'TOON IN, 'TOON OUT:

AMERICAN TELEVISION ANIMATION

AND THE SHAPING OF AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE, 1948-1980

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a systematic study of significant American television animation programs produced between 1948 and 1980, with special attention given to selected works produced by three influential studios: Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward and Filmation. It considers how outside forces such as television network censorship, grassroots political activism, and other social and political forces served to limit how the genre developed, and the extent to which producers chose to test the limits to get their points across. It provides a discussion of masculine images in television animation of the 1950s and 1960s, and of the reactions of television animation producers to outside concerns regarding violent imagery in children's programming, and the threat of censorship related to this, in the 1970s. My thesis demonstrates that television animation producers, as a result of the need to remain actively involved in production, were forced to change and adapt with the times around them.

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I would like to thank my family and friends for supporting me through this endeavor. I have appreciated their support especially in those times when I doubted my abilities, because they never did. I particularly want to thank Professor Churchill and Professor Elvins for giving me their advice and guidance in the long and arduous process of conceiving the draft. I only hope that in further projects I will have as much support and fewer challenges to overcome.

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Introduction

This thesis is a systematic, selective study of American television animation programs produced between 1948 and 1980.[1] It will investigate both the construction and the development of the narratives and ideology of these programs as situated within their time period. It will also consider how outside forces such as television network censorship, grassroots political activism, and other social and political forces served to limit how the genre was allowed to develop, and the extent to which producers chose to test the limits to get political points across. As an example of this, in Chapter 1 of this thesis I will discuss the ways in which television animation critiqued society's images of masculinity by parodying forms of identified "masculine" behavior.

One of the major aims of this thesis is to expand the limited academic dialogue on television animation by employing conventional literary and historical means in order to provide a clearer analysis of the form. It will examine how the American television networks misunderstood what the genre could achieve in terms of narrative and characterization, categorizing it as a medium fit only for the entertainment of children. It will also demonstrate how American television animation reflected the ideological aims of the "Cold War," and ridiculed and subverted them. Finally, it will outline how, despite the censorship imposed on it in the 1970s, American television animation retained an influential position in American society, while being transformed into as much an educational medium as an entertainment one. This discussion will focus on the work of several influential, early television animation studios, in particular Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward, and Lou Scheimer's Filmation.

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[1] Television animation refers to animated films produced originally for television broadcasts, as opposed to theatrical animation, originally produced for theatrical exhibition.

These three studios are significant in that each was responsible in its own way for developing storytelling methods, character development and programming ideas which remain influential in the genre today. However, they were accomplished in radically different ways to reflect different interests. Hanna-Barbera helped to affirm the commercial and artistic viability of television animation as well as indicating with an ever expanding level of success that it was capable of developing and maintaining the attention and loyalty of an audience. As will be shown, it was capable of producing work that was acceptable and commercially viable while at the same time providing subtle cultural reflections of the world in which it was created. Jay Ward, on the other hand, was not interested in developing the loyalty of commercial sponsorship but in pleasing himself and his audience. His programs controversially addressed taboo topics in a way that alienated him from his contemporaries but would provide considerable fuel for a new generation of satirists who would use and adapt his ideas to their advantage. Finally, in a changed and more circumspect production environment, Lou Scheimer and Filmation, by combining entertainment and educational content repeatedly and effectively, suggested how television animation was fluid and adaptable to the time in which it was conceived. This would prove to be fertile to helping television animation survive and prosper in a changing American media landscape.

Television Animation: A Unique Genre

Most contemporary and some historical studies of television animation have been limited because of a number of related cultural and historical factors. First of all, because it is a product of the television medium, those who considered television "… the narcotizing

trap of American society"[2] have at times dismissed the genre. Secondly, television animation was widely characterized as a fleeting diversion for children until the relatively recent, enforced, shift of its mandate to include education. Thirdly, because television animation is primarily a genre based around comedy, there is a tendency to view it less seriously than more dramatic works, as is commonplace with many comic art forms. Fourthly, within the American animation production community, it was sneered at for the limited production values that were an economic necessity for its survival. Finally, television animation became the most prominent victim of the cultural backlash against "violent" television programming in the late 1960s and early 1970s. This backlash stemmed from the social and cultural after-effects of the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement and the war in Vietnam.

For the reasons outlined above, as well as the passage of time needed for clear historical interpretation of the cultural properties of a previous era, it has only been in the past decade that a historically-minded study of television animation in America has commenced. In order for this process to continue, and for us to establish criteria for the study of television animation as a genre, it is important to set out what a genre consists of. Such a definition, which works as well for film and television studies as it does for literary ones, is provided by literary critic Robert Scholes in his book *Textual Power*:

> The genre is a network of codes that can be inferred from a set of related texts. A genre is as real as a language and exerts similar pressures through its network of codes, meeting similar instances of stolid conformity and playful challenge. No one who has ever studied seriously the history of any art can doubt

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[2] Horace Newcomb, *TV: The Most Popular Art* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1974), 3.

the importance of precedent, schema, presupposition [and] convention…in the

actual production of texts. The more one knows about a given historical situation

the more one realizes the struggle behind even the smallest innovation in any art or

craft, a struggle first to master and then to transcend a given generic or stylistic

practice…[3]

By Scholes's definition, we can interpret television animation as a genre in a unique

position within the study of television. As a form of programming often seen as being for

children, it has been forced in the past to conform to standards of censorship, yet it has also

repeatedly defied efforts to categorize it through the conflicting natures of its narrative

structures and strategies. Both "stolid conformity" and "playful challenge" exist in the

narratives, with conflict repeatedly resulting from the contrast. Therefore, the "network of

codes" is one that has to be carefully and thoughtfully interpreted.

Drawing on these literary antecedents, scholars of television history, such as David

Marc and Robert Thompson in *Prime Time, Prime Movers*, have suggested the importance

of viewing programs as "texts" and their producers as the "authors."[4] But the very nature of

much television programming, which divides programs into individual episodes or

segments, each with their own writers, directors and other key staff, fragments the creative

process and gives everyone involved in the production of a series a potential share in the

"authorship." For these reasons, it is important to establish on both an overall and an

episode-by-episode level who the key contributors to a work are and what their specific

contributions were. Analyzing television, as historian and critic John Kenneth Muir has

suggested, requires a specific set of responses, including a consideration of the impact of

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[3] Scholes, *Textual Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 2.

[4] Marc and Thompson, *Prime Time, Prime Movers* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1995), 6-10.

the visuals. The choice of camera angles and the use of special lenses or editing choices such as slow- and fast-motion photography or freeze frames provide clues to the nature of the story and the personality of the protagonists in a kind of eye-catching short-hand that dialogue, no matter how eloquent, cannot convey. Everyone has heard the truism that a picture is worth a thousand words, and in good television that dictum is critical.[5] Muir's definition of television as a visual medium is equally relevant to the study of television animation. Since it is a genre whose existence is dependent on the creation of physical and mental illusions, visual and verbal effects and imagery become crucial factors in developing a sustaining image that separates the genre from the rest of the "real world" television environment.

The Evolution of Television Animation

As a cultural art form, television animation inherited a number of production processes and cultural interpretation structures from its immediate ancestor, theatrical animation. This is particularly evident in the first two decades of television animation's existence, where the personnel consisted largely of theatrical animation veterans, and much of the humorous ambience and ideas had strong roots in the prior form. However, this did not prevent television animation from being criticized by certain members of the theatrical animation community as being a bastardized for-profit-only art form, an exaggerated and biased position that would dog television animation for decades.[6]

The most obvious separation between the two art forms was the emphasis, within television animation, on curtailed production processes, an effort designed to save costs but

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[5] Muir, *A History and Critical Analysis of "Blake's 7", the 1978-1981British Television Space Adventure* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2001), 31-32.

[6] For an overview of the history of theatrical animation and the rise of this ideological split, see Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic* (New York: Plume, 1987); Michael Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Stefan Kanfer, *Serious Business* (New York: Da Capo, 1997); and Norman M. Klein, *Seven Minutes* (New York: Verso, 1993).

wrongly interpreted as reflecting a lack of respect for the traditional painstaking artistry involved in theatrical animation. In early animated programs such as *Crusader Rabbit* (discussed more fully in Chapter 1), the latter argument seemed to be borne out, as "the stories unfolded in still, static poses, with movement occurring on the average of once every four seconds"[7] -- heresy by the standards of theatrical animation, where constantly flowing, artistic movement was considered the traditional standard. Yet, in most other respects, the seven minute format and the narrative structures were retained, although few new animated programs were seen in the early 1950s without being book-ended with earlier materials as part of local children's programming. Even when programming expanded later in that decade to full half-hours, either in segments or as full half-hour storylines, production methodology remained at a bare bones level, with a close eye placed upon excesses related to production costs. Whether it was Hanna-Barbera's "limited" animation or the "runaway" method employed by Jay Ward, the methods taken to produce quality work on a budget came with obvious costs and benefits.

The decline of the theatrical animation divisions of the Hollywood studios led to an increase in available talent for television animation producers[8], and with this came a rise in the number of television animation producers, as well as an increased level of production of stand-alone animated series, which became the dominant and preferred form for the genre in the 1960s. Traditionally, the Hollywood-based animation industry rose and fell with the successes and failures of the film industry as a whole, and it faltered after 1948 with the aftermath of the *Paramount v. United States* case in the Supreme Court. The consequences of that case were dire: studios lost control of the theatres they owned, and, with them, a

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[7] Hal Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows: An Illustrated Encyclopedia 1949-2003* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2003), 1-9.

[8] Ibid., 1: 21.

substantial source of revenue that had been used, among other things, to fund animation production. While some studios continued making animated films into the 1960s, the majority simply shut down their studios, which forced the artists in them to seek other work. It was these artists who were responsible for pioneering the television animation industry, out of both necessity and the seemingly limitless promise television offered to animation at that time. The work of Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward, discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, is representative of this time and these techniques. Nevertheless, there remained something of a bias towards programs featuring separate-but-equal segments as opposed to fully unified plots and plot lines, a leftover concept from theatrical animation. However, with the success of *The Flintstones* (discussed in Chapter 1), more programs with half-hour plotting came to the fore.

By the mid-1960s, television animation had become relegated to the Saturday morning time slots, explicitly to exploit the rise in commercial consumption by children in this era, who were viewed as television animation's primary audience. As a consequence, it came under fire during the late 1960s campaign against "violence" in the mass media, which led producers to change their methods of production and narrative development in order to suit the executives' wish to placate their critics. By the end of this study's time period, in 1980, plotlines were being largely rehashed, though some producers, like Lou Scheimer of Filmation Studios, were able to incorporate more progressive social and political ideas into their work. Scheimer's signature series, such as *Fat Albert And The Cosby Kids*, remain landmark programs because he chose to portray his characters sympathetically and multi-dimensionally instead of allowing them to be the butt of racist and sexist gags, setting an example for a new generation of animators in the process; this

work and its impact will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Television animation, in both a social and political context, was a "marginalized" genre.[9] While this may have meant that adventurous animators, such as Jay Ward, could comment bluntly on world affairs, it also meant that television animation was vulnerable to social, political and economic changes within American society. As other writers have emphasized, the Cold War period was one in which the United States changed how it viewed itself, its citizens, and its relationship with the outside world, and the media (including television animation) was forced to keep up with these changes.[10]

The most obvious signs of the times in the television animation programming of this era were the polarized, Manichean, good-and-evil posturing of the lead characters in many of the more adventure-oriented programs, reflecting the American government's equally polarizing stance against Communism.[11] This was particularly evident during the 1960s, when many programs featured villains based on Slavic or Asiatic racial models in an effort to demonize the Russians and Chinese. But this does not mean that television animation producers supported the activities of the government: their programs, in fact, repeatedly featured a more comic and critical attitude. The series of Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward in this period, discussed in Chapter 1, were especially critical of the political issues of

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[9] S.T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale* (Holicong, PA: Wildside Press, 1990), 3-5.

[10] An overview of the history of the early Cold War period is presented in William O'Neill, *American High: The Years of Confidence 1945-1960* (New York: Free Press, 1986). Reflections on the impact of the Cold War on American culture in general are discussed in Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995) and Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). The impact of the Cold War on both theatrical and television animation is shown effectively in Christopher Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons of the Vietnam Era 1961-1973* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2006). A significant discussion of the often negative relationship between the mass media and those who opposed issues related to the Cold War is given by Todd Gitlin in *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Most recently, the enduring legacy of the Cold War in contemporary politics has been expertly examined by Sean Wilentz in *The Age of Reagan: A History -- 1974-2008* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008).

[11] J. Fred MacDonald discusses the influence of this debate on television in a more general fashion in *Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1985).

this time, notably those relating to the deconstruction of traditional idealized images of American masculinity.[12]

As the 1960s drew to a close, the campaign against televised violence had restricted the type and the force of the actions animators could use in developing their plotlines, making the characters vehicles for the mouthing of a prescribed "pro-social" value system, as defined by the networks at the suggestion of activist groups such as Action For Children's Television. Other effects of consumer pressure were to bring about a more enlightened view of women and racial minorities, and the development of new programming formats. The approach taken by Filmation studios to deal with these issues will be discussed in Chapter 2.

With the changes occurring in television animation between 1957 and 1980, it became a fully articulated and idealized form of entertainment in America. Despite this, however, it continued as a marginalized art form due to a wrongly but firmly held notion that the genre was fit only for children. The programs discussed in this thesis, and the modus operandi behind them, not only demonstrated that this was not the case, but provided an ideological foundation for the more irreverent and progressive television animation programs that would emerge in the 1990s. A close examination of the genre, and its programs, characters and plots, more than justifies Marshall McLuhan's view of it as "the optimal mode"[13] of television.

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[12] See, among others, Whitfield, *Culture of the Cold War*, for an in-depth discussion of this idea.

[13] Marshall McLuhan in Eric McLuhan and Frank Zingrone, eds., *Essential McLuhan* (Concord, ON: House Of Anansi, 1995), 135.

Chapter 1

"Don't You Know I'm The Boss….?": "Masculinity" and Television Animation in the Late 1950s and Early 1960s

Modern studies of American history often point out the various ways that social and political subgroups of American culture -- women, African Americans, Jews, homosexuals etc. -- have been victimized and exploited by the mass media, which is seen as having an ability to create a prism-like reflection- and distortion- of the way society really works. One group has been neglected within the stream of this discourse is the white American male. Although often seen as an exploiter rather than a victim, the white American male was also stereotyped in the mass media of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in television. In this chapter, I will discuss how television narrowly stereotyped white American men in relation to social and political pressures, as well as how an emerging form of televisual discourse -- television animation -- used its capacity to present fantasy narratives to subtly critique the society in which these stereotypes existed.

The late 1950s and early 1960s was a period in which television animation became established as an important genre in television production. In this period, the programs and producers who defined the genre emerged. In their narratives and characterizations, they critiqued society's images of masculinity, by identifying and parodying forms of identified "masculine" behavior. As well, they helped to define society's views on the practices of both excluding and including "outsiders." In particular, the manner in which male characters -- both human and animal -- interacted with their physical and social settings and the ideas presented to them offers a significant and underutilized means of analyzing the society in which they appeared.

The "Men" of America -- and of Television Animation

The immediate post-World War II period, in which America became the most socially and economically dominant nation on Earth, is looked back on as a time of "innocence" in American life. In reality, this was not the case, in particular for the white American men who were seen to dominate this society.[14] These men, many of whom had known economic deprivation in the Great Depression and the horrors of World War II, now found themselves in a world that demanded of them a less strident and adventurous life. What was expected of the "average" American man in this period was fairly simple, if the government and media were to be believed. Economically, he was expected to hold a job. Socially, he was supposed to marry, move to a house in the suburbs, and begin raising a family. Politically, he was expected to have a "hard" attitude towards Communism and other undesirable political forces that supposedly threatened the country's security. It seemed simple, unless the man's social and political beliefs were not in line with the "government line."

The commercial television broadcasting of this time[15] reflected the ideals of the society as opposed to its realities. This was reinforced by the American television networks, who demanded that producers of their drama and comedy programs, in particular, present images that reflected an idealized, escapist view of society in order to retain the supposed good graces of its audience and the economic leverage of the

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14 For an examination of issues related to masculinity in this time, see K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2005); James Gilbert, *Men In the Middle: Searching For Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2005); and Gary Cross, *Men To Boys: The Making of Modern Immaturity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

15 For the establishment and growth of television broadcasting in this period see Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1992) and Cecilia Tichi, *Electronic Hearth: Creating An American Television Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

commercial sponsors.[16] What resulted was a view of the world that allowed dominant (i.e. "white male") points of view to be seen as the standard of the time and made other points of view either irrelevant or marginal. This view, common in the television of the 1950s, portrayed America as a country that was content and white -- a view that was not at all the truth. What was barely evident was a sense of the perspectives of outsiders -- those who, through differences in race, gender, sexuality etc., did not fit this normative standard and were placed apart from it to accommodate the goals and ideals of the dominant society. Artists who conveyed these viewpoints were largely disregarded.[17] An exception to this was seen in television animation, which provided a means of exposing and satirizing these depictions through exaggerated comic portrayals of current society. This was done in a way designed to engage both the primary audience of children, and adult viewers as well, in an effort to expand the size of their audiences and their clout with sponsors.

The two major television animation studios of the time -- Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward -- had different production processes and political philosophies. In defining and satirizing the elements of American society, they concentrated on three "masculine" stereotypes that both reflected and distorted the image of the American male at this time: the *con man*, the *suburban husband and father*, and the *hero*.

The first major stereotype of the era -- the *con man* -- descended from trickster myths of the past and was shaped by society and the mass media of the time.[18] Rooted in

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[16] For the mechanics of American network television at this time see James L. Baughman, *Same Time, Same Station: Creating American Television 1948-1961* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and J. Fred MacDonald, *One Nation Under Television: The Rise and Decline of Network TV* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1990).

[17] For an academic take on these subcultures in literature, and their later impact on the mass media at large, see Josh Lukin (ed.), *Invisible Suburbs: Recovering Protest Fiction In The 1950s United States* (Jackson: University Of Mississippi Press, 2008).

[18] For the development of this character as a literary figure see Warwick Wadlington, *The Confidence Game in American Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975). A history of the type in modern America is provided by David W. Maurer, *The Big Con: The Story of the Confidence Man* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999 [1940]).

the earlier Depression and World War II periods, he represented a time when economic

security was not guaranteed for men and deviance and deception were often the only means

of survival. At this time, the character of Sergeant Bilko, as portrayed by Phil Silvers on

The Phil Silvers Show (CBS 1955-1959),[19] made the type extremely popular, and his ability

to get his own way by subverting authority[20] would become a recognizable trait of many

later animated characters. Yet the vogue for this character type would be short-lived; as

cultural change ensued in America in the late 1960s, his appeal was substantially reduced.

The *suburban husband and father* was another, more realistic, figure who was

regularly spoofed in this time period. In the past, home life had been portrayed as a

battlefield where women had the edge or were capable of manipulating men into seeing

their point of view. While the comic portrayal of the wife who dominated her husband

relentlessly was an early stereotype that easily made the transition to television, less notice

was taken of the male figures in these programs who were less in control than they seemed

to believe. From *Father Knows Best* at one end, to bumbling idiot at the other, live action

sitcoms tended to place husbands and fathers at either end of the spectrum while ignoring

the shades of gray that ran beneath them. Hanna-Barbera's adaptations of the sitcom form

to television animation in the 1960s brought these gray areas directly into the open,

highlighting how many men failed to live up to the high standards society was setting for

them while mocking those standards in the process. Because these programs were

animated, the creators were able to use settings and plots that were often impossible in live-

action shows. This allowed them to explore areas that opened up the sitcom, and television

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[19] T. Brooks and E. Marsh, *The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network and Cable TV Shows* (8th ed.) (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 934. A biographical study of the character's creator is provided by David Everitt in *King of the Half Hour: Nat Hiken and the Golden Age of TV Comedy* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2001).

[20] Gerard Jones, *Honey I'm Home: Sitcoms Selling the American Dream* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 115.

animation, as significant areas for comic social criticism.

The traditional stalwart image of the male "hero" was often satirically punctured by these narratives. Early television, as a medium, was indebted stylistically to storytelling forms -- film, radio and pulp literary fiction -- that reinforced narrow views of what "heroism" and "the heroic" were. The taciturn man of action may have been able to succeed in his efforts in the movies, but that was only because the screenwriters allowed him to. The artificiality of "heroism" was a point that Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward both made repeatedly in their satires of Hollywood. Ward's satire, however, was closer to the truth due to the aggressive and cynical style of his comedy. By the end of the 1960s, however, the studios found that they had to embrace this image in order to survive in a changing economic marketplace for television animation. Hanna-Barbera was able to make this transition, with mixed results, but Ward was not. In exposing the limitations of "male" roles in the 1950s and 1960s, Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward both succeeded at satirizing these forms effectively, albeit in different ways and with different consequences.

The "Men" Of Hanna-Barbera

William Hanna and Joseph Barbera were a veteran team of theatrical animation directors who entered the television animation business after being dismissed by their longtime employer, MGM, in 1957.[21] Quickly adapting to the new environment, they established the "limited animation" system, a cost-efficient, scaled-down process compared to theatrical animation that allowed for more economical production. Writing in an

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[21] The lives and careers of Hanna and Barbera have been well-documented. The best sources regarding the studio's productions are Ted Sennett, *The Art Of Hanna-Barbera* (New York: Viking, 1987); Michael Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons* (New York: Hugh Lauter Levin Associates, 1998); and Jerry Beck, *The Hanna-Barbera Treasury* (San Rafael, Ca.: Insight Editions, 2007). Of equal value are the two men's autobiographies: Barbera, *My Life In 'Toons* (Atlanta: Turner Publishing, 1994) and William Hanna and Tom Ito, *A Cast Of Friends* (New York: Da Capo, 2000). For a view of the studio during this chapter's time frame see Murray Schumach, "Animated, Yes -- Frantic, No," *New York Times*, Aug. 28, 1960.

intelligent, occasionally satiric style that embraced both children and adults as viewers[22], Hanna-Barbera was able to assume a dominant position in television animation production, setting and maintaining standards in both production and content for years afterward.

Con Men, Outsiders, and Authority Figures. Hanna-Barbera's early productions embraced the con-artist stereotype common at the time, combining it with the theatrical animation tradition of endowing animal characters with human traits.[23] This had been effective in the earlier work of theatrical animation studios, such as Warner Brothers[24], and was refined by Hanna-Barbera to reflect the modern time period. As William Hanna noted later, "…we had dogs, cats…bears [and other animals] that not only conversed fluently with people, but carried cash, credit cards, and drove cars as well."[25] They were also able to express sentiments denied to other characters portrayed in the media in the 1950s and 1960s, allowing them to represent "sameness" within "otherness". This provided the creators with a means of critiquing the white male establishment of the era in a way that would have been too overt and blunt with live-action performers, but suited television animation perfectly.

The most prominent of Hanna-Barbera's animal con artist figures was Yogi Bear, who made his debut on a segment of *The Huckleberry Hound Show* in 1958 and graduated to his own series in 1961.[26] Yogi (voiced by Daws Butler, who voiced many of the studio's

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[22] Schumach. "Animated, Yes…"

[23] A recent and comprehensive study of this relationship appears in Paul Wells, *The Animated Bestiary: Animals, Cartoons and Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2009).

[24] See, for examples, Jerry Beck and Will Friedwald, *Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies: A Complete Illustrated Guide to the Warner Brothers Cartoons* (New York: Henry Holt And Co., 1989).

[25] Hanna and Ito, *A Cast Of Friends,* 108.

[26] *The Huckleberry Hound Show* and *The Yogi Bear Show* were both issued on DVD by Warner Home Video in 2007. A production history of *The Yogi Bear Show* is featured in Hal Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows*, 2: 928-935.

most prominent characters at this time[27]) was a genial inhabitant of the fictional Jellystone

Park. In the vast majority of his adventures his main goal, as historian Ted Sennett notes,

was "…to cadge food from the picknickers who swarmed into his home territory"[28] by any

means necessary. He was aided and abetted by his little associate, Boo Boo (voiced by Don

Messick, another long-serving member of the Hanna-Barbera stock company), who served

alternately as Yogi's biggest fan or his devil's advocate. Yogi considered himself "smarter

than the average bear,"[29] but this mental aptitude was frequently tested by confrontations

with his friendly nemesis, Park Ranger John Smith (Messick), whose attempts to outwit

and/or punish him were a major component of many episodes.

Yogi represents several aspects of the archetypal male con artist. He has, to begin

with, an inordinate faith in his own abilities and an unyielding belief that his approach to

the situation at hand will work. He is prepared to do anything to maintain his standard of

living. As historian Hal Erickson notes, he displays many of the expected emotional traits

of the con artist: "groveling in the face of Authority, sniggering behind Authority's back,

gleefully scamming everyone in sight to further his own comfort, and never losing rapport

with an audience who'd give anything to get away with what Yogi got away with."[30] By

managing to accomplish his goals while still remaining in the audience's good graces, Yogi

is able to succeed on a double level.

The con artist is an outsider. While Yogi is trying to get something he feels he

deserves by want of previous deprivations, the tourists perceive him as a menacing outsider

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[27] Butler's life and career has been documented in Ben Ohmart and Joe Bevilacqua, *Daws Butler: Characters Actor* (Boalsberg, PA: Bear Manor Media, 2005).

[28] Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera* (New York: Viking, 1989*), 60.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 932.

trying to harm them. For example, in "Bear On A Picnic,"[31] Yogi's efforts to steal food

from a middle-aged couple are compromised by his sympathetic interest in their infant son.

However, his efforts to be a friendly protector are negated by the couple's negative

reactions to his interaction with the child: they cannot see beyond his outward

"threatening" appearance to his inner heart. This can be seen as a commentary on the

damaging effects of stereotypes on the relationship between different people.

As Erickson suggests, Ranger Smith represents Authority and the need to repair the

rifts in social order which Yogi has created. Smith's relationship with Yogi can be

interpreted in two significant ways. There is a sense that one is the master of the other, but

our preconceptions about who fills which role are often challenged by Hanna and Barbera.

While Smith is theoretically Yogi's "master", he is also manipulated into having to correct

the damage Yogi's cons inflict, and is therefore made a "slave" to Yogi. Yogi is willing to

play the "slave" role in discussions with Smith, even though his actions demonstrate that

this role is an assumed one. Also evident are traces of a coded father/son relationship

between the pair, with Smith frequently issuing "[w]arnings and punishments"[32] designed

to "correct" Yogi's behavior, which Yogi ignores and manipulates to make his "father"

look like a fool for trying to control him. This undoubtedly enhanced his appeal to child

viewers who dealt with their own "controlling" parents.

There is a deeper edge to this relationship that reveals the subversive nature of

television animation in light of the exclusionary politics of American television in the

1950s, where racial minorities were seen only rarely and then only in heavily stereotypical

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[31] *The Huckleberry Hound Show,* Disc 1, Episode 19. Originally produced 1958. Produced and directed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera.

[32] Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera,* 60.

roles. In light of the Civil Rights movement, it is possible to look at the Yogi/Smith

relationship as a coded white/black relationship, with Yogi as the coded "black" figure and

Smith the "white" authority figure trying to control him. This behavior is particularly

noticeable in the early Yogi adventures on *The Huckleberry Hound Show*. Here, Yogi's

encounters with the Park's tourists, always drawn as caricatured "white" people, and his

efforts to separate them from their picnic food often take on a noticeable racial edge. By

Yogi's mindset, he is trying to get something he feels he deserves by want of previous

deprivations. By that of the tourists, he is a menacing outsider trying to harm them,

regardless of what his true intentions may be. An example of this is seen in "Bear On A

Picnic."[33] Here, Yogi's efforts to steal food from a middle-aged white couple are

compromised by his sympathetic interest in their infant son, who gets himself into a variety

of dangerous situations which Yogi rescues him from. The fact that Yogi's efforts to be a

friendly protector are negated by the couple's negative reactions to his interaction with their

child can be seen as a commentary on the damaging effects of racism on the relationship

between people of different races.

The underlying tension in the relationship between Yogi and Ranger Smith became

a dominant theme when Yogi received his own program in 1961. In an early episode of

The Yogi Bear Show entitled "Booby Trapped Bear,"[34] for example, Yogi disguises himself

as the Park's "Health Inspector" in order to divest unsuspecting picknickers of their food.

Ranger Smith "busts" Yogi and initially imprisons him in a cage, but later relents when

Yogi protests that his "rights" as an animal living under U.S. Government protection are

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[33] *The Huckleberry Hound Show,* Disc 1, Episode 19. Originally produced 1958. Produced and directed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera.

[34] "Booby Trapped Bear." Originally produced 1961. From "The Yogi Bear Show." Produced and directed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Featured in *The Yogi Bear Show: The Complete Series* (Warner Home Video, 2007), Disc 1, Episode 2.

being compromised by this action. Nevertheless, his release has an unknown string attached. Smith has strategically placed booby trapped picnic baskets in the Park, designed to inflict physical punishment on Yogi if he tries to remove food from them. The scheme succeeds with the intended results, and Yogi is soon on the point of permanently swearing off picnic baskets. However, Smith's triumph is short-lived; just as he reveals the insidious nature of his scheme to Yogi, his superior makes a surprise appearance and is blown up by one of the booby trapped baskets. In the final scene, we see Smith imprisoned in exactly the same cage he had earlier used to hold Yogi. When Smith accepts a stolen sandwich Yogi has offered him, Yogi observes that being confined seems to have helped him to think more like the animals he watches over.

This episode is notable not only for the comment it makes about relations between the characters, but also because of its relevance to the thesis of sociologist Erving Goffman's *The Presentation Of Self In Everyday Life*, published only two years before the production of this episode.[35] Goffman believed that human life roles could be seen as "parts" played by "actors." The animated characters in "Booby Trapped Bear" and other episodes of *The Yogi Bear Show,* like those in Jay Ward's narrative-subverting parodies of conventional media story ideas (discussed later on in this chapter) "act" on the "stages" of their creators in precisely the same ways Goffman indicated human beings "act" in real life.

As the series evolved, it became clear that, while Yogi and Smith were structured as antagonists, there was a systematic symbiotic relationship between them;[36] each needed the other to survive and thrive. Two episodes in particular highlight this often contradictory

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[35] Goffman, *The Preservation of Self in Everday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959).

[36] A listing of episode summaries is provided in Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 132-141.

relationship between the pair. In "Iron Hand Jones,"[37] Smith temporarily leaves his position

and is replaced by the title character, a stereotypical martinet who behaves in the fashion of

a U.S. Army platoon sergeant, frequently ordering those around him to march in military

fashion to reinforce his nature of command. Understandably, this clashes with Yogi's free-

wheeling approach to life, and he pulls strings to get Smith back and restore the status quo.

Similarly, in "Home, Sweet Jellystone,"[38] Smith leaves the Park after inheriting the estate

of his rich uncle. However, the change does neither him nor Yogi any good; Yogi misses

his "worthy opponent", while Smith finds his new life boring and returns to the Park. These

episodes suggest that, in spite of their differences of opinion, these characters had a

psychological need and desire for a close relationship with each other.

Hanna-Barbera would adapt the basic "Yogi Bear" format many times across the

1960s and 1970s, with diminished returns as the format became more predictable. Initially,

it showed promise and adaptability, and some of the variations were able to expand

effectively upon the political subtext of the original series. The most fanciful and

accomplished of these variations was *TopCat*, which aired in prime time on ABC during

the 1961-62 season.[39] *Top Cat* is interesting because it was able to take an existing

narrative and reshape it to the demands of the new genre of television animation, as Hanna-

Barbera had already indicated was possible with *The Flintstones* (discussed later in this

chapter). Borrowing on the popularity of *The Phil Silvers Show*, the program's characters

aped the adventures of Sergeant Bilko and his platoon in animated feline form. Hanna-

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[37] "Iron Hand Jones." Originally produced 1961. From "The Yogi Bear Show." Produced and directed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Featured on *The Yogi Bear Show*, Disc 3, Side B, Episode 20.

[38] "Home, Sweet Jellystone." Originally produced 1961. From "The Yogi Bear Show." Produced and directed by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera. Featured on *The Yogi Bear Show,* Disc 2, Episode 11.

[39] This series was issued on DVD by Warner Home Video in 2007. For a production history, see Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 864-866.

Barbera did not simply copy an existing idea but adapted it to serve their own devices.

The imprints of the *Silvers* formula still drove much of the plotting, however. Top Cat (voiced by Arnold Stang) was developed as the lead Bilko figure, with the supporting cast following the "Runyonesque"[40] role types set by the prior program. As with Bilko, the lead character was surrounded with a loyal group of followers who were memorable both individually and as a group. Providing nominal opposition to the group's activities was the local cop on the beat, Officer Charlie Dibble (Allen Jenkins). Dibble, like Ranger Smith, is drawn as a flawed but respectable caricature of traditional white male authority, in his case the often deceptively bucolic neighborhood policeman so common in urban centers of the period. However, he lacks the Ranger's intelligence and guile, and is therefore much more easily swayed by friendly words or a perceived need for his involvement. Dibble appears at first glance simply to be a cipher of outside controlling forces but, in fact, he has an implicit sense that his feline antagonists need him around more than even they suspect at times.

Again, a between-the-lines reading deepens what would otherwise be read as a simple situation. As historian M. Keith Booker notes, there are undertones of both class division and racial antagonism in the relationship between Dibble and the cats,[41] but the producers, bowing to the pressures of prime time narrative expectations, frequently soft-pedaled the latter element. However, traces of defiance remain within the structure. Booker notes that the character of Spook (a member of Top Cat's group) is reminiscent of the "White Negroes" which Norman Mailer had written about in 1957[42] -- white men who openly identified with African American culture. The urban setting of the program also

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[40] Val Adams, "News of TV and Radio – Cartoons," *New York Times*, Sept. 24, 1961.

[41] M. Keith Booker, *Drawn to Television: Prime-time Animation from the Flinstones to Family Guy* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2006), 36-37.

[42] Ibid., 36.

grounds it within one of the most potent battlefields for Civil Rights conflicts in this time, and also, significantly, predating the urban race riots of the following decade.[43] As with Yogi Bear's earlier encounters with "white" humanity, it is possible to look at the relationship between the Top Cat gang and white characters, including Dibble, in a racial light. The gang members are portrayed as outsiders but, like many other outsider figures, they have constructed a small independent universe within the larger community through which they can safely exist with minimal persecution. It is only when they move out of this universe, and into the controlling light of the larger community, that they truly become vulnerable to the threat of "racism" from the "white" human characters, though, thanks to Top Cat's manipulation of the system for his and their benefit, this rarely occurs. More controlled elements of rebellion also exist. The cats' active and independent operation and Dibble's inability to control them in particular mocks the conformist attitudes of the era, in particular their stress on group unity over individual effort and input.[44] These elements, however, were communicated only subtly -- the only way they could have been in network television during this period.

The majority of the series' installments tended to focus upon Top Cat's "straightforward attempts to cash in on the possibilities for upward mobility represented by American capitalism."[45] As with Bilko, these involved considerable scam artistry, over-the-top impersonations, cunning ploys, and as little actual "work" as possible. Yet Hanna-Barbera was not in the business of overtly imitating other media forms; as they had already

[43] For a discussion of this idea, see Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005 [1996]).

[44] See William H. Whyte, Jr., *The Organization Man* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957); David Riesman, Nathan Glazer and Reuel Denny, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969 [1950]); and Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture.*

[45] Booker, *Drawn to Television,* 38.

demonstrated with *The Flintstones*, they gave as much as they took away in developing

ideas. *Top Cat* was no exception in that regard, and for this reason, the program is indebted

both in narrative and psychology as much to Yogi Bear as to Bilko. Like the earlier

program, the disruption and restoration of the status quo forms the basis of several

installments.[46] In "Naked Town", for example, both Top Cat and his gang and Dibble are

conned by a pair of robbers who stage a real-life robbery with their unwitting aid. As in the

"Iron Hand Jones" episode of "Yogi Bear", Dibble is temporarily relieved from office and

replaced with a less sympathetic figure, making Dibble's restoration a major priority for the

gang. Similarly, in "Farewell, Mr. Dibble", a rival policeman (Prowler) engages in

Machiavellian manipulation to get Dibble dismissed. Top Cat and his gang retaliate by

fingering Prowler's citation book and littering the city with tickets. Dibble is reinstated

when Prowler overzealously arrests his superior officer and the Mayor, and is sent home.

Other episodes indicated that, while Dibble was the cats' friend, he was also the key

"mark" for their cons. In "The Long Hot Winter", the cats con Dibble into letting them

spend the night in his apartment, but they place the policeman on the fire escape when his

snoring bothers them. He retaliates by throwing them out when he wakes. Top Cat calls

"Strife" magazine and pitches a story to them about Dibble performing the noble-hearted

deed of rescuing unfortunate cats from a cold alley. To save face, Dibble is forced to

readmit the cats when a "Strife" reporter arrives to cover the story. An agreement is made

so that the cats may remain in the apartment until spring.

Top Cat was not a success in prime time for a number of reasons. As Hal Erickson

has suggested, it was not simply that it garnered poor ratings, but that its concept was

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[46] For a listing of episode summaries see Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 146-153.

simply too much of an "adult" fantasy to be translated effectively into a "children's"

format, which television animation was largely perceived to be at the time.[47] The series

certainly had the potential for attracting an audience of children, as it would do in Saturday

morning reruns. But children were considered to be a minority group among viewers.

With their other three prime time series, Hanna-Barbera attempted to give prime time

audiences programming that would have more relevance to their own lives.

Suburban Husbands and Fathers. While it was generally perceived in the 1950s

and 1960s that men had control in the public world, such was not the case in more domestic

settings. Traditionally, home life in American entertainment had been portrayed as a

battlefield where the women either had the edge or were capable of manipulating men to

see their point of view. Dating back to Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle,"[48] the

tyrannical wife had long been a stereotype used for comic effect in narratives to humble

men or to excuse the abuse they doled out to keep women "in their place." The situation

comedies, or "sitcoms", of radio and television only served to confirm, internalize and

institutionalize many of these viewpoints in their viewers, bringing these common conflicts

into the slightly more enlightened sphere of the modern world. Until the early 1970s, these

narratives were predicated on seeing women as junior partners, and reinforcing the notion

of what their "place" was supposed to be, while suggesting that women could use more

negative routes to have their "way." Hanna-Barbera's two prime-time animated sitcoms of

this period, *The Flintstones* (ABC 1960-1966) and *The Jetsons* (ABC 1962-63), were, at

least in their original incarnations, demonstrations of these roles. Both of these series

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[47] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 865.

[48] Irving, "Rip Van Winkle." From Stephen Leacock (ed.), *The Greatest Pages of American Humor* (New York: Sun Dial Press, 1936).

satirized the real positions and concerns of men in the postwar era vis-à-vis the idealistic images of masculinity served up by the mass media at this time.

The sitcom format's adaptability to changes in American society was most evident in the 1960s, when a large number of programs began using fantasy elements as a means of distancing audiences from contemporary concerns while, at the same time, using that distance to ridicule them.[49] In planning to expand their studio's reach into prime time, Hanna and Barbera were essentially riding the crest of a wave, even if they were not aware of it at the time. After choosing to use Jackie Gleason's *Honeymooners* series (CBS 1955-56)[50] as a template, a number of proposals were tried out and then discarded[51] before the final concept of *The Flintstones*[52] arrived -- transporting modern issues and concerns back to the Stone Age.[53] It took some major selling on Joseph Barbera's part before an interested sponsor and a network finally noticed the originality of the concept, and decided to give an animated program a chance to attract an audience of adults as well as children.[54]

The territorial template within which Hanna-Barbera would set its Stone Age follies -- American suburbia circa 1960 -- was still a contested ground of both obvious affluence and obvious exclusions. As historian Lynn Spigel has noted, the suburb emerged after World War II as a "promised land" that provided hope for a better life for those who

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[49] For a fuller discussion of the political implications of this sub-genre see Lynn Spigel, "From Domestic Space To Outer Space: The 1960s Fantastic Family Sitcom", in Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 107-140.

[50] Jones, *Honey, I'm Home*, 108-114.

[51] Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera,* 79; Barbera, *My Life In 'Toons*, 5.

[52] The six seasons of *The Flintstones* were issued on DVD by Warner Home Video in 2007, both as individual volumes and a complete set. For a production history see Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 333-344.

[53] William Hanna quoted in Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera*, 79.

[54] Barbera, *My Life In 'Toons*, 1-15; Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera*, 81; Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 336.

participated in it.[55] Yet this "promised land" was exclusively for the white middle class. "Undesirables" such as racial minorities were kept out through restrictive covenants and "red-lining" zoning practices. Consequently, the live-action sitcoms of the 1950s which depicted white suburbia were essentially depicting a world that was seen by outsiders as a lie even in their time. Later periods of nostalgia would remove the truth from the picture and distort the world view even more. It was this bias towards a normative "white middle class" standard of living in the suburbs, and its depiction within the environment of television, that would give *The Flintstones* much of its satiric thrust. By using *The Honeymooners* -- a sitcom with an unvarnished "blue-collar" setting -- as its template, Hanna-Barbera reflected on and spoofed the tension between the established middle class and the "arrivistes" from the working class, such as Fred Flintstone, as they attempted to negotiate and establish a harmonious environment in which to live together in spite of differences in class and politics in particular.

Debuting in the fall of 1960 on ABC, *The Flintstones* initially met with mixed and even hostile reviews. Typical of the reaction was *New York Times* television reviewer Jack Gould, who referred to the show as "an inked disaster" while despairing the fact that "the humor was of the boff-and-sock genre, nothing light or subtle."[56] Gould's harsh assessment is certainly applicable to the earliest episodes, when it was truly structured towards an "adult" mindset, but it does not account for the staying power of the series as a whole. The manner in which the producers manipulated the characters and the underlying sociopolitical attitudes of the time in the course of creating the series is an area that needs to be subjected to close historical analysis.

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[55] Spigel, "From Domestic Space," in Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse,* 110.

[56] Jack Gould, "TV: Animated Cartoons -- 'The Flintstones' in Debut on Channel 7…," *New York Times*, October 1, 1960.

It should be noted at the outset that the setting itself is perhaps the most enjoyable aspect of the program. The town of Bedrock is devised as a modern American community in Stone Age disguise, with characters wearing modified animal skins, commuting by means of foot powered transportation, and using dinosaurs in place of heavy equipment. In addition, sports and activities such as bowling are given a heavy and humorous Stone Age twist. Much of the show's humor, in fact, comes from the disjunction between modern life and the pseudo-prehistoric world presented by the series and the attempts made by the producers to reconcile these differences. These attributes provided some of the program's most memorable moments. It is in discussion of the issues and politics of the show's lead characters and their relationships with their wives that the show's age is revealed. The two distinct eras of the program -- the "adult" period (1960-1963) and the "kid" period (1963-1966) -- mark the main changes to the program during its run. The show, initially defined as an adult-oriented situation comedy, was forced into a new existence as a kid-friendly family show by changes in the target audience.[57]

The tone of any fictional television program, animated or otherwise, is usually set by its lead characters, since the producers use them as a fulcrum to keep it going on a weekly basis. It is essential that the characters be "likable" if the series is to thrive. Examining Fred Flintstone (voiced by Alan Reed) in this light is significant, for his "likability", as well as his masculinity, is frequently limited. Fred is loudmouthed, overweight and domineering, embodying many of the stereotypical traits of the "blue-

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[57] This division becomes most apparent when comparing the plotlines of the two periods. Early episodes tended to focus more on social concerns in line with the perceived "adult" audience -- i.e. joint ownership of property ("The Swimming Pool"), efforts to improve one's economic stature by ownership of a small business ("The Drive-In"), and social conflicts between husbands and wives ("The Flintstone Flyer", the series pilot). By 1963, however, with the shift towards a perceived child dominated audience, fantasy had become the dominant component, involving such elements as alien invasion ("Ten Little Flintstones"), miniaturization ("Itty Bitty Fred"), mad scientists ("Dr. Sinister"), and restrained elements of Gothic horror and the supernatural ("The Gruesomes.") In both contexts, however, the essential appearance and mindset of the characters did not change. For a listing of episode synopses, see Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 86-129.

collar" working class male, especially in the early episodes. He hopes to dominate others simply with his presence and voice, though this is not often the case. Like many real-life men who lived in the 1960's, he suffers from a psychological inability to live up to his own, inordinantly high life expectations,[58] and reacts by resorting to both real and threatened violence (verbal and physical) to get others to react to and support him in his aims. In contemporary language, he has an "anger management" problem, which is frequently aggravated when he does not get his way. Fred misguidedly (and mistakenly) believes that his status as a man allows him privileges and that he therefore should have all the luck in the world. Thus, when his schemes for improving his lot in life backfire, he is reduced to throwing childish temper tantrums. He opposes the efforts of his wife Wilma (Jean Vander Pyl) to earn money for herself because of his backward social views (views consistent with societal attitudes in the original broadcast period), ignoring how this might actually benefit the family. Most significantly, and perhaps most regrettably, he is willing to risk friendships and happiness over minor issues based on his stubborn refusal to admit that he is wrong about anything, a particularly stereotypical "male" trait that endures in many later male characters. This attitude frequently tests and limits his relationship with Wilma, although they display affection towards each other as well.

Providing a foil to Fred is his best friend and neighbor, Barney Rubble (Mel Blanc), who embodies a more even-tempered and good natured form of masculinity than Fred, much as his wife, Betty (Bea Benaderet 1960-64; Gerry Johnson 1964-66) is kinder and gentler than Wilma. Barney is able to engage the sympathy of the audience much more than Fred because of his constant humorous commentary on their joint predicaments, his

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[58] Cuordileone. *Manhood and American Political Culture*, 138.

happy-go-lucky personal nature, and the fact that he is often occasionally victimized by Fred in the name of achieving a goal (e.g. his pretending to be Fred's infant son in "Baby Barney" (1962)[59] so that Fred can lay claim to an inheritance). Barney is as much a man as Fred is, as his ability to become petty and irritable certainly can rival Fred's. The ability of the two "friends" to fall out over relatively minor issues, especially in the first season's episodes, was remarkable, though Wilma and Betty, on the sidelines, knew implicitly that these childish displays of temper on both sides were simply the men working off inner frustrations in the only way they knew how.

The first three seasons of *The Flintstones* are quite certainly an "adult" sitcom, since the disputes between Fred and Wilma and between Fred and Barney over various trifles are what drive the plots. Children of the time might not have understood what was going on with this, but adults did. The series, like any other in its time period, was constrained by the normative expectations of its audience that it would portray life "as it was" humorously in spite of its fantastic setting. Certainly, while the series was capable of felicitously exploiting the Stone Age setting at times, the true comic potential of the series was often squandered by the producers' need to conform to the normative sitcom standards of the era -- feuding husbands and wives, feuding friends, money, work issues etc. Hanna-Barbera could have chosen a different approach and taken greater advantage of available technology, but they and the network and sponsors knew that they had to work within a set pattern of narratives in order to present what their audience wanted. For an adult audience of the period what mattered most was seeing the concerns of their time presented.

Among the more gratuitous sins of the program in the eyes of contemporary

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[59] Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons,* 107.

viewers is the sexism displayed by the male characters. As M. Keith Booker has noted,

while this may have been typical for the show's original broadcast period, it is rankling to

viewers accustomed to more modern attitudes.[60] Referring to women as "girls" and using

condescending diminutives for their wives, as Fred and Barney do, is not exactly an

enlightened viewpoint by feminist standards, but given the time period of the original

broadcasts and the majority attitude towards women within it, it is not surprising that this

language was used, and that the wives simply accepted it. This does not mean that the

women were defenseless – turnabout was often fair play. In many of the early episodes, for

example, Wilma was capable of a streak of violence, "resulting in blows to the head for

Fred or anyone else who got in her way!"[61] Other male characters were portrayed in a light

that reflected their lack of ability in the home sphere, resulting in a shift in the balance of

power toward women.[62] Fred's employer, Mr. Slate (John Stephenson), for example, was

clearly in charge on the job, but viewers saw him as being dominated by a controlling and

bossy wife at home.

The *ne plus ultra* of this particular divide between the sexes was Fred and Barney's

fraternal lodge, the Loyal Order Of Water Buffaloes, which figures prominently in a

number of episodes in the series.[63] Clearly modeled on similar real-life men's groups (Elks,

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[60] Booker, *Drawn to Television*, 5.

[61] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 340.

[62] This point was raised both by scholars of the time and by contemporary historians to suggest ways that men were limited in the home in ways that they were not in more public settings. For a historical view, see Whyte, *The Organization Man*, and Riesman, Glazer and Denney, *The Lonely Crowd*. For historical and contemporary views of manhood and its evolution (or to some, de-evolution), see Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture;* R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (2ND ed.) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (2nd Ed.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Gilbert, *Men in the Middle*; John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), and Cross, *Men To Boys*.

[63] Most prominently in "The Golf Champion" (1960; Here called The Loyal Order Of Dinosaurs); "The Beauty Contest" (1962); "The Picnic" (1962); "Here's Snow In Your Eyes" (1962); "The Buffalo Convention" (1962), "Ladies Night At The Lodge" (1964), "Pebbles' Birthday Party" (1964) and "Masquerade Party" (1966). See Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 86-129.

Masons, etc.) but shorn of those groups' desire to promote and conduct acts of charity for their communities, the Buffaloes exist primarily as a means of escape for its harried members from the prototypical, tyrannical "little woman" at home. This allows the members to cavort in bacchanalian (albeit sanitized for TV) exploits that they would not care to let their wives know about, especially cavorting with attractive dancing girls. The point of this organization, both implicitly and explicitly, is to provide a place in the overly controlled and regulated society of Bedrock for men to free themselves from inhibitions and actually be *men* without being fearful of their wives' controlling concerns. Wilma and Betty can only enter this domain by disguising themselves as men, which they actually do in one episode. Yet, even within this sanctified area, the "real" world can enter and irrevocably shatter the façade of illusion. The Buffaloes' supreme leader, the exalted Grand Poobah,[64] projects a mystic and powerful image as someone in complete control of his surroundings, and the members honor and respect him for that reason. Yet he, too, is merely a man like them, with a wife who dominates him.

Midway through the series' run, in 1963, a sea change occurred in the issues and concerns addressed by the program. Specifically, Fred and Barney, like many members of their adult audience, became fathers for the first time,[65] and the show's format abruptly switched from an adult's view of the world to one much more suitable for children in consequence. The arrival of Pebbles Flintstone and Bamm Bamm Rubble, while part of a calculated ploy to improve series viewership,[66] also served to "domesticate" the rough edges of the series. Gone were the conflicts about the men staying out late, the

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[64] A term that has since entered the North American vocabulary for someone perceived to be a power broker or bigwig.

[65] This allowed the program to enter and satirize the social debates on the influence of parenting on child development and the emergence of numerous "experts" on child rearing. See Gilbert, *Men In The Middle*, 20-21.

[66] Booker, *Drawn to Television,* 5.

"extravagancies" of the wives, and much of the detailed social satire. In its place came a more fantastical element, more in tune with a series whose primary audience was now seen to be young people rather than adults. This ideological regression was made complete by additions to the series of new elements that highlighted the program's fantastical setting. In particular, Fred became much more of "a rugged individualist with a feeble brainbone,"[67] and thus a much softer and gentler figure than he had been in the past.

In relation to this change there was a greater emphasis on Fred's efforts to transcend his "blue-collar" existence to provide a better environment for his new family. As historian Paul Wells has noted, while the series nominally remained in a "blue-collar" setting, the characters increasingly began aspiring to more refined "middle class" norms. The characters aped the mannerisms and activities of the middle class, often failing in the process but creating escapist liberation for themselves and their audience.[68] In this context, the series was able to explore wider social and political terrain than would have been allowed in a more traditionally formatted live-action sitcom. Fred's various experiences -- as a popular singer, a songwriter, a Hollywood (or, rather, Hollyrock) actor, a race car driver, a college athlete, etc. -- helped to develop and enrich the series beyond the limitations of the original format. It also pointed the way for future programs, most significantly *The Simpsons,* to re-explore these contexts in a changed social atmosphere, where the gently mocking approach of *The Flintstones* gave way to a more barbed, pointed and critical form of humor.

The new status of the Flintstones and Rubbles as parents forced the producers to

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[67] Brooks Atkinson, "Critic At Large -- Cartoon *Flintstones* Possesses Freshness Rarely Found In TV Comedy," *New York Times*, Oct. 4, 1963.

[68] Paul Wells. *Animation and America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 93-94.

rethink their characterizations, specifically by adding Fred and Barney to an ever growing list of well-meaning but inept TV father figures of the era.[69] In earlier episodes, children had been caricatured largely as intruding nuisances, and served to indicate the differences in the personalities of the two men. In "The Baby Sitters,"[70] a first season episode, Fred's "expertise" at handling a crying child in his care consisted largely in yelling at it to be quiet. Barney, in contrast, takes an active interest in the child, playing with it in a memorably constructed sequence. Judging by this, one would think that Fred lacked the skill and patience for dealing with children, so the fact that he becomes a devoted father to his daughter is an abrupt about-face, although not without mishaps. Fred learns a hard lesson about parental responsibility in the 1964 episode "Daddies Anonymous"[71] when he joins a group of henpecked husbands who play poker under the guise of "looking after" their children, and is given the expected grief when he returns home with the wrong child. By the final episodes, the children have begun playing major roles in the series, and their fathers have become considerably less aggressive than they once were in their presence. The implied message of this phase of the show's evolution was that it was perfectly fine for a man to show a healthy interest in children -- so long as they were his own.

A final major element of contentious masculinity is seen in the addition to the show's cast in the last season of The Great Gazoo (Harvey Korman). A supernaturally gifted alien being, Gazoo has been sent from his home planet to study the Earthlings. While he befriends Fred and Barney, and often uses his abilities to help them, he assumes a condescending attitude towards them, frequently referring to them as "dum-dums". In

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[69] Cross, *Men To Boys*, 46.

[70] Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 90.

[71] Ibid., 114.

contrasting Gazoo with Fred and Barney, the producers cast him as an arbiter of taste and sophistication, areas in which Fred in particular is seen to be lacking. This provides a heavy level of contrast in the streams of masculinity represented by the program. The fact that Gazoo causes much more trouble than he solves, however, negates any notions of superiority that his presence might imply, which may have been the producers' intent.

As the first major prime time television animation program, *The Flintstones'* legacy is significant on both aesthetic and political levels. As much as it broke new ground as an animated television series, it was unable to transcend the expectations of its viewers because it relied so heavily on the accepted notions of its time and place. By placing the series in prime time television, Hanna-Barbera was forced to negotiate the difficult and choppy divide between the juvenile humor at the heart of the studio's work and the need to reflect, at the series' core, the bare realities of American life circa 1960-1966 in a prehistoric setting. The writers had to make the lead characters mature in a way few other animated characters had, but in ways that did not disrupt the essential fantasy at the heart of the program's setting. This conflict between accepted notions and a fantastic setting would also prove to be a problem for a similar program that followed in its wake: *The Jetsons.*[72]

As with the earlier series, the setting of *The Jetsons* is its biggest asset. Set in the near future (or, more accurately, what the near future was thought to be like in 1962), the community of Orbit City is, like Bedrock, a "modern" American community retrofitted to fit a new setting and standard of living. Cars float on the air via rocket power, and most of the citizenry is equipped with electronic communication or transportation devices that eerily anticipate many technological revolutions of the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

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[72] The original 1960s episodes of *The Jetsons* were issued on DVD by Warner Home Video in 2007; the episodes of the series' revival in the 1980s were issued in 2009. For a production history, see Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 445-449. For an episode guide, see Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 156-164.

Most ingeniously, a large percentage of functions once performed or produced through

manual labor -- eating, dressing, bathing, walking etc. -- are now done through automation

or robots. Despite the apparent advantages of the setting, a considerable number of

conflicts and concerns arise.

   The Jetsons is particularly reminiscent of a subgenre of literary science fiction

which historian Lisa Yaszek has recently dubbed "Galactic Suburbia": that is, a series of

stories "set in high-tech, far futures where gender relations [especially] still look

suspiciously like those of 'present day, white middle-class suburbia'."[73] This is not

surprising, considering both the stories and *The Jetsons*, as commercial products, were

geared towards exactly that "white middle-class" audience. Just as the female science

fiction writers discussed by Yaszek had to tailor their work to accepted literary normative

standards to be published, so too Hanna and Barbera had to make their series viable to a

diverse prime time television audience. Once again, the producers tailored their fantastic

structure to accepted social and sitcom stereotypes, although they also attempted, with

mixed success, to deepen them as well.

   The focus of the series was the titular family, in particular family patriarch George

Jetson (voiced by George O'Hanlon), who frequently conveyed a world weary cynicism

which clashed felicitously with the program's futuristic setting. A digital index operator

(i.e. button pusher) at Spacely Space Sprockets, George is the futuristic equivalent of the

1960s "wage slave" in the same way that Fred Flintstone was its' Stone Age prototype. Yet

George is a different kind of man from Fred, both physically (he is taller and less muscular)

and emotionally (his displays of violence are only the verbal kind).Though he complains

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[73] Lisa Yaszek, *Galactic Suburbia: Recovering Women's Science Fiction* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2008), 3-4.

regularly about his supposedly taxing job (three hours a week and an annual income of $100,000) and the fact that he is often taken for granted by his family, these seem empty complaints simply because he is modestly well off for his time, unlike Fred.

This is a significant difference, and points specifically to the fact that *The Jetsons* is concerned with social status in a different way than *The Flintstones*. George Jetson is seen and portrayed as a solid member of a respected middle class, the kind of status Fred Flintstone could only aspire to. Unlike Fred, George does not have to be concerned about "making it" in society because, at least in his own mind, he already *has* made it. What George secretly fears, however, is that somehow he or his family will do or say something that will unravel this secure situation. For this reason, he polices himself and his family, through various patriarchal pronouncements and pontifications, to try to ensure that such a situation never occurs. Nevertheless, his deepest fears and concerns can become realized.

George keeps his home life more orderly than Fred's, though it also escapes his control to become chaotic at times. His wife Jane (Penny Singleton) is a stay-at-home wife and mother who has no intention or desire to compete with him economically. In addition, George is a father to two growing children, preteen Elroy (Daws Butler) and teenage Judy (Janet Waldo), who, though providing him with problems on a regular basis, still respect him in the normative patriarchal fashion of the 1960s. The family setting is completed by Rosie, the robot maid (Jean Vander Pyl), and Astro, the overly emotional family dog (Don Messick), who provide their own complications at times. Still, the majority of episodes focus on George and his ability (or inability) to adjust to a changing social order.

Because there is less conflict in George's home than in Fred Flintstone's, a different arena is used to show the audience why George feels discontented with his life. Much more

than in *The Flintstones,* George's job and the various "roles" he must play at it form a major component of the series. This is also the source of his most complex and contentious personal relationship: that with his employer, Cosmo Spacely (played by Mel Blanc).[74]

The "boss-as-tyrant" was a familiar figure to listeners and viewers of radio and television sitcoms of the 1940s and 1950s. Considerable humorous mileage was gained out of this figure and his (never her) use of economic leverage over his employees. Cosmo Spacely is perhaps representative of this character type at its most rapacious. A Napoleonic tyrant figure at worst, and only mildly likable at best, the diminutive, balding Spacely is the show's most formidable character, and one of the most formidable characters in the entire Hanna-Barbera arsenal. He presents a negative version of masculinity that mirrors the more positive one represented by George. Power has gone to this man's head, and, other than his expected and customary mollifying attitude towards his wife, he answers to nobody, and will do anything and everything to keep himself and his company in business. George, as would be expected, is the primary target of Spacely's aggressive bullying tactics, which seem humorous, if only briefly, due to the extreme size difference between the two men. At times, Spacely takes almost sadistic glee in tormenting George, assigning him large amounts of work that will guarantee that he will be working overtime instead of being at home with his family. George's occasional, accidental bursts of incompetence, as well, occasionally motivate Spacely to threaten to fire him or to actually do this ("You're fired!" was virtually his catchphrase).[75] At other times, however, when he sees something of value he can get out of George, he treats him with over-the-top, obsequiousness kindness, making

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[74] Due to this, George conforms to the attitudes defined by Whyte in *The Organization Man* towards suppressing individual interests in favor of the company's interest. His deference towards Mr. Spacely provides a sharp contrast to his controlling patriarchal interests at home.

[75] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 447.

both George and the audience suspicious of his true motivation until the plot collapses like

weak floorboards beneath them both.

Some of the program's most incisive episodes concern the relationship between

George and Spacely as it plays out against the complex economic and technological

conditions shown to exist in this period, particularly as it relates to Spacely's Machiavellian

power struggles with his chief business rival, Cogswell of Cogswell Cogs (Daws Butler).

Two episodes in particular stand out here. In "Test Pilot",[76] George is drafted to be the

subject for a series of tests of an "indestructible" jacket developed by Spacely's lab, a role

that he accepts only because he mistakenly believes that he is terminally ill. A number of

successful tests of the jacket are completed, during which George displays a swaggering

macho bravado which is firmly punctured with the news that the diagnosis was false.

Nevertheless, George is offered an executive position with the company as a reward.

However, Jane ends up destroying the supposedly "indestructible" jacket in the wash,

which adds a disconcerting note of misogyny to an otherwise well-crafted scenario. Even

more trenchant and satiric is "Private Property,"[77] with the focus of the episode clearly on

the Spacely/Cogswell conflict. When Cogswell erects a new headquarters near Spacely's

building, George is assigned the task of devising a ten foot wall to be erected between the

two properties. However, through George's blundering and the respective greed and

opportunism of Spacely and Cogswell, Spacely not only ends up with Cogswell's building

(and vice versa), but discovers that his new building has to be demolished for violating

building code standards. This episode and similar ones in the series expose big business as

a petty, childish game. Like Fred and Barney in the early *Flintstones* episodes, Spacely and

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[76] Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 162.

[77] Ibid., 164.

Cogswell are unwilling to use diplomacy, negotiations and other more mature tactics to peacefully coexist, instead constantly scheming to drive each other out of business. George, the Everyman figure, simply becomes a pawn in the ongoing financial tug-of-war between them. These installments were often the closest thing to subversive liberal social satire a la Jay Ward that the markedly conservative Hanna-Barbera studio ever produced.

George is not always this easily manipulated, however. In his own home he is (or at least would like to be) the manipulator. This side of him comes out most prominently in "A Date With Jet Screamer."[78] Judy Jetson, portrayed as a stereotypically "typical" teenager whose thoughts seemed to rarely go beyond boys and rock music,[79] always seemed to bring out the protective and conservatively-valued side of her father with her "antics", and this episode was a definitive portrayal of George in this sense. In the episode, Judy is entranced with the Elvis Presley-like singer Jet Screamer, and enters a songwriting contest to win a date with him. George, harboring many of the concerns of the white American middle class of the 1950s and 1960s towards rock and roll (e.g. that it was too "loud", the performers were loutish and uncouth, the lyrics were too suggestive, etc.),[80] is not impressed with Mr. Screamer, and sabotages Judy's efforts by substituting a secret code of Elroy's for her entry. Ironically, the "song", "Eep Opp Ork Aah Aah", ends up winning the contest. George's paternal protective attitude gets the better of him, and he secretly tails the pair on their date, to a concert where Screamer is performing. In the process, George's attitudes toward Screamer shift rapidly from fear and jealousy to admiration. A moral lesson exists

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[78] Ibid., 157.

[79] This was a popular cultural stereotype that producers latched on to for "comic" effect. For the evolution of the type, see Grace Palladino, *Teenagers: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1996) and Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls In Twentieth Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

[80] For a study of the early evolution of rock and roll and the opposition which existed to it in its early years, see Ed Ward, Geoffrey Stokes and Ken Tucker, *Rock Of Ages: The Rolling Stone History Of Rock 'N' Roll* (New York: Summit, 1986).

in the story: that supposedly "threatening" musicians such as Jet Screamer are simply normal people, and that, if rock music's critics were able to forgo their initial negative impressions of the music, they might actually enjoy it. This attitude was very much a minority viewpoint in the time the episode was produced.

With *The Jetsons*, just as with *The Flintstones*, Hanna-Barbera demonstrated that it was possible for television animation to attract a prime time audience – albeit at a cost. The characters and situations had to be structured in a way that made them acceptable, and this often involved the use of social and artistic stereotyping rather than genuine creativity. Nevertheless, with both programs the studio succeeded in putting some puncture wounds in the situation comedy format with broad animated humor, particularly where the inflated expectations of masculinity in the post-war era were concerned. They were less successful, however, when they tried to do the same thing by playing it straight.

Heroes. Hanna-Barbera's final prime time production for ABC in the 1960s was, suffice it to say, a departure from their previous work in a number of ways. Airing on the network during the 1964-65 season, *Jonny Quest*[81] represented a throwback to an old fashioned, thrill packed style of adventure storytelling that had flourished prior to World War II in comic strips, pulp fiction, radio and the movies, where escapism and fun were considered the normative operatives. It was a series drawn with realistic characters and backgrounds, ambitious special effects animation, and straight faced acting. Yet while it managed to recreate some of the thrills of the pre-war era, this was compromised by a racist, Orientalist worldview and an idealized take on masculinity that could not as easily be explained away as it could have in an earlier time.

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[81] The series was issued on DVD by Warner Home Video in 2007. A production history is found in Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 452-456. An episode list is provided in Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons*, 170-177.

As historian Christopher Lehman has argued recently, it is impossible not to view *Jonny Quest* as an attempt to recreate an older, and, arguably, more racist view as envisioned by past media in a time when, in the "real" world, America was preparing to go to war in a particular "backward" country, namely Vietnam. Specifically, by depicting "the travels of white figures across the globe and the dangers they face[d]", as well as "countries inhabited by people of color as simultaneously exotic and threatening", the series served to reinforce, if unintentionally, traditional notions of white male superiority.[82] This idea cannot be ignored on a historical level of study even if the producers did not intend to make the series political in this or any other way.

External politics aside, the actual narratives of the series were less complicated, even though they certainly reinforced this worldview. The blond haired title character (Tim Matthieson) was an idealistic young boy who was the son of Dr. Benton Quest (played first by John Stephenson, and later by Don Messick), a globetrotting scientist doing vaguely defined "secret experiments"[83] for the U.S. government. They were accompanied by Jonny's "tutor, companion, and all-around watchdog,"[84] secret agent Race Bannon (Mike Road); his heavily stereotyped East Indian friend Hadji (Danny Bravo); and his dog Bandit (Don Messick). Though technically sound, the series has aged poorly in terms of its plot and character development. Key to this problem were issues common to many of the programs of this time period, especially the animated ones. Although the program was designed to be set in a "near future" time period while reflecting contemporary concerns,[85]

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[82] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 47-48. See also MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace* for the impact of the political atmosphere of the time on television depictions of foreign affairs issues.

[83] Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera,* 134.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Booker, *Drawn to Television,* 31.

it tended to reinforce social and political viewpoints of a time long since past. Race Bannon

and Dr. Quest in particular were constructed as knights in shining armor, using their

physical and mental abilities, respectively, to provide solutions to problems. The idealized

and deified status of these characters reinforced their privileged white masculine status as

the dominant one of their society, and undermined the position of the minority characters,

who were portrayed either as outright villains or threats in other ways. The group's major

enemy, for example, was a Fu Manchu-styled Chinese scientific genius named Dr. Zin,

whose megalomaniacal desire for world domination made it hard to see him as anything

other than a racialized threat to the security of the United States whom the heroes were

almost duty-bound to stop. This attitude persisted towards various other minority groups

whose members were uniformly seen as ethnically inferior "savages" and "devils."[86] Our

heroes, who represented a highly "white" view of America, were shown to be morally and

ethically superior to these "backward" folks. Perhaps this view was acceptable in the early

post-World War II period, in keeping with the demonization of "enemy" ethnicities in the

war period and before, but it is insulting from a modern, multicultural viewpoint, which is

perhaps one reason why this series has been out of circulation in broadcast television for so

many years. As with their animated sitcoms, Hanna-Barbera was guilty here of kowtowing

to the expectations of the viewers of the period, in this case the use of an adventure format

to reinforce a centralized and biased "American" viewpoint. What was worse was the fact

that, because the program had such a deadly serious tone, the producers could not use the

defense that they were simply creating a "comic" world view. Despite this, *Jonny Quest*

established a format that would regularly be used by the studio, if in diluted form, for many

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[86] Ibid., 32.

years particularly as, in the latter part of the 1960s, they shifted their attentions away from prime time and towards Saturday morning, where they continued to present this idealized masculine image in various forms for a less demanding audience.

Jay Ward's "Men"

Though they dominated television animation in this time, Hanna-Barbera was hardly the only studio active in this period. It is to their most prominent artistic competitor, whose ideas about society, and masculinity, differed strongly from theirs, to whom we now turn. Jay Ward was a Harvard-educated native of California whose promising career as a realtor was cut abruptly short by a bizarre automobile accident,[87] after which he turned his interests primarily to the production of television animation. Active in the field beginning in the late 1940s, he reached his peak during the late 1950s and early 1960s with the popular series *Rocky And His Friends* and its successor *The Bullwinkle Show*.[88] Working with a talented staff, in particular actor/writer/producer Bill Scott, Ward fashioned a series of narratives that included remarkably frank liberal and insurrectionist sentiments for their time, although they were for the most part safely disguised under the mask of comedy. Unlike Hanna-Barbera, who changed with the demands of both audience and advertisers, Ward and his colleagues refused to make any artistic or commercial concessions to their product. This may have prevented Ward from establishing a secure business, but it also ensured that the artistic success of his properties would continue for years to come, regardless of the limited reception they received in their original broadcast time.

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[87] The definitive study of Ward and his studio is Keith Scott's *The Moose That Roared: The Story of Jay Ward, Bill Scott, a Flying Squirrel, and a Talking Moose* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Griffin, 2000). Also of value is Louis Chunovic's *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book* (New York: Bantam, 1996).

[88] The combined content of the two series were issued as *Rocky And Bullwinkle And Friends* beginning in 2007 on DVD by Sony Wonder, both as a complete series and in several individual volumes spotlighting individual components. A production history is featured in Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 677-685.

Ward's work was (and remains) shockingly ahead of its time in many respects, particularly when compared to that of his contemporaries at Hanna-Barbera. There were, of course, obvious similarities in characters and subject matter: both used animals as their star characters, and both regularly satirized television and popular culture in their work. The difference lies in the approach. Hanna-Barbera, in spite of their use of symbolism for satire, far too often diffused the satiric potential of their concepts to retain the respect of audiences and advertisers. Ward did no such thing. The raw satire in his humor was revolutionary, and remains influential even today. It helped him to debunk the "heroic" images of masculinity his generation had been repeatedly presented with in the media of their youth, in a way and a style that was far more corrosive than the competition's.

Heroes and Villians. Most discussions of Ward's work have to begin with his most famous characters, Rocket J. Squirrel ("Rocky" for short) (voiced by June Foray) and Bullwinkle J. Moose (Bill Scott). This mismatched but firmly loyal pair of characters were structured in such a way that they could be admired by children for their openly "heroic" behavior while being laughed at by adults because of the all-too-obvious Achilles heels evident in their personalities. Rocky, the "brains" of the duo, is a thoughtful, agile, and courageous figure who displays surprising levels of resourcefulness when faced with danger. Nevertheless, he is limited by both his youthful idealism, which blinds him to the idea that anything bad could be done to him and his friend, and his naivete, which occasionally causes him to fall into fairly obvious traps and snares set by the villains.[89] Bullwinkle, the "brawn" of the duo, is a study in contrast to his friend emotionally. Constantly spewing a variety of insouciant wisecracks, he never takes anything too

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[89] Rocky's naïve nature is exposed in episode six of "Jet Fuel Formula", when he walks into a trap set by his enemy Boris Badenov and spends the better part of the next two episodes in life-threatening peril. See Chunovic, *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book*, 114.

seriously, even when his life depends on it. In spite of his wit, however, he is innately

stupid, and is victimized by the villains on this basis in the same way that they manipulate

Rocky's idealism.[90] The stories repeatedly reinforce the fact that Rocky and Bullwinkle are

limited in ways that prevent them from being the truly heroic "men" that their adventure-

based narratives demand them to be. They are, in a sense, "boys" (as the narrator often calls

them) doing a "man's" job. But this is something no one bothers to tell them, so they go

along on their idealistic way, and their efforts to be "TV-type heroes" become far more

comical than they would be otherwise. Despite this, the residents of their hometown,

Frostbite Falls, Minnesota, admire and respect them for their "heroic" achievements in a

way that borders almost on adulation.

The villains in these narratives, like many animation bad guys before and after

them, had villainy written into their very names. Boris Badenov (Paul Frees) and Natasha

Fatale (June Foray) were spies from Pottsylvania, clearly a satire of Soviet Russia.[91] While

Rocky and Bullwinkle were clearly structured as parodies of traditional media notions of

heroism, Boris and Natasha represent a similar caricature of such notions of villainy. This

is represented by their ghoulish physical appearance, their pseudo-Slavic accents, and their

constant application of "fiendish plans" meant to destroy their enemies but which far more

often backfire upon them. Yet Boris, unlike Rocky and Bullwinkle, is unhappy with his

limited role in the narrative and subverts the expectations of the audience by often inserting

his ideas and opinions into the narrative when they are unwanted. On these occasions, he

seeks to take control of the show itself by challenging the narrator's version of the story

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[90] For example, episodes four to six of "Box Top Robbery" concern Rocky's efforts to free Bullwinkle from the World Economic Council's clock tower after Boris Badenov tricks them and locks them inside. See Chunovic, *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book*, 122-123.

[91] MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace,* provides a lengthy discussion of the creative context in which these characters and others like them existed.

arc, putting himself in the narrator's place, and other similar tactics. In one episode of the "Topsy Turvy World" sequence,[92] for example, he orders everyone involved in the story to "hold it!" while he outlines his latest "fiendish plan." All of the other characters promptly stop *exactly in place*, suggesting the length and breadth of Boris's influence over the "offstage" aspects of the narrative. Similarly, in an installment of "The Treasure of Monte Zoom,"[93] Boris believes he heard the narrator giving away a crucial piece of information regarding the show's plot. When the narrator denies this, Boris makes the producers *rewind* the episode tape so he can make sure that he heard it properly. Actions like this add a sinister edge to Boris' otherwise comic and non-threatening "villainy", suggesting that, because he can resort to these means to take control of the narrative construction, he can control the outcome of events to help him succeed in his aims. There is a bitter irony to Rocky and Bullwinkle's ultimate defeats of him, since, even when he has been constantly scamming and tricking them, they are frequently oblivious to the fact that he is doing anything wrong.

Even with his ability to manipulate the outside narrative, Boris is still made to answer to a higher power, namely his unsympathetic employer and the menacing and ruthless dictator of Pottsylvania, Fearless Leader (Bill Scott). Fearless Leader stands out among most of his contemporaries because he is a genuinely frightening and intimidating character, a figure of totalitarian power and influence; it is perhaps no wonder that he resembles a caricatured Nazi officer. What makes him so fearful is that his power is so concentrated. Unlike so many others examined in this chapter, he has no one to answer to, no wife or employer to limit his activities, abilities or desires. Consequently, he represents

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[92] Chunovic, *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Book,* 173-175.

[93] Ibid., 182-183.

masculine power at its most extreme and cruel. This adds a level of tension to his

relationship with Boris that is similar to but higher than that between George Jetson and

Mr. Spacely. He can not only fire Boris if he is displeased with him, he can have him *killed*.

Boris knows this, and constantly sucks up to him to remain in his good graces, though this

does him little good when he cannot succeed in his efforts due to Rocky and Bullwinkle's

often unwitting interventions.

A final major element of caricature existed with the narrator himself (William

Conrad). Narrators in the past served as a link between the audience and the story; the

narrator was supposed to speak from a distance, with this distance giving him the authority

and objectivity to tell the story "properly." This hardly occurred here. The narrator was not

an empowered omniscient figure; rather, he was simply another character,[94] and subjected

to the same travails of the narrative as were the other characters. Pointing to his physical as

well as his metaphysical presence limited the amount of "authority" he could project as the

story's "teller", and, along with other factors, limited the ability of the audience to view the

ongoing story in any "realistic" way. It also made him vulnerable to being captured along

with Rocky and Bullwinkle, as in one episode, in order to halt the "official" story so the

villains could tell it their way instead. By challenging the narrator's ability to do his job

properly, the producers made it clear to the audience that this whole thing was simply an

extended joke, and the only reasonable thing they could do was simply treat it as such.

These elements helped make the "Rocky and Bullwinkle" segments funny and

memorable, as well as highlighting the essential point made by the writers: that Hollywood

and fiction narratives were essentially limited and repeated sets of characters, plots and

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[94] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 680-681.

ideas manipulated by outside hands, and if the writers did not challenge the tide of

endlessly repeated machinations, their characters would be reduced to caricatures. This was

particularly true of the male characters who played the leading roles in this series: they

either accepted their position and went along with it, as Rocky and Bullwinkle did, or

demanded to be something other and more, as Boris did. The limitations of this sort of

fiction were equally evident in another series of stories featured on the program.

"Dudley Do-Right Of The Mounties" made its debut relatively late in Ward's

oeuvre, debuting on *The Bullwinkle Show* in 1961, but it quickly established itself as a

popular attraction in its own way. Like the "Rocky And Bullwinkle" segments, it was

structured as a satiric rejoinder to an overused and heavily conventional Hollywood

narrative, the Canadian melodrama. As historian Pierre Berton has noted, the image of

Canada as created by Hollywood had little to do with the realities of life in the country,

instead it was reduced to a snow-covered fairytale paradise full of shallowly defined

dramatic stereotypes.[95] This was an image that was ripe for satire, and Ward took full

advantage of the opportunity he was given. What resulted was a traditional "Canadian"

melodrama, full of stock characterizations and stereotypes, played at the cranking speed of

a bedroom farce, which made it much more humorous than dramatic. By heavily ridiculing

its male characters in particular, "Dudley", like "Rocky", proceeded to expose Hollywood

conventions for the shams they were.

This was particularly true of the title character (Bill Scott) and his opposite number,

"arch-villain" Snidely Whiplash (Hans Conreid). Both characters are prisoners of the

mechanics of melodrama, unable to do or say anything that does not fit in or gel with their

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[95] Pierre Berton. *Hollywood's Canada: The Americanization Of Our National Image* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1975).

respective "heroic" and "villainous" personalities. Dudley is thoroughly obsessed with his role as a "heroic" male, and living up to his surname. This limits his personality severely, since someone who always "does right" is not very interesting on a level of dramatic tension, and therefore he never rises above the stereotype he is desperately trying not to be. Likewise, Whiplash is a melodrama stereotype *par excellence*, perpetually leering and threatening from behind the coat of his black cape. He would be a threatening villain if, like Boris Badenov, he were not entirely aware of the fact that he *is* a villain, which allows him to banter with and threaten the narrator in ways similar to Boris'. In addition, Whiplash is given a richer and deeper character than Dudley, heightening the irony of the fact that the "bad guy" has the audience's sympathy in a way the hero does not. This is particularly the case with his stereotypical obsession with tying women to railroad tracks, which he is seen doing even in the main title sequence. Like an alcoholic, Whiplash maintains that he wants to stop "this terrible thing" but is utterly incapable of doing so. The inability of both Dudley and Whiplash to transcend the narrow categories of "hero" and "villain" renders their constant conflict pointless because it will never be fully resolved due to their constant mechanical acting-out of old mannerisms. Whiplash even goes as far to say, in one episode, that it is "a waste of my time", since he knows how things will ultimately end in a way Dudley never will -- which is one of the program's most obvious subtexts.

The two other major characters add a greater level of subversion to the proceedings, since they are not as strictly bound to the plot mechanics as are Dudley and Whiplash. Inspector Fenwick (Paul Frees), Dudley's perpetually blustering commanding officer, represents one level of this. A middle-aged British stereotype, he speaks in "a plummy and

slightly effeminate voice,"[96] which renders almost everything he says amusing even when he is trying to be dead serious. (Frees patterned the voice after British character actor Eric Blore, who specialized in playing these kind of effeminate, foppish characters, and Ward's use of this character type in a command position in the supposedly ultra-masculine RCMP is therefore a highly subversive act). This ends up not confirming his authority and ability to act, but makes him a figure of mockery instead, though Dudley, of course, hardly notices this. Added to this is the Inspector's projection of a rugged dignity that Dudley unintentionally and Whiplash intentionally wounds repeatedly, giving this unlikely "boss" figure, at least temporarily, the sympathy not given to either the "hero" or the "villain" simply because he has to repeatedly put up with both of their crazy antics.

An even more subversive element is provided by Nell Fenwick (June Foray), the Inspector's daughter and Dudley's love interest. Nell, unlike her previous role models, is not a paper-doll cutout version of Canadian womanhood. She is, in fact, the most multidimensional character in the series. We are able to see her character develop and become refined in ways that are impossible for the men, and with that comes an ability to beat all of them at their own games. As a consequence, Nell achieves a status which is not supposed to be available to "mere" women in the past time period of the stories. She is able to convince the audience easily, for example, that she can be a capable and effective RCMP officer in one episode and a lawyer in another, but the men in the series are so firmly structured in a stereotypical "male" view of the world that they cannot accept these achievements and belittle them by attempting to deceive her into accepting their view of the world, which she somewhat reluctantly does. But this does little to defeat the satiric subtext

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[96] Kieth Scott, *The Moose That Roared* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Griffin, 2000), 170.

Ward injects into these stories -- that the best "man" in this rugged "masculine" country is actually a *woman*, and not simply a stereotypical sexpot, but a cunning creature against whom the supposedly "heroic" and "villainous" men are utterly helpless. Just like "Rocky and Bullwinkle", "Dudley" turns Hollywood from a glorification of supposedly "positive" masculine "virtue" into a cruel and bitter joke, and with it questions the legitimacy of dramatic narratives to present men as "heroic" figures in the first place.

The "Great Man." "Dudley" succeeded quite admirably in ridiculing the films that were its main target as well as the limited gender roles they seemed to reinforce. The same could be said of a third Ward series, which, rather than ridiculing masculinity, took its more successful and ingenious nature to its greatest extreme. "Peabody's Improbable History" made its debut as part of the original *Rocky And His Friends* series in 1959 and remained a major component of the *Rocky And Bullwinkle* series for the entirety of its run. Like the other Ward programs, it exists as a satiric and subversive work, but the target of its satire, unlike that of the others, is not Hollywood but historical education and the narrative construction of history (though Hollywood played a secondary role in this with its film versions of historical events). In particular, it attacks and undermines the hypothetical "Great Man" theory dominating historical study in the 19th and early 20th centuries, shortly before more progressive schools of thought began challenging it in a more serious and concentrated way, and in an unlikely way and form.[97]

To begin with, the form, characters and function of the series are unorthodox for television at any part of its history and in any genre. Devised by *Saturday Evening Post*

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[97] "Great Man" thinking was indebted to the ideas of Thomas Carlyle, who believed in the idealized portrayal of "heroic" figures in history. This is a position "Peabody" repeatedly undermines with its cavalier portraits of "heroic" figures. See Thomas Carlyle (Carl Niemeyer, ed.), *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (Lincoln: University Of Nebraska Press, 1966). For the evolving nature of historical study and interpretation of history in America, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

illustrator Ted Key,[98] the series focused on Mr. Peabody (Bill Scott), "a bespectacled, Clifton Webb-like genius who happened to be a dog,"[99] his "pet boy", Sherman (Walter Tetley), and their adventures in time, courtesy of Peabody's "Waybac" time machine. The "pilot" episode of the series set the tone for much of what was to follow, and showed the audience exactly what kind of "man" Peabody was supposed to be. After a shot of Peabody's penthouse apartment, we see Peabody standing on his head. "Please excuse the position," he says in his cultured, somewhat arrogant voice. "Just practicing my yoga." He introduces himself ("My name is Peabody…I presume you *know* yours.") and fills us in on his background. A "puppy prodigy" and university graduate, he has extensive experience in business (they called him "The Woof of Wall Street") and as a foreign diplomat (he can speak several languages, including English, occasionally all at once.) He "adopted" Sherman out of feelings of loneliness and despite the fact that the authorities questioned his ability to be a proper guardian, which he proved that he was. (There are limits to his sympathy, however. When Sherman addresses him as "daddy", he sternly rejects the appellation, telling (rather than asking) Sherman to call him "Mr." Peabody "or, informally, Peabody"). The "Waybac" was developed by Peabody as a means of amusing Sherman, and was refined to the point where the duo could interact with people from the past. This was a good thing, considering that, in Ward's words, the historical characters that they met were all portrayed as "complete boobs."[100] Peabody was, however, *always* up to the task, as he never failed to remind both Sherman and the audience, since he was also the program's narrator, and therefore completely in charge of the story regardless of the direction it took,

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[98] Scott, *The Moose That Roared*, 125; Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 678.

[99] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 678.

[100] Jay Ward, quoted in Scott, *The Moose That Roared*, 125.

something few of the other *Rocky and Bullwinkle* characters ever came close to being.

Historical accuracy was not insisted upon in these segments; indeed, the facts were more often distorted and ignored by the producers in favor of a few good laughs. We are repeatedly led to believe that "without the little white hound the course of human events might have gone terribly wrong."[101] The narratives gave their subject matter a beating with irreverent, anachronistic and modern topical humor, superimposing social and ethnic stereotypes over unlikely settings, and significantly decreasing both the intelligence and resourcefulness of the historical characters in relation to Peabody, the *ubermensch* figure who carefully and easily solved all of their problems every time. Throughout these installments, Sherman played the perfect "son" to his "father", asking questions and raising concerns that Peabody always provided solutions for. This was *Father Knows Best* played to its most absurd extreme, and the humor was heightened by the fact that "Father" was actually a dog. In the process, just as other segments of the *Rocky and Bullwinkle* program spoofed the malleable adaptability of Hollywood to outside forces, "Peabody" did the same thing to the events of the past, exposing them all as part of an elaborate shell game which was fairly simple and easy for an outside force like Peabody to manipulate. It was fortunate for the "heroes" of the past that Peabody's intentions were always honorable: one thing he was *not* was a con man.

Significantly, the Peabody character was able to acclimate and assimilate himself into the upper end of an affluent "white" society, unlike Hanna-Barbera's animal characters. He succeeds in ridiculing and marginalizing a different social stereotype of white men -- the college-educated, intellectual character. In spite of his intelligence and

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[101] Scott, *The Moose That Roared*, 126.

resourcefulness, Peabody is in many ways a negative portrait of the intelligentsia. "Humility" is not a word that exists in his extensive vocabulary. He does not hesitate to remind Sherman (and the viewers) that *he* is in charge, and quickly puts the other characters in their place if they have delusions of outwitting him. The writers actually reinforce this position by giving Peabody a deified status. This is accomplished not simply through his own portrait but also through the portrayal of the other figures. The supporting cast is drawn as narrow stereotypes with broad foreign and American regional accents that make them look and sound foolish, even if they were brilliant scientists, artists, writers etc. All of this is done primarily to increase our impression of Peabody, but it also does the job of stoking the flames of his ego, making him even more arrogant and cocky. He is a positive *and* a negative specimen of masculinity, and therefore his segments give off a different but equally satiric vibe from the other Ward programs. The message here is that having some intelligence may help you see the flaws of other people and situations more easily, but having too much of it will turn you into a control freak.

In his work, Jay Ward repeatedly deconstructed the mechanics of filmmaking and assumptions about masculine superiority, for comic effect. He left his audiences not only laughing but thinking -- questioning ideas about both masculinity and heroism.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward used their television animation programs to satirize and debunk ideas of masculinity in ways that were unavailable to other forms of television in the late 1950s and early 1960s. By exposing and parodying the devices by which masculine mythology had been created in the past, they helped establish means for redefining its portrayal in a more realistic manner, in television

animation and otherwise, in the future. But they were able to do this in part because they knew the limitations and censorship of their time period well, and were able to structure their satire in ways that either accommodated audiences and advertisers (Hanna-Barbera) or ignored them entirely (Ward) to get what they wanted. As the 1960s progressed, and television animation was increasingly "exiled" to Saturday morning as a "children's" genre, these means of opposition disappeared or were modified, forcing new and more restricted ones to take their place. That is the subject of Chapter 2.

Chapter Two

The "Kiddies" Didn't Stay in the Picture: Filmation and Television Animation in the 1970s

As the 1970s began, the United States of America was enduring one of the most heated and divisive political periods in its history.[102] In ways unseen for over a century, the country's name became increasingly ironic, as social, racial and political issues caused it to become a patchwork quilt of splintered, idealized concerns. Some of these issues had no bearing on the reality of the country's situation, while others wholeheartedly embraced it by demanding here-and-now changes which would take decades to accomplish fully, if at all. It was inevitable, therefore, that the country's mass media would find itself confronting its own ideological conflicts. This was particularly evident in the field of television animation, as the artistic and creative abilities of those involved in this enterprise were almost permanently compromised in a repressive cultural atmosphere in that decade.

Television animation, as an artistic form still seen largely as an entertainment enjoyed primarily by children, was made the most prominent scapegoat of the debate over "violence" in the mass media in the late 1960s and 1970s. As a consequence, it was subjected to an unprecedented high level of censorship. What resulted was a period in which the old ideals and storytelling practices of theatrical animation, where the majority of the original television animators had been baptized in fire, were suddenly and irrevocably made irrelevant and "dangerous" by censorship groups who had no understanding of animation as an art form or the means by which it had traditionally communicated with its audience. Television animators were no longer expected to be mere entertainers; if they

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[102] An excellent recent overview of life and politics in the late 1960s and early 1970s is Rick Perlstein's *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (New York: Scribner, 2008).

were to continue to remain in business they were expected enlighten their audiences, as well as entertain them. With its traditional production ethics tested and heavily scrutinized, television animation was, for the most part, robbed of its ability to be genuinely humorous and entertaining and sacrificed on the altar of public service by its television network patrons. Relief from this repressive system, set in mind to put social advocacy groups and concerned U.S. government officials at bay, would take nearly two decades to achieve.

Part of the problem with television animation lay in the fact that, in spite of its demonstrated ability to appeal to a wide audience, it was still seen by many as a field whose chief appeal was to young children. Therefore, it was increasingly examined in ways that suggested that entertaining and, increasingly, enlightening the children in its audience was not only a necessity but an obligation. To reinforce this fact, the television networks began employing educational consultants to examine ways in which educational messages could be inserted into television animation programs, and twisting the arms of their chief animation suppliers by suggesting that they would be put out of business if they did not comply. Such demands could only be made in a world still controlled largely by three major television networks; the entrance of cable television in the following decade would erode this power considerably, even as the structures for enforcing it remained. The escapist storytelling abilities of television animation were, understandably, severely compromised by this new education dictum.

An even greater and, for television animation, more limiting concern was continual conflict with network censorship over the issue of violence. An ongoing concern with television as a whole since the early 1960s, the debate heated up considerably at the end of the decade, with the war in Vietnam, the frequent rioting by African Americans in

American cities, and the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy

in 1968 serving as a catalyst for change. In particular, one grassroots protest group, Action

For Children's Television (ACT), began fighting to make television a "safer" place for

children.[103] Bowing to both political and economic pressures, and unwilling to sacrifice the

lucrative commercial benefits of their prime time programming, television executives

responded by lowering the boom on television animation. Anything that was remotely

perceived as "violent" in animation scripts was heavily suspect. As a result, intense levels

of conflict began emerging between television animation producers, on the one hand, and

network executives and social advocates on the other -- one group trying to execute their

creative freedom, the others desperately trying to rein in a group whom they considered to

be responsible for "corrupting" the youth of America. It was no wonder that the creative

quality of television animation as a whole began dipping considerably in the early 1970s.

The idea that one man's trash is another man's treasure is applicable to studying the

debate over "violence" in television animation in this time. The "necessary evil"[104] of

censorship resulted in conflicts between producers and censors that did relatively little to

affirm the value of television animation as a programming genre. Indeed, it did just the

opposite, stripping it bare of the elements that had endeared it to audiences in the previous

decade, in the name of "protecting" children from its "harmful" effects. With careless but

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[103] ACT's identification of itself as a "grass roots" organization of concerned parents gave it considerable leverage in this debate. Because they were parents themselves, they were concerned deeply with their children's exposure to the more damaging aspects of television, in particular violence and the commercial nature of Saturday morning network television. Such concerns were also at the heart of the formation of the Children's Television Workshop (CTW) in this same period. CTW's entrance into television production on the PBS network, particularly with its most famous program, *Sesame Street*, tipped the scales considerably in the direction of advocating for educational children's programming, with severe consequences for the future of television animation. For a study of ACT's activities and network television's reaction to them, see Heather Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors: Television Regulation Before The V Chip* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998). A recent and excellent study of the CTW through the lens of its most famous program is provided by Michael Davis in *Street Gang: The Complete History Of Sesame Street* (New York: Viking, 2008).

[104] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 21.

efficient accuracy, the basic elements of dramatic narratives (fistfights, kicking, gun- and swordplay, etc.) and comic stories (most of the basic forms of slapstick) were purged from the storylines and replaced with shallow but well-intentioned platitudes and ideologies. This increased the marginalization of television animation that had existed in the 1950s and 1960s, and made it easier for its opponents to view it as a "waste of time." Ironically, although prime time television was arguably far more "violent" than television animation ever was, it was less affected, presumably because its audience was more diverse, "mature", and affluent than that of television animation.

There were those, however, who were capable of walking the line with considerable ease. In the 1970s the animation studio Filmation, headed by Lou Scheimer, took over from Hanna-Barbera at the head of the industry, in part because it was better equipped to deal with the production process of the new environment. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Scheimer had never worked in the theatrical animation industry; his background was, instead, in commissioned non-commercial filmmaking, where the demands of sponsors and backers had to be met. He was, therefore, well-equipped to treat television animation as a tailor would his clothing: made to measure for a wide variety of customers. Yet, at the same time, Scheimer was very aware of his obligations to be both entertainer and educator, a fact that made him more successful than most of his contemporaries. Scheimer, like Jay Ward, had a set, politically liberal philosophy that was evident in much of his work, as demonstrated by his portrayals of women and African-Americans in particular. Yet, unlike Ward, he often found persuasive, and even subversive, means of demonstrating his message through subtle means of expression.

The story of television animation in the 1970s is a study of a transitional period, a

time in which an old way of making animation for television was severely challenged and tested, and a new way of making television animation asserted itself for a new environment. How these two forms met different fates and different levels of acceptance in the brave new world of 1970s television is the subject of Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The Crackdown

The debate over children's understanding of violence is one that predates the existence of television by a considerable period of time.[105] Yet television, because it was directly accessible to children within the home and not isolated in the outside world, was a danger that many American parents felt almost obligated to confront.[106]

The evolution of the mass media and public entertainment in America was something that had never gone unopposed. Most commonly, opposition came in the form of socially, politically and religiously conservative people, who feared that the "corruptive" influence of these entertainment forms, perceived and actual, would cause consumers of them to deviate from cultural and social norms. Opponents of the American circus in the 19th century, for example, feared that the spectacle offered by the shows would entice innocent young people to abandon normality and "run away" with the shows, which some

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[105] For a discussion of the debate over violence in the media, see Harold Schechter, *Savage Pastimes: A Cultural History of Violent Entertainment* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005).

[106] Central to this argument was a desire to separate the negatively "masculine" culture of urban America from the more genteel "feminine" activities of the home. As historian Lynn Spigel has noted, social activities within the home were supposed to follow the genteel model, with the "masculine" elements outside of the home designed to be socially and politically isolated and more exposed to outside regulation (Lynn Spigel, *Make Room For TV*, 15). This separation of "feminine" and "masculine" entertainments was a key cause of the negative views of many forms of entertainment taking place outside of the home in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as the circus, vaudeville, and, ultimately, the movies. Television, however, was different because it existed *within* the home. While television's backers promoted it as the ideal form of "family" (or "feminine") entertainment, there remained opposition to what was seen as its more coarse and vulgar aspects, particularly from religious and family-minded social advocacy groups. This debate persisted into the early 21st century, until the Internet began to usurp television's status as a "threat" by luring away large portions of its audience.

actually did.[107] Opposition to the most prominent popular literary form of the day -- the dime novel -- was based on similar pretexts. To critics of the time, they were "villainous sheets which pander greedily and viciously to the natural taste of young readers for excitement, [whose] irreparable wrong…is hidden from no one."[108] Variations on these themes would be replayed and revised in the forthcoming years as new and ever more threatening forms of media and entertainment worked their way into American life.

This is not to say that practitioners of live and literary entertainment were entirely negligent of their obligations to their audience. In vaudeville, the pre-eminent live media form of the time, the opposite was true. The founders of the influential Keith-Orpheum vaudeville circuit, in particular, demanded a strict model of decorum that forbade, among other things, profanity, broad sexuality in dress and speech, and anything perceived to have the potential to offend the audience "on pain of instant discharge", though this did not include the racist and sexist forms of humor that were commonplace in the era's comedy. And as vaudeville became the essential training ground for the founding entertainers of film and radio, these sentiments attached themselves to those media as well.[109]

The advent of visual culture, exemplified by the rise of motion pictures and then television, gave force to arguments against the "corruptive" forces of the mass media. As historian Robert Sklar has suggested, the ascension of the motion picture coincided with the rise of the Progressive reform movement, which "drew much of its' energy from the middle classes' discovery that they had lost control over -- and even knowledge of -- the

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[107] Janet M. Davis, *The Circus Age: Culture and Society Under the American Big Top* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 2002), 30-32.

[108] Brander Matthews, quoted in Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels And Working Class Culture In America* (2nd Ed.) (London: Verso, 1998), 9. See also J. Randolph Cox, *The Dime Novel Companion: A Source Book* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2000).

[109] For a comprehensive historical study of vaudeville and its influence, see Robert W. Snyder, *The Voice of the City: Vaudeville and Popular Culture in New York* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000).

behavior and values of the lower orders; and the movies became prime targets of their efforts to reformulate and reassert their power."[110] As the industry grew, concern over its conduct widened, culminating in the Payne Fund and Study Experiments of the late 1920s, whose results were published in 1932.[111] The first systemic study of a mass media of any kind, the Payne Fund studies examined what motion picture narratives were capable of "instructing" people in, particularly the young. In response, the Hollywood studios, with the influence of interested parties in the American Catholic Church, set up the doctrinal system of regulation for filmmaking which became known as the Production Code.[112] Adopted in 1933, and in force until the mid-1960s, the Code locked American filmmaking into a narrow doctrinal system, forbidding the use and display of profanity, overt sexuality and scatology on the screen while at the same time encouraging and supporting an idealized portrayal of American life and the Christian faith. In the short term, this served the purpose of limiting the growth of ideologically threatening ideas in filmmaking, including animation. Its value systems were carried over into television, since the vast majority of television's pioneers had gotten their start in the prior medium and were well aware of its rules and code of behavior. When commercial television broadcasting began in the United States in 1948, therefore, reactions to it and attempts to limit its influence already had nearly half a century of incubation. The severe backlash towards it from critics, particularly with regard to its impact on children and youth thus had traceable roots, yet nothing could have prepared television producers for the three decades plus of criticism they would receive simply for being part of the industry.

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[110] Robert Sklar, *Movie Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (London: Chappell and Co., 1978 [1975]), 18.

[111] Ibid., 134-140.

[112] For a history of this document and its most strident enforcer see Thomas Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

As historian Lynn Spigel has noted, television's rise as a commercial medium coincided with the post-war "baby boom", and it was therefore in a perfect position to be characterized as a "family" medium[113]. As with the movies before it, efforts to create regulation and monitor use were predicated on the middle classes' desire to "educate" and "enlighten" members of the lower classes.[114] This was coupled with efforts to keep women in the home, and to regulate the leisure time of their children.[115] Television was a prime target for these "experts" and the critics who suggested that television viewing was unhealthy and, essentially, a waste of time. This was a biased view that denied both the intelligence of the individual viewer and the efforts of the medium itself to enlighten and entertain, but one which still persists to this day. This certainly was the attitude expressed in a 1950 illustration from *The Ladies' Home Journal* done by artist Munro Leaf. The drawing featured an emaciated girl considered to be a TV addict. The caption encapsulated many contemporary attitudes towards television watching:

> This pale, weak, stupid-looking creature is a Telebugeye and, as you can see, it grew bugeyed by looking at television too long. Telebugeyes just sit and sit, watching, watching. This one doesn't wear shoes because it never goes out in the fresh air anymore and it's skinny because it doesn't get any exercise. The hair on this Telebugeye is straggly and long because it won't get a haircut for fear of missing a program. What idiots Telebugeyes are.[116]

To modern readers, this view of the average youthful TV viewer is distorted; it exaggerates the addictive capabilities of television and suggests that viewers no longer have

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[113] Lynn Spigel, "Seducing the Innocent: Television and Childhood in Postwar America." In *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, 186.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Ibid., 186-193.

[116] Reproduced in Spigel, "Seducing the Innocent." In *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, 194.

the free will needed to stop watching. Yet this argument, in various forms, would be the weapon television's critics would use to wage war on it for nearly three decades.

As Spigel suggests, children were in a difficult position. Efforts at regulating their behavior and thoughts dated back to the days of the Puritans, with efforts at regulating the mass media with which they engaged lasting nearly as long.[117] Yet the intensity of social, political and media change in the mid-20th century brought these debates too close to home, especially for a generation of parents who had already endured the hardships of depression and war and had no intention or desire to allow their children to go through similar deprivations.[118] This explains the social and political means by which they aimed to "protect" their children, in particular from the "animalistic" sounds of rock and roll, and the flurry of sound and images on the television screen. "Corruption" of their children, and its abrupt halting, was their primary concern. Given the above, the achievements of Hanna-Barbera and Jay Ward, discussed in Chapter 1, seem quite miraculous. But even the goodwill created by those projects was not enough to prevent persistent negative scrutiny of television animation, largely due to philosophic beliefs that predated television animation but would be forced on its producers.

Censorship in Television Animation

In searching for the word "violence" in a dictionary, a reader comes across six definable terms used to explain it:

1. [S]wift and intense force.

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[117] For a full history of this ongoing debate, and its impact on both American children and the media, see Stephen Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2004). Mintz's central metaphor – using Huckleberry Finn's Mississippi river raft as a symbol for the turbulence and instability of childhood -- is perfectly suited to studying both the debates of over American television animation and many of its younger characters.

[118] For an overview of child-rearing ideas in this period, such as the influential ones of Dr. Benjamin Spock, see Paula S. Fass, "Bringing It Home: Children, Technology, and Family in the Postwar World," in Mark C. Carnes (ed.), *The Columbia History of Post-World War II America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 79-105.

2. [R]ough or injurious physical force, action or treatment…

3. An unjust or unwarranted exertion of force or power.

4. A violent act or proceeding.

5. Rough or immoderate vehemence, as in feeling or language.

6. Injury, as from distortion of meaning or fact.[119]

These terms do much to explain what violence is, or may be perceived to consist of. What they cannot do is illuminate the degrees to which violence may be used justifiably as part of a fictional narrative. They also fail to capture differences in degree, from harmless childlike clowning, to murder, to genocide, and all points in between. This is a fundamental problem with the campaign against media violence; since no single definition of the term exists, it can be used freely to refer to anything an individual consumer considers to be "violent." This is where the controversy existed with television animation in this period.

As suggested earlier, the concern over violence in television animation was a concern that predated television, but was brought into sharper focus by the immediacy and the supposedly irrevocable effects of watching television. As a consequence of social and political activism undertaken against them (discussed below), the networks felt that they had no alternative but to reshape television animation to placate the critics and protect their economic investment.[120] What resulted was a censorship system that was overzealous, indicting relatively minor actions as "violence" rather than creating and abiding by a uniform definition of the term.[121] Because of a lack of coherence on this issue, the disputes and complaints about "violence" in television animation ring hollow to contemporary

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[119] Laurence Urdang (ed.) *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language: College Edition* (New York: Random House, 1968), 1469.

[120] Les Brown, "TV Enlists Educators to Aid in Children's Shows," *New York Times,* Apr. 4, 1974.

[121] Jack Gould, "Of Scapegoats and Headlines," *New York Times*, Jul. 13, 1969.

readers and viewers, as does the networks' dictatorial response to reining it in.

In their defense, the animators consistently reminded their critics that animation was a fantasy art form that was never intended to be viewed "realistically." Indeed, the acts they depicted were often virtually impossible in real life (for example, dropping a safe on an opponent, a device used in the frantic theatrical animation of the 1930s and 1940s), or were executed by superheroes (as in much of the television animation of the 1960s). As will be discussed shortly, however, network and advertising regulators did not accept this, and either cut or censured these acts in both theatrical and television animation.[122]

For their part, animation producers were quick to contend that, contrary to what their critics believed, even child viewers of television animation *were* capable of telling the difference between "real" and "fake" violence,[123] but at that time no one in charge seemed to care. Walter Lantz, whose films were heavily censored in the 1950s under this system (as discussed below), made his concerns clear in an interview with film historian Danny Peary in 1980:

> …I never considered any cartoon I produced too violent. I thought of them as slapstick comedies. I didn't know what slapstick was until I came out here [to Los Angeles] and worked for Mack Sennett. Then I realized that it took pratfalls and socks on the head and being shot at to get big laughs in the theatre. The pies in the face, and so forth. *So we just went one step further and exaggerated the gags* [emphasis added]. It takes a physical gag to get a belly laugh. In cartoons

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[122] Critics argued that, out of admiration for animated characters, children might conceivably act out their performances and injure or kill themselves as a result. The "imitation" argument was given considerably more force in 1993, when a five year old Ohio boy burned his house down with a cigarette lighter, supposedly under the influence of the program *Beavis and Butthead*. See Kanfer, *Serious Business,* 206-208, 226.

[123] Timothy Burke and Kevin Burke, *Saturday Morning Fever: Growing Up With Cartoon Culture* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1999), 2.

especially, you don't get it very often with just dialogue.

I wouldn't say that the…[cartoons of the theatrical animation era]…were violent. They used the same techniques that I used. *Nobody really bleeds or dies* [emphasis added]. If someone is shot full of holes, he is back to normal in the next scene; if his teeth fall out, he has a full set an instant later. The trouble today is that *these groups have set themselves up as censors*, and *they don't know what they're talking about*, because *they don't look at these cartoons through the eyes of children* [emphasis added]. They should be home taking care of their kids instead of setting themselves up as critics.[124]

Lantz's contention that the biases against television animation stemmed from a lack of knowledge on the part of censors was reinforced by his contemporaries, William Hanna and Joseph Barbera, who reiterated this point in interviews by indicating that the "fantasy" violence they specialized in was unfairly and unjustifiably lumped together with the more "realistic" violence of live-action programming and was therefore made indistinguishable from it.[125] But in spite of the force with which they made this argument, and the fact that additional studies suggested that there was, in fact, no direct causal linkage between television animation and violence,[126] network television sided with the regulators in a blatant attempt to maintain its economic control over the children's programming market. As a consequence, as historian Jason Mittell notes, the indirect labeling of animation as a "children's" medium resulted in its "exile" to Saturday mornings in the 1960s:

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[124] Walter Lantz, quoted in Danny Peary, "Reminiscing With Walter Lantz." From Danny Peary and Gerald Peary (eds.), *The American Animated Cartoon: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1980), 199.

[125] See Hanna and Barbera quotes in Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera*, 42.

[126] As recently as 2001, the Surgeon General was reporting that "[t]he label 'violence' is [or should be] reserved for the most extreme end of the physical aggression spectrum", which calls into question earlier, more broad-based definitions of the term used to attack television animation in the 1960s and 1970s. See Rose M. Kundanis, *Children, Teens, Families and Mass Media: The Millennial Generation* (Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 72.

The most vital effect of establishing Saturday morning cartoons as a cultural category was filing the *entire genre* under a "kid-only" label [emphasis added]. This was accomplished less through targeting a children's audience and more by driving away the adult audience. Cartoons had been on Saturday morning since the 1950s, but it was only in the 1960s that they became more difficult to find anywhere else on television schedules. Likewise[,] sponsors moved to Saturday mornings not because they could reach *more children* in that time slot, but because they could actually reach *fewer adults,* thus raising the percentage of children per rating point and advertising dollar [emphasis in original] . The appeal of cartoons for children *was always considered a default* -- what changed in the mid-1960s was the assumption *that adults could like cartoons too* [emphasis added]. Following the creation of the Saturday morning enclave, cartoons became stigmatized as a genre *only* appropriate for children, removing the traditional affiliations with a mass audience [emphasis in original]. This was accomplished partially by [the] networks latching onto an existing phenomenon -- adults watched the least amount of television on Saturday mornings. But the industry furthered this association by marketing Saturday morning cartoons *solely to children*, by foregoing the visual complexity and adult humor that marked earlier animation, by sponsors advertising only to children during the time slot, and by isolating cartoons from all other genres and time slots to maintain tight associations between all the texts within the generic category [emphasis added]. The marginalization of cartoons also served to further its appeal among its target audience -- one of the appeals of Saturday morning was the very fact that *adults did not watch the shows and the programs (and the ads)*

were aimed primarily at them [emphasis added]. Parents accepted the generic time slot's role as "baby-sitter" and yielded media control to children, furthering the industrial commitment to defining the genre narrowly.[127]

Thus, television animation was marginalized both as a creative programming genre and an economic factor within the television industry specifically because it was targeted at a narrow social and economic group -- children -- who did not possess the political means to protest the way it was marketed at them; this, by default, was left to their parents, whose concerns, in particular regarding the use and interpretation of "violence", frequently differed from their own.

As with concerns over corruption, concerns over violence in animation predated television but were amplified by it. The marginal status of theatrical animation within the film-going program of the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s had much to do with this. Though some studios were able to achieve ongoing success with star characters, the genre itself was seen only to have a marginal appeal, directed chiefly at the younger members of the audience. As a consequence, concerns over their effect on younger viewers were exaggerated and met with similarly exaggerated responses from censors. Not even the key pioneer of modern theatrical animation, Walt Disney, and his star character, Mickey Mouse, were exempt from this, as journalist Terry Ramsaye noted in the *Motion Picture Herald* in 1931:

> Mickey Mouse, the artistic offspring of Walt Disney, has fallen afoul of the
> censors in a big way, largely because of his amazing success. Papas and mamas,
> especially mamas, have spoken vigorously to censor boards and elsewhere about
> what a devilish, naughty little mouse Mickey turned out to be. Now we find that

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[127] Jason Mittell. "The Great Saturday Morning Exile: Scheduling Cartoons On Television's Periphery In The 1960s." From Carol A. Stabile and Mark Harrison (eds.), *Prime Time Animation: Television Animation and American Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 51.

Mickey is not to drink, smoke or tease the stock in the barnyard. Mickey has been spanked.

It is the old, old story. If nobody knows you, you can do anything, and if everybody knows you, you can't do anything -- except what every one approves, which is very little of anything. It has happened often enough among the human stars of the screen and now it gets even the little fellow in black and white who is no thicker than a pencil mark and exists only in a state of mind.[128]

Mickey was far from the last animated character who would be "spanked" for performing foul deeds in front of a youthful audience. In fact, censorship would only escalate in the following years. The studios differed in their approaches, but with the exception of maverick animators such as Frederick "Tex" Avery, whose one-of-a-kind productions frequently featured broadly exaggerated sexuality and overt violence,[129] Hollywood animators were well aware of the perceived limits of taste and tolerance and, while exaggerating and often defying reality, they stayed within its moral limits.

The violence issue became more of a concern when these animated films were first exhibited on television in the 1950s and beyond. Animation producers and censors were of two different worlds. Animation, in both film and television, operated within a culture and employed storytelling which its censors did not understand. Likewise, the animators, not being used to the extreme levels of censorship that television demanded, saw censors not as people trying to help them but as beings who threatened their art and craft and, therefore, represented a threat to their continued artistic and economic existence. Frequent and often

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[128] Terry Ramsaye, quoted in Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: Plume, 1987), 37.

[129] Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 291-296.

hateful conflict between them was therefore inevitable. What was ironic, notes historian

Stefan Kanfer, was that while television animation (the "children's" genre) was undergoing

the bulk of the scrutiny, the vast majority of television's "violence" was occurring

elsewhere, in more prestigious prime time programming.[130] Acceptance of the belief that

television animation was making wrong in the eyes of mainstream America was confirmed

by FCC Chairman Newton Minow's infamous "Vast Wasteland" speech of 1961, where he

indelicately placed the words "violence" and "cartoons" side by side at the end of a

sentence decrying the deplorable situation of the television industry.[131]

One significant producer who protested the manner in which the television

establishment had mistreated him was Walter Lantz, the longtime head of the animation

department of Universal Pictures. In bringing his work to television, Lantz discovered that

his sponsor and their ad agency were prepared to force him to go through an even stricter

form of censorship than the Production Code:

> The first thing that happened was the elimination in one swoop of all my
>
> films that contained Negro [sic] characters; there were eight such pictures. But we
>
> never offended the colored race [sic] and they were all top musical cartoons, too.
>
> The [advertising] agency reasoning was that if there was a question at all on
>
> a scene, why leave it in? It might cause some group or other to bring pressure, and
>
> if there's one thing the sponsor doesn't want, it's to make enemies.
>
> The next thing we cut out en masse were all drinking scenes. In one cartoon,
>
> we showed a horse accidentally drinking cider out of a bucket and then, somewhat
>
> pixilated, trying to walk a tightrope. On TV, you'll see the tipsy horse on the

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130 Kanfer, *Serious Business,* 182.

131 Newton Minow, quoted in Kanfer, *Serious Business*, 191.

tightrope, but, since we cut out the scene showing his drinking the cider, the TV

audience won't understand why he is groggy.

The agency censors also kept a sharp eye out for any material which could

be construed as risqué. The entire "Abou Ben Boogie" cartoon was rejected on the

grounds that it showed a little harem girl [sic] wriggling her hips.

Mental health and physical disabilities weren't overlooked either. In

"Knock Knock", Woody [Woodpecker]'s activities eventually lead him to a

nervous breakdown. When we got through cutting this one, what was left didn't

make much sense.[132]

What happened to Lantz, unfortunately, was *de rigeur* for the treatment of theatrical

animation in the television era. Its creative value, and its makers' original artistic

intentions, were lost. In the 1990s, for example, viewers watching vintage Warner Brothers

cartoons might have mistakenly believed that they were seeing the films as they were

originally exhibited in theatres, when in fact they were simply watching the versions

censored for television viewing nearly three decades before.

Parallels between Censorship in Comic Books and in Television Animation

A preamble to the concern over television animation and the extreme results of

outside censorship was displayed in the early 1950s in the scrutiny towards its close cousin,

the comic book, which had already been marginalized as a media genre. Originally

developed as reprints of newspaper comic strips in the early 1930s, the comic book had

become an artistic force in its own right, inventing the character of the superhero and

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[132] Walter Lantz, quoted in Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, 182.

pioneering numerous new breakthroughs in visual storytelling.[133] Its popularity peaked

during World War II, but after the war its audience became increasingly limited to children

and young adults. This is where the problems began. Because of the nature of the audience,

as well as the graphic, realistic manner in which many stories were told, it was easy to

accuse comic books of contributing to the prevailing perceived ill of the moment, juvenile

delinquency.[134] This, at least, was the assertion of the German-born American psychiatrist

Frederic Wertham.[135] In his then-landmark but now-suspect study, *Seduction Of The*

Innocent, Wertham systematically, but with limited proof, indicted comic books as a

principal contributor to juvenile delinquency; among other things, he accused superheroes

of being latent homosexual figures and comic book crime stories as helping to spur on the

trend towards real-life crime.[136] As historian David Hajdu has recently suggested, the

strength of Wertham's argument was given unnecessary force by the McCarthyite ideology

of the time and his own status as a so-called "expert" on the youth of America, when in

more clear-headed times he likely would have been dismissed simply as a voice in the

wilderness.[137] But it was the comic book makers who were the ones suspected and who had

their product burned by incensed mobs of citizens,[138] and it was they who were called

before U.S. Senate commissions on juvenile delinquency and asked to explain themselves.

In these settings, they dug their own graves by defending their actions; such was the case

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[133] The history and evolution of the field is told in Gerard Jones, *Men of Tomorrow: Geeks, Gangsters and the Birth of the Comic Book* (New York: Basic Books, 2004).

[134] Spigel, "Seducing the Innocent." In *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, 191-192.

[135] For a monograph-length study of Wertham's life and career, and his negative impact on the evolution of American comics and television, see Bart Beaty, *Frederic Wertham and the Critique of Mass Culture* (Jackson: University Press Of Mississippi, 2005).

[136] David Hajdu, *The Ten Cent Plague: The Great Comic Book Scare and How It Changed America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 97-103, 229-244.

[137] Ibid., 107.

[138] Ibid., 116-117.

with EC Comics founder William Gaines, who insisted that the high levels of exaggerated violence portrayed in his comics were simply a reflection of the things his audience wanted.[139] Just as the film industry set up the Production Code to clean up their house and avoid the influence of the government, so too the comic book industry founded its own in-house regulatory group, the Comics Code Authority, which served as a means to limit what could be addressed respectfully in comic books and avoid regulation from the outside. At the same time, however, it limited the comic book's ability to grow as an artistic medium.[140] Gaines, pointedly, did not join the organization; he abandoned the industry altogether but remained in business by converting one of his best-selling comics, *Mad*, into a well-regarded humor magazine (which is still in existence today).

The dispute over comic books and their content, along with the industry's response, had many parallels in the later, protracted dispute over violence in television animation. First, in both cases, opponents of the form were able to proceed by fiat or threat of action by the American government with limited evidence; the word of supposed "experts" such as Wertham was given priority over that of the creators of the work. Second, in neither case were the factors thought to be contributing to perceived problems arising from the work clearly articulated. Third, regulations designed to solve "the problem" were put in place not by the government but by factions within the industries themselves. As a consequence, both the creators of comic books and the creators of television animation had their ability to tell stories severely compromised for an extended period of time. With regard to the "violence" issue, the enduring influence of these attitudes became increasingly apparent in

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[139] Ibid., 278-282.

[140] Amy Kiste Nyberg discusses the history and evolution of the Code in *Seal Of Approval: The History of the Comics Code* (Jackson: University Press Of Mississippi, 1998).

the period between the late 1960s and early 1970s, when both television and America were fundamentally reconsidering a number of complex issues and practices.

The "Superhero Morning" and Responses to This Form of Programming

As it existed between the mid-1960s and late 1990s, Saturday morning American network television was largely the invention of the influential and controversial television executive Fred Silverman, an admirer of animation who felt that it *could* be as competitive and diverse as prime time television. By the mid-1960s there was a new generation of children and young adult viewers who wanted to be entertained. Silverman and television animation producers responded with a variety of animated programs that they felt met their needs. This system worked well until 1968.

The mid-1960s had seen the first creative flowering of animation on Saturday morning. Silverman, who played a pivotal role as the head of daytime programming at CBS, envisioned what he called a "superhero morning"[141] to attract children to the new programming format. This involved not only the adaptation of existing heroes such as Superman and Batman (both done by Lou Scheimer and Filmation, discussed below) but also the creation of new heroes, such as Hanna-Barbera's Space Ghost and Birdman, whose adventures were constructed along the same lines. Not surprisingly, there was soon a surplus of super-powered action on CBS and competing networks, with characters constantly rescuing their friends from the forces of evil and administering justice at the same time. But the King and Kennedy assassinations, coupled with the rise of social protest groups such as ACT (discussed below), forced a change in the atmosphere towards these trends that limited the artistic mobility of the form. An "excessive amount of fear and

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[141] Fred Silverman, quoted in Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera,* 137.

terror"[142] on the part of executives in network television, to use Joseph Barbera's words, would force unwilling producers to reconsider the ways they did business and constructed stories.

The heart and soul of the conflict was the issue of violence, particularly in the superhero genre. But a close look at the programs of this time shows that violence was actually used, if at all, as a last resort. The limitations of television animation at this time prevented the staging of well choreographed fight scenes, as would be the case with later programs in this subgenre. Greater emphasis was placed on the heroes' mental acuteness and how they used this ability, as much as their physical prowess, to defeat the villains. As with their predecessors in theatrical animation, the main thing these programs were guilty of was having bad timing, and, in some cases, being ahead of their time. Regardless of their merits, most of these programs were soon cancelled or moved to less accessible time slots to salve criticism, which nevertheless continued unabated.[143]

It was understandable that television animation programs should have been constructed to make them both entertaining and a source of potential profit for producers, executives and advertisers. Contemporary newspaper articles suggested that it was possible to reap fortunes from television animation in children's advertising,[144] which hardly endeared the series to bedraggled parents. It did not help, of course, that many critics held disparaging views of television animation's primary audience that they did not bother to

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[142] Joseph Barbera, quoted in Sennett, *The Art of Hanna-Barbera,* 151.

[143] The nadir of this was perhaps most notably FCC Chairman Nicholas Johnson, in the early 1970s, calling television animation producers "evil men" and "child molesters" for what he misinterpreted as their intentions for "manipulating" their audience. See Erickson, *Television Cartoons Shows,* 1: 25.

[144] Philip H. Dougherty, "Advertising: How To Be First On The Block," *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 1967.

disguise in articles written in this period.[145] The majority of these articles did little but

parrot the fears and opinions of the opponents of television animation, though they did

provide some token attempts for producers to speak their mind, providing one of the few

forums for an supposedly "objective" discussion. Robert Windeler's July 1968 *New York

Times* article "Violence In TV Cartoons Being Toned Down", for example, featured a

number of disparate opinions. Mrs. Irvin Hendryson of the national Parent Teachers

Association voiced the establishment concerns, saying television animation was "worse

than immoral" and "full of horror and violence and negative values,"[146] without elaborating

upon what these actually consisted of. In contrast, Joseph Barbera indicated that his studio

was victimized by the "violence" trend because they were forced to "fall in line" with the

desires of the networks. "Saturday mornings are so competitive now…" he said "…that we

have script meetings and we talk about character analysis and motivation -- for cartoon

shows!"[147] This quote suggests that Barbera was not only unaccustomed to subjecting his

shows to such deep critical analysis but also that he did not feel that television animation

was deserving of such analysis, an attitude that persisted among critics well into the 1990s.

The manner in which Windeler ultimately takes the side of the parents and regulators is

made apparent also by his quoting from a resident "expert", Beverly Hills psychiatrist

Murray Korengold, who asserts that "quickie cartoon"[148] superheroes are single-handedly

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[145] For examples, see Carol Rinzler, "Trying To Like Those Saturday TV Kid Shows," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 1976; John F. McDermott, "The Violent Bugs Bunny et al.," *New York Times*, Sept. 28, 1969; John J. O'Connor, "Lap It Up, Kiddies -- It's Bad For You," *New York Times*, Jun. 18, 1972; Beatrice Berg, "Goodbye Bang, Burn, Stab, Shoot.," *New York Times*, Nov. 9, 1969; John Leonard, "Since The Kiddies Are Hooked -- Why Not Use TV For A Head Start Program?," *New York Times*, Jul. 14, 1968; Sam Blum, "De-Escalating The Violence On TV," *New York Times,* Dec. 8, 1968; Jane Brody, "TV Violence Cited As Bad Influence," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1975; and Jack Gould, "Of Scapegoats and Headlines," Jul. 13, 1969.

[146] Mrs. Irvin Hendryson, quoted in Robert Windeler, "Violence In TV Cartoons Being Toned Down," *New York Times*, July 20, 1968.

[147] Joseph Barbera, quoted in Windeler, "Violence."

[148] Murray Korengold, quoted in Windeler, "Violence."

responsible for "desensitizing… children -- to social and personal violence, to pain and compassion for other people's suffering."[149] In addition, says Korengold, superheroes represent "the American ethic of hegemony and supremacy; he [sic] uses violence without explicit application and arrogates himself very radically into everybody else's life."[150] Yet, just as with Mrs. Hendryson, Korengold offers no direct support for this viewpoint and does not explain specifically *what programs* convey this viewpoint, *how* they do it, and *why*. The "expert" status of Korengold, Wertham, and Mrs. Hendryson is given priority over Joseph Barbera's complaints about overt and biased network regulation. This biased, and often contemptuous, attitude towards television animation persists in close readings of the newsprint of this time, suggesting who newspapers like *The New York Times* were supporting in this debate.

No help was provided from other facets of the animation industry. Some surviving pioneers of theatrical animation, such as Chuck Jones, took a contemptuous, "my kid could paint that" attitude towards television animation that limited the ability of others to see its merits.[151] In their defense, the producers stated that they were simply following marching orders from other sources. "Do you think we put into the story boards [sic] what *we* want?" producer David DePatie rhetorically asked reporter Digby Diehl in 1967. "The networks control our material [emphasis in original]."[152] Negative attitudes towards television animation would become amplified with time; indeed, the following year would be even more difficult for producers of television animation.

Certainly, no one could have foreseen how prolonged the conflict in Vietnam

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[149] Korengold, quoted in Windeler, "Violence."

[150] Ibid.

[151] Chuck Jones quoted in Digby Diehl, "On Saturdays, Super-Heroes and Talking Animals," *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1967.

[152] David DePatie quoted in Diehl, "On Saturdays".

would be when 1968 began, nor the aftereffects of the King and Kennedy assassinations. Yet these events and their side effects added considerable fuel to the fire burning with over the relationship between television animation and America's children. Violence was a buzzword closely linked to the genre, used loosely to refer to its contents despite the fact that, while many studies had been conducted to determine the relationship between children and television, most reflected their reactions to the broadcasting *process* as opposed to the actual *content* of the programs.[153] Yet the bias against television animation, as with comic books, soon gained favor with American legislators and was legitimized. The 1969 U.S. Senate Subcommittee Hearings On Communications, headed by Senator John Pastore of Rhode Island, played a large part in this because, as observers of the time charged, Pastore subliminally indicted the entire medium and therefore by proxy forced the creation of extensive regulations on all levels of the network chains of command. Pastore's opponents challenged this view, saying, like Joseph McCarthy before him, he was using the issue simply as a means to insure he was re-elected.[154] Nevertheless, Pastore's commitment to the violence issue was real. His 1972 and 1974 Subcommittee Hearings on Communications would go further toward indicting the supposedly negative effects of television animation and condemning the actions of those who produced and supported it.[155] Television animation, put simply, had to pay penance for the ongoing faults of television as a whole. Regulatory efforts were concentrated on television animation, with very little thought or effort put into reforming other areas of television, particularly prime time, whose programming arguably was far more "violent".

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[153] See Carmen Luke, *Constructing the Child Viewer: A History of the American Discourse on Television and Children 1950-1980* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1990) for an overview of many of these studies.

[154] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 32.

[155] Ibid., 209-210, 213-214.

Influences from Lobbyists, Regulators and Networks

It was understandable that certain interested people would attempt to influence television to create a more constructive viewing environment. This is where parents came in. Action For Children's Television was a group begun with good intentions, but they were ultimately to take the blame, particularly in the eyes of television animation producers of the time and their successors, for "dumbing down" the entertainment elements of the genre. Founded by Peggy Charren, a housewife/social activist from the Boston suburb of Newton, the original stated intent of ACT was to "[eliminate] commercials from children's viewing hours and [clean] up the program content."[156] The first goal was the more ambitious, considering how heavily commercials dotted the TV landscape in those years. It was also the more daunting, requiring years of testimony in front of Congressional and FCC hearings as well as expensive campaigns in the public media. Nevertheless, ACT's membership quickly jumped into the 8,000-plus bracket, a testimony to how wide-spread and accepted its anti-commercial, anti-violence stance had become.[157] As an organization consisting largely of middle-class parents, ACT presented its opponents with a clear social and political conscience; the organization put itself forward as concerned citizens acting on behalf of their children.[158] Its influence over advertising issues was quickly felt, as the television networks rapidly reduced the amount of advertising on Saturday mornings, particularly that relating to candy-coated cereals, vitamins, and apparently sexist toys.[159]

Changing the content of the actual programs was another matter. Since, as Charren

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[156] Gary Grossman, *Saturday Morning TV* (New York: Dell, 1981), 356.

[157] Ibid., 356.

[158] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 67; Joseph Turow, *Entertainment, Education and the Hard Sell: Three Decades of Network Children's Television* (New York: Praeger, 1981), 84-88.

[159] Grossman, *Saturday Morning TV,* 357; Erik Barnouw, *The Sponsor: Notes on a Modern Potentate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 91-95.

noted, political action to force parents to watch television with their children and control their viewing for them was out of the question, she insisted that the networks be held responsible for both advertising and programming on Saturday mornings.[160] The implication of this was clear: if the networks were held accountable, then they could be boycotted and held liable if they allowed damaging programming to be presented to children. While ACT did not follow through on these threats, as they did in their long campaign against the sugar industry in the 1970s,[161] the violence issue was something the networks were held to task for in ways they certainly did not like. Wishing to find a convenient scapegoat, they naturally focused on the producers of children's television, particularly television animation, and forced the genre to undergo major creative changes during the following decade.

These changes were gradual but noticeable across the 1970s. If the decade had opened with an overemphasis on superheroic action, it ended with this sort of material exiled from the air or heavily hamstrung. Comedy was put under similar restraints. Satirical critiques, snappy dialogue, and much of the more creative uses of television animation were largely abandoned, to be replaced by a starched and narrowly defined form, focused on the edification of child audiences. Where vibrant storytelling once existed, moralized ideology, focused on proper hygiene, comportment and other issues, became the norm.

It should be noted that television animation producers had, effectively, no choice but to undergo this process of change. The market for animation in prime time had vanished, not to return until the 1990s. Syndication on a daily basis did not come into existence as an option until the 1980s, along with the viability of programming on cable

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[160] Grossman, *Saturday Morning TV,* 356.

[161] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors,* 81-90.

television. The only marketplace that existed for television animation in this period, with the exception of the occasional holiday special, was Saturday morning. Producers would have to abide by a stringent new set of rules if they wished to remain in business; those who would not or did not, such as Jay Ward (as shown in Chapter 1) simply were frozen out of the market. First and foremost, they had to be wary of "violence."

The problem with the network definition of violence was, however, that it was simply too broad to be fully abided to by the producers, covering both comic and dramatic actions, often undertaken in the name of the plot. Influenced heavily by sociological studies of the relationship of children to violence (which, as historian Hal Erickson notes, coincidentally *always* managed to provide the results desired of those who funded them),[162] the networks drew lines in the sand forbidding producers to have their characters take any actions that remotely smacked of violence. It was an action of self-preservation on the networks' part which conveniently divested them of blame. As historian Stefan Kanfer notes, the networks "had already miscalculated the moral climate, and they had no intention of compounding their error."[163] That the producers were unhappy with the new situation facing them was an understatement. Joseph Barbera, in particular, argued that network censorship amounted to "legislated television." "It's as if they had legislated football and said you couldn't tackle anymore." he told writer Gary Grossman in 1981. "I can guarantee that we could still have a product that would have kids screaming their heads off with laughter, but we'll never be allowed to do it again on Saturday morning."[164] Nevertheless, they were not in charge of the situation, or of the escalating production costs that were a

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[162] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1:23.

[163] Kanfer, *Serious Business,* 205.

[164] Joseph Barbera, quoted in Grossman, *Saturday Morning TV,* 358.

divisive factor in making their product look increasingly "cheap."[165]

Just like the plotlines of the programs they regulated in the 1970s, television animation censorship ranged from conventional to absurd. Typical of the attitude was a memo circulated at Filmation Studios during this period:

> Program Practices [i.e. the censorship department] at CBS has ruled that a character that has been hit in a fight [c]an not have: 1] eyes at half-mast 2] eyes twirling 3] tongue hanging out 4] dazed or hurt look 5] closed eyes 6] circle of stars around head. No Expression Of Pain Or Dazed Expression! [sic] The characters [c]an react with frustration or anger at being foiled again. Camera: Do not shoot scenes you find with the no-nos in them.[166]

These "no-nos" threw out the conventions of half a century of animation storytelling. Anyone familiar with earlier forms of animation is aware of how storytelling and characterization, including both actual and implied violence as well as vibrant animation, was responsible for the medium's early success. It was not surprising that the creative nature of the programming began to suffer, especially at studios such as Hanna-Barbera with old, out-of-touch staffers. As Hal Erickson later noted, "[h]ow could you create anything with impunity when the tongue-cluckers kept changing the rules?"[167] Indeed, the "rules" were themselves the problem with the whole system: the networks had simply proceeded with the process of self-regulation without consulting the producers, ACT, or anyone else in an attempt to distance themselves from the censorship debate as quickly and painlessly as possible.

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[165] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1:26.

[166] Quoted in Kanfer, *Serious Business,* 207.

[167] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 27.

The networks varied in their approaches to the issue, but NBC's response was the most basic and reflective of its time. In 1975, it established a *Social Science Advisory Panel* to define what to do about the matter of violence in children's programming.[168] Predictably, a prime focus of attention was the "comic adventure caper full of gag strings and pratfalls"[169] where story served the needs of action rather than the other way around.[170] In an effort to curb the existence of violence in its programming, the network insisted that the Panel be involved in consultation during the production and development processes, during which it would voice the network's mandate and ascertain whether the programs were being produced to the network's specifications.[171] This served to shape the definition and scope of animation at NBC until the early 1990s, when the network abandoned television animation *in toto* to concentrate on early morning news programming and late morning live-action programs aimed at young adults and teenagers.[172] Similar restrictive covenants also served CBS and ABC well, until both networks abandoned or limited their traditional Saturday morning formats, the former in the late 1990s, the latter in the 2000s.

Along with actual and fabricated concerns about violence was the networks' mandate regarding something equally ill-defined and limiting; "pro-social" values[173] -- a term used to refer to specific forms of educational content. Joseph Barbera once again spoke for his generation of filmmakers by complaining about the situation: with typical bitter wit, he indicated that he could no longer produce cartoons where cats chased mice

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[168] Karen Hill-Scott and Horst Stipp, "Saturday Morning Children's Programs on NBC, 1975-2006: A Case Study Of Self-Regulation." In Michelle Hilmes (ed.)*, NBC: America's Network* (Berkeley: University Of California Press, 2007), 240-241.

[169] Ibid., 241.

[170] Ibid.

[171] Ibid., 242-244.

[172] Ibid., 251.

[173] Ibid., 249-251.

unless they "suddenly stopped to give lessons in basket weaving or glassblowing."[174]

Barbera had much to complain about, for his studio, based on its large volume of production alone, had to endure much of the scrutiny. It was a kind of attention that Hanna-Barbera disliked; the company was ill-equipped to deal effectively with the restrictive practices placed upon it in the 1970s, due to its established tradition of acting relatively free from censorship in the 1950s and 1960s, and the quality of its work suffered as a result. One only needed to look at some of the programming to get an understanding of the conflicts at hand. Where comedy was concerned, the studio was increasingly forced to rest on its laurels, trading on the name-brand recognition of its established characters and their goodwill in order to sustain its production schedule. A key example here was *Yogi's Gang*, broadcast on ABC between 1973 and 1975,[175] where Yogi Bear and numerous other vintage Hanna-Barberians were brought in to confront and reform such transparently named villains as Mr. Waste, Mr. Cheater, Lotta Litter, The Envy Brothers and Mr. Pollution. The show was a product of its era.

The superhero/adventure sub-genre was even more severely compromised by the new rules and regulations, at least at Hanna-Barbera. The most popular and representative of this new sanitized format was *Super Friends*, broadcast in various incarnations between 1973 and 1986 on ABC.[176] Based on DC Comics' popular *Justice League Of America* series (the name change, as Hal Erickson suggests, was a symptom of how badly the network wanted to avoid even the idea of militarism),[177] the series went out of its way to

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[174] Joseph Barbera, quoted in Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors,* 210.

[175] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 934.

[176] Ibid., 2: 802-804.

[177] Ibid., 2: 802.

avoid any actions that even remotely connoted combat of any kind.[178] No personality or

ideological conflicts existed between the lead characters, and some of the "villains" went so

far as to apologize for creating havoc. Instead, the heroes (Superman, Batman and Robin,

Aquaman, Wonder Woman, and The Wonder Twins) conducted what was basically "a

caped and cowled learning seminar, wherein [they] would stress and practice teamwork,

trust and cooperation,"[179] along with other supposed virtues. The presence of popular

psychologist Haim Ginott as a technical advisor only served to reinforce this ambience.[180]

Later, in a well-meaning bid to alter the traditionally lily-white superhero ranks, several

ethnic heroes were added to the lineup, including the African American Black Vulcan, the

Native American Apache Chief, the Asian Samurai and the Latino El Dorado. Here, again,

the format proved limiting, as these characters were essentially wooden tokens whose very

presence frequently debased any notions of goodwill they could have created in the eyes of

viewers; their ethnicity, rather than their abilities, was their *raison d'etre*.[181] If *Super

Friends* deserves to be remembered, it is for the fact that it was a contradiction in terms: a

superhero program with very little in the way of super-powered conflict fueling its

narrative drive.[182] As a consequence, it represents exactly the prevailing ideological

currents of its time -- as well as its studio's inability to deal constructively with them.

This is not to say that television animation was entirely without merit or value

during this time. As will be discussed shortly, Filmation producers, unlike those at Hanna-

Barbera, were able to produce work that was both entertaining and educational and,

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[178] Ibid., 2: 804.

[179] Ibid., 2: 802.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Burke and Burke, *Saturday Morning Fever,* 215.

[182] Ibid., 27.

consequently, succeeded in the new environment. Oddly, the "series" that thrived the most was not a series *per se* but rather a group of between-programs musical vignettes. *Schoolhouse Rock*[183] was a staple of the ABC schedule of the 1970s and early 1980s, and was memorable enough to be revived in the 1990s. Developed by advertising executive David McCall, the project was an innovative attempt to produce educational messages through the beats and rhymes of contemporary music.[184] Broken down into various sub-groups ("Science Rock", "Grammar Rock", "Multiplication Rock", "America Rock" etc.), each episode featured a musical number related to the theme *du jour*, illustrated through innovative animation and sung by talented vocalists such as Blossom Dearie, Grady Tate, Bob Dorough and Jack Sheldon, among others. The songs served their functions well, educating memorably on their intended subjects while at the same time keeping audiences enthralled with related visual imagery. A multiple Emmy Award winner, the series was later adapted for a stage presentation and soundtrack albums as well as being issued on video and DVD. But even the *Schoolhouse* was criticize by those who considered that it did "too little too late" to cover the deficits of Saturday morning as a whole. Annenberg communications scholar Aimee Dorr dismissively described it as "shlock."[185] Nevertheless, *Schoolhouse Rock* proved that it was indeed possible for animation and education to coexist peacefully, and the program's ideals and format would be carefully adapted and modified by other programs in the following years.

Animation by Filmation

While, as we have seen, some producers found the new environment of television

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[183] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 715-717.

[184] Ibid., 2: 716.

[185] Aimee Dorr, quoted in Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 717.

animation difficult to adjust to, there were others who found the new methods and approaches quite acceptable. The ascension of Filmation, and the ideals of its founder, Lou Scheimer, provide us with a representative example of a producer and studio that was able to work well within the confines of a restricted creative environment.

Lou Scheimer was not a part of the original generation of television animators. He had not been apprenticed during the era of theatrical animation, nor had he been forced out of it by the contraction of the theatrical animation industry into television. Prior to establishing his studio, Scheimer had done as much non-commercial as he had commercial filmmaking, and was therefore well accustomed to working within the prescribed limits set for him by those who commissioned his work. He guided Filmation through the 1970s and beyond by concentrating on its strengths as a producer of comic and dramatic narratives and making them appealing to his audiences and television executives alike. But most significantly, Scheimer engaged and respected his audience in a way most other producers of his time did not. Knowing full well that children and young adults were his primary audience and that it was his duty to make sure that they came away from his shows both entertained and enriched, Scheimer harnessed himself and his studio to the new pro-social dictums of the networks in ways that improved them. He made his lead characters people who could be related to, with obtainable goals. His treatment of women, African-American, and child and young adult characters, in particular, put other producers to shame, and set a standard for many others to follow. Though he may have been a businessman/animator like his friendly rivals, Hanna and Barbera, Scheimer was more aware of his audience and what his obligations as a producer to them were. This was one reason why his studio remained in business so long, from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, and why it helped to re-invent the

manner in which television animation stories were told.

Displaying artistic talent from an early age, Scheimer refined his abilities as a student at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon) University, where the young Andy Warhol was a contemporary. Like many eastern artists of his time, Scheimer traveled west in the 1950s in search of work, occasionally traveling back to Pittsburgh before permanently settling in Los Angeles in the 1960s. His chief employers during this time were advertising agencies and non-commercial filmmakers, who employed him to produce animated ads for Ford and other products, along with commissioned religious films. He also worked briefly at Hanna-Barbera during the late 1950s, and during this time forged an important partnership with animation director Hal Sutherland, who would helm much of Filmation's productions into the 1980s.

Scheimer gave some perspective on himself and his background in an interview with educator Edward Palmer in 1987:

> …I came out here [to Los Angeles] in 1955 hoping to get a job in the animation industry…[B]asically to get a job in the animation industry you're talking about programming for young people…and it was the heyday of the animation industry. It was when UPA was…doing terrific stuff…[U]nfortunately, it also was the end of the animation industry as it was then known because just about that time was when the major... [film studios] were starting to close their animation studios….And television had not really started to pick up the pieces…[W]hen I first came on….the only thing around was doing animation for commercials….[T]here were a bunch of studios around that fortunately kept the animation industry alive in those early days doing commercials…[I]t was not until…the early sixties that television [animation]

really started to become significant….In those early days sponsors were really

buying shows and placing them and bartering them and hiking back time and stuff

like that…[I]t wasn't until the very early sixties that television [animation] really

became important with network television…I started [Filmation]….in 1962. The

first three or four years were dreadful….We'd pick up a job every now and then,

but it was difficult...[186]

The most significant of these early "jobs" was *Rod Rocket*, a syndicated series

broadcast in 1963, which Scheimer co-produced and co-directed.[187] Largely obscure today,

the series involved "serialized space adventures with a soft-pedaled educational slant,"[188]

setting in place the basic template that would be a trademark of Filmation's production

process. For this project, Scheimer recruited a number of animators at one of his former

employers, Larry Harmon Productions, and this group, headed by Sutherland as animation

director, became the basis for the studio's production staff. Soon afterward, Scheimer took

on business partner Norm Prescott, a veteran executive in the radio and popular music

fields whose contacts would become increasingly valuable to the studio.

The studio's big break came in 1965, when DC Comics approached it to bring their

star character, Superman, to television animation as part of Fred Silverman's "superhero

morning" concept at CBS. The result was a vibrant program which stayed true to its source

material even within the six-minute episode format. With *The New Adventures Of*

Superman, as the program was called, "Filmation established its future *modus operandi*."[189]

First of all, while many of its future productions would be adaptations from other media

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[186] Lou Scheimer, quoted in Edward Palmer, *Children In The Cradle Of Television* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath, 1987), 101.

[187] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 685.

[188] Ibid.

[189] Ibid., 2: 811.

sources, Scheimer and company were still able to infuse the material with personal touches.

Superman was kept entirely in a fantasy context; there were no references to the war in

Vietnam (unlike when, during World War II, Superman had been used by the Max

Fleischer studio for propaganda purposes).[190] His character did intervene, as when in "The

Force Phantom" American military installations were threatened by alien invaders, though

episodes like these were rare. In addition, Filmation, unlike Fleischer, utilized Superman's

comic book opponents extensively in the narratives,[191] and constructed highly original and

compelling narratives on their own. One example was "The Pernicious Parasite", where

Superman is nearly defeated by a petty thief (Icy Harris) capable of draining the strength

from his body. Harris, portrayed as stocky and balding, represented a continuing trend in

the studio's narratives towards polarized, Manichean depiction of good and evil.[192] A

further developing trend was the employment of figures associated with Superman from his

prior media incarnations: writers from DC Comics (George Kashdan, Leo Dorfman and

Bob Haney) and actors from the long running radio series (Bud Collyer, Joan Alexander,

Jackson Beck).[193] While the animation may have left something to be desired,[194] Filmation

established itself as a credible producer of superhero narratives, to the extent that it was

identified as the "superhero company."[195]

Filmation proved itself equally up to the task of providing other forms of

programming in 1968, when Fred Silverman commissioned it to produce a series based on

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[190] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 68.

[191] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 79; Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 811.

[192] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 78-79.

[193] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 811-812.

[194] Ibid., 2: 811.

[195] Bruce Scivally. *Superman on Film, Television, Radio and Broadway* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland and Co., 2008), 72.

the hugely popular "Archie" comic book line as an "antidote" to the concerns over violent animation.[196] *The Archie Show*, debuting in the fall of that year, and its successor programs, became an immensely successful franchise for the studio. While certainly trading on the name brand recognition of the characters, the series was produced in a manner that attracted both children and young adults. Each episode of the original program ended with a "dance party" segment after the fashion of NBC's *The Monkees*, which had recently concluded its original run. Through the connections of Prescott and CBS, music publication tycoon Don Kirshner, who had previously worked on *The Monkees*, was contracted to do the musical production. One of the recordings, "Sugar, Sugar", actually proved to be popular enough to travel to #1 on the *Billboard* music charts.[197] In subsequent seasons, the format varied considerably. As Prescott noted, the studio needed constantly "to look for other ways to utilize the characters in new forms to regenerate interest. Sometimes we succeed, sometimes we fail."[198] Where they succeeded was in expanding into an hour-long format in 1969 and featuring a giant "juke box" at the center of the action in 1970-71. Where they failed was in taking the formula beyond the scope of its original focus. *Archie's TV Funnies*, running from 1971-73, found them adapting archaic comic strips such as "The Katzenjammer Kids", "Nancy" and "Dick Tracy", whose appeal to 1970s television animation audiences was questionable at best. Likewise, the well-intentioned *U.S. of Archie*, running between 1974 and 1976 to coincide with the build-up to the American Bicentennial, suffered from poor ratings and uneven execution. On the positive side, it helped bring attention to then-neglected figures in American history such as Harriet

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[196] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 91.

[197] Ibid., 1: 92-93.

[198] Norm Prescott, quoted in Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 93.

Tubman, in keeping with the socially progressive attitudes the studio had already demonstrated.[199] Nevertheless, the *Archie* programs kept the studio active and demonstrated, like Hanna-Barbera's series before it, that Filmation was a company capable of investing television animation with a unique, idiosyncratic quality. The studio's productions in the following decade would demonstrate this to an even greater degree.

  Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids. The idiosyncratic nature of Filmation, and the best example of the effectiveness of its methodology and ideology during this time period, is seen in one of its most popular series: *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, which debuted on CBS in 1972 and ran there and in syndication for the better part of a decade. From the announcement of its production in April 1972,[200] *Fat Albert* was heralded as a revolutionary program. To a degree, it actually was. There was, to begin with, the star power of its creator and his intentions for what the program was to be. Bill Cosby was (and is) one of the most influential African-American figures in the history of American television -- one who has repeatedly made numerous political statements in the name of art.[201] *Fat Albert* was no exception; in many ways, it fundamentally altered the methodology and means by which television animation communicated with its young viewers, creating a template for numerous "pro-social" programs to follow in the 1970s and 1980s.

  Fat Albert differed from the majority of child-directed television programming at this time, animated or otherwise, in two important ways: it had a major and influential

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[199] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 93.

[200] Louis Calta, "Bill Cosby To Star In Children's Show Saturdays On CBS," *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1972.

[201] For biographical studies of Cosby's life and career, see Ronald L. Smith, *The Cosby Book* (New York: S.P.I. Books, 1993) and Bill Adler, *The Cosby Wit: His Life and Humor* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 1986). See also Gerald Nachman, *Seriously Funny: The Rebel Comedians of the 1950s and 1960s* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2003), 562-590.

cultural figure as its guiding spirit, and it was intended to educate even more than to entertain. Having risen from poverty in Philadelphia to success as an Emmy-award winning actor and Grammy-award winning stand-up comedian, Cosby was already to many a great success story. Yet he was not entirely satisfied with this. Having dropped out of high school and then college to pursue his career (much to the disappointment of his mother, who insisted that "[e]ducation is a must!")[202] Cosby now embarked on a quest to better himself and become a good example to the people of his race in particular. His commitment to education led him not only to become involved with educational programming, such as PBS' *The Electric Company,*[203] but also to pursue academic degrees. This climaxed with his earning a doctoral degree in education from the University of Massachussets in 1976.[204] *Fat Albert* was a central part of this. It was a series that, in Cosby's mind, would be "more than simple entertainment for a Saturday morning."[205] Its deceptive, and almost subversive, purpose was to educate children, especially African American ones, in the reading, writing and behavioural skills they seemed to lack. Cosby used the development of the program's ideals as fuel for his doctoral studies,[206] insisting that its focus be heavily weighed towards examining educational issues. This was made most apparent by his appointment of a team of advisors, headed by Dr. Gordon Berry of UCLA, who examined issues and ideas in every episode to make sure they conformed precisely with the educational aims Cosby desired for the program.[207] Cosby, therefore,

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[202] Adler, *The Cosby Wit,* 105.

[203] Ibid., 26.

[204] Nachman. *Seriously Funny,* 580.

[205] Adler, *The Cosby Wit,* 89.

[206] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors,* 201; Smith, *The Cosby Book,* 126.

[207] Smith, *The Cosby Book,* 128; Adler, *Seriously Funny,* 89-90.

played a key role in ensuring that the program was used as a vehicle for the illustration of pro-social narratives.

Where other programs before and after would simply pay lip service to the mandate of educational content, *Fat Albert* made it a key and essential part of its storylines. As executive producer (the first African-American to hold this position on an animated television program) and live-action host (innovatively cut into the animation footage to set up the stories and provide commentary on them for the audience's benefit), Cosby put his identifying marks on the series and, with them, an implicit guarantee that the program would have substance as well as entertainment value. This was made clear in his identifying greeting during the program's main title sequence: "This is Bill Cosby coming at you with music and fun, and if you're not careful, you may learn something before it's done." Yet, as much as Cosby contributed to the program's success, he likely would not have been able to produce the show as he wished had Filmation and Lou Scheimer not been willing to support him. In other hands, even with Cosby's presence, the results might have been disastrous. When asked why he focused on including positive portrayals of women and minorities in his work, Scheimer replied with a simple statement: "it had to be done" because no other producers in his time were doing it. Scheimer's thinking was progressive enough to allow Cosby to structure the show as he wished, and to pursue the educational mandate he wanted. The educational advisors, and the inventiveness of the studio's writing staff, ensured that both the educational and entertainment goals of the series were met.[208]

Fat Albert was one of the first programs in television animation history to depict African-American characters without the condescension or racism that had been

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[208] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 323.

commonplace in media depictions of the past.[209] Indeed, Cosby and Filmation went to great

pains to ensure that their characters, despite their obvious racial characteristics, would

appeal to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. As they were based on characters

from Cosby's childhood and introduced in his stand-up comedy routines,[210] they displayed

real emotional behavior and engaged in slapstick comedy antics. Like Walt Disney's Seven

Dwarfs, they were constructed both as a unit concerned with mutual goals and as

individuals with finely tuned personalities. The title character, Fat Albert, was not only the

group's gravitational center but its moral one as well. Bill and Russell Cosby were

distinguished by their fraternal loyalty, and Russell was further distinguished by his small

size, distinctive voice and quick wit. Guitar playing Rudy was depicted as an arrogant

braggart -- the "bad" example for the audience, as well as a key target of his friends'

wisecracks. Mush Mouth displayed a characteristic speech pattern. Dumb Donald lived up

to his name with the occasional inane comment. Mudfoot, an elderly African-American

man, gave the gang counsel, whether they wanted it or not. These characters were

supplemented by a wide range of other characters, most of whom only appeared in one

episode, who helped to illustrate and instruct the audience in the theme/issue of the week.

According to historian Christopher Lehman, the show's distinctive sense of both

time and place was directed at the young urban audiences which were its primary target:

> [The series] present[ed] scenery that illustrated the cost of the Vietnam War to
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> urban America. After President Johnson had begun spending more on the war than
>
> on combating poverty in the 1960s, cities nationwide fell into disarray. Likewise,

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[209] For the history of the treatment of African-Americans in television, see J. Fred MacDonald, *Blacks and White TV: African Americans in Television Since 1948* (2nd. Ed.) (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1992), and Donald Bogle, *Prime Time Blues: African Americans on Network Television* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001). *Fat Albert*, based on its marginal status as an animated program, is not discussed significantly in either text.

[210] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors,* 196.

[the series] include[d] dilapidated buildings and garbage-filled junkyards in its

backgrounds. In addition, the role of the junkyard as the space for the juvenile black

characters to play represents the absence of community centers or public

playgrounds -- facilities frequently sacrificed by cities confronted with shrinking

funds for public play areas. The [characters] make toys [and, in many of the closing

segments, musical instruments] out of junk, showing not only creativity but also the

financial inability to purchase toys. Such imagery was on par with contemporary

movies focusing on urban African-American hardship[s]....[211]

Lehman makes a key point by indicating how significantly the show drew on a

contemporary urban, and especially urban African-American, experience,[212] one that many

in its target audience could easily relate to. Though somewhat passively by today's

standards, the program brought major social issues of the time, in particular racism and

gender relations, as well as more minor ones, such as lying, cheating and judging others

based on appearance and mannerisms alone, into major focus for its audience, allowing

them to confront these concerns on a realistic level.[213] This was, in and of itself, a

significant and sharp political statement. Up until this time, the vast majority of television

animation narratives were focused tightly on escapism and magical realism (see Chapter 1).

By setting the program in a real and recognizable setting, Cosby and Filmation were

making it clear that what was going on in the series was not the product of fairy tale

imagination, but the bare bones of real life itself. It was a significant departure for the

genre, and one that would be used and reused considerably in later years to give depth to

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[211] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 163-164.

[212] Historian Thomas Sugrue analyzes many of the issues and concerns related to African-American urban life and their origins, which *Fat Albert* frequently drew upon, in his detailed study *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

[213] Lehman, *American Animated Cartoons*, 164; 181.

television animation scenarios. With Cosby's assistance, Filmation proved that it was a studio that could set trends as well as follow them with this series. Further grounding this was the studio's employment of African-American street slang in the dialogue, such as the insult game "The Dozens", and the ultimate expression of un-cool -- "no class!"[214]

The narratives reflected the seriousness of the program's intentions. Every episode was firmly grounded in exploring issues of hygiene, comportment or morality universal to all children, or issues specifically concerning lower class and African-American children. One of the Cosby Kids or a close acquaintance would experience a problem, which would then be explored in depth. Coupled with Cosby's live-action commentary on the action, the results could be humorous, harrowing or often both. In the early episodes at least, the theme of the episode was further emphasized at its ending by the gang "performing" a song based on the moral at hand on their manufactured junkyard musical instruments.

An examination of one of the early episodes, "Dope Is For Dopes", indicates how significantly these various elements of *Fat Albert* tied together to create a compelling television experience. Franny Bates, an acquaintance of the gang, has been treating them to a wide variety of expensive presents. The money for this is said to come from Franny's brother Muggles, a "businessman" of some nature. When Fat Albert accidentally damages Franny's motorcycle while riding it, he goes to visit Muggles (who has the appearance of an urban criminal, or a "blaxploitation" film villain)[215] and offers to work for him to pay for the damages. Muggles gives Albert a package to deliver, but before he can deliver it, he is arrested by the police. They inform the naïve Albert that the package he was delivering contains drugs and that Muggles is a noted drug dealer. Albert is forced by the police to

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[214] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 215.

[215] Ibid., 200.

participate in a sting operation which results in Muggles being arrested. Franny promptly

loses his money, and bitterly ends his friendship with Albert as a result. Albert worries that

he has also lost the respect of the gang, but they are, in fact, proud of what he has done and

tell him this. All is resolved.[216]

The idea that a television animation program would be built around such a

contemporary, hot button issue as drug dealing and use illustrates why *Fat Albert* was such

a groundbreaking program for its time. Few other programs would have even considered

tackling such a topic, despite the fact that the drug culture was epidemic in the urban

centers of the time, and that young kids like Albert were actually being used as "runners"

for dealers like Muggles. In *Fat Albert* the issue was not red-flagged as a problem, but

situated in purely human terms, as Franny is abruptly forced to confront the manner in

which his older brother is really making his living. Like many such characters in the series,

he does not like the situation, but, with the gang's help, is made to confront and address the

situation. Narratives such as these, which allowed "real world" issues to be discussed

seriously, are part of *Fat Albert*'s legacy.

Other episodes of the series similarly grounded real, relatable problems in the

fantastic context of animation to ensure they were addressed and examined in ways that

could constructively be grasped by the audience. "The Newcomer", for example, focuses

on Dumb Donald's reaction to the news that his parents are going to have a baby. Initially,

he is shattered by the news, fearing that his parents will no longer have any use for him

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[216] This was, of course, a rather simplistic way of dealing with a complex situation for urban African-American communities. The drug culture, as shown in the "blaxploitation" film *Superfly* (Gordon Parks, Jr., 1972), was a major problem for urban African-Americans at this time, and a key source of the social and economic divisions that continue today. As with many of the issues related to urban African-American populations, it was a consequence of the isolation of African-Americans in urban ghettoes, which were "areas with densely packed tenements and visible poverty, plagued with disease and crime" (Sugrue, *The Origins Of The Urban Crisis*, 37). However, as an animated program aimed at children, *Fat Albert* was limited as to how it could approach this topic for its audience. Given this limitation, "Dope Is For Dopes" manages to discuss this issue in a constructive and effective manner, making the gravity of the situation apparent to its audience.

once the baby arrives. However, when the baby actually comes, he becomes interested in

and protective of it. The sensitive manner in which the show examined the scenario

underlined its message: that older brothers and sisters should be grateful for the chance to

be involved with younger siblings and should not consider them annoying nuisances or

usurpers of parental attention. Yet the series also presented issues and storylines that could

not be solved easily within the timeframe of a half-hour television program. "Talk, Don't

Fight", for instance, dealt with the touchy subject of inner-city street gang warfare and its

impact on the familes of gang members. The Cosby Kids' friend Tito is confronted with

this situation when his older brother becomes involved with a street gang. Ultimately, he

gets himself killed to prevent harm from coming to his brother, in a highly dramatic

sequence that involves a rising heartbeat on the soundtrack and literal visual evidence of a

smoking gun.[217] Such a blatant depiction of death was unheard of in Saturday morning

television at this time, notes historian Heather Hendershot; she contends, justifiably, that it

was only because of Cosby's influence and the program's educational mandate that such an

episode could have been made in the first place.[218]

Episodes such as this provided an ideological challenge to the prevailing view that

television animation did not and could not present material with redeeming social values; in

this way, they met Cosby and Filmation's educational criteria for the program. By

constructively dealing with issues that children and young adults, especially but not

exclusively in the African American community, dealt with on a regular basis, *Fat Albert*

towered above its contemporaries and remains one of the more powerful examples of an

educational television animation program. As well, in outlying issues related to the "urban

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[217] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 199-200.

[218] Ibid., 200.

crisis" facing the majority of African American children, the series stood out from other animated programs of the era, which often pretended African Americans did not exist in order to avoid discussing social and political issues of concern to them. Here, the issues of concern were not simply devised and escapist narratives; they were inescapably and unavoidably *real*, which added immensely to their impact.

"Busted", an episode produced towards the end of the show's run, involved the boys getting involved with a "Scared Straight" kind of program after accidentally witnessing a crime. Just as their real-life counterparts in the now-famous program would have done, a group of menacing convicts "assaulted the terrified boys with threats, profanity and sexual invitations,"[219] a harrowing situation that was something few other television animation characters had had to endure, at least until the more liberal 1990s. Cosby prefaced this episode with a warning about its content, but that could not have been enough to prepare some viewers for that sort of visceral experience. Presenting that material was a calculated risk on the part of Cosby and Filmation, and something that only *Fat Albert* could get away with presenting at that time.

One might consider that CBS, the program's home network for most of its original run, would have been pleased with *Fat Albert*'s pro-social agenda and encouraged its producers to continue producing material in the same vein. In actuality, the relationship between producers and network was more complex and schizophrenic than that. CBS did initially take pride in the series, employing it as an effective and new form of televisual discourse in defending itself against John Pastore, ACT and others who opposed television

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[219] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 324.

animation.[220] Yet, at the same time, given its status as a "mere" television animation program, it was also considered disposable. When Cosby and Filmation approached the network for funding to extend the show's production run, they were refused on at least one occasion; CBS countered that since reruns of the shows were doing as well in the ratings as the original broadcasts, there was no need to waste money on producing new episodes.[221] As a consequence, despite running over a decade on the network, *Fat Albert*'s production run at CBS was limited to 54 episodes. During some seasons CBS would not allow any new episodes to be produced at all.[222] This was hardly a fit way to treat such a socially constructive program, and likely it would not have happened if it was not television animation, and aimed an economically underprivileged group of consumers whom the network could not profit from. At least Cosby and Filmation seemed to think so, and, as a consequence, when the opportunity came to revive *Fat Albert* as a syndicated program in 1984, with full production resources and support now available, they jumped at the chance.

By this time, the series had already undergone a drastic period of cosmetic change. In the late 1970s, the title of the series was changed to *The New Fat Albert Show*, and there was also a change in the show's atmosphere. The early *Fat Albert* episodes had been presented within the confines of a world made up almost entirely of African-Americans, which, despite its realistic trappings, had seemed occasionally to almost be hermetically sealed off from the larger (read: white) world.[223] In later episodes, the characters began attending a primarily white school, and seemed to be the only African-Americans in

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[220] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 208-215.

[221] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 324.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Hendershot, *Saturday Morning Censors*, 206-208. For a concise study of an earlier and more heavily criticized television series with a similar format, see Melvin Patrick Ely, *The Adventures of Amos 'n' Andy: A Social History of an American Phenomenon* (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

existence. The storylines began focusing on the Cosby Kids' friendships with white characters, who they frequently rescued from difficulty. As well intentioned as this may have been, this muted the impact of some episodes, as the more complicated sphere of race relations began intruding, both directly into the narratives and indirectly into the character relationships. In such a context, the show's formula became more limited -- and limiting.

The characters still had their junkyard and clubhouse, to which they frequently adjourned to watch television. The subject of one of their favorite programs, whose adventures were depicted extensively in each of these episodes, was one of the few positive changes to the show's format. The Brown Hornet was an African-American superhero with an identified altruistic approach to life. Though his adventures were drawn and written comically, in a bizarre visual approach reminiscent of the early Looney Tunes, the Hornet and his sidekicks Stinger and Tweeter were treated in plainly human terms, as were the bizarrely conceived extra-terrestrials they dealt with in roaming the galaxy. In contrast to the "ethnic" superheroes on *Super Friends* in particular, the Hornet was a strongly conceived and purposeful character who provided a strong example for the Cosby Kids- and their audience. He could be related to in ways others of his kind were not, in particular because he displayed a strong streak of self-deprecating humor along with his other abilities. The Hornet episodes served as a mini-preamble for the main action to follow, as the Hornet's unique brand of justice was enforced on a wide variety of space tyrants, crooked salesmen and other ne'er-do-wells who needed to be shown the error of their ways. They minutely copied the issues that would be dealt with in the main action, and often handled them, given their more limited running time, more effectively than did the main stories themselves. It was perhaps no wonder that, in these episodes, Fat Albert would cite

the Hornet as a precedent for the actions he undertook to solve his problems. The Brown Hornet stories functioned well as a show-within-a-show, and likely could have provided fodder for a spinoff series had Cosby and Filmation been so inclined. Even with the emerging trend to depicting ethnic superheroes in television animation on a more realistic level than before, the Brown Hornet still stands out as one of a kind.

In spite of the limitations placed upon it, *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, in its various incarnations, was still able to produce material of a nature never before seen in television animation, and therefore establish itself as a lasting influence on future television animation storytelling. It reshaped the manner in which television animation dealt with African-Americans, treating them as human beings rather than stereotypes, and bringing urban social issues to the attention of a broad audience. But, most importantly, it redefined the position of the audience vis-à-vis the programs they watched, a change that continues to resonate among contemporary television animation programs. Subsequent programs would not take their audiences for granted; their narratives, characterizations and plots would have to conform to more realistic forms, and they would have to engage the viewers as active participants in the stories if they expected to retain their attention. Cartoon characters after *Fat Albert* would have to be both entertaining and enlightening figures if they wished to survive, and this was not a task, that all of them were up to.

Despite *Fat Albert*'s phenomenal success, it proved to be lightning in a bottle than the beginning of a long-term trend. The extreme censorship of the era, coupled with the networks' interest in following short-term popularity trends rather than establishing brand loyalty as television animation providers, did much to decrease the value of even the most well-intentioned projects during this decade. Filmation found this out the hard way, as it

struggled to balance the education/entertainment mandate Cosby and Scheimer pioneered

with *Fat Albert* with the esoteric production style that was the studio's trademark.

> *Other Filmation Initiatives.* As noted earlier, Lou Scheimer was already

accustomed to balancing his needs and desires as a producer with those of the television

executives who employed him. If he was handed lemons in terms of what he could not do,

he was still able to make lemonade. He had already demonstrated this with his 1960s

superhero shows, the "Archie" programs and *Fat Albert*, and kept his company in operation

in the 1970s and 1980s on similar principles. In addition, just as Hanna-Barbera had

achieved financial security with being sold to Taft Broadcasting in 1967, Scheimer

achieved this for Filmation with its sale to the TelePrompter company in 1969 (it was later

sold to Westinghouse Broadcasting in the early 1980s, and acquired by L'Oreal in 1988

with unfortunate consequences [see the conclusion]). This freed Filmation up to

experiment, and it began to produce a wider variety of both animation and live-action

programming under Scheimer's guidance.

> One of his more notable experiments predated *Fat Albert* by one television season.

Debuting on CBS in 1971, *The Groovie Goolies* re-invented the traditional horror film

monsters of an earlier era in a "harmless" comedy setting.[224] While Frankenstein, Dracula,

the Wolfman, the Mummy etc. had once been the key names in terror, World War II, and

especially the atomic bomb, had robbed them of their ability to scare people, and so they

became joke figures more than anything else.[225] If anything, the show seemed more like a

horror-themed *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* than a genuine horror narrative. The presence

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[224] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 386-387.

[225] Historian David J. Skal has examined the evolution and decline of these figures extensively in his works *The Monster Show: A Cultural History Of Horror* (New York: Norton, 1993); *Screams Of Reason: Mad Science And Modern Culture* (New York: Norton, 1998), and *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web Of Dracula From Page To Stage To Screen* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2004).

of defanged monsters from an earlier era certainly symbolized the manner in which the "monsters" of Saturday morning themselves had been defanged, but even this proved not to be good enough for critics of the form.

More directly related to the educational aims of the studio was *Mission: Magic,* broadcast in 1973-74 on ABC.[226] The educational portion of the program was mainly accomplished by its protagonist, Miss Tickle, a teacher who was able to transport her students into a world of fantasy where adventure and learning awaited. Accompanying them was an animated version of actor/singer Rick Springfield (an imposition on the part of the network,)[227] who regularly performed musical numbers. The concept seems harmless and inoffensive today, but not so at the time: historian Hal Erickson notes that the National Association for Better Broadcasting (NABB), one of the more difficult-to-please of the advocacy groups that sprung up in the wake of ACT, complained about its "eerie settings and music" and its use of "[r]obbery, gangs and other sordid ingredients in cheap[,] mediocre animation."[228] One has to question the motives of the NABB, especially considering the track record of Filmation and Scheimer's commitment to value and quality in his work, but such harsh criticism was par for the course in this era.

The NABB's complaints marked it as one of television animation's fiercest critics: conservative-minded social advocates, religious leaders and academics such as Annenberg communications scholar George Gerbner, who simply did not "get" what television animation was really all about.[229] Mistaking what was intended as harmless fun for "threatening" situations that would disturb children irrevocably, ignoring and de-

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[226] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 553.

[227] Ibid.

[228] Quoted in Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 553.

[229] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 24.

emphasizing the positive aspects of the genre, and making baseless claims that it had no creative value, these critics hid behind their "expert" status to belittle television animation, claiming that they knew what was "best" for the children of America. The hawk-like manner in which they monitored -- and distorted -- the actual content of the animation did much to prevent the finer examples of the genre from being seen in an objective light, and contributed to the continued creative regression of the form in the 1970s and 1980s.

Filmation's animated adaptation of the pioneering and influential live-action science fiction series *Star Trek,* debuting on NBC in 1975, was more positively received. This program had much to recommend it, and showed off Filmation's skill at translating narrative forms from other media effectively into animation. The show had the complete support and involvement of the original series' production team. Indeed, series creator Gene Roddenberry served as executive producer and consulted on storylines, and D.C. Fontana, one of the principal writers of the original program, served as story editor and associate producer, making her one of the first women to hold such a position in television animation. In addition, nearly all of the original cast members of the series reprised their roles in the animated program. Scheimer and Prescott went so far as to solicit the opinion of hard-core *Trek* fans on the idea for the series at a 1972 convention, and convinced NBC to air the program in a late-morning timeslot, even though this would mean a significant decline in the overall audience share.[230] The result was a series that managed to reproduce and at times even enhance the appeal of its live-action predecessor. Hal Sutherland directed the episodes, while the writers (including veteran science fiction writer Larry Niven and original show cast-member Walter Koening) produced material that was far above the

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[230] Ibid., 2: 790.

norm for contemporary television animation, though very much in keeping with the standard for excellence the original live-action series had set for mass media science fiction. As an animated program, the show could provide materials, characters and plots its predecessor could not: there was a greater variety of nonhuman alien beings, the supporting characters (particularly Lieutenant Uhura) were allowed to do much more than they had previously, and many of the episodes were sequels, revisions or updates of earlier live action episodes that felicitously exploited the program's new medium. The effort paid off as the series won an Emmy Award in 1976 for "Outstanding Children's Entertainment Series", the only such award Filmation ever won. Yet the future would not be kind to the program. When science fiction writer Alan Dean Foster adapted the animated scripts for book publication, he apparently did not even watch the series for reference. There was also continued debate over whether the series could be officially considered part of the original series' "canon", especially when several live-action updates and successor programs were produced in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s along with a series of successful live-action movies. Yet the animated *Star Trek* deserves to be remembered not simply as a successful animated adaptation of a live-action television series, but as a one-of-a-kind effort from a one-of-a-kind television animation studio.

Star Trek, like *Fat Albert*, was a groundbreaking television animation program for specific and important reasons. Just as with *Fat Albert*, it was a product of an outside vision whose creator collaborated with the studio intensely to make sure it met with his specifications. And, just as before, that vision was maintained. Roddenberry had shaped the original series democratically, with all peoples represented on equal terms, a departure from earlier live-action science fiction programs which had been predicated on the

"superiority" of the white American male, a vision that, as we have seen, dominated much of television animation in the 1960s. By bringing this vision to television animation intact, and in some cases, enhanced, Filmation continued its quest to "democratize" television animation and once again succeeded. In particular, it chose, just as the original series did, to respect the audience's intelligence instead of demeaning it, which gained it the favor of some often hard-to-please critics of television animation.[231]

Filmation proved equally successful at adapting several other existing media properties around this time. In its adaptation of *Tarzan*, in various incarnations between 1976 and 1982 on CBS, Tarzan was restored to Edgar Rice Burroughs' original conception of him as erudite and articulate, a version shattered by the MGM/RKO films starring Johnny Weismuller in the 1930s and 1940s. His "mate" Jane was conspicuously absent. There were reasons for this, of course, but the severe censorship of the time explains most of them. Also missing from the adaptation were the action, graphic fight scenes, and creatively portrayed African people of the Weismuller films, which (like the often inaccurate subject matter in Burroughs' novels) could never have been fully reproduced in the conservative 1970s television animation atmosphere. But the show was noted for its above average background art, and for human figures made realistic through the clever and careful use of rotoscoping (tracing a drawing from images of a human being).[232]

For much its original run, *Tarzan* was sandwiched with other programming from Filmation. From 1977-78 Tarzan shared a timeslot with earlier produced adventures of *Batman*, with the Caped Crusader getting top billing. Then, from 1978-80, Tarzan was the headliner of *Tarzan and the Super Seven*, a mammoth, 90-minute extravaganza designed by

[231] Ibid., 2: 791.

[232] Ibid., 2: 826.

CBS to compete with programming of a similar length by Hanna-Barbera on ABC. Along

with Tarzan and Batman, a new group of heroes was featured. "The Freedom Force",

Filmation's answer to *Super Friends*, featured the Egyptian element goddess Isis, the Greek

strongman Hercules, medieval master magician Merlin, Arabian sailor Sinbad, and a new

character, the "giant of justice" Super Samurai, the alter ego of young Toshi.

"Microwoman and Superstretch" featured the husband-and-wife crime-fighting team of

Chris and Christy Cross. Significantly, both characters were African American, pointing

again to the studio's capacity for subtle politicizations. "Web Woman" concerned the

adventures of scientist/gardener Kelly Webster, who was empowered with special abilities

after rescuing a spider from certain death, and was called into action by her mentor, the

extra terrestrial Scarab. "Manta And Moray" featured the last member of a water-breathing

human civilization and his female friend.[233] The program concluded with a 15-minute live-

action serial, *Jason of Star Command*, similar to other live-action properties then being

produced by the studio. *Tarzan and the Super Seven* was, at the very least, a unique series

that showed off the creative abilities of the studio.

From 1980 to 1982 Tarzan shared space with two other heroes of a bygone age: *The

Lone Ranger* and *Zorro*. *The Lone Ranger*, the legendary masked rider of the plains who

appeared on radio from 1933-54 and in films and early live action television, had been the

lead character in an animated series on CBS produced by Format Films between 1966-69

which saw the Ranger and his Native American associate Tonto involved with a variety of

modern science fictional setups.[234] Filmation, while abiding to network fiat by presenting a

bare minimum of violence, brought the Ranger back to his roots. The radio's show original

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[233] Ibid., 2: 827.

[234] Ibid., 1: 514.

opening ("From out of the past come the thundering hoofbeats....A cloud of dust and a hearty 'Hi-Yo, Silver!'" etc.)[235] and the "William Tell Overture" theme music were firmly in place, while William Conrad (under the pseudonym "J. Darnoc") was brought in to narrate and perform the Ranger's voice. Tonto, as well, was given a more distinct personality and a broader vocabulary, in keeping with changing times. An educational component was met often by having the Ranger and Tonto meet famous historical figures such as Ulysses S. Grant, Wild Bill Hickok, Buffalo Bill Cody and Annie Oakley, as well as fictional characters from the time, such as Tom Sawyer. The episodes also concluded with the Ranger delivering 30-second Public Service Announcements, in keeping with what was becoming Filmation's house style.

A similar job was done equally effectively with *Zorro*, Johnston McCulley's pulp fiction hero of old California, who, like the Ranger, had already had extensive exposure in movies and television. Zorro resembled actor Guy Williams, who portrayed him in the early 1960s Walt Disney live-action television series, while his nemesis, Captain Ramon, resembled character actor Basil Rathbone, who had played the villain in the 1940 film *The Mark Of Zorro* starring Tyrone Power.[236] But in keeping with the times (and the censorship of the time), and in keeping with the manner in which the studio depicted Tarzan and The Lone Ranger, Zorro did not instigate swordplay and insisted that Captain Ramon's soldiers were just "doing their duty" when engaging in duels with him.[237] Other additions included Miguel, the retainer for Zorro's secret identity, Don Diego, who served as a loyal associate for Zorro, and the female pirate Lucia, who lacked Zorro's altruism

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[235] Ibid., 1: 515.

[236] Ibid., 2: 942-943.

[237] Ibid., 2: 943.

though she was also fighting against the Spanish.[238] The voice cast consisted entirely of

Latinos, a departure from previous media incarnations and a foreshadowing of the more

multicultural voice casts of a later era. Just as episodes of Tarzan and The Lone Ranger

ended with pro-social segments about their environs, Zorro taught his audience about the

Spanish language and the history of California (for example, the fact that the Pacific Ocean

got its name because it was considered "peaceful" by Balboa).[239]

The *Lone Ranger* and *Zorro* series represented Filmation's ability to adapt a

particular sub-genre of television animation -- the action-adventure program -- to a new

generation and mindset, and in the process the studio secured a reputation as a quality

provider of television animation. Yet, at the same time, it was capable at times of badly

miscalculating its own abilities to produce programming with broad audience appeal,

particularly when it attempted to produce broad comedy in the Hanna-Barbera mode. For

example, there was *Uncle Croc's Block* (ABC 1975-76), a misguided satire of live action

children's programming. The title character, portrayed in live action by Charles Nelson

Reilly, was a forerunner of *The Simpsons'* Krusty the Klown, a bitter misanthrope who

hated his job, his boss and his audience. The approach was simply too much too late: the

live-action network television children's series, where television animation had begun in

the 1950s, was a dying genre by the 1970s, destroyed by imposed educational mandates as

well as ACT-enforced bans against hosts touting commercial products. Consequently, the

potential the series had for comedy in its time was minimal. The animated segments

featured on the program were only slightly better, showing the studio's singular ineptitude

at short comic narratives. *Fraidy Cat* featured a cat working on the last of his purported

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[238] Ibid.

[239] Ibid.

"nine lives", with the other eight scheming to kill him off; he had to avoid even saying the

numbers one to eight (else the past lives would be conjured up) or nine (else he would

die).[240] *Wacky and Packy* was *The Flintstones* in reverse, with a caveman and his pet

mastodon stuck in the modern world. *M*U*S*H*, the final segment, was unanimously

considered to be the worst, an incredibly uninspired parody of *M*A*S*H,* with the sole

novelty coming from the fact that the characters were transformed into dogs and the action

changed from 1950s Korea to a "god-forsaken snowbound outpost."[241] Incredibly, this was

the only animated segment retained when *Uncle Croc* was reduced from one hour to half

an hour in running time due to poor ratings. Not surprisingly, ABC subsequently refused to

do more business with Filmation after this fiasco,[242] which severely limited the studio's

marketplace and tarnished its reputation.

There were other series during this time that had restricted impact because of poor

ratings, conception or execution. *Lassie's Rescue Rangers*, produced for ABC in 1973-74,

represented another of the studio's well-meaning attempts to reinvigorate an old star for a

new era. The legendary dog heroine was now employed by Forest Ranger Ben Turner and

his family in their efforts to rescue the forest from those who would ruin it. It was one of

the first television animation series to adopt the eco-centric attitudes which would become

prevalent in the 1980s, but at the time it was not truly understood or appreciated, mainly

because the animation and writing failed to do it justice at times. Longtime Lassie trainer

Rudd Weatherwax dismissed the series as unworthy to the *Lassie* mantle, calling it "trash."

An even more negative characterization came from the National Association for Better

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[240] Ibid., 2: 881.

[241] Ibid.

[242] Ibid., 2: 882.

Broadcasting: "[t]he manufactures of this rubbish have incorporated violence, crime and

stupidity into what is probably the worst show for children of the season."[243]

Other missteps along the way included trying to adapt Jerry Lewis to animation for

ABC in *Will the Real Jerry Lewis Please Sit Down?* (1970-72),[244] a program that tested

Filmation's abilities and its audience's patience. Where the series succeeded at comedy was

not with broad farce, but with gentler narratives, such as *The Secret Lives Of Waldo Kitty*

(NBC 1975-76), an engaging adaptation of James Thurber's "The Secret Life Of Walter

Mitty" with a primary feline cast and live-action bookends, which allowed the studio to

poke gentle fun at some of the properties it had already adapted for animation. The Thurber

estate was less amused, actually suing Filmation for copyright infringement.[245] Yet, by the

end of the decade, the studio was barely treading water, unable to adapt the properties the

networks commissioned from it (e.g., *The New Adventures Of Mighty Mouse* which aired

on CBS from 1979-1982)[246] in ways that convincingly respected their sources while still

complying with the "violence" and "pro-social" mandates of the time. As a consequence,

when the company was acquired by Westinghouse and moved towards syndication

programming rather than network-oriented material, a sigh of relief could almost be heard.

The following decade would see Filmation continue to re-invent television animation in

new and surprising ways in its new environment, at least for a few more years.

Summary

In the face of an intensely harsh system of censorship, few of the leading producers

of television animation believed it could be produced with integrity without the "violence"

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[243] Ibid., 2: 488.

[244] Ibid., 2: 908-909.

[245] Ibid., 2: 730.

[246] Ibid., 2: 546.

its critics frequently accused it of trading in. Yet those who voiced the harshest complaints were those, such as Joseph Barbera, who were not prepared or able to work within a firmly regulated system of censorship, and not those, such as Lou Scheimer, who were. Certainly, what the critics and regulators of television animation were most guilty of was tossing random critiques at the programs without analyzing them closely. Lou Scheimer and Filmation, by ensuring their work would be seen as unique and valuable at a time when television animation was not expected to be either, created a significant body of achievement in a then-neglected field. That Filmation's work continues to entertain and influence people into the new century is ample evidence of how Lou Scheimer's commitment to quality amply paid off for him.

Conclusion: Products and Legacies

The End of the Story?

The poor treatment of television animation that existed in the 1970s only intensified

in the 1980s, in spite of evident and obvious changes in the television industry itself. If

anything, the view of television animation as a product rather than an art form increased

during the economic deregulation of the Ronald Reagan presidency. Mark Fowler,

Reagan's FCC chairman, epitomized the idea of television as a visual marketplace by his

famous assertion that television was simply "a toaster with pictures."[247] Under the

circumstances, what distinguished the artistic content of the work from its commercial

priorities became increasingly blurred; toy companies such as Mattel and Hasbro could

now build programs entirely around toys and toy lines as opposed to simply plugging them

in ads. This created severe creative stagnation and conflagration, as journalist Tom

Engelhardt noted in 1986:

> The actual [series] revolve[d] around a series of evil plans to loose havoc
>
> on innocent [people], or to trap the hero and deny him his [or her] transforming
>
> powers, or stop the mighty robots from being assembled, or to kidnap a friend of
>
> the superheroes, or to steal something so powerful, dangerous, radioactive [or]
>
> death-dealing that it will destroy the….universe or alternatively turn it into a world
>
> of slave/zombies at the service of the Evil Force….
>
> All of which results in a series of chases and battles with techno-wonder
>
> weapons -- space stations, laser beams, harnessed black holes, assorted yet-to-be
>
> invented and never-to-be-invented mega-weapons -- and a final withdrawal by the

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[247] Quoted in Erickson. *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 28.

forces of evil, muttering curses and threatening to return, followed by a pro-social

message, often not obviously related to the show, or perhaps a "safety tip" by the

show's hero.

Such a summary only begins to touch on the similarities among these

shows. To the extent that they are driven at all, the forces driving them are three --

the introduction of new characters with their accompanying weapons, castles and

other accoutrements; the necessity for "teamwork"; and the displaying of the

show's techno-weaponry through special effects. Each is a larger imperative linking

the show into the energy field of licensed-character marketing….[248]

Of course, there were important differences, as I have stressed earlier, within the

programs, particularly with regard to the intent of the individual producers. But as with the

violence issue, the concerns over commercialism prevented individual series from fully

being examined on their own merits until much later on. Yet things were beginning to

change. Where in the 1970s television animation had largely been apolitical or uninvolved,

there was a greater emphasis in the narratives of the 1980s on at least indirectly engaging in

narratives of the "real" world. Most of these series, as Engelhardt noted, were based on

Manichean power struggles between polarized forces of Good and Evil, no doubt inspired

by Reagan's railings against the "Evil Empire" of the Soviet Union in his first term. There

were, furthermore, a great many series that openly embraced ideologies and ideals --

feminism, environmentalism and "love" in general -- that would have been difficult to

address clearly in the prior decade. But at the same time, television animation series were

drawing on stereotypical beliefs of what boys and girls "liked", and reinforcing traditional

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[248] Tom Engelhardt. "The Shortcake Strategy." From Todd Gitlin (ed.), *Watching Television* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 88-89.

gender roles more often than their creators would have admitted.

These changes occurred because television animation, as a cultural product had to reflect changes within America and the world to retain its audience. It helped that television animation now had more forums in which to present itself. The traditional tri-network hegemony was broken on two fronts that allowed for a greater range of exposure for the genre. First, the growth of television animation as a barter syndication product, in a new weekday format, gave the genre the chance to develop story and character arcs beyond the limits of a weekly Saturday morning program's run. Filmation, through its acquisition by the Westinghouse broadcasting concern and its influential Group W syndication arm, began playing a major role in shaping this new format. Other producers began imitating the new format, such as Hanna-Barbera and DIC, a French animation concern with an American division headed by Hanna-Barbera veteran Andy Heyward. DIC scored a major hit in the new format and established itself with its *Inspector Gadget* series. The new format and the opening up of Saturday morning to other voices, such as the Ruby-Spears and Film Roman studios, helped to create plurality within American television animation production.

The second event that eroded the predominance of the three major networks was the growth of the cable television industry. Among its innovations were channels such as Nickelodeon, which began courting the networks' Saturday morning audience. Eventually, the cable channels and television networks became part of the same corporate families, even as they continued competing for the same audiences, which exacerbated the concerns of many critics about creative independence in the media.

The year 1990 marked a significant period of change, seen both in daytime programming and in the resurrection of animation in prime time. First, the Children's

Television Act (CTA) was passed by Congress. A long time dream project of Action for Children's Television, it represented a belated attempt by the government to create legislation regarding violence and commercialism in television animation. Specifically, it attempted to rein in the "Evil Empire" rhetoric of the 1980s by forcing producers to legitimize the behavior of their characters. Villains would have to purposely engage in destructive activities, while heroes would have to act in the name of reasonable causes.[249] Some producers complained, but the new rules applied primarily to syndicated programming and to what remained of Saturday morning network television.

The other major development of 1990 had more lasting effects. The debut of *The Simpsons* fundamentally reshaped television animation.[250] It was the product of an emerging new force in broadcasting -- the FOX television network, the creation of Australian media tycoon Rupert Murdoch through the merger of the 20th Century Fox film studio with the Metromedia television station chain. FOX aggressively charted a course for itself by courting the young adult viewers the traditional networks ignored, a strategy that paid off well. *The Simpsons* was (and remains) a keystone series of the network -- a cutting edge, innovative program that absolutely refused to portray its storylines in any way other than what could be clearly identified as its own style. It embraced stories and characters who repeatedly endorsed a world view that had never been seen in television animation before. Its impact, on television animation and society at large, is immense and remains ever growing. Yet even *The Simpsons* had antecedents, and how it used and adapted these prior forms will be discussed shortly.

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[249] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 37.

[250] The series has been examined in writings on television animation. A recent history of the program is Chris Turner's *Planet Simpson: How A Cartoon Masterpiece Documented An Era And Defined A Generation* (Toronto: Random House, 2004).

The success of *The Simpsons* legitimized television animation. No longer could it be seen simply as a "children's" art form; it could, instead, be anything and everything its creators desired it to be. With the emergence of the cable channels Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, and Walt Disney studios, who produced new television animation on a regular basis, this view was internalized and a wider range of programs and program possibilities began to emerge. In addition, FOX mandated the production of additional innovative programming on both its daytime and prime time schedules, further adding to the range and diversity of the form. Television animation was no longer a single genre. Yet the influence of the pioneers of the field -- Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward and Filmation -- was neither forgotten nor ignored; in many ways, it was enhanced in ways that reflected a more creatively liberal attitude. This is made clear through a brief analysis of their legacies.

The Legacy of Hanna-Barbera

Hanna-Barbera, as has been shown, was the company that helped to pioneer television animation as a legitimate programming genre. Its influence continues to be felt in the manner in which programs are structured, characters are defined, and humor is developed in the new era. This is particularly clear in the work of Cartoon Network, which rose as the phoenix from Hanna-Barbera's ashes.

Hanna-Barbera had remained active as a producer during the 1980s and 1990s even though much of its work, limited as it was by network censorship, was less skilled and well-produced than it had been in earlier times. This was perhaps not surprising given that the key creative work was now done by outsiders. It was also not surprising that the studio's market share declined, due both to the entrance of new, highly skilled producers, and to its increasingly laggardly efforts to update its older characters for a newer audience.

In spite of the occasional better effort, such as a well-produced animated version of *The Addams Family* in the early 1990s (the studio had previously animated the property in the 1970s),[251] the studio was showing stagnation -- and its age.

Yet the studio did have a revival by the end of the decade. In 1995, the studio was folded into the Turner Entertainment group (and, in the following decade, Time Warner). The creation of Cartoon Network shortly thereafter provided a vehicle not only for rebroadcasts of the studio's classic programming but also for the development of new ideas. In particular, it provided the means for restoring to television animation the seven-minute cartoon format that Hanna-Barbera had used as its original vehicle for gaining an audience.[252] A new generation of animators, many of whom had begun cutting their teeth at Hanna-Barbera and other studios in the decade before, suddenly found itself in demand as producers and creators of new and innovative television programming forms.[253] Keeping pace, Nickelodeon[254] and Walt Disney, offered a similarly broad range of programming options on their own cable outlets (and in Disney's case through its ownership of ABC).

Unlike their predecessors, the producers of these programs had the corporate backing and infrastructural support needed to produce programs as they intend them to be. But, as most fully embraced the traditional seven-minute format length (generally featuring two segments in each episode), the influence of Hanna-Barbera could still be clearly felt in pacing and timing, even when the content was far different than what Hanna and Barbera had presented long before. Consequently, some of the programs looked and felt as if they

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[251] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 1: 59.

[252] Mallory, *Hanna-Barbera Cartoons,* 194.

[253] Ibid., 195-197. Shortly after William Hanna's death in 2001, Hanna-Barbera changed its name to Cartoon Network Studios, in deference to the fact that the cable channel had by now become the studio's only client.

[254] Jerry Beck (ed.), *Not Just Toons -- Nicktoons* (New York: Melcher Media, 2007).

belonged in Hanna-Barbera's heyday of the 1950s and 1960s, while others applied the studio's traditional approach to more modern material. As confirmation of this combination of old and new, Hanna-Barbera series of the past were frequently referenced (if not always in a complimentary way) in the narratives of the new programs. All the same, most of these programs took chances that the original Hanna-Barbera series would not have dared to. *The Powerpuff Girls*, one of the most famous of the Cartoon Network's series, pushed boundaries simply by characterizing preadolescent girls as superheroes; in this context, it was able to reexamine prevailing stereotypes about gender and social roles. Certainly, in earlier times the television networks and censors would not have allowed series creator Craig McCracken and his studio colleagues to produce such programs, in part due to the heavy levels of "violence" they contained. Indeed, and as something of a commentary on the way this new generation of animators viewed those who had criticized their predecessors, the Girls were forced, in one episode, to rein in the excesses of their crime-fighting activities by a social advocacy group going by the acronym PAP.

Most of the Cartoon Network series were engaged in broad comedy and action/adventures stories in the old Hanna-Barbera and theatrical animation traditions. By following the Hanna-Barbera tradition of using multi-dimensional characters, fast paced plots and humorous visual and verbal gags, Cartoon Network Studios succeeded in ensuring that the traditional Hanna-Barbera formats could exist and thrive within the changed community of America in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

The Legacy of Jay Ward

Jay Ward died in 1989. Had he survived into the 1990s, he would have found that his ideas found a receptive audience. As noted in Chapter 1, he had been effectively forced

out of business in the 1970s by a decline in interest and support for the manner in which he

produced and promoted television animation. Yet the final decade of the twentieth century

found his *zeitgeist* very much present among the new generation of television animators,

especially those using humor as their primary means of narrative expression.

Ward's humor had fundamentally been based on iconoclasm and irreverence, things

that television in his prime was not fully prepared incorporate into its narratives. The

comedy in much of his programs depended entirely on the disjunction between the over-

used formats his characters were presented in and in the manner which they reacted to

them. Certainly following the Vietnam War and Watergate, with increasing numbers of the

American citizenry becoming dyed-in-the-wool cynics, the stock of these tactics as

humorous devices rose extensively. The live-action comic programming of the 1970s

employed this to a great degree, but it was not until the 1990s that television animation did

so. The *Simpsons* was very much the kind of program Ward would have made, had he

thought of applying his irreverent attitude towards the family situation comedy: the mildly

jaded attitude of this program's humor owes much to Ward's house style.

Ward's approach to narrative storytelling, as a fluid, flexible form rather than

something written in stone, would be something that would endure in the industry to an

even greater degree. There are few television animation programs after the 1990s that do

not employ in some way the deconstructionist, post-textual narrative style he introduced in

his programs, even those of his one-time rivals at Hanna-Barbera/Cartoon Network and

Disney and their associates at Nickelodeon. Characters often refer to the fact that they are

"merely" cartoon characters, protest the aging mechanics used to propel their plots,

describe others as representative of "stock" character types, and explain (for the benefit and

amusement of the audience) the manner in which the stories will unfold. And, like Ward's heroes of old, they refuse to stand idly by and let events overwhelm them: they insist on being active participants in the development of their fictional lives.

Ward also pioneered and legitimized the parodying of other media forms. He was both a producer and a viewer of television, and Ward and his staff felt television could do better than it was doing. His characters' self-parodic attitude towards the medium in which they appeared echo in the mouths of later characters, including those in *The Simpsons*. Even more indebted to Ward in this light were the works of Seth Macfarlane (whose *Family Guy* and *American Dad* series utilize Ward's formula with even more corrosive, Rabelaisian humor at their core) and Craig McCracken (especially in the critical portrayal of weak male authority figures in the *Powerpuff Girls)*. The produced have secured this connection by paying Ward direct homage in their work: Ward characters have made cameo appearances in episodes of *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy*, while an entire episode of *The Powerpuff Girls* was conducted in the narrative style of a typical "Rocky and Bullwinkle" installment.

Ward was heavily criticized and demonized in his heyday, and driven out of television because he would not conform to set standards. Little did his critics know that he would have the last laugh.

The Legacy of Filmation

The 1980s started off as a prosperous time for Filmation, but it did not end that way. As noted earlier, the sale of the company to Westinghouse led to a shift in the studio's production obligations away from network television and towards syndication. With the exception of the 1984 revival of *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids*, the series were all original

and added to the studio's reputation. There were missteps, such as 1982's *Sport Billy,* an animated program based on a West German sports mascot that was produced in collaboration with NBC and failed largely because of a dispute between producer and network over scheduling.[255] The studio had much greater success with a collaboration with Mattel, in which the toy company designed figures for sales and Filmation adapted them for animation. This arrangement resulted in two of the studio's best known and most admired productions: *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* (Syndicated, 1983)[256] and its companion series *She-Ra, Princess of Power* (Syndicated, 1985).[257] These two programs reflected Filmation's action/adventure/ education format at its zenith, as well as the culture of the "Evil Empire" attitudes of much of 1980s television animation. Yet both programs also reflected the progressive attitudes Scheimer always brought to the fore of his work. While structured as action-adventure programs, the syndicated format of both, which required production of a larger number of episodes than network broadcasts, also provided ample opportunities to produce both traditional narratives in that field and issue-oriented stories in the *Fat Albert* mode. All were capped with morals that encapsulated what was to be learned from the episode. Once again, the studio leavened what on the surface seemed threatening concepts with traditional means and uses of ideas. Though both He-Man and She-Ra themselves were super-powerful, they always acted on the side of "good". Their nemeses -- Skeletor and Hordak, respectively -- were constructed non-threateningly as comic opera blusterers. In the Filmation tradition, the stories were told effectively, and only occasionally belabored an educational point. The storytelling format was used effectively

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[255] Erickson, *Television Cartoon Shows,* 2: 786.

[256] Ibid., 1: 404-407.

[257] Ibid., 2: 734-735.

as well in the outer-space themed *Blackstar* (CBS 1981-1983), in the studio's western/science fiction themed final series, *Bravestarr* (Syndicated, 1987), and in the more comically inclined *Ghostbusters* (Syndicated, 1986).

Though the good guys always won in the studio's narratives, in real life Filmation was unable to rescue itself from peril. In 1987, the studio was purchased by L'Oreal, with the intent of acquiring its older programs for European television distribution. Yet within months, in early 1988, the studio closed without a word of warning, ending over twenty years of quality television animation production in a heartbeat.[258] But though the studio was gone, its programs and their influence remained. By 2006, the Entertainment Rights group had begun issuing nearly all of the studio's product on DVD, allowing for these unique programs to be shown to a new generation of admiring viewers as well as established fans.

The greatest legacy Lou Scheimer and Filmation left to American television animation arose from their efforts to make programs more inclusive. Scheimer knew that women, racial minorities and young people were underrepresented and often falsely portrayed in the media, and he hoped to use his work to make a difference. *Fat Albert and the Cosby Kids* alone helped to create a new image of African-Americans in the mass media, while at the same time helping to show that the marriage of education and entertainment need not be a shotgun one. It is only a small step from *Fat Albert* and *Zorro* to the enlightened African-Americans and Latinos of contemporary television animation, and from Microwoman, Web Woman and She-Ra to the powerful heroines of *The Powerpuff Girls*, *Kim Possible* and *My Life as a Teenage Robot*.

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[258] Tom Sito. *Drawing the Line: The Untold Story of the Animation Unions From Bosko to Bart Simpson* (Lexington: University Press Of Kentucky, 2006), 279-280.

Filmation also rode the crest of the "pro-social" wave of the 1970s and 1980s to sow the seeds for the programs mandated by the "Education/Information" protocols of the Children's Television Act, and the programs which followed in its advent. Scheimer's pioneering work at portraying children and young adults as multi-dimensional beings set an example for a new generation of animators, who strove to develop their child and young adult characters as a means of appealing to a "tween" audience. Walt Disney Studios, a relative newcomer to television animation, found this format particularly helpful. Series such as *Recess, The Weekenders* and *Fillmore* updated Scheimer's entertainment-plus-education format and made it the foundation of a dynamic storytelling style with memorable characters, uniformly structured plots, and subtle borrowings from the real world culture of kids as well as the media world of adults. Certainly, the Disney characters were portrayed as being more intelligent and savvy than their Filmation counterparts, but the influence was clear, as when Tino, the lead character of *The Weekenders*, addressed and engaged his audience in the program narratives exactly as Bill Cosby had done in the live segments of *Fat Albert*.

Lou Scheimer was often accused of manipulating his audience, but this was never something he intended to do. If anything, he wanted to make sure his audiences came away from his shows enlightened. Quite often, he succeeded. And he provided a clear cut example for others to follow in the next generation of television animation programs.

Where Three Roads Meet: The Simpsons

Still on the air after 20 years, *The Simpsons* is one of the most creatively potent programs in the history of American television. Much has been written about the series during its run. Suffice to say it was a series that changed television animation for the better.

It is also shows how the influences of Hanna-Barbera, Jay Ward and Filmation live on and can coexist in new narratives.

The influence of each studio is evident in different elements of the series. First of all, the basic animated situation comedy format is indebted to the animated sitcoms Hanna-Barbera produced in the 1960s, albeit with a significant twist. Where *The Flintstones* and *The Jetsons* mixed the format with escapist fantasy, *The Simpsons* frequently addresses real-life problems. While embracing the slapstick comedy and fantasy dreams often used by Hanna-Barbera, it undercuts them by presenting the fact that these devices can often have consequences. When a character on this series gets hurt, physically or emotionally, their pain is deep.

Jay Ward's influence is clear in the program's bitter, unsentimental approach to humor, its repeated bursting of sentimental clichés, and its use of parody and satire as devices to mock contemporary trends. There is very little this program will not do to engage the attention of critics while keeping the audience's attention. For this reason, just as Ward did, it has made as many enemies as it has friends over the course of its run. Even more significant are minor touches, such as the intense Rocky-and-Bullwinkle-like loyalty the characters are capable of displaying with each other, or the fact that the male Simpsons, like Rocky and Bullwinkle, have the middle initial "J."

Filmation's influence is also evident. Lou Scheimer, as we have seen, frequently used his programs as a vehicle for social commentary, and set an important benchmark for Matt Groening and his staff in this regard. Many of the most powerful episodes of *The Simpsons* deal upfront with contemporary social concerns. Feminism, homophobia, environmentalism, and key concerns in American education, politics, religion, science, and

the arts have all been given their moment in the sun, through the voice and actions of Lisa Simpson, the show's unofficial political avatar. Like Scheimer, Groening is also capable of making subtler political statements. The fact that Springfield's leading physician, Julius Hibbert, is an African American who is not identified solely by his race is a testament to Scheimer's efforts to have characters in television animation not be judged by outward appearance but by their moral actions and reactions to events.

The Simpsons has enriched and enhanced television animation as an art form, and deserves to be celebrated because of its uniqueness. But, as with everything unique, it has only gotten as far as it has by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Closing Credits

The television animation produced in America between 1957 and 1980 provides an important link between what came before and after it. From the theatrical animation industry, pioneers came into television and reinvented their art form. In spite of censorship and misunderstandings about the intent of their work, they persisted and refined the art. It is important to remember how these programs were produced, what their producers had in mind for them, and what they left behind for the next generation of television animators. It is an enduring artistic and social legacy.

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