

# From Books to TV: The Business of Adapting Literature

Juliana Koranteng,  
Founder/Editor-in-Chief

MEDIATAINMENT FINANCE, UK

**MediaTainment  
Finance**

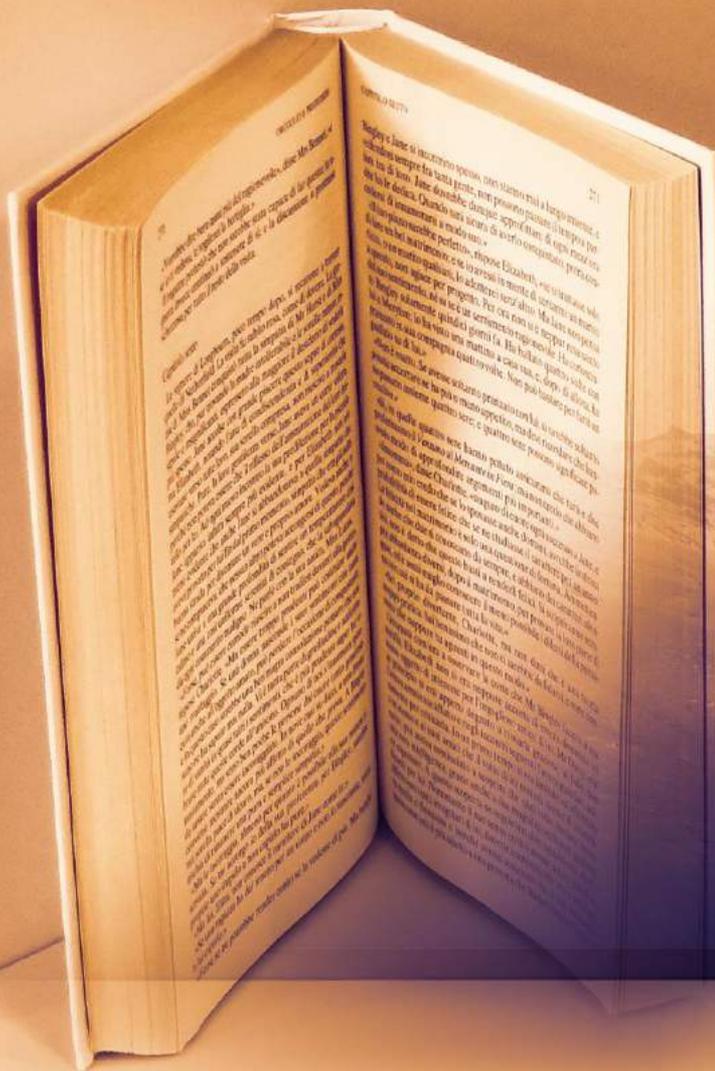
**miptv**®

**mipcom**®

Cannes, France

<http://www.miptv.com> <http://mipcom.com>

07/17/2010



## From Books to TV: The Business of Adapting Literature

SONY

## CONTENTS

- Introduction
- The business of TV and books: Forecast
- What the experts say: the business and creativity behind TV adaptations
  - ITV Studios Global Entertainment's Ruth Clarke
  - The Ink Factory's Stephen Cornwell
  - Lookout Point's Damian Keogh
- TV adaptations: Tips on what to consider during the rights negotiations
- The classics, the hits and the new: some of the most popular adaptations in TV history
- About the author

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most recent English-language international TV drama hits has been *The Night Manager*, the modern take on the John Le Carré spy thriller co-funded by the BBC and AMC.

Already sold to TV networks in 180-plus countries, it has been praised for the cinema-standard production by The Ink Factory, the London/Los Angeles-based company jointly founded by Stephen and Simon Cornwell, the sons of Le Carré (real name David Cornwell). The riveting storyline and A-List cast set alight both traditional and social media chatter.

At a reported US\$5m an episode, the six-part one-hour suspense had the budget normally associated with movies. It has even been compared to the James Bond franchise. It also confirmed the symbiotic relationship between the worlds of literary fiction and TV entertainment remains tight.

TV adaptations of best-selling books are nothing new. Look at the catalogues of the UK public broadcaster BBC, US cable network HBO and several other leading TV networks, and you'll find screen versions of books are a mainstay.

However, in our modern times when digital technology has been known to upset the old order in media and entertainment, adaptations continue to be a highly rewarding form of creativity.

## From Roots to War and Peace

From the American slavery-themed *Roots* in the 1970s to the remake of Tolstoy's gargantuan opus *War and Peace* earlier this year, the re-workings of great novels on TV make gripping viewing.

Sometimes, the ambition can be overreaching until it is too late. In 2011, it was reported that HBO was investing a great deal of time and money in the development of *The Corrections*, the 2001 novel by multi award-winning US author Jonathan Franzen.

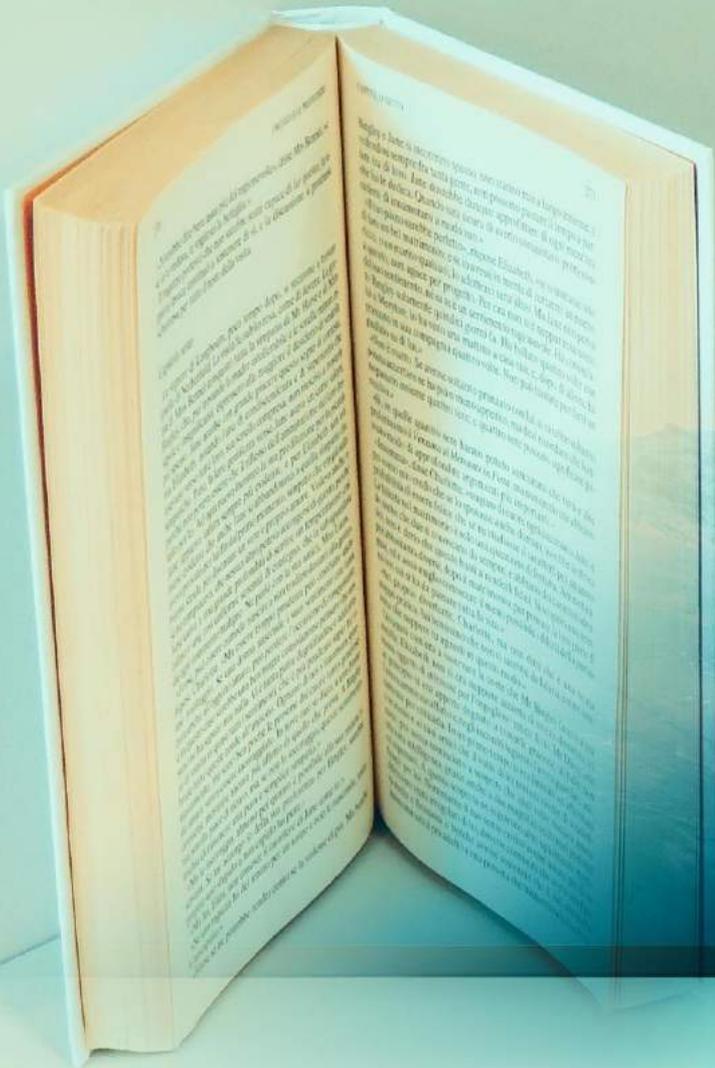
Its stellar cast was to include Ewan McGregor. A few months later, according to media reports, HBO dropped the project because the novel's complex plot was not translating easily into a TV script.

Sometimes, the creators of the adaptation deviate from the original book's plot to develop a new concept. *Dickensian*, a 20-part drama series produced by UK-based Red Planet Pictures for the BBC, was an original storyline centred on the characters of Charles Dickens' most famous novels, including *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *Great Expectations*.

ITV, the UK's biggest commercial TV network, is soon to air *Tennison*, the prequel to *Prime Suspect*, the TV version of the famous Lynda LaPlante detective novels that turned its star, Hollywood UK actress Helen Mirren, into a household name.

And then you have *Paradime*, a psychological thriller by Irish writer Alan Glynn that will not be published until this August but has already been optioned by the UK's ITV Studios America and US-based One-Two Punch Productions.

This exclusive MIPTV-MIPCOM whitepaper will show the business of adapting literary narratives into TV shows remains an adventurous one. In fact, *Purity*, another Franzen title, has been optioned for screen dramatisation and it is to star none other than James Bond actor Daniel Craig.



# The business of TV and books

## Forecast

SONY

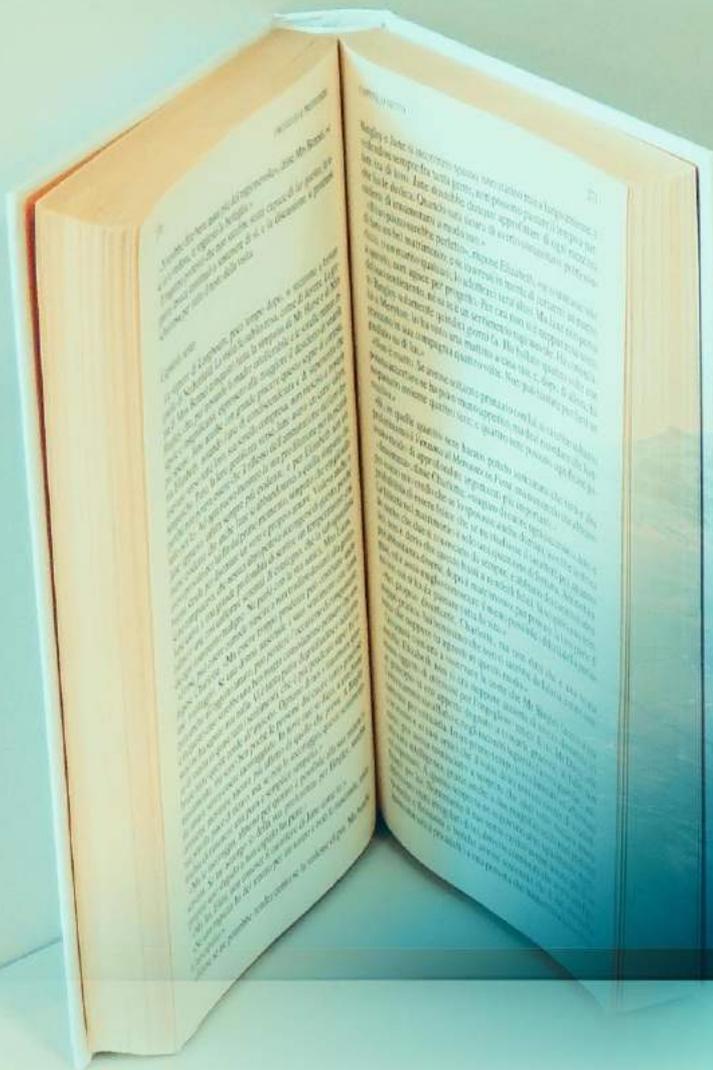
## The business of TV and books – Forecast

Viewers' demand for sumptuous TV drama worldwide has fuelled the on-going demand for TV adaptations. And one of the most consistent sources of inspirational plots and characters remains book publishing.

Advertising income, which is said to account for about 90% of TV revenues, is predicted to reach US\$204bn by 2019, based on reports by international consultancy group PwC. The remainder is being generated from subscription-funded TV platforms, including the fast-growing emerging streaming video-on-demand services.

PwC also forecasts that total revenues from book publishing (consumer and educational) will bring in about US\$128bn the same year. Considering research company Euromonitor calculated that global book publishing yielded US\$145bn in 2014, it is fair to assume that as a medium, the printed book (like most of the printed media sectors) is experiencing a decline in sales.

But it is not dead either. Just as *The Night Manager* snagged record-breaking TV audiences in the UK and the US and is expected to do so worldwide, sales of the book have also soared.



**What the experts say:**  
The business and creativity  
behind TV adaptations

## What the experts say: the business and creativity behind TV adaptations

Based on authoritative experience, TV industry experts share their views on:

- What producers look for when approached to adapt an existing literary classic or a title with all the hallmarks of a best-seller
- How to recognise when a literary masterpiece will work on screen
- How books and the written-word have contributed to the success of TV entertainment and vice versa

## Ruth Clarke, Executive Vice President, Global Content Strategy & Investments, ITV Studios Global Entertainment



“As a distributor, when we are searching for novels that can be adapted into TV dramas for international audiences, we’re looking for the following factors:

- As with any intellectual property, first and foremost, we’re looking for great content, compelling storylines and interesting and complex characters.

## From Books to TV:

### The Business of Adapting Literature

- We want to develop long-running, returnable TV series, so we're looking for novel series that can provide a wealth of source material for a number of TV seasons, with characters that evolve across the show.
- It's helpful if the novelist is a well-established name, with a track record of international sales. We're also looking for a novelist with a strong and distinctive voice.

Literary works continue to be a popular source for TV adaptations. For example, we distribute **Poldark**, the new TV adaptation of the classic book series.

Crime novels in particular are fertile ground for TV. Our portfolio features the long-running TV series *Vera* and *Shetland*, based on Ann Cleeves' novel series; **Tennison**, the forthcoming **Prime Suspect** prequel written by Lynda LaPlante and based on her book of the same name, and **Agatha Christie's Poirot** and **Agatha Christie's Marple**, the TV series based on Agatha Christie's famous series of novels, which are hugely popular internationally; we've sold at least one series of **Poirot** to every country in the world.

Plus, literary source material doesn't just have to mean books; we've recently launched **Victoria**, a new TV series starring Jenna Coleman as the young Queen Victoria, which writer Daisy Goodwin has adapted from Queen Victoria's own diaries."

From Books to TV:

The Business of Adapting Literature

## Stephen Cornwell, Co-CEO The Ink Factory



“With any great literary work, even if it is a graphic novel, there is a purity of creation that is uncompromising. It makes the (TV) adaptation a challenge, but it also makes it exciting.

With television, with what we call the long-form drama or the continuing narrative these days, there is a huge amount of talent migrating into that space.

In the past, that talent would have wanted to be in (the 1970s Hollywood classics) *The Godfather* and *Chinatown*. They were the backbone of elevated cinema, the thoughtful mystery-based works of art. But the studios have stopped making them and that kind of independent drama has migrated to what we call television.

## From Books to TV:

### The Business of Adapting Literature

In that space, adapting a novel is very interesting. Because with hundreds of drama being made at any given time, how do you differentiate yourself? In such a noisy marketplace, how do you make what you are doing distinctive? Literary material can be truly valuable for that. There is also embedded in any great book an inherent audience that helps cut through the noise and has a certain amount of media traction.

If it is a good title, it allows you, the producer, to be attractive to the creative talent you want to work with. You can reach out to a very good screenwriter and director and then, by extension, good actors. You also want to create long-term relationships with the authors.

Sometimes, producers will come to us with a title they are already working on. We would ask them:

- What makes you think it will work on the screen?
- How will your approach to the adaptation make it distinctive?
- Who is the screenwriter?
- What is your vision of how it will work?
- Is it a continuing series?
- What is the author's control over the adaptation?
- What are the collective goals here?

You have to make sure everyone's expectations are aligned.

- The fact is the long-form immersive narrative has seen a very dramatic return and it is well suited to today's digital experience because audiences can select how they want to watch it."
- The Ink Factory's adaptations for TV include *The Night Manager*, a broadcast sensation that has already been sold to more than 180 countries

From Books to TV:  
The Business of Adapting Literature

Damian Keogh, commercial director  
Lookout Point



“The opportunity to remake a classic literary masterpiece, as we recently did with War and Peace, may have different drivers than approaching the manuscript of a modern new work as yet unpublished. We are always looking for interesting and relevant stories that will resonate with audiences, ones that are executed with the highest quality story-telling. The unexpected can be compelling and fresh, but it could also feel right to approach material that looks at traditional, eternal themes, but handled in a new way.

Often it’s timing – a literary classic might suddenly feel highly relevant due to themes or characters that throw a mirror on powerful issues and people in the present day.

## From Books to TV:

### The Business of Adapting Literature

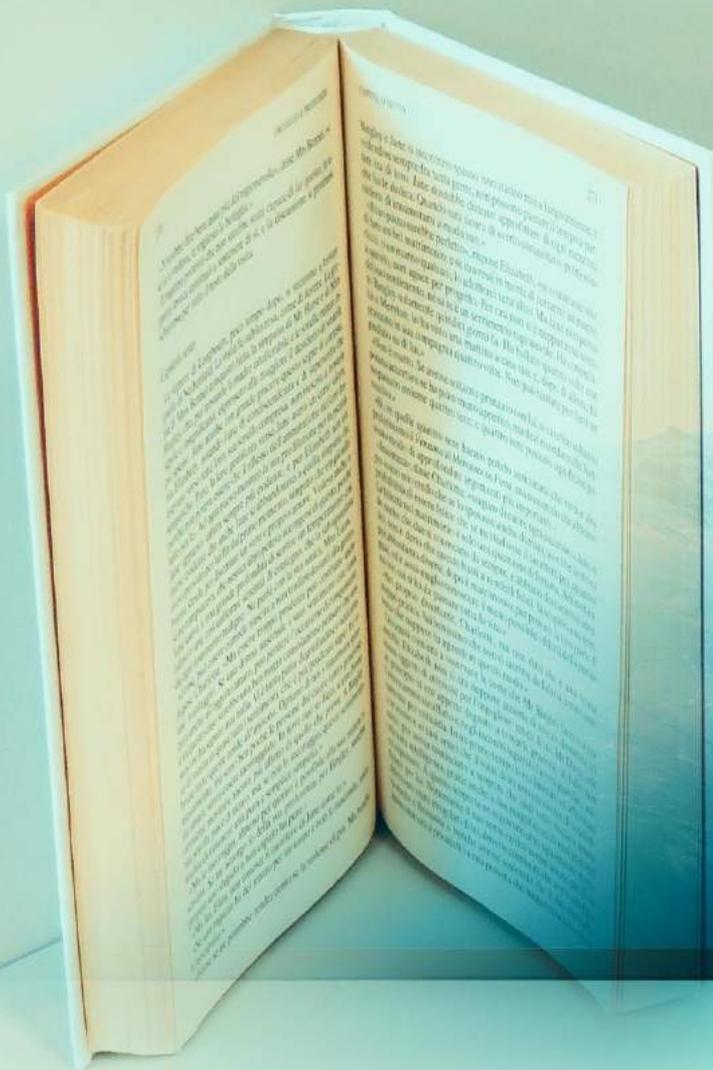
With television, unless we are considering a single film, we need to believe that the book should be told over several hours for the best creative outcome. Complex, interwoven storylines; multiple, compelling characters; unexplored and unexpected worlds – these are all ingredients that lend themselves to numerous episodes of television. And in a box-set TV landscape, we don't need to shy away from sophistication in our on-screen story-telling.

And the platforms and broadcasters are keen to have shows based on established literary IP (intellectual property) so they have a head start in terms of their audience already being aware of the brand. Agatha Christie and the Marvel franchises are just two (rather different) examples.

In terms of securing rights, it's not just about the deal. It's about both parties being aligned with the creative vision. The author of the book needs to feel that the producer is handling their work in the right way, but also needs to give space to trust the producer to develop the project, attach the right scriptwriter and then make the show.

So transparency up front as to what level of involvement the author will have is critical. And funnily enough, when there is great competition for a book option, very often it is this alignment rather than the financial package that is the dominant factor - as it should be!"

- Lookout Point's existing and forthcoming adaptations for TV include Tolstoy's War and Peace on the UK's BBC and A&E in the US; Ford Madox Ford's Parade's End for the BBC and the US' HBO; and Len Deighton's SS-GB, the alternate history thriller, for the BBC.



## TV adaptations :

Tips on what to consider during  
the rights negotiations

## TV adaptations: Tips on what to consider during the rights negotiations

With authors, their legal advisers, agents and publishers on one side of the negotiation table and the TV producers and networks on the other, here are some tips of what literary rights owners will want to discuss.

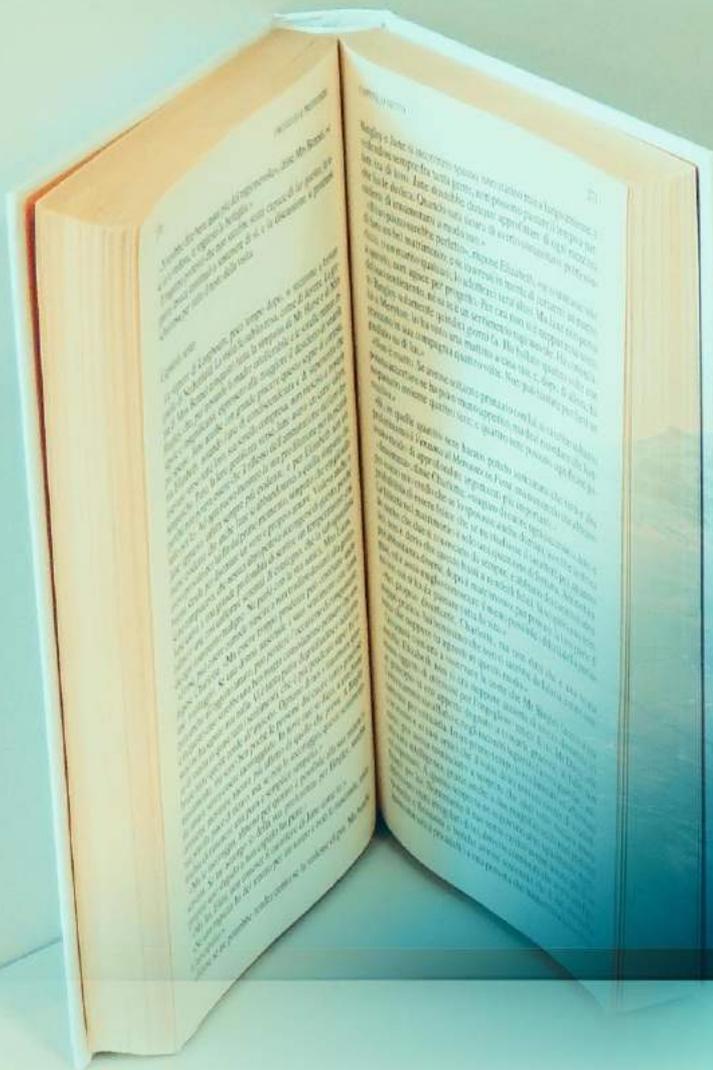
Although not exhaustive or comprehensive (legal contracts have never been simple affairs), these are guidelines to get you started.

- **Option agreement:** this gives the producers the exclusive right to purchase the right to make the TV adaptation, as long as certain conditions are met, such as paying the fee and getting the budget.
- **Option fee:** This is paid by the producers after signing the exclusive right to option the book. It gives them time to chase possible investors and broadcasters.
- **Rights ownership:** the author does not necessarily own the audio-visual (AV) rights to make an adaptation. It could be the book's publisher. So the producers need to ascertain who actually owns the AV rights and ensure no other interested party ends up claiming them once the TV show is a hit.

## From Books to TV:

### The Business of Adapting Literature

- **Purchase agreement:** Once this is paid for, the literary rights owners cannot option or sell the AV rights to other producers. The purchase rights can be held for up to two years. The option to extend the period might require paying more for the privilege, depending on the demand for the title.
- **Purchase price:** For the exclusive AV production rights, the rights owners can ask for 1.5%-4% of the TV production's budget. But 2%-3% is the standard rate. This could include an advance to the author (who is also paying about 10% of his or her fee to the agent and another 5% to the lawyer) until the actual size of the budget is finalised and the date for principal photography is established.
- **Contingent compensation:** Tough lawyers for all negotiating parties are needed here as they discuss additional payments depending on the book's future success, its best-selling status and the eventual TV audience ratings.
- **Future productions and other extensions:** The TV adaptation format has been around long enough for most authors to know the producers might think of sequels, prequels, TV-movie versions and other spin-offs. The literary rights owners will want a share of the profits made from those extensions, including possible licensing rights for movies, comics, radio adaptation, live entertainment editions, video games, toys and other merchandise. The author might want to retain some, if not all, of these ancillary rights.
- **Consultation/Approval/Participation/Development materials:** This establishes the extent to which the author can participate in the TV show's development, production, writing and marketing.
- **Reversion:** Sometimes the AV right ends up buried in a digital vault somewhere because the series, miniseries, serial or TV movie ended up not being produced. To avoid this stalemate, the contract will invariably include a clause that returns the AV rights back to the literary owners.



## From Books To TV: The Classics, the Hits and the New

SONY

**mip**tv.

**mip**com.

From Books to the TV Screen

The Business of Adapting Literature

The following pages feature a selection of blockbuster and other best-selling titles that were turned into some of the biggest TV hit shows ever.

They are followed by examples of other literary successes that are about to be dramatised on our TV screens.

**Title:** Roots: The Saga of an American Family  
(autobiographical novel)

**Author:** Alex Haley

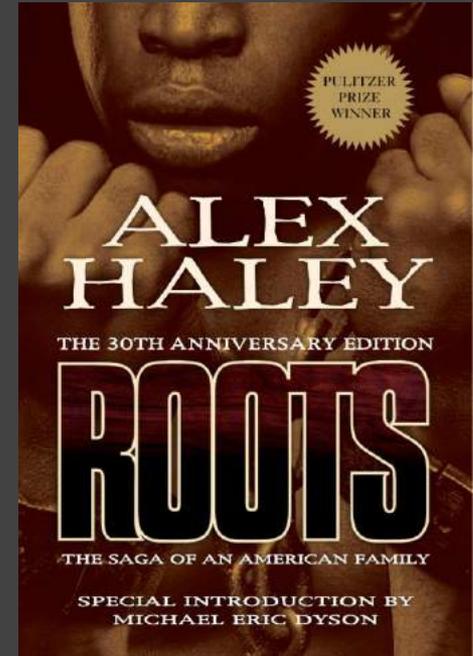
**Publication year:** 1976

**Publisher:** Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (now Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

**Original TV network:** Miniseries on ABC (US) in 1977

**Production company/producers:** ABC; Stan Margulies

**TV Achievements:** 9 Emmy Awards; 1 Golden Globe; said to be the “most watched miniseries in US history (reaching 44.4% of US TV homes)”; sequels include Roots: The Next Generations; Roots (2016)



**Title:** Brideshead Revisited, The Sacred and Profane  
Memories of Captain Charles Ryder (novel)

**Author:** Evelyn Waugh

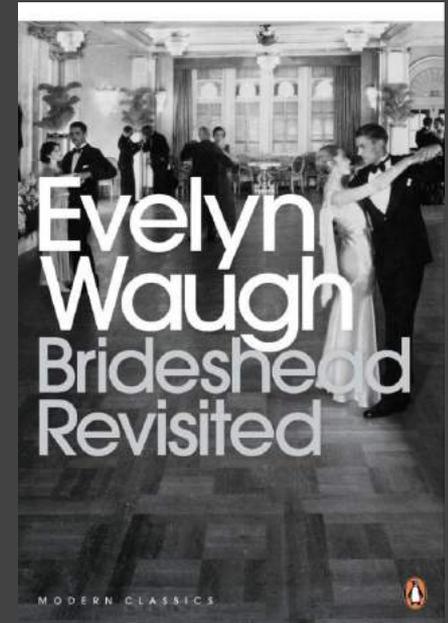
**Publisher:** Chapman & Hall (Penguin Books today)

**Publication year:** 1945

**Original TV network:** Serial on ITV (UK); CBC (Canada); PBS (US) in 1981

**Production company/producers:** ITV; Derek Granger

**TV Achievements:** Awards include a Golden Globe, a Primetime Emmy; the Broadcasting Press Guild and numerous BAFTAs; No.10 in the British Film Institute's 100 Greatest British Television Programmes (2000); TIME magazine's 100 Best TV Shows of all Time (2007); No.1 in The Telegraph's Greatest Television Adaptations (2015)



**Title:** Lonesome Dove (novel)

**Author:** Larry McMurtry

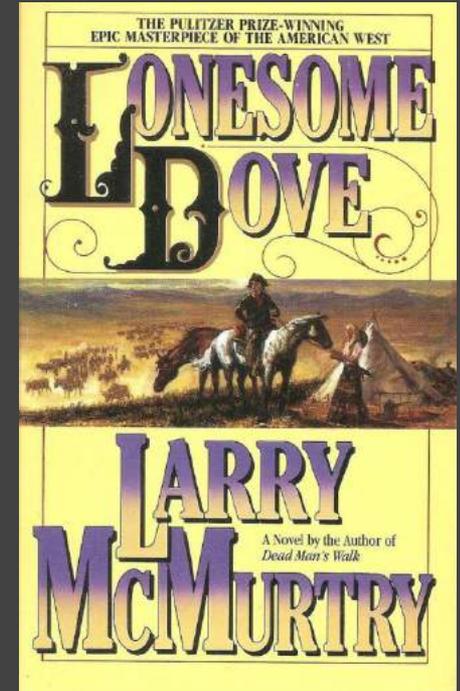
**Publication year:** 1985

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Original TV network:** Miniseries on CBS (US) in 1989

**Production company/producers:** Dyson Lovell; Suzanne De Passe

**TV Achievements:** include seven Emmy Awards, two Golden Globes and one from the Writers Guild of America; said to have resuscitated the Western genre on US TV after drawing in audiences in more than 26 million US homes.



**Title:** A Song of Ice and Fire (an epic fantasy, the first of planned seven volumes)

**Author:** George R.R. Martin

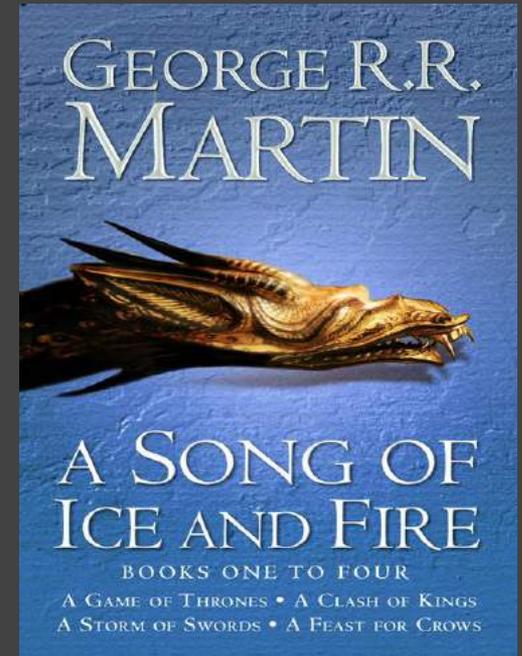
**Publication year:** 1996

**Publisher:** Bantam Books (US)

**Original TV network:** Serial drama on HBO (US); debuted in 2011

**Production company/producers:** HBO; D B Weiss; David Benioff

**TV Achievements:** including 26 Primetime Emmy Awards and 86 nominations, plus a Golden Globe, a BAFTA and Screen Actors Guild Awards



**Title:** Two novels: *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*  
(historical fiction)

**Author:** Hilary Mantel

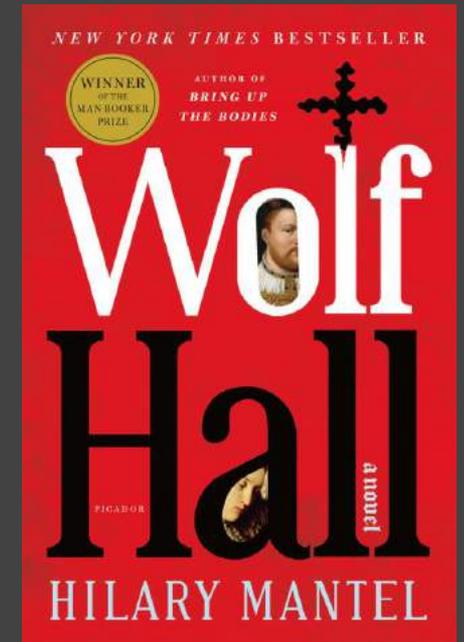
**Publication year:** 2009 (*Wolf Hall*); 2012 (*Bring Up the Bodies*)

**Publisher:** Picador; Fourth Estate; Henry Holt and Co

**Original TV network:** *Wolf Hall*, the miniseries, debuted on BBC Two (UK) in 2015

**Production company/producers:** Company Pictures

**TV Achievements:** include winning a Golden Globe Award, Broadcasting Press Guild Awards, plus numerous nominations for Primetime Emmy Awards



**Title:** The Night Manager (spy novel)

**Author:** John Le Carré

**Publisher:** Hodder & Stoughton (hardback); Penguin (paperback)

**Publication year:** 1993

**Original TV network:** Miniseries on BBC One (UK) and AMC (US) in 2016

**Production company/producers:** The Ink Factory

**Achievements:** Already sold to TV networks in more than 180 countries



**Title:** War & Peace (epic)

**Author:** Leo Tolstoy

**Publisher:** The Russian Messenger (serialised original); Penguin Books today

**Publication year:** 1865-1867

**Original TV network:** Period drama series on BBC One (UK) in 2016 and in 1972

**Production company/producers:** Lookout Point; The Weinstein Company; BBC Cymru Wales; BBC Worldwide

**TV Achievements:** Sold to broadcasters in China, Taiwan, South Korea, Philippines, Latvia, Ukraine, Russia, France, Finland, Norway, Iceland, India and more



## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** His Dark Materials (fantasy trilogy)

**Author:** Philip Pullman

**Publisher:** Scholastic Corporation; Everyman's Library

**Publication year:** 1995-2000

**Production by:** Bad Wolf (UK/US); New Line Cinema (US)

**The Buzz:** Fans of Pullman's epic fantasy trilogy, whose devotion matches those of Harry Potter followers, will be on tenterhooks as the first TV version gets ready for production.



## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** The Neapolitan Novels

**Author:** Elena Ferrante

**Publisher:** Europa Editions

**Publication year:** 2012-2015

**Production by:** Wildside (Italy); Fandango Productions (Italy)



**The Buzz:** The coming-of-age quartet, which made Ferrante one of TIME magazine's 100 most influential people on the planet in 2016, is coming to Italian TV. The screening of the reportedly 32-part serial will also revive speculation about who Ferrante (a pseudonym) really is.

## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** The North Water

**Author:** Ian McGuire

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Publication year:** 2016

**Production by:** See-Saw Films (UK/Australia)

**The Buzz:** Published as recently as February this year, *The North Water* (a historical thriller set on board a 19<sup>th</sup>-century whaling boat) is already the subject of a big-budget epic packed with mystery and suspense. See-Saw co-produced the multi-award winning (including the Golden Globe) *Top of the Lake*, written by the acclaimed Jane Campion.



## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** Paradime (psychological thriller)

**Author:** Alan Glynn

**Publisher:** Picador

**Publication year:** 2016

**Production by:** ITV Studios America; One-Two Punch Productions (US)

**The Buzz:** This is one to really keep an eye on; it is not scheduled to be published until August 2016, and yet two major production companies have optioned the title for our TV screens.



## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** Purity

**Author:** Jonathan Franzen

**Publisher:** Farrar, Straus and Giroux

**Publication year:** 2015

**Production by:** Scott Rudin

**The Buzz:** Starring in Purity will mark the first major TV series in almost two decades for Daniel Craig, the UK actor who has been packing cinema houses as super spy James Bond. Purity, which is to be produced by Hollywood's Scott Rudin (The Social Network, Moneyball and Steve Jobs), is expected to air next year.



## ONE TO WATCH OUT FOR (STILL ON PRE-PRODUCTION STAGE)

**Title:** Tennison

**Author:** Lynda La Plante

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster

**Publication year:** 2015

**Production by:** Noho Film; La Plante Global for ITV (UK)



**The Buzz:** The hotly anticipated Tennison, a six-part, one hour police procedural drama, is the prequel to Prime Suspect, the 1990s international crime franchise that catapulted Helen Mirren's career.

# About the Author

## JULIANA KORANTENG

**Juliana Koranteng** is the founder/editor-in-chief of **MediaTainment Finance (MTF)**, the business journal that covers investments in the international media, entertainment and creative sectors. Koranteng, an international journalist, has been a contributing editor at Billboard magazine, Rockol.com and the daily magazines published by Boutique Editions at the annual MIPTV, MIPCOM and Cannes Lions events in Cannes.

She has been a correspondent for TIME magazine, the Hollywood Reporter, Advertising Age, the Washington Post, The Economist, UK national newspapers and the author of several books and reports. She also conceived, developed and sold New Media Age, the UK's leading digital-marketing publication, to Centaur Media. She has given speeches at international events and been interviewed by Forbes magazine, BBC TV and radio, CNN and Bloomberg TV.

MediaTainment Finance and sister title TechMutiny are published by JayKay Media Inc, the London-based media group that also includes an editorial consultancy, speech-writing and ghost-writing for Prince Albert of Monaco; and photography-design among its activities. **@OutsidetheBoxMT @MediatainmentMT @TechMutiny**

This report is brought to you by

## MIPTV/MIPCOM

MIPTV & MIPCOM are the world's leading content markets for creating, co-producing, buying, selling, financing, and distributing entertainment & TV programs across all platforms.

MIPTV & MIPCOM respectively take place every April and October, each bringing together over 12,000 professionals from 100 countries.

### Our websites

**miptv.**

<http://www.miptv.com>

**mipcom.**

<http://www.mipcom.com>

### To follow us:



<http://feeds.feedburner.com/mipworld/ABNF>



<http://twitter.com/mip>



<http://youtube.com/mipmarkets>



<http://facebook.com/mipmarkets>



<http://linkd.in/mipmarkets>



<http://flickr.com/photos/mipmarkets>

### To download our MIPTV / MIPCOM app:

<http://bit.ly/mymipapp>