

Camillo and Camillò. A "Double Screenplay" Case in a Post-war French-Italian Coproduction

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Panel 5 – ADAPTATIONS

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Abstract

In the aftermath of WWII, European cinematic arts, which during the war had been living years of crisis, were able to face the troublesome period of reconstruction and regained international prestige. The newly established European social, political and cultural context, made it possible for production companies to sign deals, thus remarkably increasing international co-productions.

At the beginning of the 50s, there were many Italian-French co-productions. A particularly interesting case is the first movie based on the tales by Italian writer Giovannino Guareschi, with the Catholic priest Don Camillo and the Communist Mayor Peppone as the leading characters. The movie was shot in two different versions, the first one titled *Don Camillo* and released in Italy, the second one titled *Le Petit Monde de don Camillo* and released in France, both in 1952. It was two Frenchmen who wrote the script, director Julien Duvivier and writer René Barjavel. To get the green light, the text, later translated in Italian, needed approval from the author of the original stories. His objections to the Frenchmen's script, which complicated the pre-production process (retraceable thanks to correspondence and to the notes to the original script taken by Guareschi himself), reveal several details about the Italian political climate of that time. They also testify to how the adaptation for the screen of a fiction book is always an excellent test to examine the categories of Universal and Particular.

The result was the production of two movies which are almost identical as to their frames and yet each with its own unmistakable mood. The (darker) French version sticks to the director's vision – and, paradoxically, to the spirit of the original stories, even more than the Italian version. The more cheerful Italian version is the result of an intricate negotiation between different forces in play (in addition to Guareschi and the filmmakers, the Catholic Church and the Italian Communist Party). Traces of this negotiation are already visible in the original script: a "double script", both Italian and French, born across borders.

Keywords – Italian cinema, French cinema, genre, co-production, adaptation, creative process

Raffaele Chiarulli (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan, Italy) earned a PhD degree in Communication Studies at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan), where he directs a Film Criticism workshop and collaborates with the Chairs of Semiotics and History of Film, as well as with the MISP - Master Program in International Screenwriting and Film Production. He wrote *Di scena a Hollywood. L'adattamento dal teatro nel cinema americano classico* (*Staged in Hollywood. The Adaptation from Stage to Film in the Classical American Cinema*; Milan 2013) and *Social Movies. Dal cinema digitale al cinema del sociale* (*Social Movies. From Digital Cinema to Social Cinema*; Milan 2015). He edited, with Armando Fumagalli, a commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* for screenwriters (Rome, 2018).

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