Arguably the most comprehensive and, in my estimation, most accurate account of Paulo Freire’s life, legacy and praxis – both his intellectual contributions and the application of his philosophy in various educational sites – has thankfully been published in paperback. Peter Mayo’s exceptional book is an essential pre-requisite for anyone wanting to engage in a serious study of Freire and/or the theoretical foundations of critical, and revolutionary critical, education. Congratulations to Mayo and Sense Publishers for making this valuable book more accessible to readers.

Paula Alman, author of Revolutionary Social Transformation, Democratic Hopes, Political Possibilities and Critical Education and Critical Education Against Global Capitalism. Karl Marx and Revolutionary Critical Education

A brilliant and comprehensive analysis of Freire’s work
From the Foreword by Henry A. Giroux, McMaster University

The present book has been written by an admirer and connoisseur of Freire, one who has had first-hand access to the relevant sources. Mayo makes brilliant use of his material in what amounts to a highly interesting and insightful study.

Mohammed Sabour, International Journal of Contemporary Sociology

A meticulous piece of work that updates and weaves Freire’s thought with that of other critical educators and philosophers, producing a text of great clarity and valuable insight. Mayo’s exploration of the concept of ‘reinvention’ and the concrete application of Freire’s ideas to his own context constitutes an excellent example of praxis in the emancipatory education in which he engages. This work substantially advances the understanding of adult education for transformative ends.

Nelly Stromquist, University of Southern California

...[A] path-finding work by one of the world’s leading Freirean scholars. The current political climate and the intensification of Neoliberalism as a global strategy of exploitation demands that we take Paulo Freire’s legacy to heart, and Mayo’s treatment of Freire’s pedagogy and politics makes this urgently clear. It also sets the terms of the debate for how educators can proceed apace in taking up the struggle for social transformation.

Peter McLaren, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies UCLA
LIBERATING PRAXIS
INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON ADULT EDUCATION

Series Editor:
Peter Mayo, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Scope:
This international book series attempts to do justice to adult education as an ever expanding field. It is intended to be internationally inclusive and attract writers and readers from different parts of the world. It also attempts to cover many of the areas that feature prominently in this amorphous field. It is a series that seeks to underline the global dimensions of adult education, covering a whole range of perspectives. In this regard, the series seeks to fill in an international void by providing a book series that complements the many journals, professional and academic, that exist in the area. The scope would be broad enough to comprise such issues as ‘Adult Education in Specific Regional Contexts’, ‘Adult Education in the Arab World’, ‘Participatory Action Research and Adult Education’, ‘Adult Education and Participatory Citizenship’, ‘Adult Education and the World Social Forum’, ‘Adult Education and Disability’, ‘Adult Education and the Elderly’, ‘Adult Education in Prisons’, ‘Adult Education, Work and Livelihoods’, ‘Adult Education and Migration’, ‘The Education of Older Adults’, ‘Southern Perspectives on Adult Education’, ‘Adult Education and Progressive Social Movements’, ‘Popular Education in Latin America and Beyond’, ‘Eastern European Perspectives on Adult Education’, ‘An Anti-Racist Agenda in Adult Education’, ‘Postcolonial Perspectives on Adult Education’, ‘Adult Education and Indigenous Movements’, ‘Adult Education and Small States’. There is also room for single country studies of Adult Education provided that a market for such a study is guaranteed.

Editorial Advisory Board:
Pauela Allman, Research Fellow, University of Nottingham, England
Stephen Brookfield, University of St Thomas, Minnesota, USA
Phyllis Cunningham, University of Illinois, Urbana Champagne, USA
Waguida El Bakary, American University in Cairo, Egypt
Budd L. Hall, University of Victoria, BC, Canada
Astrid Von Kotze, University of Natal, South Africa
Alberto Melo, University of the Algarve, Portugal
Lidia Puigvert-Mallart, CREA-University of Barcelona, Spain
Daniel Schugurensky, OISE/University of Toronto, Canada
Joyce Stalker, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand/Aotearoa
Juha Suoranta, University of Tampere, Finland
Liberating Praxis
Paulo Freire’s Legacy for Radical Education and Politics

By

Peter Mayo
University of Malta
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreword</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1. Introduction – Paulo Freire: The Educator, his Oeuvre and his Changing Contexts</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paulo Freire (1921–1997)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How Much is Lost in Translation?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Reflexive Statement</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2. Interpretations of Freire’s Work – A Critical Review</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul V. Taylor’s <em>The Texts of Paulo Freire</em></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moacir Gadotti, <em>Reading Paulo Freire</em></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria del Pilar O’Cadiz, Pia Lindquist Wong and Carlos Alberto Torres, <em>Education and Democracy. Paulo Freire, Social Movements and Educational Reform in São Paulo</em></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Roberts, <em>Education, Literacy and Humanization. Exploring the Work of Paulo Freire</em></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonia Darder, <em>Reinventing Paulo Freire. A Pedagogy of Love</em></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>César Augusto Rossatto, <em>Engaging Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of Possibility – From Blind to Transformative Optimism</em></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3. Critical Literacy, Praxis and Emancipatory Politics</strong></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Practices of Domination</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Alternative: Cultural Action for Freedom</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Revolution</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 4. “Remaining on the Same Side of the River.” Neo-liberalism, Party, Movements and the Struggle for Greater Coherence  
   Introduction 67  
   Factors Influencing Freire’s Later Work 68  
   The Watershed 70  
   The 1990s 71  
   What is New in Freire’s Later Works? 72

Chapter 5. Reinventing Freire in a Southern Context: The Mediterranean  
   Globalization 101  
   Unequal Multi-ethnic Relations: Colonialism Transposed 103  
   Learning about the ‘Other’ and Confronting the Politics of Misrepresentation 105  
   Pedagogical Strategies: Object to Subject 108  
   Language and Literacies 108  
   A Multi-centric Curriculum? 110

Chapter 6. Engaging with Practice: A Freirean Reflection on Different Pedagogical Sites  
   In and Against the System 116  
   Working Outside the Academy’s Hallowed Walls 119  
   Parental Empowerment 121  
   To be Inspired by the Popular-Public School? Schools as Community Learning Centers 123  
   The Museum as an Alternative Site of Practice – A Freirean Perspective 129  
   Conclusion 135

References 137
Educational reform has fallen upon hard times. The traditional assumption that education is fundamentally tied to the imperatives of critical citizenship, designed to educate persons to exercise civic leadership and public service, has been eroded. Several formal learning agencies (including schools and formal adult education institutions), operating within a hegemonic narrow conception of Lifelong Learning, serve as key institutions for producing professional, technically trained, credentialized workers for whom the demands of citizenship are subordinated to the vicissitudes of the marketplace and the commercial public sphere. Given the current corporate and right wing assault on public, further, and higher education, coupled with the emergence of a moral and political climate that has resuscitated a culture of cruelty marked by a much celebrated social Darwinism, the issues which framed the democratic meaning, purpose, and use to which education might aspire have been displaced by more vocational and narrowly ideological considerations.

The war waged against the possibilities of an education wedded to the precepts of a real democracy is not merely ideological. Against the backdrop of reduced funding for public educational institutions, the call for privatization, vouchers, cultural uniformity, and choice, there are the often ignored larger social realities of material power and oppression. On the national level, in the USA, for instance, there has been a vast resurgence of racism and a growing inequality between the rich and poor. This is evident in the almost hysterical attack on immigrants, the dismantling of the social state, the increasing immiseration of vast segments of the population marginalized by race and class, the ongoing demonisation and social disinvestment in young people and their future. Poverty is on the rise among children in the United States, with 20 percent of all children under the age of eighteen living below the poverty line. Unemployment is growing at an alarming rate for poor youth of color, especially in the urban centers reaching as high as seventy percent in some cases. While black youth are policed and disciplined in and out of the nation’s schools, conservative and liberal educators define education through the ethically limp discourses of privatization, national standards, and global competitiveness.

The writings of Paulo Freire and other critical theorists provide an antidote to all this. Freire’s ideas, which appeared in print over a thirty year period, enable critical educators to challenge the right wing fundamentalism behind educational and social reform in various parts of the world while simultaneously providing
ethical signposts for a public discourse about education and democracy that is both prophetic and transformative. Eschewing traditional categories, a diverse number of critical theorists and educators have successfully exposed the political and ethical implications of the cynicism and despair that has become endemic to the discourse of schooling and civic life. In its place, such educators, and most notably those engaged in a Freirean approach to education and cultural work, strive to provide a language of critique and hope that inextricably links the struggle over schooling to understanding and transforming our present social and cultural dangers.

At the risk of overgeneralizing, a range of social theorists and critical educators, inspired by Paulo Freire, Raymond Williams, Antonio Gramsci, Zygmunt Bauman and a host of other critical theorists, have emphasized the importance of understanding theory as the grounded basis for “intervening into contexts and power . . . in order to enable people to act more strategically in ways that may change their context for the better.” Moreover, theorists in both fields have argued for the primacy of the political by calling for and struggling to produce critical public spaces, regardless of how fleeting they may be, in which “popular cultural resistance is explored as a form of political resistance.” Such writers have analyzed the challenges that educators will have to face in redefining a new mission for education, one that is linked to honoring the experiences, concerns, and diverse histories and languages that give expression to the multiple narratives that engage and challenge the legacy of democracy. Equally significant is the insight of recent critical educational work that connects the politics of difference with concrete strategies for addressing the crucial relationships between education and the economy, and citizenship and the politics of meaning in communities of multicultural, multiracial, and multilingual learning settings, including schools and adult learning settings as well as those wider settings which are seats of public pedagogy.

It is for this reason that I first encouraged Peter Mayo to include this book, in its earlier hardcover version, in the series I once co-edited with Paulo Freire, namely Critical Studies in Education and Culture (Bergin & Garvey/Praeger, Greenwood). A brilliant and comprehensive analysis of Freire’s work, as can be found in this book, certainly fitted a series that attempted to address and demonstrate how scholars, working in the fields of cultural studies and critical pedagogy, might join together in a radical project and practice informed by theoretically rigorous discourses that affirm the critical but refuse the cynical, and establish hope as central to a critical pedagogical and political practice but eschew a romantic utopianism. Central to such a project is the issue of how pedagogy might provide cultural studies theorists and educators with an opportunity to engage pedagogical practices that are not only trans-disciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional, but also connected to a wider project designed to further racial, economic, and political democracy. By taking seriously the relations between culture and power, works such as this book, which deals with not only a critical exposition of Freire’s work but also the task of reinventing Freire’s concepts in diverse international contexts and learning settings (involving parents’ circles, workers’ education in-
stitutions, community learning centres and museums), further the possibilities of resistance, struggle, and change.

Peter Mayo’s book, therefore, opens a narrative space that affirms the contextual and the specific while simultaneously recognizing the ways in which such spaces are shot through with issues of power. In its hardcover version, this book concluded a series that attempted to continue an important legacy of theoretical work in cultural studies in which related debates on pedagogy are understood and addressed within the larger context of social responsibility, civic courage, and the reconstruction of democratic public life.

Its publication in paperback version opens another series, edited by the author himself, which hopefully will do likewise. It is primarily an adult education series which should provide space for work that will contribute ideas and provide inspiration for cultural workers in their quest for reconstructing a genuinely democratic public sphere. Paulo Freire strikes me as being the perfect ‘subject-to-think-with’ for this purpose. Paulo’s work is as important today as it was when it was originally published and in the spirit of his own commitment to what he called the unfinished nature project of humanity and social justice, it deserves to occupy a central place of inquiry and critical dialogue over the possibilities of education and its related concerns with the promise of democracy itself. His well elaborated and complex notion of a liberating pedagogy forges the link between learning and the ongoing quest to transform society into a more authentically democratic and therefore a more socially just one. It is a pedagogy that is concerned with the ongoing task of addressing contradictions at the levels of the self and the collectivity within which one learns, since Freire’s pedagogy is one that underscores the collective dimension of learning and action.

We must also keep in mind Raymond Williams’ insight that the “deepest impulse (informing cultural politics) is the desire to make learning part of the process of social change itself.” Freire’s ideas, as discussed in this book, challenge the current return to the primacy of market values and simultaneous retreat from politics so evident in the recent work of educational theorists, legislators, and policy analysts. Professional relegitimation in a troubled time seems to be the order of the day as an increasing number of educators, comprising school teachers, adult educators and academics refuse to recognize public, non formal and higher education as critical public spheres and offer little or no resistance to the ongoing vocationalization of different forms of education (this includes the education of older adults, given the perceived non-sustainability of public pension schemes), the continuing evisceration of the intellectual labor force, and the current assaults on the working poor, the elderly, and women and children.

Emphasizing the centrality of politics, culture, and power, this book, in keeping with the series in which it first appeared, deals with pedagogical issues that contribute in imaginative and transformative ways to our understanding of how critical knowledge, democratic values, and social practices can provide a basis for educators, students, and other cultural workers to redefine their role as engaged and public intellectuals. In drawing on Paulo Freire’s work, it enables us to rethink the relationship between language and experience, pedagogy and
human agency, and ethics and social responsibility as part of a larger project for engaging and deepening the prospects of a democratic education in a multiracial and multicultural society. Educators inspired by Freire take on the responsibility of witnessing and addressing the most pressing problems of public education and civic life, and engage culture as a crucial site and strategic force for productive social change.

Henry A. Giroux
Hamilton, Ontario
June 8, 2008

NOTES


3 My notion of transdisciplinary comes from Mas’ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton, “Theory, Pedagogy, Politics: The Crisis of the ‘Subject’ in the Humanities,” in Theory Pedagogy Politics: Texts for Change, Mas’ud Zavarzadeh and Donald Morton, Eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 10. At issue here is neither ignoring the boundaries of discipline-based knowledge nor simply fusing different disciplines, but creating theoretical paradigms, questions, and knowledge that cannot be taken up within the policed boundaries of the existing disciplines.


5 The term “professional legitimation” comes from a personal correspondence with Professor Jeff Williams of East Carolina University.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people whose help I should like to acknowledge. In the first place, I must express my gratitude to members of my family, Josephine, Annemarie and Cecilia, for having put up with me especially during the summer months when I spent the best part of almost every day and night logged on to my computer working on the manuscript for this book or alternatively reading those last few books which I felt deserved a thorough read before I could do justice to them in the book. They also deserve gratitude for the way they put up with the constantly increasing towers of books and papers that became a feature of our house.

I would also like to express a big ‘thank you’ to a colleague and good friend Carmel Borg, with whom I have co-authored several papers, for reading and commenting on a draft version of the entire manuscript and for giving me permission to use material from interviews we carried out together and from papers we co-authored and published together. A big ‘thank you’ is also due to another friend and colleague, Paula Allman, who was ever so willing to read drafts of chapters for this book. Both Carmel and Paula provided me with invaluable feedback and very good tips to improve the text. I should also like to thank Noah Lissovoy from UCLA for his feedback on a number of draft chapters I sent him and Joseph Buttigieg, from Notre Dame University, a good friend, for his instant feedback on Chapter 5. I also want to express my gratitude to Daniel Schugurensky, a long time friend, for having discussed and clarified issues, taken up in this book, through e-mail exchanges. Thanks are also due to Moacir Gadotti and Maria Aparecida Diorio from the Instituto Paulo Freire (Brazil), for clarifying some statistical facts regarding Brazil and São Paulo, and Frei João Xerri, with whom I discussed certain details mentioned in the book.

I also owe immense gratitude to Henry Giroux for encouraging me to write this book for this series with Praeger and for making invaluable suggestions to help me develop the text. This is the second time that he has included a book of mine in one of his series.

I also benefited from the views and insights of the participants in the various University of Malta M.Ed. courses, with specialization in Adult Education, and in the same university’s diploma in adult education courses. Freire’s work featured prominently in these courses. I owe the participants many thanks. I also benefited greatly, when revising the text for the paperback version, from having discussed material by and critiques of Freire in graduate seminars I conducted on Freire at
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

the universities of Verona and Seville in 2007, diplom block seminars on critical education I taught /co-taught at the University of Mainz (2006, 2007) and the intensive graduate course on Freire I taught in the Department of Education Policy Studies, University of Alberta in July 2007. A big ‘thank you’ is therefore due to the various participants. The same applies to students in the B.Ed. (Hons.) course who followed the optional credits in adult education that I taught between the mid 90s and 2002. Works by Freire featured prominently in these courses. I also owe many thanks to participants in the workshops and/or seminars on Freire and Freirean education held in Milan (Metodi-Centro Formazione Paulo Freire and Associazione Fratelli dell’ Uomo, 2005), Bologna (Scuola di Pace Quartiere Savena, Bologna, together with Teatro Giolli, Amici dei Popoli, COSPE,¹ 2005), Rome (Centro Giustizia e Pace and Circolo Paulo Freire, 2005 and 2006) and Naples (Universita degli Studi, Federico II, 2005). I learnt a lot from the participants’ insights and experiences. I would like to express my gratitude, for this purpose, to Patrizia Morgante, from the Centre for Peace and Justice, St. Sabina and the Circolo Paulo Freire (both in Rome), who coordinated the 2005 ‘Freirean week’ in Italy, and Piergiorgio Reggio (Milan), Luca Basile (Bologna) and Paolo Vittoria (Naples).

Finally, any remaining shortcomings in this book are my responsibility.

NOTES

¹ Cooperazione per lo Sviluppo dei Paesi Emergenti
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION – PAULO FREIRE: THE EDUCATOR, HIS OEUVRE AND HIS CHANGING CONTEXTS

Paulo Reglus Neves Freire has been one of the most significant educationists of the last thirty years. His work is cited freely in the literature on education and social thought emerging not only from the ‘Third World’, that provided the context for most of his pedagogical ideas and practice, but also from the world’s most industrially developed centers.

He continues to enjoy iconic status among educators. Argentinean scholar, Daniel Schugurensky, says, with reference to adult education, that: “in Latin America, Paulo Freire constitutes a watershed. There is before and after Freire” (Schugurensky, 1996, p. 344). Several years earlier, another Argentinean scholar, Carlos Alberto Torres, remarked: “We can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire” (Torres, 1982, p. 94). And although Freire is undoubtedly one of the most heralded educators of the 20th century, who inevitably has his detractors, his influence extends beyond the field of education to be felt in a variety of areas including sociology, political theory, development studies, theology, philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, language studies and communications.

He was, first and foremost, a man of action who suffered imprisonment and exile for his efforts in planning what was perceived as being a ‘subversive’ approach to literacy in Brazil in the early sixties, was frequently called upon by revolutionary governments to assist them in developing and evaluating educational projects, used his sixteen year period of exile to engage in projects with a variety of groups in different parts of the world and also ventured into the complex area of municipal educational administration in one of the world’s largest cities. He was, however, a most prolific writer, with many of his works having been translated into English and other languages. Freire’s better-known work is regarded by many to be exemplary in the way it provides reflections on his many worlds of action in a process that also involves constant recourse to theoretical formulations deriving from a variety of sources. Remaining steadfast, till the very end, to his cherished principles of radical humanization and democracy, Freire has, throughout his life, produced work that provides those who share his political-pedagogical philosophy with resources of hope and a strong sense of agency.

With the posthumous publication of a number of his last writings, Paulo Freire’s oeuvre is almost complete. It therefore seems to be an appropriate time to take stock of a substantial and representative part of Freire’s work with a view
to, among other things, tracing the evolution of his thought and exploring its contemporary significance.

PAULO FREIRE (1921–1997)

The greatest and most enduring aspect of Freire’s work is his emphasis on the political nature of all educational activity, as this book will show. In Freire’s view, there is no such thing as a ‘neutral’ education. Education can either ‘domesticate’ or ‘liberate’. In the latter case, as I shall argue in Chapter 3, it can foster the disposition among learners to engage in a dialectical relationship with knowledge and society.

One-way teacher-student transmission, often a reflection of a wider prescriptive process of communication, constitutes a domesticating education. Freire advocates a process involving a dialogical approach to knowledge, an approach that warrants much elaboration in that it entails a number of conditions and features, as I shall demonstrate further on in this book. Although not being on an equal footing, teacher and learner learn from each other as they co-investigate dialectically the object of knowledge. This entails a process of *praxis*, a key term in Freire’s work. It is central to Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy and will be elaborated on in Chapter 3 where I shall also discuss its varying uses and foci in Freire’s work including, in the latter case, the areas of communal living, production (as in Marx’s *Capital* Vol.1) and temporary abode during periods of exile.

One aspect of Freire’s pedagogical approach to be emphasized throughout this book is that educators have to be directive in their approach. This will be a recurring theme throughout the book starting from the chapter that follows where I review a selection of works, in the English language, that attempt to analyze Freire’s work holistically, each in a book-length single study. Quite important in this context will be the discussions surrounding the tension between authority and freedom which, as I shall argue, draws parallels with Gramsci, and especially the distinction in Freire between authority and authoritarianism, a distinction that recurs throughout his work and especially his work from the mid 80s onward. This is all in keeping with a rigorous approach to teaching that eschews all forms of laissez-faire pedagogy and that is predicated on a very complex notion of dialogue. This approach is characterized by a sense of authority that rests on other important qualities that deserve elaboration in the chapters that follow, notably Chapter 4. Included among them are those of humility and love (Freire, 1970a, 1993, pp. 89–90; Freire, 1995a, p. 20). Humility is a feature often attributed to Freire himself. The lay Dominican friar, Carlos Alberto Libanio Christo, better known as Frei Betto and one of Brazil’s foremost contemporary left wing intellectuals, has this to say about Paulo Freire:

During many periods of our lives I was on intimate terms with Paulo Freire and I consider myself his disciple. For more than 20 years I worked in popular education based upon his method and we wrote a book together, with

2
INTRODUCTION

the participation of journalist Ricardo Kotscho. The first thing that impressed
me about Paulo Freire was that, ever since his experience with workers in the
State of Pernambuco, he allowed himself to be educated by the workers, before
presuming to be their educator… He was a simple person, an unpretentious
intellectual, who never wished to show off his erudition, who did not favor one
person over another in any relationship. I remember him telling me how he had
entered a store that sold neckties in Switzerland and could not get anyone to
help him. After some time he complained and the employee said that nobody
paid attention to him because he would not have enough money to buy any of
those ties. He related this anecdote as a joke, laughing, to show the prejudices
that exist in Europe regarding Latin-Americans. (Betto, 1999, p. 44 and in Borg
and Mayo, 2007, p. 34)²

A Freirean approach to knowledge is not concerned solely with the cognitive
aspects of learning (Darder, 2002, p. 98). It involves conceiving of the educators
and learners as “integral human beings” (Ibid, p. 94) in an educational process
that has love at its core (Ibid, p. 91).³ An e-mail message by Valerie Scatamburlo
posted on the Progressive Sociologists network soon after Freire’s death on 2 May
1997, eventually to reappear in a special issue of the journal Taboo, reproduces a
remark said to be uttered by Freire only a few days before his death:

I could never think of education without love and that is why I think I am an
educator, first of all because I feel love…⁴

In response to Carlos Alberto Torres’ question regarding his legacy to humanity,
Paulo Freire stated that he would like to think that people would say the following
about him:

Paulo Freire was a man who loved, who could not understand a life existence
without love and without knowing. Paulo Freire lived, loved and he tried to
know. (Freire, 1995b, p. 181)

The humanizing relationship between teacher and taught (teacher-student and
student-teacher, in Freire’s terms) is a relationship of love. It is love that drives
the progressive Freire-inspired educator forward in teaching and working for the
dismantling of dehumanizing structures. Antonia Darder states, quoting Freire,
that he

was thoroughly convinced that the process of dialogue, central to his pedagogi-
cal project, could not exist “in the absence of a profound love for the world and
for people.”⁵… it was through such love, he surmised, that teachers could find
the strength, faith, and humility to establish solidarity and struggle together to
transform the oppressive ideologies and practices of public education. (Darder,
2002, pp. 91–92)

It is love which lies at the heart of the struggle to solve the contradiction of oppo-
sites which is part and parcel of a dialectical approach to learning, a point which
deserves much elaboration in any serious account of Freire’s work and which will
be taken up in Chapter 3, where I shall be drawing on, among other sources, the work of Paula Allman. And the entire process advocated by Freire rests on the trust he had in human beings and in creating “a world in which it will be easier to love” (Freire, 1970a, 1993, p. 40; see Allman et al., 1998, p. 9). This concept has strong Christian overtones as well as revolutionary ones, some of the influence in the latter case deriving from Ernesto Che Guevara who, according to Freire, “did not hesitate to recognize the capacity of love as an indispensable condition for authentic revolutionaries.” (Freire, 1970b, p. 45).

The emphasis on dialectics and on a dialectical mode of thinking, certainly reflected in Paulo Freire’s own style of conceptualization (Allman, 1988, 1994, 1999), immediately recalls Hegel and Marx, the latter constituting, as I shall argue, one of the greatest influences on Freire, especially following the Brazilian’s period of exile in Chile (see Gajardo, 1998, p. 44; Schugurensky, 1998, p. 19). Marx’s early writings are constantly referred to and provide the basis for Freire’s social analysis in his most celebrated work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This book was conceived of and written during the first six years of his long period of exile. This period involved spells in Bolivia, Chile, the USA and Geneva. Freire has often acknowledged, in this regard, the influence of his first wife Elza (died in 1986) and a number of close collaborators. These include fellow Brazilian exiles Plinio Sampaio, Paulo de Tarso Santos, Ernani Fiori, Francisco Weffort and the Chilean, Marcela Gajardo (Freire, 1994), the last mentioned being a colleague who, among other things, introduced him to the writings of a very important source of influence, namely Antonio Gramsci, and specifically to an edited anthology of Gramsci’s cultural writings, *Letteratura e vita nazionale* (see Morrow and Torres, 1995, p. 457), naturally in its Spanish version.

Freire was exiled following the multinational-backed military coup of 1964 that overthrew the administration of Joao Goulart. At the time of the coup, Freire was about to coordinate a nation-wide literacy program that would have rendered several Brazilians (peasants and city dwellers alike) literate and therefore eligible to vote. Because of this and the fact that his approach involved a process of ‘reading the word and the world’ (Freire and Macedo, 1987), Freire’s work was perceived as posing a threat to the status quo. Asked in London whether his adult literacy work in Brazil would have succeeded had no coup been staged, Freire had this to say:

At least some Brazilians, in their negative criticism of my work, were able to find something positive by saying that one of my major pieces of luck was the coup d’état. In their view the coup spared me a tremendous disaster. I am not sure about that. On the contrary, I think that if the coup d’ état had not happened we would have been very successful all over Brazil. We had examples of success. In Brasília, for example, for three or four months we had the opportunity to work with thousand of illiterate workers. We organized three hundred cultural circles, around Brasília in the satellite towns, with excellent results. The first experience in Northeast Brazil, in Angicos, in the state of
INTRODUCTION

Rio Grande do Norte, was also very good. I had there three hundred illiterate workers reading and writing just before the coup d’état. (Freire, 1995a, p. 65)


Pedagogical activity is discussed not in a vacuum but in the context of an analysis of power and its structural manifestations. There are those who often miss this key point and consequently adulterate his work by reducing it to a method or ‘technique.’ (Aronowitz, 1993, Macedo, 1994, Macedo in Freire and Macedo, 1995, Allman, 1996). In his early work, the focus is primarily on the Latin American context where Freire, who was born in Recife (he always had a special passion for this city) in the north-east state of Pernambuco, draws on his experiences as an adult educator, the vocation he embraced after having studied law and taught Philosophy of Education. The context of his adult education work is the Nord-Este itself, one of the world’s most impoverished areas.

Freire initially worked in a region characterized by semi-feudal relations of production which campesinos had to accept to gain access to land (Ireland, 1987). They therefore lived and worked in a situation of abject thraldom. The rural landowning class is engaged in a historical alliance with the national indigenous bourgeoisie located in the south-east, the São Paulo area (Ireland, 1987). The country is characterized by huge contrasts. In a discussion, published in 1986, involving Fidel Castro, Frei Betto and the Brazilian correspondent on economic affairs, Joelmir Beting, the country was dubbed ‘Belinda’, that is to say Belgium and India side by side (Betto, 1986, p. 33). It was stated, at the time, that in Brazil, there were no less than 32 million consumers with a pro-capita income equivalent to that of Belgium. They thus constituted a huge market. Another 40 million lived in relative poverty while 30 million lived in absolute misery. In between the affluent 32 million and the 70 million poor, there existed a working class living at basic subsistence level. The 70 million poor were said to live in a situation comparable to India, hence the tag ‘Belinda’ that captured the sharp social contrast characterizing Brazilian society at the time. (Betto, 1986, p. 33–34).11

The situation is one of stark contrast in access to material goods and power, in a country whose fortunes have been guided by colonial and neo-colonial interests. Echoing Brazil’s well known sociologist, Fernando Henrique Cardoso,12 later to become President of Brazil, Freire states that the coup d’état brought about a “recapitulation to an ideology of development based on the handing of the national economy to foreign interests, an ideology in which ‘the idea of the great
international enterprise replaces the idea of the state monopoly as the basis for development.” (Freire, 1970b, pp. 41–42) The issue concerning the very poor distribution of resources in Brazil and the rest of Latin America rendered discussions regarding social class an important feature of such works as Pedagogy of the Oppressed. As Freire himself has admitted, this feature is conspicuously missing from his first published work, Education as the Practice of Freedom (this is published in English as part of Freire, 1973) (see Schugurensky, 1998: 14; Gajardo, 1998: 44).

Social class analysis constitutes an important feature of the radical Brazilian religious movement with which Freire is strongly associated. A “man of faith”, Freire was certainly influenced, in the development of his ideas, by the radical religious movements which made their presence felt in Brazil in the late 1950s and early 1960s (Dekadt, 1970). There is a strong convergence between his views on education and the education document produced by the Latin American bishops for the Episcopal conference in Medellin, Colombia (this conference represents a landmark in Liberation Theology), a point to which I shall return in Chapter 3. In a conversation with Carmel Borg and me, the then São Paulo Cardinal, Paulo Evaristo Arns stated categorically that, in his view, Paulo changed not only people’s lives but also the Church; he made reference, in this context, to the 1968 Medellin conference.13 This connection between Freire and the liberation theology movement persisted throughout his life. A year after Freire’s death, Frei Betto (1999, also in Borg and Mayo, 2007, pp. 36, 37) had this to say about the state of the movement:

On the one hand, Liberation Theology is weak at the moment. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the pressures from the Vatican, there have been no great advances and in some measure it “dis-articulated” itself because of a lack of support. On the other hand, themes that belonged exclusively to Liberation Theology are today addressed even in documents by the Pope. Suddenly, the Vatican publishes a document about Land Reform which could be signed by any liberation theologian. We now say that Liberation Theology is no longer a ghetto in the Church, but a leaven that has been “irradiated” so that one can no longer perceive the leaven because it has irradiated itself. Anyone who can cook can distinguish the leaven from the dough at the moment of mixing, but afterwards this is no longer possible. In a way, Liberation Theology is present as a method, as a sensibility towards social questions and the poor in the general Church theology, because the Vatican’s disappointment with neo-liberalism, with the situation of the countries of the late Soviet Bloc, induces it to favor this concern about destitution and poverty. I would say that Liberation Theologians were marginalized, but Liberation Theology ended up by being incorporated into the official theology of the Church with all the contradictions that this official theology has, because it still carries great conservative weight.

While on the issue of poverty and therefore social stratification, Freire claims to have made no less than thirty three references to social class in Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire in Freire and Macedo, 1993, p. 172) and this led to
some severe criticisms leveled at him primarily by North American feminists who pointed to the invisibility of women and their experiences in his project of liberation. This criticism seems to have had a telling effect on Freire’s later writings, including work that was born out of contact with the North American educational milieu. Issues concerning gender and race, and social movements, began to feature prominently in his work as I will show in Chapter 4 where I also discuss the issue of progressive social movements and political party. One ought to remark that, in published dialogues, the Cape Verde-born scholar, Donaldo Macedo, from the University of Massachusetts at Boston, with whom Freire had a fruitful association (Freire and Macedo, 1987, 1993, 1995, 2000), pushed him hard on such issues.

Writers such as Kathleen Weiler (1991) sought to fuse his ideas with those representing different strands within feminism. Probably one feminist writer who openly embraces his ideas, not allowing his earlier “phallocentric paradigm of liberation” (hooks, 1993, p. 148) to stand in the way, is Gloria Watkins, alias bell hooks (see also hooks, 1989, 1993, 1994). She incorporates Freire’s pedagogical ideas within the best critical traditions of Afro-American writing. Freire’s work, with its emphasis on liberatory pedagogy, appealed to other Afro-American activists and intellectuals, including Cornell West (1994, p. XIII) who hailed him “as the exemplary organic intellectual of our time.” From the mid-1980s onwards, Freire engaged in ‘talking books’ (dialogical books) and co-authored texts with a number of writers and educators, including the radical adult educator, Myles Horton (founder of the Highlander Folk High School, Tennessee), fellow Latin American exile Antonio Faundez, Frei Betto (Betto and Freire, 1986), a group of academics from UNAM, Mexico City (Escobar et al., 1994) and the American critical pedagogue, Ira Shor who Freire first met in a pizza parlour at Amherst in 1984 (Shor, 1998, p. 75) and with whom he wrote an important book (Shor and Freire, 1987). Ira Shor is one of a number of important critical pedagogues from North America who are inspired by Freire’s work. They include one of Freire’s earliest friends in North America, Jonathan Kozol and such critical pedagogues as Henry A. Giroux (Giroux, 1985, 1996) and Peter McLaren, the last mentioned having produced four books on Freire (McLaren and Leonard, 1993; McLaren and Lankshear, 1994; Steiner, Krank, McLaren and Bahruth, 2000; McLaren, 2000).

In one of the last works, which saw the light a few months after he passed away, Freire responded to a number of North American based critics who reflected on his work in the same volume (Freire et al., 1997).

Despite his large output as a writer in Portuguese and English, Freire did not forsake direct political activity. When in exile in Geneva, working for the World Council of Churches, he engaged in activities with trade unionists and other social activists from Spain and Italy (Freire, 1994) and as a consultant to governments in such former Portuguese colonies in Africa as Guinea Bissau (Freire, 1978, Freire and Macedo, 1987, Freire and Faundez, 1989), 14 Cape Verde and São Tome’ and Principe. He later served as consultant to the organizers of literacy campaigns in Nicaragua (see Arnove, 1986; Carnoy and Torres, 1990) and Grenada (Torres, 1986; Jules, 1995; Hickling Hudson, 1999).
CHAPTER 1

His lifelong commitment to social justice culminated in his being a founder member of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers’ Party – PT) that was founded in 1979 through a left wing coalition of unions, leftist organizations and social movements (Gandin and Apple, 2002, p. 100) and is headed by Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva. As a result of this commitment to social justice, Freire served, on behalf of this party, as Education Secretary in the São Paulo Municipal Government when Luiza Erundina de Souza, a social worker, was Mayor. There he engaged in reforming the public education sector through the development of ‘popular public’ schools and adopting innovative measures in developing schools as learning communities with all personnel involved, from teachers to janitors and cooks, being prepared as educators (Freire, 1991). He also developed a strong adult education program, Mova São Paulo – Movimento de Alfabetização de Adultos e Jovens (Adult and Youth Literacy Movement). Grassroots organizations were invited and were actively engaged in the process. (Freire, 1991, Freire, 1993, Torres, 1993, 1994, Saul, 1995; O’Cadiz et al., 1997; Stromquist, 1997). These approaches, while dismantled for a while in São Paulo, after the PT lost the elections there, were adopted in other municipalities governed by the PT, notably Porto Alegre in Rio Grande do Sul where, since 1989, the PT had been leading a coalition of leftist parties (Gandin and Apple, 2002, p. 100). One should also refer, in this context, to the municipalities (including São Paulo) and states where the PT gained power following the elections of the Fall 2000.

Freire’s writing continued unabated till the end with a number of works and interviews appearing in the months before his death and even posthumously, one of his most recent works in Portuguese being Pedagogia da Indignação (Pedagogy of Indignation).

He was due to visit Cuba in the first fortnight of May to collect an award from Fidel Castro, an event to which he had naturally been looking forward. At 5.30 am (Brazilian time) on Friday 2nd May, 1997, Paulo Freire passed away at the Albert Einstein Hospital in São Paulo where he had been admitted because of heart problems. In an interview with Carmel Borg and me, Paulo’s widow, Ana Araujo (Nita) Freire states:

All of a sudden, when he was full of engagements, projects and life, there came the heart attack that took him away. He smoked many cigarettes a day. His organism was compromised, undermined by nicotine. One of the kidneys was not functioning any more; he had a brain ischemia and his blood pressure was controlled by drugs. Unfortunately his whole circulatory system was weakened, but we never thought he could die so soon. (Nita Freire in Borg and Mayo, 2000, p. 118 and in Borg and Mayo, 2007, p. 12)

The spirit of this remarkable figure, however, lives on. It is constantly felt by those like me who often seek refuge and solace in his works to recuperate that sense of hope and agency that can easily be lost as we are constantly assailed by the dominant hegemonic discourse of technical rationality and marketability. This sense of hope is communicated through the constant fusion of reason and emotion.
that constitutes one of the most distinguishing features of Paulo Freire’s style as writer and speaker.

HOW MUCH IS LOST IN TRANSLATION?

This fusion leads to the consideration of a much-related issue – the issue of translation. The great majority of the works from which I quote and to which I refer in this book are in the English Language, often translations of works originally written by Paulo in Portuguese. Those who read his works in English must keep in mind that this is only a part, albeit a substantial and I would argue, a representative one, of Freire’s output. Some works still await translation. We also have to ask ourselves an important question: how much is lost in translation? Carmel Borg and I posed the question, in the same interview, to Nita Freire. She replied unequivocally that those who read Paulo only in translation miss much of the beauty and emotional resonance of his work.

He used words of such beauty and plasticity, organized in phrases and these in turn in the context of the totality of the text, with such aesthetic and political force that, I repeat, they cannot be transposed so easily into other languages because a language cannot be translated literally. And it is important to emphasize that his language is extraordinarily beautiful, rich and full of his particular way of being ... Another problem for translators who did not know Paulo well is the fact that his language is loaded with his feelings, since he never provided a dichotomy between reason and emotion. Paulo was a radically coherent man: what he said contained what he felt and thought and this is not always easy to translate. There are emotions whose meaning can only be well perceived, understood and felt inside a certain culture. And we Brazilians are unique in this way. I think this is so, isn’t it? Without any prejudice, I think it is difficult for translators who have only studied the Portuguese language, albeit accurately, to express Paulo in all his aesthetic and even cultural-ideological richness. (Nita Freire, in Borg and Mayo, 2000, pp. 110–111 and in Borg and Mayo, 2007, pp. 4–5)

The emphasis on Freire’s constant fusion between reason and emotion is underlined. As I have intimated earlier, many of us experience this sense of an absolute fusion between the two elements even when reading Freire in translation. One can only imagine how great our sense of this fusion would be if we read Paulo in the beautiful Brazilian variant of Portuguese. And yet I have come across a few North American feminists who refer to the ‘separation between reason and emotion’ as one of the problematic polarities in Freire’s work. There are those who would argue that his work promotes the ‘rational’ to the exclusion of other domains of experience and knowing. One wonders whether they would hold the same opinion were they to read him in the original.
CHAPTER 1

PERSONAL REFLEXIVE STATEMENT

This fusion of reason and emotion became apparent to me from my very first contact with his work, a first contact that, however, did not occur at an early stage in my experience as a professional educator. I had been teaching in the Maltese state school system for a number of years, equipped with a mixed theoretical baggage of behavioural and progressivist notions concerning teaching, before I encountered Paulo Freire’s writing. The occasion for this encounter was the first semester of graduate studies at the University of Alberta in Canada. This experience was to change my attitude towards teaching, knowledge and society. Freire’s work, together with that of Marx, Gramsci, Nyerere and a number of exponents of critical pedagogy and the ‘new sociology of education’ helped bring about such a change. I would dare say that his was a very significant influence on my view of the world from then onwards. While many other writers appealed to me mostly at a cerebral level, he was among a small band of writers who ‘spoke to me’ also at an emotional level. The emotional impact of Freire’s work is such as to render it distinct from that of many other male writers whose work influenced me profoundly.

Freire has taught me or consolidated in me several things. He helped me develop sensitivity to the politics of knowledge and to confront a very disturbing question: on whose side am I when I teach/act? He has also taught me to appreciate the virtues of and ethical issues involved in dialogical education and to realize that this approach to learning, once again based on a dialectical engagement with the material world, implies not laissez-faire pedagogy but a pedagogy that is directive. He also taught me that one should not shy away from working for change within the system, provided one keeps “one foot inside” and another “outside” the system. In short, one should be “tactically inside and strategically outside” the system, a theme to which I return time and time again in this book, especially in my focus on sites of practice in the last chapter. I have since begun to regard this as an important consideration for teachers engaged in the public schooling sector. Teachers require support and sustenance from sources lying beyond the school walls. It is also heartening to note, in Freire, something on which several writers have been harping all along, namely that although social class considerations retain their importance within a critical approach to education (one should guard against the now fashionable tendency, typical of certain reactionary and nihilistic currents within contemporary social theory, to throw out the class baby with the class bathwater) there are other considerations of social difference to be borne in mind. In this regard, one cannot but appreciate Freire’s engagement with feminist and anti-racist issues in his later work.

For someone like me who was brought up and still lives in a country with a long history of direct colonialism, to use Edward Said’s term (Said, 1993, p. 8), applied to situations characterized by the presence of an occupying force, reading Freire meant something else. It meant much to read Freire extensively and intensively after having been brought up reading texts primarily by mainstream European (mainly British) and American authors. Reading Freire, a ‘southern’
author, and other ‘majority world’ writers, taught my ‘colonized mind’ a lot about the social dimensions of knowledge and the need for its de-colonization through reading, thinking and acting beyond the exclusively eurocentric framework.

Finally, for someone coming from a country with a dominant catholic culture, Freire’s writings on the ‘prophetic’ church, with its basis in liberation theology, have helped in my conception of this church as a site of struggle. These and other elements in Freire’s work resonate with my experience and hopefully the experience of several readers of this book. It is this that has compelled me over the years to write a substantial amount of papers on the work of one of the 20th century’s most significant educators. The purpose of this book is to bring these writings together and develop them into a coherent volume in which I take stock of a representative corpus of work by this writer produced over a twenty-eight year period. I also attempt to go beyond this task and demonstrate the relevance of his ideas to a specific southern regional context, very much the context in which I have lived and worked for practically all my life. The focus will be on the Mediterranean regional context. The attempt here is to give prominence to areas that do not feature strongly in the English language literature concerning contextual reinventions of Freire’s work, given the preponderance of writings on Freire and Freirean ideas developed within the UK-Australian-North American contexts and the obvious Latin American one. My choice of the Mediterranean region as focus is also in keeping with my overall attempt to make sense of the contexts in which I act as educator, researcher and citizen. To this end, I conclude the work with a chapter in which I reflect on a few, varied ‘on the ground’ projects with which I have had a connection as researcher, educator or, in the case of two of these projects, member of the coordinating team.

NOTES

1 Frei Betto is from Belo Horizonte and was very active in the Brazilian student movement. He has been active in the Christian Base communities; among other things he was in charge of the workers’ pastoral at the Metallurgical center of São Bernardo do Campo. He suffered imprisonment (1969–1973) at the hands of the military regime in Brazil (Betto, in Betto and Freire, 1986, pp. 39–52) and has written extensively on different subjects including religion in revolutionary contexts (Betto, 1986).

2 Taped interview with Frei Betto carried out by Carmel Borg and me in São Paulo on April 28, 1998 and reproduced in a Maltese Sunday newspaper. The transcript was translated by Lilia de Azevedo while Frei João Xerri, who set up the interview, helped out with on the spot translations, during the interview, from Maltese to Portuguese and vice versa.

3 Antonia Darder (2002) eloquently and lucidly underlines these points in a book on Freire aptly sub-titled ‘a pedagogy of love’.

4 Quote also reproduced by Peter McLaren (2002).

5 Freire considers love “the foundation of dialogue.” (Freire, 1970a, 1993, p. 89).

6 Plinio Sampaio, a good friend and collaborator of Freire, disclosed, in a taped interview in English with Carmel Borg and me, held at his residence in São Paulo, in April, 1998, that he and a number of other exiles, including Freire, gained greater exposure to Marxist class analysis during the Chilean experience. This exposure added a new and significant dimension to the level of analysis hitherto derived by Sampaio from writings by authors to the left of Christian democratic politics. Before the coup, Sampaio was a congressman in Brazil who, like the Minister of Education, Paulo de Tarso Santos, stood to the left of the Christian Democratic party. His left leaning brand of politics had, until
CHAPTER 1

the Chilean experience, been mainly influenced by the social teachings of the Catholic Church and the writings of such figures in Christian-democratic politics as the Italian economist and political leader, Amintore Fanfani. Information provided in the taped interview. Freire refers to Sampaio in at least three books (Freire, 1970a, 1993; Freire, 1994; Freire, 1996).


8 Interestingly enough, Plinio Sampaio tells us in the same interview that he had forewarned Freire of a probable coup, attributing this intuition to his experience of being a politician. Trusting his ‘politician’s instinct’, Sampaio left Brazil before the coup took place.

9 On this influence and connections between Freire’s thought and that of Che, see McLaren’s excellent comparative work (McLaren, 2000).

10 See, for instance, Freire’s reference to Eduardo Nicol’s Los Principios de la Ciencia (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965) regarding the point, concerning the non viability of a ‘neutral education,’ that “The mere awareness of the fact does not constitute a full knowledge of it” and that one must transcend mere awareness of it to obtain precise knowledge of it through apprehending “the reason for its being.” (Freire, 1972, pp. 174–175). He also refers to Nicol when making the point that the “dialogical relation does not, as is sometimes thought, rule out the possibility of the act of teaching” and this act is founded and “sealed” in its “correlative, the act of learning” (Freire, 1994, p. 117). The reference is to the same work by Eduardo Nicol.

11 The human development index has improved since then. The facts mentioned by Frei Betto were divulged by UNICEF at the time. They created controversy and were called into question by the government of the time. I am indebted to Professor Moacir Gadotti of the Istituto Paulo Freire for this information. E Mail communication 12th June 2008.


13 This conversation was held in English in the Sacristy of São Paulo Cathedral, April 1998 in the presence of Frei Joao Xerri.

14 See also the video-taped interview, Guns and Pencils, featuring Paulo Freire, Alan Thomas and J. Roby Kidd.

15 The interview took place in São Paulo, 24 April, 1998. It was transcribed by Frei Sergio Abreu and translated by Lilia Azevedo. Frei Joao Xerri acted as interlocutor throughout the interview.

16 Antonia Darder’s work (Darder, 2000) provides a most valuable corrective in this regard, as the earlier quotes from her book in this chapter immediately suggest.

17 There is much activity and research, from a Freirean perspective, going on in this region and in neighboring countries that, though geographically not bordering the Mediterranean (eg. Portugal), have strong cultural affinities with this region. The five Freire Forums to date, organized by the Instituto Paulo Freire in collaboration with the host institution and held in São Paulo (1998), Bologna (2000), Los Angeles (2002), Porto (2004) and Valencia (2006) have shed light on the work emerging from this part of the world. Represented at these forums were such countries as Italy, Spain (Catalonia in particular), Portugal (there are such organizations as the Paulo Freire Institute at Porto and the Paulo Freire Center for Social Research, University of Evora) and Malta.
CHAPTER 2
INTERPRETATIONS OF FREIRE’S WORK – A CRITICAL REVIEW

In the Preface to a book containing one of Freire’s later pieces (Freire et al., 1997), published soon after the Brazilian’s death on May 2, 1997, the American scholar, Joe L. Kincheloe writes: “I suppose Paulo Freire is the closest thing education has to a celebrity. Known or loved (or not) throughout the world, Paulo commands a presence unequalled by anyone who calls himself or herself an educator.” (p. vii).

Evidence for Kincheloe’s claim derives from the fact that publications and conferences, celebrating Freire’s ideas and evaluating their relevance to different fields and forms of social activism, never ceased throughout the last twenty years or so. In addition to Freire’s considerable output, we have been witnessing a series of studies concerning the reinvention of Freire’s ideas in different contexts. These studies include the ones by Shor (1987) with respect to the USA, Kirkwood & Kirkwood (1989) with respect to Scotland and Roberts (2000) with regard to New Zealand. There have also been comparative studies linking Freire’s work, or, in one case (Coben, 1998), refuting the linkage of Freire’s work, with that of other theorists/activists. The one theorist whose ideas figure prominently alongside Freire’s in comparative work is Antonio Gramsci and we have witnessed three books on this topic. In addition to the book by Diana Coben, who considers Gramsci’s work more useful to radical adult educators than Freire’s, we come across work, focusing on Gramsci and Freire, by the present author (Mayo, 1999) and Paula Allman (1999). These last two works are very sympathetic towards Freire and seek to strengthen the connections between Gramsci and Freire. My work represents an attempt towards a synthesis of the ideas of these two key figures in the radical debate on adult education while Allman’s work affirms the indebtedness of both Gramsci and Freire to Marx (his work is given extensive treatment in this book) and specifically Marx’s theory of consciousness in which the respective works of the Brazilian and the Sardinian are anchored. These positions were elaborated on by Allman and me in a number of papers which each of us published in journals or as chapters in books. Papers and chapters linking Freire’s work to Gramsci abound and one can mention here the work of Marjorie Mayo (1995), who links the Brazilian’s work with that of Gramsci and Etore Gelpi in the context of adult education for social transformation, and the work of Raymond Morrow and Carlos Alberto Torres (1995, 2002a). Morrow and Torres consider the work of Freire and Gramsci in relation to Latin American popular
CHAPTER 2

education; Freire is one of the foremost exponents of popular education, that type of education on which Gramsci’s thought has exerted considerable influence (La Belle, 1986; Ireland, 1987).¹

There is a substantial amount of literature dealing with popular education in Latin America. Popular education takes on different forms in different contexts and its rhetoric betrays a strong Marxist influence. It is often under-girded by theoretical formulations that combine Christian precepts with Marxist class analysis. This kind of popular learning activity has often been described as a form of ‘Catholic populism’ (Paiva, 1995). The Christian-Base Communities provide the context for much of this work that is closely connected to Liberation Theology. (see Mayo, 2000). Ideas from popular education abound throughout the related and broader field of community development. This is an area in which Freire has been very influential. Margaret Ledwith (1997, 2001, 2005) explores Freire’s work alongside that of Gramsci in the context of a critical approach to community development.

Literature linking Freire’s thinking with that of Gramsci does not end there. It is widespread and has been developed outside the strictly ‘educational’ field. Paul Ransome (1992) for instance explores such a linkage, albeit briefly, in a discussion on Gramsci and intellectuals while Peter Leonard explores this linkage in the context of a critical and non conventionally ‘welfarist’ approach to social work. We are here dealing with ‘education’ in its broader context. Other figures who feature prominently in the literature on Freire are the Argentinean revolutionary, Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara, the German social philosopher, Jürgen Habermas and the American philosopher, John Dewey. John Dewey seems to be an obvious figure with whom to contrast Freire’s work and there are those who would argue, often in a manner intended to detract from Freire’s stature, that there is little in Freire’s pedagogical thought that is not found in Dewey. Among recent works connecting Freire’s thought with that of Dewey, is a book systematically comparing and contrasting Freire’s work with that of Jürgen Habermas. In this book, the two authors, Raymond Morrow and Carlos Torres (2002b), posit a complementarity thesis regarding Freire and Habermas, claiming that they “share a conception of the human sciences, the crisis of modern societies, theory of the subject, and pedagogical practice” and that, when viewed conjointly, their work can help “provide a framework for further developing and radicalizing the themes relating philosophy, education, and democracy joined in the great American pragmatist John Dewey…” (Morrow and Torres, 2002b, p. 3). Among other things, this book serves to connect Freire with the critical social theory tradition and reconnect this theoretical tradition with Latin America.

The Latin American context is fore-grounded in a book connecting Freire with another figure, Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara. That Freire’s thought has potential for the
INTERPRETATIONS OF FREIRE’S WORK

development of a pedagogy of revolution, triggered off by some of the recent historical experiences in the Latin American context, both in terms of guerilla warfare and in terms of peasant movements such as the Frente Zapatista in Chiapas, can be seen from this comparative work. To my mind, this work comprises one of the most thorough discussions on Freire available in the English language. The book in question is written by Peter McLaren, a prolific writer on Freire (this will be borne out throughout the book and elsewhere in this chapter), critical pedagogy and Marxist politics. This linkage between Che and Freire occurs in a work which, like that of Paula Allman, stresses the Marxian and Marxist underpinning to Freire’s thought with a view to highlighting the relevance of historical materialist thinking to a global strategy against global capitalism. Then there is preliminary work providing a comparative analysis between the ideas of Paulo Freire and those of the Tuscan priest and educator, Lorenzo Milani, including the ideas expressed by eight of his pupils in a text written under his direction, the much celebrated Lettera a una Professoressa (Letter to a Teacher) (see Mayo, 2007). The convergence between Freire and the ideas emerging from the School of Barbiana are remarkable and it is probably for this reason that these two figures are often mentioned in the same breath in Milani’s native Italy. The major points of similarity are the emphases in both on the collective dimensions of learning and critical literacy, as well as their radical Christianity and their commitment towards the education of the oppressed.

In addition to these conjoint analyses, we come across several books that contain at least one chapter focusing exclusively on Freire. The list here cannot be exhausted and among such chapters which come to mind are Frank Youngman’s analysis of the suitability of Freire’s work for a socialist pedagogy. This occurs in what I regard as one of the finest texts in English to date that provides a comprehensive analysis of the potential contribution of Historical Materialist tenets to the development of a socialist approach to adult education. The book contains, among other things, a brilliant and lucid second chapter on ‘Marxism and Learning’. In one particular chapter, Youngman assesses Freire’s suitability against the template he constructs earlier on in the book, a template consisting of a number of concepts he deems suitable for a socialist pedagogical approach. I shall return to Youngman’s assessment of Freire’s work and ideas later on in this book, specifically in Chapter 4.

Henry Giroux is one other prolific writer who engages Freire’s work. A key figure in the American critical pedagogy movement, Giroux is on record as having stated: “... that anyone who took up that field [i.e. critical pedagogy], in some way, had to begin with him [Freire] whether they liked him or not.” (Giroux, in Torres, 1998, p. 141). Apart from writing what I consider to be a memorable introduction to Freire’s Politics of Education, subsequently republished in Giroux (1988), he has also written on the relevance of Freire to a postcolonial politics (Giroux, 1994). He also wrote on Freire’s relevance to a process of revitalization of the public sphere; this sphere is being subjected to corporatist encroachment and commodification with a war being waged, in this sphere, on youth and children (Giroux, 2000).
CHAPTER 2

Other examples include bell hooks’ essay on Freire in her anthology, *Teaching to Transgress*. In this essay, hooks discusses the notion of an inclusionary politics of liberation and embraces Freire’s ideas, as she does in other works, finding them instructive and inspirational despite the “phallocentric paradigm of liberation” they reflect.

It is virtually impossible to do justice to all the essays on Freire that have appeared throughout the last twenty years. It is even impossible to do justice to essays on Freire that appeared from the 90s onwards. Some of these essays reappeared in edited volumes focusing exclusively on Freire, notably the two volumes for which Peter McLaren has acted as co-editor, namely *Paulo Freire. A Critical Encounter*, which he co-edited with Peter Leonard (McLaren and Leonard, 1993), and *Politics of Liberation. Paths from Freire* which he co-edited with Colin Lankshear (McLaren and Lankshear, 1994). They follow the earlier well known anthology of essays edited by Robert Mackie and published in Australia: *Literacy and Revolution – the pedagogy of Paulo Freire.* The first volume by McLaren brings together some of the best British and American names in critical pedagogy. Among the finest white male exponents of this approach in North America are Henry Giroux, Ira Shor, Stanley Aronowitz, Roger I. Simon and Peter McLaren. Four of these authors provide articles in this volume. Afro-American and women writers are hardly evident, bell hooks being the only one to contribute a chapter, with Cornel West writing a very brief, one page preface. The piece by hooks, referred to earlier (hooks, 1994), appears also in this volume alongside other memorable pieces. These include Carlos Alberto Torres’ reworked essay on Freire, originally published in the University of Botswana’s *Education and Production*. This essay provides excellent background material for an appreciation of Freire’s work. The piece has been updated to include, among other things, Freire’s work as Education Secretary in São Paulo. There are also Paulo Freire’s conversation with Donaldo Macedo, Stanley Aronowitz’s discussion of Freire’s radical humanism and the joint piece by Tomaz Tadeuz da Silva and Peter McLaren on adapting Freire’s theoretical insights for an engagement with the politics of redemptive memory.

As far as gender is concerned, the situation in the second volume, co-edited by McLaren, is much better. There are six of the many women who engage with Freire’s ideas in their work. Included is Kathleen Weiler’s memorable piece that originally appeared in the *Harvard Educational Review* (Weiler, 1991). After underlining the important absences in Freire’s project of liberation and outlining as well as analyzing different strands within feminism, Weiler explores possibilities for a fusion of Freire’s insights and those of a feminist pedagogy. Other memorable pieces in this volume are the ones focusing on Latin America, notably the chapter by Edgar Gonzalez Gaudiano and Alicia de Alba, which examines the way Freire’s work is taken up in Guatemala and Mexico and which assesses Freire’s role within the tradition of Latin American great intellectuals, including Simon Rodriguez (Bolivar’s teacher), Jose’ Vasconcelos, Jose’ Maritegui, Julio Antonio Mella and Farbundo Marti’. Equally revealing is an interview that McLaren carried out with left wing Argentinean educationist, Adriana Puiggros.
Here Freire’s work is discussed against the backdrop of the history of education in Argentina characterized by such historical developments as the process of nation building, relations between Church and state, populist regimes and dictatorships.

Other anthologies on Freire involving different authors from different contexts include two volumes published soon after Freire’s death. The first of these, entitled, *Mentoring the Mentor*, involves Freire as editor together with a host of other contributors, mainly authors based in North America. This book was in press at the time of Freire’s passing away but it saw the light soon after. It includes a memorable piece by Freire that consists of a response to issues raised by the various contributors to the volume. Freire elects to provide a more general response rather than answer each author directly. This essay sheds light on Freire’s thinking concerning the issue of identity and difference, with specific reference to issues concerning class, race, gender and the area of multiple, layered and contradictory identities / subjectivities. Reference to this important essay will be made in this book especially when I discuss the later Freire in Chapter 4. The volume includes essays by established authors such as Donaldo Macedo and Peter McLaren besides lesser known ones. Among the essays that stand out is a piece on the relevance of Freire’s ideas to struggles in Africa, penned by the Massachusetts-based Eritrean scholar, Asgedet Stefanos. She writes about education in the context of the struggle for liberation in Guinea Bissau, where Freire served as consultant to the PAIGC Government, and the struggle for liberation in Eritrea (for a more recent elaboration of her thinking in this regard, see Stefanos, 2002). There is an insightful and revealing piece by Marilyn Frankenstein concerning the relevance of Paulo Freire’s pedagogical approach to the teaching of Mathematics, a theme she had broached in an earlier volume concerning the reinvention of Paulo Freire in a classroom context (Shor, 1987).

A special issue of the prominent adult education journal, *Convergence*, was dedicated to Freire. *Convergence* is produced by the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) with which Freire had strong connections, having served, until his death, as Honorary President. Freire wrote a memorable piece published in *Convergence*, entitled ‘To the coordinator of a cultural circle’ (Freire, 1971, pp. 61, 62). I would consider this very short piece relevant to practitioners seeking to reinvent his work in a non-formal adult education setting. In 1990, *Convergence* featured an interview, published in Spanish, which Moema Viezzer carried out with Paulo Freire. The interview, which was subsequently included in *Pedagogy of the City* (Freire, 1993), focused, for the most part, on his work as Education Secretary in the Municipal Government of São Paulo. (Viezzer, 1990) Soon after Freire’s death, the then Editor of *Convergence*, Deborah Wise Harris, assembled a team of guest editors, consisting of Paula Allman (Senior Research Fellow, University of Nottingham) Chris Cavanagh (popular educator from the Catalyst Center, Toronto), Chan Lean Heng (University of Malaysia), Sergio Haddad (a colleague of Paulo Freire in the Department of Curriculum at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo) and the present author. The brief was to help prepare a special issue of *Convergence* that would provide a tribute to Freire. The final product was a collection of articles dealing with different aspects of Freire’s work.
CHAPTER 2

Some deal with more general issues such as the introductory essay (Allman et al., 1998) which traces the evolution of Freire’s thought, the overview provided by Daniel Schugurensky and the analysis of some of Freire’s key concepts provided by one of his closest collaborators, Marcela Gajardo. Others provide revealing biographical anecdotes. These include the pieces by Ira Shor, Budd Hall and D’Arcy Martin. The there is the preface, penned by Freire’s widow, Ana Maria (Nita) Araujo Freire, that provides important insights regarding the act of listening. The piece aptly entitled ‘The Million Paulo Freires’ by Rosa Maria Torres deals with the different interpretations of Freire’s work, while the paper by popular educator, Deborah Barndt focuses on a specific aspect of Freire’s pedagogical approach – the codification.

There is an excellent discussion on Freire’s relevance to people from the South working in Northern contexts and facing the legacies of colonial struggles (Egli Martinez), besides a chapter on the impact of Freire’s thought on African scholars (Prosper Godonoo). One comes across discussions on Freire’s relevance to work within the Canadian labor union (D’Arcy Martin), work for social justice in a non poor context (Lange), popular legal education in Chile (Susan Macdonald) and feminist struggles in different parts of the world (Leith Dunn, Kate Pritchard Hughes).

The foregoing provides an indication of the range of writings on Freire that are available. This is by no means an exhaustive list and is selected from only one section of the vast literature on Freire, specifically literature in the English language. This review does not take into account literature written in other languages, including Freire’s native Portuguese. Given that it covers a wide range of writings, the account consists of nothing more than an overview. In addition to the foregoing collective works, however, we have seen, during the last twelve years, a number of comprehensive and book-length single studies on Freire in English. These are the books by Taylor (1993), Gadotti (1994), Elias (1994), Roberts (2000) and Darder (2002). My book would fall into this category of writings on Freire and it is for this reason that I feel that these book-length single studies deserve to be analyzed in some depth. I will also add two book length single-studies that focus on Freire. The first of these differs from the ones just mentioned in that it focuses exclusively on one aspect of his work and not on his entire oeuvre. This is the study by Maria del Pilar O’Cadiz, Pia Lindquist Wong and Carlos Alberto Torres (1998) on the educational reforms introduced by Paulo Freire in the city of São Paulo. Finally I will look at a seventh book (Rossatto, 2005) which is also original in its combination of qualitative and quantitative data in that it focuses, among other themes, on the time factor as it relates to Freire’s ideas and their pedagogical reinvention in two contexts.

PAUL V. TAYLOR’S THE TEXTS OF PAULO FREIRE

The first book-length single study to appear in English in the nineties is Paul V. Taylor’s Texts of Paulo Freire (Taylor, 1993). Paul Taylor starts by providing a
comprehensive ‘bio-text’ of Freire’s life, relying, in the absence of a fully developed Freire biography, on biographical references made by Freire throughout his large corpus of writings. The range of writings, on which Taylor draws, is impressive and includes primary, secondary and background sources written in Spanish, Portuguese and French. Taylor’s knowledge of these different languages constitutes one of the book’s strengths.

It is surprising, however, that no sustained reference is made to some of Freire’s later volumes in the English language, such as *We make the road by walking*. I single out this book because it appeared two years before Taylor’s book was published. Taylor’s book came out before *Pedagogy of Hope* and well before *Letters to Cristina*, two books from which anyone seeking to provide a biographical account of Freire’s life would have benefited given the ample biographical material contained in them.

The introductory and second chapters of the Horton-Freire book include ample biographical material on which Taylor could have drawn to enrich his ‘biotext’. The material includes discussions concerning Freire’s formative years in which the various influences on the development of his ideas are outlined. The Horton-Freire book, therefore, would also have been useful, to Taylor, for the purpose of developing his otherwise excellent chapter on ‘Backgrounds and Borrowings.’ In this chapter, the author does a great job of acknowledging, among other influences, the ‘European heritage’, including important “French connections”, in Freire’s thought. Omitted from this discussion, apart from the Horton-Freire book, is the important article on Freire and Feminism by Kathleen Weiler (Weiler, 1991). This article raises important issues, regarding gender, that would have been relevant to the study under review, considering that Taylor is at pains to underline the sexist nature of Freire’s early writing and the patriarchal nature of literacy programs, including many of the pictures used as codifications in Freire’s work (Taylor, 1993, p. 93).

The chapter on ‘education and liberation’ provides a good exposition of Freire’s pedagogical ideas, yet it relies too heavily on earlier works by Freire, making few references to later ones. These later works provide important elaborations on Freire’s ideas. One of these developments is Freire’s rendering explicit the belief that educators and learners are not on an equal footing in the learning process, a point developed within the context of his discussion of the tension between authority and authoritarianism. The *Politics of Education* as well as the Horton and Freire (Horton, Freire, 1990) and the Shor and Freire (Shor and Freire, 1987) books are instructive in this regard. In my view, this point should have been borne in mind, by Taylor, in his discussion of one of the situations in his otherwise in depth analysis of Freire’s decodification process. Probably, consideration of Freire’s points concerning directivity and authority and freedom, on which I shall elaborate in the chapter that follows, would have made him refrain from producing such a statement as “The most obvious (contradiction) is the overtly directive manner of the teaching. There is no hint here of a learning partnership, of a dialogue between equals. Rather, what is evident is the clear distinction between the teacher and the taught” (Taylor, 1993, p. 129).
The author, nonetheless, provides an excellent discussion that highlights the contradictions in Freire’s pedagogy. The point regarding the need to write the word(l)d, rather than merely read it, is well argued and can generate much debate. This is one of the key insights I drew from Taylor’s discussion. However, given the author’s background as an educator who adopted Freire’s ‘method’ and philosophy in community work, I was somewhat disappointed not to discover, at the end of the penultimate chapter (‘A reconstruction of literacy’), any practical suggestions for the reconstitution of Freirean pedagogy in future literacy and community work.

Such criticisms notwithstanding, I would argue that the text demonstrates erudition on the author’s part. It is extremely informative and very thought provoking. It challenges Freire-inspired adult educators to reflect critically on their practice and on the basic tenets of the pedagogical theory on which they draw, encouraging them to recognize the contradictions involved.

MOACIR GADOTTI, READING PAULO FREIRE

In Reading Paulo Freire, which is a translation of a work in Portuguese that appeared a few years earlier in Brazil, Moacir Gadotti provides an introduction to Freire’s work. This introduction is written by someone who, for 20 years, had worked at close quarters with Paulo Freire, having also been Chief of Cabinet during the time when Freire was Education Secretary for the city of São Paulo. Gadotti is now Director of the Instituto Paulo Freire based in São Paulo.

This book stands out among the books in English on Freire precisely for the accuracy of its contextualization of the key concepts we have come to associate with Freire. It also provides an ‘insider’s knowledge’ regarding certain projects in which Freire was involved, in view of the fact that Gadotti had collaborated with him on many of them. This applies in particular to work carried out by Freire following his return to Brazil after sixteen years of exile. Written by a Brazilian, this book captures aspects of Brazilian culture(s) that have contributed substantially to the development of certain concepts in Freire’s work. It also provides useful insights deriving from exchanges involving the author and Freire.

The book is quite comprehensive in scope, starting from Freire’s early work in Angicos, proceeding with the plans for the national literacy program in Brazil which Freire had been discussing with the Brazilian government authorities, the period surrounding the coup and Freire’s eventual arrest, his period of exile in Bolivia, Chile, the USA and Geneva, his African experience and his return from exile. It also provides accounts of Freire’s work with the Education and Society Centre of Studies (CEDES) in Campinas of which he had been a founder while still in exile. Light is also shed on Freire’s work as Education Secretary in São Paulo comprising his curricular reforms involving inter-disciplinarity, his efforts to create partnerships between state educational agencies and social organizations and his contribution to the setting up of a literacy program for young people and adults in São Paulo (MOVA-SP). The book provides an overview of the whole
range of Freire’s writing in Portuguese and English as well as his intellectual influences including the authors he had been reading in the early 90s which coincided with Gadotti’s preparation of the manuscript for the original version of this book in Portuguese. Gadotti states that classic and contemporary Marxist writers continued to feature among the authors Freire read. Freire’s Christian faith is emphasized alongside his indebtedness to Marxist and other authors. Gadotti furthermore compares Freire’s work with that of other educators and educationists, providing passing references to Janusz Korczak, Theodore Brameld, Pichon-Riviere, Pierre Bovet, Celestine Freinet and Jean Jacques Rousseau.

In an number of short sections, Gadotti dwells on four writers whose work invites comparisons with that of Freire, namely Carl Rogers, Ivan Illich, John Dewey and Lev Vygostski. In each case, he brings out the points of convergence and contrast between Freire’s ideas and those of each of these thinkers. For instance, in contrast with Illich, Freire believed that institutions such as the Church and the school constitute sites of struggle and allow scope for transformative work. Instead of doing away with schooling, in favor of learning webs, as Illich had suggested, Paulo Freire argues that work can be carried out within and outside the school to transform it into a ‘popular public’ institution, something Freire sought to carry out during his tenure as Education Secretary in São Paulo and something which his party carried out when in government in other municipalities throughout Brazil. Gadotti argues that Dewey’s notion of culture is “simplified” without the anthropological connotation that Freire’s notion has, a notion which renders imperative considerations regarding structures of class, race and ethnic oppression. He also sees Dewey’s and Freire’s respective educational goals as being different, with the Brazilian thinker linking education to “a structural change in the oppressive society.” (Gadotti, 1994, p. 118).

This book also has the merit of shedding light on some of the works by and on Freire published in Brazil. Certain works are mentioned only briefly and perhaps, given that this is an introductory book targeted at an English-speaking readership with no knowledge of Portuguese, some further elaboration on these works would have been appropriate. Brevity and conciseness characterize the writing in this introductory book in which the author restricts himself to providing the reader with just a broad introductory overview of the background material that would help enhance one’s understanding of Freire’s work. The serious student of Freire’s work is expected to deepen her or his knowledge by following up on the sources indicated in this book.

JOHN L. ELIAS, PAULO FREIRE. PEDAGOGUE OF LIBERATION

Gadotti’s introductory book came out the same year that Paulo Freire: Pedagogy of Liberation by John Elias was published. Elias’ book provides us with an overview of Freire’s work. It focuses on the events which led to Freire’s formation as a revolutionary educator, the pedagogical method he used in his cultural circles, the many sources of intellectual influence on which he drew (certainly
in his early work), the fusion of Christian and Marxist ideals which underpin his writings and inspire his practice, the theory of knowledge which emerges from his various writings, his contribution to social theory, the revolutionary theory which can be gleaned from his writings, his critique of traditional teaching methods, his alternative of an ‘education for liberation’ based on conscientization through dialogue and his interrelated roles as liberation theologian and educator.

I feel that the sections dealing with the philosophical and religious influences on Freire are the strongest ones in this book. The author does a very good job of delineating and indicating, with sufficient documentation, the two main strands in Freire’s thought, namely the Marxist-Humanist one and that of Liberation Theology. That the religious dimension of Freire’s writing features prominently and strongly in this book is hardly surprising given that the author is a specialist in ‘Religion and Education’, and has published several books in the area. He attaches due importance to the particular chapter in *The Politics of Education* where Freire (1985) distinguishes between different types of churches, a point to be dealt with in the chapter that follows. Elias also stresses the influence which Freire exerted on Latin American Liberation Theologians, notably Gustavo Gutierrez and Juan Segundo.

As far as the Marxist-Humanist side of Freire is concerned, one welcomes the extensive reference to the work of Leszek Kolakowski, presented as an important source of influence on Freire. One, however, would have expected a number of pertinent quotations from the early Marx (and Engels), notably from such works as the *Holy Family*, the *Theses on Feuerbach*, *The German Ideology* and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, to emphasise this important aspect of Freire’s work.

One would also have expected an avoidance of such statements as “Freire, however, does not accept the economic determinism that Marx espoused” (p. 43). In my view, what Freire did not accept, as indicated in his interview with Donaldo P. Macedo (Freire and Macedo, 1985), is the overly economistic readings of Marx by orthodox Marxists, as I shall show in Chapter 3. I feel that Freire’s work is imbued with that strong sense of agency which is also a feature of Marx’s work.

As with Taylor’s book, this work is quite comprehensive in its coverage of Freire’s ideas over the years. The lack of reference to Freire’s 1993 book, *Pedagogy of the City* is understandable. Elias’ work must have already been in press when this particular volume dealing with Freire’s work as Education Secretary in the Municipal Government of São Paulo, Brazil, came out. Elias, therefore, could not have been exposed to the excellent analytic accounts by Carlos Alberto Torres of Freire’s work in São Paulo (see Torres, 1993, Torres, 1994). This aspect of Freire’s work is hardly given any treatment in the chapter dealing with ‘The Making of a Revolutionary.’ Nevertheless, sufficient information concerning Freire’s work in São Paulo was available to enable it to draw more than just a passing comment that, in effect, constitutes a howler: “Freire is presently a Minister of Education in Rio de Janeiro.” (Elias, 1994, p. 13)

As regards texts by Freire, the range of literature drawn on is quite extensive with references also being made to his later talking books. Once again, as with
INTERPRETATIONS OF FREIRE’S WORK

Taylor’s book, the ‘talking book’ with Myles Horton is overlooked. This book was published sufficiently in time for some of its ideas concerning commitment, pedagogy and the system to be taken up and analyzed in Elias’ study. Two sources on which Elias draws are Freire (1985) and Shor and Freire (1987), works in which one discovers a deepening of some of the insights found in Freire’s earlier work regarding a liberatory practice of education.

This book completely overlooks the emphasis on directivity in Freire’s later work (I would argue in the next chapter that this emphasis was always present in Freire’s work) as well as the complexity of Freire’s views on the relations between teacher and learner, not to mention the distinction between authority and authoritarianism and the tension between freedom and authority, alluded to in the introductory chapter and to be elaborated on in the one that follows. It is because of these considerations that Elias’ statement that there are “areas which entail careful teaching and even testing” (Elias, 1994, p. 116), intended as a criticism of Freire, is problematic.

Neither does Elias’ book take into account the multiple sources of oppression which Freire exposes in later works. The author also repeats the by then already dated criticism that conscientization does not necessarily result in action for social transformation. My major criticism of this book therefore is that it fails to provide a holistic analysis of Freire’s work. Elias does not take into account points made in Freire’s later writings regarding the need for teachers to work in wider contexts outside the school or educational settings and the opportunities provided by social movements and, in later discussions, political parties in this regard. I shall return to this point in the subsequent chapters since it represents a key element in the development of Freire’s pedagogical thinking. Elias even states (Elias, 1994, p. 14) that “The works after Cultural Action for Freedom, which was published in 1970, do not add anything substantive to Freire’s social and educational philosophy.” I hope that the chapters that follow can suggest otherwise. A more holistic reading of Freire’s corpus is called for.

MARIA DEL PILAR O’CADIZ, PIA LINDQUIST WONG AND CARLOS ALBERTO TORRES, EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY. PAULO FREIRE, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN SÃO PAULO

Of the seven books that I am reviewing in this chapter, this is one of only two studies that combine theoretical and empirical work. It is very much a study about the ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed in action’ featuring the presence of Paulo Freire himself. It focuses not only on Paulo Freire’s actual work as Education Secretary in the city of São Paulo but also on his legacy in this regard.6

This is a well researched book that provides a very detailed and in depth analysis of the policies and actions of the PT government in democratizing the system of education in the Brazilian megalopolis, through a concerted effort to improve the quality of public schools, democratize access and, most importantly, democratize in a concrete way the social relations of education and the knowledge content of what is taught in these schools. Furthermore, the process of democrati-
zation was extended to the administrative set up in schools, involving the revival of the School Councils that had a pivotal role to play in the school’s regeneration. It also involved efforts to encourage the active participation of all the potential and actual stakeholders in the public education sector, including teachers, students, parents, educational administrators and community representatives. This massive reform of the previously neglected and largely under-funded public sector (the emphasis then was on privatization for those who aspired to a good quality and materially-rewarding education) also included improving the conditions and financial situation of the hitherto underpaid teachers in this sector, with better pay being reserved for those electing to teach in the less popular areas of the city. The improvement in the teachers’ conditions of work was also intended to be matched by greater teacher resourcefulness and by a qualitative change in the nature of teaching that is conceived of no longer as an isolated activity but as an activity involving teamwork, research and ongoing reflection on action. Importance was attached, in this context, to ongoing teacher formation through the setting up of Grupos de Formação. These reforms in the public education sector were complemented by a strong adult and youth literacy program which, as already indicated, involved efforts to forge a partnership between the State, as reflected in the PT Municipal Government, and social movements.

The adult literacy program naturally and, as expected, was to comprise many of the elements one has come to associate with Freire-inspired popular education. However the same can be said of the public school system that the Secretariat sought to develop, a system that was to take on board many aspects of popular education.7

The foregoing points strike me as being the main features of the reforms to emerge from this account. The book also provides the reader with excellent background material consisting of a historical and sociological analysis of Latin American and, specifically, Brazilian education. It indicates the landmarks in the development of public education in Brazil, provides a discussion concerning Freire and popular education and offers the reader a concise and succinct historical account of the development of the PT. It provides a brief overview of the educational achievements of the PT administration in São Paulo and goes on to provide a brief account of the ‘Neo-liberal turn’ after the PT was defeated in the 1992 municipal elections. The book also provides a fine discussion regarding theories of the state and then dwells, at considerable length, on the role of social movements in the struggle for power, with specific reference to Latin American social movements.8 The authors also provide a highly illuminating account of state-social movements relationships in Brazil and the kind of relationships the Freire secretariat sought to establish with respect to the process of educational reform in São Paulo. I consider this to be one of the most important discussions in the book that dwells on transformative education being carried out in the context of broader social movements. The study also conveys the idea that those engaged in the desired process of curriculum reform can constitute a social movement.9

Most of the salient features of the process of educational reform in São Paulo, provided at the outset of this review, and the idea of a curriculum reform move-
ment, are described and expounded on in the chapter, ‘Creating the Popular Public School.’ This chapter is followed by an equally in depth discussion on the interdisciplinary curriculum project, based on generative themes derived from the pupils’ own social environment, developed in the participating schools. A number of documents and other sources normally used in the context of policy studies are availed of here.

The longest and arguably the most revealing chapter is the almost 100 page long qualitative research study that exposes us to the realities experienced inside a number of participating São Paulo schools. Many are located in poor communities. Others are located in areas marked by crime and murder while one school is characterized by the presence of a middle class residential area on one side and a favela on the other. The voices of people involved in this reform process also emerge from this account which, as with most ethnographic work, features numerous quotes from interviews with key actors in the project, tables outlining school subjects and generative themes and the occasional ‘thick description’ of teacher-student dialogic interactions (pp. 176–182).

The interviews mainly privilege teachers’ voices and perhaps the study could have been enhanced by a greater presence of voices pertaining to other important stakeholders, notably students and parents. More ‘thick descriptions’ from field notes, of the type mentioned earlier, would have enhanced the study. Furthermore, it would have been interesting to see some revealing disclosures by teachers and other personnel regarding not only the handling of social themes emerging from the pupils’ immediate surroundings but also the learning process occurring with respect to those subjects and their content areas which somehow relate to the dominant culture. Whenever discussions revolve around Freire and his ideas, the focus with regard to content is often on the ‘popular’ and these schools are no exception; they are, after all, ‘popular public schools’. This is as it should be given the need to strengthen the school’s link with the pupils’ immediate culture as a result of which these pupils can experience a sense of ownership of the school and identify with the culture it fosters. And yet Freire has always insisted that the popular constitutes only the starting point of the educational process. I shall return to this point later on in this book. What also strikes me as missing, from this book, is some discussion concerning the tensions, contradictions and obstacles arising from having different systems operating within the same sector, the public sector in this case, and across sectors (a reformed and non selective public sector system co-existing alongside a competitive and elitist private sector system).

The detailed accounts of life within schools are honest. They capture the complexities with which the Secretariat had to deal. This process of reform met with all sorts of responses ranging from approval, especially by teachers such as Francisco who had shared the pupils’ poverty earlier on in life, to resistance and suspicion, especially in the latter case by teachers who do not support the PT and therefore regard the generative themes focusing on social issues as vehicles for the promotion of ‘PT propaganda’. Teachers who misconstrued the reforms’ underlying philosophy often applauded them for the wrong reasons. Then there are those who were attracted to the project of the popular public school by the
extra pecuniary remuneration (p. 173) and some of them made no bones about the fact that they were determined to keep on teaching the way they liked in the privacy of the classroom. Others complained that participation in the project entails an increase in the amount of work they need to carry out.

Equally honest and disheartening are the revelations that, despite the Secretariat’s intentions to create a non-selective public sector system, teachers privately carried out internal tracking in their classrooms. This is not unique to the São Paulo experience. It seems that certain teachers might find it extremely hard to break away from the selectivity and what can be called the ‘streaming’ (tracking) mindset. Others also fear the freedom to experiment, create their own teaching resources and engage in preliminary research.10

The foregoing indicates that the discussion throughout this book is grounded in the realities of practice at different levels. It should be a key source of reference for any account of Freire’s later work, one that dwells not only on theory but also on the relationship between this theory and the realities of administering education within a specific municipality’s public sector. It also serves as a lucid and revealing account of curriculum reform within a specific context, with due attention attached not only to the process of developing curricular guidelines with an underlying philosophy but also, and most importantly, to the way the reform is interpreted/mediated by and reinvented through the multiple realities of school and classroom practice. This book ought to be recommended to policy makers and curriculum specialists, as well as to prospective and present educational administrators. It offers a refreshingly Southern perspective and a welcome respite from the onslaught of imported ideas in educational administration emanating from Northern contexts that often favor an unmistakably technical-rational approach.11

PETER ROBERTS, EDUCATION, LITERACY AND HUMANIZATION. EXPLORING THE WORK OF PAULO FREIRE

The book on the São Paulo reforms was followed by a largely theoretical study on Freire by the New Zealand based scholar, Peter Roberts. Earlier on, I showed how the Paul V. Taylor and John Elias books have their strengths. I feel, however, that Roberts’ more recent Education, Literacy and Humanization (Roberts, 2000) surpasses them in breadth of analysis. Of course, since his book was published quite recently, Peter Roberts had the advantage of being able to incorporate some of Freire’s latest work. One ought to remark, here, that there are still more works by Freire to be published posthumously in English. Even so, the major shortcoming of the otherwise valuable books by Elias and Taylor is their failure to take sufficient account of Freire’s work that was published in English in the late eighties and early nineties. We have just seen that Elias disregards the early 90s work completely.

Peter Roberts differs in this respect. He gives due consideration, in the evolution of Freire’s ideas, to both early and later books in English, thus providing a welcome holistic reading of Paulo Freire. This is important given that, in his later work, Freire stresses and elaborates on a number of points, some of which were
already present in his early work but were not rendered explicit. In a collaborative piece (Allman et al., 1998), it was argued that “these positions were also revised in the light of the new experiences of oppression and emancipation to which he was exposed in the later years of a highly eventful life as educator, activist, consultant to revolutionary governments (Guinea Bissau, Nicaragua, Grenada) and ultimately educational policy maker and administrator.” (Allman et al., 1998, p. 9)

Freire has offered us ideas and conceptual tools that constantly warrant further elaboration, in view of the new experiences and challenges encountered across different borders. It is this aspect of the book by Roberts that gives it its strength, allowing the author sufficient material to engage adequately with some of the criticisms levelled at Freire by a number of writers.

In focusing on the evolution of Freire’s ideas throughout his thirty year oeuvre, Roberts is careful not to go over material which had already been well documented before. This includes material concerning two of Freire’s major sources of influence: Liberation Theology and Marxism. The book by Elias (1994) and Retamal’s (1981) monograph, for instance, have dealt adequately with the former while, as indicated, Paula Allman provides a most thorough exposition of the Marxist influence on Freire (Allman, 1999). There was no point for Roberts to repeat such arguments, even though he does take the concepts involved on board and uses them to good effect throughout his text.

Roberts’ holistic discussion, which reflects an intimate familiarity with all of Freire’s texts that were available in English at the time of his writing the book manuscript, enables him to underline the most important developments in Freire’s thinking. Included are those elements which were implied in the early work but which Freire had to emphasise, in his later ones, to set the record straight, given the several misconceptions surrounding his view of education.

The one obvious point that Freire emphasised, time and time again, from the mid-eighties onwards (it was always present in his work but required greater emphasis) is once again the directive nature of socially transformative education. This leads to one of the best discussions in the book under review, Roberts’ engagement with Chet Bowers and Peter Berger on the ‘interventionist’ nature of education. Once again, the distinction in Freire between authority and authoritarianism is key and Roberts does a great job of illustrating this aspect of Freire’s work, indicating that the kind of democratic relations advocated by the Brazilian educator is a complex one. Once again the issue of authority and the danger of lapsing into laissez-faire pedagogy is brought to the fore.

Considerations such as these lead Peter Roberts to defend Freire’s notion of an interventionist pedagogy. In his critique, Roberts targets not only Bowers and Berger but also postmodern feminists such as Elizabeth Ellsworth and Kathleen Weiler. Perhaps Roberts could have extended his critique to engage with other writers who have taken up issue, in a systematic way, with Freire. These include, as I have indicated, Diana Coben and Frank Youngman, the latter critiquing Freire for reasons that are much different from those which prompted the criticisms of Bowers, Berger, Ellsworth, Weiler and Coben.
Apart from emphasising the directive/interventionist nature of Freirean pedagogy, Roberts rightly stresses the collective dimension of learning in Freire’s work. This, in my view, is of crucial importance, given the constant misappropriation of Freire’s ideas by many who use and distort them within a liberal, individualistic learning framework. While also emphasising Freire’s tendency to overlook race, gender and other forms of difference, in earlier work, Roberts foregrounds the Brazilian educator’s later positions on these issues taking on board the discussions concerning identity and coherence which feature prominently in Freire’s later works, issues which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

One element, however, which is missing from Peter Roberts’ analysis and other analyses of Freire’s work (my previous work included) is the recognition that Freire’s discussions on transformative learning and difference remain encapsulated within the anthropocentric framework. I shall return to this point in Chapter 4, drawing on writers who have added the bio-difference dimension to the critical pedagogy literature.

Peter Roberts’ book does not romanticise Freire. Throughout this book, Peter Roberts portrays Freire as someone who is inspiring, who has influenced generations of teachers and other cultural workers, but who, to use an important Freire expression, is ‘incomplete,’ as is the case with all human beings. The flaws in Paulo Freire’s thinking are a reflection of this incompleteness which renders his call for an ongoing struggle for greater coherence all the more urgent.

Antonia Darder provides a lucid account of the relevance of some of Freire’s concepts to contemporary struggles at the macro and micro levels. Darder does not spend time and space on rehearsing the literature concerning the origins of certain concepts developed by Freire. Neither does she dwell on Freire’s formative influences. Much has been written and published on these aspects, as this chapter will have shown by now. As the title of her book suggests, she is concerned about the way Freire’s concepts can be reinvented in a predominantly US context as part of the struggle by progressive teachers and other cultural workers for greater social justice, a struggle meant to occur within the context of larger progressive social movements. She heeds Freire’s warning that experiments and concepts cannot be transplanted from one context to another, otherwise they would constitute yet another form of cultural invasion. They ought to be reinvented.

Darder focuses on some of the basic concepts in Freire’s pedagogical approach and elaborates on them. She deals with Freire’s advocacy of basic human virtues such as humility, love, tolerance, courage, hope, decisiveness, security and patience (or rather ‘patient impatience’, a point which Gadotti also stresses and which is a key theme in Freire’s later works). She elaborates on these points by interspersing personal anecdotes with accounts concerning other teachers’/activists’ day to day struggles in and outside classrooms and in the larger public sphere. For it is evident from the very start that this book provides no dichotomy between
INTERPRETATIONS OF FREIRE’S WORK

theory and practice but is concerned with praxis throughout. Theoretical insights from Freire are elaborated on in light of the personal everyday experiences of progressive teachers. In fact the voices of progressive teachers are reproduced in this work that ends with a long final chapter consisting of first person narratives by various educators of different class, ethnic and gender background.

‘Walking the talk’ is a key concern throughout this book penned by an educator with a reputation for her activism in the struggle for social justice (see Darder in Borg and Mayo, 2007). Throughout her writing, reason is never divorced from emotion and the other non-cognitive domains of being, a key insight gleaned from Freire. The kind of progressive education called for by Darder is intended towards seeing educators and educatees, the two key elements in the dialogical process, develop, through co-investigation of the object of knowledge, into more “integral human beings.” And yet this development is to occur by means of a process – authentic dialogue – in which conflicts are not avoided but confronted. Yet what distinguishes the confrontation involved in Freire’s conception of dialogue from other types of confrontations is that the interaction occurs within a context characterized by a genuine love for humanity and a sense of solidarity with others for the creation of a more humane, more socially just world.

The emphasis on the lived experiences of teachers of different ethnic and gender background in this book has not led Darder to overlook the larger macro-level issues that impinge on people’s everyday lives. She analyses these experiences against a scenario marked by the intensification of globalization and neo-liberalization of policies that affect the work of people engaged as teachers, learners and citizens. In the opening chapters, the author provides a very illuminating account of some of these processes and their encroachment on public/private lives. Particular emphasis is placed on the lives of people from traditionally subaltern ethnic groups which reflects the author’s own location as a Puerto Rican, a person hailing from a country still experiencing direct colonialism. Echoing Freire, Darder maintains that progressive educators and cultural workers must develop a strong knowledge of political economy to be able to, among other things, fully recognise the limit situations of their work and to connect their work with larger struggles.

The emphasis on ‘courage’ is key since the effusive and enthusiastic nature of her writing on Freire, though continuing to render her book inspiring and imbued throughout with the message of hope that Freire himself always sought to convey, is tempered with a strong sense of realism. This realism derives from the authors’ own experience as an activist involved in various struggles concerning social justice, struggles which involve victories and losses and, as always, reprisals. Her writing on the issue of ‘political backlash’ is quite insightful in this regard; these insights are re-echoed, in one of the first person narratives, by a teacher who suffered reprisals from the school board for engaging in a struggle on the side of the students during her first experience as a fully-fledged teacher. It takes courage and an unswerving sense of justice to persist with such potentially transformative action. Freire’s account of the risks taken by popular educators in certain parts of Latin America, who risked life and limb to carry out their ‘dangerous’ work (see
Frank’s and Horton’s account of the situation concerning popular educators in Nicaragua during the Contra War) while serving as a stark reminder of the price to be paid for teaching/working against the grain, can also serve as a source of inspiration.

This book, written in a very lucid and flowing style, appeals to both academics and practitioners. Perhaps I might here be accused of reproducing the sort of false dichotomy that this book by Antonia Darder should have led me to avoid. *Reinventing Freire* provides a clarion call for activism and scholarly work to be combined – a process of praxis characterized by the inextricable intertwining of action and reflection for further transformative action. It deals with Freire’s work holistically, with substantial material derived from both the early and later Freire. Key quotes from *Education for Critical Consciousness*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and *Pedagogy in Process* co-exist with equally key and substantive quotes from *Pedagogy of the Heart*, *Pedagogy of Hope*, *Pedagogy of Freedom* and, significantly, given that Darder is constantly appealing to progressive teachers, *Teachers as Cultural Workers. Letters to Those who dare Teach*.

One quibble that I have is that the book could have been concluded with a short chapter in which the author provides an analysis of the first person narratives and the themes that they introduce, connecting these issues with the larger issues from Freire’s work and other sources taken up in the earlier chapters. Perhaps I am once again being conventionally academic here. I do feel however, that such a concluding analysis would have certainly enhanced the sense of praxis that runs throughout the book in which reflection and action are intertwined.

**CÉSAR AUGUSTO ROSSATTO, ENGAGING PAULO FREIRE’S PEDAGOGY OF POSSIBILITY – FROM BLIND TO TRANSFORMATIVE OPTIMISM**

The final book on Freire that I am reviewing in this chapter is by the Brazilian scholar, César Augusto Rossatto (2005). ‘Time’ is the key concept in Rossatto’s discussion concerning education and the limits and possibilities of Freirean pedagogy. He dwells on life on the capitalist ‘fast lane’ in cities such as Los Angeles where “everybody always seems to need to be someplace else very quickly.”

Rossatto broaches key Freirean themes such as fatalism, optimism and transformation in his analyses of the experiences of ‘high’ and ‘low’ school ‘achievers’ in two contexts, one in Los Angeles and the other in Brazil.

Quantitative and qualitative research techniques are used in this grounded study. It is therefore the second empirical study discussed in this chapter. His observations centre around different types of optimism. There is blind optimism characterised by a belief in ‘meritocracy,’ fatalistic optimism and the rather individualistic resilient optimism. Resilient optimism would belong to the domain of ‘having’ rather than that of ‘being’.

Rossatto relates each discussion on the different types of optimism to the ‘time’ factor: “The temporal construction of time consciousness within the hegemony of blind optimism can implant fatalistic views in disenfranchised students. Schools become complicit with the historical amnesia of blind optimism…” Of
course, statements such as these warrant elaboration on how the time factor im-pinges on such features of this condition as, for instance, a non-critical disposition towards ‘banking education,’ memorization etc. Sociologists have argued that, in traditional working class cultures, there has been a reluctance to invest in the future and therefore to postpone gratification (marking time) because of the traditional precariousness of working class existence which makes members of this class have faith in only the ‘here and now’.

Freirean pedagogy geared towards a transformative optimism (a sense of hope, or ‘educated hope’ as Henry Giroux would call it – Giroux, 2001, p. 125) helps learners as subjects to “develop emancipatory concepts of time to maximize the utilization of their time.” The author does not stop there but takes a good look at educational policies affecting the two countries in which he has lived. His early discussion on his native Brazil is revealing. Particularly noteworthy are his references to such important sources of mass popular culture and ‘common sense’ construction as the telenovelas (Latin American soap operas). Equally revealing is the author’s discussion concerning the way he gradually developed his political consciousness as a ‘person in process,’ outlining the various stages of his own transformations, of his becoming, in Freire’s own words, “less incomplete” (Freire, 1997) and therefore more coherent (Freire, 1998, pp. 51, 66). His depic-tions of different facets of Brazilian society are a boon for anyone not familiar with the country and who seeks to obtain some preliminary understanding of the context which shaped Freire’s early and later ideas regarding education, politics, power and society.

César Augusto Rossatto’s analyses of educational policies in his current con-text, the United States, are equally revealing and he draws on numerous studies, involving different methodological approaches, to demonstrate the impact of different educational measures on the educational and other life chances of different students. Quite interesting is his discussion on the impact of US standardized testing measures on the different kinds of optimism he identified in the earlier discussion in the book, including the much desired transformative optimism with its Freirean and critical pedagogical overtones. And the author finally turns to the areas of Freirean and US critical pedagogy, the latter originally rooted in critical theory. He also draws on ideas emerging from the very inspiring reforms occurring in São Paulo when Freire served as Education Secretary there in the Erundina Municipal Government (Freire, 1993); the author provides us with a glimpse of the kind of pedagogical activity that took place within the classroom. The author does all this to strengthen his recommendations for policy changes intended to develop a more democratic and socially inclusive educational system. In fact the book ends with sixteen points outlining what the author regards as the ingredients for a proposed Freirean critical temporal curriculum.

The recurring concern throughout is how to deal with the temporal knowledge of students. The author argues that the curriculum must be reoriented frequently since students change their concepts of time. One insight obtained from the Freire-led Secretariat’s ideas concerning the ‘popular public school,’ so brilliantly analysed in the work of O’Cadiz et al. (1998), is that of developing a cross dis-
CHAPTER 2

ciplinary curriculum based on the use of generative themes. This was a feature of the curricular reforms centring on thematic complexes in São Paulo and also Porto Alegre (City Secretariat of Education of Porto Alegre, 1999).

The generative themes were intended to help connect with the life worlds of the learners. They marked the initial stage in the educational process as part of an attempt to link the school to the popular classes, and therefore to render it an institution which is no longer alien to these classes. The PT’s Secretaria Municipal de Educação (SMED) in Porto Alegre shared this concern with respect to the ‘The Citizen School’ that was developed in this city (Gandin and Apple, 2002, p. 110). César Augusto Rossatto also gives due consideration to the democratic process characterizing the ‘popular public’ schools in São Paulo with their emphasis on participation and collaboration at all levels. These schools were intended to allow their members (administrators, teachers, students, parents, school union members and members of the surrounding community) to experience a sense of ownership of the programmes and the schools themselves. This is surely one of the finer conceptual developments in Freire’s later work. It merits greater consideration in the discourse on educational administration and reform worldwide than is the case at present.

Unfortunately, I can gather from my own country’s experiences and some of the international literature that circulates around the English speaking world, that the São Paulo educational reforms, which somehow resonate with other PT ideas such as those of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre, lose out to more northern oriented ideas. I am referring here to the rather managerial/technical rational ideas that derive from North America-based gurus. Oddly enough, one comes across citations from people whose ideas gesture in the direction of this approach, citations which appear in the context of a discussion attaching importance to critical pedagogy. I felt that, at times, the author was too eclectic in his choice of sources. I suppose one can appropriate insights from different kinds of people with different pedagogical orientations (although I certainly recognize that there are limits), provided that the overall tenor of the discussion is not diminished as a consequence.

The most interesting aspect of this and the over all discussion, that covers a huge range of theories and approaches, including the psychosocial approach, is that the author retains the time leitmotif throughout and explores how Freirean pedagogy can help “deconstruct traditional temporalities, leading to the creative construction of new concepts of time for students.”

This book by César Augusto Rossatto is different from many of the other books on Freirean pedagogy that emerged during the last sixteen years or so. The writing throughout the middle and later sections of this book lacks passion, save for the vivid descriptions of Brazil and Los Angeles besides the short but lucid interview with Paulo Freire himself, carried out just a little time before Paulo died. Freire’s concerns about Neoliberalism and its exacerbation of the culture of individualism rather than social solidarity are there for all to see in this interview. The final discussion, in which the author explores possibilities for a Freirean inspired reform, drawing on the municipal government experience in
São Paulo, raises some challenging questions but left me somewhat cold. Nevertheless I cannot doubt the rigour of the scholarship involved. The comparative and quantitative/qualitative dimensions of the research render the work exemplary as far as scholarship goes. It is, however, the foregrounding of the time concept in relation to different forms of optimisms or fatalisms that accords this book its originality.

CONCLUSION

This chapter was intended to provide an overview of some of the literature on the work of Paulo Freire produced in the English language from the 90s onwards. It has now become fashionable to complain of the existence of a ‘Freire industry’ in view of the fact that studies on the Brazilian educator’s ideas continue to be produced. This represents a cynical view of such writings. In my view, such a burgeoning literature continues to confirm Carlos Alberto Torres’ view, cited at the outset of this book, that “We can stay with Freire or against Freire, but not without Freire” (Torres, 1982: 94). I feel that, as long as the studies being produced are rigorous, do justice to Freire’s own ideas, provide fresh critical perspectives and shed further light on the complex thinking of this often misunderstood figure, they are most welcome. Most of the works covered by this review make useful contributions not only to the debate concerning the relevance of Freire’s ideas to contemporary times in different contexts but also to the process of exchanging views and experiences regarding creative uses and reinventions of concepts that derive from his large corpus of work. Most of the writers included in this review chapter must have had their lives touched by Freire. It is probably this more than anything else which compelled them to contribute to the ever burgeoning literature on the Brazilian educator’s work. I too have been feeling this compulsion for a long time. This has led me, over the years, to write a number of papers on Freire and to revisit them and write fresh pieces with a view to producing this book. It is my sincere hope that this book will contribute, in its own way, to the ongoing rich debate on the legacy of Freire’s work, a debate on which many of the authors cited in this chapter have left their mark.

NOTES

1 Morrow and Torres argue that there has been a certain degree of polarization with respect to the reception of Gramsci in Latin America. There are those who link him with a “technocratic” perspective. Here the emphasis is placed on a critical appropriation of the dominant knowledge. This position brings to mind the Leninist revolutionary vanguard theory; it is regarded as standing in contrast to Freire’s ideas. There are others, however, who posit connections between his ideas and those of Freire; they underscore the link between Gramsci’s particular conception of civil society and that of popular education that is regarded as an important feature of the process of democratization of Brazilian society. (Morrow and Torres, 2002a, p. 79) This polarization stems from what has been perceived as a paradox in Gramsci’s work. This apparent situation led Morrow and Torres to pose the question: are there two Gramsci’s? (Morrow and Torres, 1995).
CHAPTER 2

2 At the 3rd Paulo Freire research conference, Douglas Kellner presented a paper connecting Freire’s thought with that of Dewey. Also featuring in the relevant session were connections between Freire’s thought and that of Rousseau (Danilo Streck) and Gramsci (Peter Mayo).

3 For heuristic purposes, I am confining my overview of published English language literature on Freire to work which appeared from the 90s onwards.

4 Martin provides an account of his meeting with Freire and Betinho in connection with the video ‘Starting with Nina.’ He does this in the context of a discussion concerning the relevance of Freire’s ideas to workers’ education especially with respect to the Canadian labor movement.

5 See, for instance, the Convergence interview cited earlier (Viezzer, 1990) and the 1991 AERA recording (Freire, 1991).

6 The projects initiated during his tenure of office naturally continued under the direction of his successor, Mario Sergio Cortella. I would dare say that they continued to inspire reform in other municipalities where the PT was in government.

7 This particular development is no doubt reflected in the term allotted to the public sector schools that elected to join the project (schools were allowed the democratic right to choose either to join or stay out of the project) – ‘popular public’. I will expand on many of the above ideas in subsequent chapters, notably Chapter 4 and Chapter 6.

8 They provide important details regarding the nature and amount of social organizations and movements available in Brazil, to which reference will be made later on in this book.

9 Needless to say, reference to the discussion concerning social movements and also state-social movements relations in São Paulo, as well as party-social movement relations will be made in the forthcoming chapters on Freire’s early and later work.

10 In the São Paulo case, they would fear the freedom to team up with others, work across traditional disciplines, research the community and explore generative themes.

11 The book becomes also significant in an age when we are witnessing the emergence of a variety of projects connected with the concept of ‘learning cities’ and ‘learning regions’ in several parts of the world (see Walters et al., 2004 with respect to South Africa) including European regions participating in the European Union’s Regional networks for Life-Long Learning – R3L pilot initiative (CEC, 2002, p. 1).