

# *Television for children: problems of national specificity and globalisation*

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Jonathan Bignell

### **Television for children: problems of national specificity and globalisation**

In the developed nations of Europe, and in the USA, it has long been assumed that television should address children. Thus, notions of what 'children' are have been constructed, and children are routinely discussed as an audience category and as a market for programmes. A fundamental set of conceptions of childhood, originating in the late eighteenth century, links the unstated ideological assumptions of the great majority of programme producers, television programme buyers and executives, and parents, politicians and commentators.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the chapter's focus on the construction of childhood in television has many links with the other chapters in this book. For adults' assumptions about childhood also inform literature that constructs children as textual subjects and addressees. Childhood has been seen as a life-stage in which emergent subjectivities are predisposed to immorality or amorality, and irrational behaviour, so that adult supervision of children's development is required. Conversely, the child is also understood as innocent, authentic and pure. Affected by these competing and contradictory discourses about childhood, adult television professionals who have produced and distributed animated programmes have addressed children in a range of ways.

The influence of public service television values has been strong in the UK, and powerfully influenced other West European television institutions making programmes that address and thus construct children. This is because of the early establishment of the BBC as a public service broadcaster in radio from 1922 and in television from 1936, and because of the broad acceptance of social-democratic ideologies in western European societies.<sup>2</sup> In early European television culture (until the 1960s), television for younger children was oriented towards a concept of playful education. Programmes aimed to connect with their play world, to stimulate their creativity and encourage them to discover the world in an experimental way.<sup>3</sup> The BBC and later the commercial public service broadcasters ITV and Channel 4 aimed to elevate the national audience's taste, intellectual appetite and knowledge, supplying diverse material for diverse audiences, including an audience sector categorised as children.<sup>4</sup> In Britain and in many other nations, the requirement for public service broadcasting for children stimulated both animated and live-action television. A range of public service models existed in Western Europe and constructed similar notions of the child audience, and the more monolithic state-supervised television of Eastern Europe also promoted the development of children's programming.

In the USA, non-commercial television broadcasting has been overshadowed by the commercial networks, whose children's programmes have been reliant on funding from the makers of consumer products marketed to children, such as breakfast cereals or toys. Across the developed world, nevertheless, there are constructions of childhood and children that have been similar enough to facilitate the exchange of productions that are recognised as 'children's programmes'. Discourses about genre and audience have a

homogenizing effect, and this is connected to commercial relationships of television exchange. Because of its international reach and public visibility in discourses about social policy, children's television is a paradigm case for debates about the role of the medium in subject-formation, ideology and the globalisation of the media economy.<sup>5</sup> But transnational histories of the complexities of its production and exchange remain patchy, and often caught unproductively in debates about the influence of American television on other nations.<sup>6</sup> Throughout the history of British television there has been strong resistance to US programmes because of the fear of Americanization.<sup>7</sup> This applies especially to children, who are considered more vulnerable to the influence of the consumerism that is said to be embodied in many US toy-based series. Children are also regarded as susceptible to negative influence by the violent content in US children's programmes, especially cartoons. Indeed, inasmuch as their susceptibility to anti-social influence is what characterises children in such policy debates, childhood itself could be understood as a construction that is legitimated by such ideas about vulnerability to media effects.

Since commercial television is associated with the USA as the dominant commercial broadcasting arrangement in the world, suspicion of commercial television has run alongside suspicion of US programming. This is especially the case for programme genres that construct youth audiences, such as pop music programmes and channels, and imported US children's programming. Each of these genres had commercial success, and throughout the second half of the twentieth century the critique of Americanization, the defence of nationalism and the valuation of tradition have occurred around the totemic figures of the child and the teenager. In this context, the fact

that the British and European animation<sup>8</sup> discussed in this chapter was not American could become a virtue in itself. Yet imported American fiction television for children, like *Lassie* (1954-73) or *Champion the Wonderhorse* (1955-6), set child characters and animals in narratives characterized by the threat and rescue format discussed below in a case study of Gerry Anderson's puppet series. The kinds of borrowing and mixing of forms discussed in this chapter's case studies undermine the possibilities for making distinctions between the programmes on the basis of their national cultural characteristics.

There have been consistent exchanges of programmes between European countries, and between Europe and the USA. There are inequalities in production funding, and different roles of domestic and imported programming in national television cultures, and at both international and regional levels it has been argued that 'world patterns of communication flow, both in density and in direction, mirror the system of domination in the economic and political order'.<sup>9</sup> Globalization theses proposed by Herbert Schiller, for example, have argued that the globalization of communication in the second half of the twentieth century was determined by the commercial interests of US corporations, working in parallel with political and military interests.<sup>10</sup> This discourse connects cultural imperialism with the dynamics of colonialism, arguing that the colonial empires of Britain or France have been replaced by American-dominated commercial empires. Transnational studies of television cannot ignore the impact of the USA, and the broadcast of animation for children in Britain has been dominated by US series. In the period discussed here, examples included *Scooby-Doo, Where Are You?* (1969), *Josie and the Pussycats* (1970), *The Harlem Globetrotters* (1970), and series based on pop

celebrities such as *The Jackson Five* (1971) or *The Osmonds* (1972). Each of these series was screened in Britain in children's programming slots, either on weekday afternoons or Saturday mornings. In the early 1980s, exported US animation shown in the UK included *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (1983), whose success led to the subsequent *She-Ra: Princess of Power* (1985). These series were each repeated for several years, and related toys and merchandising enhanced their cultural visibility. The link between programme import and commodity culture reinforced the stigmatization of US imports as an aspect of cultural imperialism and a supposed threat to the very concept of childhood.<sup>11</sup> Although the globalization of television trading appears to entail homogenization, in fact it also produces differentiation. Some programmes are regarded as inimical to childhood, while others are regarded as good for children.

Regional flows and institutional arrangements have been developed in Europe to foster and protect its television culture. These transnational relationships foster and protect a shared notion of childhood and children too, inasmuch as they facilitate the exchange of 'children's programmes' that are different from those that supposedly undermine childhood. The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) was formed in 1950 by 23 broadcasters across Europe and the Mediterranean, and further national members and associate members subsequently joined (some of them outside Europe, from Canada, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, India and the USA). The EBU promotes members' cooperation and represents their legal, technical, and programming interests, and runs the Eurovision network to pool programmes and coordinate joint programme purchases.<sup>12</sup> It was against this background that European programmes and programme-makers entered the British television landscape in the 1950s to the 1980s, in a period preceding the rise of

international television channels for children (such as the Disney Channel) and cross-border broadcasting by satellite. This was still during the Cold War, in which boundaries between the television cultures of East and West might suggest that cross-border exchanges were rare. But in fact, hybridity, migration and exchange were evident, and question conventional assumptions about the identities of programmes and broadcasting cultures.<sup>13</sup> The case studies later in this chapter demonstrate how programmes promoted and marketed as being for child audiences were both made in Britain according to the practices and formats of US programmes, and were imported into Britain from a range of continental European nations including East European countries.

Despite the introduction of quotas and subsidies, domestic production of children's programming in Europe has been vulnerable to competition from US imports because of its limited profitability on commercial channels and a focus by policy-makers on prestigious genres for adults, especially drama.<sup>14</sup> State-supervised channels broadcast a wider range of national, imported European and American programmes than commercial channels, with domestically produced series predominating over American series on both public and commercial channels. However, European drama has been constrained from import into Britain by considerations of language and cultural proximity<sup>15</sup> in ways that American programmes were not, and freedom from these constraints made transnational children's animation possible and relatively common. The chapter charts this mainly in relation to stop-frame animation and puppet series, whose separation of image and sound tracks allows re-voicing<sup>16</sup> and conduces to their exportability. The exchange of programmes, formats and personnel is much easier in children's animation than in live-action series because of how it is made. Animation is

made on film rather than video, so that technical work was not required to re-process programmes for the varied and incompatible transmission formats used across Europe and in the USA.<sup>17</sup> Animation requires the separation of image and sound tracks during the production process, allowing subsequent dubbing and re-voicing in different languages. The adaptability of re-voicing gets around the language obstacle that has restricted imports of continental programmes compared to US imports, which are already in English.

British viewers are very rarely offered opportunities to watch subtitled programmes, or programmes where live actors' dialogue is dubbed into English. The shared language of the UK and USA made import and export easier since processes of linguistic transformation were not needed, but translation is done in different ways in different television cultures and is also affected by the programmes' address to, and construction of, different sectors of that audience. In general, children's programmes construct a more youthful audience the more dubbing into local languages they use and the less subtitling they use. But once the audience is considered by the broadcaster to be of school age, subtitling takes over from dubbing. In some television territories such as the Netherlands or Greece, subtitling is common, whereas in Germany, Italy or Poland it is not. Conventional translation practices in programmes scheduled for children are closely related to national norms in audio-visual translation more broadly. But they are affected by specific assumptions about literacy and the relationship between spoken and written language that are part of ideologies that construct and sub-divide the category of the child according to developmental and age-based criteria. In this way too, the notion

of the child as audience and addressee for television programmes has both nationally specific and also transnational characteristics.

### **Transatlantic hybrids: Gerry Anderson and puppet science fiction in the 1960s**

Animation has been dominated by US imports but there is a strong tradition of British and continental European animation.<sup>18</sup> In the 1960s in the UK, some producers aimed for export success by creating a transatlantic and internationalist fictional world, while others emphasised aspects of national specificity. This section discusses Gerry Anderson's 1960s puppet series, which have hybrid identities in their production for export to the USA and in the fictional worlds that they represent.<sup>19</sup> They were a compromise between Anderson's desire to make films for adults versus an available market for children's television puppet programmes, and aimed to appeal to a cross-generational family audience. They were made on film, using novel effects, for a UK television production culture that still relied largely on live and videotaped production.<sup>20</sup> While commissioned by British ITV companies, the programmes were designed to be transatlantic products and had notable success in the USA, achieving national networked screening as well as syndication.<sup>21</sup> The transnational hero teams and security organisations featured in the series supported this internationalism, and simultaneously negotiated between the cultural meanings of Britishness and Americanness.<sup>22</sup> In many ways, therefore, Anderson's programmes are examples where difference is recognised and mobilised.

Anderson's puppet series were made with the backing of the television mogul Lew Grade, who ran the ITV company Associated Television (ATV) and whose Incorporated Television Company (ITC) was at the forefront of programme export to the

USA.<sup>23</sup> Grade made programmes for the ATV region around London and also for supply to the national ITV network, thus covering the majority of their costs, but his ITC distribution arm also sold programmes to the US and other overseas markets to increase the programmes' profitability. Action and adventure drama aimed at family audiences, such as *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1955) led the way in Grade's export sales, and were followed by programmes addressed to adults such as *The Avengers* (1961-9) and *The Prisoner* (1967-8). By the end of the 1960s, ITC had sold Anderson's children's series *Supercar* (1961), *Fireball XL5* (1962), *Stingray* (1964-5), *Thunderbirds* (1965-6), *Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons* (1967-8) and *Joe 90* (1968) to US broadcasters as well as to ITV in Britain, and 60 percent of Anderson's revenue derived from sales to the USA.<sup>24</sup>

Supercar could drive, fly, travel underwater, and go into space, piloted by the series protagonist Mike Mercury, assisted by its inventors Professor Popkiss and Doctor Beaker, ten year-old Jimmy and Mitch the monkey. The series was set in the present day, but Anderson's increasing refinement of special effects led to further futuristic and technological series ideas. *Fireball XL5* (1962) was set in 2063, with Steve Zodiac piloting the eponymous flagship of the World Space Patrol. *Stingray* followed, set in 2064, in which WASP (the World Aquanaut Security Patrol) sent its flagship submarine Stingray to combat the alien technology of the underwater kingdom of Titanica. Titanica's cause was assisted by its terrestrial spy, agent X20. The series was sold by ITC for US syndication, and led to a further commission from Grade for a more ambitious format. *Thunderbirds* was a fifty-minute episode series, enabling more complex storylines, more characters and more special effects. It was set in 2065 and featured the

Tracy family leading the International Rescue organization from their secret Pacific island base. Each Tracy son piloted one of the vehicles, invented by 'Brains' Hackenbacker, that specialized in air, space, underwater or ground travel and had rescue capabilities. Anderson continued with *Captain Scarlet*, which began with a landing on Mars in 2068 by the Earth security organization Spectrum. Captains Scarlet and Black mistakenly destroyed a Mysteron city, triggering Mysteron revenge attacks against Earth. The Mysterons killed and duplicated Scarlet and Black in indestructible form, Black becoming a Mysteron agent and Scarlet leading Spectrum's operations from Cloudbase, its airborne military and communications centre. The protagonist of Anderson's next series, *Joe 90*, was the adopted nine year-old son of the scientist Professor McClaine. Joe and his father worked for WIN (the World Intelligence Network) and could transfer the brain patterns of selected individuals into Joe's special glasses from the BIG RAT (Brain Impulse Galvanoscope Record And Transfer). Thus Joe was able to undertake secret missions, such as stealing a Russian fighter plane, or piloting a World Army tank to prevent a rogue state from activating a military base.

The production organization of these projects was a concrete instance of negotiation between British and American production norms. Each series was shot on film, paralleling the industrial practices developed in Hollywood. Filmed drama was the most common programme form among US imports to the UK, because it comprised the majority of primetime US network programming, but regulation and self-imposed quotas restricted US imports to about 15 percent of programmes on any one channel. Pressure to sell British programmes to the USA<sup>25</sup> led to making programmes of about 25 or 50 minutes in length, to accommodate commercials on US television. US television had

been broadcasting in colour since 1954, so the settings and design of Anderson's programmes were conceived with colour in mind. In Britain, BBC2 did not broadcast in colour until 1967, and BBC1 and ITV only from 1969. *Stingray* was the first British children's series made entirely in colour, because it was designed to appeal to the American market, but had to be screened on British television in black and white, as did each of the later series on first showing. Anderson's programmes resembled American ones in textual structure and production methods, and used American or Canadian voice actors, as well as British performers. Many American performers and other media personnel came to Britain following US anti-Communist hysteria in the 1950s, and in the 1960s during the Vietnam War, creating a pool of overseas talent. Canadians could masquerade as Americans for voice work, and did not need work permits because they were Commonwealth citizens. Thus transatlantic voices could be used in Anderson's series to enhance their exportability. Puppet characters were designed to resemble American film actors, or international stars appearing in US films. *Supercar*'s antagonist Masterspy was based on the portly Sydney Greenstreet, and his henchman Zarin sounded like Peter Lorre, thus recalling these actors' pairing in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). In *Stingray*, Troy Tempest was based on the film star James Garner,<sup>26</sup> and Captain Scarlet's characterisation was expressed by his resemblance to Cary Grant both facially and in his voice.<sup>27</sup> In *Thunderbirds*, Jeff Tracy's sons Scott, Virgil, Alan, Gordon, and John were named after the first US astronauts.<sup>28</sup> The transatlantic appeal of Anderson's children's series depended not only on their US-influenced production, but also on aesthetic features that signalled US popular cultural icons, and shared international references.

The audience categories discursively constructed for Anderson's programmes comprised separate groups identified as children or as adults, but the programmes were argued to bring these separate demographic groups together. The puppet series were conceived, scheduled, and advertised as addressing children, but in the 1960s, British households would normally have only one television set and programmes were watched by mixed adult and child audiences, at least until the 9.00 pm 'watershed' when scheduling designed for adults began. Anderson's puppet adventures were planned to provide possibilities of fantasy and imagination that could entertain both child and adult audiences, and bring them together in shared experiences. A promotional brochure for *Joe 90* claimed, for example, that this was 'fantasy adventure that will soon have every boy *and his Dad* playing JOE 90'.<sup>29</sup> The threats of war and environmental degradation in the 1960s, especially Cold War anxieties and speculation about technologization, were expressed in visually spectacular forms in Anderson's series, but also tamed by reassuring resolutions and by the domestic contexts in which they were watched. An associated culture of play and consumption promoted the programmes' imagery, characters, and themes, for Anderson's series were supplemented by product ranges including comics, toy vehicles, dressing-up costumes, LP records, confectionary, badges and sheet music.<sup>30</sup> These products, like other toys and playthings, were predominantly purchased for children by adults, and thus take part in the process of simultaneously establishing and also blurring the boundaries between adults and children.

Television for children is made by adults, for the group they define as other to themselves inasmuch as childhood and adulthood are distinct yet mutually defining. Children's television therefore commonly explores and expresses borderline states and

boundaries between one zone and another. Television is both a homely medium watched in domestic space but its programming also connects children to the world beyond, and Anderson's series reflected on the familiar and alien, and on safety and danger. The format of each series included a base or home that signified safety and familiarity, and there were pseudo-parental relationships between figures of authority and child characters or characters in a subordinate power-position. They addressed both child and adult audiences with storylines dealing with the mutually-defining roles of child and adult, and with slippages between those roles. The protagonist of *Supercar* was accompanied by a child and an animal, *Fireball* featured the often-inept robot Robbie and the alien Zoonie in child-like roles, and the premise of *Joe 90* was that a boy could masquerade as an adult with the aid of technology. John R. Cooke, for example, places Anderson's work, and *Joe 90* in particular, among a group of series in the 1960s and 1970s that 'mediated in their different ways the utopian hopes and dreams of a new Aquarian order of enlightenment and rationality led by the young.'<sup>31</sup> Childhood was a concept that was mobilised as both fragile and in need of protection, but also as a resource for future progress and social betterment.

By the mid-1960s, many adventure series, especially those produced for ITC, were deliberately international in setting and appeal, marketing both British pop culture and also the spatial mobility that British people began to aspire to, as affordable air travel and foreign holidays became accessible to them. In *Thunderbirds*, for example, the Britishness of Lady Penelope and her butler Parker were attractions to both British and US audiences in the context of the American Tracy family who surrounded them, and drew on the cultural meaning of 'cool Britannia'. Sylvia Anderson scripted Lady

Penelope with ‘not only the daring and panache of a secret agent but also the poise of a cool and beautiful aristocrat’, and costume ideas for the puppet were based on Sylvia’s interest in the Carnaby Street fashions of 1960s London.<sup>32</sup> The cultural meanings of the USA were contradictory, since consumer capitalism was associated with energy, progress, and entrepreneurialism, but also acquisitiveness and the replacement of British imperial power by a new order of American cultural imperialism. The modernity represented by American youth culture and the ideology of opportunity could also entail disrespect for tradition, loss of national specificity, and cultural colonization. The plurality of these meanings could be mapped onto the aesthetics of the American-influenced programmes that Anderson made.<sup>33</sup> Both programmes for children and for adults were regarded as both high and low in quality, and as both British and American in character, so they were discussed in conflicting and ambiguous ways. The London *Evening Standard* commented on 30 April 1960, for example, that ITV was a ‘dull routine of cowboys, crime, murders, pop singers and half-wit quiz games’,<sup>34</sup> condemning ITV programmes associated with the USA.

In Anderson’s puppet series, British and American characters work together, usually for transnational organizations. *Supercar* and *Thunderbirds* feature non-state organizations that cooperate with apparently benevolent worldwide authorities. *Fireball XL5* introduced the pan-galactic World Space Patrol, and in *Stingray*, *Captain Scarlet*, and *Joe 90* the main characters work for a transnational government resembling the United Nations. This political context was rarely addressed directly, and de-specified storylines so that conflict was represented as being between order and security versus disorder and disruption. The transnational organizations combated specific threats in

futuristic settings, thus displacing the storylines from the nation in which the series were produced and facilitating export outside the UK. The domination of the futuristic security organizations by American and British personnel nevertheless signified their leadership of the imagined new world order, supporting the arguments of political elites since the Truman 'Doctrine' of 1947<sup>35</sup> for stable, free-market capitalism in the West and in the British Empire and Commonwealth. Anderson's protagonists help to secure the Free World and work towards a particular version of future global identity.

### **Looking East: British imports of European animated programmes in the 1970s-1980s.**

Programmes with hybrid origins across Europe were configured for British television, as a brief discussion of animated series from the 1970s and 1980s will show. Short animated children's programmes have been appealing to UK broadcasters, especially to the BBC where the absence of commercials led to a programme schedule that did not match the half-hour and one-hour slots that characterise US television. In the 1970s, for example, BBC children's programmes frequently had lengths such as 25 or 50 minutes, and programmes did not customarily begin and end on the hour or half-hour. On BBC1, 'children's hour' in the 1970s ended at 5.40 pm when the live broadcast of *Blue Peter* (1958-) finished, leaving a short interval before the national news. Animation was useful for filling this gap, and became very successful as a transitional buffer between children's programmes and the news's address to adults, gaining ratings of up to 10 million viewers. Moreover, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, public service broadcasting rules created the need for programming categorised as being for children and thus constructing

children as an audience group, but comparatively low budgets meant that resources were directed at prestige drama, and domestically made animation and imports offered cheaper programmes that could be repeated in successive years.

Children's programming has been regularly exchanged, either in programme packages acquired at annual trade fairs, or under the auspices of the transnational organisations such as the EBU or Eurovision which were referred to at the beginning of this chapter.<sup>36</sup> As I have argued, across the Western world there are shared assumptions that construct children as an audience group. A brief discussion of imported European animated programmes shown in Britain demonstrates some of these assumptions, such as that children enjoy puppetry and animation, that they identify with anthropomorphised animals and child-like characters, and that they enjoy songs and music.

Textually, institutionally and economically, the notion of national origin conceals networks of textual borrowing and collaboration between individuals and firms. The most well-known example of this hybrid production history and textual form is probably *The Magic Roundabout* (1965-71, 1974-7), in which an unseen adult narrates the adventures of animated child and animal characters who are seen in a magical garden. The series was produced by an émigré British animator, Ivor Wood, who learned his craft when working at the French studios run by Serge Danot. *The Magic Roundabout* was made by Wood and Danot for French broadcast as *Le Manège Enchanté*. It was modified significantly when screened in the different national context of Britain's early evening children's slot, because of the completely different storylines narrated by Brian Thompson that replaced their French predecessors. It is such complex national attributions that demand a more nuanced analysis of their hybrid components and

multiple determinations than ascribing them simply to one national television context or to a generalized notion of globalization.

In a public service tradition similar to that of the UK, *Barnaby* was created in France and acquired for broadcast by BBC in Britain in 1973. The series was based on Olga Pouchine's books about the bear Colargol, written in the 1950s and subsequently popularised by Philips LP records in the 1960s.<sup>37</sup> The television adaptation, *Les aventures de Colargol*, was made by the French producer Albert Barillé's company Procidis and Polish animator Tadeuzs Wilkoz at the Semafor animation studios in Lodz, Poland. Music and songs were composed and recorded by French contributors. The programme was thus of hybrid nationality, crossing the Iron Curtain, before the 53 thirteen-minute episodes were translated by the British animation company Q3. *Les aventures de Colargol* was re-edited into thirteen episodes and acquired by BBC for the 'Watch with Mother' slot formerly occupied by the French import *Hector's House* (*La Maison de Toutou*, 1965), and was re-titled *Barnaby*. Its stop-motion animation follows the adventures of a little bear who leaves the forest to begin a singing career and travel the world. His voice in the first episode is very discordant, but with the help of the King of the Birds he becomes melodic and is employed in Monsieur Pimoulou's circus. Escaping Pimoulou's cruelty, he goes to the North Pole, and lands on the Moon. In Canada the series was renamed *Jeremy the Bear*, but in other European broadcasts of edited versions, in France, Poland, Norway and The Netherlands, for example, the protagonist retained the name of Colargol. The original French version had a story arc following Barnaby's travels, and this led to different opening music and a different visual sequence at the beginning of each episode. The British and other edited versions

disrupted narrative progression and adopted a consistent opening sequence and title music, turning the programme into a series of free-standing episodes. Like other transnational hybrids discussed below, *Barnaby* was an adaptation of an existing literary text, was produced with experienced Polish collaborators, and different national versions significantly changed its form and structure. But the story of the bear's travels of discovery, adopting aspects of the idea of playful education, resonated sufficiently for the programme to be acquired for several national television channels.

Just as the creation of *The Magic Roundabout* was conditioned by the migration of Ivor Wood, *Ludwig* (BBC 1977) was produced by cross-border migration, in this case by the Czech documentary and current affairs director, editor and producer Mirek Lang and his son Peter. Lang migrated with his family to Britain in 1968 because his films were critical of the Soviet-supported Czech regime, and Soviet forces had invaded the country that year. Mirek Lang failed to penetrate the British current affairs production culture, so he and Peter made short animations, which drew the attention of the BBC. The BBC commissioned *Ludwig*, a series of five-minute episodes made by the Langs with scripts by the British Jane Tann and Czech émigrée Susan Kodicek.<sup>38</sup> Episodes comprised the adventures of an egg-shaped creature whose exterior resembles the faceted surface of a diamond. Ludwig could be an alien<sup>39</sup> machine rather than a living entity, and he played music and drew pictures using mechanical limbs that emerge from his shell. Each episode began as Ludwig arrived in a forest by descending on a retractable helicopter rotor. He brought various objects out of his shell, most often musical instruments such as a violin or cello, which he then played. Throughout, Ludwig was secretly observed from the bushes, by a man with binoculars, wearing the tweed suit and

deerstalker hat of an Edwardian naturalist, or perhaps Sherlock Holmes. The observer's voice provides the narration about Ludwig and the forest creatures' activities, while Ludwig is silent. Ludwig's name alludes to Ludwig van Beethoven, whose music was always used in the series, and is the German composer of the EU's anthem. The UK children's television industry could accommodate Lang as a Cold War émigré, whereas he was unable to work in adult current affairs programming. While the series alludes visually to British tropes (especially in the representation of the ambivalent naturalist-detective observer), its forest animals and setting, and its music, gesture towards broader European cultural frameworks that render the identification of national specificity problematic, and draw from ideas of nature and discovery that again assimilate to playful education.

Semafor studios in Poland, where *Barnaby* was made, also produced *The Moomins*, an animated series based on the Finnish Tove Jansson's books. Though screened in Britain by ITV in 1983, the programme has a very complex international history of institutional collaborations leading to its production and subsequent transmission.<sup>40</sup> Semafor made the series between 1979 and 1982, financed jointly by Film Polski and the Austrian company Jupiter Films. The relatively liberal political regime in Poland after 1956 allowed collaborations between Polish and Western producers, and imports of Western (including American) programmes to Poland. Originally there were 78 ten-minute Polish episodes (*Opowiadania Muminków*) based on Jansson's stories, re-edited for German broadcast into 28 half-hour episodes titled *Die Mumins*. These German episodes were edited again by the British company FilmFair into 100 five-minute stories and bought by the southern England broadcaster, Central Television, for

screening on the ITV channel. The animation method combined painted backgrounds, flat felt cut-outs and three-dimensional puppet characters.<sup>41</sup> The unusual spatiality of the resulting films contributed to the uncanny tone of the series, which matches the current of menace in Jansson's books. The main characters were the Moomin family, resembling hippopotamuses, together with the Snork Maiden, the mouse-like Sniff and the vagabond Snufkin. Because the series was so significantly re-edited to produce its various export versions, the visual sequences were arranged in these versions in quite different ways. Thus quite different narration was added for each version, and similarly the music accompanying the visual sequences took different forms and used different instrumentation.

Like *Barnaby*, *The Moomins* was based on an established literary property, and its characters crossed national boundaries. But significant changes were made that show how the apparently stable identity of the Moomin fictional world was subject to reworking in ways that suggest how cultural difference operates alongside the transnational relationships of television exchange. The original Finnish publication was followed by a Polish film adaptation produced in collaboration with Austrians, and the series came to Britain as a significantly different programme with new voice tracks and music, edited into much shorter episodes with abbreviated storylines. Some of the components of the Moomin brand, such as their name, visual appearance and character relationships persisted though such complex reworking, yet considerable changes were made to music, storyline, narration and the editing of visual sequences.

### **Hybridity and transnationality**

The attribution of nationality is not a simple matter in children's television, and this chapter has shown how from the 1960s to the 1980s children's television made by or acquired for British channels integrated national, European and transatlantic programme forms, personnel and business relationships. American television's production methods, personnel, and attitudes to the audience have been both adopted and resisted in British television culture. In Gerry Anderson's science fiction series, US television was a model for British production practices, and programmes worked on a new sense of transnational community in futuristic settings. These strategies led to relatively successful attempts to sell British programming to US broadcasters in the 1960s. The boundaries between Britishness and Americanness shifted in dynamic ways, in relation to production, representation and reception. Imported US children's programmes in Britain have often been criticized on the grounds of quality, but Anderson's series were praised for their ability to reconfigure conventional action-adventure programme formats associated with the USA and sell those narrative forms back across the Atlantic. Children's programmes from continental Europe were comparatively cheap to acquire, professionally produced, and re-voicing in English enabled them to be assimilated into British television schedules. The strength of the US domestic television industry has been the foundation of its success in exporting children's television as well as programmes for adult audiences, but the tendency to conflate American cultural exports with changes in popular culture in other nations is misleading. British and other European producers of children's television, and their programmes, played a considerable part in the processes of modernization and transnationalization that can also be seen in other cultural sectors such as the arts, fashion or architecture.

The circulation of children's television across borders has drawn on transnational conceptions of what childhood is and what child audiences want and need. That circulation has not been prevented by national regulatory regimes or political boundaries like the Iron Curtain, though of course these factors have also operated as constraints. While discourses of national protectionism (usually protection of children from American television culture) have been significant, the child audience has been constructed as a transnational entity that could be addressed and provided for by transnational programming. But paradoxically, programmes originating abroad, or made for overseas markets, contributed to the perceived distinctiveness of children's television in Britain, and there are many examples of programmes that are the hybrid products of different national television institutions, production staff and source materials. Similar points can be made about programmes made for adults, and the hybridization of cultures seen in cases of programme and format trading, and the transformation and exchange of programmes made possible by dubbing or subtitling, demonstrate that television accommodates and works with difference as well as homogeneity. These dynamic forces of difference and homogeneity are significant to transnational television in terms of both programmes and the organisation of broadcasting institutions, technologies and professional cultures. In children's television, and especially in the animated programmes discussed here, re-voicing of sound tracks while maintaining a version of the original visual material, significantly obviated the 'language barrier' that affects programmes for adults acquired for British television from non-Anglophone producers. The absence of that linguistic barrier in British programmes for export to the USA has facilitated an important if still unequal transnational relationship. Working with largely unstated

conceptions of children as a market and an audience category, national and transnational television cultures borrow from and exchange with each other, at the same time as they resist structures, modes of address and representations that are seen as uncomfortably other and unacceptable.

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Bignell, 'Writing the child in media theory', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 32 (2002), 127- 39.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Bignell and Andreas Fickers (eds), *A European Television History* (New York: Blackwell, 2008), pp.19-23.

<sup>3</sup> See Ib Bondebjerg et al., 'American television: point of reference or European nightmare?', in Bignell and Fickers (eds), pp.170-3.

<sup>4</sup> Paddy Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting: the history of a concept', in A. Goodwin and G. Whannel (eds), *Understanding Television* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.11–29.

<sup>5</sup> Dafna Lemish, *Children and Television: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> See Janet Wasko et al, (eds), *Dazzled by Disney?: A Global Disney Audiences Project* (London: Leicester University Press, 2001) for an investigation of US and non-US child viewers' conceptions of America and Americanization in relation to Disney.

<sup>7</sup> For an outline of the history of British attitudes to imported American programmes, see Paul Rixon, *American Television on British Screens: A Story of Cultural Interaction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp.32-58.

<sup>8</sup> The term 'animation' is used broadly in this chapter to include filmed puppets animated by unseen operators, and drawn, sculpted or painted figures animated by stopping and

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starting the camera to produce an illusion of motion (stop-frame animation). The chapter does not consider cartoon animation in any detail.

<sup>9</sup> Sinclair, J., E. Jacka and S. Cunningham, 'New patterns in global television', in P. Marris and S. Thornham (eds), *The Media Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.173.

<sup>10</sup> Schiller, H., *Mass Communications and American Empire* (New York: Augustus M Kelly, 1969); Schiller, H., *Communication and Cultural Domination* (New York: Sharpe M. E., 1976).

<sup>11</sup> Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage, 1983).

<sup>12</sup> Jérôme Bourdon, 'Unhappy engineers of the European soul: the EBU and the woes of pan-European television', *International Gazette of Communication* 69:3 (2007), 263-80.

<sup>13</sup> A more developed argument about the programmes discussed in this section can be found in Bignell, J., 'Migration, translation and hybridity: European animation on British television', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 7:2 (2010).

<sup>14</sup> For a recent example of an organized defence of children's television in Britain against imports and reduced television provision for children, see the 'Memorandum from Save Kids' TV Campaign to the Culture, Media & Sport Parliamentary Select Committee Regarding Public Service Media Content Inquiry', 18 January 2007, available at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/upload/SKTV.doc>

<sup>15</sup> Cultural proximity denotes the relative closeness or distance between different national or regional cultures, seen as a determinant of whether cultural products such as television programmes are readily assimilated and enjoyed by audiences in a different culture from the one which originated them.

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<sup>16</sup> The term re-voicing is used throughout to indicate the integration of new voice narration and character dialogue with a visual image track. Re-voicing is carried out after the visual sequences have been recorded, and replaces an original voice track that had been combined with them.

<sup>17</sup> Domestic television sets in Europe and the USA (and elsewhere) produce pictures by means of a scanning beam of a certain number of horizontal lines, and the number of scanning lines varies widely. See Andreas Fickers, 'National barriers for an *imag(e)ined* European community: the technological frames of postwar television development in Europe', in Hojberg, J. and Sondergard, H. (eds), *European Film and Media Culture* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculum Press & University of Copenhagen, 2006), pp.15-36.

<sup>18</sup> The British tradition is exemplified by Gordon Murray's *Camberwick Green* (1966) and its spin-offs *Trumpton* (1967) and *Chigley* (1969), the work of Cosgrove Hall on *Danger Mouse* (1981-92), and the Australian émigré Bob Godfrey on *Roobarb and Custard* (1974) and *Henry's Cat* (1983).

<sup>19</sup> This chapter refers to Gerry Anderson as the creator of the programmes, to avoid complex explanation. The situation was much more complex; Gerry was mainly responsible for company management and planning special effects filming, and his wife Sylvia for character origination and directing actors, while numerous collaborators worked on scripts and visual design, for example, and distinctive music for his series was composed by Barry Gray.

<sup>20</sup> Videotape was used in television production after its invention in 1958, but in Britain it was not commonly used until the early 1960s. Production on film was suited to programmes that used special effects or shooting in outside locations, but it was costly

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and children's programmes would be made on videotape in enclosed studios wherever possible. Anderson's use of film is thus a significant choice.

<sup>21</sup> Syndication refers to programmes being sold to a regional US television broadcaster for screening in that region. Sale to the national US networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) was much more lucrative.

<sup>22</sup> The discussion of Anderson's programmes in this section is developed in more detail in Bignell, J, "'Anything can happen in the next half-hour': Gerry Anderson's transnational science fiction', in James Leggott and Tobias Hochscherf (eds), *British Science Fiction in Film and Television* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> For a brief account of Grade's commissioning of Anderson's programmes, see Jonathan Bignell, 'And the rest is history: Lew Grade, creation narratives and television historiography', in C. Johnson and R. Turnock (eds), *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2005), pp. 57-70.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Sellers, *Cult TV: The Golden Age of ITC* (London: Plexus), p. 92.

<sup>25</sup> This was a period in which export was crucial to British economic viability. Lew Grade was given Queen's Awards for Export in 1967 and 1969 for his success in television trading, in which the programmes discussed here were a part.

<sup>26</sup> Sellers, pp. 89-90.

<sup>27</sup> Captain Scarlet's voice was provided by the British actor Francis Matthews. Cary Grant was born in Britain, and his 'cool' and sophisticated persona in Hollywood films is connected to his émigré status.

<sup>28</sup> S. Archer and S. Nicholls, *Gerry Anderson: The Authorised Biography*. (London: Legend, 1996), p. 86.

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<sup>29</sup> Sellers, p. 113, emphasis in the original.

<sup>30</sup> Sylvia Anderson, *My FAB Years* (Neshannock, PA: Hermes), pp. 84-9.

<sup>31</sup> John R. Cooke, 'The age of Aquarius: utopia and anti-utopia in late 1960s and early 1970s British science fiction television', in J. Cooke and P. Wright (eds), *British Science Fiction Television: A Hitchhiker's Guide* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p.110.

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, p. 26, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup> Similar negotiations with ideas of national identity were evident in ITC's live action series; see Steve Neale, 'Transatlantic ventures and *Robin Hood*', in Johnson and Turnock, pp. 73-87.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted in Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain*, vol. 1, *Origin and Foundation, 1946-62* (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan, 1982), p. 371.

<sup>35</sup> Joyce Kolko and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

<sup>36</sup> On the institutional arrangements for programme sales, including international trade fairs, see Jeanette Steemers, *Selling Television: British Television in the Global Marketplace* (London: BFI, 2004) and Timothy Havens, *Global Television Marketplace* (London: BFI, 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Sheridan, S., *The A-Z of Classic Children's Television* (London: Reynolds & Hearn, 2004), pp.52-3.

<sup>38</sup> Sheridan, pp.149-51.

<sup>39</sup> While protagonists in children's series are most often children, animals or adults in childlike roles, figuring the protagonist as an alien other is not uncommon, for example in

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the pre-school series *Teletubbies*; see Bignell, J., 'Familiar aliens: *Teletubbies* and postmodern childhood', *Screen* 46:3 (2005), 373-88.

<sup>40</sup> Sheridan, pp.162-9.

<sup>41</sup> Because of the use of mixed two-dimensional and three-dimensional animation techniques using felt cut-outs, this series is sometimes referred to as 'the fuzzy-felt Moomins' to distinguish it from two earlier Japanese cartoon versions (1969, 1972) and a later Japanese cartoon version (1990) that was acquired for broadcast in the UK.