Teaching the Media with Mouse Woman: Adventures in Imaginative Education

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Abstract:
Concerns have been expressed for decades over the impact of an increasingly media-saturated environment on young children. Media education, however, occupies a somewhat marginal place in compulsory schooling, and its theorists and practitioners have given relatively little attention to the question of how to teach the media to elementary school children. This question is explored through an auto-ethnography and métissage spanning more than twenty years of media use, media studies, and media education. Three shifts in emphasis are particularly central to the thesis. The first is a shift from a protectionist to a more open, albeit critical stance with respect to children’s media use. The second is a shift from conceiving of media education in terms of a pre-packaged curriculum towards the co-construction of learning experiences with the students, guided by Egan’s theory of imaginative education. The third involves learning to slow down and take time to dwell with the questions and activities inspired by an imaginative focus on media. By tracing the personal and professional growth and struggles of one passionate media educator, the thesis seeks to illustrate the educational issues that the field of media education needs to engage with, if it is to develop into a more dynamic and influential field of theory and practice. It also offers a situated, experiential perspective on the practice of imaginative education that highlights its close ties with other voices and traditions in educational philosophy, and connects it with the ethos of métissage as a research praxis.

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