

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Issues in MultiCultural Education

Phil Cohen
Centre for New Ethnicities Research
University of East London
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Beyond Positive Thinking ?

In the early triumphalist phase of antiracist education, the search for images, words, or whole texts which might be thought offensive, their removal and/or replacement by material which promotes a 'positive image' of ethnic minorities, was an important activity. It is here that the discourse of political correctness articulated its own theory and practice of representationⁱ.

There is, of course, no question about the need to challenge the hegemony of viewpoints, and image repertoires which marginalise or misrepresent ethnic minorities in the mass media, popular culture and the arts, and to do so by providing platforms for alternative perspectivesⁱⁱ. But what perhaps does need to be looked at are the strategies which are employed for this purpose.

The underlying premise of Black Markets, and many similar initiatives is the notion that the meaning of an image can be fixed by its 'objective' social relation to its referent, and that this in turn determines its effect on the viewer. So, for example, a photograph which showed a group of black youth standing in threatening attitudes on a street corner, would be a racist image, because it confirmed the negative association between black people and street crime. Alternatively a photograph which showed a well known black academic entrepreneur opening a new afro-caribbean cultural centre would be a positive image, because it showed someone from an ethnic minority in a position of power and influence performing a civic duty.

One of the achievements of semiological analysis has been to demolish this kind of essentialist reading of images, which reduces them to a fixed relation between signifier and signifiedⁱⁱⁱ. Images are by definition polysemic; their meaning is always provisional, being decided by their anchorage in specific texts and contexts. The black youth may be a group of famous rappers, posing for their next album cover. The

photograph of a black VIP may be placed within a story about how he is being accused of mistreating his wife, or misappropriating public funds. So now the first photograph seems to have become a positive image, signifying the vibrancy of black popular culture and the second a racist slur on the black community, suggesting that one of its leading representatives is a hypocrite, public virtue being used to hide private vice. But even that may not be the end of the story; there may be black leaders who object strongly to this particular group of rappers, because their sexist and violent language is bringing the community into disrepute; it may be argued that they should be denied media coverage, and certainly their photographs should not be published in any community newspaper. These same leaders may however approve the publication of the photograph of their colleague, as a warning that those who betray the trust of their community by their unseemly behaviour must expect to be publicly exposed.

No representation can sum up its subject so that there is nothing else left to say. There is always and already, *pace* Derrida, another supplementary reading. However under the sign of PC every image tends to be judged in isolation as if it were the last word, a statement which grasps the essence or totality of what it represents. The possibility of any more complicated kind of image which plays on contradictory aspects of its subject matter is not allowed for in this model.

The reason for the last word rule is precisely to permit a final judgement to be made - this image is positive, than one is negative. Yet the significance of any image, including the most blatantly racist ones, always remains open to multiple interpretations. There is no ideal viewer, there is no unitary spectatorship, and there is no necessarily correct view. But starting with socialist realism, there has been no shortage of attempts to legislate as if there was. To project a positive image of the proletariat, and to expose the negative characteristics of the bourgeoisie, was supposed to be the first duty of the artist under socialism. Today socialist

realism is dead, but ironically a version of its aesthetics is still alive within some sections of the anti-racist movement- not among black artists who long ago abandoned such one dimensional practices, but amongst those whose job is to instruct the public and especially the youth.

There is a good reason for this. In this educational setting, a positive image is whatever serves as a point of identification and motivates young people to succeed by giving them a sense of pride in the achievements of their people or 'race'. Equally a negative image is whatever undermines their confidence in their own abilities. In other words the meaning of the image is defined by its function as an agency of socialisation. Images furnish role models. Implicit in this there is a particular paradigm of learning and identity. It is a model in which unitary subjects learn about their true origins and destinies through certain strategic images which narcissistically mirror back to them their own preferred selves. Positive role models represent certain essential defining characteristics of Blackness, Jewishness, Africanity or Islamism. It is no longer a question of whether a particular image conveys an 'accurate reflection' of 'how things really are' but whether it represents some normative ideal of 'how they should be'.

But norms have to be policed, as well as stated. In order to discriminate between positive and negative, to decide whether this or that photograph could be exploited by racists or reinforce stereotypes, the image police have to continually look at the world through racist eyes. This keeps them quite busy since there is literally no image which could not be invested with a racist connotation by someone with a mind to it. Images of Jewish achievement in the arts or sciences can always be given an antisemitic reading, as confirming conspiracy theories about cosmopolitan intelligentsias; pictures of african american astronauts can always be read to convey the message that now the blacks are taking over the moon!

This instability of meanings is such a massive feature of everyday experience in the post modern world that it cannot be altogether evaded even by the most blinkered traditionalists. How then is it to be dealt with?

One approach, which conserves the essentialist position, whilst conceding polysemy, is to argue that the validity of images rests not on their empirical verification, or their normative strength, but on their degree of cultural authenticity. In this view an image is valid only in so far as it is endorsed by authoritative insiders as expressing something 'true' about the culture, irrespective of how it might be interpreted by outsiders.

The appeal to authenticity privileges the role of gatekeepers, and there is a strong (though not inevitable) tendency for these positions to be filled by people who have the most static and conservative models of race, culture and identity. Only work by those who are themselves cultural insiders, and/or who follow a prescribed aesthetic are then likely to be given the stamp of approval. And so priority is often given to 'ethnic artists' or 'antiracist artists', who are also more acceptable to the white liberal arts establishment, because their work can be more easily 'placed' as representing their community within the framework of arts patronage. ^{iv}

Nevertheless the process of consensual validation is fraught with internal conflict. Authenticity become a hotly contested property once the stakes are raised and the players multiply. But we are not talking about a free for all. There are moves which belong to different language games for explaining race, ethnicity or culture. In the case study which follows we look at how rules of authenticity are interpreted as moves within the game of multiculturalism.^v

Multiculturalism Rules OK?

For this purpose I want to look at a conversation between a white teacher who was head of art at a large comprehensive school in a multiracial - and multiracist- area of the East End, and 14 year old Bangladeshi girl. They were working on a project which involved students making a multilayered image/text, using a range of public and private media to map the places which they associated with their life journeys, and their sense of home.

This was part of a wider cross curricular project for secondary schools which was applying ideas and methods from the field of 'post colonial' cultural studies to tackling issues of race and identity through the arts ^{vi}. The teacher however defined the project in terms of conventional multiculturalism. For him it was to do with learning about other cultures, and dissolving stereotypes of prejudice en route.

Zeeshan produced a complex and visually sophisticated picture focused on a specific historical moment in the struggle for Bangladeshi Independence. Written on the map is an account of the context of the work :

It was a long time ago, in 1971, I think. Many Bengali students died fighting in front of the Medical College. They were fighting because of their language, Bengali. Bangladesh was called East Pakistan at the time and no-one could speak their own language. Because of that they fought and died. So they built a memorial to them which I show here, and every 21 February they go there with flowers. The soldier in the picture is to remind us of what the military did. They went to knock down the memorial again and again, and again and again we rebuilt it until they had to give up and we were free.

In amongst the wreathes, and the pictures of different scenes from life of Bangladesh, she places a photograph of herself aged 5, the age at which she left home. The inscriptions in Bengali refer us both to the actual events she describes and to the issues of language and representation which were their focus. These issues clearly do not just belong to the past or

to the origins of Bangladesh as a nation. They are very much alive in her own personal struggle for independence as a Bengali girl growing up in the East End today. This dual articulation is also picked up on the other side of the picture where she explores signifiers of englishness : the archaic english script, with echoes of bengali, country houses, her school, a Christmas scene, a jar of coins, stamps and various conventional symbols of modernity. The cross referencing is deliberate - she compares Bengali and Christian rituals, and picks up the colour of the Xmas tree in the area around the Memorial. The two sides of the story are held in tension, and literally stitched together, with this suture placed along the exhaust trail left by the plane which has carried her from Bangladesh to England.

The teacher decided to interview Zeeshan about the work; he asked her to give him a guided tour of the map, discussing the personal and political meaning of the different images en route.

TELL ME ABOUT THIS SIDE OF THE PICTURE WHICH IS SOMETHING YOU KNOW ABOUT AND I KNOW ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ABOUT. WHERE DID YOU GET THE PICTURES FROM AND WHAT DO THEY REPRESENT.

This cart is being driven by an ox, people travel round in them from one village to another. They carry their clothes and food in them.

WHAT EXACTLY IS GOING ON IN THIS ONE, JUST TELL ME, IT LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF AGRICULTURE BUT I CANT WORK IT OUT. ARE THEY RICE PLANTING

No, I dunno, they re digging the land with something

ITS VERY OBVIOUSLY IRRIGATED BECAUSE THERE IS A HELLUVA LOT OF WATER AROUND. ITS A VERY FERTILE LOOKING AREA.

um

YOU'RE NOT CLEAR ON THAT ONE BY THE SOUND OF THINGS

No

WHAT ABOUT THAT ONE

Its a mosque. its in the capital city and its very famous. I think its the largest one

SO ITS A TOURIST ATTRACTION
WHAT ABOUT THIS ONE,WHERE DID IT COME FROM

Its from a booklet I found in a restaurant, about old calendars and cards.

TELL ME ABOUT THIS ABOUT THE SEA
Every morning in the villages the women get up very early and take the jugs with them and go and fetch water from the river.

THESE NATIONAL SYMBOLS (a flag and a royal bengal tiger) ARE EASIER TO UNDERSTAND THAN THOSE SCENES OF EVERYDAY LIFE.
COULD YOU TELL ME A BIT ABOUT THAT ONE,ITS A VERY PEACEFUL SCENE, EVERYONE LOOKS VERY QUIET AND RELAXED
They are all washing clothes and there is a man over here I think he's selling something.

IS THIS VILLAGE TYPICAL OF WHAT YOU'D SEE OR IS IT PRETTIFIED ?

That's quite typical.Most of the villagers are farmers and they have cows like the ones shown here.
This is the picture of a big forest..

WOULD THAT BE IN SILHET IN THE NORTH

No its in the south

SO ITS IN THE DELTA WHERE THERE WAS THAT TERRIBLE FLOODING.

That one there from Silhet where they have tea plantations.
The women and children pick the leaves.....

WHICH IS BACK BREAKING WORK I IMAGINE. THIS LOOKS LIKE A SPECIAL KIND OF TREE

Its a banana tree, which you get mostly in south east asia.

IS IT AN EXPORT COMMODITY, SOMETHING BANGLADESH SELLS TO THE REST OF THE WORLD ? OR IS IT MOSTLY FOR HOME CONSUMPTION

I don't really know.

WHAT ABOUT THIS LADY, SHE'S ALL DRESSED UP LOOKING VERY SMART
WHAT IS SHE UP TO ?

I dunno (giggles) but that's one of these carriages,driven by cows.

BUT SHE'S NOT DRESSED FOR WORK, THIS WOMEN IS GOING SOMEWHERE SPECIAL, ANY IDEAS? SHE'S RICH BY THE LOOK OF THINGS. I WONDERED WHETHER SHE MIGHT BE A BRIDE GOING TO A WEDDING, A PRINCESS EVEN ?

She could be. Maybe she's just going somewhere.

NOW I'VE NEVER SEEN THAT IN MY LIFE BEFORE. TELL ME ABOUT THAT.

There are festivals, and the women decorate their hands with jewellery or um

HENNA ? I'VE SEEN THEM DRAW THE PATTERNS. AND WHAT ABOUT THE HANDS ? ARE THEY IN PRAYER

In India its a form of greeting

YES THAT'S RIGHT. THAT LOVELY ITS LIKE A GREETING CARD. WHAT FESTIVAL MIGHT IT BE. IS IT DIWALI BECAUSE OF ALL THE LIGHT

Could be Diwali or it could be Eet

OK THEY ARE THE ONLY TWO I DO KNOW SO IT HAS TO BE ONE OR THE OTHER ! NOW TELL ME ABOUT THIS ONE. THIS IS A MONUMENT TO BANGLADESH. ITS NOT THE SAME AS THIS OTHER ONE THOUGH IS IT.

No that one was built earlier...

THIS IS MORE FAMOUS, I'VE SEEN THIS ONE MORE

cos a lot of people fought to get rid of the dictators who didn't come from the country but took out all the riches

SHEIK MUIB WAS THE LEADER OF THE BANGLADESHI SIDE WAS'NT HE. THAT WAS THE PERIOD. SO BACK TO THE VILLAGE LIFE, THERE IS THAT CART AGAIN. RIGHT THIS LOOKS LIKE A FORTRESS. WHAT THE HELL IS IT ?

Its the parliament building

OH

And there's a park round there. And there's a mosque nearby, there's a very famous poet buried there and there's an art college nearby. And this monument, the big one, is near the medical college.

This is a peacock, it also symbolises the country, because there used to be a lot of those around.

YOU'VE TAUGHT ME SOMETHING THERE, BECAUSE I KNEW ABOUT THE TIGER,BUT I HAD NO IDEA ABOUT THE PEACOCK.THERE IS AN AWFUL LOT OF TRADITIONAL STUFF ON THIS. DOES THIS REPRESENT IN YOUR VIEW A RATHER ROMANTICISED VIEW OF THE COUNTRY, RATHER A TOURIST VIEW OF THE COUNTRY ?

Yes

YEAH.

I used to go there every year with my grandparents and my cousin lives in a place like that with hills so um (sighs)

The teacher starts by making a profession of his ignorance.True to the multicultural formula he is here learning about other cultures. The roles and even the power relations are supposedly being reversed. The student is supposed to be one who knows, the cultural insider with the authentic voice of truth, while the teacher sits back and takes notes.However in practice nothing of the kind takes place. The teacher reads the picture, continually offering interpretations which are signalled as displays of his intimate knowledge of Bangladeshi history and culture. Zeeshan is put in the position of simply confirming the teachers superior power of understanding her own culture. At several point she herself is made to profess ignorance.In many cases when she starts to offer her own reading the teacher interrupts her to foreclose her own interpretation with one of her own. Despite all this she still manages at several points to assert the validity of her own locally situated knowledge, based on visits to her family in Bangladesh. For the rest of the time she can only resist teacherly imposition by keeping silent or playing dumb.

The invisible pedagogy of this teacher silently communicates this pattern; even as it claims to be overturning the colonial forms of knowledge/power at another level it is reproducing them^{vii}.

This teacher was an imaginative, dedicated and caring member of his profession, apparently sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity in the school; he was completely unaware of the inhibitory effect of his approach, and was genuinely

distressed when we pointed this out to him. He was in fact trapped in a particular language game, centred on rules of rationality and authenticity which had the result of closing down any potential space of negotiation over meanings. His irritable reaching after fact, the desire to fix and pin down the multiple associations flowing from this complex image/text, was all in aid of demonstrating to himself the authenticity of Zeeshan's work as an expression of her culture and her history. And in doing so he destroyed the very space of representation which it was the purpose of the project to create.

Technologies of Self

How then are young people, many of whom are so vulnerably preoccupied with their self image, to find their way through this maze of conflicting strategies of representation and arrive at a viable frame of reference?

There are a number of possible 'technologies of self' which can be adopted to counter or challenge dominant images of otherness^{viii}. But the real test is whether they are appropriate or relevant to young people who are struggling with an already heavy burden of representation, in everyday contexts where issues of social impression management are often highly racialised. Unless art teachers understand where students are coming from at this most intimate and passionately intense level of cultural politics, they are unlikely to be able to devise programmes or curricula which are as serviceable to individual needs as they are to collective aspirations.

So let us briefly summarise the practical payoffs or disadvantages with each strategy:

1) Positive images.

A strategy of self imagineering, focusing on qualities which are generally admired - enterprise,

courage, resourcefulness, ambition, achievement, success and so on. This may challenge the negative racial underclass imagery associated with poverty, urban deprivation, violence, drugs and crime and to that extent promote both a public re-evaluation of particular communities, and enhance the self esteem of their members. This approach tends to be associated with the creation of a new 'ethnic' middle class, and is closely linked to the notion of the model minority (i.e. those who have supposedly espoused traditional British values). Consequently it may serve to draw a familiar, racialised line between sheep and goats - between those who assimilate and/or are upwardly mobile, and those who are left behind or remain marginalised. A final objection is that this strategy tends to produce one dimension stereotypes and hence offers an impoverished resource for constructing identities.

2) In Your Face or Niggers With Attitude

This involves taking the negative image and giving it an affirmative spin. Yes we are everything you say we are and more. We are dangerous, angry, sexy, wild, and out of our heads, but at least we are not dead white middle class family men ! The strategy of positively celebrating images of deviance which you find in queerness, and also certain kinds of black cultural politics can be liberatory in so far as it neutralises certain terms of abuse and opens up spaces of representation which have otherwise been closed off; it also yields a fun and feel good factor for those directly concerned. But by definition it reinforces marginality and far from challenging dominant images of otherness depends on their existence to produce its special rhetorical effect.

3) Roots radicalism

This ignores the dominant images and discourses - these are outsider stories which have no bearing on our real lives. To pay attention to them is to give them power over us which they do not deserve. Instead our sense of identity derives from an insider story, a story about roots to which only we have access and which others cannot properly penetrate or

understand. So the struggle is to protect this inside from contamination or corruption by external influence. The quest for a positive self identity based upon authenticity of origins can thus lead to various kinds of separatist or fundamentalist cultural politics. This may provide young people with strong sense of where they have come from and are going to in a way which helps them over the worst angsts of adolescence, but it is open to many of the objections raised against the previous two approaches.

All three strategies share some common assumptions : 1) that it is possible to own and control ones collective self image, 2) that it is possible to do this without reference to the Other 3) such reinventions provide a internally self regulating system of representation which do not depend on any inputs or support from outside 4) this is a means for creating cultural capital out of one's oppression and legitimating claims over resource and amenity.

Post structuralism has done much to challenge these assumptions and to argue that the Other is always present in our self images ^{ix}; these images are constructed with a certain other, a certain audience, in mind - for example we learn how to how to pose for the camera at an early age and those poses often stay with us all our adult lives ; at the same time the Other is that part of our selves which has become foreign to us, but which is nevertheless present in our dreams, our phantasies, and indeed in much of our waking life as the subject we secretly hope to become, or once believed we were.

The argument may be taken further to suggest that this internal other/hidden self may be taken over by quite destructive feelings of hatred or envy, stirred up by external attacks (viz racial abuse); but in order to effectively counter these attacks it is essential to clearly distinguish between these two kinds of othering, internal and external, as well as recognise the kinds of anxiety and ambivalence to which their articulation may give rise^x.

This model point towards to two further, rather different strategies of self positioning :

4) Masquerade

This involves the ironic deconstruction of dominant images, through parody, mimicry, playful juxtaposition, interjection of elements which break up common sense flows of meaning - a preferred technique of performance artists, video artists, and photographers, of course, and which you might think is not so readily available to young people who don't go to art school. In fact at least one way of reading contemporary youth cultures is to see them as a popular aesthetic which is playing with and subverting essentialised identities of every kind.

5) Complex Narrative

The creation of multidimensional image/texts which explore the tensions and contradictions between different kinds of identification, without imposing any single authorised story line on them. This certainly provides a very open ended framework of representation, and one which I personally have found useful in doing image based work around issues of race with young people. But some people have argued that it is likely to reinforce the sense of fragmentation which many young people feel; others object that it underwrites a moral relativism which fails to give them a firm sense of value and purpose which they need to deal with the oppressive circumstances of their everyday lives. Against this it could be argued that it is precisely those young people who are on the front lines of struggles against racism and social

injustice, who are rejecting the traditional political or religious ideologies in favour of more complex and fragmentary narratives.

These last two approaches break with the whole enterprise of imagineering and social impression management. They do not depend on role models, stereotypes, or public relations exercises. Indeed they challenge the collective narcissism which characterises the cultural politics of the big battalions. But what then do they have to offer those young people who are growing up 'on the wrong side of the tracks', and who so desperately want to make it out into a better life?

The Making of the Indian Cowgirl Warrior

We are faced with an apparent paradox. Young people who belong to communities which are marginalised may be especially attracted to cultural forms and practices which conjure up omnipotent selves lording it over others in grandiose landscapes of aspiration; but by the same token they are the ones who can least afford the luxury of such self delusion, if they are in reality to move on and out from where they are made to start from. It is only by confronting the ambivalences of their situation, that they can survive its oppressions, with their own images to draw, their own tale to tell.

Our task therefore must be to create a framework which makes that possible in the classroom. For this purpose we need to construct a potential space in which children are free and able to negotiate over the meanings which they produce, yet one which is structured enough to hold and work through the conflicts, and anxieties which are released^{xi}.

In what follows I describe an attempt to do just this with a small group of 7 and 8 year old girls. Amanda was Vietnamese Chinese, Sharon was from a local Irish family, Rachel's mother was a local white east ender, and Yolande's family were from Kurdistan. And they were all growing up together in poor working class neighbourhood of Docklands ^{xii}.

We wanted to devise a co-operative activity which would encourage the children to explore more directly the imaginings which could be mobilised in constructing a multi- rather than mono-cultural form. Collage techniques are obviously useful in generating such composite images, but they remain at the level of a more or less mechanical sifting and shuffling of different cultural bits and pieces, a process in which the deeper reaches of feeling and imagination remain essentially disengaged. So instead we drew a large outline figure and invited the girls to work together to create a character by filling in the features as they wished. What happened next was to be an object lesson in what can sometimes be released by such simple means.

There was very little preliminary discussion. Each of the girls took a different part of the body and started drawing with their coloured felt tip pens. But as they drew they talked; this took the form of a running commentary on the whole character they imagined they were constructing from the part they were immediately working on, and these discussions in turn affected what they drew. Out of these negotiations what came to be known as the Indian Cowgirl Warrior gradually took shape.

As the children worked they wove an intricate web of phantasies around this figure yet in a way which integrated all its elements into an considered aesthetic whole. This was no Frankenstein's monster, but a creature given life through a shared impulse to narrate (rather than dominate) the process of its creation. So where does 'it' come from? The figure bears some resemblance to the character in Chinese mythology described by Maxine Hong Kingston at the beginning of her autobiography. This is not a case of direct cultural influence, I think, but because the 'warrior' plays a similar function in articulating these girls dreams of a different, and non-traditional, feminine role. Nevertheless as

we will see the way this role is envisaged and deliberated about contains its own highly localised set of histories.

The first problem in giving birth to this collective brain child was to give her a name, and after that to define her essential mission in life:

She's called Sandy....No Jo.....Sandy Jo.....she fights and bangs people's heads together but only the baddies.....she's a warrior.....she's a bad warrior.....no a good warrior.....cos if people beat up their best friends she helps them out.....sometimes she's mad....she's mad about the baddies shooting people dead.....she chases after them and bangs their heads together,saying' pack it in'...

An issue which in a boys group might have trigger bitter dispute, is here quickly resolved by the intervention of Sharon;she combines the two suggestions into a single composite name in which all the 'parents' can feel they have an equal stake.Such co-operative and compromise solutions characterised most of these discussions, and again this may be considered a strongly gendered pattern.

The role of gender is foregrounded in the way moral characteristics are debated.The girls want to portray female assertiveness in a positive light,but this causes some problems.Yolande felt it was always bad or mad to fight.But Rachel and Sharon argue that its OK if you are on the side of the goodies,and do it to rescue people from trouble and help friends out!So the militant superego can take on a feminine form.But in the process the 'Warrior' is somewhat domesticated,cast in the role of a mother, or teacher banging naughty children's heads together and telling them to "pack it in".

In the next sequence, the mise-en-scene shifts and the 'Warrior' finds herself suddenly transported to the Wild West. But this re-location in turn sparks off a debate about her ontological status- is she real or imaginary?

she's a cowgirl.....a cowgirl warrior.....I saw one in a film, she had boots on and these prickly things on behind (i.e. spurs PC).....I like Supergirls.....so do I.....the cowgirl lives in heaven.....No Way.....No Way..... she lives in a desert.Every morning she gets up, she cleans everything up, and she goes to work.....she does something very important.....she's not real, is she, cos she's just in a film.....she cleans everything up then she goes to the man making the film and says 'can I have a cup of tea first cos I've come a long way to get here'.....

Again we see how quickly a new element is integrated into the story line, but this 'syncretic' impulse also begins to undermine the realism of the whole enterprise, especially with the entry of 'Supergirl'. We are in the ethereal world of movie and TV heroines, where 'anything is possible', (even heavenly choirs of cowgirls !).

But Sharon will have none of this. She brings the discussion down to earth with a bump by grounding 'Supergirl' in the realities of women's work. Her cowgirl is a working class girl who lives in a desert, (it is certainly no heaven), who is involved in both domestic and waged labour, but is nevertheless positively valued: her work is very important to the community. At this point Yolande gets confused and more than a little anxious about the sudden switch from Hollywood to the kitchen sink. She can't handle the contradiction if it is real, though it wouldn't matter if it was 'just a movie'. But Sharon is more able to integrate aspects of social rationality and phantasy into a single construction, without confusing them. She does this by drawing a 'pen portrait' of someone who first cleans up the film set and then stars in the picture being made. At one level this startling juxtaposition of charlady and film star represents an extreme, polarised, version of women's dual roles as drudge and idol; Sharon mimics the daydream of the housewife she might yet become: to escape the confining realities of the domestic round by having ones true talents 'discovered' at last. But in daydreams the promise of transcendence is contained and

neutralised within the structures of its own negation-in this case by the sexual double standard which precisely destroys the imaginative link by splitting its terms into an either/or. Sharon does not take this path. She is not writing a script for the Hollywood dream factory. Quite the reverse. She is trying to reconcile her positive sense of working class realities with her wider social aspirations as a girl. And she does it precisely by debunking the mythology of instant 'stardom'. Her movie actress is a working cowgirl, someone who goes to the director and says ' can I have a cup of tea because I've come a long way to get here.' She wants her aspirations recognised in material as well as symbolic terms. It is the man's turn to make the tea, while she puts her feet up and has a well earned rest!

The class status of the cowgirl warrior having been resolved the debate now moves onto another terrain of confusion :her ethnic origins. Rachel is doing her face and announces "I'm going to do the colour of the skin". Thereupon Amanda speaks for the first time: " do it yellow". But Rachel refuses. "No I'm going to do it brown.....I know let's make her an indian....an indian cowgirl " And this suggestion is greeted with a chorus of Yeses from Yolande and Sharon, but not from Amanda, who looks hurt. Yolande then turns to Amanda and says in a comforting tone of voice "You're an Indian". But this is immediately contradicted by Sharon "No's she's not" at which Rachel and Sharon break out into giggles.

Care has to be taken in interpreting this exchange. The effect on Amanda is crushing and echoes other contexts of social exclusion she experienced in the school. But there is also another, more complex, process of negotiation going on. Amanda makes a bold move to claim the cowgirl as her own. Rachel however knows that cowgirls are not usually chinese, although warriors most definitely are. However at this point it is the cowgirl not the warrior who is uppermost in their minds. In saying she is 'going to do it brown 'Rachel is denying Amanda exclusive ownership of the image by giving it a skin colour

which belongs to no-one in the group. However this also means that the cowgirl is magically metamorphosed into an Indian. When Yolande turns to Amanda and offers her honorary membership of an Indian tribe, she seems to be denying her real ethnicity. But at another level she is expressing a shared kinship between a Turkish and a Chinese girl, as a member of ethnic minorities who face racial discrimination. But that act of solidarity is immediately attacked by the two white girls, who must feel threatened; if they giggle it is partly perhaps out of the sense of dissonance aroused by the thought of a Chinese Indian; but it is also partly out of anxiety least their own ethnic credentials should be put on the line. It is exactly at this point that colouring the face brown ceases to be an act of identification with black people, or a means of preventing the figure being monopolised by any one member of the group; it becomes instead part of a strategy to divide and rule ethnic minorities on the basis of skin difference.

Yet this device did not, in fact, resolve the issue; it only compounded the confusion. For there is an ambiguity about the term 'indian' in this context. Are they referring to American Indians, or the inhabitants of India? At this point I intervened for the first time to ask them what they knew about 'Indians', where did they come from? Rachel suggested Africa; Yolande, loyal to Amanda, suggested Hong Kong, while Rachel said simply 'the desert'. Their answers revealed a personal geography of identification with the figure which had little or nothing to do with the real world. Yet this also made their own creation wholly 'other'. How then could they then reclaim it as the product of a shared enterprise?

For this purpose it was necessary to construct a new myth of origins. And now it became clear to which mise-en-scene this indian belonged:

"first there were cowboys....no the Indians.....then the cowboys came along..... they were looking for treasure...a great big

block of gold....they fight a lot..... they fight about money.....and princesses.... the indians come along....they're warriors.....they bang the baddies heads together and tell them to stop "

In this dialogue Amanda for the first time fully participated. She could bring her gift for story telling to bear in reclaiming the figure for everyone. Sharon starts by stating the traditional colonial mythology of the American frontier. But this is quickly contradicted by Rachel, who knows better - the Indians were there first. Amanda now suggests one of the real motives behind the settlement of the American West - they were looking for gold. This appeals to Sharon's material imagination - there were a lot of fights about money. She would no doubt have appreciated 'The Treasure of the Sierra Madre' and Von Stroheim's 'Greed' ! But for Amanda gold and buried treasure clearly have a more mythological significance and she persists in adding a fairy tale theme about princesses. When the indians make their entry it is, implicitly to avenge this pillage and rape. Naturally they are warriors, and in a reprise of the opening motif, they are invested with a legislative and peacekeeping role. They bang the cowboys heads together and tell them to stop.

But now it is perhaps becoming clear just who or what these cowboys represent; they are the boys in the playground whose racist and sexist taunts were, I later discovered making their lives a misery. In lieu of any effective intervention by adults, these girls can only look to themselves, to their own power of social combination, here symbolised in the hybrid character they have jointly created, to step in and stop the racism going on around them.

In this way, through a process of indirection, the whole group comes finally to recognise the issue of racial injustice. This vantage point is reached through their own internal negotiations and it necessarily follows a tortuous path. For en route they have to grapple with a whole series of contradictions related to gender ethnicity and class. Members

of the group are continually shifting their positions vis a vis each other and the issues under debate. In the process they are setting their own agenda, and staking out areas for further work. And my job was to support what might emerge in this potential space of representation, rather than foreclose it through any irritable reaching after fact, or interpretive intervention.

Finally we should not forget that what held the group, and their collective creation, together, was not just talk, but the act of drawing. In looking at the final picture it is hard to believe that it was made by so many hands. The process of figuring out always has to be iconic as well as discursive^{xiii}. It is about redrawing the inner landscape of thought and feeling around a significant image. This is something that can never be forced upon children by the imprimaturs of 'correct thought'; it resists prescriptive 'insights' and the rhetorics of 'positive imagery'; instead we are directed towards a more complex theory of subjectivity and meaning, one which focuses on the unconscious process of representation. It was because the Indian Cowgirl warrior worked at this level that its making authorised Amanda to speak out and thus helped her to begin to find her own distinctive voice, as a Chinese girl, within the group. And in doing she made space for other stories to be told, including this one.

FOOTNOTES

1. For a general discussion of the debate on political correctness see the contributions to Dunant (1994) and Williams (1995). In Britain this debate was preceded and in some senses pre-empted by the developed of a purely internal critique of antiracism, in the 1980's focussing on the negative effect of its more moralistic, symbolic and doctrinaire forms. See for example Macdonald (1989) and Cohen (1988).

2. Much of the research in this area has focussed on questions of stereotyping and the construction of racialised scenarios of social conflict in the mainstream media. See for example Van Dyjk (1991) and Campbell (1995). Husband's survey of ethnic minority media (1994) provides a useful view of how issues of race and representation look from the other side of the tracks.

3. The analysis of visual ideologies of race remains dominated by the cognitivist model of the stereotype, which from a strictly semiological point of view begs the all important question, for example concerning the rhetorics of the image, and its structures of addiction. The semiotics of race is a largely neglected field, but see the useful discussion by Amossy (1991) and Gilman (1985). The work of Roland Barthes (1994 a and b) remains seminal, and for the analysis of photographs see his Camera Lucida (1982)

4. See for example the Art Council Report by Constanzo and Alexander (1986) and also Pankratz (1993). For a general discussion on race and the politics of representation in the arts in Britain see Lucie Smith (1993).

5. For a discussion on the philosophical foundations of multiculturalism see Taylor (1992). The classical statement of the pedagogic principles is to be found in Craft (1984). For a discussion of their application see Lynch (1992). The implication of cultural authenticity in the construction of 'ethnic arts' and the discourse of primitivism is well

illustrated in the work of Beyreuth (1988) Barnard (1991). A critique of this position is developed by Gilroy (1994). Derrida (1987) discusses how the issue of authenticity in art is relayed through the discourse of 'the original' and its provenance.

6. The Tricks of the Trade project is a collaboration between art educators and cultural researchers based at the Centre for new Ethnicities Research, University of East London. The project has been funded by the London Arts Board, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Arts Council of Great Britain, and a number of other trusts.

A video, and teaching materials from the project are available from CNER.

7. For a general discussion of the colonial power relations which operate through the ethnographic contract see the contributions to Asad (1973). On the temporal dimensions of unequal cultural exchange between Europe and its Others see Fabian (1983) and on its aesthetics Taussig (1992).

8. The term is Foucault's (1988) but may be taken to refer to any strategy which positions the subject in relation to the other, via specialised techniques of imaginering or impression management.

9. See Niranjana for a discussion of the relation between post structuralism and the post colonial subject, and also Pieterse (1992) on the epistemology of emancipation in the era of globalisation.

10. Recent theoretical research influenced by psychoanalysis has tended to focus on racism as structure of desire/discourse of the Other. Kristeva (1991) develops a Lacanian reading of nationalism as a discourse of ambivalent (and disavowed) feeling associated with the unheimlich. Bauman (1991) links ambivalence to the structure of modernity rather than the psyche. Bhabha (1994) also utilises a Lacanian perspective,

following Fanon, to examine the more intricate dialectics of colonial subjection.

11 The linked concepts of potential space and negative capability are discussed in a psychoanalytic context by Marion Milner(1986) and in their political implication by Unger (1984). Their relevance to a post modern pedagogy is discussed in Cohen (1996).

12. This work is discussed in greater detail, in Cohen (1995)

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ⁱFor a general discussion of the debate on political correctness see the contributions to Dunant (1994) and Williams (1995). In Britain this debate was preceded and in some senses pre-empted by the developed of a purely internal critique of antiracism, in the 1980's focussing on the negative effect of its more moralistic, symbolic and doctrinaire forms. See for example Macdonald (1989) and Cohen (1988).

ⁱⁱ Much of the research in this area has focussed on questions of stereotyping and the construction of racialised scenarios of social conflict in the mainstream media. See for example Van Dyjk (1991) and Campbell (1995). Husband's survey of ethnic minority media (1994) provides a useful view of how issues of race and representation look from the other side of the tracks.

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^{iv} See for example the Art Council Report by Constanzo and Alexander (1986) and also Pankratz (1993). For a general discussion on race and the politics of representation in the arts in Britain see Lucie Smith (1993).

^v For a discussion on the philosophical foundations of multiculturalism see Taylor (1992). The classical statement of the pedagogic principles is to be found in Craft (1984). For a discussion of their application see Lynch (1992). The implication of cultural authenticity in the construction of 'ethnic arts' and the discourse of primitivism is well illustrated in the work of Beyreuth (1988) Barnard (1991). A critique of this position is developed by Gilroy (1994). Derrida (1987) discusses how the issue of authenticity in art is relayed through the discourse of 'the original' and its provenance.

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^{vii}For a general discussion of the colonial power relations which operate through the ethnographic contract see the contributions to Asad (1973). On the temporal dimensions of unequal cultural exchange between Europe and its Others see Fabian (1983) and on its aesthetics Taussig (1992).

^{viii}The term is Foucault's (1988) but may be taken to refer to any strategy which positions the subject in relation to the other, via specialised techniques of imagineering or impression management.

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^{xi} The linked concepts of potential space and negative capability are discussed in a psychoanalytic context by Marion Milner (1986) and in their political implication by Unger (1984). Their relevance to a post modern pedagogy is discussed in Cohen (1996).

^{xii} This work is discussed in greater detail, in Cohen (1995)

^{xiii} See for example Krayser (1991)