime brand is the *CSI* franchise. We could even say there has been an intertwining of brands. Created through a dialogic association with the franchise, and conveyed through language and image, the aura of the channel is one of ‘criminal expertise’; which may be lightened, but always aims to entertain. As time passes, the *CSI* role has become less central as we broadcast many more shows. But as

the channel grows its reputation adds to the brand identity carried in and through graphics, language and tone, which is no longer so dependent on *CSI*.

The first two years saw us consolidate the *CSI* brand; in fact FoxCrime began with large *factual* broadcasting slots, which eventually disappeared, due to low audience share. Brand protection even led us to re-purchase the *CSI* franchise back catalogue.

During the last year, however, we tried to renew the channel's identity, providing new quality genres and products. *Dexter* is the best example, as it turned out to be an outstanding and groundbreaking series for us.

Within this renewal operation, we produced a fiction exclusively for Fox Channels Italia. *Donne assassine* is a show in which we maintain the same aesthetical and plotline quality our viewers expect from us, but with the juicy add-on of an entirely Italian production.

## **Results**

### *Dadà Isola*

From the start we targeted both men and women; and, in the beginning, our public was, as we predicted, equally split between the genders. But the balance soon shifted, becoming 60 per cent female and 40 per cent male. The highest concentration of our viewers is amongst the 35-45- and 65-74-age groups, with education levels fitting their particular ages. The socio-economical status of FoxCrime is the same as the other Fox Groups, but FoxCrime has one of the best. This is because 70 per cent of its share is amongst the upper and middle classes. What this means is that we have a privileged status, delivering audiences desired most by advertisers.

The channel has been a winner in terms of audience ratings. Looking at the daily totals, FoxCrime is the network leader (share 0.41%); and in primetime it is third after sports and movies (share 0.92%). On total day, our AMR is 65.000 with 6 per cent share; in prime time AMR is 150.000 with 6.8 per cent share. What satisfies us most, other than the numbers, is how the channel has grown from the beginning. Its growth is around 99 per cent in the daily total, and 150 per cent in primetime. We started with a very high rate – it usually aces a 30 per cent during the first year – and now we have an 83 per cent share among our public.

Popularity rating was also high, and it has not shifted much since. Rating from 0 to 5, we reach 1.7 per cent in 'awareness and spontaneous', and we are the fifth



channel after our channel Fox, Disney, cinema, sport. As for ‘liking’, we are at 8 per cent, and we are the fourth after cinema, sports and Fox. As for ‘innovation’, we are third, after Fox and cinema.

Why do people like us? The reasons are varied and complex: the commitment of the people who work at FoxCrime, successful scheduling choices, luck in bargaining, scheduling strategies, and finally our focus on channel development that never ceases, because we always try to enhance and enrich the identity of this particular kind of channel.

*Translated by Stefania Carini and Chiara de Togni*

## **Branding Crime and the Italian Way: From Giallo Mondadori to FoxCrime**

*Stefania Carini and Aldo Grasso*

### **Introduction**

*Aldo Grasso*

FoxCrime is an amazing product suspended between past and future. This modern brand channel, capable of stretching out into the international market, has a respected literary ancestor.

The year 1929 witnessed the inception of ‘I Libri Gialli’ (‘The Yellow Books’) by Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, renamed ‘I Gialli Mondadori’ in 1946; it is a book series, still being published today,<sup>xiii</sup> which focused on the best detective, mystery, thriller and noir tales written by renowned international and Italian novelists. The ‘giallo’ (‘yellow’) label at first alluded to the colour of the paper used for the cover, but soon, in the wake of its astonishing success, came to denote an entire genre.

The ‘Gialli Mondadori’ series can be considered an ancestor of FoxCrime, not only because of the genre it covers, but also because the publishing campaign initiated by Arnoldo Mondadori shares many features with the promotional strategies developed at FoxCrime.

### **The ‘Gialli Mondadori’ series**

*Aldo Grasso*

When the ‘Gialli Mondadori’ series first appeared in 1929, Italian publishing was in crisis. The 1920s are generally remembered as a critical juncture in Italy, despite the

foundations of modern publishing being laid in these years. An adverse economic climate and inadequacies in a publishing system not yet ready to meet the demands of a modern readership contributed to the predicament. Indeed at this time, Italian cultural life witnessed a shift in reading tastes and the emergence of a new type of audience: the general public.<sup>xiv</sup> The élite may have prized lofty genres and prominent authors, but the new readers wanted something different. Originating from the ranks of the middle- and lower-middle classes, this new readership already enjoyed the pleasures of the silver screen, comic strips and parodies; and they were seeking to replicate those pleasures in works of fiction.

There was only one way to remedy the situation: Italian publishers had to come to terms with this new heterogeneous public and start publishing different kinds of fiction. In short, books cease to be regarded as ‘art’ but instead become merchandise. This dichotomy marks the transition from an élite to mass publishing industry, and was lead **among others** by Italian publisher Arnoldo Mondadori.

Mondadori represented a ‘new’ kind of publisher, whose brilliant ascent, dating back to the 1910s, was coupled with a lucid business rationale.<sup>xv</sup> He founded his ‘modern’ publishing house in Milan, nurturing a different public, different kinds of genres and promoting magazines as well as more high-brow literature from Italian modernist writers like Luigi Pirandello and Gabriele d’Annunzio. This strategy of steady expansion also included a new series called ‘I Libri Gialli’.<sup>xvi</sup> The collection was designed by Luigi Rusca and edited by Enrico Piceni; but the vision behind the series belonged entirely to Lorenzo Montano, an intellectual as well as collector of crime fiction, and friend to modernist poet Engenio Montale and founder of the Futurist movement Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.

The new series covered detective, mystery and thriller stories, and focused in particular on the traditional whodunit, a genre already popular in other countries such as France, Britain and the United States. Readers and authors in Italy were still unfamiliar with it, but Mondadori sagaciously ‘realize[d] its astounding potential within his nation, now ready to absorb such an innovation into its tradition’.<sup>xvii</sup>

The collection was devised essentially for the middle class, a public endowed with reasonable culture capital, but one which represented a prized demographic. The promotion campaign cunningly stressed the ability of the series to attract different kinds of readers (it will be ‘literally devoured be everybody, everywhere, anytime’<sup>xviii</sup>),

but also its magnetism ('its tales are unputdownable, they will keep you alert and awake all night and stimulate your imagination'<sup>xi</sup>).

The series exhibited a distinctive and unmistakable graphic style. Yellow was probably chosen for the series because the colour was already used in Britain, Germany and the United States to indicate spy stories and crime tales; but in Italy it became a distinctive feature to connote the entire genre. Yellow has an undeniable glowing impact and, as Lorenzo Montano put it, it allows the collection to 'be immediately spotted on the shelf of the bookseller' and 'stick out among its analogues'<sup>xx</sup>. The stylish covers also displayed exciting images, which no doubt had an effect on its reader. The whole packaging, refined and well trimmed, immediately found a public.

Distinctiveness and elegance coupled **red** to a reappraisal of the genre. The editor acknowledged that his books 'show a high artistic value and can be proudly displayed to great effect on the bookshelves of your [homes]'.<sup>xxi</sup> Mondadori met popular tastes and trends: he re-imagined the book as merchandise, but also strove to underline its noble purpose and artistic value. For these reasons, the authors published in the early years were of unquestionable artistic relevance: S.S. Van Dine, Edgar Wallace, Anne Katherine Green, Robert Louis Stevenson with *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Foreign writers have always been published and in fact remain the series' most prominent authors.

At this point it must be noted that Italy not only lacks an appreciable lineage of detective-story writers, but also a tradition of popular literature. Italian writers from those years had no desire to become 'popular', or perhaps they simply lacked the appropriate skills. National literary production had long been ruled and controlled by Italy's elite.<sup>xxii</sup> Since Italian writers do not accept the reading public as an undifferentiated mass, Mondadori had no choice but to look abroad for authors. Which, in turn, opened him up to charges of being a xenomaniac. He did, however, begin a personal quest to find national writers capable of producing popular literature, which would in time become State policy with the ascendancy of the Fascists. In 1931, a decree was issued, which required that at least 15 per cent of national publications had to be the work of Italians.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Under Benito Mussolini, the series was suspended as the regime considered detective and thriller stories morally harmful. In 1946, the series was re-launched, but under the title, 'I Gialli Mondadori'. Although blocked for a period, 'Gialli Mondadori'

has become part of the Italian cultural heritage; and nowadays the term ‘Giallo’ has acquired a richer semantic meaning, becoming synonymous with crime stories, detective stories, thriller novels. ‘Giallo’ represents a brand of literary genre in much the same way as Disney is a brand of animation.

### **FoxCrime, the new ‘Giallo’**

*Stefania Carini*

Mondadori developed a themed series and Fox conceived of a themed channel: both created a new-brand product with a specific and clear identity, its own style and content. The former appealed to new readers as it made the most of a definite genre and stimulated tastes. The latter also appeals to a general public, and to this end its viewers are scattered among numerous ‘predilection niches’, satisfied through numerous channels. The deal concluded between channel and viewers is ‘the same kind of deal concluded between the editor of a series and its readers.’<sup>xxiv</sup> But FoxCrime and Giallo Mondadori also share further traits.

FoxCrime came into being at a momentous time.<sup>xxv</sup> namely, the Italian model of popular television was facing a crisis when Rupert Murdoch, a new international publisher, appeared. In 2003, following the collapse of Telepiù and Stream, two satellite pay-TV providers, Murdoch launched Sky, an innovative product, which soon turned out to be the only real alternative to public (RAI) and private (Mediaset) television: the duopoly RAI-Mediaset in the Italian broadcasting system was finally shattered and Italy entered ‘the age of plenty’.<sup>xxvi</sup> Digital television became the newest media entertainment: multichanneled and customisable.

Murdoch, just like Mondadori, is a publisher in search of expansion and aims at winning new slices of the market. The notion of the TV public is already changing: it is no longer a mob, but rather a blend of diversified niches. Every channel is distinguished by a specific theme, and aims to win a single specific target. In this scenario a new contender enters: FoxCrime, created by Fox Channels Italia, a division of the Fox Entertainment Group and devoted to the promotion and management of themed television channels.

Detective stories and thrillers are again selected, since it is a genre that has a broad appeal, in books as on television, and is enjoyed in Italy and abroad. Generic products of this kind usually experience irregular broadcast on the same channel, or even worse, are scattered across different Italian channels. We still lack a defined

channel for this genre, one capable of absorbing and promoting the best of what is available on the market.

The promotional campaign initiated by FoxCrime underlines the originality of the channel and adopts an ironic style: it is a modern and self-referential element, which is missing from 'I Gialli', a sign of the times. FoxCrime can in fact play with the genre, as it is one that is now well known to Italian readers', which was not the case back in 1929.

The channel has created a new visual style with which everybody can identify: packaging is as important for a satellite channel as typographic style was when Mondadori first marketed 'I Gialli'. Distinction is again the final goal, especially today in a multi-channelled environment, which requires companies to become immediately recognisable amongst its competitors. The layout is stylish and conforms to international concepts: it is a quality packaging for a quality product.

'I Gialli Mondadori' bet everything on authors like Stevenson and Wallace. FoxCrime has chosen *CSI* and *Law&Order*. The new channel offers products [that have already been well-received elsewhere] and **relies on** sensational authors and titles: the standard is to conform to US Quality TV, a leading model in contemporary television. The company in fact invests in TV series commonly regarded as 'artistic' by both the public and reviewers in Italy. This is also due, in part, to the weakness of Italian productions, still unable to rival the US ones. **Italian television is witnessing a fracture between authors and the public, and one that mirrors a similar obsession in Italian literature in the first years of the twentieth century. Contemporary Italian authors do produce "popular" scripts in the strictest sense of the word. Their products are in fact shabby and careless, very far from the standards of Quality TV. This way, Italian TV fictions boast successes, but especially** amongst the elderly or those with low or no education; but this type of indigenous fiction is not loved by younger and more cultured audiences, who are in fact Sky's target audience.

Fox channels, often accused of xenomania, must come to terms with a public that prefers US products. But as in 1931 with 'I Gialli', a new regulation stipulates that satellite pay-TV's must devote half their daytime broadcast schedule to European productions. This also applies to peak-time (8.30 pm-10.30 pm). Fox can, of course, divide the percentage among its many channels, but each one must not reduce its European products to less than 20 per cent. This is why FoxCrime is also determined to exploit pioneering European and Italian programmes. The channel is bound to keep its

promise with the public: the quality standard will be judged against the US one. This is not an easy way out (just as it was not for 'I Gialli') but it seems to be bearing fruit. FoxCrime, and Sky for that matter, are doing well, and are influencing the production of the other free channels.

Like 'I Gialli', FoxCrime has become the leading series channel for crime-fiction enthusiasts, and can boast many imitations. Its paradigm has influenced free channels such as Italia 1 and RaiDue, which have created their own 'primetime crime'.

Italia 1, Mediaset's youth free channel, broadcast *CSI* for free in 2001, a year later than Telepiù (one of the two pay-TV purchased in 2003 by Sky). It met with immediate success, which, in turn, affected other franchise products. The show airs on Friday, and is repeated on Tuesday, thus entering into direct competition with FoxCrime, which broadcasts *CSI* on the same day. These days have become the favourite days for crime fiction, thanks to *Life* (2007-present) and *Dexter*. The connection is so apparent that during 2008/9 Friday nights simply became known as Italia 1 Crime.

RaiDue is the public analogue of Italia 1. Some years ago the channel started to broadcast 'Nel segno del Giallo' ('Under the Yellow Mark of Thriller') on Saturday nights: it is not a series, but a collection of US films and European TV-films. RaiDue maintained this weekly broadcast, but in the light of FoxCrime's achievements the channel was forced to reinvent its schedule. Two different crime nights were created: *NCIS* (2003-present) and *Criminal Minds* (primetime, on Sundays) together with *Cold Case* (2003-present) (primetime, on Saturdays) were immediately acquired and offered. Films and European TV films were discarded, while quality US TV was chosen as the template.

FoxCrime, its programming strategies and those channels that have attempted to replicate its success, demonstrate the ever-growing success of quality US TV in the Italian television market. It is deemed a first-rate item of television in much the same way as film premières and sport programmes.

## **Conclusion**

*Stefania Carini*

'I Gialli' was first published at the turn of last century. FoxCrime goes on air at the beginning of the new millennium. Between these two periods, the media scenario has changed but both undertakings share common traits. Due to the need of acquiring new

slices of the market, both publishers shaped successful brands, similar in style and content.

Such a comparison unveils significant details and gives us a chance to connect contemporary phenomena to their roots, **shed some light on** two cultural industries different in style and time, enrich our knowledge of television studies. Such a process cannot but bring about a deeper understanding of contemporary dynamics and their exact arrangement in a wider and stimulating scenario.

<sup>i</sup> Kaarle Nordenstreng and Tapio Varis, *Television Traffic: A One-Way Street?: A Survey and Analysis of the International Flow of Television Programme Material*, UNESCO, 1974; see, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000075/007560eo.pdf>, accessed 21 January 2009

<sup>ii</sup> See Milly Buonanno's discussion of Italian attitudes toward US TV imports in this issue, for example.

<sup>iii</sup> Herbert Schiller, 'Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era,' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 8, 1991, 13-28; Alessandro Silj, *East of Dallas: The European Challenge to American Television*, bfi Publishing, 1988, pp. 22-58; Herbert Schiller, *Mass Communications and the American Empire*, Augustus M. Kelley, 1969.

<sup>iv</sup> Milly Buonanno makes a similar point in this issue of CST, when she talks about how US TV imports were subject to restrictive import policies as well as viewed as less than the 'virtuous' public service broadcasting models (such as the BBC).

<sup>v</sup> Elke Weissmann, 'Negotiating American Quality: the NBC Brand in Britain,' *Critical Studies in Television*, 3, 2, Autumn 2008, 40-58; Robin Nelson, *State of Play: Contemporary "High-End" TV Drama*, Manchester University Press, 2007; Paul Rixon, *American Television on British Screens. A Story of Cultural Interaction*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006; Janet McCabe, 'Diagnosing the Alien: Producing Identities, American "Quality" Drama and British Television Culture in the 1990s,' in Bruce Carson and Margaret Llewellyn-Jones, eds, *Frames and Fictions on Television: The Politics of Identity within Drama*, Intellect, 2000, 141-54; Kerry Segrave, *American Television Abroad: Hollywood's Attempt to Dominate World Television*, McFarland, 1998; Geoffrey Lealand, *American Television Programmes on British Screens*, bfi Publishing, 1984; Also see, the AHRC-funded project 'British TV Drama and Acquired US Programmes 1970-2000' at the Department of Film, Theatre and Television, University of Reading, <http://www.reading.ac.uk/ftt/research/ftt-britishtvdrama.asp>, accessed 30 July 2008.

<sup>vi</sup> Simone Knox, 'Five's Finest: The Import of *CSI* into British Terrestrial Television,' in Michael Allen, ed, *Reading CSI: Television Under the Microscope*, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 183-97; Ian Goode, '*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*: Quality, the Fifth Channel and "America's Finest",' in Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, eds, *Quality TV: American Television and Beyond*, I.B. Tauris, 2007, pp. 118-28

<sup>vii</sup> Cathy Johnson, 'Telebranding in TVIII. The Network as Brand and the Programme as Brand,' *New Review of Film and Television Studies*, 5, 1, 2007, 11-20.

<sup>viii</sup> Janet McCabe, 'Creating "Quality" Audiences for *ER* on Channel 4,' in Lucy Mazdon and Michael Hammond, eds, *The Contemporary Television Series*, Edinburgh University Press, 2005, pp. 207-223

<sup>ix</sup> Paul Rixon, 'American Programmes on British Screens: A Reevaluation,' *Critical Studies in Television*, 2, 2, Autumn 2007, 96-112.

<sup>x</sup> Channel 5, as it was known then, adopted a similar strategy, marketing the US pairing as 'Partners in Crime' when in 2001 it sought to establish its reputation as home to US crimes series.

<sup>xi</sup> FoxCrime, <http://www.foxtv.it/web/fox/foxcrime?mmlD=channel>

<sup>xii</sup> One only need think of Five's high profile 2006 'White' campaign, used to launch the Spring schedule. It comprised three separate ads, each featuring characters from either the *CSI* franchise, *House* or *Prison Break*. Shot in tight close-up it provides an intimate portrait of a character. Each tells us, 'This much I know,' followed by a response which says something about a particular character's psyche. The campaign thus rewrote the glossy, slick US visual style into a muted, languorous and arty UK one. As Simone Knox says: 'with its fresh whiteness and understated piano score, this stylish campaign moves beyond the police procedural to link together different genre programmes ... and identify them within the broader category of quality television, which it links to Five's re-branded white logo; the white campaign's tagline "This much we know. Simply great dramas at 10" affirms a unity of programmes, channel brand and imagined quality audience'. See, Knox, 'Five's Finest: The Import of *CSI* into British Terrestrial Television,' p. 195.

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<sup>xiii</sup> See, Blog del Giallo Mondadori, <http://blog.librimondadori.it/blogs/ilgiallomondadori/>, accessed 26 January 2009.

<sup>xiv</sup> Fausto Colombo, *La cultura sottile*, Bompiani, 1998.

<sup>xv</sup> Giulio Ferroni, *Profilo storico della letteratura italiana*, Einaudi, 1992.

<sup>xvi</sup> Maurizio Pistelli, "I libri Gialli Mondadori", in *Un secolo in giallo*, Donzelli, 2006.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102. In 1929, even George Simenon (and his inspector Maigret), Dashiell Hammett (and Sam Spade), together with the Lepofsky brothers (with Ellery Queen) were published.

<sup>xviii</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>xix</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xx</sup> *Ibid.* 102

<sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99

<sup>xxii</sup> Colombo, *La cultura sottile*, 1998.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Loretta Eller, *Il Giallo*, Fratelli Palombi Editori, 1996;

<sup>xxiv</sup> Sandro Dazieri, lecture for the meeting *Lo schermo globale: presente e futuro della televisione*, 2-3 aprile, Triennale di Milano. Dazieri is scriptwriter and detective-story writer. He has also edited the *Gialli Mondadori* series.

<sup>xxv</sup> For a glimpse on Italian TV, see Aldo Grasso, Stefania Carini and Massimo Scaglioni, *Enciclopedia Garzanti della Televisione*, Garzanti, 2006; Aldo Grasso, *Storia della Televisione Italiana*, Garzanti, 2004; Aldo Grasso and Massimo Scaglioni, *Che cos'è la televisione*, Garzanti, 2003.

<sup>xxvi</sup> John Ellis, *Seeing Things*, I.B. Tauris, 2002.