What West Is It? Anime and Manga according to Candy and Goldorak

Lord Ko, le dinosaure, deux balafres comme Albator

[Lord Ko[sity] the dinosaur, two scars like Albator]
—French rapper Lord Kossity, Gladiator (2001)

Japanese “cool” is traveling popularly and profitably around the world and insinuating itself into the everyday lives and fantasy desires of postindustrial kids from Taiwan and Australia to Hong Kong and France.
—Allison, 2006, p. 5

If Japan’s rise to economic superpower dominated U.S. academic discussions in the 1980s, the last 15 years or so have been marked by an intense fascination, both in academic and popular discourse, with the country’s perceived increase in global cultural influence (see, for example, Faiola, 2003; Talbot, 2002). As Pokémon and Hello Kitty invaded U.S. TV screens and supermarket aisles at a time when, paradoxically, Japanese economic influence was on the decline, U.S. scholars (and a good number of Japanese officials) started to point to the emergence of a new kind of Japanese superpower. The discussion shifted from Japan’s Gross National Product to its “Gross National Cool” (McGray, 2002). The characters in Japanese animated cartoon series (animation or anime) and in the related genre of manga (Japanese-style comic books or graphic novels), along with their videogame cousins, came to symbolize a new order in millennial capitalism characterized by a decline in U.S. cultural hegemony and the fragmentation of global powers (Allison, 2006). Thus, Japanese animation provides a logical starting point to an analysis aimed at decentralizing the role of the United States as the world’s most significant global cultural producer.

This chapter will demonstrate, however, that while intending to point to Japan’s growing influence and to a concomitant relative decline in U.S. power,
the academic and popular discourse about Japanese animation’s “global” popularity has paradoxically resulted in the re-centralizing of the United States as both a global cultural producer and a consumer of globalized cultural forms. Turning a translocal lens to the genre’s transnational spread, this chapter illustrates the multiple ways in which this discourse is problematic. Throughout the chapter, the names of a few scholars will frequently reappear. These scholars are most assertively critiqued here not because their work is particularly problematic but, on the contrary, because they have produced the most comprehensive and sophisticated studies of Japanese animation and/or comics. Their works have become seminal texts in the academic study of Japanese popular culture in general and have greatly contributed to our understanding of its influence in the U.S. context. The chapter’s deconstruction of these scholars’ characterization of global processes is offered in an effort to illustrate the productive potential of a more translocal approach. It does not invalidate their otherwise positive contributions to the field of Japanese studies.

The chapter starts with a critique of the tendency to merge the United States with “the West” in studies of Japanese animation’s global spread. It then turns to an analysis of the genre’s voyage to France—drawing both from historical evidence and from interviews with media consumers—to illustrate the multiple ways in which its powerful intersection with the French popular cultural context differed from its influence in the United States. It concludes with a reflection on what we can learn theoretically from these differences about the nature of the global imagination and its significance for media consumers. It points, in particular, to the relatively unique position of the United States in relationship to “non-native” globalized popular cultural forms.

The Japanese term “anime” will frequently be used in the chapter as a shortcut for “Japanese animation.” The Japanese term “manga” will be used to refer to Japanese comic books and to differentiate these texts from their European counterparts, generally known as bandes dessinées (or the abbreviated “BD”), and from U.S.-style comic books.

The West according to the United States

The academic discourse on Japanese animation’s impact on “Western” cultural environments tends to remain dominated today by the works of U.S. critics—most of them cultural anthropologists, Asian studies scholars, and/or individuals with a long-term engagement in the genre’s fan subculture—and (to a lesser extent) by scholars of Japanese origin operating within an Anglo American academic setting. This is due in part to the fact that cultural studies in the United States and Britain has raised the status of popular culture to a higher level than in other academic contexts, resulting in a situation
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in which Japanese academia has yet to fully enter the conversation (Choo, 2008). The historical significance of Japan’s relationship to the United States also partly explains this situation. While these works have contributed to our understanding of anime’s cultural meaning in the Japanese context (see, for example, Napier, 2005, 2007; Poitras, 2008; Schodt, 1983, 1996, 2007) and of the significance of its entry into U.S. culture, their tendency to position the United States as representative of all of “the West” limits their usefulness when considering Japanese animation as a global genre (Berndt, 2008).

“America” and “the West” are frequently used interchangeably in discussions of anime’s “global” spread. For example, after noting that the genre must convince “American children to adapt to its aesthetics,” U.S. cultural historian Gary Cross continues with the observations that “Western children may embrace Japanese animation because it is ‘foreign’ and thus ‘cool’” (2006, p. xviii, emphasis mine). In his description of its search for “an appreciative Western audience” cultural critic Shinobu Price notes that “anime has been appearing on major U.S. television networks since the 1960s” but that “the true crossover boom came in the early 80’s when a new generation of Americans” began to appreciate it (2001, p. 160, emphasis mine). After observing that “Japanese animation was initially very hard to come by in the West,” professor of Japanese literature and culture Susan Napier adds that “a few series . . . crossed into American television, but they were almost always Americanized beyond recognition” (2007, p. 134, emphasis mine).

More generally, these works tend to uncritically equate the cultural and historical trajectory of U.S. consumers’ engagement with anime and/or manga with that of the rest of “the West.” For example, when popular author Gilles Poitras suggests that “adult Westerners” are not familiar with Japanese animation and later contrasts Japanese texts to “the cartoons of their youth” (2008, p. 48), he is ignoring the fact that a rather large number of “adult Westerners” outside of the United States actually grew up on rather heavy doses of Japanese animation, as this chapter will soon demonstrate. Similarly, while Napier sets out to analyze the cultural significance of Japanese influence in the mind of the West (as suggested by the title of her book), her conclusion that “unlike the fan cultures existing around Star Trek or Star Wars, non-Japanese fans of anime are coalescing around a non-domestic fan product that until quite recently did not even appear in English” (2007, p. 136, emphasis mine) implies that the “non-Japanese” fans she is describing are in fact both American (Star Trek or Star Wars as “domestic” products) and English speakers.

These slippages on the part of U.S.-based scholars studying Japanese cultural production are understandable considering the fact that a similar merging between “the West” and “America” frequently happens in Japan. Unfortunately, this results in the development of a genealogy of Japanese ani-
mation’s entry into “Western” cultural territory based on a rather limited and not particularly “representative” set of circumstances. This genealogy almost exclusively equates “Western” animation with Disney in its comparisons with Japanese productions (see, for example, Napier, 2005; MacWilliams, 2008; Poitras, 2008; Price, 2008), focuses only on the relatively small portion of texts that “made it” to the United States, and pinpoints Japanese animation’s initial entry into “the West” to the 1960s (with such texts as Speed Racer, Astro Boy, and Kimba, the White Lion) but sees its apogee as taking place in the late 1980s and beyond (Patten, 2004).

While this genealogy may paint an accurate portrait of Japanese animation’s relationship to U.S. popular culture and of the significance of U.S. fans’ engagement with these texts, it fails to take into account the genre’s different trajectory into other “Western,” particularly non-English-speaking, environments, as well as in other parts of the world. This “crossing of the Pacific” version of anime’s spread to “the West” must be problematized. A translocal comparison with the French popular cultural context helps us accomplish this goal.

A Different “West”

Contrasting anime’s entry into the U.S. cultural context to its influx onto the French popular cultural scene quickly reveals differences that allow us to start deconstructing notions of the United States as representative of “the West.” Most broadly, Japan’s relationship to France is premised on a different set of historical circumstances than its relationship to the United States steeped in the legacy of its World War II defeat, of the psychologically marking events of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and of a postwar period marked by American occupation and concomitant cultural influence. The full details of the complex cultural outcome of these historical events have been outlined by numerous scholars (see, for example, Gordon, 1993; Iriye, 1967) and are beyond the scope of this book, but suffice it to note that the United States’ shift from enemy to protector in the mind of the Japanese public followed a necessarily tortuous path that continues to mark these two nations’ relationships. Similarly, Japan’s economic rise in the 1980s was experienced differently in the United States than in other parts of the world. Anxieties in the United States over Japan’s economic success—over the possibility that Japan may have after all “won the war” or “beaten America at its own game”—were so strong not only because they threatened the United States’ global economic domination but, more profoundly, because they challenged the very core of American identity as the world’s leader (Napier, 2007).

Japan’s relationship to France has, in contrast, been relatively less antago-
nistic. If dread of the “yellow peril” certainly spread to France during World War II—and resurfaced to some extent in the 1980s—Hitler’s Germany represented a much more immediate and alarming enemy whose presence on French soil powerfully contrasted with the remoteness of the war in the Pacific. Thus, as French cultural critic Anne Garrigue puts it, “Asia is today . . . a region that a majority of French nationals approach in a less confrontational or desperate manner than Africa, the Middle East or the United States” (2004, p. 15). It is a region, she adds, that “has always occupied a special place in our imaginary” (2004, p. 26, emphasis mine).

France’s relationship to Japan is indeed marked by a long history of transnational borrowing epitomized by the Japonisme of 19th-century French writers and artists whose “fan culture” (they gathered over Japanese food and sake to admire woodcut prints, which many of them collected, and wrote sonnets of haiku inspiration) is reminiscent of the anime and manga fan activity Napier (2007) describes—a fact that, incidentally, she aptly recognizes. If this admiration for all things Japanese was tinted with Orientalism, it nevertheless had a remarkable impact on the development of French visual culture, an impact that set up the stage for the later influence of the highly visual genres of anime and manga.

Furthermore, because of the circumstances of its historical development, the French media landscape provided a much more amenable terrain to early anime’s entry than the U.S. context. The destruction of the French infrastructure caused by World War II bombings and the German occupation resulted in a relatively later development of domestic television production and a later spread of television to a majority of French households. In 1950, television broadcasting only covered about 10 percent of the French territory, and French households owned a total of only about 3,500 sets. France’s second television channel was inaugurated in 1964, its third (a local channel that did not cover the entire territory) in 1972, its fourth came only in 1984. All non-pay channels were public until 1986, and cable and satellite did not have a strong penetration until the late 1990s.

This resulted in a situation in which French television consumers growing up in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s (the time, as we will soon see, of Japanese animation’s intense penetration of the French media market) had access to a more limited set of viewing choices, mostly provided by the two largest (then) public channels, TF1 and Antenne 2, than viewers in the United States. If “by 1968 Japanese animation had become virtually unsalable in America” because “American studios were creating an increasing quantity of TV cartoons better tailored for American audiences” (Patten, 2004, p. 54), Japanese animation encountered little such “native” competition on the French market. France’s comparatively weak position as a global cultural
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producer has meant that it has long been flooded with all sorts of foreign imports. The fact that quotas are still in place today to guarantee French cultural products a mere 35 to 40 percent share of the French audiovisual primetime landscape powerfully illustrates the scope of this foreign penetration.

Thus, despite the common stereotype of France as “a country not known for its generosity to non-native cultural products” (Napier, 2005, p. 5), French consumers are actually quite familiar with “non-native” fare. In addition to “native” texts such as French comedy films or Franco-Belgian comic books (bandes dessinées or BD’s) and to the usual globally distributed Hollywood and Disney blockbusters, the media consumers I interviewed in France reminisced about growing up with (British) Enid Blyton books—as a man in his 40s put it, “my entire childhood was shaped by Enid Blyton”—American and Australian TV series—“Little House on the Prairie, oh my, how I cried watching Little House on the Prairie!” (41-year-old woman)—Italian Westerns, German cop shows, and, of course, Japanese or Euro-Japanese animation.

Texts as diverse as the Japanese City Hunter, Captain Tsubasa, Princess Sarah, Heidi (both animated series), Dragon Ball Z, and Power Rangers, the Franco-Belgian Asterix, Tintin, Boule et Bill, The Smurfs, and Largo Winch (the comic book version), the French Barbapapas, Mickey Magazine, Hélène et les Garçons, and Tom Tom et Nana, the American Batman, Scooby-Doo, MacGyver, Lost, X-Men, House, M.D., CSI, Desperate Housewives, The A-Team, and Shrek, and the Swedish Pippi Longstocking, along with Tim Burton and Miyazaki films (to mention just a few), all repeatedly came up in interviews. Older viewers might add Candy, Goldorak, Ulysse 31, Saint Seiya, The Wild Wild West, The Avengers, Zorro, Maya l’Abeille, L’Ile aux Enfants, and Woody Allen and Wong Kar-Wai films to the mix. A highly non-scientific survey conducted in early 2010 of the vast DVD aisle of the supermarket near the small town where I conducted fieldwork counted 18 non-French titles in its “top 20” recent DVDs. The DVD release of Avatar was quite an event for several weeks a few months later. In other words, the fact that France “in the mid 1990s carried over 30 hours a week of Japanese cartoons” (Napier, 2005, p. 5) rested in large part on these cartoons’ intersection with an already hospitable cultural terrain and on a differently conditioned engagement with global popular cultural production than is found in the United States.

In addition, French media consumers’ attitude toward Japanese cultural texts is shaped in part by France’s complex relationship to U.S. popular culture whose highly popular nature raises the specter of cultural imperialism. In an essay comparing the cultural policies of the United States, Europe, and Japan, political scientist Harvey Feigenbaum reminds us of the relatively unique position held by the United States vis-à-vis transnational cultural influence. Noting that “every member of UNESCO voted in favor of the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, with the sole exceptions of the United States and Israel”
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(2007, p. 374, emphasis mine), he suggests that “for Europeans, and others, the ubiquity of American popular culture is at best a mixed blessing, and to most represents one of the major liabilities of globalization” (2007, p. 375). Thus, as Garrigue contends, engagement with Japanese anime or manga can serve as “a form of resistance to American cultural hegemony” (2004, p. 114) on the part of French media consumers.

Anime’s Voyage to France

The differences between France’s and the United States’ historical and cultural relationships to Japan (and to each other) have resulted in tangible differences in the way anime and manga came to influence these two contexts. First of all, while Napier suggests that the 1989 release of Katsuhiro Otomo’s Akira “in many ways can be seen as the film that started the anime boom in the West” (2005, p. 41), the first major wave of culturally influential Japanese animation—France’s “anime boom”—actually hit France a full 10 years earlier. It came with the broadcasting of two highly influential texts: Toei Animation’s Goldorak (UFO Robot Grendizer in Japanese) first aired on July 3, 1978—less than 18 months after it finished airing on the Japanese Fuji TV—and the hugely globally popular shôjo (girl) anime Candy (Candy Candy) on September 18 of the same year, before it finished airing on NET TV (now TV Asahi) in Japan. Both were broadcast as part of (the French public channel) Antenne 2’s children’s program Récré A2. Both were inspired by popular manga (the Candy manga was published in France in 1982).

Due in part to the scarcity of programming targeted at a younger audience on French television at the time, these two texts enjoyed an immediate phenomenal success. Goldorak was so popular that it landed on the cover of the French news magazine Paris Match under the heading La Folie Goldorak [The Goldorak Madness] on January 5, 1979. Both programs were constantly rerun through the mid-1990s, and their cultural significance cannot easily be overstated (Hermelin, 2000). As a male informant in his 40s recalled: “Goldorak, I knew it was Japanese because everyone talked about it when it first came out.” To this day, the generation who grew up in the late 1970s and early 1980s is frequently referred to in France as “la génération Goldorak” [the Goldorak generation] (Garrigue, 2004). When the digitally re-mastered unedited version of the first 12 episodes of the series was released on DVD in late May 2013, it quickly made it to the number 1 slot in national sales despite its rather steep price tag of €34.99.

Regardless of their age, the French media consumers I interviewed were all familiar with these two texts. When reminiscing about this first wave of Japanese animation, and some of the other series that quickly followed, their
typical first reaction was to burst into a rendition of their theme songs—I can myself still recall all of the lyrics of the French version of Candy’s opening song (titled Au Pays de Candy [In Candy’s Country—which, incidentally, refers to the United States]) as well as those of other classics. Those who had been part of Candy’s and Goldorak’s original target audience remembered them as the most influential programs they had watched in their youth: “our genera-
tion, it’s Candy and Goldorak” explained a 40-year-old woman. “If I must cite one [show] that made me, ah! . . . that provoked emotions in me, it’s Candy! I watched the whole thing . . . from when they find her baby in the basket until . . . when she’s a nurse afterwards. Yes, from the beginning to the end.”

These media consumers, now in their mid-30s to early 40s, fondly reminisced about Goldorak’s powerful “fulguropoing” [which might be loosely translated as ‘lightningfist’]—“Goldorak was great! The lightningfist! (33-year-old man). “Goldorak, yes, the lightningfist!” (40-year-old woman)—and the transforming robot’s other numerous impressive attributes: “There was the lightningfist, his fist shot off, that was really something! He transformed into a space ship . . . and you could buy the figurine that you put into the space ship and there was the head, Goldorak’s head that stuck out. Goldorak, I’m telling you, that was quite a machine, not your average kitchen appliance!” (37-year-old man).

They also identified these shows as significant contributors to their cultural identity. As the man quoted above concluded: “Goldorak, it’s universal. You can ask my brother, you can ask all the kids I lived with [his family was a host family for disadvantaged children in the summers], that’s it . . . the glue at the base of culture. Because in the end, that’s what we’re talking about here, culture.” Other scholars’ discussions with French media consumers have prompted similar comments—as when a young woman explained in an interview with Garrigue: “Candy and Goldorak marked my generation. When I was six years old, I followed these almost traumatizing, dramatic, intense stories with passion. In our eyes it was much stronger than Walt Disney” (2004, p. 126).

These shows’ success quickly led to a genuine tsunami of Japanese shows, particularly those produced by Toei Animation, on the French popular cultural scene. In 1980, the space pirate Albator (mentioned by rapper Lord Kos-sity in this chapter’s opening quote) possibly surpassed Goldorak in popularity, particularly among the female audience, with his flowing long hair, “virile attitude” (40-year-old woman), and the famous scar—“he was beautiful with his scar” (32-year-old woman)—that marked his angular facial features. He was quickly followed by Capitaine Flam (Captain Future) in 1981 and countless others too numerous to mention. While some of these early imports were “Goldorakesque” science fiction shows, others—including Isao Takahata and Hayao Miyazaki’s Heidi (Arupusu no Shôjo Haiji), which started airing in France in December 1978, Yoshihiró Kuroda and Fumio Kurokawa’s Bouba le Petit Ourson (Seton Dôbutsu no Shôtô: Kuma no Ko Jacky) in 1981, and Osamu Dezaki’s Remi sans Famille (Ie Naki Ko Remi) based on a well-known French novel by Hector Malot, and Hiroshi Saitô’s Tom Sawyer in 1982—drew from different corners of Japanese anime’s vast repertoire. Yet others, such as San Ku Kai (broadcast in 1979
in both France and Japan) and X-Or (broadcast in Japan in 1982 and in France in 1983), while not animated (they featured live Japanese actors) resonated with the early science fiction animation in their themes and overall aesthetic.

From then on, different waves of Japanese texts were to follow, each marking a generation of French youths in slightly different ways. Thus, following “the Goldorak generation” of those growing up in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Garrigue (2004, p. 124) identifies the “Chevaliers du Zodiaque (Saint Seiya) generation” (late 1980s) and the “Dragon Ball Z generation” (1990s and beyond). In line with this characterization, the French satellite channel Manga advertised in late 2009 its upcoming programming of Albator, Flo et les Robinson Suisses (The Swiss Family Robinson), Ranma ½, Olive et Tom (Captain Tsubasa), and Dragon Ball Z by claiming that it “remains the channel of all generations.”

Aside from their relatively early arrival when compared to the spread of culturally influential anime and manga to the United States, these texts are significant in that they differ from the texts typically identified as the “seminal” texts of Japanese anime’s voyage to “the West”—Speed Racer, Astro Boy, and Kimba, the White Lion, followed, for a later generation more consciously engaged with the genre, by Akira, Ghost in the Shell, Neon Genesis Evangelion, the later Miyazaki films (Princess Mononoke, Spirited Away), and the lighter Pokémon and Yugi-oh. In fact, many of these shows—including Goldorak and Candy—were not shown as full stand-alone series in the United States and are, consequently, generally ignored by U.S. scholars who fail to recognize their influence not only in France but also throughout Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Discussions of the works of the extremely popular (among scholars as well as audiences) Hayao Miyazaki typically fail, for instance, to mention—other than occasionally in passing (see, for example, Drazen, 2003, p. 257)—that he was involved in the Heidi project along with his current Studio Ghibli partner Isao Takahata.

Equally disturbing is the fact that U.S. scholars frequently miss these texts’ significance in the Japanese context. In May 2009, a TV Asahi special claiming to have 10,000 respondents ranked Heidi number one “favorite childhood anime” among Japanese female viewers (Cooper-Chen, 2010). In 2005, the Ghibli museum in Tokyo had a major exhibit on the show that detailed its creation, included many of its early drawings and sketches, and featured photographs of Takahata and Miyazaki posing near the house that served as the inspiration for the home of Heidi’s grandfather during a research trip to Switzerland—all this despite the fact that the show was produced for another animation studio. Heidi and her friends from the series were even given their own postage stamps by the Japanese postal system (Arupsu no shōjo Haiji no kitte [Girl from the Alps stamp], 2013) in January 2013.

Like their French counterparts, the Japanese media consumers I inter-
viewed fondly recalled watching Candy Candy, Captain Tsubasa (Olive et Tom), Captain Harlock (Albator), Heidi, and the numerous other shows that were part of the Nippon Animation “World Masterpiece Theater” (Sekai Meisaku Gekijô) series. Lasting for 28 seasons from 1969 to 1997 and resumed in 2007, the series features works inspired by famous European and North American literary texts, including (in addition to Heidi and Remi sans Famille) such classics as Little Princess (Shôkôjo Sêra/Princess Sarah), Tom Sawyer, Anne of Green Gables (Akage no Anne), Little Women (Ai no Wakasu Monogatari), and A Dog of Flanders (Furandâsu no Inu). They, too, frequently broke into song when reminiscing about their childhood engagement with these texts.

Like their French counterparts, those old enough to have been part of the “Candy generation” identified it as a cultural reference point: “When I was young, there was Candy Candy, the manga. There was also the anime” (41-year-old woman). When I explained to one of them that I was going to ask her about the shows she watched while growing up, her response was “All the way from Candy Candy?” Another wanting me to clarify (in a different interview) what I meant by “shows she watched while growing up” asked, “like Candy Candy?” Even those too young (or too male!) to remember watching Candy often nevertheless had a relationship with it: “It was popular when I was very small. And Candy Candy had a special box in the show and my mother bought me that box. That’s what I remember. I was too young to remember the show” (30-year-old female); “In my house, my older sister watched it, so I’ve seen it a few times” (39-year-old male). Again, the cultural significance (global and otherwise) of these texts is difficult to overstate.

From Candy to Totally Spies!: Localizing Japanese Texts (and “Japonizing” French ones)

These differences between the French and U.S. cultural landscapes have more generally resulted in anime’s influence being negotiated quite differently in these two contexts. While scholars in the United States identify Japanese animation as progressing from relatively “culturally odorless” texts (Iwabuchi, 2002)—such as Speed Racer or even the early version of Pokémon from which references to Japan were carefully erased—to more culturally marked products consumed at least in part for their “Japaneseness” (Allison, 2006), anime and manga in France were quickly localized on different axes and in particularly complex ways. Or, to put it differently, they developed a different kind of hybridity.

While the early seminal texts of anime’s entry into the French cultural context may be seen as fairly culturally neutral, at least as far as Japanese culture is concerned—Candy is a young American girl, Goldorak is a war machine and
his pilot is, technically, an alien, Albator wanders somewhere through space in his pirate ship—these texts unmistakably adhere to the highly marked aesthetic of classic Japanese animation. Candy flaunts a prototypical 1970s shōjo (girl) manga look, while Goldorak draws from the equally recognizable tradition of Japanese robot/transformer/superheroes from outer space (his “color scheme” and “facial features” are reminiscent of Ultra Man’s, and he is constantly fighting dragon-like robotic monsters). In other words, while these texts are not ostensibly set in a Japanese context and do not propose to “represent” aspects of Japanese culture—there are subtle references to Japanese daily life in Goldorak (such as when the characters eat onigiri) but these are mixed in with loads of references to other cultural environments—they are strongly visually marked as Japanese or, at least, different. As one French media consumer in her 20s explained, “Goldorak and all that, they didn’t have the same look [pas la même tête] as the other cartoons” or, as a 46-year-old woman similarly recalled, “I think that we started to realize where cartoons came from when the Japanese entered the production scene [. . .] First of all, it was a new graphic style, and also, a new generation of cartoons that didn’t look like what we had seen until then.”

French media consumers came to associate these texts’ visual features—color scheme, lines, editing—with their Japanese origin. As a 40-year-old female informant recalled, “I think that I knew that when they had big eyes, it was Japanese, because there was a particular drawing style [un graphisme particulier]. . . . Yes, Candy, Goldorak, I knew it was Japanese. . . . It was in relationship to the graphic elements that we could recognize that.” Thus, as French cultural critic François Hermelin puts it, “For years, starting at the end of the 1970s, the Japanese cartoon series [séries de dessins animés japonais] that poured onto the European airwaves prepared the younger generation for the stereotypes of the Japanese genre” (2000, p. 142). These distinctive features are still easily identifiable today—as a 19-year-old man explained, “They don’t have the same eyes . . . They have big eyes, the Japanese [characters] they have big round eyes”—even though they have been adapted to a variety of non-Japanese texts: “Now [the animated series] Totally Spies!, they do the same kind of thing, even though it is French” (40-year-old woman).

Furthermore, because of limited production budgets, visual elements pointing to anime’s Japanese origins could not always be erased when the genre first entered the French cultural context. As a Goldorak viewer in his 40s recalled, “When they went places . . . it was written in Japanese, and that is something that impressed me, because if they went to a store and picked up a can or something, it was written in Japanese on it.” Japanese writing in kanji and kana (the two sets of characters used to write Japanese) appeared in titles, credits, or in the opening scenes of these early shows. As a 42-year-old woman
explained, “In the ending credits you had [Japanese] characters. Even in the titles, there was writing in Japanese underneath [the French translation], I remember . . .” Songs in Japanese punctuated Heidi’s most emotionally charged moments. In a particularly interesting twist for French viewers, the maps of France used in Remi sans Famille to follow the hero and his companions’ travels throughout the country were labeled in katakana (the Japanese set of characters used to identify words of foreign origin). These subtle references to the Japanese cultural context created a form of visual and aural hybridity independent of the texts’ (often already quite hybrid) scripted narrative.

These texts’ status as cultural phenomena also rested, however, on their successful integration into the broader French cultural context. This was accomplished in part through a process of localization that involved the inclusion of opening and ending songs in French marketed as separate texts and sung by well-known artists. Chantal Goya, who marked a generation of French children with her cheery pop songs (many of them written by her famous singer-songwriter husband Jean-Jacques Debout), performed the theme songs of Capitaine Flam (Captain Future), Bouba le Petit Ourson (Seton Dōbutsuki Kuma no Ko Jacky), and Les Quatres Filles du Docteur March (Ai no Wakasu Monogatari/Little Women). Dorothée (a close friend of Goya’s) performed a reworked version of Candy’s opening song when the show re-ran on her program Club Dorothée in 1987. As a result, informants too young to recall Candy’s or Goldorak’s initial entry into the French media market frequently commented in interviews that they “remembered the music better than the show.”

These singers’ performances served to intertextually link Japanese animation to other elements of the French popular cultural scene. Perhaps most significantly, Dorothée hosted Antenne 2’s Récré A2 (the show that brought Candy and Goldorak to the French market) from 1978 to 1987, when she moved to TF1 to host Club Dorothée. Thus, as illustrated in the songs of the French rappers discussed in chapter 4, most media consumers growing up in France between the late 1970s and the late 1990s (Club Dorothée went off the air in 1997) encountered Japanese animation through the culturally specific experience of watching one of these shows.5 It is an experience they recall with much fondness, as in the exchange below worth quoting at length as it illustrates both Dorothée’s importance and anime’s omnipresence.

When asked to recall the shows that were most important to them when growing up, three women and one man, all in their early 20s, replied:

**BRIGITTE:** Dorothée.

**CHRISTINE:** That’s exactly what I was going to say!

**ANNE:** The Club Dorothée. I was a member of the club so, at the end, when they ran the credits, at the end they put on the birthdays . . .
DAVID (speaking at the same time): The birthdays!
ANNE: And so, my birthday went on . . .
CHRISTINE: No way! . . .
BRIGITTE [to me]: Because she had registered.
ANNE: Yes, I was registered with the club and I had received their letter and after each episode at the end of the Club Dorothée they put the names of all the participants and the date of their birthdays and they put my birthday on.
DAVID: Yes, the birthdays! The ending credits lasted forever!
FABIENNE (to David): Did you watch Club Dorothée?
DAVID: Of course, they showed Dragon Ball and Olive et Tom (Captain Tsubasa).
BRIGITTE: Oh yes! Olive et Tom!
CHRISTINE: I watched Princess Sarah.
ANNE: Oh yes! Me too!
DAVID: Nicky Larson [from the manga Shitihantâ—City Hunter].
BRIGITTE: I watched Princess Sarah, Sailor Moon.
CHRISTINE: Me too, I loved it!

Everyone under the age of 40 with whom I had a conversation on the topic had similar reactions: “Dragon Ball Z, I watched Dragon Ball Z, it was aired on Club Dorothée, that was something Club Dorothée!” (37-year-old male); “First [I watched] Récré A2, then Club Dorothée. ( . . .) there was Goldorak, Goldorak, that I remember. ( . . .) Les Filles du Docteur March [Ai no Wakasu Monogatari/Little Women], and Princess Sarah, a little later” (33-year-old female); “The Club Dorothée showed a lot of cartoons. There was Candy, Remi sans Famille . . .” (33-year-old male), “It was Goldorak, Albator, in other words, it was Dorothée! [C’était Dorothéé quoi!]” (40-year-old male).

If Dorothée’s programs did broadcast heavy doses of Japanese animation they also aired, however, a lot of other things—the French-produced Boule et Bill, Bibifoc, Johan et Pirlouit, and Clémentine, the American Fantastic Four, Masters of the Universe, George of the Jungle, Thundercats, and Spiderman, to name only a few. Furthermore, the immediate early success of Goldorak and Candy quickly prompted the development of numerous Franco-Japanese or Euro-Japanese co-productions that further blurred and complicated anime’s cultural origins. The 1981 Franco-Japanese Ulysse 31 loosely inspired, as its name suggests, by Homer’s Odyssey and the 1983 Franco-Luxembourgian-Japanese series Les Mystérieuses Cités d’Or (Taiyô no Ko Esuteban) relating the travels of a young Spanish boy to the New World in 1532 (it aired in Japan on the educational NHK public channel) were most frequently mentioned in interviews. Both are still
quite popular today, due in part to the fact that parents like to introduce their children to these highly influential texts. As one father explained, “I really liked Ulysse 31, and in fact, I introduced [my daughter] to it, I have the whole series, from the first to the last episode. [. . .] The Cités d’Or also, we know it all,” to which his daughter added, “I have the theme song!” One informant even suggested that a young boy named Esteban who attended the village’s school was named after the Cités d’Or’s main character (the show was still airing on French television in the summer of 2014).

Thus, Japanese animation entered the French media market as one element of a large repertoire of native, non-native, and co-produced texts. As Tom Sawyer, Capitaine Flam, and La Chanson de Candy joined such diverse titles as Bécassine, C’est Guignol, Comme Tintin, Babar, Bravo Popeye, Allons Chanter avec Mickey [Let’s Go Sing with Mickey], Snoopy, Mon Pinocchio, Les Schtroumpfs [The Smurfs], The Little Ewoks (yes, the ones from Star Wars), and the theme songs for Disney’s Davy Crockett or Rax et Rouky (The Fox and the Hound), in the repertoires of Dorothée and Chantal Goya, anime’s hugely popular characters joined a hybrid cast of global and local icons.

When Candy Met Asterix: Bandes Dessinées as a Vector of Manga’s Penetration

In the case of manga (which started to be distributed en masse in France in the 1990s) this process was further facilitated by the huge popularity and cultural influence of bandes dessinées (BD)—the much-celebrated Franco-Belgian comic books—that created a particularly favorable cultural terrain for the reception of the genre. Indeed, ever since the 1929 arrival of Tintin, the young Belgian reporter, on the Francophone popular cultural scene—followed by the Franco-Belgian Spirou et Fantasio in 1938, Lucky Luke in 1946, Gason Lagaffe in 1957, and the legendary Gaulois Astérix et Obélix in 1959 (whose magic-potion-induced resistance to Roman domination and encounters with such mythical figures as Julius Caesar and Cleopatra have made them some of the most globally famous “French” citizens despite the fact that their story takes place before France existed as a nation)—bandes dessinées have become an integral part of France’s cultural identity. It is also a celebrated component of Francophone global cultural capital.

The fact that two of the three floors of the small community library I frequently visit when in France (located in a village of approximately 1,200 inhabitants) are dedicated to bandes dessinées and other graphic novels from around the globe—I found Jiro Taniguchi and Natsuo Sekikawa’s excellent historical manga series The Times of Botchan there—provides an anecdotal illustration of
the genre’s importance. So does the fact that the original artwork for the cover of *Tintin en Amérique* [*Tintin in America*], the third volume of the *Adventures of Tintin* series published in 1932, recently sold for 1.3 million Euros at an auction in Paris (Lévêques and Johnny, 2012).

With comments such as “I had a neighbor friend whose father had all of [the Tintin and Asterix] [. . .] and it’s thanks to her that I read them all—I didn’t own all of them, but I have read them all” (40-year-old woman); “I didn’t have a lot of them at home, but I got some from my cousins” (43-year-old man); “I visited people who had adolescent children and they read a lot of Asterix and Obelix, or Gaston Lagaffe, so it made it easy because they lent us their books” (37-year-old man); “[Our daughters] are very much into BD’s right now. They started with the ones we had at home, with Asterix,” (42-year-old mother); and “there are so many BD’s, I can’t even tell you which ones [I read the most]” (13-year-old girl), the French media consumers I interviewed illustrated the extent to which *bandes dessinées* were simply an unavoidable feature of growing up in France.

As a result, French informants all remembered reading *bandes dessinées* in their youth—*Tintin, Asterix, Gaston Lagaffe, Lucky Luke, Iznogoud, Les Schtroumpfs, Yoko Tsuno, Les Tuniques Bleues*, but also more “adult” fare such as *Le Cinquième Evangile, Le Génie des Alpages, and Rubrique à Brac*—and, often, U.S. comics as well. As a 33-year-old man recalled, “my sister loved the Marvels. So, I ended up reading them all because she had a lot of them. So there was Spiderman and the entire Wolverine team, Captain America and all of that . . .” Many continued to read them into adulthood—as a 43-year-old man quoted above added: “I’m in the process of buying them all again.”

Perhaps because *bandes dessinées* are more similar to Japanese manga than to American comics in their stylistic and thematic diversity (which ranges from science fiction and fantasy in texts such as *Yoko Tsuno, Lanfeust de Troy, and La Quête de l’Oiseau du Temps* to youth-oriented fare such as *The Smurfs*) and also because they are targeted to and read by adults as well as younger audiences, manga quickly resonated with French audiences. As Hermelin contends, “[manga’s] popularity can no doubt be explained by the presence of a style common to these genres” (2000, p. 140; see also Garrigue, 2004, p. 110). Manga also offer a convenient, relatively cheaper alternative to the hardbound *bandes dessinées* that are released less frequently and sell for about €10 ($12 to $15) each.

As a result, manga integrated relatively easily into the French media market. In fact, France is one of the largest markets for the sale of manga outside Japan, bringing in 50 percent of all European sales (Davidson, 2012). While the distinctive aesthetic qualities of the Japanese texts are generally recognized, however, manga are not necessarily perceived in France—as is the
tendency among U.S. fans (Napier, 2005, 2007)—as an entirely separate category. Manga are now exhibited at the Frankfurt international book fair and celebrated at the Angoulême festival, the “Mecca of Franco-Belgian BD” (Gar-rigue, 2004, p. 109). Even at the production level, manga and Franco-Belgian bande dessinée are becoming increasingly linked. For example, French cartoonist Frédéric Boilet’s Nouvelle Manga movement “aligns like-minded creators of bande dessinée (BD) and manga under one conceptual banner” (Vollmar, 2007, p. 34) and encourages French and Japanese artists to collaborate (see also Boilet, 2006). In sharp contrast to the clearly dichotomized treatment of foreign and domestic production in the cultural policies of the French government, the consumption of manga and anime has come to represent one (important) dimension of French consumers’ multidimensional engagement with global cultural production.

Anime and U.S. Academic Cultural Imperialism

Aside from challenging the stereotype of France as a culturally arrogant nation closed to outside influences, the differences between anime and manga’s encounters with the French and U.S. cultural contexts point to the dangers of assuming that the Anglo-American experience of (trans)cultural negotiation matches that of the rest of the West.

On the most basic level, this assumption leads to inaccuracies in the assessment of the possible factors of influence that might have led to anime and manga’s popularity in “the West.” For instance, the common argument that anime’s “far more open approach to sex and nudity” (Napier, 2007, p. 135)—which, according to Price is “from a Western perspective, certainly one of [its] most shocking features” (2001, p. 159, emphasis mine)—had an important impact (both negative and positive) on the genre’s initial reception in “the West,” does not fully apply to the fairly large portions of “the West” where sex and nudity are approached in a much more open manner (both visually and culturally) than in the United States.

Similarly, the notion that anime provides an antidote to the formulaic happy endings of “Western” texts and allows “Western” audiences “to ‘break the rules’ of Western culture, to go beyond the Hollywood happy endings, or the need for a defined good and evil” (Napier, 2007, p. 204) may apply to parts of the U.S. audience. It does not adequately explain, however, the genre’s attraction for the large portion of the “Western” audience for whom ambiguity and non-happy endings—including in texts targeted at younger audiences—are more culturally resonant. I was recently reminded, for instance, of the uncomfortably unsettling ending of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s much celebrated Le Petit Prince, read by most French children as they enter third grade (and
highly popular in Japan) when, incidentally, reading its graphic novel version (found in the public library described above) with my children. Remi tragically loses most of his companions in the course of his coming-of-age voyage through France in both the French novel and the Japanese animated series. Hollywood and Disney, while certainly globally influential, are not the only “Western” texts available to worldwide audiences.

This positioning of the United States as the natural representative of “the West” ignores the experiences and cultural contributions of non-U.S. (particularly non-English speaking) “Westerners” and essentializes both “the West” and Japan. As values most closely associated with U.S. culture are uncritically attributed to all of “the West”—as when Yamanaka contrasts Miyazaki’s texts with the Calvinist ethic of rugged individualism, which he links to the United States but describes as “the Western model” (2008, p. 245)—“Western culture” is treated as if it were a singular homogenized entity (see, for example, Napier, 2005, 2007).

Perhaps more disturbingly, failing to compare anime and manga to a broader set of transnational cultural references results in a limited understanding of their significance as Japanese genres. Too close a focus on the U.S. context produces descriptions that “tend to reinforce exoticism and neo-nationalism” (Berndt, 2008, p. 297) by characterizing anime and manga as unique and peculiar.

Because anime consumption in the United States developed as a fan activity initially “very closely intertwined with the SF and comics fandoms from which it has grown” (Patten, 2004, p. 57; see also Cooper-Chen, 2010), U.S. consumers’ engagement with the genre is generally more exclusive than in France or Japan—and, as noted above, not quite as widespread. Cultural critic Henri Jenkins’ description of manga and anime’s entrance into the U.S. market “through small distributors who targeted Asian immigrants” and of its spread through “fans [who] would venture into ethnic neighborhoods in search of content” or “start their own small-scale (and sometimes pirate) operations” (2011, p. 550) powerfully contrasts with Goldorak’s or Candy’s spectacular and very public (remember the Paris Match cover) entry onto the French popular cultural scene.

The relatively narrow focus on a more “culturally fragrant” repertoire—which typically does not include anime and manga’s engagement with European or North American cultural productions (Heidi, Tom Sawyer, Remi, Anne of Green Gables)—further amplifies the tendency to characterize these genres as exotic and different. Price concludes, for instance, that “the way anime uses its medium of animation is so fundamentally different from the artistic tradition of Walt Disney, that it creates a freshly intriguing aroma that lures foreigners
into its mist [sic]” (2001, p. 166, emphasis mine). Napier contends that “anime, at least until very recently, has been uncompromisingly true to its Japanese roots” (2007, p. 5). Celebrated manga aficionado and popular author Frederik Schodt claims that manga are “an open window onto the Japanese id, a view—not necessarily of reality itself—but of a culture’s aspirations, dreams, nightmares, fantasies, and fetishes” (2008, p. vii).

This positioning of anime and manga as both highly distinctive and “representative” of Japanese culture powerfully resonates with the nationalist discourse on Japanese uniqueness promoted in Japan by conservative politicians and critics. Jacqueline Berndt, a German-born scholar who teaches at Yokohama National University, challenges such claims of “national particularity” (2008, p. 305). She warns, however, that “from a foreign perspective it is easy to repeat this position without realizing its essential conservatism” (2008, p. 305; see also Vollmar, 2007). This positioning also obscures the presence of more prosaic non-cultural factors contributing to the Japanese genres’ global popularity.

Indeed, if fans’ engagement with anime and manga certainly facilitated their global spread (Leonard, 2005), the facts that their exportation turned out to be highly economically viable and that the Japanese government has come to recognize them as significant tools of Japanese transnational influence—as illustrated by the Japanese Ministry of Education prize established in 1990 (Kinko, 2008)—are equally significant. In a move that he qualifies as a case of “soft nationalism,” Asian and Religious studies scholar Mark MacWilliams notes, for instance, that since the Iraq war, the Japan foundation has made the broadcasting of the Captain Tsubasa (Olive et Tom in French) series—highly popular as Captain Majed in the Middle East since the 1990s—on Iraqi national television “one of the key priorities of its cultural diplomacy” (2008, pp. 15, 16). The Japanese coalition forces even obtained permission to put Captain Tsubasa stickers on their trucks. As he concludes, “In effect, Captain Tsubasa as ‘Captain Majed’ became an important part of the Japanese government’s public relations campaign to propagandize its reconstruction efforts. . . . Here, Japanimation is used as a cipher of Japanese identity” (2008, p. 16). Political scientist Peng Er Lam similarly locates the use of manga and anime as “instruments of global outreach and appeal” within a larger effort on the part of the Japanese government to promote a “cheerful ‘Japan Cool’ thesis” (2007, pp. 353, 352) seeking to burnish Japan’s international image (see also Condry, 2009).

Pointing to the fact that anime and manga constitute “an extraordinary successful culture industry,” Berndt also reminds us that their characterization as specifically Japanese, in what she deems a form of “economic Japa-
neseness,’” powerfully serves the business interests of Japanese producers (2008, p. 299). In a similar vein, Casey Brienza argues in an article in Publishing Research Quarterly that manga’s recent popularity in the United States has more to do with a shift in publishing and distribution practices than with a sudden infatuation with Japanese culture. Critiquing current research for “relying extensively upon nebulous notions of textual exceptionalism and/or emphasizing Japan’s unique talent for the creation of escapist fantasies with cross-cultural appeal,” she suggests that the publishing industry’s decision to migrate manga “from the comics field into the book field” (2009, p. 104) by redefining them as “graphic novels” to be sold in non-specialized stores is a better explanation for their growth in market share. While such factors are certainly not the only explanation for manga and anime’s popularity, they point to the need to develop a more nuanced understanding of the articulation of different dimensions of the genre responsible for its global spread.

Unfortunately, the tendency to remain strictly focused on Japan and the United States as the two main axes on which manga and anime’s status is considered results in a rather limited portrayal of global power dynamics. Japanese influence becomes an antidote to the alleged homogenizing nature of U.S.-dominated globalization: “In a world where American domination of mass culture is often taken for granted and local culture is frequently seen as either at odds with or about to be subsumed into hegemonic globalism, anime stands out as a site of implicit cultural resistance,” writes Napier (2005, p. 9). Noting that “when Disney held the international monopoly on entertainment, ‘globalization’ was synonymous with ‘Americanization,’” MacWilliams argues that “‘Japanization’ is now a dominant transnational economic and cultural force” (2008, p. 13). In her otherwise compelling study of Japanese characters’ entry into the global imagination, cultural anthropologist Anne Allison similarly concludes: “At work here is a new kind of global imagination: new, at least, in the way it differs from an older model of Americanization” (2006, p. 275). A more translocal approach points to a more interesting phenomenon.

Anime and Manga’s Multiple Resonances

Because, like hip-hop, anime and manga are globally linked to a vast array of cultural texts, considering them solely in terms of their ability to provide the world with “a window to Japan” (Poitras, 2008, p. 65)—just as considering contemporary global hip-hop solely in relationship to African American culture—does not do justice to their complexity. On a global scale, anime and manga might resonate with audiences in different cultural environments not only because they promote some sort of universal human values, as some
scholars argue (see, for example, Yoshioka, 2008), but also because they resonate on different levels with a variety of elements in a given popular cultural context, including, but not limited to, “native” ones.

Indeed, the anime versions of Heidi, Remi sans Famille (Je Naki Ko Remi), and Belle et Sébastien (Meiken Jorii) resonated with French audiences in part because they were based on familiar French or European children’s literature—as a woman in her 50s put it, “They were from our own books.” They also represented environments intimately familiar to French viewers. With comments such as “Heidi, it was—quote and quote—‘our mountains’” (42-year-old woman); “Heidi it was for me, so faithful to our own lives, I mean for me, I lived in the Alps, in the mountains, it was so faithful to the Alps, the Alpine pasture” (32-year-old woman); or “I spent much of my childhood among the cows and the herds, and because there were [in Remi sans Famille] cows, fairs, people trading things and everything, you found yourself [in that universe] and you told yourself ‘yes, it corresponds to the model’” (39-year-old male), informants suggested that these texts represented their own lives. As a result, they sometimes found it difficult to reconcile these representations with the texts’ Japanese origin—as the 42-year-old woman quoted above put it, “I had trouble projecting it elsewhere.”

Thus, the most interesting aspect of anime and manga is the extent to which they are able to blur cultural origin and loosen the requirements of cultural representation. As Japanese studios offer their animated versions of popular American and European literature and locate their quintessentially shôjo manga in foreign settings (as in Candy and the hugely popular Rose of Versailles [Lady Oscar in French] set in France at the time of the revolution), as Belgian artist Roger Leloup chooses to make his main character, Yoko Tsuno, Japanese in his famous 1969 science-fiction bande dessinée, as Japanese artists and French and Luxembourgian directors collaborate to tell the story of a young Spanish boy’s 16th-century voyage to Latin America (Les Mystérieuses Cités d’Or/Taiyô no Ko Esuteban), they break down the boundaries of cultural representation.

When French viewers watch Candy, they, consequently, are not only engaging with foreign culture through their consumption of a text that is clearly visually marked as Japanese (and part of the larger specifically Japanese category of shôjo manga/anime) but also through their consumption of an exotized (Japanese) version of America—the opening lines of the first episode state that the story takes place “on the shores of Lake Michigan.” For a generation of French television viewers (of which I am part), Tom Sawyer is first and foremost the main (American) character of a Japanese anime text rather than the hero of a Mark Twain novel. And the aforementioned Totally Spies!—popular both in the United States and Japan—can draw from Japanese anime
in its overall visual aesthetic, situate its main characters in a United States context (the three “spies” live in Beverly Hills), and be popularized as a French series all at the same time.

Thus, Napier is correct when she positions anime “at the forefront of creating an alternative cultural discourse that goes beyond the traditional categories of ‘native’ or ‘international’ to participate in what may well be a genuinely new form of global culture” (2005, p. 292). As she notes, this “global culture” has less to do with geography than with a broader engagement with an imagined global scape. When the French-language version of the Japanese Tom Sawyer anime series’ opening song states that “Tom Sawyer, c’est l’Amérique, le symbole de la liberté [Tom Sawyer, it’s America, the symbol of freedom]” it is not referring to the actual geopolitical and territorially based entity that we know as the United States, but to the global imagination of “America” as a mythical land of opportunity—an imagination to which the show powerfully contributed. It is the imagined America of the French expression “c’est l’Amérique” used to refer to great opulence or an extremely positive outcome, rather than that of Bush or even Obama. Tom Sawyer’s or Candy’s popularity in both France and Japan suggests that this imagination is translocally shared—in fact, the Japanese and French media consumers who participate in my research often express a very similar mix of admiration (as a producer of high-quality cultural texts) and anxiety (as a potentially cultural imperialist nation) toward the United States.

This case study demonstrates that the “global culture” to which anime and manga contribute is significantly more complicated than descriptions couched in U.S. vs. “the rest” terms—where the United States stands as the putative representative of “the West”—can account for. Japanese animation is a lot more than a window on Japanese culture or an antidote to U.S. cultural imperialism. It is one contributor to the complex process of negotiating locality and globality as mutually constitutive elements—a process that may take on different shades and nuances in different contexts, but which, overall, profoundly shapes our collective contemporary condition. In other words, Japanese animation is and has long been an important contributor to the disjunctive messiness of imagining the global.

Indeed, the “global culture” Napier describes is not as new as she suggests. Engagement with a wide range of non-domestic or “partially domestic” (co-produced) texts and characters has long been commonplace in most areas of the world. This is certainly the case in both France and Japan where Snoopy, Garfield, Winnie the Pooh, Spiderman, and the Disney Princesses easily cohabit with the (French) Barbasapas, Gaspard et Lisa, the Little Prince, and Babar; the (Belgian) Tintin; the (Italian/Japanese) Calimero; the (Finnish) Moomins; and, of course, a cast of Japanese characters too numerous to
name. While the fast pace of evolution and increasingly diverse nature of globalized cultural forms spurred by the development of the Internet and other forms of digital communication is certainly noteworthy, what is, perhaps, most “new” and significant in the current development of “global culture” is the fact that the United States is starting to avidly consume (Kelts, 2007) rather than simply produce it. What is most interesting about recognizing the (often ignored) long history of Japanese animation’s complex contribution to global culture is the extent to which it was not—despite its long-standing global spread—previously part of U.S. consumers’ imagination of the global (at least not to the extent found in other parts of the world). In this sense, Napier (2007) is correct in identifying U.S. media consumers’ engagement with non-domestic anime and manga as an important turning point. It suggests that the experience of U.S. audiences’ is becoming more in line with that of individuals across the globe.

The potential repercussions of this shift, as well as the continuing significance of the United States’ historical influence, are further explored in our next chapter. Building on what we have learned so far about globalized cultural forms and drawing parallels between the three sites that constitute the focus of this book, the chapter provides a broader final exploration of the nature of individuals’ imagination of the global. It considers, in particular, how the different histories of transnational influence in these three sites have resulted in U.S. media consumers having a different relationship to both “global” and American texts than their Japanese and French counterparts.