

Gramsci, Freire, and Radical Adult Education: A Few 'Blind Spots'

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REFLEXIVE STATEMENT

Ever since my initial engagement in the area of sociology of adult education, Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire have appealed to me as two key figures who can provide theoretical signposts for an exploration of the role that adult education can play in a process of social transformation. I have committed myself to the development of a synthesis project concerning their ideas relevant to adult education. I would argue, however, that in order for a synthesis of their ideas to be relevant to some of the most pressing social concerns of this day and age, one would have to underline certain absences in their work. These 'blind spots,' to borrow bell hooks' (1993) vocabulary, need to be addressed at some length to render their work meaningful.¹ In this essay, I shall be confining myself to an analysis centering around these perceived 'blind spots.'

INTRODUCTION

Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire are often cited as two key figures who provide theoretical formulations pertinent to the development of a theory of radical adult education (Connelly 1992, p. 250). It is not uncommon, in literature dealing with a radical or critical adult education, to find important and often sustained references to both writers (e.g. Youngman 1986; Torres 1990; Brookfield 1993). While the literature relating Freire to adult education has been vast, too vast to be cited here, there have been a few published contributions, in English, dealing with the relationship between Gramsci and adult education (Entwistle 1979; Ireland 1987; Morgan 1987; Armstrong 1989; Apitzsch 1993; Mayo 1994). There have been attempts, in the published literature, to bring the two writers together with a view to providing directions for radical processes of adult education and other forms of social practice (cf. Allman 1988; Leonard 1993). My own work in the sociology of education has also taken me in this direction (Mayo 1988; 1994). This is something I am also attempting to do in my current work.² While I consider the work of these two authors important for the development of a theory of radical adult education,

I shall be restricting myself, in this essay, to drawing out some of the limitations about which, I feel, one must be wary when attempting to incorporate their ideas into a synthesis project. It is only through a consideration of these limitations, or 'blind spots,' that one can start 'reconstituting' the theoretical framework that their ideas provide in order to render it more relevant to contemporary radical and transformative adult education projects.

GRAMSCI: CLASS REDUCTIONISM AND OTHER FORMS OF SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

It can be argued, given the role of leadership which he ascribes to the industrial proletariat in the revolutionary process, that Gramsci's vision of social transformation is, going by Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) terms, 'essentialist,' or more precisely, 'class essentialist'. And even in so far as class is concerned, it focuses primarily on the transformative role of just one of the two main 'subaltern' classes in Italy (the industrial proletariat rather than the peasant class). The peasant class is in no way overlooked in his writings, and constitutes the subject of an unfinished study. Indeed, Gramsci's love of Sardinia is reflected throughout several of his writings, especially his letters, and I should emphasise that he does not romanticise life on the island, bringing out also its brutal aspects (cf. Germino 1990, pp. 1-24). Yet there is little related to the image of the peasant in Gramsci's cultural writings that are of relevance to the creation of a proletarian culture. As Forgacs and Nowell Smith (1985, p. 345) point out, Gramsci attaches too much importance to the written word in his promotion of popular culture (e.g. his discussions on the serial novel). Little consideration seems to be accorded to the rich oral traditions that have always been a feature of cultural production in the Southern Italian regions where access to cultural products, involving the medium of the written word, was limited in view of the high rates of illiteracy prevalent there (ibid., p. 344). As David Forgacs (1988, p. 53) points out, citing the 1911 census, illiteracy among persons over six years of age in Piedmont, where the industrial proletariat was concentrated, was down to 11%. In the South, the proportion of illiteracy was higher, Forgacs (ibid.) stating that, according to the 1911 census, the figure for Sardinia was 58%, which contrasts with the figure of 90% cited by Hoare and Nowell Smith (1971 p. XVIII), while that for Calabria was 70%. In this respect, it would be worth underlining that there is little concerning illiteracy and adult basic education in Gramsci's educational writings. Such absences are remarkable, considering that Gramsci was himself a Southerner and considered The Southern Question of 'primordial importance' in the struggle for the creation of a workers' state.

The limited references to the issue of adult literacy in his writings and his constant focus on cultural activities that emphasise the written word, indicate that the educational requirements of the industrial proletariat were uppermost

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in his mind. He saw the peasant class' role as secondary in importance to that of the northern industrial proletariat. It is to the industrial proletariat, 'the universal class' in the classical Marxist sense, that Gramsci devoted his attention for revolutionary purposes. This is reflected in his cultural and educational concerns. The emphasis he places on the setting up of cultural associations where workers can indulge in free, 'disinterested' discussions, suggests that the people he had in mind were the literate workers of the North. However, irrespective of how literate workers are, one assumes that there has to be some process of mediation that enables them to be able to appropriate critically those elements in the 'canon,' those works that form part of the established 'cultural heritage,' which can be of relevance to them in their quest for establishing hegemony. What role, if any, do the organic intellectuals play in this process of mediation and how do they go about it? What kind of provision ought to be made for those adults who lack the necessary background to be able to critically appropriate this culture? These are questions which, I feel, have to be addressed by people exploring ways of developing forms of cultural production commensurate with the aspirations of a potentially revolutionary class.

It appears that, with respect to the problem of creating a synthesis between the established forms of cultural production and the popular ones, Gramsci has limited himself to indicating what to do and *where* to explore. He has not indicated how to go about it. I feel that this is also a feature of other areas in his work. It can be argued, therefore, that his work in this area is of a tentative and groping nature.

So far we have dealt only with issues relating to social class in Gramsci's work. However, in discussing the relevance of Gramsci's work to the development of a contemporary democratisation project, one has to deal with other issues of difference that have been brought to the forefront of sociological and cultural,³ including, hopefully, adult educational,⁴ debate in more recent times. Of course, it would be ironic to accuse Gramsci of some 'politics of absence' and yet fail to recognise that his voice is also that of a marginalised person, given his location as a disabled, Southern islander, one whose mixed feelings regarding Sardinian popular life has also to be seen in the light of traditional prejudice with which Sardinians regarded and dealt with disabled people – his shocking description of the disabled youth chained within a pigsty is highly indicative in this regard. There was considerable prejudice regarding hunchbacks, like himself, who were believed to have been possessed by evil spirits (Germino 1990, p. 2). It would be grossly unfair, therefore, to infer that Gramsci was not conscious of social difference in his projects, given his own marginalisation as a disabled person – a gobbo (a hunchback) – and a Sardinian.

This having been said, one needs to register absences in his writings for the purpose of underlining their relevance and inspiration for a contemporary project. When dealing with the Factory Council Movement, conceived as a movement of worker education for greater and complete worker control,

Gramsci provides little, if any, indication regarding how traditionally unequal power relations between male and female workers can be improved through a process of education for industrial democracy. And one can argue that gender considerations are not integrated into Gramsci's analysis of oppression even though he has some isolated pieces on the issue.⁵ Gramsci has dealt with the issue of gender in some of his writings, notably the piece on 'Americanism and Fordism' (Gramsci, in Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971) and his review of Henrik Ibsen's *The Doll's House* (Gramsci, in Forgacs and Nowell Smith 1985, p. 70-73). It is stated in Quentin Hoare and Nowell Smith's introduction to the *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, that one of his first public speeches in Turin was on the emancipation of women, a speech that was inspired by Ibsen's play (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, p. xxxi). Gender considerations, however, do not seem to form part of the analyses of those aspects of his work that are of relevance to adult education. This is very much a reflection of the times in which he wrote. As Holub argues:

I do not expect Gramsci to think or act differently from the way he does when it comes to women. If, in spite of a few decades of intensive feminist discourses and practices, many contemporary men often display little feminist consciousness in the practices of their daily lives, despite all theoretical claims to the contrary, and if many of our contemporary women, even some of great repute as feminists, are at times incapable of basic forms of solidarity when it comes to some very real male power relations that continue to marginalize women, so that it seems indeed that a new poverty of feminism has arrived, I find it difficult to insist on feminist practices when it comes to a thinker and a man such as Gramsci whose experiences were not confronted, the way ours now are, with a series of continuous radical, complex and extensive feminist discourses. (1992, p. 195)

The same can be said of the issue of racism and most particularly the eurocentrism that is a hallmark of Gramsci's writings on culture, an obvious example of which is provided by his controversial piece on education in which most of the discussion regarding content centres around the Western classical writings. Echoing Holub, one may argue that one should not have expected anything different from him, given the era in which he wrote and given the fact that, even today, despite the experience of the Civil Rights Movement and the pressures posed by anti-racist writers, activists, and movements, as well as the multi-racial nature of most Western societies (which could not have been the case in Italy in Gramsci's time), eurocentrism remains pervasive in western institutions. There are those who would argue that 'Eurocentrism makes no economic sense in a world where, within 25 years, the combined gross national product of East Asia will likely be larger than Europe's and twice that of the US. In such a world, [Eurocentrism] will only be an impediment to the chief goal of every company: the maximisation of profits' (Rieff 1993).⁶ In my view,

however, this argument fails to consider a very basic point; namely, that the quests for larger markets and greater profits often lead to attempts to generate more eurocentric modes of consumption! It could well lead to situations characterised by the 'westernization' of indigenous cultures.

Although one may not have expected Gramsci to have acted differently to the issues of racism and eurocentrism, given the historical period in which he lived, one would do well to point out that there is a particular form of regionalism (cf. Apsitzsch 1993) that is endemic to Italian society and to which people like Gramsci, himself a southern islander, must have been exposed. Gramsci himself rebels against this in his writings and inveighed against those from the North and other parts of the Italian mainland who would attribute situations of poverty and material hardship, deriving from an unjust and exploitative social system, to genetic inferiority (Germino 1990, p. 11). He must have been confronted by the issue of whether Southern workers, with a recent peasant past, gained acceptance in a workers' environment located in the North of Italy. To what extent did the traditional North/South form of racism rear its ugly head in the Turin factories? What role should the factory councils, as adult education agencies, play in combatting this form of 'racism' generated by such regionalism? These are, I feel, pertinent questions in view of concerns that are constantly expressed within the trade union movement with respect to its often patriarchal, racist, and homophobic nature. And regarding the issue of homophobia, one may argue that Gramsci does denote, in the piece on 'Americanism and Fordism,' a fine understanding of the connection between sexual regulation and the demands of industrial production (Gramsci, in Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971). The problem with Gramsci's views, though, is, as Holub (1992, p. 198) underlines, his justification of such a connection, his legitimization of certain forms of sexual discipline, and his failure to distinguish between different sexualities and their social and cultural effects.

The alleged high incidence of sexual, homophobic, and racial harassment taking place at the workplace make it a task that I would consider of primordial importance for any movement/organisation seeking social change. I would argue that these issues will have to be dealt with in adult education programmes connected with such movements/organisations, including trade unions which have often been faulted in this respect (cf. Taking Liberties Collective 1989, p. 124). They will also have to be dealt with by adult educators whose intention it is to provide a democratic adult education experience and who are, however, employed in community colleges and other established institutions where the emphasis is placed on training for work, probably as part and parcel of a new *vocationalism* (a lot of formalised adult learning in the United States is a form of technical training).⁷ It is, after all, not uncommon to find educators inspired by radically democratic ideals who work within institutions harbouring an opposing ideology! Such educators would be operating 'in and against' the system, or as Freire often puts it, in a situation of being *tactically inside* and *strategically outside* the system.

In both cases, I would argue that, unless differential social locations are considered, there would be severe limits to the extent in which adult educators acting as organic intellectuals can help mitigate potential barriers between them and the learners. They may be 'organic' to them in terms of class, even though there could be barriers also in this regard, since commitment to the working class does not necessarily mean that one lives like members of this class, but estranged from them, or, at best, a number of them, in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Failure to account for such differential location can lead to elements of domestication emerging from an ostensibly emancipatory practice.

FREIRE AND SOCIAL DIFFERENCE

Unlike Gramsci, Freire takes account of social difference in his writings, referring in his discussions, especially the 'talking books,' to the situation of women, gays/lesbians, ethnic minorities, blacks, etc. The reasons for this can be various. One may argue that Freire represents a voice from the so called 'Third World,' and such voices have traditionally been marginalised within the context of dominative, eurocentric regimes of truth. He also happens to live in an era when the issue of difference is affirmed in the radical sections of cultural discourse. His conception of oppression extends beyond the notion of class. It has, however, been a standard critique of Freire that, despite his constant references to social movements in his English Language publications, there is no sustained discussion on gender, race, and sexuality issues. These issues and movements are mentioned only in passing (Mayo 1993, p. 18). One may go so far as to argue that, despite his many references to class in his early work (thirty eight, according to Freire himself), even this particular aspect of social differentiation is not analysed in a sustained way. And even when referring to the oppressed in the impoverished *Nord-este*, he does not differentiate in terms of race, despite the fact that Blacks and indigenous people suffered considerable oppression during the period. One wonders whether, in his literacy work in this area of Brazil, when he used the dominant Portuguese language, account was taken of the different literacies engaged in by members of different tribes. One is tempted to argue that this is a 'blind spot' in Freire similar to the one concerning peasants and literacy/ies in the work of Antonio Gramsci.

I have argued, elsewhere, that a sustained analysis of particular forms of oppression is not available, in Freire's English Language volumes, even when the situation clearly lends itself to it (Mayo 1992, p. 80). A case in point is Freire's transcribed conversation with the late Myles Horton (Horton and Freire 1990). It is a well known fact that Myles Horton was a social activist *cum* educator whose work in the 50s was closely connected with the Civil Rights Movement (Adams 1972; Peters and Bell 1987; Horton and Freire 1990). The citizenship schools, coordinated through Highlander, the centre he founded, constituted a means whereby Afro-Americans attained the basic level of

literacy required of them so that they could become eligible to vote. Yet, despite Horton's close connection with the Civil Rights Movement, the issue of racism is not explored in any depth (Mayo 1992, p. 80) in his book with Freire. References to Afro-American educators like Bernice Robinson are made only in the context of a demonstration as to how one can be effective as a pedagogue working with underprivileged groups. I have argued that such a sustained analysis of racism would have presented Freire-inspired adult educators with a wonderful opportunity to examine closely the application of Freire's ideas within the context of one of those social movements which, Freire has been arguing, constitute the more likely agents of social change (ibid.).

Gender is another issue which, to date, Freire has not dealt with in a sustained way, and as part of an integrated analysis, in any volume of his in the English Language. Feminists have, over the years, pointed to the invisibility of gender issues in such influential works as *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, as well as the sexist language used throughout.⁸ bell hooks, one of his admirers who has engaged some of his ideas in her earlier work (hooks 1988), refers to the 'phallogocentric paradigm of liberation' (1993, p. 148) that informs Freire's work. She regards this phallogocentrism as the 'blind spot in the vision of men who have profound insight,' and includes Freire, together with Memmi and Fanon, among such people (ibid.). Attention (Taylor 1993; Mayo 1993) has also been drawn to the patriarchal settings of some of the codifications that have been printed in one of his early works (Freire 1973). Freire, while acknowledging that he was not 'acutely aware' of gender issues, when writing his most celebrated work, argued a point that Holub (1992) makes with respect to Gramsci, namely 'that the knowledge base with respect to gender oppression we have today, thanks to the great and comprehensive works of feminists, was not available to me then nor was it available to many women' (Freire, in Freire and Macedo 1993, p. 173). The problem though is that a sustained analysis on gender is no more to be found in his subsequent volumes in English.

One of the very few pieces, in the English language, where Freire deals with gender in a sustained way, is a recently published conversation with his long time friend, translator and co-author, Donaldo P. Macedo (Freire and Macedo 1993). It is ironic that the first time he engaged in a conversation, in the English language, on this issue, it had to be with a man. And my contention, in this respect, is that, being a man, one can be in solidarity with women in their particular struggles but one cannot share the pain of their oppression, the kind of pain which bell hooks (1988) writes about. There seems to be a limit to the kind of 'border crossing,' to borrow Giroux's (1992) phrase, one can engage in as far as this issue is concerned. This is why I winced at Freire's assertion: "I am too a woman" (Freire in Freire and Macedo 1993, p. 175), an assertion that smacks of presumption on his part. I personally feel that, to be a woman, one has to share the pain and knowledge of gender oppression. It entails more than being in solidarity with women! In this respect, even a discussion on

racism with Horton, a white male, would have been characterised by the lack of that pain likely to be forthcoming from someone directly suffering from racial oppression. Of course, one may argue that, in his struggles in support of better working conditions for miners in Wilder and, later, for racial justice, Horton did place himself on the line, risking his life with respect to the first struggle, given the fate suffered by other people involved, notably Barney Graham, the miners' leader, who was eventually killed in the most brutal manner. Horton was even arrested in Wilder and charged with gathering and disseminating information (Adams 1972, p. 104). At the time of the 'citizenship schools,' Horton also suffered the stigma of 'communist infiltrator,' with all the connotations of being 'unamerican' and a 'menace to Constitutional government' (ibid., p. 113) that it carried. The work carried out for the purpose of achieving interracial progress, naturally, did invite repression – drawing 'fire from Southern white racists' (ibid., p. 112). One can perhaps speak of pain here.

The pain I was referring to earlier, however, is the everyday pain suffered by underprivileged people as a result of their social location – the everyday pain suffered by a black person who sees doors being closed before her or him because of the colour of the skin. This is a pain I can only acknowledge but neither feel nor understand given my location as a white, heterosexual male. And here one must therefore note the social difference that lies between Horton and the people he supported, a difference he himself acknowledged. As Adams remarks:

Horton realized Highlander could help lay the groundwork for the struggle, but they couldn't take much part in it. They were white and the struggle was Black. Even more important, the leadership was now Black. The people were leading themselves. (1972, p. 114)

Horton realised the race barriers that existed between him, together with the other Whites at Highlander, and the Blacks with respect to the Citizenship programme. As Adams underlines:

Horton never entered a Citizenship School classroom as a teacher, and, as the idea spread, he discouraged other well meaning whites from doing so too. He felt the presence of any white stranger in the classroom altered, even stopped the naturalness of learning. Citizenship schools were run by Blacks from the start (1972, p. 112).

Given such an awareness, Horton would have recognised the limits being imposed on a discussion on racism, limits that would have made him wary of the danger of 'speaking on behalf of' someone else. This is not to say, however, that, in a work like the Horton-Freire book, the issue of racism should be avoided. On the contrary, I feel that it should be taken up, especially if, as in

Horton's case, the experiences of the citizenship schools lead to such a discussion. I would argue that, in these situations, the limits of the discussion should be acknowledged and underlined, limits which Horton acknowledged with respect to his engagement in anti-racist struggle in the 50s and early 60s.

The pain and knowledge resulting from a first hand and ongoing experience of oppression can have a direct bearing on the conversation and on the nature of engagement with Freire regarding the important issues of gender and race. For all his conversation books in the English language, a style of writing for which he seems to have developed a predilection, Freire has yet to engage, in a publication of this kind, with either a woman or a person of colour, a point that I have registered elsewhere (Mayo 1991, p. 82). In this respect, bell hooks' (1993, p. 154) open invitation for him to engage in a 'talking book' with her ('my great wish') is something I would like to see Freire take up. Such an engagement would serve as a source for further examination of the suitability of his radical pedagogical ideas for an adult education project intended as a vehicle to confront the issues of racism and patriarchy, besides other forms of oppression (Mayo 1991, p. 82).

Furthermore, when he deals with the issue of differential location between educator and educatee, he does so only in terms of class. In *Pedagogy in Process*, (Freire 1978), he echoes Amilcar Cabral in referring to the concept of 'class suicide.' Yet 'class suicide' strikes me as being very difficult to accomplish, especially when there are so many factors, like one's habitus (values, norms, taste for culture, 'master patterns' of thinking and speaking, relationship to language and culture, etc.), one's educational background, the nature of one's everyday work (especially cerebral work), possibly even one's acquired coherent and systematic view of the world (Gramsci's notion of 'good sense'), that can distinguish the adult educator from the working class participants with whom he or she is working. Writing in a piece in which he dwells on Gramsci's and Freire's influence on the Warwick School of Social Work, Peter Leonard (1993) states:

As intellectual defectors we faced, but never fully escaped from, the dangers inherent in traditional bourgeois intellectual activity - élitism, the cult of the expert, the belief in the superiority of mental over manual labor. (p. 166)

As for 'habitus', bourgeois formed educators will probably find it extremely difficult to break away from it. 'Habitus' is considered by Bourdieu and Passeron to entail 'irreversible' processes of learning which condition 'the level of reception and degree of assimilation of the messages produced and diffused by the culture industry, and, more generally, of any intellectual or semi-intellectual message' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, pp. 43-44). While the French sociologists seem to be too deterministic in this regard, they do stress an aspect of our class location as educators that provides a formidable barrier in the way of committing class suicide.

On the other hand, I feel that a position of marginality, with respect to the system, can possibly help draw the educator closer to the learner. Working in a position of marginality seems to be or have been the case with a number of adult educators.⁹ The case of Raymond Williams stands out in this respect. Referring to the Oxford University Delegacy for Extra-Mural Study, that worked in collaboration with the Workers' Education Association (WEA) and with whom Raymond Williams was employed for several years, McIlroy (1993) states:

In 1946 tutors did not enjoy the same tenure, facilities, or opportunities for promotion as internal lecturers. But by 1961 assimilation was advanced, although it was only in 1960 that Williams secured a form of promotion. This reflected and reinforced the marginality of university adult education. Critics felt that this work 'is not of university quality.' It was noted that 'extra-mural tutors, many of whom work at places remote from the university have little effective contact with their internal colleagues and are not in fact regarded as of equivalent status.' At Oxford, Frank Jessup recalled staff tutors in the post-war period as being connected with the university but not of it, 'irregulars skirmishing on the periphery.' (p. 275)

In such situations, there could be a mutual feeling, between educator and educatee, of marginality within the system, that can serve as a means of drawing them closer. One must acknowledge, however, that there would still be differences in the degree of marginality experienced by the two. There would still be differences in the degree of marginality experienced by different types of adult educators. Barriers would, therefore, still remain.

WAR OF POSITION: CONTESTATION AND CO-OPTATION

Freire-inspired pedagogy can be taken up as a strategy for transformation even by progressive educators working within the state system, attempting in Freire's words, to be 'tactically inside and strategically outside' the system. Of course, the task, here, has its problems and the threat of co-optation is ever present. After all, people who seek to strengthen the system often accommodate elements of the oppositional discourse, leaving out some important, threatening ingredient, as part of their own 'war of position.' This having been said, those working 'in and against' the system should be wary of the tensions created by gender, race, and other differences, between educators and educatees, tensions that could lead to domesticating forces emerging from a liberatory practice (Mayo 1993, pp. 18, 19). These tensions can be encountered in most situations but most particularly when operating within the system, since the educators involved would not have the freedom to choose where and with whom they are going to carry out their adult education work. A male teacher

can be assigned a class entirely made up of females. A White teacher can be assigned a class of Black students. A strong sensitivity to such tensions is therefore warranted, if one is to work effectively 'in and against' the system. Weiler (1991) is instructive on this issue, as it affects teaching both within and outside the system:

Without naming these sources of tension, it is difficult to address or build upon them to challenge existing structures of power and subjectivities. Without recognizing more clearly the implicit power and limitations of the position of teacher, calls for a collective liberation or for opposition to oppression slide over the surface tensions that may emerge among teachers and students as subjects with conflicting interests and histories and with different kinds of knowledge and power. (pp. 454, 455)

There is little in Freire that deals with such an issue. Weiler's (1991) quote appeared in the context of a critique of Freire on these grounds. She argues that his dichotomy of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' is somewhat simplistic and that it reveals a failure, on his part, to indicate the multiplicity of subjectivities involved in the learning process. A person can, after all, be oppressed in one situation and an oppressor in another. I would submit that failure to take account of the complexity of the nature of oppression, and of the interchangeability of roles between oppressor and oppressed, is one of the lacunae in both Gramsci's and Freire's writings. A radical adult education theory would have to address this issue in a substantive and, therefore, no token manner. It would therefore have to go beyond their work to take into account the writings and practice of Weiler (1991) herself, a host of other writers in the areas of feminist and anti-racist education, including people who draw on either Gramsci's or Freire's (e.g. bell hooks 1988, 1993) work, and, to a certain extent, the work of major exponents in the area of critical pedagogy for whom Freire, and, to a certain extent, Gramsci, are constant sources of reference (cf. Aronowitz and Giroux 1991; Giroux 1992; Shor 1992; McLaren and da Silva 1993).

GLOBAL CAPITALISM

One other limitation concerns the issue of global capitalism (cf. Ross and Trachte 1990). I would argue that global capitalism can have a devastating impact on the allocation of public funds to social programmes, including adult education programmes, intended as a response by the State, in Carnoy and Levin's (1985) terms, to popular democratic demands and struggles. In Ross and Trachte's (1990) terms, the 'rhetoric of the business climate' (p.68) would take precedence over concerns for democracy. This immediately calls to mind Freire's recent work as Education Secretary in the Municipal Government of Sao Paulo. The tension between the quest for better education and better working conditions, on the one hand, and the demands of foreign mobile capital

must have been felt and continue to be felt in this Brazilian city. As Ross and Trachte (1990) argue: 'Manufacturing capital has been attracted to the Third World precisely because the workforce receives low wages, has few rights and offers little threat to the interest of capital' (p. 112). Can the kind of democratic social relations, which Freire's policies in Sao Paulo sought to promote, begin to be implemented in such a way that they begin to pose a serious threat to the interests of mobile capital? Can they, in the circumstances, survive 'the withholding of investment by global firms, credit denial by the International Monetary Fund and global banks, and economic and political pressures by core states' (ibid.)?¹⁰ To what extent can radical adult education contribute successfully to a process of social transformation, given such a scenario? With regard to Gramsci's theory of power and the State, as well as its pertinence to contemporary reality, is it still useful to talk in terms of limiting oneself to surrounding the locus of power through a 'war of position' engaged in and across the entire complex of 'civil society,' when the locus of power has to be seen in the context of larger, international forces? Given such a scenario, would there be validity in the suggestion that Gramsci's concept of an 'historic bloc' must transcend its 'national-popular' character to begin to signify an alliance of movements, including international labour movements acting in response to international capital, across national boundaries? One can argue that the foregoing assumes only one facet of capitalism. There can be a variety of motives and strategies often bordering on the contradictory. It is perhaps these contradictions that need to be explored/exploited by agencies striving for social change.¹¹

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

There is another issue which, I feel, should be touched upon briefly in this essay. It concerns the ever-increasing role of information technology, itself a product of capitalism that can prove to be an instrument of domination, but which can be critically appropriated in the interest of subaltern groups. Gramsci's emphasis on journalism (Gramsci 1971; Gramsci, in Forgacs and Nowell Smith 1985) and the creation of such periodicals of working-class culture as the *Proletkult*, in Russia, *Clarté*, in France, and *L'Ordine Nuovo*, in Italy, raise the issue of the working class gaining critical access to the media, mainly newspapers that featured among the most important sources of communication at the time. But times have changed since Gramsci's period of writing. Much more sophisticated communication technologies are in place nowadays. They were already beginning to emerge at the time. In Gramsci's time, radio and cinema were the emerging forms. Alas, they are given little consideration in the *Quaderni*. As Forgacs and Nowell Smith point out:

His concept of culture became richer and fuller, but it retained uncriticized residues of its original bias towards the written word as the core of cultural

formation in individuals and in society. It is significant that the emerging forms of radio and cinema receive minimal attention in the Notebooks. (1985, p. 13)

The lack of sufficient attention devoted by Gramsci to these emerging forms of technology is something which, though understandable, since Gramsci was very much a creature of the particular historical conjuncture in which he lived, must be registered when embarking on a project involving the incorporation of his ideas. However, given that the radio was an emerging form, one would have expected some consideration by Gramsci of the possibilities that it offered for any future dissemination of information. One expects such consideration from a person whose exploration of different forms of adult education for workers was vast enough to include the setting up of a correspondence school for the PCI, for which school he was also entrusted with the task of preparing materials (Buttigieg 1992, p. 83).

Similarly, I would regard Freire's lack of analysis, in his English language volumes, of contemporary forms of information technologies as another 'blind spot.' How can they be utilised in the context of adult education strategies for social transformation? One would expect more from Freire than from Gramsci on this issue, given the contemporary historical context in which the former lives. Perhaps it could be argued that part of the 'war of position,' for a movement or organisation striving for social transformation, in this day and age, lies in adult educational experiences intended to provide people with greater and critical access to information technologies (cf. Baldacchino 1991). Access to such technologies would constitute one of the means for greater international mobilisation of resources¹² to counter the ever growing threat to democracy posed by the increasing internationalisation of capital.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, I have argued that there are pressing concerns, in this day and age, that need to be addressed if one is to suggest guidelines for the creation of projects intended to contribute towards the generation of greater social justice. I have shown how these concerns are not addressed by Gramsci and Freire, two of the most cited writers in the contemporary debate on adult education. In order to take on board their several valid ideas, one must engage critically with their work. And one important aspect of this critical engagement would, in my view, be that of constantly registering and politicising their absent discourses. In this respect, adult education theorists would do well to supplement the insights of these two white male figures, who, as indicated, suffered from their own particular forms of marginalisation, with those deriving from writings and practices in such relevant fields as feminisms, anti-racism, cultural studies,¹³ and critical pedagogy. I would point, here, particularly to those writings by the many people, in these fields, who themselves draw on the influences of either

(e.g. Stuart Hall, bell hooks) or both (e.g. Giroux, Shor) of the two theorists analysed in this paper. I feel that one must be sensitized to and address these blind spots to ensure that one is not engaging in a totalising discourse when confronting oppression. One would do well to heed the advice given by Raymond Williams with respect to such traditional subaltern institutions as working-class organisations which he argued, should be renewed 'from top to bottom and to urgently engage with new causes and new movements based on feminism, anti-racism, ecology, to reconnect with the general interest' (McIlroy 1993, p. 277). One can take this a step further, as Westwood (1993) has done, citing Bauman, and argue that we must constantly be made aware that roads which have often been regarded as the uncontroversially appropriate ones to take can indeed be slippery (p. 336). The new postmodernist mode of thinking 'calls all in doubt.' Strategies pursued and theories relied on need to be constantly re-examined in a process of ongoing critique. No matter how insightful and resourceful they are, the works of Gramsci and Freire, just as those of other advocates of social change, are not immune to this process.

NOTES

- 1 This paper developed out of a short three-page section in Mayo (1994). It therefore incorporates material from this section. I am indebted to *International Journal of Lifelong Education* for granting me authorisation to use material from this paper. I should also like to thank Prof. David W. Livingstone and Prof. Angela Miles, from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), Toronto, as well as Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino, from the University of Malta, for commenting on an earlier draft of this paper. I should also like to thank the two reviewers, Professor Bruce A. Arrigo and Professor Dion Dennis, for their helpful comments and suggestions for improvement. Any remaining lacunae are entirely my responsibility.
- 2 My doctoral thesis in the Department of Sociology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education consists of a Gramsci-Freire synthesis project relating to adult education.
- 3 There is a vast literature which emphasises the need to incorporate insights gained from feminism/s, anti-racist struggles, and struggles against other forms of oppression. See, for example, Giroux (1992). A more recent attempt to reconstruct theories of social and cultural reproduction in education in terms of parallel determinations caused by class, gender, and race, as opposed to 'relatively closed structuralist models based on economic and class determination,' is provided in Morrow and Torres (forthcoming).
- 4 See, for instance, Thompson (1983, 1988); Rockhill (1987); Westwood (1991); Ball (1992); Blundell (1992); Hart (1992); Schedler (1993); Brookfield (1993).
- 5 For an interesting discussion around the issue of Gramsci and feminism, see the conclusion to Holub (1992, pp. 191-203), in which, following the maxim 'the personal is political,' she attaches importance to two key women in Gramsci's life, Julia and Tatania Schucht.
- 6 I am indebted to Prof. Dion Dennis for bringing this argument to my notice.
- 7 I am indebted to Prof. Dion Dennis for this point.
- 8 A recently published version of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* sought to remedy the situation through the use of inclusive language. While I consider this to be a welcome step, one must emphasise that it is at the level of ideology that much of the work concerning patriarchy needs to be done. In this respect, I anxiously await the English version of *A Pedagogy of Hope*, which involves revisiting *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* after a period of over twenty years. This publication was not available to me at the time of my submission of the essay.
- 9 Because of the often non-formal nature of adult education and the engagement of volunteers in this sector, adult educators are often regarded as of inferior status to educators in the

- formal system, the latter often regarded as professionals for having gone through a period of professional preparation, ranging from a teacher certificate course to a B.Ed. degree programme.
- 10 This section on Sao Paulo and the issue of mobile capital has been reproduced from a recently published work of mine (Mayo 1993, p. 22).
- 11 I am indebted to Dr. Godfrey Baldacchino for this point.
- 12 Holub (1992) concludes her study on Gramsci by stressing the point of international collaboration within the context of feminist struggles 'which the rapid dissemination of information technology more powerfully enables as each day passes' (p. 203).
- 13 For an account of the 'turn to Gramsci' in British cultural studies, see Turner (1990); Morrow (1991); Harris (1992).

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