



MEDIA EDUCATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF CRITICAL SOLIDARITY

A paper to be delivered by

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Introduction

I first mentioned the concept of critical solidarity in a paper given at a conference in Brazil in 1998.¹ I was referring particularly, in this context, to the aspirations set out in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states that

"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship amongst all nations, races or religious groups."

After the conference some colleagues suggested to me that it might be both useful and necessary to say more about what might be meant by critical solidarity. My aim in this paper is to address this task. I will first consider some of the developments in media education which, I will argue, have a bearing on the case for developing critical solidarity as a core goal and central focus of media education. I will then consider some of the economic, political and educational contexts which may or may not contribute to that goal, but which certainly have a determining influence upon the contemporary context. Finally I will attempt to develop the concept of critical solidarity in a little more detail, and in doing so acknowledge and comment upon the significance of the work of Len Masterman. First, however, I want to say something about rhetoric.

¹ Global Interculturalism and the Dilemmas of Universalism: Teaching the Media after 2000, delivered to the International Congress on Communication and Education in Sao Paulo.



Whenever one attempts to address the aims or goals of education generally, or media education specifically, there is the possibility that one will make statements which may be interpreted as *merely* rhetorical by sceptical minds. They are right to do so, but we have to be clear that suspicion of rhetorical statements should not be used as a pretext for avoiding the key questions which they may be addressing. Furthermore, we would do well to reconsider the ways in which the term 'rhetorical' has been used in educational discourse. Rhetoric is about persuasion, and to suggest that educationalists who argue for a particular approach are being rhetorical is to suggest that they are trying to persuade us of the validity of their case. Perhaps we should follow the lead of a whole panoply of earlier thinkers, and more recently of Len Masterman (1985) and Roger Silverstone who point out that rhetoric is of crucial importance in the educational process. Silverstone goes further and explores rhetoric as 'a dimension of media, which it palpably is, and as a means for the analysis of media, which arguably it must become.' (Silverstone 1999: 31) My reason for this early digression is that I wish to draw attention to Article 26 mentioned already. Article 26 might be interpreted as rhetoric in a much less complimentary way, because it is, for some, little more than empty waffle. 'Of course' some critics might say, 'Of course we all want to see a respect for human freedoms and human rights.' But they would see such a declaration as little more than *rhetorical* in their use of the term. Here we see that rhetoric has become a synonym for 'statements which provide no concrete strategies and require no empirical backup'. This second use of the term 'rhetorical' is unhelpful and, unfortunately, common. The rhetoric of which Silverstone writes is potentially both helpful and productive and is a close relative of the concept of critical solidarity. It is on the basis of persuasion that we are most likely to act in our social world of the twenty first century. We ² may no longer wish to be merely told something - we may need to be convinced by argument that what we are told is a worthwhile option to adopt. Rhetoric involves a detailed study of the ways in which communication is structured and it is very relevant in relation to our study of media representations.

In media education we are always operating on at least three fronts at once. We are interested in what the media say (represent), and how and why they say it the way they do. We are also interested in the ways in which we can teach and learn about what the media say etc. This involves us in questions of pedagogy. Thirdly, we are interested in establishing what this has to do with 'us' and our lives. All three of these fronts require close and constant scrutiny.

It has often been the case, particularly with the more protective approaches to media education, that much emphasis has been put on the significance of teachers *helping* children to become aware that they (the children) are the unwitting victims or dupes of the media. This has always been a dubious educational strategy, even before it was associated with the mass media. It is based, in this case, on an unstated premise which assumes that the media

² The word 'we' is notoriously problematic and I will return to it when I discuss the issue of critical solidarity. For the moment I am arguing that 'we' means those of us directly involved in a particular educational endeavour at a particular time.



are (mostly) harmful and that children will fall victims to unhealthy media influence unless they are helped by the teacher.

There are several serious problems with this approach. The first is that 'the media' are here conceptualised as one mainly harmful influence on children. Children are assumed to be incapable of judging quality in the media, so they need to be helped along the way. This does not (usually) mean that the children will be encouraged to develop analytical skills, nor does it imply that the skills can be offered non-prescriptively. The protective educator will usually offer skills because they may lead the child to the truths of which the educator is already assured. There may be a place for such activity, but it should not be confused with education. The protective approach is, fundamentally, concerned with policing exercises. It is counter productive in most cases because children are sensitive to being told what they should and should not 'like', particularly in what they see as their own their own culture. In the schools of the inner city it is even less likely that young students will accept the teacher's right to police their enjoyments. It is also based upon a 'teacher knows best' approach to popular culture and much else besides. It is not, of course, a bad thing that teachers should be expected to know more about many issues which the media represent, and that they would need to work with the children to ensure that they are able to acquire more knowledge and intellectual understanding where it is necessary and relevant. What is a bad thing is attempting to sustain a pedagogy based upon the moral superiority of the teacher. Let me be even more direct. You cannot develop a successful pedagogy based upon simply *telling* children what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad, what is beautiful and what is ugly. It does not matter if you dress up your mode of address so that it seems less disciplinarian or authoritarian. The 'teacher knows best' approach, when softened and disguised as education becomes patronising. Children are quick to pick up on this, and even if they were not it would be a questionable mode of teaching and learning. So what are we left with?

Given the perceived crisis in values in many societies and the fact that many (though not all) schools are becoming places where wars of attrition are more common than educational voyages, it may seem odd to argue that we should not tell children (or perhaps set them straight?) on a few things. I will say once more that, even if this were possible (which I doubt), it would not be education. Before considering questions of media education, let me presume to say a word or two about the place and purpose of education in our world. I am aware that this is a presumption, but I wish to argue that it is the right and perhaps the duty of educators at all levels to engage in debate about the place and purpose of education in the twenty first century. It is simply not enough to pay lip service to great educators like Dewey, or Freire whilst we engage in monumental bureaucratic and managerial follies. For many teachers in the schools of the United Kingdom, the idea of having a debate about the place and purpose of education might seem like a utopian and idealistic aspiration. It might also be greeted with a cynical or weary groan. We do not speak of purposes beyond those of passing tests and meeting criteria of something called excellence. It seems that excellence



requires the abandonment of critical thinking for all but the policy makers. We come, therefore, to equate an impoverished concept of literacy and numeracy with educational success – or at least we are cajoled into doing so.³ The education for which I wish to argue has to be based upon a critical awareness of societal and global change, and upon a crucial engagement with the values of democracy. This is not the place for me to extend these ideas. I mention them here merely to contextualise what I wish to say about media education. I also wish to point out that we cannot and should not talk about media education without thinking about education more broadly. Such an argument is one which would apply to all subjects in the curriculum. No educator in the twenty first century can afford to look in only one direction. Nor should any educator use arguments about postmodernity and fragmentation as a means of denying the holism which informs the strategies of policy makers.

Waiting for a history

"History is not dead. It is only taking a nap." *Theo Angelopoulos*

It is difficult to develop a coherent argument for the direction which media education might follow without reference to the history(ies) of the field. At the same time, any history will only be of value if curricular and pedagogic strategies are understood in relation the social, political and economic contexts in which they occur. Media education is a comparative newcomer. It is also a field which, whatever the reasons, has not attracted the research time or the research funding to facilitate the production of an appropriately thorough introductory history. I am certainly not arguing for the production of something regarded as *definitive*. We have learned to be wary of such stories. But we do need to review critically and regularly where we have been and where we think we are going. I should mention some sources which provide clues in the context of the United Kingdom. Jim Cook and Jim Hillier produced a paper which provided a helpful though brief overview of developments in film and television studies from 1960 to 1975. Manuel Alvarado *et al* (1987) devoted a chapter of their work on media teaching to what they entitled 'histories'. This chapter is one of the few attempts to engage with a range of debates, albeit based upon a minimal amount of primary source material. More recently Julian Sefton Green has offered an account of the development of practical work in media education. I do not think it unfair to any of these writers to suggest that they have not attempted to provide a thorough social and political contextualisation of developments in media education. This has yet to be done. I wish only to make a relatively uncontroversial point: developments in media education have had and continue to have a significant relationship to the period in which they occurred.

In the early days of media education, before it had a name, much emphasis was placed

³ I must insist, to those who protest that literacy and numeracy are important, that I agree with them. Furthermore, I believe our aspirations for the development of numeracy and literacy need to be much more ambitious than they are. But this belief is rooted in the need for an education which is very



upon what could be learned from film. I want to provide just one example here of the well-meaning (I think) patronisation and ideological numbness of those who entered the field. My choice represents the genteel middle class face of the policing pedagogy. This is from a book published in 1947 with the title *Going to the Cinema*.

But whether the films we see are important or unimportant, they all influence our outward and visible life. Americanisms have crept into our speech because we have been listening to so many American characters on the screen. Americanisms, or slang, are very expressive and terse, even though they do not claim to be either beautiful or musical. They combine slovenly forms of expression with a brisk way of speaking..... Whilst any thinking person realises that to introduce American slang into one's conversation is nothing to be proud about, on the other hand the attention paid to personal appearance and the general smartening up which has occurred during recent years, despite shortages of so many things, are largely the result of the influence of film. Although a great many feminine fashion whims result in an artificial appearance, and conceal the real person, attention to such details in moderation is better than a complete disregard for one's appearance. (149)

Of course this book was not intended for use in the formal education system, but it does stand as a useful reminder of the fact that media education, in its various guises, grew up in a United Kingdom which was class divided, elitist, sexist and insular. In the British context, much of the work on the media was also an exercise in holding the alleged cultural barbarity of the United States at bay.

Pedagogies pursued

The pedagogy which accompanied such attitudes was seldom questioning and open ended. It was more likely to be cosily superior.

With the passing of time, the attention of media educators turned to a range of media which included television, comics, popular music and broadened into a field more often known as cultural studies. The elitism of the middle classes was overlaid by a new politicisation of the field. The reasons for this were complex, but they included the fact that some theoretical perspectives were finding their way across the channel to the United Kingdom. The work of writers such as Barthes and Althusser was hardly new, but it came as a kind of intellectual revelation to a minority of teachers who were often political activists. It could be argued that they helped to replace genteel middle class elitism with a kind of left wing radical chic. This is, of course, a gross oversimplification of what happened. My contention, however, is that it will do as a summary of popular understanding of media education. It is that popular understanding which has been more influential than any detailed consideration of curricular strategies or content.

Steering a course through these wild waters with Little Englander elitism on one side and

different from that based upon staggering from test to test in a schooling process where quality is measured in records and files rather than lives and actions.



revolutionary rhetoric on the other we find one or two interesting and important writers and educators. These include Jim Kitses and Ann Mercer with their work based on the discussion of the films in further education classes, and Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel (1965) in their sadly neglected work *The Popular Arts*. In part their work was very conscious of the political changes afoot in some of the post-war industrial social formations. But it was their pedagogy which was a real marker of change. Kitses and Mercer were very interested in talking with young people about the cinema, rather than talking at them. They adopted a structured approach which set the bounds for discussion, but did not believe they could be neutral in articulating their own responses:

No teacher can be truly neutral: the choice of subject materials, questions, tone are all his (*sic*). But the distinction we have tried to make is between creating a controlled situation in which students can think through their own discoveries, and a situation in which response can be legislated and standards imposed. (p89)

By the mid 1960s, the cultural elitism of the previous period was on the wane, though Hall and Whannel were not shy when it came to pronouncing upon the relative merits of selected examples of popular culture. So of Ian Fleming they could say:

The particular unpleasantness of the Fleming novels is that they appeal, in such a vulgar way, to sophisticated readers, and the class snobbery is compounded with the nastiest kind of sex and violence. (page 154)

Raymond Chandler, on the other hand, was for them a writer of considerable merit:

Like the true satirist, his gift lies in a disenchanting view of life, and depends upon a highly artificial style. Like the mock-heroic writers and poets, who made play with 'heroism', Chandler makes play with the notion of toughness. He inverts the thriller conventions, draws attention to their artificiality. (page 163)

The pedagogy they espoused was, however, based upon a wish to provide structures within which it might be possible for their readers to explore the specific signifying practices of a range of media. They were also, and this is a crucial point, *enthusiasts*. We tend to forget, as educators, that there is a world of difference between general condemnation of a medium of communication, and enthusiastic debate over the quality of the messages which are produced by and for that medium. It is relevant here to emphasise once again that youth culture is an arena of hotly contested value judgements for the 'youth' to whom it is addressed. So there are three points to keep in mind: blanket condemnation or 'protectivism' are not media education; enthusiasm is a much better pedagogic platform than paternalistic condemnation; and debates over the relative worth or significance of media messages are essential if media education is not to become ossified or narcissistic.

There have, more recently, been significant developments in the ways in which conceptual approaches to the study of the media might be organised. The key questions and concepts developed by the British Film Institute Education Department and others, have contributed significantly to our understanding of the potential of organised thought and study. My case in



this paper is not based upon challenging the more successful attempts to construct formal conceptual schema which will make the study of the media more productive. Indeed such schema will always be needed if media education is to have coherence within formal education. I have argued elsewhere, however, that such conceptual approaches are not enough without structures of interpretation based upon understandings of social existence. You cannot address or study the media and popular culture without addressing and studying the social formations of which they are a part or which they re-present. In the context of a paper such as this, I can go no further than suggest that media education in a democracy has a political as well as an intellectual and aesthetic role to play. I will return to this when discussing the concept of critical solidarity. With this in mind, however, I want to comment upon another recent publication which seeks to address the future of media education, though it does so with more specific reference to the medium of film.

In the UK, the Film Education Working Group (FEWG) was formed in 1988 at the request of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. Their report, published in 1999, is entitled *Making Movies Matter*. It is likely to become an influential piece, and as such a detailed response to its arguments is called for.⁴ I wish to highlight here some of the issues which bear more directly on my argument in this paper. I have already quoted from Hall and Whannel to illustrate the significance of their move away from more restrictive forms of elitism in the projected study of popular culture. In the work of the FEWG, we also find an emphasis on making judgements which are based upon the acquisition of a range of analytical and production skills. The report is either confused or deliberately hedging its bets in its own use of key terms. There is something of a slippage between film education, moving image education and visual literacy in the work. There is also an attempt to stake a claim to a field which looks remarkably like the terrain of Film Education before media education or media studies were twinkles in the eyes of educators. At the same time the report contains some acknowledgement of the significance of the new technologies alongside the much more strongly argued case for the development of what is called *cineliteracy*. There are many problems here which need exploration, not least of which is the insistence on the usage of the terms *film* or *filming* when talking about video recording. The key points for now, however, are two in number. The first is the relative absence of any engagement with the social world beyond references to the 'social conditions of production and reception' of films. The second is the almost total absence of any reference to the word democracy. In the introduction to the report, the following statement is made:

The existence of an informed citizenry - essential to the democratic process - is increasingly sustained through the moving image media. This unique and vital language [*sic*] must surely, therefore, become part of basic literacy at the start of the third millennium. (page 6)

Democracy is not mentioned again, not is the democratic process. Nor is there any

⁴ One important contribution has already come from David Buckingham and Ken Jones (Buckingham and Jones 2000)



perceptible attempt to suggest how what is referred to as 'an informed citizenry' will benefit from basic literacy in this 'unique and vital language.' The gap between an enthusiasm for film and/or the moving image and viable educational or educative strategies which might be essential to the democratic process is too wide here. It may be, to return to an earlier point, that mention of the democratic process is simply a rhetorical trope. I think, however, that we need to problematise the notion of what it means to be informed, and make a careful argument for the study of the structure of what is implicit in this statement - something called *information*. We also need to make an argument for the study of the processes of information production and distribution, and of the processes of making meaning which take place in a variety of contexts. The 'informed citizenry' which we might seek will need to be aware that information and its companions *signification* and *mediation* are part of the same package. It is a highly volatile package, subject to the ebb and flow of ideological tides. This we do need to study, and the moving image will be part of that process. As will the moving discourse and the sliding signifier. It is reductive to overstate one's case in media education in favour of a single medium or communicative mode.

One other point is important here. The development of media education is likely to take place in multiple and changing contexts. I am not arguing for it to take place in only one place or at only one level of the educational process. What is needed is a strategy for media education which recognises differences, whether they be cultural, economic or geographical. The *aspirations* of media education, however, will have to move beyond the parochial and insular. Media education *is* about how 'we' are represented or not represented. It is also about how 'others' are re-presented to us. Rather than placing an emphasis on the wonders of the moving image (and I really do share that sense of wonder) perhaps we should be asking questions about how certain groups in this world call themselves 'we', and identify certain groups as 'others'. Then we need to ask how those groups are represented - by whom, in what way, and to what purpose. I know that this sounds like some models of the communication process with which you will be familiar. There is a difference, however. We are now operating in a world where the analysis of discourse and social semiotics, plus developments in the analysis of narrative and modes of representation, have made questions of representation eminently study-able. Such study can, however, develop in at least two ways. The first is that it can become refined, abstract, abstruse, formalist and inconsequential. The second is that it can become sharp, focussed, critical, and very relevant to the 'democratic process'. Media education and democracy could then become permanent partners, but their relationship will never be without tension. The reason for this is that asking questions about modes of representation and the exercise of power tend to act as a foil to complacency.

I want also to relate *Making Movies Matter*, which *is* an important document, to what I perceive to be a general trend in the field. I have to say 'the field' here, because it is difficult to find one name for all those activities which vie for attention under such titles as *media studies*, *cultural studies*, *communication studies*, *film studies*, *television studies*, and *media*



education. The trend, however, is clear. Either the mention of the political and social dimensions of media education are ignored, or they are put very much on the back burner. What might be described as the 'cultural turn' in media education has become a distinct move away from the overtly political.⁵ Instead we find references to strangely decontextualised notions of literacy in one form or another. It is, however, a literacy which has turned its back on the political ways of the world.

This is a grave error, and a change in direction is needed. This is beyond the scope of my paper now, and I hope to return to it in the future. I want, in this context, to trace a line of thinking which is based upon an acknowledgement of the issues outlined above. I have briefly sketched in some approaches to media education which have been either protectionist or elitist. I have also noted the ways in which writers such as Hall and Whannel have tried to demonstrate the importance of critical judgement in the face of a popular culture which they both respected and saw as part of their shared social existence. In other words they were part of it and liked where they were. They did, however, believe passionately in the need to follow analysis with debate over relative merit. In other words, you first establish criteria for judgement, then you attempt to make some judgements. The process is repeatable and changeable. It is a process and it cannot be served usefully by attempting to pass on pre-formed judgements about merit or worth. Criteria for judgement have to be *arrived at* through discussion and debate. Media education should be very much concerned with this process.

To a certain extent, there is evidence of a wish to develop critical thinking in the work of the FEWG. But it is a critical thinking which only acknowledges the overtly political on rare occasions and for older children. This approach to the political in education is probably one of the main reasons why democracy is such an unattractive issue to many who have grown up knowing no other way of life. Politics becomes a chore or a matter for careerists. Talking about it with young children is inappropriate. Talking about it as an adult is acceptable if kept under strict control. Political thinking and the possibility of political action should be part of the agenda of any worthwhile education in a democracy. Media education constantly takes both students and teachers to the brink of these issues. Whether one is studying feature films, newspapers, comics, magazines or listening to music, the political is never far away.

Media Education and the Political

I should make it clear that I am using the term political in a way which seeks to identify a three way relationship. It is initially a relationship between forms of representation, pleasure and power, and lived existence. Before commenting on the potential of a concept of critical solidarity, I want to say a word about each of the elements in this dynamic triadic relationship. We live our political existences (whether we see ourselves as 'political animals' or not) as part of this overall dynamic.

⁵ The insertion of a production still from *Land and Freedom* on page 53 of *Making Movies Matter* is an



On Representation

The concept of representation has informed a great deal of the work in media and cultural studies, from the early work of Roland Barthes, through to writers as diverse as Umberto Eco, Noam Chomsky and Jean Baudrillard.⁶ Whether we see ourselves as unreconstructed modernists, postmodernists, cognitivists or sceptics, we are likely to recognise the importance of the way the media mediate our world. Some of us, incredible though it may seem, may be less convinced that the world is still out there beyond the mediations. But representation is also a key term for materialists who do not doubt the existence of a material world, whilst acknowledging that much of it is only accessible through forms of representation involving mediation and discourse. The socio-political implications of these various positions are many and often profound.

On Pleasure and Power

The nature of our pleasures, particularly the pleasures we gain from our relationships with the media, needs scrutiny as well as celebration. Earlier media educators, however, have made the fatal error (in educational terms) of believing that pleasures can be policed into and out of existence. The complexities of the pleasures which we may experience in and through the media cover a broad spectrum of human potential - from the pleasure in formal beauty to the pleasure in wallowing in the suffering of others; from the pleasure in being challenged in our interpretations of the world, to the pleasure in having our predilections and prejudices reconfirmed on a regular basis. In this way many of our pleasures become of ideological and hence political significance.

Linked with the concept of pleasure is that of power. The media have the power to define for their audiences the nature of the pleasures which are likely to be on offer. The media also have the power to lead audiences to pleasures in a way that leaves many educators breathless, inadequate, and secretly wishing that they could police most popular media. All this would be done, it goes without saying, *on behalf of* the student. Meanwhile the student has an even more significant power - that of refusal. Another dynamic is in operation here. It needs to inform the developing pedagogy of media education, and it is certainly political in its implications. The acceptance or refusal of media pleasures is one based on more than the mere content of programmes.

On Lived Existence

This leads us to the third aspect of this triad of the political: that of lived existence. It is not exactly a new idea to suggest that social being determines consciousness. It is, however, increasingly important in an age when change (social being) is way ahead of consciousness. Everything from employment prospects to housing and modes of communication are moving with the new technologies. Much of our education, however, is still struggling to find a way of

example of the way in which the political is reduced to an element of graphic layout. A bit of decoration



addressing the rapidity and extent of this change. In doing so, education often misses out large areas of human experience, or turns its back on the structural and economic implications of the times. Not addressing issues has become one strategy for dealing with them. This is particularly the case with the Internet, and the relationship between the microchip and longer term employment prospects. The political today must recognise the contradictory lived existences which occur simultaneously around the globe. Media education must also try to address these matters.

The Politics of Critical Solidarity

I have mentioned, in this paper, the implicit pedagogy of middle class patronisation found in early film appreciation approaches. I have identified the more openly discriminating approach associated with some of the early work of Hall and Whannel. I have then argued that the contemporary turn to cinema in *Making Movies Matter* has, in many ways, taken a step towards an apolitical model of critical thinking. Finally, I have suggested that the political is never far from the surface in any work on the study of the media.

I believe that one of the most important media educators to recognise the significance of teaching politically about the media is Len Masterman. Masterman's work is internationally renowned and influential.⁷ He has also been consistently aware of the importance of issues of ideology in relation to the study of the media. He has argued, on more than one occasion for the importance of developing in young people a sense of critical autonomy. This was always something to be welcomed in the face of educational systems which sought to *impose* (whether from the left, the right, or simply the moral high ground) values and discourses upon school students. Critical thought was and is a way of ensuring that students attempt to weigh things up, to try to decide for themselves, to consider evidence critically. In relation to the media, it meant that students might look carefully at the ways in which media messages were structured, at their implicit and explicit discourses. It also allowed the media educator to hold back on trying to separate high and low cultures as more or less worthy of attention. Critical autonomy was something which might allow some freedom for students and pupils to judge for themselves, without fear or favour.

So far so good. Indeed it would be wonderful if we had reached the goal of critical autonomy in media education. It is, however, something of an illusory project. For what we discover as we work hard at developing our critical thinking and our semiotic and discursive skills, is that the very term critical is a *social* one. Autonomy is a convenient pointer away from any easy acceptance of domination in the name of any cause. But we quickly find that our relationships to the media are not ones that can be sustained autonomously. Shared critique requires a social commitment. It does not matter whether we are arguing over the relative merits of two films, or the conduct of democratic politics, or the representation of minority

⁶ See for example Barthes (1972,1977); Eco (1979, 1990); Chomsky (1988); Baudrillard, 1994)

⁷ See particularly: MASTERMAN, L. (1980, 1985,1994)



groups in the media. We end up having to take sides.

Perhaps it would be more educationally discrete to say that we have to take up positions in relation to issues. But it means we have to take sides. Media education should be about recognising the ways in which taking sides in relation to media representations has social consequences. We have to decide how we will 'act' with others who share our views, and with those who do not. In this sense we have to move towards judgements and actions based upon forms of solidarity. Sometimes it may be a solidarity about which music we wish to hear or the length of our hair. At other times it may be solidarity over our understanding of justice and exploitation and our democratic rights and responsibilities. We have to recognise that, in a media age, these issues are likely to occur back to back (or screen to screen) and that they are likely to come to us first in the form of re-presentations. Hence the primary importance for the media educator of developing a range of approaches to the study and production of media representations.

My main point here is that we can only make judgements in social contexts and that this requires us to ally ourselves with a variety of groups according to the kinds of judgements we are trying to make. Critical solidarity is a means by which we acknowledge the social dimensions of our thinking and analyses. It is also a means through which we may develop our skills of analysis and relative autonomy.

The future of media education has to travel the road of critical solidarity, or it will end up in one of a number of cul de sacs. These may include aesthetes avenue, identity mews, or media specific skid row.

In order for the concept of critical solidarity to become workable and as stimulating as I believe it could be, we need to work on the development of a relevant and practicable pedagogy. That is the next task.



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