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Deadline for application is February 17, 1989.

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This program is funded by the Department of the Secretary of State and administered by the Department of Advanced Education in conjunction with the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.

Freaks, secret heart ache and fat people: prof searches for tabloid truth

by Nancy Loane

LONDON, ONT. —

Myths, like Apollo riding the sun chariot or Atlas shouldering the world are usually associated with our ancestors, but a Western history professor says they are alive and well on the pages of today's Tabloid newspapers. Ron Glasberg thinks tabloids are the most reliable source for information regarding the myths by which we currently live.

"Tabloids are operating with several recurring myths as themes, such as the anything can happen at any time syndrome, the need to see freaks, secret heartache, exploitation of fat people, perverse greed and the fountain of youth idea," Glasberg said.

For modern man, myths have expanded to fulfill human needs in the 20th century by providing explanations for the elements of the world around us. "Myths are prevalent patterns in society, which help explain scary parts of life and help people reconcile what they regard to be meaningless lives, by providing fables that they can consistently count on to make them feel better. We are surrounded with myths, but they are most graphically displayed in tabloids.

"People are conditioned to accept our myth-filled environment, so they fail to be aware of

it, yet myths still direct our lives as much as if people were still sharing takes and preserving history around a tribal camp fire."

Some people believe that if a social pattern has survived that long, it must be 'right'. However, others find it irritating that we are programmed by the past and seemingly cannot lose our ancient attitudes.

Mythology expert, Joseph Campbell, a professor at Sarah Lawrence college in New York, notes that changes have occurred to myths over the years: "Myths used to be exclusive to a particular religion, region or race. Today, myths have more of a common human denominator."

According to Campbell, myths fulfill four human needs: they instill a sense of awe into the human relationship with the universe, provide an understanding of the world in accordance with the scientific knowledge of the time, provide support for the social order through rituals, and guide the individual through psychological traumas of living.

And where are these myths most blatantly displayed for all to see these days? In tabloids.

However, opinions vary regarding the value of tabloids. Professor John Anderson of Western's journalism school says the publishers of tabloids are "just exploitive liars, appealing to yel-

low journalism readers, who enjoy that kind of trash."

John Miller, chairman of Ryerson's journalism program, sums up the appeal: "Your lips do not get tired when you read them, they are escapism. They make people feel better about themselves, because they have never given birth to a three headed baby."

"North American culture is highly competitive — there is no room for losers, so most people are doomed to failure. Myths in tabloids are a way of... feeling the smug satisfaction of other people's hopelessness. This is junk food for the mind."

The information in a tabloid can be digested as quickly as fast food, Glasberg notes a similarity. "It's interesting that tabloids are sold in food stores, where society displays another one of our big obsessions — our passion for food. We are a consumer society with limitless desires. In a grocery store we allow ourselves to succumb to all of our desires — which includes our desire for the myths in the papers, which we consume."

Glasberg also says the sexual message given by tabloids is confusing for women. In recent issues, there are many stories about traditional sexual roles, such as National Enquirer's 'Tom Green, Four Wives, 12 Kids' and about perfection as what women should be striving for, 'Once Too Fat To Walk, Housewife Now Finds That Life is Great!'

The stories tout the sense of continuity that comes from traditional marriages, such as the National Enquirer's story 'Happiest Granny in the World — at 28'. Several of the tabloids have a lovelorn column such as The Globe's "Dear Sarah" column.

There is also the 'conspiracy' theme which provides "simple answers to a world filled with complex problems," Glasberg said. "If there are attractive people such as Elvis Presley and Marilyn Monroe involved in an awful conspiracy, then people will be glad to be nobodies, to not get caught up in the torment. Using older celebrities also creates a sense of resurrection, which gives people hope."

"Deformations pop up frequently in the tabloids. Since the dawn of man we have been gawking at whatever is foreign to us," Glasberg said. "Kids like to look at the fat lady at the fair. Tabloids are an acceptable form of looking at the bizarre and grotesque, as a grown-up."

"Extreme strangeness is like an opening to another world, a hidden sense of reality that is usually beyond our grasp. It makes people feel good that despite their problems, they still fit into society, no one is going to stare at them on the street," Glasberg said.

"As scary as it is to accept, tabloids reflect what is important to us, be presenting the most prevalent myths in society, which we cling to over the years."

Acid rain hanging over Alberta prairies

by Carrie Hoffman

reprinted from the U of C Gauntlet

CALGARY - According to a recent environmental survey, Alberta has yet to feel the effects of acid rain.

In a three-year study, led by Dr. Allan Legge of U of C's Kananaskis Centre, the Acid Deposition Research Program (ADRP) concluded that the levels of acid forming pollutants in Alberta are extremely low.

The \$5.3 million study was funded by the Province of Alberta and a collection of various Alberta industries. The aim of the study was two-pronged. One: to find out if acid deposition is presently a problem in Alberta, and two: if no, when and where will it become a problem?

The survey, which has been rated by the Science Advisory Board as, "one of the most comprehensive studies of air pollution in the world" is expected to become the prototype for other studies of pollution.

The purpose of the study was not to examine the effects of a specific source of air pollution or the effects on one particular area of the province. Rather, the point was to examine Alberta's air quality on a regional scale. This method led to the scientists' conclusion that although at present

Alberta cannot be said to have a problem, certain areas of the province are identified as sensitive and should be studied further. The Barrhead area north of Edmonton is referred to as "a potentially sensitive area." Chairman of the Science Advisory Board in Alberta Dr. Sagag Krupa said, "Now we have a narrower field to deal with and we can focus on the sensitive areas, verify the findings of work to date, and consider the effect of combinations of pollutants."

Principal Investigator Dr. Legge stressed the importance of continuing to study pollution levels in Alberta. "Monitoring is most important — we can't just say 'oh, we had a clean bill of health in 1988' and leave it at that." He believes that Albertans should be taking an interest in preventing the air pollution problems that plague so many other areas of the world.

According to the ADRP, prevention is the key, not repairing the damage once it's done. "Living in an environmentally responsible manner is not as easy as people think," Legge said. "It is necessary to educate people to be aware of their actions." Legge said he is hoping to get people to think before they throw away their empty pop cans or old newspapers.

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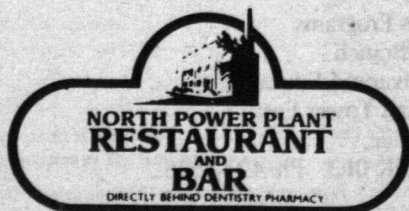


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