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**Sue Jackson**

**Freire re-viewed**

***Pedagogy of Indignation* by Paulo Freire**

***Engaging Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of Possibility: from Blind to Transformative Optimism* by Cesar Augusto Rossatto**

***Re-thinking Freire: Globalisation and the Environmental Crisis* edited by C A Bowers and Frederique Apffel-Marglin**

*Introduction*

The work of Paulo Freire has continually been associated with the themes of oppression and liberation, and his critical pedagogy is visionary in its attempts to bring about social transformation. Drawing on his experiences in Latin America and elsewhere, Paulo Freire has created a theory of education that is closely linked to issues of oppression and struggle: particularly within social relations that centre around both ideological and material domination. In his development of a pedagogy of and for the oppressed, Paulo Freire has said that from reflection by the oppressed on their oppression and its causes:

will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade (Freire, 1972: . 25).

This review of Freire, his work and ideas considers three books, one by Freire himself, and the other two by authors engaging with his work: Cesar Augusto Rossatto, whose book aims to find ways to engage Freire's pedagogy of possibility; and the authors in a collection edited by C A Bowers and Frederique Apffel-Marglin which asks readers to re-think Freire with regard to globalisation and the environmental crisis. The other book reviewed here, *Pedagogy of Indignation*, is Paulo Freire's final work before his death in 1997, in which he re-visits some of his key themes and ideas. His widow, Ana Maria Araujo Freire, states in her prologue to the book that it was her concern that:

the final words of his should make up a book exclusively of his own writings. The book should contain his words and ideas, his emotions and concerns, his wisdom and sensibility, with just a few words of my own contextualising each of the *Pedagogical Letters* (Freire, 2004: xxix).

As well as Freire's three 'pedagogical letters' the book contains a range of other writings, including conference talks and work produced for publication. In addition to Anna Freire's Prologue, there is a Foreword by Donald Macedo and a 'Letter to Paulo Freire' by Balduino A Andreola. These introductions to the book – the Prologue, Foreword and Letter – all honour the man whose work and life the authors

love and admire, although the styles verge on the sentimental. This is particularly the case with the letter to Freire, which Andreola explains was written when he was asked to reflect on the messages of Freire's pedagogical letters. These reflections, addressed to 'Paulo', are almost biblical in their language. They focus on Freire's message to the people, in which

you speak about love for the world in the context of love for life, challenged as you are by your saintly and vehement indignation ...” (Freire, 2004, xl)

'It is', says Andreola, 'up to us, Paulo, who remain here' to continue the vision (xliv). In his Foreword, Macedo is also concerned about continuing the vision, in a style which borders on the didactic, wanting to confront those who vulgarise Freire's ideas and works. There is little room here for disagreement or discussion: this is a critique that cannot be challenged, a one-sided conversation because 'Paulo' is no longer here.

However, there are conversations with Freire. Rossatto begins his book with a 'personal perspective' which largely consists of an interview with Paulo Freire. The tone is set in this opening section of a student sitting at the feet of a master, and the book by and large reads as though it is a well-developed doctoral thesis, finding (sometimes struggling to find) ways to use Freirian perspectives in a case study of how students experience schooling in relation to time and optimism.

Freire himself does attempt to open conversations, both with Rossatto and in his pedagogical letters. If his work, too, takes on something of the tone of knowing what is best, this is not his intention: 'The requirement I set for myself as I wrote these pedagogical letters, was that ... they should be free of, protected from, certain qualities' (Freire, 2004: 13). including freedom from arrogance, excessive certainty of being right and theoretic elitism.

In the first letter, which also serves as an introduction to the book, Freire explains:

For a while a purpose had been disquieting me: to write a few pedagogical letters, in light style, whose readings might interest both young fathers and young mothers and, perhaps, teenaged sons and daughters, or teachers who, called to reflection by the challenges of their teaching practice, would find in the letters elements capable of helping them develop their own answers. In these pedagogical letters, I would address problems, visible or hidden, present in relationships with sons and daughters or pupils within day-to-day experiences (Freire, 2004: 5).

These problems include several themes: themes of family and education; pedagogical issues for teachers; themes of ecology and ethics; and questions of ways in which we exercise citizenship, which he describes as a "fundamental competency" (Freire, 2004: 7).

### *Optimistic citizenship?*

For Freire, the only way to act as a citizen is by keeping faith with a commitment to the realisation of a better world. Although such faith involves utopian vision, it also involves a unity between discourse and action. And yet it seems to me that Freire

overestimates the possibilities of active citizenship. Although he remains convinced that “that men and women can change the world for the better, make it less unjust” (Freire, 2004: 31) I see little evidence of the power of the individual, despite the discourse of neo-liberalism and individualism that currently prevails.

The power of this discourse is apparent in Rossatto’s research. His book tells a tale of two cities, Rio de Janeiro and Los Angeles, and I did wonder if I had picked up a tourist information sheet by mistake. ‘Upon arrival in Rio’, says Rossatto, ‘one can immediately feel a friendly, carefree and hospitable attitude on the part of the city’s residents’ (Rossatto, 2005: 36). It is not clear who these ‘residents’ are, as around 20% of Rio’s population live in acute poverty, with a lack of education, healthcare and other resources, and amongst drug-related violence. He does go on to acknowledge that:

Mixed into this idyllic setting (sic), however, is obvious evidence of extreme poverty and environmental depredation: trash overflowing in public places, the acrid and fetid odor of raw sewage, and choking air pollution (Rossatto, 2005: 36).

Rossatto’s book is a case study of how people experience schooling in relation to time and optimism. In his work with schools in each of these two cities, four typologies of ‘optimism’ emerge.

The first of these is blind optimism, which Rossatto describes as a naïve embrace of a meritocratic ideology. Blind optimism fails to see the social importance and urgency of developing images about the future that include the organisation of social movements. It involves a chosen denial, coupled with the enjoyment of privileges in systems of power and domination.

Secondly there is fatalistic optimism, an immobilizing acceptance of an alienating reality and dismal future. Events become fixed in time, with a perceived inability to change the course of events. Fatalistic optimism is misplaced resistance and/or inappropriate acceptance or acquiescence, involving self-defeating behaviour, such as a view of education as pointless. However, as Paul Willis (1977) demonstrated in *Learning to Labour*, such a view is sometimes realistic: no matter how often disenfranchised groups learn to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, structural inequalities remain, and the individualism espoused by neo-liberalism does not, for example, redistribute wealth or life chances.

Resilient optimism involves a kind of citizenship which conforms to the normative order to achieve individualistic future goals and to glean rewards. Here, according to Rossatto, hegemonic order and socio-economic dictates are reproduced with the complicity and participation of those most oppressed by that order. Rossatto explains that resilient optimism is an ‘if you can’t beat them join them’ approach which results in reproduction of the hegemonic order through the complicity and participation of those most oppressed. I always find explanations which suggest that oppression is the fault of the oppressed problematic, but I find Rossatto’s example extraordinary in the extreme. To illustrate his point, Rossatto refers to ‘the concomitant brutalisation of Jews by other Jews’ (Rossatto, 2005: 70). He describes

the Jews who voluntarily and brutally policed the ghettos of Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe, even helping to load the trains to the extermination camps. In return for their co-operation, these Jews were given added measure of comfort, treated a little less badly, *but were still oppressed*, as evidenced by the fact that they also ended up in the furnaces of Auschwitz (Rossatto, 2005: 69, original italics).

Of course it might well be true that an urge to try and live beyond all horrors, to protect families and loved ones, a morbid dread of the nightmare that awaits those who disobey, could be described as ‘conforming to the normative order to achieve individualistic future goals’, in much the same way as for example rape or murder victims may try to ‘co-operate’ to save their lives, but who nevertheless end up brutally killed. There are many examples Rossatto could have chosen to show how people conform to the normative order to achieve individualistic future goals. Neo-liberalism has ensured that there is no shortage of examples on which to draw, including within schools and educational institutions, and there are numerous psychological experiments that show ways in which people co-operate within a hegemonic order. It is highly inappropriate for Rossatto to have chosen this one.

Finally, there is transformative optimism, involving a more active form of citizenship; a collective resistance against social processes, coupled with a consciousness of solidarity. There is individual responsibility within collective effort. As Rossatto found, this is more apparent in more affluent schools, where learning involves more creative forms of knowledge construction and critical thinking. Transformative optimism, says Rossatto, offers possibilities for collective resistance and the hope of a liberated future.

Optimism is a temporal term signifying perceptions of a given future (Rossatto, 2005: 84). The dominant time construct is blind optimism, emphasising individual hard work and de-emphasising collective action or struggle, and creating neo-liberal subjects. Disenfranchised groups must learn to survive in institutions controlled by dominant groups, developing a strategy of conformation. There is a political subtext of the world as meritocracy, where we all have opportunities for success, if only we grasp them for ourselves.

As Ana Maria Araujo Freire indicates, Freire is concerned with the world’s situation as tied to a neo-liberal political model and to economic globalisation. However, whilst Freire acknowledges that we are all conditioned by economic structures, he believes that we are not determined by them. Yet whilst transformative action may be possible, the ability to transform the world through transformation of self fails to recognise or acknowledge the highly unequal positionings we all occupy within economic globalisation and super-powerful states. In his Foreword, for example, Macedo refers to the ‘spectacular display’ of about ten million people on five continents marching against war on Iraq (in Freire, 2004: x). However, that marching had little if any effect: the war continued and its direction had little to do with the ten million who marched. Globalisation creates a need to engage differently. Although globalisation is not of itself defining, ways to engage in political action need to be reinvented. Freire describes how, for example, globalisation can weaken the political effectiveness of strikes (Freire, 2004: 75): it also seems apparent that it weakens the effectiveness of huge displays of popular uprisings such as the marches against the

war in Iraq. As Freire shows, rebellion is not enough without expanding into a more radical and critical position, a revolutionary one.

*Learning through 'knowing'*

Throughout his life's work, Freire has viewed education as a political act. Teaching, he believes, can never be divorced from critical analysis of how society works, and teachers must challenge learners to think critically through social, political and historical realities within which they are a presence in the world. Rossatto (2005) raises similar issues in his book. It is, he says, the task of progressive education is to inspire students' critical curiosity. Today there is an especially great need for these curiosities, as neo-liberal discourse and ideology can be immobilising.

Freire believes that

education makes sense because women and men learn that through learning they can make and remake themselves, because women and men are able to take responsibility for themselves as beings capable of knowing – of knowing that they know and knowing that they don't (Freire, 2004: 15).

It is the responsibility of teachers, says Freire, to challenge oppressed groups to overcome certain portions of their knowing as they begin to show their 'incompetence' to explain facts, although teachers should not arrogantly impose their knowing upon oppressed groups 'as the only *true knowing*' (Freire, 2004: 64, original italics).

Freire tells the story of a young man struggling to understand his material and subject positioning:

If yesterday he blamed himself for it, now he became able to realise that he was not responsible for finding himself in that condition ... His struggle was more important in constituting his new knowledge than the messianic, authoritarian militant's discourse (Freire, 2004: 65).

However, although the young man of the story obtained 'new knowledge', all knowledge is not equally privileged and what is 'known' and who are the 'knowers' is highly politicised. As Rossatto (2005) shows in his discussion of schools, some knowledges count, whilst others do not, legitimising and de-legitimising beliefs. Education is always a certain theory of knowledge put into practice, and it is therefore always political (Freire, 2004: 71). Different realities, different ways of knowing and experiencing the world, need to be acknowledged and understood. There are questions to be asked regarding the power and authority of teachers, and knowledge and truth claims. How do beliefs become legitimised as knowledge, who can be a 'knower' and what things are 'known' (see Harding 1987)? Epistemology questions remain about the nature of knowledge, its foundations, limits and validity. The 'new knowledge' that has been acquired by the young man in question may well bring insight and political awareness, but of itself will not bring about the power to implement change or transformation, although challenges to ways of knowing can lead to collective action.

Freire believes 'there are questions all of us must ask insistently that make us see the impossibility of *studying for study's sake*'. Instead, we should ask 'In favor of what do I study? In favour of whom? Against what do I study? Against whom do I study?' (Freire, 2004: 60, original italics). These are important questions. Although, as Rossatto (2005: 145) shows, educators can construct nonfragmented knowledge by relating daily life experiences to academic content, ruling groups are able to exercise control both over *what* is taught and *how* it is taught, maintaining hegemonic control. Neo-liberal discourse and ideology can be immobilising, promoting adaptation and a fatalism which means that we compromise with reality rather than transforming it. An absence of, or the opposite to, solidarity comes from neo-liberal discourses (Rossatto, 2005). Neo-liberalism emphasises accountability, audits and managerial control, with funding regimes working to the detriment of adult, continuing and liberal education. Although neo-liberalism purports to support social justice, embedded within it are discourses of individualism and support for a 'free' market. Judgements are then made and enforced according to who has the power to do so, and in relation to 'the market' rather than to social equity. Furthermore, the market is continually assessed to justify the continuation or not of some of its constituent parts. The dominance of neo-liberal discourse means that we are increasingly seeing the decline, even death, of adult 'liberal education' programmes, and the question of choosing whether or not to study for studying's sake will soon, to coin a phrase, be academic.

Additionally, there are challenges to adult education posed by new technological restructuring. Freire describes neo-liberalism as the transference of knowledge for industrial productivity (Freire, 2004: 77).

A critical reading of the world implies the exercise of curiosity and the ability to challenge in order to know how to defend oneself from the traps ideologies ... will place along the way (Freire, 2004: 92)..

Education has come to be about technical knowledge, training learners in skills which enable them to adapt to economic globalisation, but leaving little space for utopian dreams.

The more education becomes empty of dreams to fight for, the more the emptiness left by those *dreams* becomes filled with technique, until the moment comes when education becomes reduced to that. Then education becomes pure training, it becomes pure transfer of content, it is almost like the training of animals, it is a mere exercise in adaptation to the world (Freire, 2004: 84, original italics)

Indeed, education – whilst often promoted in the name of equality and justice – can become a means of oppression, continually re-creating social class divisions (Esteva, Stuchal and Prakash, in Bowers and Apfel-Marglin, 2005: 21). When education and knowledge are described purely in terms of technology and training, then 'in a postmodernity touched at every moment by technological advances' 'new pedagogical proposals become necessary, indispensable, and urgent' (Freire, 2004: 107).

As Bowers argues in his edited collection:

Addressing these issues will require developing a critical understanding of the connections between the high-status knowledge acquired in our educational institutions and the relentless drive to create new technologies and markets (Bowers (b) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 144).

This includes developing understandings of how language frames current ways of thinking that represent humans as controlling the genetic basis of life. Additionally, we should remain critical of what ‘universities have relegated in the category of low-status knowledge’, knowledge which can contribute to the vitality of communities (Bowers (b) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 145). The building of awareness and conscience around such issues is part of the project of critiquing globalisation.

Although Freire has earlier placed a heavy emphasis of conscientizacao, in this later work he says that it is not everything. Others go further, suggesting that ‘conscientization is, in fact, new wine for old bottles – the bottles of colonisation’ (Esteve, Stuchal and Prakash, in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 13). Freire asks us to consider the dialectical relationship between reading the world and reading the word, and argues that reading and writing must not be relegated to second place. There is an emphasis on the importance of adult literacy in his final book as well as in much of Freire’s work (Freire, 2004: 72). Like all education, literacy too is political, and reading the world needs to go with rewriting the world, leading to transformation. The more informed and better we read the more we can rewrite, becoming able to write what is not yet written.

Audre Lorde has warned of this necessity in her earlier work:

What are the words you do not yet have? What do you need to say?  
What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence? (Lorde, 1984: 41).

And yet finding the words, moving from silence to speech (hooks, 1989) is not always sufficient. Quoting Freire (1994) Rossatto says that the duties of a pedagogy of hope

are to make it possible for the popular groups to develop their own language ... one that emerges around their own reality ... This is the central question of popular education – language as a way to enable citizenship (Freire, 1994, in Rossatto, 2005:129).

Yet, as is clear from the work of Bernstein (1977) and others, ‘working-class’ languages can leave speakers disempowered and located within a discourse of lack. Literacy can be a powerful and significant means of social change. Literacy is a complex social practice, and greater access to more information does not necessarily mean that people are able to make critical judgements about its significance and value (Crowther et al, 2001). Discussions of literacy education then also need to include discussions of pedagogical practices, which can disable as well as enable.

However, Freire fails to develop critiques of education (and educators) as disablers:



Freire was explicitly interested in the oppressed. His entire life and work were presented as a vocation committed to assuming their views, their interests. Yet he ignored the plain fact that for the oppressed, the social majorities of the world, education has become one of the most humiliating and disabling components of their oppression, perhaps even the very worst (Esteva, Stuchal and Prakash in Bowers and Appfel-Marglin, 2005: 20).

Teachers can reinforce dominant and hegemonic value systems, or challenge them. In reality, as Rossatto has shown, even the most critical and liberatory of teachers often do both. Despite clinging onto pedagogies and practices of emancipation, teachers (in the Western world at least) are working in structures of neo-liberalism, with government and/or centrally determined curricula, audits and managerial controls, and funding regimes, all of which mitigate against pedagogies as the practice of freedom. Coupled with this, the cult of individualism, reliance on technological advances, and hierarchical structuring of 'knowledge' make social, collective and transformative actions increasingly more difficult.

The neo-liberal mindset, as Bowers shows:

continues to emphasize that the teacher's role is to foster a greater sense of individual creativity and expression, to promote economic growth by reinforcing students to think and communicate in ways that are mediated through technologies, and to see the answer to social justice issues as a matter of assimilating marginalised ethnic minorities into middle-class consumer lifestyles .... (Bowers (c) in Bowers and Appfel-Marglin, 2005: 153).

Freire remains concerned about the present negation of dreams and of utopia and the struggle to sustain them, now and in the beginning of the coming century. However, change depends on much more than individual hope and dreams, even when they are coupled with action. In what comes to sounds like the mantra running through the book, Freire states that 'changing is difficult, but it is possible' (Freire, 2005: 77). Mantras though can take on a power of their own. Bowers and Appfel-Marglin (2005), for example, are concerned that critical reflection has turned into a dominant mantra for Western educational theorists. However, in discussing Freire's work, bell hooks says that there is:

one sentence of Freire's that became a revolutionary mantra for me:  
'We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects'  
(hooks, 1994, p46).

This struggle of moving from object to subject was clearly apparent in bell hooks' own work, *Ain't I a Woman* (1981), although this work goes unacknowledged by Freire. He does, though, engage in a brief discussion of the movement from object to subject, stating that he is not a mere object of history but equally its subject (Freire, 2005: 60). As bell hooks says, it is 'the act of speech ... that is the expression of our movements from object to subject – the liberated voice' (hooks, 1989: 9).

By stripping education of its political nature and reducing it to dexterity training, the object subsumes the subject and the 'liberated voice' disappears. Neo-liberal ideology and politics produce educational practices that contradict fundamental

requirements of technological advances. Critical subjects should respond to change, but more than that they need a knowing that is part of a broader universe of knowing.

### *Universalism and globalisation*

Still present in this book, as has been the case in earlier work of Freire, is the suggestion of universality. He sees a key challenge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century being that of confronting the ways in which neoliberal discourse and market ethics can forestall human beings' universal ethics (Freire, 2005: 92). Political struggle, he believes, should be undertaken in the name of the universal ethics of human beings, an ethics that Rossatto (2005) describes as 'natural', but I remain doubtful about such supposed naturalness or universality.

In talking about *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for example - probably his most influential work - Paulo Freire describes the universality of his book (Freire, 1985: 190). However, whilst 'universal issues' may mean that the book 'speaks' to people across many boundaries, it does not give sufficient concentration to difference, to the conflicting needs of oppressed groups or the specificity of people's lives and experiences. Freire's pedagogy takes a dualistic approach to the oppressed and the oppressors. However, it is difficult to argue for a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* without considering how the oppressed can also be oppressors, or a *Pedagogy of Indignation* without showing the differences of indignation and different possibilities for challenge and change. Freire has stated that 'a humanizing education is the path through which men and women can become conscious about their presence in the world' (Freire and Freire, 1985: 14). And yet there is a danger in universalising a shared humanizing education, and there are many other paths through which we become conscious of our positions in the world and learn to 'know' who and what we are (see Jackson, 2004).

In *Re-thinking Freire*, Bowers and Apffel-Marglin (2005) pick up and extend some of these issues and challenge their readers to do the same. Their edited collection starts from the premise that Western assumptions are the basis of Freire's ideas, which his followers have taken for granted. The chapters in this book are written by postcolonial third world activists, and document something of the transformation in their own thinking. They were:

at first deeply motivated by Freire's vision of empowerment, which they initially interpreted as a noncolonising pedagogy. But as they learned from indigenous cultures, they became aware that Freire's ideas are based on Western assumptions and that the Freirean approach to empowerment was really a disguised form of colonialism (Bowers (a) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 2).

In particular, Bowers and Apffel-Marglin are critical that Freire pays little or no attention to the environmental crisis brought about by globalisation. They argue that Freire's understanding of intelligence is about individual capacity for change through critical reflection. Instead, the ecological intelligence of indigenous cultures needs to be addressed, including ways in which different cultures pass on and renew their understandings both within communities and between humans and other forms of life. We should look for answers not to educational theorists but within local cultures.

However, it is not entirely the case that Freire fails to acknowledge the central importance of ecology, although it is certainly little referred to in his earlier works, and only referred to in passing, as it were, in his last book:

I do not believe in loving among women and men, among human beings, if we do not become capable of loving the world. Ecology has tremendous importance at the end of this century. It must be present in any educational practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature (Freire, 2004: 47).

Lack of concern about globalisation and the environmental crisis should lead to political as well as personal indignation. Freire has exciting things to say, and shows how we should all be teaching and learning through a pedagogy of indignation. All too often learning, coupled with the development of active citizenship, is linked to ideological, political and economic investment in (patriarchal and colonial) globalised capitalism, and we *should* feel indignant.

However, I remain unconvinced that Freire gives sufficient attention to ways in which we are subject to ideological, cultural and social conditioning. He states that ‘if we were determined, no matter by what – race, culture, class, or gender – we could not speak of freedom, decision, ethics, and responsibility’ (Freire, 2005: 108). However, whilst we may not be determined by, for example, race or gender, our life chances may certainly be determined by racism and/or sexism. Freire believes that hope is a necessary component of being a presence in the world, and that education is the process of a hope-filled search. However, hope in the face of racism or sexism – including hope in the power of education – may indeed be a false hope when faced with structural and material inequalities. We may all have possibilities, but for some the possibilities are greater than others.

Rossatto (2005) is also concerned with possibilities. He searches for ways to reinvent the present, transforming moments and experiences into an ever-liberating and evolving future. He argues for a need for a pedagogy of solidarity, of unity in diversity, calling for students to be led from a ‘blind’ to transformative optimism. In considering optimisms, he extends his analysis to include hegemonic time construction, exploring ways in which social institutions (including schools) mediate the construction of dominant time. The book focuses on how students are influenced by temporal constructs and their consequences. Rossatto explains that time is a cultural constraint: whilst a concept of quantitative time is dominant in modern cultures, life can also be measured as an accumulation of transformative experiences, although he does not expand this discussion to explore qualitative time / non-linear time. Difference in notions of time consciousness (both external and experiential) can be seen in a neo-liberal discourse of fatalism, leading to conditions of hopelessness. Schools reflect the values, traditions and structures of culture within global restructuring of postmodernity, whilst teachers are expected to prepare students to function in a global economy. Dominant, or hegemonic, time construction in the classroom can alienate already disenfranchised students, and Rossatto turns to Freire shed light on pedagogical practices that encourage more time involvement of students.

*Critical pedagogy*

Critical pedagogies involve transformative action and empowerment of students, acting as a site for struggle and the development of praxis. In turning towards pedagogical practices, Rossatto produces a (literature) review of critical pedagogy. He begins by outlining some critical theory, concentrating on an exploration of hegemonic practices. Rossatto says that rather than being a conspiracy narrative, hegemony refers to the penetration of the knowledge of the social, economic and moral leaders into daily experiences associated with social institutions, language and private life. Hegemony, he concludes, is a problem of ‘worldview’ (Rossatto, 2005: 30; paragraph duplicated on p129). Despite the duplication, and therefore the possible return to a discussion of hegemony, Rossatto’s critical analysis of hegemony remains light. There is no mention of people like Gramsci, for example, who has done so much influential work on hegemonic practices. Instead, Rossatto attributes Freire’s influence to an understanding that ‘the structuring of a dominant knowledge produces a condition called hegemony’ with both the dominated and the dominator complicit (Rossatto, 2005: 30, repeated on p129) (see above for further discussion on ‘compliance’).

His section on feminist pedagogy is particularly weak, drawing almost entirely on one author (Kathleen Weiler) and on one of her texts (Weiler, 1988). This misses an enormous wealth of literature, once again marginalising and invisibilising feminist writing. At the least, if Rossatto wanted to only explore feminist pedagogy in relation to Weiler (and as interesting as her work is, this is a mistake) I would have expected to have seen her (1991) work on “Freire and a Feminist Pedagogy of Difference”. Rossatto does mention bell hooks, but not in relation to Freire (see above) and her work does not appear in the bibliography. There was a chance, too, for Rossatto’s discussion of autobiographical narratives of social reconstructionist movements (Rossatto, 2005: 131) to raise interesting comparisons with feminist pedagogical approaches. Other writers have found feminism a useful tool for engaging with and deconstructing Freirean approaches. For example, Phyllis Robinson (in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 101) shows how ‘third world and women-of-color feminism’ has enhanced understandings of the multiplicity of social identity; and has found the work of some post-modern and post-structural feminists ‘courageous’. In particular, she has found helpful ways in which ‘post-structural feminist epistemology accepts that knowledge is always provisional, open-ended and relational’.

In my own work I have remained critical of Freire’s lack of gender analysis in his work and his apparent universalisation, and have always had concerns with regard to the role of the teacher (see eg Jackson 2004). He rarely, for example, engages in discussion of the authority or power of the teacher, who is assumed to share the ideals of humanizing education. Freire seems to offer a pedagogy of and for the oppressed which criticises colonialism whilst seeing the world through the partial and particular lens of patriarchy. He fails to recognise gendered, classed and racialised subject positions of both teachers and learners, as well as their structural locations and lived realities. I have serious reservations about the role of teacher as emancipator which leaves students believing that transformation is possible through individual and collective utopian dreams and actions without fully engaging with and critically reflecting upon either structural inequalities or the role of globalisation. Nevertheless, I found Bowers and Apffel-Marglin’s collection challenging, and there are other issues raised by this book which I either had not previously considered, or had not considered sufficiently, including questions of literacy.

Whilst I believe that adult literacy programmes are not in themselves part of progressive pedagogy (a view shared by Freire, despite his life's work on developing such programmes), the book goes much further. Although for Freire literacy is an essential step on the route to becoming a reflective thinker, this collection argues that 'literacy itself is a colonising process that reinforces a modern sense of individualism' (Bowers (a) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 3). Freire suggests that we can only achieve a sense of identity through language, and we can only take part in the struggle for transformation if we have an identity. Through claiming or reclaiming language, people can critically engage in an analysis of their experience which enables them to transform and create the world. In his examination of language, Freire demonstrates the struggle between oppression and liberation.

He talks, for instance, about Creole as an antagonistic force that threatens the privileged and dominant position of Portuguese (Freire, 1985, p184/6). The colonisers, he says, have had to convince people that the only valid language was Portuguese: they have said that Creole does not contain the necessary vocabulary to enable scientific and technical advancement, for instance, and that Portuguese is far superior as an 'educated' and advanced language. (Jackson, 2004:24).

However, as Bowers and Apffel-Marglin show, Freire gives little or no acknowledgement of the 5,000 languages still spoken in the world. It is argued that Freire presents a reactionary - even conservative - way of thinking. The real question, Bowers suggests, is:

Who are the oppressed – the Freirean agents of emancipation or the people who were to be emancipated from the intergenerational knowledge that is the basis of their identity and culture? (Bowers (a) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 6).

Critical reflection, the book argues, is appropriate in some contexts, yet it is only one of many valid approaches to knowledge. Critical reflection is important, but it should not lead to the overturning of tradition and intergenerational knowledge. We can learn from our experiences, but these should include the past/passed experiences of the generations, and should recognise future possibilities linked to ways in which cultures and communities renew intergenerational knowledge. Bowers argues that:

Freire was correct in associating critical reflection with empowerment. His mistake was in arguing that each generation has to overturn the knowledge of previous generations (Bowers (c) in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 160).

The question that remains, then, is the extent to which Freire's pedagogical approaches are useful to educators as well as to 'the oppressed', and whether challenges to re-think Freire can lead to renewing ways in which critical pedagogies are approached.

Esteva et al believe that:

Freire's pedagogy is ... best understood as a pedagogy for mediators qua liberators. He did not address himself to the oppressed ... Freire wrote for critical educators ... who in his view could and would dedicate themselves to the liberation of the oppressed (Esteva, Stuchal and Prakash, in Bowers and Apffel-Marglin, 2005: 13).

And therein lies the problem, for me at least. There is a great deal about Freire's work that I both admire and find useful if my own engagement with learning and teaching. However, at times I find his writing glib and lacking in critical edge. For example, he states that the future 'belongs to the Peoples, not to the Empires' (Freire, 2004: 56), which might well constitute his utopian dream but bears little resemblance to the realities of people's lives. I believe that he over-simplifies and universalises 'the oppressed', without recognising the multiplicities of social identities, nor the complexities of structural positionings within advanced technological globalisation.

### *Conclusions*

In summary then, I have found some of the writing in *Pedagogy of Indignation* (especially that by others, but including work by Freire) to be didactic, even messianic in tone and the style, by admission and intent, 'light' (Freire, 2005: 5). Freire's work is indignant, certainly, but does not advance his earlier ideas, nor develop theoretical concerns. Perhaps that is why I felt that Rossatto was struggling to engage with Freire, despite his project to do so.

In particular, there is no linking by Rossatto of theoretical frameworks to his empirical work, which seems to exist outside the author and the book. As he comes towards the close of his book, Rossatto states that the future is present, just as the past and present are present (Rossatto, 2005: 138). This is of course true, but how we imagine the future depends on how we imagine/(re)construct the past and present. Realities, says Rossatto, can be uncovered by studying how students construct their past, present and future motivations. But there is more than this that constructs our histories and our futures. Rossatto says that students develop hope and vision for the future by changing their attitudes towards life (Rossatto, 2005: 139) but takes little note of material and structural realities, including gender, race, social class etc., a similar criticism to the one that I have also levelled at Freire. Bowers and Apffel-Marglin's collection, on the other hand, did encourage their readers to use theoretical perspectives from postcolonialism and development studies to re-think their engagement with Freire.

And this (critical) engagement, in the end, is what is important to Freire and to all the authors in these books. As I showed above, Freire has emphasised the importance of openness to dialogue. The central aspects of Freire's final book are produced as 'letters', which in themselves suggest a dialogue, an ongoing conversation, a right of reply. With regard to his work on *Pedagogy of Indignation*, but in words that could apply to all his works, he says:

In the process of reading these letters, the reader could start realising, little by little, that the possibility of dialogue with their author is to be found in the words themselves, in the curious manner in which the author writes them, being open to doubt and criticism ... What is fundamentally important is that

the legitimacy and acceptance of different positions with respect to the world be clear (Freire, 2004: 14).

These books all add to that dialogue. Whilst *Pedagogy of Indignation* does not offer new theoretical perspectives, it does add to and enhance understandings of Freire's earlier works. Despite my criticisms of Rossatto's book, it does aim to open dialogue regarding Freire's conceptions of possibilities, whilst *Re-thinking Freire* examines some of the limitations. However, it also offers new ways to consider Freire's critical engagements, especially with regard to globalisation and the environment. The dialogue needs to continue: between authors and readers certainly, but also between teachers (who also learn) and learners (who also teach). That part is the easier. To even start any kind of meaningful dialogue between those who are oppressed (yet who may also oppress) and those who oppress (yet may also be oppressed) is the challenge. Any such dialogue needs to extend to those who lay claims to hierarchical constructions of knowledge and those who dispute them, and becomes more than finding ways to facilitate 'the oppressed' in becoming 'people like us'. To engage in citizenship, says Freire, we must develop 'the ability to observe, to compare, and to evaluate, in order to choose, through deciding, how one is to intervene in the life of the city' (Freire, 2004: 7):

What I mean to say is this: To the extent that we become capable of transforming the world, of naming our own surroundings, of apprehending, of making sense of things, of deciding, of choosing, of valuing, and finally, of *ethicizing* the world, our mobility within it and through history necessarily come to involve *dreams* towards whose realization we struggle (Freire, 2004: 7, original italics).

Yet dreams are not enough for transformation, although they may be part of the political struggle. Dreams also belong to those who dream them, and will therefore be part of differing ideological hopes and expectations, looking at different problems and hoping for different solutions. Engaging with the various authors of these books may start to give differing perspectives to re-view Freire and find ways to move from indignation to political change.

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