

The overall result is an encyclopedia that is basically an accessible inventory of a great deal of information (as any encyclopedia must be) but that also offers a considerable opportunity for thoughtful engagement with the province. There is no correct way of making an encyclopedia, but – given the objective to produce an accessible work that a great many British Columbians

would use, enjoy, and be instructed by – I find it hard to imagine a more successful result than this one. The attention it has attracted since its publication is eminently deserved, and academics who want fuller and more nuanced treatments need to go ahead and write them. Few if any of our works will find the audience that this book deserves.

The Paulo Freire Reader

Ana Maria Araújo Freire and Donaldo Macedo, Editors
New York: Continuum, 2000. 291 pp. US\$18.95 paper.

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PAULO FREIRE WAS a passionate educator, one who embodied a love of humanity and commitment to social justice; and he was someone who played a significant role in my own life. I had the good fortune to take courses from him at the beginning of my graduate studies in Adult Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC). In the summer of 1984, Paulo Freire came to teach a course at UBC. It was my first master's degree course in adult education, and, at that point, I had only heard of Freire in passing. My mother had become very ill, and her health crisis was foremost in my mind as I began my graduate work. Within this context, I was oblivious to the excitement of his visit and his iconic status, and I asked him many questions. It is his grace, passion, and care that I remember from that summer as he listened deeply to my queries and responded with care and wisdom. In the following year, I

had the privilege of again witnessing his dialogic approach, this time in a seminar in Recife, Brazil, his hometown. I was part of a small group of UBC students who toured Brazil studying its literacy policy and programs. Freire's ideas – that all education is political and key to achieving social justice – became the foundation for my master's thesis and have stayed with me as a source of inspiration and support. He died on 2 May 1997, but his ideas remain refreshing, radical, and important.

The Paulo Freire Reader begins with a forty-four-page introduction by Anna Maria Arujo Freire (his second wife) and Donaldo Macedo (a long-time colleague) that outlines Freire's life, ideas, career, and awards (he was once nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize). In this introduction, a dominant objective becomes clear – to situate Freire's writings and thought within the context of his life and to argue that

his work is more than a method; rather, it is a philosophy of education whose purpose is social justice. We learn details of Freire's life as well as his approach to writing. "Facing his desk, leaning over a leather support, with unruled paper and in his own handwriting, almost always without erasures or corrections, he would write out his text, encircling his topic, going deeper into it until he had fully exploited it" (34). The introduction presents something of a challenge as it moves between descriptive biographical details (sometimes presented as long lists within a single paragraph) and a passionate argument against the instrumental perspective of Freire's work and the poor state of literacy education in the United States. Schools of education are condemned for their failure to provide teachers with the tools to help themselves and their students engage in critical thinking. There are harsh words for experiential education as well, particularly for those activities that reduce Freire's notion of dialogue to an uncritical appeal to the discourse of experience.

The remaining chapters of the book include excerpts from Freire's most significant writings. First on offer are the first two chapters of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which outlines the foundation of Freire's understanding of oppression and the relationship between the oppressed and their oppressors. An excerpt from *Education for Critical Consciousness* constitutes the next chapter in the reader. In this selection, Freire discusses his design for literacy programs and his notion of creating a dialectical solidarity between reading the world and reading the word. The third chapter presents the introduction to *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau*. Freire emphasizes the difference be-

tween transplanting and reinventing a method, and the necessity of ensuring that the process is grounded in the particular context, culture, and history of that country. The goal does not concern giving knowledge; rather, it concerns returning knowledge in an organized form.

The next excerpt is from *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*. Here Freire (in dialogue with Donald Macedo) continues with reflections upon his experiences in Guinea-Bissau, discussing the problems and "failure" of that literacy project – a failure that he believes stemmed from Portuguese being the only language used in the program. It is impossible, Freire asserts, to decolonize people using the same medium that colonized them. The fifth chapter in the reader includes a selection from *Learning to Question: A Pedagogy of Liberation*. Here Freire, in dialogue with Antonio Faundez, discusses the experience of being an exile and his work with the World Council of Churches while he lived in Geneva. The importance of recognizing the signs of resistance, and of avoiding authoritarian proposals for action that ignore resistance, is part of this discussion, as is the educative power of questions. He comments sadly on how education is now dominated by a concern with providing answers rather than with asking questions. He refers to this as the "castration of curiosity" (219). The challenges of urban education are discussed in the next excerpt, which is taken from *Pedagogy of the City*, another "talking book" within which he responds to questions from Terra Nuova concerning his view of the problems facing Brazil and his process of becoming an educator.

In the fourth chapter, which is taken from *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving*

Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire reflects upon the philosophical foundation for his literacy method, discussing the importance of content, dialogue between teachers and students, and what he means by "banking education." The final chapter of the reader includes three sections from *Pedagogy of the Heart*. The collapse of the left and the rise of the right are the focus of these pages, as is a plea for the left to work towards creating "unity within diversity" and developing a radical experience of tolerance – something Freire refers to as being "impatiently patient." Freire criticizes the sectarianism of the left – its tendency to defend its positions even when its errors are clear – and calls for greater humility.

Moving through this series of excerpts, written at different times in Freire's life, provides a sense of his philosophy and method as a creative and lived endeavour. This is a book I

would recommend, with some reservations. Some reorganizing of the introductory chapter, with background information on the editors as well as information regarding the selection of excerpts, would have made the book more accessible. Short introductions at the beginning of each chapter, situating the excerpt in time and space, would have strengthened the text. This should be a required introductory reader for teacher training programs, where it could act as a tool to engage in dialogue about what it means to be an educator. "Any education based on standardization, which is laid bare in advance, on routine in which everything is predetermined, is bureaucratizing and anti-democratic" (228). Freire's ideas are a welcome antidote to the economic rationality dominating educational discourse, clarifying what it means to engage in education as a practice of freedom.