From visual literacy to critical visual literacy: An analysis of educational materials

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses differences in purpose, orientation and method between what is commonly known as "visual literacy" and what is being called "critical visual literacy". It does so through a comparative critical analysis of two sets of materials produced for classroom use: those produced in 1993 under the umbrella of visual literacy and those produced in 2011 under the umbrella of critical visual literacy. Through an examination of different approaches to context, semiotic choice and authorial discourse in the development of the material, the article shows the distinctive nature of critical visual literacy – its emphasis on the positioned and positioning nature of visual texts, on the socio-political consequences of semiotic choice in visual texts, and on reading against *rather than reading* with *the visual text.*
KEYWORDS: Critical visual literacy, critical classroom materials, reading against the text.

INTRODUCTION

This article discusses differences in orientation and method between what is commonly known as "visual literacy" and what has been called "critical visual literacy". It does so through their application in materials produced for classroom use. The materials concerned are to be found in two related workbooks, the first, *Words and Pictures* (Newfield 1993), written for the *Critical Language Awareness Series* edited by Hilary Janks during the last few years of apartheid education in South Africa, and the second, *Critical Visual Literacy* (Ferreira & Newfield, in Janks et al., forthcoming), revised materials composed in 2011 for a book demonstrating the ongoing relevance of critical literacy to democratic South Africa, and indeed the rest of the world, at the present time (Janks et al., forthcoming). The article discusses shifts in orientation and method between the workbooks through an analysis of three sections.

The 1993 workbook was composed under the umbrellas of media education and visual literacy, two closely related educational fields, which developed as a response to the ubiquity of visual representation in the contemporary communications landscape. Both were premised on inclusion of visual media in what were then almost exclusively language- and literature-based curricula. The media education movement was fuelled by concerns around the "mediazation of modern culture" (Thompson, 1990, p. 16), and the UNESCO Declaration on Media Education (1982). Media education permeated the thinking of a group of South African educators (see Prinsloo & Criticos, 1991; Bertelson, 1991; Newfield, 1994) who wished to include media analysis in curricula during a time of stringent media regulation and control by the state. Media education was thus a serious endeavour at the time. Its goal was the promotion of critical autonomy and agency in individuals and groups – especially the dispossessed and marginalised – and the strengthening of democratic educational

practices in the face of hegemonic structures (Masterman, 1985, 1989; Ferguson, 1998; Alvarado, Gutch, & Wollen, 1987; Giroux, 1994; Prinsloo & Criticos, 1991).

Visual literacy is education that enhances understanding of the role and function of images in representation and communication, especially in the media. Visual theorists Debord (1983), Barthes (1977) and Baudrillard (1988), visual literacy educators Messaris (1994), Hodge and Kress (1988) Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), The New London Group (1996), and, in South Africa, van Zyl (1987), Bertelson (1991), Newfield (1993), Newfield and Peskin (1988) and others, and organisations such as the International Visual Literacy Association (USA) are amongst those who have stressed the increasing centrality of the visual in the contemporary communications landscape. They showed how visual images of all kinds were increasingly used to represent meaning, ideas and feelings, often in complex combinations and orchestrations with words, sounds and movement. They showed, for example, how photographs created a powerful sense of "reality", "truth" and "evidence" because they resembled the objects they represented, unlike in the case of verbal language, which is why identity books and passports, and sometimes credit cards and speed traps, were based on photographs. They discussed the power of television and film images, which create an almost palpable world of objects and events, an illusion of "reality" that draws us in and makes us laugh or cry.

Visual literacy thus promoted engagement with visual texts of all kinds and an understanding of how visual form constructs meaning. It advocated careful scrutiny of the elements that make up the image in order to enhance understanding and appreciation or to promote critical viewing skills.

According to Messaris (1994, pp. 1-40), visual education had four major goals:

1. To enhance the comprehension of visual media across a range of visual forms, including diagrams, graphs, editing and other technological effects.
2. To enhance cognitive abilities through the specific properties of the visual, for example, spatial relationships.
3. Awareness of visual manipulation, distortion and misinformation in advertising, political campaigns and propaganda.
4. Aesthetic appreciation of the visual arts and of visual skills in all forms of visual communication.

The foreword to *Words and Pictures* (1993) acknowledges its debt to writings on media education and visual literacy at the time, and elaborates on Messaris's third goal:

> The idea underlying this workbook is that the media play an important role in society, in the way society sees itself, sells itself, and in the way power in society is sought, maintained or challenged. South Africa, at the present time, is at a turning point in its history. The questions of media control and representation are of vital importance. Equally important is that we, as readers and viewers, reflect critically on what we see and hear. Who constructed that text? On behalf of whom? Where did it appear? To whom is it addressed? What has been included and what omitted? Would we like to contest the message? What other ways are there of portraying the event? These are questions the workbook asks of the media texts within it ... (Newfield, 1993, p. ii)

The stated goal of the 1993 workbook was critical in orientation, showing that early conceptions of media education and visual literacy had a critical foundation. A number of questions arise in relation to revision of the workbook in 2011:

1. Was the goal achieved?
2. In what ways was it necessary to modify the materials according to critical literacy precepts in the 2011 version?
3. If the term "visual literacy" includes criticality, is the term "critical visual literacy" (Ferreira, 2009, p. 231; Ferreira & Newfield in Janks et al., forthcoming) tautologous, the word "critical" being superfluous? If not, what is the relationship between the two, and wherein lies the distinctiveness of critical visual literacy?

This paper attempts to answer these questions through a discussion of three different sections of the workbooks.

DISCUSSION

"Advertising puzzles" and the question of context (see Figure 1)

When searching for materials in order to design a student visual literacy activity on the interaction between words and pictures in 1993, I was inspired by an advertising campaign for Exclusive Books, a South African book store, which I found intriguing and whose basic premise, "Put your mind at risk", seemed to resonate with the tenets of media education and visual literacy. The campaign's concept was built on the consciousness-expanding potential of titles in the Minerva Paperback range of books which it was promoting. During the final years of apartheid rule, what was uppermost in my educational mission was the need for students to move out of apartheid mindsets, with their prescriptions and tunnel vision, and instead to accept and work for intellectual and ideological change, thus embracing and being able to cope with the new future that was on the horizon. The Exclusive Books advertising campaign of the early 1990s seemed to provide suitable material for my general and specific educational aims: i) to reinforce an important social and educational message; and ii) to understand an important fact of visual literacy, namely, the interaction of two modes of communication, words and pictures, in the process of communication.

The creative concept of the Exclusive Books advertising campaign was to link scientific discovery and invention in the European Renaissance of the 15th to 17th centuries with the reading of books in the Minerva Paperback range; both were portrayed as acts of exploration and achievement.

Two advertisements from this campaign appear in the 1993 workbook. The first utilises an image of old-fashioned sailing ships on a stormy sea, and the second a sketch for a flying machine with cursive handwriting below it. Anchorage for the images is supplied by the captions, "If it weren't for the element of risk, the earth would still be flat", which positions the image as representing scientific progress; and "Nice idea, but it'll never fly", a sceptical comment about our ability to design a machine capable of flight. In both cases, the nature of the image evokes an earlier

period in history, in terms of the content and form of the image; the first is a black and white engraving and the second a hand-drawn design.
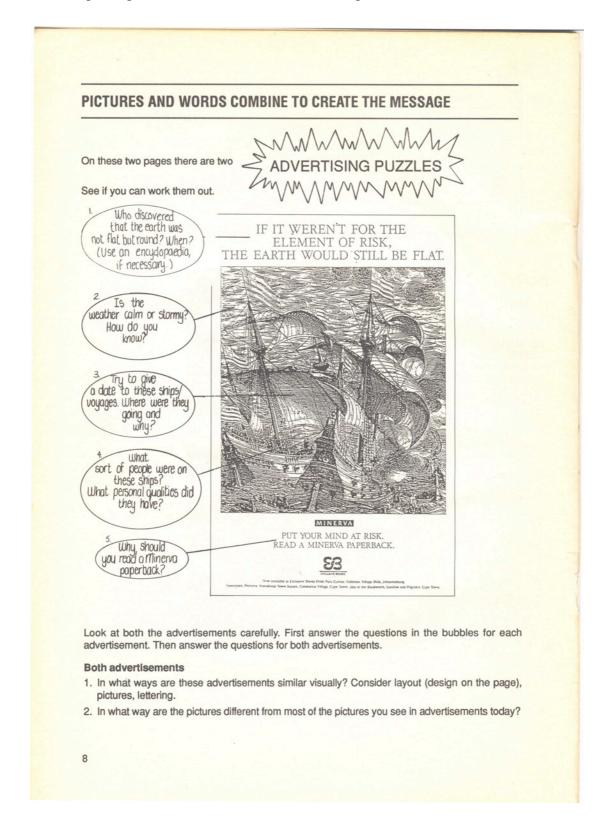
Figure 1. A voyage of discovery?

The analysis here focuses on the image in the first advertisement, that of sailing ships. The ships are deployed as a visual sign for the discovery that the earth is spherical rather than flat. The caption leads readers to surmise that the ships were on so-called "voyages of discovery", such as those of Christopher Columbus in 1452 and Ferdinand Magellan, who sailed around the world in 1519-1522. Since the meaning of the advertisements themselves is historical and implicit rather than overt, the advertisements are termed "puzzles" in the introduction to the worksheet, and students are encouraged to tease out the meaning through careful scrutiny of visual details, the relationship of image to verbal text, and their knowledge of western history. Five questions are asked in order to guide the students towards an appreciation of the meaning and strategy of the advertisement:

- Who discovered that the earth was round not flat?
- Is the weather calm or stormy? How do you know?
- What is the period of the voyage, where were they going and why?
- What sort of people were on the ships, and what were their personal qualities?
- Why should people read a Minerva Paperback?

Students are also asked to consider the layout in order to see how the words "anchor" (a key concept in the workbook) the images, providing them with a particular meaning, narrowing down their polysemous quality. In the final stage of the activity, the students are asked to design their own advertisement for a publishing house or bookstore, and to decide what sort of books they want to sell and to whom. The activity thus moves from analysis to production, from elucidation and appreciation to redesigning.

In revisiting the materials from a critical visual literacy perspective, it is clear that these materials are built pedagogically upon "reading with" the text as opposed to "reading against" it. Although the final activity provides some opportunity for an alternative formulation, the worksheet as a whole falls short of a full criticality, allowing visual literacy students to be manipulated and interpellated by the advertisement's implicit ideology. It is useful to consider how readers are pulled into the ideal reading position for the advertisement, since there is no doubt that they were aware of Jan van Riebeeck's controversial position in South African history and of post-colonial critiques. How are readers seduced by the Exclusive ad into the discourse of "voyages of discovery", a discourse that implies that empty lands did not exist until they were discovered by brave and intrepid western explorers?

A critical visual literacy reading would reveal that a number of textual and contextual features contribute to the readers' interpellation. Firstly, the power of the verbal text and its discourse to "fix" the meaning of the image. The process of "anchorage" described by Barthes (1977, pp. 25-27) fixes or pins down the uncertain signification of the image of old-fashioned ships as those of intrepid explorers who make scientific discoveries, such as that the earth is round not flat; in this way, its caption directs or "remote-controls" the reader's interpretation of the image. The verbal text "loads the image, burdening it with a culture, a moral, an imagination" (Barthes, 1977, p. 26).

Secondly, the "site of display" (Jewitt, 2006), or where the text appears, affects the text's meaning. The text appears in a particular South African newspaper, the *Weekly Mail* (renamed the *Mail & Guardian* in 1995), an alternative newspaper which was a vocal critic of the apartheid government; within the paper, the text forms part of an

advertisement for Minerva Books at Exclusive Books, a bookstore catering for discerning readers who enjoy quality books. The ad's strategy is to position reading as an intellectual voyage of discovery.

Thirdly, inadequate historical information about the image itself and its context is provided to students in the "Clues" section of the materials, where the image is described as "Voyage of discovery, etching by Callot, 17th century" (Newfield, 1993, p. 9). No further information is provided, even though it is essential in terms of a "critical" approach to this advert. What is ignored is the fact that the image shows only a small segment of Callot's large engraving. The full work is entitled "The Siege of La Rochelle". La Rochelle, France's second largest city at the time, had been a self-governing Huguenot stronghold. Callot's engraving depicts La Rochelle under attack on land and at sea by the French King, Louis XIII. The large sailing ships and smaller boats just visible around them are thus at war, engaged in a religiously-based conflict between the royalist Catholic and the dissenting Protestant forces. The battle was won by the royalists, the Huguenots surrendering in 1628, after which time groups of Huguenots fled to Switzerland, England, America and South Africa, amongst other countries, to escape persecution. This important bit of contextual information has serious implications for reading the image. It enables what seemed like storm clouds to be read as puffs of smoke from cannon guns during the battle, and undercuts the advertiser's portrayal of the sailing ships as signs of scientific progress.

Knowledge of the context behind the production of the original image – Callot's engraving – thus introduces an unavoidable irony into the advertisement. It demonstrates the way in which advertisers may use and manipulate images to their own ends in order to sell their products. In being recontextualised and cropped, the Callot engraving comes to mean the opposite of its original meaning – an image of exploration and discovery rather than one of oppression and violence.

The fourth layer of context which is insufficiently examined is the advertisement's situation within the historical context in which it appeared, that of the last few years of apartheid rule in South Africa. A critical visual literacy approach would insist on wanting to explore how the meaning of the advertisements relate to South African history, and to what extent the "voyages of discovery" may more properly be seen as voyages of colonial conquest of indigenous peoples. Within the South African context of systematic discrimination and oppression of people in terms of race, the issue of religious persecution depicted in Callot's etching is both highly pertinent and resonant, and clearly relevant to South Africa's general educational situation in the pre-democratic period. Revisiting the material from a critical visual literacy perspective highlights the worksheet's neglect or suppression of the full context of both the original image and the advertisement itself in the 1993, showing it to be a serious, if not insidious, matter.

Critical visual literacy would want to uncover and emphasise the Eurocentric discourse of progress inscribed in the advertisements. No question explicitly allows students to reflect on European "voyages of discovery" as voyages of colonial conquest. This leads directly to a consideration of the target market of the advertisements – educated, white, middle-class readers who subscribe to notions of Western superiority and learning. No scientists from Africa or the east, for example,

are alluded to in relation to the complex question of the origins of the theory of a round earth.

To conclude, the worksheet does indeed make clear the way words and pictures are orchestrated together to communicate the advertiser's message, one of its stated aims. It also attempts to guide learners towards an appreciation of the visual details of the image's design. In reading only *with* the text – and ignoring the *different layers of context* – criticality is dulled, allowing for reinforcement rather than critique of, or, at least, negotiation with, the ad's colonising and Eurocentric cultural and ideological discourses. A critical visual literacy would be able to surface these, with questions such as: To whom is the ad addressed? Where does it appear? Whose interests are served by the ad and whose are ignored? In what ways does the advert change the meaning of the original engraving by Callot? What discourse does the ad mobilise to sell its product? How do you respond to the ad as a young person in South Africa in the early 1990s, and in 2011?

The final activity could be retained. It might read as "Redesign the ad for South Africa in 2011. Decide on the name of the bookstore and publishing house you wish to advertise, as well as your target market. Select a suitable image (or images) and caption. On a separate sheet, mention the discourse or discourses you are drawing on." This reconstructive activity would be informed by the critical visual analysis preceding it, leading to more self-conscious decisions regarding target audience, captions, and selection of images on the part of students as they design their own ads. (It is important to note that the revised material of Newfield and Ferreira (Ferreira & Newfield in Janks et al., forthcoming) includes an activity based on a contemporary cartoon by Zapiro, which satirises the colonial arrogance of Jan van Riebeeck and his crew in the Cape on their arrival in 1652 with the knowing but powerless response of the indigenous people.)

Boy Mangena and the question of photographic choice (see Figure 2)

This section of the paper discusses the shift in pedagogic orientation between the 1993 and 2011 versions of a worksheet based on the article on gangsterism in Alexandra Township, "Death in the Dark City", which appeared in *Drum* magazine in 1956. The versions appear in Newfield (1993) and Newfield and Ferreira (Ferreira & Newfield, in Janks et al., forthcoming). The article features a photograph of gangster, Boy Mangena, which was taken by Peter Magubane. The 1993 worksheet is divided into two parts. The first part encourages interpretation of the photograph from a position of aesthetic appreciation. It focuses readers' attention on details in the photograph such as body position, the setting, marks on the paving stones and the contrast between the film poster, which depicts a white couple kissing, and the lifeless figure of the gangster on the ground. The questions seek to complexify and enrich the process of reading the image, through pointing to a range of possibilities and ironies in the meaning of the photograph. The second part of the worksheet focuses on the relationship between the two sections of the composite, bimodal text – the photograph and the accompanying article – aiming at demonstrating the way in which "words affect the meaning of the picture" (Newfield, 1993, p. 19), in this case pinning down the richness and evocativeness of the picture in didactic fashion. The final student activity is based on issues of polysemy and positioning in images, asking readers to write alternative paragraphs to the original from the viewpoint of different people, such as "Boy Mangena's mother, a policeman in Alexandra, an associate of Boy

Mangena, a woman living in the white suburb of Kew, who is afraid of her neighbours in Alexandra, and an official of the South African government of 1956" (Newfield, 1993, p. 18). The worksheet as a whole encourages "learning to really look" (Newbury personal communication March 1, 2011) through engagement with the text, while the final section encourages reading against it.

By contrast, the 2011 version (Ferreira & Newfield, in Janks et al., forthcoming), written under a "critical visual literacy" banner and in a different historical context, emphasises photographic and editorial choice in relation to positioning, and interrogates the social effects of the image for a contemporary audience. Its central intention is to interrogate the idea of a photograph as a mirror image of "reality". Drawing on Newbury's research (Newbury, 2009), three different images of Boy Mangena are provided in order to demonstrate questions of photographic choice. The first two photographs are similar, except that one is more tightly cropped than the other. Both are shot from the front, and show a black male figure lying on the pavement, his hands folded neatly on his chest and a cap covering his face. The framed film poster is visible in the upper left hand corner. The third photograph, while clearly representing the same scene, has a quite different effect. Shot from an oblique, high angle, it reveals the pavement lengthwise rather than horizontally and includes bystanders in the background. Boy Mangena lies untidily still, his body in a state of disarrangement, giving the impression of having fallen in this position on being shot. His legs are out of alignment; his left hand is on his chest, and his right arm lies limply across his right leg. His face is uncovered, unlike in the other two shots where his face is covered with a cap.

Students are asked to consider the different effects of each photograph and why the editor selected one photograph rather than the others. Close reading remains central to the pedagogic activity in which students are asked to consider the different effects of different camera angles and body poses, just as in the 1993 version, but here the close reading is directed towards subject positioning. The first question in the section called "Photographic choices" asks how the camera angles in the different photos of Boy Mangena position them differently in relation to Boy Mangena's figure (Ferreira & Newfield, in Janks et al., forthcoming). Later sections of the worksheet develop the politics of representation on a broader level, too, in relation to definitions and representations of criminality itself rather than of a particular criminal. Students are asked to interrogate how criminality and criminals are portrayed in newspapers and films, to discuss different styles of representation and alternative possibilities. In this regard, Newbury's book (2009) is an invaluable resource in showing how *Drum* magazine contains different representational styles of gangsters: staged shots of behatted and snazzily dressed established gangster groups, in the film noir aesthetic tradition, such as Gosani's "The Americans" of 1954 or the 1951 cover shot of a masked gangster figure astride the Johannesburg skyline. These contrast with Magubane's unstaged street shots of teenage gangsters (Newbury, 2009, p. 127, pp. 148-9). The dramatic and evocative photograph of Boy Mangena falls between the two styles.

In discussing the shifts between both versions of the worksheet on the *Drum* text, however, it is necessary to bear in mind the political and educational contexts in the 1950s, when the article appeared, in 1993 when the first worksheet appeared, and now. Photographic representation of urban black life was in itself an oppositional act
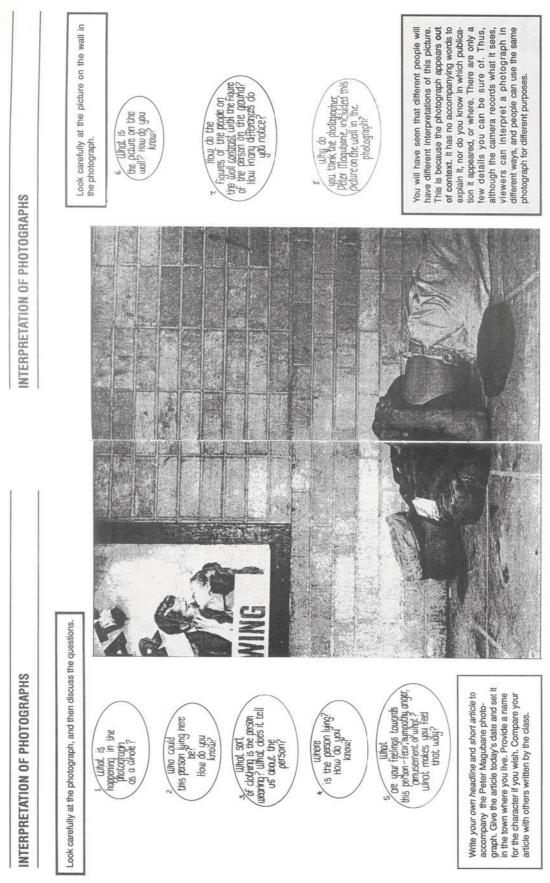
Figure 2. Photograph of Boy Mangena

during the 1950s – a time of influx control laws restricting the presence of black people in South Africa's apartheid cities – as Newbury's book, *Defiant Images: Photography and Apartheid South Africa* (2009) makes clear. Moreover, in order to assess the changes in the worksheet, it is necessary to consider the different political contexts of the early 1990s, when the activity was first devised, and that of 2011. Still in the tight although loosening grip of apartheid curricular practices, during a period when mainstream English speaking newspapers and magazines continued to ignore black urban life unless it related to acts of violence, the choice of a text from *Drum*, which had become associated with the cultural revival in black journalism, photography and music of the 1950s, was deliberate. A key aim of the activities based on the Boy Mangena photograph was "defiance" of the segregated and Eurocentric apartheid curriculum, both in its Christian National Education and Bantu Education forms. Furthermore, the selection of a *Drum* photograph rather than any other photograph to teach visual reading skills, was a way of celebrating and paying tribute to black South Africa and its talented photographers.

In the early 1990s, then, as in the 1950s, the Boy Mangena image was in an important sense oppositional; however, in the context of 2011, and drawing on research on the representation of black people around photographic and cinematic stereotyping (Hall, 1997; Tomaselli, 1989; Pieterse, 1992; Ferguson, 1998; and Nuttall, 2008 on post-racial advertisements in South Africa), the image may be open to critique as a stereotype of black urban life. The 2011 worksheet addresses this question, by providing the image with a range of different captions, which serve to analyse criminality in South Africa from a sociological perspective. The captions are quotations from speeches and writings across a wide social spectrum – the opening of *The Freedom Charter* of 1955, which states that "our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace"; Nelson Mandela, who in an address to the ANC in 1953 called members of the South African government "gangsters"; Sibongile Mazibuko who likens Soweto as Hollywood; and Jacob Dlamini who challenges stereotypical representations of township life as the "hypervisible problems of poverty, crime and disease" (2009, p. x).

Representing Mandela and the question of authorial discourse

The worksheet on Mandela was the final stage of the 1993 workbook, *Words and Pictures,* its culmination. It focused on the concept of "representation" through a series of visual images of Nelson Mandela, who had recently been released from 27 years in prison, but who was not yet president of South Africa. Its aim was twofold: to pay tribute to this remarkable freedom fighter, and to explore the meaning of the concept of representation, a key term in media education at the time, used to "describe the way the media construct images of people and of the world for readers" and how "the representation of people and of the world then becomes reality, the way things are, unless challenged by critical readers" (Newfield, 1993, p. 22).

Understanding that media representations were representations of reality from different perspectives, ideologically determined, rather than reality itself, was a central aim of the activity. The ideological positioning of the workbook itself emerges from the set of nine images of Mandela that form the "portrait gallery". The images portray Mandela in his early years as an amateur boxer and young husband to Winnie; as "an invisible man" during his incarceration in prison from 1962-1989, when images of Mandela were banned; as a political hero on his release from prison in

February 1990; and as an international statesman who consorts with the most powerful political figures in the world. All but one of the images carry a positive valuation of Mandela. The exception is *The Star's* cartoon which mocks Mandela's support for revolutionary mass action during the 1990s on the grounds that it will lead to national bankruptcy and insolvency.

The worksheet remains substantially the same in the 2011 version, except that some of the images have been updated. Since Mandela is now over 90 years old and a global icon, a 46664 concert poster occupies pride of place amongst the images selected. The activities for students remain substantially the same. However, there is a shift in the discourse in which the questions are formulated. The 1993 version asks students to examine the different representations of Mandela in the following way: "Examine each of the portrayals on the opposite page. Each picture **denotes** Mandela, but each picture **represents** Mandela differently. ..." (Newfield, 1993, p. 22). The 2011 version reads: "What identity for Mandela is constructed in each of the images?" (Ferreira & Newfield, in Janks et al., forthcoming). This discursive shift, seemingly small, is highly significant. It is not simply pedantic. The key concept of "representation", though based on a notion of active construction of the image, was understood in the 1993 worksheet in terms of the representation of the different facets of Mandela's life and history. On the other hand, the conception of representation underlying the 2011 version has a stronger sense of construction: here the media images "construct different identities for Mandela" – as a pugilist and hence a political fighter, and as a past prisoner turned hero.

The 2011 worksheet thus positions itself in "critical visual literacy" terms. The notion of "construction" is sharper, more insistent, more closely aligned with Janks's (2010) perspective on "representation". Discussing the question of authorial and photographic choice, she writes:

> All these selections are motivated: they are designed to convey particular meanings in particular ways and to have particular effects. Moreover, they are designed to be believed. ... [A]ll texts are positioned and positioning. They are positioned by the writer's points of view, and the linguistic (and other semiotic) choices made by the writer are designed to produce effects that position the reader. ... [Texts] entice us into their way of seeing and understanding the world – into their version of reality. Every text is just one set of perspectives on the world, a representation of it: language, together with other signs, works to construct reality. This is as true of non-fiction as it is if fiction. (Janks, 2010, p. 61)

This concept of constructing different identities for Mandela leads to the central concept of iconicity that underlies the worksheet. The worksheet seeks to explore the way icons are celebrated in this media-saturated age, how they are constructed through agglomerations of images, and how these images can be contested. It also seeks to examine the moral, political and aesthetic power of these icons, and the consequences of iconicity, both positive and negative. Representations of Mandela as "the great reconciler" worked to encourage an attitude of reconciliation and forgiveness rather than revenge amongst formerly polarised South African groups during the first decade of South Africa's democracy. The 46664 music concerts, the over-sized statue of Mandela in South Africa's premier shopping mall, and his appearance at the final match of the World Cup at Soccer City, Soweto, confirm his ongoing status as global icon.

CONCLUSION

My analysis of three examples from the 1993 and 2011 workbooks has discussed the changes that occurred in the development of materials composed to promote critical visual literacy as opposed to the more general and eclectic "visual literacy" and "media education". The analysis demonstrates that the 1993 materials did not expose the workings of power in the advertisement, and shows why it was necessary to revise the materials for the 2011 version. Change was necessary in relation to goals, analytical method and authorial discourse.

The eclecticism of semiotic elucidation and aesthetic appreciation in the earlier workbook gave way to a tighter focus on the workings of power in and through the text. "Critical" came to be seen not simply as "reasoned analysis" but as an analysis seeking to uncover the social and political interests in the images' production and reception in relation to the social effects of power and domination. The underlying assumptions and methods of the earlier workbook were therefore questioned and modified. In particular, there was a shift in the manner of reading, from engagement and identification to estrangement and critical distance (Janks, 2010), from submission to the power of the image to resistance to its structuring codes and discourses, from reading *with* the text to reading *against* the text. This is a crucial shift, one that must be made consciously.

The analytical method was modified in significant ways. Reasoned analysis based on evidence from the text, exemplified in the close reading of the Magubane photograph in order to appreciate its richness as a work of art, gave way to a more critical discussion of photographic choice and its consequences for subject positioning in the revised version. When revisiting the earlier material on the Exclusive Books advertisement though a critical visual literacy lens, greater and more scrupulous attention was paid to context – both the contexts of production and of reception – as well as to questions of recontextualisation and manipulation of the original image in a new context. A crucial question for critical visual literacy relating to historical images concerns the original context for the production and meaning of the images as well as their re-publication in the present.

Formal features of texts in the revised versions were examined in terms of their social and political consequences not simply for the purpose of elucidation nor for that of aesthetic appreciation. Texts were juxtaposed and rubbed up against one another in order to demonstrate positionality. The materials were modified in relation to discourse, firstly, by highlighting the way in which discourses – ways of thinking and representing the world – are inscribed within images; and secondly, by shifting the authorial discourse itself. The shift from asking how different images represent different facets of the life of an iconic figure to asking how an image constructs an identity for that figure is highly consequential, and is in keeping with the deconstructive spirit and methodology of critical visual literacy.

Finally, the shift to critical visual literacy is an acknowledgement that texts work to position us, and that this happens below the level of consciousness. What critical visual literacy does is provide strategies for making these workings conscious.

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