

YESTERDAY'S WORDS, TOMORROW'S WORLD.
From the Racialization of Adoption
to the Politics of Difference.

Prologue:

The following story is told about the great Yoruba Trickster God, Esu-Elegba:

There were once two friends who were thwarted in their friendship by Esu. They took vows of eternal friendship to one another, but neither took Esu into consideration. Esu took note of their actions and decided to do something to teach them a lesson.

When the time was ripe, Esu decided to put their friendship to his own little test.

One day the two friends were out in the fields tilling their land. One was hoeing on the right side and the other was clearing bushes on the left. Esu came by on a horse riding between the two men.

Later the two men took a break for lunch under the cool shade of the trees. Said one man 'Did you see the man with a white cap who greeted us while we were working? He was very pleasant wasn't he?'

"Yes he was charming, but it was man in a black cap I recall, not a white one."

"It was a white cap. The man was riding a magnificent grey horse."

"Then it must be the same man. I tell you his cap was dark, black."

"You must be tired or blinded by the hot rays of the sun to take a white cap for a black one."

"I tell you it was a black cap and I am not mistaken. I remember him distinctly."

The two friends fell to fighting. The neighbours came running but the fight was so intense that the neighbours could not stop it. In the midst of this uproar Esu returned looking very calm and pretending not to know what was going on.

"What is the cause of all the hullabaloo?" he demanded sternly.

"Two close friends are fighting" was the answer. "They seem intent on killing each other and neither would stop or tell us the reason for the fight. Please do something before they destroy each other."

Esu promptly stopped the fight. "Why do you two lifelong friends make a public spectacle of yourselves in this manner?"

"A man rode through the farm greeting us as he went by", said the first friend. "He was wearing a black cap, but my friend tells me it was a white cap and that I must have been tired or blind or both."

The second friend insisted that the man had been wearing a white cap. One of them must be mistaken, but it was not he.

"Both of you are right" said Esu.

"How can that be?"

"I am the man who paid the visit over which you now quarrel, and here is the cap that caused all the argument". Esu put his hand in his pocket and brought out the special cap which he had made for his trick.

"As you can see one side is white and the other black. You each saw one side and therefore are right about what you saw. Are you not the two friends who made vows of friendship? When you vowed to be friends always, to be faithful and true to each other, did you reckon with Esu? Do you know that anyone who does not put Esu first in all things has only themselves to blame if things go wrong".

And so it is said

"Esu do not undo me

Do not falsify the words of my mouth,

do not misguide the movements of my feet

You who transform yesterday's words

into tomorrow's new sayings

do not undo me."

This story was irresistibly called to mind, as I read through the statements of the main protagonists in the debate on transracial adoption. The intense and often bitter tenor of the argument had the feel at times, of a family quarrel, or a dispute between close neighbours. It struck me that Eshu's parable contains a lesson which we continually need to relearn and adapt to changing circumstances. It seems especially apposite to the black and white terms in which the issue of race and adoptive identity has been posed in recent times.

The story dramatizes the fact we fall into error (and conflict) when we claim to have a monopoly of truth, or assume some absolute moral standpoint from which it can be uttered. It is because they both think that the hat must either be white or black, that there is only one possible 'side' to what something can mean, that the two friends fall out.

What they forget is the principle of indeterminacy embodied by Esu . The trickster, who is often portrayed as having two mouths, is telling us that everything has *more* than two sides to it, but also the truth is not guaranteed by adopting some superior 'third' position. Rather it consists in recognizing that meanings are produced precisely through the interplay of oppositions, and hence are not fixed or univocal but are always subject to negotiation and revision. Orthodoxies and fundamentalisms of every kind destroy the truth in the very moment they lay claim to possess it. The prayer to Esu begs him not to push this indeterminacy to the point where no one knows where they stand any more but also celebrates the creativity which this process releases, turning dogmatic clichés (yesterdays words) into a language which is capable of embracing new complexities.

The relevance of Esu's message, if it is not already apparent in this context, will I hope become so, in the course of this chapter . I will try to show that the arguments which have been advanced to attack or defend transracial placements, share very similar underlying models of adoption, 'race' and identity, even if they invest these terms with diametrically opposed values and meanings. By locating the genealogy of these models in a wider historical perspective, I will try to open up a rather different space of representation for these issues, and one which hopefully will help to stimulate a more productive kind of debate.

Some Points of Departure

We could perhaps start by considering the issue of identity and difference. Those who have asserted that 'race' makes a whole world of difference to the making of identity and those who

argue that it should be irrelevant, have tended to assume that, to have a satisfactory identity is to possess a unitary sense of self, in which nothing vital is lacking. This positive self image is supposedly secured through a process of emotional bonding with parental figures. There are certain personal qualities or social characteristics of the parties involved which facilitate or inhibit this process taking place in the context of adoption. The argument then is about the conditions under which 'successful bonding', hence 'positive identities' can be achieved and how far physical and /or socio cultural similarities based on 'race' are salient to the outcome.

If we are to follow in Esu's footsteps, we might want to depart from some of the assumptions which underlie this kind of argument. Is it really the case that identities can ever be complete or singular, or that they contain some internal essence which defines them for all time, for example as 'White' or 'Black'? The African trickster directs us to a quite different model, one in which subjectivities are not unitary or fixed, but multiple and shifting, positions which are assumed within particular structures of feeling associated the presence or absence of the Other.

This standpoint has been advanced most strongly in the 'post-structuralist' tradition associated with the work of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. Although these ideas today occupy an increasingly important place in the human sciences, they have not, to date, penetrated very far into the theoretical discourse of social work in Britain. This remains dominated by a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon mixture of naive empiricism and political rhetoric. What might be gained and lost by a shift in paradigm is beyond the scope of this book, although elsewhere it is a topic which is hotly debated. There is in any case a tradition much nearer home to the adoption scene which is equally concerned to problematize issues of identity and difference within an account of how human beings come to be 'socialized'.

The object relations school of British Psychoanalysis has long been concerned with the way children defend themselves against the painful recognition of their dependence on sources of external nurturance and knowledge, or the threat of their loss, by constructing narcissistic self images. These images allow the child to maintain an omnipotent position, from which everything is always and already known or possessed, and nothing is lacking that is not also and already wholly Other.

This is not a purely infantile defence mechanism, something which is outgrown in all but the most pathological cases. On the contrary, trace elements of this structure can be found in many social ideologies and cultural representations. It is there, in myths of national or racial origin, which underwrite phantasies of fusion with the lost object. They invent a kind of umbilical cord connecting people to their 'roots' via real or imagined relations of kinship with idealized figures, which represent an essential authenticity of origins. All those who lack this privileged genealogical link, are then regarded as entirely worthless and alien beings.

Given the absolute centrality of lack and loss to children who have been abandoned or rejected by their birth parents, it would hardly be surprising if many of them developed a strong emotional attachment to personal myths of origin which function as defence mechanisms in this way. In some cases such children may imagine that there is a secret principle of consanguinity or filiation, linking them to their adoptive parents, or alternatively, fusing the two sets of parents into a single composite figure. Or they may construct some entirely make believe community of belonging for themselves where they can continue to 'rule OK', and from which one or other, or both sets of parents are excluded. The damaged narcissism of adoptees, may therefore lead them to seek out purified identities, identities from which all 'anxiety of influence' has been purged, and which guarantee a sense of omnipotence, untouched by the presence of the Other. Radicalized identities are one, but only one possible model for this process.

Whatever their cultural supports, life story lines which construct such 'positive self images' help the child to deny the difference which is constitutive of adoptive identities - the fact that the biological and sociological parents are not one and the same, that there are usually important inequalities between birth and adoptive parents, and that one family has been substituted or exchanged for another through a specific external intervention by the State. But even and especially when, all that is denied, the irreducible fact of genealogical difference remains and creates the special conditions under which issues of adoptive identity have to be negotiated and lived out.

It is not only children who may have a stake in fairy tale adoptions with happy endings based on establishing some kind of elective affinity between all the members of the adoption triangle. In the era of open adoption, social workers too, may be strongly motivated to entertain similar ideas. In an earlier period, story lines which stressed an apparent

symmetry of lacks - childless parents and parentless children fulfilling each other's emotional needs - may have worked to conceal an asymmetry in which the birth parents' loss was the adoptive parents' gain. More recently versions of the adoption story which either deny the salience of 'race' as a site of difference, or transform it into the guarantee of bonding between adoptive parents and child, may produce similar effects. In all these cases, the 'fairy story' may support a collusive denial of genealogical differences.

I say 'may', because we still know very little about the way the official textbook models of adoption are actually communicated and lived out by the people most directly concerned. This is not just a matter of looking at how adoption policies are implemented by particular agencies or interpreted by individual social workers, or how far they are consciously acted upon by parents or children. It concerns the imagery and narratives, through which patterns of identification are conveyed, or resisted; the subtle structures of feeling and fantasy which are evoked and the strategies of disavowal which may be mobilized. One of the problems with much of the research, which is invoked both for and against transracial adoption, is that it often rests on rather crude, reductive measurements of attitude and outcome and ignores these 'other scenes' which govern the unofficial (and usually unauthorized) versions of the adoption story.

This leads us on to a further set of considerations about how policy issues are contextualized within a particular reading of adoption history. Most authorized accounts, tell a story of continuous progress, from the bad old days of the orphanage and foundling hospital, to the age of enlightenment represented by current practice. Such 'Whig interpretations' repeat at the level of grand narrative the success stories told about individual cases, in the idioms of child rescue with their familiar sequence of unhappy beginnings, the struggle to overcome them and the happy ending.

Alternatively, it may be a story of continuous oppression and resistance, where the heroes are not the child savers but the victims of their misguided philanthropy, whose onward march to justice is inspired by the vision of an altogether different kind of better world.

In both cases, however, it becomes rather difficult to account for the discontinuities and contradictions which inevitably comprise the history of both individual adoptees and the institution of adoption itself.

This reading of history has thrown a long shadow over the contemporary debate. The defenders of transracialism often argued for it as an extension of traditional enlightenment ideals which supposedly informed social policy. It was a way of making progress towards greater racial harmony, tolerance and understanding, inspired by universal values of human welfare, and charity. Others, no less committed to the ideal of progress, were more embarrassed by what its opponents implied the practice, might be continuous with namely paternalistic racism. They tended to suggest that it was an emergency measure forced upon them by a specific set of circumstances beyond their control: the large number of childless White couples and Black children in care, together with the dearth of Black families interested in fostering or adopting them. Demography and market forces were thus made to combine to make a history in which ideology had no place.

In contrast, the anti lobby has tended to operate with a conspiracy theory of adoption history in which the ideology of White suprematism is the main driving force. Transracialism is seen as not only continuous with the history of Black oppression since the days of slavery, but with a whole range of other racist practices in contemporary White society, designed to ensure that Black people are kept in their subordinate place. From this vantage point, whatever the context or conjuncture, racism is always the same old story. To end the practice of transracial placement was thus to make a decisive break with the past, to ensure that 'never again' would history repeat itself.

If we try to locate this debate in a rather different model of history, one which is as concerned to trace patterns of disjuncture in the way ideologies are reproduced - as to detect patterns of difference in the way identities are made and remade - then we might want to question both these readings and to suggest alternative points of historical departure for understanding the contemporary debate.

In what follows I have tried to develop three main propositions:

The pragmatics of transracial adoption proceed neither from traditional humanistic ideals of welfare nor from tactical expediency. Their conditions of possibility lie in particular discourses of family and childhood, which do indeed articulate adoption practices to certain exclusionary definitions of 'race' and nation.

2. These discourses are not, however, specific to the history of Black oppression, nor are they necessarily continuous with other practices of racism experienced by Black or White ethnic minorities in Britain today. They developed historically as a means of legitimating the adoption of children from the poorest sections of the White working class into the families of well-to-do middle class professionals, or their transportation to the colonies. Trans-class placements, which continue to be the norm, have always been articulated to discourses of 'race' and nation. It is only recently that Black people in Britain have become their main focus.

3. The rhetorical terms to which transracial placements have been opposed and have ended, in the 1980's, far from representing a break with the past, they have actively reinstated many elements from earlier models of adoption, supposedly superseded by more enlightened practices. This return of the repressed, may well serve to delegitimize same race placements unless its special effect is recognized.

Adoption as A Civilizing Mission

The adoption agencies which emerged at the high point of Victorian philanthropy were often inspired by evangelical Christianity. This was the case not only of Dr. Barnardo's but the ventures founded by Anne McPherson, William Quarrier and many others. As such the language and strategies of these early child savers were heavily influenced by the example of missionary societies who had played such an important role in rationalizing the British colonization of Africa and the Caribbean. By the 1880's, it was the 'dark continents' at home, the slums and rookeries of 'darkest England' which were a cause for public concern. The Social Imperialists, in particular, argued that these conditions produced crime, immorality and the breakdown of family life on a scale which threatened the wellbeing of the nation and even the 'future of the Imperial race'.

The position of children was seen to be symptomatic of these processes. Rising rates of illegitimacy and child abandonment were hailed as living proof of the degenerative effect of the urban/industrial environment. The theme of child rescue became quickly associated with images drawn from the civilizing mission to natives in the colonies. Destitute children were often referred to as 'Street Arabs'; they were portrayed as wild, unkempt, in a semi savage state, as a result of their early privations. For purposes of fund raising, the 'child savers'

softened the incipient threat of the Street Arab into the more vulnerable and appealing figure of the 'waif and stray'. The message was clear; with a mixture of Christian charity, quasi-parental discipline and hard work, some at least, of these potential delinquents, might have their young feet set on the straight and narrow path to grow up into honest citizens, who were some approximation of the God Fearing Englishmen and Women who had cared for them.

In principle the radicalism of the choice for family adoption, as opposed to continued placement in an orphanage, juvenile reformatory, Workhouse or some other institution, lay in its practical stand against the more deterministic theories of child development, which during this period derived largely from the tenets of racial anthropology and psychology.

The eugenicists, for example, continually stressed the connection between the health of the family and the nation, and the dangers of what they called 'nomadism' to both. Immigrants, unemployed or casual workers, and abandoned children growing up on the streets, were all lumped together as members of the dangerous classes because they were regarded as having no fixed abode, and thus no stake in either family or nation. Special measures were needed to restrict the 'natural promiscuity' of these groups and prevent their rampant reproduction from endangering the health of British racial stock.

Juvenile reform institutions aimed to do this by providing a moral regime based on some approximation to the Protestant work ethic, and designed to inculcate industrious habits, social deference and sexual restraint in equal measure. In practice, children in these 'homes' were prepared for various kinds of unskilled manual labour and domestic service.

Against these views the early advocates of family adoption were often inspired by the belief that just as some colonial populations could be civilized or Europeanized, so the children of immigrants and the labouring poor could overcome the deficiencies of their birth, provided they were got young enough and subjected to the right kind of corrective family influence. In principle,(but not as we will see always in practice,) family placement, regulated by careful agency selection, held the promise of social elevation undreamt of by all but the most aspirant sections of the working class. As sociologists would say today, it was designed to be a form of sponsored social mobility.

In this period, the idea that individuals could 'change classes' challenged the still prevalent model of a society divided into separate estates. Many members of the traditional governing elite still believed that social distinctions and inequalities were innate, and that no matter what, 'breeding will out'. It is significant that opposition to the Adoption Act of 1926 largely came from members of the House of Lords, who felt that by making the adopted child the legal heir of the adopted parents, the very foundations of aristocratic inheritance were being undermined. What price primogeniture as a means of keeping the estate together, or patrimony as means of ensuring unbroken lines of descent when the eldest child might be adopted, and be of common, even degenerate, stock ?

Family adoption was thus initially a strategy of class assimilation, predicated on the ideal type of the Victorian and Edwardian middle class family, and modelled on forms of colonial paternalism. It was a case of class mediated by religion. The criteria for selecting both babies and parents were largely denominational and were driven by intense rivalry between the Church of England, Methodist, Catholic and Jewish adoption societies. As a result the family was seen and judged not as an isolated unit but as part of an imagined community associated with religious faith. The cultural capital which was to be bestowed upon the child by its new family was represented primarily as a spiritual inheritance.

This model served a number of purposes. Religious adherence provided a putative link between birth and adoptive parents in a way which might serve to conceal, neutralize, or transcend possible discrepancies in social status. Religion was made into an internal guarantee that what was passively inherited from the family of origin, might yet be put to good account; and finally it provided the occasion for sectarian philanthropy. There was a frequent assumption that better-off members of the religious community should support their poorer brethren, and what better and more practical way than by volunteering to bring up their children?

In all these cases, religious identity had a further and more hidden function in sealing the bond of silence encompassing the fact of adoption itself. All that mattered was that the child was being brought up in the faith. Adoption was thus implicitly a strategy for enlarging the population of the faithful, while maintaining a principle of closed reproduction. This was of particular concern to religious and ethnic minorities. The Jewish and Catholic Societies were largely formed out of a concern that children should not be lost through adoption to other

religious cultures. Although there was little opposition to outsiders marrying in to the faith (as long as the children would be brought up Jews or Catholics), marrying out, like adopting out was seen as an act of betrayal. Jewish and Catholic couples and/or families were therefore actively encouraged to adopt children of their own faith. Adoptive endogeny was the rule.

This essentially defensive response to the 'evangelism' of the protestant agencies, helped to disseminate the idea of adoption as a superior form of child rescue, to a wider audience. En route it also helped to widen the social basis from which adoptive parents themselves might be recruited. Religious conviction might in some cases, be regarded as more important than even marital or material status in considering the suitability of placements. Single professional women and respectable artisan families could thus be included within the fold, provided they could persuade the agencies that they too could offer a moral and social environment which approximated to some notional ideal of a religious upbringing.

There were however, contexts where religious matching served to strengthen the boundaries of class rather than to transcend or diffuse them. In many Irish Catholic and Jewish working class districts, there were processes of customary or informal fostering and adoption, which ensured that not only orphans or abandoned children, but children from large families who were temporarily 'too much' (or one too many) for their parents, were taken in and cared for either by close relatives, or by friends who lived in the neighbourhood. Only as a last resort, where these immediate networks failed or were simply not available, would an adoption society, charity or religious organization be approached for help .

This was most likely to happen in contexts where illegitimacy was regarded as a major stigma, depriving the mother of access to sources of support within the family or the community. Similar informal practices existed amongst the English working class. If the mother died, or could no longer cope, children were often 'farmed out' to neighbours or kin, on a temporary or permanent basis. Illegitimate children were often brought up by 'uncles' or 'aunts' who were in fact their birth parents.

As the term 'farming out' suggest, this practice derives from pre-industrial strategies for dealing with surplus or unwanted children. From at least the sixteenth century it was a common practice to 'put out' children of both sexes, as apprentices or servants to other families, as soon as they reached an age when they could look after themselves. If the child

was to learn a trade, a premium would be paid and a formal indenture agreement drawn up, setting out the rights and obligations of both master and apprentice/servant; otherwise the child's employer simply gave an informal undertaking to act 'in loco parentis'. A somewhat similar contractual arrangement was made to apprentice orphans and foundlings 'on the parish' - whereby they would be 'put out' to local employers, who undertook to feed and clothe them and provide them with 'training in good habits' in return for their labour. Needless to say the whole system was subject to abuse, largely due to its private, unregulated character. Stories of cruel treatment and harsh exploitation by brutal masters, was a common thread linking the lives of orphans, foundlings, apprentices and servants in pre-industrial society.

If today this whole arrangement strikes us as odd, it must be remembered that in a patriarchal society, at a time when production was still centred in the family, the relationship of child to parent was closely approximated to that of apprentice to master, or servant to mistress. Some elements of that 'pre-industrial' model were conserved in the family ideologies of the industrial working classes, especially amongst artisans, and the more 'respectable' manual workers. The apprenticeship model of child rearing also became linked to new ideas of self help and self improvement which were becoming current amongst the labour aristocracy and lower middle classes in the late Victorian period. The two elements were combined in unofficial forms of fostering and adoption, which were improvised to deal with illegitimate and unwanted children. The rationale for 'putting out' these children to other families was both to avoid the stigma attached to their presence and to better their life chances elsewhere. It seems likely that this model was confined to the more privileged strata, who had access to the networks of the resources on which it depended. It was the more disadvantaged groups, single mothers, destitute families, who were forced to surrender their children to the early adoption agencies.

It would be wrong to suggest, that the institution of legal adoption, through family placement, supervised by statutory or voluntary bodies, and inspired by religious/philanthropic concerns, marked a decisive break from long established traditions of child indenture and farming out, or from strategies for policing the dangerous classes based upon eugenic principles. Up until the Second World War, these different strands in public thinking, were often intertwined in agency philosophies and practice.

The now notorious child migrant scheme, which sent over 150,000 children to the colonies from the 1880's up to the 1950's, is a good case in point. Although it was directly inspired and largely organized by religious philanthropy, it was not just about reclaiming lost souls from a life of vice and crime on the streets of London or Liverpool. The evangelists of child migration also spoke in eugenic terms about the need to improve the racial stock, by increasing the White population in the colonies. These two priorities were easily reconciled. For example, sending good English Protestant children to Canada was a means of buttressing the colony against French Catholic influence.

The scheme was based on a version of the customary 'farming out' system. Children were usually placed as 'apprentices' and domestic servants on farms, in the rural interiors of Canada, Australia, and South Africa. A glowing picture was painted of the healthy outdoor life these children would enjoy while they learnt a trade. The halo of betterment still surrounding customary fostering was adumbrated with Social Imperialist rhetorics about ensuring the future of the race in a Greater Britain overseas. Only in Rhodesia, where child migrants were placed in educational institutions designed for the white elite were these ambitions realized. Elsewhere the scheme involved a particularly brutal form of indentured labour with punitive overtones. In Australia there was a strong historical association with the practice of transporting convicts to the colonies. Of course the families, in which they were placed, were by definition, still organized along traditional patriarchal lines, so that it seemed entirely natural to regard children as a source of labour power, and adoption as a form of poor relief. The extent of sexual and physical abuse suffered by these children, may not have been unconnected with the memories they evoked of the despised status of the first White settlers, from which so many of their new 'parents' were descended.

An even crueler twist to the tale was added by the application of closed adoption procedures, which severed all links with the birth parents. In many cases children were told that their parents were dead, when they were not; even if this did not happen, once children had been cajoled or bribed into 'volunteering' to go, they were in effect given a one way ticket to orphanhood. Even though very few children were ever legally adopted by families in their new country, communication with relatives or friends back in England was discouraged and sometimes actively prevented. Maintaining such ties would, it was argued, prevent the young migrants from putting down roots and making a fresh start. In fact, the only point of

continuity in their lives, was the harshly authoritarian nature of the institutional regimes to which they were subject in both 'mother country' and colonies.

In retrospect, what is significant about the child migrant scheme, is that it combined elements of both legal and customary adoption in a way which ensured that the children had the worst of both worlds: apprentices who never grew up to be masters, migrants who found themselves in juvenile penal colonies rather than the promised lands, adoptees who were made to lose one set of parents, but never gained another.

Here we have a clear example of a case where discourses of race, nation and empire directly presided over injustices, systematically done to large numbers of White working class children under the rubric of adoption as a civilizing mission. This was not the result of the application of some single all embracing ideology, still less a 'genocidal conspiracy' to rob the proletariat of its youth, but rather it was the outcome of a complex articulation of many different elements, some of which, in different contexts and conjunctures, held quite other implications. As we will see, this story has all too contemporary reverberations for the debate on transracial adoption.

3. Hidden Agendas in the Adoption Contract: From Physical Matching to Emotional Bonding.

The child migrant scheme highlights an important distinction between customary and legal adoption, which has to do with the nature of the contract involved. Whereas farming out, in its original form, depended on processes of negotiation, carried out through informal social networks, and was therefore, in principle, if not always in practice, both traceable and revocable, legal adoption in its closed version, involved a contract regulated by the State, which severed absolutely, the links between the two families and kept the facts of their early life, secret from the child, by placing all documentation in a sealed record. The 1926 Act institutionalized a process of collusive denial at the heart of adoption proceedings. Adoptees were not only kept in ignorance about their birth parents, but had no right to trace or contact them. Instead they were inducted into a fictional kinship system, in which they were made to believe that their adoptive parents were the only ones they had.

It was not enough, however, to maintain the official secret of adoption by law. A more active and subjective principle of concealment was required, if legal fiction was to be lived as autobiographical fact. For this, adoption agencies mobilized a further way of classifying and selecting their baby and parent populations – that of physical features. The ideal was the perfect physical match - the baby or child should have the same colour hair and eyes, the same skin colouring and facial type, the same build and constitution as its adoptive parents. This was supposed to enable the adoptee to pass as the natural child of its new parents. It was to provide a cover story and avoid questions being asked. This practice originated with commercial 'baby farming', in which infertile couples paid a premium to a private agency to supply them with a suitable offspring. It was carried over into the matching criteria applied by public adoption societies .

In so far as physical matching occurred, and again we do not yet know how far the ideal was realized in practice, the adoptee was invested with a purely imaginary biological identity, which effectively concealed the fact of genealogical difference. Moreover if the child did become aware that its sociological parents were not its biological ones, and it seems that despite the 'evidence' of physical resemblance, and the lack of alternative information, many children grew to sense it, they were left in a hopeless double bind. Either they were a virgin birth, the offspring of a couple who could not have children; or they had been begotten by some strange process of coupling that did not involve parents at all. In neither case was it easy for them to keep in mind a model of intercourse as a process of procreation or, if they did, to consider themselves as anything other than freaks. Until we are able to carry out more research with people who were adopted under these regimes, we have no means of telling just what the impact of being inducted into such a phantasmatic relation to one's own body and origins, has on the subsequent emotional development and inner life of individuals.

Whether this practice could be described as racial matching is a moot point. It certainly may have involved the deployment of racial typologies; babies and parents may have been variously classified as Celtic, Anglo-Saxon, Semitic , as an adjunct to religious/ ethnic matching processes. In the case of babies of mixed parentage, the imputed possession of 'Jewish' 'Irish' or 'English' features may have been used to differentiate between them.

We just do not know enough about the early history of adoption agencies or their practices, to be able to say what weight was attributed to physical characteristics as opposed to moral or

social criteria in making placements. It does seem unlikely, however, that the practice was fully racialized, simply because the racist assumption - that moral mental and social characteristics can be inferred from physical ones, also implies that these characteristics are only transferable through blood relationships. The eugenic belief, for example, was that children of inferior stock would not only be morally defective, but introduce their congenital taint in hitherto healthy strains of the population through inter-breeding. Physical matching assumed the opposite, that a 'make believe' racial resemblance would create the social conditions for changing the direction of mental and moral development, and in this way 'constitutional deficiencies' might be largely overcome.

During and after the Second World War the view that nurture could prevail over nature was given added impetus by new theories of child development. Attachment theory as elaborated by John Bowlby and his associates at the Tavistock Clinic became widely influential in the child welfare field. This work arose out of research into maternal deprivation during the war years, and more especially the experience of evacuees - the largest experiment in fostering ever undertaken. Perhaps as a result the issue of loss, whilst being made central to the account for the first time, was treated as contingent on particular traumatic life historical events rather than as a structural condition of human subjectivity.

Bowlby's model stressed both the plasticity of the early attachments as well as the permanence of their effects in later life. The human infant could become emotionally attached to a woman who was not its birth mother, provided that this happened early enough and in a favourable environment. Bowlby's views were important in rationalizing a shift in policy, away from institutional care in children's homes and towards long term fostering and adoption even for older children and those with special needs.

In the 1960's, Bowlby's ideas were also taken up in a more simplistic vein, in a burgeoning literature of popular psychology, especially via primers for good parenting, produced by women's magazines. Data drawn from ethological studies of primate behaviour was used selectively and in combination with elements drawn from folk psychology, produced the notion of primary emotional bonding between mother and infant as being the key to the individual's future well-being in life. If that bonding process, did not occur, or was interrupted, the child would fail to develop a satisfactory personality and all manner of social pathology would result.

The magical power of bonding was thus linked to a new mystique of motherhood and this in turn was connected to changing ideologies of the nation and of family life. The movement to rebuild post war Britain through the operation of a welfare state required a new 'orthopaedics' of child development in which the citizen parent (and especially the mother) was educated into new responsibilities for ensuring the healthy mental and emotional development of the next generation. For example it became the mother's job to encourage her child in constructive play, since this promoted cognitive and social skills, and prepared the child to do well at school. Healthy psychological adjustment to social norms was thus made a prerequisite of national reconstruction.

At the same time the post war family was invested with a new, specifically therapeutic function. It could, and indeed had to compensate for the emotional damage which had been caused by war time separation and loss. New techniques of surveillance and new theoretical discourses in the human sciences were mobilized in order to open up the psycho-social interior of the family for inspection and reform, since it was this which was regarded as decisive in determining the outcome of child development. The family was thus enclosed within itself; its culture was no longer placed with a wider social nexus, whether of class, ethnicity or religion. The family became its own imagined community. It lacked nothing - except a child - to complete itself. En route the process of attachment or bonding was radically freed from the constraints of physical or cultural matching. Or rather it becomes defined as a process of psychological matching, or identification, which potentially transcended, or denied the salience of cultural or physical differences.

The therapeutic family was at the centre of post war change in the adoption policy. The religious/philanthropic model was largely displaced by new secular articles of faith. Foster carers and adoptive parents were scrutinized for their personality traits and incipient neuroses, rather than (or as well as), their religious beliefs or social standing. They were trained up in theories of child development which privilege their reparative rather than their civilizing function. They became barefoot social workers and counsellors, rather than moral educators. The idioms of child rescue thus took a new psychological turn and new figures appeared in the promotional literature addressed to prospective clients. It was no longer so much a question of reclaiming the wayward child who had been led astray, but of healing the traumatized child whose learning difficulties and delinquencies had been induced by early failure in the bonding process.

En route the foundling made the transition from being a source of additional labour and an object of philanthropic endeavour, to become a focus of emotional investment in the family as a therapeutic enterprise. Adoptees became special in a new way. The stigma of illegitimacy was increasingly lifted from their shoulders by changing social and sexual mores, and the advent of the single parent family. Instead, they were made to carry another burden of representation, as a site for the projection of social hopes bound up with the post war dream of a better, even classless society. Their specialness was intimately connected to the themes of an emergent consumerism; in fact they had been singled out and chosen by their new parents. 'Yours by Choice' as the title of a popular primer for adoptive parents aptly described it.

Adoptees were also made distinctive by the special measures which were now taken to prepare them for placement. The dearth of babies and toddlers (consequent on the changes noted above) plus moves to limit and close down children's homes meant that for the first time significant numbers of older children were available and in demand. New forms of counselling and autobiographical work were developed to help them adjust successfully, and participate in adoption as a therapeutic enterprise. The commonalities of hardship and deprivation which hitherto linked the life stories of orphans, and runaways, the abandoned and delinquent, gave way to a much more differentiated set of provisions, and thus experiences. What henceforth marked out adoptees from their erstwhile peers in adversity was a heightened self consciousness about issues of origins and identity. As a consequence of all these shifts in emphasis, the calculation of invisible emotional assets or deficits now became much more central in selecting and matching children and parents, and these factors in turn regulate the supply and managed the demand for placements.

In principle the new model was more democratic than the old. It was continually stressed that working class parents were as likely to have the desired psychological make up for fostering and adoption as anyone else. In Winnicott's phrase they were certainly 'good enough parents' in providing a warm, emotionally sensitive environment, which would facilitate attachment or bonding. In practice, however, the model worked best for those who already spoke its language, indeed who had already internalized its norms in the process of their own upbringing - namely professional White middle class couples.

This model was greatly popularized in the 1960s and 70's through its links with the personal growth movement, which stressed the possibilities of overcoming early conditioning through a variety of 'liberation therapies'. These would enable people to discover, or retrieve their 'authentic selves', and experience a new oneness with their inner being and the external world. Personal politics, rather than charity now began (and perhaps ended?) at home, and the world could be remade through the adoption of new kinds of relationship which broke the stranglehold of the old bourgeois, patriarchal norms. This may also have provided a personal rationale for White middle class couples adopting black children; once the family was reinvented as its own imagined community it seemed possible for everyone to build a harmonious multi-racial society in their own back yard.

Adoption agencies however were not the places to be caught up in this fervour of social experimentation. The nuclear family, not the commune, remained their ideal for adoptive bonding. Hippies, did not on the whole, come into the category of good enough parents; neither for a long time did single parents or gay couples. Although psychological factors had replaced philanthropic ones, they were still often linked in practice to the operation of traditional moralistic criteria. In particular, the persistence of denominational adoption societies has ensured that religious criteria continue to be used alongside psycho-social ones. It is only recently, and then as a response to demographic as much as ideological pressure, that some agencies have begun to open their doors to nontraditional family units.

The move to transracial adoption was not therefore undertaken in a spirit of commitment to multicultural parenting, or facilitating personal growth, although that may have retrospectively provided a rationale, neither of course, did it evolve in some ideology free realm. Adoption agencies had their own grounds for rationalizing the practice of transracial adoption. This arose from a conjuncture in the 1960's of the following elements:

a model of child development which harmonized with
the experience and values of their traditional base
of recruitment;

a model of bonding and matching which gave primacy to
emotional rather than cultural or physical factors;

a model of the family which discriminated against non traditional or non nuclear forms.

The interaction of these factors meant that practices of advertisement and search, procedures of assessment and preparation, continued to be premised on an ideal type of placement, which indirectly discriminated against large numbers of potential foster/adoptive parents, including those from ethnic minorities. It helped to make the placement of Black children with White families seem both normal and natural when a situation arose in which the supply of White babies dried up.

In breaking with the mandates of the civilizing mission, the psycho-therapeutic model opened up a new space in which issues of adoptive identity and genealogical difference could be officially represented rather than repressed. At the same time these issues were negotiated through the medium of feelings, at a level which seemed to be both classless and untouched by 'race'. Yet in shifting from physical matching to emotional bonding, a hidden agenda was introduced into the adoption contract, inscribing it within an ideology of child and family centredness, which was culturally and socially specific to the White professional middle class, and which rendered other ways of bringing up children suspect. It was this class and colour blindness which set the stage for the subsequent racialization of adoption.

4. Identity Politics: from Roots to 'Race'.

One of the larger ironies of recent adoption history, is that the arrival of the new ethnic minorities as a major force on the scene, has coincided with the displacement of the old religious/philanthropic model which had served the Jewish and Irish communities so well in preventing children being adopted out. Lacking their own agencies, the immediate resort of Black and Asian communities was thus to their own practices of informal fostering and adoption. This did not however, always or even often result in endogenous placement. Many children of West African parentage, for example, were placed with well-to-do White couples on the grounds that this would secure for them certain educational and social advantages. Farming out was, therefore, rationalized as social betterment yet again. At the same time, this practice incurred the concern of social service departments and adoption agencies, on account of its unregulated nature. In any case, the sad fact was, that informal adoption,

whether transracial or not, could in no way cope with the numbers of Black children in need of families during the 1960s and 70's.

There was however, another development in this period which was to offer Black parents and social workers greater purchase within the British adoption scene, and the beginnings of a platform from which to attack the practice of transracial placement. From the early 1960's groups of adoptees began to campaign for access to their adoption records, for the right to know the full circumstances which had led to their adoption, for the means to trace and contact their birth parents, and for the counselling services to help them to deal with the often traumatic effects of disclosure. This search to discover one's true origins, over and against the various cover stories or myths which had been constructed in order to conceal or deny them, inevitably implied a particular model of identity and its role in the formation of the individual personality.

It was a genealogical model, a model of identity as a birthright or inheritance. To inhabit such an identity was to possess an authentic sense of selfhood. To lack such an identity was to lack a core personality, to be deprived of a meaningful sense of roots. The family of origin had now to be included within the imagined community of kith and kin and the search for origins itself, made an integral part of adoption a therapeutic enterprise.

The campaign for the right to know established a new form of identity politics in social work and paved the way for the shift to current policies of open adoption. En route it gave a new twist to notions of bonding, stressing not the plasticity of attachments, but the primordial nature of the link between birth mother and child, and the long term effects of early and traumatic severance on both. When the campaign against transracial adoption began in earnest, in the early 80's, much of its rhetoric about Black identity and the primary importance of roots resonated powerfully with the agenda and language of the earlier movement. If the adoption agencies capitulated so quickly to the demand to introduce, or rather to reinstate the policy of racial matching, it was not only out of fear of being accused of racism, but because this accusation evoked a perhaps more deep rooted sense of guilt about the historical injustice which had been done to generations of White working class adoptees.

By now of course, the stakes around issues of adoptive identity had been decisively raised. It no longer had to do with tracing individual birth parents, but of finding ones roots within a

collective ancestry. The assumption of a Black identity was made to mean more than being proud of one's own immediate origins. It meant actively locating an individual life history within the collective memory of a 'race'. Only if identity was completely racialized, so that no part of it could escape racial determination, and only if family genealogy was defined in the same all embracing racial terms, was it possible to draw an absolute dividing line between White and Black. Equally this was a bodily identity, an identity which was coextensive with the skin, and by definition you were black (or white) all over.

For those campaigning against transracial placements, such water tight binary categories were felt to be essential; otherwise exceptions to the same race rule might multiply to the point where it would become unworkable. For example children of mixed English and Afro-Caribbean parentage, or children who looked White but had some remote African ancestry, or who came from non White ethnic minorities which saw themselves as neither English nor Black, these children might all slip through the net of racial classification, and end up being placed with White families. As we will see the kind of discourses and strategies which had to be used to justify such a rigid system of racial classification had to be applied inflexibly or not at all.

The deployment of the binary typology also inevitably made 'race' the primary principle of matching and bonding. This indirectly created the conditions for a new myth of origins based on physical resemblance. For the placement of 'Black' children with 'Black' families meant that now they too could pass as 'natural', could be provided with cover stories so that no one would ask questions. Indeed one of the key arguments against transracial placement was that the very visibility of the difference between parent and child advertised the fact of adoption, would focus external hostility and internal conflict, and thus undermine the chances of success. Same race placements simply did not suffer from this problem.

The project of assuming a Black identity thus became linked to a principle of equivocation about the fact of the genealogical difference. Differences of class, religion, ethnicity or life style between birth and adoptive parents might be denied, concealed or magically transcended by appealing to an imagined community of shared blackness. The affirmation of pride in common roots might not only provide a framework of protection against racism, but in some cases it might become enmeshed in a collusive denial of the more painful and contradictory aspects of reality underlying not just individual cases of adoption, but the

wider situation of Black and Asian communities in Britain. 'Might' is the operative word here, not just because other, more positive, outcomes are possible, but because research into the psycho-social interior of 'transracial' placements over time has never been carried out in sufficient detail or depth to enable such issues to be addressed with any empirical confidence. In any case, the agenda of debate was set by other priorities that discovering what was actually happening in the hearts and minds of those most intimately involved.

5. Fundamentalisms

Throughout the 1980's the field of adoption policy was one of the front lines of confrontation over the meaning of 'race' in Britain. It became a 'Great Cause', around which a new generation of Black social workers could rally and find their own professional voice. It was also the site of A Great Historical Reckoning, where customary practices which had long characterized the British adoption scene, were for the first time, defined and challenged as racist. The issue had reverberations far beyond the tight knit world of adoption.

In staking its claim, the campaign against transracial adoption spearheaded by ABSWAP (Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professions) drew on elements from both new and old models of adoption and subsumed them within an anti racist perspective whose rhetorics initially owed most to the language of Black cultural nationalism and panAfricanism imported from the USA. This provided a useful formula for exploiting residual White liberal guilt in the social work establishment. Unfortunately the heady mix of militant Afro-centrism, and municipal antiracism (with the odd dash of Marxism) was ready made to put off more traditionalist elements amongst the ethnic minority communities especially the Asian Muslim groups, some of whom were in any case developing alternative strategies based on their own version of religious philanthropy.

At the same time the ABSWAP rhetoric was calculated to provoke confrontation with Thatcherism and the New Right. In fact the emergence of left antiracism was partly a response to the growth of what Martin Barker called the New Racism. This was no longer based on quasi biological arguments about White racial supremacy, but instead stressed the issue of cultural difference and pathology, to restate the assimilationist case. This position was most publicly articulated in Mrs. Thatcher's infamous 'swamping speech', in which she portrayed the threat to 'our traditional way of life' posed by 'alien cultures' and called for a

return to the Victorian values which had made Britain Great. More recently Norman Tebbit's 'cricket test' speech pursued a similar theme.

The new racism combined elements of romantic English nationalism, with a philosophy of libertarian individualism to produce a new version of the civilizing mission. In terms of this framework, the unwillingness or inability of 'some people' to identify with the Tory tunnel vision of Anglo-Saxon history and culture was read as sign of their irredeemable otherness. A line was drawn within and between ethnic minority populations, in terms of those who had adapted to, or espoused the national enterprise culture, and those who had not, because they still clung to a primitive belief in communalism or socialism. The aim was to promote the advancement of the more responsible and deserving elements, whilst isolating and containing those who were regarded as belonging to the new dangerous classes.

New Right Racism found a perfect arena in the debate on transracial adoption, with ABSWAP providing their readymade sparring partners. The case for White families adopting Black children was restated as new form of civilizing mission with the English middle class playing a heroic role in providing a reparative environment in which the emotional and cultural deprivations associated with the Afro-Caribbean family could be overcome. Both sides therefore, drew on similar elements from the philanthropic and therapeutic models, but gave them radically opposed articulations. As a result, pro and anti positions became highly polarized continually feeding off and reinforcing rival political rhetorics, but underneath were riddled by many of the same internal contradictions.

If we briefly review the main terms and protagonists of the debate, we can perhaps see how this works in practice. Take for example the issue of cultural genocide. For John Small, the founder of ABSWAP, transracial adoption is 'a form of internal colonialism, it is like the slave trade, except children are used'. It was removing the Black community's most valuable asset – its children - and represented a fundamental attack on the physical and cultural integrity of the race. This view was more or less literal translation of the arguments put forward by an African American psychologist, Leonard Chestang, who had taken a leading role in the USA debate. For Chestang the fear of cultural genocide was linked with increased racial pride and the anxiety that any dilution of identity would threaten the transcendent feeling of unity in struggle against the oppressor society.

This position was comprehensively attacked by David Dale, a senior social worker who published a pamphlet under the auspices of the Social Affairs Unit, a think tank involved in launching the New Right counterattack against socialist welfare policies during the 1980's. For Dale, the Small/Chestang statements were alarming evidence of a form of political extremism and cultural pathology which was threatening to overwhelm traditional values in social work, values which he also associated with the preservation of English family life. For him the issue was one of parental choice - were parents free to choose the kind of child they wished to adopt? This was, as we've seen, the case which was made for the uniqueness of adoption in the post war period, but one which was now given a sharper and more ideological focus. For Dale the issue of race was secondary - the parents just happened to be White and the children Black, but that in no way affected the general principle of choice.

At first sight then it seems as if the anti and pro positions differ radically in terms of their reading of race. Dale totally denies its relevance. His form of transracialism involves the dogmatic assertion that race is irrelevant to the making of both personal and social identities, whilst at the same time tacitly affirming the superiority of a dominant 'English way of life' in embodying universal human values. For Chestang and Small, in contrast 'race' is the primary determinant of identity in a racist society; their version of antiracism entails the dogmatic assertion of a permeation model of racism - it is everywhere and everywhere the same, coupled with an explicit affirmation of the moral superiority of Black cultural values and life style.

I think it can be argued that both positions are equally concerned with the 'future of the race' - only they are talking about different 'races', in different ways. Both see the present state of race relations through the prism of the imperial past. For Small the adoption of Black children by White families in 1980's Britain recalls the practice under slavery whereby the White master used to adopt some specially favoured children from the plantation and train them up as domestic servants or 'house niggers'. In many cases these were mixed race children whom he had fathered through the exercise of 'droit de seigneur' over 'his' female slaves. The analogy was useful in establishing 'guilt by association'; but is it really an appropriate comparison?

Dale sees history through decidedly more rose tinted spectacles. His arguments evoke an element of noblesse oblige, associated now with the White educated middle class who help

those less fortunate than themselves to get a better start in life. For the New Right, arguments about parental choice are intimately connected with a historical view of private philanthropy and self help as superior alternatives to the welfare state. It was precisely the capacity to help others which staked the original claim to moral and cultural superiority associated with the civilizing mission in the era of Imperialism. Is this really a relevant model to apply to adoption in a multicultural society?

For both sides contemporary race relations are perceived in terms of their similarities or correspondences with certain key historical processes or events. Through the grid of this racialized memory, the varieties of individual experience and events are reduced to a compulsive repetition of the same old imperial story. Where they differ of course, is that Small and Chestang do not want the future of their 'race' to be a repetition of its past enslavement (even if the present is), while Dale and his kind are locked in a collective daydream about the restoration of a form of ethnic hegemony which has already been consigned to the dustbins of history.

Both sides use arguments about cultural difference- the historical uniqueness of the Black experience of oppression in one case, or of the 'inherent tolerance of the English way of family life' in the other, in order to support their claims to occupy the moral high ground from which to pursue particular strategies of social reproduction. Both champion the importance of kith and kin as the privileged means of transmitting invented traditions of imagined community, based on race, ethnicity and nation. At the same time both utilize the new model of adoption to claim unique therapeutic powers for their preferred family forms which lack nothing and leave nothing to be desired. For Small only the Black family can transmit adequate coping mechanisms to enable the Black child to overcome the emotional damage caused by racism. The Black family is a haven of hope in a heartless racist world. For Dale, only the White English middle class family can provide the cultural resources to enable the Black child to overcome the handicap of his racial origin - including, he suggests at one point, its low IQ, and make a successful adjustment to 'the English way of life'. His Anglo-Saxon family is an island of individual freedom and tolerance, amidst a sea of prejudice.

These rival idealizations of cultural self sufficiency and superiority were complemented as always, by strategies of denigration addressed to the other side. For Small, transracial adoption involved a process of pathological bonding, while the

motivations of White parents in wanting a Black child were equally neurotic. For Dale, Caribbean patterns of kinship had failed to adjust to British conditions and family breakdown had caused a whole range of social pathologies, leading to high numbers of Black children and young people in prison, or care. ABSWAP activists in the early 80's accused White parents who adopted Black children of committing soul murder by loving them. The New Right counterattacked by accusing social workers who objected to the racial discrimination of denying Black children homes; and so the slanging match went on.

Perhaps the most striking convergence was in the implicit model of adoption as a process of cultural assimilation. The Black adoptee was supposed to unlearn bad habits (derived in one case from White society, in the other from Black) and model itself on the good example set by its new parents (in resisting racism or promoting civilized standards). This was, to put it mildly, a rather disingenuous view of what is involved in the adoption process. We are dealing with two complementary versions of the same underlying fairy tale. In one case the issue of genealogical difference is disavowed through the assertion of common racial roots binding birth and adoptive parents; on the other, it is denied through an extreme form of colour blindness. In both cases, the child's body is pledged to a myth of origins, in which there is little or no potential space for representing and working through the contradictory identifications which are inevitably present; nor in this version of the adoption story, was there much room for each set of parents to acknowledge that the other had something which they lacked.

A final point of agreement is the strategy of textual citation which is used to authorize the arguments. Due to these arguments resting on priori positions, which derive from ideological abstractions rather than concrete analysis, they have to find some way of justifying their claims by reference to empirical reality. Usually this is done by quoting individual cases which apparently support the line being taken. So we get atrocity stories about Black children being turned into misfits as result of being cut off from their own community, or being treated as White by their adoptive families. We are also given equally sensational accounts of Black children being driven to despair because they are forced to remain in residential care, or are removed from White foster homes by the brutally insensitive policies of same race placement. It is not that such cases do not exist, and do not have important consequences for the individual concerned, but that the rhetorical use which is made of them, loads them with a burden of proof which they cannot possibly sustain.

The citation of research studies follows the reverse strategy. It is not now a question of too much being made of too little evidence, but of complex findings being selectively quoted out of context and boiled down to simple propositions which supposedly corroborate this or that fundamentalist position.

One reason for the apparent symmetry in positions, is that both sides are using reductive monocausal explanations to account for complex multiply determined phenomena, in order to avoid looking at painful realities close to home. What if, for example, it turns out that West African/Caribbean kinship systems, transplanted to the British context do prove to be particularly vulnerable to the disorganizing impact of racism, whilst at the same time provoking compensatory forms of community cohesion which are especially well equipped to produce a vibrant culture of resistance, albeit in ways which are likely to lead to its criminalization. Evidently we need an account which can make as much sense of the bad news as the good.

Equally if White social workers turn out to be more likely to pathologize the Afro-Caribbean family (perhaps in some cases assimilating it to earlier negative stereotypes of the Irish family), whilst holding to a more positive image of Asian families as stable, close knit and committed to self help (possibly corresponding to the Jewish model), then we need a perspective which can distinguish clearly between empirical differences in family forms and the ideological constructions which are placed upon them.

The precise weight to be given to these various instances in explaining the disproportionate number of African Caribbean children in care, and the reluctance of members of their community to foster or adopt them through official channels, is not fixed; it cannot be established in advance of detailed investigation into particular contexts and conjunctures. All that is certain is that the interaction of all these factors will have to be taken into account in the final analysis.

Both sides, it seemed, could recognize one side of the story but not the other. Members of the Association of Black Social Workers and Allied Professions (ABSWAP) felt they had to deny or discredit any evidence which might have shown Black families in a less than favourable light, because this might have lent credence to the pathological model; and it is

indeed true that people like Dale lost no opportunity to make capital out of such evidence, in order to justify their prejudice. At the same time Dale could not afford to admit for one moment, any element of justice in the anti racist case, and persistently denied that cultural racism (such as stereotypical perceptions of ethnic minority client populations) were institutionalized within social work practices. If he were to do so, the foundations of his own arguments might have stood all too clearly exposed.

The reductive nature of the arguments deployed on both sides, was well illustrated in their attitudes to religion. Both had great difficulty in accommodating denominational claims because they introduced an intervening variable which disturbed their rigid system of binary categories, although both, for different reasons would have liked to have been seen to be acknowledging their validity. The fact is that where religion does continue to play a major role in the making of adoptive identities, it is likely to be ethnically or racially marked in a way which does not fit into simple White and Black definitions.

With the notable exception of the anti-Semitic Black Muslim groups in the USA, Islamic fundamentalism and Afro centism have not fused into anything like a coherent ideology. Instead Islam has provided Bangladeshi, Turkish, and Pakistani communities in Britain, with a distinctive politico-religious identity, (especially after the Salman Rushdie affair) in a way which tends to dissociate them from the category Black. Black is effectively reduced to its initial African roots radical meaning. At the same time, the re-introduction of religion, destabilizes - or at least considerably complicates - the category Black as the arbiter of same race placements. For example there may be persuasive grounds for placing a Muslim child of say Turkish origin with a Muslim family even if they are White English, rather than putting them with an Afro-Caribbean family who have no such affiliations, simply on the grounds that they are Black. Ethnically sensitive adoption practice does not necessarily have to mean a ban on transracial placement. Indeed as this example indicates, it can mean the reverse.

The play of differences continually threatens those who hold to purified notions of identity, but how is the problem to be dealt with? For the ABSWAP fundamentalists, Black was first reduced to a biological category and then reconstructed as a 'political colour' so that it could be magically expanded to include a large number of honorary Blacks, including White ethnic minorities like the Irish or the Jews on the grounds that they had a long and honourable history of resisting racism. For the reasons I have just indicated, however, this kind of

subsumption was increasingly recognized and resisted as a disguised form of Afro-Caribbean hegemony.

Transracialists, like Dale, appeared at first to have less difficulty in dealing with difference. They were quick to marshal 'common sense' on their side and point to the nature of parental love as providing the magical ingredient of emotional bonding which transcends social and ethnic divisions. Yet the form which this love was supposed to take was highly normative; it entailed the inculcation of self discipline and respect for authority, which for Dale, were the embodiment of 'traditional family values' associated with 'Old England'.

Here we can see just how far the therapeutic model of adoption has been converted, (or perhaps perverted) by Thatcherite individualism, yet this contains its own contradictions. Transracialism can work either way. This position was, in principle, committed to encouraging the possibility of White children being fostered and adopted by Black parents, provided presumably, the latter had acquired the requisite 'English family values' and passed Mr. Tebbits's cricket test. Although there seemed no immediate 'danger' of this happening, the logic of assimilation would ultimately point towards a scenario with which some of Mr. Dale's supporters might not have felt too comfortable.

The presence of ABSWAP has helped to ensure that the majority of the new Black middle class will reject all forms of assimilationism and practice adoptive endogeny. A tactical, if not ideological, commitment to racial separatism was a necessary component of militancy around the adoption issue. Yet how was ABSWAP to articulate this kind of Black perspective, whilst at the same time legitimating its case by drawing on sources of professional thinking with which White social workers might have felt sufficiently comfortable, or at least familiar, to lend their support?

6. 'Positives and Negatives'

The first problem was that the theories of psycho-social formation, which almost nearly permitted a rigorous determinism to be founded on the term 'race', themselves either rested on racist assumptions or reached conclusions which supported them, as in the work of Jensen and Eysenck. It was necessary to look elsewhere. A gamut of quite disparate, and often

conflicting models from various traditions of Western psychology, were ransacked for ideas which could be pressed into service. Piaget, Klein, Maslow and Erikson all found themselves recruited to the Cause.

How was it possible to assimilate object relations theory, behaviourist accounts of social learning, and functionalist models of cognitive development, to the same story line, to make them say the same thing about race and identity? Clearly this would be to only reduce them all to the same lowest common denominator. They were all apparently about the formation of 'self concepts' and could be used to specify the conditions under which 'negative' or 'positive' images might occur. You only had to affix the term 'Black' or 'race' to the formula to generate a series of prescriptive statements about what should, or should not be done to create 'positive Black identities'. Such statements could then be expanded upon, with some suitably cautionary tales about the identity confusion induced in Black children by being placed with White families.

The subtext in all this was the search for a psychological correlate to the category Black, to ground the construction of Black as a unitary/unifying social category in an equally unitary/unifying model of the psyche. 'Positive identity' was whatever supported the full presence of the Black community itself, across space and time. By definition, such an identity left nothing to be desired; it was constituted by a retrieval of lost origins, in which no trace of Black remained. In this formula, Black was a purely negative concept; indeed it was the very definition of a negative self concept - the subject had been made to feel he or she congenitally lacked certain desired attributes by virtue of internalizing derogatory value judgements placed upon them by others.

In order to fix and essentialise Black identity formation in these terms, it was necessary to work with a model of human psychology which rigorously excluded, or rendered pathological any decentering of the self. Any model which made Black and the other a positive constituent of the subject's desire was taboo. In other words, it was necessary to reject the very theories which were emerging in the 1980's to make a critique of the individualistic, logo centric bias of Western philosophy and psychology. Instead it was these 'Eurocentric' models which were used as the basis of Afro centric definitions of the uniqueness of Black identity.

The problem was compounded whenever attempts were made to introduce a more dynamic mode of analysis. The risk in doing so is that this may also introduce the complexity of actual choices, the contradictoriness of lived positions, into the picture in a way which destroys the fragile, one dimensional, clarity of the argument. To guard against this possibility meant using a model of human socialization based upon rigid developmental laws, governing the unfolding of different stages of the life cycle. Ideally the model should anchor the psychic to the social in an unequivocal way so that at any point the individual always and only has to deal with psychic conflicts prescribed by the social structure. Erikson's model is understandably popular for this purpose, although there are many other less refined versions of the same story line on the market.

The model of 'psychological nigrescence' which was popularized by ABSWAP in the 1980's, took this kind of thinking to its logical conclusion. The Black child who was the victim of transracial adoption was supposed to go through a series of levels or stages: an initial 'pre-encounter' position of alienation or identity confusion, where the subject remained colour blind or refused to recognize that they had been the victim of racism; an 'encounter stage' where the fact of racism was confronted at the level of direct experience, followed by an immersion/emersion stage, where the child embraced a Black identity to the exclusion of everything else. This led to a final position of internalization/commitment, where a new sense of racial pride was installed at the core of the personality and the subject was now free to engage in political activity as a fully fledged member of the Black community.

What is interesting about this model is the way it inscribes a teleological view of Black history, as an onward and upwards march to freedom, in and as a normative schema of, psychological development. In other words, the individual was supposed to repeat or recapitulate the history of his or her 'race' in the course of growing up, moving from the earliest phase of enslavement by racism, to a position of personal and political emancipation. The model does, of course, have a certain resonance, given the way racist discourses infantilize Black people; but whether the struggle against racism followed the unilinear trajectory described here, and whether the individual life course repeated the historical process, is quite another matter. The precedent, if not the provenance, for this kind of recapitulation theory, does in fact belong to the wilder shores of nineteenth century racial psychology, where equations between the infant and the primitive were routine. Stanley Hall, for example, inspired by Social Darwinism, insisted that the Western life cycle involved the

transition from stone age baby to civilized man, even though not everyone (especially the working classes), made it through to the final stage of evolution.

There were, however, alternative story lines. Chestang's theory of the 'dual Black personality', involving a constant interplay between the 'transcendent' and 'depreciated' character, offered a more dynamic version of racial determinism. In this account principles of hope and faith linked to processes of psychological individuation, might be mobilized to acknowledge and overcome self destructive processes, set in motion by racism. These were 'opposites seeking unity', but they might also result in divided selves. Black people needed to learn ways of maintaining equilibrium between the two sides of their personality, primarily through positive identifications with Black culture and history. So here the category 'Black' is promoted into a therapeutic principle of integration, maintaining a sense of unity which might otherwise dissolve into pathological splits.

In all these models, there is certain idealization about the way the positive pole of identification is imagined to function. For example, it assumes a particular tunnel vision of 'Black history' focused on a pantheon of 'heroes and heroines', who will provide 'positive role models', as a means of overcoming damaged self esteem. Other, more complex and possibly less heroic aspects of historical reality are likely to get airbrushed out of the picture. When history becomes an instrument of collective narcissism, or a struggle between goodies and baddies, dialectics are dead.

These theories admit social processes into the psychological, only to fix them there as immobile determinisms. Equally they abstract from intra-psychic processes only those ones which can be made to correspond in a simple, one-to-one way with social structures. This makes the argument largely circular or tautological. For example racist images are said to be internalized, when the individual behaves self destructively in a way which inhibits the expression of racial pride. If the individual does not express a sense of pride in being Black, then this can only be a symptom of a neurotic or self destructive defence mechanism. According to this logic, the possibility that a member of an ethnic minority could behave self destructively and yet not have internalized negative racist stereotypes does not exist. For the 'internal racist' is only ever a model or copy of the external one.

The theories chosen by ABSWAP to state their case were formally adequate for the purposes of making the hard and fast distinction between healthy (same race) and pathological (mixed race) bonding which was so crucial to establishing a new orthopaedics of adoption. If the aim was to persuade White social workers, that the ideas with which they had grown up with, as part of their professional common sense, did after all support the Black perspective, then the strategy must be judged a great success.

The question remains as to whether too high a price has been paid by abandoning the field to impoverished ideas which foreclose the terms of debate. The racialization of adoption and the ensuing polarization has meant that theories or research findings which pointed to a more sophisticated understanding of the issues, tended to be sidelined.

It was especially ironic that none of the ABSWAP advocates could afford to follow in the footsteps of Franz Fanon, the founder of Black liberation psychology, in utilizing elements of Lacanian psychoanalysis to interrogate the discourses of the Other, or the 'sliding signifiers' at work in transcultural identification. Nor could they draw on that tradition of social psychology which demonstrated the historically constructed and culturally relative nature of psycho-social formations. Such models would have rendered permeable the very boundaries they wanted to fix, and made distinctions between levels of reality which they needed to conflate. Perhaps even sadder, in the light of their own roots, radicalism was the failure to draw on models from indigenous African psychology which offered a similarly multi-dimensional reading of identity and difference.

Today, however, these models and evidences are re-emerging in the space created by new debates around open adoption, dual heritage or multicultural parenthood, and inter-country adoption; they also have a new salience in re-opening the debate on transracial adoption, because they address moral dilemmas and social contradictions which have emerged within the practice of 'same race' placements, in a way that the more fundamentalist positions are unable to do. Let us therefore, in conclusion, examine the emergent agenda.

7. Towards a Politics of Difference.

If there is a common thread to the histories we have briefly reviewed in this chapter, it lies in the way successive generations of adopted children, White and Black, have been made to carry a special burden of representation, as the vehicle of wider social ideals and conflicts to do with race. The ideologies and discourses which have made adoptees the object of these adult projections, have further complicated, and sometimes damaged their lives, over and above the inevitable difficulties created by their traumatic early months and years.

In the ordinary course of events, most children are only dimly aware of the wider forces which shape their lives until they are grown up. Then it is too late to do more than trace the effects of what they have been mostly affected by. Adopted children, on the other hand, are in a position to recognize sooner and with greater prescience than most, the role in which particular policies of State, play in the government of the most intimate registers of their identity.

The plea to 'put children first', cannot then mean the building of some kind of 'ideology free zone', in which pure disinterested decision making takes place. This is a rationalist utopia, which has historically been fully complicit with a whole variety of knowledge/power games; it promises a state of enlightenment, which belies the vested interests which are inevitably in play.

If we are to give greater priority to both the overt and hidden agendas which children bring with them into the adoption process, we have to be more, not less, aware of the structural and unconscious processes which shape them; only on that basis can we work with children to create a space in which they can articulate the questions which are important to them.

These questions will be all the more awkward in so far as the answers do not fit neatly into the pigeon holes provided by what I have called the 'new orthopaedics' of adoption. Consider for example the big questions - why couldn't my birth mother look after me? Why did she give me up for adoption? Who or where is my birth father? Although these questions appear to be simple requests for information (and should be answered as such), they are always phrased through structures of feeling which go beyond that, to a problematic state of being which is more easily expressed in the theatre of the body, than in words: what marked me out for abandonment? How is it possible for me to reverse that fate?

Whatever circumstantial evidence is conveyed to the child, it provides raw material for a reconstruction of events organized into a myth of origins, which at some level allows the child to provide an answer to that more fundamental issue in a way which provides principles of hope. This personal mythography can be as simple as a make believe genealogy, or as elaborate as a fictional life story. It usually equips the child hero with an exalted or exotic parentage, associated with the birth or adoptive family; a promise is made that one day the child will come into its rightful inheritance, and all the wrongs suffered as a result of its abandonment, will be magically redressed, so that everyone will live happily ever after.

This fairy story can undergo infinite variations on its basic theme. The child may be re-united with its birth parents, or return to wreak vengeance on them; Black children may invent rich White uncles, White children find their 'roots' in some imaginary Caribbean paradise. Poor parents can be transformed into millionaire film stars, conventional middle class families can be made to inhabit a more excitingly bohemian world. The point is, that these phantasies do not stand in any simple relation to social reality; they cannot be legislated for or against, by some kind of social engineering of the child's world.

As these constructions are about fictive families centred on imagined relations to The Other, not actual identifications, they cannot be used to measure or read off social attitudes. Black children in 'same race placements', are just as likely to need to invent imaginary White companions to support their heroic deeds as those living with White foster parents. Conversely, it may well be that 'transracial' adoptees, are more likely to choose 'same race' figures as the co-natural support of their more adventurous autobiographies, provided that the difference between their two sets of parents has neither been disavowed, or made into an unbridgeable divide. The fact that children can make up tall stories about themselves featuring imaginary kinships with other 'races' or classes, is not necessarily a sign that they are suffering from 'identity confusion' or a 'failure to choose appropriate role models'; on the contrary, it can indicate that their powers of imagination have not been damaged beyond repair.

'Race' provides one of a number of available image repertoires, which children may use to explore through phantasy the vicissitudes of early adoptive identity. For adolescents the situation is complicated by internal and external pressures to produce purified identities purged of all trace of dependence on the m(other). Totalizing ideologies which operate this

kind of closure, by splitting the world into goodies and baddies, and stressing singular, exclusive, and inherent sources of 'authenticity', are understandably, popular supports for the adolescent project. At this stage the issue of genealogical difference is displaced from the family, to the peer group. White working class children adopted by middle class couples, find ways of re-appropriating elements of that 'other scene' through involvement in the teenage worlds of street life, drug culture, heavy metal, disco land, or whatever else can be regarded as dangerously 'common'. Afro-Caribbean children placed in White families may, in addition, become roots radicals, or Bangladeshis discovering one of the many roads to Islam.

But, and it is a big but, these experiments are only possible on condition that adoptive parents do not foreclose the issue of difference, either by repressive toleration or overzealous celebration. It is as destructive to force children to learn about their roots, as it is to ignore the fact that they have another history and culture from which their adoptive parents are by definition excluded. Cosy tolerance practiced by the complacent for whom difference is immaterial, is as undermining as the determined insistence on inculcating alternative ethnocentrism. Differences will have to be made and negotiated through anger, pain, rejection and revolt, before they can create new alliances based upon more qualified, and mature identifications. This is true for all adolescents, but especially so in the case of adoptees, for whom difference is intimately connected with separation and loss.

Secondly, adolescents need access to appropriate youth cultures, in which the play of identity and difference is sufficiently rich and varied so as to enable them to explore the elements of their dual heritage, and find their own individual niche. All adoptees by definition have a dual heritage; this fact may be more easily hidden under the rubrics of 'race and class' matching, than in situations where it is, from the outset, an undeniable fact of life. Sub cultural styles may provide a medium in which the drive for purified identities is tempered by a playful bricolage of elements drawn from a diversity of sources, East and West, Black and White, masculine and feminine, working class and middle class and where everyone is taking part in some game of adoptive identity.

This kind of situation is only found where these cultures already interface, in other words in multi-ethnic areas of large conurbations. You won't find it in the English countryside, in market towns, or the White middle class suburbs - the so called 'White Highland' areas. Moreover this kind of creative hybridity is a special feature of Black and Asian youth

cultures and flourishes in contexts where White ethnicity and popular racism are also strong on the ground. It is not at present likely to be available to child immigrants brought to Britain through inter-country adoption, who at best may have access to only very small and highly localized refugee communities. Yet even under these circumstances ways may still be found of creating a symbolic space outside the family, in which the child can explore its dual heritage. Diaspora is an *imagined* community, and you do not necessarily have to be physically located in its midst, in order to sustain a meaningful sense of membership, though it clearly helps.

In and against multi racist Britain, hybrid ethnicities are increasingly becoming the cultural norm. Inter-marriage and mixed-race relationships of every kind are producing a new generation in which purified notions of 'Englishness' or 'Blackness' are a standing joke, especially amongst the young. Amongst many White working class children, this is producing its own inverse form of transracial adoption. 'Rap' and 'Rude Talk' become the dominant vernacular, a currency through which the local hegemony of Afro-Caribbean culture is negotiated by White and Asian youth, enabling them to entertain an imaginary kinship with this 'other race'. This situation is duplicated in many children's homes, where these children identify strongly with the style of resistance relayed by their Afro-Caribbean peers, seeing in it a form of self empowerment directed against the world of Them. As a result many would prefer to be fostered or adopted by Afro-Caribbean parents, rather than by 'their own kind'; sometimes they get themselves adopted as a kind of mascot by local Black 'posses'. To be the only White member of a 'Black' gang is to become your own do-it-yourself ethnic minority; it is to embrace a difference which hides or cancels the fact that you are adopted. What looks from the outside like a personal antiracist statement, turns out, on closer inspection, to be based on a form of splitting in which the idealized Black is contrasted with denigrated 'paki', a position which is often echoed by Afro-Caribbean youth themselves.

It is important then to be able to distinguish between various forms of adoptive identification. To want to have the good things associated with the other 'race', or class, without the concomitant disadvantages, is 'normal' in our kind of society. To seek to emulate the sound system or street strut of the Black 'yardie', without having to endure the racism, or to possess a BMW car and yuppie life style without the compulsive work ethic needed to pay for it, is par for the life course in the post Thatcherite era. To want to destroy these things because you realize you cannot have them is also an all too normal part of our contemporary

culture of envy. To want to *be* Black when you are White, or vice versa, is an altogether more pathological enterprise. There is a world of difference between wanting to take the Others place, and wanting to be the Other.

A similar distinction perhaps needs to be made in considering relationships to racism. There are two significant positions. The first is manic denial - racism simply does not exist, or only affects other people. The second is based on the permeation model, in which racism becomes a global persecutory power, and the subject loses the ability to discriminate between people or practices which are racist, and those which are not. In both cases racist discourses may become articulated through an 'internal saboteur'.

This cruel and perverse figure, is a symbolic representation of what Freud called the 'death instinct', and is mobilized against what or whoever promises greater hope and vitality (such as the adoptive family). The British psychoanalyst Fairbairn, pointed out the element of dissimulation, which is often involved in this process. The internal saboteur is a seductive bully, a psychic confidence trickster, who makes capital out whatever vulnerabilities are exposed when important struggles for emotional growth are taking place. In the same way the internal racist sabotages actual struggles against discrimination by offering an omnipotent, or omniscient standpoint, from which they are judged to be irrelevant, either because of their necessarily limited nature, or because they are aimed at something which is supposed not to exist. Adoptive families, whether Black or White, where the issue of genealogical difference is both racialized and disavowed, give this figure more than usual room for manoeuvre.

The 'internal saboteur' feeds off anxieties which are stirred up whenever the subject has to take a step into the unknown. In cases of adoption, where the child is deliberately kept in ignorance about significant factors affecting placement, anxiety is likely to be especially intense and get structured unconsciously through this figure. One of the ironies of the current situation is that while race continues to be a decisive factor in placement, it is no longer discussed as an issue. In the era of open adoption, a veil of silence has been drawn over the whole question; in some agencies, social workers who may have reservations about the way current policies are being implemented are discouraged or afraid to voice their objections, in case they are accused of being racists. Political correctness 'rules OK', and gives the real reactionaries plenty of scope to make ideological 'mountains out of molehills'. Although the children concerned may be unaware of what has been going on 'behind the scenes', at a

deeper and more unconscious level, they are undoubtedly affected by the climate of such regimes.

Against all this, I have tried to show that there are arguments to be made both for and against transracial and inter-country adoption which are not beholden to fundamentalist positions and which make dialogue more rather than less possible. I have tried to spell out some of the psychic and social conditions which may make for more or less successful outcomes and to indicate some of the problems and possibilities of different types of placement. Running through all this, is the notion that we need a much greater understanding and sensitivity to the complexities of individual life histories, so that decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis, rather than on generalities.

The cultural politics of difference which I have tried to sketch out here, point towards an alternative model of race and adoptive identity. It also points us towards models of self which derived from non European cultures. Here for example is the way identity is constructed in Yoruba culture, certainly as multivocal as anything produced by Western psychology and more relevant to the issues I have been discussing in this chapter than most. I have put in brackets the possible points of correlation:

- a) the hereditary self - the soul of the ancestors (the body image linked to birth parents);
- b) the divine self - which belongs to god (religious or affiliation);
- c) the individual self - qualities of personality (language of the self);
- d) the shadow or unconscious self - the indestructible part of the self which leaves the body at the time of its birth, but which remains present in dreams (the Unconscious -discourse of the other within);
- e) the social self which acquires or loses status through a series of transitions in the life cycle (social identity linked to the adoptive parents).

For the Yoruba, there is no pre-established harmony between these different selves. In particular moments or contexts, one or other may be especially significant. War may break out between them when one tries to dominate or destroy another. This is likely to happen when, due to internal or external pressures, the subject loses that sense of balance which the Yoruba describe as 'cool'. This seems to me to be a very useful model to apply to thinking about what is in play in the formation of adoptive identities in general.

As regarding principles of matching, the syncretic African Brazilian religion of Candomble provides us with a very interesting model, one in which the priest tries to find a suitable spirit or Orixá which represents significant aspects of the personality of the individual devotee. The spirit, to whom a person is dedicated, is not chosen arbitrarily. The choice is the outcome of careful enquiry and considered judgement by the cult priest. The initiate's character must correspond with the character of the Orixá spirit to whom they are dedicated. The priest must choose a spirit; one or more of whose aspects matches the personality of the initiate as closely as possible. Since it is recognized that most people display extremely complex personalities, with characteristics which may correspond to more than one Orixá spirit, the initiate is dedicated to the spirit whose characteristics they share mostly with. So a large number of people may be dedicated to the same spirit, but no two people can be dedicated to the same spirit to exactly the same degree. Specific names are given to the spirit with whom they are identified, in order to make some distinction. Usually this takes the form of an epithet which comes after the common name. In other words the framework is flexible enough to adapt to individual cases rather than mechanically apply an a priori rule.

Here, finally, is a summary of the main points about 'race' which are relevant to issues of adoption. They are offered as points for further discussion and research, not as a blue print for change.

One: If races do not exist except as ideological constructs, and if they carry no weight in determining human behaviour except in so far as they are the referents of racist practices, then it makes no sense (except racist sense) to talk about whether or not to place a child from one 'race' in a family from the same or another 'race'. However the process of adoption may become more or less racial-ized, in so far as the practices of placement become articulated through debates in which the term 'race' is used to signify the complex relation between a dominant society and its 'ethnic minorities'.

Two: Racism is not a unitary phenomenon, either in its origins, its functions or its effects. It takes a multiplicity of forms, is directed at a wide variety of groups, and changes according to context and conjuncture. For example popular or working class racism tends to patronize or

even idealize aspects of Afro-Caribbean culture as having 'street cred' or 'style', whilst denigrating Asian communities for their supposed lack of these qualities. In contrast, the racism of the New Right, patronizes and even idealizes aspects of Asian culture as representing the 'traditional English' values of family, thrift and hard work, whilst attacking the Afro-Caribbean community for supposedly lacking these virtues. Another example: anti-Semitism and Orientalism, represent distinct modes of racism which are not confined in their application to Jews or immigrants from the Far East, and can be combined in various ways with elements from other racisms.

It follows that the skills required to resist these racisms are as specific as the practices against which they are directed. Such skills are neither innate, nor simply acquired through experience. They are not the monopoly of any one group. They have to be acquired and transmitted by particular kinds of anti racist education. How can this best be done as part of the adoption process?

Three: Identities are not fixed, or total, or defined by what they are not. It is entirely possible for the same people to identify themselves at the same time or successively as Black, British, Welsh, Londoners, East Enders, Working Class, Muslims and Bangladeshi, without experiencing membership of these different and overlapping imagined communities to be a source of confusion, even if in some circumstances it may lead to conflicting loyalties. The conditions of Diaspora communities lend themselves to this process of multivocal or hybrid identity formation, both as a way of refusing the closures imposed by racist stereotyping and of negotiating on their own terms the precise in-mixture of elements from their own and the host cultures. The growing number of children who are the offspring of 'mixed race' relationships, and the development of new multicultural styles of parenting are part of the same process. If the future is hybrid, how can we best prepare all our children for tomorrow's world?

Four: Ethnicity is a myth of origins which is continually being re-invented. It may become more or less racialized, and/or be linked to forms of cultural nationalism. It may be used to define, exoticize or otherwise marginalize minorities; but it may also be used as a means of creating cultural capital to resist these processes, and/or establishing an autonomous space of political representation based on the historical individuality of particular communities. Ethnicity is not confined to so called ethnic minorities. For example, the dominant culture of

'Englishness' exerts a form of ethnic hegemony which is both internalized and resisted within White working class cultures. Ethnically sensitive policies, mean taking into account these diverse linguistic, religious and cultural factors which often cut across class, 'race' and gender. How should we set about this task?

Five: At the level of both policy and biography, immigration and adoption are closely linked. They are both travel stories. Adoption involves a journey from a familiar, if troubled homeland, into the foreign country which is the new family. Like the immigrant, the adoptee may be pressured to assimilate into the new culture, and penalized if they fail to do so. All adoptees and immigrants, whatever their ethnic identifications, have a dual heritage. In order to belong, the adoptee and immigrant have to change their legal status through a process of 'naturalization'. These parallels over determine the situation of children and parents who are involved in 'transracial' or inter-country adoption. For that very reason they are in a position to make these connections more explicitly and with encouragement could help to rebuild the bridges between the groups who have been most involved in one set of issues to the exclusion of the other. How could we establish a space in which they could take the initiative?

Six: Moral, symbolic and doctrinaire forms of anti racism have persisted in social work, whereas in education and other areas of social policy they have collapsed. As discussed in Sections Two and Three, this can partly be explained by the particular conditions and terms in which the campaign against transracial adoption was fought to a successful conclusion. There are, however, signs that the ideological opposition is waiting for the 'right' moment to launch a counter attack, probably in the form of a moral panic around practices of 'ethnic cleansing' applied to surviving forms of transracial placement. What could or should be done to prevent this happening?

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