Investigating Format

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The Transferral and Translation of Televised Productions in Italy and England

By

Bronwen Hughes

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FOREWORD

Over the last decades of the 20th century and the first of the 21st, a great deal of research has been carried out on language and television in a variety of research ambits ranging from cultural and media studies, to sociolinguistics and translation studies. Relatively little work, however, has been done on the analysis and comparative study of television format. The term 'format' to which a great many definitions can be attributed, in the world of television is taken to mean a copyrighted programme whose license can be sold or leased to a foreign country. Throughout the eighties and nineties of the last century, European television networks were inundated by such formats, *The Big Brother* being perhaps the most well-known.

Often denigrated as being a sort of mediatic McDonalds, classified as junk or trash TV for their noticeable lack of cultural content, these formats have, over time, served to extend and reinforce the concept of the global village and the global message. Viewers in Great Britain, France, Australia or Italy can all undergo the same mediatic experience, though in this case they are not watching a dubbed or sub-titled rendition of an imported product, they are watching participants or actors performing in the 'local' equivalent of the original format.

This work of research focuses on the transferral of a television format from the country in which it was originally produced into a wholly different cultural and linguistic ambit. The format chosen is that of *The Bill*, a police procedural which was aired in Great Britain (Thames Television – Pearson Productions) from 1986 to 2010 and was first adapted for Italian television as *La Squadra* (Rai Tre – Pearson Productions), in January of the year 2000. The reason for selecting a police procedural as opposed to a soap or a game show format resides in the fact that the close investigation of an institutional ambit offered the opportunity to concentrate on the specific characteristics of 'institutional talk' which differs considerably, in terms of the discursive constraints and obligations placed upon speakers, from talk which occurs in mundane conversations and settings.

The world of 'real life' policing clearly varies from country to country, as regards for example the legislative and procedural rulings by which the institutional incumbents must abide, the hierarchical structure of

the police force, the 'ideology' which underlies and fuels the police officers' actions, or the type of criminal delinquency which characterizes a given nation. In turn, the average viewer's knowledge of the police institution is gleaned both from rare encounters with law enforcers and from the image of the police force projected by television fiction,: "the police series not only reflects the world of policing, but actively constructs a coherent version of social reality" (Hurd 1981: 60). This constant negotiation between reality and fiction allows for two lines of investigation to be developed when embarking upon a comparative study of the British procedural and its Italian format equivalent: on the one hand the manner in which each series reflects the real-life police procedure and institutional discourse of the nation that 'hosts' it; on the other, the way in which this 'reflection of reality' in the original British format differs from the one presented in the Italian format equivalent.

As regards the research corpus and selection of episodes, work was carried out on the first fifteen episodes of *La Squadra*, from its inception in January 2000 until the summer of the same year. Although the programme subsequently ran for seven years, it is in the first season of broadcasting that the 'format transferral' was most evident. With the passing of time, the Italian format progressively took on greater local specificity, particularly with regards to the type of crime depicted in the series, concentrating to an ever-increasing extent on 'camorra' warfare and the rivalry between opposing factions, a far cry from the more general delinquency present in the first series and which reflects that to be found in *The Bill*.

As for *The Bill*, the original British format, there would have been little point in going back to its outset, way back in 1986, as those episodes are by now most definitely 'dated', both from a technological point of view (filming techniques and quality) and as regards content topicality. The decision to select the fifteen episodes which were broadcast from the Autumn of 1998 to the Spring of 1999 stems from the fact that initial interest in the British series, on the part of the Italian Rai Tre network, was manifested in the autumn of 1998. It is upon viewing the Autumn '98/Spring 1999 episodes that the Italian network – together clearly with the Australian production company (at the time Pearson, successively Grundy) – assessed the feasibility of a format transfer and chose to adopt the format on Italian television For the purposes of comparison, intended as a close look at the social, cultural and linguistic similarities, but more significantly, differences, between the two series locked within a 'format-container' yet firmly rooted in their own individual national identities, the period selected seemed to be the most appropriate.

An exhaustive analysis of the innumerable discursive features present in the two police series would be well beyond the scope of this study, considering that analysis is being carried out not only within one fictional institutional community with its national, social and linguistic characteristics, but indeed across two fictional communities situated in very different cultural frameworks, for this reason one specific institutional ambit has been selected for analysis: that of the adversarial investigative interview in which the dyadic pair is made up of an institutional incumbent and a suspect or culprit. This circumscribed scenario is an ideal setting for the two lines of inquiry outlined above, on the one hand it will allow for an examination of the degree of authenticity reflected in the interviews present in the two formats, on the other, it will enable investigation of the extent to which the investigative interviews in *La Squadra* reflect those of its British counterpart.

The study is made up of six chapters which can be broken down as follows:

Chapter One presents a rapid genesis of the police procedural in Great Britain and Italy and examines the general 'structural' features which characterize the British format and its Italian format equivalent. Subsequently, Chapter Two, presents a research framework suitable for the analysis of the fictional institutional talk that has been selected as the focus of research. In Chapter Three, the structure and characterizing features of the 'real life' formal interview are examined, together with the underlying legislative framework; this provides a benchmark against which to measure the degree of authenticity present in the fictional interviews which make up the data. Subsequently, Chapter Four, examines the way in which questions are employed in formal interviews; once more this emphasis on the 'real life' context provides the necessary grounding to understand to what degree fiction and reality coincide in the two police procedurals. In Chapter Five, the non-dialogical features which contribute to the reproduction of 'realism' and 'authenticity' in the interview room scenes in the two formats are analysed. Finally, Chapter Six presents an investigation of the linguistic devices employed in the adversarial interviews in *The Bill* and *La Squadra,* and brings the underlying differences to the fore.

CHAPTER ONE

FICTIONAL PORTRAYALS OF THE POLICE: THE NON-DIALOGICAL ASPECTS WHICH CHARACTERIZE AND DIFFERENTIATE 'LA SQUADRA' AND 'THE BILL'

'Investigating Format' the name chosen for this piece of research was deliberately selected with two possible interpretations in mind. The first interpretation focuses on the term 'investigating' thus placing the emphasis on the layout, organization, constitutive and regulative features of the adversarial investigative interview in order to ascertain whether such features are reflected in the fictional police interviews which constitute the focus of research and to examine if the fictional investigative interviews present in 'The Bill' and its Italian format equivalent do indeed adhere to a particular model or 'format' which reflects that of 'real-life' adversarial interviews. Subsequently, we shall investigate whether the fictional interviews in 'La Squadra' reflect those in 'The Bill' to an extent that can permit us to talk of mere transferral from the original format to its Italian format equivalent. In the second interpretation, the emphasis is placed on the term 'format' which can, in turn, be defined in two partially overlapping manners: format is the word employed to define the characteristic features of a given televised production, thus 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 program 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 there is a good chance that it will be equally successful elsewhere, and the annual programming schedule can be organized well ahead of time as the viewing slot, running time, number of episodes etc. can be pre-established.

It is this acceptation of the term format which will be investigated in this first chapter, the transferral of a successful television programme into another, culturally and linguistically, very different environment.

We will begin our foray into the world of format by providing a short overview of the history of police procedurals in the two countries respectively, such a review is pertinent to the present study as certain features of past 'cop shows' have been maintained over the years only to reappear in present day productions. We will then briefly present the genesis of each format and go on to examine the manner in which certain non dialogical features of the UK production have been modified or 'translated' to suit the Italian cultural environment.

1.1 A brief overview of televised police procedurals in the United Kingdom and in Italy

1.1.1 Police procedurals in the United Kingdom

The first police procedural to be broadcast in the UK was 'Dixon of Dock Green'; its popularity was such that it spanned a twenty-year period, from 1956 to 1976, and the protagonist George Dixon took on iconic value in later years, brought back to life whenever a reference to the 'Bobby on the beat' of foregone days was required. To illustrate George Dixon's sempeternal value, Clarke quotes a headline of the Financial Times following the inner-city upheavals which rent the UK in 1981: "We can't leave it to old George any more" (Clarke 1986:225)

Despite its rather bucolic sound, Dock Green was in fact situated in the rough and tough East End of London steeped in traditional working class values. To emphasize the nationalistic and community based spirit of the programme, the 1947 classic 'Maybe it's because I'm a Londoner' was chosen as the theme tune. To reinforce the sense of post-war unity each of Dixon's colleagues at the police station represented one of the four home

countries. George Dixon epitomised the solution to the post-war increase in crime and the programme attempted "to grasp the reality of England as a unity, a family structure, local solidarity and mutual responsibility writ large" (Barr 1993:85). The aim behind the programme was to reassure rather than alarm, to reinforce the public's faith in the police force as an institution, and to provide the audience with a sense of stability and continuity. The delinquency depicted was at a fairly innocuous local level, and the actor, Jack Warner, chosen to impersonate Dixon never changed over the twenty-year period in which the programme was broadcast, although he was already in his early sixties when he started out. Furthermore the scheduled viewing slot, Saturday at 6.30 p.m., was chosen with family viewing in mind. Community spirit and solidarity were at the very heart of Dixon of Dock Green; George was on first name terms with all the local villains who willingly accepted arrest and were all too eager to see the error of their ways. Dixon was proud to wear his neat blue uniform, proud to protect and defend his community and to be the embodiment of the police institution. He used a paternal, avuncular manner with both criminals and young policemen alike as he dispensed wisdom and advice, and each episode was crowned by his 'Blue lamp speech' when he stood on the station steps, under the blue lamp, which symbolized the law and the police institution, and summed up the evening's episode giving it a moral conclusion and warning viewers to 'keep on the straight and narrow'.

The advent of the equally popular police procedural 'Z cars' was due to a number of factors, the increasing rate of serious crime in the UK, which after the post-war lull, had increased to such an extent that for the first time in history, fighting crime became one of the leading themes in the political manifesto of the Conservative Party in 1959 (Downes & Morgan 1997:37). Furthermore, the BBC, the channel which broadcast 'Dixon of Dock Green' was facing a rapid decrease in viewing time in favour of the more competitive channel, ITV (Laing 1991:126). A faster paced, more up to date procedural was called for and thus, in 1962 the first episode of 'Z cars' was aired. The main ingredients of this production differed considerably from those of the statelier 'Dixon'. First of all the programme was set in the fictional housing estate of Newtown. The choice of a stark overspill estate inhabited by a mixed community of persons displaced from the inner cities by slum clearance, wholly devoid of any form of community spirit, where violence and everyday delinquency are rife, is a key element of this faster-paced procedural. The first series of 'Z cars' was also shot live with six cameras and film footing was often employed for the background scenes; fast car chases supplanted the steady

tread of the bobby on the beat, and far more live, outdoor action was shown; the policeman walking his beat was replaced by patrol cars driving through the estate and keeping an eye out for any form of delinquent behaviour. A further innovative feature of 'Z cars' lay in the fact that it was set in the North of England, in the Liverpool area, thus the actors no longer spoke in the best Queen's English, as had been the case in 'Dixon', but with regional accents and a fast, slangy, more realistic form of speech, often interrupting and overlapping each other. The viewing slot, Tuesday at 8.30 p.m. was also destined to attract a more adult audience. The protagonists themselves fell a long way short of the moral standards set by George Dixon, although, as in 'Dixon' they were again chosen to represent the four countries which make up the UK, and thus provide a sense of national unity. They are often to be seen carrying out minor infractions to police rule such as using the station phone to place bets or ring girlfriends, and consuming a few too many beers in the local pub as well as roughing up the local criminals in order to obtain information or confessions. "The iconoclasm of Z cars lay in its warts and all portrayal of the police as adults with personal weaknesses and defects, rather than the Dixonesque superannuated Boy Scout image" (Reiner 1994:22-23). The first series of 'Z cars' was broadcast live from 1962 to 1965, after which a pre-recorded version went on air from 1967 to 1978. Thus, throughout the 60s and 70s the BBC was broadcasting two popular police procedurals, 'Dixon of Dock Green' which was generally more reassuring and destined for family entertainment, and the faster-paced 'Z cars' aimed at a more adult audience.

The 1970s registered a further sharp rise in serious criminal offences with the number of cases of homicide passing from 391 in 1973 to 526 in 1974 (Richards 1999:91), again the Conservative Party devoted considerable time and space to the issue of law and order in the 1974 election manifesto (Downes & Morgan 1997:91) thus, the general public was aware that the world was not as reassuring and sedate as George Dixon would have them believe, and nor could widespread crime be solved by Z-Victor one and Z-Victor two, the two panda cars which represented the 'Z' in 'Z cars', patrolling the Newtown overspill estate. Furthermore, in the early 70s the BBC had begun importing 'Kojak' and 'Starsky and Hutch' and thus 'the two series which had dominated British TV schedules suddenly became anachronistic, a nostalgic legacy of days gone by' (Clarke 1983:47).

The fast emerging anomic world of urban crime could no longer be restricted to fictional American procedurals, the high-profile criminal trials of the Kray twins and the Tibbs gang in England in the late sixties and

early seventies had brought the general public to be aware of the encroaching danger of organised crime and gangland-warfare, episodes of police corruption had also been widely publicised, to the extent that in 1972 the Metropolitan Police appointed Sir Robert Mark as Commissioner of the newly established anti-corruption Bureau (Leishman & Mason 2003:72). Such an anomic, violent world called for a new kind of police-hero; squeaky-clean George was no longer credible and nor was the community-centred world of 'Z cars'. Hurd makes an interesting distinction between 'centred' and 'de-centred' biography (Hurd 1981:60) when investigating the characteristic features of police procedurals. 'Z cars' qualifies as a de-centred biography since it represents a world of extended, group-directed relationships, among the policemen themselves and between the officers and the surrounding community. In the case of a 'centred' biography, a selected number of actors are permanently fore-grounded, they are always present, permanently on view, and thus they qualify as 'round' characters as opposed to the plethora of 'flat' characters present in procedurals of the 'de-centred' type.

'The Sweeney' is the third and last British 'cop-show' pertaining to this period. In terms of Hurd's dichotomizing definition it qualifies as a 'centred' biography, focusing as it does, on the individual actions of a small number of institutional incumbents. 'The Sweeney' was broadcast on ITV from January 1974 to December 1978.

As regards the setting, 'The Sweeney' takes us back to the East End of London, however, it is no longer the world of flower-sellers and street-stalls depicted in 'Dixon' where a quick 'what you up to lad?' was enough to stop a villain in his tracks; in this procedural we are plunged into the underworld of pimps and prostitutes, drug-dealers and gangland bosses.

The unusual name chosen for the series derives from a play on words in Cockney rhyming slang for the Flying Squad: Sweeney Todd = Flying Squad. The main character, DI Jack Regan is present in every episode and practically every scene, the centrality of his role is described succinctly in the cover notes to the second paperback spin-off from the series *Regan and the Manhattan files*: "Jack Regan is a mean cop in the Flying Squad. He's also the Sweeney's hardest, sharpest and brightest detective inspector. He hates interference, rank, regulations and crime. But most of all he hates to lose" (Hurd 1981:60).

Jack Regan embodied a form of legitimised or 'noble-cause' (Leishman & Mason 2003:70) corruption in which the ruthless pursuit of the villain may well entail the short-cutting of legal rules and regulations, crime is represented as a form of evil perpetrated by "villains who must be fought and stamped out, and can only be combated successfully by police officers

who are equally ruthless" (Reiner 1994:24). The moment of apprehension itself represents the conviction of the criminal and this brings to the fore an important aspect of police procedurals both in the past and in the present day: the initial excision of two fundamental components of the legal system: the courts and prisons. The moment of capture or of interrogation becomes the moment of conviction, the assembling of evidence becomes the revelation of guilt.

Although a number of other police procedurals paved the way to "The Bill", they were generally short-lived spin-offs of the three procedurals we have outlined above. Over the years, especially throughout the eighties, all the most important American cop-shows were imported into the UK, 'Miami Vice', 'Starsky and Hutch', 'Hunter', to name but a few. However, these foreign procedurals have always flanked British productions, and in much the same way as crime fiction in literature, it can be said that from as early as the 1950s, the televised police procedural has represented a national genre in British televised viewing. As shall now be illustrated, the situation in Italy is very different, it is only at a much later date that the police procedural can be said to have taken on genuinely 'national' characteristics.

1.1.2 Televised detective fiction in Italy

Milly Buonanno in her study of Italian televised fiction (Buonanno 2004:57) analyses the birth and development of televised police procedurals, or detective series as they should more appropriately be called throughout the early years, and roughly situates them within three different time frames, each of which presents specific characteristics. Clearly, there is no precise 'cut off' mark between each frame; there is occasionally an overlap of two or three years, but on the whole, in the history and development of the genre, marked changes took place within the given periods.

1.1.2.1 From the late fifties to the early seventies: the foregrounding of foreign heroes

In line with the Italian tradition of the 'sceneggiato' which consisted in adapting literary classics for the television screen, the first police shows to be broadcast in Italy were adaptations of the European and American classical works of detective fiction. Throughout the late fifties and sixties numerous novels by George Simenon, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rex Stout were adapted for Italian television. Though the television adaptations were

written and produced in Italy, these 'detective shows' were all set in a foreign geographical and cultural context and the protagonists, Maigret, Sherlock Holmes and Nero Wolfe, embodied a good many traits of the nations they fictionally represented. On the whole these adaptations were faithful to the original works, but one small feature regards the Italian adaptation of the Simenon novels, is, however, worth mentioning as it underlines a particular aspect which is later to become a staple feature of Italian police procedurals when, in later years, they take on specific 'national' characteristics. Although the RAI production team maintained all the 'foreign' elements present in the novels, as regards the setting and the plot, they chose to place greater emphasis on Maigret's family life and domestic situation, than is in fact found in the original works. Thus, whereas Maigret's wife in the numerous novels written by Simenon is very much a shady, background figure who is not granted much relevance in the narrative development, in the Italian televised production she is 'foregrounded' and the protagonist's family life is awarded more 'space' in the development of the plot. This aspect is worth mentioning as it heralds, at a very early stage, the fact that 'domesticity' is a key feature of the truly national Italian police procedural and, as we shall later see, constitutes one of the main differences between 'The Bill' and its Italian format equivalent. This early phase, from the late fifties to the end of the sixties, in which the RAI production teams, the only television network which existed at the time, appeared to believe that televised detective fiction could only be accredited if it had a foreign flavour was further compounded, as Buonanno underlines, by the interesting case of a wholly Italian hero 'masquerading' as an American detective. In the late fifties a quiz show called 'Giallo Club' was broadcast on Italian television, the participants, present in the television studio, were shown part of an episode from a detective story which was interrupted before the culprit had been identified, the participants had to guess who had committed the crime and were successively shown the final part of the episode, the 'winner' was clearly the person who had identified the culprit correctly. The detective, protagonist of the series, was Tenente Sheridan who worked for the San Francisco Police Department; though the series was entirely written by two Italian authors, Mario Casacci and Alberto Ciambricco, the name of the detective and the setting of each episode was declaredly foreign. Thus, it would seem that in these first years of television viewing in Italy, authors and producers believed that a detective or investigator could only be credible if he operated within a foreign context.

1.1.2.2 The seventies and eighties: the birth of an Italian genre and the American influx

Although at the beginning of the seventies classical works of detective fiction by foreign authors were still being aired on Italian television, Chesterton's 'Father Brown' and Thomas' 'Philo Vance' being the most noteworthy examples (Buonanno 2004), this decade also witnesses the birth of an Italian detective genre. Initially the classical works of well-known Italian authors of detective literature such as Augusto De Angelis or Loriano Macchiavelli were adapted for the television screen, but very soon television scriptwriters began to concentrate on the detective fiction genre with series such as '*Qui Squadra Mobile*' or '*Il commissario De Vincenzi*'. These series are of interest from two separate points of view: on the one hand because they begin to delineate a specifically Italian type of crime, in particular that of gangland warfare between rival Mafia or Camorra factions, and on the other because an initial outline of the Italian police officer is traced: sensitive and often emotionally vulnerable, he solves his 'cases' by means of intuition as opposed to technological means, and he places his family life and human relationships on a par with his professional duties. This initial insight into a specifically Italian police procedural genre is, however, short lived as, throughout the eighties, with the birth of commercial television in Italy, television viewers are submerged by an influx of American cop shows which progressively bury the incipient attempts to create a national genre. Cop shows such as 'Miami Vice', 'Hunter' and 'Magnum P. I.', to mention but a few, present the audience with fast-paced action, breath-taking car chases and sophisticated technological means far-removed from the slower, more domestic Italian products. Thus, the national genre is eclipsed for a ten year span, and it is only in the nineties that we truly witness the foregrounding of the Italian 'poliziesco'.

1.1.2.3 From the 1990s on: the consolidation of a national product

Throughout the nineties the now consolidated presence of a commercial network meant that the competition to produce valid nationally produced televised programmes which would meet with audience approval was very high, the interest in the imported American procedurals had at this stage waned, and the tenuous attempt to produce a wholly national police procedural, which had first been undertaken in the late seventies only to be submerged by imported products, was once more taken up by Italian television authors and scriptwriters. In the early nineties three separate

police series (‘*L’ispettore Sarti*’, ‘*Il commisssario Corso*’ and ‘*Un commisario a Roma’*), heralded the advent of a truly Italian police procedural, Buonanno individuates three foundational aspects (Buonanno 2004:70) which contribute to the national character of such productions and which, as we shall illustrate in the latter part of this chapter, are all present in ‘La Squadra’.

- 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 can be identified as a national trait: institutions and institutional figures are not to be taken too seriously, as Buonanno states:
  “La *dramedy* poliziesca italiana sembra riflettere una particolare propensione nazionale a prendere le distanze, facendone motivo di sorriso o di riso, dai rappresentanti dell’autorità e del potere istituzionale” (Buonanno 2004:71) [The Italian police dramedy appears to reflect a particular national propensity to set a certain distance between ourselves and the representatives of authority and institutional power, while making this a reason for a smile or a laugh – **NB** *all translations are the author’s own*].
- The importance awarded to the family, the home environment, and to human relationships as opposed to merely professional ones. The professional incumbent in the Italian police procedural is an individual, a human being with all the emotional and relational turmoil that this entails; this aspect is strongly connected to the third characteristic feature which grants Italian police fiction its specificity.
- The police officer in the Italian procedural is an ordinary person, ‘one of us’, not above bending the rules if this suits his own ends or those of the institution he represents. Thus, the thin line which separates ‘good’ from ‘bad’ and places criminals and institutional incumbents on opposing sides of the barricade is often of a rather tenuous nature. 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.

1.2 Presentation of ‘The Bill’ and ‘La Squadra’

The next brief section merely aims to trace the genesis of the British procedural and its Italian format equivalent; in the section which follows, a

more detailed study of the non-dialogical features which characterize each format and cause them to differ will be carried out.

1.2.1 'The Bill'

The longest-running contemporary British police procedural, 'The Bill', originally stemmed from a one-off episode in a Thames Television showcase of single dramas entitled 'Storyboard' and broadcast in 1983. This particular episode, written by Geoff McQueen, received such acclaim that an initial 12-part series of 'The Bill' was aired in 1984 and successively, in 1986, the programme became annual. The first two series of the procedural were filmed in Wapping, therefore establishing the fictitious police station of 'Sun Hill' as being situated somewhere in the London area, in 1990 the production moved to an industrial estate in Merton, Greater London. The institutional incumbents portrayed in the series are fictitious members of the Greater London Metropolitan Police and many of the 'props' employed throughout the series (uniforms, posters in police station, patrol cars) are genuine articles and not copies, thus reinforcing the authentic and realistic 'feel' to the programme. When the program was on air, two retired police officers from the Metropolitan Police were permanently employed by the production to ensure that all the real-life procedural norms were adhered to. Over the years the 'viewing slot' occupied by 'The Bill' in ITV's programme scheduling has varied from twice or thrice-weekly half-hour shows to twice-weekly one-hour shows. In the course of the programme's life-span more than 150 actors impersonated the institutional incumbents working at 'Sun Hill' and ranging across all the recognized ranks of the Metropolitan Police Force.

1.2.2 'La Squadra'

The first episode of 'La Squadra' was broadcast on the Italian Rai Tre network in January of the year 2000. It was, however, from the autumn of 1998 to the spring of 1999 that the Italian network, together with the Australian production company Pearson Television, monitored the British format and decided that it could be successfully transferred into an Italian context. Two specific motivations fuelled the decision to implement the procedural in Italy: on the one hand the format could be adapted to suit the national context without excessively modifying the overall 'format container', it was also felt at the time that there was a need for a long-running police procedural in the overall RAI programming schedule, on the other, the Rai Tre televised fiction department did not at the time

possess the necessary technical know-how to set up the kind of 'conveyor belt' production needed for a long-running series; thus they imported the format both in terms of 'content' and technical know-how. The headquarters and film sets for the fictitious 'Sant'Andrea' police station which figures in 'La Squadra' were established in Piscinola in the suburbs of Naples and although from the second series on, the progressive emancipation of the Italian format equivalent and its increasingly local flavour led to the foregrounding of the city of Naples and to an increasing focus on local 'camorra' related criminality, in the first series which constitutes the object of our research, the precise location of the fictional events is rarely mentioned and the criminal 'cases' which the institutional incumbents have to solve are of a more generic nature, similar to those in 'The Bill' and only rarely connected to gangland warfare. The 'viewing slot' chosen for the series was a one-hour slot aired once a week in prime-time viewing. Throughout the seven-year run of the series, the cast was made up of 9 characters with only one actor change, two extra characters appeared in the first two episodes but they were merely present for the purposes of one particular story-line and were subsequently eliminated.

1.3 A comparative study of the non-dialogical features in 'The Bill' and 'La Squadra'

The main focus of this study concentrates on the constitutive features which characterize the investigative interviews in the two formats and this aspect will be dealt with in the following chapters. There are, however, within the general 'format container' a number of non-dialogical features which differ in the presentation of 'The Bill' and 'La Squadra' and which concur to the general character of each series. This section on the non-dialogical features of the two formats does not aim to be exhaustive, as to study aspects such as gender, hierarchy or storyline content, to mention but a few of these features, would require a wholly different analytical focus; the objective here is merely to illustrate that the characteristics which emerge from the subsequent linguistic analysis are already present in the overall structure of the two police procedurals.

The general format container envisages a police station situated in a difficult urban area with plenty of scope for cases of micro and macro-criminality, institutional incumbents who embody the hierarchical structure and ranks of the regular 'national' police force, and three separate storylines: a main one which deals with the principal 'case' to be solved and can last the length of one single episode or be stretched out over two or three successive episodes, a secondary one which concerns a

minor criminal case and is dealt with in a single episode, and a third one which is always 'internal' and involves the institutional incumbents personally; as we shall see in the following sections, it is this third storyline which differs considerably in the two formats.

1.3.1 What's in a name? Encapsulating titles and revealing credit sequences

The origin of the slang term 'The Bill' or 'Old Bill' employed in English to refer to the police force has never been univocally certified; in the main, however, it is thought to date back to King William IV, known as 'Old Bill' whose constables represented an early form of law enforcement (Fido & Skinner 1999:107). This reference to the rather dated origin of 'The Bill' serves to establish a comparison with the more contemporary term 'cops', which has semantic equivalents in most European languages, 'gli sbirri' in Italian, 'les flics' in French. Whereas, or indeed because, the term 'cops' brings to mind both American cop-shows and the 'good cop' 'bad cop' ploy occasionally employed as an interrogation technique, it has a rather derogatory connotation and refers to *individuals* often shown to have human failings. The term 'The Bill' abolishes any reference to individuality and underlines the *super partes* role of the police institution. With regards to the name of the British format, the point which needs to be stressed is that this appellative is employed by criminals when they refer to the police institution as a whole and not to the single, fallible, individual 'cops', who operate within it, as mere offshoots or human manifestations of an institution abstractly considered infallible. Thus, the term 'The Bill' reinforces the institutional nature of the police force, it is a collective label applied to a group of people who forfeit their individuality in the name of a common purpose: to enforce the law. The name 'The Bill' operates a dichotomizing process which strengthens the idea of the two opposing factions involved in the pursuit of criminal justice: the police institution *against* the criminals, justice *against* delinquency, or in more moralistic terms good *against* evil.

The name of the Italian format equivalent 'La Squadra' calls into play a series of very different values. Essentially these are human as opposed to institutional. Much as in the world of sport where each member contributes to the team thanks to *both* his individual capacities and characteristics and to his ability to fit in with the other players, the title chosen for the Italian series presents us with the idea of a group of individuals striving together to attain a common goal; but never forfeiting their individual characteristics and qualities. The emphasis in this case is

on values such as team spirit, solidarity, empathy, mutual support and understanding. Although ultimately the aim of the police team in 'La Squadra' is clearly to combat crime, the accent is not placed on a dichotomizing 'us against them' process, but rather on the human relationships and feelings which underlie and bring together the group of officers operating within the fictitious 'Sant'Andrea' police station. It is also important to note that intrinsic to the idea of a team is the idea of 'equal footing', and hence the back-grounding of any form of hierarchical superiority or inferiority; thus although the ranks at the Sant'Andrea range from 'Vice Questore' to 'Agente semplice', institutional labels and their correlated power and authority are put aside for the purpose of working together towards a common objective. To press home the connotations encapsulated within the choice of the title for the Italian format equivalent, the term 'La Squadra' is employed five times throughout the very first one-hour episode in utterances which make its intrinsic meaning altogether clear: when getting ready to go out and investigate a crime scene, Vice Questore Cafasso, the head of the police station, orders an underling to: 'unisci la squadra' [round up the team]; when asked to provide police protection for a political event, Ispettore Guerra states: 'ti mando uno della mia squadra' [I'll send you one of my team]; when referring to a football match the Sant'Andrea police officers have to play, Sovrintendente Amato states: 'siamo una squadra anche sul terreno da gioco' [we're a team on the playing field too] (thus interestingly inverting the idea that the term 'team' is employed first of all in sports contexts); when talking to Ispettore Baroni, an 'outsider' freshly arrived at the police station from Rome, Sovrintendente Amato exclaims: 'lei, lo spirito di squadra non lo capirà mai!' [you will never understand the idea of team spirit!]; and finally, at the end of the episode when the 'case' has been successfully closed, Vice Questore Cafasso declares: 'io sulla mia squadra posso sempre contare' [I can always count on my team]..

Thus, it was clear from its very inception that the Italian production team and authors had every intention of contrasting the strong institutional nature of 'The Bill' with a product which brought to the fore human values and relationships. A comparison of the credit sequences shown at the beginning of the British format and its Italian format equivalent should make this all the more evident.

The credit sequence shown at the beginning of 'The Bill' is particularly significant as it provides the viewers with what is effectively a short story of police procedure and in this manner serves to 'encapsulate' the programme content. In 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, the report is steeped with numerous procedural acronyms such as R.T.A (road traffic accident), A.R (accident report), IC 1 (identity code for white male); we then see another anonymous police officer speaking into a microphone in the highly technical radio control room (presumably to the patrol cars), 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 (again numerous procedural acronyms are employed), 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' the names of the fictional police officers do not appear nor do those of the actors who impersonate them; the cast 'role call' is relegated to the closing sequence.

The opening credits of 'La Squadra', the Italian format equivalent, 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 pointed, 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 nine successive close-ups of the nine fictional police officers in the course of their duties (either wielding guns or driving patrol cars) only Vice Questore Cafasso, the head of the police station, is shown in the meeting room talking to his men and Agente Alfio Donati, the front desk officer, is seen answering the phone. As each actor/character appears, his 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 place the stress 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. It can be posited that from the very first elements presented to the viewer in the series' title and opening sequences, the British series and its Italian format equivalent each focus on a very different aspect of the fictional police force; this impression shall be further confirmed in the following two sections; the first section concerns

the hierarchical structure and human and professional relationships which bring together (or divide) the officers at the 'Sun Hill' and 'Sant'Andrea' police stations; as shall be illustrated it is these relationships that provide the content for the third story line to be found in each episode of the two formats. The second section focuses on the physical layout of the two police stations and serves to illustrate that this layout is nothing more than the physical embodiment of the rank relationships illustrated in the previous section.

1.3.2 Relationships among the ranks and the third story line

The 'Sun Hill' police station represented in 'The Bill' has a rank structure which reflects that of any police station situated in a strategic urban setting in the United Kingdom. All larger, strategically-situated police stations in the UK comprise two separate departments CID (Criminal Investigation Department) and Uniform. These two departments have parallel rank structures, thus a constable or sergeant in Uniform and a detective constable or detective sergeant in CID are hierarchically on a par, it merely depends on which department the individual police officer opts to belong to, and the move from Uniform to a parallel rank in CID is a question of a specific training course followed by an internal examination. It must however be said that CID, the 'detective branch', is generally considered more prestigious as its incumbents have 'investigative' as opposed to 'patrol' duties. This separate yet parallel rank structure is the greatest cause of friction in 'The Bill' and the third story line in each episode is entirely based on some form of 'internal' dissent.

Starting from the top level of the hierarchical structure represented in the British format, we have the 'men upstairs', as they are referred to by the other officers in the police station, these are five high-ranking officers belonging either to CID or to Uniform who are fore-grounded in the different episodes depending on whether the main or secondary storyline revolve around a Uniform or CID 'case'. The appellative 'Gov' is employed by all the other ranks when addressing these hierarchically superior officers. Next in line, in terms of rank, are the three sergeants whose duty it is to 'book in' the criminals or suspects when they are brought to the police station, the sergeants act as intermediaries between the 'men upstairs' and 'the ranks' both in terms of distributing operational tasks and in 'smoothing out' misunderstandings and rivalries. Of the three sergeants present at 'Sun Hill', Sergeant Bob Cryer deserves a special mention as he is the contemporary representative of the 'Dixon of Dock Green' character mentioned in the initial brief historical overview of

televised British procedurals. Cryer is fore-grounded in all of the episodes which make up the data, he is the embodiment of correct procedure, he always follows the rules and severely admonishes any police officer caught infringing them, whether said officer is his hierarchical superior or inferior; his moral rectitude and avuncular manner make Cryer the '*trait d'union*' between the classical British police series of the past and faster-paced contemporary procedurals such as 'The Bill'. When addressing the three sergeants, all the other police officers employ the appellative 'Sarge'. Following a hierarchically decreasing order, we then find the five Detective Constables who work for CID, four men and one woman and, successively, the 11 constables who belong to the Uniform department, 8 men and 3 women. The Detective Constables and Uniform Constables are all referred to by their first names. The conscious decision taken by the authors at the inception of the British format not to include any details of the police officers' personal or family lives means that we very rarely view the institutional incumbents in any setting other than their professional, working environment and, very occasionally, in the pub with colleagues for an after-work drink. Thus, the police officers at Sun Hill, both the men and the women, are only known to the viewers in so far as they have acquired characterial traits and particular mannerisms over the course of the long-running series. The third story line which we have labelled 'internal' and which is present in every episode, deals either with the opening or closing phases of romantic involvements among the officers (always rigorously within the police station premises) or, and this in the vast majority of cases, with episodes of rivalry, envy and disloyal behaviour between CID and Uniform, either generalized and 'divisional', or between two individual officers.

When examining the hierarchical relationships within 'La Squadra', it is the third storyline which from a non-dialogical point of view constitutes the most fundamental difference between the two formats, and it is the parallel, yet oppositional, rank structure of CID and Uniform within the Metropolitan Police Force which lends itself to the negative values repeatedly portrayed in the third story line in 'The Bill'.

Within the 'Sant'Andrea' police station we also have two different departments, the 'Investigativa' and the 'Volanti', the difference between the two series as regards hierarchical structure lies in the fact that whereas in 'The Bill' the ranks in the two departments are institutionally on a par, in 'La Squadra', lower ranking officers begin their career in the 'Volanti' and progressively, if they so choose and if they pass the necessary exams, move up the hierarchical ladder into the 'Investigativa', thus there is no in-fighting between the two departments. From the point of view of the

hierarchical order, the head of the 'Sant'Andrea' police station is Vice Questore Valerio Cafasso, he is greatly respected by his men, both in human and professional terms, unlike the 'men upstairs' in 'The Bill', he takes an active part in all the investigative work and accompanies his 'team' when they leave the police station to combat crime or apprehend a criminal. He is addressed as 'Dottore', by all of his men except Ispettore Pietro Guerra with whom he has a long-standing, more intimate relationship. Next in line on the hierarchical ladder are the two inspectors who work for the 'Investigativa', Ispettore Guerra and Ispettore Baroni. The inspectors are followed, in terms of rank, by the two Sovrintendenti: Sergio Amato who works for the 'Investigativa' and Antonio Ramaglia who is in charge of the 'Volanti'. Antonio Ramaglia deserves a special mention as he is effectively the 'Sergeant Cryer' of 'La Squadra', he follows the rules with great precision, gets irritated at the often lax behaviour of his colleagues, and is extremely proud of belonging to the police force. However, whereas Cryer suscitates admiration and respect in his colleagues, Sovrintendente Ramaglia's legalistic attitude irks his fellow police officers to such an extent that they invest time and energy in finding ways to bend the rules without him noticing. At the bottom end of the hierarchical scale in 'La Squadra' are the 'Agenti semplici': Fabrizio Nava, Stefano De Pretis, Laura Onorato and Alfio Donati. Apart from the Vice Questore, previously mentioned, the other police officers are all on first name terms.

Unlike 'The Bill', in the Italian format equivalent there is never any friction between those who are hierarchically inferior or superior, each police officer has a role to play within the team and exploits his personal capacities to the best in order to back up his fellow officers. Whereas in the British format the institutional incumbents are constantly striving to prove their worth, indeed to show that they are better-prepared than their colleagues, that they deserve more recognition and merit, in 'La Squadra' each officer is considered invaluable, there is never any competition among the ranks, and in times of trouble, whether professional or personal, the team always rallies around. Unlike 'The Bill', the viewers of 'La Squadra' know everything about the fictional incumbents' personal lives; the police officers are regularly shown in their home environment and whereas in 'The Bill' the third storyline centres on friction within the Sun Hill police station and among colleagues or ranks, in 'La Squadra' 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 colleagues. This emphasis on 'domesticity' which Milly Buonanno pinpointed as one of the foundational features of

the Italian procedural, leads to a different characterization of the very nature of the two formats. Whereas 'The Bill' can be labelled a 'docudrama' and effectively illustrates 'a day in the life of the British policeman', 'La Squadra' is more of a 'docusoap' which 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 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.

In the final section of this chapter I will attempt to illustrate the manner in which the physical layout of the two police stations embodies both the hierarchical structure of the two police forces, and the overall nature of the British format and the Italian format equivalent.

1.3.3 'Sun Hill' vs. 'Sant'Andrea': a physical layout which underlines and reinforces conceptual differences

The Sun Hill police station in 'The Bill' is a three-storey building whose internal organization reflects the hierarchical rank structure of the Metropolitan Police. On the ground floor viewers are shown the booking-in desk, the numerous detention cells, situated at the end of a corridor and never 'on view' unless a culprit is being locked away or released, the interview rooms, the computer room, the radio-control room and the Sergeants' office. On the floor above are the various offices of the 'men upstairs' together with the CID room; the doors to these offices are always closed and to gain access knocking is always required. Below the ground floor yet slightly raised above ground level are the Uniform room and the canteen. Thus, the three-tiered structure of the building reflects the rank structure portrayed in the British format: the highest ranks are on the top floor, the lowest are practically underground. It must be said that we rarely view the building as a whole; most scenes depict long institutionally grey corridors papered with 'real-life' police posters usually warning against drug-abuse, domestic violence, or burglary, stairs going up or down and closed doors and windows with tightly sealed Venetian blinds. Many scenes depict the 'technological' aspect of the Sun Hill police station, the well-equipped computer room, the highly technological radio-control room, and the up-to-date computers on each incumbent's desk. Apart from occasional inquirers at the booking-in desk, the general public is seldom seen within the building, and in the background to all the scenes which take place in the police station we are shown a considerable number of

anonymous uniformed police officers going about their duties along the corridors. The institutional incumbents in 'The Bill' sometimes gather in the canteen for meals or cups of coffee but we very rarely witness a 'mixed ranks' table, indeed only when a higher ranking officer has some official communication to impart to one or more lower-ranking incumbents do we see them sharing a table.

The Sant'Andrea police station in 'La Squadra' is a sprawling one-floored building; we are often shown the main entrance and the constant entering and exiting of police officers and members of the general public. The 'hub' of the police station is the enquiry desk manned by Agente Alfio Donati and situated to one side of a vast central hall. This central space is always milling with people and is often the site of comic scenes: loudly protesting, scantily clad prostitutes being accompanied to one of the detention cells, old ladies enquiring about lost cats, a slightly deranged older man who regularly enters the police station and stands talking to one of the pillars; none of the numerous members of the public is treated brusquely, they all receive due attention from Agente Donati. Around the sides of the central hall are situated the various offices, the meeting room, the interview room and, slightly set back, but in full view, the detention cells. Whereas the detention cells in 'The Bill' are situated at the end of a long corridor and have doors made of heavy metal with only an 'eye grid' set in the upper part thus granting the locking-away ritual a 'finalistic' air, as we illustrated when analyzing the opening sequence of the British format, the detention cells in 'La Squadra' are barred cages and the shouts and protests of the detainees contribute to the general confusion present in the main hall. The only office door which is kept permanently closed is that of Vice Questore Cafasso's room; in order to gain access all the other institutional incumbents are required to knock. The doors to the other offices are kept open and it is not uncommon for members of the public to be found wandering in and out. The Venetian blinds which cover the windows overlooking the central hall are also in the open-slot position and are only closed when a victim or witness is being questioned. To one side of the central hall is the coffee dispensing machine and, although this may seem a trivial detail, it appears many times throughout each episode as the place where the police officers meet to talk about either the case they are working on, or to air their personal problems and seek advice from colleagues.

As regards technology, the Sant'Andrea police station has no computer room or radio-control room (although the patrol cars are clearly equipped with radios, we never witness the station 'talking' to the cars, only the other way round). The 'Volanti' and 'Investigativa' offices are each equipped with

a superannuated computer, as Sovrintendente Amato exclaims in the second episode, referring to the office computer: "Facciamo prima a spulciare le scartoffie, sto coso dentro tiene i cinesini coi pallottolieri" [It'd take less time to go through the paperwork, this thing here is full of little Chinese men with abaci]. We are far-removed from the aseptic, highly-technological offices present in 'The Bill'. Finally, whereas in the British format the canteen is the place where the institutional incumbents have their meals or coffee breaks throughout the working day, in 'La Squadra' the police officers spend their breaks or mealtimes in the nearby 'Bar Caruso' where they all share the same table, with no rank distinction - apart from Vice Questore Cafasso who is only ever seen at the coffee dispenser in the police station - and where they are frequently joined by wives, girlfriends, relatives or friends.

Although the aspects examined in the above sections, the choice of name and credit sequence, the hierarchy among the ranks and the physical layout of the two police stations portrayed in the British format and Italian format equivalent, would appear to take us a long way from the essentially discursive focus of this study, it is important to underline that these features all contribute to granting each of the procedurals a specific identity which, as we shall later attempt to illustrate, is further supported and confirmed by the dialogical activity which takes place within the interview rooms. Physical space and spatial organization in particular can channel human activity and contribute to consolidating the identity of those who 'inhabit' it. Thus: "a basic idea is that *who* we are is intimately connected to *where* we are, and that places can be moral sites of power, struggle, exclusion and prejudice" (Benwell & Stokoe 2006:12). In the construction of a police identity in the two police procedurals, the disposition and employment of space should not merely be considered a static representation but rather a means of conveying considerable information about the specific nature and identity of the two police forces. In the Sunhill police station portrayed in 'The Bill' the three-tiered structure of the building, the sealed doors and, above all, the total absence of any members of the public, all confirm the idea of a 'world apart', a world inhabited by a strictly ordered 'in-group' from which the 'out-group' made up by both the general public and the criminals (who are segregated behind closed doors at the end of long corridors), are excluded: "Space is therefore central to the production and maintenance of in-groups and out-groups in everyday life" (Benwell & Stokoe 2006:214). On the other hand, the spatial disposition of the Sant'Andrea police station portrayed in 'La Squadra' is characterized by 'inclusion' as opposed to 'exclusion'. The demarcation line between the 'in-group' made up of