

Multiple Influences in Cinema and TV-series Adaptations: The Case of *Largo Winch*

When evoking the name "Largo Winch", it usually reminds people of the Belgian comic strips in the 90s illustrating the adventures of a millionaire hero. The albums, plotted by Jean Van Hamme and drawn by Philippe Francq, gained rapid success and had been translated in English in order to reach a wider audience.

Since 2001, the adventures of the "humanist millionaire" was adapted for audiovisual format, a TV series. It was an English-speaking series with international casting co-produced by stakeholders from Belgium, France and United States. However, the series, consisted of 39 episodes, only had limited access in English-speaking countries (i.e. the UK and USA). It was later adapted for cinematographic format. Between 2008 and 2011, two films were realized under French-Belgian co-production: they were *Largo Winch* and *Largo Winch II*. From 2010, the two films were recognized by the public under the English title *The Heir Apparent Largo Winch* and *Largo Winch II The Burma Conspiracy*. For *Largo Winch II The Burma Conspiracy*, it seemed the strategy to engage an international star – the actress Sharon Stone – failed to reach a success. This paper tends to explain why the English-speaking product were kept confidential: the film were only released in limited screens in the USA, or directly via DVD format.

Another question is why the production straddles restlessly between comic strips and audiovisual adaptations. Philippe Francq explained that he was inspired by the image of the American actors Patrick Swayze and Kurt Russell when conceiving the figure of Largo Winch. James Bond is another reference used in the comic strips. However, the agent "007" seems to be more used in the strips than in the audiovisual adaptations. It is worth of questioning why the print version of *Largo Winch* used a popular cinematographic figure as a reference.

The series were known for its financial issues. It is interesting to note that the comic strips integrated lesson of finance crisis (i.e. the subprime in 2008) in a pedagogical way. Yet this approach were not adopted (consciously?) in the audiovisual version. It will be an opportunity to reflect on the issue by exploring the ambiguity between the Entertainment Industry in a political approach and a moralist way.

Eventually, a political figure related to this work is the controversial Russian-American female writer Ayn Rand. Jean Van Hamme indicated he advised his friends to read Rand's novel *The Fountainhead*. Her books in which the individual stands up against the community were successful in the self-made-man's America. It will be interesting to analyze how this extra-literary character has influenced the multiple formats of *Largo Winch*.

Keywords: Largo Winch, Adaptation, Influence, Reception, Ideology

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