December 2008

Watching Canada, Learning Canadian: Media, Pedagogy, and the Nation—An Introduction to the Special Issue

Christine Quail

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lsu.edu/taboo>

Recommended Citation

Quail, C. (2017). Watching Canada, Learning Canadian: Media, Pedagogy, and the Nation—An Introduction to the Special Issue. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education*, 12 (1). <https://doi.org/10.31390/taboo.12.1.03>

Watching Canada, Learning Canadian: Media, Pedagogy, and the Nation— An Introduction to the Special Issue

Christine Quail

The articles in this volume, “Watching Canada, Learning Canadian: Media, Pedagogy, and the Nation,” address the intersecting issues of media power, critical cultural pedagogy, media literacy, and Canadian nationhood(s). Scholars from communication and media studies, education, and sociology, as well as media practitioners, visual artists, and media literacy professionals, come together here to analyze a variety of texts, discourses, policies, and movements. A broad range of theoretical and methodological tools is employed.

Taking seriously the ways in which globalization debates force us to rethink the nation as an imagined community (Anderson, 2006), the articles are founded on the desire to question the media’s construction and dissemination of that imagination. How do commercials, books, news reports, social networking sites, TV programs, and films, discursively produce and reproduce what it means to be Canadian today? How is public policy about culture and education, shaped by similar constructs? How do people (conceptualized variably as consumers, users, producers, citizens) make sense of such representations? How do people resist problematic representations? How do independent media creators (youth or activist organizations, as well as Web 2.0 users) create their own narratives and images, and does this impact policy? Using Appadurai’s (1990) five dimensions of ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, financescapescapes, and ideoscapescapes, the ways in which Canada embodies cultural tensions in a global context can be highlighted. The articles herein address, then, people, media, technology, economics, and ideologies.

To start, Michael Hoechsmann and Stuart Poyntz expertly map the concerns of media literacy in Canada. They provide a succinct and thoughtful historical account of the policies, ideologies, and cultures of media education in Canada. Reminding us that debates on the contours of media literacy still abound, the article is essential for a critical understanding of the institutionalization of media literacy in Canada.

One text familiar to anyone teaching or studying media literacy in Canada is

the children's book, *The Hockey Sweater*. Sandra Chang-Kredl interrogates this foundational text from a new, critical media studies perspective. How has the text been transformed onto different platforms? How, specifically does this text represent a type of Canadianness that becomes mantra for school children everywhere?

The interrogation of the media construct of Canadian identity continues in several other articles. Giuliana Cucinelli and David Pickup's critical and humorous article extends Chang-Kredl's analysis of the cultural and political dynamics of hockey. Their focus, however, is on Don Cherry, "the Don of hockey." This mythic figure is an eternal wonder in Canada's favorite pastime, and has been reinvented in a Web 2.0 world. Ozlem Sensoy turns our attention to the multicultural construct of Canada in the media in her analysis of the hit TV program, *Little Mosque on the Prairie*. Here, Sensoy critically and poignantly points to the contradictions of multicultural representations of the nation, as well as the varied and complex reception of these images and narratives by Canadian Muslims. Finally, Peter Pericles Trifonas and Effie Balomenos vividly deconstruct Molson's "I Am Canadian" beer campaign, again problematizing media representations of Canadian character as a beer-guzzling, hockey loving, beaver-appreciating people.

The next article moves us away from televisual and filmic entertainment. In "War for the Seals," Brian Lowe examines the Canadian seal controversy through the lens of his unique concept of "sociological warfare." In a discursive analysis of news, publicity, policy, and photographs, Lowe demonstrates how the contested nation is bound up in tradition, indigenous identity, and federal policy. He analyzes indigenous, federal, and activist mobilization of support for particular constructs of the nation, and the impact each has on power and culture. Likewise, Jacques Brodeur points to mobilization of public support for policy—yet, his concern brings us back to legislation regarding children and advertising. As a media literacy educator and activist, Brodeur's decades of experience in this realm are apparent in his passionate discussion.

Finally, my interview with Yassin Alsalman, or Narcy, shifts the emphasis of media, pedagogy, and the nation, to an examination of self-representation and independent media production. Narcy is a hip hop artist, an Iraqi Canadian, who discusses his music, post 9-11 politics, and the contemporary identity crisis of self and nation.

Together, these articles represent an attempt to think through the ways in which media, pedagogy, and the nation can provide multiple axes of interrogation into contemporary culture, politics, and society.

References

- Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined communities* (New ed.). London, UK: Verso.
- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. *Public Culture*, 2(2), Spring.

Christine Quail is an assistant professor in the Department of Communications Studies and Multimedia at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.