first class sleeping compartments, but they provide only a rumour of their former grandeur. The sheets, the towels, the uniforms of the porters and servers: all are remnants of the past, held together by contemporary starch. The train, though, has a rollicking, festive character that is not staged for the sole pleasure of so-called first world tourists. One doesn't have sealed off air-conditioned chambers from which one distinct set of people observes another. Not only is there no air-conditioning available, there is no toilet paper either. Probably because even the first class fare is affordable to many Kenyans, the cars are not mobile segregated parlours. In the dining car people are mixed at tables that still bear the semblance of a statelier era. Although the china and cutlery have done countless laps on the Nairobi-Mombassa track, they wear their faded stature well and the food on them tastes as if it made its way onto the circuit immediately before consumption. Easy circulation, so difficult for the traveller in much of Kenya, is possible on the train.

I remember laughing when I heard the story of Raymond Roussel, a quirky turn-of-the-century Frenchman who visited the continent of Africa in preparation to write a novel about Africa, but who, once installed in his elegant hotel suites, never left them. He is reported to have said the real Africa was less interesting than his own imagined one and would only contaminate his version. No Kenyan bookstore I know of carries the novel that Roussel published in 1910 as *Impressions d'Afrique*, probably because it is nominally about French West Africa. An English translation published in 1966 as *Impressions of Africa* may not even be in print. Still, if one prefers to read an outsider on Africa, if one prefers to read something that in a number of sense comes from out of Africa, *Impressions of Africa* is far richer than *Out of Africa*. It is extravagantly false; it parades its outsider status so palpably that whenever its fiction and the reality of Africa collide, it points out the weaknesses of outsiders' systems of making sense of Africa. That makes it different, indeed, from *Out of Africa*, which elevates the outsider, or from a number of other books and movies about the continent that purportedly offer sage, impartial insights into African culture or African sensibilities.

While I was in Kenya the local papers reported the banning of four Zimbabweyan soccer players from further league play. It seems that at half-time of a game in which they were trailing, they urinated on the field at the behest of a witch doctor who advised them that was the way to rid the stadium of evil or harmful spirits. That this seems sillier or more unsophisticated than what takes place at half-time of American football games comes from watching too much American television and reading too many books that champion practices originating out of Africa. I think I would prefer to see a few steroid bulked behemoths urinate on the artificial grass on which they play that watch a few hundred marchers play loud, tuneless songs celebrating, all at once, the country, the state, the university and Disneyland. *Impressions of Africa* just as fantastically records the coronation of Talu VII, Emperor of Ponokele and King of Drelshkaf. For his delectation Europeans, captured after a storm has wrecked their ship nearby, entertain the Emperor-King and his people by setting up a miniature Paris Bourse or stock market to take bets on the best performers and performances; by training two teams of cats in different coloured ribbons to play "Prisoner's Base"; by having one of their troupe, a marksman, shoot away the white of an egg to reveal an intact yoke. Other dazzling acts of European legerdemain are mixed with indigenous rites, none more or less ludicrous than the other. Roussel's Africa is more interesting than the spectacle-laden one available from travel agents anywhere. For a Kenya, to name one country, that is less fictional, you might try a tour conducted by my friend Edward; some of the places on his itinerary, however, are off limits.

Stan Fogel is trying to invent himself as a travel writer.

Visuals : J.J. INK

Teaching the Media in SCHOOLS

JOE GALBO

There is no doubt that the mass media are a crucial political and public issue. That is why media literacy at high school and university levels has been recognized as a crucial component of the curriculum. Today's postmodern culture requires a critical and active audience that not only can scrutinize the persuasive power of the word but also must increasingly know how to deal with the power of the image , for the image has become the dominant form of public address.

Ideally the mass media, both audiovisual and print, are supposed to offer a wide variety of voices and help sustain the political plurality of our society. For too long, however, the media have been allowed to develop pretty much as they wished in the pursuit of the commercial imperative and in the process have managed to undermine cultural considerations and to silence the very voices they are supposed to have aided. Broadcasting and publishing facilities are now in the hands of large global corporations. The media are one area where corporate control is at its most concentrated. Any attempt at meaningful change becomes particularly difficult since alternative programs and publications are either edged out silently and by stealth or drowned out by the stentorian voice of the corporate media.

There are ways to start taking some control over the very media that define much of our daily life. Community radio, alternative magazines and community cable are some of the obvious places where people can begin to make their own culture and pursue their creativity. This is not to suggest that the television and radio spectrum should be immediately crowded with amateur TV and radio shows, but that professional and semi-professional alternative spaces can be created where ordinary individuals and groups normally excluded from the mainstream media--Native people, working people, lesbians and gays, people of colour and people with disabilities--can tell their own stories in their own ways without appropriation by the corporate world.

The educational system is another place where the cultural battle over meaning can be fought. Here, issues such as media ownership, as well as skills such as analyzing television and film, and rudimentary hands-on skills for students' own media productions can be discussed and taught. Once again there is no point minimizing the difficulties of these tasks. In today's educational curriculum there is little that prepares the student to make sense of the rhetoric of the image or the historical development and social implications of popular culture, and there is still less opportunity to study how to use the media for oppositional rather than for corporate

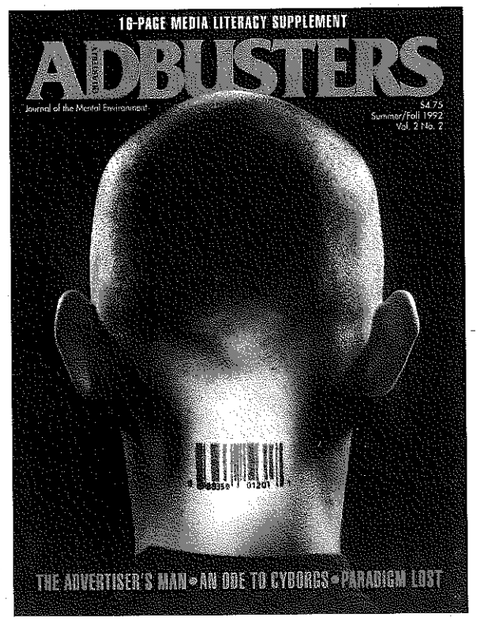
purposes. Nevertheless, it is through education that a constituency for change can be organized and issues can be brought out into a public space where they can be further debated, examined and defined.

On the theoretical front, the proliferation of the mass media and the rise of a "mass culture" have given birth to heated debates. Many people see the mass media, especially television, as the work of some sinister cabal that transforms individuals into zombies with an attention span no longer than that of a gnat. The "tepid ooze of mass culture," as Dwight MacDonald called it, is perceived by some critics as producing a superficial, shrivelled-up culture that corrupts everything it touches by offering numbing delights to the increasingly alienated masses. Still, there are others who optimistically defend the audience's ability to see through the commercialism and bad faith one finds in television, newspapers, radio and advertising. These critics defend the ability of the audience to be critical of the distortions and noisy sloganeering of the media, and they hold to a belief that the audience can generate from the media its own popular pleasures and their own resistant meanings.

We should be wary of these kinds of theoretical polarities. I believe one cannot easily answer the question about the impact of mass media and the power of the audience to generate its own popular meanings without a good deal of equivocation and contradiction and ambiguity. The fundamentally argumentative nature of a popular democratic culture is captured only sporadically by the mass media. The products of the mass media embody the rules and values of the market system that produce them; nevertheless, they offer the audience a limited opportunity to resist and define aspects of this culture. A more apt analogy is that of a tug-of-war between the forces of cultural indoctrination and the forces of popular resistance. One crucial key to teaching about the media is to understand the nature of these forces and tensions.

Today the cultural industries provide for people resources similar to those which several generations ago were rooted in folk tradition, the family, religion and other traditional institutions. The most accessible cultural materials used and circulated within culture, such as music, songs, visual images, fashion, entertainment and ideas are the outpourings of a varied and vast mass media apparatus. The culture produced largely by the mass media and selected by the audience is powerful because it addresses ideas simply, energetically and with a great deal of feeling. Admittedly, many of these cultural messages lack irony, verve and rely on mollycoddling formulas for arguments, yet their directness and accessibility are their major source of strength. The success of the mass media rests precisely on their ability to deliver a clear emotional message with mind numbing repetition and with a good deal of entertainment. The more powerful the feeling, the more important the message, and the more often it is repeated.

But there is a further point: the media have been successful in shaping our culture, partly because they have been able to deliver messages that make at least partial sense to a large segment of the audience. The recent spat over Murphy Brown is clearly indicative of the ability of the media to touch issues that resonate with a majority of people. Vice President Quayle may rail about the failure of Hollywood to reinforce family values--read heterosexual, middle class, white Christian values--but the reality is that a significant number of women are sole-support parents juggling work, home and child-rearing, usually with considerably less money than Murphy Brown. There is an on-going negotiation between the audience and the media, with the audience choosing those messages that reflect aspects of their everyday experiences and overlooking and rejecting other aspects that do not.

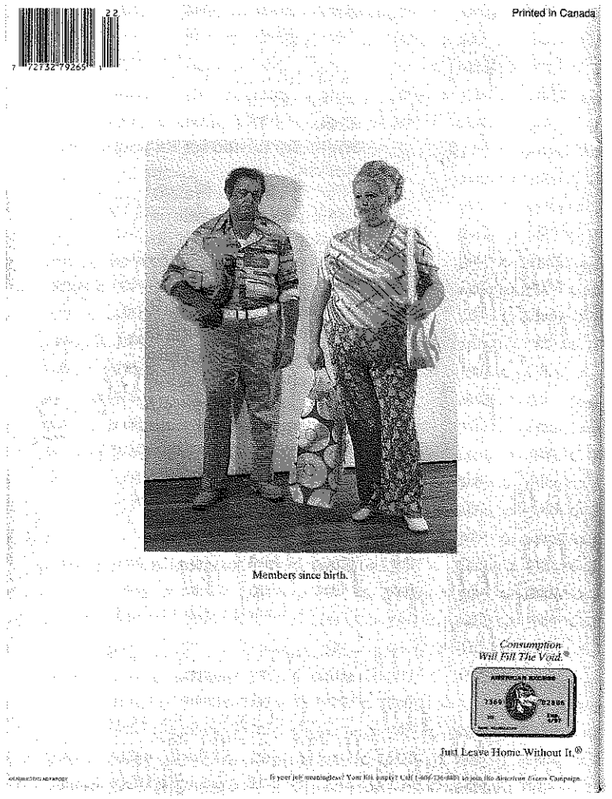


The cultural industries know quite well that their interests are closely connected with the moods and feelings of the majority of the people; that is why they are acutely sensitive to the nation's many publics. Virtually every product of the cultural industries is intent on satisfying some fundamental wish and desire of their audiences. Over the past decade programming and advertising have become more specific in their demographics: that abstract and older concept known as the "mass audience" has now been broken down into more detailed and particular entities. The "mass" has become more segmented, with more individuated pockets of audiences who have specific interests, ambivalences, desires, anxieties and needs. The pressures of a consumer society, the extra strains imposed on women who are working and at the same time raising a family, the blatant racism throughout society, the economic depression and the effects of free trade which have led to plant shutdowns underemployment and mass unemployment, all of these forces affect individual audiences in a number of concrete and different ways.

These are issues of which the cultural industries do take account through a sophisticated technology of polling and the surveying of market preferences--and popular preferences are far more difficult to identify and control than many people believe. If the cultural industries failed to accommodate these factors and offered only escapist fare, their ability to grab and involve an audience would effectively evaporate. The corporate world is compelled to tap into these desires and anxieties and to examine the needs of their audiences. Nevertheless, the individual feelings and the political ideas of specific popular groups cannot be completely incorporated into the products of the cultural industries nor can they be disseminated without alteration by the media since that would represent an unwelcome challenge to their hegemonic power. The media's role has traditionally been to naturalize the status quo, make it look normal and commonsensical, by orchestrating a political and cultural consensus and by selling what Hans Enzensberger calls "the existing order." Public issues such as the Gulf War, the environment, feminism, ethnic, race, and gay and lesbian concerns are at best contained by the mass media. These issues are sometimes addressed obliquely and sometimes directly. Most of the times, however, these questions and others as important are defused, and, as in the recent case of the Gulf war, distorted.

We don't need to be inoculated against the media as much as we need to know how they work, who owns them, and how the underlying values and messages of shows, news, and films are structured. Who gets represented in the media and how? Who gets excluded and why? Media literacy should acquaint every student with how the media are organized, what policies have been promoted to regulate the media and how these policies can be changed in order to empower excluded publics, and how to use effectively the media to reach these audiences. Finally, media literacy should examine how different audiences use the messages of the media. One thing that becomes obvious is that teaching the media is not exclusively about the media, but about fundamental social and political issues that have been worked on, transformed and constructed by the media. The task of the instructor is to encourage a critique of the media's naturalized constructions and to stimulate a larger analysis of social, economic and political power.

How then have we fared in teaching the media? In Ontario we have moved perhaps farther than many other provinces. In September 1988 Media Literacy became a mandatory component of the English curriculum in Ontario High Schools. One key organization that has promoted the teaching of the media at the high school level has been the Association for Media Literacy (AML) which to a great degree has set the media



studies curriculum in the Ontario school system. The AML is made up chiefly of high school teachers and others who work in the media, and their self-appointed task has been to encourage the critical study of the media and to train teachers through conferences and workshops, to analyze the media and popular culture. A conference recently held in Guelph, Ontario was the second that has been held by the AML, and both have been attended by over 400 teachers from across Canada and the US, with some participants coming from as far away as Australia and Europe. Having been to both conferences I have been generally impressed by the level of energy, analysis and commitment, though I also have some critical observations of the AML.

Founded in 1978, the AML has grown to a membership of over 1200. When in 1987 the Ontario Ministry of Education was revising its guidelines for English, it felt a strong need to address the media and they turned to the AML for guidance.

"When the Ministry,"

noted Barry Duncan, the current president of the AML,

"came to us and said we need to write a media literacyresource guide," I guess that's when we were institutionalized. You may say co-opted. But the only way that we were going to effect change was if we worked through those traditional structures, the Ministry of Education, school boards, teacher's federations."

The recent publication of the *Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide* (1990), and the production of CBC's video program *Inside the Box* (1990), as well as the NFB's *Media and Society* (1990) video program, have all been prompted in some degree by the efforts of the AML. The rationale behind media literacy is to enhance students' critical faculties with regard to new and emergent audiovisual technology, and to analyze the effective presence of dominant ideologies: patriarchy, commodification, sexism, racism, heterosexism, and consumerism. The theoretical framework of the AML is eclectic, influenced by McLuhanism, semiotics, feminist theory and formalist analyses of the media. Much of this falls into the tradition of media studies, but in this case influenced by the engaged position of cultural studies through the tradition of critical pedagogy in the writings of Henry Giroux, Stanley Aronowitz, and Roger Simon, and more specifically by way of Australia and England where media literacy programs at the secondary school level have been in place a lot longer and where the AML originally turned for its pedagogic models.

The most important factor that influences the development of media literacy is classroom practice itself. Those who teach media literacy quickly realize that because they deal with popular texts of which students often have more knowledge than teachers, they are being challenged to involve themselves in a new kind of teaching that calls into question the very power and discipline of the classroom. Len Masterman, an English educator, author of Teaching the Media and a participant in the past two AML conferences emphasizes this crucial point:

"Studying the media,"

he said in an interview,

"actually involves a new way of education. In traditional pedagogythe student/teacher relation is part of what Paulo Freire called the banking process of education which does not encourage critical understanding. The expertise of the tutor is tied up with the education. What is interesting about media analysis is that immediately the relationship changes. Suddenly both teachers and students are together looking at the object out there and we can talk about it and discuss it. Media is transmitting knowledge and education laterally. You don't pass down knowledge but we are creating our own knowledge with our own critical interaction with whatever text there is.

Knowledge is not something out there that we accommodate ourselves to. Knowledge is something that you create,that you make your own, and you do that through your own critical interaction through the world. That's the importance of media analysis. If you see it as reality then you can't change it. If you see it as a construct then you ask: who is doing the constructions, who is behind it, who is producing it, for what purposes, using what techniques, for what audience, whose interests are being served, and so on."

What this asks of teachers, of course, is that they do not privilege a single discourse, or silence the multiple voices within the classroom. The analysis of the media and popular culture is not simply a reading of ideology from texts but a field of practices that can and should empower students through a radically different pedagogical encounter.

This kind of curriculum change means training and retraining teachers with new pedagogical skills. Many high school teachers, already set in their traditional classroom ways, will resist change and will teach media literacy in a way that will meet only minimum requirements. The accomplishments of the AML are yet to be tested. One of the hurdles it must overcome is the structure of its own organization--its leadership is predominantly white, middle class and male, and seems to feel most comfortable dealing with the educational issues of its own constituency. The other hurdle is the educational structure itself, which resists change and innovation to the curriculum.

Having taught media literacy, mostly to teachers at Atkinson College at York, there is another factor that must be added to the equation: there is really no curriculum development at the university level that has forcefully pushed for media literacy and integrated the areas of educational pedagogy, communication and media production so that teachers can be trained in the field. Media Literacy is often a course disconnected from other courses. And while as such it offers students some rudimentary analysis of how the media represent and frame issues, it fails to integrate media analysis with media production. Resources should be made available to people who want to take the next logical step and move on to the production of community-based alternative programs and develop useful skills that can be passed on in the classroom.

The fact that media studies is growing in Canada is heartening, though as I have noted, what gets defined as media literacy is often diffused across a disorganized curriculum both, I would venture to say, at the university and the high school levels. Even if one demystifies the media, there is also little sense that one must carry the investigation further into the areas of the family, school, the work place and politics. It is encouraging that at least in Ontario media literacy programs have eschewed an "inoculation approach" to teaching about the media. There is the opposite danger that in teaching media literacy and in stressing an active audience that produces its own unique popular culture we begin to attribute to the audience too much power to decode the messages in their own interests. When media literacy engages the popular forms of entertainment it must be careful that the resistance that is attributed to an audience--its perceived ability to read in its own interests--is real rather than imaginary. It is imperative not to succumb to a subjectivist and popular model that easily dismisses the power of the media and returns that power to the individual viewer and interpreter.

Media literacy must not stop at the classroom door. The most important work is done outside the classroom. For those interested in an activist position there are other venues, such as the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* and its parent organization the Media Foundation. Despite its smug moralism and simplistic attacks on consumerism, *Adbusters* does provide an alternative that, if not emulated, at least can be modified. Media analyst John Fiske in a letter to the editor printed in last issue of Adbusters had this to say: "Your message is wonderful and needs to be widely heard--but boy oh boy, do your tactics suck!" Fiske was complaining about the magazine's irritating habit of positioning the audience as mindless couch-potatoes and frenetic consumers. Fair criticism. *Adbusters* and the *Media Foundation* have managed, on the other hand, to attract the attention of a generation of students where a slew of critical academics have failed. Part of the reason for the success of *Adbusters* is its unabashed cultural guerrilla tactics: a form of artistic terrorism that is both anarchic and locally based, directed against the media and cultural industries.

The most successful *Adbusters* campaign has been its production of what it calls television non-commercials. The tapes are made available to the public free with information about how to buy local media time and how much it costs. Individuals can then purchase a 30 second spot to show their non commercials, which deal with a range of topics: TV addiction, with a commercial aptly named "Tubehead"; an anti-logging ad called "Talking Trees"; and an ad against consumerism called "American Excess." So far this campaign has raised its share of controversy. Last year NBC, CBS, and ABC affiliates in Boston refused to show the commercials on the grounds that they represented advocacy advertising that was "too controversial." In Canada, the CBC has recently relaxed its 30 year old policy against controversial advocacy advertising, and the Media Foundation will be testing the limits of the new regulations.

Adbusters promotes a form of "culture jamming": a subversive attack on the symbolic power of the media which takes apart media generated images and turns them upside down, a kind of carnivalesque attack on the power of the media. Billboard bandits who alter billboards to make ironic and anti-commercial messages are the best examples of ways of disrupting the media and turning our familiar commercial world upside down. These kind of strategies are significant in that they allow people to get involved in an individual and immediate way in subverting the power of the media, but they should not be seen as a replacement for a first-rate education in the media and for the building of a wide network of local and oppositional cultures.

Joe Galbo teaches media at York and is a member of the Border/Lines Collective.