

# SELLING CHOCOLATE: RHETORIC, REPRESENTATION AND AGENCY

## INTRODUCTION

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In the last chapter we emphasised how students' rhetorical study of texts could help them to explain their aesthetic effects. In this chapter we look at the rhetorical strand more broadly, and at how it can account for the kinds of messages conveyed in advertising. As we have seen, Aristotle's model of rhetoric incorporated three elements – *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* – which can be broadly aligned with conceptions of institutions, texts and audiences in modern rhetorical studies, and media studies in particular.

Again, critical engagement is seen here in tandem with creative production work, rather than opposed to it, as students make their own TV advert. Television advertising is an important area of the media literacy of young people. It is also difficult to account for as a part of their cultures and the economies in which they live: hard to say how important it is, hard to say how much it influences what they buy and aspire to, hard to say what kind of pleasure they take in it as a condensed form which carries, amongst other things, intense miniature narratives, celebrity vehicles and representations of contemporary tastes and lifestyles. On the one hand, television advertising can be viewed by educators as a seductive manifestation of the power of corporate capitalism; at the other extreme, it can be viewed as a contemporary art form, commercial in its primary purpose, but, like its close cousin the music video, an energetic and playful moving image genre.

Consequently, teaching approaches to advertising need to be similarly ambivalent. Young people certainly need to know that advertising exists to sell them both material products and ideas, and to be critically aware of how it does this. However, they also need room to extend and explore the complex ways in which they engage with them as cultural forms. Teachers also need to be aware of the positive aspects of adverts: their value as a part of shared popular culture (think of James Joyce's play on the Guinness slogan in *Finnegans Wake*); their inventiveness as a moving image form with a washback effect in mainstream video, television and film culture (think of Ridley Scott's Hovis

advert on UK television in the 1970s); their mediation of stars of popular culture, such as Nike's mini-essays on the images and skills of international footballing heroes.

The project described in this chapter explores advertising addressed at the new ethical consumer through the marketing of a Fair Trade chocolate bar. It raises the important question of how media production projects simulate the work of media industries. Simulation, as Buckingham argues (2003), is a legitimate and frequently practised approach to media production work, and to classroom explorations of the nature of media organisations. However, in the end, there is always something unsatisfying about endless simulations, not just in the context of media education, but in the educational lives of young people generally. Most of what they do in schools is a simulation of the adult world in some form or another: they move from lesson to lesson discarding and assuming roles modelled on the work of adult professionals, trying on the identities of young scientists, actors, mathematicians, designers, authors, chefs, film directors, geographers, academics, musicians, artists. Many teachers work hard to break out of the glass box of school simulation, putting on public art shows, concerts, exhibitions and so on. At Parkside we can recall many examples of this: exhibitions of student pub sign designs in the local pub; an exhibition of model insects made in Biology in a Cambridge University natural history museum; a concert of music played on instruments made with trash metal performed with a famous London orchestra; a documentary by a group of Bengali-speaking children about their lives, broadcast on regional television for the Millennium.

This project was another opportunity for us to develop a media production course that connected with the real world in some way. We were approached by the UK charity organisation Comic Relief, much of whose work is channelled towards aid for Africa and support for sustainable development projects. In this case they wanted to link English schools with schools in Ghana to promote the idea of Fair Trade chocolate production. The chocolate was made by a London company, the Day Chocolate company, a third of which is owned by the Fair Trade cocoa-growers co-operative Kuapa Kokoo in Ghana.

With Parkside's media specialist work in mind, we suggested an additional element to the project: for students to make a television advert for the new chocolate bar the company was launching – Dubble, a Fair Trade chocolate bar marketed for children. Comic Relief agreed, and we worked with the 'product champion' for Dubble at the Day Chocolate company, Kika Dixon, to develop a brief for a television advert. Kika visited the class of the students whose work is analysed later in this chapter, and gave them the brief just as she would to a professional advertising company.

While we developed this work into a media production course for the GCSE Media Studies exam at Parkside, we also invited a number of other specialist media schools to work with us to write a resource pack for teaching advertising through the Dubble project. Jenny Grahame of the English and Media Centre in London supported the project, and helped to develop the resource pack as part of the Centre's media education resource for Key Stage 4, the 14–16 phase of the UK education system (Grahame et al., 2002).

Finally, while the brief for the advert was real, and the product was real, and the Parkside students even met and interviewed a representative from Kuapa Kokoo in Ghana, there remained the question of what would happen to the adverts once they were made. Needless to say, it was impossible to broadcast them on television (and broadcasting time remains the most valuable resource television companies could offer for young people's media production work; and the least commonly available). However, the students' adverts were viewed with interest and appreciation by the project teams from Comic Relief and Day, who fed back comments. In addition, the Parkside adverts were screened by the Arts Picturehouse cinema in Cambridge as part of a Dubble feature during the cinema's Summer Festival season.

We will look now at two aspects of the project: first of all the pedagogy, as represented by the planning of the course; and then at an example of students' adverts, a selection of which are included on the CD-ROM, along with the original brief from the Day product champion, on video. There are, as with all media production work, two key questions here: how can teachers plan for the kind of critical–rhetorical learning which is the focus here; and what kinds of learning will occur in addition to (even in spite of!) such pedagogic structures?

## PLANNING THE DUBBLE PROJECT

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### **Institutions**

Like any advertising project, this one invites students to imagine they are an advertising agency given a brief to produce an advert for a particular project. However, more important than this simulation is what students learn about Day Chocolate: that a third of it is owned by the Kuapa Kokoo co-operative; that other owners include Body Shop International, Christian Aid and Comic Relief; that Dubble is a Fair Trade bar, providing a guaranteed price to the cocoa-growers.

In what sense can this kind of information be seen as education about media institutions? In the case of Dubble, the political economy which lies behind the Fair Trade movement needs to be understood, at least to some

extent, by students. In addition, the ways in which the media function to sell ideas about aid, trade and Africa in particular are the context out of which any advertising for Dubble emerges. Debt cancellation and trade are early twenty-first century political stances, seeking to improve on the charity impulse that determined earlier models of government and NGO intervention in African poverty and famine. This is the bigger institutional context, and its contemporary manifestations in the UK have been represented in UK politics by the 2005 G8 summit and its debt, aid and trade settlements; and in popular media terms by the Live 8 concert and the prolonged engagement of campaigning music celebrities in such political settlements. Of course, such movements are the subject of intense debate, criticism and contestation: the question for the classroom is how to open up such debate to students.

For teenagers of the early twenty-first century, this form of international politics is visible and motivating. The Dubble project has the potential to tap into the latent or actual political engagement of students, to provide contextual information, personal narratives (from Ghanaian farmers and their children) and a connection through chocolate, a consumer product with a powerful historic presence in children's culture, but also a profound economic history redolent of post-colonial relationships and the poverty trap in which developing economies are confined.

The very identity of chocolate producers such as Cadbury Schweppes in the UK speaks of this history. Cadbury is an old Quaker company characterised by a benevolent paternalism towards its workers in the nineteenth century, for whom it built a working village on the outskirts of Birmingham. Now this village functions as a theme park for children to visit; and the 'educational' message of this 'experience', like the website that supports it, revives the narrative of the historical benevolence of Cadbury in the UK, while reducing the narrative of its relations with cocoa-growers in Africa to a mere cartoon sketch (for a comparative analysis of the Dubble and Cadbury educational websites, and their respective representations of Africa, see Burn and Parker, 2003).

However, presenting the political economy of chocolate production and its mediation through advertising is one thing; guaranteeing that students have 'learnt' this in some measurable way is quite different. In this course they were expected to show that they understood the institutional context in the written work which accompanied the production of their advert. Yet the nature of such work has often been questioned (notably by Buckingham et al., 1995): it is too easy for this kind of writing either to fail to produce evidence of learning beyond the superficial, or for it to obediently rehearse the expected information, concealing where the students' interests and motivations really lie.

Nevertheless, language – whether in the form of speech or writing – remains an important mode for the critical interrogation of media texts, not least because it is well adapted to represent abstract concepts. Media teachers need

to work with writing, not denying its place in early twenty-first century culture, but campaigning for it to be seen in a wider context of genres (game walkthroughs, comicstrip captions, agony aunt columns, blogs, text-messages), and to be perceived as one among many signifying systems which today's media interweave. In this respect, the written work accompanying advertising production work can simulate the genres of institutional production (memos, pitches, letters, design specifications). It can be a form of roleplay: students can write in role to the Day company, expressing the merits of their advert; and can also reply in role, criticising it. This kind of writing can incorporate: design features (letterheads, logos, slogans); screengrabs of images from the advert; casting notes and photos; storyboard sequences; interviews with audience focus groups. The writing, rather than being at odds with the digital production of video, can be another form of digital production itself.

### **Text**

The intention in this project is for students to learn about three aspects of media texts: genre, representation and a number of features of the grammar of the moving image.

In terms of genre, the Dubble advert is a hybrid. On the one hand, it requires an advert for a consumer product which typically associates that product with a desirable lifestyle. On the other hand, it is a descendant of the 'charity ad' genre, typified by sombre images of the victims of poverty, abuse and neglect, and produced in the UK by charities such as Christian Aid, Oxfam and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (see the English and Media Centre's Advertising pack for examples).

This double lineage (to add to the many puns the name of the bar has intentionally spawned) leads to a number of *representational* issues. Since Fair Trade intends to recognise the self-determination of African farmers, the typical charity ad representation of passive victims needs to be avoided: no easy task when children's experience of these images is profoundly rooted in discourses of victimhood and aid. The representation of chocolate is an easier matter, at first glance: it simply needs to be shown in the advert in a positive light, and associated with desirable qualities, lifestyles or consequences. However, the chocolate itself is related to the Fair Trade theme, and this relationship is difficult to convey in an advertisement.

A second representational problem is to do with the nature of metaphor, something more often associated with English classrooms than media ones, perhaps. Students find it easier to design literal meanings than symbolic or metaphorical ones: so it was simpler to imagine a Dubble advert in which a teenager entered a shop, bought a Dubble bar, ate it and found new friends than to associate the bar with fantasy images, or superficially unrelated objects and events.

When it came to representing the Fair Trade message, the task became even more difficult. This was much more distant from the students' lives than the consumption of chocolate, and required them to move beyond their immediate personal and cultural preoccupations, which media work is often able easily to cater for. How to represent Africa, and African cocoa-farmers? Even more difficult, how to represent the rather abstract idea of Fair Trade? For one thing, it does not lend itself easily to visual representation. For another, the whole idea of Fair Trade, while it was interesting for some students, was a little 'worthy' for others, and less immediately motivating than the process of representing themselves, their friends and the chocolate in narratives that might be witty, ironic, amusing and closely associated with their immediate cultural interests.

These problems betray a dilemma at the heart of media education. It is a commonplace observation that working with popular media allows students to explore and further engage with popular media forms and texts they are familiar with, and which give them pleasure. On the other hand, it is a grave mistake to imagine some homogeneous media culture which all young people inhabit: their tastes and experiences are as wide and varied as those of any comparable group of adults. Whichever texts teachers select to focus on, or to require students to make, they will be more familiar, motivating, interesting to some than to others. Furthermore, media courses, while part of their aim will always be to deepen students' understanding of media texts they know well, will also always want to introduce them to texts, genres, forms they have not experienced. This is a difficult balance to achieve, especially for any given individual student; but the principle is clear enough. The Dubble project offers the possibility of such a balance: the pleasurable exploration of consumer advertising in which many children are experts from an early age, coupled with the challenging task of selling a complex abstract message, rooted in a serious political and economic context.

Finally, this task is a moving image task, and requires students to learn (or further develop) their grasp of the 'grammar' of the moving image. Like music videos, title sequences for films or television drama, and film trailers, adverts are perfect short forms for media production work in schools. They offer all the satisfaction of making a complete text, in a genre whose rich cultural history young people know well. They require economical, precise design of shots, and equally precise and economical editing.

However, this is not just a training exercise in shot construction and editing. The point of this grammar is that it is the semiotic realisation of all the questions of politics, representation, agency and culture raised above. The grammar cannot be divorced from the meaning it conveys – the images and sounds of the advert need to be understood in terms of the social meanings they carry. As in any media project, these meanings will be in terms of the

stated aims of the project and the content it is attempting to engage with; but they will always also exceed those aims. Short films of this kind made by young people will necessarily carry unpredictable meanings which emerge from their own preoccupations, experiences, tastes, beliefs and interactions with each other. This needs to be planned for – it needs space, slack, resources and, above all, an openness of mind on the part of teachers. We need to understand the emergence of unexpected meanings, and not automatically censor them because they appear at odds with, perhaps even undermine, the ‘official’ intention of the course.

### **Audience**

As with any kind of simulation of the media industries, this project asks students to imagine an audience for their advert. The audience is specified in the original brief by Kika Dixon: ‘11–16-year-olds, boys and girls’ (see CD-ROM for the video of Kika’s brief). The key question here, as in any exploration of audience, is how the students’ notion of audience connects with their conception of representation and mode of address. How will their work represent the target group, or their interests, aspirations, preoccupations? How will it construct a mode of address which will be comprehensible, engaging and credible? How will it locate the viewer?

In social semiotic terms, the idea of address is realised as the function of interactivity: how does the text invite readers or spectators to engage with it, through its choice of content, its framing of shots, its camera angles and distances, and so on. The interactive function also includes the idea of *modality*. Modality is the system in semiotics which determines, amongst other things, the truth claim of the text, which relates to longstanding debates about realism in film and television, for instance; but which here is more to do with authenticity and credibility. We will explore below how examples of students’ films work to establish modality claims: how to make both the chocolate *and* the Fair Trade idea seem convincing and believable.

Three things remain to be said about audiences. First, students are not simply addressing their film to an imagined audience in a vacuum. This audience shares their world, and the texts made by students will draw on cultures and discourses which they believe their audience will share. This shared world of discourse connects producers and audiences, though not always in transparent or predictable ways. If we were to provisionally name the discourses these films principally engage with, they might be discourses of chocolate, of childhood and youth, and of Africa (through the eyes of the ‘developed’ world).

Secondly, to approach an audience is, eventually, to extend the life of a text beyond the process of production. The five strata we have incorporated in our model of media literacy lead to this extension: *discourse, design, production,*

*distribution, interpretation.* It is often not possible in school media production work to reach the fourth stratum, distribution. We might simulate it, asking students to construct schedules for when their work might be broadcast, or press kits for distribution of their films. But the distribution stratum is inevitably elusive. In this project we did manage to show the students' work to the Day Chocolate company, and to screen it in a local arts cinema, but not to broadcast it on television.

Thirdly, as Steve Archer has argued, student productions are, in some ways, a genre of their own; and a corollary of this is that, in many ways, students make them for themselves and their friends rather than for an imaginary, unknown audience (Archer, 2007). This is not necessarily a limitation: it may well be that many professional makers of texts do the same thing. Many authors are on record as writing the books they themselves would like to read. Similarly, we encountered, in the course of a recent research project, a game development company who were clearly making a game for young men like themselves. With this broad description of the course in mind, we turn now to an analysis of one of the first outcomes, which can be viewed on the CD-ROM.

#### THE GRAMMAR OF CHOCOLATE: AGENCY AND MODALITY

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This advert is by a group of four boys which has remained quite constant through the two years of the GCSE Media Studies course. They have already made two productions: one of a trailer for the Luc Besson film *The Fifth Element* (1997), the other a short documentary on skateboarding (an analysis of this can be found in Burn and Parker, 2003).

Their advert is a narrative of chocolate-eating, associated with lifestyle qualities (the brief from Day Chocolate wanted messages like 'cool, cheeky, delicious'). The group found this narrative relatively easy and enjoyable to imagine, plan and construct. They decided early on to recruit a friend from their year group as the star of the advert, and adopted an approach which several other groups also used: to show the boy buying the bar from the local corner shop, followed by some kind of transformation of his life.

They found the Fair Trade message much harder to conceive of. They had real difficulty in imagining how the agency of African cocoa-farmers might be represented. For them, as for other groups, part of this difficulty lay in a desire to represent Africa in a literal way. Eventually they asked if they could take their camera out of school to the Botanical Gardens in Cambridge and film lush tropical vegetation which they hoped could represent cocoa plantations. However, they realised that the rather abstract notion of Fair Trade needed more explication than this, and later adopted other strategies.

The challenge of this task for them is, in many ways, to do with the representation of different kinds of agency. Who or what has agency in the narrative sequences they construct? And who is on the receiving end? Their task has been in some ways explicitly constructed along these lines: they know, for instance, that they must try to avoid representing the Ghanaian cocoa-farmers as passive.

The terms social semiotics borrows from functional linguistics for the performer of an action and the recipient of the action are Actor and Goal. There are, arguably, three Actors in their video. There is the boy who buys the chocolate bar, who becomes replicated – two of him on screen, eating the bar – a visual joke derived from the name of the bar, Dubble. The dynamic movement in the ad is vested in the teenage protagonist. He buys the bar, walks out of the shop, holds the bar in his right hand, the lyrics of the accompanying soundtrack singing ‘Take a look at your right hand’. He sits down, eats the bar, is amazed by its taste (big close-up on his wide-open left eye) (Figure 6.1). His replica appears on the bench beside him – more amazement. He laughs and jokes with his double.



FIGURE 6.1 *Close-up shot of the teenage protagonist of the Dubble advert*

This sequence can be seen as a kind of dramatisation of an idealised everyday life, in which the protagonist represents desirable aspects of the boys’ peer group: witty, cool, assured. In their previous video production piece, the skateboarding video, their representational strategy was very similar: they chose to film members of their year group who were accomplished skateboarders. In a sense, both choices were a kind of vicarious construction of teenage cultural identity: they never used themselves as the actors (as other groups commonly did), partly because of a degree of social uncertainty. All three members of the group were relatively retiring boys, and academically

successful: the brash, streetwise persona they construct in both videos is an ideal, aspirational fantasy.

These negotiations of identity through clothing, music, consumer choice and engagement with media genres have been theorised in recent youth culture theory as lifestyle rather than as the classic form of youth subculture. In particular, Bennett's account of youth culture as 'glocalisation' (2000), in which global cultural influences become infused with local knowledge, seems an appropriate model to apply to the work of these three boys. Across both videos, the global cultures of skateboarding, hip-hop and associated dress codes are interwoven with the local spaces appropriated by the boys' peer group – a local university forecourt and the corner shop outside their school – as well as local speech forms, interpretations of music genres, and inflections of humour and irony.

In their advert, these qualities are signified in the performance by clothing (hooded jacket, baggy jeans) and comic facial expressions. In the editing it is signified by changes in the speed – slow motion as the boy swaggers into the shop, speeded-up for comic effect as he emerges. It is also signified by the choice of music for the whole piece – a hip-hop song written and recorded by the step-brother of one of the group.

The group has worked to develop the first message of the advert – the desirability of the chocolate bar – and in this respect, the bar itself is constructed as the second protagonist of the video – the 'subject' of the marketing (we are the addressees, in a communicative link between the marketers, the representation of the bar and the target audience). The bar in this respect, is the 'star' of the advert. In the establishing shot, as the boy emerges from the shop, he is seen in long shot; the bar is a mere detail. As he walks towards the camera, though, the bar grows in size in his hand while he moves out of sight to the right of the screen. The grammatical terms, indicated by size and prominence on the screen, are reversed – the bar becomes the Actor, the boy more of an appendage, the Goal of the bar's taste.

In the second shot this reversal is given a new twist. It is a shot from the boy's point of view, looking down at the bar, travelling along in his right hand, the pavement beneath moving along (Figure 6.2).

Again, this strongly suggests the bar as Actor, travelling cheerily along, pulling the boy behind it. The point of view positions the boy with us, observing the bar's antics, being pulled along as well by its insistent message.

Thirdly, there are the cocoa-farmers of Ghana, partners in the Fair Trade enterprise. Not surprisingly, the students in this project found the last idea the hardest to represent, and were obliged to find a range of metaphorical images to suggest the idea of Fair Trade. In this advert, the group film a scene in the Botanical Gardens in Cambridge to represent the cocoa plantations of Ghana (Figure 6.3).



FIGURE 6.2 *The chocolate bar as hero/Actor*



FIGURE 6.3 *The Botanical Gardens, representing the cocoa-growers of Ghana*

However, this sequence is extremely ambiguous. There is little dynamism in this shot: the lush greenery just sits there, as a cascade of coins is poured in the foreground, symbolising the money returning to Africa through the Fair Trade system, while text across the screen hammers the message home. This stacticity is a reflection, in the grammar of the image, of the difficulty of conveying this idea. There is an uncertainty in the visual sequence about whom to signal as the Actor, what to signal as the action, what to signal as Goal, bearing in mind that the group don't want to represent the cocoa-farmers as passive beneficiaries.

To push the idea of agency a little further, there are three possibilities.

- 1 The landscape itself is the Actor, a signifier of the Ghanaian farmers, constructed from a semiotic resource to hand – the Botanical Gardens. If the landscape *is* the Actor, it is, as we have mentioned, notable for its staticity – the image has duration, but no movement, at least as far as the landscape is concerned.
- 2 The cascade of coins is the Actor. In this reading ‘money talks’, pouring across the landscape. In fact, of course, this is a signifier where all the key meanings reside in the invisible elements of the image, what is not shown. Somebody must have *poured* the money; somebody must be the *beneficiary*. This is the equivalent of the so-called ‘agentless passive’ in language, often used to conceal who is responsible for an action (*many people have been injured in the attack*). This leaves unresolved a crucial aspect of Fair Trade. If these students are imagining the invisible agent as a Western group (Comic Relief? Day Chocolate? The Department for International Development?), charitably donating funds to poor African farmers, then they miss the point of Fair Trade, which is to invest in the producers of the raw materials as powerful partners in a fair economic exchange, not passive recipients of charitable handouts. If, on the other hand, the students are imagining the cocoa-farmers co-operative pouring the coins, the picture is quite different. Probably, of course, they don’t have a clear image – this area is less clear, less close to them, and the ambiguity of the image reflects this.
- 3 The Actor is signalled in the written text, which reads: WHEN YOU BUY DUBBLE, MORE MONEY GOES TO THE COCOA-FARMERS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN GHANA. There are two clauses in this sentence, thus two Actors: YOU and MONEY. YOU signals the desire to involve the target audience/market in the Fair Trade partnership, which was one of the key messages in Day’s advertising brief. The other Actor – MONEY – suggests the same deleted agency as the visual image. MONEY GOES ... but who sends it? The clear inclusion of the cocoa-farmers as the Goal of the clause suggests that the group haven’t thought through how the money is produced and by whom, and are thus in danger of reverting to the political ‘grammar’ of the charity handout.

The grammar of the moving image reveals the ad’s ambiguity about agency. In social terms – the meanings these students produce about the world, acting on the world – the advert’s grammar is richly suggestive. The bar is humorously personified by the way it is positioned, sized and moved, and by the duration of these shots. The boy toggles between the grammatical function of an Actor in a teenage narrative of cool confidence, on home turf, and that of a Goal, on

the receiving end of the delicious and astonishing sensations the bar can deliver. The hardest idea to represent, that of the Fair Trade nature of the bar, remains elusive, its grammar hesitant and uncertain, poised between the imprecision of the exotic foliage and the abstraction of text, and bereft of the movement which is a strong signifier of agency – the boy and the bar are the dynamic elements of the ad – the signifiers of the cocoa-farmers are oddly immobile.

Finally, the pace of the ad is created by its rapid cutting, on the beat of the soundtrack. The music and its lyrics suggest a confident, urban teenage lifestyle, underlining the function of the boy as principal Actor in the piece, the sequence cut to the rhythm of the music which suggests his walk, his dance. This music and its rhythm is possibly stronger than any visual image in the first seconds of the ad, signalling the theme of the whole sequence as teenage identity, and subordinating the bar and the Fair Trade message to this rhythm throughout. Theo van Leeuwen (1999) suggests that measured time in music can represent the concerns of the secular, embodied life, deriving as it does from human footsteps – the walk or the dance. He opposes this to unmeasured time, such as mediaeval plain chant or an eerie soundtrack for a sci fi movie, which might represent eternal time. In this piece, then, the mark of the in-your-face secular can be inferred from the rhythm of the soundtrack, between walk and dance.

This short film works hard to make its messages convincing. The methods it employs can be seen as *modality cues*, the aspects of texts which negotiate with audiences what is credible, authentic, convincing. Just as the group have found it relatively easy to represent the agency of contemporary teenage life in the UK, they find it easy to claim a high modality for these representations. This can be seen in the richness of the multimodal complex employed: so the authenticity of teenage culture is buttressed by mobile camera work, dress, action, gesture, facial expression and music. This complex is assured, confident that its claim to a high degree of credibility is likely to succeed – at least with an audience of its peers.

The modality of the sequence representing Africa is much less assured. It is less dense multimodally, effectively composed of still image and writing. There is an attempt at camera movement, but it lacks the confident sweep of the other sequences. The intermodal links become somewhat incoherent: for instance, the hip-hop music continues from the earlier sequence, though it is arguably less appropriate here. Finally, the modality claim here is not culturally anchored in the secure way typical of the other sequences: the text is abstract and unattributable; the symbolic coins pouring down are also only conceptually related to the other elements of the sequence.

None of this is surprising, and it is not suggested as a criticism of the film. The hybrid modality is a consequence of the difficulty of the task, and the hybrid motivations of the young film-makers. We draw attention to it here partly because, like other aspects of multimodal texts, it is unlikely to be made explicit within existing conventional accounts of media texts in media studies courses.

## CONCLUSION

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As in the last chapter, this example of media production work suggests that the critical function of media literacy can be most effectively developed through the creative function. In this case, the boys' advert engages critically with the rhetorics of consumer advertising, at one moment ironically emulating the conventions of the genre with exaggerated images of consumer gratification, at another struggling to invert stereotypes of African passivity.

To some extent, this provides evidence of learning in the key concepts of media education. For instance, the advert, along with other work (memos to the director, proposals and storyboards for the advert, letters to the Day Chocolate company, audience surveys carried out in the school), shows that the group have learned something about media organisations and audiences.

Like their earlier projects, this moving image work can also be seen as a minor essay in selfhood. One of its key driving impulses is the desire to explore teenage culture, dress, behaviour, identity; to construct bold, authoritative representations out of the uncertainty of adolescence. This exploration of selfhood, as we have argued in Chapter 2 of the Tiger Woman comicstrip design, is *negotiated* (between the three boys and other members of their peer group who were involved), and *distributed*, in Bruner's terms. The process and product are visible to others for comment and response, both in the local community of the school and in the wider contexts of display and exhibition this work has reached. This aspect of their advert is of importance to them, and is the representational impulse least able to be regulated by the school, and for that reason, most in need of recognition by teachers.

However, the real challenge of this project was to move beyond meanings and representations that are relatively easy to construct – in particular, representations of their own peer group and its culture. The representation of the chocolate bar was more difficult and required the construction of associative meanings that media teachers are used to relating to Roland Barthes's notion of connotation (Barthes, [1957] 1972). But most difficult of all has been the requirement to represent what is, in effect, an example of the 'Other' of con-

temporary cultural theory, and specifically post-colonial theory. The students have had to imagine a lifestyle and set of economic relations very unfamiliar to them, not least because their prior experience of it exists as a powerful complex of misrepresentations. This struggle to represent the least familiar takes their project to the limits of what they are able to do, to the zone where the greatest learning takes place. This is the place Vygotsky called the 'zone of proximal development', where learners, with the right kind of support at the right time, move into new territory.