

**Tatjana Samopjan**

*Creative Development Consultant, Fractal Volcano, Stockholm, Sweden*

**Book Review: Sanja Kovačević: *Kvalitetne TV serije: milenijsko doba ekrana* [Quality TV Series: Millennial Screen Time], Zagreb: CeKaPe, Jesenski i Turk, 2017, 359 pp., ISBN 978-953-222-796-3**

Many books have been written about the phenomenon of the rise of the TV series as the dominant narrative that has been stealing the best writers and creative minds from the movie industry. Surprisingly enough, one of the best books on the subject is written not in English by an American insider, but in Croatian by a Croatian television pundit.

*Kvalitetne TV serije* [Quality TV series] by Sanja Kovačević is a rare book written with a combination of scholarly prowess, professional insight and the unabashed passion of a true fan. The author's background as an accomplished screenwriter, an experienced dramaturge and a sociologist has provided her a unique set of perspectives from which to venture a most engrossing exploration of this still under-appreciated narrative medium.

Through an approach that is dramaturgical, psychological, ethical and sociological, Kovačević delves deep into some of the best TV series written and produced to this day. *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, *Breaking Bad*, *Deadwood* and *Mad Men* along with a number of well-chosen quality predecessors present a fertile ground for an incisive exploration of the demise of the American dream. Much wider currents that have been shaping the Western culture in the past decades are examined too. Beneath all that, the archetypal level is revealed: where a story about a particular place, time, set of characters and circumstances turns into a story that is universally relevant to viewers all over the world.

Screenwriters are inspired by these quality shows and often moved to imitation of the form without examining the intricacies of the craft and the creators' personal connection to the content that is the secret behind the series' noticeable effect on the viewers' consciousness. These series are entertaining to watch, but they have reached the sphere far beyond entertainment. This book reveals just how much knowledge, skill, passion and even obsessive artistic madness is needed to create a long-running story with deep emotions that can retain such powerful resonance with the audience. The book shows what goes into creating series that have a potential for making us see ourselves, and the societies and cultures that we are embedded in, with more clarity.

Given that author has long experience in television industry, this book provides interesting insights from three different methodological perspectives: from theoretical, the practical perspective of screenwriting and producing and the perspective of an emotionally involved fan. The probing, meticulous approach does not, however, stand in the way of humor and wit that make this book a true joy to read. It presents a fountain of information and insight for the sophisticated cineaste, student of screenwriting and the interested viewer alike.

*Quality TV series* is a brilliant accomplishment worth every praise and wider international recognition.