

Fictions of Europe

On "Eurofiction" – A Multinational Research Project

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In 1999, the French media sociologist Philippe le Guern issued a general warrant, calling upon fellow researchers to locate a fugitive. Name: "TV fiction expressing a European identity". He also proposed a major European research project to this end. Media researchers in Denmark, Great Britain, Greece, Italy and The Netherlands answered the call, searched high and low, but in the end came up empty-handed. Either the description was too sketchy or the fugitive was wandering about elsewhere – perhaps incognito, perhaps suffering from amnesia. The closest thing the researchers turned up, the one programme that fostered a pan-European sense of identity and elicited *dialogue sans frontières*, was the annual Eurovision Song Contest¹. The point of this contest is, explicitly, for songwriters and singers of the participating countries to express national indiosyncrasies in ways that are calculated to appeal to as much of Europe as possible.

Even if the fugitive is still at large, the search itself highlights a number of interesting questions within the horizons of the Eurofiction project. Questions like: What is the status of national television fiction production in Europe in a period when regional and global perspectives challenge a focus on the nation? What resources do the respective European countries commit to national production? Are there any clear-cut patterns with regard to the respective commitments of public service and commercial channels? Are certain genres more popular in some countries and less in others? Is it so, that Germans like crime stories whereas the British prefer historical drama? Do language differences raise barriers, and if so, what are the impli-

cations for production and sales? What part does/ will digitalization play in all these contexts?

Most observers agree that one cannot speak of "European TV fiction" in any more precise sense; that is to say, most TV fiction is nationally rooted in one or another sense and/or inspired by American models. This impression is often accompanied by what appears to be consensus among European TV channels, audiences and media critics on three points: (1) a desire to show/see many American television series and serials; (2) admiration of the Americans' professionalism; and (3) a distaste for the stereotyped character of their products.

European Structures

Thinking about Europe and television brings to mind the collaboration among European public service companies that has developed under the auspices of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), an organization founded in 1950 and headquartered in Geneva. The collaboration extends over several aspects of broadcasting: programming, engineering R&D, and legal aspects. In the area of programming, Eurovision, started in 1954, provides a framework for regional coproduction. The founding participants were Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, The Netherlands, Switzerland and West Germany. By the end of the 1950s, most of Western Europe had joined. The focal point of collaboration was the annual Eurovision Song Contest.

In the beginning, no one could say what programme collaboration might amount to as it encompassed two essentially different activities, having different goals. First, it stood for truly European programme production that would on its own terms serve an ambition to unify Western Europe in the wake of the war.² Secondly, it should provide a

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framework for the exchange of programmes by the national broadcasting organizations in Western Europe. European programming (i.e., programmes common to the region) came to consist primarily of 'live' transmissions of events, particularly sports events. The sensation of simultaneity was new; it had a strong audience appeal. As a consequence, it was used to create part of Eurovision's 'image'. In recent years, the EBU has organized two pan-European dedicated channels, Eurosport and Euronews. National channels have made use of the programme exchange facility mainly for music, entertainment and non-fiction and, to a lesser extent, drama, but the programmes exchanged have been predominantly national, not European products.

Fiction genres have been essentially national; they apparently lend themselves poorly to fulfilling pan-European ambitions. Language barriers pose the greatest obstacle, but there are also the expectations of a shared experience and 'special events' that Eurovision itself has cultivated. At the same time, the participating countries were finding out the ways in which film and television might collaborate or differentiate themselves. Differences in national traditions regarding fiction did not exactly facilitate coproduction or other forms of collaboration to produce TV fiction. From a production point of view European collaboration only began to be interesting with organizations like Eurimages, which was created by the Council of Europe in 1988 to support coproductions involving three or more European countries.

Collaboration in film and television production has tended to involve countries having strong cultural and linguistic affinities (rather than disparate partners such as, say, Norway and Portugal). Thus, coproduction between Great Britain and other anglophone countries like the USA and members of the Commonwealth is far more common than coproductions between Great Britain and countries on the Continent. Similarly, coproductions between Germany, Austria and Switzerland are fairly common. As for the Nordic countries, Nordvision, an organization to facilitate broadcasting collaboration between national public service channels in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, was founded as early as 1959. Iceland joined in 1966. Like Eurovision, Nordvision had a dual purpose: to facilitate programme exchange and to promote collaboration in production. Here, too, the national governments have committed resources to support coproduction. Acting through the Nordic Council of Ministers, they set up the Nordic Film and TV Fund for this purpose in 1990.

Organizations like the Council of Europe and the Nordic Council have also actively supported broadcasting research and documentation. The European Audiovisual Observatory was created under the auspices of the former in 1992. Headquartered in Strasbourg, the Observatory has compiled and processed information on broadcasting engineering, legal aspects, the structure of the media industries and developments in the branch.³ Similarly, the Nordic Council has (since 1973) supported Nordic media research through the Nordic Information Center for Media and Communication Research, Nordicom.⁴

The American Perspective

Numerous research projects have used a comparative approach – on public service radio and television, on news reporting, on youth cultures, on the Internet, and so forth. In fact, the paucity of studies of television fiction constitutes a remarkable exception to the rule. The focus of studies of TV fiction is generally national, be it analysis of specific genres, productions, trends or aesthetics. When comparative approaches have been taken, the focus has more often rested on objects of American origin than on regional European products. Among Nordic researchers, Birgitta Höijer has compared the reception of Swedish and American TV series among Swedish viewers (Höijer 1995). Other scholars have chosen to focus on American series and reception of them in a domestic context. Jostein Gripsrud, for example, considers *Dynasty* in Norwegian television symptomatic of the fundamental changes in national and international media structures that took place in the early 1980s (Gripsrud 1995), and Karen Klitgaard Povlsen discusses *Beverly Hills 90210* as an expression of, as well as a motive for an ironic attitude among youthful viewers in Denmark of the 1990s (Povlsen 1999). Earlier, Tove Arendt Rasmussen and Peter Kofoed identified *Dallas* as the principal model for modern television serials (Kofoed & Rasmussen 1986). In the same vein, Poul Erik Nielsen takes his point of departure in American conventions of production and the context in which they have emerged when he defines genres of television fiction (Nielsen 1992). Indeed, Ib Bondebjerg's interest in national genre traditions, both in European contexts (focussing on Edgar Rietz and Dennis Potter) and in American contexts (e.g., Herman Wouk and David Lynch) is exceptional (Bondebjerg 1993).

The American perspective has been both natural and necessary. There is no need to justify it; the

reasons are obvious. First, a substantial amount of American programming fills European screens, often constituting a greater share of the channels' total transmission time than domestic productions. The dominance is most pronounced on commercial channels, but public service channels, too, make use of the American fare on offer. Secondly, there have been rather many interesting innovations in American TV fiction in terms of aesthetics, genres and so forth. Third, American programmes have attracted large audiences. Fourth, American programmes are affordable.

The European Perspective

Whereas viewers and media researchers in the Nordic countries are highly familiar with TV fiction from the USA, few in either category know very much about, say, Greek or Belgian programmes. In the Nordic countries "European TV fiction" generally means British productions, fiction from other countries being largely ignored.⁴

Europe is fraught with divisions, which together explain a general and mutual lack of interest: the larger nations are accustomed to playing a leading role; the many small nations have their own languages and traditions, distinctions cultivated to stage their national identities; there are also numerous regions that wish to be recognized as nations. Overall, there are differences between North and South and between East and West. The many linguistic and cultural differences are also reflected in national television structures and traditions. Whereas it might seem most meaningful to compare similar nations of roughly the same size, we find that the conditions under which television operates and the common problems that have been solved in so many different ways invite comparisons of countries of different sizes, as well.

Among the conditions that are common to all national channels are the developments of the mid-1980s, when commercial television made its entry, causing public service channels to reassess and redefine their roles. The coming of commercial television meant an expansion of transmission time that outstripped the capacity of most national production systems. The American system, however, was already geared and tooled for volume production, as was the British system to some extent, as commercial TV had broken the BBCs monopoly as early as 1955. Another common factor is globalization: widespread access via satellite to the programme output of other countries. Here we have

the continuing proliferation of channels and thus a steady increase in transmission time – for better or worse, where the down side is the need to fill programme schedules 'round the clock. Another factor is the tendency toward media convergence, digitalization and its consequences – as yet diffuse – for how television is produced and, not least, how it is viewed inasmuch as the technology affords considerably more leeway for personalization in time and space. These developments will, of course, further weaken the sense of community that rallying around one and the same television programmes promoted in the days before deregulation. A sense of community that was national in character, which TV fiction in particular has helped foster and maintain.

One of the many common questions that arise concerns the role of television fiction in the new media landscape. Will it continue to be an exponent of national community? Or, will it serve as a mediator between communities?

These common problems and questions and the various solutions are the meat of the Eurofiction project, an international research project that got under way in 1996. As the name suggests, the focus is on TV fiction, initially in an essentially western European perspective. The following pages will present the project and its findings to date.

Participants and Organization

The coordinating project group consists of media researchers from France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain. The group, which started their work in 1996, agreed on a set of common objectives, an organizational structure and the methods to be applied. Coordinator is Milly Buonanno at the University of Florence. Each team consists of 3-4 researchers.⁶ The teams in the above-mentioned countries constitute the core of the project, which produces annual reports that analyze developments in the sector and coordinates the project in terms of methodological approaches and levels of analysis.⁷ The group is also responsible for engaging research teams in additional countries. Funding of the project is raised in the participating countries.

Additional articles on Russia and Switzerland figure in the 1997 report. In 1998 an article on Denmark was included, and the 1999 edition includes The Netherlands and Turkey. These five latter countries have associate status: they are not included in the longitudinal comparisons in the same detail as the core group, but each is briefly summar-

zed to afford some comparison over time. Research teams in these countries do not take part in the co-ordination of the project.⁸

Participants (associates included) meet annually at a seminar in Florence, which features lectures on various aspects of intercultural study in addition to the following standing items: reports on the year's findings in each country, internal discussion, discussions with producers, and screenings of the best and most innovative TV fiction during the past year in each country.

Methods

The aim of the project is to analyze trends in each country on the basis of identical sets of criteria, which allow relevant comparisons. The first limitation concerns the channels included in the study. The 1999 report included the following national channels (the Catalan channel being the only regional channel to date):

France	Germany	Italy	Spain	Great Britain
TF1	ARD	Raiuno	TVE1	BBC1
France 2	ZDF	Raidue	La 2	BBC2
France 3	RTL	Raitre	T5	ITV
M6	SAT.1	Canale 5	A3	Channel 4
Canal+	Pro7	Rete4	TV3	Channel 5
Arte	(others)	Italia1		

(Buonanno 2000:3)

The channels included in the associated countries are identified in each case.

So as to obtain a measure of each country's production capacity, the analysis includes all nationally produced TV fiction during the year, including coproductions, initial transmissions only. *Repeats* and *imports* are not included here, but they are included in the records of the sample week/s (the same for all countries), which include all TV fiction. (The project group are cognizant of the risk for random variations associated with sample weeks as a method.)

Individual transmissions are registered in terms of certain basic data: *time of transmission* ('slot'), *type of production*, *format*, *genre*, *recorded rating*. In addition four simple 'cultural indicators' are used: 1) the *time* depicted (present, past, future), (2) the *place* (primarily national, mixed national/foreign, entirely foreign), 3) the *setting* (city, town, countryside/wilderness), 4) the *main characters* (gender distribution, individual or group).⁹

Clearly, the project provides solid data on each country's TV fiction production (initial transmissions). But considering that one of the foci of the project is the relationships between of the major Western European countries as represented on European channels, it is perhaps surprising that the ratio of national to foreign (European and international) productions in each country is examined only via one or two sample weeks. The cultural indicators are also a bit meagre, and a more discriminating set of variables is needed in order to register any distinguishing characteristics of individual programmes. The question of quality is not addressed, but the information provided in the cultural indicators, while hardly conclusive, does offer some grasp of main tendencies and trends in certain focal areas.

Findings 1997-1999

The measure of any project lies, of course, in its results. The principal contribution of the Eurofiction project is that it quantifies a number of parameters that have long eluded comparison. It is not my intention to report the project's findings in all areas, but simply to highlight some of the more interesting ones. The first Eurofiction report in 1997 was also the simplest, since 1996 was the first year studied. In addition to cross-sectional comparisons between channels and countries, the report laid the foundations for longitudinal comparisons in selected areas. In the following I shall mention findings from that first report and, as an indication of the direction developments took, the report of data from 1998.¹⁰

The most striking observation in the first report concerns the marked *differences* between the participating countries when it comes to the *amount* of TV fiction they produce. Measured in terms of transmission time, initial transmissions of nationally produced fiction range between 1,689 hours in Germany and 221 hours in Italy. Irrespective of the measure used the differences are major. If we look at the number of original productions (titles, regardless of the number of segments or episodes) the extremes are Germany, with 297 titles, and Spain, with 27. If we instead count the number of segments/episodes, Germany again tops the list with 2,532, while Italy comes in last at 42. The various measures reveal other features, as well: In Germany, for example, programme lengths of 30 (soaps and sitcoms) or 60 minutes (typically serial fiction or series) are preferred, whereas in France and Italy

the tendency is to produce 90-minute programmes (typical feature film-length – formerly, at least).

What quantitative trends are visible between 1996 and 1998? The dominant tendency regarding transmission time is expansion. Increases are noted in Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain, whereas there is a slight decrease in France. Once again, Germany is in the lead. In an article published in *MediaPerspektiven*, Gerd Hallenberger, Eurofiction coordinator for Germany, outlines possible reasons. Very briefly, he identifies three decisive factors for a country's production: (1) the finance base, measured in population size (and thus the number of licence fees), and GNP (an indicator of the advertising market); (2) the status of the national production industry – How well-developed is it? How experienced? What traditions have developed?; and (3) the dominant distribution technology – Is it primarily terrestrial or satellite/cable? As Germany has the largest population and a vital economy, a seasoned production industry and extensive cable network, it is hardly surprising, as Hallenberger sees it, that Germany produces the greatest amount of TV fiction, by all measures. The reason Great Britain and France trail behind is not to be found in the production industry, Hallenberger argues, but rather in the mode of distribution. Cable/ satellite is not as well developed in France or Great Britain as it is in Germany.¹¹ The same goes for Italy and Spain, but here, in addition, the production industry in Spain is only starting up. With the growth of cable/satellite networks and production facilities the rankings of the countries may also change. One question is not raised, namely, whether quality has anything to do with it!

Whereas the quantitative variation is remarkable, considering that the countries are of roughly the same size, there is considerably less diversity when it comes to programme *formats*.¹² With the exception of Spain, 'TV movies' are the most common single format. The predominance is particularly marked in France and Italy, possibly because of the long cinematographic traditions in these countries. Germany and Great Britain occupy an intermediate position, with series/serials more important there. In Spain, finally, serial formats dominate entirely. 'TV movies' is still the dominant format in the material as a whole in 1998. Series come second, whereas mini-series and serials are somewhat less common in 1998 than they were in 1996. In other words, we note an overall tendency in the larger countries of Western Europe to use the film format rather than series, serial or mini-series formats. The pattern forms an interesting contrast to

the development of serial fiction in American television.

Genre preferences, too, are fairly uniform in 1996 inasmuch as one genre, 'drama', predominates throughout, albeit the category itself is quite heterogeneous, indeed, something of a catch-all.¹³ In all the countries except France, 'drama' is the largest single category. In France, the most common genre is comedy, which comes in second in Italy and Spain, whereas second place is occupied by 'Action/Crime' in Germany and Great Britain. The pattern persists in 1998, except that drama is now the most common genre in France, as well.

Similarly, the *cultural indicators* show that the same overall tendencies prevail in all the countries. Contemporary fiction predominates. Historical fiction constitutes 12% of TV fiction at the most (in France) in 1998, compared to 7-8% in Great Britain and Italy, and none at all in Spain. In the figures for 1997, Great Britain is a bit higher (9%) and France lower (6%). In most cases the stories take place in the country of production. France is the most internationally oriented country in this respect; just under one-fifth of the fiction produced in France is set outside the country. The dominant setting in the material as a whole is urban, a city or town. Again, France distinguishes itself in that rural settings are decidedly more common there. Rural settings are next-most common in Great Britain. As for the main characters, there is a general tendency for male leads to be complemented, or even replaced, by female characters. Mixed gender groups are the most common solution. Bearing in mind the caveat regarding representativeness, then, we note certain variations within the overall pattern. In this respect French TV fiction shows the greatest variation, and Spanish fiction the least.

One-sixth of the TV fiction produced in 1996 was coproduced, but not necessarily in a 'European' context. The pattern reveals a strong tendency toward collaboration among countries having linguistic and cultural ties. They need not necessarily share borders or even be in the same part of the world. Germany, France and Italy distinguish themselves as being the most Europe-oriented, with one-fifth of their fiction output being coproduced through collaboration amongst themselves or with other European countries like Austria, Switzerland and Belgium. The number of coproductions in the countries studied rose from 146 in 1997 to 180 in 1998.

Thus, we note both similarities and differences in the TV fiction output of the largest Western European nations. The differences are most striking

with respect to quantity, the similarities with respect to format and genre. But what about *imported fiction*? Here we only have the sample weeks to go on, again with a general disclaimer regarding their representativeness. Whatever the case, we find a remarkable uniformity: in 1996 American fiction filled more than half the air time devoted to fiction in all countries except Great Britain. There, British productions amounted to 50 per cent, and programmes of American origin 30 per cent. In the other countries the shares of American fiction were as follows: Germany 69%, France, 57%, Spain 67% and Italy 70%. As might be expected, there is some variation in the figures between 1997 and 1998, but overall the pattern is unchanged. When we introduce the time of transmission into the picture, we find that American fiction is often used to fill daytime slots, whereas 'prime time' is reserved for nationally produced fiction – and the best of American fiction.

All the major Western European countries have one thing in common: a mixture of national and American TV fiction. The common denominator among European countries is more American than European. This becomes even more apparent when we consider the representation of fiction produced in other European countries.

France shows the strongest European orientation, with 18% of TV fiction being of 'other European' origin in 1998. This compares to 8-9% in Germany and Italy, and 1% in Spain. British television did not air any fiction produced elsewhere in Europe in either 1998 or 1997. These figures, too, reflect the importance of linguistic and cultural affinities. Further confirmation of their importance is provided by the representation of Latin American fiction in Spain (14% in 1998) and Italy (19%), but not at all in the other Eurofiction countries.

Closer analysis of these relationships would require a more fine-toothed coding scheme. In the sample week of 1998, 15% of the TV fiction on British television were imports from 'other countries'. Exactly which countries were not specified: An educated guess might be Australia, New Zealand, Canada – but, obviously, it would be nice to know. In the same vein, we know that Germany exports some crime drama to other countries. Yet it is my impression that the volume of exports does not correspond to the volume Germany produces or to the level of British exports. Here, too, more precise data would be welcome.

Not all phenomena lend themselves to quantification and tabular summaries. The analysis of individual countries' production often reveals interest-

ing, albeit not necessarily well-documented perspectives, some of which I should like to mention here. *Digitalization* figures centrally in the reports from Great Britain and Germany in 1998. Digitalization will most certainly have an impact on viewing habits, but it is still unclear how quickly and in what ways. Georgina Highham points to *docusoaps* (sometimes referred to as 'faction') and *lifestyle programmes* as innovations that may come to undermine TV fiction: such programmes are like popular drama in their choice of settings (resorts, veterinaries, police stations), main characters, and stories from 'real life'. Some of them have had ratings equal to, in some cases even better than, fiction (Buonanno 2000:102). In Denmark, TV 3's Niels Jørgen Langkilde makes the connection outright, commenting that "drama is a quality of the programmes" – not a genre.¹³

The emergence of *hybrid genres*, which increasingly defy categorization, is noted in, for example, Italy, France and Great Britain. Finally, *repeat transmissions* represent an important strategy for stilling national channels' voracious appetite for content. Data from France, Great Britain and Denmark indicate that ratings for new and recycled fiction are almost the same, which naturally has fired interest in mining programme archives. We note the same tendency here in Denmark, where an episode of the evergreen serial, *Matador* (from 1978-82) still attracted over two million viewers in 1998.

A Danish Perspective

Of the Nordic countries, only Denmark is involved in the Eurofiction project to date. There has been talk of a Swedish team joining. Comparisons of TV fiction in a little country like Denmark and fiction output in the largest countries of Western Europe are interesting, as well, since they, too, reveal similarities and differences that can help specify what Europeans have in common as well as in what respects trends in the respective countries differ.¹⁵

First of all, the Danish public service channels, DR 1 and TV 2, which are the only two channels having nationwide coverage, continue to attract a large share of the viewing public (67% in 1998). This is despite extensive cabling and widespread access to satellite channels (which had attained a household penetration of 68% in 1998). This circumstance raises some question marks around Gerd Hallenberger's assumptions regarding the importance of distribution technology with respect to volume of production. In Denmark, most TV fiction is still carried on terrestrially distributed channels.¹⁶

In terms of infrastructure, Denmark differs. A 'German' development may be in the offing, but it has not appeared on the scene as yet. The pattern in a little country that has its own language may, by virtue of linguistically defined interests and barriers, turn out to be different from the larger European countries.

Secondly, there are of course many similarities in the patterns of output and preferences, but also some distinguishing features. If we include feature films¹⁶ and take transmission time as our measure, Danish fiction amounts to 497 hours or 17% of the total output of the public service channels in 1998. American fiction fills 1589 hours or 55%. This proportion is in line with the share noted in Finland and is less than the share noted in Italy, Spain and Germany. Fiction from other European countries (outside the Nordic region) fills 507 hours (18%). British imports dominate this category, whereas programmes from Denmark's Nordic neighbours amounted to only 80 hours or 3%. In terms of output, Denmark's European orientation is on a par with the most Europe-oriented of the larger countries, namely, France.

But what about viewing? Do Danish viewers choose in equal measure from the different parts of the menu? When we consider ratings, we find a much stronger orientation toward Danish fare and, secondly, anglophone fiction. Thirty-seven per cent of viewing time is devoted to Danish fiction, and just under half to American fiction. On the DR channels, 9% of viewing time is devoted to British fiction,¹⁸ whereas fiction from other European countries attracts very small shares of the audience. In other words, audience behaviour does not correspond to either channel output or trends in production. In Denmark it is becoming increasingly common for two or three Nordic television companies to collaborate on major fiction productions, particularly in the case of drama and 'action/crime'. TAXA, a serial coproduced in collaboration between Denmark, Sweden and Norway that ran 1997-1999, is but one example of many.

The tables in the Eurofiction project show only trends in programme output, not consumption patterns, which rules out comparisons of audience behaviour. Nonetheless, consumption patterns are an important key to understanding developments in output: ratings do not support the idea of expanding the output of European fiction. If such a policy decision is made, it must be based on the ideals of public service broadcasting or some other motive besides viewer preferences. Viewing patterns also show that in Denmark – as in the larger European

countries – viewer orientation focuses dually on national and American fiction.

Thirdly, the tables showing the most popular TV fiction transmissions in 1998 show certain *national genres* that elude international comparison. In Denmark, for example, the Christmas feuilletons on TV 2 and DR 1¹⁹ are extremely popular, and they are unique in Eurofiction contexts.

Among the 'top ten' fiction episodes in 1998, drama ranks first, followed by the Christmas feuilleton and comedy in shared second place.

These observations lead me to conclude that the inclusion of other little countries' experiences, not least data from the Nordic countries, would enrich the Eurofiction project.

Conclusions

Whether we like it or not, we have to conclude that "TV fiction expressing a European identity" is a fiction and will continue to be one unless something drastic happens in Europe these next few years. In 1994, an audiovisual 'think-tank' set up by the European Commission published proposals for audiovisual policy in the framework of the EU. The proposals spoke of expanding European collaboration in production, of creating a pan-European market and of measures to combat American dominance (Vasconcelos, ed., 1994). The proposals must, however, be read in the light of empirical reality, namely, the fact that the *greatest common denominator in European television today is American TV fiction*. That is to say, American fiction fills a considerable share of air time in every European channel. After American fare comes national production which, as a number of parameters suggest, represents an apt and popular forum for depictions of modern urban life, and secondly, life in the country and the national heritage (history and the classics).

The regional, pan-European level is not really visible in the research design of the Eurofiction project. If other measures were applied, it might become more salient, but as things stand today, the international/American perspective dominates, followed by national perspectives.

In the realm of television fiction, *globalization* is chiefly a question of interaction with other members of existing cultural and linguistic spheres. In the main, European TV fiction serves two main functions today: to maintain various communities of a national character and to maintain and reinforce each country's relationship with American culture. *Europeanization* has meant expanding col-

laboration in production, again primarily within existing cultural and linguistic spheres. It will also mean a lot of hard work, if the aim is to stimulate Europeans' curiosity about their fellow Europeans beyond national frontiers. For the time being, it seems that producers tend to play up national idi-

osyncrasies, the features that only members of the community can appreciate, but that leave others cold – in any case, in the dark!

But at least Europe scores points for diversity!
Vive la différence!

Notes

1. The Contest is hosted by the national broadcasting company in winning country the preceding year. It is a spectacular show, transmitted 'live' in all the participating countries. Originally, the Contest entries were to be sung in the respective national languages, but now English is allowed, as well.
2. A background note: European broadcasting collaboration goes back to the International Broadcasting Union (IBU), founded in 1925. The IBU, however, fell under Nazi Germany's control during the second world war, which meant that it could not continue after 1945. In 1946, the OIRT (Organisation Internationale de Radiodiffusion et Télévision) was founded, but Western European broadcasters withdrew from the organization in 1949 as a consequence of the 'Cold War'. In 1993, the OIRT joined the EBU, which today unites public service broadcasters throughout Europe.
3. See <http://www.obs.coe.int/oea>.
4. See <http://www.nordicom.gu.se>.
5. Tom O'Regan does this in his account of the international distribution of British television fare (O'Regan 2000). The picture O'Regan paints is somewhat passé, however, as he bases his discussion on data from 1984-85, i.e., before deregulation took full effect.
6. The institutions involved are Università di Firenze, Fondazione Hypercampo, Osservatorio sulla Fiction Italiana; Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel; Universität Siegen; Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona; British Film Institute, David Graham & associates. See the list of references for names of participating scholars.
7. The first report was published in 1997, the most recent in 2000.
8. Though understandable from a practical point of view, the solution is not entirely satisfactory from the point of view of democracy and sense of participation.
9. A copy of the form used in the analysis is included in each report.
10. The data are derived from the both reports on the individual countries and from analytical articles in Buonanno (ed.) 1997 and 2000.

11. Starting in 1998, we find that terrestrially distributed channels in Great Britain have begun to lose market shares to satellite channels. BBC1 and BBC2, ITV and Channel 4 lost viewers that year; the BBC channels continued to lose viewers in 1999, as well. In Georgina Highham's estimation, digitalization has had the greatest impact on viewing habits since commercial television came on the air in 1955 (Buonanno, ed., 2000:99).
12. Formats are classified as "1. TV movie (one-off) 2. Miniseries (up to six episodes) 3. Series 4. Open serial 5. Closed serial". (Data sheet in Buonanno 2000:5)
13. The genre categories used are "1. General drama 2. Action/Crime 3. Comedy 4. Other" (Data sheet in Buonanno 2000:5). In addition each national research team may include particularly national genre traditions.
14. Niels Jørgen Langkilde in a discussion of TV drama in Århus, Denmark, 1 March 2000.
15. See Agger & Nielsen: "The Good, the Bad and the Dull — Danish TV Fiction in 1998" in Buonanno 2000. This article is the source of the data in the following.
16. Part of the explanation may lie in the fact that TV 2 is of a mixed character: it is subject to public service requirements, but is primarily advertising-financed (but also receives licence fee revenue).
17. Feature films are not generally included in the Eurofiction project, but were in the summary I refer to.
18. Unfortunately, we have no data for TV 2, whose programme statistics are not as detailed as DRs.
19. This Christmas tradition was introduced by DR in 1967: a new episode was offered daily throughout the Advent period. Originally, the programmes targeted children. Starting in 1990, TV 2 renewed the concept, extending the appeal to the whole family and other adults.

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