

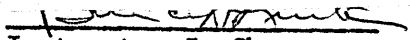
HISTORICAL TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT
AS THEY RELATE TO CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

By

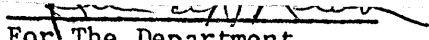
Mimi D. Cazana
B.A., University of Tennessee, 1969

Submitted to the Department of
Radio-Television-Film and the
Faculty of the Graduate School of
the University of Kansas in
partial fulfillment of the re-
quirements for the degree of Master
of Arts.

Redacted Signature


Instructor In Charge

Redacted Signature


For The Department

HISTORICAL TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

AS THEY RELATE TO CHILDREN'S TELEVISION

	Page
CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION OF STUDY	1
A. Statement of problem	
B. Purpose of study	
C. Limitations of study	
D. Brief Description of study	
CHAPTER II. PRODUCTION TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT	5
A. Simplicity and humor	
B. Involvement	
C. Color	
D. Fantasy	
E. Morality	
CHAPTER III. PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT	33
A. Tokenism	
B. Criticism and regulation	
C. Impetus for change	
CHAPTER IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY	55

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

An ancient Greek philosopher addressed a youth; "Where you are, I have been," he said. "And where I am, you are coming." It is doubtful the youth understood what the old man said. But problems in communication between generations are inherent in life. It is because of these problems in communication that a study of children's entertainment is necessary. For entertainment or "play," oftentimes reflects a child's interests and his way of communicating.

Younger children, especially those in the two to five age bracket, are still forming base-line behavior. Their problem is that truth gets mixed up with fantasy. Whimsical fantasy, the kind that turns pumpkins to palaces, mice to kings, nothingness to everything, is basic to childhood. Yet fantasy which jells an attitude or social pattern into a child's actions is the type that should be carefully handled.

If the father of the man is the child, then the child's environment, particularly his pervasive communications environment, must be conducive to his healthful intellectual growth. It is a serious situation when a broadcaster doubts the importance of his responsibility in creating an opulent communications environment for the child audience.

An impressionable audience survives in a communications ecosystem where the natural elements should be truth and fairness. Surely in this environment impressionism should be the gift rather than the burden of the child audience. Or, to state it succinctly, the problem with the child audience is that (1) communications are extremely effective in creating opinions on ideas on which children have no pre-existing opinions and that (2) parents, teachers, and broadcasters often

communicate these first impressions. And finally, as child psychologist, Dr. Bruno Bettelheim notes in a Redbook article, "Parents vs. Television;"

Certain things that children have done since time immemorial, even before TV, have forced parents to ask themselves, 'where does my child get that from?' or, 'what's wrong with how I'm raising my child that he does it?' These are, after all, very constructive questions to ask, and very important ones. Only these questions are now sidestepped by saying, 'He got it from TV.'

Clearly, children's entertainment and children's television are important communications forces which help to shape youngsters' impressions of situations around them. But the problem with studying historical trends in children's entertainment, in relation to children's television, is that there is no exhaustive study written on the subject. There are books on children's drama; for instance, the Jed Davis work, Children's Theatre or the Winifred Ward book, Theatre for Children. There are numerous books on children's radio and television, including Dorothy Gordon's All Children Listen, the Wilbur Schramm, Edwin Parker and Jack Lyle classic, Television in the Lives of our Children, and the Hilde T. Himmelweit study, Television and the Child. There are books on myths and legend that include references to children's entertainment, including Thomas Bulfinch's Golden Age of Myth and Legend and McLuhan's Understanding Media. There are even notable reports written on children's television by Federal Communications Commission Children's Director, Elizabeth Roberts, one being Some Highlights of Children's Television. FCC economist, Dr. Alan Pearce, made a study of The Economics of Network Children's Television Programming. There is even a doctoral dissertation which includes a helpful outline of the history of children's television: Maurice E. Shelby's 1963 Ohio State

dissertation, The Impact of Discovery, A Network Television Children's Program, on a Child Audience, Ages Seven to Twelve. But there is no study available on the precise subject of trends in children's entertainment and how these trends have influenced children's television. There is a great need for more research in this area. The state of the art in children's television is critical at this point in time 1973. According to Dean Burch, chairman of the FCC, government pressure to improve the state of the art is a distinct possibility. In an address before the 1973 National Association of Broadcasters, Burch commented:

Three years ago... I laid down a blanket critique of children's programming and children's network programming in particular. Three years, many petitions, and several Commission proceedings later, my judgment is that not very much as really changed.... The problems remain and so do the deficiencies.

The purpose of this thesis is to take a look backward through the history of children's entertainment and try to find the seeds of children's television program concepts. Why is animation so successful with children? Why have puppets survived thousands of years in children's entertainment? Why is the morality play forever alive in children's fare? This thesis will attempt to answer these and other questions.

This study is by no means exhaustive. It does not include a survey of feature-length motion pictures filmed for children, nor does it include a review of children's literature. Rather, it features highlights of certain trends in children's entertainment. The findings in this thesis are at least a start. If children's programming on commercial television is to improve, we must first understand its possible origins and development. There are additional limitations to this thesis. The writer excludes lengthy references to violence in children's

fare, and she does not attempt to discuss the overall "effect" of entertainment forms on children.

A brief description of this thesis is as follows: Chapter Two examines production trends and techniques in children's entertainment, as they relate to children's television. This includes scripting techniques, the question of humor, fantasy and morality, and a thoughtful approach to the matter of simplified communication for children throughout the ages.

Chapter Three considers the philosophical trends in children's entertainment, i.e., what attitude adults have held as they approached the question of children's fare from the days of Socrates. This chapter points out that tokenism and regulation have existed in some form or another since the beginning of children's entertainment.

Chapter Four offers summary and conclusions. It also offers suggestions for the future of children's television, in particular.

CHAPTER TWO

PRODUCTION TRENDS AND TECHNIQUES IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

Before delving into an historical perspective of the child and his place in religious pageants, miracle and morality plays, radio and television, it is necessary to consider the child firstly in his own light and for himself. In The Cult of Childhood, George Boas reflects that childhood is something inherently different from manhood, and that it has its own rights and privileges. The chief of these is the right to be itself.

Several philosophers and writers state this innocence quite beautifully, and Boake dedicated "Songs of Innocence" and "Songs of Experience" to the children of England. Wordsworth, Montaigne, Rousseau, and Shelly wrote about childhood as a thing apart from adulthood, a state of being that was almost sacred. Even film maker, Robert Flaherty, referred to the "innocent eye" in his film techniques as a secret to tenderness and understanding. Artist Paul Klee attempts a child-likeness in several of his works. And even in modern posters, children's pictures accompany rather adult philosophies that "War is not healthy for children and other living things."

Certainly, then, childhood is not considered a time of ignorance and ineptitude. Rather, it is considered by some as the most enlightened time of an individual's life, where one is yet fresh to the world around him. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century, philosophers regarded the child as a "miniature adult," and attempted to dispell the theory that childhood was something very special. This was a position diametrically opposed to the Wordsworthian concept of childhood.

During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth century, research leaned

heavily on methods formulated from adult viewpoints rather than dependence on methodology and facts proven from child research.

This research, beginning and continuing greatly in the Twentieth century, notably from establishments such as the Clinic of Child Development at Yale, becomes incrementally important for not only parents but for all adults who deal with children or a child audience. Problems arise from the superimposition of adult standards on a child's viewpoint or on a child's efforts at a project. To illustrate this interpretive discrepancy, consider the example of a modern child who is "playing" by arranging and re-arranging patterns of dirt, matchsticks, and other fragments. This is his way of telling us how far he has gotten with his life. But many adults would call it untidiness.

The youngster produces "play" to communicate. But how many adults can discern the difference between pattern-formation of objects and dirt on the floor? And how many adults in drama, radio or television, transfer this same lack of judgment to the children's productions they mount? Few adults have the fresh viewpoint of a Bob Keeshan, the host of "Captain Kangaroo," or the insight to a child's fears that Fred Rogers displays. And few produce quality children's productions.

In terms of this thesis, the word, "production" means the method by which an idea becomes reality. This includes production in religious pageantry, all forms of theatre, radio and television. Production includes materials, props, set design, scripting techniques, financial matters, technical facilities, schedules, and methods used for bringing an idea to life. A producer is the person in charge of

1
Herbert Zettl, Television Production Handbook, (Belmont 1968)
p. 408.

these matters. He is also the one who chooses the cast, or in the case of television, the host or hostess for a children's production. Oftentimes at local stations in small markets the producer is solely responsible for selection of the host, with a guaranteed agreement from management.

In children's entertainment throughout history, one production problem producers must meet before any other is: "how can I simplify my message?" or, to put it another way, "what method should I use to communicate simply, yet effectively, to children?"

This is a very important question, for children understand directness, not subtleties. Unless a producer can get his idea across simply, he is likely to lose his child audience. Children have an innocent, simplified view of life: good triumphs over evil, proper deeds are rewarded, improper deeds are punished, and every question has an answer.

This trend of thinking applies not only to the child but also to the culturally primitive who view the world innocent of all arts and sciences.² The primitive Australian aboriginee, for instance, depicts a simplified, child-like view of life by drawing "stick figure" animals on the cave walls of Ayers Rock. Sometimes he depicts animals in an "x-ray" type of drawing, which reveals bones, entrails, skin and all. This type of art "technique" corresponds to types of children's art. The primitive mind simultaneously views objects simply and in their entirety. The first seed of successful communication with children is simplicity, and this trend of simplicity prevails throughout children's entertainment.

Two of the most successful production techniques in children's television reflect the popularity of simplicity in dealing with a child audience. These techniques are puppetry and animation.

Imagine dancing stick figures in the aboriginee cave drawing. This is the effect of shadow puppets, used in India two hundred years before Christ.³ Shadow puppets were simple in design, their purpose centered around an identifiable outline. When they were brought out of darkness, dressed up a bit, and given voices, they became hand or stick puppets. They became patterns for puppets that would be used in television 2,000 years later.

Some of the first stick puppets delighted children as early as the second century, A.D. when the Roman Emperor, Hadrean, built the first puppet theatre. Potheinos, a Greek puppeteer in the third century, A.D., added strings to the limbs of his puppets and operated them from above the stage.⁴ These were the earliest marionettes.

Puppets continued, and in the Middle Ages children viewed puppetry within the confines of religious education. The Medieval Church found puppets useful in transmitting religious teaching, especially in roving street-wagons. The children would sit on the curb, facing the wagon's side, and when the curtain was drawn, they would see six cubicles. In each cubicle puppets enacted a scene, perhaps the Last Supper, or the birth of the Christ child. [This production technique of using cubicles featuring various puppet characters was transplanted almost intact

3

Bil Baird, The Art of the Puppet (New York, 1965), p. 102.

4

Ibid., p. 16.

to children's television in "Curiosity Shop," an American Broadcasting Company show for children which premiered in 1972.⁵ Street-wagon puppets then acted in non-religious drama, usually commenting on social, moral, or political issues, of interest to adults as well as children.

When English Theatre entertainment was banned in 1653, puppets survived.⁵ Oliver Cromwell could not stifle the popular Punch and Judy. Punch and Judy were simply designed puppets with protruding noses. Punch was always at odds with his surroundings, and young children trying to grow up in an unfamiliar world could understand that all too easily. Punch and Judy played to adult audiences, as well as children on Sundays. One Sunday morning in 1710, as the ten o'clock chimes called worshipers to church, the townspeople took the bells as a sign that "Punch was playing" and flocked to the puppet show rather than the pews. These incidents eventually took care of Punch's Sunday morning performances.⁶

Punch is known today to children throughout the world by different names: the Italian Polichenelle, the German Hansworst, the Russian Petrouchka, the Czech Kasporet, and the Hungarian Vitez Laszlo. A Bergen's "Charlie MacCarthy" or a televised "Kukla" of Burr Tilstrom's "Kukla, Fran and Ollie," both possess off-shoot characteristics of the granddaddy puppet of all time: Punch.

In children's television circles there are several rules of thumb.⁷ One is "if possible, use a puppet," the second is "get a laugh." A comical puppet offers children several things. He is usually likable,

⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

⁶ Ibid., p. 103.

⁷ Conference with George Heinemann, V.P. for Children's Television at NBC-TV. Conference held at WRTV, Channel 6, Indianapolis in March, 1972.

colorful and animated. He is small, and a child identifies with his size. But more importantly, a puppet can make mistakes. He can be corrected by another puppet or a "host" or by children themselves. Consequently, he offers television writers an avenue for giving advice to youngsters.

"Kukla", Tilstrom's bulb-nosed puppet, once had a cold and had to blow his nose. "I'll get a handkerchief" his friend, Oliver Dragon, offered. "Nope," Kukla said, and blew his nose on the curtain. That week in 1952, the National Broadcasting Company received over 800 handkerchiefs in the mail, some from parents. But some were from children who had been taught the right way to blow their noses, and they wanted to pass it on to their friend, Kukla, who obviously needed their help.

A second example of the success of puppetry in children's television is the financial and rating success of "Howdy Doody". "Howdy Doody Time" aired in 1948 on NBC-TV, and it might be considered the prototype children's show with a live host, marionette, and studio audience. "Howdy Doody" netted a weekday audience of over 6.5 million children and netted its host, "Buffalo Bob", over a quarter of a million dollars in one year. "Buffalo Bob", freckle-faced, red-headed "Howdy Doody", and other live characters sang, acted in humorous skits, and offered children educational hints on living. "Howdy Doody" and his puppet friends remained on NBC-TV until 1964 when they were replaced by "I Married Joan", a program designed for broad-based family appeal, rather than specific children's fare. This trend of replacing children's

shows with "family" programs in the mid 1950's, was partially responsible for the disappearance of numerous shows featuring puppets. The trend will be discussed later in this thesis.

There are several radio and television network children's programs that have featured marionettes, ventriloquists and dummies, and puppets throughout the years, in addition to "Howdy Doody" and "Kukla, Fran and Ollie". "Edgar Bergen and Charlie MacCarthy" were popular on radio and later on television. "Shari Lewis" and "Lambchop" were favorites on the "Shari Lewis Show." The "Muppets" appeared on the highly successful "Sesame Street," and "Mister Rogers Neighborhood" featured puppets. Bil Baird's puppets performed in specials like "Peter and the Wolf." These programs were all acclaimed for their appeal to children.

Before leaving the subject of puppetry in children's television, the impact of this trend on local television shows for children should be noted. Beginning in 1970, due to several factors in broadcast management, government regulation and public awareness, a trend toward more quality local programming for children emerged. A special issue of P.D. Cue Magazine, a magazine for television program executives, took a national survey of local children's shows. Out of 44 local programs featured in the issue "Programs for Children" 26, or over 57%,⁹ involved the use of puppets in the production.

Puppets are more than fragile creatures of fantasy. They are thriving citizens of a healthy population, seemingly immune to centuries

of change in children's entertainment.

Animation

If puppets are well-established citizens of children's television, so are their simple counterparts: animated figures. In simplest terminology, animated figures are moving images, and moving shadows on a cave wall would qualify for a crude type of animation, comparable perhaps to moving silhouettes on a windowshade.

Animated figures fascinate a young child, for in psychological terms, children are animistic. They attribute life to inanimate objects, such as clouds or blowing leaves. In the history of children's entertainment, the most successful productions are those which coupled the proper animism to the proper age group.

For instance, children between 4 and 6 believe everything is alive, unless broken or damaged; therefore, the spooky talking trees in Washington Irving's Legend of Sleepy Hollow would horrify this age group.

Children six and seven believe everything that moves is alive, and puppets fit this category. Children eight to ten believe everything that moves by itself is alive, and animal stories fit the group particularly well. Older children reserve "life" for animals and plants.

In Laws, Socrates commented on children's entertainment. He said the "...artistic tastes of little children rise no higher than the puppet show and those of youth are satisfied with comedies." Cartoons

10

Zettl. op. cit., p. 254.

11

Robert Watson, Psychology of the Child (New York, 1965), p. 313.

12

Peter Slade, Child Drama (London, 1956), p. 22.

are one form of comedy, and they have satisfied children since 1903.

One of the first humorously animated features was produced by Winsor McCay, creator of the "Little Nemo" comic strip. McCay animated "Gertie The Dinosaur" on film in 1903. "Gertie" drank a whole lake dry, then by rolling the film backwards, spit it all out again. Today this animated stunt would still hold water, as far as a child audience is concerned. However, it was Walt Disney, not McCay who perfected the techniques of animation and humor, and produced the first series of "cartoons" for a child audience. This series was called "Alice in Cartoonland." These first "Cartoons" were animated short subjects about five to six minutes in length. In the field of children's television Disney's cartoon features, as well as animated features from Walter Lantz and Paul Terry were some of the first "Cartoons" that went from the movie houses to the television screen in the late 1940's and early 1950's. One of the easiest, and most lucrative, local television formats during this "pioneering" period in children's television was the cartoon show featuring a live studio host. "Bugs Bunny Club", the "Popeye Club", "Uncle Al", and "Bozo the Clown" were formats adapted to local talent in hundreds of markets throughout the country.

Although cartoons and cartoon shows were popular with children throughout the early years of children's television, they did not begin

13 Richard Schickel, The Disney Version (New York, 1969), p. 80.

14 Ibid., p. 84.

15 For example, WATE-TV, Channel 6 in Knoxville, Tennessee the "Popeye Club" ran from 1952 to 1970. At WFBM-TV in Indianapolis, Indiana, the "Harlow & Curly Show" ran from 1958 to 1972.

to dominate television fare for the young set until the late 1950's. It was the American Broadcasting Company that fostered two full-length animated shows for children. These two children's shows were "Rocky and his Friends" and "Mattie's Funday Funnies." These programs were not the six-minute featurette cartoons which aired primarily in movie houses. They were fully-animated, half-hour television programs.

"Rocky and his Friends" was re-titled "The Bullwinkle Show" in 1960.

It became one of the longest running children's shows on ABC and was still on the air in 1973, the date of this thesis. ¹⁶

The "Mattie's Funday Funnies" became "Matties Funnies with Beany & Cecil," and eventually became "Beany & Cecil" in 1963. ¹⁷

However, it was 1964 before animation became the staple of Saturday morning children's fare. Again, it was ABC that lead the way in animation. In 1964, trying to make their Saturday morning line-up even more competitive, ABC-TV introduced a King Features Syndicate production called "The Beatles." This was an animated show built around the adventures of the Beatles singing group, composed of the English quartet of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and George Harrison. According to network heads at that time, "The Beatles" changed Saturday morning children's programming.

This program energized all three networks to develop and/or purchase new shows specifically tailored for the "...Saturday morning cartoon oasis..." that followed. "We responded to ABC," CBS Program Executive, Fred Silverman, said. "We re-programmed our entire Saturday

16

ABC-TV Program File.

17

Correspondence with Sody Clampett. Bob Clampett Productions, Inc. Hollywood, California.

morning schedule. We spent large sums for new [animated] programs,
 18
 and so did the other networks."

Between 1964 and 1969, the ABC-TV network, now in control of the Saturday morning children's audience, aired 28 new shows. Nineteen of these, or 67.8% were animated. It is interesting to note the titles of these programs as they ushered in what might be called the "Period of Animation;" the show titles were all simple and no doubt delighted young ears by their sounds. Besides "The Beatles", the other animated shows were: "Bullwinkle," "Hoppity Hooper," "Porky Pig," "Milton the Monster," "Peter Pontamus Show," "Linus the Lionhearted," "King Kong," "Spiderman," "Fantastic Four," "George of the Jungle," "Journey to the Center of the Earth," "Fantastic Voyage," "Adventures of Gulliver," "Dudley Do-Right," "The Hardy Boys," "The Cattanooga Cats," "Hot
 19
 Wheels," "The Smokey Bear Show."

The cumulative effort of all the networks running animated shows on Saturday morning resulted in a jungle of cartoons, which peaked during the 1969-70 and 1970-71 seasons, and Socrates' comment turned out to be an accurate historical observation on children's fare over 2,000 years later.

Involvement

If the first rule of production for children is simplicity and humor, the second would be involvement, for throughout the history of

18

Neil Hickey, "The Key Word is Entertainment", TV Guide (Oct. 18, 1969)
 p. 10.

19

ABC-TV Program Files.

children's entertainment, adults have tried to involve children, physically or emotionally, with the entertainment at hand.

In ancient feast days, it was customary to encourage the children in mass physical involvement. During the Festival of Dionysius, for instance, the ancient Greeks sent children on a type of "treasure hunt," to find lost pieces of a shattered statue of Dionysius, a god who exploded from his zest for life. Bulfinch reports another Athenian rite of tribute to Minos, the King of Crete, where seven youths and seven girls were sent to Crete to be symbolically "devoured" by the Minotaur. 20

At Kinkelsbuhl, in Bavaria, the Germans involved their youngsters in a "Kinderzeche" or "Children's Reckoning." This festival commemorated the role of children in saving the small village from invading Swedes. 21
Christmas time always offered a special opportunity to involve children in pageants and in several Christian countries like Mexico and the United States, children would re-enact Mary and Joseph's search for an inn. In Mexico, this re-enactment is called a "posada."

The historical trend of involving children in basically religious theatrical ceremonies developed into training children for theatrical performances. Following the Middle Ages in England, children were used quite extensively in the theatre, primarily under the favor of Queen Elizabeth I. The Queen maintained two companies of child actors called the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, from 1597 to 1603. The Blackfriar children performed a play a week for Elizabeth. 22 Children's

20

Thomas Bulfinch, The Golden Age of Myth and Legend (London, 1915) p. 188.

21

Winifred Ward, Theatre for Children (New York, 1939), p. 18.

22

Charles William Wallace, The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597-1603 (Nebraska, 1908), p. 12.

companies were quite controversial during this period. For while Elizabeth's Blackfriar Boys were under royal right, other public theatre companies were shut down by royal order. William Shakespeare noted this controversy in Hamlet II, ii, ll. 350-370, where the prince speaks to his courtier, Rosencratz, about the strolling adult players whose business has suffered due to the Queen's favored boy players:

Hamlet: How comes it? Do they (adult players) grow rusty?

Ros: Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted place, but there is sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top question, and are most tyrannically clapped for it; these are now the fashion...²³

Children's companies and later, children's theatre in the United States, formed a solid foundation for involving the child in supervised entertainment. In 1903, American dramatist, Alice Minnie Herts Heniger, began the Children's Educational Theatre in New York. She attempted to involve underprivileged children in entertainment. She asked children from New York's lower East Side to attend the Children's Educational Theatre and build sets then act in stage productions. ²⁴ As "Sesame Street", the 1969-70 NET show which taught pre-schoolers letters and numbers, aimed at teaching underprivileged children, the beginning of children's theatre in the United States aimed at involving the underprivileged in a theatre experiment.

Children's theatre has influenced children's television greatly, particularly in instances where dramatic presentations are adapted to

23

Ibid., p. 13.

24

Jed Davis and Mary Jane Watkins, Children's Theatre (New York, 1960) p. 5.

television. Here, in the adaptation of a children's play for television, a producer can chop out scenes or bits of action not workable for the television audience. However, one element always adapted from a stage version, is intimate consultation with the audience. A scene in J. M. Barrie's "Peter Pan" illustrates this involvement.

Early in the play, Peter Pan addresses both the audience and another character, Wendy, on the subject of fairies, setting the scene for a crises later in the play. "Children know such a lot now" Peter says. "Soon they don't believe in fairies, and every time a child says, 'I don't believe in fairies,' there is a fairy somewhere that falls
25
down dead." Later in the play, the fairy, Tinkerbell, falls ill, and Peter Pan turns to the audience and pleads with them to clap, to indicate that they believe in fairies. This plea was included in the televised version of the play, giving the home audience a chance to become involved and "save Tinkerbell" by their clapping.

Several opportunities in children's television afford show hosts and hostesses the chance to ask their home audience to "do something." It might be a "close your eyes and let's visit" type of involvement where a child joins in the pretend by "closing his eyes,"
26
or the involvement could be the demonstration of a craft to be made at home.

Several programs in children's television history, particularly between the years of 1952 and 1957, used this technique of involving the audience quite well. CBS-TV offered "Captain Kangaroo" with host

25

J. M. Barrie, Peter Pan, a fantasy in five acts. (New York, 1928)
p. 23.

26

Used several times in locally-produced children's show, "Uncle Uri's Treasure" WRTV-Channel 6, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Bob Keeshan, in 1953. The Captain, never taking his eyes away from those of his home viewers, dealt with attitude formations, word and letter identifications, join-in sing-a-longs, and stories. ²⁷

NBC-TV introduced two programs during 1953-54 season, which were also high on audience involvement. They were "Mr. Wizard" and "Ding Dong School." "Mr. Wizard," portrayed by Don Herbert, was a show which explored the realm of science, and which encouraged home viewers to try experiments of their own. NBC-TV rescheduled "Mr. Wizard" in the 1971-72 season, after several years absence. "Ding Dong School" aimed at pre-schoolers, and taught how to make home crafts. The program was hosted by Dr. Frances Horwich known as "Miss Frances." ²⁸

In the history of children's television, there is one program that stands out in the area of audience involvement: "Winky Dink and You," which aired on the CBS television network between 1953 and 1958. ²⁹ This was a show written for high audience participation. The live studio host, Jack Barry, told stories which featured the animated tales of a star-faced pixie, "Winky Dink." Barry asked the children to participate in the show by "helping" Winky Dink through fearsome struggles. In order to help "Winky Dink," a commercial tie-up was involved. The kids had to buy a "Winky Dink" kit, which featured a green plastic sheet that fit over the TV set, and a box of grease crayons. The children drew bridges over which "Winky Dink" could flee charging bulls,

27 Richard K. Doan, "Shortchanging our Children," TV Guide (June 6, 1970) p. 31.

28 "WNBQ Rings the Bell; Ding Dong School," Newsweek, Vol. 41 (February 2, 1953), p. 74.

29 CBS Promotional Brochure.

ladders for him to climb, and windows through which he could escape. This show and the involvement it fostered, preceeded Marshall McLuhan's supposition about the television child:

Because the low definition of TV insures a high degree of audience involvement, the most effective programs are those that present situations which consist of some process to be completed.³⁰

There were several "involvement" shows for children during the 1950's, but most of these programs were phased out in favor of situation comedies in the 1960's. There is one major reason for this. Shows like "Winky Dink," "Captain Kangaroo" and "Ding Dong School" were expensive to produce and did not have the re-run value of films or cartoons. Following this period came the previously mentioned cutback in creativity on the part of network programmers, which lead to criticism in the early 1960's. However, by the 1970-71 season and 1971-72 seasons, in a "Period of New Concern," children's programs again showed an interest in creatively involving their audiences. Two shows created at this time deserve special mention: "Sesame Street," an NET production, and "Take a Giant Step," an NBC-TV program, although these two shows aimed at different age levels, both sought high audience involvement.

In one segment of "Sesame Street" for instance, pre-school children in the audience were shown sequences of picture-pairs and were asked to identify which of the pair "came first." In this case the children were shown two peanut butter sandwiches. One was whole, the other had a bite out of one corner. The question "which came first" asked the home

30 Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (New York, 1964), p. 319.

31 Maurice E. Shelby, Jr., "Discovery" an ABC-TV Network Program: and Its effect on a Child Audience, Pages 7-12 (Ohio State, 1963) p. 64.

viewer to answer a conceptual, time-sequence question.

"Take a Giant Step," a program geared for pre-teenagers, sought audience involvement another way. The program, its title later changed to "Talking with a Giant," asked youngsters at home to write in and apply to make movie films of things that interested them for use on the program. If chosen, the child received film and camera in the mail from "Take a Giant Step;" he shot the film and it was or was not broadcast, depending on its quality.

The factor of involvement is simply demonstrated in local children's television with the reading of "birthday" mail or the displaying of children's drawings. Whether a child sends in his birthday announcement in anticipation of it being announced on the air, or whether he claps vigorously to try and bring "Tinkerbell" back to life, there is hardly a quality of children's entertainment more precious than involvement. For by involving and guiding a child, an entertainer acknowledges the child's dignity and ability to respond in his own special way. Abuse of a child's involvement is a serious matter, and in the field of advertising on children's television, lead to regulation in the 1970's.

Color

In addition to humor, simplicity, and involvement, children's entertainment has always been colorful entertainment. Not only colorful in emotions, but colorful in design, whether for costumes, special effects, or sets.

Feast days in foreign countries usually featured colorful costumes: for instance, Boys Day and Girls Day in Japan are times set aside to honor children. Green and gold dragons, vermilion birds, and azure

carp kites adorn houses on Boys Day. Girls are powdered white and dressed in their finest kimonos to enact tea parties on Girls Day.

In the Middle Ages, whenever children watched the re-enactment of the nativity, the angels were always clothed in the whitest raiments, and the wise men wore resplendent costumes, woven with glitter and stones. Even Santa Clause dresses in a colorful red suit to deliver packages.

In children's theatre, costume coloration helps children sense the type of character an actor portrays. Proper colors often project his symbolic purpose, white for purity and red or black for evil.

When children in India visit the Taj Mahal, they are reminded that the king who once lived there had nine wise men in his council, and each had a certain temperament. Wealthy families buy their girls necklaces with nine precious stones, each stone coloration signifying the disposition of one of the wise men.

Children's writers revel in color references, even in their titles: "Snow White", "Little Red Riding Hood", and "Little Boy Blue." Rumpelstiltskin spins straw into gold. Cinderella rides in a pumpkin-orange coach, and Snow White eats an evil red apple. In children's entertainment color is king at first glance.

Locally-produced children's television shows must deal with the problem of color also. Citing the WRTV children's show, "Uncle Uri's Treasure" as an example, the setting of an underground cave posed special problems because of its color. At least four separate meetings were called over a seven-month period to discuss the problem. Originally the cave walls were a dark brown, earthy color, but the over-all effect turned out to be drabness rather than mystery, as was first

intended. Also, the engineers were concerned about the low light reflection capabilities of dark brown. The set was painted a light blue with tiny flecks of pink and green. Producer Mike Maze and set designer, Bud Bishop added a cozy fireplace with burning logs, a bright orange shag carpet, a yellow clothes tree, and dolls and props of various colors to brighten up the set, and give it the appearance of an underground home where the fictive "Uncle Uri" once lived.

Sometimes colors arouse a flush of emotion in children, particularly young children. This phenomenon is called "synesthesia" when children combine color tones and color smells. A three-year old boy might "smell green", a six-year old might hear "light and dark red whistling."³³

In the history of children's entertainment, fantasy concepts in speech, settings, and characterization offer the biggest challenges to producers of children's entertainment.

Fantasy

In addition to color, fantasy is an element often found in children's entertainment. Sometimes known as whimsy or fancifulness, fantasy has a special place in children's entertainment. It is parti-

cularly noticeable in three areas: speech, settings, and characterizations.

Hokus pokus, dominokus
 Bibbity bobbity boo;
 Supercalifragilistic,
 It's all the same to you
 If you take your rhymes in whimsy
 For these magical words can say
 What average talk from average folk
 Never could convey.³⁴

In order to trace fantasy in speech in children's entertainment, it is helpful to separate onomatopoeia from scientific fantasy words and true fantasy speech. Onomatopoeia matches like-sounding words with their meanings such as the "buzzzzzz of a bee," or the "plip plop" of a raindrop. The song "Old MacDonald Had A Farm" is filled with onomatopoeia, so that children can imitate the "quack quack" of a duck, etc.

In Barrie's Peter Pan, Peter's speech is an example of true fantasy speech, on several levels. Children are not bothered when Peter tells Wendy that Never-Never Land is "... second star to the right and then straight on 'till morning."³⁵ Nor are they confused at Peter's answer of how old he is. "'I don't know,'" he answers, but quite young ... I ran away the day I was born ... because I heard mother and father talking of what I was to be when I became a man."³⁶

In children's radio, fantasy speech often set the scene for a mystery. The words, "... the Shadow knows..." filled many young minds

34

"Magic Word" poem used on "Uncle Uri's Treasure," WRTV Children's Television Show.

35

Barrie, op. cit., p. 22.

36

Ibid., p. 23.

with terror.

CBS, ABC, and the Dumont Network all aired outer-space television programs whose stars spoke in a sort of outer-space science lingo in the 1950's. CBS offered "Flash Gordon." ABC aired "Buck Rogers" and "Tom Corbett, Space Cadet." But one of the most popular space programs for children was Dumont's "Captain Video" which enjoyed a six-year run. "Captain Video" aired from 1949 to 1955, and it was on 7:00 p.m. week nights, E.S.T. The show was deliciously fun for kids. It was created by James L. Caddigan, Dumont's Vice President, and it was written by M. C. Brock, formerly a writer for radio's "Dick Tracy." "Captain Video" was basically an epic struggle between the forces of light, headed by Captain Video, and the forces of darkness, lead by evil mastermind, Doctor Pauli, head of the Astrological Society. On this show, the basic plan of the society was to destroy earth. Two points in this program are worth noting here: (1) The show was educational. Even creator Caddigan said the purpose of the show was to illustrate to children what electronics could do, and (2) the program capitalized on the fun of the English language. Strange sounding words enchanted young ears and confused hard-listening adults. Who could make sense out of "forty-seven inclination, temperate calibrated at zero three ..."

38

but kids?

Perhaps fantasy speech in drama, radio and television had its beginnings in Greek theatre, with myths and rituals and supplications to nature's unexplainable forces. Fantasy speech is symbolic speech

37

Dorothy Gordon, All Children Listen (New York, 1942), p. 44.

38

"Seven mps, zero 3; Captain Video," Time, Vol. 56 (Dec. 25, 1950), p. 45.

based on enactment of a mythical set of circumstances. Parables, including Christ's story of the seed falling on good earth or his metaphorical command at the Last Supper, all fall into a category of speech that demands a high degree of interpretation.

Children long not only to hear but also to see fantasy characters and fantasy places. Throughout the history of children's entertainment the "fantasy set" is one of the first problems a producer must solve, if he is designing a show for children.

In 850 B.C., as children listened to stories of the gods who dwelled on Mount Olympus, the sight of powerful Zeus, Archilleus,³⁹ and Apollo in conference formed easily in their heads. As these stories were dramatized, sets were needed to complete the production. The earliest "sets" were designed for the Greek festivals, like that of Dionysis, where many children were present. During the festival, play-writing contests would be held. The plays were performed near the temple of Dionysis, and the sets were constructed on a proscenium stage, built next to the temple. This early "stage" faced an open-air amphitheatre. In order to create a scene, triangular columns called "perifactors" would be placed on the stage. Each of the three sides had a different scene painted on it, and by turning all of them simultaneously, the stage manager could create fantasy, reality, or any other setting he wanted.⁴⁰

Over 2,000 years after the Greeks introduced this stage technique,

39

Homer, The Illiad, in World Masterpieces, Vol I. Revised, (New York, 1965) p. 87.

40

Lecture on "History of Theatre" given at University of Tennessee by Mrs. Frank Lester, February, 1969.

television set designers used it in televised productions under the same name with a different spelling: a periaktos.⁴¹

In Greek and Roman theatre, the actors wore masks made of balsa wood and wigs of horsehair, to portray both fantasy and reality characters, and considerable time and effort went into devising flying chariots, and other "deus ex machina" whereby actors could exit from fantasy situations on stage, saved by the power of the gods.

In children's theatre, most sets are designed to give the illusion of an actual locale rather than the locale itself in a fantasy set.⁴² A castle, for instance, would not be cold, dark and filthy, as castles tended to be in the Middle Ages; instead, it would be gleaming and colorful, filled with immense tapestries and gigantic fireplaces.⁴³

The problem with educational shows for children, particularly in radio and television, is the lack of imagination with which they are done. The opposite of fantasy is boredom, duty and drudgery. For better or worse, the "classroom approach" to any subject wears the tag of doom to a child audience.

Two scholarly studies which considered a "Reality-Fantasy" preference in terms of a child audience, both concluded that children preferred excitement and adventure over educational matter, and that lower-intelligence children preferred "soft" or fantasy-entertainment programs, while higher intellects preferred programs of the narrative

41

Zettl, op. cit., p. 192.

42

Davis., op. cit., p. 167.

43

Ibid., p. 160.

type, humor, or news.

A smaller scale survey of 100 children and 50 parents in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1971 concerned the "entertainment/educational" balance of a local television show pilot, "Uncle Uri's Treasure." Results showed that although the parents would encourage their children to watch an educational show of this type, they did not believe it had sufficient entertainment to hold a child's interest. ⁴⁵ The pilot program featured poetry for children and picture sequences explaining "What is a Poem." It also included popular songs with emphasis on the rhyming pattern of their lyrics. The show featured a live hostess in costume and three boys, in an underground cave-setting.

With the "Period of New Concern" in the early 1970's, commercial network children's shows featured a higher ratio of education to entertainment than they had since the early 1950's. Shows like "Curiosity Shop," "Make a Wish," "Take a Giant Step," "Talking with a Giant," "In the News," "Multiplication Is," and "You Are There" were built on an educational foundation. Fantasy and entertainment were window trimmings. Unfortunately when these programs were matched against fast-paced animated programs, they suffered in ratings. And the three networks took losses on producing this caliber of children's show.

44

The first study on children's radio listening habits was Apriel Eisenberg's Children and Radio Programs (New York, 1936). The second study on children's television viewing habits was the Wilbur Schramm, Edwin Parker and Jack Lyle report on Television in the lives of Our Children (Stanford, 1961).

45

Pilot program questionnaire for "Uncle Uri's Treasure" administered in March, 1971 at WRTV, Channel 6, Indianapolis, then under the call letters, WFBM-TV.

Local television stations produced educational shows with budgets ranging from \$50.00 to \$800.00, the cost of producing one "Uncle Uri's Treasure." The cost of producing NBC's "Take a Giant Step" for instance, was a minimum of \$12,000 per show, a shoe-string price for a network program. ⁴⁶ The fantasy of children's shows had a very real price tag.

Before leaving the trend of fantasy in children's entertainment in set design and speech, a mention should be made of the fantasy hero, and his importance in children's entertainment.

Mythological figures like Beowulf and Don Quixote, Paul Bunyon, Cinderella, and the Lone Ranger have a common purpose: they serve as identifiable protagonists for children to emulate. The same might be said of an astronaut, a football hero, or a beauty queen. In children's entertainment therefore, producers and writers hesitate to white-wash a rogue-ish character like Tom Sawyer, Robin Hood or Little Klaus. This same principle, coupled with governmental pressure, prodded the National Association of Broadcasters to ban host-selling of products on children's television shows in January, 1973. A television host has a high-identification factor and is a media "fantasy hero" of sorts.

Morality

Morality sits opposite fantasy on the children's entertainment spectrum. Yet, morality is a staple in the history of children's entertainment. Perhaps nowhere is this so clearly examined as in Eighteenth Century children's theatre in France. In this earliest

productions a theatrical performance seemed license to lecture children on the benefits of doing right and the consequence of doing wrong.

Madame Stephanie de Genlis, artist, teacher, writer, was one of the foremost children's theatre directors in France. She presented plays starring her teenage daughters to a cultured audience of friends in her garden theatre.⁴⁷ Madame de Genlis' presentations were stilted morality offerings. They were plays which warned children against being too curious about things that did not concern them or plays showing children the proper way to dress, etc. These plays imposed adult tastes on children's theatre.

The Moscow Theatre for Children also imposed adult tastes on children's theatre, but in a much more constructive way. It utilized a scientific approach to child entertainment with psychologists, child specialists, educators, and authors on the staff headed by director, Natalia Satz.⁴⁸ Like the NET television program, "Sesame Street," children's experimental theatre consulted experts for guidance in children's fare.

Morality involves learning a lesson of life, and fairy tales in literature and in the media, offer plenty of examples. The "Three Little Pigs" suggest that hard work and planning will avert disaster. "Cinderella" promises that good deeds will be rewarded; "Pinnochio" suffers because he cannot tell the truth, and "Rudolf, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" shows that being different from the group can often times be beneficial.

47

Winifred Ward, Theatre for Children (New York, 1939) p. 1.

48

Ibid., p. 19.

On television, morality finds its way to children many ways. Youngsters who watch the CBS television special, "J.T.," witnessed an example of a ghetto youth learning responsibility in caring for a pet cat. "Howdy Doody" songs suggested "If you want a friend, be one." Programs like NET's "Misterogers Neighborhood" devote an entire half-hour to a single theme of perhaps not being jealous of baby brother or sister.

Sunday school pageants, miracle plays and Medieval puppet shows transmitted religious indoctrination before children's "entertainment" was allowed, and children's games taught youngsters to count "one potato, two potato ..." before radio was ever thought of.

Morality in children's entertainment is neither good nor bad, but it does help to serve as a barometer of what adults want children to learn at a given period in history. Without a dash of morality in children's entertainment, the fare would be vacuous and without meaning. Too much morality would make it unpleasant for youngsters.

The problem is children's entertainment throughout history has been finding the correct balance between fantasy and morality, entertainment and education.

CHAPTER TWO SUMMARY

There are several noticeable production trends in children's entertainment, as they relate to children's television. Among these are simplified communication, including puppetry and animation, humor and involvement, color, fantasy and morality.

These production trends can be found in the earliest Greek pagan festivals, like that of Dionysius, or the most sophisticated nationally-televised shows for children.

CHAPTER THREE

PHILOSOPHICAL TRENDS IN CHILDREN'S ENTERTAINMENT

Unfortunately the philosophical trends in children's entertainment are in many cases negative, or in the case of children's programming on commercial television, only partially formed. However, three trends are readily discernible: tokenism, criticism, and regulation. This thesis does not attempt to define these terms in all their shades of meaning; however, in order to discuss them, short definitions are necessary.

Tokenism is a false representation of concern. In the case of children's programming on commercial TV, it would be lack of concern for quality children's entertainment on the part of producers or programmers of children's shows. In the field of children's television tokenism results primarily from pressures of commercialism on broadcasters, apathy among parents, and difficulty in creating the "perfect children's program" with a proper educational/entertainment balance. Tokenism concerning children's programming shows itself in many ways. One of the best examples would be the lack of care in selecting a host and hostess for children's shows, nationally and locally.

"Ding Dong School" was a nationally televised show that began in October, 1952 at Chicago's WNBQ, an NBC outlet. The show, aimed at two to five year olds featured a live hostess who taught fundamentals in home crafts as well as introduction to neighborhood friends. Dr. Frances Horwich, later known as "Miss Frances" was a lady eminently qualified for her position as hostess of this children's show. However, according to a national news magazine, she was chosen through a mysterious case of mistaken identity. Three days after the new daytime show was telecast, a

WNBQ official told a local TV critic: "We've got a show over here - Ding Dong School - I think it's called, that's either the worst show we ever pitched up, or the best. Right now I just don't know." ⁵⁰ The reason for his confusion was understandable, although not admirable. For one thing, the star of the show was a plump, forty-four year old schoolteacher named Frances Horwich. Secondly, the program was a slow-moving, one-camera affair, sans flashy gimmicks. Thirdly, the show had been named by a three-year old. "Ding Dong School" turned out to be one of the best shows WNBQ ever "pitched up" as far as audience response goes. Almost five thousand mothers wrote in their approval after the show's premier. It went network less than a month later. The tragic footnote to "Ding Dong School" was that for any other local, live program such as news, public affairs, or talk-show a host or hostess would never be chosen through "mistaken identity." Without the overwhelming response from mothers in the audience, this program would have undoubtedly passed by the wayside after a short, experimental time on the air, and "Miss Frances" would have never been known to children across the nation.

The most obvious case of tokenism on the local children's television level comes in the guise of limited funds for show budgets or a non-caring attitude on the part of some management personnel. It would be an unfair indictment of local commercial television broadcasters to say that this is the rule of thumb, but before the citizen group activists began petitioning the FCC for action on children's television in 1969, the average philosophy for "kiddies shows" was "cartoons" and "cash" in the name of full sponsorships.

At one point in this writer's career as a television show hostess for a children's program, an offer was made to a department head to write, produce, and locate feature material of an educational nature to add to a local cartoon show. This material would have replaced one of the two six to seven minute cartoons in a half-hour show, and the offer of extra work was made with the understanding that there would be no extra cost to the station. Not only was the offer refused, but the program director added one more cartoon to the already thirteen minutes of cartoons in the program, making the cartoon total nineteen out of twenty-four minutes. The remaining five minutes was the only time allotted for the reading of mail, talking to an average of twenty-five studio guests, and introductions of cartoons. The rest of the time was programmed for commercial breaks or commercial tie-ins. Rather than take advantage of no-cost educational features which the hostess had successfully introduced, the decision was to get additional mileage out of cartoon re-runs.⁵¹ The show was an overwhelming first in its time slot, and the hostess had received mail from parents encouraging continuation of educational features she had introduced. Following this decision, the hostess left.

Tokenism in local productions is a retardation of quality children's shows. Children's television programs are the bastards of the industry, requiring care but never receiving true attention.

If a local television station tries to break away from the stock host-cartoon format, tokenism can practically destroy quality production. Take the case of one half-hour show on "flight" produced for "Uncle Uri's Treasure," a locally-produced children's show in Indianapolis, Indiana.

51

"The Popeye Club with Mimi Mermaid" WATE-TV, Channel 6, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1969.

The script called for twenty-four minutes of film featuring the history of flight, to be filmed at the Dayton Air Force Museum, some 120 miles from Indianapolis. A week before film date, the producer requested 800 feet of film, sufficient indoor lighting equipment and a camera crew for the prime-time film program. The day of filming, he was assigned one cinematographer, two quartz lights, and 400 feet of film, equipment drastically under the required amount for filming. After filming one entire day, at a one-to-one film ratio, and after processing the film, the producer had to re-shoot the entire show, because of inadequate lighting, a handicap imposed on him because he was "...only shooting for 'Uncle Uri' anyway." This is only one example of tokenism.

Tokenism can result due to an unchangeable priority list on which children's programming is close to the bottom. For instance, several stations buy newspaper and advertising space quite heavily during ratings, to promote local programming. The advertising budget is proportioned according to the programs management deems most important. In January, February, and March, 1973, when locally-produced "Uncle Uri's Treasure" changed time slots from Saturday morning to prime-time on Sunday evenings, the show hostess approached the promotion director for advertising funds. "We can't buy one inch for 'Uncle Uri'", the promotion director said. "Our entire budget is earmarked for news."

Not only was "Uncle Uri" low on the advertising priority list, it was also low on studio taping list. High on studio taping time schedules are lucrative commercial tapings done during the daytime, with the best crews. Low are children's shows, whether sponsored or not, for these tape sessions, in themselves do not generate revenue. The video taping of a show and the time allotted for it are critical factors in the quality of the show. A hurried job results in splotchy audio, unimaginative

camera work, and an over-all amateurish quality. An average of two hours is allotted during the day to tape a one-minute commercial at WRTV. A 30-minute "Uncle Uri" taped at night, often with partial crew, is also allotted two hours. Clearly, the station cannot devote a lion's share of valuable studio time taping public service or educational shows. The station cannot produce a quality half-hour children's show in that time, either. The local commercial broadcaster faces a true dilemma in producing an educational children's program. He must strive for quality but not at the expense of commercial accounts.

Tokenism, however, should not be laid at the laps of commercial broadcasters only. For parents are responsible for promoting proper viewing habits in the home, and for encouraging stations, through letters and phone calls to program and/or originate quality shows for children. The broadcast manager who addresses a group of parents who demand "better" children's shows, has only to ask if the same parents have seen the most recent specials for children, or the educational shows he is airing on his station. One midwest television station manager threw out a fictitious program and air date and a lady answered, "Oh yes, I've seen that!" and added with a frown, "but it wasn't that good." "Uncle Uri's Treasure" an educational children's show produced in Indianapolis, suffers from many production maladies, including lack of sufficient tape time, filming equipment, and advertising budget. But these problems are minor in comparison to the lack of public response to what local program managers agree is a quality, local effort. The show costs are approximately \$800.00 a week, and this is only partially offset by a half sponsorship. The station lost about \$15,000 to \$20,000 its first year on the program.

Tokenism can be found not only in station practices or lack of parental guidance in children's shows, but also in terminology used when referring to children's programming.

"Kiddies shows" is a derogatory term denoting entertainment for children. Professionals in children's theatre, children's radio, and children's television, consider their work highly demanding and difficult, and are piqued when referred to as "kiddie show hosts."

Tokenism also appears through omission of a history book, tracing children's radio or children's television. Tokenism is a 22 year span of commercial television without one network vice president in charge of children's programming. Tokenism is a state university of 17,000 students, whose faculty has not established a children's theatre series.

It is difficult to distinguish where tokenism ends and criticism begins, but in the history of children's entertainment, one usually follows the other, and unfortunately, regulation is not far behind.

Criticism and Regulation

Both in children's radio and children's television, criticism led to regulation, and parental protest flurried in the twilight of this change.

Beginning in 1931, the educational "Schools of the Air" were phased out, due to the lack of receiving sets and teacher animosity. These programs were used as classroom supplements, featuring shows on music, literature, history and science. They are notable because they were

the first attempts to utilize a mass medium strictly for the educational enrichment of a child audience. They are also notable because teachers considered them an infringement on their classroom roles. Even the "Schools of the Air" were not spared criticism.

And certainly commercial radio during the early 1930's was not spared criticism. Parents, teachers, and civic leaders deplored the emphasis on violence, which shows like "The Green Hornet" and "The Shadow" broadcast. Others charged commercial radio with irresponsible programming: "The radio makes one a bit furious" one respondent in a child study survey reported. "It could be so marvelous from an educational and cultural view, but instead it is ... a mess."⁵⁴

Perhaps the most publicized criticism of commercial radio in the 1930's appeared in records about a Scarsdale, New York Parent-Teachers Association. The Scarsdale protest began with a speech and a letter from the Scarsdale PTA Radio Committee Chairman to the New York Times, admonishing the radio industry for allowing programs which have an adverse effect on children on the air. The article in the Times, "Mothers Protect Bogeyman on Radio" eventually stirred up such controversy that the CBS outlet near Scarsdale offered the group a free period of time on radio to develop and produce their version of what a good children's radio program might be. The parents, however, made "... an irreparable error" broadcaster and writer, Dorothy Gordon says, "confusing their critical ability with professional competence."⁵⁵ The program about Western United States history went flat. If the parents had called in

54

"Effect of Radio on Children," in Education by Radio (March 30, 1933) p. 17.

55

Dorothy Gordon, All Children Listen (New York, 1942), p. 21.

experts from every angle of the entertainment field to design the program, the situation would have changed entirely. According to Dorothy Gordon, the parents missed an opportunity to change the direction of children's radio programming.

The Scarsdale protest might be compared to Action of Children's Television, which in 1968 began criticising children's television programming, with considerably more success. ACT, also a civic group composed of parents, never for a moment assumed responsibility for creating a show. Instead, ACT used its influence on professional program sources to better children's fare on television and alter the amount of advertising during and adjacent to children's shows. Ultimately, ACT petitioned the Federal Communications Commission for direct action on improving children's television.

However, 18 years before ACT was formed to challenge children's television fare on commercial television, the United States government held its first senate hearings on juvenile delinquency and cast a questioning eye toward the effect of televised violence on a young audience. These first Kefauver hearings were followed by more hearings, and in 1954 the television industry decided to sponsor research to determine the relationship between viewing violence and violent behavior.

Yet in the eyes of the federal critics "... the amount of research ...on this issue was so small [it was] insignificant and... clearly undertaken as a defensive move."

56

Criticism continued, and in 1961, Newton Minow, the then Chairman

56

Preface to Violence and the Media. Staff report by the National Commission on Causes and Prevention of Violence (Washington, D.C., 1969) p. ii.

of the F.C.C., delivered his vast wasteland speech. First he denounced the ratings system for children's shows, then he accused members of the broadcast industry of abandoning their responsibilities in the area of children's shows:

If parents, teachers and ministers conducted their responsibilities by following the ratings, children would have a steady diet of ice cream, school holidays, and no Sunday School. What about your responsibilities? Is there no room on television to teach, to inform, to uplift, to stretch, to enlarge the capacities of our children? ⁵⁷

There were two results of Minow's speech. The first was that some local and network programmers designed a new genre of children's shows designed for education and entertainment. The second was more senate hearings. In 1961 and 1963, Senate hearings continued on juvenile delinquency with children's television as a possible factor. One of the more serious offenses was committed by the ABC-TV network, in its airing of the "Bus Stop" series.

The "Bus Stop" series, purported for an adult audience, attracted youngsters because the series starred teenage idol, Fabian: however, Fabian's role (portraying a homicidal psychopath) was questionable in light of the young audience attracted to the series. Three sponsors and twenty-five stations affiliated dropped the show after previewing it. One of the earliest and most controversial of the shows was an episode entitled "Told by an Idiot," where Fabian portrayed "Luke," a 19 year old Jimmy Dean type, who was a sexual psychotic. Several ABC

affiliates refused to carry the show, and other stations wrote in and complained.

The main criticism as cited previously was that a substantial portion of the audience viewing "Bus Stop" was compiled of young people. However, Oliver Treyz, the President of ABC-TV network at the time testified at the 1961-62 Dodd hearings that the program represented "... fine writing and fine drama, and that it was a program designed for adults." The show was aired on Sunday nights from 9:00 to 11:00 o'clock. "We have always gaged "Bus Stop" as the program that would have little child appeal," Treyz added. But this intent did not prevent young viewers from watching their teenage idol, Fabian, nor did the network's "new programming" attract young viewers to the educational shows Minow suggested. For instance, the CBS-TV network introduced two educational shows in 1962, "Reading Room" and "1,2,3, Go!" Both programs lasted only a year. NBC-TV aired "update," a news show, and "Exploring," neither of which were represented on the network lineup the following year. In 1962 ABC-TV introduced "Discovery," an educational, travelogue-type show which aired until the 1971-72 season. "Discovery" was by far the most successful educational show for children on ABC-TV during the early 1960's; however, network executives quickly saw that the educational shows they programmed for children were not profitable due to costly budgets and small audiences. So, in the midst of criticism, the networks abandoned that course in favor of "family" shows, which were neither very educational nor very harmful, but which attracted a broad-

58

Violence and the Media, op. cit., p. 2412.

59

CBS and NBC program files.

based audience. Most of these shows were film series. During the 1964, 1965, and 1966 seasons, the networks spent approximately \$10,500,000.00 weekly on these filmed programs from Hollywood, many of which drew a larger child audience (7 to 12) than adult audience. ⁶⁰

The years from 1963 to 1967 were the years when the child audience was homogenized into a "family" audience, and the most successful shows were those like "Bonanza," "Walt Disney," "Bewitched," "Fugitive," "Beverly Hillbillies," "Flipper," "Gomer Pyle," "Daniel Boone," "Dick Van Dyke," "I Dream Of Jeanie," "The Flintstones," "Gilligan's Island," "The Munsters," and "Gidget," where children comprised a larger percentage of the viewing audience than adults. ⁶¹

However, this was not quality children's television, for the shows were not specifically designed for a child audience, with a child's needs in mind. This was an easy way out for the commercial broadcaster. He could profitably and temporarily answer criticism of excessive violence in programming, and still keep a large audience. Here again, the child was lost in the shuffle for the dollar.

Had local and network commercial broadcasters been concerned with quality children's fare in the early 1960's, they could have avoided the looming hand of government regulation in the 1970's. The warning signs were there, but the professional concern was not.

One final programming trend appeared before the 1970's which encouraged criticism of the television industry's children's fare:

60

"Film Backbone of TV Programs", Broadcasting Vol. 68 (April 5, 1965) p. 31.

61

"Young Viewers Raise New Program Ratings", Broadcasting (November 2, 1964), p. 60, Vol. 63.

animation. The "Period of Animation" did not begin cleanly in the 60's, nor end precisely in the 70's, but as more and more animated shows aired on television, they had a cumulative effect on children's programming, specifically on Saturday morning programming. By the 1969-70 season, Saturday morning was hardly more than a jungle of cartoons.

In 1964, ABC-TV introduced "The Beatles," an animated show built around the adventures of the Beatles singing group, composed of the English quartet of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, and George Harrison. According to CBS Program Executive, Fred Silverman, "The Beatles" was the program that changed Saturday morning children's programming.⁶² Unfortunately, this scheduling of animated cartoons proved to be the most lucrative programming decision in the history of children's television. The pattern of running animated features filtered down to local affiliates.

The production trends so popular in children's entertainment throughout history seemed to work against children during this animation period. The simplicity and humor in fast-action, color cartoons could create a fantasy program which involved the viewer more than the "family" shows, which were not designed specifically for children. In the 1969-70 season alone, the three networks introduced 12 animated programs to their Saturday morning lineups, already brimming with animated shows. The fantasy speech patterns children found enjoyable in "Peter Pan" and "Cinderella" were prevalent, even in the titles of the new shows.

During the 1969-70 season, ABC-TV premiered "The Cattanooga Cats,"

"Dudley Do-Right," "The Hardy Boys," "Hot Wheels," and "The Smokey Bear Show."⁶³ CBS presented "The Jetsons," "Dastardly and Muttley in their Flying Machines," "The Perils of Penelope Pitstop," "Scooby Doo, Where are you?," and "The Archie Comedy Hour."⁶⁴ And NBC added "The Heckle and Jeckle Show," and the "Pink Panther Show."⁶⁵

Also during the 1969-70 season, a mother who lived in Boston, Massachusetts looked around one day at the fare her children were watching on television and decided to speak her mind on the state of children's programming. Not only did Mrs. Evelyn Sarson form a committee to discuss the current state of children's television, she organized Action for Children's Television. Three years later, ACT had chapters nationwide.⁶⁶ ACT, and what it stood for, had also attracted the attention of local, state and national news media and had petitioned the FCC to adopt rules and regulations in children's programming. Among ACT's proposals are: a reduction or elimination of commercial time during children's programs, a required 14 hours a week of educational children's fare, and a change in children's foods commercials, specifically candy and cereal.

In the 1970's local stations, networks, and the NAB made steps toward self-regulation in a period of new concern on their parts. In January, 1973, the National Association of Broadcasters beefed up its children's code by eliminating host-selling during children's shows. In March, 1973 the NAB again took a self-regulatory step concerning drug

63 ABC Program Files.

64 NBC Program Schedule, October 6-12, 1969 (Also listed CBS shows).

65 Ibid.

66 "Making a Move on Children's TV" Broadcasting, Vol. 81 (July 19, 1971) p. 52.

ads on television, particularly during times when children would be watching. In June, 1973, the NAB joined the University of Cincinnati, and CBS affiliate, WCPO-TV and sponsored the first national conference on children's programming, organized by commercial broadcasters and educators.

In the light of criticism, the three commercial networks and local affiliates began programming educational shows during the early 1970's. Shows like NBC's "Talking With a Giant," CBS's "You Are There" and ABC's "Make a Wish," were all educational and entertaining. However, they suffered from low ratings, an issue which is a philosophical question in itself concerning children's shows.

Local stations all across the country created or continued educational children's shows like the "Magic Door" show at WMAL-TV Washington, "Treetop House," at WGN-TV Chicago, and "Al and Wanda Show" at WCPO-TV and "Uncle Uri's Treasure," at WRTV in Indianapolis. Both local stations and networks gambled on audiences for their new educational children's shows in the early 1970's. But they were gambling for a good reason: self-regulation resulting in low ratings was better than federal regulation, resulting in revoked licenses. Schramm and Rivers have outlined the responsibility of government in broadcast regulation as "... clear, sweeping, and almost entirely negative" [the government] must keep their hands off mass communication. Hardly anything [it] can do will be so important..., and hardly anything will be so difficult."

67

Impetus For Change

The impetus for change in broadcasting children's programs should

 67

William Rivers and Wilbur Schramm, Responsibility in Mass Communication (New York, 1969), p. 234.

be more than fear of government regulation. It should be professional concern for the children themselves, and the programs they view.

Broadcasters, government officials and the public should work toward understanding one another and toward bettering the professional caliber of broadcasters who create children's shows. More education is needed, education of broadcasters who create programs and education of the public to respond to quality shows when they air. The NAB should work with universities and colleges in setting up scholarships for study in children's programming, to promote interest and professionalism in this important phase of broadcasting. Overall, children's television should be raised from a level of "kid's stuff" to professional, entertaining, and creatively educational programming. This is the one trend in children's entertainment that must not be overlooked: professionalism.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The seeds of children's television production can be found scattered throughout the history of children's entertainment. The ancient Greeks used mystery and involvement to keep children interested in religious pageants. The Chinese introduced simplicity and humor in puppetry. Color adorned costumes of characters in medieval miracle plays, and morality dominated plays of the Eighteenth century, including plays viewed by children.

From the early Festival of Dionysius to modern television shows, children's entertainment has had a light spirit and a wholesome spirit. Gaiety was the emotion that presided over the mock sacrifice of children to King Minos, father of the mythical Minotaur. Attention to colorful detail was present in the early Punch and Judy shows. Even early Eighteenth century children's drama, although very stilted and didactic, still used children themselves as actors and actresses. And the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars and the Children of Revels no doubt kept their performances spry and snappy. Children's theatre in the United States in the early 1900's emphasized fairy tales to a large extent, and it was not until the early 1960's that children's theatre even introduced more serious themes with rogue protagonists who were less than perfect boys and girls.

Children's radio programs, like children's television programs, competed for the child audience and therefore changed the spirit of children's entertainment from lightheartedness to economic reality.

The structure of regulation in children's entertainment is traceable, at least in part. City elders and priests in villages no doubt

watched that children gave due respect to revered objects in pagan rituals. Likewise, parish priests during medieval times would make sure each young participant knew his part well in a mystery, miracle, or morality play.

When drama moved from the church to the stage, adult supervision gave way to the first instances of government regulation. Drama was for the masses in the England of Queen Elizabeth I, and she meant to regulate it. She directly controlled the performances of the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, and she regulated all other drama at that time.

Theatres specifically for children continued to have regulation in a sporadic pattern from the Eighteenth Century plays of Stephanie de Genlis to the Children's Theatre of Alice Minnie Herts Heniger. The Association of Junior Leagues of America later on became the coordinating body for the children's theatre movement in the United States. Children's theatre techniques, not only in script-writing but also in production, influenced children's television greatly. The process of character identification, the technique of drawing the audience into the action, the bright-color costuming and emphasis on movement were all present in children's drama and later in children's television.

However, children's theatre lacked instantaneous communication with a large nationwide audience. The electronic media had that power, and with that power came regulation, self-regulation from the radio and television industry, and federal concern that bordered on regulation in the early days of the television industry.

Radio and television programmers produced special children's shows for large audiences, and in the early days of both industries, some shows were unsponsored. A great many of the early radio children's shows were

educational. As sponsors realized the commercial value of radio advertising, however, children's shows became specialized programming units for which advertisers competed. The shows with the most listeners received the most sponsorship, and many shows with few listeners began disappearing. Mystery and adventure programs fascinated young radio listeners, and children began tuning in a thriller show before an educational program. With parental protest such as the Scarsdale case, the radio industry took another look at children's programming.

But it was not until the days of television that industry guidelines, serving as self-regulatory codes, became of supreme importance to the child audience. The National Association of Broadcasters drew up a special section of its code for children's programming. Children's entertainment on television became big business, and the child audience became an important television audience segment. As commercial television broadcasters competed for that audience block, children's television changed style from year to year, season to season. These changes were gradual, as broadcasters experimented and competed for the highest ratings.

This thesis periodically suggests some convenient labels for the changes that occurred in children's programming trends. The following period delineations are only possible guidelines, but they might make an overview of children's commercial television a bit easier to understand. The periods are referred to singularly in this thesis, and this summary affords the reader an opportunity to look at them in a group. The suggested period labels and their approximate dates are: The Pioneering Period 1947-1952, The Period of Expansion 1952-1957, The Period of Criticism 1957-1963, The Period of Homogenization or the Family Period

1963-1967, The Period of Animation 1967-1970, The Period of New Concern 1970- . The first three period titles and approximate dates were adapted from a 1963 Ohio State Dissertation by Maurice E. Shelby, Jr. The last three period titles and approximate dates are proposed by the writer.

The Pioneering Period in children's television set out three basic program-type patterns for children: live host and studio audience; live host and guest and puppet; filmed or video-taped shows. The puppets seen in the early children's shows were direct descendents from the earliest shadow puppets in India and China and the stringed marionettes in Greece. In the evolution of children's television, puppets are the most visible link to the past.

During the Period of Expansion, the networks began airing action-adventure series, which drew large youth audiences. This was a period too, for a high rate of turnover in programs. CBS alone, aired eighteen new shows in this five year span, and most of them were action-adventure. ABC-TV meanwhile, became embroiled in Senate Subcommittee hearings on televised violence and juvenile delinquency. The ABC-TV "Bus Stop" case was particularly unfortunate, as was the indictment from the Senate Subcommittee that the ABC-TV network had begun the trend toward action-adventure programming.

Criticism of children's television on commercial networks became even more severe, and during the Period of Criticism it progressed to the point that the three networks decided they had better change the direction of at least a few of their new children's shows. The child, rather than being singled out in a viewing audience, as he had been since the days of ancient drama, was homogenized into the family audience. And the family shows, with broad-based audience appeal, multiplied and

did very well in ratings. What happened to the child viewer in addition to watching family shows? He began watching shows late into the evening hours. There was barely a distinguishable children's hour left.

The Period of Homogenization, or the Family Period, was approximately from 1963 to 1967. And surveys taken during this time indicate that a large viewing audience of six to twelve year olds watched television well into the late evening hours. It was during this period, also, that color television became more popular and the element of color was blended into television in greater amounts. In 1964, ABC-TV introduced a colorful animated show on Saturday morning called "The Beatles." Following the rating success for that show, the other networks decided to buy animated series from production houses for Saturday morning programming. But before CBS and NBC joined the animation race in about 1968, ABC had programmed twenty-eight new shows, nineteen of which were animated. Perhaps it could be said that ABC-TV entered the Saturday morning animation race before the other two networks. But the Period of Animation, like the other suggested period delineations, has hazy boundaries.

The suggested span for the Period of Animation is 1967-1970. The network file schedules bore out the trend toward increased Saturday morning animation at that time. Saturday morning, in short, became an animation oasis. This electronic adoption of simplified communication fit precisely into the pattern of simplified communication that children have preferred throughout the ages.

The Saturday morning cartoons pleased the children, but they did not please many adults. A whole new surge of interest in children's television motivated parents, teachers, educational broadcasters, government officials, and interested citizen groups to become involved

in a "movement" toward better programming for children's television. This new concern began before 1970, but beginning in the 1970-71 season the Federal Communications Commission began listening to petitions from interested citizens groups on children's television. It was apparent by 1970 that children's television was in for a big change.

The networks responded by programming shows with an educational base, such as NBC's "Take a Giant Step," CBS's "You Are There," and ABC's "Curiosity Shop." The National Educational Television Network continued the educational "Sesame Street" during this Period of New Concern, and it introduced a new Children's Television Workshop presentation, "The Electric Company."

Children's entertainment, once confined to village pageantry and simple games, became big business in the modern age. The singular village elder who most likely directed the children into appropriate interpretations of stories was replaced by an entire contingent of psychologists, educators, Madison Avenue ad men, broadcasters, and government officials who were to eventually combine into advisory and creative experts in the field of children's television.

Television is no longer solely entertaining for the child audience. It is also a learning tool, and this is why an impetus for change is mandatory. Tokenism must be eliminated. Regulation must be self-imposed, and professionals who are qualified children's programmers must be trained and hired onto staffs throughout the country. Unlike all other forms of entertainment for children, television is the most likely candidate for regulation.

Education is the key toward better children's television: education of the public, in order that they will recognize and support quality

shows, education of the government so they are aware of local efforts in the field and these efforts are taken into consideration when license renewals are due, and most of all, education of professional broadcasters themselves, so that they work toward training and hiring only professional children's broadcasters. Anything less will rob our most impressionable audience of the guidance they so desperately need and deserve.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABC-TV Program Files.

Atkinson, Carroll. Radio Network Contributions to Education.
Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1942.

Baird, Bil. The Art of the Puppet. New York: Macmillan
Company, 1965.

Barrie, J.M. Peter Pan. New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1928.

Bettleheim, Dr. Bruno. "Parents vs. Television." Redbook.
Vol. 122 (January, 1964).

Bulfinch, Thomas. The Golden Age of Myth and Legend.
London: George G. Harrape Company, 1965.

CBS Promotional Brochure.

Conference between writer and George Heinneman of NBC-TV
June, 1972.

Davis, Jed, and Mary Jane Larson Watkins. Children's Theatre.
New York: Harper and Row. 1960.

Doan, Richard K. "Shortchanging Our Children." TV Guide (June 6, 1970).

"Effects of Radio on Children." Education by Radio. Child
Study Association of America. Vol. 3 (March 30, 1933).

Effects on Young People of Violence and Crime Portrayed on
Television." Senate hearings before Subcommittee to
investigate Juvenile Delinquency (Washington, D.C. 1962).

"Film Backbone of TV Programs." Broadcasting Vol. 68
(April 2, 1965).

Gordon, Dorothy. All Children Listen. New York: George W. Stewart,
Publisher, Incorporated, 1942.

Hickey, Neil, "The Key Word Is Entertainment" TV Guide
(October 18, 1969).

Homer, The Illiad in World Masterpieces. Vol. I. Revised (New York)
W.W. Norton Co., 1960.

Letter from Sody Clampett of Bob Clampett Productions, Inc., to writer.

"Making a Move on Children's TV." Broadcasting. Vol. 81
(July 19, 1971).

- McLuhan, Marshall. Understanding Media. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964.
- NBC-TV Program Schedule, October, 1969.
- "Programs for Children," P.D. Cue (October, 1971).
- Rivers, William, Theodore Peterson, and Jay W. Jensen.
The Mass Media and Modern Society. New York:
Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Incorporated, 1966.
- "Seven mps, zero 3; Captain Video." Time. Vol. 56 (December 25, 1950).
- Shelby, Maurice E. Jr. "Children's Programming Trends on Network TV"
Journal of Broadcasting. Vol. 8.
- Shickel, Richard. The Disney Version. New York: Avon Books, 1969.
- Slade, Peter. Child Drama. London: University of London Press, 1956.
- Wallace, Charles William. The Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars, 1597-1603. University of Nebraska: University of Nebraska Studies, 1908.
- Ward, Winifred. Theatre for Children. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1965.
- "WNBQ Rings the Bell; Ding Dong School." Newsweek. Vol. 41 (February 2, 1953).
- "Young Viewers Raise New Program Ratings." Broadcasting. (November 2, 1964).
- Zettl, Herbert. Television Production Handbook. Belmont, 1968.