



November 2001

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Lee Rother**

Response to the Guide to the Events of September 11

Within four days of posting the October edition of "Barry's Bulletin: Studying the Events of Sept 11," I had received positive comments from high profile media educators in seven countries – Canada, Australia, New Zealand, The United States, UK, Japan and Hong Kong. That several list-serves have picked it up (including one from the UK) is very gratifying. Media educators who have been working on materials for 9/11 are providing vital resources to study this highly mediated war in which a daily barrage of half-truths is the norm. Thanks for all your kind comments. The success of this Bulletin is, of course, because of MNet – The Media Awareness Network in Ottawa, which has been a keen advocate of media education from its inception in 1995. Their Web site is, in anyone's short honour list, among the best in the world.



The look of the Bulletin is crucial for its success and Jane Tallim, who wears many hats at MNet, has done superb work with the editing, layout, graphics, photographs and so on, invariably revealing grace under pressure of the monthly deadlines. I am pleased that the 9/11guide will be reproduced in *The Australian Screen Education* and in *Telemidium*, the American Journal of Media Education, from Madison Wisconsin



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9/11 Continued: Issues and Updates



Young children responding to momentous events often have fresh and revealing observations. The drawing shown here was done by a Norwegian child who had seen the plane crash into the south tower of the World Trade Centre.

- Discuss with your colleagues and your students the level of knowledge about 9/11 which you would deem necessary for effective global citizenship. What areas remain to be debated? (E.g. should there be an extensive ground war in Afghanistan?)
- To what extent is this war accurately described as a Jihad (a holy war)?
- Since its founding in 1996, Al-Jazeera has created a revolution in Arab news media and public opinion, emerging as the first independent, professional pan-Arab news outlet – the station's coverage and its audience have become more important than any other in the world. If CNN was made by the 1991 Gulf War, the current conflict represents a similar global coming of age for Al Jazeera. Read up about the influence of Al Jazeera. Why has it become such a key player in the information war?

Satire and comedy about 9/11 seem to be back on our entertainment agenda. What is your response to the picture of the fighter plane and Bin Laden on a magic carpet? The comedy network's *The Daily Show* (Monday to Friday) with Jon Stewart, uses the events of the day to make some telling comments.



- Watch several of these shows and determine how effective it is to make people have a well-earned laugh. (The comic strip *Doonsbury* has had an ongoing commentary on the events, several of them taking a tongue-in-cheek view of racism.)
- What serious commentary about 9/11 emerges from behind the humour?
- Debate the following: "Anthrax, real or imagined, has taken center stage in recent weeks. Several media critics have faulted the media coverage for largely creating and then exploiting the panic."





- Flag waving seems to be the essential patriotic gesture as Arnold ("I'll be back") Schwarzenegger demonstrates. Recall as many scenes as possible since 9/11 where the Stars and Stripes was in the foreground or background to create patriotic favor.

- PR spin is essential in the propaganda war, which President Bush seems to be losing. Grim scenes of civilian deaths and injuries in Afghanistan, combined with widespread protests in Arab countries, convey the image of bungled war missions and anti-Americanism. Besides learning to hit military targets, what advice would you offer the Spin doctors and PR wizards to help the American propaganda machine?

"US attempts to shore up support for war"

Claire Cozens

Tuesday October 30, 2001 from Media Guardian

The US is to marshal the efforts of the advertising world to help sell the bombing of Afghanistan to the American public. Michael Sennott, a key figure in US advertising until his retirement earlier this year, will head a new government-led crisis-response team. The Coalition against Terrorism will be in charge of shoring up public support for the war as it becomes clear that it could last longer than previously anticipated. The team is being set up with the Advertising Council in New York, an independent organisation created after the attack on Pearl Harbour to rally public support for the US war effort. The council is responsible for all of America's public-service announcements – extended commercials that broadcasters run free of charge – from anti-drunk driving to road safety. It has already put together several advertising campaigns since the terrorist attacks of September 11, including one that showed a view of the Manhattan skyline with the twin towers replaced by the words "Hate has taken enough from us already. Don't let it take you." But critics believe the council's response to the crisis has been slow and fragmented, and that it has been too keen to take orders from the White House rather than developing its own strategy. The new team will create campaigns "to inform, involve and inspire" Americans' support for the fight against terrorism, said Mr. Sennott. The British government is also having to shore up waning public support for the bombing campaign in Afghanistan. In a speech today, Tony Blair urged the British people not to forget the sight of the planes flying into the World Trade Centre and the "gloating menace" of Osama bin Laden.

- What is your response to this announcement? What are some potential actions which would realize the reality behind the expression "inform, involve and inspire?" Check out advocacy ads. which emerge from this campaign and, using the key concepts of media, analyse the results.



- Assess the general effectiveness of this campaign. Some government officials have referred to this goal as the "rebranding of America." What is implied by this term? How can America be a brand?

Excerpt from Toronto media critic Barrie Zwicker's commentary for Vision TV entitled, "Will journalism ever connect the dots?"

Dateline: Tuesday, October 30, 2001

"Although some newspapers were prepared to publish isolated pieces of horrifying information, they had no intention of forming a coherent picture of the war and every intention of preventing others from doing so."

- Bertrand Russell on the Vietnam War

Fast forward to October 6th in Ottawa. Six hundred peace and anti-globalization activists gather to hold a silent vigil on Parliament Hill. Then, as people dedicated to end wars and bring reason and nonviolence to human affairs, they walk to First United Church for a teach-in. They hear detailed analyses and proposals from a dozen speakers in all. All media had been notified. No media outlet sends a reporter. There is no coverage.

Will journalism connect the dots? A US strategist said recently: "If it's time for another 100 years' war, let's go for it." At such a time, journalism is blessed with an unprecedented opportunity and challenge. Writers and editors can start connecting the dots between big oil, big arms, globalization, poverty, and much else. The information is abundant; it's detailed; it's newsworthy. Journalists can form, in Lord Russell's words, a coherent picture. Until you connect the dots you cannot see the picture. It is the American empire's drive for world domination. And that is the biggest peace issue by far. If the media cannot form this coherent picture, we must demand they at least not do everything in their power to prevent others from seeing it.

- In the wake of 9/11, how "coherent" is our picture of what is happening? What factors may be preventing a coherent view from emerging?

"Drums Along the Potomac: New War, Old Music"

by Lewis H. Lapham, editor Harper's Magazine, November 2001

"Almost as soon as the Trade Towers fell down, a loud caucus of commentators and politicians began to complain about the criminal incompetence of our intelligence services. We should have known. Where was the CIA? Why was there no timely warning or preemptive arrest? Who neglected to alert James Bond or Bruce Willis?"

Continued...



The question missed the point. We had suffered not from a lack of data but from a failure of imagination. Accustomed to the unilateral privilege of writing the world's blockbuster geopolitical scripts, hiring the cast and paying for the special effects, the Washington studio executives seldom take the trouble to look at the movie from the point of view of an audience that might be having trouble reading the subtitles. Why bother? Let them eat popcorn and look at the pictures. It isn't only that we don't learn the languages. We don't remember history. Obligated to issue a statement to the cameras while traveling to Washington on September 11, President Bush began by saying, "Freedom itself was attacked this morning by a faceless coward." Two days later he was talking about mindless hatred and unfathomable evil.

- What do you understand by Lapham's explanation of America's crisis as "a failure of imagination?"
- Why is the blockbuster film metaphor so effective in this context?

Further Processing of the events of Sept 11 – Real Alternatives to Media Saturation and paralysis

Two events in Toronto, and I am sure similar ones being held throughout the world, confirm that only a multi-perspective approach will help us understand what is happening after 9/11 and to see through the propaganda war of recent weeks – attaining some level of what Noam Chomsky calls "intellectual self-defense." We also need some respite from the media saturation and the fears surrounding bio-terrorism. One of the most important ways of achieving this goal is through town hall and public forums. In one session which I attended, held at the University of Toronto, there were eight panelists representing diverse view points that included: understanding the religion of Islam and the impact of Muslim stereotypes; anti-racist education initiatives; exploring the motives and tactics of the terrorists; and implications for civil liberties and national security. Certainly the range of views heard was necessary, especially in a city such as Toronto which has been declared as the most multicultural city in the world. While there were, in my opinion, some extremist views coming from the audience, it was important to hear them. We have so much to learn.

Teaching Cultural Appropriation: Ontario Loons lose their innocence

As a wilderness camper, I love loons for their striking beauty and their haunting calls. (That I have acquired a reputation for closing over seven media education conferences with my piercing, auditorium-ripping loon calls is another script, thank you very much!)



Thus it was with some horror that several months ago I discovered that Ontario convenience stores were selling beautiful slip-on covers for cigarette packages drawn from nature scenes.



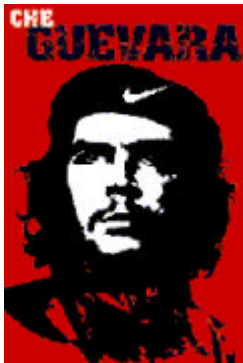
Why? Because one of them featured a loon with its chicks. The intention, of course, is to cover up the typical warnings about the dangers of nicotine and the graphic images of diseased lungs that Health Canada insists are to appear on the packaging. Is it right? Is it just? Is it Canadian? Is there a loon's point of view?

I don't have the answers. What I do know, however, is that this phenomenon is a great way to show students 1.) How the media can construct reality – a key concept in media analysis; and 2.) How and why cultural appropriation works.

Appropriation/co-optation is the process of taking a symbol or cultural icon, a cultural trend, or a slogan for social change – usually positive and socially progressive in nature – and using it to say something commercial or potentially corrupting and exploitative. Of course, this is all very subjective – corruption and all manner of cultural appropriation being in the eye of the beholder. Cultural theorists have thoroughly mined this area, talking in terms of commodification of people and objects inevitably intertwined in the logic of capitalism and materialistic excess. For many young people, the notion of appropriating and marketing notions of rebellion – especially through hip hop music – is familiar territory. For media teachers, a unit on the topic of appropriation will take one nicely into the realm of cultural criticism; it will also access those elusive higher order thinking skills. Nonetheless, for younger students this topic may be too abstract. However, in the spirit of the concept of the spiral curriculum, teachers who can provide the right examples and ask the right questions will make this unit work effectively.

Here are some mini case studies:

- Think of the variety of ways that nature – for example, mountain springs – are used as backgrounds for cigarette ads; or, note those television commercials for new cars which always seem to be careening at high speed around beautiful seaside country roads where there are no traffic jams.
- Several years ago, the Bank of Montreal's "M-Banks" advertising campaign was ubiquitous. In one of their TV commercials they showed several dozen kids on a country road, walking and singing Bob Dylan's famous 1960's anthem for social change, "The Times They are Changing." (Rick Mercer, of CBC's *This Hour has 22 Minutes*, did a brilliant satire in which he pilloried both the hypocrisy and the futility of a bank trying to change its conservative and socially indifferent image.)

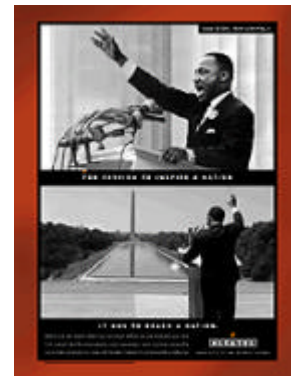


Having sold thousands of T-shirts and posters, Che Guevara is the best known poster boy for rebellion and revolution in the last fifty years. When some jester inserts the Nike swoosh on that famous beret, Che becomes the ultimate corporate shill who wants to 'just do it' for eager shareholders. I find this image guarantees a chuckle from audiences whenever it is shown. There are plenty of examples mocking mainstream ads from "Adbusters" magazine, dubbed by their writers as 'subvertising.'

- Nike gleefully used the Beatles' song "Rrevolution," and Microsoft used the Rolling Stones' song "Start me up" which, according to Toronto media educator George Ventura, was "just this side of advocating anarchy." Never underestimate the power of advertisers pitching to Boomers' nostalgia to take those special songs and rob them of all their political and social comment.
- A US sponsored Pepsi ad campaign in Brazil went from "Join the Pepsi Generation" to "Join the Pepsi Revolution." What is appalling about this appropriation is that the majority of Brazilians lack any other means to express their need for social change except through changing brands and increasing their consumption. Big deal! What Brazil needs is an effective social "revolution." Of course, today the use of the term revolution is like a convenient Rorschach-ink-blot test: one reads into the shapes whatever one chooses to see.



To hype its service, Alcatel, an American Internet company, used a photograph of Martin Luther King addressing the huge crowd (his "I have a dream" speech) at the Lincoln memorial in Washington. (August 28, 1963.) The ad copy boasts that Alcatel is "a leader in communication networks" and are "architects of the Internet world." By association, this sponsored image conveys integrity and visionary social change. The challenge: running the risk of alienating many people who could be offended by their transparently crass motives.



(A larger version of this ad can be found on Alcatel's Web site, at: <http://www.alcatel.com/apropos/ad/images/martin.gif>)

- A really good example of corporate co-optation is the Gap's advertising strategies. You may recall the Gap campaign where famous people/celebrities (from authors to peace figures like Gandhi) were shown on posters. At a subway station in Toronto, one could see a sequence of 20 such posters. Naomi Klein commented in the October 22, 2001 issue of *The Nation*, how rapidly anti-corporate images were co-opted by corporate marketing. Examples include Gap's recent window displays featuring its own prefab graffiti (words like "independence" sprayed in black) and a frame from Sony Playstation's "State of emergency" game, featuring cool-haired anarchists throwing rocks at evil riot cops protecting the fictitious American Trade Organization. Her point was that these examples were all overshadowed by the events of 9/11.

Activities:

- To what extent are you upset by the ways in which the above examples use cultural appropriation? Is it funny? Outrageous? Politically subversive? Or is it a commentary on living in a postmodern culture which lacks context and events are dehistoricized?
- Collect current examples of cultural appropriation and apply appropriate criteria for making judgments about them.

Debate the following quote:

"Boomers who excessively dominate our culture are finally getting their just punishment when their favourite songs of their youth are co-opted by advertisers to sell products which are thrown back at them. Most Boomers are just materialists buying the latest consumer toys and they deserve the final revenge of advertising."

Rap music has recently been co-opted by advertisers to sell everything from car mufflers to designer clothes. In the process of this raid on hip-hop culture, the original social criticism message of rap gets lost.

- Brainstorm new subject ideas/images for advertisers, who would see the potential of cultural appropriation in their work. You might want to include: famous people shilling for corporations; and establishing the links between current social issues (e.g. feminism, concerns about the environment) and noting the appropriate companies which might gain integrity and credibility in the process. (One easy way to achieve this goal is to use the



technique of collage in which careful juxtaposition of images and print copy can yield dramatic effects.)

Additional Web sites for exploring alternative sources of information

- Nologo.org contains updates on Naomi Klein's ground-breaking book *No Logo* and includes recent columns Naomi has written for various publications and sundry protest material. (Naomi Klein could be considered a brand herself, but a damn good one!)
- New York's Media Workshop has been working to create a response to the events of 9/11. Their special Web section, at <http://www.mediaworkshop.org/september11> helps teachers and students address their concerns through projects, activities, poetry, and photo collages. (This is a good site, but I can't understand why this high profile educational organization and, as a generalization most others, fail to systematically address the media coverage/spin of 9/11. Is this not a telling comment on why media education analysis is still marginalized in North America?)
- Other excellent Web sites include: tompaine.com, inthesetimes.com, mediachannel.org, and fair.org

Media Clips

Media and Democracy Day

On October 19, an event entitled "Media and Democracy Day" (check out www.mediademocracyday.org) was held in Toronto. About 200 people were crammed into a downtown bar, while similar groups were held in cities across Canada and in Los Angeles. Here is an excerpt of their manifesto:



"In our era of rapid concentration and commercialization of the mass media, one major convergence remains: interest groups for media democracy. Media Democracy Day will push for and promote a mass media system that informs and empowers all members of society. Media Democracy Day will connect existing pockets of critical and creative media projects into a coherent message for public attention and global actions."

Two panels were held at the Toronto event and some fast-paced experimental videos were shown as well. (One was an insightful satire on McDonald's.)

The two panels were chaired by Barrie Zwicker, a dynamic media critic and broadcaster for Vision TV. The first panel zeroed in on what was wrong with the media. Representing media education initiatives, I talked about the commercialization of the classroom, the corporate take over of public space, and the critical need for media literacy because of 9/11. I was joined on the panel by Melanie Cishecki, representing MediaWatch Canada, an activist group which monitors gender stereotyping in the media and offers educational strategies. She showed slides of stereotyped images of women in ads and explored the disempowering impact. Finally, Jan Pachul, who is the founder of StarRay community TV, made the case for supporting his allegedly illegal television



station with its alternative programming (available in the Toronto area if one has an old TV aerial or a set of rabbit ears).

The second panel stressed the work of reconstructing the media. Judy MacDonald of www.rabble.ca ("news for the rest of us") focussed on the ways that the Internet and individual initiatives can be empowering, from writing letters to creating your own Web site. Adonnis Huggins discussed "Catch Da Fava," a media project in the challenging Regent Park area of Toronto which aims to find ways of having positive stories told by the media about their community. Paul Boin, an investigative journalist completing his doctorate on the impact of media control and activism, gave a brilliant overview of our current media crisis. Finally, Tara Atluri from the Anti-Racist Media Education Collective described her important work and then read a poem she had written in 'dub' poetry style about how it felt to be a visible minority after 9/11. It was incredibly powerful and she received a two-minute ovation.

Clearly these events help us to take stock of our situation in ways that newspapers and even background documentaries can't; they offer real heartfelt and passionate exchanges and they reveal individuals groping to find some truth beyond the data smog of the dominant media viewpoint. Surely, it is only through a sense of community and our interconnectedness with similar groups and coalitions that we can navigate the current murky waters.

Key Challenge: How can a community forum on the events of 9/11 help us to understand the issues and the intellectual and emotional complexity of our current crisis? How could schools best organize an event which would encourage a diversity of views and foster meaningful social action? Please share your thoughts on any viable approaches.

Refugee Camps and the Value of Experiential Learning



We have all seen on television the pitiful lines of refugees from many countries – from Kosovo to Afghanistan, where several million people may soon be uprooted as the ground war continues. We have seen it all before, the mass of humanity forced into tent cities which spring up instantly, the look of fear and desperation on their faces. But what is it really like to survive for months, or even years in these make-shift shelters? And for our students, most of whom have led sheltered lives, what kinds of learning might permit them to have understanding and empathy for this alien kind of world? The following are two worthwhile approaches. What can we learn from each?

On October 18, the CBC ran a documentary about some Alberta high school students who went to a wilderness location for a weekend to participate in a refugee simulation experience. They endured many discomforts – coping with the cold and little sleep, consuming unappetizing food and most important, receiving some deliberate abuse from the camp leaders. In the debriefing, the teens described the experience as a memorable one, and ultimately very frightening; but important to their understanding the plight of refugees. The CBC received some complaints from viewers who claimed that the kids were enduring only a mildly discomforting boy scout adventure and hardly a comparison with the suffering at the actual camps. I think this criticism was self-righteous nit picking. The teachers who planned this event deserve kudos for taking risks and facilitating a breakthrough in experiential education.

- Key Question: My fellow educators, would you recommend and promote this refugee simulation for your school? Why or why not?



Not as dramatically gripping but still worthwhile was the project "A Refugee Camp in the City," organized by the international group, Doctors Without Borders. For several days, they set up their refugee camp with a dozen or so tents at City hall square in Toronto. (They had already been to four other Canadian cities.) "We want to give people a sense of the reality of what living like a refugee is all about," says Clea Kahn, the organization's communications officer. The 40-minute tour of the various 'stations' was led by guides who had direct experience at the camps – including former refugees and Red Cross workers. My tour guide had lived three months in a refugee camp in Kosovo . As we learned about the sanitation precautions or tasted the unappetizing survival food, he helped to bring home the grim realities of refugees to the onlookers. Doctors Without Borders, who won the Nobel prize in 1999 for their humanitarian work, are to be commended for organizing this important project.

Recommended Resources

The Harry Potter Phenomenon is upon us

With the arrival of the movie for *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* on November 16, the advertising campaign – already in high gear – promises to go into overdrive. From mugs to posters and T-shirts, there will be no end to the marketing hysteria. One of the key questions raised by the movie is the old image problem that is still worth discussing. A *Toronto Star* film critic notes "The biggest risk of all is to take Harry Potter and to make, to literalise him in a way the movie must. Already the other big competitor for the images in our imagination of this season is *The Lord of the Rings* and already a number of readers are upset."



In other words, will my personal picture of Harry Potter be stolen from my imagination because of the movie? To the millions of young readers who care about this problem, I hope you won't feel betrayed by the film.

The following is an excerpt from the outstanding study guide written for Bravo Television by Toronto media educator Neil Andersen. (The full guide can be found at: www.bravo.ca/scanningthemovies/)

- Do you have a Harry Potter book? Do you have a poster, coffee mug, pen, or mouse pad? Why might people want to own objects that include images from Harry Potter stories? How do these objects help to promote sales of the books? How do these objects help people enjoy the stories?
- Is it a mistake for people to want to own Harry Potter images as well as books? Might it reduce their images by taking advantage of readers by turning their enthusiasm into a money-making business? J.K. Rowling receives a portion of the sale of posters, mugs, etc. Is she taking unfair advantage of her readers, or is she providing them with further opportunities to understand Harry? Explain.
- Some people are very upset that Warner Brothers has sold the marketing rights to the Harry Potter movie to Coca-Cola. They are concerned that children who don't understand the power of marketing will be taken advantage of by the marketers. Read about their concerns at <http://www.saveharry.com/> and check out the recent press release below.



Harry Potter Use by Coke Protested

The Associated Press

Thursday, Oct. 18, 2001; 9:49 a.m. EDT

ATLANTA – A Washington public interest group is calling for an end to Coca-Cola's use of the Harry Potter character in a new ad campaign. The Center for Science in the Public Interest and other international organizations claim Coca-Cola is using the image of J.K. Rowling's boy wizard to market its sugary soft drinks to children. Coca-Cola features imagery from the new movie, *Harry Potter and Sorcerer's Stone* on packages and in advertising for some of its beverages, including Minute Maid, Coca-Cola and Hi-C. The group argues that over-consumption of some of the beverages contributes to obesity, diabetes and tooth decay. "Coke has transformed Harry Potter into a marketing wizard to hook our kids on its junk beverages" said Gary Ruskin, executive director of advertising watchdog Commercial Alert. Coca-Cola spokeswoman Susan McDermott said Coca-Cola's association with Harry Potter is about promoting the value of reading and the magic of Harry Potter – not promoting products. To be involved in reading with their children and helping to make decisions about what they read, parents are also involved in deciding what their kids choose to eat or drink," she said. "Both experiences are about family enjoyment and parental choice." The saveharry.com campaign encourages people to send an e-mail via the site urging Rowling, author of the Harry Potter stories, to end the deal with Coca-Cola and donate royalties she has already received to a nutrition campaign.

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- Summarize their arguments. Explain the difference between selling a Harry Potter coffee mug and Coke. Explain why you agree or disagree with the Save Harry campaign.
- You might put your opinions into a letter to J.K. Rowling to advise her on how to proceed with marketing Harry Potter's second movie.

Montreal Media Educator Lee Rother Finishes Valuable Doctoral Thesis On the Impact of Media Education On At-Risk Students

One of the criticisms of media literacy is the lack of research that would verify its claims "to create critical viewers who can also produce their own media." Media education is, let's face it, not elevated to the position of power in our schools enjoyed by literature, math and science – each of which has its share of cheer leaders. Enter Montreal educator Lee Rother, a veteran of 23 years of teaching high school, who has just completed his doctorate for McGill University. Lee is a pioneer in media education, having co-founded the Association for Media Education Quebec (AMEQ), a provincial media literacy organization for Quebec teachers.



Using media literacy curriculum to explore 'literate behaviour of at-risk adolescents' is dear to Lee's heart since he has been teaching such students for most of his career. A keen media educator, he wanted to explore what his students understood about the media and how their knowledge could be exploited to its full advantage in a class to improve the students' literacy skills and behaviour. What he had heard continually from many of his colleagues was that studying the mass media such as television, movies and other forms of popular culture in the classroom was a



time waster. Instead of seeing that the print world and the media world can co-exist, they simply condemned the media, taking a typical elitist point of view.

A class of so-called at-risk students in the co-op program was the setting for much of his research. They were typically 16+ and not meeting the qualifications of the mainstream curriculum. With a long track record of being pushed to the fringes of education, these students presented an opportunity for a talented educator like Lee to apply his knowledge of media and communications theory to an expanded definition of literacy.

In the abstract for his dissertation he outlines the nature of his project:

I devised a curriculum in which students produced and read popular media texts. Through this investigation, I gained insights into the literate abilities and behaviours that at-risk students possess and can demonstrate, which traditional measures of literacy were unable to uncover. I also developed pedagogical approaches which enable the literacy of not only at risk students, but also all students. The result of this inquiry suggests that the consideration of Media Education within a conceptual framework of literacy holds considerable promise for research, curriculum development and pedagogy.

In one of the classroom exercises, the students were asked to interpret a dense and challenging National Film Board film called *The Apprentice*. After several viewings, heated discussions, and focussed writing, the class was able to provide a sophisticated reading that tapped into neglected higher order thinking skills. One of the students exclaimed "It is like us. We're apprentices on our work study." Similarly, when the class was asked to interpret the opening 30 seconds from "Roseanne" they brought their life experience to bear on their interpretations. Here is a sampling:

Me: Ok, what can you tell me about Roseanne's family in the opening?

M.D. There's junk food on the table.

Me: So ?

P.F. They're poor. He has a baseball hat and usually rich people don't wear baseball caps.

T.P. Ya, and they're eating regular cereal.

Me: What about "Full House?"

S.H. The way they're dressed.

P.F. The way they talk isn't real . They don't use slang. Class: (all at once) Yes they do!

P.F.: (irritated) Ya, but they don't swear.

P.D.: They're middle class.

Me: How do you know?

S.H.: What they have. Everything looks new. The way they dress. They wake up in the morning and the girls have lipstick on.

Me: What else?

M.D.: They don't argue.

Lee's first person writing style is informal and anecdotal. His discourse conveys the tone of one teacher explaining to another what 's happening in their classroom today. The thesis is also written chronologically revealing the author's growth and development and, I dare say, his growing excitement as he started to make important breakthroughs with his students. This approach bodes well for future research projects in media education (believe me, this is a document that was truly an easy read!) and is a tribute to McGill University's faculty of education and Lee's very media literate and compassionate thesis adviser, Professor Winston Emery. Lee deserves a North American academic tour. All he needs is a sponsor.

You can reach Lee Rother at irothe@po-box.mcgill.ca.



Memories in Black and White

"The experiences I lived through to finalize this assignment are almost beyond words. They taught me the importance of family and symbolize how things must be cherished because one day they might be gone and a picture is all you are left with"

Dario Hajjar, Laurier Macdonald High School Student

The following three paragraphs are from the publicity information for a proposed documentary on the book *Rainbow of Dreams*.

"In the multi-media, high technology environment of today, literacy has become a very important and complex concept. It now includes not only the ability to read and write but also to create, understand and use information presented with images, sound and electronic text.

The Media Education Program at Laurier Macdonald High School in Montreal is endeavouring to make its students media literate. It all started a number of years ago as a class of 25 students and their teacher, Frank Tiseo, made their first super-8mm film. Today, there are well over 400 students engaged in producing and analyzing messages through television, radio, still photography and digital technologies. Frank and his colleagues have developed a challenging and imaginative curriculum in which students experiment with, utilize and question technology."

In 2000, *Rainbow of Dreams: Memories in Black and White* was published. *Rainbow of Dreams* was a book project for Laurier Macdonald's Grade 10 media students – a project unlike any other they had done before. The students were challenged to research and restore old family photographs, and interview grandparents and relatives about the story behind the moment captured on film. Once the research was done, they then wrote the story of the photograph in their own words. Some wrote as if they were journalists reporting an event, others wrote in the first person, like a diary entry. In each case, the students turned their family story into a message over which they had creative control."

And now for my personal observations. Media educators are dedicated to using visual narrative and ROD facilitates the discussion and practical applications of this skill. One convincing reason for the usefulness of the project lies in its cross-curricular nature. Combining History, English, Geography, Art, and Media Arts, ROD speaks to a large secondary school constituency. The creative process is clearly identified and the potential learnings at each step are in keeping with the pedagogy of process-oriented learning. School board consultants, especially in the language arts and in integrated studies, could easily use a film treatment of the projects' basic premises for special workshops. Schools involved in interdisciplinary curriculum will find ROD an exemplary project, combining important facets from so many subjects. ROD could serve as case study for a school to either emulate or to modify in their own cultural milieu.

Identity formation, hybridity, cultural pluralism are all folded into this inspiring work. The students have obviously benefited as much as the teachers. As a catalyst for discussion, a film of ROD, would be ideal. Among many things, students are encouraged to reflect on their own unique backgrounds. (The search for roots has been a major enterprise, ever since *Roots*, the saga of black Americans was told in the acclaimed television series.) In addition, with the revival of interest in Canadian history (note the recent success of the CBC's *Canada: a People's History*) educators as well as the community-at-large will be inspired to reevaluate both our individual and our collective past.



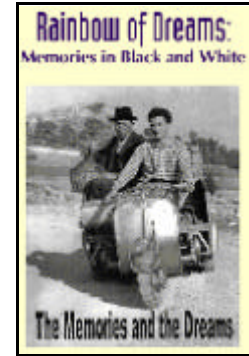
According to the ROB publicity, the members of the project have made a proposal for a documentary which will follow the students at Laurier Macdonald's media class through the school year, as they undertake a Memories in Black and White project. "We will get to know the students and their families and be inspired and enlightened by educators who know that there is still excitement and value to an educational experience in which we learn about who we are by exploring our roots, as individuals and as members of a community and a nation."

Good luck!

Rainbow of Dreams: Memories in Black and White edited by Winston Emery, Frank Tiseo, Leon Llewellyn. ISBN 1-55059-207-6 Detselig Enterprises, 2000.

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Upcoming Events

For those in the Toronto area. On November 22, from 7-9 PM at the ChumLtd/City-TV building, the Association for Media Literacy will be presenting: "Making Sense of the Media," a discussion with Kathleen McDonnell and Geoff Pevere. Kathleen is the author of the recently published *Honey, We lost the Kids: Rethinking Childhood in the Multimedia Age*. Geoff Pevere is the film critic for the *Toronto Star* and co-author of *Mondo Canuck*. Topics for discussion include the Harry Potter phenomenon, 'tween idols and talking constructively about 9/11.

The Final Word

"Most Americans have been disinclined to commit themselves to any larger cause. But this is not because we are too well fed. Rather, a triumphalist corporate capitalism, free at last of the specter of Communism has mobilized its economic power to relentlessly marginalize all nonmarket values; to subordinate every aspect of American life to corporate "efficiency" and the bottom line; to demonize not only government but the very idea of public service and public goods."

Ellen Willis, *The Nation*, October 15.



Barry's Bulletin will return in January 2002.

Barry Duncan is an award-winning teacher, author, consultant and founder and past president of the Ontario-based Association for Media Literacy. Co-author of the best selling text book, *Mass Media and Popular Culture*, he has presented workshops and keynote addresses to thousands of teachers in Canada and around the world. You can contact Barry at baduncan@interlog.com.

