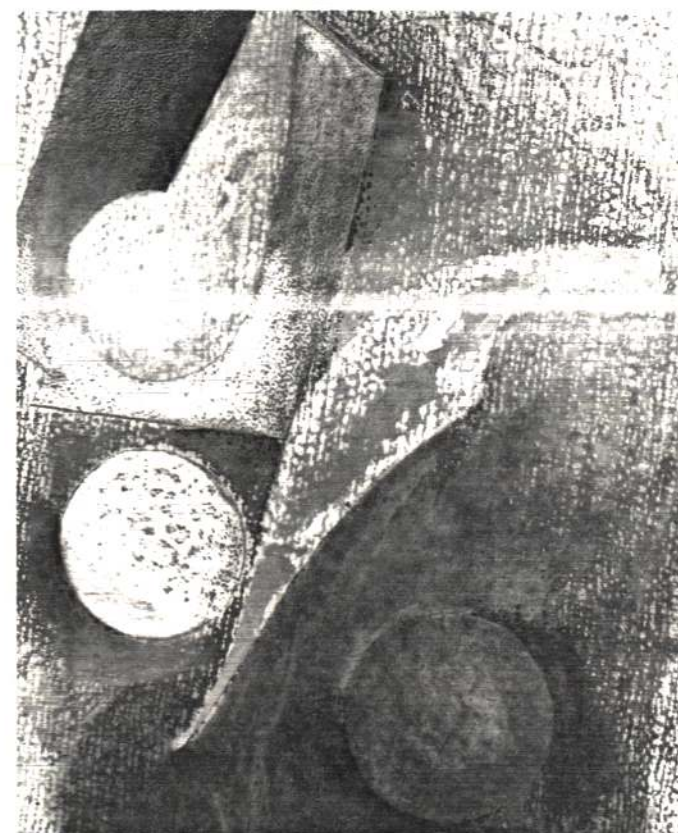


THE TEXTS OF PAULO FREIRE

PAUL V. TAYLOR



THE TEXTS OF PAULO FREIRE

Paulo Freire can be numbered among the few, great educators this century. His classroom is the world of the oppressed: his subject is the literacy of liberation.

This volume provides a (re)introduction to Freire. The first part is a fresh, biographical sketch of his life, the context within which he worked and the texts which he has produced. The second part uncovers the genius of his eclecticism and discovers that, contrary to the myth, his revolutionary method is more a radical reinvention of classical pedagogy.

This sets the scene for a review and questioning of Freire's method and of his philosophy of contradiction. There is then a critical examination of his view of literacy through a close reading of the teaching material on which his successful method is based.

The concluding section attempts to reconstruct a practice of literacy, illustrating the importance of Freire's pedagogy of questioning for all those who are working in the field of literacy today.

Paul V. Taylor has for many years used Freire's method and philosophy in community work and community education and in international development programmes. He is currently a Lecturer in Community Education at the University of Tours, France. His fieldwork and research is centred on non-formal education and adult literacy.

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The texts of Paulo Freire

PAUL V. TAYLOR

Aos Professores

Paulo e Ana Maria,
nossa gratidão pelo
esforço que tornou
possível o Seminário
"The Educational
Theory of Paulo Freire."

Com carinho e admiração,

Deixe

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Note on language and sexism

It is regrettable that so much of the vigour and commitment of those who write and teach against oppression is vitiated by sexist language. Sadly, if we construct the struggle for freedom as an engagement for 'man's liberation', we may be contributing to the suppression, invisibility or powerlessness of women. We can no longer inhabit a world where 'men are oppressed' and where we try to educate people that a man can 'liberate himself' and can achieve 'his ontological vocation through his own efforts'.

I have discussed this problem of sexist language in my correspondence with Professor Freire. He has indeed confirmed that it was certainly not his intention to cause offence by the apparently sexist translations of his work, and he agreed wholeheartedly that such 'old forms of writing' should be avoided.

Professor Freire willingly agreed that I should retranslate his early works, avoiding sexist language and in keeping with his own efforts, since 1975, to find more acceptable linguistic expressions. This I have tried to do where I have had the original text to hand. In other cases, I have reworked or reworded the available translations.

Equally, I have rephrased other texts used in this study, albeit without permission. I have tended to use *person* or *humankind*, *she/he* and *their*, but I have also circumvented the linguistic problems of certain texts by using the formula of *we*, *us*, and *our*. The essential meaning of the texts has not been altered, but there may be a nuance of direct, personal expression which is more evident here than in the original sources.

The task of trying to create a discourse on liberating education that is anti-sexist has been difficult. It is hoped that any strain experienced by the reader because of unfamiliar linguistic forms will be tolerated in the light of my underlying intention to engage all those who wish, as Subjects, to enter an authentic and authenticating dialogue.

Acknowledgements

Many people have contributed to the constructive dialogue on which this book is based. I am grateful to my students and colleagues at De Montfort University, Leicester and at the Université de Tours who have helped me to convert theory into practice. I would particularly like to thank Theresa Purcell, Biant Suwali Singh, Elke Mathes and Numa Murard for their comments, criticisms and constant encouragement.

In large part, this book could not have been completed without the counsel and help of Keith Hoskin, at Warwick University whose insights into the power of literacy I have relished, just as I have enjoyed his enthusiasm for the debate. In addition, I have had the enormous advantage of working with a careful and supportive publisher whose efficiency and guidance I have greatly appreciated.

We have tried to ensure that all our responsibilities towards other copyrights have been honoured. The pictures of the codified themes which I have used here have been circulating in various 'Freirean' groups and courses for many years. As I am uncertain of the source of the pictures in my possession, I have taken the liberty of referring the reader to the most accessible sources: Freire's *Education: the Practice of Freedom* (1976) and Brown's *Literacy in Thirty Hours* (1974). Despite the demise of the Writers and Readers Co-operative, who held the copyright of both these editions, every possible attempt has been made to seek the permission of previous copyright holders on whose amicable consideration and understanding I hope I can rely.

Finally, my love and fullest thanks go to the family, Sally, Luke and Ruth who have supported me in every possible way through the highs and the lows of researching and writing.

My thanks to these special people does not implicate them in the faults and shortcomings of the book. Despite all, should the book fail in any way to meet the ideals of engaging in real dialogue, the responsibility will be wholly mine.

Introduction: The textualizing and contextualizing of Freire

Paulo Freire, educator, philosopher and political activator, has the capacity to excite and frustrate friends and critics alike. He is not, apparently, a man about whom one remains neutral. With almost cultic status, he has been called the greatest living educator, a master and teacher, first among a dying class of modern revolutionaries who fight for social justice and transformation. His pedagogy is epoch making: he is a legend in his own time.¹

But is he a living legend, still relevant today? For some he represents the period of youth, idealism and enthusiasm which was fashionable in the late 1960s and early 1970s but which since has been tainted with disillusion and middle age. For others his philosophy was and is much more than a passing, opportunist discourse on liberating education. It has provided the basis for radical experimentation in education and for asserting that the kind of dialogic education which Freire proposed is the only viable means, other than that of the bullet and the bomb, for attaining social change and freedom.

The two ideas of education and freedom have always been intertwined: 'As an educator, Freire is mainly concerned with the educational means of freeing people from the bondage of the culture of silence' (Reimer 1970: 69). This view is illustrated by the report that

The direct outcome of his work in Brazil and Chile has been that various groups of oppressed people, who have lived for years in a world where they have been imprisoned by mental and physical poverty, now have a new hope, a renewed desire to live a life as full human beings, a belief that they can affect their own destinies and a desire to become educated. He has provided them with the tools to liberate and educate themselves. (Haviland 1973: 281)

Yet is this, was this ever, really the case? In what sense can education be linked

causally to the complex processes of liberation? Does education combat 'mental poverty' as it might do 'physical poverty', even supposing that the former denotes a meaningful, social or individual deprivation? One response frequently offered is that the so-called Freirean method is not primarily concerned with education but with a much greater human need, namely the development of a just society.

This may sound a grandiose claim, but it is one that underlies the suggestion made by many commentators that the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, for example, should not be read as a 'revolutionary pedagogy' but as a 'pedagogy for revolution' (Harman 1971).

What is surprising is that there should be need at all for any discussion about the central tenet of Freire's philosophy. But discussion there certainly is. There is no shortage of critics who blame Freire himself for this lack of clarity and for creating a magma of texts, analyses and reflections beneath the apparently solid crust of his literacy method. They point to the contorted manner of his writing; his lack of human experience; his circular logic and confusing repetitiveness. He is obscurantist, too mystifying, too abstract, too psychological, too utopian. His method requires a high level of social manipulation and can be used equally to domesticate as to liberate.²

It is these contiguous elements of confusion, criticism, contradiction and commendation that make any study of Freire fascinating but difficult. Yet we cannot allow his appeal: 'Many people say I am a contradictory man, and I say I have the right to be contradictory. Let me be in peace with my contradictions' (1979: 11). This may have been a felt need on his part, but it is inconsistent with that process of conscientization in which he otherwise actively encourages people to 'refuse to be inactive readers and to become agents of their own learning' (1976c). Dialogic education must also be dialectic education, and we have to reject the homogenization of knowledge and seek to 'problematize', to bring into question what is given by exploiting the contradictions, by finding those *contra-dicta* that mean that something can be 'said against' the *status quo*.

In refusing Freire his contradictions, however, we are not simply attempting to rationalize his system. We cannot demythologize Freire by imposing an illusion of coherence on his inconsistencies. The critical reader is not condemned to find a coherent Freire inside the disparate texts which are available. On the one hand, there is a danger in any review of ideas, particularly when the period under review spans half a century, of making earlier texts anachronistic by imposing on them the author's later understandings. On the other hand, there is the temptation to 'read between the lines' and so find or implant that inner thread of consistency and logic which the reader thinks she or he has perceived.³ We may have to accept as inevitable, even desirable, that a method founded on the principles of dialogue should be exposed by the evidence of incomplete premises and even downright contradiction.

A chronology of ideas will take account of the fact that key terms and core principles may have changed and developed with time. The reader, in that case, can fall back only upon the internal evidence of a date-marked text to

speculate on what the author was trying to say at that time. Some of those ideas will be situation specific (for example, Freire's work in 1961-3, or his activities in Guinea-Bissau) so that there may be corroborating evidence of other external texts or con-texts which 'explain' the texts.

With Freire, this textualizing is no easy task. His sincerity is not in doubt; not even a casual reader could miss the passion and strength of this commitment. The difficulties lie rather in establishing a proper image of the man himself and a clear catalogue of his work. What do we know of Freire's life, what has he said and written, in what context and to whom was he speaking and writing?

It is important to note that there is as yet no accredited biography of Freire. I have formed only an incomplete jigsaw picture, using pieces gleaned from his writings and interviews and from people who knew him. Although he often asserts that 'any statement on education implies a statement about a person's relationship with the world', he has been less than expansive in dealing with his own biography.

Here I have preferred to use the term 'bio-text' rather than biography. First, because Freire has always insisted on writing his own life in his own script. The kind of popular biography that many seek, he would regard as necrophilic: it would be a 'treacherous memorial because it is logical and necessarily centripetal, and that means life-denying' (Sturrock 1974).

Second, 'bio-text' draws attention to the fact that this study is a *reading* of Freire, in the fullest sense of the word. It is an attempt to read what he has written and to read his world, to understand what he has done and how he has done it, allowing actions to speak at least as loudly as words. Biography is strictly a writing of a life: bio-text reads a life, critically always, but with humility, enabling us to analyse the content of the text, 'keeping in mind what comes before and after it, in order not to betray the author's total thinking' (1985a: 3).

We shall therefore be able to feel how the centrifugal force of Freire's pedagogy flies outwards in search of dialogue and the possibility of change, how he harnesses Aristotle's dictum that each person is capable of being 'other' to a method that is more focused on what we can become than on what we are. However, reading Freire is also a process of listening to Freire for, ever provincial despite his international acclaim, he often prefers to talk his 'texts' rather than write them.

He has always admitted that he is 'more used to talking than to writing' (1975d), but he values this in a very positive way. For him, speaking, even with a provincial accent, is the prerequisite of literacy. His method demands that one learns to speak before one can write and read, not least because speaking is the essential mode of dialogue: 'In the last analysis, you are recreating yourself in dialogue to a greater extent than when you are solitarily writing, seated in your office, or in a small library' (1987a).

His preference for speaking a text, rather than writing a text, is marked in the reprint of dialogues and conversations (1985a), in his 'talked book' with Shor (1987a), in the further dialogues and reflections with Macedo (1987b), in *Learning to Question* with Faundez (1989), and in his collection of interviews and discussions (1991). This raises the technical question of the authorship and

ownership of the text: whose text are we actually reading? The fact that a 'book' is largely spoken, makes the writer more a dictator, and it takes less than a Derridean twist of language to expose the relationship between power and knowledge which that evokes.

To whom, then, belongs the 'author-ship', the author-ity, of Freire's books? McLaren (1988) suggests, for example, that

Macedo brings a complementary and critical voice both to the theoretical and the practical aspects of Freirean pedagogy. He helps to clarify some of Freire's positions on the pedagogical implications and applications of his work. (McLaren 1988: 219)

It is perhaps significant that Freire's early work was 'authored' alone (*Education as the Practice of Freedom*, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and *Letters to Guinea Bissau*), while nearly all his work published since his return to Brazil is 'co-authored' (with Guimaraes, 1983b; with Betto, 1985b; with Shor, 1987a; with Macedo, 1987b; and with Faundez, 1989).

Is it possible now to hear the voice of Freire without listening also to his acolytes? When he works and reworks the core of his ideas and publications, often through dialogue and discussion, who is the real author: Freire when he answers a particular question or his interviewer for drawing him out or leading him on? We might even ask: Is Freire's pedagogy the work of one man, or does it now represent a 'school of thought' in which Freire is but the principal partner? That is a problem which we shall have to consider, but it is not the only one if we want to trace the development of his ideas. Somehow, we shall need to establish a proper chronology of his 'grapho-texts', that is, all that he has actually written and published. Again I prefer the term 'grapho-texts' to that of 'bibliography' because it can include, with the long list of books, articles and interviews, recorded speeches, transcripts of conferences, reviews in journals, notes and letters, while stressing the role of the author as a writer, as someone who is in the process of writing a word and a world.

Freire's work, which has been published in seventeen languages, appears, in the main, in Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and German. Not only does that create a mixed vocabulary (for example: *Educação*, *Educación*, *Education*; *Conscientização*, *Conscientización*, *Conscientization*; *Culture Circle*, *Circulo de Cultura*) where the apparently similar words are nuanced and do not necessarily mean the same, but also it frequently causes his work to suffer either from cross-translation (for example, does 'Bewußtseinsbildung' convey the meaning of 'education for critical consciousness'?) or from repeated publication, or from both.

Some work has even been translated back into Portuguese by Freire: 'My best writing on the "culture of silence" is the Portuguese edition of *Education as the Practice of Freedom* of which I have lost the original and so had to translate it back from the English edition' (Costigan 1983). Some has been cross-translated: one finds, for example, that the article 'Conscientization and Liberation' which appeared in *Communio Viatorum* is a 1974 English translation of a Spanish version of a discussion originally conducted in Portuguese.

Even material in the same language can appear at first glance to be two

different texts but which, in the event, prove to be the same substantive material translated by different people with differing perspectives. For example, 'Notes on Humanisation and its Educational Implications' from the seminar *Tomorrow Began Yesterday* (Rome, November 1970) was translated from the Portuguese original by Louise Bigwood. This was retranslated by Donaldo Macedo in Freire (1985a: 111-19) as 'Humanistic Education' but with an appreciable difference of emphasis and of interpretation.

Finally, editorial presentation can result in noticeable differences even between two translations of major texts. One of the most significant examples is that of the English and French versions of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. A number of paragraphs of the original Portuguese do not appear in the same place in either of the two translations. Critically, the English version sometimes includes quotations in the body of the text, where the French uses footnotes. Equally, where the English merely cites the author, the French text often provides a detailed reference with the title, date and page. A comparison of the three texts clearly shows how the editor has become a co-author.

In referring the reader constantly back to the text, I have quoted the most accessible versions. The reader will therefore need to note that the date given for the reference is often a poor guide to the date when the work was actually written. Throughout this book, I have given references to Freire's own work simply by date, indicating where appropriate a particular page reference. References to other authors are clearly indicated with the name of the author.

These difficulties in establishing the authentic texts of Freire's works serve to provide an important caveat. It needs to be noted that the use of phrases like 'Freire's philosophy' or 'the Freirean method' are somewhat misleading. They should be better seen as a shorthand, a way of referring to what is a complex package of ideas and techniques the authorship of which is not always clear. On the contrary, what becomes increasingly obvious to the reader of Freire is that his words are not only his own. He is highly eclectic:

He has reached out to the thought and experience of those in many different situations and of diverse philosophical positions: in his words, to 'Sartre, Mounier, Eric Fromm and Louis Althusser, Ortega y Gasset and Mao, Martin Luther King and Che Guevara, Unamuno and Marcuse'. (Shaul 1982: 10)

The list is impressive, but again misleading. Nowhere in his writing does Freire make an explicit reference to Unamuno, while two of the most important influences on him, Karel Kosik and Lucien Febvre, are not mentioned here. Of course it is not always necessary to seek 'cause and effect' in the inter-textuality of two or more authors, so that one can clearly be seen to have influenced the other. Although Unamuno, in his *The Tragic Sense of Life* provides a framework of ideas and understandings that greatly illumine the reasoning and culture of Freire (in that it is obviously Catholic, Aristotelian and Manichean, where the boundaries and causes of pain and loving are often intertwined), what we find is more an affinity of ideas and interpretation than a direct influence. Perhaps what Freire found most in Unamuno, as in many

other authors, was the sympathetic echo of his own voice, and therefore he did not feel the need to acknowledge that by direct quotation.

What this degree of eclecticism means is that we cannot find or study Freire without also exploring the genealogy of his ideas. He is not a pedagogic Copernicus who, alone, found a new way of looking at the universe of education. He is rather a syndicate of theories and insights. His particular genius lies in his ability to construct out of all these disparate ingredients a recipe that produces both a philosophy and a practice of literacy. His achievement, more Newtonian than Copernican, was to analyse the gravitational pull between power and literacy and to suggest that it would be possible to create a new dynamic of educating. This would create a changed interaction, the process of which is dialogue (speaking the word) and the product of which is liberation (writing and righting the world).

The 'reading' of Freire therefore requires a triple redaction: the auto-text or bio-text which interlinks biographical details; the grapho-text, penned or dictated, of his books, articles and interviews; and the altero-text or con-text which is supplied by other co-'writers', the acknowledged or unacknowledged sources on which he relied, and the historical circumstances through which he lived. This is an extremely complex process. Leach (1982) suggests that

The pattern of his work, which can be traced through from the early essays to *Pedagogy in Process*, contains a central core of beliefs or 'principles'. In each successive work these fundamental principles are repeatedly restated in different ways. (Leach 1982: 185)

None the less, Freire's work is not neatly stratified: there is no simple, evolutionary logic that provides the infrastructure to his life and works. What we are required to do is to interweave this triple helix of textuality (bio-, grapho-, and altero-) into a critical study that will expose the coherence of Freire's insight and the warp of contradiction which his texts expose. We shall need to consider the enigma posed by Freire: that an upper-class Brazilian lawyer should become the pedagogue of the oppressed masses, not just in his own country but throughout the Third and First Worlds; that his successful literacy method is based on flawed theorizing; that Dialogic Education may only be a benign form of Banking Education; that this very South American approach to education can be placed firmly within mainstream European traditions; and that, despite all the contradictions and inadequacies, Freire offers a unique insight into the way Literacy presents and manages the fundamental relationship of Power and Knowledge.

'Reflection', says Freire (1973b: 6), 'is only legitimate when it sends us back to the concrete context where it seeks to clarify the facts'. That is why he was so committed to the deconstructive methodology of *Codification* and *Decodification* which are the strategies by which he seeks to conscientize and to achieve that praxis which is based on naming, reflecting and acting. It is, therefore, wholly appropriate to attempt to place Freire in his own intellectual, political and social context, allowing him to speak for himself, to 'name his own world'. This demands, on the part of the reader or investigator, an ability to go beyond

philosophical voyeurism in search of a holistic archaeology to discover the personality and pedagogy of Freire, with all his complexities and contradictions.

Conventionally, a 'history of ideas' tries to understand its Subject/subject by identifying with the person and their way of thinking, to come inside that person and so explain their view of the world.⁴ However, this essentially *emic* perspective tends to provide a lens that either magnifies or reduces the subject. This distortion, as Brookfield (1984: 6) indicates, arises because the study of learning and pedagogy does not yield easily, if at all, to the discipline or methodology of scientific research.

What is therefore needed as a methodology is the prism of an *etic* analysis which will ensure a more objective view of the subject by exposing its component parts but without destroying its integrality. First, the value of this approach is that it enables me, the reader, to engage in a cross-cultural discussion with Freire, given that we are not of the same age, culture or language background. Second, an *etic* analysis allows me to view Freire from the outside, thus finding his relevance to me and to education in a non-Third World, non-South American environment. Third, it helps me to deal with contradiction and inconsistency, whereas an *emic* view would seek the integration of all the disparate elements, biographic, intellectual and historical into some coherent whole. An *etic* methodology provides a legitimate entrée into the hyper-complexity of Freire's thinking and practice. It does so because it can accept that this is not an exhaustive study of the total Freire but rather a partial (in both senses), empathetic but critical rewriting of an extra-ordinary pedagogy.⁵

Chapter 1 concentrates on Freire's bio-text and on some of his grapho-texts. It is not intended as an intellectual biography, an historical review of the development of his ideas but rather as a biography of an intellectual. It serves, for the reader new to Freire, as an introduction to a very complex person who grew up in a world perhaps very distant from that of the reader. It gives some details of his early life, the context in which he developed his teaching method, his first steps into literacy and his progress on to the international, educational stage. Against the backdrop of the various texts which he wrote during this period and into the 1980s, for which a brief thumbnail sketch is given, the bio-text concludes with Freire's return to Brazil, his new life there and his return to his professional origins as director of his own literacy programme in his post as Secretary for Education in São Paulo.

Freire has only ever been truly Brazilian, spiritually and culturally. Chapter 2 takes that as given, but looks in detail at the evidence that Freire cannot be dismissed as some bizarre, South American educator who invented a high-speed method of teaching illiterate peasants to read. The conclusion is that Freire is, in reality, an educator within the mainstream of traditional, European pedagogy, who is fluent in applying Aristotle, modern Existentialism, Marxist Humanism, and all the liberalism of *éducation nouvelle* to a method which has a long pedigree in many, different social and labour reform movements.

Chapter 2, therefore, looks at this spider's web of influences, sources and

borrowings. It is less a detailed analysis of these diverse philosophies and traditions than an attempt to see Freire afresh through the perspective of these differing traditions. The reader can imagine a dialogue or 'talking book' between, for example, Freire and Aristotle, or Freinet, and can ask: What do they have in common? How would they understand each other? Would Freire make as much sense to Hegel, for example, as Hegel makes to Freire?

The extended essay on Dialogue and Conscientization in Chapter 3 continues this 'Pedagogy of Questioning'. It would have been easy just to describe Freire's understanding of these two key ideas, but I have preferred to link the main elements together by 'problematizing' them, offering some of the questions which have arisen in my use of Freire or in student discussion groups. I am not offering easy, prepackaged solutions: the debate is too important and too interesting for that. Ideally, the reader will be encouraged to go back to the Texts, to read and reread Freire and so formulate his or her own response. One of the principles of Freirean pedagogy is that the reader should not enthusiastically agree with what an author says, nor dismiss an argument out of hand, without actively rewriting his or her own interpretation of the original Texts. To that end, and so that the reader can read Freire himself in parallel, I have tried to give sufficient references to the essential source material without, it is to be hoped, being too disjointed or pedantic.

Chapters 4 and 5 constitute the second stage of Freire's method, the decodifications. First, I have considered certain questions which arise from Freire's theory of linguistics and communication, in particular, drawing attention to his Nominalism and exploring whether there is a fundamental contradiction between the use of this syllabic parsing of key nouns and the aims of dialogue and what Freire calls 'annunciation'.

Second, I have made a detailed textual analysis of the content of Freire's teaching material, the generative themes and codified situations which he published in *Education: The Practice of Freedom*. I have tried to expose and then exploit the 'Pedagogy of Contradiction' which is implicit in Freire's own account of these codifications. It is a critical reading that tries to cut through the language of mysticism and idealism in which Freire so often expresses himself. I have tried to look objectively, as an educational agnostic, at this sequence of learning and teaching, in order to appreciate the consequences, for better or for worse, of Freire's remarkably *bibliocentric* pedagogy.

The final chapter turns this last point again into a question. If Literacy is not about reading, what is it about? The discussion explores the power of Literacy in the light of the literacy or literateness of Power. Using the framework provided by Freire, we can then look at the underlying definition of literacy and why it is so often valued only because it is patriarchal and functional. That question is essential for, without an answer, a literacy of liberation is a contradiction in terms. It is a discussion which reflects the third stage of Freire's method: reflection turning to action. What does this pedagogy help us to do or to see which we could not do and could not see before?

The words *pedagogy* or *pedagogue* may sound strange, even pretentious, to some English speakers, but I have used them throughout the book, often in

preference to *educator* or *teacher*. First, because they are the terms that Freire himself uses, they mark off an approach to teaching and learning which is quite particularly identified with him. Second, although the terms can be used quite easily in most other European languages, I wanted to stress their classical connotation. Traditionally, the pedagogue was the servant who accompanied the learner to his or her place of learning. It is a wonderful image with which to invert, or subvert, the image of the teacher in the Banking System of education where it is the teacher who leads and the learner who follows, the teacher who controls, who imposes, who is superior in every way to the learner. The essential challenge to the Freirean educator is to become a companion to the learner, to 'get alongside' them, to encourage, to help them to be creators and not consumers of their own learning: to be, in short, a pedagogue.

The *pedagogy of the oppressed* is not a pedagogy for the oppressed or simply with the oppressed. It is a pedagogy that belongs to the oppressed: it is *The Oppressed's Pedagogy*. The title of Freire's most famous book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, is grammatically both a subjective and an objective genitive. However, for the oppressed's pedagogues, there is no confusion. One cannot be a pedagogue of the oppressed and a pedagogue of the Banking System at one and the same time.

There is no safe haven of neutrality in pedagogy. I discovered that through hard experience the first time I used Freire's method. I was working in the mid-1970s in French West Africa as a fieldworker and as a consultant to a number of aid agencies – the International Red Cross, The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the American Lutheran Church. The aim was to negotiate with the Tuareg and Bororo nomads of the Sahel ways in which they could 'break out of the drought' which had devastated the region over several years, combat the cyclical precariousness of their life and radically alter a situation in which they were 'objects' of oppression. The Sahel is the fringe, the margins of the desert. It is a word that both represents a geographic fact and provides a powerfully evocative symbol of social marginalization and cultural domination.

In researching the urgent vocabulary of those communities, in identifying with them the generative themes which were then discussed in small groups, from which came proposals for action, community development and change, I experienced Freire's method in action. I know that it works.

What did not work for me was the discovery, naive perhaps, that the politics of aid is not interested in independent, critically aware 'recipients'. I lived through exactly what Freire analyses with such jarring exactitude in *Extension or Communication*: the educator has become (or always was) an agent of cultural invasion and political extensionism. I learnt, as Freire had, that Memmi's *Portrait of the Colonizer* could have been written just for me.

I had first read *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1974, after a fortuitous encounter with Bill Cave, a Visiting Professor at Edinburgh who had come from Michigan State University. I still remember the discussion (good pedagogues have that kind of effect) when he asked, 'Have you read Freire . . . ?' I hadn't, but I recall the excitement, the frustration, the completely destabilizing impact of that first reading. It is the same today: each time I read Freire, I react at the extremes.

Sometimes, I think I get an insight, a glimpse of what he is really trying to say, and it is profound, exact, stimulating and genuine. Other times, I am submerged under mystical nuances, Easter experiences, all kinds of -izations, and a sense of unreality tinged with piety.

My experience in Africa left me knowing two Freires, and never the two did meet. One was theoretical and philosophical, the other was practical and effective. This remained so until the mid-1980s when several circumstances converged to change that. The first was the British publication of *Pedagogy in Process*, Freire's work in Guinea-Bissau. There seemed here to be a greater confidence in his thinking, a sharper analysis of social or socialist pedagogy, and a real effort to confront the question of cultural invasion. I felt encouraged to reread and rediscover the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

The second 'moment of learning' came about because I was responsible, at Leicester Polytechnic where I was a tutor on the Youth and Community Development Course, for a module on 'Community Education and Non-Formal Education'. Obviously the content of the course was going to treat Freire's philosophy and techniques of creating learning, but we were enabled, through challenging discussion in the group, to experiment with putting theory into practice, effectively creating our own Cultural Circle. At the beginning, as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) recalls of her own experience, this 'did not feel empowering'. Yet, gradually, as we, and the Institution, grew more accustomed to the dialogue, we came to realize its possibilities. Some people, says Alinsky (1973), believe it when they see it: others see it only when they believe it.

I think we came to believe that liberating education was possible and we began to look again at our field practice as educators and community workers. We were greatly helped by a visit to the ever inspiring *Adult Learning Project* in Edinburgh,⁶ and other visits, other researchings and many discussions confirmed our view that, despite the difficulties of the text, despite the contradictions, Freire's approach made possible genuine personal learning and authentic community work. As a teacher, it was a great privilege for me to be associated with this *crew* or crew of 1985-7 and this book is, in many ways, the fruits of their risks, their commitment and their discoveries.

It was then Augusto Boal who opened up new insights for me into the working of Freire's mind and method. His *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1980a) moves Freire out of the classroom and into the theatre of life. It is a new way of looking at the world: that is the root of the word *theatros* – a place for viewing, for observing.⁷ But the techniques of theatre, the importance of declaiming and communicating, the playing of roles, the imagination to be other, the literacies of culture other than those which are bibliocentric, all contributed to enlarging my understanding of pedagogy. It is not just a method of teaching or a way of learning: it is a way of life. It was only when I had found that out for myself, did I find it written large across every page in Freire.

Now that I find myself in the very non-Freirean world of French education which is hyper-Cartesian in Thought and ultra-hierarchical in Form, I am trying to find the confidence to open up my classroom again to let in Boal's invisible theatre. I understand better now what Freire means when he says that

pedagogy has to be reinvented, restlessly, earnestly. It is a sad compliment to the efficacy of this refined Banking Education that none of Freire's major works is currently available in French. Freire is dismissed, it seems, because he has no theoretical underpinning, because he is Brazilian, because in France there is social inequality but not oppression. So my students and colleagues, who have not been educated to imagine a pedagogy of liberation, ask: But who is Freire? What does he stand for? Does it make sense?

Yes, it does, that is if you understand how the same person can receive the Unesco Prize for Peace Education, as Freire did in 1986, and be the author of one of the most subversive and revolutionisable pedagogies of modern times. His preferred epitaph is: 'Paulo Freire was a man who loved, who could not conceive of life or human existence without love and without the quest for knowledge. Paulo Freire lived, loved and tried to understand' (1991: 128).

That epitaph he wrote himself, but it is not his last word. It does, however, serve as a summary of all the other Texts that he has written, spoken and lived. He is that kind of person because he is that kind of pedagogue.

A biographical sketch

Introduction

The life and work of Paulo Freire has many phases and many facets as befits a man who has always been physically and mentally 'in transit'. He has lived through anonymity and fame in Brazil, acclamation and success in the wider world of Africa and Europe, and is now back in South America, living perhaps more on remembrances and mature reflection rather than on the impulsiveness and vigour of the creativity which drove him in the early years.

He was born into a comfortable, middle-class family – an unlikely setting, culturally, economically and socially, for someone who was to become one of the great champions of the oppressed poor. Indeed, even up to the time when he started work as a trade union lawyer, Freire's only exposure to the working and the non-working classes had been when the family suffered severe, but temporary, financial difficulties during the Depression.

That setback almost prejudiced his schooling. Although he could read before he went to school, poverty or hunger, or lack of application, caused him to repeat two years of education, resulting in a delayed entry into university. But when the family was financially and socially back on course, it went without question that Freire should go to university to study Law. What is interesting, however, is that the local university was in many ways a French academic institution. The Brazilian tertiary system of education, in its choice of disciplines and in its structuring of examinations and degrees, had been modelled on that of the French. The content and style of courses had been strongly influenced by the core group of French intellectuals who were a major influence in the development and expansion of the universities in Brazil and who enabled the Faculty of Social Science, which included Law, to be the elite cornerstone of that expansion.¹ It was through the resources of their libraries

and teaching that Freire was introduced to the works of Althusser, Foucault, Fromm, Lévi-Strauss, Maritain, Mounier and Sartre, all of whom were to have such a formative influence on the development of his pedagogy.

The groves of academe clearly suited Freire the intellectual, but it gave him little sense of direction as he left university. He was quickly a lawyer, high school teacher of Portuguese, and then adult educator, married but unsure whether his career options would be curtailed by family responsibility.

Looking back, one has the impression that those experiences between 1944 and 1959, about which little has ever been said, are almost 'lost years' for Freire. In the event, a career was thrust upon him. By the genius of fate, Freire was the right man in the right place at the right time, qualified by the rare mix of his experiences and skills to accept the invitation to direct the government's literacy programme in the North-east State, Brazil.

From there, the details of his life are better known. Regional success led to national recognition as his programme expanded. As educator and government consultant, he created the base for radical reform in both the education and the electoral systems. It was this success that first led to his downfall and exile in 1964, and then later to his rehabilitation as an international figure. He worked first in Chile, next in Harvard, and then in Geneva as consultant to the World Council of Churches, through a period of upheaval and transition, from 1964 to 1970, that produced his most important writings.

For some, this represents the height of his career. He was recognized world-wide, speaking at conferences and maintaining consultancies throughout the Third and the First World, a government adviser and fêted academic. He was one of the central figures of the 1970s.

This is still how Freire is most widely remembered, but he is, in fact, an exile returned. In June 1980 he left Geneva to take up a post at the Catholic University of São Paulo. He returned to his two confirmed loves: Brazil and teaching. Except for a short but effective sortie into local politics as Secretary for Education (1989–91) in the city of São Paulo, he has remained a university professor, continuing to write and to lecture in Brazil and on the international circuit.

None the less, a criticism which Youngman (1986: 152) made in the mid-1980s, that Freire has not produced a significant new work on his pedagogy and practice, is all the more true in the early 1990s. True, that is, only if we are looking for the renovation of an idea which we feel is worn or unfashionable, or if we are insisting that ideas, somewhat like fashions, must change with the times. Freire himself says (1991: 118) that a writer is not obliged to dress up an idea just to be modern. We might also have to allow for the fact that Freire, at the age of 72, can simply point to the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and argue that it is still as valid now, although it has become a 'classic text' as it was when it was first 'revolutionary' and just published.²

There is no doubt that Freire's work is not finished. He has remarried and has resigned from his local government post. The renewed experience of literacy teaching and management will most certainly result in a new book in the near future. How different might that be from his early work? Has Freire yet to write the definitive version of his pedagogy? To answer that and, at the same time, to

identify the main elements of his philosophy and educational practice, we need to review his bio-text in more detail and so follow the life cycle of a complex idea and of an even more complex personality.

Early life

Paulo Freire was born in Recife, North-east Brazil, on 19 September 1921. He was one of several children in an established middle-class family which, according to Freire's later reflection, was but average for Recife at the time. What did he mean by that? His description of 'the average house in Recife where I was born' is instructive (1987b: 30): it was an old house, with bedrooms, an attic, hall, terrace and back yard, with the family's cats, father's dog, and grandmother's fat chickens, all surrounded by roses, jasmine and mango trees in a street where the lamplighter passed to light the elegant gas lamps each evening.

His parents were bourgeois and of liberal attitudes (Jerez and Hernandez-Pico 1971: 498). The father, Joaquim Temistocles, held an officer's post in the military police, and he tolerated, rather than approved of, the fact that Edeltrudis, his wife, held strongly Catholic convictions. He himself frequented a local spiritualist circle (Gerhardt 1979: 40).

Joaquim Freire was concerned that his son should have a good education. Freire (1978: 132) called his father his 'first teacher', remembering how he wrote words with a stick in the sand in the shade of a wonderful mango tree in the back yard and how he helped his children to make new words out of the parsed syllables. The method Freire would use himself later with non-literate adults, but its efficacy was even then proven because, by the time he went to Eunice Vascancello's private school, the young Freire was already literate (1987b: 32).

That early progress, however, was impeded by the severe financial reverses which the family suffered during the Great Depression of 1928–32. Freire experienced real hunger, a fact by which he explained his poor showing at school. Twice he had to retake a complete school year (Collins 1977: 5), finally entering secondary school two years behind his age group. A number of informed commentators, notably O'Neill (1973) and Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971), report that he was considered by some of his teachers to be mentally retarded.

'We shared the hunger', says Freire (Mackie 1980: 3), 'but not the class', an important distinction which Freire later recognized as one of the reasons which had enabled him to continue his schooling. His father had insisted, despite the setbacks, on keeping up the appearances of respectability. He continued to wear a tie, and he kept on the house in Recife, although the family moved briefly to Jaboatao. He dispensed with all non-essential furniture but not with the German piano (Jerez and Hernandez-Pico 1971). He died in 1934, fatigued prematurely perhaps by the stress of this period.

Freire was only 13: the loss of his father and the increased difficulties for the family proved a very traumatic experience. Despite his efforts and those of his

sister and elder brothers, Stella, Armando and Temistocles, the plight of the family did not improve. So Freire starting 'teaching', giving supplementary lessons in Portuguese to children of his own age at the private high school which he attended. He found it a gratifying experience, and decided then that his particular ambitions lay in becoming a teacher.

His tutoring was also some recompense to the high school for, after the death of his father and given the financial insecurity of the family, Freire was allowed by the director, Aluizo Aruajo, to have a free place at his school. Without this free place, Freire would probably never have completed his secondary schooling.

Success even to this level, and then a passage through university, was not intended, however, for all Edeltrudis's children. Even within the family, Freire was privileged: 'Because of my problems, the eldest in my family began to work and help our condition, and I began to eat more' (1987a: 29). He was, at the time, in the second or third year of high school so the improved financial position of the family was certainly a critical factor in his continuing through to his high school graduation-baccalaureate. 'To the extent I began to eat better, I began to understand better what I was reading'.

He entered Recife University to study Law and Philosophy but he also read Linguistics. It was a standard route for the intellectual middle classes (Gerhardt 1979: 42), and it gave Freire his first university degree. It was also the fruit of privilege which Freire later came to see as 'my university training – perhaps, to be more accurate, I should say my elitist university training', access to which had been facilitated by his class position (1978: 117).

In his detailed appraisal of Freire and of his early work, Mashayekh (1974) also formed the view that schooling in Recife was a privilege enjoyed only by the minority.

That Freire's mind and future vocation was shaped by the social situation into which he was born and in which he grew into manhood seems evident. It was this schooled minority which dominated the social and economic institutions of society and enjoyed the benefits they produced. The majority lived in circumstances of grinding poverty and oppression. They were to be seen in the streets and served in the shops and homes, but were not 'heard'. They lived in what Freire called a 'culture of silence', condemned to passivity. (Mashayekh 1974: 4)

Since those university days, Freire, mainly because of his education and class, has never been poor or unemployed. He has always been 'invited' to take up his various posts and has never had to look for work. Yet with the security of a job, a wife and family, even with house servants (1970: 10), he felt empowered to create a pedagogy of the oppressed. The contradiction between the radical, subversive nature of this approach to education and the apparent conformity and ordinariness of his early life style and experience is blatant. It seems that the more one knows of the situation and values of his childhood and adolescence the more the choice and motivations of his first steps into radical literacy are unexpected, even out of character. The mismatch is certainly not easy to explain, particularly because a simply chronological or historical

bio-text often allows hindsight to impose a logic and orderliness on events which do not reflect the reality of the situation at the time. Often, too, memory sees certain facts with more coherence and certainly with more charity than the lived experience might merit. Therefore, to get at the facts, but before we ask further questions of Freire himself, we need to consider the personal and cultural context in which this radical move into pedagogy was possible.

North-east Brazil

North-east Brazil is 'one enormous region of a country, as large as a continent, one of the most backward areas in the country, marked by truly appalling social conditions – 60,000 square miles of suffering'. Here, in *Death in the North-east*, first published just before the coup in 1964, Josué de Castro is writing passionately about the deprivation of his home region. In his earlier work, *The Geography of Hunger* (1952), he notes that the area was celebrated only for 'the misery of the great majority of its inhabitants, for its periodic, natural catastrophes and for a system of land ownership which was incredibly unjust'. A comparable historical and sociological analysis, which Freire used and which later provided him with one of his key images of oppression – the *senhor de engenho*: the mill owner – is equally forcefully written in Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves*.³ This was the study which scandalized many at the time of its first publication in 1933 precisely because it attempted to unmask the complex realities which lay behind the eclectic, individual and collective Brazilian national identity. It identifies the fusion of African cults and Indian customs with Roman Catholicism, and exposes a sexually permissive but sexist culture founded on patriarchy, slavery and class oppression. It outlines the sequences of colonial and cultural invasions which help to explain the structures of social and political domination, but it also presents the need for agrarian reform to combat widespread poverty and exploitation.

Freire (1987a: 20) admits that Freyre 'the great sociologist and anthropologist who writes so well was an important, saving influence' but it does not seem that this helped him to see any more clearly the blatant inequalities in society or the privileged position of his own family. On the contrary, although as a teacher of Portuguese Freire used *The Masters and the Slaves* with students, it was only to 'point out syntactical aspects strictly linked to the good taste of their language' (1987b: 34). There is nothing to suggest that he had seen the contradiction between Lucien Febvre's stylish description of Recife, the Venice of the North, in the preface to Freyre's book, and the poverty and misery which Freyre and de Castro describe in such detail.

There is nothing to suggest either that he had any empathy for the content of one of Brazil's best-selling books ever, *Beyond All Pity* (de Jesus 1970). Written not in the smooth, classical prose of the academics but in the sharp, urgent language of the street, this is the deeply passionate diary of Carolina Maria de Jesus, a woman who lived in the *favelas* (slums) of São Paulo. It has a vital and shocking honesty: there is humour, violence, deep sadness, anger and an insuperable human spirit. It is a book of tears and hunger that clearly explains

the expression which Freire later made his own: *los marginados*, those who have been marginalized, those 'who don't have names'. Had his discourse on oppression been her discourse of the oppressed, Carolina Maria could have offered Freire an insight into a world which lay outside his own experience and both a first-hand description of the reality of poverty and oppression and a language to describe that reality which many people in Brazil would have recognized.

What indeed was the reality at that time? As a brief indicator, we are able to compare the North-east in 1960 and in 1970 – the decade which encompasses Freire's first literacy efforts in Latin America.

In their Pastoral Letter, *Eu Ouvi os Clamores do meu Povo* (I have heard the cries of my people), the Catholic Bishops of the North-east (1973) stated that

Data from the 1970 census revealed that only 3.3 per cent of the economically active population in the North-east earned more than 500 cruzeiros (\$83) per month, and only 0.86 per cent earned more than 1,000 cruzeiros (\$166). In Piauí and Maranhão, for an economically active population of 1,470,000 persons, only 955 earned more than 2,000 cruzeiros (\$333) per month.

Infant mortality in the North-east as a whole was 180 per 1,000 live births. In the capital, where medical assistance was concentrated, it was still 98 per 1,000. Of all deaths, 47 per cent occurred before 5 years of age.

Drummond (1975), who in 1972 was attempting to develop a nutritional education programme on Freirean lines, noted the evidence of poverty as a major factor in the serious problem of malnutrition:

Virtually all the children admitted to the São Luis hospital are under-nourished, and 3/5 of them have manifest signs of kwashiorkor, including bilateral oedema. (Drummond 1975: 1)

A decade earlier (in 1960) Tad Szulc, writing in the *New York Times*, explicitly criticized the United States for having done so little to help the area around Recife in peacetime, despite the fact that it was the support base for a string of guided missile tracking stations in the South Atlantic for the United States Air Force.

There are sections of the North-east where the annual income is about \$50. About 75 per cent of the population is illiterate. The average daily intake is 1,664 calories. Life expectancy is 28 years for men and 32 for women. Half the population dies before the age of 30. In two villages in the State of Piauí, taken at random, not a single baby lived beyond one year. (Szulc, quoted in de Castro 1969: 119)

These reports, from very differing sources, cover periods either side of the coup, yet they show very little change in the stark picture of poverty. None the less, many in Brazil, and certainly in Europe, saw this period as the time of Brazil's economic miracle. There was a marked upsurge of economic development which went even further than the already dramatic changes achieved in the earlier Kubitschek period.

His promised 'fifty years' progress in five' was very real. Skidmore (1967), using Celso Furtado's detailed study *Diagnosis of the Brazilian Crisis* (1965), notes that between 1956 and 1961, Brazil had witnessed the most extraordinary industrial expansion. Industrial production grew by 80 per cent, the steel industry by 100 per cent, mechanical industries by 125 per cent, electrical and communications industries by 380 per cent and transportation equipment industries by 600 per cent. The effective real rate of growth was 7 per cent per year, approximately three times that of the rest of Latin America. However, the rate of inflation had increased from 24 to 52 per cent between 1958 and 1959 and had risen to 70 per cent just before the coup in 1964 (Gerhardt 1979).

This darker side of this economic expansion was also seen when the results of the 1970 census were tabulated:

The share of the total national income of the lower 50% of the population decreased from 14.5% in 1960 to 13.9% in 1970. The lowest 10% of the population saw their share decrease from 1.9% in 1960 to 1.2% in 1970. The exclusion of the majority of wage earners from the windfall of economic growth, together with the high profits of an increasingly de-nationalized industrial sector, brought about the conditions for social movements of dissent and grass roots organisation. (Fernandes 1985: 81)

This was the context in which Freire was working in the mid-1960s: no doubt many saw his Literacy Programme as one of those social movements of discontent. Yet maybe Freire had only ever seen poverty from the exterior, from his 'average house'. The statistics dispute his assessment of what was *average*, and illustrate his position of privilege in those early years. Although he considered himself to have been poor, he was not forced into dissent by his own experience of that poverty and hunger.

My childhood was partly in Recife and then in Jaboatao. My family left Recife in order to survive the economic crisis of the Depression in the 1930s. A great moment of my life was the experience of hunger. I needed to eat more. Because my family lost its economic status. I was not only hungry but I also had very good friends both from the middle class and from the working class. Being friends with kids from the working class, I learned the difference of classes by seeing how their language, their clothing, their whole lives expressed the totality of the class separations in society. By falling into poverty, I learned from experience what social class meant. (1987a: 28)

Freire had fallen into poverty but had climbed out of it: he was never truly 'of the poor'. He encountered the dominated classes through this discovery of his own middle-classness and through the differences of language, clothes and life styles which separated him from the oppressed.

At the time, however, Freire was unaware of the advantages of his own social situation. He later admitted:

A critical view of my experience in Brazil requires an understanding of its context. My practice, while social, did not belong to me. Hence my

difficulty in understanding my experience . . . without comprehending the historical climate where it originally took place. (1985: 12)

Only with hindsight did he see himself as following unquestioningly the normal, educational paths appropriate to his class. This meant going to university and, in what Gerhardt (1979: 42) describes as the mainstream, Brazilian intellectual tradition, studying Law and Jurisprudence.

First steps into literacy

This difficulty which Freire has had in identifying and coming to terms with his past perhaps explains why, at this stage, biographical details remain vague and unexplored.

Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971: 499) suggest that, after university, Freire worked for several years as a legal assessor in the trade unions – *trabajo durante varios anos de asesor legal de los sindicatos obreros* – through which, indirectly, he became involved in education. Drummond (1975), on the contrary, prefers to see Freire as a pedagogue and less as a lawyer. She says that, having finished law school but after being presented with his first case and talking with the young dentist, Freire 'decided he was not meant to be a lawyer. He turned to the field of education' (Drummond 1975: 4). Both she and Brown (1974) then take up the story from 1959, the date of Freire's doctoral thesis *Educação e Atualidade Brasileira* at the University of Recife.

Both these biographical traditions, which are part of the 'Freirean mythology', gloss over the critical years of 1940–59. Little is known of this period in Freire's life other than some incidental details about his marriage and some generalized reflections on his increasing involvement in education. Only in his latest book, *Education in the City* (1991), has Freire attempted to fill in these lost years.

As he remembers it now, he had always wanted to be a teacher, but equally the family budget required him to work. So he started to 'teach' Portuguese (the emphasis is his, 1991: 52) shortly after he started high school, giving individual tuition to his fellow students. Later, he was actually employed in the same private high school: 'When I was a young man, I accepted a position as a high school teacher of the Portuguese language. Of course, at that time I taught youths whose families were very well-to-do' (1985a: 175).

At the same time, but for reasons which he recalls with no great clarity, Freire, still a teenager, was teaching in the slums and shanty towns of Recife (1991: 53). He does not explain why or how he came to be there, and he also chooses to ignore the fact that he was still at university and training to be a lawyer. What he does not ignore here is his meeting with his first wife, Elza.

If there is a key to understanding or explaining this period of his life, it may well lie in the importance of Elza Maia Costa Oliveira. Freire (1987a) records, with a vagueness that is instructive because it is typical of the way he often records his early life, that

At some point between 19 and 23 years of age, I was discovering teaching as my love. Also important at this moment, in my affective life, was when I

met Elza, who was my student, and then we got married. I was her private tutor. I prepared her for an exam to qualify for school principal. (1987a: 29)

In fact, Freire was 21 when they met, that is when Elza came to ask him for help to pass the competitive examination which she needed to advance her career. They married a year later (1991: 93).

Elza was a nursery school teacher, but Freire says elsewhere that 'it was Elza who led me to pedagogy' (1985a: 175) and he recognizes that 'she influenced me enormously'. Yet notwithstanding the more than standard acknowledgement of authors – 'Here I would like to express my gratitude to Elza, my wife, and first reader, for the understanding and encouragement which she has shown my work, which belongs to her as well' (1982: 19) there is no misunderstanding the relationship of patriarchy which is revealed in the statement: 'She was my student . . . I was her private tutor. I prepared her for an exam'.

Elza was to bear him three daughters and two sons (Collins 1977: 6), but Freire has spoken remarkably little about his family. One son, Joaquim, who went on to teach classical violin at the Fribourg Conservatoire, was with him in Geneva in 1976 (1989: 19), but little other reference is made to the family, to his own children or to his brothers and sisters. No account is offered, for example, about what happened to the family after his arrest, how the children left Brazil with him in 1964, how they managed the upheaval and stress of moving to Bolivia, then Chile, then to Cambridge, Massachusetts, before settling more permanently in the very non-American setting of Geneva.

Freire conveys this deep uncertainty, in part cultural and in part personal, about his role as father or husband. In a conversation with Macedo (1985a: 198) he admitted that 'As a young man, I thought that living and sleeping with a woman might interrupt my intellectual life. I found that my family did not interfere with my writing and my writing did not interfere with my love for my family.' It is almost as if the personal, family man is quite distinct from the professional persona, even in that public arena which he shared with his wife. Undoubtedly, he 'loved to love Elza' (1985a: 198) and was heartbroken after her death; *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* is eloquently dedicated to her memory. Yet, although Freire talks of 'later as we were teaching', describing 'that praxis which was ours in Brazil', there is no evidence that Elza was directly involved in his work in Brazil. On the other hand, he notes (1987b: 63) that 'since 1976, my wife Elza and I have tried to contribute to adult education in São Tomé and Príncipe', but the ensuing discourse continues emphatically in the first person: 'my practice renders me a colleague of the national people'.

Without the evidence of a detailed bio-text that would clarify the options and motivations of Freire's choice of career, an objective biographer of those days might be justified in saying simply that Freire was able to turn his initial interest in language and communication to his longer term, professional advantage. His move into education was pragmatic and opportunist: he never was, and has never professed to be, a Messianic figure who was somehow

'born' to save the oppressed masses. None the less, it is this very pragmatism that explains first why he might have wanted, consciously or not, to play down the elitist education which led him from private school to a lawyer's office, and second, why, at the height of his popularity and fame, he preferred to emphasize his pedagogical roots as a teacher and linguist.

It certainly was the case that, after passing his exams, Freire quickly abandoned law as a means of earning his living. However, his path from Portuguese to Literacy was due less to his own sense of vocation than to the guidance and motivation which he received from Elza. Although he may have tutored her, it was she who directed his path from 'teaching privately, in order to get some money, tutoring high school students or young people working in stores who wanted to learn grammar' (1987a: 27). He started teaching in a secondary school, working by intuition rather than by a clearly articulated pedagogy, and gradually he became more and more involved in teaching adults.

This was the seminal period of intense reading and study which justifies the much quoted references to Freire's eclecticism:

He has reached out to the thought and experience of those in many different situations and of diverse philosophical positions: to Sartre and Mounier, Eric Fromm and Louis Althusser, Ortega y Gasset and Mao, Martin Luther King and Che Guevara, Unamuno and Marcuse. (Shaull 1982: 10)

In his own words

My interests were in studying the Portuguese language, and Portuguese syntax in particular, along with certain reading I did on my own in areas of linguistics, philology, and the philosophy of language, which led me to general theories of communication. (1985: 175)

At the same time, through Elza, Freire became involved in the Catholic Action Movement, although he never became a full member. In 1944 the Church was still a very conservative force and only gradually was it moved to question the realities of the poverty and oppression which it was supporting and of which it was always aware. Freire himself underwent a similar process of 'conscientization'. He was, and has remained, a practising Catholic: a short period of adolescent doubts ended with his marriage to Elza, but also not without some pressure or support from his mother (Gerhardt 1979). He was, however, able to move from a naive acceptance of the authority of the Church to a more mature, questioning faith that even allowed of criticism, although it was not until as late as 1972 that he was able to write and publish a cogent analysis of the failings of the Church to fulfil its evangelical, prophetic role.

Not surprisingly, Catholic Action was not the answer for Freire. It was rather a very disheartening experience as he discovered the intransigence of the middle classes, forcing him to make a conscious choice: 'We decided not to keep working with the bourgeois and instead to work with the people' (R. Mackie 1980). That 'we', however, sounds to have included the choice which Elza had already made before meeting Freire.

Through his close relationship with Dom Helder Camara, the Bishop of Recife, Freire became closely involved in the Basic Church Communities (*Comunidades Eclesiais de Base*) which were developing a pastoral ministry through community groups that sought to relate their biblical study to local, social and personal issues. During the 1940s and 1950s this movement had grown to accept the need for a clearer identification with the poor, and for a theology of liberation relevant to ordinary people (Fernandes 1985).⁴

It was through his involvement in the Church that Freire was invited by what he called a 'private industrial institute' (1987a: 29) to be the co-ordinator of a programme concerned with education and culture. This institute was, more accurately, an organization called Social Service for Industry (SESI), a private sector institution set up by the National Confederation of Brazilian Industries (1991: 96), but it was here that Freire was able to rediscover popular culture and the working classes.

This is a point which he makes often. 'Now as a young man, working with labourers, peasants and fishermen, I once more became aware of the differences among social classes' (1985a: 175). He was able to renew the experience which he had as a child when he had been 'associated' with working class children and peasants. This was a 'second chance to reknow what I had learnt about working life' (1987a: 29) when 'at the age of 25, I found myself faced with fishermen, labourers and peasants' (1991: 96). Freire also notes that it was this experience that enabled him to write *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a significant comment not least because it tends to confirm that Freire identified the working classes as the oppressed class.

'It was precisely my relationship with workers and peasants then that took me into more radical understandings of education' (1987a: 29). That might be true, but the change did not happen immediately. Although this initial contact with the trade unions and community education was also an introduction to the 'Culture Circles', his primary concern, paradoxically, was less with literacy than with post-literacy: 'I paid little attention to whether the participants in the Culture Circles were literate or not' (1978: 116). He was involved in what was essentially a basic education programme, teaching Portuguese. This did not, however, prevent him from making two important discoveries. First, that this new awareness of illiteracy, the fact that men and women were not able to read or write, provoked in him a profound sense of injustice. 'I remember clearly that these injustices used to touch me, and they took up a lot of my time during my reflections and studies' (1985a: 176).

Second, he found that the method of teaching in 'culture circles' was an effective means of structuring both discussion and collective action. The method, of course, was not new. Although the Culture Circles had their origins in Brazil in the so-called *Peasant League*, a union movement of the 1930s, they represent a long tradition of similar community-based learning groups which were central to the diverse labour movements which were active in the United States, Britain, the former Soviet Union, France and Sweden.⁵ This dormant structure of trade union organization and education had been reactivated in the 1950s in the North-east by Francisco Julião, a radical, socialist lawyer, creating, according to Sanders (1968), an important catalyst in the opening up

of 'new discussions about nationalism, remission of profits, development and illiteracy', just at the time when Freire had been invited to respond to the major problem of illiteracy among the local workforce.

De Castro's (1969: 177) own appraisal of Julião was that he had made a tenacious effort to free the peasants from their silence, by talking to them and by teaching them to talk. His work was uncompromisingly aimed at the destabilization of social structures: for him, to be called a 'social agitator' was an accolade for it meant 'in that patriotic sense, someone who brings a fundamental problem before the people so that it might be frankly debated'.

This 'tap-root' of dialogic learning has more than anecdotal significance. First, it sets the scene for the educational study which Freire presented for his doctoral thesis in 1959, *Educação e Atualidade Brasileira*, although it scarcely explains his motivation for writing it.⁶ Why, at the age of 38, married and with a secure job, did he feel compelled to write up his ideas on adult education? Was it that he was looking to hasten the offer of the teaching post at the university which did, in fact, materialize shortly afterwards? We may never know, but it is clear that that work experience, plus the doctorate, provided the incentive for a confrere of Julião, Miguel Arraes, then the Mayor of Recife, to invite Freire to construct a literacy programme for the city council in 1961.

Arraes had no doubts about what that programme should yield:

He surrounded himself with a team of technical advisers, among whom there were Communists, but also Socialists, devout or nominal Catholics, and simple economists and technicians, many of whom had a horror of ideological embroilment. They all worked together to achieve a common goal – the socio-economic transformation of the State of the North-east. (de Castro 1969: 170)

Freire probably was to be counted among those with a horror of ideological embroilment, for the direct, political implications of this concerted social development seem to have escaped him at this point. He may refer (1978: 176) to 'those political-pedagogical activities in which I have been engaged since my youth', but his later reflection appears more accurate: 'When I began my educational practice, I was not clear about the potential political consequences' (1985a: 179).

What then becomes clear is that it was not his personal, political association with Arraes and Julião that provided the driving force for what quickly became a very effective literacy programme: the simple motivation was Freire's own delight in teaching. He was not one of Julião's social agitators: he was an educator, loving and needing the adrenalin of the classroom (1989: 12), an intellectual occupying that position of neutrality which later he came to condemn.

As an educator, in 1961, Freire was writing his first book: *A Propósito de Uma Administração*. This was essentially an appeal for the university to become more relevant to the lives of ordinary people and to create learning that confronted the social realities in Brazil. Universities in developing countries, especially those modelled on European countries, he saw as incapable of combating social alienation precisely because the responses or remedies which they offered

were being transplanted from other cultures, disregarding their own particular context and culture.

In this light, it has been suggested (Elias 1972), that Freire did not promote literacy for its own sake, but saw it rather as bringing about the democratization of culture among the rural and urban illiterates in Brazil. If this is true, then Freire's project did indeed constitute a major effort against the elitism of the university based education system. In the pilot project, some 300 workers became 'literate' within 45 days (Mashayekh 1974).

Freire's position of 'in but against' the university, plus the success of his pilot project, made him the ideal candidate, academically and politically, for the post of director of the newly created Cultural Extension Service at the University of Recife. Once in post, from early 1961, he had started to confront the enormous problem of illiteracy in the region, bringing thousands of illiterate peasants throughout the North-east into literacy Culture Circles, when he was helped from an unexpected source. From October 1962 to January 1964 the Cultural Extension Service received considerable financial assistance from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), clearly not without Freire's knowledge and approval (Brown 1974). This shows once again his ability to make the pragmatic choice or compromise: he had the motivation and the need, they had the money. Only later would he view things differently and see as naive his easy acceptance of this archetypal agency of cultural invasion.

Whatever the political or even pedagogic content of this first initiative, its social and media impact at a national level was such that Freire was invited, in 1963, to extend his programme and to become the director of a National Literacy programme.

A National Development Plan was produced which aimed to enrol some 2 million people and to teach them in Culture Circles of twenty-five people, each Circle lasting three months, at the extraordinary, direct cost of some \$5-7 per Circle (Freire 1970n). The cost-effectiveness of the programme was achieved in part through the import of Polish projectors which cost \$2.50 each, and films costing \$1, a fact which, however, brought Freire into disrepute for it aggravated charges against him that he was undermining the national economy and was 'attempting to bolshevize the country'. This was never even remotely true, given his background and personality. He had simply modelled his programme on the very successful Cuban Literacy Project which had been completed a year before. Much of the organizational structure of this Brazilian National Plan, which Freire would use substantially again in Guinea-Bissau, owes much to that Cuban experiment.⁷

This was not just a simple plagiarizing of the Cuban programme but rather that the populist Goulart Government (1961-4), riding on the wave of radical reforms in agriculture, social services and labour relations, was not wanting to be compared unfavourably with Cuba, and was actually seeking a consolidating programme which could be seen as equally 'modernizing' and effective as the Cuban model (Skidmore 1967: 244-56).

The forces for change in the two countries, however, were very different, and Freire found that he had unleashed some unexpected, and not altogether

desired, developments. For example, in the State of Sergipe, the number of literate people went from 9,000 to 80,000, and in Pernambuco from 800,000 to 1.3 million (Mashayekh 1974). The implications both for regional and national democracy, and thereby for the ruling classes, were enormous. Under the legacy of Portuguese colonialism, only those who could read and write were eligible to vote (Gerhardt 1989). Brazil in 1960 had a population of some 34.5 million people of whom only 15.5 million were eligible to vote (Collins 1977). Freire's estimates for 1964 were that 4 million school-aged children lacked schools and that there were 16 million illiterates of 14 years and older (1976b: 41).⁸

Almost overnight, therefore, the whole electoral base of the country had been overturned, a fact which suggests that the motivation of the peasants was more than a simple desire for literacy. The central demand for the trade unions and of the Movement for Popular Culture in Recife, the demand for the vote (and thereby power to demand further economic and industrial reform, the right of free association and security of land tenure), not only had been acquired without bloodshed but also had been given to them by a governmental literacy campaign (Sanders 1968).

Freire was criticized immediately, for example, in the powerful Rio de Janeiro daily, *O Globo*, for bringing the country to the verge of revolution. In fact the country had been on the verge of revolution throughout the Goulart presidency, but it is not surprising that Freire should have been a focus of the right-wing, middle-class backlash that brought about the coup in 1964. Many people saw *Ação Popular* and the Basic Education Movement's (MEB) programme of mass literacy only as a subversive strategy to introduce the agrarian reforms to which they were totally opposed. Skidmore (1967: 254) records how landowners increased their stock of arms, ready to defend their interests by force and how Freire was identified as a target by 'the traditional patrons of the agrarian sector who did not view with indifference the nascent mobilisation of the agrarian masses'.

At this point we need to throw a force-field of political assessment around the simple narrative of dates and events which links the coup with Freire. While it is true that he may have been regarded as a somewhat maverick professor of an otherwise traditional university, and that he was a director of a national literacy programme, he was none the less marginalized geographically by working from Recife, and the scale of his success was more regional than national. According to de Kadt (1970):

Freire's work at the time of the coup was still characterized by potential rather than actual achievements. Incitement to revolt was never Freire's objective as an educator, although democratisation was. (de Kadt 1970: 104)

Freire seems to agree with this assessment. As the emotional climate became more intense and sectarian irrationality grew stronger, 'there was increasing resistance to an educational programme capable of helping the people move from ingenuity to criticism' (1976b: 20, emphasis added).

In the event, Freire was deemed guilty by association. He was seen to have

been part of that socialist/communist *tomada de consciencia* (awakening of consciousness) which had destabilized the country.⁹ Gerhardt (1989), who was actually working in Brazil at the time, is pointed in his criticism:

The first literacy campaigns in the north-east of Brazil (1961–64) which were based on Freire's 'system' show just how far the educators had espoused the political objectives of the programme organizers, that is, of the reformist provincial government. The reality is that the goals of these campaigns were blatantly political. (Gerhardt 1989: 541)

He goes on to argue that only when the programme organizers saw the number of enrolments decreasing was any emphasis put on the merits and advantages of functional literacy.

Does this mean that Freire was more the enthusiastic but naive academic who was used by the socialist coalition for their own political ends? Was he exiled because of their political downfall? Besides the fact that, after his departure, the literacy campaign continued without him in the form of the *Cruzada ABC* with the goal of 'conscientizing the workers' (Duiguid 1970), two other arguments support this demythologized view.

The first is that, although Freire later came to clarify his own commitment to socialism or Christian humanism and was not in disagreement with the aims of the regional government and their objectives for the literacy campaign, he was himself aware of the naivety of his involvements.

Considering my present and more pronounced experience, I am also becoming aware of this kind of mistake in some of my earlier activities and also from pedagogues who do not see the political dimensions and implications of their pedagogical practice. (Freire 1985a: 169–70)

In effect, Freire is admitting that he was involved as an apolitical actor in a process of education, in which he had not considered the political consequences. He had jested with Elza after his first night working in adult literacy, 'After what I saw today, what I experienced today, possibly I will be jailed'. He had, however, no understanding of *why* he might be jailed. 'I was still not totally clear about the political nature of education. My first book reveals this lack of clarity' (1985a: 180).

Others, however, were clear and had long been observing the consequences. Freire (1976b: 31) saw only with hindsight that 'the country had begun to find itself. The people emerged and began to participate in the historical process'. Yet the *New York Times* had seen that as early as 1960 and was already warning of revolution (O'Neill 1973). Skidmore (1967) documents the fears of the US State Department in his appendix entitled 'The United States' role in Joao Goulart's fall': he clearly felt no need to add a question mark. The White House doubted that a socialist Brazil could reorganize its foreign debts and feared a Peronist-type solution to economic and social problems, a view which explains why, within hours of the coup, the interim government of Ranieri Mazzilli was recognized by Lyndon Johnson who also quickly confirmed a very favourable aid package for Brazil. In return, the United States gained an unequivocally

pro-American ally for its foreign policy, particularly in the Dominican Republic.

In this context, it is not surprising that Freire, whose USAID support had been stopped in January 1964, was listed among those who were anti-American. Worse, through his associates, he was listed as being pro-communist. He was among some 10,000 government officials who were immediately dismissed or forcibly retired.

Exile and return

The reactionary nature of the coup allowed the new government to suspend individual and political rights. Along with many others, Freire was imprisoned and interrogated. On his release, he sought refuge in the Bolivian embassy, through whom he was able to arrange an exit visa to Bolivia where he had been granted political asylum.

It is one of the ironies of fortune that Bolivia itself experienced a coup fifteen days after his arrival and he was forced to seek further refuge in Chile (R. Mackie 1980). But forced by what? The popular image is of this 'eminent, influential, and for some, highly dangerous figure' seeking a political haven in whatever country would have him. Obviously there were many problems, politically and professionally, which confronted Freire in this new and unstable country, but it is also the case that other practical factors, much less dramatic, encouraged Freire to leave for Chile. First, he felt that, with the upheaval of the coup, his career prospects were very limited. Second, he was convinced that, after two months in La Paz, he could not cope with the climate and the high altitude (1989: 98). So there were more advantages to be had in moving to Chile.

Interestingly, Freire's bio-text across this period of crisis is again vague. It is only in the kind of conversation with Faundez that Freire mentions this temporary stay in Bolivia; normally, he passes over the events of those months. Although, this time in conversation with Macedo, he recalls the places of his exile, 'Chile, Cambridge, Geneva and la Paz', his preferred recall is that

After those 75 days, I was taken to Rio de Janeiro for further questioning. And there I was told via the newspapers that I ought to be jailed again. My friends and family convinced me that it would be senseless for me to stay in Brazil. So I went into exile in Chile. (1985a: 181)

Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971) suggest that the choice of exile was imagined rather than real. Although he was 'invited' to leave the country – *Setenta días más tarde le dejaron en libertad, y le 'invitaron' a abandonar el país* – in reality he had no choice but to leave. Yet surprisingly, given the momentous experiences of being let out of prison, being exiled and trying to make a new start in two new countries, Freire has never sought to clarify a certain confusion around all these events. Although, for example, he recalls the detail of his five-by-two foot cell (1985a: 154), there is some uncertainty even about how long he was in prison. He says, 'I was jailed twice before I was exiled, for a

total of 75 days' (1985a: 180). but no one else records the two periods of imprisonment, although Mashayekh and Mackie also count 75 days. Other biographers and commentators closer to Freire, like Gleeson, McLaren and Shaull, count only 70 days. Brown (1974), whose work was well known to Freire, is alone in recording that 'Freire was under house arrest until June, imprisoned for 70 days, and finally sought refuge in Chile' (1974: 25). Freire himself recalls (1987a: 63) that he spent only one day and a night in a small closet-cell, but that otherwise he was in a cell with five or six other colleagues, doctors, intellectuals, liberal professionals.

At this point, we need to note a further element which contributed significantly to Freire's exile, but which also, because of his association with Bishop Camara, may also have assured his safe passage from the country. That element, little discussed, was the response of the Catholic Church in initially supporting the coup. With the exception of a few dissenting priests and laypeople, the Church was for the most part wholly positive in its response to the new, right-wing, conservative government. Whatever difficulties that posed for the Church socially or democratically, doctrinally they had found in the leaders of the coup a convergence of interest against the forces of communism. The Church, even according to the differing perspectives of O'Neill (1973) and of Camara (1969), was simply expressing its felt need for an anti-communist government that would protect Brazil's Christian civilization from Marxism, communism and from atheism. It was going to take four long years before the Church in Brazil realigned itself with the poor and the oppressed through its radical defence of human rights and its clear statement of opposition to government policies at the Medellin Conference, held in Columbia, in 1968. In the mean time, it made sense that all Freire's 'communist' learning materials, films and projectors should be not only confiscated but also destroyed, and that the problem posed by his close association with the Church should be resolved, to the short-term advantage of both Church and State, by his exile.

In Chile, where he immediately felt he was 'born again with a new consciousness of politics, education and transformation' (1987a: 32), Freire was able to secure a post at the University of Chile, Santiago. Here he was contacted by Waldemar Cortes and invited to work as a Unesco consultant in a literacy programme which was being proposed by the Department of Special Planning for the Education of Adults. At the time, the government of Eduardo Frei was committed to a dual programme of literacy and agrarian reform. In this way, Freire became involved with the Chilean Agrarian Reform Corporation where he then worked until 1969.

While involved in the training of extension workers, Freire was also writing creatively. In 1967 he published *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, the notes of which he had begun in prison in 1964. The core of the book is his detailed explanation of his method of creating 'generative' words and of reconstructing, syllable by syllable, other words from the learner's own vocabulary. In much less detail is the introduction to his emerging philosophy of education. Learners, as well as teachers, must be seen as subjects who awake to a critical consciousness of reality. They are creators of their own learning, who respond

actively through dialogue rather than mechanically and passively to the anti-dialogue of imposed, dehumanizing, massified education.

The tone of the book reflects a style which is now known to be 'typically Freirean'. It combines an appeal to highly charged human values of love, humility, hope, faith and trust with an academic style that seeks to present an objective sociological analysis of alienation.

This was followed, early in 1969, by what was effectively a fusion of his fieldwork in Chile and his longstanding, academic interest in epistemology and communications: *Extension or Communication*. Given his first-hand experience both of the need for land reform and of the need for literacy education, he was able to make a radical examination of extension work or community development. He polarizes the difference between extension and communication as a choice between cultural invasion and propaganda or true, dialogic education. This latter is not now described in terms of Christian virtues but as an approach to knowledge which exists only 'in history', in the praxis of action and reflection. This 'gnosiological state' requires learning to be concrete and practical, and generated by the learner, rather than theoretical and idealistic and imposed by the educator/developer.

The strength of Freire's integration into Chile is perhaps illustrated by the fact that the introduction to this essay was written by Jacques Chonchol, a leading academic and economist who was later to become the Minister of Agriculture in Chile's Allende government. It is worth noting, however, that these two important books or extended essays (the first published in Portuguese in 1967 and the second in Spanish in 1969) were published in English only in 1974, four years after the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* – a chronology which explains why many English-speaking readers consider this latter work to be Freire's most influential book.

Despite the productivity of his writing and of his involvement in the literacy campaign, Freire was clearly not satisfied to stay in Chile. In 1969, some months before the election of the Marxist Allende government in Chile,¹⁰ he was invited to Harvard to be Visiting Professor at the Center for Studies in Education and Development. Three or four days later he received another invitation, this time from the World Council of Churches at Geneva. Both institutions were offering an initial stay of two to three years, and Freire opted for the 'world-wide chair' at Geneva rather than the limited sphere of work at Harvard; 'however famous or great the university'. He agreed, however, to spend some months at Harvard, because 'I thought that it was very important for me, as a Brazilian intellectual in exile to pass through, albeit rapidly, the centre of capitalist power' (1989: 12).

Important the visit certainly was. This was a time of student and social unrest, especially in Europe, where demands for more freedom within education, for greater personal freedom and independence of thought featured strongly in the 'Student Movement', causing severe anxiety to many academics. The liberalism and openness that characterized or caricatured certain parts of the United States, for example the University of Berkeley, had not been a feature of life at Harvard, and Freire found some very challenging reactions to his views which provided the impetus and encouragement for him

to publish two articles in the *Harvard Educational Review* (May and August 1970) which appeared just before the English version of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and which later were published together as *Cultural Action for Freedom*.

This marked, at least for Freire, a watershed in his development:

Let me say in passing that in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and in *Cultural Action for Freedom*, I do not take the same position when confronting the problem of conscientisation. My own praxis in the interval between the last two books and the first taught me to see things I had no opportunity to see before. (1975c: 15)

What he had recognized was that conscientization is not simply a personal, psychological process of renewal or change that could be seen apart from other processes of political action and shifts in related power relations. His evaluation of his literacy work in Brazil and in Chile showed him that the motivation for change, however strong that might be and however necessary the change might be, was not of itself sufficient to bring about that change.

It was his attempt to respond to this major criticism of his earlier work, namely that he had created a polarization between the knowledge or awareness of a given reality and the transforming of that same reality, that explains his demand in these two works that we should see critical consciousness as a process of action and reflection. It is a dynamic, individual and collective reappraisal of history, that insists that the learner is 'in the world' and able to 'name' his or her world.

The world is the world of the oppressed, where banking education, cultural invasion, domination and silence mark the life of those who are not conscientized, and particularly the lives of those who are non-literate. The pedagogy of the oppressed (the title of the book is in the singular in the original Portuguese but is usually read in the plural sense in English) requires that they should be able to read and to write, to enter into an equality of dialogue and so name their world, in order to transform it and thus be makers of their own history. The means and the ends of such a pedagogy are a critical awareness of reality (knowledge) and the eradication of the inequalities which exist between the oppressed and their oppressors (power).

Within a wide range of movements of questioning, reform and confrontation, particularly within education, the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, plus the impact of the two Harvard articles, quickly established Freire's international reputation as a radical, even revolutionary, pedagogue. He became a symbol of the time, fashioned by the rhetoric, the liberalism and the romanticism of the post-1968 era. It was this reputation and the potential of his pedagogy rather than any published, quantifiable results from particular literacy programmes, that Freire took to the World Council of Churches when he was appointed consultant in their Office of Education at Geneva. There he set up the Institute of Cultural Action through which he had the opportunity of more direct involvement in the struggles of other Third World countries, mostly in Africa. His consultancies, as well as a host of seminars and

international conferences, took him to Mozambique, Peru, Angola, Tanzania, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Guinea-Bissau.

Among all these activities, it was perhaps his work in Guinea-Bissau which was the most crucial in the development of his ideas and practice. *Pedagogy in Process: Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, a collection of letters written to educators and politicians between 1975 and 1976, shows Freire moving towards a much clearer position about the power relationships between learning, conscientization and freedom (Youngman 1986). He locates his pedagogy and his praxis within the context of overt political and economic activity, and he manages to be comfortable with the neo-Marxist but very African ideology of Amílcar Cabral in a way that could not have been imagined ten years earlier.

Ironically, at the very point at which he had moved towards a clearer political statement about literacy and conscientization, he found himself included, contrary to the expectations of many, in a general amnesty granted by the Figueredo government in Brazil in September 1979. Freire, ever Brazilian, returned to Recife in June 1980 to work initially at the Centre for Educational Studies (Centro de Estudos em Educação) and then to take up a post as Professor of Philosophy of Education at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo and the public Universidade de Campinas in São Paulo.¹¹

So commenced a period of reintegration, marked by no major publications in English until *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power and Liberation* in 1985. This is essentially a reprint of selected articles and interviews, first published between 1965 and 1975, including the two Harvard essays of *Cultural Action for Freedom* and the article which first appeared in *Study Encounter* and which gives crucial evidence of the politicizing of Freire's thought: 'Education, Liberation and the Church'. Although the book aims 'to stimulate more discussion on current major issues in education' (p. xxvii), the only new material is an interview/dialogue with Macedo recorded in 1984.

The same themes re-emerge in his next publication in 1987, *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*.¹² This is a series of dialogues with Ira Shor which have been transcribed, the 'talking book' being itself a device to create a 'dialogue' with the reader who can then both see and hear Freire's explanation of the development of his pedagogy. The constant anchorage in Freire's theory of communication and his view of what constitutes knowledge is still there. What is added to the discussion which prevents it from being merely as restatement of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is Freire's reflection on his wider experience and Shor's more incisive logic and disciplined analysis.

Freire has clearly a great enthusiasm for such 'talked books'. The same device, this time again with Macedo, forms the base of *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World* (1987b). The edited dialogues focus less on the techniques of literacy teaching (which so marked his early works) and more on restating the goals of literacy as the acquiring of the *language of possibility*. This 'pedagogy of liberating remembrance', to borrow Giroux's sumptuous phrase from the introduction, is embedded in history. It is a literacy which is an act of knowledge but in which 'it is no longer possible to have the text without the context' (1987b: 43).

This elision of text and context takes Freire beyond Berthoff's 'pedagogy of knowing' to a pedagogy of questioning. *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation* is his latest book published in English, co-authored or conversed with Antonio Faundez.¹³ The dialogues centre on selected biographical details and the different experiences of exile which the two men had endured. There is a detailed examination of the relationship between learning and power but the book serves primarily as a means for Freire to answer criticism of his work in Guinea-Bissau and for him to repeat his view that literacy acquisition should be in the natural language of the people and not in the dominant language of the educator or of the cultural invader.

None of the work which Freire has published in English since his return to Brazil in 1980 shows a radical change in his thought or in his practice. Little approaches the passion of *Extension and Communication* (1969e) or the clarity of *Education, Liberation and the Church* (1973a). Yet, before the discourse of pleasant conversations and of comfortable nostalgia come to be all pervasive, there will be an English translation of Freire's latest work, *Education in the City* (1991).

This reveals a renewed Freire, in a series of ten reprinted interviews or dialogues which took place between 1989 and 1990. The text, unusually, gives considerable biographical detail and because of that reveals much more of Freire as a person. It is almost as though he feels himself liberated from certain elements of his own past and therefore able to talk with a new energy and vigour. Three points are of particular note, bringing this bio-text up to date.

First, Freire is able to speak about his second wife, Ana Maria Araujo. She is the daughter of the high school director who had given him a free place to continue his schooling so many years before. She is twelve years younger than Freire and had also been a student of his when he taught Portuguese at her father's school. Nita, as she is familiarly called, is an educator and literacy tutor and an author in her own right.¹⁴

Freire's new-found love and joy allows him to reveal just how devastated he had been at the death of Elza. She had been a far greater influence on him than he had as yet been able to admit and her absence brought to a close a unique relationship and a long period of working and teaching together.

Second, and perhaps because of that, Freire launched himself in 1989 into a new political career. He had been invited by the mayor of São Paulo, Luiza Erundina, to create an adult literacy programme. He was appointed Secretary for Education in January 1989, and set about organizing, together with the Church and the university, a literacy movement (MOVA) which aimed to reach 60,000 people in some 2,000 culture circles. Additionally, he had the task of building or rebuilding 546 schools to meet the needs of the vast number of children in the area who were not attending school. The first results of this programme, which Freire calls a restatement of the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in action, appear to be very positive.

Behind the decision to co-ordinate this project lay an overt political decision on Freire's part. The logic of his position within the local government was that he was, even in Geneva before his return to Brazil, one of the founder members of the Workers' Party that convincingly won the local elections in November

1988. This is the first time that Freire has committed himself to a political party and he has done so because it is a people's party, rejecting elitism and authoritarianism. In this case, he sees his role as administrator and decision-maker as wholly coherent with the principles and goals of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Finally, after two and a half years of intense work, having achieved some success but having also suffered sharp criticism from the press and opposition parties, Freire resigned from his post as Secretary for Education in May 1991. He has returned to his books and his writing. His time in the Town Hall had served to convince him that his real skills and ambitions lie in being a political educator rather than an educated politician. He has taken up his post again in the university, and is now occupying himself with 'three or four projects' which he has laid aside in these recent years.

There is no doubt that this experience will serve, in the strict sense of the word, as a pretext (pre-text) for Freire to write a consolidated version of his philosophy and practice of education. He will continue, as he has always done, to pose the simple, provocative question: What is the relation between literacy, liberation and learning?

The contemporary Freire, teaching in a modernized Brazil, will have cause to reflect upon the changes in texture and context through which his pedagogy has lived. The bio-text of his experiences and the grapho-text of his work have given us not just a writing of his life (a biography) but a reading of his world. Both assert the possibility of a liberating pedagogy which is commonly known now as the 'método Paulo Freire'. What they do not assert as clearly is that, if we rewrite this text by reading it in more detail, we shall find that, despite its apparent novelty, such a pedagogy is not new and that behind Freire lies the weight of other traditional pedagogies and a large library of other philosophers of education and of liberation.

expressions and messages he encounters. (British Association of Settlements 1974: 5)

The inherent sexism in this quotation, noted by Levine (1982: 256) only emphasizes the point already made that functional literacy is doubly dysfunctional for women.

Functional literacy concentrates on Reading because it is in reading the word that one creates the possibility of consensus or convergence. Yet it is only Writing which can create the possibility of dissent. *If I can read, I can follow what you want to say to me. But if I can write, you can read what I want to say to you.* Writing alone raises contradiction – the possibility that something can be 'said against'. This is more than mere disagreement, which obviously can result from reading: it is the creating of a response which is counter-hegemonic. The paradox of Writing, which is one of the most refined symbolic systems created by humankind, is that it has the potential to be anti-symbolic: it is fundamentally iconoclastic.

For the elites, iconoclasm creates the challenge which is experienced by all orthodoxies in that it encourages heresy, even deviance. For them, a literacy which produces a writing of, or a rewriting of, the relationship between knowledge and power becomes dysfunctional for it does not educate the citizen into orthodoxy, into that governability, even that vulnerability to governance and to media and myth, which are the signs of an 'educated person'. In Freire's terms, Reading is the currency of Banking Education, Writing is the currency of Dialogue. The former creates imitation, the latter innovation.

For Freire functional literacy is a contradiction in terms. It creates the silence of the passive reader, the silent receiver who has found their place in society, who has been given entry into the elite's library of knowledge and who therefore may be seen there, but who cannot, or must not, be heard. This is neither the society nor the culture into which he was wanting to introduce the non-literates, for finally and paradoxically, it is this functional literacy which creates the Culture of Silence from which the non-literates are trying to escape.

Literacy, Freire has always said, is about reading the word and the world. Perhaps he should have said that it was about 'Writing the Wor(l)d'. That one lies within the other is now obvious, but this does not explain why, in redefining the obvious, 'writing the word' and 'reading the world' remains the ultimate contradiction of Freire's pedagogy.

Conclusion

Freire's pedagogy has enabled us to deconstruct the dialectic relationship between the Power of Literacy and the Literacy of Power. It is not possible today to live in other than a textualized world: neither Power nor Literacy can be dis-invented. What is possible is to imagine a different con-text within which a different literate text could be written and where Literacy would serve to create a new world, to liberate and not to domesticate. It is a pedagogy which is hopeful, in the strict sense of the word, full of hope. It is also full of contradiction.

'To contradict' does not always mean 'to criticize negatively, to argue against, to put down'. It can also mean 'to put the other side of, to see a contrary view, to affirm by posing the opposite'. In this positive sense, it is a privilege to be able to contradict and to be contradicted, for contradiction widens horizons, permits other perspectives, and creates the possibility of difference. The pedagogy of the oppressed, the *oppressed's pedagogy*, expressed in the narrative of the learners and not in the discourse of the teachers (Ellsworth 1989) thrives on contradiction, exploits it as the ruptural principle which engenders change.

Thus we have seen that conscientization does not bring about literacy, any more than literacy results in conscientization. The one can be used to *describe* the other, but neither can *prescribe* the consequences of critical consciousness. The paradox (the Greek form of contradiction) is that we have to be able to think and speak in a literate way *before* we can become 'literate'. 'Although the fact of writing historically follows the fact of speech, nonetheless the idea of speech depends upon the idea of writing' (Harland 1987: 129). To speak the word, name the world, in Freire's usage, is to be already literate.

We have seen how the very idea of writing the word, reading the word are not two sides of the same literate coin. They represent such antithetical skills and competencies that any attempt to forge a synthesis results in blatant

contradiction. What else is Functional Literacy? In this latter case, we found that Literacy was dysfunctional for non-literates and for those becoming literate precisely because Literacy is both the author of the status quo within which the dominant classes are the literate classes, and controller of the means by which those classes express their superiority over those who are non-literate or illiterate.

We have had to ask: does Freire's Method enable the learners of the Culture Circles to become authors, Subjects who name and create their own world? Or does it enable them only to achieve a sufficient level of literacy so that they could be assimilated into their Society, the new generation of *assimilados*? Despite their enthusiasm and capacity to create their own self-preparation for this new citizenship, has their involvement in the literacy campaign already defused, culturally and politically, any real potential movement towards fundamental, social change? Is it not the case that no radical change has ever been ushered in through the ballot box just because the person who made his or her mark on the ballot-sheet was literate?

We have seen that Freire had codified the oppressed culture of the learners, but he seems never to have codified the oppressive culture of the literate educators, except through the one important image of Banking Education. If the reciprocity of dialogue is to be respected, should there not have been some opportunity for the participants of the Culture Circle to ask that the educators reveal a picture-codification which is typical of their lives and culture and that they declare what generative words they use to decode their world?

In the absence of that equilibrating disclosure, more threatening even than the invitation to the educator to undertake class suicide, we have seen how the analysis of Freire's literacy programme shows that the rhetoric which announced the importance of dialogue, engagement, and equality, and denounced silence, massification and oppression, did not match in practice the subliminal messages and modes of a Banking System of education. Albeit benign, Freire's approach differs only in degree, but not in kind, from the system which he so eloquently criticizes.

The genuine difference between the two systems is one of intention, and here Freire's sincerity and personal commitment is not in doubt. This does not disguise the fact, however, that he is at heart a very traditional pedagogue. We have seen how he repossessed the traditional philosophic and religious roots of European education in order to find a language in which he could re-state his own pedagogy. Because of (or in spite of) that, he remains the classic teacher who loves his classroom, even though he professes not to need it (1989: 12). The learner is not just someone who needs to learn: he or she is also someone who needs to be taught. Freire's faith in humankind, perhaps like all faith, prevented him from looking objectively at this fact, but helped him to find what he wanted to find – an enlightened learner who could 'name his or her own world' through dialogue with an enlightened teacher.

The tendency to think of Freire as an abstruse, Latin American educator who was propelled by events to the world stage of education but who there found himself out of his depth, unable to communicate with anyone other than his own North-eastern compatriots, is wholly contradicted by the events. Freire

has occupied a pivotal place in the formulation of education campaigns throughout the Third World, and his influence on other European and North American educators has been considerable.

He is an educator of a world-wide university, yet he was, and still is, fiercely Brazilian. The scars of exile will always be there, but he is now, more than a decade later, firmly reintegrated into Brazilian society. He has taken a new lease on life and has begun to place the various texts relating to his own history and his own achievements in a clearer context or perspective. On the face of it, he does not have, and has never had, the profile of a radical, revolutionary educator. Born into a middle-class family, he took the career path through Law, bypassed politics, but continued with little direction until influenced by his wife and by fate to exploit his evident aptitude for teaching. Then he found himself upon the road to Literacy that has brought him, by diverse routes, to his destination as one of the most creative Pedagogues of the twentieth century.

There then emerged, as it were between the lines of his texts and bio-texts, the 'método Paulo Freire' and a problematizing of the obvious: a method, with the genius of simplicity, that actually works but which is deceptive in appearance. Too many people have considered Freire as a purveyor of literacy, whereas in fact he is a politician of pre-literacy. What he may not have admitted to himself is that, while he offered 'Literacy in Thirty Hours' to meet certain felt needs on the part of the peasants and the oppressed, what he was actually doing was confronting the underlying real needs of those individuals and of society. The educator in Freire is not neutral: he has always denied that teachers have the right to self-absolution by claiming such impartiality. But he is not just a pedagogue of the oppressed: he is that most subversive of social radicals, a crypto-politician.

In that sense, his pedagogy is revolutionisable, a learning iceberg where what is most important is invisible to the eye. It is what cannot be seen that contradicts the obvious. So Freire's final contradiction is that the pedagogy of this 'Vagabond of the Obvious', as he liked to call himself, is not primarily about literacy, but rather about pre-literacy. It is a pedagogy which places the presence of oppression before the absence of literacy but which also, against the popular logic, insists on treating the effect in order to remedy the cause.

Freire can be easily dismissed for comfortable idealism, utopianism, other-worldly mysticism and irrelevance. Yet beneath that, beneath the Banking system which he has diverted into a Co-operative Banking system, there is a pedagogy of contradiction, which is contradictory because it creates another reality, a critical, practical awareness, an 'I now know where I am in this world-ness' that presages action. It is disturbing, deranging, uncompromising and irreverent. A homeopathic medicine it might be, but its side-effects are considerable.

To want to write the word (pre-literacy) and so learn to read the word (passive literacy) and then to write it (active Literacy) is the goal of Freire's pedagogy. He may not have put it that way, but neither would he now deny it. In reviewing the Texts of Freire, that might not appear to be the case at first glance. That this might emerge only through the intense analysis of this kind of

study which has tried 'not just to consume ideas, but to create and recreate them' (1985a: 4) is Freire's way of proving his point and of gainsaying, contradicting his critics. In the end, the fact that many of Literacy's contradictions are now unveiled is Freire's ultimate success. At least now the right questions can be asked.

There is no greater accolade that can be bestowed upon a pedagogue. If the reader of the word and the world can now return to reading the diverse texts of Freire, a new *Dialogue with Freire* can be written. That next volume of the writing of the wor(l)d will not just be another text to be read: together, we can make it a further chapter in the righting of oppression.

Notes

Introduction: the textualizing and contextualizing of Freire

- 1 It is important to note that these tributes come from other, recognized educators: I. Illich (undated) *Yesterday I Could Not Sleep Because Yesterday I Wrote My Name*, Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa Barbara, California, audio-tape; Ohliger (1971: 7); Lovett (1975: 15); McLaren (1986: 394).
- 2 To appreciate the force of these criticisms, the reader would need to place them in their original contexts: see Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971); Knudson (1971); Boston (1972); Collins (1972); Griffith (1974); Egerton (1975); O'Neill (1975); Barndt (1980); R. Mackie (1980); Kidd and Byram (1982).
- 3 This important point on adjusting the biographical lens owes much to Skinner (1969), whose caution about parochialism, that is 'misdescribing, by a process of historical foreshortening, both the sense and the intended reference of a given work' should also be noted.
- 4 A useful explanation of the nature of historical understanding (*verstehen*) as an epistemological problem is contained in Hitzler and Keller (1989). Rabinowitz (1977) proposes that one best understands a writer not by examining the authored text (which seeks to identify the author's intentions) but by considering the con-texts, the audiences implicit or explicit in the text.
- 5 The *emics* and *etics* analysis does not create two standpoints which are dichotomic, but rather two elements which compose a stereographic picture. None the less, this study has emphasized the construction of an *etic* perspective. The method, still little known, has enormous potential in the analysis of textuality. For the definition and application of the *emic/etic* distinction, see Hymes (1964); Headland (1990).
- 6 The Adult Learning Project in Gorgie-Dalry in Edinburgh is one of the few learning programmes in the United Kingdom which has been committed to putting Freire's ideas into practice. A documented review of their experiences is given in Kirkwood and Kirkwood (1989).
- 7 Three books by Boal are worth following up to see how Freire's initial insight can be

applied to other forms of teaching/learning: *Theatre of the Oppressed*, *Stop, its Magic* and *The Rainbow of Desire*.

1 A biographical sketch

- 1 In Brazil, although there were institutes of higher education from 1808, in Medicine and Law, and a widespread growth in the 1920s of technical colleges and polytechnics which were judged to be essential for economic development, the first universities were founded only in 1934 (São Paulo) and 1935 (Rio de Janeiro). The new *Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras* at São Paulo was seen, academically and politically, to be the cornerstone of the university. Its first director, Teodoro Ramos, was sent to Europe to recruit an eminent cadre of professors/academics in the Social Sciences. Eight of the ten were French; the French government contributed to the scheme sufficient books to form the basic libraries in each of the departments (Philosophy, Social Sciences, History, Geography and Humanities). The visiting professors, individually and collectively, had an enormous influence on intellectual life in Brazil. They included Roger Bastide, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Fernand Braudel, Lucien Febvre, Gérard Lebrun and Michel Foucault. See Capelato and Prado (1989).
- 2 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is currently in its eighteenth, twentieth and thirty-fifth editions in Portuguese, English and Spanish respectively.
- 3 Freyre's *The Masters and the Slaves* first appeared in Portuguese as *Casa-grande e Senzala* in 1933 but was the last of Freyre's major works to be translated into English (1970). Two other important studies, which equally clarify the context of Freire's work at that time, had already been translated: *The Mansions and the Shanties* (1963), and 'The Patriarchal Basis of Brazilian Society', in J. M. Maier (ed.) (1964) *The Politics of Change in Latin America*, New York, Praeger.
- 4 An outline of the work and function of the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* can be found in Ferndandes (1985). Behind these changes can be heard the powerful voices of Jacques Maritain and Gustavo Gutierrez whose works were well known to Freire. For a useful summary of the emergence of Latin American social or liberation theology, see Chopp (1986).
- 5 The practice of small group, community-based learning is so widespread that its origins are difficult to trace. Brookfield (1984: 90) traces the existence of such groups, prior to their widespread use in the US labour movement of the 1920s, to the Juntos proposed by Franklin in 1727, the Lyceum Movement in the 1820s and the Settlements in England in the 1880s. Hall (1978) finds Workers' Circles well established in St Petersburg in 1887, and Study Circles in Sweden effective from the turn of the century. Spies-Bong (1989) highlights the key role of the Learning Circle in Petersen's 1927 'Iena Plan'.
- 6 There is some confusion over this doctorate. Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971: 499), who are right on other details, say that Freire was awarded a doctorate *Honoris Causa* from the university because of the success of his education programme, and that it was this doctorate that enabled Freire to teach in the university: 'Cuando su filosofía y sus programas educacionales le habían hecho ya famoso en gran parte de Brasil, la Universidad de Recife le otorgó el grado de Doctor Honoris Causa en Pedagogía. Desde entonces enseña filosofía de la educación en dicha universidad.'
- 7 For an absorbing and enthusiastic account of the Cuban Literacy Programme which captures the excitement and achievement of what it means to become literate, see Kozol (1978).
- 8 More than a quarter of a century later, the level of schooling in Brazil is still a major problem. Braslavsky (1988) suggests that 30 per cent of all children aged 7-14

(7,553,741) are not receiving a full-time education, a figure confirmed by Freire in his recent role as Secretary for Education (1991: 17).

- 9 It is difficult to reproduce in English the power of the expression *tomada de consciencia*. As in the French *prise de conscience*, the verb is as important as the noun: conscience, consciousness or awareness. *Tomar* and *prendre* have that added sense of 'taking, taking seriously, taking possession of' which signifies both a conscious, responsible act and an identifiable result or consequence.
- 10 It is interesting to note that, later, immediately after the successful, US-backed coup against Allende, General Pinochet declared Freire *persona non grata* in Chile (R. Mackie 1980).
- 11 The influence of his current work, through teaching and through directing post-graduate studies, is explicit in Braslavsky (1988) and in the review by Francisco Gomes de Matos (1989) of eight recent, Brazilian publications on literacy.
- 12 Interesting, for the point of authorship versus status, is the fact that the book is commonly attributed to Freire, although the copyright actually belongs to Shor.
- 13 This is the book cited twice in Freire (1987b: 62, 114). Although a footnote is numbered in the text, no reference is actually given.
- 14 Araujo Freire, Ana Maria (1989) *Analfabetismo no Brasil*, Cortex Editora, INEP.

2 Backgrounds and borrowings: a review of selected sources and influences

- 1 The English text gives no reference: the French text quotes an English version of Goldman's (1969) *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, but nuances 'mechanistic change' by translating it 'la transformation de la réalité peut s'opérer automatiquement'. Freire (1985a: 32) again refers to Goldman's transition of consciousness, but quotes an undated Spanish translation: *Las Ciencias humanas y la filosofía*.
 - 2 See Petersen (1965). A more recent résumé of the main points of the Plan, plus a synthesis of other of Petersen's writings, is to be found in Spies-Bong (1989).
 - 3 This affirmation has to be placed within the traditional teaching of the Church on social issues. On the condition of the working classes, the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (May 1891) had stated: 'The transference of property from private individuals to the community is emphatically unjust' (para 3). This argument had been used to deny land reforms in Brazil and the breaking up of the large *latifundia*. Forty years later, *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931) reaffirmed these principles and made it clear that 'no catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism'. Even as late as 1961, *Mater et Magistra: New Light on Social Problems [sic]* was stating that 'The permanent validity of the Catholic Church's social teaching admits of no doubt' (para 218).
- The Catholic Church was far from the position of liberal Protestantism as evidenced by Paul Tillich: 'First and foremost I owe to Marx an insight into the ideological character not only of idealism but also of all systems of thought, religious and secular which serve power structures and thus prevent ... a more just organisation of reality' (Tillich 1973).
- 4 While this expression clearly echoes Teilhard, it is actually a reference to Mounier's *Be Not Afraid*, here quoted from an English version (1954). Earlier (p. 12), Freire refers to a French edition of 'Le christianisme et la notion de progrès' in *La Petite Peur du XX Siècle*.

It is interesting to note the re-emergence of a *leitmotif* which lies deep in Freire's psyche and which is reflected in a short bibliography of his references: Mounier's *Be*

not Afraid, Tillich's *The Courage To Be*, Fromm's *The Fear of Freedom* and *To Have and To Be*, and Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*.

- 5 De Kadt (1970: 90ff) details Mounier's influence on the Church and on Brazilian intellectuals. Mounier stressed the importance of interpersonal relations, and brought a Christian-Marxist analysis to bear on society and injustice. However, he saw change primarily as a process which concerned the individual and he made little analysis of institutions of power and oppression. None the less, his demand for authenticity had to imply some measure of social change, simply because a society could not be authentic if the poor and the marginalized remained oppressed.

A Portuguese translation of Mounier's *Le Personalisme* was available from 1964: *O personalisme*, Lisbon, trans. João Bénard da Costa.

- 6 It is the whole fabric and concept of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* which is rooted in Personalism, although it is easy to find particular quotations which sound like direct translations. For example, 'The movement of enquiry must be directed towards humanization – our historical vocation' (Freire 1982: 58). 'Dialogue (Engagement) involves critical thinking, thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and humankind admitting no dichotomy between them' (1982: 64). 'Intervention in reality – historical awareness itself – thus represents a step forward from emergence' (1982: 81).

- 7 The quotation also highlights the problem of translation. The English edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* carries the footnote 'in English, the terms *to live* and *to exist* have assumed implications opposite to their etymological origins. As used here, *live* is the more basic term, implying only survival; *exist* implies a deeper involvement in the process of becoming.' The footnote does not appear in the Portuguese or French editions. Exactly the same footnote had already been used in the English edition of *Education: The Practice of Freedom*.

The problem lies in the use of *viver* and *exister* in Portuguese, *estar* and *ser* in Spanish, *sein* and *leben* in German, the contrary use of *to be* and *to exist* in English, and the confused use of *être* and *exister* in French. There is therefore a double process of interpretation underpinning the translation of Freire into English which also operated when Freire was trying to understand, for example, Heidegger's concept of *in-der-welt-Sein* through an English translation.

- 8 Teilhard de Chardin played an important role in shaping Catholic intellectualism in the early 1960s, particularly prior to the Vatican Council. His central tenet, as a scientist and palaeontologist, was that humankind is progressing to its goal, its Omega point, of complete socialization (1965: 334). As such, we are all in a state of becoming (p. 13), incomplete human beings seeking out our own personalization or humanization (p. 192).

A Spanish edition of his major work, *El Fenómeno humano*, Madrid, Taurus, was available in Brazil from 1963. It is this text which Freire quotes in 'Notes on Humanization and its Educational Implications' (1970m).

- 9 Freire to some extent demystifies Teilhard, preferring in this case to speak of encircling proximity as *limit situations*, 'the real boundaries where all possibilities begin' (Freire 1982: 71). *Thinking the world* is analogous both to *naming the world*, speaking the word to transform reality (Freire 1970h: 213) and to the process whereby 'There is no longer "I think" but "We think"'. The object is not the end of the act of thinking, but the mediator of communication' (Freire 1976b: 135). The process of complexification is exactly the applied technique of *problematizing*: 'If education is the relation between Subjects in the knowing process, then it must be *problem posing*' (Freire 1976b: 150).
- 10 Kosik was one of the few survivors of the Czech Resistance during the Second World War. He was arrested by the Gestapo and deported to a concentration camp. After

the liberation, he completed his studies at Prague and later at Leningrad but returned to Prague to take up a post from 1962 as Professor of Philosophy. After his dismissal from the university in 1968, his house was raided by the police and much of his private work, notes and lecture materials were confiscated.

- 11 Perhaps because Kosik is not given as a reference to clarify this expression, the translation of this text in *The Politics of Education* misses Kosik's (and Freire's) point about the symbiotic nature of action and reflection. Therefore, 'Like our presence in the world, our consciousness transforms knowledge, acting on and thinking about what enables us to reach the stage of reflection' (1985a: 100, my emphasis added) is ultimately an inadequate translation.
- 12 Freire's references to C. Wright Mills date from this period and may well have come through Kosik (see Freire 1982: 83; 1985a: 4). The method which Freire encouraged the field investigators to use their collecting of generative themes, namely registering every detail in notebooks, is a technique proposed by Wright Mills in his *Sociological Imagination*. This source is acknowledged by Freire in the French and Portuguese versions of the *Pedagogy*, but the reference both in the text and as a footnote is missing from the English version.
- 13 This is Freire's underlying model of the relationship between oppressor and oppressed (1982: 16, 26, 46). Confirmation of Freire's possible encounter with Hegel's *Phenomenology* in 1967 is that *Education: The Practice of Freedom*, which was written early in 1967, also contains the important image of master-slave. Here, however, the theme is taken from Gilberto Freyre's detailed, historical study (1963) *The Mansion and the Shanties* (see Freire 1976b: 25) and not from Hegel's intellectualizing.

3 Education and liberation: the means and ends of Dialogue and Conscientization

- 1 Berger (1975: 34, 35) is dismissive of the arrogance of Conscientization as 'consciousness raising'. This is a 'project of higher class individuals directed at a lower class population who are in need of enlightenment. Put differently, the concept allocates different levels to "them" and to "us", and it assigns to "us" the task of raising "them" to the higher level.' For Berger, 'a better term would be conversion, and anyone claiming to raise the consciousness of other people should be seen as a missionary'.
- 2 The Church's failure to distinguish Marxism from atheistic communism has vitiated this debate which was only gradually opened up by South American theologians and intellectuals who needed, more and more, an alternative paradigm with which to analyse society, to reconstruct a valid, historical and sociological perspective, and to explore new political options. Chopp (1986: 16) offers a useful résumé which does not diminish the felt risk and threat to the Church in those first steps into the Christian-Marxist dialogue: 'Marxism is as much a general attitude emphasising the historical and transformative nature of all actions and reflection as it is a specific political structure or set of philosophical assumptions'.
- 3 Although Freire knew Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, he does not exploit the concept of *in der welt sein* which would have clarified the social and temporal, and therefore historical, construct of our existence. Instead, Freire is still confined by his vision of that other-worldliness offered by Christianity, and by the believers' compromise between being 'in the world but not of it'.
- 4 This is an assertion which has evaded many of Freire's critics and followers alike. Ewert (1981) is perhaps typical of many: 'Unlike many of his colleagues, Freire has

explicitly addressed the problem of exploitative social structures: his educative strategy amounts to a call for revolution'.

4 The 'Método Paulo Freire': generative words and generating literacy

- 1 Fernandes (1985) illustrates how these groups were used by the CEB for political goals. The political consciousness-raising of the CEBs has contributed to a significant increase in the strength of popular grass roots movements. The CEBs strengthen internal democratic participation that values each human being and brings forth his or her full potential as an agent of change.'
- 2 Ewert (1981) says that, in his experience, the co-ordinators were often forced to adopt a parent-child relationship simply because they were considered to be there in order to solve the communities' problems. Nevertheless, Ewert is clear that 'Freire's concept of codifications has tremendous conceptual power for transforming perspectives and providing hope in the face of dominance' (1981: 32).
- 3 *Mangue*, which appears in two lists, illustrates the problem of taking the read word out of the context in which it was written. It has both an agricultural and an urban connotation, giving at least two possible decodings in a Culture Circle: it is a swamp or marsh, but it also refers to the 'red light' district of the city of Rio (Sanders 1968).
- 4 Le Men (1985) raises a parallel point in questioning the use of alphabetic learning: 'Seeing letters is an obstacle to reading. The Alphabet is not made for reading but for being heard and spoken'. She contrasts synthetic literacy, that builds up words from individual syllables which in themselves have no meaning, and analytic literacy which is based on recognition of whole words which are given meaning by the reader.
- 5 Le Men (1985) argues that this analytic method of whole word recognition, which was current even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, found little favour among educationalists because it is based more on intuition and memory rather than on logic and repetitive learning. It is not without significance that the latter are more controllable and examinable than the former.

6 A reconstruction of literacy

- 1 Reflecting this disparity of approach, Nickerson (1985) notes that the lack of significant progress towards literacy has not been the result of lack of attention. Quoting Weber (1975), he points out that, in the United States, some ten major federal agencies were authorized by nearly thirty laws to teach reading to adults, while more than six hundred non-governmental agencies were engaged in adult basic education. In a national guide to literacy facilities, Kadavy *et al.* (1983) lists thirty-nine national literacy programmes and several thousand state-level resources.
- 2 For an example of French and Spanish usage of these terms, see Jerez and Hernandez-Pico (1971); Roman (1990).
- 3 The word seems to have first been used by the ATD-Quart monde in the 1960s, and passed into widespread usage in the 1980s. See Fondet (1990). *Le Robert* Dictionary quotes a 1983 usage of *illettrisme*: 'état de ceux qui sont illettrés', and defines *illettré* as 'qui est partiellement incapable de lire et d'écrire'. It is worth noting that in current French usage *lettré* retains the high cultural values of 'literate' in English: 'qui a des lettres, de la culture, du savoir', for which the synonyms given are *cultivé* and *érudit*.
- 4 In his review of the proceedings of the International Symposium for Literacy which was held at Persepolis, Iran, Bataille (1976) confirms Unesco's commitment to literacy as a universal, human right. Its programme *Education for All* (1984) was

modelled on a similarly argued programme within the World Health Organization (WHO), *Health for All*. The WHO had proposed, following its conference on primary health care in Alma Ata (USSR), in 1978, a programme of basic health care to achieve 'a more equitable distribution of health resources throughout the world'. Unesco aimed to achieve a more equitable distribution of educational resources, and both programmes state as their aim 'to enable all people to lead a life which was socially and economically productive'.

See Organisation Mondiale de la Santé (1987) *Evaluation de la stratégie de la santé pour tous d'ici à 2000* Vol. 1, OMS, Genève; Unesco (1984) *Projet de plan à moyen terme, 1984-1989*, Programme II.1, Généralisation de l'Intensification de la lutte contre l'analphabétisme, Paris, Unesco.

- 5 This summary of the main traits of Orality that echoes of the anthropological approach of Lévi-Strauss and Malinowski with which Freire was familiar. Obviously the main source is Ong (1988). It is to be hoped that the summary is not a total injustice to his influential book.
- 6 A detailed exposé of all these elements can be found in Goody (1986), albeit that he considers literacy primarily from a technological rather than a teleological perspective, with little analysis of literacy as Power-Force.
- 7 For a detailed, economic development of this point, see Becker (1975) and Blaug (1966).
- 8 'Framework for Action', Appendix 2 of the Final Report (1990) *Education for All*, Jomtien, New York, Unicef, p. 54.
- 9 An interesting study of 'qualification inflation' can be found in Dore (1976) where he shows how the social justifications for schooling changed through the process which related quantitatively measurable educational achievement to both social mobility and employability.
- 10 The correlation between poverty and illiteracy is made explicitly in the report of ATD Quart-Monde (1980) *Données sur l'illettrisme: le cas français*, Paris, Pierrelaye.

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