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In The Shadow of Freire:

Popular Educators and Literacy in Northeast Brazil

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Peter Lownds

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

In the Shadow of Freire:

Popular Educators and Literacy in Northeast Brazil

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Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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This dissertation examines the history and legacy of Paulo Freire's Literacy Methods, his involvement with the Popular Culture Movement in Recife, and the philosophy and mechanics of the early 'Reading Circle' experiments in Recife and Angicos as well as the Method's planned national rollout, curtailed by the Brazilian military coup of 1964. Throughout the first section, I interweave scenes from my early years as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Olinda, Pernambuco, 1966-1968. The cultural and historical background of Freire's 'problem-solving' pedagogy is explored, especially the 'slavocratic' practices of the Portuguese colonizers who created the 'culture of silence' Freirian pedagogy was designed to combat.

The case against Freire is discussed, beginning with charges of cowardice, subversion and traitorous behavior leveled by the Brazilian military after Freire was exiled, critique of Freire's 'directive' pedagogy by Brazilian observers of Freire's early

experiments and, more recently, charges of manipulation and hypocrisy by Diana Coben and C.A. Bowers.

I posit Freire as a Romantic-Utopian in the line of J-J Rousseau and the socialist craftsman, William Morris, whose romantic, 19th century connection to the English working class resembles Freire's 20th century Catholic-Marxist mystique. I discuss the 'Citizen School' proposal of Freire's collaborator/successor. Moacir Gadotti, describe the work of the Paulo Freire Institute of São Paulo and several 'utopian' projects: the Unified Educational Center (CEUs), Educator Cities and Children's Participatory Budget, with which the PFI is involved.

My units of analysis are portraits of popular educators in Recife and Olinda: Cecy Prestrello, the founder of the NGO, *Coletivo Mulher Vida* (Woman Life Collective), who employs what she calls the "pedagogy of affection" to deal with issues of sexual harassment, child labor and sex tourism, Guiomar Allbuquerque Barbosa, popular educator-turned-director of the Norma Coelho School in Peixinhos, Professor João Francisco de Souza, a long-time champion of EJA as Secretary of Education in Olinda and as Director of the Education Center at UFPE and Danilson Pinto, a CUT educator-activist and community organizer. Through participant observation, translation of Portuguese-language texts and documents and interviews with Brazilian popular educators and social observers, I discuss municipal EJA projects in Olinda and Recife, a literacy program in the *zona da mata* and several nascent utopian projects in the south Brazil.

VITA

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1969	B.A., English Literature, Yale College New Haven, CT
1998	M.A., Latin American Studies University of California, Los Angeles
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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Lownds, Peter (1999) “Notas de um educador popular em Los Angeles: uma leitura do mundo dos imigrantes latino-americanos no sul da Califórnia,” published in *Paulo Freire e a Agenda da Educação Latino-Americana no Século XXI* (Buenos Aires: CLACSO)

_____ (September, 2002). Third International Paulo Freire Forum, UCLA, , presented a paper, “A Report from Olinda: Scenes from the Barricades”, based on my pilot study of popular educators in Olinda, July 2002.

_____ (March, 2003). Comparative International Education Society Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, presented a paper, “Politics of Difference and Education: A Freirian Approach and Possibilities in North & South”, as part of a panel from the Paulo Freire Institute.

_____ (September, 2003). International Sociological Association Midterm

Conference, Universidade Lusófona, Lisbon, presented an updated version of “A Report from Olinda” and was one of the members of a plenary panel on “Critical Education & Utopia, Emergent Perspectives for the 21st Century” with Carlos Alberto Torres (moderator), José Eustáquio Romão (Brazil) and Josep Aparício Guadas (Spain).

_____(November, 2003). Comparative International Education Society, Regional Conference, USC, , presented a paper, “¡Me reconozco! Photography as Critical Consciousness” as part of a panel from the Paulo Freire Institute.

_____(January-June, 2003). Co-produced and moderated six seminars on Paulo Freire’s life and work for the Clinical Faculty of the Teacher Education Program, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, UCLA.

_____(August, 2003). Paulo Freire for the Classroom, UCLA, co-produced and led a three-day Summer Workshop on practical applications of Freirian pedagogy for UCLA Teacher Education Program graduates.

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Chapter One: Introduction, Background and Roadmap

1.1 Introduction

The following dissertation is an examination of the emancipatory pedagogy of Paulo Freire, focusing on the time and place it was formulated and field tested (Northeast Brazil, 1960-1964) and investigating indications of its ‘reinvention’ in that same place four decades later by a handful of popular educators I have come to think of as ‘passionate pedagogues.’ My research indicates that Freirian principals are currently being used as the theoretical basis for teacher training in Youth and Adult Education and the production and diffusion of a wide range of didactic materials at the Education Center of the Federal University of Pernambuco. UFPE is the direct descendant of the University of Recife, where in the early 1960s Freire was the Director of the Education Extension Service and developed his ‘education as the practice of freedom’ methodology.

My dissertation has two goals: first, to examine the historical, political and ideological roots of Freirian pedagogy and, second, to explore the current adaptation of the so-called ‘Freire Method’ as the philosophical and practical basis of formal and non-formal EJA (Youth and Adult Education) programs in and around his native city. Freire’s original, ‘problem-posing’ approach to the act of reading required that educators investigate ‘the world’ of literacy-learners in order to understand the vocabulary and beliefs of their particular community before they began to collaborate on the imbricated acts of reading and writing. It promised to turn people who had lived as objects into subjects. It provided exercises, and techniques through which they came to understand the reasons for their oppression. Dialogue between *educador* and *educando* (teacher and student) was supposed to provide a bidirectional conduit for ideas and experience, challenging the prevalence of what Freire called *educação bancária* (banking education) where teachers

deposited hegemonic knowledge in the epistemic ‘accounts’ of accepting and acritical students.

Most adult classrooms that I observed in Brazil were discouraging examples of this tradition. Confronting working-class youth and adults in the evening after spending the day with their children in chaotic, understaffed public schools, the teachers transmitted the “overwhelming boredom, uninterest and apathy”¹ of ‘banking’ pedagogy mixed with resentment. Add disaffected, scholastically marginal and chronically unemployed youth and adults who come to EJA as a last resort and you have a combustible blend. One evening I watched a young woman use a pocketknife to sharpen her pencil with such ferocious intensity that I feared for the life of her teacher who, minutes later, announced she felt ill and went home.

Although much has been written about Freirian pedagogy and its impact, or lack of impact, on world education and on the use of literacy as a tool for social and political empowerment, no one, to my knowledge, has written anything in English about its *in situ* application since Cynthia Brown’s pamphlet, “Literacy in 30 Hours: Paulo Freire’s Process in Northeast Brazil” was published by the Alternative Schools Network of Chicago in 1978. I have attempted to fill that critical lacuna by examining documents, artifacts and accounts by Freire’s comrades and contemporaries and by reading, interviewing and observing a number of popular educators who invoke the critical pedagogy associated with his name.

This dissertation is intentionally dialogical and polyphonic. I have translated dozens of Brazilian and Spanish-language sources into English, taped and transcribed hours of interviews with teachers in Olinda and Recife, Pernambuco (where Freire developed his distinctive approach in the early 1960s) and

¹ hooks (1994, 10)

immersed myself in the extensive bibliography on the subject.² Some of the Brazilian educators I cite, like Beisiegel, Gadotti and Romão, were Freire's collaborators and have produced critical analyses of his methodology and empirical techniques. Others, like Barreto, de Souza, and Streck, contextualize and reinterpret his work for new learners and new situations. Witness the title of Freire's 1959 dissertation: *Educação e atualidade brasileira* (Brazilian education and actuality). Or de Souza's 2001 book, *Atualidade de Paulo Freire*. 'Actuality' refers to the reality of the present moment. In the last forty years, there have been remarkable changes. Brazil is now a country of cell phones and shopping malls, combining hyper-capitalist aspirations and tropical languor but, beneath its materialist facade, it is still a land of masters and slaves. Nowhere is this more evident than in the streets of the contested colonial port, Recife, and the verdant canebrakes to the north and south of it that made the region one of the world's foremost suppliers of sugar.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000, 35-36), Freire held a mirror to this Medusa, finding "fear of freedom" and "of *conscientização*³ as a threat to freedom" the twisted roots of a perennial reenactment of the master-slave dialectic amid a verdant sea of cane. I discuss the contributions of Frantz Fanon and Josué de Castro to Freire's critical thinking. Both men wrote books as important as his, focusing on racism and hunger – colonial wounds that still bleed and suppurate. Both died in exile, Fanon at 36 in 1961, Castro at 65 in 1973. Freire outlived the dictatorial scourge in his homeland, returned in 1979 and spent most of the rest of his life writing, teaching, making the vision of a "less ugly, less mean, more just and more human" world plausible before succumbing to illness in 1997 at 75.

² The Charles E. Young Research Library at UCLA, the documents I collected on my last three trips to Brazil and the Jordão Emerenciano Public Archives of Pernambuco provided most of the material I examine.

³ A Brazilian neologism of the 1960s, synonymous with the U.S. term, 'consciousness-raising.'

What Latin-Americans call “popular culture” and “popular education” are inextricable. I have written this dissertation from their crossroads in Northeast Brazil, a place rich in baroque architecture, woodcarving, music, poetry, dance and festive spirit where too many children get too little nourishment and survival is more important than school. Freire considered “curiosity and seriousness” the prerequisites for any kind of study. I agree with bell hooks (1994, 7, 11) that he never got around to examining “the notion of pleasure in the classroom” although he took great pleasure in teaching and pointed out a way for others to do the same in book after book. I share hooks’ conviction that learning is exciting and that “teaching as a performative act” can transmit that excitement, provided the teacher is an “active participant in learning”:

...it is that aspect of our work that offers the space for change, invention, spontaneous shifts, that can serve as a catalyst drawing out the unique elements in each classroom. To embrace the performative aspect of teaching we are compelled to engage ‘audiences,’ to consider reciprocity (...) to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning. (...) The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself.

I posit my “engaged voice” as a unifying element in this dissertation. The twentyish Peter Lownds who lived and worked in mangrove-swamp *mocambo* is a character in this story. As is the sixtyish writer/researcher whose critical auto-ethnographic stance toward social science is meant to inform and involve the reader of this dissertation. The following questions will focus and guide my work:

a) What has changed in youth and adult popular education and what has remained the same since Freire began his Reading Circles, inspired by the Base Education Movement (MEB) and Popular Culture Movement (MCP), in the early 1960s?

b) Given the fact that illiteracy continues to be a major stumbling block to democracy, that Brazil's population has more than doubled in the past four decades, and that a country which was then 80 per cent rural and agricultural is now 80 per cent urban and industrial, is Freire's mixture of emancipatory education, popular culture and populist politics still viable?

c) Freire's literacy method has been criticized as providing little or nothing beyond a provocative introduction to phonics. Have Brazilian educators and thinkers managed to develop a didactic infrastructure and curriculum? If so, is it still based on teacher-student dialogue and participant research, yielding "generative words" and "generative themes"?

In the next section I discuss the origins of my involvement with Northeast Brazil.

1.2 Tropical Fate

In September, 1966 I was sent to Northeast Brazil as a health and community development worker by the U.S. Peace Corps and spent most of the next two years living and working in what the Brazilians call a *mocambo* (shantytown) of several thousand people living as squatters on or near a beach which belonged to a Brazilian Navy training school. Its denizens fished or foraged for shrimp, crabs and mollusks in the surrounding mangrove swamps. Few had proof of their own existence in the form of birth certificates or identity papers so they could not qualify for the jobs and services offered by the trade unions and municipal government. Most of these people were illiterate. The women washed and ironed clothes, worked as midwives and healers and spent most of the day lugging water from the *chafariz* (fountain) in the old plaza⁴ up the hill, cleaning their huts and tending to their children, waiting for the men to come back from sea or swamp with

⁴ UNESCO declared the baroque XVI-XVIII century colonial city of Olinda the "Natural and Cultural Patrimony of Humanity" in 1982. In 2005, it was named "The First Brazilian Cultural Capital." Lacking industry and infrastructure, it depends exclusively on tourism, culture and carnival for revenue.

their catch. The young ones sold their hair to the Italian *peruqueiros* (wig-makers) or worked as salesgirls, barmaids and prostitutes. Six-year-olds carried and fed their baby brothers and sisters while their parents worked. Goats, pigs and curl-tailed mutts roamed the streets and, when the rain came, the whole place flooded and stank. But there was an easy camaraderie and laissez-faire acceptance of life on its own terms that seemed right.

With the exception of a year spent teaching English at the American School of Rio de Janeiro (1969-70), my post-Peace Corps contact with Brazil was limited until recently. I maintained my Portuguese by reading books and singing sambas. After moving from New York to Los Angeles in 1983, I found that one of my closest friends from Olinda was living in San Francisco. In February, 1990 I spent fifteen days with his family in the *Cidade Alta* (the high city) in the midst of the crush of carnival. Most of my friends were still alive. Conversations were resumed and stories recounted as if I had been gone two weeks.

I returned to Los Angeles determined to make Olinda part of my world again. Although I was unable to return for nearly a decade, Brazil came to me. I moved into an old house near the beach in Santa Monica that, according to several new friends who revered the *bossa nova*, resembled Ipanema. With one of these, John Scott, I began to sing and study some of the musical masterpieces of the pre-*bossa* era, particularly the work of the samba-composer Noel Rosa (1911-1937). I met Theresa, my wife, in 1992. The following year, shortly after the Northridge-Santa Monica earthquake, we moved from the beach to a multi-ethnic, immigrant neighborhood not far from downtown Los Angeles where we have remained as ESL teachers and proprietors of an international student *pensión*. Resolved to incorporate my passion for Brazilian culture into an organized course of study, I applied to graduate school at UCLA. I matriculated in an interdisciplinary M.A.

program in Latin American Studies in 1996, studying history, cinema and ethnomusicology. I received my Master's in the Spring of 1998 and was encouraged to join a doctoral program that Fall in Social Science and Comparative Education at the UCLA Graduate School of Education and Information Studies by Professor Carlos Alberto Torres for whom I had translated a book of essays by Paulo Freire and his followers from Portuguese and Spanish.⁵

In November, 1999, I was invited to present a paper⁶ at the CLACSO (Latin American Council of Social Sciences) conference in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco, Freire's native city and scene of the 1960-1964 Popular Culture Movement (MCP) that inspired the development of liberation pedagogy and the book that made Freire famous, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

It had been nearly ten years since my last trip to Pernambuco. I stayed with a friend in Olinda who had just retired after twenty-five years of teaching and, with her help, managed to locate a promising research site: the CEJA (Center for Youth and Adult Education) that offered evening classes to working-class youth and adults in Peixinhos, a densely populated, high-crime neighborhood close to the Recife city line. CEJA is the brainchild of Professor João Francisco de Souza who worked with Paulo Freire and Paulo Rosas in the Popular Culture Movement as a high school student and is now Director of the Center of Education at UFPE (the Federal University of Pernambuco) and coordinator of NUPEP (Nucleus of Instruction, Research, and Extension in Youth and Adult Education and in Popular Education of UFPE). De Souza served as Secretary of Education of Olinda from 1992-1995 and is a champion of continuing education in

⁵ The book, *Educação Popular: Utopia Latino-Americana*, organized and published in São Paulo by Torres and Moacir Gadotti in 1994, is in the process of being revised and updated for a U.S. edition. I will contribute a chapter on Freirian pedagogy in North America.

⁶ A Portuguese-language version of my Translator's Foreword to the aforementioned book, entitled "Notas de um educador popular em Los Angeles." (Lownds, in Torres, org., 2001).

Northeast Brazil. As a member of the governing Worker's Party (PT) and director of the educational research center at one of the most influential universities, Professor de Souza's work in this area has considerable latitude. NUPEP workbooks are currently used in 42 *Assentamentos* ('Squatter's rights' settlements on previously unused but farmable private landholdings) for the Landless Peasant Movement (MST) in rural Pernambuco and Ceará (another northeastern Brazilian state). The Center is also responsible for training teachers and providing didactic materials for the *Programa de Apoio ao Desenvolvimento Sustentável da Zona da Mata de Pernambuco* (PROMATA)—an ongoing literacy program designed for 15 to 24-year-old sugarcane cutters in the Pernambucan *Zona da Mata* (the "forest zone," so-called because it was the site of the primeval Atlantic rainforest, *mata Atlântica*), most of whom attend classes in the intervals between the harvest and planting seasons.

In 2002 and 2004 I spent time at the CEJA and at the Centro de Educação at UFPE, attending meetings and taking part in day-long training sessions at several sites in the *Zona da Mata* with PROMATA regional teacher-coordinators led by Danilson Pinto, one of my case study subjects.

In September, 2003, I presented a paper, "Report From Olinda" at the Midterm Conference of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in Lisbon, Portugal, using examples from NUPEP workbooks and data I had gathered which demonstrated the importance of popular culture in the lives of young people of all classes and colors at a moment of extreme economic and political tension immediately preceding Lula's election as the first working-class President in Brazilian history.

As I write this more than two years later, Lula's administration is coming under heavy fire for not moving quickly enough to address the country's manifold social problems, kowtowing to the demands of the World Bank and being more concerned with international diplomacy and the fluctuations of the dollar than with millions of hungry and oppressed Brazilians he promised to prioritize. Allegations concerning the improper use of campaign funds involving many of Lula's closest advisors have been corroborated and unblinking media focus on the scandal may keep him from being reelected in 2006. A second Latin American Center travel grant enabled me to conduct three months of interviews, observation and data collection in Olinda and Recife from July through September, 2004. In the next section, I provide a roadmap for my readers.

1.3 Dissertation Roadmap

In the remainder of Chapter One, I discuss the downfall of the populist regime of President João Goulart and Freire's association with it, leading to his 1964 conviction as a subversive element, imprisonment by the ruling military junta and eventual exile in Chile, the U.S. and Switzerland. I intercut scenes from my own experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer, recalling what it was like to arrive in Rio in 1966 and live in an Olinda shantytown. The chapter ends with a brief comparison of the modus operandi of adult ESL teachers in Los Angeles and their EJA counterparts in Recife and Olinda.

Chapter Two, "Historical background and literature review," supplies the historical

context of human oppression in Northeast Brazil and analyzes two distinct responses to it: *Casa Grande & Senzala* (1933), Gilberto Freyre's seductive but biased history of Portuguese colonization and the Popular Culture Movement of Recife (1960-64) which gave Paulo Freire the idea for his "Reading Circle" literacy method. After acknowledging the Brazilian people's 1930-2004 struggle for democratic governance, I examine a racist Brazilian joke from a Freirian standpoint. The remainder of the chapter is a reading of various U.S. and Brazilian authors' responses to popular education and adult literacy campaigns and a definition of the various stages of literacy by the anthropologist and critical educator Carlos Rodrigues Brandão.

Chapter Three, Theory and Methodology, begins with a description of my praxis as a popular educator teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) to Latin American immigrant youth and adults in Los Angeles. I discuss the tenets of phenomenology, my research methodology, and Professor João Francisco de Souza's adaptation of Freirian principles. Finally, in "The Case Against Freire, 1964-2005," I describe in detail arguments against liberatory education by some of his most emphatic critics at the same time making clear my own theoretical and political perspective as an experienced adult educator and, for the past seven years, a translator, writer and researcher focusing on Paulo Freire's life and work in Brazil.

Chapter Four presents case studies of four Pernambucan pedagogues working with oppressed and marginalized people in Recife and Olinda: Cecy Prestrello, founder and President of *Coletivo Mulher Vida* (Woman Life Collective), an internationally-funded NGO dealing with issues effecting socially marginalized women and adolescent girls and children of both sexes who have been abused or are vulnerable to abuse; Guiomar Albuquerque Barbosa, an adult literacy teacher since the age of thirteen and presently the

Director of the Norma Coelho Elementary School at the CAIC in Peixinhos, Olinda with whom I have conducted a series of interviews dating back to 1999. Guiomar and Danilson Pinto, another of my case study subjects, are both former students and collaborators of Professor João Francisco de Souza, a leading proponent of public school Youth and Adult Education (EJA) in Northeast Brazil who participated, as a high school student, in the 1960-64 Popular Culture Movement (MCP) which inspired Freire's original *Círculos de Leitura* (Reading Circles) and who is also one of my subjects. Their shared history as pioneer adult educators at the CEJA (Youth and Adult Educational Center) and collaborators in projects there and at the Educational Center of the Federal University of Pernambuco is recounted in some detail. Guiomar is now married and the mother of two young sons and teaches at a private school (Americano Bautista) as well as administering at CAIC during the day; Danilson, an erstwhile Salesian monk, is a teacher and community organizer, involved as a teacher-trainer in the PROMATA rural literacy campaign as well as the *Escola de Formação Sindical da CUT no Nordeste*, a program sponsored by the *Central Única de Trabalhadores*, a nationwide labor union inaugurated by Lula and the *Partido Trabalhista* (PT) nearly twenty-five years ago. João Francisco has his hand in most things having to do with Youth and Adult Education in the Brazilian Northeast. As director of the *Centro de Educação*, founder of NUPEP and Professor of Education at UFPE, he is a prolific writer and lecturer on the subject of popular education and a reinventor of Freirian pedagogy for multi-ethnic and multicultural *milieux* provided by the global society. A sabbatical year in universities in Spain and Portugal (2003-2004) gave him a frontrow seat on augmented immigration from Africa and the mid-East—longstanding contributors to Brazilian hybridity.

Chapter Five, "Reinventing Critical Pedagogy," is peripatetic: it begins with a

discussion of Dan Baron's neo-Freirian "Cultural Literacy" projects with the Landless Peasant Movement (MST) and then posits the concept of *Saudade* as a poetic way of dealing with loss and regret, a Luso-Brazilian version of the Blues. Historian Hannah Arendt, psychiatrist Maria Rita Kehl, sociologist Francisco Weffort and a social-worker/priest Vilson Groh all reflect about the importance of remembering (and the pain of forgetting) the past. To illustrate this, I follow Louis Menand's account of the case of Louis Agassiz, a mid-XIX century Harvard anthropology professor who sought to refute Darwin's theory of natural selection on the basis of eugenics, a pseudo-scientific theory of white superiority, which he hoped to prove in the jungles of the Amazon. One of his student-researchers on this expedition was William James, the future philosopher, who looked askance at certain of his professor's research methods and findings. I then go back to Freire's early years in Recife to trace what I see as his utopian romanticism, comparing it to the socialist writings of XIX-century British craftsman-aesthete William Morris and to the XVIII-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Finally, as present-day examples of utopian pedagogy, I examine the Decalogue of the Citizen School enumerated by Freire's comrade, collaborator and biographer, Moacir Gadotti and recall a brief but illuminating encounter with Gadotti in São Paulo on July 7, 2004.

Chapter Six, "Final Days in Brazil & Conclusions," returns to Olinda for a last, lingering look at the glocal reality. A CEJA workshop facilitated by a man who calls himself the *Poeta Errante* (Wandering Poet) reinvents the ambience of the Reading Circles of Freire. CEJA director Almeri Freitas offers a toast to the school's first ten years of struggle with an eye to the future informed by the past. My teacher friends Monica and Evaldo make it possible for me to attend a TV Globo telecourse training-session for teachers in the municipality of Igarassu and, a few days later, take me to the

northern Zona da Mata to visit Araçoiaba, the town where they met. At sundown, standing in a rain of ash from the burning canefields, I have an epiphany about the immutable sadness of peasant life that I reexamine in dialogue with Danilson Pinto and discover to be linked to what Scheper-Hughes (1992) calls “the delirium of hunger” that has assailed Northeast Brazil for centuries. In the final section, “Conclusions,” I attempt to answer the research questions I pose on page 5.

1.4 Setting the stage

In his work with the Popular Culture Movement of Recife and in his first experiments with a problem-posing, dialogic literacy method in Recife, Olinda, Angicos and Brasília, Paulo Freire was concerned with preparing ‘oppressed’ people to vote for the reigning populist government by ‘codifying’ and discussing what he called their ‘limit situations,’ invisible but obdurate strictures imposed by the social and economic hegemony. In *Educação e Atualidade Brasileira*, a 1959 dissertation he wrote in a competition for the Chair of History and Philosophy of Education in the Pernambuco School of Fine Arts, Freire suggests that the major task of Brazilian popular adult education is the formation of citizens who will serve (and reap the fruits of) a new and more equitable Brazilian democracy, the product of the urban and industrial path chosen by President Juscelino Kubitschek de Oliveira (1956-1961) and profoundly influenced by the national developmentalist thinking of the time. Freire’s decade of experience at SESI (Industrial Social Services, 1946-56) where he eventually became the Director of Education and Culture, sensitized him to the need for learning the language of rural sharecroppers and the urban working class so he could bridge the gap between them and the hegemonic elite, with whom he had become identified as a bourgeois intellectual. Under the influence of a brain trust of nationalist authors and professors, most of them from Rio de

Janeiro and São Paulo, lecturing and publishing under the aegis of the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (ISEB), Freire's dissertation outlined an eclectic 'developmentalist' theory described by Celso de Rui Beisiegel (1982, 70) as "devoid of consistent revolutionary thinking, idealistic, and having an inadequate understanding of Brazilian social reality." It embodied what Beisiegel calls the "contradiction between an illuminist, authoritarian proposal and the affirmation of the search for its inspiration in the masses."⁷ Completed in 1959, when the populist Miguel Arraes had just been elected Mayor of Recife, Freire's thesis did not yet consider literacy the fulcrum of Brazilian popular adult education.

Freire escaped, with his family, to Chile in the aftermath of the 1964 Brazilian *coup d'état* and his first book, *Educação como a prática da liberdade*, written in 1965 and initially banned in Brazil, while reaffirming many of the ideas and analyses recorded in Freire's dissertation, also serves as a pedagogical practicum for his literacy method, including detailed discussion of the "ten situations" he designed as 'codifications' for *Círculos da Leitura* (Reading Circles) in collaboration with Recife artist Francisco Brennand.⁸ The book's introductory essay, entitled "Politics and Education" and written by Freire's son-in-law, sociologist Francisco C. Weffort⁹, analyzes the countervailing social pressures leading up to the coup: the emerging political participation of the popular

⁷ In the final chapter of his 1959 thesis Freire wrote: "The big problem of our current education, its most emphatic problem, is its inadequacy to the cultural climate that is beginning to extend throughout the country. It is an education in great part, or almost completely, anachronistic and superimposed on the country's cultural space or spaces. Thus, it is inorganic and inefficient. (...) It appears to us that one of the fundamental tasks of Brazilian education (...) is to create critical and permeable mental dispositions in the Brazilian people so that they can overcome the [deficit] force of their 'democratic inexperience.' To overcome this force and lose the quasi-terror in which they currently find themselves, they must willfully insert themselves into the climate of participation and intervention. (...) Increasingly, the Brazilian people need mental attitudes that allow them to better adjust to a rapidly changing world that demands increasing mental flexibility and initiative. That demands decision." (Freire, 2001, 79-80, fn 35, my translation).

⁸ Copies of these are appended to this dissertation.

⁹ Weffort married Freire's oldest daughter Maria Magdalena and accompanied his in-laws in their Chilean exile. He later served as Minister of Culture under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1998-2002).

classes and consequent crisis of the oligarchic elite. According to Beisiegel (op. cit., 263), the exiled educator and his son-in-law “came to largely convergent conclusions from very diverse analytical perspectives. They understood the [military government’s] repression of the popular education movement as a reaction on the part of a ‘privileged elite’ to the ‘threat contained in the coming-to-consciousness’ of the common people and the danger they foresaw in anything that could ‘contribute to the active presence of those people in the historical process.’”¹⁰

While Freire had not attained the rhetorical power or analytical acuity which illuminate the pages of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published five years later, his (and Weffort’s) retrospective comments on the development and demise of the Paulo Freire Method are informed by his seminal involvement with the pre-coup *Movimento da Cultura Popular* (MCP) in Recife, initiated by Mayor Arraes. As director of the Extension Program at the University of Recife, Freire initiated a series of dialogic, problem-posing literacy ‘experiments’ that President João Goulart quickly adopted as the prototype for a national campaign for youth and adult literacy, bringing Freire to Brasília to supervise them in 1963. Nipped in the bud by the April 1, 1964 *coup d’état*, Freire continued his experiments in Santiago de Chile under the Social Democratic government of President Eduardo Frei, where he served as an advisor to the newly formed Cabinet of Planning for Adult Education. Freire’s “Brazilian radicality” eventually became a cause for concern in conservative Chilean governmental circles and led to his eventual decision to accept a teaching post at Harvard and eventually to move to Geneva and the World Council of Churches under whose auspices he carried on his work for ten years in various parts of the developing world before being granted amnesty and returning to Brazil in

¹⁰ The quotes within the Beisiegel quote are Freire’s, from the 1967 edition of *Educação como prática da liberdade*, p. 57.

1979.

In the meantime, what Freire described as a “culture of silence” became the status quo during more than two decades of Brazilian military rule. Oppression was general and cut across all class boundaries with the suspension of human rights, nightly curfews in the cities, the disbandment of democratic government and widespread censorship.

I was transported into this atmosphere of enforced torpor by the U.S. government as a 22-year-old ‘innocent abroad’, a Peace Corps Health and Community Development Volunteer.¹¹ In the four decades since, I have been involved with Brazil, mostly from a distance, in what has often felt like an extended exile from the promised land of my youth. I view this dissertation as an opportunity to untangle and reflect upon some of the reasons for and manifestations of this involvement. I propose to compare the Brazil I encountered as a man in his early twenties living and working as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Recife and Olinda, Pernambuco from 1966-68 and as a high school English teacher at the American School of Rio de Janeiro (1969-70) with the very different country to which I have been exposed in subsequent trips to Olinda and Recife (1990, 1999, 2002, 2004), the last three as an educational investigator. I will be examining theories and programs that stand at what I discern as the crossroads of popular education and popular culture. It is clear that Brazilian public education and social service programs are not serving the great majority of the populace. On the other hand, the

¹¹ There was no discussion whatsoever of the social, economic or political aspects of Brazilian society in my three months of Peace Corps training in Chicago, Illinois, July-September, 1966. Although we lived and conducted informal, door-to-door surveys in the working-class ‘negro’ neighborhood of Lincoln Park and attended daily Portuguese-language classes in a ‘technical trades’ high school on nearby West Madison Street which was vacant during the summer, our ‘community development’ training consisted of a couple of admonitory lectures by tough-talking collaborators of radical community organizer Saul Alinsky, none of whom had any notion of the Brazilian ethos but warned us that ‘middle-class white kids’ would be targets for abuse. In August, members of the Lincoln Park community reacted to Mayor Richard Dailey’s failure to quell or punish angry white hecklers at a civil rights march in the suburb of Cicero and the neighborhood was deemed ‘too hot’ for our continued presence. We spent the last month of our training living and studying among the Jesuits at Loyola University’s Lakeside campus, safe but sorry to have lost connection with what felt like a long-overdue demonstration of vitality, pride and pain in Lincoln Park.

ability to improvise (*dar um jeito*) and arise like a Phoenix from the ashes of the past is as much a part of the Brazilian character as silent suffering and obdurate survival. Luís da Câmara Cascudo, a pioneering folklorist and cultural historian from Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, describes the protean character of his countrymen :

I think the defining characteristic of Brazilians is the rapidity of their adaptation. And their mental miscegenation. A northeastern peasant, after four years in São Paulo, is as much a '*paulista*' as a *campesino* from Santos or Piracicaba. In Amazonas, no one can tell the difference between someone from Ceará and a local. I see this Brazilian adaptive facility everywhere: in Portugal, in Spain, in France. The skin and the pronunciation are different, but the habits, the interjections, the walk are impeccably indigenous. And I think it is dangerous because this Brazilian de-characterization does not change or even touch the medullary perennial of their temperament. At certain moments they are really Brazilian.¹²

The origins of this adaptability and 'mental miscegenation' are not difficult to trace. The three and a half million African slaves who were brought to Brazil between 1550 and 1850, the indigenous peoples they supplanted in the mines and fields of the New World and with whom they interbred, and their often brutal Portuguese masters, many of them consanguineous with the Moors and Jews of Iberia, created and served a corrupt, extractive culture rooted in myth. Their existence was schizoid from the start:

Every characteristic of Spanish and Portuguese society was transferred to the New World. The warrior psychology of the home countries found new fields in America. The victorious soldier soon became the exploiter. The Inquisition, which had begun as a religious instrument of faith purification, became an instrument of state policy. Eight centuries of religious wars against the Moslems plus inquisitorial Catholic thinking led directly to intolerance in political and economic expression. Feudalism in the Old World meant feudalism in the New. (...) In both Portugal and Spain the individual rose to exalted heights. It has been said that during the Middle Ages the universe was centered on God, while during the Renaissance it became centered on man. But in Iberia, where the Renaissance was but a projection and a prolongation of the Middle Ages, the axis was inseparably "God and man." The individual who had been submerged in the mass until 1492, now became a symbol of the mass, and as a spark carries flame he carried the mass spirit with him wherever he went, into whatever he did, until the fires he had kindled burned deep in the wilderness of the New World he had set out to conquer and to save; and some of them are burning yet. (Crow, 1992, xv, xxviii)

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire saw this "desire for conquest (or rather

¹² (my translation of a Luís da Câmara Cascudo quote from <http://memoriaviva.digi.com.br/todos.htm> -- downloaded on 3/9/05)

the necessity of conquest)” as a profoundly “anti-dialogical attempt” on the part of the “oppressors...to destroy in the oppressed their quality as ‘considerers’ of the world. Since the oppressors cannot totally achieve this destruction, they must *mythicize* the world” (Freire, 2000, 139). Many bourgeois Brazilians supported the 1964 coup and subsequent military take-over of their country as a return to the beneficent paternalism of the dictator Getúlio Vargas and his populist *Estado Novo* of the 1930s and 1940s. The idea that the Brazilian people are childlike and need a father’s firm hand to keep them in line is one I heard expressed openly by parents, employees and faculty members when I taught at the American School of Rio in 1969 and 1970. The dictatorship had only been in power five years but the society was totally polarized: anyone who opposed the conservative and reactionary generals was considered an enemy of the State and could be exiled, imprisoned or killed. Supporters of this brutal regime went about their business in an increasingly stressful and dangerous society for another seventeen years.

The Catholic martyr Saint Sebastian is the patron saint of the city of Rio de Janeiro and it is the image of his martyrdom, tied to a post and riddled with arrows, that poet and composer Chico Buarque invokes in the *estribilho* (refrain) of his samba, “*Mangueira, Derradeira Estação*” (Mangueira, Final Station):

*São Sebastião, crivado, nublai minha visão
Na noite da grande fogueira desvairada!
Quero ver a Mangueira—derradeira estação
Quero ouvir sua batucada, ai ai!*

[St. Sebastian, pierced one, cloud my vision
On the night of the great mad bonfire!
I want to see Mangueira, the final station
I want to hear its drumming, ai ai!]

“*Derradeira Estação*,” with its mournful evocation of a fiery carnival at the end of the world takes me back forty years, to the beginning of my Brazilian adventure, inspired by a cinematic narrative of love and death at carnival time. The next section traces that

connection from its inception. I introduce my (younger) self as a character in this narrative because, as someone who has spent more than forty years reading, thinking and dreaming about Brazil, I feel my very being has been transformed by the relationship. In *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker writes:

The one thing modern man cannot do is what Kierkegaard prescribed: the lonely leap into faith, the naïve personal trust in some kind of transcendental support for one's life. This support is now independent of living external rituals and customs: the church and the community do not exist, or do not carry much conviction. This situation is what helps make faith fantastic. In order for something to seem true to man, it has to be visibly supported in some way—lived, external, compelling. Men need pageants, crowds, panoplies, special days marked off on calendars—an objective focus for obsession, something to give form and body to internal fantasy, something external to yield oneself to. Otherwise the neurotic is brought back to the point of his departure: how is he to believe in his own specialness? (Becker, 1973, 200)

Brazil has been an “objective focus for obsession” for most of my adult life. My ideas of community, family, friendship, adventure and love were profoundly influenced by two years as a Peace Corps Health and Community Development Volunteer on the *Ilha do Maruim* (Mosquito Island) *mocambo*, as *favelas* are called in Pernambuco. As a writer-researcher in the Romantic tradition,¹³ I return to my own life experience and to the story I have made of it as a recurring grail and essential preliminary to creative production. The fact that I am writing for an audience of social scientists does not lessen the impact of the act of creation because, as a Romantic, I am “justifying my life and experience” and seeking “new forms and contents (...) to be able to express [my] personal self more completely” (Rank, 1932, 51). As a writer and as an actor, I have always been interested in dialogue and the interplay between text and subtext, between what people, particularly artists, say and do and the context, the given circumstances, in

¹³ “The romantic type, flung hither and thither between the urge to perpetuate his own life by creating and the compulsion to turn himself and life into a work of art, thus appears as the last representative of an art-ideology which, like the religious collective-ideology, is in the process of dying out (...) On the other hand, it is just the appearance of this decadent type of artist which marks the beginning of a new development of personality, since the tendency to self-perpetuation is in the end transferred to the ego from which it originally sprang.” (Rank, 1932, 46-47).

which what Freire called ‘praxis’ occurs which lend it particularity and weight. Martha Graham (1894-1991), innovative choreographer and theatrical *savante*, called what she and her company did on stage their “message to the world.” Paulo Freire saw Pernambucan peasants as connective beings who depend on language for survival and thought that teaching them to read and write would improve their lives, a heretical notion to the entrenched hegemony. Spending two years on the Ilha was, for me, the first indication that there was a way to coexist with this planet and its people that had nothing to do with the capitalist ‘rat race’ into which I was born.

1.5 Générique¹⁴

I was sixteen years old when I saw Marcel Camus’ *Orfeu Negro* (Black Orpheus) for the first time. I sat on a hard wooden chair in a wintry New England boarding school auditorium and was transported, in a celluloid rush, to a place I hadn’t known existed but which pulled on something in me that felt as if it were being born then and there. Ninety minutes later, my life had a purpose. If such a place and people existed, I would live among them. In those pre-cybernetic times, my ‘virtual reality’ was primarily cinematic. By the time I got to the south side (*zona sul*) of Rio de Janeiro in 1966, it looked familiar. As did certain neighborhoods in Paris a decade later because I had seen them so often in the films of Claude Chabrol, François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard.¹⁵

¹⁴ A French word for what Hollywood calls ‘the credits.’ When the *Black Orpheus* sound track was released by Verve in 1959, it featured the music of *bossa nova* composers Antônio Carlos Jobim, Luiz Bonfá, and Vinícius de Moraes. “*Générique*” was the title of the *batucada* overture.

¹⁵ While my compass pointed due south, my *gentils organisateurs* were the aforementioned Paris trio of *nouvelle vague auteurs*. I did not realize at the time the extent to which Brazilian culture was magnetized by Paris and *la littérature française*. When the work of the ‘new wave authors’ came to Manhattan (first runs at the Paris, next to the Plaza, at 59th and Fifth, reruns at the New Yorker on Broadway and 88th), I was ‘hooked.’ Philippe de Broca’s wacky adventure, “That Man From Rio” (1964), Godard’s “Pierrot le Fou” (1965) and Claude Lelouch’s “Un Homme et une Femme” (1966) all had enticing Brazilian elements—as did English-language publication of Jorge Amado’s *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* (“Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon”) which I read on the afterdeck of a supertanker, *S/T Rebecca*, I hoped would bring me to Brazil but only took me as far as Venezuela as a merchant mariner in the summer of 1964 when a maritime incident ‘staged’ in the Gulf of Tonkin precipitated the U.S. military ‘build-up’ that led to war in Vietnam.

1.6 Rio de Janeiro, 1966

As I felt the first blast of Brazilian September heat, my mother's warning that it "might not be like the movie" was expunged by the *batucada* of my pulse. I had just turned twenty-two, the same age as my father when he first set foot in *his* dream city, Manhattan, in 1936. Rio welcomed me with arms as wide as its soaring Christ's.¹⁶

In those days, most of Rio's taxis were old American cars, as is still the case in Cuba. The invasion of the VW bugs which Brazilians call *fuscas* was just around the corner. The men wore white linen suits. Tropical veterans used stylish Panamas while young men pomaded their hair into glistening helmets to keep the sun at bay. The street kids were not as numerous, glue-addicted or in your face as they are today.

We were Peace Corps Volunteers, young and idealistic "B.A. generalists," assigned to urban shantytowns and sweltering hinterlands to import Yankee optimism and help the people help themselves. Most of us lacked agricultural skills or urban savoir-faire. But we had undergone three months of training in Chicago and were grateful to be in Brazil rather than Vietnam where our peers were engaged in a mortal struggle to prevent reintegration of the Vietnamese Republic under the Communist leader Hô Chi Minh.

The Hotel Flórida was not far from the *Atêrro de Flamengo*, acres of reclaimed waterfront playground in the first of the five *bairros* that compose Rio's famous South Side (*Zona Sul*): Flamengo, Botafogo, Copacabana, Ipanema, and Leblon. I was enraptured by the Brazilian language. I sat in the lobby of the Flórida, listening to the voice on the PA system recite phone numbers: "set-chee meya traish meya zay-ro doish oom" (763-6021). I attempted colloquial repartee with the poker-faced *garçons*, who patrolled the dining room. I felt gratifyingly distant from my family, my girlfriend, my

¹⁶ Rio's landmark statue of Christ the Redeemer atop Corcovado (Hunchback) peak seems, when its rocky perch is obscured on moonless nights or cloudy days, to be soaring.

university. I had made to Brazil: my life was about to begin.

The hustle and bustle of North American cities has an organized, programmatic quality totally lacking in Brazil. In Rio and Recife, where I would eventually make my home, cruelty and compassion, misery and mercy, fantasy and reality continuously collide. I looked up at the ubiquitous *morros*¹⁷ and saw villas surrounded by the motley roofs of clapboard hovels.

The short-lived populist regime of João “Jango” Goulart had brought the country to the edge of revolution. Goulart had made the mistake of befriending Fidel Castro who had conquered Cuba only four years before. The *golpe* (coup) was carried out on April Fools Day, 1964 and the first occupant of the *Palácio da Alvorada* in Brasília was *Marechal* (Field Marshal) Humberto Castello Branco, a frog-faced Army general who wielded unlimited power over a population of roughly 80 million people. Martial law was in effect. Although the nightly curfews that followed the coup had been lifted by the time I got there, the right of habeas corpus had been rescinded, which meant that you could be arrested on suspicion of anything and held indefinitely or questioned, tortured and ‘disappeared’.

The infamous Death Squad (*Esquadrão da Morte*) a vigilante force of hired killers, many of them policemen, had finished disposing of unsightly mendicants and was going to work on drug pushers, sexual deviants and street kids. The daily press, politically censored, would report the discovery of their mutilated bodies in blood-curdling detail. Besides soccer, movies and nightclubs and the annual carnival, there wasn’t much to report. What had once been a leftist student movement was transformed into clandestine cells of urban guerrillas with the closing of the universities. Less than a year before I got there, there were pitched battles in the streets of Rio and Recife between rebellious

¹⁷ The word *morro*, ‘hill’, has become synonymous with *favela* in Rio.

students, dissident activists and saber-wielding mounted police.

That evening, I went to an *umbanda*¹⁸ ceremony. The *terreiro* of Mãe Clarisse was a long, low-ceilinged room near the *Joquei Clube* racetrack, at the foot of the Gávea hills. Men sat on one side, women on the other. A wooden guard rail separated the spectators from the drummers and dancers and an altar which held the most eclectic group of Christian, African, Buddhist and Amerindian ‘saints’ I had ever seen. By the time the cabdriver found the place, the ceremony had begun. “*Mãe*” (Mother) Clarisse, the priestess, a tall brown-skinned woman in a white lace dress, was drumming and singing the invocation to propitiate Exu, the mercurial messenger-spirit, so he wouldn’t ‘inhabit’ the body of one of the worshippers with malevolent intent.

A dozen *filhas de santo*, ‘daughters of the saint,’ danced to a polyrhythmic *conjunto* of three drummers playing a set of handmade wood and goat-skin *atabaques*¹⁹ while another man kept time by striking two joined metal cowbells, an *agogô*. The room was full of incense, the floor sprinkled with fragrant *folhas de arruda* (leaves of rue). As the dancers circled, Mother Clarisse lit a fat cigar and sang the *ponto* to Exú, exhaling clouds of purifying smoke through her nostrils. The daughters, in their white bandanas and dresses, repeated the chorus:

*Exu, que tem duas cabeças,
Ele é o que ele quer:
Uma é Satanás do Inferno,
A outra é Jesus Nazarém.
[Exu, who has two heads,
He is whatever he wants:
One is Satan from the Inferno
The other is Jesus of Nazareth.]*

¹⁸ “A syncretic religious sect born in Rio de Janeiro at the turn of the twentieth century and perhaps derived from the *cabula* which already included Bantu and spiritist elements and words of current *umbanda* jargon” (Ferreira, 2004, 2017, my translation).

¹⁹ The set, composed of three drums of varying sizes, *Le* (the smallest), *Rum-pi* (medium) and *Rum* (the largest) is used for *samba de roda* street parties and considered essential for the religious ceremonies of *candomblé* and *macumba* (Bullit & Friedman, 1994, 127a). See also Herskovits, M. 1966, 183-197 for his 1944 paper, “Drums and Drummers in AfroBrazilian Cult Life.”

Once the path was opened, the ‘daughters’ went, one by one, into trance and were ‘mounted’ by the *orixás*, collapsing with eyes rolled back, then howling and shaking spasmodically on the cement floor. I had not yet heard of Paulo Freire, who had fled to Santiago, Chile following the coup. But what he calls ‘mystical consciousness’ pervaded the *terreiro*. How else could one explain the dramatic transformation of working class women into African gods? There was nothing this dramatic on the North American stage. No acting class I had ever taken prepared me for the intensity of the Afro-Brazilian cult religion. The possessed women screamed like banshees, their gestures no longer controlled or graceful. Some suddenly assumed masculine postures and voices. Others became sultry and coquettish. Still others danced wildly, flinging out their arms and leaping about in response to the drumming which seemed to have trebled in speed and volume to match their madcap intensity. I remembered reading that the name of a similarly manic Sicilian folk dance, *la tarantella*, derived from the dancers’ reactions to the toxins of tarantulas. The women’s hair, freed of any restraint, stood straight up, as if electrified. Their energy was infectious – at one point I felt as if I too might ‘go under.’ But a few deep breaths calmed me down. Those who had been chosen were attended by their soberer sisters who dressed them in garb the style and color of their particular ‘saint’ and handed them their sacred talismans: the double-headed axe of *Xangó*, the sword of *Ogun*, *Obaluayê*’s three silver arrows, the *espingarda* (shotgun) of *Oxóssi*, the fan, silver fish and half-moon crown of *Iemanjá*—goddess of the sea. Within half an hour, the mediums, most of them women puffing on fat cigars, had fully embodied their *orixás* and were stable enough to focus on and counsel fellow believers or those who wished advice.

I was moved irresistibly forward and, despite my pounding heart and fractured Portuguese, managed to stammer my concern at having to leave Rio into a perspiring,

mask of sapient negritude. The reply came slowly and clearly in a voice as deep as a man's: *Deixe p'ra lá, meu filho*. ("Let it go, my son.") *Você já está em casa*. ("You're at home already.") *Vai voltar quando quiser*. ("You can come back whenever you want.")

1.7 Olinda, Pernambuco, 1967

One of my first jobs as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Olinda was assisting in a *creche* as orphanages with religious (usually Roman Catholic) affiliation were then called. I was still struggling to speak Portuguese and thought it would help to be around kids, who are generally less judgmental than adults. The *creche* turned out to be a day care center for street kids, boys only, run by an order of German nuns. They had a VW van, a *kombi*, and would make the rounds of the bridges and bayous of Recife and Olinda daily, in the early morning and late afternoon, gathering pre-adolescent *meninos da rua*, *moleques*, *pixotes* (all names for the wiley, charming and often feral street kids) and taking them back to their *creche* in the Afogados neighborhood of Olinda. My previous idea of an orphanage, founded largely on the 1938 Hollywood tear-jerker, "Boys Town" with Spencer Tracey and Mickey Rooney, was changed forever by a couple of dozen diminutive hustlers who scurried up the mango trees like monkeys to shake down their copious fruit, wheedled and begged the nuns for money, ate rice, beans and manioc flour with their hands off battered tin plates, and spoke a rapid argot that might as well have been Basque or Albanian. These were the 1960s forebears of what are now called *meninos moscas* because their lives tend to be brief as a fly's. Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes, an ex-Brazil PCV, remembers:

In the 1960s street urchins were accepted as a fairly permanent feature of the urban landscape, and they were referred to affectionately as *moleques*, that is, "ragamuffins," "scamps," or "rascals," or any small black child. *Moleques* were "streetwise" kids, cute and cunning, sometimes sexually precocious, and invariably economically enterprising.

They tried to make themselves useful in myriad small ways, some of these bordering on the deviant. Think of Fagin's "boys" from *Oliver Twist*, especially the Artful Dodger, and you have it. Many *moleques* survived by adopting a particular affluent household, where they often ate and slept in a courtyard or patio. Hardly a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil in the 1960s didn't have a special *moleque*, who attached himself or herself to the volunteer for the duration of the stay. A few of these "loose" and "excess" children were adopted and brought back to the United States. (Scheper-Hughes, 1993, 240).

When Amy, my fiancée, arrived for a visit in February, 1967, my identity changed. Now, instead of being called a 'playboy', I had a *parceira*, a partner, and was seen as part of a *casal*, a couple. Peace Corps officials were still unaware of her presence, or her intention to return when her 90-day visitor's visa ran out. With her gray-green eyes and light brown hair falling past her shoulders, this quiet, comely architect's daughter from Connecticut was exotic by Brazilian standards. The local children were especially taken with her and would appear within minutes of my opening the door and windows of our house each morning, asking if they could "*ensinar a moça falar com a gente*" (teach the the girl to speak to us). One of these kids, Conceição, whom everyone called *Nega* although she was more brown than black, took a particular interest in Amy. She was probably 10 or 11 at the time although she looked smaller and at the same time older, in her ragged dress and bare, calloused feet. *Nega* was already, in many ways, a saucy little woman with flashing brown eyes, high Indian cheekbones and a razor sharp wit. It was she who first called us *Adão e Eva* (Adam and Eve), a name that stuck. Her sarcasm was anything but childlike. When she saw Amy peeling an orange piece by piece, she scoffed: "*Puxa! Emi nem sabe descascar uma laranja!* (Gee! Amy doesn't even know how to peel an orange!) before demonstrating how Brazilians do it, in one long, curling strip. Amy, the youngest of two sisters whose genetic father left when she was two, had strong abandonment issues. It was why, perhaps, she had been so eager to 'elope' with me, coming all the way to Brazil to get away from her jealous mother and silent stepfather. She saw *Nega* as an orphan and began to talk about our 'adopting' her. *Nega*

knew none of this. She loved to hold Amy's hand as they walked through the muddy streets of the Ilha or brush her smooth hair and teach her soft 'Brazilian' words. Nega had never owned a doll and now here was Emi/Eva, who smiled at her and hugged her and repeated the words she was taught.

When Peace Corps authorities discovered I was living with a non-Volunteer, they claimed it was a poor example for the people in 'my community,' whose significant relationships went unsanctified by Church or State. It was suggested that Amy move to another community and that we date occasionally, although I could have married a fellow volunteer or a 'host national' after my first year of in-country service. Plans for Nega's adoption were put aside as focus on and objection to our relationship increased. In June of 1968, I was terminated two months early by the new regional director, an erstwhile Catholic priest, who was cohabiting with an unmarried Brazilian woman. We flew back to New York after spending an evening on the town in Rio with a new country director and his wife, who wished us well. A week later, I traveled to Peace Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., where an in-house ombudsman resolved the case in my favor. I was able to collect residual salary that had been withheld and re-enroll as a 'special student' at Yale. Amy and I were married soon after I graduated in June, 1969 and, a month later, returned to Rio where I had a job teaching English at the American School and she found work as a bilingual secretary with an American NGO. We lived near the beach in Leblon, subletting the *pied à terre* of a Yale professor who used it only three months a year.

We spent eight months living on the margin of what seemed, after our eventful life in Olinda, an uptight enclave of diplomats, missionaries and the pampered children of the '*milicos*' who had commandeered Brazil. Meanwhile, the resistance had grown bolder—

banks were robbed and the U.S. and Swiss ambassadors kidnapped and released in exchange for imprisoned radicals who were flown to Chile where Socialist President Salvador Allende welcomed them. In sanctuary, they demonstrated the cruelty of their captors, revealing their stigmata while denouncing the disappearance of *companheiros* and *companheiras*. Never had the national motto, *Ordem e Progresso* (Order and Progress) seemed more cynical or supercilious.

1.8 Adult ESL in Los Angeles

As an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Community Adult Schools for the past nineteen years, I have had the opportunity to work in Mexican and Central American immigrant communities with men and women, some recent arrivals and some who have been here for decades, whose linguistic oppression is but one manifestation of social and gender issues I will not address here. The public Community Adult Schools (CAS) of Los Angeles serve as sanctuaries. After harrowing border crossings and long days spent cleaning houses, cutting and sewing garments, washing dishes, food and floors in restaurants or looking for work, people are glad to study English free of charge and meet like-minded compatriots. As soon as they register, students are interviewed and placed in classes commensurate with their skill and experience in reading, writing and speaking English. Some people have never attended school at all or have only two or three years of primary school so the majority are placed in Level I or literacy classes where they begin the delicate assimilation process to which language is key.

Adult ESL rewards teachers with students grateful for the opportunity to learn. Since student attendance is voluntary, the ability to maintain attendance from ten to twenty hours week for up to sixteen weeks is essential. ESL teachers in this country are often

‘stand-up performers’ who can keep hungry, hard-working immigrants involved with learning after a long day’s work. Discipline is not an issue for people eager to hurdle any barrier to professional success. Some teachers ‘moonlight’ as ESL instructors after day jobs at K through 12 schools, others pass on things they learned as former ESL students themselves – all are beholden to prescribed curricula and standardized tests, to keeping at least 20 people in class every night to uphold the ADA (Average Daily Attendance) the school needs to receive funds from the State. Most are content to guide their classes through one of a graduated series of English Workbooks designed to support the basic skills curriculum. These usually have little to do with the often grim reality of the students’ existential struggles. Community Adult School students are meant to inculcate rudimentary English as quickly as possible so as to gain and maintain entry-level (minimum wage) jobs. In a lot of classrooms, obedient following the workbook takes the place of dialogue. Many students never learn their teachers’ or classmates’ names and fewer still are called upon to do anything other than answer questions posed by the books. There is a preponderance of what Paulo Freire called ‘banking education:’ the teacher depositing ‘valuable’ knowledge in the heads of the students—in this case enough ‘survival English’ to provide traction on the well-worn lower rungs of the capitalist ladder. Most Los Angeles E.S.L. teachers live in neighborhoods distant from the schools at which they teach.

1.9 EJA in Northeast Brazil

In Recife, the state capital of Pernambuco in northeast Brazil, Paulo Freire’s hometown, Popular Education (*Educação Popular*) is an embattled domain where the median salary of municipal teachers, according to the 1997 Teacher’s

Census,²⁰ was 183.12 *reais* (less than \$70) per month despite the fact that over 50 per cent of urban teachers have professional degrees, compared to rural areas of the state where 24.9 per cent of instructors have not completed high school. It is a profession where women predominate, comprising over 85 per cent of all basic education teachers (pre-school through middle school) in Brazil and, according to Nelly Stromquist, “two-thirds of the world’s illiterates, a fact not accountable by either intelligence or motivation.”²¹ In theory, Youth and Adult Education (called EJA, the acronym for *Educação de Jovens e Adultos*) and Popular Education (*Educação Popular*) are political activities, dedicated to building “critical consciousness” as well as vocabulary and the ability to read and write the lingua franca. Literacy learners are encouraged to share their struggles and quotidian suffering and to “problematize” their individual and communal existence in dialogues and codifications designed to unveil socio-political reality, guided by teachers who are either members of the community themselves or who have inculcated its particular language, ways and issues.

In practice, *Reprovação*, grade retention, is common in Brazil and students who have been ‘left back’ more than once, particularly in elementary school, end up in EJA classes as do adults who have never been to school at all. Adult Literacy Campaigns are proposed by politicians to gain political leverage. Nothing proclaims one’s humanity louder than seeming to care for the poor and illiterate. There is no population whose votes are easier to acquire or whose needs are easier to ignore.

The grace of education is in the climate it creates, the influence it engenders, the

²⁰ Organized by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP) of the Ministry of Education and Sports (MEC) and sent to me by Professor Pedro Demo, a sociologist and Professor at the University of Brasília, as part of an unpublished paper dated November, 2000 and entitled “*Vida de Professor*.”

²¹ From “Literacy for Women’s Citizenship: What We Know and What Can be Done,” a paper presented at the international conference on “The Role of Adult Education in Sustainable Development,” organized by Project Literacy, Johannesburg, South Africa November 27-29, 2001.

solidarity it inspires. Participative intensity is at its core. Most education is self-education. “Great teachers demystify (...) all the magic they have to offer is a commitment to repetition and perseverance.”²² By this definition, Paulo Freire was a great teacher: he demystified the idea that people cannot think or act in their own best interests because they are, temporarily, unable to read and write. He demystified the ‘naïve’ and ‘mythical’ states of consciousness unlettered people use to explain their misery. He reminded us that compassion for the suffering of those less fortunate is a call to action and a key to self-awareness for those of us who have the power to change things, teachers and politicians alike. He viewed education as a democratic right that had nothing to do with public charity or federal welfare programs. His ‘vocation’ to be ‘fully human’ meant he could be loving, angry, confused or heart-broken and still be Paulo Freire. A master teaches by example. Freire was a complex being whose charisma was composed of the courage and open-heartedness to connect with other beings emotionally, brilliant intellect and what Bergson called *élan vital*, avidity for life. The death of his father, coinciding with the worldwide economic crisis of the 1930s, brought his family close to the edge.

Freire used his childhood experience of hunger and poverty as an objective correlative which enabled him to see the oppressed as beings of exemplary incompleteness. Rather than feeling pity or empathy for them and entering into a static, ‘assistive’ relationship which would only perpetuate their disempowerment and disgrace, he recognized that *they* were the ones who held the key to their freedom *and* the freedom of their oppressors, who would never change the relationship on their own because they confused slave-owning with profit and regarded themselves as powerful their chattel as weak. Freire reasoned that if the oppressed understood the double bind (the need of slave

²² Adam Gopnik, “Last of the Metrozoids: A teacher’s final lessons” (*The New Yorker*, 10 May 2004, 90).

for master and master for slave), they could opt out by choosing to become the subjects of their own lives, rather than objects of their oppressors' desires. Since most human beings are slaves to something or someone, many people can relate, intellectually, to this dialectic. But not everyone is courageous or desperate enough to steadfastly pursue its solution in her/his own life. That is because, for many people in developed societies, the oppressed/oppressor syndrome has been internalized from infancy and because psycho-spiritual healing is a slow, painstaking process of self-discovery that depends on our fellows' awareness of and enlistment in our plight. If isolation is the breeding ground of addiction, habit is its glue. Habitual behavior allows the addiction to appear to be a choice, something over which we have imagined power. We construct elaborate defense-mechanisms in early childhood, to protect ourselves from physical or psychological destruction at the hands of others, often our parents and caretakers, who have little or no idea what they are doing—because they are acting out of pain and fear, haplessly reproducing the actions of *their* dysfunctional parents – ad infinitum, ad nauseam. Coming from an unhealed slavocratic society and a fractured and rudderless family that fell from bourgeois contentment to the struggle for subsistence at a time of tremendous socio-economic pressure in a country without the government, means or will to allay it, the adolescent Paulo Freire felt the dialectic in his bones. He put down his slingshot and picked up a book. His path was pedagogical. Thirty years later, place, politics and history conspired to bring the “Paulo Freire Literacy Method” to national attention long enough to demonstrate both its efficacy and its threat to the stability of those in power. The oppressors feared the oppressed were about to shake off their shackles and engineered a quick coup d'état. In Chapter Two, I start to examine some of the social pressures that led to the 1964 crisis and why the notion of teaching adults to read and

write was such a contentious one.

Chapter Two: Historical Background & Literature Review

2.1 Toward a Passionate Pedagogy

Maxine Greene wrote, in a 1986 essay entitled “In Search of a Critical Pedagogy,” that Paulo Freire’s “background awareness and ... that of most of the largely Catholic peasants with whom he has worked, are not that of most North Americans.” Undoubtedly, this is true. The Catholicism of the Portuguese-Amerindian-African *mestiços* who make up the bulk of the populace of Northeast Brazil is a syncretic entanglement of millenarian faith and indigenous folk beliefs leading to what Freire described as “fatalism in the guise of docility.”²³ But the socio-economic plight of those at the bottom of the class system in the two largest countries in the Western hemisphere is similarly hopeless and there are a growing number of U.S. ‘popular educators’ who choose to stand with Greene “in the shadow of silent majorities...[as] teachers learning along with those [they] provoke to learn.” Greene’s prose is as lyrical and utopian as Freire’s:

We may be able to inspire hitherto unheard voices. We may be able to empower people to rediscover their own memories and articulate them in the presence of others, whose space they can share. Such a project demands the capacity to unveil and disclose. It demands the exercise of imagination, enlivened by works of art, by situations of speaking and making. Perhaps we can at last devise reflective communities in the interstices of colleges and schools. Perhaps we can invent ways of freeing people to feel and express indignation, to break through the opaqueness, to refuse the silences. We need to teach in such a way as to arouse passion now and then; we need a new camaraderie, a new *en masse*. These are dark and shadowed times, and we need to live them, standing before one another, open to the world. (Greene in Darder et. al., editors., 2003, 111-112)

If we are “to teach in such a way as to arouse passion now and then,” we must

²³ “Fatalism in the guise of docility is the fruit of an historical and sociological situation, not an essential characteristic of a people’s behavior. It is almost always related to the power of destiny or fate or fortune —inevitable forces—or to a distorted view of God. Under the sway of magic and myth, the oppressed (especially the peasants, who are almost always submerged in nature) see their suffering, the fruit of exploitation, as the will of God—as if God were the creator of this “organized disorder.” (Freire, 2000, 61)

discuss the things that matter most to dispossessed and marginalized people: food and the lack of it, proper housing and the lack of it, power and the lack of it, social aggression, class, race and gender prejudice, and the ongoing struggle for social equity and the rights and duties, liberties and constraints of full-fledged citizenship. Under the leadership of President Luiz Inácio da Silva and the Worker's Party, Brazil is clamorous with such discussions as part its people's attempt to balance government focus on capitalist growth with basic issues like hunger, crime and human rights issues and bringing basic education to the nation's disenfranchised working class.²⁴ In the next section, I compare Brazil's colonial circumstances with those of the U.S.

2.2 Nature and man in colonial Brazil

Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese in the XVI century in a different way and for different reasons than North America. It was not a haven for dissenting religious groups like the English Protestants, Quakers and French Huguenot pilgrims who came to the colonies of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Maryland to establish permanent New World communities where they could practice their faith without censure or rebuke. The impetus for Brazil's colonial settlement was essentially mercantile and extractive. The fruit of the fecund Portuguese colony – dyewoods²⁵, sugar, tobacco, cotton, cocoa, gold and diamonds – was destined for European export. In the words of historian Bradford Burns: "Portugal expanded overseas to enrich itself. The political and economic institutions imposed by Lisbon on Brazil pursued that singular goal (...) The colony

²⁴ As his first term draws to a close, Lula's cabinet is wreathed in scandal. Charges of fraud, graft and campaign-fund corruption, including a sizable contribution from Libya's Muammar Kaddafi are threatening Lula's chances of re-election in 2006.

²⁵ *Pau brasil* (brazilwood) which gave the country its name, is also called *Pernambuco* and once grew abundantly in the coastal rainforest (*mata Atlântica*), yielding a red dye. Used since the Renaissance to manufacture fine stringed instruments and bows, this mighty hardwood is now threatened with extinction. See the April, 2004 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine (pp. 52-63) for an article about how an international guild of musical craftsmen is gathering resources and strategizing to preserve it.

exercised no authority over its own economic destiny. Nor did the Luso-Brazilians ever achieve any notable efficiency in the exploitation of any of those natural products with which generous Nature endowed them...The huge plantations and ranches, owned by relatively few and often employing large numbers of slaves, sought to supply to the international market on as large a scale as possible the tropical product most in demand” (Burns, 1993, 61, 63). Families favored by Portugal’s imperial family were deeded huge *latifundia*, ideal for the cultivation and milling of thousands of *hectares* of sugarcane into rum and *rapadura*, exportable brown sugar bricks²⁶. Brazil cast off the Portuguese yoke in 1822, but the ball and chain leg-irons of slavery were harder to unshackle and it was not until 1888, 23 years after the U.S. Civil War had ended, that Brazil became the last country in the hemisphere to officially liberate its slaves. It was as if the plantation life of the Confederate South were transported south of the equator and, indeed, many secessionist cotton-planters from ‘Dixie’ opted to move lock, stock and refinery to Brazil after Robert E. Lee signed the Peace Treaty at Appomattox. Slaves were still available although the African slave trade had been stopped by common accord in 1850, and Dom Pedro II was anxious to add fair-skinned immigrants with a wealth of agricultural expertise to the Imperial plan to ‘whiten’ and Europeanize the populace.²⁷

Roberto Schwarz (1992, 14) writes of the cultural confusion of the Brazilian elite at the time:

In the nineteenth century, there were the slave trade, the latifundia and clientelism--a set of relations with their own rules, consolidated in colonial times and impervious to the universalism of bourgeois civilization. (...) Grafted from 19th century Europe onto a colonial social being, the various projections of civilization began to follow different rules from those operating in the

²⁶ “From the mid-sixteenth to mid-seventeenth centuries, Brazil supplied Europe with nearly all its sugar, a lucrative export encouraged by the Crown with tax exemptions, monopoly privileges, guarantees against court attachment of production facilities, and patents of nobility.” (ibid., 64).

²⁷ Although *embranquecimento* (whitening) did not guide Brazil’s immigration policy until after the turn of the twentieth century, the sole (1872) census taken during slavery showed that Brazil’s population of approximately 10 million was 37 percent white, 44 percent brown and 19 percent black (*apud*. Telles, 2004, 29).

hegemonic countries. (...) The new stage of capitalism (...) convert[ed] local property owners and administrators into a natural ruling class, yet retained old forms of labor-exploitation which have not yet been fully modernized up to the present day. (...) The discrepancy between the two Brazils (...) was the lasting result of the creation of a nation-state on the basis of slave-labor which arose out of the English industrial revolution and the consequent crisis of the old colonial system.

Gilberto Freyre, a sociologist and colonial historian, was heir to this slave-holding elite and its prime literary apologist. Possessor of an entertaining and descriptive prose style, he enchanted the world into believing that his Portuguese colonial forebears were the progenitors of a hybrid race particularly suited for New World tropical life.

No one has done more to shape his countrymen's perception of their colonial past than Freyre, the U.S.-educated²⁸ scion of wealthy Recife sugar mill owners.

His 1933 masterpiece, *Casa-grande & senzala – introdução à história da sociedade patriarcal no Brasil*, was published by Alfred A. Knopf as *The Masters and the Slaves (A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization)* in 1946, translated by Samuel Putnam. In his introduction to the 43rd edition, sociologist Darcy Ribeiro displays limited tolerance for Freyre's vainglorious exaltation of his plantation-owning forebears:

The object of study of *CG&S* is this " patriarchal" family to which Gilberto devotes all his attention. But very little or no attention is paid to the other family, epitomized by the mother--giving birth to children begotten by diverse fathers--not infrequently by the landlord himself--who raises them zealously and with affection, although she knows they are alien property and that any day they will be taken from her to fulfill the destiny that the master decides. It is true that the very grandeur of the patriarchal family of the plantation owner was such that it left no social space for any other. But it is a shame that Gilberto's elitist myopia has not allowed him to reconstitute this Brazilian matrix, this non-family, this mother-centered anti-family of yesterday and today, the impoverished breeding mother, black or white, who engendered and raised the Brazilian masses. (Freyre, 2002, 29, my translation)

According to Ribeiro, reading Freyre's book was a confrontational experience for Brazilians:

It taught us, above all, to reconcile ourselves with our Portuguese and black ancestry, about which all of us were more than a little vexed. To it, we owe our being able to accept as a worthy forebear the immigrant who worked like a donkey in the marketplace pulling a cart until he was transformed by profit into a stingy merchant. It was Gilberto who taught us to accept, if not proudly at least calmly, in each of our faces and those of our uncles and cousins, the big fleshy mouths, kinky hair and those enormous nostrils which came from our indubitably servile and African strain. (ibid., 13, my translation)

Freyre's emphasis on what Edward E. Telles calls "horizontal relations – sociability and social relations among class equals" regardless of race, was particularly influential among U.S. 'Brazilianists' in the 1950s, a time when the burgeoning Civil Rights

²⁸ Freyre was an undergraduate at Baylor and studied anthropology at Columbia in the late 1920s and early 1930s with Franz Boas. Boas was the subject of a retrospective essay in *The New Yorker*, "Franz Boas: The Measure of America. How a rebel anthropologist waged war on racism" by Claudia Roth Pierpont (March 8, 2004, pp. 48-63).

Movement was leading North American sociologists to look elsewhere for examples of harmonious multiracial societies. Swayed by Freyre's depiction of the smooth sexual blending of the Portuguese colonial masters with indigenous tribes and imported Africans, they "assumed that integration would lead to eventual assimilation, where the dominant and previously subordinate racial groups would become similar and racial differences would disappear...predicting an optimistic future for the descendants of Brazilian slaves" (Telles, 2004, 8).

But slavery in all but name continued in the fertile sugar lands of the Pernambucan *zona da mata*. Tens of thousands of peasants were dependant on the cyclical cutting and burning of sugarcane to eek out a livelihood as hardscrabble tenants on vast plantations owned by the descendants of the same 'noble' families whose local origins Freyre traced back to the XVI century. Fidel Castro's successful peasant revolution, ousting longtime Cuban strongman Fulgencio Batista in January, 1959 reverberated in Recife where the *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) of the early 1960s began to agitate for equitable land distribution and progressive artists and intellectuals created a citywide Popular Culture Movement with the support of students and the municipal government.

2.3 Paulo Freire & the MCP

Any discussion of race is conspicuous by its absence from Paulo Freire's early writings²⁹. When Freire described encountering a "culture of silence" in *Educação e a prática de liberdade* (1967) and *Pedagogía do Oprimido* (1970), Brazilian readers understood that he was referring to the socio-political muting of the illiterate masses in the same way that Ralph Ellison created a trope for the social status of twentieth century

²⁹ It was not until the World Council of Churches sent him to Tanzania and the former Portuguese colonies of Moçambique, Guiné-Bissau and São Tomé e Príncipe that Freire grappled with the dilemmas of *negritude* and colonialism, under the aegis of the revolutionary ideologue, Amílcar Cabral, as described in *Cartas a Guiné-Bissau* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1984).

North American blacks in the title of his 1952 novel, *The Invisible Man*. The reality is that both Gilberto Freyre and Paulo Freire, as sons of Recife³⁰, spent their formative years among a voluble populace of hybrid African, Amerindian, Iberian and Levantine stock. The Popular Culture Movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s worked because the *hoi polloi* of Recife were opinionated people unafraid to express themselves in public, as long as they knew they would find a sympathetic audience—which was the case in Recife from 1958-1964 under the successive Municipal and State governments of Miguel Arraes. Paulo Freire’s task at the time, as Professor of Educational Philosophy and Director of the Social Outreach Program at the University of Recife³¹, was to encourage his predominantly middle- and upper-class students to learn the popular vernacular so they could conduct research in working-class communities and participate in *Círculos de Leitura* (Reading Circles) as monitors, animators and assessors, “instruments at the service of the people” rather than “instruments of the reproduction of inequality.”³²

Today, in Roberto Schwarz’s words, “local property owners and administrators have become a natural ruling class” and the oligarchy persists, particularly in the rural Northeast where sugar is king and slavery-in-all-but-name prevails. The country’s sprawling southern *megapolí*, São Paulo (ten and half million inhabitants) and Rio de Janeiro (six million)³³ are full of transplanted *nordestinos*, many of them illiterate and unemployed, who survive by begging, stealing or foraging in municipal garbage dumps.

Paulo Freire died at the age of seventy-five in 1997 (ten years after Gilberto Freyre, who was born in 1900) challenging readers, disciples, and admirers the world over to ‘reinvent him’ by continuing to fight alongside those oppressed by race, class, poverty, or

³⁰ The former was ‘to the manor born’ and the latter lost his policeman father at the beginning of the world economic crisis of the 1930s and watched his family slide into poverty. Although Freire’s worldview was undoubtedly affected by reading *Casa Grande & Senzala*, it is highly unlikely that Freyre, as a politically conservative member of the ruling elite, would have ever bothered to read or acknowledge *Educação como a prática da liberdade* or *Pedagogia do Oprimido* as anything but radical and subversive tracts menacing to the sanctity of his oligarchic fatherland.

³¹ Now the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).

³² The terms are from a 1984 article by Carlos Rodrigues Brandão entitled “The Crossroads: Ways of Thinking About and Realizing Education in Latin America”, published in *Popular Education: Latin American Utopia*, my translation of a 1994 Brazilian book of the same title, edited by Moacir Gadotti and Carlos Alberto Torres.

³³ IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) figures from the 2000 census.

sexual prejudice. As his chosen successor³⁴, Carlos Rodrigues Brandão writes:

More than a *program*, popular education is a *presence*. It is the possibility of education to be not merely committed and militant, or to be not merely participative and liberating, but to be, in and of itself, a mobilized anticipation of liberation. An educative work which, before it succeeds in realizing that in which it participates, struggles to realize in itself what it dreams of materializing on the horizon of social life.³⁵

Unfortunately, a militant liberation movement was not foremost in the minds of the men who ran the country during most of the twentieth century. What mobilized them was the possession of power and its perquisites. The political vicissitudes of twentieth century Brazil were continual, as the next section shows.

2.4 The wheel of (mis)fortune, 1930-2004

Nowhere is the struggle for social justice and popular education more problematic or imperative than in Brazil, the second largest country in the Western hemisphere, whose rapacious founding by the Portuguese, long-term dependence on slavery and perpetuation of a hegemonic elite has made democracy a chimera and the gap between rich and poor a chasm. Throughout most of the twentieth century, Brazilians ricocheted from pillar to post, enduring 35 years of nationalist rhetoric and autocratic control under the *Estado Novo*³⁶ of Getulio Vargas, 1930-45 and a military dictatorship, 1964-85; import-substitution modernization (Juscelino Kubitschek, 1956-60); ‘populist’ manipulation (Jânio Quadros and João Goulart, 1961-64), political pluralism with *vox populi* mobilization for the restitution of constitutional rights in the mid-eighties, the forced resignation of a corrupt neoliberal President in 1992, and the Caesarian birth of hyper-

³⁴ Nominated by Freire to succeed him at the World Council of Churches in Geneva, cultural anthropologist and critical pedagogue Carlos Rodrigues Brandão declined.

³⁵ Op. cit., p. 33, my translation.

³⁶ Carmen Nava (1995) points out that the name *Estado Novo* (New State) was eponymous with Antonio de Oliveira Salazar’s 1933 proto-Fascist regime in Portugal and that Vargas’s Department of Public Service (DASP) was modeled on the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda visited by DASP Director, Luis Simões Lopes during a 1934 trip to Berlin.

capitalist, demand-side economics supervised by Dr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso, 1994-2002—a seemingly spectacular delivery from triple-digit inflation that indebted his country to the international banking community for decades to come.

According to the 2000 census, 16 percent of the population above the age of five (more than twenty-four million people) is unable to read or write. And that is the *good* news: in 1991, the national toll of *analfabetos* was even higher, almost thirty-three million. Members of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, the governmental census-gathering body, have lately made their feelings as well as their findings public, abandoning positivist neutrality to condemn a “perverse educational situation in which twenty-four million Brazilians lack one of the basic conditions of citizens in a literate society – a form of social exclusion, which has exclusion from school at its base.”³⁷ Moreover, the number of non-literates is likely to increase since there are now almost three and a half million children between 7 and 14 struggling to read and write who do not attend school full-time. Fifty-five percent of those between 15 and 17 are still in primary school. Only half of all Brazilians between 18 and 19 stay in school and, of these, only 17 percent graduate from high school. Forty-four percent of the population gets less than three years of school, while a third of the people living in rural areas never go to school at all. On the average, Brazilians spend 4 to 7 years in school—well below the legal minimum of 11 years required for basic education, which only eighteen percent of Brazilians complete.³⁸

Add to these dismal statistics, widespread institutional racism, ludicrously low pay for teachers and the fact that the top-of-the-line, federal university system is attended, free of charge, by the sons and daughters of the rich while private cram schools are full of

³⁷ From *A Folha de São Paulo* online: <http://www.lpp-uerj.net/olped/noticias/Folha.htm> (12/2/03), p. 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.2, my translation.

paying customers from the middle and working classes struggling to acquire the cultural capital to pass the annual *vestibular* (national college entrance exam) and you begin to see the extent to which the deck is stacked against the poor. Not to mention the deleterious economic effects of Brazil's ballooning debt to the World Bank and the IMF: national coffers choked up \$62 million in interest payments for 2003 alone. Despite prioritizing economic recovery, Brazil's current administration, a broad-based coalition engineered by President da Silva and the Worker's Party (PT) after decades of grass-roots organizing in labor unions and base communities, could not come up with even half of this ballooning IOU, so it was "expelled from the circuit of credit renewal from June to December of 2002 and dropped from the market of exporters with good credit which provoked an immediate devaluation of the *real* when the dispute for dollars caused the national currency to fall to a ratio of almost 4:1 against the dollar."³⁹

In troubled times, class disparities and racial prejudice are often exacerbated. In the next two sections, I translate and analyze a recent Brazilian joke as a significant sociological artifact.

2.5 A racist 'joke' from Brazil

Brazilian racism does not stop at the schoolhouse door. A recent *piada* (joke) from Brazil⁴⁰ succinctly contextualizes the situation by placing children from distinct social strata in the same classroom:

In a very heterogeneous school, where students from various social classes study, the lady who teaches Portuguese asks the meaning of the word "obvious." Carine, a rich girl and one of the most diligent students in the class who is always very well-dressed, fragrant and pretty, answers:

"Esteemed professora, today I arose at dawn after an excellent night's sleep in the comfort of my own room. I descended the enormous staircase of our humble abode and headed for the parlor

³⁹ Cardoso was elected to his first term as President for having, as Finance Minister, introduced the *real* on par with the dollar. The citation is from "Boa Conversa sobre economia," an e-mail from Bahian economist Romeu Temporal, dated 12/11/03. His URL is temporal1@terra.com.br

⁴⁰ I received this joke via e-mail from Adão Pinheiro in São Paulo on 12/18/03.

where breakfast was being served. After savoring the appetizing delicacies, I went to the window that overlooks the front garden and admired that beautiful landscape for some time, thinking how beautiful and agreeable it is to be alive. Turning slightly, I perceived that the BMW automobile belonging to my father remained in the garage. I thought to myself: it's OBVIOUS that my father went to work in the Mercedes-Benz."

Not wanting to be outdone, Luiz Cláudio Wilson, from a middle-class family, spoke up:

"Professora, today I didn't sleep so well, because my mattress is kinda hard. But I managed to wake up anyway, because I set the alarm clock beside the bed to ring early. I got up kinda dizzy, ate some bread which was kinda hard and drank some coffee. When I left for school, I saw that my Dad's Corcel II was in the garage. I imagined: It's OBVIOUS that Dad went to work on the bus."

Inspired by the discussion, little Juca from the favela raised his hand to speak:

"'Fessora, t'day I 'mos didn't sleep, 'cause dey was shootin' all night in the favela. I on'y waked up dis mornin' 'cause I was starvin', but dey wasn' nuttin' ta eat...when I peep' tru da window of da shack, I seen my granma wit' a newspaper under her arm an' figgered: it's OBVIOUS she gonna take a crap. She cain't even read!"

2.6 A Freirian analysis of the joke

If we take this *piada* at face value, it recalls Paulo Freire's dictum: "the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word." Juquinha, the black slum kid, has not yet mastered the hegemonic tongue but, in order to survive, he has had to become a skilled 'reader' of the lethal world he inhabits. In Brazil, poverty is a weapon of mass destruction. Socially and economically oppressed to the point of extinction, *Juquinha* has nothing left to lose. His only defense is a self-deprecating sense of humor that recalls Gilberto Freyre's elite perspective on slavery ("sadism of the whites, masochism of the indians and blacks") and makes Juquinha's long-suffering grandma the butt of the joke.

If he is to achieve *liberdade*, Juquinha must work through the naïve or 'mythical' consciousness which has, until recently, prevented his people from questioning their lot in life, instead accepting it as their prescribed fate. Freire believed that human beings are conditioned, but not determined, by their historical epoch and ingenuous beliefs, especially when these are reiterated by the oppressive world around them. Critical pedagogy holds that such 'limit situations' can be overcome by people's critical understanding and willingness to take action. By taking pride in what they are able to

accomplish as readers of the word, *alfabetizandos* learn to distinguish themselves as separate from what they do to earn a living in the daily grind for survival. ‘Subjects of their own stories,’ they begin to ‘read the world’ critically and to analyze and combat the conditions it imposes on them as ‘utilitarian’ objects of someone else’s greedy dream.

The joke’s racism is codified in Juquinha’s ‘Afro-Brazilian’ grammatical errors when describing his and his grandmother’s plight and in the fact that he mocks her by pointing out her illiteracy and poverty rather than honoring her as his grandsire and guardian, a sapient matriarch who has survived conditions that would kill an embodied intellectual. To me, this joke is a vivid example of what Freire called the “evil contempt” with which the Brazilian popular classes continue to be held by those in power.⁴¹ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, a radical alliance of Christian social activists, the National Student Union (UNE) and the Popular Culture Movement began to work with and organize the oppressed. The next section traces Brazilian national literacy efforts from 1962-1985.

2.7 Adult Literacy & the State

With the exception of the 1961 Cuban literacy campaign which was reported⁴² to have been both participative and revolutionary, most campaigns for adult literacy in Latin America amounted to little more than “a significant way for the State to legitimize

⁴¹ “I believe that sensitivity to the pain imposed on the Brazilian popular classes by the evil contempt with which they are treated pushes us forward and motivates us to fight politically for the radical transformation of the world.” (Freire, 1998, 50)

⁴² Jonathan Kozol (1978) gives a detailed and enthusiastic account of the challenges and vicissitudes of Cuba’s unique campaign.

itself.”⁴³ In Brazil, Paulo Freire’s much heralded “method” of problem-posing, consciousness-raising education for liberation, developed as an extension program at the University of Recife and successfully field-tested in the Rio Grande do Norte *sertão*⁴⁴, was adopted by the populist regime of President João Goulart in 1962 as a way to swell the tide of popular suffrage (only those deemed functionally literate could vote) and loosen the landed oligarchy’s perennial grip on the reins of power. As the national roll-out of “the Freire method” was being put into effect in early 1964, the Goulart government was toppled by a bloodless military coup and Freire, along with thousands of other leftist intellectuals and activists, became an enemy of the State.

In Recife, Freire’s native city and the epicenter of progressive politics in Northeast Brazil at the time of the coup⁴⁵, the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (MCP), which had inspired Freire’s earliest experiments, was sacked. MCP headquarters were invaded by military police who set fire to the folklore-rich “Brasiliana” library, burning one-of-a-kind books, documents and archival materials.⁴⁶ Freire’s slide projectors were confiscated along with Francisco Brennand’s paintings, source of the ten slides⁴⁷ used to ‘conscientize’ pre-literate peasants and urban slum-dwellers to the fact that they were not mere beasts of burden suffering through a life of ceaseless misery ordained by God but contributors to the rich and varied Brazilian cultural scene. The “generals” remained in

⁴³ Carlos Alberto Torres (1992), 81.

⁴⁴ Having initiated a Popular Education Campaign in João Pessoa, capital of Pernambuco’s neighboring State of Paraíba, Freire was invited in October, 1962 by the Secretary of Education of Rio Grande do Norte to continue his experiment in Angicos as part of a state-wide literacy movement, *Com pé no chão também se pode lêr* (The barefoot can also read) campaign. Celso de Rui Beiseigel (1982) quotes the triumphant Freire: “Three hundred people were made literate in Angicos in less than forty hours. Not just made literate. Three hundred people became conscious and learned to read and write in Angicos...and were discussing Brazilian problems.” (p. 72)

⁴⁵ The *Ligas Camponeses* (Peasant Leagues), a grassroots movement begun by renegade cane-cutters and mill workers at the *Galileia fazenda* outside Recife and spearheaded by a local lawyer, Francisco Julião, provoked violent reaction on the part of the landed oligarchy and fed American ‘Cold War’ fears of a Communist takeover in the area.

⁴⁶ The library fire was vividly recalled by Professor João Francisco de Souza in our interview on 7/31/02.

⁴⁷ See appendix for color reproductions with accompanying text by Freire.

power for twenty-one years during which time any notion of pluralist democracy was abandoned, all communications media were censored and the right of habeas corpus revoked under martial law. Thousands were tortured, killed and exiled in clandestine operations and a strong underground opposition formed and fought the government troops. Employing urban guerrilla tactics, robbing banks and taking hostages (including the American ambassador in Rio, in 1969), the sons and daughters of the middle class risked their lives to free imprisoned comrades, demanding that they be sent to Castro's Cuba or Allende's Chile where they were welcomed as heroes of the people's cause.

After spending more than a month as a political prisoner in Olinda and Recife, Freire sought diplomatic sanctuary and began what was to be a sixteen-year exile in Bolivia, Chile, Cambridge, Massachusetts where he taught at Harvard and Geneva, Switzerland where he worked as a roving ambassador of literacy, conducting and/or supporting popular campaigns in Tanzania, São Tomé and Príncipe, Guinea-Bissau and Nicaragua for The World Council of Churches before being granted amnesty and returning to Brazil in 1980.

The only youth and adult literacy movement to survive the coup was the *Cruzada ABC* (ABC Crusade), the acronym standing not only for the first three letters of the alphabet but for *Ação Básica Cristã* (Basic Christian Action), a national association of Baptist fundamentalists. The Crusade attempted to fill the vacuum created by the military regime's banishment of popular pedagogy, until it was replaced in 1967 by MOBREAL, the *Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização* (Brazilian Literacy Movement), the official program of the military government and the largest and best-organized literacy campaign the country had ever seen. Privately funded by a 2 percent 'contribution' that the government permitted large businesses to withhold from their

taxes and contribute directly to MOBRAL, the Movement was able to function as an autonomous program within the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and maintain structural flexibility. In addition to national coordination, each state in the Republic and many municipalities had their own MOBRAL commissions. Aided by a steady influx of government funding, MOBRAL transformed buses into mobile libraries and initiated early childhood projects while focusing on adult and youth education and editing collections of Brazilian folklore to serve as source materials. The program expanded operations, region by region, around the continent-sized nation, employing professors of linguistics and anthropologists as researchers.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, little of this intermediate structure trickled down to the grassroots level of *alfabetizadoras* and *alfabetizandos*.⁴⁹

The work of the MOBRAL *educador(a)* was semi-voluntary, unlinked to any steady source of employment. She or he was paid a *per capita* pittance for each matriculating *educando*. But, for all its attention to detail, MOBRAL remained a top-down hierarchy, increasingly out of touch with its base. Literacy *educadores* might accrue a list of thirty or forty students but would receive no pedagogical supervision, direction or encouragement – they were left very much on their own.

Shadowing the national growth of MOBRAL was a clandestine regional resurgence of the Ecclesiastic Base Movement (MEB), inspired and implemented with parochial funds, by Dom Helder Câmara, the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, a charismatic and courageous people's prelate who assumed his bishop's "throne" (and immediately put it into storage) on April 12, 1964 – less than two weeks after the military coup ended progressive politics in Brazil. Despite widespread repression, the experience that had

⁴⁸ With many of the universities shut down by the military, intellectuals not exiled or in jail were glad to put their training to use.

⁴⁹ I use the generic terms for 'literacy teachers' and 'literacy learners' because so few of those employed as MOBRAL monitors had any special certification or training to teach.

been lived before the coup proved indelible: local and foreign-financed NGOs appeared, helping to form fishing cooperatives and reviving artisan crafts, while the Catholic Church sheltered a number of worker-priests who carried out their missions in the *alagados*, *mangues*, *morros* and *mocambos*⁵⁰ along the coast as well as in the desert interior of the northeastern states, sometimes collaborating with former trade-union workers who took refuge in poor and working-class neighborhoods and continued to organize. While MOBRAL was the ‘official’ initiative of the military government, a number of popular initiatives, like the *conselhos de moradores*⁵¹ were seeded and supported by the MEB.

When MOBRAL was dissolved by the Federal government in 1985, one of the first initiatives of its successor organization, *Fundação Educar*, was to open the possibility of an accord with the NGOs, municipalities and churches. *Fundação Educar* (FE) had a different structure and politics than MOBRAL. It was no longer functioning on a national level but existed under the auspices of the Ministry of Education in Brasília and provided funding to the various municipalities. Each municipality had to organize its own structure to take care of Youth and Adult Education (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*: EJA) with funding from the Federal government. *Fundação Educar* survived for two or three years. The Federal government has not sponsored another nation-wide line of funding for EJA.⁵² Of the grassroots organizations and NGOs which took the place of

⁵⁰ *Alagados* are floodplains which abound along the northeastern Brazilian coast, rising and shrinking with the rain and tides, in which the hovels of the oppressed are suspended on stilts; *Mangues* are mangrove swamps, a primary food source for the foraging oppressed who extract crabs, small shrimp and a variety of mollusks from the mud; *Morros* are hills many of which, particularly in Olinda and sections of Recife, house *Mocambos*—the northeastern term for *favelas*—teeming, sanitationless shantytowns.

⁵¹ Literally, ‘dwellers councils,’ informal organizations of *mocambo* residents, which often supported literacy *educadores* with pedagogical training and political orientation, collaborating with local NGOs like the *Josué de Castro Center* (see Chapter 6.2: Guiomar’s Story).

⁵² I am indebted to Professor João Francisco de Souza for supplying me with much of the information on which this discussion is based in the course of our aforementioned interview. In addition to his duties as Professor of Pedagogy and Director of the Center for Education at UFPE, he is one of the founders of NUPEP (*Núcleo de Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão em Educação de Jovens e Adultos e em Educação*

the government in supporting literacy programs after 1985, the best-known was MOVA, the Youth and Adult Literacy Movement, established in 1989 by the newly appointed Secretary of Education for the City of São Paulo, Paulo Freire.

2.8 MOVA-SP

Paulo Freire was, along with Luís Inácio "Lula" da Silva⁵³, one of the founders of the Partido Trabalhista (PT), the Workers Party, in 1980. He had recently returned to Brazil after sixteen years of exile and declared himself anxious to 'relearn' his country so he could serve it. In 1989, he was appointed by Mayor Luiza Erundina as the first PT Secretary of Education of the São Paulo Municipality. Although he remained in office for just three of the four years of his mandate, the Freire administration inaugurated MOVA-SP (*Movimento de Alfabetização de Jovens e Adultos-São Paulo*), whose goal it was to teach 60,000 of the City's non-literate adolescents and adults to read and write Brazilian Portuguese.

By the time Freire brought his adult literacy method back to São Paulo in 1989, it had been tested in the fires of revolutionary campaigns in Chile, East and West Africa and Central America, and was applicable to working-class youth and adults in a South American megalopolis. With seventy percent of Brazilians living in cities⁵⁴ and a consumerist middle-class supplanting the aging oligarchy as the ruling hegemony, the non-literate were invading São Paulo, the most populous city on the continent⁵⁵ and the

Popular) which currently supplies textbooks on a variety of subjects for the *Escola de Formação Sindical da CUT no Nordeste*, a national trade union training school for northeast Brazilian laborers.

⁵³ Lula's election, on October 27, 2002, after three unsuccessful attempts (1989, 1994, 2000) was a mark of the working-class candidate's and his party's persistence as well as the symbolic end of 500 years of oligarchic hegemony in Brazil.

2

⁵⁴ At the end of the 1950s, seventy percent of the Brazilian population could still be categorized as "rural." The pyramid was inverted within a decade because the industrial boom in São Paulo and construction of Brasília convinced millions of people that, by migrating to the larger cities, they could find work, schools for their children and full-fledged citizenship.

⁵⁵ According to the 2000 census, São Paulo had 10,600,060 inhabitants but this number is believed by

perennial “locomotive” of Brazilian progress. Freire's first priority was to revivify the educative future of 900,000 children in crumbling public schools staffed by underpaid and overworked teachers, so he relegated the running of the MOVA program to grassroots organizations and NGOs. According to Maria del Pilar O'Cadiz (Torres, 1997)⁵⁶, "MOVA was a confederation of movements coordinated by an institution called 'The MOVA Forum,' which included 50 leaders ranging in age from 18 to 24 years."

This youthful cadre had to deal with a central coordination team from the Secretariat that included pedagogues, administrators, sociologists and journalists, with a General Coordinator reporting directly to Freire. The chronological disparity in the makeup of the two groups led to personality conflicts, tension and frequent changes of leadership. There were 49 different social movements which "signed agreements with MOVA when it started in February 1990 with 320 *núcleos de alfabetização* (literacy training nuclei), each containing 20-30 students...Teachers (called 'literacy trainers' or 'monitors') were selected by the social movements, which also recruited the *alfabetizandos* (literacy-learners).

The key responsibilities of the Secretariat were to design pedagogical content and methods, (...) train the selected teachers, and finance the process, including paying monitors' salaries."⁵⁷ MOVA-SP's stated tenets were: 1) education as the production and not merely the transmission of knowledge; 2) the defense of education for freedom as a pre-condition for life in a democracy; 3) the rejection of authoritarian, manipulative ideologies which arise when rigid hierarchies are established between teachers and students; 4) the defense of education as an act of dialogue in a process of rigorous

many to be a gross underestimate since there is a sizable population of transient ‘marginals’ and non-literates who slip through the census net.

⁵⁶ In an article entitled “Literacy, Social Movements and Class Consciousness: Freire’s Paths and the São Paulo Experience” by O’Cadiz and Torres (Torres, 1997, 128). My translation.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 58

discovery; 5) the notion of education as a science open to the needs of the people; and 6) education as the product of participative community planning.⁵⁸

Missing are key Freirian concepts like the 'generative word' or 'thematic investigation' which were reserved for the "Inter Project", the Secretariat's much more elaborate program for children in the City's public elementary and middle schools. In handing the administration of MOVA over to an unwieldy mix of inexperienced teachers operating under the auspices of a gamut of social movements, Freire's team failed to create a coherent pedagogical framework. One of the critiques of MOVA-SP was that it "endorsed the philosophy of Paulo Freire but did not mandate a set curriculum."⁵⁹

The care and conscientious preparation that had gone into teaching three hundred Northeastern peasants to read and write in forty hours three decades earlier was, sadly, not available for sixty thousand *Paulistanos*. Perhaps it was too laborious and time-consuming a task to add to the Augean labors⁶⁰ already underway. But the political agenda of the São Paulo Secretariat was interrupted, in the aftermath of the 1992 mayoral elections, by the reactionary victor, Paulo Maluf, who went out of his way to discredit and dismantle much of what the PT progressives achieved.

O'Cadiz and Torres (Torres, 1997, 128) call MOVA-SP "a historic initiative" and write that "it was imperative, given the high rate of Brazilian illiteracy (19% of the population above the age of 15), for the PT Secretary to include in his proposal for the democratization of municipal instruction an explicit policy of support for the Social

⁵⁸ My translation of a list of MOVA-SP precepts cited by Carlos Rodrigues Brandão (2001) as a "xerox" from Moacir Gadotti entitled "MOVA-SP -- Inheritor of the Tradition of the Base Education Movement" (São Paulo, 2000)

⁵⁹ Nelly Stromquist found that "access to dominant print media, primarily women's magazines, reinforced existing ideological messages" among the predominately female MOVA literacy students who lacked 'critical consciousness'" (Stromquist, 1997, 220).

⁶⁰ As one of his seven labors, Hercules washed away the filth of King Augeas' long-neglected stables by diverting a river through them. Freire's team had only São Paulo's notoriously polluted Tieté River with which to accomplish a task of similar magnitude in less than four years.

Movements that, during the preceding three decades — beginning with the Popular Culture Movement — had been active in the poorer sectors of the population.” That such a decision may have weakened MOVA-SP’s pedagogical effectiveness is less important, according to the authors, than Freire’s “unique attempt to democratize literacy” by seeing that “the State, represented by the Municipal government, passed financial resources and technical knowledge to Social Movements which were already operating in the area of literacy and ‘conscientization’ of the popular sectors, instead of imposing a determined program and/or creating a new entity or movement parallel to the base initiatives already in existence.” This double-edged sword cuts deep into the goals and praxis of EJA — “contributing to the betterment of the underclass by encouraging political mobilization and raising consciousness” but sacrificing methodological rigor for political expediency.⁶¹ Fortunately, MOVA survived its shaky start in São Paulo in 1989. The next section describes some successes it has achieved in Brazil’s southernmost state.

2.9 Reinventing Freire in Rio Grande do Sul

Proof that MOVA survived Paulo Freire’s death, on May 2, 1997, is nowhere more evident than in the southern Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Sul. In this land of temperate climate, bordering Argentina and Uruguay and settled mainly by European immigrants, MOVA has entered into agreements with more than 300 social movements and organized approximately 6,000 literacy classes in 430 municipalities since initiating operation in May, 1999. Brazilian popular education has been given a shot of ideological

⁶¹ Tensions of this kind, created when political maneuvers trump pedagogical sense, are common. Sociologist Pedro Demo writes: “It seems obvious that the educational system ought to be at the disposal of the student. After all, learning is its fundamental challenge. But that is not the case: the system seems to be the property of the teachers, untouchable and immutable. So nothing can occur which would undermine the political positions they have conquered. Many of these positions are an undeniable historical success but they become worthless when teachers’ interests supplant those of the students; the student seems an accident. The ideal school would be one that had no students.” Demo’s critique of the “performative contradiction of critical pedagogy” is compelling if dire (Demo, 2000, 24, my translation).

adrenaline by the World Social Forum that has taken place in the Rio Grande do Sul state capital, Porto Alegre, for the last several years, uniting representatives from nearly two thousand social movements. People from ‘Third World’ nations and progressive elements from North America and Europe come together to dialogue and present a gamut of ideas and accomplishments as a progressive alternative to the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where the neoliberal masters of the “globalized economy” confer.

Among the topics in open discussion at the Porto Alegre event has been an attempt at furthering the definition of *elementos sureños*, ‘southernly elements,’ which represent a significant change in direction from those directed at and by the hyper-capitalist North, where the majority of so-called “developed countries” are located. Some of these elements are: dialogue, humanity, contextualized reality, collective construction of knowledge, the willingness to critique neo-liberal concepts of autonomy and culture as contributive factors to the ransom of what delegates to the Forum consider a formerly viable and humane citizenship purloined by the dictates of hyper-capitalism now rampant in the world-at-large.⁶² The “new social contract” that is being forged in Porto Alegre is another of these ‘southernly elements’ close in spirit to Freire — “not as the inventor of a methodology, much less a theory, but as a man who had the sensitivity and the ability to interpret what was happening” at a pivotal moment in the history of his country:

Reading Paulo Freire from the perspective of the new social contract suggests that the *Pedagogy of Autonomy* [his final book] reveals another dimension: his concern with the disappearance of the subject, with the risk of eroding the base of political action. It is a

⁶² A splendid example of this ‘southernly’ critique is the recent address of Zapatista Subcomandante Marcos before the *Encuentro Internacional de Intelectuales en Defensa de la Humanidad* at the David Siqueiros Cultural Polyforum in Mexico City, on 24 October 2003. Assuming the ‘southernly’ character of “Don Durito de La Lacandona, the flower and cream of the walking cavalry,” a sapient indigenous *guerrillero*, Marcos compared the world to an “inflated bladder” where “international money” acts as a “storekeeper” who “constructs his shop where there used to be a country...makes war against the people and their houses...employing politicians who, since money rules, know nothing about governing...since they’re trained to keep shop.” (<http://ar.groups.yahoo.com/group/ComunidadEducativa>, my translation).

new critical reading of his former pedagogies that does not deny them, but neither feels the need to cling dogmatically to any of their formulations. The difficulty many academics have when reading Freire, which they characterize as a lack of rigor, in my view has to do with the fact that he founded his rigorousness beyond the disciplines and any determined body of theory. It is more or less what Peter McLaren writes in his study of Che Guevara and Freire: “I am arguing that theory must organically connect to a vision and a practice of revolutionary politics. It must be a theory of flesh and bones.” That’s his theory. (Streck, 2003, 97, my translation)

In the final sections of this chapter, I bring the discussion back to the present via a meditation on the ‘meaning of manipulation’ first posed by Freire’s son-in-law, Francisco Weffort, in 1965. I open the discussion with C.R. Brandão’s “flesh and bones” definitions of the four types of literacy.

2.10 Barefoot and barely literate

Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, using a diagnostic from an article by Maria Eugenia Letelier,⁶³ differentiates the degrees of literacy:

illiterate: the individual who cannot read or write a short sentence, in a significant (official) national language, who cannot recognize words in signs and documents in an everyday setting, or recognize public symbols and signs

barely literate: the individual who cannot read or write a short sentence in a significant (official) national language, but is able to recognize words on plaques and documents in everyday settings, can sign her/his name and recognize the meaning of public signs.

moderately literate: the person can, with some difficulty (making many mistakes), read, understand, and write a short text in a significant national language.

highly literate: the person can, with little difficulty (few mistakes), read and write in a significant national language. (Brandão, 2001, 27, my translation)

For years, it was enough for Brazilians to be “barely literate;” politically speaking; their ability to sign their names was all that was needed to swell the ranks of the voting populace. This attenuated literacy brought up an important “question about the meaning of manipulation” as early as 1965, when Freire’s son-in-law, the sociologist Francisco C. Weffort, wrote an introduction to his wife’s father’s first book, *Educação como a prática*

⁶³ Letelier’s article is entitled “Analfabetismo e alfabetização: problemas conceituais e de diagnóstico” in *Alfabetização e Cidadania*, no. 3, RAAAB, São Paulo, pp. 9-20, agosto/1996.

da liberdade, entitled “Education and Politics, Sociological Reflections about Liberation Pedagogy” when both families were in exile in Santiago de Chile:

We all know the populists’ intention in mobilizing the masses in Brazil or in any Latin American country: every man is a vote. And that is where the entire problem lies since, from the standpoint of liberationist pedagogy, preparing for democracy cannot mean merely to prepare for the conversion of the non-literate into voters, that is, for limited option alternatives established by a scheme of pre-existent power. If this kind of education is only possible when the *educando* commits to it as a concrete person, at the same time it prepares him or her for critiquing the alternatives presented by the elite and affords him or her the possibility of choosing his or her own path. And here we are talking not only about theory, but also about the experience of hundreds of thousands of Brazilian working people: a significant part of this mass joined labor-union activities and the concrete struggles of workers in defense of their interests. (Weffort in Freire, 1992, 30-31, my translation)

Nearly forty years later, it remains to be seen whether the Brazilian government, with the Partido Trabalhista (Worker’s Party) in power, will be any better than Goulart’s populists at keeping the basic rights of its citizens in view by giving them the democratic imperative to use their new-found language in free speech. Lula’s stated aim of eradicating hunger must include sating the intellectual hunger of the people to read and write the *lingua franca* as full-fledged citizens. Otherwise, like Caliban, they will only ‘know how to curse.’⁶⁴

Even privately-sponsored literacy campaigns continue to avoid what Carlos Alberto Torres calls the “trap,” from the State’s perspective, of programs where *alfabetizandos* are encouraged to participate as embryonic citizens—something that Freire deemed essential to their attainment of ‘historical subjectivity.’⁶⁵ A case in point, is the recent *Projeto Escola do Radio* (Radio School Project), a government-financed campaign

⁶⁴ Caliban, the “savage and deformed slave” of Shakespeare’s final play, *The Tempest* (1608), has often been used as a symbol of the Latin American oppressed. When Prospero, whose very name bespeaks his status, scolds his ‘monstrous’ bondsman, Caliban replies: “You taught me language, and my profit on’t is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you for learning me your language!” (Act I, scene ii, ll.363-365).

⁶⁵ In “Conscientização e Alfabetização: uma nova visão do processo,” published in *Estudos Universitários —Revista de Cultura da Universidade do Recife* # 4, April 1963, while in Brasília to supervise the national roll-out of the literacy program so successfully tested in Angicos, Freire presciently listed 12 procedures, 7 internal and 5 external, to guard against usurpation of “the direction of the movement and its bases and relations” and to “prevent different interest groups from becoming obstacles to the cooperation, understanding and depth of the work to be undertaken” (Beisiegel, 1982, 215, my translation).

designed by a well-respected NGO, *A Fundação Getúlio Vargas*⁶⁶ (FGV) in collaboration with the Paulo Freire Institute of São Paulo (IPF-SP), in the northeastern State of Paraíba, where Freire conducted some of his earliest experiments. Paraíba has one of the highest illiteracy indices in Brazil—nearly 40 percent. The project, which targeted a population of 80,000 *analfabetos* in municipalities throughout the state, was terminated five months after its inception when the Governor who sponsored it failed to win re-election, despite the fact that it boasted elements of distance learning (“virtual” classes broadcast on radio and TV) and family literacy (the inclusion of *amigos de fé*, ‘study buddies’) and was relatively inexpensive—costing the government only 150 *reais* (about US \$50) per participant.

What Brazilians call *politicagem*, a coinage that covers a wide range of manipulative behavior including intentional myopia, misanthropy, grandiosity, chicanery, graft, corruption and vituperative action on the part of *politiqueiros* (political game-players) is an accepted fact of life in most developing countries which claim to pursue a democratic path. But in the Northeast, where hunger and unemployment are perennial social scourges and Mafia-style ‘vigilante justice’ is still operative, it can have devastating power. In the words of Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993, 222):

Northeast Brazil is still at a transitional stage of state formation that contains many traditional and semi-feudal structures, including its legacy of local political bosses (*coroneis*) spawned by an agrarian *latifundista* class of powerful plantation estate masters and their many dependents. To this day most sugar cane plantation estates are protected by privately owned police forces or at least by hired *pistoleiros*. The web of political loyalties among the intermarried big houses and leading families of the interior leads directly to the governor and to the state legislature, which is still controlled by a traditional agrarian oligarchy.

Small wonder that literacy programs specifically designed for youth and adults, many of them ‘marginalized’ professionally and socially by a lack of marketable skills, are so

⁶⁶ Named after the longtime (1930-45, 1951-54) Brazilian President and architect of the populist *Estado Novo*, who committed suicide while in office rather than step down from power.

vulnerable to the shifting tides of politics and the often vengeful opportunism of those in power. Such was the case with the CEJA (Center for Youth and Adult Education) in Peixinhos, a working-class suburb of Olinda, Pernambuco. In 2000, the multidisciplinary EJA program was forced to move to a provisional site, expensive laboratory equipment belonging to the Municipal School District was stolen, university-trained teachers dispersed and students abandoned when a conservative party won the municipal election and engaged in a violent display of *politicagem* aimed at its founder, Professor João Francisco de Souza's and his faculty which included many Worker's Party (PT) adherents. In 2004, with the PT and PC do B (Brazilian Communist Party) holding the mayoralties in Recife and Olinda, it is perhaps possible to practice what Freire called 'emancipatory literacy' or 'education as the practice of freedom,' without fear of political retribution.

At least for the moment, the path is clear for EJA champion de Souza and his colleagues at the *Centro de Educação* at UFPE and NUPEP to roll out their 'reinvention' of a multidisciplinary, multicultural Freirian pedagogy, one that will make a difference to the lives of militant followers of the Landless Peasant Movement (MST) exercising 'squatters rights' in 42 Pernambucan *latifundia* (many of them former sugar mills), to itinerant sugarcane cutters in the Zona da Mata (PROMATA) and to urban *operários* getting on-the-job literacy training as part of a National Worker's Union (CUT) proposal to insure that the Brazilian working class is included in the "literate society" and can live up to the new job requirements of the 'Information Age.'

Chapter Three: Theory and Methodology

3.1 Teaching to transcend in L.A.

In “Theory as Liberatory Practice” (1994, 59), bell hooks describes how she “came to theory young, when I was still a child, because I was hurting ... desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around and within me... to make the hurt go away. I saw in theory then a location for healing.” Although I was born in a very different world than hers, white, urban and relatively privileged, I can relate to those feelings. As the only child of difficult parents, I was raised by an *au pair* and a grandmother and sent off to boarding school at age fourteen. School was the place where I made friends whom I conflated with family. Since I studied in gender- and race-segregated schools in New England, my world was composed largely of white male Episcopalians. I still hum their hymns. I was *in* that world but not *of* it. “Black Orpheus” blew it all away. So did eight months in Key West and two weeks in Haiti⁶⁷. I am a living testament to the metamorphic power of tropical culture, a mutant Macunaima.⁶⁸

Professionally, I am the teacher I never had but always wanted. I bring body and soul into my classes and sit down at my desk only when I am too tired to mingle. I am there to stimulate my students, to question, encourage and provoke them to transcend their limit situations, to abet their escape from the monolingual ghettos they inhabit by any means available: ‘deputizing’ children as tutors, enlisting classmates as “study buddies,’ using the L.A. Central Library as a free university, creating *un rincón de estudio* (a study corner) in their apartments where they can revere dictionaries, English-language texts and vocabulary lists with intensity and pleasure.

⁶⁷ I refer here to two important childhood adventures: seven runaway months with my mother in Key West at age 13 and a trip to Antigua and Haiti with both parents a year later.

⁶⁸ The shape-shifting antihero of Mário de Andrade’s eponymous modernist novel of 1928 and the 1969 Joaquim Pedro de Andrade film which magnified and diffused its anarchic vision of ‘anthropofagous’ Brazilian culture during the most brutal and repressive period of military dictatorship.

We learn each others' names from the first day of class. I open the door to my world and ask that they do the same: "What is your first name? What is your last name? Where are you from? How long have you been in L.A.?⁶⁹ Where do you live now? Why are you here?" Dialogue depends on questions, feeds on them, spawns them. Soon the language-learners are up on their feet, talking to each other.

"Hello, my name is Blanca. What is your name?"

"My name is Edgardo."

"Nice to meet you, Edgardo."

"Nice to meet you too, Blanca."

"I am from Oaxaca, Mexico. Where are you from?"

"I am from El Salvador."

Next, the dialogue expands to include another person.

"Hi, Olivia!"

"Hi, Blanca!"

"Olivia, I want you to meet my friend, Edgardo."

"Edgardo, this is Olivia Arce."

"Olivia, I want you to meet Edgardo Aguilar."

Dialogue takes a while to develop. It is enriched by laughter. Interlocutors appear with their characteristic tics, clothes, limits and lusts—all of which are cause for celebration. The young man who comes to class every evening with a headset and a can of Red Bull energy drink spends eight hours a day at a sewing machine, making outfits for dogs. He has trouble getting down to work, especially when the glamorous Rozibel enters with all her appurtenances. One day I call him Red Bull. The name sticks, he likes it.

⁶⁹ The shock of this first foray into the *passado compuesto interrogativo* is lessened by its cha-cha-cha metrics. First we say it, next we clap it or beat it on our desks. Then, for guaranteed laughs, we dance it.

Fear is the enemy. Fear and *pendejismo*: a masochistic straight-jacket of shame and self-deprecation that keeps mouths closed and people translating every new word back to the mother tongue. We struggle with reading aloud. I tell them their ears are cynics and must hear their mouths speaking English day after day to believe their owners are bilingual, that I want them to “swallow” as many flies as possible.⁷⁰ They have vast cerebral storehouses of Spanish with which they conduct all the juicy business of their lives and nearly no room for English with which they hope to make money and *superar las barreras* (overcome the barriers): racism, classism, sexism, lack of education.

It makes no sense. English has to become a living language in which they conduct some of the emotional business they now reserve for Spanish. I hand out photocopies of Sandra Cisneros’ short short stories from a book called *Mango Street*. The students identify with them. I ask them to stand up and read a paragraph or two to the class. Soon they are vying for the opportunity

The labor of second language acquisition is straightforward for people who can read and write their mother tongue: look up words, write them down, remember them by using them in conversation. Use a second language whenever and wherever possible. Make friends and converse with native-speakers. Listen to talk radio and watch TV and movies with English subtitles. Help your kids with their homework and let them help you with yours. Honor yourself and the polyglot diversity of Los Angeles by going to a museum, a festival, a restaurant where English is spoken, shop in English, serve and eat Sunday breakfast in English, make love in English, overcome your fear, feed head, heart and stomach with the polyglot, multicultural food and fellowship of the place you traveled so far and overcame so many barriers to inhabit.

⁷⁰ The dictum “En boca cerrada no entra mosca” (“Flies don’t enter a mouth that is shut”) was meant to silence loquacious children.

This is the cycle of my praxis as an adult ESL teacher: theory into action into theory. This dissertation is fueled by it. Four evenings a week as I prepare to teach, I bless my pedagogy and its power to renew and inspire me.

3.2 Phenomenology

Although my primary theoretical lens will be the Freirian literacy ‘method’ and popular education, my standpoint is essentially phenomenological. Phenomenology is a philosophy/epistemology that questions most of the ‘givens’ of the quotidian. It posits that we live in a world of multiple realities and that, as actors on this shifting stage we are constantly switching roles and scripts, depending on whether we are at work, at home or at our leisure, how we are feeling and whom we are with. It is our consciousness that lends given objects their ‘reality.’ The conscious life can be made evident and known. The unconscious is made manifest in actions and reactions, in relationships and dreams. All of this is material for the trained and curious observer, whose ability to remember and record depends on being ‘in the moment,’ remaining open to ‘the other,’ in synch with what is happening externally. Phenomenology does not focus on finding causality or a reality that can be generalized but seeks to produce knowledge with the help of and about the people with whom one is engaged.

Thus, as someone doing qualitative, phenomenological research, I do not start with a preconceived hypothesis but, rather, endeavor to maintain my subjective experience as the basis of research. As a participant observer and interpreter, I try to understand in qualitative ways how the people I study make sense of the phenomenal world in which they are immersed.

Phenomenology is concerned with meaning and meaning-making by subjects (see Husserl, 1900, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*). The perceptions of

individuals matter. Multiple meanings therefore exist in any given situation. Knowledge is bound by context. Phenomenology always situates the actor in her/his context: work, family, gender, class, race, interests, ideologies. It privileges the understanding of ‘the other.’ Since our inter-subjective understanding is always limited and indirect, we have to attempt to understand ‘the other’ through:

- **Observation:** interpreting the subjects’ actions and practices after studying them first-hand.
- **Exploration** of the subjects’ lived experiences, thereby linking actions with personal projects and motives.
- **Analysis** of the communication between actors. Language becomes an indicator of subjective experience.
- **Focus** on expressive acts that project ‘the other’s’ consciousness.

3.3 Methodology

Since my ‘units of analysis,’ portraits of Freirian educators, will be largely based on interviews, as well as personal observation and analysis of didactic materials, I am following Seidman’s (1991) proposal for a ‘phenomenological interview’ protocol. This format comprises a series of three interviews: the first to focus on the individual’s life history and experiences; the second to reconstruct details of particular experiences, and the third to enable the individual to reflect on the meaning of her/his experience. The language, objects and actions the individual subject describes become the focus of the analysis and interpretation.⁷¹ I have also found Michael Quinn Patton (1987) informative on qualitative data-gathering methods and “Variations in Evaluation Research Interview

⁷¹ I am indebted to Professor Nelly Stromquist of USC for sharing her ideas and notes on phenomenology. It was she who suggested the Seidman book and sent me the Patton.

Instrumentation.”⁷²

Literacy-teaching techniques based on the work of Paulo Freire value both the vernacular and hegemonic versions of Brazilian Portuguese. Freire urged his students to listen closely to the way fisherman, peasants and factory-workers spoke so as to be able to find ‘generative words’ and ‘generative themes’ within their ‘vocabulary universe’ that could then be ‘codified’ and ‘problematized’ in existential situations which would allow them to ‘read the world’ afresh – unfiltered by habit and denial. Only after weeks of dialogue generated by the codifications and managed by the *monitor(a)/animador(a)*, did the *analfabetos* begin to work with ‘generative words’—breaking them down into syllables and combining them to make new words in ‘discovery cards’ – a process that would eventually lead to what Freire called the “naming of the world”. This is an essential step on the path to *conscientização*: the mysterious process in which feelings of inadequacy, fear and shame are replaced by the joy of accomplishment and writing your wife’s name on the blackboard can be an epistemic epiphany.⁷³

Seven years after Paulo Freire’s passing, the pedagogical principles he helped establish and diffuse are the basis for what I believe is a renaissance of popular education and popular culture movements in and around his native city, Recife. Much of this has to do with the activism and vision of a group of young educators, many of them trained and/or inspired by the work of Professor João Francisco de Souza, Director of the Educational Center at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).

De Souza’s adaptation of Freirian principles begins with the belief that “every

⁷² Patton distinguishes four interview types: informal/conversational; interview guide (outline) approach; standardized open-ended; and closed quantitative.

⁷³ Freire recalls, in a scene from the George Stoney’s documentary shot in a classroom in Olinda where he once taught, the strange expression on a student’s face after he writes the word ‘NINA’ on the blackboard. “What’s the matter, Raimundo?” Freire asks as the man shakes his head in disbelief. “NINA is my wife’s name!” Raimundo cannot stop laughing. Freire is visibly moved by the memory.

teacher/educator is a researcher of learning and will research reality together with her/his students. The object is to diagnose significant aspects within this reality that can be elaborated in the plan of the course. This analysis is focused on four areas which serve as flexible elements and axes of interchange in the process of teaching/learning throughout the course:

The Principle Problems of the Community (Research into the principle problems of the community will help the educator systematize the generative themes that will be ‘problematized’ in debates, seeking to reflect, analyze and seek solutions to overcome them, as well as to see significant aspects for community success);

The Community’s Vocabulary Universe (starting with the vocabulary universe, the educator will pick generative words which correspond to the selected generative themes. This happens as the result of paying close attention to people’s oral expression. What are the words they use most powerfully when dealing with their problems and their victories?);

Money-making Activities (youths and adults in the process of learning have different ways of making money so as to be able to survive in a world that conspires against their class. Knowing what they do to make money will help the educators enrich the plan of the course with the principle demands on these students, which call for new ways of thinking and strategizing in their professional training;

Principle Economic Activities (This is another step that cannot be disregarded. It will show with greater visibility the economic vocation of the locality. It should help the educator promote discussions about local development, collaborating in the construction of a project of sustainable, collaborative development, a concrete strategy of CUT (the Central Workers Union founded by the PT).’’⁷⁴

One of the ways these elements and activities are brought into focus in literacy classes is through the use of *codificações* (coded visual representations). Freire defines a *codificação* as “the representation of an aspect of reality”, pointing out that a “‘codification’ must always be used as a challenge to the group and the *animador* (enlivener, educator) or as an ‘object’ to be analyzed by the group, with the help and participation of the educator rather than as a prompt for her/him ‘to deliver a class’. For Paulo Freire, ‘decodification’ is the act of analyzing the ‘codification.’ ‘By decodifying

⁷⁴ From a handbook entitled *Educação de Jovens e Adultos—Processos de Alfabetização* (“Youth and Adult Education—Literacy Processes”) published by the *Escola Sindical da CUT no Nordeste* Marise Paiva de Moraes (Recife: CUT, 2001, 11-12, my translation)

the codification, which represents aspects of reality, we are ‘reading’ the reality.”⁷⁵

I am interested in how these ‘codifications’ have changed. Freire’s original set of ten, based on paintings by well-known Recife artist and sculptor Francisco Brennand (see appendix) was mostly rural in theme, befitting the preponderantly rural-agricultural Northeast of that time. Forty years later, things are significantly different. The majority of Brazilians live in cities where television, movies and the Internet bring them images of the world-at-large. Whether or not they read and write, people are constantly bombarded with media images and the literacy workbooks I have collected reflect this with graphics and photographs from the worlds of advertising, art, theater, cinema, comic books and nature accompanying song lyrics, prose and verse. Placing emphasis on the ‘money-making activities’ of students and the ‘principle economic activities’ of their communities means confronting drugs and prostitution which, for many working-class youths and adults, are part of the raveled thread of life. As the recent Brazilian film, *Cidade de Deus* (City of God)⁷⁶ chillingly demonstrated, guns, drugs and money can turn impoverished kids into cold-blooded killers.

Paulo Freire spent time in a five-by-two-foot jail cell in Olinda after the April 1964 *golpe do estado* (coup d’état). He reminds his interlocutor, Chilean writer Antonio Faundez, in a passage from a book called *Learning to Question* cited by hooks (1994, 48) that “human beings do not get beyond the concrete situation, the condition in which they find themselves, only by their consciousness or their intentions—however good those intentions may be. The possibilities that I had for transcending the narrow limits of [my]

⁷⁵ From *Quatro cartas aos animadores de círculos de cultura de São Tomé e Príncipe* (in Brandão, 1980, 144-145), my translation.

⁷⁶ Fernando Meirelles’ and Kátia Lund’s 2002 *succès d’estime* tracks the lives (and deaths) of a gang of drug-trafficking delinquents in an eponymous *favela* on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro. Based on a novel by Paulo Lins, a former *Cidade de Deus* resident, the film features a cast of talented first-time actors and owes much to Hector Babenco’s 1981 *Pixote* although it lacks the depth of character and emotional complexity of the earlier film.

cell were not sufficient to change my condition as a prisoner. I was always in the cell, deprived of freedom, even if I could imagine the outside world. But praxis is not blind action, deprived of intention or of finality. It is action and reflection. Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis, and in the process they have become capable of transforming the world—of giving it meaning.” Freire lived intensely and his lifelong pursuit of a pedagogy of hope was replete with disappointments, set-backs and failures, perhaps none greater than the first—watching his dream dissolve and become a nightmare in a matter of days following the 1964 coup.

In the next sections, I examine the case against him, beginning with newspaper articles and artifacts from the early 1960s I discovered in Freire’s dossier while perusing the recently declassified DOPS (Secret Police) archives in Recife; proceeding to contemporaneous accounts by Brazilian educationists which shed a contradictory light on the presumed spontaneity and horizontality of the Reading Circle dialogues and, finally, reflecting on certain surprising statements Freire himself made in an impromptu, videotaped dialogue with Danilson Pinto, a young popular educator, not far from the Olinda *lixão* (city dump) during his final visit to Pernambuco, less than five months before his death. Next, I examine and counter the anti-Freire arguments of a British feminist scholar, Diana Coben and an Oregonian university professor, C.A. Bowers. In other words, I make my theoretical perspective on Freirian pedagogy and politics clear in a dialogical manner, by locking discursive horns with his critics.

3.4 The Case against Freire, 1964-2005

I tried for more than a month to get Lutgardes Freire, Paulo’s youngest son, whom I met at a CLACSO conference in Recife in 1999 to sign a sheet of paper giving me permission to open Freire’s *ficha* (file) at the Jordão Emerenciano Public Archives of the

State of Pernambuco where the DOPS files are housed. Lutgardes was in São Paulo, I was in Recife and it took some logistical manipulation and concerted urging on my part but, finally, he came through. On September 28, 2004, two days before I was to return to Los Angeles, his signed permission as a member of Paulo Freire's immediate family allowed me to open the file. "I doubt you'll find anything interesting there," Lutgardes said the last time we spoke. In a way, it was true. There was nothing earthshakingly novel for students of modern Brazilian political history and, in particular, of 1964—the quicksand year of "Revolution" as the right-wing generals who wrested control of the nation from the populist President João Goulart wanted their coup to be known.⁷⁷ But it was exciting to be sitting at a table in a large, almost empty room (only one other researcher was present) opening the *ficha*'s cardboard binders and examining tattered newspaper accounts of Freire's alleged perfidy.

3.5 The DOPS⁷⁸ Files

PAULO REGLUS NEVES FREIRE

Lawyer, married, born in 1922, native of Recife, PE.

Son of Joaquim Temístocles Freire and Edeltrudes Neves Freire.

Imprisoned: 6/17/64 Motive: investigation of subversive activities

Police register case number: 15,272

On 3/19/64 Freire signed the Manifesto of Solidarity to Governor Miguel Arraes

He was also among the signers of the Manifesto of Solidarity to the Cuban People

On 6/17/64 he was detained and taken to the erstwhile Stationhouse for Public Safety under investigation and thence to the IV Army HQ [in Olinda]. According to a report

⁷⁷ Glauber Rocha's 1967 film *Terra em Transe* is an evocative portrayal of the internecine enmeshment of both populist and conservative elites in the centrifugal chaos of "Eldorado," Rocha's trope for Brazil. "To the intellectual hunger for the ideal of romanticism, [the film] opposes the real physical hunger of the Brazilian masses... Romanticism, the film suggests, is out of place in a world where the political earth is in convulsion... *Terra em Transe* performs the *mise-en-scène* of the contradictions of populism. The character Vieira represents a composite political figure, combining the traits of a number of Brazilian populist leaders... Populism sets a trap for the people. It offers the illusion of participation. It incites the people to speak, but represses them when their voices of protest become too strident. It invites the people into the palace, but murders them if they become too militant. In the populist zigzag between democracy and authoritarianism, paternalistic encouragement often precedes brutal repression." (R. Stam in Johnson & Stam, editors, 1995, 159-160).

⁷⁸ *Departamento de Ordem Política e Social* (Department of Political and Social Order). Like the FBI, CIA or KGB, DOPS was a menacing acronym for the seemingly unlimited punitive power of the State throughout the period of military rule (1964-1985).

from the Military Police Investigator there in 1964: “[P.F.] was one of those responsible for the subversion in the field of adult literacy. The most serious [accusation] was that this subversion was executed with the financial resources of the Federal Government itself, with the help of the [U.S.] Alliance for Progress. The Popular Culture Movement was a machine of the [Recife] municipality at the service of international communism. On 10/9/64 [Freire] was dismissed from the [Federal] Ministry of Education and Culture by the power of an Institutional Act.

It is known that, on 7/4/58, the prisoner taught a course on “Educational Aspects of the Development of Literacy” and another on “Sociology of Religion.”

Sr. Paulo Freire’s links to leftist politics are notorious. With the permission of the Administration of Recife University and the support of the former government, he has been communizing the Northeast with his revolutionary-style literacy method.

He constantly traveled to Brasília, where he maintained contacts with former President João Goulart and was allied with Leonel Brizola, Darcy Ribeiro and Paulo Tarso⁷⁹, who accepted and gave ample support to the literacy method of this professor.

Recife University Radio served as the dispenser of propaganda for that method and the name of Sr. Paulo Freire became popular among the social classes.

Thus it has become necessary to suspend his political rights for a period of 10 years.

Secretary of Public Safety

[Summary of Testimony given to the IV Army Military Police Investigator in 1964]

[Paulo Freire] is one of those most responsible for the rapid subversion of the least favored. His activity in the field of adult literacy is nothing more than an extraordinary, Marxist undertaking of mass politicizing. His treason to the Fatherland is that much greater because this subversive activity was conducted with the financial resources of the Federal Government and with the help of the Alliance for Progress and others! He denied this insofar as it was possible, and evasively continued to spend the government’s money, only admitting his guilt when he realized that it was known and his dissimulation and denials unmasked. He was not the creator of a system or a ‘method’, he was just one myth-maker among many who infested the Country, [dispensing] myths created by the dense propaganda of Communist Party contractors. Students in schools of psychology and politics, masters of such subjects, were set up and sustained by the U.S. Communist Party. Even after they flee, the U.S.C.P. still provides them with dollars, directly or indirectly, so that they can continue their subversive activities in other sectors, in other countries. Many of those who were under preventive custody and are now at liberty (and especially the majority of those who have managed to escape since the imposition of the Revolutionary government) can be accused of having tried to rearticulate the Communist Party or the leftist system by any and all means. As proof we have the frequent and insistent documentation presented in the form of pamphlets, newspaper articles, graffiti on the walls of buildings, etc. All with the sole purpose of the demoralization of authority by violent personal attacks and generalized rumors about persons responsible for the investigations, for public safety and, even more boldly, against the major authorities of the Republic themselves whom they attempt to ridicule, demoralize and debauch: e.g., “ACTS AND FACTS,” “TIME OF ARRAES” [titles of publications.]

Antecedents

Author of the “supposed” Literacy “method”
which held that learning the alphabet was the same as becoming conscious or

⁷⁹ Leonel Brizola, Goulart’s brother-in law, was Governor of the State of Rio Grande do Sul at the time. “In January of 1962, he expropriated a local subsidiary of ITT (...) forcing Goulart to become increasingly radical to preserve his leadership over labor” (Burns, 1993, 437). Darcy Ribeiro, anthropologist, novelist, and one of the founders of the University of Brasília, was the Chief of Goulart’s Civil Cabinet. Paulo de Tarso Santos was Goulart’s Minister of Education.

politicized, Freire attempted to deceive the government with this “supposed method,” trying to sell it in diverse situations.

The Fatherland has no reason to be grateful for the work of Paulo Freire. On the contrary, the betrayed Fatherland will pursue him, through those currently responsible for his destiny, to pay for the damage he has caused.

He is a crypto-communist masquerading as a literacy teacher. The Angicos experiment was highly profitable for the communist movement: the major part of it was politicization, not literacy.

The Popular Culture Movement was the [Recife] municipality’s machine to serve international communism and that is where the Paulo Freire method was applied.

The Popular Action [movement] was an organization with revolutionary goals that defined *conscientização* as “The Organization Aimed at Taking Power.” Their motto: “*conscientização* without a revolutionary goal is one more way to anesthetize the masses.”

[P.F.] insistently denies being a communist. Having applied his method for the communization of the country, can he be one of the anesthetized?

He received a summons to testify in the Ministry of Education and Culture in Rio de Janeiro and once there, decided to flee. The Nation had paid for his plane fare, not believing that one of its intellectuals would prove a traitor and a fugitive.

After traveling on the Nation’s account, he sought asylum in the Bolivian Embassy, refusing to testify and thereby proving his guilt as one of the chief criminals.

By confirming the accusations made against him, he assumed the entire responsibility for having fled. ‘He who has nothing to fear, has nothing to hide.’

“Journalist defends and architect accuses Paulo Freire in court hearing”

(From the Recife daily newspaper, *Jornal do Comércio*, 10/5/66)

Two witnesses who testified yesterday in the subversion trial of the University of Recife, held antagonistic positions regarding the principal defendant, Professor Paulo Reglus Freire, who was considered a democrat by the journalist, Calazans Fernandes, and a communist by the architect, Jaime Sales George.

Both witnesses were called by the prosecution but Sr. Calazans Fernandes pointed out that the term ‘subversive’ is a wide and controversial concept “since, before the Revolution, it defined someone who sold out to North American imperialism and, after it, people suspected of being communists were called ‘subversives’.”

The architect, Jaime Sales George, said that professor Paulo Freire taught a course on Humanism in the Architecture School, through the Cultural Extension Service, whose intentions were, according to this character witness, “purely subversive, with the goal of making the young students consider diverse problems in the light of socialism.” When questioned by the counsel, he classified this as “subversive,” employing the same term to describe Freire’s literacy method.

The journalist Calazans Fernandes confirmed that he knew professor Paulo Freire as a democrat of good antecedents and a practicing Roman Catholic (he had seen him attending mass). As Secretary of Education in the [Rio Grande do Norte] government of Aluísio Alves, Sr. Fernandes suggested [Freire’s] literacy method to the military commander as useful for the troops, according to his testimony, only after the military authorities had requested it. He declared that he was not familiar with professor Freire’s literacy primer but that he thought it was similar to one used in New Mexico, U.S.A. He

said he knew the defendant's audio-visual method but saw nothing in it that could be considered an example of subversion.

Sr. Calazans Fernandes also mentioned that, in the Colloquium of Latin-American Ministries of Education that took place in Bogotá [Colombia] in 1963, Paulo Freire's literacy 'method' was considered the most efficient.

[All the above information was transcribed from documents in the Paulo Freire DOPS file at the *Jordão Emerenciano Public Archive of the State of Pernambuco* on 9/28/04, and translated by the author.]

It is reassuring to realize that, two and a half years after the first of the Generals, Humberto Castello Branco, assumed control, there were still people like Calazans Fernandes, a *Potiguar*⁸⁰ journalist appointed state Secretary of Education and the man responsible for bringing Freire to Angicos in 1963, who dared to stand up in a military tribunal and remind the officers that their comrades-in-arms had been interested in using the Paulo Freire 'method' to alphabetize non-literate troops. The Alliance for Progress, mentioned several times in the articles above, was President Kennedy's version of Franklin D. Roosevelt's WWII "Good Neighbor Policy," but FDR's aim as conveyed by his special envoy, Nelson Rockefeller's, was to convince Getúlio Vargas to collaborate with the Allies⁸¹ while, twenty years later, JFK and his brother, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, were concerned about the potential for something like the Cuban revolution to occur in the Brazilian Northeast.

President Kennedy was murdered in Dallas just before Thanksgiving, 1963. A week

⁸⁰ *Potiguar* is the nickname for inhabitants of the State of Rio Grande do Norte. The Potiguaras were a Tupi-speaking tribe of coastal indigenes inhabiting what is now Paraíba and Rio Grande do Norte.

⁸¹ "Brazilians, more heavily committed to the struggle in Europe than any of their Latin American neighbors, questioned why they should contribute to the promotion of democracy in Europe while suffering the constraints of dictatorship at home. (...) Intellectuals and opposition politicians voiced that annoyance, as did ninety prominent Mineiros [residents of Minas Gerais] who, in October of 1943, signed a manifesto that stated, "If we fight against fascism at the side of the United Nations so that liberty and democracy can be restored to all people, certainly we are not asking too much in demanding for ourselves such rights and guarantees" (Burns, 1993, 382-383). On October 29, 1945, the Army obliged Vargas to relinquish the Presidency after backing the *Estado Novo* ("New State," as Vargas called his oligarchic regime) for 15 years.

later he was to have visited Recife.⁸² The Alliance for Progress withdrew its support for Freire's literacy program on January 1, 1964, exactly three months before the CIA helped the Brazilian military engineer the 'bloodless' coup d'état.⁸³

What became obvious as I perused the DOPS file on Paulo Freire is that the "revolutionary" generals who ruled Brazil for two and a half decades, starting in April 1964, "saw red" wherever they looked. They were, nearly a decade later, subject to the same Cold War paranoia that made junior Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, Vice-President Richard Nixon and Screen Actors Guild President Ronald Reagan self-appointed inquisitors in the biggest U.S. witchhunt since the Puritans in XVII century Massachusetts. What they saw as "godless" Communism they associated with Soviet Russia, our major ally against the Nazis in WWII, and after the division of conquered Germany, our main competitor in the race for world domination. North Korea, North Vietnam, and Castro's Cuba were also our declared enemies—"satellite" nations under Soviet sway. "Commie-symp" Hollywood screenwriters, progressive artists and intellectuals were accused of subversion, of being traitors to their country because they wrote, taught or sang about men and women who worked in factories and joined labor unions or refused to denounce the Stalinist menace in the Kremlin. The same was true in Brazil; progressive thinkers like Paulo Freire, Darcy Ribeiro, Leonel Brízola, Francisco Julião, Miguel Arraes, and avant garde artists like Augusto Boal, Chico Buarque, Gilberto Gil and Caetano Veloso were exiled and deprived of their rights as citizens by the military guardians and wardens of a new regime. Freire was vilified as a "crypto-Communist masquerading as a literacy teacher," a conman who spent the Brazilian

⁸² According to Calazans Fernandes' and Antonia Terra's 1994 memoir, *40 horas de esperança. O método Paulo Freire: política e pedagogia na experiência de Angicos*.

⁸³ Freire (1996, 139-140) cites Jerome Levinson's and Juan de Onis's 1970 book, *The Alliance that Lost Its Way*, to substantiate this fact.

government's and the U.S. Alliance for Progress's money under false pretenses—radically politicizing peasants and urban slum-dwellers with a “supposed method” he did not invent—and a coward for accepting government airfare to appear before a Ministry of Education board of inquiry in Rio de Janeiro only to seek political asylum in the Bolivian Embassy and subsequent exile in La Paz and Santiago, Chile—a sure sign of guilt.

Homi K. Bhabha, in his Foreword to the 2004 Grove Press edition of Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, points to the failure of Fanon's “proleptic proposal that the postcolonial narrative of nation building could enter its international phase only after the end of the Cold War” as telescoping “the long history of neglect into our times, the unanswered call for development as freedom” particularly in “the cartography of the global south [which] follows the contours of the Third World.” According to Bhabha, Fanon's historical prescience “reveals the poignant proximity of the incomplete project of decolonization to the dispossessed subjects of globalization. Caught up in this spiral of history, the wretched of the earth, in our time and Fanon's, enter the zone of psycho-affectivity and echo the horrifying call to violence” (Bhabha in Fanon, 2004, xvii-xviii). Writers like Fanon and Albert Memmi⁸⁴ provide an elucidative complement to Paulo Freire's critique of the post-colonial Brazilian ‘solutions’ of populism and military dictatorship by shifting the focus to the Francophone colonies. Fanon's final masterpiece⁸⁵, like Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, has been criticized, in Bhabha's words, as “long on prophecy and polemics and short on policy and planning—a deliberately universalized level of analysis that has led *The Wretched of the Earth* to

⁸⁴ Bhabha cites Memmi's statement in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1967) that “If one chooses to understand the colonial system, he must admit that it is unstable and its equilibrium constantly threatened” (op. cit., xxii).

⁸⁵ Dying of leukemia, the 36-year-old Fanon was aided by his wife, Josie, in “the writing of *The Wretched of the Earth* in a feverish spurt between April and July of 1961. (...) When his wife read him the enthusiastic early reviews of the book, he could only say, ‘That won't give me back my bone marrow.’ On the day of his death [December 6, 1961], the French police seized copies of [the book] from the Paris bookshops” (Bhabha in Fanon, 2004, viii).

become (...) the ‘Bible of decolonization.’”⁸⁶ Although Freire avoids the Brazilian racial question in his seminal work, he does cite a passage from the 1968 English translation of Fanon’s book as an example of what he calls “horizontal violence”:

The colonized man will first manifest this aggressiveness which has been deposited in his bones against his own people. This is the period when niggers beat each other up, and the police and magistrates do not know which way to turn when faced with the astonishing waves of crime in North Africa...⁸⁷

In Richard Philcox’s 2004 translation, the same passage has been liberated of the ‘N-word’:⁸⁸

The colonized subject will first train this aggressiveness sedimented in his muscles against his own people. This is the period when black turns on black, and police officers and magistrates don’t know which way to turn when faced with the surprising surge of North African criminality.⁸⁹

Although Freire follows Fanon into what Bhabha calls the “zone of psycho-affectivity” in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he maintains epochal Brazilian “color-blindness” throughout the book.⁹⁰ Thus, when he writes of “the peasants” or “urban masses,” he chooses not to contextualize them in a specifically Northeast Brazilian milieu—as he did in his first book, *Educação como prática da liberdade* (1967) where the inclusion of graphic representations of the ten ‘existential situations’ he and artist Francisco Brennand created for the early Reading Circles and Francisco Weffort’s introduction, analyzing the specifics of the Paulo Freire Method against the backdrop of

⁸⁶ The phrase is Stuart Hall’s, in an interview with Isaac Julien, director of the 1996 British documentary *Frantz Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks*.

⁸⁷ *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Press, 1968), p. 52

⁸⁸ Philcox explains, in “On Retranslating Fanon, Retrieving a Lost Voice,” that “the word *nègre* [was] used in the same way by Fanon, the Martinican, whether referring to the black man in general or putting it in the mouth of the oppressor as an insult. It was a word rehabilitated by the black intelligentsia of the time and thrown back at the European as the supreme weapon. (...) Now that the vocabulary has evolved, it places the translator in a twenty-first-century predicament. I have updated the word *Negro*, when he refers to the peoples of Africa or the diaspora, to *black*, and used *nigger* when it is the colonizer referring to the same. In some cases I have left *Negro* in its historical context. But I have lost something in the translation of the word *nègre*, for it has both a sting and an embrace, and that is irretrievable” (Philcox in Fanon, 2004, 248).

⁸⁹ *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, Grove Press, 2004), pp. 15-16

⁹⁰ “Brazilian society would continue to believe in racial democracy throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s. (...) Brazilians especially gained a sense of moral superiority over their powerful but unabashedly racist neighbor to the north, where miscegenation was associated with degeneracy, mongrelization, and sexual terror and prohibited for three centuries. (Telles, 2004, pp. 44, 46)

the last days of the populist regime of President João Goulart (see pp. 35-36, above) left no doubt in Brazilian readers' minds as to the kind and complexion of the people discussed. Perhaps it was the Maoist (or Guevarist) tenor of the times that led to Freire's decision to make his peasants and urban masses universal. By Chapter 3 where both Guevara (footnote 4, p. 89) and Mao (footnotes 7 and 10, pp. 93-94) are cited, it is apparent that Freire has an international audience in mind.

Fanon, on the other hand, has been criticized for providing "an iconic evocation of Africa, a symbol of Pan-African solidarity composed of his syncretic experiences of the Maghreb, West Africa, South Africa, and the Antilles, *with scant awareness of Latin America (with the exception of Cuba)*" (Bhabha in Fanon, 2004, xvi-xvii, italics mine). An extended, intertextual study of *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), while beyond the scope of this dissertation, would explore the *zeitgeist* of 1960s southernly revolutionary thinking and the extent to which Fanon influenced Freire's subsequent participation in and writing about literacy campaigns in Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé-Príncipe both directly and through his influence on African revolutionaries like Amílcar Cabral (see *Cartas à Guiné-Bissau*, 1984).

3.6 Beisiegel and Paiva: Brazilian critique

One of the richest contemporary accounts of the Popular Culture Movement from which Paulo Freire's literacy method derived is that of Celso de Rui Beisiegel whose 1982 book, *Política e Educação Popular: A Teoria e a Prática de Paulo Freire no Brasil* combines two volumes presented as his doctoral dissertation in the Sociology of Education at the University of São Paulo (USP). At the suggestion of his professor at the *Centro Regional de Pesquisas Educacionais* (CRPE) in São Paulo, Beisiegel traveled to Rio Grande do Norte to observe the "culture circles" in Angicos in 1963. There he met and interviewed Freire and was also involved with the *pé no chão...* campaign in Natal and one in Ubatuba, São Paulo in the mid-1960s, both of which utilized the 'Freire

method.’ He was able to accumulate “documents, friends, experiences, some frustrations and a lot of questions” (Beisiegel, 1982, x). Nearly twenty years later, despite the demands of teaching full-time at CRPE, these questions about “the connection between popular education and the development process; the foundations of the generalized belief in the developmentalist virtualities of popular education; the origins of the movements of mass education...” oriented an exhaustive, first-hand study of the Paulo Freire method in its experimental phase.

At the core of the pre-1964 Popular Culture Movement’s *Círculos de Cultura* (Culture Circles) that led to the first Freirian *Círculos de Leitura* (Reading Circles) were the 10 ‘codified,’ existential situations devised by Freire and Brennand. These were simple, two-dimensional portrayals of real life situations familiar to the rural *alfabetizandos* (scenes of people farming, hunting, making pottery, and participating in culture circles) that were made into slides and used as foci for dialogue that would inspire people’s existential knowledge and expertise. Their stories and observations could then be turned into ‘generative’ words and syllabic “Discovery Cards” by the program coordinators and used to teach unlettered adults to read and write basic Brazilian Portuguese. On a national level, this apparently reciprocal exchange between *educador(a)* and *educando*, or between what Gramsci would call “organic intellectuals” and the struggling masses, was the brainchild of development-minded ISEB⁹¹ intellectuals, particularly Álvaro Vieira Pinto and Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, who saw the oppressed as “a ‘national macrophenomenon’ to be finally elevated to public life in an atmosphere of infra-structural transformation [where] they would emerge as the primary source of ‘authentic’ thought and of corresponding developmentalist activity” (Beisiegel, 1982, 177, my translations). Vieira Pinto, in his book *Ideologia e desenvolvimento nacional* (1956) declared that the demands of the people for work, land and literacy were essentially “the expression of an imperative for national development” and that it was up to the intellectuals “to capture these expressions of national consciousness and, learning from their content, to formulate a development project which would then return them to their popular origins to unify and accelerate the conscious involvement of the people in the construction of the future” (Beisiegel, 1982, 177-178). Beisiegel portrays Freire the educator as absorbing the vocabulary and adhering to the interpretations of the *Isebianos*⁹² and, at the same time, “marked by his own reflections and experiences” as a *Nordestino* intellectual with an empathic connection to the working class. He cites Freirian scholar Vanilda Pereira Paiva, as one of the most prescient investigators of the complex socio-political ethos described in Freire’s 1959 thesis which, according to Beisiegel, analyzes the “presence in agrarian social life of the seigneurial style of

⁹¹ The *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros*, created by decree of President Café Filho on July 14, 1955, was a national developmentalist ‘think tank’ linked to the Ministry of Education some of whose members influenced the ideological stance of Freire’s 1959 competitive thesis, *Educação e Atualidade Brasileira* (Education and Brazilian Actuality), for the History and Philosophy of Education ‘chair’ at the *Escola de Belas-Artes de Pernambuco* (J.E. Romão, in Freire, 2001, xiii, xxix).

⁹² The first ISEB generation, which exerted the greatest influence on Freire, consisted of Roland Corbisier (who was appointed Director by Cândido Motta Filho, Minister of Education & Culture), Hélio Jaguaribe (political science), Vieira Pinto (philosophy), Cândido Mendes (history), Ewaldo Correia Lima (economy), Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (sociology), the educator Anísio Teixeira (one of the movers and shakers of the *Escola Nova* movement), Nelson Werneck Sodré (a nationalist military officer) and Roberto Campos, who would be Kubitschek’s appointee to head the National Economic Development Bank (BNDE) and an important economist in various of the military governments of the 1960s and 1970s. (Romão, in Freire, 2001, xxxi-xxxii)

domination” at the same time that it abhors “paternalism, assistentialism and authoritarianism as diverse expressions of an unacceptable process of human ‘domestication’” (ibid., 70).

In her 1978 doctoral dissertation⁹³, which Beisiegel cites, Paiva claims that the ‘directive’ pedagogy of the first Culture Circles was inspired by ISEB intellectuals and their image of the people as a source of truth.

Freire intended to extract people’s truth; at the same time, he oriented the debates to specific objectives. An example of this is his belief that [the Marxist term] ‘mass’ should be changed to ‘the people,’ according to the definitions of [Karl] Jaspers. If we peruse the material available from the pre-1964 [Freire-] method literacy courses, we observe that the *alfabetizandos* frequently refer to the fact that they are no longer a mass (*massa*), but rather a *povo* (people). A graduate of the Angicos classes said exactly this in a speech to the President of the Republic [João Goulart]. Such an idea does not come spontaneously from the people, it has to be imported from outside, brought in by the coordinators, and coincides exactly with Freire’s thought. (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 174, translation mine.)

Beisiegel reproduces an excerpt from Paiva’s 1977 interview with one of the Angicos *coordinadoras*, fourteen years after Freire and his colleagues conducted literacy classes there. This transcript seems to substantiate Diana Coben’s suspicion that “Freirean educators hold all the cards” and that “the pedagogical relationship is one in which the learner is constructed at the outset as passive, silent, ignorant, unaware, inexperienced, possibly fearful but acquiescent [whereas] the educator is active, in control, free, aware, experienced, wise, fearless and self-sacrificing” (Coben, 1998, 112-113). The pedagogy of the MCP must be contextualized, ‘inserted’ as Freire often phrased it, in the socio-historical reality of Northeastern Brazil, with its particular pressures and prods. Northeastern Brazil was a vital pawn in the dependency-developmental chess match of the early 1960s, with the United States and Russia, like Fischer and Spassky⁹⁴, on either side of the board. From this optic, which Freire critics like Coben and Bowers ignore, Freire is neither a Machiavellian seducer of virginal consciousnesses nor a subordinator of cultural differences, but merely an ambitious educator, affected by the developmentalist rhetoric and democratic illusions of a specific historical moment:

At the time, we all had lots of illusions, Paulo Freire included. We thought that the people were going to tell us the goals of all that mobilization, at the same time that we had representative democracy as our model. Really, it was not up to the people to say what political regime was best for them; they were being prepared to participate in the decision-making process at the electoral level. The people were made to feel valuable until the moment they voted; after that, everything was up to the State. Everything was taken from the people and concentrated on the State, on the leader. Moreover, everything we did [as teachers] was permeated with nationalism, we directed our efforts toward demonstrating that Brazil was being exploited by foreigners; we began with discussions of the concrete hunger of our students and ended up in North America... We prepared for class discussions in great detail in meetings where we discussed the daily objectives so we already knew what was going to be explored in the classes, independent of the students’ desires. Democracy was always presented as the ideal to be attained by voting; voting well would save the

⁹³ *Paulo Freire e o Nacionalismo-Desenvolvimentista* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1980.) Paiva received her doctorate from Johann Wolfgang University in Frankfurt, Germany in 1978.

⁹⁴ The Bobby Fischer-Boris Spassky Chess Championship at Reykjavik, Iceland took place in July, 1972—almost a decade after the coincidental threats of grassroots agrarian reform by the Pernambucan Peasant Leagues and the Cuban ‘missile crisis’ made Northeast Brazil appear to be following the lead of Castro’s Cuba—all memorable Cold War events.

Pátria... It was much like *Mobral*⁹⁵ now, in fact. Enormous absenteeism obliging classes to dissolve, despite the positive influence of the little film⁹⁶. It did no good to tell the poor people that they were worth as much as the President of the Republic and that they could save everything by voting when there were no beans on the table... We told them a thousand times they should vote in their own best interest but, by election day, they were back in harness because the [incumbent, oligarchic] Mayor gave them medicine, took them to the Maternity [hospital], or else they would come to us to ask for whom they should vote... Theoretically, the method was spontaneously supported; in practice we [coordinators] acted as a vanguard. (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 175, my translation)

From such testimony, it is evident that Freire's consciousness-raising 'method' was 'directive' and that its goals were those of the nationalist-developmental *Isebianos* (as intellectuals employed by ISEB were known in Brazil):

Education was the instrument of 'ideological organization' that would permit consensus around the necessity for development. In 1959, Freire was defending an emotional identification with the people as the criterion by which elite elements could arrive at the ideology necessary for national development. By establishing an existential dialogue with the people, by becoming 'intimate with the people', by finding solutions that 'came from the people,' through leaders who spoke their language and discussed their problems (admitting, albeit implicitly, the idea that the leaders of the masses could come from the elite). Such a position defended a directive pedagogy that diffused a determined ideology. What is more, Freire is more explicit [in his 1959 thesis] than Vieira Pinto [was] in 1956. He speaks of giving the ideology of national development to the masses and thereby increasing the people's "degree of consciousness of the problems of their time and space." His directive position is even clearer when, affirming the importance of the people's integration in the work of economic recuperation in their communities through the creation and augmentation of a "popular development consciousness," he surmises that they "could not make such ideological communities" by their efforts alone. At this moment, Freire attributes an educative role to the elite and highlights the importance of political parties in the business of educating the people for development... (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 174, my translation)

Paiva, like Beisiegel, sees Freire at cross-purposes—the government's directive populist agenda contradicting the supposed spontaneity of his consciousness-raising method. "Directivity and non-directivity walked hand-in-hand, present in different aspects: inductive populism was present at the same time that everyone [working with Freire] had a determinate model of political society, which meant that they were preparing the *alfabetizandos* to support the basic reforms of the traditional populist political program—a camouflaged directivity was superimposed on what [Freire] proclaimed as 'political spontaneity'" (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 175-176). The implication of subterfuge and hypocrisy inherent in such 'contradictions' and 'ambiguities' is a serious allegation—particularly coming from someone as well-informed and close to the source as Paiva. She traces Freire's dilemma to what she calls the "two faces" of Vieira Pinto's "inductive populism:" on one hand, the masses are exalted as a spiritual source of the ideology of national development and inspiration of the collective projects it will bear while, on the other, "the intelligentsia reserved for itself the right to speak the masses' truth" (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 176). Ultimately, Paiva

⁹⁵ The national literacy campaign of the military government, one of the longest-lasting and best-organized in Brazilian history although problematic in other aspects, is discussed in Chapter 6.2: Guiomar's Story.

⁹⁶ Paiva's informant uses the word "*filmezinho*"—probably a reference to an introductory 16mm film, describing the benefits of the MOBREAL program to prospective students.

absolves Freire of any suspicion of hypocrisy or double-dealing. She sees him as an existentialist educator whose exhortative style was part of the dialogical thrust of his method and who found a way to stimulate and combine the ‘conscientization’ of the unlettered but critically awakened *alfabetizandos* in his Reading Circles with the populist government’s developmentalist dream for Brazil:

Dialogue, which makes ‘communication of consciousness’ possible, is what converts naïve consciousness into critical consciousness. Dialogue is only possible when those who participate in it choose to hear each other, to ponder each other’s arguments, to judge them rationally and, if they come to the conclusion that their position is inferior, to convert to the other side. The ability to engage in dialogue grows with the acquisition of ‘critical consciousness’; its bearers avail themselves of dialogue with the bearers of naïve consciousness, attempting to bring them to a critical standpoint vis-à-vis reality. This is where the illuminist⁹⁷ character of Freire’s pedagogy is noticeable; it lends a clearly exhortative character to his work as a whole which led Francisco Weffort to note the difficulty of distinguishing “clearly (...) between theory and sermonizing” in [Freire’s] writing. It is not casually exhortative, however. On one hand, it is characteristic of [Freire] (who, contrary to social scientists, does not restrict himself to proving and interpreting what occurs in reality, but needs to indicate ends for educational means), to indicate a direction, a finality: let us recognize that, unlike traditional pedagogues, at the time Freire did this, he was seeking support from Brazilian social and political scientists. On the other hand, a pedagogy based on existentialism (...) employs exhortation as an essential part (...) of the dialogue that makes it possible. On an individual level, this exhortation to ‘personal conversion’ persists throughout Freirian pedagogy; but the exhortation to convert to the national reality is added to it, as is the objective of the nation’s becoming a ‘self-supportive organism’ by way of development. In synthesis, the collective dimension of [Freirian] pedagogy consists in contributing to the nation’s capacity for self-conversion through the nationalist consensus of its citizens. So, individual goals become inextricably intertwined with national goals, in the same way that existentialism and ‘Isebian’ nationalism intermingle. In popular existentialist pedagogy, people learn to speak in dialogue with each other; industrialization makes it possible for the people to “find their voice,” to participate; but education by means of dialogue is what allowed [Freire] to exercise his conquest by means of [the learners’] simultaneous conversion to their own cause and the nation’s (Paiva, in Beisiegel, 1982, 176-177, my translation).

José Eustáquio Romão, in an essay entitled “*Eterna Demanda do Reencontro*”⁹⁸ (Eternal Demand for Re-encounter), ponders Beisiegel’s statement in a postgraduate seminar he taught at the University of São Paulo’s *Faculdade de Educação* that “Paulo Freire, each time he writes a book, always rewrites as if he is tilling the field for the first time, in an incessant quest to overcome the directivity of the pedagogical process, in favor of the manifestation of the representations of the students.” Romão considers Freire’s “almost anguished dialectical return to what has already been reflected upon and

⁹⁷ The *Século XXI mini-Aurélio* dictionary of the Portuguese language defines ‘illuminism’ as “confidence in reason and science as the motors of progress” (Ferreira, 2000, 372, my translation).

⁹⁸ Gadotti, org., 1996, 246-248

realized” part of a “Freirian effort at reflexion (...) an eternal rehashing of contradictions that arise within a liberating pedagogical concept which, by its own essence and teleology, demands non-directivity” (ibid., 247, translation mine). Romão points out that this “bruising reflexive anguish” began to have “repercussions in Paulo’s relationship with the teams of educators under his direction, who attempted to apply Freirian pedagogical concepts in literacy and basic education classes” (op. cit., 247). Although he does not mention them by name, he is most likely referring to the “*Livro de leitura para adultos*” (Adult Reader) put together by two of Freire’s colleagues in Recife’s Popular Culture Movement, *professoras* Josina Maria Lopes de Godoy and Norma Porto Carreiro Coelho⁹⁹.

Romão notes that Freire was “firmly opposed to non-literate people being taught with ready-made messages” which he believed “always produced ‘domesticating effects’, whether they came from the right or the left” since “both sides demanded acritical acceptance of [their] doctrines and manipulation would begin” (ibid., 247).

On August 24th, 2004, at the Jordão Emerenciano State Archives in Recife, I found faded, forty-year-old mimeographed copies of pages from Godoy’s and Coelho’s Adult Reader in the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) files. The five “generative words” upon which much of the book is based are *povo*, *voto*, *vida*, *saúde* e *pão* (people, vote, life, health and bread). The first sentence of the first lesson reads *O voto é do povo* (“The vote belongs to the people”). Lesson 2 expands upon that: *O voto do povo todo* (“The vote of all the people”). Underneath the drawing of a hand putting a ballot into a ballot box, the word *voto* is broken into its two syllables, hand printed and in cursive script. Other

⁹⁹ The *Livro de leituras para adultos* was published in 1962 by the MCP in Rio de Janeiro with an introduction by Germano Coelho, the Movement’s founder. Cynthia Brown writes that she was “given a copy by officials of USAID in Recife. The military confiscated all known copies, but USAID saved one to show how communistic the area had been before the takeover.” (Brown, 1978, fn. 4, 24)

words: *ôvo* (egg) and *vôo* (flight), are made from the letters of *voto*. Lesson 3 introduces the words *saúde* and *vida* and forms the simple sentence *Saúde é vida* (“Health is life”). In Lesson 4, the sentences *O povo precisa de pão* (“The people need bread”) and *O pão dá saúde ao povo* (“Bread gives health to the people”) are presented to the *alfabetizandos*. Other variations: *Um povo com saúde trabalha com alegria* (“Healthy people work happily”) and *O voto dá vida ao povo* (“The vote gives life to the people”) occur in succeeding lessons. In Lesson 11, students are told *O povo sem casa, vive no mocambo* (“People without a house live in shacks”) and dictated questions and answers: *O povo vive no mocambo? Sim, o mocambo é a casa do povo.* (“Do the people live in shacks? Yes, shacks are the people’s houses.”) At the top of the page, simple line drawings of a house and a shack illustrate their comparative size. The final word introduced in Book I of the Adult Reader is *paz* (peace): *No Nordeste só haverá paz quando as injustiças forem eliminadas em suas raízes* (“The Northeast will only have peace when its injustices are eradicated”) and *A paz surge da justiça* (“Peace arises from justice”). Beisiegel notes that the book “did not hide its being the instrument of a well-defined political project.” He reproduces a section of Germano Coelho’s introduction:

The Popular Culture Movement was born “as a response to the challenge of misery on the part of Mayor Miguel Arraes, City Councilmen, intellectuals, students and the people of Recife.” The roots of this misery are nourished by the bleeding “wounds of a degraded city” and they run beneath “the arid lands of the Northeast,” reflecting a “dramatic synthesis of the whole social structure.” The *Livro de leitura para adultos* is part of this response. “Focused on adult interests, expressing the people’s anxieties, highlighting regional values and simultaneously dealing with language and grammar instruction,” it will be “yet another cultural instrument for the people’s emancipation” (op. cit, 1982, 126, my translation).

Thirty-three years later, Mayor Germano Coelho’s interdiction of Olinda’s most disadvantaged inhabitants as unlicensed peddlers of food and drink during carnival (see Chapter 4.3) is an example of the hardening of an old populist’s heart and a reminder that the emancipation of the people must not depend on elected officials of any party, class,

creed or color.

The Adult Reader's authors, in a 1962 interview published in the Educational Supplement of the Rio de Janeiro newspaper, *Diário de Notícias*, responded to accusations of having produced a "political catechism, pure and simple,"¹⁰⁰ claiming they created the primer "as a literacy experiment (...) to awaken in the people of the Northeast an awareness of their problems so they could become active members of their communities rather than beggars waiting, year after year, for the South to send them clothes and food" (Godoy and Coelho, in Beisiegel, 1982, 127). The authors' perhaps unconscious *noblesse oblige* may explain Freire's disavowal of their project. The Adult Reader contained a total of seventy-seven lessons which were broadcast daily as part of the local *Escola Radiofônica* and imposed the authors' hegemonic views about conditions in the *mangues* and *alagados* (mangroves and floodplains) of Recife, in the arid *sertão* (backlands) and in the Northeast as a whole. In Section V, Lesson 41, for instance, it is clear from the exemplary paragraph that they supported mangrove-eradication along the banks of the Capibaribe River whose sinuous, bridged course through the heart of Recife has led it to be called the 'Venice of Brazil:'

The city of Recife is full of mangroves. Look at the dredge on the banks of the Capibaribe. This dredge is from the Municipality. With its help, the mangroves will become firm ground and widen the street. The Municipal government helps recuperate Recife from the mangroves." (Godoy & Coelho, in Beisiegel, 1982, 134, my translation).

In addition to feeding the poor of the Third World with their rich plant and animal life, mangroves offer natural protection against floods. In the 2004 Indian Ocean *tsunami*, "coastlines fringed by mangroves were strikingly less damaged than those where mangroves were absent or had been removed. Field reports indicate that mangroves also prevented people being washed into the sea, which was a major cause of death. In

¹⁰⁰ Beisiegel writes only that these accusations appeared in a "Carioca morning paper" (1982, 127).

addition, mangroves trapped driftwood, preventing property damage and injury to people. Green belts of other trees, coastal dunes, and intact coral reefs performed similar functions.”¹⁰¹ Recife poet and marine biologist, Renaldo Tenório de Moura, rhapsodizes about *Rhizophora mangle* (Latin name for the ‘true mangrove’) in his self-published chapbook, *Ei moço, eu sou poeta?* (Hey, boy, am I a poet?), 2004¹⁰². Most of the urban *mangues* in Recife and Olinda today are *ciliar* – riverine ‘eyelashes’ (*cílios*) — scraggly victims of the crescent pollution of a city whose natural resources are threatened. Where poverty abounds and sanitation is insufficient, natural features like the *manguezais* (mangrove marshes) with their rich piscine, crustacean and vegetable life are doomed. The descendants of the skinny kids from the Ilha do Maruim who, forty years ago, used to wade waist-deep in their fecund silt, catching shrimp, crab and shellfish¹⁰³ now spend their days competing with rats, pigs, goats and buzzards for rotting food in Olinda’s municipal garbage dump.

Here is the final stanza of Dr. de Moura’s poem:

Mãegue, Mangue
Sabe que o mangue é riqueza,
É local de reprodução,
É berçário para vidas;
É vergel de alimentação
Da sua prole querida,

¹⁰¹ From the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) News, 153rd Edition, April 9, 2005. See mangroveap@olympus.net

¹⁰² I met Dr. de Moura at the Convés Restaurant in Igarassu, PE on Sunday afternoon, August 15, 2004. He was having a book-signing party upstairs on the patio overlooking the Santa Cruz estuary up which Duarte Coelho first sailed in 1534. The restaurant owner, Adamo, introduced us when I told him I was there doing research for a dissertation on Paulo Freire. Moura recited several poems, including *Mãegue, Mangue*, and graciously dedicated a copy of his book to me.

¹⁰³ “A boy of ten digging for shellfish would make an average of 5,000 *réis* for three hours work—ten liters of shellfish. He might catch thirty liters of shellfish, but the average was something like ten. I know because I did it. At 50 *centavos*, 500 *reis* at the time, that made 5,000 *réis*. You could make that in three hours, as the tide went out. A civil construction worker made 3,800 *reis* for eight hours of work. The worker made 1,200 *reis* less than a ten-year-old boy. So the boys started smoking early, looking for women, gambling, all that stuff. Because we always had money! And since the plot of land was immense with very few houses, the people raised pigs. There was a lot of pig-raising. The people fed them and let them loose, and the pigs went into the *mangue* to hunt, to eat crabs.” (from an interview with José Ataíde, Olinda, 7/12/02, my translation).

Que vive a alimentar

Com a vida das águas do rio

*Banhadas com as águas do mar*¹⁰⁴.

And here is a pertinent excerpt from Josué de Castro's only novel, *Homens e caranguejos* ("Men and crabs"), written in the early years of his European exile in 1966:¹⁰⁵

Back then, there was still no organized public power to defend this kind of latifundium and so it was soon invaded by other immigrants, coming from far-away places in search of a little piece of unoccupied ground where they could lay down roots. They were refugees from other droughts, scorched by the fiery wind of the *sertão*, like human waste. They were emigrants expelled from another latifundium—that of sugar—much better protected by the law, where there were no squatter's rights. Instead there was the exhausting labor of the canebrake, with neither time nor permission to plant so much as a stalk of corn or a row of beans to slake the hunger of one's family. So the sugar latifundium continually secreted worn-out and superfluous workers that the latifundium of mud absorbed like an ink-blotter. And the city of Recife swelled like a drunk, the gross wounds of misery forming into a scab of slums.

The Pernambucan metropolis was turning into a slumopolis.

And that is why, in defense of its threatened esthetic, the State governor started a big campaign against the slums. Against this urban leprosy that threatened to cover over all the aristocratic beauty of the Northeastern capital, all the class and nobility of its ancient mansions, with these sordid blots of misery. But in this campaign against the slums, the governor did not attempt to analyze where the true roots of evil were located. He thought that these roots were buried right there in the mud of the mangrove swamps and that all he had to do was to dig them out and the tangled vegetation of the slums would start to disappear. Neither he nor his helpers understood that the vegetation of the slums, which were blooming like a flower in the mud of the mangroves, had roots that stretched below the soil of the country and the subsoil of its archaic social structures. Product of the agrarian feudalism that had, for centuries,

¹⁰⁴ "He knows the *mangue* is rich/Is a place of reproduction/Is the nursery of lives/Is the garden of nourishment/For its cherished children/Whom it lives to feed/In the living waters of the river/Bathed by the waters of the sea."

¹⁰⁵ A prominent hunger-researcher and "world citizen," Dr. de Castro was named Brazil's ambassador to the United Nations by President João Goulart in 1962 and stripped of his political rights as an "undesirable element" after the military coup in 1964. He was President of the Executive Council of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for two terms, from 1952-1956, and a professor at the University of Paris. His principal works, *Geography of Hunger* (1946) and *Geopolitics of Hunger* (1952) brought a new definition of hunger to the world's attention with economic, political, social and geographical as well as biological attributes. In *Geography of Hunger*, de Castro divided the map of Brazil into five regions: two, the North and Northeast, suffer from hunger—the rest from subnutrition. The two books have been translated into 25 languages and received universal praise. Dr. de Castro died of a heart attack in Paris in 1973. He was 65 years old. (from a *Diário de Pernambuco documento*, a special 12-page section of the September 14, 2004 edition, entitled *Josué de Castro, o gênio silenciado* ("Josué de Castro, the silenced genius").

oppressed and exploited all those poor folks who ended up preferring the stench of the swamps to the stench of their shacks in the sugarmills—the new, fragmented slave-quarters surrounding the new master's houses.

The governor's campaign targeted not only the destruction of the slums located at the entrance to the city and along its main routes of access but, mainly, prevented any new slums from being built. It only allowed the construction of houses with rooftiles like those that were being built by welfare institutes where laborers protected by pension plans would live. But the governor also forgot that the slum-dwellers were not laborers. They were, in their crushing majority, unemployed and survived by running errands and selling trifles or, as a last resort, fishing for crabs because they could find no other work. And the mangrove swamps were their only hope. In the mangroves, the land belongs to no one. It belongs to the tide. At high tide, the waters rise and extend, flooding the area, but when, at low tide, they retreat, they leave muddy mounds in their wake. On these blisters of land, the refugees construct shacks whose walls of braided mangrove branches are covered with tightly packed mud. The roofs are of coconut palm fronds, dried marsh grass and other materials supplied by the garbage dump—all of them for the asking, found right there in a crude camaraderie with nature.

The mangrove swamp is a great friend. It supplies everything: home and food; shacks and crabs. It was not easy for people living on air to simply leave the swamp because the government ordered it. It was necessary to stretch the edict a bit. (Josué de Castro, 2001, 105-107, my translation)

The socio-cultural insensitivity of the authors of the *Livro de leituras para adultos* becomes clear in the light of this extraordinary excerpt. In extolling the mangrove-clearance project as an example of Municipal enlightenment, Sras. Godoy and Coelho are as myopic as de Castro's barely fictional "Governor" who thinks, that by eliminating the "sordid blots of misery," he can clean up Recife. It would have been interesting to witness the reaction of semi-literate urban *alfabetizandos*, in 1963, to Section V, Lesson 41 in their radiophonic Reader. Beisiegel claims the Adult Reader "promoted and adjusted" discussions among critical literacy educators and between participating coordinators and adult *alfabetizandos/as*. Freire went in a completely different direction than Godoy and Coelho—into the field, together with his university-trained students and local informants—to research the 'generative' words and themes of a particular community in a prelusory quest to extract (rather than impose) those 'anthropological'

elements that would become the focus of literacy instruction, slide by slide and syllable by syllable, as the ‘crab-men,’¹⁰⁶ -women and -children of the *mangues* began to read.

Celso de Rui Beisiegel is a generous man. His book, *Política e Educação Popular*, is the most informative, diverse and exhaustive study of the origins and effects of the Freire Method. But he is more a reporter, observer and investigator than a critic. His final word on the coercive “*cartilha*” (primer) of *professoras* Godoy and Coelho is that “in terms of its orientation, its content and the ways it was used, as a guide for the monitors in the radio schools and as a conductive script in discussions about the work of alphabetization, the Adult Reader achieved the expectations for educational renovation made explicit by Paulo Freire. (...) It represented a radical change of perspective in the handling of problems of adult education. (...) It established a restored relationship between instruction and the life conditions of the non-literate adult. The critique about the authors’ ‘superimposing’ instruction on the existential reality of the *educandos* did not apply. On the other hand, popular education in the MCP orbit stimulated debate and the Adult Reader promoted and adjusted such discussions. However, it was not what Paulo Freire had in mind” (Beisiegel, 1982, 136-137).

Beisiegel writes that, for Freire, “a primer represented the rigid separation of the educative process into the ones who know, the *educadores*, who create the primer, and the ones who do not know, the *educandos*, understood as the objects of the action developed to teach them something” (ibid., 137). He cites an early paper of Freire’s¹⁰⁷ in

¹⁰⁶ Josué de Castro melded man and crab (homem-caranguejo) in an unforgettable passage from *Geografia da Fome* (1946): “...with this meat made of mud, they make the meat of their bodies and the meat of the bodies of their children. There are a hundred thousand individuals, a hundred thousand citizens made of crab meat.” Fifty years later, Chico Science, funkadelic originator of *Mangue Beat* and self-described *caranguejo com cérebro* (crab with brain), evoked de Castro in *Da Lama ao Caos* (“From Mud to Chaos”): *Vi um caranguejo andando pro sul/Saiu do mangue, virou gabiru/Oh Josué, eu nunca vi tamanha desgraça/Quanto mais miséria tem, mais urubu ameaça...* [I saw a crab headed south/He left the mangrove and became a giant rat/Oh Josué, I never saw such disgrace/The greater the misery, the more the buzzards threaten]. (My translation.)

¹⁰⁷ “Conscientização e alfabetização; uma nova visão do processo” in *Estudos Universitários; Revista de*

which the educator claims to have “always trusted in the people, rejecting donated formulas, believing that we had something to exchange with them, never just to offer them (...) We would never claim that democratizing the culture was vulgarizing it or, on the other hand, donating something to the people which we formulated ourselves in our library” (ibid., 137, fn. 63). He quotes at length from an interview with Freire published in the May 5-11, 1978 edition of the Rio de Janeiro satirical newspaper, *O Pasquim* when Freire was still in Geneva with the World Council of Churches (WCC). In it, Freire speaks about the “tremendous phase displacement” (*defasagem*) “between the way I (...) was living [in the 1950s and early 1960s] and the way millions of my brothers and sisters were living:

It happens that I was an educator. If I were an architect, I might have gone to the peasants and factory workers to discuss the best way to build their shacks. If I were a doctor, I'd have made preventive medicine my specialty. But I became an educator. I began with what today in Guinea-Bissau we would call “cultural animation” though I still prefer to call it “cultural action” (...) My first work of this kind was with the Catholic Action Movement in the parishes of Recife. I worked with schools, with adults, but in cultural action activities, a kind of paradoxical post-literacy. That is, working with the education of illiterates, but discussing themes that would be considered appropriate for literate people. How did that come about? In 1959, 1960 and 1961, and even earlier, I was able to discuss with groups of young workers and, sometimes with peasants, themes that came from them. That's how I came up with what I later called a *thematic universe*. (...) The problems were born there, in the local community. Those present had in mind what they wanted to discuss. My job, after a while, was to find people able to dialogue with them about those different themes because I couldn't discuss everything: I was not an encyclopedia! (ibid., 138, my translation)

Some of the themes Freire lists in the *Estudos Universitários* article as viable MCP discussion topics are: nationalism, remittance of profits overseas, the political evolution of Brazil, development, illiteracy, illiterate suffrage, socialism, communism, ‘rightism,’ SUDENE,¹⁰⁸ democracy, and the Peasant Leagues. Beisiegel declares “the question

Cultura da Universidade do Recife, no. 4, April/June, 1963, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ Between 1960 and 1964, SUDENE (Superintendency for Northeastern Development), the brainchild of Economy Minister Celso Furtado, a neo-Keynesian structuralist, prioritized the following areas: 1) food production amid the sugarcane monoculture of the *zona da mata*; development of drought-resistant agriculture in the semi-arid *agreste*; colonization of the state of Maranhão; development of irrigation in the São Francisco river basin. See www.historianet.com.br

‘open’ of whether such themes arose as the spontaneous expression of the adults meeting in debate groups” or “whether the printed order of such topics determined the examination of these themes and not others.” He also mentions that “the themes that were discussed at that time reflected the intense agitation of ideas sweeping Recife and other areas of the Brazilian Northeast” (ibid., 138). Freire, in the course of his *Pasquim* interview, also recalls the intense political curiosity and critical analysis of unlettered people in Recife:

I remember that I invited certain friends of mine, professors of economy and sociology, to discussions with the non-literate people. That was when I began to use visual aids, projecting diagrammatic slides and drawings as codifications. I observed that people began to systematize, to organize their thinking around the analysis of reality, discussing the themes that they themselves suggested; I saw that these groups began to take highly critical positions [and were] rigorous in their analysis. I observed this in the university and saw that sometimes the students were less rigorous in their thinking than the people from the slums. One day I asked myself—if this is possible at the level of post-alphabetization, independently of being just for illiterates, why wouldn’t it be possible to do the same thing with literacy? (Freire, in Beisiegel, 1982, 139)

Coordinators’ instructions regarding the dialogical use of Freire’s and Brennand’s ten existential situations, several pages of which I found in the MCP files, indicate that Freire’s was a more open-ended inductiveness than the standpoint-imposing Adult Reader of Godoy and Coelho¹⁰⁹:

Slide #1:

MAN IN THE PRESENCE OF REALITY AND INSIDE REALITY.

- Man is a relational being.
- Things man made and things he didn’t make.
- Cultural objects and natural objects.
- Cultural objects are born of the work of man.

Slide #2:

NATURE AS THE MEDIATOR OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN MAN AND THE
WORLD OF CULTURE

¹⁰⁹ I include copies of Brennand’s paintings of the ten existential situations in the Appendix.

- Man in the presence of other men.
- Dialogue = intercommunication.
- The plant, which the man holds in his hand, is a mixture of nature and of culture.
- A natural object becomes a cultural object through man's hand.

Slide #3:

THE INDIAN AND THE HUNTER

- The first stage of civilization.
- Man's work is organized by technique.
- The stage preceding ours (and that of the illiterates).
- An unlettered stage of civilization.
- Education solely by oral tradition (it is not necessary to read and write to become educated).

Slide #4:

THE CIVILIZED HUNTER

- Our own stage of civilization (and also that of the illiterates).
- Man's work is organized by advanced technology (the shotgun represents the age of fire and of steel).
- This stage is lettered.
- Education is done, principally, through reading and writing.

Slide #5:

THE HUNTING CAT

- A stage of existence previous to that of even the Indian.
- The irrationality of inferior animals.
- Instinct.
- The difference between the cat's "work" and that of the Indian, of the civilized man, etc.

Slide #6:

MEN WORKING WITH CLAY

- Work: its dignity, utility, etc.
- What can come from work.

Slide #7:

THE CLAY VASE

- The useful worth of a cultural object.
- The esthetic worth of a cultural object.
- Art, manifestation of the people's culture.
- Man makes culture transforming nature: man makes art transfiguring nature.

Slide #8:

THE BOOK AND POETRY (“The Bomb”)

- People’s poetry. String literature.¹¹⁰
- This is as much culture as the preceding vase: it’s just a different dimension, since man, here, has created with words (= Literature).
- The book, one of the most important channels of communication.

Slide #9:

THE GAUCHO AND THE COWBOY

- Patterns of behavior and patterns of culture.
- Each land has its own customs.¹¹¹
- The resistance to change of behavioral and cultural patterns.
- The need, in certain historical epochs, to change patterns of behavior and culture (examples: abolition of slavery, agrarian reform, etc.)

Slide #10:

FINAL SYNTHESIS: THE CULTURE CIRCLE ITSELF

- A new dimension of culture: the systematic acquisition of experience (principally through writing, reading and books)
- The democratizing of culture in Brazil today [1962-63].
- Democratizing culture is, more than anything, diffusing books (writing and reading) among the people so that they have access to all the other channels of communication, thus guaranteeing their direct and enlightened participation in the life of the nation.

Similar care was taken with the generative words. Below, again from documents I found in the DOPS files on the *Movimento de Cultura Popular*, are some examples of coordinators’ discussion prompts regarding words that formed what Freire called the *universo vocabular mínimo* (“minimal vocabulary universe”) of the inhabitants of a particular community. According to Beisiegel’s eye-witness account, the requisite research was “not at all sophisticated and easily accomplished by interviewing the adults enrolled in the courses and other inhabitants [who] supplied information about local uses

¹¹⁰ *Livros de cordel* are inexpensive chapbooks sold in most of the major *feiras* (outdoor markets) in the Brazilian Northeast. Many of them contain satirical and sometimes bawdy rhymed couplet commentaries on major events or figures of the time. *Cordel*, which means “string” or “twine,” refers to the fact that such chapbooks were often strung together and sold by itinerant merchants who displayed them suspended from a pole.

¹¹¹ The actual phrase employed, *Cada terra com seu uso, cada roça com seu fuso* is a folk expression: “Every land has its use, every farm its spinning wheel.”

and customs regarding production, commerce, alimentation, health, religion, politics—the words obtained by means of these informal interviews with the inhabitants were considered representative of current usage in the locality” (Beisiegel, 1982, 149) :

T I J O L O¹¹² (BRICK)

Fundamental objective

- The society is divided into classes.
- Differences in salary exist.
- Different kinds of work exist.
- Different ways of life exist.
- There are poor people and rich people. Exploited and exploiters.
- Organizations exist that defend the interests of each group.
- There are confrontations and strikes.

Example:

Description of the slide – people working – work.

Differences of work – differences of salary:

training people

technique utilized

exploitation

degree of organization

Owners of the work – workers in the city and the countryside.

Explanation of the situation of each of them. Whom they work for. How they live and

how their bosses live. What allows exploitation. How you defend against exploitation –

trade unions, strikes, etc.

¹¹² Beisiegel (ibid., 150) mentions that each of the “*palavras geradoras*” would be accompanied by a “graphic representation (drawing, painting or photograph)” of a “typical existential situation” in which it would be contextualized. Thus, for the word *tijolo*, “the figure of a bricklayer could evoke common life situations in a locality inhabited by civil construction workers.”

P O V O¹¹³ (PEOPLE)

Fundamental Objective

- Fundamental classes of the society we live in.
- Division of the population into people and enemies of the people.
- Analysis of each class.
- Organization of classes.
- The dominant class's utilization of the apparatus of the State to defend its interests.
- Elections.
- Illiterates vote.

Example:

Description – people – analysis of [a slide] of various people who attended a political rally. The politician – who he is when he brings what he promised to defend his interests – the enemy of the people. Describe the people present, paying attention to the differences in dress, in the transportation used; even generalize about the [different] types in groups and classes. Struggle between the exploited and the exploiters. Instruments used. Use of the State and its Laws. Example: illiterates vote and electoral discrimination. New situation in Pernambuco.

¹¹³ Beisiegel cites Carlos Lyra, one of the coordinators of Freire's paradigmatic experiment in Angicos, RN whose book *Angicos: diário de uma experiência*, published locally in 1963, includes his diary-entries and "covers the project from January 18-April 2, 1963, the day President Goulart attended the 'final class', with commentaries and data taken from the entries of other coordinators" (op. cit., 145, fn 76). The third *ficha de alfabetização* (slide) projected contained the words *voto* and *povo* beside the figure of a northeasterner voting. Lyra's 'diary' begins—"It's not about giving a class regarding the people, democracy, etc.; but to draw out of them what they think of the people, democracy, participation in the political process. To dialogue without any concern yet about focusing on the word *povo*." The diary continues: "Difference between people and masses. Importance of the vote for political emancipation. To demonstrate that a greater number of Northeastern voters will weigh on the national political scale. Learning to read so as to vote with conscience. The vote is the people's weapon. Selling votes strips them of value. Our grandfathers fought for this right. Are we honoring them?" (Lyra, in Beisiegel., 1982, 157, my translation). The degree of coercion between this and the daily broadcast of lessons from Godoy and Coelho's Adult Reader telling what we now call "distance learners" that the removal of the mangroves will beautify Recife and that *O voto dá vida ao povo* ("Voting will give the people life") is negligible. Any Brazilian adult who wanted to learn to read and write in 1963 was taught with populist rhetoric. As Freire reminded readers in dozens of books and speeches; politics and education are inextricable, especially when *educandos* are old enough to vote.

F A R I N H A¹¹⁴ (FLOUR)

Fundamental Objective

- High prices – speculation.
- Commerce.
- Rise and fall of prices.
- Cooperativism.
- Speculators and monopolizers.
- Natural products from different regions.

Example:

Description – market – selling and buying – prices – price variation according to harvest season. Who sells – who buys. Where the products come from. What is produced in the three zones.¹¹⁵ Where the best lands are. Why the *zona da mata* produces no food [other than sugarcane]. Monoculture. Financing of the harvests. Who gets rich – who gets poor.

Solutions – Cooperativism – better land distribution – controls on commerce and speculation – better wages, etc.

Although *farinha* was not one of the generative words in Angicos in 1963 (where it was replaced by *xique-xique*, a comestible cactus that grows in the *caatinga* – the sparse and spiny, stunted ‘forest’ of the *alto sertão*), it would fall under the general heading *gêneros alimentícios – o que comemos* (“types of food – what we eat”) and inspire the most fervent debates. Currency inflation and hoarding, which add to the perennial

¹¹⁴ Of the different kinds of *farinha*, three—*farinha de milho* or *fubá* (corn meal), *farinha de trigo* (wheat flour) and *farinha de mandioca* (cassava or manioc flour) are predominant in the northeast of Brazil. Of the three, manioc flour is the most typically *nordestino*—whether cooked with meat or fish broth and spices in a pungent *pirão* or simply sprinkled on top of a mound of rice and beans, it is the *pão nosso* (daily bread) of the poor.

¹¹⁵ The three zones are the *zona da mata* (humid and fertile coastal strip), the *agreste* (drier interior region used for cattle raising, some farming) and the *sertão* (the hinterland, more capacious than the *agreste* but subject to frequent and extended periods of drought).

difficulty of acquiring staff-of-life products like rice, beans, milk, salt and bread, are endemic to the Northeast, particularly among the peasant sharecroppers of the vast interior *sertão*. Josué de Castro pierced the veil of silence, greed and shame surrounding the subject in 1946 when he argued, in *Geografia da Fome* (*The Geography of Hunger* was not published in the U.S. until 1952), that hunger was neither a natural calamity nor punishment from God but, rather, a scourge fabricated by men against other men. His Brazilian findings can be contracted into his famous dictum: “*Metade da população não dorme porque não tem o que comer; a outra metade não dorme com medo dessa que não tem o que comer*” (“Half of the population doesn’t sleep because they have nothing to eat; the other half doesn’t sleep because it fears those who have nothing to eat”)¹¹⁶. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992, 130) points out that:

What de Castro might have said, but what he failed to note, was that the attention of biomedical scientists to the subject of hunger had to wait until *white* Europeans began to suffer from the same conditions that had long afflicted black and brown peoples in many parts of the globe, including the southern part of the United States (Goldberger & Sydentrick 1944; National Research Council 1943; Hunt, Hunt, & Scheper 1970). The ravaged face of hunger was a shocking novelty to the Allied forces that liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 12, 1945, but it was a common reality during periods of drought and famine in the Brazilian Northeast, where there are, even today, many hunger victims, most of them very young, who die alone, unattended, and *desconhecido*, anonymously.

Against the merciless *pano de fundo* (backdrop) of widespread hunger and suffering, all of the efforts at conscientization of the Popular Culture Movement of Recife and the critical educators who were inspired by it – people like Freire, Paulo Rosas, Beisiegel, Paiva, Godoy and Coelho) or preceded it, like Barreto Guimarães,¹¹⁷ may be understood as revolutionary pedagogical acts, calling attention to entrenched injustice and greed.

¹¹⁶ *Diário de Pernambuco* “documento Josué de Castro,” 9/14/04, p. 4

¹¹⁷ Former mayor of Olinda (1959-63), State Deputy and Lieutenant Governor of the State of Pernambuco, Guimarães oversaw the construction of five *barracões-escolas* (shed schools) whose palm thatch roofs, dirt floors, crude wooden benches and wooden lattice walls were conceived as “ecological schools” in the *mocambo* style which would not embarrass or constrain children unable to afford shirts, shoes or school uniforms. Of these five, all constructed in 1948, number 4, on the Ilha do Maruim, was still functioning twenty years later with an *alumna*, Nelicita Luiza da França, as the teacher. Although Guimarães was not an educator *per se*, he is still fondly remembered in Recife and Olinda as an honest civil servant and tireless champion of the oppressed.

One of the things that makes the criticism of academics like Diana Coben and C.A. Bowers so difficult to countenance is that their attacks tend to be *ad-hominem* broadsides, seeded and sustained in the incestuous milieu of peer-reviewed books and journals. With the exception of Paul V. Taylor, most North American and British educationists writing about Freire are unable to tap the sizable trove of Portuguese and Spanish-language literature about him.

3.7 Freire *Agonistes*: Olinda, 1996

In his final book, *Pedagogia da Autonomia* (1996), Freire recalls a morning, in February of that year, spent with Danilson Pinto, a popular educator whose ideas and work are discussed in this dissertation (see Chapter 6.5):

I had recently in Olinda, in the Brazilian Northeast, on a morning of the kind that only the tropics know, a mixture of rain and sun, a conversation that I would call exemplary with a young popular educator who, with every word and reflection, revealed the coherence with which he lives his democratic and popular option. We walked, Danilson Pinto and I, with souls open to the world, curious, receptive, along the paths of a favela where one learns early that only at the cost of much pertinacity does one succeed in weaving a life in the midst of its seeming absence or negation—despite constant need, threats, despair, offense and pain. While we were walking through the streets of that mistreated and offended world I was remembering the experiences of my youth in other *favelas* of torn souls. Tripping on human pain, we were questioning ourselves about numerous problems (...) What do we need to know, as so-called educators, to have viable encounters with women, men and children whose humanity is being negated and betrayed, whose existence is being crushed? We stopped in the middle of a small, narrow bridge that makes it possible to cross from the favela to a less badly treated part of the working class neighborhood. We looked down at a branch of the polluted and lifeless river whose mud soaks the shanties almost submerged in it. "Beyond the shanties", Danilson told me, "there is something worse: a big plot of ground which has been turned into a public dump. People from all around here 'research' the garbage for something to eat, to wear, to keep them alive." (Freire, 2002, 82-83, translation mine).

This visit home, to Recife and Olinda was to be Freire's last. He died in São Paulo in the beginning of May, 1997. Danilson informs him¹¹⁸ that ninety per cent of the adults in

¹¹⁸ In August, 2002 when I was doing my pilot study in Olinda, I first interviewed Danilson who allowed me to make a copy of the videotape that videographer Julio Weiner shot that morning as part of George Stoney's continuing video-biography of Freire. I transcribed and translated their conversation, a section of which I analyze here.

the *Cabo Gato* (Cape Cat) *favela* are unemployed and surviving on one meal a day and that they may soon be forced to live in the garbage dump (*Lixão*) and forage there for food. When Freire learns that Olinda Mayor Germano Coelho¹¹⁹ has refused to allow such people to work as free-lance *biscateiros* (peddlers) selling beer, sausages, cheese and *cachaça* in the streets during *carnaval* because they are unlicensed and do not pay taxes, he is, momentarily, at a loss for words. Then he makes his position clear in a reflexive monologue:

PF: What a thing, what a terrible thing! It leaves me in disagreement with almost all the things people in Brazil do and say about this reality. For example, there's a kind of talk, by politically responsible people in Brazil, that gives us the impression that these guys are speaking about things that they really believe (which isn't true) saying that to live in misery is a choice that these people make. That people live like this because they want to! Because they are lazy! Obviously, no one who comes here and stands on this bridge can say that. But that is what has been said and reiterated for lack of rightful rejoinder. It's not...it's not the poverty per se – it's even possible to coexist with poverty. It's the poverty that outgrows itself and becomes misery, a system of misery. (...) My battle is against poverty (he laughs bitterly) you can imagine how I feel about misery. If poverty already mistreats me, you can imagine what misery does! I don't understand the lack of concern of men in public office, the spending on superfluous things, the poor use of public monies. We, the people, elect these governments. How can we ask if people who live like this have 'critical consciousness?' It takes 'critical consciousness' to survive this. My body and my own consciousness would both die here; if you would make me live here now, I wouldn't last a month. In other words, I am not in shape to defend myself against this misery. And those who live here have to construct their defenses. They have a resistance that is not just physical but political and ethical as well. It's 'created' by the conditions in which they live. If we were able to organize public spending and elect decent administrators, I think we could begin to change things.

The parts of this 'monologue' which trouble me are: 1) Freire's claiming he is physically affected by poverty ("if poverty already mistreats me, you can imagine what misery does!") and complaining about "the lack of concern of men in public office, the spending on superfluous things, the poor use of public monies" like a bourgeois professor who, between trips abroad to receive awards, writes books and teaches, complaining

¹¹⁹ This is the same Germano Coelho whom Freire called "the great architect of the MCP" (Movimento de Cultura Popular) which, according to Beisiegel (1982, 207) "united politicians, artists, intellectuals and university students, from different backgrounds and political orientation and, later, even common people, in an ambitious cultural and educational program [while] internally reproducing the difficulty of reconciling the demands of political activity and intellectual toil and, even more, confronting the natural difficulty of articulating the diverse positions and orientations of its members."

about the corruption and social injustice of the hegemony as though he were not part of it; and, 2) his equating ‘critical consciousness’ and survival, suggesting that, by persisting through existential misery, people acquire political and ethical consciousness as well as physical strength—“created by the conditions in which they live.” This is romanticizing the struggles of the marginalized and the oppressed (implying, for instance that they are made of ‘sterner stuff’ than the rest of us) and directly contradicts the categories of consciousness (semi-intransitive, naïve, magical, permeable, etc.) that Freire outlined in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974). It also contradicts the accounts of several of my informants, including Guiomar Barbosa, José Ataíde and Danilson Pinto himself, who see the current predicament of the poor and unemployable as much less ‘heroic’ and far more complex than the aging author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire’s insistence that the physical, political and ethical ‘resistance’ of the *favelados* are “created by the conditions in which they live” is particularly disturbing because it contradicts Darwin’s theory of natural selection. Guiomar’s account of the behavior and attitude of the refugees housed at CAIC when heavy June rains inundated their houses is not about community solidarity or ethical behavior but about people ‘acting out’ under existential pressure in ways that reiterate and reinforce negative class and race stereotypes.¹²⁰ Freire’s concern with ‘ethics’ is part of his romantic-utopic “possible dream” but, confronting the misanthropic cynicism of hypercapitalist, supple economy, the deterioration of public education and social services in Brazil and the consequent descent of growing numbers of the oppressed from poverty to misery in his final years, he growled the word ‘neoliberal’ like Aesop’s lion with a thorn in his foot.

Maxine Greene, the doyenne of U.S. critical pedagogues, writes that “one of the few

¹²⁰ See Guiomar’s Story, below.

explicit attempts to articulate aspects of the Western tradition for educators has been the courageous work of Freire, who stands astride both hemispheres:

He has been the pioneer of a pedagogy informed by both Marxist and existential-phenomenological thought; his conception of critical reflectiveness has reawakened the themes of a tradition dating back to Plato and forward to the theologies of liberation that have taken hold in oppressed areas of the Western world. His background awareness, however, and that of the largely Catholic peasants with whom he has worked, are not that of most North Americans...Like his European colleagues, he reaches back to predecessors other than Jefferson and Emerson and Thoreau and William James and Dewey; his social vision is not that of our particular democracy. (Greene in Darder et al., eds., 2003, 108)

It is interesting, in light of this quote, that many of Freire's most assiduous critics are English-speaking scholars who neither read nor speak Portuguese and are limited to criticizing those works by and about him in English or English translations. Although *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) and *Letters to Cristina* (1996) go out of their way to contextualize Freire's auto-biographical 'insertion' in history via his widow, Ana Maria Freire's notes, they only hint at the fortuity of his attainment of international prominence through his work with and writings about non-literate, oppressed people in one of the poorest and most problematic regions in the Western hemisphere.

3.8 Diana Coben's Case

In his Foreword to Diana Coben's *Radical Heroes: Gramsci, Freire and the Politics of Adult Education* (NY & London, Garland, 1998), Joe Kincheloe writes that "a central theme (...) emerges in her challenge to the fetishization of radical heroes" (ibid, viii). Coben works hard, and often convincingly, to explain and contextualize the development of Freire's basic pedagogical concepts, particularly conscientization, and her knowledge of the English-language literature both by and about him is impressive. Using books by Paul V. Taylor (1993) and Emanuel de Kadt (1967, 1970) as literary divining rods, she boldly approaches the wellspring of the Paulo Freire Method, as developed and explained

by its author in his own seminal works (1967, 1970), and finds it “not so much revolutionary as consensual. Not only is [Freire’s] approach dependent on favorable political and economic circumstances but, for example in the postcolonial situation of Guinea-Bissau or the populist regime in Brazil in the early 1960s, it also seeks to generate support for the status quo” (Coben, 1998, 124). She repeats the opinion of H.-P. Gerhardt¹²¹, whom she characterizes as “a first hand observer of Freire’s literacy campaigns” that “the educators had espoused the political objectives of the programme organizers (...) the goals of the campaigns were blatantly political” (ibid., 60). She compares Freire’s method to that of the *Movimento de Educação de Base* (MEB), reiterating Taylor’s (1993) opinion that “Freire was using a tried and tested method as Cartesian as it was Catholic” (ibid., 1998, 61). Finally, she links him to *Ação Popular* (AP), a “para-Christian organization” which Emanuel de Kadt (1970, 99) writes “shared the post-Stalinist disenchantment of the world’s neo-Marxists and socialist humanists with the results of the Russian Revolution and attacked the PCB [Brazilian Communist Party] for its lack of true revolutionary perspective.” Coben repeats de Kadt’s opinion that Freire “was in many respects closely related to AP” (1970, 103), noting that “he removed his literacy work from the Communist-influenced MCP in Recife” and speculating that he may have “feared that any association with Communists would jeopardize the continuation of his USAID money” (op. cit., 1998, 62). She quotes Taylor (1993, 30) to the effect that “the publication of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (...) quickly established Freire’s international reputation as a radical, even revolutionary pedagogue,” adding that this was “notwithstanding the absence of any published, quantifiable results from his literacy programs” (1998, 64). Finally, she agrees with

¹²¹ Gerhardt is the author of an essay, “Paulo Freire (1921-),” in *Prospects*, XXIII, 3/4 (87/88): 439-58 but the quote is from P.V. Taylor, 1993, 26.

feminist scholar K. Weiler¹²² that “the myth of ‘Freire the revolutionary’ was in a sense created, not only through his books, but also through his charismatic personal appearances” – many of them as special consultant to the Office of Education at the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva.

Coben relies mainly on Taylor and de Kadt to trace the multiplicity of influences on Freire. De Kadt’s ‘discovery’ of the Brazilian Jesuit philosopher and theologian, Henrique C. de Lima Vaz, who “could easily be mistaken for Freire” at the beginning of the 1960s when both conceived of a kind of “historical consciousness [emerging] when man begins to look critically at his world, becoming aware of the fact that history unfolds in an empirical time-span, which is given substance by the action of man in the form of historical initiative; action, that is, which transforms the world” (from a 1962 essay by Vaz as quoted in de Kadt 1970, 87-88) is appropriated by Coben. As is Freire’s 1993 statement that “it is impossible to think about literacy without reading Piaget and Vygotsky.”¹²³ She also concurs with de Kadt’s assessment of the “personalist Christian existentialism of Emmanuel Mounier, with his emphasis on man and the unfurling of his potential” being a “profound influence on Freire (ibid., 1970, 91).” She finds Freire “well within the Liberation Theology camp” and agrees with D. McLellan’s observation¹²⁴ that his “poeticism, a hallmark of Liberation Theology (...) has enabled a realization of alienation and oppression (and therefore resistance to it) to take place within religious consciousness among people who would be quite untouched by the rational tones of a pure Marxist discourse” (McLellan in Coben, 1998, 71-72). But her concurrence is begrudging: “Perhaps Freire’s particular gift has been to enable such a

¹²² See “Myths of Paulo Freire” in *Educational Theory*, 46, 3, 353-71.

¹²³ Coben credits this citation to M. De Figueiredo-Cowen and D. Gastaldo in their 1995 book, *Paulo Freire at the Institute*, London: Institute of Education, University of London.

¹²⁴ In *Marxism and Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1987, 155)

realization to take place within the professional consciousness of adult educators” (ibid., 72). While ignoring the marginalized, Northeast Brazilian context of Freire’s praxis, Coben is loath to admit that his pedagogy could be universally relevant or have an existential purpose beyond enriching the lesson plans of teachers of adults.

Freire’s eclectic approach brings out the skeptic in Coben. In search of a “theoretical framework in Freire’s work,” she grants that “perhaps the framework metaphor is not well-chosen ... for one who weaves together such a multiplicity of ideas and sources,” adding that “Freire himself speaks of ‘fabric’ and ‘tapestries’ in his reflections on his life and work in *Pedagogy of Hope*” (ibid., 72). The “key motif” in Freire’s “theoretical fabric is his concept of conscientization (*conscientização*),” according to Coben. She points out that “Freire did not invent the term, which emerged from ISEB deliberations in the late 1950s and was popularized abroad by Bishop Helder Câmara. De Kadt (1970, 98) states that *conscientização* was in common use among Catholic radicals in Brazil before the coup and it was an express goal of initiatives such as the MCP and MEB.”¹²⁵ Coben calls conscientization “an elusive concept in Freire’s writing” (ibid., 72). Freire decided to stop using the concept in 1974, according to Peter Mayo (2004, 49), “because he felt that it had been used in a rather loose manner, as a result of which its actual significance began to be undermined.” There is some indication, however, that Freire was considering resurrecting *conscientização* toward the end of his life. Mayo (ibid., 49-50) quotes Nita Freire, Paulo’s widow, from an interview she granted him and Carmel Borg in São Paulo three years after her husband’s death:

Paulo was not using the word *conscientização* anymore (*conscientização* did not exist as a Portuguese word. Dom Helder Câmara used it, but it was Paulo who filled it with such meaning). This was because of the criticism he had received from those who understood it to be an idealistic concept. However, lately, he used to tell me he was going to use it again, because he found it to be very rich: it indicates movement, the beginning of an

¹²⁵ *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (Popular Culture Movement) and *Movimento Eclesial de Base* (Basic Church Movement, a Brazilian term for what was more widely known as “Liberation Theology.”

action, preparation of the action that must follow. In no way did it indicate a sense of “spontaneity” or “voluntarism.” Neither did it imply that unchecked action or idealism were among its ingredients. In short, he did not intend it to convey a sense lacking in or separated from true political praxis, the praxis that reaches for theory, and goes back to it, illuminating it.

Coben chooses what she calls “arguably Freire’s most succinct statement of the concept” from Myra R. Bergman’s 1976 British translation of Freire’s first book, *Education: The Practice of Freedom*: “*Conscientização* represents the *development* of the awakening of critical awareness [which] must grow out of a critical educational effort based on favorable historical conditions.” But Coben confuses matters when she defines such “favorable conditions” as having been provided by “the populist regime in Brazil in the early 1960s” which encouraged Freire to diffuse his literacy method on a national scale so as to “generate support for the status quo” (Coben, 1998, 124). Coben’s point here is that “Freire’s educational method is not so much revolutionary as consensual” and that “the notion of popular consent” is as important to Freire as it is to “Gramsci’s multifaceted concept of hegemony, which encompasses and subsumes consent” (ibid, 124). What Coben ignores is that the Brazilian status quo is five centuries old and adamant and that Goulart’s “populist regime” was threatening to the oligarchs and generals who would go to any length to maintain it—witness Brazil’s military dictatorship, 1964-1985. This was particularly true in the Northeast where the Paulo Freire Method was developed as an effective way to bring about social change by simultaneously ‘alphabetizing’ and ‘politicizing’ tens of thousands of newly eligible peasants and urban marginals to vote for progressive candidates (see pp. 55-62, above).

Peter Robb, an Australian writer, describes this perennial status quo in a recent book:

Power in Brazil stayed in the hands of the landowners, the exporters of sugar, gold, coffee, beef and rubber. Each state in Brazil was run by a small group of intermarried families. They were the people who, a few years earlier had run their estates on slave labor and they still, in remoter parts of the country—the coffee estates of the south, cattle runs in the drylands of the Northeast and the rubber plantations of the Amazon—kept the people working for them dirt poor and serflike in their dependence. Most of the

northeasterners who went south left rural misery for the urban poverty nesting within the Southeast's huge industrial wealth. The landowning families dominated the military high command, and even the career officers who rose through the ranks identified with the ruling caste and were ready to step in with guns whenever its interests seemed threatened. As they had, with a big nudge from the United States, in 1964. (Robb, 2004, 111-112)

By maintaining that the conscientization concept is “elusive” and the process “elaborate,” Coben adds to the confusion. She does this by quoting Freire out of context, in a citation culled from a two-page article entitled “Pedagogy, Oppression and Us” by someone called R. Hawthorn in the May, 1980 issue of *Basic Education* magazine:

The dependent society is by definition a silent society. Its voice is not an authentic voice but merely the echo of the voice of the metropolis—in every way, the metropolis speaks, the dependent society listens. (op. cit., 1998, 73)

Whether the statement is Freire's or not, the juxtaposition of “dependent society” and “metropolis” allows Coben to portray Freirian logic as vague and abstract:

Freire sees the culture of silence as a characteristic also of “those areas in the metropolises which identify themselves with the Third World as ‘areas of silence’” (CAF:57)¹²⁶. For Freire, the “Third World” denotes any group of people who have experienced cultural invasion (PO:121)¹²⁷. It is on the basis of statements such as this that some educators¹²⁸ claim that his approach is generalizable and applicable to the education of poor and oppressed people in countries such as Britain or the United States (ibid., 73)

She ascribes the ‘elusiveness’ of the conscientization concept to Freire's “prolix writing style,” adding that “it is likely that Freire began by assuming a shared understanding of *conscientizacao* among his readers. Since 1964 Freire came increasingly to address an international audience which cannot be assumed to share the experience, the worldview or the terminology of Catholic radicals in South America” (ibid., 76). This is also Maxine Greene's point, but it was not meant to apply to researchers like Coben who are very familiar with Freire's ‘worldview’ and ‘terminology’ and choose to take issue with

¹²⁶ *Cultural Action for Freedom*, by Paulo Freire. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1972)

¹²⁷ *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by PF, translated by Myra B. Ramos. Harmondsworth: Penguin (1972)

¹²⁸ In a footnote, Coben mentions Giroux's 1985 “Introduction” to *The Politics of Education* and Kirkwood & Kirkwood's *Living Adult Education: Freire in Scotland* (1989) as the “educators” she had in mind.

them.

Cynthia Brown (1978) was one of the first U.S. educators to write about “Freire’s Process in North-East Brazil” and Coben cites her definition of conscientization as “a process in which people are encouraged to analyze their reality, to become more aware of the constraints on their lives, and to take action to transform their situation” (Brown in Coben, *ibid.*, 75). This is a concept with which no one in Freire’s “international audience” would have had much trouble.

Coben goes back to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to analyze the concepts of praxis and dialogue – “the two interrelated principles on which [Freire’s] education process rests” (*ibid.*, 76). She finds that Freire defines this process “by using a device that recurs throughout his writing: presenting two sets of statements as bipolarities, with the preferred position identified in terms of its antithesis. He counterposes ‘banking education’ and ‘problem-posing education’ in terms that leave no room for doubt as to which is the favored approach” (*ibid.*, 77). No longer does Coben complain that the concept is “elusive” and the process “elaborate.” Now...

The issue is disarmingly simple: the education process mirrors society as a whole, so that banking education mirrors oppressing society and dialogical, problem-solving, conscientizing education is characteristic of a humane society based on libertarian values. But what does this mean in terms of what actually happens in the education process? Here we turn to examine the educational method which bears Freire’s name and which is designed to make problem-posing education a reality. (Coben, 1998, 78)

Coben’s examination of the “psycho-social method” of Freirian problem-posing education begins with a discussion of the “two stages, a literacy campaign and a postliteracy phase, designed to bring about conscientization” (*ibid.*, 79-82). Relying on Freire’s descriptions in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, she walks her readers through “the anthropological concept of culture, the fundamental distinction between the natural world and the world of human agency,” explaining the “codifications” in terms of the

“existential situations” (based on Brennan’s and Freire’s famous slides) and “discovery cards” (in which the “generative words” are broken down into “phonemic families” and juxtaposed to illustrate their semantic links). The postliteracy phase of the selection of “generative themes” is also examined in detail. Coben is apparently made uneasy by the complexity of the process and by Freire’s statement that it ends when “the thematics which have come from the people return to them – not as contents to be deposited, but as problems to be posed” (Freire, in Coben, 1998, 81):

The problem is that the process of collection, selection and presentation of thematics and codifications is far from being a straight-forward matter. It raises fundamental questions, such as who selects images, on what grounds, how are the images presented and how are they read? (...) The selection of an aspect of the people’s reality is a crucial issue and once selected it will inevitably be susceptible to multiple readings. The codified images that Freire presents in *Education: The Practice of Freedom* exemplify the problem. The first situation shows a barefoot man in the foreground with a book in one hand and a hoe in the other, standing on the edge of what looks like cultivated land. There are trees in the picture and in the background there is a house, a well, and a woman walking toward the house, holding a small child by the hand. The text states: “Through the discussion of this situation—man as a being of relationships—the participants arrive at a distinction between two worlds: that of nature and that of culture” (EPF: 63). This is one reading of the picture but hardly the only one. It could equally well be seen as illustrating the idea that a woman’s place is in the home looking after her children, or that the family members (assuming they are a nuclear family) have everything they need (with the possible exception of a pair of shoes for the man). The situation was presumably selected for the reasons set out in the text but another political agenda might have produced a very different reading. (Coben, 1998, 81-82)

Clearly, Coben has a “political agenda” of her own: to cast doubt on the cogency and coherence of Freire’s pedagogical method. Here too, she depends on Paul V. Taylor, a knowledgeable, Portuguese-reading British scholar whose 1993 book, *The Texts of Paulo Freire*, is one of the best critical evaluations of the pedagogue’s work available in English. Coben calls Taylor’s analysis of the first of Freire and Brennan’s ten ‘existential situations’ “illuminating:”

He points out that the image endows the book with a totemic significance and thus sets the agenda for the literacy program as: “*The individual who is Subject cannot live without the book*” (Taylor 1993:88). Meanwhile the hidden agenda is to ensure that the participants arrive at an understanding of the distinction between nature and culture. As Taylor (1993:88) notes, this requires “a deft use of manipulation to achieve the objectives of the session.” Thus, the image of the enlightened peasant shown in this drawing “is important precisely because he or she is the model of the ideal student. By definition, their enlightenment means that they already know what it is that they already know what

it is that they are supposed to know, except only that they do not know it in the way that the teacher knows it. In what is really an example of pedagogic bad faith, the peasant is enlightened because he or she has been judged to be “in the image and likeness of” the teacher (Taylor 1993:89). Taylor deconstructs “the dialectical relationship between the Power of Literacy and the Literacy of Power” in Freire’s literacy work, revealing a contradiction at the heart of his method (Taylor 1993: 147). (Coben, 1998, 82)

Taylor’s analysis is ‘illuminating’ for reasons Coben never examines because she does not deal with the given circumstances of Freire’s context, something Taylor attempts. Here is a *précis* of his argument (Taylor, 1993, 88):

- For Freire, “the book is a symbol of a new relationship between men and men and between men and the world, a relationship not marked by domination or transformation.”
- Culture Circle “coordinators” used simple pictorial slides as ‘codifications’ to lead literacy-learners into discussions about the distinction between nature and culture.
- They ‘manipulated’ the ensuing dialogue by avoiding “key questions.” Those they asked: “who made the well? the pig? the hoe? the house? the book?, etc.” are “flavored with the piety of two illusions or acts of faith.”
- **1st illusion:** “that there is some deity, some God who is Lord and Father of all mankind who ‘made’ the natural world...”
- **2nd illusion:** “that this particular man [a barefoot peasant] has created his own culture.
- Taylor suggests an “alternative sequence of responses to Freire’s questions:”

Q: Who made the well? A: The landlord paid men to brick and cement it.

Q: Who made the length of rope? A: I traded a pig for it.

Q: Who made the hoe? A: I bought it at the market.

Q: Who made the clothes? A: A cotton manufacturer in the south.

Q: Who made the book? A: The missionary.

Taylor refers to “the second act of faith” as “the illusion of the enlightened peasant (enlightened except that he cannot read) who has the skills and resources to make everything for himself:

He bears the imprint of thrift, practicality and ingenuity. His culture, even at this primary level of subsistence, is self-made. It is the culture of a man who is Subject, who ‘relating to the world, made the latter the object of his knowledge. By work, he submitted the world to a process of transformation.’⁷

Illusion though it may be, the image of the enlightened peasant is important precisely because he or she is the model of the ideal student. By definition, their enlightenment means that they already know what it is that they are supposed to know, except only that they do not know it in the way that the teacher knows it. In what is really an example of pedagogic bad faith, the peasant is enlightened because he or she has been judged to be ‘in the image and likeness of’ the teacher.

Such an image is meant to motivate and encourage the learner. It also serves to preclude an equally important discussion about work itself, about whether the peasant/farmer is working for himself or for someone else, about whether he and his family actually eat what they grow or whether he has to sell it in the market place. It avoids the need to reflect on how the peasant is controlled or even dominated by the market place where he might have to buy all his tools, the grain he needs and the clothes he wears, and where he will not always get a just price for his pig.

Freire will want to get to a discussion of domination and oppression in due course, but it is clearly his intention not to do so through this route. It is not that he cannot or will not challenge the illusion of the self-sufficient, autonomous farmer/peasant. It is rather that, in the cultural and social context in which he was working, and even for himself personally, there was a taboo surrounding any discussion of the first illusion which assumes the presence of a caring God. (Taylor, 1993, 88-89)

I believe Taylor misses the point when he posits that the discussion about work should include “whether the farmer/peasant is working for himself or for someone else, whether he and his family actually eat what they grow or whether he has to sell it at the market place.” Such questions were moot in the context of the Northeast in 1962 and, for the most part, remain so today. Freirian Culture Circles in places like Angicos were formed, for the most part, by share-croppers and their families who had few options of the kind Taylor suggests. They were not dominated by the market place, but by oligarchical ‘colonels’ who owned both the land and the ‘company store.’ Despite the continuous

demands for social justice of the MST (Landless Peasant Movement), represented by “more than 135 thousand families currently camping out in provisional tent-cities while waiting for the legalization of their claims by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform,”¹²⁹ poverty and misery have not diminished in the fields and cities of Brazil, they have grown. In a country where the chasm separating the controlling few from the marginal many gapes like the jaws of hell, Taylor misses the point by blaming an ‘illusionary’ God designed to “mind guard” against “revolutionable questions like ‘why did God make some people poor and some people rich?’” (op. cit., 89). That was certainly not the stance of *Ação Católica Brasileira* (Brazilian Catholic Action) movement of the 1950s which, according to Vanilda P. Paiva (1980, 66), believed that a “third way” (*terceira via*) would come from the Third World, a personalist, democratic socialism.” Paiva also cites Padre Henrique Lima Vaz whose belief that “man is not defined essentially by work but by the communication of consciousness, that is, not only by his relationship with nature but by his relationship with others” exerted direct and lasting influence on Freire (fn. 100, p. 69). According to her, “Vaz defends a position analogous to the [French] Catholic thinkers who sought to elaborate a theology of labor, refusing to accept work as the ‘essence of man.’ Work makes a relevant object for Christian reflection when seen as a ‘human way to link technical progress and the consciousness of freedom’

¹²⁹ Welsh teacher-activist Dan Baron, who has been collaborating with the MST since 1998 when he came to Brazil as a visiting professor of communitary theater at the State University of Santa Catarina, calls this improvised ambience, which can last up to five years, “‘school for the excluded’ where the ‘campers’ [*acampados*] construct a gradual process of reclaiming their humanity, learning to read and write, to organize themselves into a collective, to collect medicinal herbs, to care for the land, to raise independent children, to form new gender relationships and to become self-sustaining. Instead of risking their lives, the campers deoccupy the disputed areas when there is a risk of confrontation with gunmen and police.” When land occupations are legalized, “the *assentados* [squatters] begin to build their new communities of *agrovilas* and agro-ecological schools where, every morning, young people study sciences, history, geography, languages, religion, physical education and modes of production from an anti-imperialist perspective and, in the afternoon, put theory into practice in their collective crop gardens. This social movement of almost 2 million people, currently the largest in Latin America, not only critiques imperialism but seeks to construct a new, socialist society in the country with the greatest disparity of income in the world” (Baron, 2004, pp. 54-55, my translation).

in a ‘cosmic spirituality’ [wherein] labor ought to constitute one of the central axes.”¹³⁰

In the wake of the 1959 Medellin (Colombia) Conference of Bishops, a divided Roman Catholic Church produced cadres of activist priests who defied the reigning dictatorships with grass-roots community organizing in *favelas* and *mocambos* throughout Latin America, despite the restraining hand of a conservative Pope. Forty years later, Peter Robb (2004, 87-88) brings the situation up to date:

In the worst of times of the inland drought of 1970, the starving people who arrived in Recife from the interior had been helped by Dom Helder Câmara, the bishop of Recife, and he remarked, when he grew notorious as a friend of the dispossessed, that *when he fed the poor, people called him a saint and when he asked why they were poor, people called him a communist*. But Dom Helder was forced to retreat into silence and inaction by the new pope, John Paul II, and by the end of the nineteen-eighties was in any case very old. After its last great stand with the people against the military in São Paulo, the engaged and human Roman Catholic Church in Brazil had become shrunken and inert under Wojtyła’s deadening hand. Its influence was fading fast, although Brazil was still called the largest Catholic country in the world. The church of the first colonizers was ridiculed or ignored among the middle classes for its harangues against contraception, abortion and divorce and everywhere else it was being supplanted by proliferating evangelical sects...Unlike the Brazilian Catholic Church these offered prospects in the here and now as well as hope of redemption in the afterlife, and for any candidate for government in Brazil it was more important to get the mass evangelical churches on one’s side than to be limply endorsed by the Catholic hierarchy.

Anthony Grafton begins an article about John Paul’s recently elected successor, Benedict XVI entitled “Vatican notebook: Reading Ratzinger” in the July 25, 2005 edition of *The New Yorker* with a conversation between Ratzinger as “the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vatican office formerly known as the Inquisition (...) a job he had for nearly twenty-five years, before becoming Pope, last April” and the Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff whom he summoned to Rome in May, 1984 to discuss Boff’s interpretation of “relations between the Catholic Church and Christianity as a whole:”

¹³⁰ According to Paiva, “These young Christians” used Padre Vaz’s Brazil-oriented readings of French theologians like Mounier, Lebreton, Dubarle, de Lubac Chifflet and Chenu as well as Marx to “attack the perspective defended by the ISEB theoreticians, that of a nationalism that intended to serve the sedimentation of national capitalism in the sphere of the production of merchandise (...) attempting a historical and structural analysis of Brazilian society, denouncing the private appropriation of the means of production and indicating socialism as the solution for the specific tensions and contradictions spawned by the capitalist mode of production. Capitalism [was] denounced in all its forms, national or not, because it was founded on profit and not on man and his needs.” (Paiva, 1980, 75-76, translations mine)

In the nineteen-seventies and eighties, Boff had helped create the movement known as liberation theology, working with poor Catholics in Latin America to create small, autonomous groups called “base communities.” Influenced by Marxism, the movement redefined Christianity as a critique of the oppressive social and economic order, and it often considered the Roman center of the Church part of that order. In “Church: Charism and Power,” a collection of essays published in 1981, Boff argued that the base communities were the core of the true Church: “The Church is directed toward all, but begins from the poor, from their desires and struggles.” He justified the base communities as an essential part of the radical changes produced by the Second Vatican Council, in the early nineteen-sixties. These changes include the performance of Mass in the vernacular and a willingness to acknowledge elements of religious truth in other Christian denominations and even in other religions. (Grafton in *The New Yorker* 7/25/05, 42)

Ratzinger believed that “the true Church ‘both is and can only be fully present in the Roman Church, with all its hierarchies. *Lumen Gentium* (“Light of the Nations”), one of the papal bulls issued by Vatican II, offered no support for Christian institutions created without Rome’s sanction:

After Boff returned to Brazil, the Congregation published a formal critique of his work stating that Boff had drawn from *Lumen Gentium* “a thesis which is exactly the contrary to the authentic meaning of the council text” – that is, to Ratzinger’s rather acrobatic interpretation of it. Less than two months later, another notice required Boff to cease writing, editing, and teaching, and to maintain “obedient silence” for an unstated period, a verdict that Boff accepted. (ibid., 43)

Liberation Theology in Brazil ended in 1984, for all extents and purposes, with the muting of its most vocal pedagogue by Ratzinger who, twenty-one years later, has become the Supreme Pontiff and will formulate and defend the Church of Rome’s policies for the rest of his life.

Coben calls Freire a “radical Catholic, emerging from the milieu that produced Liberation Theology and identifying with its tenets. [His] pedagogy of liberation may thus be seen as the pedagogical analogue of Liberation Theology” (1998, 88). She agrees with Giroux (in Freire, 1985, xvii) that “Freire is ‘a harsh critic of the reactionary church’” and cites G. Cooper, in a two-page 1995 article entitled “Freire and Theology” from *Studies in the Education of Adults*, who sees him as “an Old Testament prophet challeng[ing] thinking and expos[ing] ideology.” Again, she elects to minimize and

demean Freire's diverse international audience by claiming that "his prophetic optimism is a beacon of inspiration to many adult educators who may be unaware that its source of power is Christian theology" (ibid., , 88).

As for his politics, Coben notes that "Freire clearly deplores sectarianism" and cites his statement from *Pedagogy of Hope*, regarding the splintering of the Chilean left under Allende, that "only a radical politics—not a sectarian one...but one that seeks a unity in diversity among progressive forces—could ever have won the battle for a democracy that could stand up to the power and virulence of the Right" (ibid., 89-90). Despite what she terms Freire's "efforts to remain nonaligned in the face of left sectarianism" which may have led to the "elusiveness of his political writing," Coben finds "persistent resonances of Maoism" throughout, especially in his "concept of revolutionary leadership" (ibid., 90). This, she explains, is "because the masses, especially in Freire's early work, are likely to be peasants (or former peasants living in urban slums) rather than proletarians, just as they are for Mao." She refines this further:

However, it may be that the important issue for Freire is not so much whether the people are proletarians or peasants, but that they are oppressed. For Freire, the people's potential for revolutionary agency is not the issue—they are not the agents. Agency is vested in the leader. What matters is that the people are oppressed and consequently redeemable through the conscientization process. The people cannot become leaders in their own right and cannot themselves construct a theory of liberating action, since they are victims of cultural invasion "crushed and oppressed, internalizing the image of the oppressor" (ibid., 99).

To Coben, "Freire's vision of the authentic revolutionary leader is deeply patriarchal." The fact that he considers Guevara, Castro, Cabral and Mao "authentic revolutionaries" because they do not deny praxis, are dedicated to process and engage in dialogue with the people is deemed a "phallogocentric paradigm of liberation in which freedom and the experience of patriarchal manhood are conflated" by Peter McLaren and T.T. da Silva (McLaren and Leonard, eds., 1993, 70) and Coben, a feminist, wholeheartedly agrees.

Earlier in her argument, she cites Peter Mayo (an author “generally sympathetic to Freire”) as “point[ing] out that none of Freire’s talking books involved a sustained conversation between Freire and either a women or a person of color. Although Donaldo Macedo, Freire’s frequent interlocutor and an academic of Azorean provenance might choose to define himself as *afrodescendente*, his “dialogue with Freire on the subject of [Freire’s] treatment of gender and [bell] hooks’s ‘playful dialogue’ with herself (as Gloria Watkins) on the same subject in McLaren and Leonard’s book, makes this point most poignantly” (Coben, 1998, 94).

In a subchapter entitled “The Pedagogical Process in Freire’s Work” Coben appears to be swept toward hyperbole by her feminist sentiments. Once again, she is led there by her countryman, Paul V. Taylor’s “point[ing] out a further fundamental contradiction in Freire’s method, all the more devastating since it comes from a sympathetic critic” (ibid., 111). Taylor cites [Basil] Bernstein’s argument that nominal forms lead to universalist statements, while pronomial forms are particular, personal and situation specific. Only the latter form of expression supports a process that is intended to be deeply personalizing. Freire’s process of naming the world is quite literally nominal, therefore, Taylor argues, literacy acquired in terms of his lists of nouns can be only subliteracy” (op.cit., 111). Bernstein’s argument, which Coben does not detail, was based, according to Taylor, on “a linguistic analysis of a story-telling study (which is just another form of coding and decoding) where middle-class British children used thirteen nouns and six pronouns, but where working-class children used only two nouns and fourteen pronouns. Taylor extrapolates:

Besides the factor of class, which must surely be significant when one is considering a literacy programme for working-class or sub-working-class peasants and labourers, the instructive point is that nominal forms led to universalist statements, while pronominal forms were particular, personal and situation-specific. It is therefore, this latter form of expression which supports a process which is intended to be deeply personalizing. The

nominalist learner may be able to recognize the word for a brick, or a mill, or discuss the importance of the words for employment, wages and the price of bread. But, unless he or she can write read and write 'I can read' and 'I can write', there will always be a sense in which they are condemned to remain sub-literate. Only the person who can write 'I can' is in a position to begin to change the world, for it is the *I can* which is the catalyst to the process of conscientizing. This, in turn, breaks the bonds of the culture of silence and enables the learner, as Subject, to say *I am*. The resulting new statement of liberating literacy, '*I can, therefore I am*', becomes nominative in a way that the nouns on Freire's word list could never be. (1993, 80-81).

It seems to me that Taylor and Coben are both led astray by very literal readings of the Freirian literacy process, dependent on questionable research. Taylor, for all his insight and knowledge of the rudiments of Freirian practice, is thrown offtrack by what he sees as the 'nominal' thrust of Freire's word list. He wants it to include prepositions and pronouns as well. He decides, perhaps for the sake of argument, that "through the use of *nouns*, the learner can only *read*. 'Naming the wor(l)d' does not and cannot mean inventing, creating the world (...) The use of the nominative word lists is fundamentally anti-dialogic, for it never allows the learner to *personalize* the processes of reading and writing" (ibid, 80). For good measure, he throws in a quote from a 1972 article entitled "Conscientisation for the masses" that appeared in the March 17 edition of *The National Catholic Reporter*, perhaps in Ireland or Scotland, in which the author, one G. MacEoin, declares: "For years I have been searching for an instance in which peasants have broken out of their oppression, even at a local level, but I have found none. When I asked Freire, he admitted that neither has he." Aside from this being absolute '*blarney*,' to use an Irish expression dating from the late 18th century which remains as popular in the early 21st century as the 'misleading nonsense' it describes, Coben and Taylor both seem to regard such little-known and unfounded sources as felicitous and employ them at will. Coben, who depends on Taylor for most of her insights into Freirian pedagogy, chooses his distinction between 'nominal/universalist' and 'pronominal/particular' vocabulary (one that seems tenuous since it is based on a single, decades-old study by the British

sociolinguist, Basil Bernstein) as a basis to complain about what she sees as Freirian educators' autocratic relationship to literacy-learners:

Without a clear exposition of the grounds for the selection of aspects of reality it is naïve to assume that the posing of problems will, of itself, lead oppressed people to identify the causes of their oppression in such a way as to enable them to act to change their circumstances, as Freire intends should happen, and to do so in ways of which he would approve. (...) In lieu of organization, Freire posits his notion of pedagogical leadership, raising further questions about the relationship between the problem-posing Freirian teacher and students, and their analogue, the revolutionary leader and people. In this relationship the Freirian educators hold all the cards; they design, initiate and control the education process; they identify the potential students as oppressed; they investigate the potential students' reality; they select the elements of the reality to be re-presented to the learners; they pose the problems; they formulate the codifications. The students are only consulted once the process has been initiated and only on terms set by the educators. Their oppression and their state of consciousness are not defined by themselves but designated by the educators. The learners are heavily reliant on the good faith and good will of the educators and subject to the educators' definition of their interests, rather than their own. The relationship of educator to learner, far from being democratic, as Freire insists it should be (*Pedagogy of Hope*: 79), is profoundly dependent. (Coben, 1998, 112)

To expect people who cannot read or write their own language, who are trapped in what Freire called the "culture of silence" – a centuries old web of slavery and self-abnegation in which only their faithful acceptance of Divine Will makes their miserable lot endurable – to understand the reasons for their oppression and take contrary action on their own seems naïve. Coben is caught between acknowledging Freire's value to adult education and the desire to be known in the Academy as someone who exposed a 'radical hero' as a dangerous fraud:

The [Freirian] pedagogical relationship is one in which the learner is constructed at the outset as passive, silent, ignorant, unaware, inexperienced, possibly fearful but acquiescent. By contrast, from the outset the educator is active, in control, free, aware, experienced, wise, fearless and self-sacrificing. Through the education process, the learner is deemed to undergo an awakening, leading to fulfillment as a more complete human being. The educational encounter is thus revealed as a sexualized one in which the roles of the protagonists are stereotypically gendered, with the educator cast as the "male lover" and the learner as the "female virginal beloved," the object of desire. This feminization and to an extent, also, infantilization of the learner is the nub of the inequality at the heart of the Freirian pedagogical relationship. Conscientization, which Freire conceives as an act of love, is revealed as at best a consensual but unequal coupling, at worst an invasion, a rape. (Coben, 1998, 112-113)

By the same token, for Coben to accuse Freire and Freirian educators of

“infantilizing” and “raping” the oppressed is, at best, a non-sequitur and, at worst, a lie. Adult literacy learners are infantilized when they are talked down to; when they have to sit in tiny chairs at tiny desks in a kindergarten classroom; when they are made to feel stupid or worthless; when the instructor fails to acknowledge them as men and women with life experience, hearts and minds; when, as individuals, they must leave their personalities and problems outside the classroom and accept their instructor’s word as ironclad truth. By honoring dialogue and teacher-student parity, Freire’s method is usually very effective at counteracting what he calls ‘banking education.’ But several of his critics, including Coben and C.A. Bowers, accuse him of owning an autocratic and conservative ‘bank’ of his own.

It is evident that Dr. Coben has never attended, much less taught, a literacy class in a Third World setting—especially one based on “Freirean”¹³¹ conceptions. If she had, she would understand at once that what she sees as overweening ego and manipulation on the educator’s part is something else entirely. Why would a youth or adult who wants to learn to read and write her/his native tongue so (s)he can find gainful employment and not have to beg, steal or prostitute herself/himself, second-guess an educator about the “education process?” Freire’s insistence on ‘dialogical’ rather than ‘banking’ education was meant to counteract what he identified as a ‘culture of silence’ constructed on the low self-esteem and inherent servility of the oppressed. The fact that a student is not literate usually means that education was not available in the first place or that existential necessities and/or family duties had priority. The students, not the educator, “initiate” the “process” in public school youth and adult education (EJA) by showing up of their own

¹³¹ The spelling of the adjective as Freirean rather than Freirian has been pointed out by José Eustaquio Romão as erroneous. It only works because the Brazilian pronunciation of Freire’s name makes the final vowel a separate syllable (as in ‘Nietzsche’ but not ‘Joyce’). If the name had ended with a consonant or any vowel but a pronounced ‘e’ this would not be the case (it’s ‘Proustian,’ not Proustan, Rousseauian, not Rousseauan).

accord and “control” it by remaining in class despite the fact that it can be physically painful to hold a pencil steady long enough to produce legible writing and humiliating to admit you cannot read. In Brazil, most unlettered people are or have been ‘oppressed’—otherwise, they would be working, eating regularly and making enough money to afford decent housing and support their dependents. So, when Coben remarks that “learners are heavily reliant on the good will and good faith of the educators and subject to the educators’ definition of their interests, rather than their own” (112), she is usurping Freire’s role as a “pilgrim of the obvious.” Public school adult educators measure their success on their pupils’ desire to keep coming to class. Thus, a friendly, open demeanor is as essential to their praxis as patience, a cohesive and intelligible method, persistent optimism and the physical resilience of a marathoner. No one who openly sexualizes, demeans or dominates students lasts long. ‘Unlettered’ students come to class because they want to learn to read and write. With adolescents and adults, this often requires making the classroom ‘safe’ for protracted and delicate psychological probing into the underlying issues. The authoritarian hypocrite that Coben wishes to make of Freire would not last a day.

In the public schools of Los Angeles, I teach morning classes full of women—mothers and grandmothers—who have dropped their children off at primary schools and come to an ‘off-track’ classroom set aside for parents who need to learn enough English to pass their citizenship exams. The humiliation of their ‘illiteracy’ is compounded by the miniscule chairs and desks at which they sit. Many of the women were the oldest girls in their families and had to quit school at an early age to help take care of younger siblings. Their language skills are rudimentary. The stories they tell are of deprivation, humiliation, and sacrifice and they are often recounted in visible pain, with anger and

tears. When such painful memories are recounted the class is softened, taut nerves relax. Everyone who witnesses these outpourings of grief and shame knows that they augur transformation. Sometimes those who weep are laughing moments later. There is a palpable sense of relief. It requires courage and faith to speak about family-of-origin issues in front of other people at the urging of a teacher who looks like he or she comes from a place where life was not so dour. But such purgation makes practice possible by validating emotions and experience essential to the ensuing dialogue.

At times, Coben seems to be attempting a *reductio ad absurdum*. Or is she really at a loss as to the meaning and nature of teaching and the Freirian technique? She grasps at straws near the end of her argument when she finds his “concept of dialogue contradictory” because “it envisages dialogue as both the means and the end of the educational process” (1998, 111). Or when she maintains that “since people are manifestly unequal, by definition, in oppressive societies, the implication is that Freire’s educative process is necessary to enable them to become more fully human, more equal, of greater intrinsic worth. The corollary is that without the educative process people are less than fully human, less equal, of less intrinsic worth, a point Leach himself makes” (ibid., 111). “Leach, T.” is cited only once in Coben’s bibliography as the author of a sixteen-page article, “Paulo Freire: Dialogue, Politics and Relevance,” in a 1982 edition of *International Journal of Lifelong Education*. It is ironic that Coben chooses rank-and-file adult educators, the very cohort she describes as holding Freire in such high esteem, to bring him down.

Critical force is depleted by picayune quibbling at the end of the chapter “Paulo Freire: Education As Political.” For instance, Coben notes that “Freire writes with delight of the often profound and moving statements made by peasants in the circles of

culture:

Statements such as “I want to learn to read and write so I can stop being the shadow of other people” and “I have the school of the world” have the force of discoveries newly made. Any educational process which calls forth and celebrates such powerfully poetic affirmation has much to recommend it. However, how does Freire know that similarly profound statements were not made by the peasants before the investigators were there to record them? If so, the process Freire describes would be one of discovery of the peasants’ words by the investigators, rather than discovery by the peasants of the truth of their own insights.

She has fleshed out her argument with citations from Taylor, deKadt and Freire himself. Without their sustaining insight, she cavils instead of summarizing. She takes Freire’s “quoting members of the culture circles in Brazil without naming them, (for example, ‘a man from the backlands of Rio Grande do Norte,’ ‘an illiterate from Recife’), while naming the professionals involved in the educational program (for example, Professor Jomard de Brito, Professor Jarbas Maciel) as an indication of dialogical inequality “throughout his work” (ibid., 111). The fact that he remembers and mentions the *aperçus* of such students means that he has learned from them—not that he is tooting his own horn (or Maciel’s or de Brito’s) as Coben implies. Freire is the most perspicacious and articulate teacher-philosopher since John Dewey and, like Dewey, he learns from his students.

In “Conclusion,” Coben finds Freire’s “rhetoric seductive” while “his pedagogy of liberation remains a romantic ideal, and like other romantic ideals it has its dark side (...) One is left with the vision of relatively privileged individuals driven by guilt to atone for the sins of their class through service to the poor and oppressed, and in the process either silencing themselves or silencing those they have imposed themselves on, unbidden, as leaders” (ibid., 113). The fact that, after reading Freire (even in translation), Coben pictures Brazilian literacy teachers as petit-bourgeois seducers and pedagogical ‘rapists,’ ambushing “the poor and oppressed” to force-feed them language and politics is absurd

and contradicts her earlier judgment of Freirian pedagogy as “consensual.” Her assumption that Brazilian *alfabetizadoras* and *alfabetizadores* are of a different social class than their students and “driven by guilt” is similarly self-serving and unfounded.

To dispel the cumulative negativity of Coben’s gloomy judgments of Freire and his method, I will translate a number of students’ comments on their experience in the PROMATA literacy campaign, directed by João Francisco de Souza¹³² in which I was a participant-observer from July through September, 2004. The students, in this case, are migrant workers from the municipalities of São José da Coroa Grande and Tamandaré, suburban municipalities in the sugar-producing *Zona da Mata* that borders Recife. They are responding to questions about why they want to learn to read and write. Their first names are included in parentheses:

“To learn to read and to write is to be someone in life.” (Maria José dos Santos)

“I want to learn to read so my life has a better future and one day I can have a better job.” (Antônio)

“A very profound feeling that goes to the depths of my soul. It’s an emotional adventure full of grace and love. I have seen many people who say that to go to school is to discover a new world. For me, it is a beautiful dream, sight for a blind person. Anyone who cannot read is blind.” (Marileide)

“I want to study and respect the teacher by paying attention to what she says. I hope, through school, to have a better life; this project is important to me.” (Elineide)

“What I learned in school already helps me a lot, I am very happy to have people who are concerned about me and the other people who live on the plantations.” (Edvânia)

“I hope I get another chance to study next year and my children too.” (Willa)

“Today I can read a letter and make a cake from a recipe. I even know what bus to take.” (Maria N.)

“Today we have the freedom to think, agree or disagree. Before we did not.” (Amara)

“At this stage of our lives, to know how to write our own names without feeling inferior to other people is very good.” (Adelson)

“With this school I will be respected, I will have a better future, discover the world,

¹³² Freire dedicated *Pedagogia Da Autonomia*, his final book, to João Francisco de Souza, “an intellectual whose respect for the wisdom of common sense never made him a ‘basist’ and whose respect for scientific rigor never turned him into an elitist.” *Basista* (basist) is Freire’s neologism for educators who adopt the parlance, customs and wisdom of the ‘popular classes’ as a gesture of solidarity: ‘class suicide’ manqué.

understand how to travel and get to know places without other people's help and to solve day-to-day problems.” (Ana Lúcia)

When Coben compares Gramsci and Freire, in Chapter 4 (“Gramsci and Freire: Points of Contact and Divergence”), the Brazilian always comes up short. For instance, she cites a 1995 British book, *Freire at the Institute*¹³³ to characterize Freire’s “focus” as “always on the quality of the relationship between teacher and student, which, he believes, should be characterized by humility, tolerance, trust and love.” Whereas, she says, “Gramsci’s aim is different: every citizen should be educated so that she or he is formed ‘as a person capable of thinking, studying and ruling—or controlling those who rule.’ Trust in the leader is not enough, as Gramsci makes clear; it is what people fall back on when they cannot work out for themselves what direction to take. The notion of the citizenry controlling their rulers or becoming rulers themselves is alien to Freire, for whom the role of the people is to support rather than to replace or direct the leader” (Coben, 1998, 136).

Comparing Gramsci, who died at 46 in 1937 after eleven years in an Italian Fascist prison, with Freire who survived imprisonment and exile, had an extraordinarily active and eventful life and died at 75 in 1997, seems invidious. But to posit them as antitheses with Gramsci steadfastly opting for individual political autonomy while stating, as Coben does, that Freire always chose to “support the status quo leader,” is both manipulative and misleading. While Freire’s political enemies, wardens and ideological inquisitors in 1964 Recife acknowledged the revolutionary potential of his pedagogy by the rabidity of their reaction to it, Coben questions and belittles his achievements, chipping away at his reputation, as if determined to prove that her “radical hero” has feet of clay. Her Marxist

¹³³ The *Institute* referred to is the University of London’s Institute of Education where Freire lectured in 1993, an event that Coben apparently attended. M. de Figueiredo-Cowen and D. Gastaldo are the authors.

bias is apparent when she praises Gramsci as “emblematic of monumental struggles...a tragic figure, enormously important in the development of Marxist thought and increasingly influential in a wide range of fields...[who] seems to offer a noble vision of adult education as a key element in the creation of revolutionary hegemony.” Gramsci was “a real revolutionary,” according to Coben, “but the cause he lived and died for seems to have all but collapsed” (ibid., 202). Whereas “Freire’s ideas—and Freire himself—seem particularly vulnerable to mythification [and] misappropriation and a considerable amount of energy has gone into efforts by some of his supporters to distinguish the real from the pseudo-Freirean practice; Freire himself seemed constantly to be trying to explain what he meant” (ibid., 204). Coben cuts Freire so little slack and her perspective is so slanted that she soon runs out of bonafide material and must fabricate her final argument out of whole cloth.

It is evident, for instance, that Freire’s productive longevity is daunting to Coben. Had he died years earlier or written fewer books, his achievements might have been easier to contain and categorize. It is difficult to draw a bead on a moving target, so Coben spends “a considerable amount of energy” spraying critical buckshot in Freire’s direction hoping, perhaps, that such random aspersions will damage his reputation while advancing her own. Determined to prove that Freire’s feet are made of clay, she ignores the fact that they are rooted in it – the calculous, cretaceous, umber *massapê* of the *Zona da Mata*, fertile humus for sugarcane, Brazil’s most enduring and treacherous cash crop and all its ills.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Much has been written about the cultivation of sugarcane and its effects on man, both dulcet and astringent. For the Afro-Cuban scholar, Fernando Ortiz, whose *Contrapunteo del tabaco y el azúcar* (“Counterpoint of tobacco and sugar”) first appeared in 1940: “*Diríase que el trabajo del azúcar es un oficio y el del tabaco es un arte. El tabaco nace hecho; es regalo de la naturaleza al hombre, cuyo trabajo en el tabaco es manual y solamente selectivo. El azúcar no nace hecho; es regalo que a sí mismos se dan los hombres por el esfuerzo creativo de su trabajo.*” (“One could say that to work with sugar is an occupation and to work with tobacco is an art. Tobacco is born complete; it is nature’s gift to man whose cultivation of tobacco is manual and solely selective. Sugar is not born ready-made; it is a gift that men

One of the things that Freire makes clear in *Cartas à Guiné-Bissau* (Letters to Guinea-Bissau), subtitled *Registros de uma experiência em processo* (Ledgers of an experiment in process) which refer to his development of a literacy campaign for the independent PAIGC¹³⁵ government, as an IDAC¹³⁶ consultant, in conjunction with President Luiz Cabral and Minister of Commerce Mário Cabral, brothers of the martyred Guinean - Cape Verdian revolutionary leader, Amílcar Cabral, is the secondary importance of literacy campaigns in revolutionary times. Nevertheless, the Freirian pedagogical focus is always on the *alfabetizandos*, those learning to read and write. Coben's observation that "learners are heavily reliant on the good will and good faith of the educators and subject to the educators' definition of their interests, rather than their own" is an accurate description of the dynamics of Freire's problem-posing pedagogy.

...if the educator's option is revolutionary and if her practice is coherent with her option, adult literacy, as an act of knowledge, has, in the *alfabetizando*, one of the subjects of this act. Thus, the task of the educator is to search for the best paths, the best ways to encourage the *alfabetizando* to take a subjective role regarding knowledge in the process of learning to read and write. (Freire, 1984, 17, my translation)

Such knowledge is never arbitrary—it has a purpose: the education, in Marxist terms, of the *lumpenproletariat* and the assimilation into the masses (by what Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral called "class suicide") of the *petit-bourgeoisie*. Cabral, unlike Fanon, did

give themselves by the creative effort of their work.") Images of slavery and prostitution accrue to the latter in Ortiz's antiphony: "Sugar is born without a surname, like a slave-woman. Perhaps, it is known by the name that its plantation or sugarmill master lends it; but in its economic process it will never divest itself of its typical egalitarian vulgarity. It lacks a proper name as well. In the canebrake, it is just *caña* (cane). In the sugarmill, simply *guarapo* (fermented juice). Even in the vat, it is nothing more than *meladura* (concentrated syrup). And when, in the vertigo of the turbines, it begins to be and to have the name *azúcar* (sugar), it will never go further. It is the same to be called *mujer* (woman); just woman, without a family name, a baptismal name, a sobriquet of war or of love. Sugar dies as it is born and as it lives: anonymous, as if ashamed to live without a surname, flung into a liquid or into a beaten mass where it is diluted as if predestined to suicide in the waters of a lake or in the squalls of society." (Ortiz, 1973, 65, my translation).

¹³⁵ *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde), co-founded and led by Amílcar Cabral from 1956 until he was murdered on January 20, 1973, supposedly by Portuguese agents, months before Guinea-Bissau achieved independence.

¹³⁶ IDAC was the acronym for the *Instituto de Ação Cultural* (The Institute of Cultural Action), an early NGO, which Freire's Geneva-based employer, the World Council of Churches, subcontracted as a research team of educators consisting of Paulo's first wife, Elza de Oliveira Freire, Miguel D'Arcy de Oliveira, Claudius Ceccon and Marcos Arruda, who accompanied Freire to Guinea-Bissau in 1976.

not consider the peasantry a dependable vanguard. They represented a “physical force” less malleable and daring than the “revolutionary force of uprooted youths recently arrived from the countryside, who lived off petit-bourgeois or working class relatives” and were willing to risk life and limb in “our battle for liberation” (Amilcar Cabral in Cabaço & Chaves, 2004, 82, my translation). Perhaps, like the suicide-bombers in present-day Baghdad and London, they felt they had nothing to lose.

Freire wrote, tongue in cheek, that “there are many things to be studied, done and redone in Guinea-Bissau before an investigator dedicates her/himself to a scientific analysis of the reasons why the sloth, that “sympathetic animal” indigenous to both Brazil and Guinea, moves so slowly” (Freire, 1984, 124, my translation). Struggling to make sense of the chaos left in the wake of the overthrow of a Portuguese colony, he looks back at another former colony, Pernambuco, from which he was exiled in 1964:

It needs to be said, however, that the *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) in which peasants, especially those in the Brazilian northeast, were engaged, in an organizing spirit, about conflicts over land reform, were not the product of any adult literacy campaign. It was the experience of the peasants, initially getting together to solve vital problems, among them the burial of their dead¹³⁷, that brought them to a more and more political practice—one that engaged them, later, in the demand for land reform and better wages and ended up making literacy a sensible idea (...) one necessary to their struggle, even if it made no difference to the social relations of production or precisely because it did not. Literacy was seen by many under such circumstances as one more instrument with which to effect the transformation of those relations. The two great strikes of Pernambucan rural workers in 1963, the first with 83,000 strikers and the second with 230,000, are an indisputable example of this phenomenon. (...) The keynote of the Brazilian literacy campaign was eminently political. In the historical conditions we were in, what interested us was to establish an extremely close link between literacy and the political consciousness of the popular masses. For that reason, in the context of the Brazilian experience, the relations between adult literacy and production were expressed as criticism of the capitalist mode of production which, characterizing the country as a whole, are preponderant in the urban centers, as well as in the critical analysis of the social relations of production, in the rural areas. (Freire, 1984, 130-131, my translation.)

Freire’s forthright admission of a political motive for teaching oppressed adults and youths to read and write, corroborates Coben’s and the Brazilian military’s accusations of “manipulation” and “subversion” and exposes them as mere epithets denigrating an

¹³⁷ “The rural people of the *zona da mata* always struggled to assure for themselves and their loved ones a decent burial, and eventually this came to mean, in the words of Zé de Souza, a founding member of the Peasant Leagues, “six feet under and a coffin of one’s own.” This slogan became the rallying cry of the Peasant Leagues, which adopted as one of their first projects a rural mobilization around the burial needs of the dead: land rights for the dead, rather than for the living. “Before the leagues,” Zé de Souza explained, “when one of us died the coffin was lent by the *município*, and after the body had been carried to the common grave, the coffin went back to the municipal warehouse. Today the League pays for the funeral, and the coffin is buried with the dead. That’s what the League did for us, *meu filho*.” (Scheper-Hughes, 1992, 253).

audacious politico-pedagogical experiment nipped in the bud by the coup d'état of 1964. At the height of Juscelino Kubitschek's "economic miracle" a few years earlier when tens of thousands of itinerant *nordestinos* were employed as laborers in the construction of the new capital, Brasília, and others were encouraged by the government to homestead the virgin expanse of the Amazonian interior on the newly constructed transcontinental highway, BR-1, the great majority continued to suffer abject poverty. Their situation has not improved much in the intervening half century. While today's freewheeling global market has supplanted mid-twentieth century attempts at import-substitution autonomy, Brazil is still struggling to pay the interest owed on its huge foreign debt. With the long-overdue election in 2002 of the first working-class President in Brazilian history, the hope was that by fulfilling his campaign promise to put an end to hunger, 'Lula' da Silva would succeed in constructing an administration that would pay more than lip service to social justice and find a way to open the door to full citizenship and social participation for the country's majoritarian underclass. Whether he has done enough in his first term to warrant the continued faith of his countrymen will be decided in the national elections of 2006.

Although Diana Coben clearly intends to offer a balanced and informed critique of Paulo Freire's work in the area of adult literacy, her reliance on other people's research, inability to read the Portuguese-language bibliography on the subject and consequent lack of understanding of the Northeast Brazilian context and issues mislead her. She focuses on Freire's faults and compares him, unfavorably, to Gramsci despite their very different eras, perspectives and destinies. In her final chapter, she writes: "since their work is in the public domain, both Freire and Gramsci must submit to the enthusiastic promulgation or refutation of their ideas by people with strong convictions, some of whom may have

very different agendas from their own” (1998, 204). Yet, beyond an ‘Emperor’s Clothes’ impulse to call attention to Freire’s shortcomings, real and imagined, Coben’s own agenda is never made clear. Here she describes being part of a “packed audience which had come to hear Freire speak at the Institute of Education in London in 1993:

The atmosphere was electric, strangely reminiscent of a religious revival meeting. I found the experience troubling, not so much because of anything Freire said, but because of the enraptured audience. Freire spoke of the qualities needed by a progressive teacher, of the love he felt as a teacher for his students and of his “pedagogy of hope” (Freire in de Figueiredo-Cowen and Gastaldo, 1995:17-24). (...) While charisma is imputed to the individual, it resides rather in the charged relationship between the charismatic individual and the mass. (...) It seems to me that under certain circumstances, for example, when educators feel demoralized and marginalized, as many do in Britain in the 1990s, the charisma factor can turn hero worship into something pathological, into fetishism. That is what I felt happening all around me in the audience at the Institute of Education. The desperate need for something—someone—to believe in was palpable. Freire did not seem disturbed by it; he seemed to accept the adulation as normal, which rendered the experience all the more disturbing. (...) Reflecting on the occasion now, it seems to me to epitomize the problematic, sacrificial relationship in Freire’s pedagogy between leader and led, teacher and student. It also highlights a more general problem with the radical hero phenomenon. Once ideas and individuals are fetishized in this way they cease to be open and productive of new insights. Challenge becomes inadmissible and debate dies. The cult of personality is a beguiling and insidious phenomenon, as stultifying for the object of desire as it is for the worshiper. As a martyred hero of the Left, Gramsci has his own cult following; I like to think he would be horrified if he knew. (1998, 205-6)

Apart from what this passage reveals about Diana Coben – that she is disturbed by and strongly suspicious of what she terms ‘charisma,’ ‘fetishism’ and ‘adulation’; that, as a British educator-in-training, she too may have felt ‘demoralized and marginalized’ at the time, that she was not as interested in what Freire had to say (she relies on other authors to recall this) as in the audience’s reaction to him which she “can only describe as reverence.” Yet there seems to be little difference between the reactions of the people she remembers (the man who tells Freire, “last year I met Nelson Mandela, today I am in a room with Professor Paulo Freire. This is the greatest day of my life”; the woman who “confessed [her] pedagogical sins” by beginning “her question with: ‘I am not a sufficiently dialogical teacher’”) and Coben’s reverent conjecture that “Gramsci would be horrified if he knew of his own cult following [as] a martyred hero of the Left” (ibid., 205). Educators want to be recognized for what they do and inspired by the words and

experience of pioneers in the field and, in 1993, such inspiration was still available in the form of a diminutive, white-bearded Brazilian who spoke English with an intriguing accent and engaged audiences with his worldly wisdom and personal charm. By the end of his life, Freire had become a sort of international pedagogical guru and he played the role with remarkable dignity, humility and lovingkindness although the demands on his time and constant traveling took their toll. Yet, as Coben avers, he was able to transform the energy of a lecture hall full of ‘demoralized and marginalized British educators’ until it resembled ‘a religious revival meeting.’ Obviously, his presence gave them a reason to rejoice.

It is Diana Coben’s prerogative to make her preference for Gramsci clear throughout *Radical Heroes* and to decide that Freire’s myth has obscured his meaning. I question her assertions and conclusions. For instance, she apparently believes that “once ideas and individuals are fetishized, they cease to be open and productive of new insights.” Freire was 42 when his literacy program became the Brazilian national standard, 48 when he taught at Harvard, lived to see his work translated into more than a dozen languages and wrote and lectured passionately and provocatively about the art of teaching and the need for social justice throughout his long and very productive life.

“The point,” writes Coben, “is that ideas matter. Theory should be something that we use to think through difficult issues, such as the relationship of adult education to social and political change” (ibid., 206). I agree. I see the political sabotage of adult education, and of literacy campaigns in particular, as a Brazilian governmental *leitmotiv*.¹³⁸ Coben

¹³⁸ In a June 29, 2005 article from the online version of the *Folha de São Paulo* newspaper (<http://www.folha.uol.com.br>), it was reported that the recently-elected [PSDB—conservative] mayor of that city, José Serra who lost the November, 2002 presidential run-off to Lula, had closed 313 adult classrooms since the beginning of the year despite the fact that there were an estimated 400,000 adult illiterates in the city, 26,600 of whom were enrolled in MOVA classes, many of them opened during Paulo Freire’s tenure as municipal secretary of education, 1989-1991. “We have asked Serra not to do what Paulo Maluf did [after replacing Freire’s champion, Luiza Erundina as mayor in 1992]. There were eight years where MOVA would not have survived were it not for the help of the students themselves, even

cites Max Weber's "definition of charisma, a word often used of Freire: an extraordinary 'quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged or presumed. The legitimacy of charismatic rule thus rests upon the belief in magical powers, revelations and hero worship'" (1998, 205). Coben implies that Freire put a worshipful spell on people, evidence of "magical thinking" surprising from a positivist.

"Theory," says Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust*, "is gray, but the golden tree of life springs ever green."¹³⁹ As Coben's countryman David Whyte reminds us, any creative undertaking must include the fire of creation and passionate engagement as well as theory:

Creativity and the articulation of creative ideas have always been experienced as a form of combustion, as if the soul and the world it perceived have suddenly been set alight. Here is the Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda, looking back to his first fiery but inarticulate attempt to write the poetry that would become his life's work. It is taken from a poem called "La Poesia," or "Poetry" (Whyte, 1993, 96-97)

*I didn't know what to say, my mouth
could not speak,
my eyes could not see
and something ignited in my soul,
fever or unremembered wings
and I went my own way,
deciphering that burning fire
and I wrote the first bare line,
bare, without substance, pure
foolishness,
pure wisdom
of one who knows nothing,
and suddenly I saw
the heavens
unfastened and open.*

Translation by David Whyte

Try as she may, Coben cannot force Freire's praxis to conform to the theoretical mold she has been trained to apply so she dismisses it with conjecture as distant from the sweaty throngs in the public plazas of Recife (where the Popular Culture Movement was

though education is a right" said Ionilton Gomes de Aragão, coordinator of one of the groups responsible for the classes and MOVA representative. According to Fabiane Leite, *Folha* reporter, "there was no transparency in the decision-making, which was based, in some cases, on a single visit to classes where the required minimum attendance is 15 students and enrollment is voluntary." (translation mine)

¹³⁹ Cited by Anthony Grafton in his "Vatican Notebook: Reading Ratzinger," *The New Yorker*, 7/25/05, 49.

born in the early 1960s) as a crowded lecture hall at London's Institute of Education is from the dirt-floor *favelas* of Olinda, João Pessoa and Angicos where Freire and his colleagues began to investigate the language of the oppressed. Onstage in London that afternoon in 1993, Freire likely linked these distant but parallel realities, but Coben was distracted by her negative reaction to the audience's adulation of the speaker. Five years later, the necrophilic¹⁴⁰ picture she paints of a "pedagogical relationship" between "passive, silent, ignorant, unaware, inexperienced, possibly fearful but acquiescent learners" and an "active, in control, free, aware, experienced, wise, fearless and self-sacrificing educator" leads her to allege that by espousing such a one-sided pedagogy Freire committed "an invasion, a rape." Like Neruda's young poet who "did not know what to say", whose "mouth could not speak", whose "eye could not see," Diana Coben looks for inspiration at the end of her lengthy dissection of Freire's sources and techniques and, when 'the heavens' fail to open, posits a surmisal "bare, without substance, pure foolishness."

Freire was someone who wrote and spoke with a passion born of conviction about unpopular and embarrassing subjects—lives led in brutish servitude¹⁴¹ and the greedy

¹⁴⁰ Freire, who loved neologisms, credits the word to Erich Fromm and uses it to describe how "total emotional dependence can lead the oppressed to what Fromm calls necrophilic behavior: the destruction of life—their own or that of their oppressed fellows" (2000, 65).

¹⁴¹ In a 1991 interview in VEJA, Brazil's equivalent of TIME, Amaro João da Silva, a 47-year-old, 3'6" tall sugarcane worker in the *zona da mata* who had been examined by Dr. Meraldo Zisman, a nutritional researcher, and declared a "nutritional dwarf", spoke about his world while eating chicken for the second time in his life at a Recife *churrascaria* (barbecue house). Father of thirteen children, Amaro goes to bed at 7 PM ("sleeping a lot helps kill your hunger"), gets up at 4 AM, has a cup of coffee and walks for up to two hours to work in the fields with his wife. Depending on the season, they may spend the whole day cutting cane or setting fire to the cut stalks to prepare for planting. In planting season, they get home around noon, Amaro has a slug of *cachaça* (rum), eats a plate of beans with a lot of manioc flour sprinkled on it and a bit of *charque* (sun-dried beef), naps for a couple of hours and spends the rest of the day tending his backyard *roça* (crop garden) where he grows corn, beans, *macaxeira* (manioc) and sweet potatoes. The youngest children wear no clothes at all and are fed a diet consisting mainly of powdered milk ("a can of milk powder lasts us a month if we mix it with a lot of water"), the others wear hand-me-downs. No one has shoes. Amaro never used a toothbrush—he had his teeth pulled by the time he reached thirty and has a *chapa* of false ones with which to chew his meat. When the *charque* runs out, Amaro hunts the beasts of the field—lizards, armadillos, possums, weasels, sloths, termites and grubs. When his radio ran out of batteries, Amaro presented it to one of his daughters as a wedding gift. He has worked for the same plantation most of his life and knows he is exploited ("The land they give us to plant our food is very weak.

oligarchs who profit from keeping them in thrall—so he was always a pariah in the academy. Nevertheless, to accuse him of ‘raping’ the very people he spent a lifetime championing is a grave allegation. Moreover, *Radical Heroes* was published a year after Freire’s death when he had no chance to reply to Coben’s attack. Even if what Antony says of Julius Caesar in Shakespeare’s eponymous play (III, ii, 74-75) is true:

*The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft’ interred with their bones*

to impute an ‘evil’ as dire as Coben’s charge against Freire is, to use another of Antony’s words, “ambitious.”

Although he spent his last years teaching at a pair of Brazilian universities, PUC-SP and Unicamp, and accepted honorary degrees, accolades and speaking engagements from scholarly institutions around the world, Freire’s long and embattled career is best described by a stanza from Rilke translated and cited by Whyte (1994, 71):

*Winning does not tempt that man.
This is how he grows: by being defeated, decisively
By constantly greater beings.*

The ‘greater beings’ in Freire’s life were demiurgic forces – not of nature, but of man’s machinations to control it; the greed and fear of the oppressors, the ignorance and fatalism of the oppressed, hunger, superstition, political extremism, demagoguery, censure, exile, and the winner-take-all arrogance of global capitalism (as impervious any notion of the common good as the slave masters were). Freire, like his fellow *recifense* Josué de Castro, was born close enough to the mud and misery of the mangroves to

They keep all the best land for sugar. I have worked for the *Bomfim Usina* for 23 years and what have I got to show for it? I’m going to leave this world just like I came into it—naked and hungry.”) When asked what he believed in, Amaro answered “In God, the priest and the politicians, in heaven and hell and, as I am an honest man, when I die my soul will go to heaven.” When asked, Amaro described heaven as “a big beautiful place where God lives. The good souls go there and each one stays in his corner, sad, resting. Why are the souls sad? “Because they can’t eat, drink or make love.” Why does he believe in priests and politicians? “Because the priests only talk about what is right and the politicians come across with everything they promise.” The local boss had given his wife a medicine kit before the last election to secure his vote. (Silverman, 1994, 174-78, my translation.)

remember their smell for the rest of his life. Thus, he was particularly concerned in his final book, *Pedagogia da Autonomia*, with what he called “our ethical responsibility, as teachers, in the exercise of our teacherly undertaking:”¹⁴²

The ethics of which I speak are those that are knowingly betrayed and negated in grossly immoral behavior like the hypocritical perversion of *purity* in *Puritanism* [Freire’s italics]. The ethics of which I speak are those that are knowingly affronted by discriminatory manifestations of race, of gender and of class. That is why we must fight to make these ethics inseparable from educational practice whether we work with children and adolescents, or with adults. And the best way to fight for them is to live them in our practice and bear them vivid witness in our relations with our students. *In the way we treat the content of what we teach, in the way we cite authors with whose work we disagree or with whose work we agree* [my italics]. (Freire, 2003, 16, my translation)

Freire’s argument for “ethical forthrightness” serves as a response to Coben’s attack:

I may not accept the pedagogical conception of this or that author and I ought to make clear to students the reasons I oppose him or her but what I must not do as part of my criticism is to lie, to say untruths about them. The scientific preparation of the teacher must coincide with his or her ethical forthrightness. Any misstep between the former and the latter is harmful. Scientific formation, ethical correctness, respect for others, coherence, the ability to live and learn from those different than ourselves, not to allow our own uneasiness or our antipathy toward others lead us to accuse them of something they did not do – all of these are obligations to whose fulfillment we must dedicate ourselves humbly and perseveringly.

It is not just interesting but profoundly important that students perceive the differences in factual understanding, the often contrary positions teachers take when analyzing problems and laying out their solutions. However, it is fundamental that they perceive the respect and loyalty with which a teacher analyzes and criticizes other people’s positions. (ibid., 16-17, my translation)

Coben’s antipathy toward Freire leads her to calumny. Joe L. Kincheloe, in his Foreword, finds “Coben’s critical analysis of Paulo (...) not motivated by a lack of respect for him, but just the opposite, by her reverence for what he taught.” He also mentions that Freire “was genuinely thrilled by the frank critiques of those who shared his democratic and pedagogical passions” (Kincheloe in Coben, 1998, viii). It is not my intention to impugn *Radical Heroes* in its entirety. There is no doubt that Coben worked long and hard to shape her argument. Nonetheless, Freire would not have been “thrilled”

¹⁴² “a nossa responsabilidade ética no exercício de nossa tarefa docente.” Although an English translation of Freire’s last book exists under the title *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, trans. Patrick Clarke), it is controversial. Although it was published with the consent of his literary executor, Ana Maria Araújo Freire, some claim it is bowdlerized. I translate from the original.

by her conclusion—not because it is “irreverent” or irrelevant—but because it vacillates, suffering from what he calls “the hypocritical perversion of *purity* in *Puritanism*.” Coben begins by condemning Freire’s “patriarchal discourse” from a feminist perspective, she haughtily accuses him of “lacking an understanding of power,” dismissing his “model of oppression [as] just too simple and indiscriminate to accommodate the multifaceted and contradictory nature of differential power relationships in terms of gender, class or any other social category” (ibid., 97). Yet, fifteen pages later, she finds him guilty of a maximal abuse of power and cries “rape!” She “does not accept Freire’s (...) idealism and his bizarre notion of a revolutionary leadership composed of patriarchal, charismatic, indeed messianic, members of the *petit bourgeoisie*” yet most of the leaders of revolutionary movements in the 20th century, including Lenin, Trotsky, Castro, Guevara, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Mao Tse Tung and Ho Chi Minh, were charismatic, messianic figures born into more propitious circumstances and from a higher caste than those they led.

Coben allows herself to be guided by European scholars like de Kadt and Taylor who tracked the Brazilian on his native ground, and follows their footsteps until her conclusions lead her astray. Were she able to read Portuguese, she would have likely come across the work of Vanilda Pereira Paiva who discusses Freire’s ‘directive’ pedagogical propensities at length (see section 4.2, above). Coben’s “vision of [Freirian teachers as] relatively privileged individuals driven by guilt to atone for the sins of their class through service to the poor and oppressed” (ibid., 113) demeans Freire’s pioneering pedagogy and has nothing to do with “education and Brazilian actuality.”¹⁴³ She is grasping at straws when she finds Freire “naïve to assume that the posing of problems

¹⁴³ A literal translation of Freire’s title for his 1959 “competitive thesis for the chair of History and Philosophy of Education in the Fine Arts School of Pernambuco.”

will, of itself, lead oppressed people to (...) change their circumstances (...) to mount a revolution founded on consciousness without organization” (ibid., 112). What Coben never considers and Paiva brings into sharp relief is the historical context:

We should remember here that the creation of the Alliance for Progress in 1961 owed a great deal to the political situation unfolding at the time in the canefields of the Northeast, especially the multiplication of the Peasant Leagues. It was no accident that a USAID office was set up in Recife soon after the Alliance for Progress started. And their “aid for development” soon showed its true face as a “program of impact” when the new organism entered into conflict with SUDENE by establishing assistential relations with state governments considered “receptive” and began to supply them with resources based on essentially political criteria. According to Riordan Roett, a member of the AID team who worked in the Northeast at the time,¹⁴⁴ “the United States saw the region as an international security problem and external economic aid as a weapon against a threat that Brazil was not alone in recognizing.” Thus, in the first place, all aid plans were adapted to U. S. security priorities to “defeat the Communist threat” and, in April of 1962, [the U.S. government] decided that the situation in the Northeast had gone beyond the state of emergency that motivated its original decision to offer economic aid. Roett says that, from Washington’s perspective, the matter was no longer one of economic and social development but the imminent political survival of a non-Communist society in northeast Brazil. (Paiva, 1980, 22, my translation).

U.S. focus on the Northeast at the time of Freire’s literacy experiments is a significant factor in the ensuing drama. “In pedagogical and didactic terms,” Paiva writes, “the foundation of Paulo Freire’s adult literacy method is based on a complex evolution of ideas that begins in the Brazilian Philosophical Institute, passes through the Superior Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB) and debouches on the Popular Action movement in a sinuous trajectory from merely speculative activity to political militancy:”

Freire’s thinking flourished in the shadow of supposedly liberal thinking which was not that far from authoritarianism, it was stimulated by (Jacques) Maritain but influenced by a process that countered the ideas of Maritain and by the penetration of the radical personalism of (Emanuel) Mounier. And, when it acquired concretion in the form of a pedagogical method, its practice was more than the sum of its parts—needing to be explained in connection with the characteristics and contradictions of the period. (op. cit., 18-19)

The two most important Northeastern states in terms of Freire’s pedagogy were Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte. In the former, the so-called Recife Front (*Frente do Recife*) had been in power since 1948 when a coalition of communists, socialists and

¹⁴⁴ Roett’s book, *The Politics of Foreign Aid in the Brazilian Northeast* (Nashville: Vanderbilt U. Press, 1972), is cited by Paiva (1980, fns. 2 & 3, p. 22).

left-wing Catholics joined with leftist factions of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PTB) and Vargas's Social Democratic Party (PSD) to elect Pelópidas Silveira mayor with twice as many votes as his four opposing candidates together.

By 1964, one out of every three voters in the state lived in metropolitan Recife and the National Democratic Union (UDN), the party of the plantation masters and sugar-mill owners, realized if they wanted to win Pernambuco from the oligarchic 'coronels' of the *sertão* traditionally associated with the PSD, they would have to make alliances with the *Frente*. The leftists' strategy worked and the Front-backed candidate, Cid Sampaio, won the Pernambucan governorship in 1958. In Rio Grande do Norte, although both the UDN and the PSD included strong oligarchic factions, the *udenistas* had held the governorship since 1950. However, in 1960, a UDN party hack, Aluísio Alves, courted the leftists and populists, ran against his former party and won the governorship.

Meanwhile, Miguel Arraes replaced Cid Sampaio as Mayor of Recife in 1960 and Djalma Maranhão became Mayor of Natal both with strong support from the progressive Front. Now both states had similar situations: conservative governors who saw reform politics and industrialization as the way to modernize and leftist mayors in the capitals whose inaugural programs focused on school construction and adult literacy. In Recife, the Popular Culture Movement (MCP) and in Natal, the *Pé no Chão Também se Aprende a Ler* ("The Barefoot Also Learn to Read") campaign were effective not just in generating new voters but also in terms of expanding popular participation in the municipal administrations of both cities. Miguel Arraes became governor of Pernambuco in 1962, a mere two years after being elected mayor of Recife. Meanwhile Aluísio Alves, the Governor of Rio Grande do Norte, was courting USAID, aware that his political future was linked to the economic transformation of the state. Natal had been the site of

large American military and airforce installations during WWII and the spendthrift Yankee presence was profitable to the *potiguares*.

Newly elected, Governor Alves visited President John F. Kennedy in Washington and opened a sluice for USAID dollars that he used to build schools and start a statewide literacy campaign which would enlarge his electoral base and prevent the left-wing mayor of Natal from becoming his successor. Enter Paulo Freire who had pretested his literacy method in Recife and believed it could be applied on a larger scale and at comparatively low cost. So, when offered the opportunity to test his method in a large-scale experiment in Rio Grande do Norte, financed by resources provided by an agreement between USAID and Governor Alves, he jumped at the chance.

According to Paiva, Freire's acceptance of Alves' invitation was considered "a threat to [the left's] political strategy in Rio Grande do Norte" (ibid., 24). Angicos, the site chosen for the experiment, was 176 kilometers from the capital, Natal, in the arid middle of the state. It happened to be Alves' birthplace. Freire required that there be no political interference in the project and that the literacy students themselves act as its co-administrators. That and the fact that his "method" was soon adopted by progressive forces in the capital, supporting Mayor Djalma Maranhão's *Frente de Educação Popular*, helped calm ruffled egos. Nevertheless, the new program became a focal point for allegations and accusations from both sides of the political spectrum, according to Paiva:

At first, Freire thought that the North Americans were financing the program because they were concerned about the success of his literacy technique and he took full advantage of the resources they were offering. When the program was inaugurated, it was praised by the Country's conservative press as a great accomplishment and featured in various newspaper and magazine articles was the fact that large-scale literacy efforts using rapid methods like Professor Freire's were as displeasing to the UDN and PSD "colonels" as they were to the Communists, because he was teaching [people] not just to read and write but to love democracy. However, by the end of 1963, these same magazines denounced the method and USAID's support of it as an "intensive program of communization in the Northeast," obliging the USAID director to declare publicly that "the Paulo Freire method, like any other non-political theory, would prepare individuals

to be influenced by any one of a number of schools of political thought.”¹⁴⁵ Soon after, USAID withdrew its support of the project due to “inadequate didactic procedures,” the official excuse, but really because it had come to regard the method as “a factory for revolutions.”¹⁴⁶ By the time this occurred, Freire and his method were already launched on a national scale. [President] Goulart became personally involved, appearing at the closing ceremonies of the Angicos experiment at the behest of [Governor] Alves (...). With the nomination of Christian-Democrat Paulo de Tarso¹⁴⁷ as Minister of Education, Freire was asked to start a program in Brasília and the Cultural Extension Service (SEC) of Pernambuco University became responsible for the orientation of programs in various regions of the Country (...) envisioning a national literacy plan. (op. cit., 24-25, my translation)

Paiva points out that the government’s adoption of Freire’s “Method” for the National Alphabetization Plan (PNA) in 1964 provided plentiful political fodder for diverse players: populist politicians in the Northeast tried to use its touted rapidity to swell the rolls of potential electors, since you had to be ‘functionally literate’ (able to sign your name) to vote; in several states, including São Paulo, students adopted the method on their own initiative; on a national level, it seemed that Freire’s breakthrough pedagogy would provide a sufficient number of voters to assure the approval of Goulart’s basic reform measures via plebiscite. Christian students thought that it would help transform “the masses into a people” without assuming ‘directive pretensions’ (its nationalist contents were favorable to reforms and the modernization of Brazilian society); militant leftist, Christian and non-Christian movements saw in the culture circles an opportunity for the large-scale politicization of the popular classes in collaboration with a recently-literate population motivated by the ideological content of the course.

Paiva and Coben both question the “ambiguity of the theory on which [Freire’s] method is founded, particularly concerning the question of pedagogical directivity or

¹⁴⁵ According to Paiva (1980, fn 5, 25), a response from USAID director James W. Hope to Carlos Swann, the journalist for the Rio de Janeiro daily *O Globo* who had made the accusation, appeared in the January 24, 1964 edition of the São Paulo paper, *A Gazeta*. Nine weeks later, the CIA-supported military *coup* toppled Goulart’s government.

¹⁴⁶ Paiva cites Joseph Page’s book, *The Revolution That Never Was* (New York, 1972, 175) for this quote.

¹⁴⁷ Paulo de Tarso was the older brother of Ana Maria Araújo, Freire’s second wife. (Brandão, 2005, 43).

non-directivity.”¹⁴⁸ But they draw very different conclusions. Coben portrays Freire as a guilt-ridden, charismatic, male chauvinist conman in savior’s garb whereas, for eye-witnesses like Beisiegel and Paiva, he was a bookish professor with a passion for Portuguese syntax and an unproven but appealing literacy method caught between opposing socio-political forces at a crucial moment in Brazilian history. Paiva explains:

Freire was combated by the leftists for being non-directive but they used his method as a way of politically organizing those attempting to become literate; his pedagogy was seen as radically non-directive by young Christians preoccupied with the “personalization” of individuals who postulated the necessity of a long-term educational undertaking, but embedded in this pedagogy was its inseparable content. This content was able to serve programs promoted by traditional populist political leaders as well as those who made up the Northeastern Fronts and assumed an unwavering leftist stance. Because, in the final period of Goulart’s government, his basic reforms unified the immediate objectives of nationalist and populist forces of the most varied tendencies and its defense was clearly perceived in the application of the [Freire] method. Freire was clearly won over by the politics of basic reform, toward which he had evolved from his ISEB indoctrination—as had many Brazilian intellectuals of the time. In Freire’s vision of the time, the method could not be reduced from its central goal of contributing to the democratizing of Brazilian society, regardless of the diversity of practices it allowed. (1980, 26-27, my translation)

The Brazilian Northeast in the 1960s was a battleground in which the retrograde, hegemonic power of the landed oligarchy and the emerging forces of industrialization-modernization waged ideological war. Coben considers Freirian pedagogy apart from this epic struggle and focuses on its anomalies without heeding their cause. The Paulo Freire Method was not formed in a political vacuum but in a world of conflicting ideas and ideals.

The absolute dominion of the Portuguese land-grant latifundia and the slaveholding oligarchs who ruled them prevented any form of social justice or democracy from taking root in the Brazilian Northeast for four and a half centuries. Padre Antônio Vieira, Jesuit orator, defender of the indigenes and advisor to the Portuguese royal house of Bragança during a pivotal phase of Brazilian colonization in the mid-XVII century, wrote that

¹⁴⁸ The phrase is Paiva’s: *a própria ambigüidade da formulação teórica sobre a qual o método se apoiava, no que concerne à questão da diretividade ou não-diretividade pedagógica*. (1980, 26).

“every family is a republic” in the equatorial immensity of the Portuguese colony. “Brazil has no people,” the historian Sílvia Romero declared in 1907, echoing the words of a French observer, Louis Couty, who traveled in Brazil in the early 1880s. Alberto Torres, a jurist and essayist from Rio de Janeiro, writing at the red dawn of the First World War in 1914, opined that the country’s “society had not yet solidified.” ISEB intellectual Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, who had a profound influence on Freire’s early work, wrote in *A redução sociológica* (The Sociological Reduction), a sociological analysis published in 1965, that Brazil is “a country without an internal market, without a national system of transportation and communications, displaying dense demographic stains separated by huge tracts of uninhabited land, with no concept of a people.”¹⁴⁹

In the Northeast, education was an exclusive domain. João Francisco de Souza (1987, 40-41) writes of the 1958-64 “battle for the schooling of the popular classes in Recife,” citing Miguel Arraes’ 1960 observation that “instruction is still, unfortunately (...) a privilege assured to a minority.” De Souza regards “the class movement that was articulated in Pernambuco between 1958-1964 as perhaps the most important in Brazilian history,” citing F. de Oliveira¹⁵⁰: “It was more than a decisive moment in Brazilian history, [it was] an enormous qualitative leap in the class struggle in Brazil and its repercussions are as yet imperceptible in their entirety. It terminates a whole period of mystification and reveals the real faces of the economic, social and political agents of Brazilian society” (ibid., fn. 1, p. 11). In the decade between 1950 and 1960 the school-age population of Recife increased by 52 percent. In 1950, 45.5 percent of these young

¹⁴⁹ Guerreiro Ramos, an Afro-Brazilian intellectual who entered public life during Vargas’ Estado Novo and an outspoken critic of the Brazilian social science tradition became head sociologist at ISEB in the late 1950s and spent his final years as Professor of Sociology at USC writing *The New Science of Organizations: A Reconceptualization of the Wealth of Nations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). The historical quotes are all from *A redução sociológica* which Beisiegel (1982, 41-46) cites repeatedly.

¹⁵⁰ In *Elegia para uma (re)ligião* (Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1977, 109-110).

people were excluded from any scholastic participation whatsoever. By 1960, this percentage had increased to 52.9. Moreover, 44.3 percent of those who attended primary schools dropped out after the first year and only 17.5 percent completed the first four years. De Souza's statistics are from a summary of the 'Municipal [Educational] Plan' published in the January 31, 1960 issue of the Recife daily newspaper, *Diário de Pernambuco*, which ends with the observation: "There are few possibilities for young people from the low income populations to receive the primary and basic knowledge of human acculturation, even in its most precarious form" (ibid., 1987, fn. 1, p. 40). The structuring of mid-twentieth century Brazilian public schooling, according to de Souza, "excluded an enormous contingent from its parameters, abandoning it to illiteracy or to a minimal level of schooling and thereby reducing its capacity to think and to discern, apart from depriving it from subsequent instruction, which could create conditions for greater political enlightenment thus dynamizing the process of social transformation" (op. cit., 40).

I believe the absolute educational exclusion of the underclass made what Paiva calls Freire's "directive" and Coben his "manipulative" strategies necessary. When you are attempting to inculcate an avidity for democratic freedoms in adolescents and adults who have never been to school a day in their lives, who neither read nor write the *lingua franca*, whose lives have been decimated by hunger, want and fear, you must leaven their shame and feelings of unworthiness with humor, familiarity and unwavering faith in their potential as students and citizens. The Freire Method accomplished this from the start. As one of the original 'animators' of the dialogic encounters with the people of Recife sponsored by the Popular Culture Movement¹⁵¹, Freire understood that people's

¹⁵¹ "In this period there were organized, in Pernambuco: the MCP (Popular Culture Movement), linked to the Recife Prefecture and, later, to the state government in Miguel Arraes' administrations; the FPS (Foundation for Social Promotion) of Cid Sampaio's government, with the goal of collaborating with the

experience could be used as a whetstone for their critical acuity through dialogue with social workers and educators about political and cultural matters which effected their welfare. By adapting techniques inspired by debates in the public plazas of Recife to the classroom, he came up with the *Círculos de Leitura* (Reading Circles) where visual codifications and dialogical prompts facilitated transmission of a socio-political message to the *alfabetizandos*: ‘You are culture-makers and subjects at a decisive moment in the history of your country which you can turn to your advantage by voting for populist politicians who have made your cause theirs.’ João Francisco de Souza, who joined the MCP as a high-school student, remembers:

Within the organic crisis were the political possibilities of education—in the schools and as an organizing element in the people’s quest for their own hegemony or that of the bourgeoisie—which originated in Pernambuco’s move toward education. It was an attempt to come up with a new response to Pernambuco’s organic crisis that dynamized and intensified educational actions and debates through the competition between the municipal government of Recife and the state government of Pernambuco which were controlled by different political forces.

This movement had influence in the whole of Brazil pre-64 (and certainly did not completely disappear, post-64) and, subsequently, in all of Latin America and even in Africa, Europe and the United States. Influence that was put into effect by the work of Paulo Freire, educator-pedagogue, the most significant product of the educational focus of this organic crisis in Pernambuco, who consolidated himself as pedagogue-educator¹⁵² in exile, having been purged by the April 1, 1964 coup (op. cit., 40-41, my translation).

De Souza regards Miguel Arraes (Mayor of Recife, 1960-62, Governor of Pernambuco, 1962-64) as “the one responsible for the emergence of the Pernambucan educational movement.” In 1960 alone, the Recife Municipality, under his direction, opened 55 schools. “The demands of the people and their recognition of the paucity of

people in the sectors of education, health and social assistance, the SEC (Cultural Extension Service) of the University of Recife, coordinated by professor Paulo Freire. (...) In the MCP and the SEC, Paulo Freire began to consolidate the educational proposal that became known as the Paulo Freire System of adult literacy when he was still [Director of the Department of Education and Culture] at SESI (Industrial Social Services), even though it was in no way restricted to literacy projects. (...) According to the Registry of Literacy and Popular Culture Organizations compiled by the MCP on the occasion of its First National Conference, the MEB (Base Education Movement) in Pernambuco had lent its services to other Northeastern states, including Alagoas, Bahia, Ceará, Maranhão, Piauí, Rio Grande do Norte and Sergipe.” (De Souza, 1987, 15-16, fn. 5, p. 16, fn. 8, p. 17, my translation).

¹⁵² J-F de Souza (1987, fn. 2, p. 41) points out a “separation” between Freire the educator-pedagogue (involved primarily in “practical activity”) and the pedagogue-educator (involved primarily in “theoretical activity”) implying that the focus of his work during sixteen years in exile shifted from one to the other.

local schools as well as the possible political contribution they would make to the process of popular organization were essential to the dispute for hegemony and the main causative factors of the Pernambucan educational movement from 1958-64” (ibid., 42).

When Coben twists Bishop Helder Câmara’s statement (cited by de Kadt 1970: 72, fn. 48) that the Brazilian rural poor live in “subhuman” conditions by inferring that Freire and his followers saw “the people themselves [as] subhuman” with the snide interjection “it is easy to see how some conceptual slippage might occur, especially if the educators are drawn from more privileged social strata” (1998, 109), she ‘reinvents’ Freire as a British imperial bigot, a cad out of Kipling. With what Freire calls the “hypocritical perversion of purity in Puritanism,” she disfigures a pivotal moment in the history of Brazilian education and discredits thousands of educators, the great majority of them women from the same social stratum as the people they serve, who continue to struggle in circumstances beyond Coben’s ken to diminish the cycle of ignorance bred by centuries of ceaseless toil and bondage:

Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait. (Freire, 2000, 91-92)

3.9 C.A. Bowers’s Complaint

In an article entitled “Is Transformative Learning the Trojan Horse of Western Globalization?” in the April, 2005 (Volume 3, Number 2) issue of *Journal of Transformative Education*, C.A. (Chet) Bowers, an adjunct professor of environmental studies at the University of Oregon, turns Freire’s own concepts against him. His article “raises a number of questions intended to disrupt the ‘banking process’ that now characterizes how the ideas of Freire, Dewey, and critical pedagogy theorists are passed on to the next generation of teacher educators” (116). Bowers has apparently had it in for

Freire since 1983 when he published an article entitled “Linguistic Roots of Cultural Invasion in Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy” and republished it ten years later in *Critical essays on education, modernity, and the recovery of the ecological imperative* brought out by Teachers College Press in New York. He writes that his “critique was prompted by reading the account of two cultural linguists, Ron and Suzanne Wong Scollon, of the differences between the mainstream Western patterns of thinking and that of the Fort Chipewyan in the northern part of Alberta” (116). Although Bowers does not elucidate these differences, he implies that reading this article clarified for him the fact that “Freire’s ideas, and thus his pedagogy, was based on the assumptions of the Western enlightenment” (Bowers, 2005, 116). To substantiate his *aperçu*, Bowers cites four “Third World activists who initially were highly committed as well as knowledgeable followers of Freire” (ibid., 116) but became disillusioned on discovering his Eurocentric roots. All four have published essays in a collection edited by Bowers and Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (2005) in which they “describe the difficulties they encountered in getting the members of indigenous cultures to engage in the Freirean process of consciousness-raising as part of becoming literate” (ibid., 117).

According to Bowers, these four educator-authors, an Asian, a Bolivian militant, a Peruvian and a Mexican, found that “Freire’s assumptions about the emancipatory nature of critical reflection, as well as how its practice supposedly leads to the highest expression of humankind’s potential, were fundamentally different from the cultural ways of knowing of the indigenous groups [they] worked with” (ibid.,117). Bowers has a number of points to make: 1) that these activists “initially set out to transform” the indigenes they taught but saw the error of their ways when they realized “how the colonizing influence of Freire’s ideas would undermine the local commons”; 2) that this

realization “stands [them] in sharp contrast” to the “ethnocentrism of the uncritical promoters of his ideas who have ignored the differences in cultural ways of knowing”; 3) that, by engaging “in cultural affirmation programs that strengthen resistance to economic and technological globalization,” they have become “acutely aware of the deepening ecological crisis” unlike Freire who, “according to Moacir Gadotti (...) only became aware of [it] just before his death.” What “separates the observations of these activists about the Western colonizing nature of Freire’s pedagogy” from those of us who engage in “the uncritical promotion of his ideas in Western colleges of education is that these activists spoke the local languages” (op. cit., 117). What Bowers seems to be saying, in his ungainly way, is that these educators were able to see Freire’s ethnocentrism from the standpoint of the indigenous people they were teaching because they spoke their students’ languages. Bowers is ethnocentric in reverse. Critical thinking is not dependent on bilingualism.

Attempting to hoist Freire on his own petard, Bowers widens his target: “In addition to the criticisms of Third World activists, there are other reasons for reassessing the adequacy of the ideas of Freire and John Dewey – and more generally the conceptual foundations of the various interpretations of transformative learning theory” – which Bowers blames for aiding “the acceleration in the process of economic and technologically based globalization (...) now being driven by a neoliberal ideology (...) the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the further merging of Western science and industrial culture (...) also undermining the linguistic/cultural diversity that is essential to maintaining biological diversity and to resisting the further spread of a market mentality (ibid., 117-118).” How do Freire, Dewey, Gadotti “and the many professors of education who promote the spread of critical learning theories” contribute

to this pernicious *pot pourri* of hyper-capitalist greed and destruction? By their “silences, ethnocentrism and misconceptions,” according to Bowers, which include blindness to “their own complicity in the efforts to globalize the non-economic side of Western liberalism by referring to the industrial culture as a conservative force” (ibid., 118). Calling “the ideology and practices of economic globalization *conservative*” is a misnomer that Bowers abhors because it obscures “the basic reality that is being experienced by nearly everybody on a daily basis: the growing dominance of a market mentality is forcing people around the world to engage in a version of “transformative learning” which has nothing to do with “the progressive view of transformative learning promised by its proponents.” Culture is being transformed, for example, by global warming which is “changing the basic weather patterns of the Inuit of northern Canada” by forcing them to “read new and increasingly unpredictable patterns” (ibid., 118). This enforced rereading of the world is not a good thing, according to Bowers. He is a literal ‘conservative’ because, “conserving the still nearly 6,000 languages spoken in the world today (a third of them are in danger of becoming extinct in the near future) ... is directly related to conserving biological diversity. These languages encode knowledge accumulated over many generations of living in one place and from observing the interdependent relationships that make up the natural and cultural ecology.” It all boils down to linguistics and Bowers has a bone to pick with “transformative learning theorists” (he adds Giroux and McLaren to the list) who “have not become a voice for educational reforms that support linguistic and, by extension, biological diversity...” (op. cit., 118). We may assume that Bowers has never read *Cartas À Guiné-Bissau* (1978) where Freire attempts to convince Mário Cabral, the younger brother of the martyred leader Amílcar Cabral and Commissioner for Education and Culture of the erstwhile new

republic, to abandon the colonizers' Portuguese and 'alphabetize' the people in their indigenous language, *creoulo*:

In truth, the process of a people's liberation cannot succeed, in profound and authentic terms unless they win back their word and the right to speak it, to 'pronounce' and 'name' the world. To say the word is to have a voice in the transformation and re-creation of their society: to say the word and, with it, to liberate their language from the supremacy of the dominant language of the colonizer. The imposition of the colonizer's language on the colonized is a fundamental condition of colonial domination. That is why the colonizers speak of their language as 'language' and of the language of the colonized as a 'dialect,' comparing the superiority and richness of the former to the 'poverty' and 'inferiority' of the latter. (...) In one of the texts in which he discusses the role of culture in the struggle for freedom, Amílcar Cabral (...) speaks of the assimilation—de-Africanization—of the urban minorities who, living under and around the colonial power, surrender to the dominant culture and language, as opposed to the great majority of the country people who, escaping the colonizers' most destructive power, survive through the preservation of the distinguishing aspects of their culture. (...) Thus, it is urgent that *creoulo*, which has the same relationship to Portuguese as [Portuguese has] to Latin, be declared the national language and that a serious effort be made toward 'regulating' it as a written language since it already has its structure as a spoken one. (Freire's Letter No. 4, dated "Geneva, 3 February 1976," my translation)

Although he cites a similar statement from Freire's 1997 'talking book', *Mentoring the Mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire*;

What I am proposing is a profound respect for the cultural identity of students—a cultural identity that implies respect for the language of the other, the color of the other, the gender of the other, the sexual orientation of the other, the intellectual capacity of the other; that implies the ability to stimulate the creativity of the other. (Freire, 1997, 307-308)

Bowers believes that Freire does not realize he is subordinating cultural differences in the name of emancipation and dialogue. In fact, he takes Freire to task for stating that "teachers have to transcend their merely instructive task and to assume the ethical posture of a mentor who truly believes in the *total autonomy, freedom, and development* of those he or she mentors" (op. cit., 324).

As far as Bowers is concerned, "total freedom" is "an abstraction of Western intellectuals who do not recognize the interdependencies and historical continuities that characterize how all individuals are nested in a culture and how the culture they are linguistically embedded in is nested in the natural systems that sustain life" (Bowers,

2005, 122). This ‘nesting’ and ‘embedding’ is apparently what Bowers has in mind when he speaks of “the commons” as “the only alternative to the West’s industrial culture, consumerism and technologies,” something that Freire and his followers unconsciously abet “through an approach to education that fosters a rootless form of individualism” (ibid., 123). Unfortunately, Bowers’ own description of “the nature of the commons” is vague:

[They vary] from culture to culture and from bioregion to bioregion. What they have in common is that much (sic) of the culture’s symbolic patterns as well as the natural systems of the bioregion are available to the members of the community on a non-monetary basis. That is, they have not been enclosed—that is, privatized, commodified, monetized, incorporated into an industrial process, and so forth. (Bowers, 2005. 123)

Bowers complains that “the word *commons* is not part of the emancipatory liberal discourse” and that “Freire’s political language...lacks a vocabulary for naming those aspects of culture that are now the only real source of resistance to the imperialism of market liberalism” (ibid., 123). By associating Freire and “the other transformative learning theorists” with the “banking process of education they reject for others by imposing on themselves and their students a restricted political language that they had not thought about critically,” Bowers alienates himself from people who should be his natural allies in the struggle against neo-liberalism and what he calls “the industrial culture” (123). In the meantime, his position on these matters remains nebulous. He objects to Gadotti’s “romantic idea of a planetary consciousness emerging from the grand journey into the individual’s subjective universe” because Gadotti “simply does not address the genuine sources of resistance to economic globalization and its impact on natural systems.” He condemns the “liberal discourse of Freire, Dewey (...) and the critical pedagogy fundamentalists (Giroux, McLaren, Peter Roberts, and so forth)” for “lack[ing] the language for representing in other than pejorative terms what is distinctive about the

commons” (124). Yet he seems incapable of defining them himself except to say that “the commons are dependent on intergenerational knowledge—which can also be understood as traditions” – a word which, according to Bowers, has “a pejorative meaning for the critical learning theorists even though they are entirely dependent on the reenactment of traditions in their use of language and most other areas of their daily lives” (124). Finally, he blames “the use of the liberal political vocabulary that critical pedagogy reinforces in teacher education classes, which in turn is reinforced in public schools” for the “significant number of Americans [who] call themselves conservatives while supporting the imperialistic assumptions and practices of market liberals.” It seems Bowers wants “social and eco-justice advocates” to be proud of their *conservatism* (italics his). In a vertiginous conclusion, he melds “neoliberals such as President George W. Bush and the critical learning theorists” because they “support each other in avoiding the question, ‘what do we need to conserve to resist the forces that are increasing poverty around the world and putting future generations at greater risk of an environment that is too contaminated to support a healthy and fulfilling life?’” (125)

Bowers clearly has an environmental bone to pick with Freire, Dewey, Gadotti, Giroux, McLaren and their “many followers” but he seems to have forgotten where he buried it more than twenty years ago. Aside from being largely inchoate, his argument is anachronistic in that it assumes that “critical learning theorists” have a much more central position in American academia than they actually do. Will McWhinney, *JTE*’s editor, harbors no such illusions. In an “Editor’s Perspective”, McWhinney writes:

Critical theory, critical pedagogy, and transformative learning are all marginalized in American academia. Few, if any, departmental faculties of the standard institutions have adopted any of these modes of thinking or teaching: not education schools, programs in psychology, schools of social work, schools of economics, or any other of the professional schools. All of these approaches to action are clearly radical. (*Journal of Transformative Education*, Vol 3, No. 2, April 2005, 99)

In his 2003 book, *Mindful Conservatism: Rethinking the Ideological and Educational Basis of an Ecologically Sustainable Future*, Bowers asks, rhetorically, “What do we need to conserve in order to have a more sustainable future and just world order?” He answers in the negative: “more individualism, consumerism, and global markets that will lead to a world monoculture based on a Western pattern of thinking is ecologically unsustainable. It also reflects a continuation of the colonizing thinking that will cause more violence to be directed toward us,” adding that “the question is important to correcting an imbalance in the thinking of liberal educational reformers who advocate critical thinking and democratic decision making without considering which traditions need to be conserved and renewed. The assumption that critical thinking and democratic decision making will always lead to a progressive form of change reflects the cultural baggage they have ignored; cultural baggage that continues to represent all traditions as backward, oppressive, and in need of being changed” (Bowers, 2003, x-xi). “They” are:

So-called radicals and revolutionaries, such as Lenin and Paulo Freire, [who] were comfortable with dressing in a certain way, enjoying certain topics of conversation, and reading authors they found stimulating. (...) If the pattern or preference is continued over time, it is an example of how personal existence involves conserving what feels comfortable and predictable. (ibid., 117)

Thus, according to Bowers, Lenin and Freire are both “temperamental conservatives.” Reading Bowers can be a tricky business—he embarks upon a point, drops it and picks it up, tangentially, thirty pages later, from a different perspective:

While there are fundamental differences in how Marx, Dewey, and Freire understood social justice and the role that education should play in achieving it, all three shared a number of culturally specific assumptions that continue to underlie the critical pedagogy approach to educational reform. These assumptions include thinking of change as linear and progressive in nature, the need for adopting a critical form of inquiry that makes emancipation (“reconstruction” for Dewey) an unending process, and that everybody in the world will adopt the one true mode of critical inquiry when they have been emancipated from their present system of beliefs. While sharing these assumptions, many educational theorists have aligned themselves more with the ideas of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educational reformer who received worldwide acclaim but is now being criticized as a Western thinker who misled others with his claims of a non-colonizing pedagogy. (op. cit., 147)

Bowers may have a “hidden agenda.” He refers at one point to the continuing search for a new theory involving what he calls “high status knowledge” that will “sweep through universities across the country like the locust in early Mormon history.” If he is a Mormon,¹⁵³ then Bowers’ preference for “low-status knowledge” which “is not predicated on the assumption that change is always progressive in nature but (...) requires valuing traditions that have proven effective in meeting past challenges and in adapting rather than abandoning them as new challenges arise” would qualify as doctrinal. ‘Latter-day Sainthood’ would also explain his espousal of the ecological cause of the “members of over 6,000 linguistic groups in the world (who have their 6,000 + knowledge systems)”¹⁵⁴ despite his failure to cite ethnographers and anthropologists, his vagueness about the concept of the “commons” and his willingness to base a refutation of “Freire’s assumptions about the emancipatory nature of critical reflection” on the personal testimony of four “Third World activists, an Asian, a Bolivian militant, a Peruvian and a Mexican” (Bowers, 2003, 148; 2005, 117). When Bowers refers to “marginalized groups [that] have survived through a greater reliance on face-to-face intergenerational traditions of mutual support,” (op. cit.,141), he may be thinking of Mormons rather than Mead’s Samoans or Malinowski’s Trobriand islanders. After spending several pages reiterating his high- and low-status knowledge distinction (originally discussed in his 1997 book, *The Culture of Denial*) he vacillates:

However, it is important to keep in mind the following: every achievement of high-status knowledge should not be dismissed as contributing to the process of colonization and environmental degradation, just as every expression of low-status knowledge is not an example of morally just communities and good environmental citizenship. (...) This description of the two categories of knowledge also breaks down when we relate them to daily experience. Marginalized groups have survived through a greater reliance on face-to-face intergenerational traditions of mutual support. Even while wanting to preserve their traditions, they may desire to improve their own lives by adopting certain aspects of

¹⁵³ For the moment, this is pure surmisal.

¹⁵⁴ The Mormons have compiled a formidable amount of anthropological and linguistic data to aid their wide-ranging proselytism.

modern culture—and hope that sending their children to the university will not lead to their becoming alienated from the traditions of the parents and community. Even professors, who play such a key role in translating high-status knowledge into new technologies and theories of control, also live part of their lives in the social realms dominated by low-status knowledge conveyed through the non-monetized face-to-face interactions within the family and community. (Bowers, 2003, 140-141)

As a ‘marginalized group,’ the Mormons have prospered through universal tithing and intermarriage. They are also among the most recognizable and well-supported modern missionaries.¹⁵⁵ It is not difficult to imagine why Bowers, a “semi-retired” but prolific adjunct professor at the U. of Oregon, finds fault with what he calls “the ideologically driven formula of the Freirean educational reformers whose emphasis on critical reflection as the only valid approach to knowledge and action has the effect of fostering the Western ideal of the autonomous individual,” especially when he believes that, unlike “intergenerationally connected and morally coherent cultures which are viewed (...) as sources of oppression, [Freirians] believe that each generation must rename the previous generation’s emancipatory renaming project” (op. cit., 148-149). Whether such obscurantism is deliberate or the product of his infelicitous prose, it does little to advance his scholarly credibility, as does his ‘glass-house’¹⁵⁶ disparagement of “the Western ideal of the autonomous individual.” Mormon or not, Bowers’ declaration that “intergenerationally connected and morally coherent cultures are viewed by Freirean educational reformers as sources of oppression” (ibid., 149) is pure falderal.

Bowers mentions “a Bolivian woman who was a revolutionary in her teens, who was imprisoned and deported to Argentina and who later became an activist in the Bolivian literacy program based on Freirean pedagogical principles” who tells him that Ché

¹⁵⁵ In Brazil's 2000 census, 199,645 residents identified themselves as Latter-day Saints, while the church listed 743,182 people there on its rolls. There are five Latter-day Saints temples in Brazil: in São Paulo, Campinas, Porto Alegre, Curitiba and Recife. (<http://lds.about.com/cs/ldsnewsarticles/index.htm>)

¹⁵⁶ I refer to the adage “People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.” Bowers complains about “Western autonomy” while taking potshots at both sides of the political spectrum, claiming his is the only true ‘conservatism.’ The ‘limb’ on whose extremity he perches is supported by the “Western ideal” of free speech.

Guevara complained to her father that the Bolivian peasants were “uncommunicative and he even had difficulty making sense of their facial and bodily expressions” (ibid.,153).

The woman is Loyda Sánchez Bejarano (bsalsa@supernet.com.bo) whose essay is one Bowers and Apffel-Marglin have published in their edited collection, *Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the environmental crisis* (2005) and who was a fellow-panelist at “Beyond Freire: Furthering the Spirituality Dialogue,” an academic conference sponsored by the Center for International Education (CIE) at the University of Massachusetts.¹⁵⁷ Sra. Sánchez is currently the coordinator of CAIPACHA, an NGO dedicated, in her words, “to Andean/Amazonian cultural affirmation and mental decolonization. CAIPACHA accomplishes this principally through a Graduate Course on ‘Andean Culture and Agriculture’ as well as through projects dedicated to the revalorization of peasant knowledge and technology, to the increase of bio-diversity and of the phytogenetic resources of the peasant communities.” Bowers does not discuss her work in *Mindful Conservatism* although he does mention her by name, along with three other “Beyond Freire” conferees, Siddhartha, Derek Rasmussen¹⁵⁸ and Grimaldo Rengifo, in his 2005 *JTE* article.¹⁵⁹ Here is her “biographical sketch” from the “Beyond Freire” conference:

Loyda Sanchez is Bolivian, born in a small town on the Brazilian border. She studied economics at the Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz, and later studied pedagogy in Cochabamba, both in Bolivia. Since 1970 she was a militant of the ELN, the army founded by Ché Guevara. Due to this activity she was exiled to Chile, Argentina and Peru. She was incarcerated in 1976 by the Bolivian military government until 1978

¹⁵⁷ The Sánchez Bejarano information is available on the internet: http://www.umass.edu/cie/beyond_freire

¹⁵⁸ Rasmussen’s paper “Cease to do evil, then learn to do good (a pedagogy of the oppressor)” is published in his aforementioned 2005 book with Apffel-Marglin.

¹⁵⁹ Bowers concludes that “Ché Guevara did not know the cultural languaging patterns of the people he set out to liberate” and so was doomed to fail “in a new process of colonization—which was, of course, resisted by the indigenous people.” He extends this critique to Peter McLaren, whose book on Ché and Freire (2000) “gives lip service to the importance of multiculturalism; however, he does not understand the knowledge systems of other non-Western cultures, nor does he understand that many of the assumptions he takes for granted cannot be reconciled with the assumptions that other cultures are based on.” (2003, 153-4)

and then deported to Argentina. Back in her country she worked for the Central Bank for a year until there was another military coup that forced her to take refuge in the city of Cochabamba in 1980. From 1980 until 1990 she has worked with indigenous peasant communities in the valleys around Cochabamba as a member of several NGOs. During this time she worked intensely with the Freirian methodology of Popular Education. Toward the end of the 80s she begins a critical reflection on this methodology, grounded in her experiences with the communities she worked with.

This is a précis of the paper she delivered:

Who are the Oppressed?

This article explores the author's journey of personal change via political activism and ultimately de-colonizing herself by living with Andean peasant farmers (*campesinos*). After suffering many hardships and exile in the 70s, the author turned to participatory education (PE) as a tool for organizing social-revolutionary change among Bolivian campesinos. This was an expression of a deep commitment to Socialist-Leninist views to societal liberation grounded on the premise that the working masses could never form their own philosophy of change. However, dialectics has little meaning from an Andean-centered perspective. The author's relationship to the communities was based on workshops stressing action-reflection-action, which started with the campesino's practical experiences, then moved on to reflection and the realization of larger patterns at play in their lives. But the campesinos were not able to abstract their own practices as phenomena at the margins of their lives. Instead they lived their feelings, ideas, and thoughts; they stayed in their immediate life contexts; they did not live life as a class struggle; they saw life as a series of circumstances. (...) Understanding this notion of community from the Andean perspective came slowly to the author and her team, where every aspect of life saw the presence of mutual cooperation. Ultimately, they came to understand that their way of thinking was methodologically flawed. A notion that had previously assured them that revolution not only was possible but necessary was based completely on "faith" and governed by universal laws. Under this conception, what was understood was that the oppressed were the peasants and the day laborers, when in fact, the author and her team themselves felt oppressed because they sought to change a world that did not conform to their ideas. While the Andean campesinos simply nurtured everything. In time, the author and her team were transformed by the nurturing they received throughout the workshops, activities and fiestas with the campesinos.

This confessional mode in which former Freire devotees see the error of their (and his) ways, identify as 'oppressed' and find that his 'dialogics' do not work with indigenous peoples (who prove to be more enlightened, communal and 'nurturing' than their would-be educators) was adopted by several panelists at the Massachusetts conference. This is what Freire called "basism" and anthropologists call 'going native' – adopting the wisdom, parlance and life-perspective of the people with whom you are working as more genuine or valid than your own. It is also a key component in the sales pitch of populist politicians. However, it is far removed from Fanon's 'class suicide' which requires middle-class educators to abandon their bourgeois perspective and adopt the cause of the

working class—not to spontaneously abrogate their duties as educators and adopt the ways and mores of their ‘oppressed’ educatees as more ‘nurturing’ or communal than those they advocate. Such epiphanic transformations may invalidate the effectiveness of some of the most caring and empathetic teachers. When they adopt the mores of their students as superior to their own they create confusion and conflict. Middle-class, university-trained educators bring to their classes what Bourdieu called “cultural capital.” When they abrogate the power such capital bestows, they become “wannabes” in the eyes of those they teach.

Another conferee, Derek Rasmussen, a policy advisor to Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the representative body for the Inuit of Nunavut Territory in Canada¹⁶⁰, brings a Buddhist perspective to what he calls the “Euro-American (Freirian) rescue mission:”

Paulo Freire called for "intervention", "liberation" and "transformation"; he called for the "oppressed" to rescue themselves with the help of his liberatory pedagogy (Freire, 1974). Freirean educators believe that conferring literacy on members of an oral culture would make them, in Havelock's words, "wake up from the dream." Nunavummiut have serious reservations about the Freirean rescue mission, especially when it seems to lead to the undoing of established ways of life. The two main life-preservers the Rescuers offer the world are Education and Economy, otherwise known as print and price, alphabet and money, bank books and school books. However, what the rescuers view as tools of salvation, the rest of the world experiences as the things which cast them further adrift. We Euro-Americans – and I include Paulo Freire here – we believe that we are compassionate. We don't like to see suffering. The Buddha said: "Cease to do evil, learn to do good, that is the way of the awakened ones." Well, 80% of the world's resources are being diverted to us – the 20% of the world's richest people. Instead of spending a lot of time and money trying to help the rest of the world learn our economic system or learn our educational system – maybe it would be better if we focused on putting our own houses in order. Maybe this could be thought of as a “pedagogy for the oppressor.”

The trouble with this tentative, pie-in-the-sky approach is that the current administration's idea of putting the national house in order is to continue to pillage the planet's most marketable resources while wresting autonomy from those who threaten

¹⁶⁰ “In 1993, after a twenty-year struggle, the Inuit of the Eastern North American Arctic settled a land claims agreement with the Canadian government in addition to Inuit title to 350,000 square kilometers of land. Derek advises NTI on economic and social policies, including education policy; he has lived in Iqaluit, the new capital of Nunavut, since 1991” (http://www.umass.edu/cie/beyond_freire).

them by refusing to play their game. Despite the fact that Bowers attempts a redefinition of the term ‘conservatism’ from an ecological standpoint, his basic message varies little from standard environmental rhetoric.

His solutions, which fall under the chapter heading “Educating for a Sustainable Future” and he claims are directed “Toward Deep Changes in Cultural Patterns of Thinking,” seem much less specific and less actualizable than Gadotti’s “Decalogue for Autonomous Public Schools,” (see Chapter 5.7). Yet Bowers takes Gadotti to task, in his 2005 *JTE* article, for “repeat[ing] the error of Freire and his followers in not addressing the educational issues that surround the need for students to understand that although socially unjust and ecologically unsustainable practices need to be reformed, there is also a need to become aware of what needs to be conserved as sources of resistance to being colonized by the Western project of economic globalization — which is another form of planetary citizenship but one suited more to the requirements of an industrial/consumer-dependent culture” (op. cit., 120). Is Bowers aware of the extraordinary environmental focus that Gadotti and Freire built into their curriculum design for the São Paulo Municipal Public School ‘Inter’ Project in the period 1989-1992, a project that brought the tenets of sustainable ecology home to more than 900,000 *paulistano* school children? If so, he is what Brazilians call “*um cara de pau*” (literally, ‘a wooden face’, a shameless fellow) for suggesting that “the following recommendations represent the starting point for reorienting how we think about our relationships with each other and the environment, and our responsibility for the well-being of future generations” (Bowers, 2003, 167):

Changing from a cultural schema that represents the individual as autonomous to one that represents the individual as nested in the complex network of relationships and symbol systems that constitute the culture. The schema that foregrounds relationships must also represent the culture as

nested in and thus dependent on the viability of natural systems. (the emphasis should be on recognizing that all levels of life—from the microecology of genes and proteins to complex cultural institutions—are constituted and sustained through relationships.)

Changing from a schema that represents individuals as only responsible to themselves to a schema that emphasizes responsibility within a continuum of past, present, and future. (educate students about how individual lives are dependent on traditions carried forward through the multiple pathways of communication that sustain the culture.)

Changing from a schema that represents technology as both culturally neutral and as the latest expression of progress to one that foregrounds how the characteristics of technology amplify and reduce different aspects of individual experience and cultural renewal. (When technologies are understood as privileging certain ways of knowing, relationships, and groups over others, both within our culture and within other cultures, the question of what we want to conserve becomes a central concern.)

Changing the schema that reinforces a taken-for-granted attitude toward the commodification of knowledge, skills, and relationships to a schema that recognizes that other values are more important and that there are limits to what can be bought, sold, and patented. (The first step in changing the taken-for-granted attitude that everything can be turned into a market opportunity is to clarify for students the nature of high-status knowledge and how it underlies the current drive to make it the basis of a global economy. The important questions that need to be asked about high- and low-status knowledge include: What are the contributions and destructive nature of each? Which form of knowledge strengthens community and makes it less dependent on consumerism? How does each form of knowledge affect the environment? Which approach strengthens cultural diversity?)

Changing the schema that leads to thinking of other cultures as undeveloped because they have not made technological innovations and market relationships the dominant concern to a schema that leads to the awareness that cultures have developed in different ways and that the Western approach should not be the basis for assessing the merits of other approaches. (A new schema of understanding should make self-sufficiency and a smaller ecological footprint the principal criteria for the approach to development taken by different cultures.) (ibid., 167-172)

The generalized panacea of the verbal schemata that comprise the last four pages of Bowers' 173-page book may come from one of his undergraduate courses at the U. of O. Bowers has it in for critical pedagogues. Anyone who considers "the writing of Maxine

Green, who argues that the classroom should contribute to the students' sense of freedom and creative self-expression," a "liberal assumption that can be traced back to the early founders of classical liberalism" (2003, 154-155) or who lumps Freire together with George W. Bush as "reductionist neoliberals" (2005, 124-125) is more an addled gadfly than an environmental 'conservative.' In its obsession with nomenclature (Western vs. indigenous, conservative vs. liberal, high- vs. low-status, temperamental vs. environmental conservatism) and retread environmentalism, Bowers's is a voice in the wilderness.¹⁶¹

In the next chapter, I lay out my case studies. The first of these has as much to do with an organization, the Woman Life Collective (*Coletivo Mulher Vida*), as with the woman who founded and runs it, Cecy Prestrello. I had limited access to Cecy because I learned of the *Coletivo*'s existence only weeks before leaving for Recife in July, 2004 and did not meet her until I had been there almost a month. She gave me carte blanche access to their centers in Setúbal (Recife) and Casa Caiada (Olinda) but her schedule was set and allowed us only sporadic contact. Although the case study focuses on my observation of *Coletivo* programs, publications and personnel rather than providing an in-depth portrait of its leader, I think it is important for a number of reasons. First, because, as a private entity, the *Coletivo* offers non-formal pedagogy unrestricted by federal, state or municipal curricular requirements, to children, adolescents and adults. Second,

¹⁶¹ In a recent review of *Rethinking Freire: Globalization and the Environmental Crisis*, edited by Bowers and Frédérique Apffel-Marglin (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005), Richard Kahn finds the book "seriously flawed in both form and content...a pointedly distorted representation...more typical of the political cartoon than the scholarly critique" and "dismissible for its tone and lack of familiarity with the many intricacies of both the later Freire's work and the work of those who have found inspiration in him." Kahn points out that, on page 47 of *Pedagogy of Indignation* (the bowdlerized *Pedagogia da Autonomia*, 1996), "Freire significantly wrote, 'Ecology has gained tremendous importance at the end of this century. It must be present in any educational practice of a radical, critical, and liberating nature'" Kahn hopes that "Freireans and Ecojustice educators can begin to close ranks" before "market ideologues...make of this debate little more than a historical footnote to transnational capitalism's zoöcidal excesses."

because it was founded and is run by women for women (although some workshops and classes for children and teens are bi-gender). Third, because it feminizes what Coben criticizes as Freire's phallogentric, rapacious pedagogy into a *pedagogia de afeto* (a 'pedagogy of affection') without resorting to the teacher-as-coddling-auntie role he abhorred for teachers.¹⁶² Fourth, because Cecy is a feminist and feminists have been Freire's most acerbic and unforgiving critics. Finally, because the Collective, an independent, internationally-funded NGO, is the kind of social service entity on which developing nations increasingly depend.

¹⁶² Freire's 1993 book, *Professora sim, tia não—cartas a quem ousa ensinar* ("Teacher yes, auntie no—letters to those who dare teach") was retitled *Teachers as Cultural Workers* in its 1998 English translation. In it, he distinguishes teaching from coddling: "Teaching is not coddling (...) the attempt to reduce teachers to the role of coddling parents represents an 'innocent' ideological trap in that, under the illusion of softening teachers' lives, what is in fact being attempted is to soften the teachers' capacity to struggle or to keep them occupied in the implementation of their day-to-day tasks. For example, teachers' capacity to struggle involves their capacity to challenge their students, from an early to a more adult age, through games, stories, and reading so that students understand the need to create coherence between discourse and practice: a discourse about the defense of the weak, of the poor, of the homeless, and a practice that favors the haves against the have-nots; a discourse that denies the existence social classes, their conflicts, and a political practice entirely in favor of the powerful" (Freire, 1998, 15).

Chapter Four: Case Studies

4.1 The Woman Life Collective

My first case study is an example of the application of Freirian methodology by an NGO based both in Recife and in Olinda, founded by women for women, to provide meals and emotional respite for street children, psychological and birth control counseling for adolescent girls and neighborhood workshops (*oficinas*) for women who have been harassed, battered and sexually abused. Women have been vulnerable to such treatment for centuries, with little or no legal redress, in developed and underdeveloped countries around the world.

Affording access to males of all ages, colors, castes and nationalities, the *zonas*, as ‘red light’ districts were known, provided an ideal backdrop for novelists like Machado de Assis (1839-1908) and Jorge Amado (1912-2001) to write Brazilian versions of what French novelist Honoré de Balzac (1799-1850) called *la comédie humaine*. Brothels were a place where middle and upper class males felt free to flaunt the rigid conventions of a society shaped by Roman Catholic morality. Lumber, gold, diamonds, cotton, tobacco, cocoa, rubber, sugar, coffee—all had boom times in Brazilian history when fortunes were made and profits were spent, in part, on the sex industry—creating state-of-the-art bordellos and peopling them with witty and obliging women from around the world.¹⁶³ On the far side of the tracks were the working-class *zonas* like Rio de Janeiro’s *Mangue*. Vinicius de Moraes brought Waldo Frank there, as Frank recalls (1943, 27-28):

From the Church, we went to the *Mangue*, the home of the cheap whores. *Mangue* means mud; also it means mangrove, a marshy land by the sea. Along the two-storied houses of several streets, among them the Ruas Carno Neto and Abilia Cavalcanti, the women stand behind open doors and windows, and in obscene detail cry their wares. They stand behind horizontal bars: indecently clad, in poor finery, in the warm light. They are Negresses, still blossoming; they are repulsive harridans advertising themselves as French; they are matronly women, loose-beamed, soft, with plain and kindly faces. These (I have noticed the same phenomenon wherever the poor seek solace), not the pretty, not the young and the more vicious, get the most customers. Prostitution for men who work is more, far more, the seeking of a mother than of sexual delight. Three thousand they are, in the *Mangue* streets, in their dim cages! And from their gaols, they dart repartee, rough words and soft, abuse when the men insult them. The prevailing mood is of anger and gaiety, the anger and gaiety of despair. For these are lost souls, and know it (few lack a Cross on thir naked breasts): the social garbage of a Catholic country.

¹⁶³ Gilberto Freyre, in *Casa-grande & senzala*, makes a distinction between “the voluptuous ambience of the master’s houses, full of servants, little negresses, half-breeds, house slaves, [where] venereal diseases were propagated more easily through domestic prostitution – always *less* hygienic than that of the bordellos.” (Freyre, 2001, 374, translation and emphasis mine.)

With the change in mores occasioned by easy access to birth control and the subsequent easing of strictures on the amorous behavior of unmarried women, *zonas* and *prostíbulos* appear to have diminished in size and importance in the past several decades. In Recife and Olinda, they have been replaced by what the French call *maison de passe* motels where rooms rent by the hour.

Several weeks before I was scheduled to leave for Brazil to begin my data collection, an acquaintance gave me the DVD version of a 48-minute documentary film he had edited. Shot in 2003 by an American woman, Holly Mosher, in Recife and Olinda, “Hummingbird” tells the story of two Recife NGOs, the *Coletivo Mulher Vida* (Woman Life Collective) and *Casa de Passagem* (Passage House), groups dedicated to the prevention of violence against women and to the physical and spiritual well-being of children and adolescents growing up in violent surroundings both inside and outside their homes. According to Ms. Mosher’s film, seventy per cent of these children come from fatherless families where the mother, grandmother or other female caretaker is frequently overwhelmed by her own existential problems and vents her frustration and despair on her dependents, thus perpetuating a syndrome of dysfunction and abuse. As Mosher says, in a voiceover introduction, “I wanted to see if it was possible for kids who have lived all their lives among violence and misery to become part of the society that has rejected them.”

The film’s title comes from a story that the *Coletivo*’s founder and president, Cecy Prestrello, tells about a hummingbird in a flaming jungle, taking drops of water in its tiny beak and dropping them on the conflagration. The lion sees this and says to the hummingbird “Are you crazy? Why aren’t you fleeing like the rest of us? To which the

hummingbird replies, “I’m doing my part. What about you?” The moral of the story, according to Cecy, is that anyone can do what she has done, if they have sufficient ‘*vontade, amor, afeto e paixão*’ (desire, love, affection and passion), to pursue an idea so fervently and single-mindedly that the universe ultimately “conspires in its realization.”

The *Coletivo*’s approach to the manifold problems of people living on the edge of the precipice entails what Cecy calls ‘the pedagogy of affection’ (*a pedagogia do afeto*): encounter groups, theater and dance workshops and classes facilitated by articulate, affectionate social workers and psychologists that prepare people to cope with their difficulties. Like the hummingbird, Cecy thinks we should all be asking ourselves: “What can we do to better our planet? To make the societies we form on it more dignified, just and humane? To guarantee its (and our) survival?” These are the kinds of questions that motivated Paulo Freire in his final years in Brazil (1980-1997) and that now spur debates at the World Social Forum, the Instituto Paulo Freire and in Brasília.¹⁶⁴

According to Cecy, “no one helps anyone, no one transforms anyone, no one changes anyone—we simply have an instrument that helps that child, that adolescent, that woman to see that there is something marvelous inside her. She has to believe in this internal potential in order to change, to transform herself, to choose a new way of life” (Mosher, “Hummingbird,” 2004). Some of the most powerful images in the film are of the “*cheira-colas*” (glue-sniffers)—kids who pour a couple of inches of what we used to call ‘airplane glue’ into small plastic water bottles and inhale the fumes. In Recife and Olinda, the glue-sniffers haunt the streets like hungry ghosts.

The *cheira-colas* test the ‘street/house opposition’ proposed by sociologist Roberto DaMatta by “sleeping, eating, bathing, having sexual relations, and all other forms of

¹⁶⁴ Although many decisions regarding public education are made at the municipal level, literacy campaigns have been instituted by both state and federal entities. Gadotti and the IPF have become Lula’s trusted advisors in such matters.

physiological relief and satisfaction...in the public domain of the street” (1991, 67-68). I disagree with DaMatta’s fundamental premise, in *Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes*, “that allowing ‘the poor’ to become ‘rich’ for four days of the year... is the crucial point and should serve as the guiding thread of sociological reflection” (1991, 24). I think that this notion represents ‘mythological’ thinking on the part of an elite intellectual about the Brazilian people – that they are ‘unfailingly generous, wise and hopeful’ and will obligingly vent their longstanding resentment at an unjust and amnesiac society in four days of licensed excess and, on Ash Wednesday, obediently return to mute obscurity.

Brazilian carnival is commercialized libertinism not revolutionary liberty and, over the last half century, has served a media-driven instrumental rationality¹⁶⁵ in the hegemony’s hands. It was taken from the working class people of color who had reinvented it¹⁶⁶ in the first decades of the twentieth century and provided the heart and soul of its popularity, removed from the streets of Rio a quarter of a century ago and placed in a specially built site, the *Sambódromo*, where it has become a gargantuan, high-stakes ‘media event.’ As one of carnival’s credentialed sociological explicators, DaMatta also functions as its apologist.

The street kids, particularly the *cheira-colas*, have their own threepenny¹⁶⁷ carnival

¹⁶⁵ Instrumental rationality “is governed by technical rules seeking precision and control of social and physical events [and] involves a substantive purpose of domination,” according to Carlos Alberto Torres (unpublished paper, 2001, my translation).

¹⁶⁶ The *entrudo*, its XIX century Portuguese progenitor, was a rather violent affair where people bombarded each other with unsanitary liquids and powders. The main dance was the *maxixe*, an amalgam of the European polka and the African *lundu*. The middle-class celebrations were centered in social clubs with elaborate costumes and dancing to waltzes, polkas and quadrilles. For more on this, see Chasteen, J.C. “The Prehistory of Samba: Carnival Dancing in Rio de Janeiro, 1840-1917” in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 28 (1996), 29-47.

¹⁶⁷ I invoke Brecht’s *Dreigroschenöper* as an antidote to the elite mystification of DaMatta’s Bakhtinian gloss. Augusto Boal, ideologue and founder of *Teatro do Oprimido* (Theatre of the Oppressed) writes that ordinary Latin Americans “are interested in experimenting, in rehearsing...they abhor the ‘closed’ spectacles...they try to enter into dialogue with the actors, to interrupt the action, to ask for explanations without waiting for politely for the end of the play. Contrary to the bourgeois code of manners, the people’s code allows and encourages the spectator to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate.” This is the origin of Boal’s concept of the “spectactor” (Boal, 1985, 142).

going on all year long—as Brazil’s youngest and most visible drug addicts, they are generally too groggy to work. So they publicly anesthetize their pain and go begging, stealing, sexing, sleeping in the streets and public spaces of a State that pretends they don’t exist and, if they become public nuisances, violently eliminates them.¹⁶⁸

“Why doesn’t the Brazilian world transform itself permanently into a Carnival?” DaMatta wonders, “not into a perpetual parade, but into an ongoing enjoyment of creativity, encounter, and especially freedom?” He adds that this is “the question that can be raised on the basis of a deep understanding of the ritual experience” (ibid, 23) and posits that “the distinctive feature of ritual seems to be dramatization: i.e., the condensation of some aspect, element, or relationship which is spotlighted and set in relief” and that “everything can be ritualized because everything in the world can be personified, spotlighted, and ultimately reified” (op. cit., 20-21). Such reification has happened to the glue-sniffing street kids – they have become emblematic of all that is wrong with Brazil. A brown-skinned boy wearing a soiled tee shirt much too large for him dominates the dustjacket of *Race in Another America*. He looks straight at the reader, his mouth and nose obscured by a large plastic bag of glue. *Cheira-colas* have become powerful symbols of the country’s social malaise. In this case, the sad-eyed ragamuffin personifies the book’s subtitle, “The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil,” although the author mentions street children only once in his text to remind us that they are “predominately black” (Telles, 2004, 52).

When DaMatta writes about carnival as a symbolic ritual producing “creativity,

¹⁶⁸ *O Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente*, Article 18, states “It is everyone’s duty to be vigilant about the dignity of children and adolescents, keeping them safe from any kind of inhuman, violent, terrifying, vexatious or constraining treatment.” While Scheper-Hughes (1992, 222, 239) writes: “In the interior of Northeast Brazil there are only the police, a judiciary that has generally failed to prosecute cases of police brutality, the prison, the FEBEM federal reform schools for criminalized or simply marginalized youth, and the local death squads, all of them violent institutions...the stories of physical and sexual abuse of children detained in Brazil’s correctional institutions are matched by the equally horrible stories of abuse, battering, mutilation, and death on the streets.”

encounter, and especially freedom” (1991, 23) he is mythologizing black-white relations the same way Gilberto Freyre did in *The Masters and the Slaves*¹⁶⁹. In his authorial introduction to the English-language version of *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis*, originally published in 1979, he suggests that the book “should be placed alongside the contributions of Gilberto Freyre, Caio Prado, Jr., Sérgio Buarque de Holanda and Florestan Fernandes,” a group of influential intellectuals who came to prominence in the 1930s. His paternalist paean to carnival as “the vehicle of permanence and of change; of the return to order or of the creation of a new order, a new alternative,” seems atavistic, a throwback to what Sérgio’s son, Chico Buarque, sentimentalizes, tongue in cheek, as “*o tempo da delicadeza*” (the time of delicacy). The *Estado Novo* dictatorship favored *ufanista*¹⁷⁰ Brazilian intellectuals inspired by President Getúlio Vargas’s populist vision of a modern, industrialized Brazil. In *Raízes do Brasil* (1936), the elder Buarque de Holanda portrays his countrymen as *homens cordiais* (cordial men)¹⁷¹. But there is nothing cordial about Jeremias and Siegfried, characters in Raimundo Carrero’s 1995 novel, *Somos Pedras que se Consomem* (We are Self-Consuming Stones), set in modern Recife, who recite Lorca, Updike, Elizabeth Bishop and Henry Miller by heart — when they aren’t throwing teenage prostitutes from third-storey windows or immolating kidnapped street kids for kicks.

¹⁶⁹ Telles (2004, 174) refers to Freyre’s “suggest[ion] that race relations were more fluid in Brazil because of sexual unions” as “a slight of hand” and explains that “many of these unions were likely mere liaisons involving extremely unequal power relations.”

¹⁷⁰ *Ufanismo* is a Brazilian term expressing the “attitude, position or sentiment of those who, influenced by the potential of Brazilian riches, by the natural beauties of the country, etc., become exaggeratedly vainglorious about it.” (*Novo Dicionário Aurélio*, 1975, my translation).

¹⁷¹ “It has been said, in a felicitous phrase, that the Brazilian contribution to civilization will be cordiality—we will give the world the ‘cordial man.’ Affable relations, hospitality, generosity, virtues highly praised by foreigners who visit us, actually represent a definite quality in the Brazilian character. (...) It would be a mistake to assume that these virtues are the same thing as ‘good manners,’ civility. They are, more than anything, legitimate expressions of extremely rich and overflowing emotive resources.” (Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in “Dialogue about the greatness of Brazil,” an essay in quotes arranged and edited by Roberto Pompeu de Toledo, *Veja*, 9/8/04, my translation).

That such outrageous acts can occur to poor and defenseless people is part of what Scheper-Hughes calls “the violence of everyday life in Brazil.” If one takes Holly Mosher’s film at face value, NGOs like the *Coletivo Mulher Vida*, funded by philanthropic organizations outside the country and therefore not subject to the red-tape, corruption and *politicagem* of Brazilian government agencies, would seem to be the answer to many of Brazil’s current social ills.

When your local contacts have a notion of what you are up to, as most of my friends did after I spent a month observing and interviewing teachers in Recife and Olinda in 2002, they can be very helpful in making connections. I mentioned the *Coletivo Mulher Vida* one evening at dinner and Ataide’s eldest daughter, Carmita said she had a childhood friend, Jane (Jáh-nee) who worked there. When the daily downpour ceased for a day or two at the end of July, a meeting was arranged.

On a sunny morning two days before my sixtieth birthday, my wife and I took our seats in the *Coletivo*’s Toyota van (gift from a Japanese sponsor) along with Jane, who works as the NGO’s liaison with a number of public schools and were driven to Setúbal, a neighborhood near Boa Viagem beach, one of their two centers-of-operation. Cecy Prestrello, the *Coletivo*’s charismatic founder and director, was sitting next to the driver. When we reached the Collective’s Setúbal center, a walled compound with a swimming pool, spacious patio and verandah, meeting rooms, offices, a kitchen and a well-ventilated *sala*, which Cecy managed to acquire for 80,000 *reais* (US\$ 27,000) from a German with tax problems, I began to experience severe stomach cramps which curtailed my stay. But contact had been made. The next day, the fourth of August, still feeling a bit shaky, I took the bus to the *Coletivo*’s headquarters in the *Casa Caiada* (Limehouse) neighborhood of Olinda. Here Cecy has converted the bedrooms of a two-storey

beachfront house into offices and left the two main *salas* (living and dining rooms) empty to provide workshop and rehearsal/performance space. After giving me a brief tour of the premises and introducing me to various members of the Olinda staff, I was invited upstairs where we made a small circle of folding chairs in the former living room. There I was able to tape a conversation with Cecy, Jane and two of the *Coletivo's* bevy of project administrators, Adriana and Vânia.

PL: What was it in your life that opened the door to this work?

Cecy: Márcia [Dangremon] and I began the *Coletivo Mulher Vida* in August, 1990. We both came from very similar backgrounds and had been very militant throughout the dictatorship, fighting for democracy in our country. The Brazilian dictatorship was one of the longest-lasting in Latin America. It was 25 years from the coup in 1964 until the direct elections in 1989. Márcia and I came from resistance movements in defense of democracy and of the rights to organize, to have free expression, to hold meetings. At that time, meetings were forbidden. The five of us would have been prohibited from holding a meeting like this. There was a police agent, a *dedo duro* (hard finger) or *delator* (denouncer) in every university class. This person was disguised as a student. No one knew who it was. There were also professors who turned in other professors. At that point, I was doing social service at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and Márcia was studying sociology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). We were engaged in a clandestine struggle against the military dictatorship like many young people of our time, priests and even the Archbishop of Recife and Olinda, Dom Hélder Câmara, who was a great fighter for democracy. Paulo Freire was in political exile and his books were banned in Brazil. Freire was from Recife. He was a secretary in the [Miguel] Arraes government, the Secretary of Education.¹⁷² (...) We had a very serious problem in Pernambuco since there was not a single organization or job site in the state that sought to intervene in the struggle against violence toward women, that would even raise the subject of their victimization in relation to domestic and sexual violence. There was an organization led by women activists, whose work consisted in filing a complaint when a woman was murdered or raped, trying to get the rapist imprisoned, etc. But there was no struggle to prevent the problem or anything that anticipated it. (interview at CMV, Olinda, 8/4/04, my translation)

The Presentation (*Apresentação*) of the Woman Life Collective, in the *Livro de Oficinas* resonates with an almost religious belief in the power of like-minded individuals working together on a common project to change the world:

Woman Life Collective, an organization made of passions and dreams

This organization was born from the emotions of four women who dared to question

¹⁷² In fact, Freire did not hold an official post in the Arraes administration although he was one of the founders of the Popular Culture Movement (MCP), along with Professors Paulo Rosas, Anita Paes Barreto and Silke Weber, Sylvio Loreto, Aluizio Falcão and Geraldo Vieira, and Secretary of Education and Culture, Germano Coelho. During the four years of Arraes' tenure as Mayor of Recife (1960-1962) and Governor of Pernambuco (1963-April 1964), public education was a top priority: 55 municipal public schools were opened in 1960 alone. (De Souza, 1987, p. 41)

the life in which they were submerged, people who came from a time in which to think was almost a crime; a time when the powerful could do anything. A time of pain, a time when everything was profoundly radical; when friends and colleagues disappeared; when any meeting was a synonym for subversion; it was then, five years after the end of darkness in our country, that four women met and dared to construct an organization that would attempt to reach the heart of the violence against women, that would question the patriarchal pillars responsible for the perpetuation of violence and of disrespect for women's human rights.

We wanted to create something horizontal, where power was shared. Where everyone would be a principal subject and co-participate in the decisions and management of this organization. Even the name, Woman Life Collective, was the result of a gathering where we, Alda Siqueira Campos, Cecy Prestrello, Marcia Dangremon and Severina Garcia, chose it for our organization in a collective and democratic manner.

We have always believed in this collective construction of knowledge, in this collective building of a dream, of passion and of life itself.

For this to happen, to have a truly collective construction of anything, there must be an absence of fear so that the radical liberty of trial and error in every decision becomes possible for each of us.

We need to be absolutely sure that we have a line of action, a methodology of intervention. However, the way in which we do it, in which we reinvent it, is up to each and every woman and man. In our work, in our organization, there is no rigid rule, no straightjacket to solidify our actions, desires or dreams. Our constant task and challenge is to believe in each other, to have confidence in our ability to accomplish the work at hand.

It is essential to delegate power so that everyone is a co-participant in everything we build. The constant and collective scrutiny of everything, of each and every detail, act, and decision, is our daily rice and beans.

Here nobody owns the truth since it is not conjugated in the singular. The truth is plural, ample, non-restrictive, liberating. However, each woman and man is the keeper of the flame of the collective wisdom, the product of our collective work. We don't believe in heroes. According to Bertold Brecht, "only unhappy people need heroes." We believe that each being, every person, is responsible for the construction of human history and that, within the group, within the unstoppable strength of each being, resides the hope and faith to build a more just and equitable world, with citizenship and respect for human rights. We place our faith in the collective construction of a world full of possibilities rather than the solitude of heroes, although we respect them too.

We need to build, in our daily lives, a world of social relations, based on the respect of differences. To construct, in our everyday relationships, a world of affection, a path that will lead to a greater construction, social and collective, of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect on our planet. In our work, we seek daily to build living relationships that will contribute to the construction of a different planet. We dream about a world of total and equal possibilities for everyone, women, men, children, blacks, whites, people of mixed races, different sexual options, different religions, ideologies, in sum, a planet that respects its own diversity. At the Woman Life Collective, this is our dream, and you can be one more ally, one more dreamer who joins us in the construction of this utopia.

Cecy H. Prestrello, President of the WLC, (*Livro de Oficinas*, 2002, p. 5, my translation)

I include the Presentation in its entirety because I find it compelling. It seems very much like Cecy herself—intense, outspoken, certain that what she is doing can be done by anyone with a persistent praxis. “To have a truly collective construction of anything, there must be an absence of fear so that the radical liberty of trial and error in every

decision becomes possible for each of us.” An absence of fear; the radical liberty of trial and error – these are the words of a woman who fought against a dictatorship of conservative terrorists and survived to see it shrink and finally drown in a dirty pool of scandal.¹⁷³ Cecy and her all-woman staff at the *Coletivo* work with some of the most pressing issues of the moment: domestic violence, child abuse, sex tourism, on a one-to-one and small group basis. They have developed their own style of dialogic pedagogy. Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano provides the Presentation’s epilogue

*A utopia é como o horizonte,
quando te acercas, ela se afasta
Para que serve a utopia, então?
Para isto serve...
Para caminhar.*

[The utopia is like the horizon,
You approach, it keeps its distance
So what’s a utopia for?
For only one thing ...
To keep us moving.]

One of the *Coletivo*’s co-founders, Márcia Dangremon, died of cancer almost a decade ago but a large framed poster of her, looking both radiant and revolutionary, with a tigress gleam in her eye and a smile so broad it is almost a leer, occupies prominent wall space in both the Setúbal and Olinda Collectives. It is entitled “*un anjo, uma bruxa, um meteoro*” (an angel, a witch, a meteor). In Brazilian society, radical feminists like Cecy and Márcia have not only to be powerful individuals, they must come from ‘good families’¹⁷⁴ to have the political clout to intervene on behalf of the oppressed, especially focusing on issues as buried in what Freire called “the culture of silence” as domestic

¹⁷³ In the early 1980s public functionaries in Brasília found and ‘leaked’ information from a sizable cache of government documents detailing the use of torture to extract confessions from captured ‘subversive elements’ during the dictatorship. São Paulo Archbishop Paulo Evaristo Arns was instrumental in overseeing the clandestine copying and international diffusion of this information.

¹⁷⁴ Cecy is from a ‘traditional’ Pernambucan family and worked for ten years in the Pernambuco State Federation of Agricultural Workers (FETAPE) forming women’s groups within the rural labor syndicates. Márcia’s father was a top auditor for the Brazilian IRS.

violence and the sexual harassment of women. Brazil was, until relatively recently, a country where middle- and upper- class men were routinely exonerated after killing unfaithful wives and lovers, often *in flagrante delicto*, where married men had affairs and sired children with whomever they fancied while holding their wives to the highest moral standards and demanding their unmarried daughters remain chaste. In the Northeast, it is still not uncommon for men to father ten or twelve children with multiple partners, none of whom receive child support. Such an individual gains the reputation of *mulherengo*, ladies' man, or *garanhão*, stud.

Northeastern cities like Recife, Natal (Rio Grande do Norte) and Fortaleza (Ceará) are prime destinations for international sex and porno-tourism and the high-end beach community of Boa Viagem, around the corner from the Woman Life Collective's Setúbal center and not far from the Guararapes International Airport, is a favorite haunt for the *garotas de programa* ('program girls' as prostitutes are called), waiting for the next plane from Lisbon or Milan to arrive and deposit an affluent, affection-starved sybarite in their path. Allan Bloom writes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's view of sex in his introduction to *Emile*:

As a simply natural phenomenon, it is not more significant or interesting than eating. In fact, since natural man is primarily concerned with his survival, sex is of secondary importance inasmuch as it contributes nothing to the survival of the individual. But because it is related to another human being, sex easily mingles with and contributes to nascent amour-propre. Being liked and preferred to others becomes important in the sexual act. The conquest, mastery, and possession of another will thus also become central to it, and what was originally bodily becomes almost entirely imaginary. This semi-folly leads to extremes of alienation and exploitation.

Certainly, a self-serving dynamic such as Bloom describes is at play on both sides of the transaction in Boa Viagem: European sex tourists come to a Third World venue where they can enact concupiscent fantasies with pliant partners of either sex and

virtually any age. While the ‘hustling’ *garotas* and *bichas*¹⁷⁵ hope their companionship, physical charms and savoir faire will so gratify the sex tourist that they will ‘go steady’ for the duration of his stay in Brazil. The pot of gold at the end of the rainbow is the ultimate exportation of the sex worker to the tourist’s homeland. What began as a financial transaction between two needy people can be transformed into life-altering, legal emigration for the girl—something that apparently happens often enough to motivate the ‘extremes of alienation and exploitation’ Bloom describes. Since the girls are usually from embattled circumstances and have often been victims of childhood abuse, such fleeting affairs may catalyze earlier traumas, especially in situations where misconstrued intentions and ‘acting out’ behavior are exacerbated by drug and alcohol ingestion as well as language, class and cultural chasms between the partners. The Woman Life Collective offers at least a dialogical palliative to this, and other, existential knots of hope and pain: “psychosocial support through courses offered in its Casa Caiada (Olinda) and Setúbal (Recife) houses and in [marginal] communities in Olinda, Recife and Paulista (...) [where] training and development work is based on critical discussion about various matters, facilitated by playful-educational techniques.”¹⁷⁶

While it is to the credit of Cecy and her team at the Woman Life Collective that they venture boldly into liminal territories, in taking on a multiplicity of roles (advocates, mediators, educators and therapists) they often stop short of real expertise. This is because many of the workshop leaders are community members, working from experience rather than practical training. For instance, when a terrified teenage girl in

¹⁷⁵ Generic term for effeminate gay men, including ‘drag queens’ and transsexuals, many of whom also frequent the beach at Boa Viagem and are popular partners for ‘straight’ men.

¹⁷⁶ “*Sua ação acontece em comunidades de Olinda, Recife e Paulista, além do apoio psicossocial e dos cursos oferecidos nas casas de Casa Caiada (Olinda) e Setúbal (Recife). Atua ainda com a realização de trabalhos de formação e capacitação baseados na discussão crítica de diversos conteúdos, através de dinâmicas lúdico-educativas.*” I have altered the original statement slightly for the sake of clarity in translation.

one of the community *oficinas* (workshops) the *Coletivo* sponsors and that Mosher filmed, admits that her boyfriend of nine months has repeatedly beaten her and is now threatening her life, the workshop leader suggests that she contact a state social worker who “can go to your house or to his house and talk with both of you and your parents too.” The girl gets more helpful and empathic suggestions from her peers.

Again, in a section of *Hummingbird* called “*As Mulheres*” (The Women), the camera focuses on Marceline, a petite blonde mother of two and former prostitute who says she is hated and feared in her community because “I go straight for the knife and cut people who mess with me.” When the distraught Marceline repeatedly asks to see a psychologist, claiming she is disgusted with life and wants to kill her two children and herself, the group leader asks “will you actually go if I make an appointment?” and tells several of the other women “she needs your support, not just here but in the neighborhood.” The *Coletivo*’s *Mulher Cidadã* (Woman Citizen) program invites women who have participated in the workshops to become workshop leaders. Many have accepted, wanting to stay involved with the woman’s movement while finishing primary or secondary school in public Youth and Adult Education (EJA) classes in the evening. As a man, I was not privy to sessions like the ones Ms. Mosher filmed although I did attend two *Mulher Cidadã* workshops in the peripheral communities of *Alto da Bondade* and *Chão de Estrelas*. Participants in *Coletivo oficinas* are told, time and again, that they must be self-reliant, responsible and fight for their own happiness, that they are the only ones who can do it, that, to repeat Cecy’s words, “no one transforms anyone, helps anyone, changes anyone ...we simply have an instrument that allows women to see the marvelous things inside themselves so they can begin to transform themselves and choose a new way of life.”

The question remains: are the women learning dialogical and affective techniques they can use outside the weekly hour-and-a-half *oficinas*? Or are the *Coletivo*'s efforts merely the kind of authoritarian assistance Freire railed against in his final books¹⁷⁷ – addictive social welfare masquerading as revolutionary self-help? Adriana Duarte, the coordinator of the *Projeto Crescer* and *Criança Feliz* programs in the *Coletivo*'s Setúbal HQ, responded to this question:

We work within Paulo Freire's 'pedagogy of autonomy,' of affectivity, and we believe in Paulo Freire because when a child, an adolescent, a woman comes to our group, we don't think she comes empty of knowledge and understanding, it's not like she's just there to receive. The person has a life history and inside this life history, a lot of what she brings can contribute to the growth of others in the group, the educator, coordinator and psychologist as well. We make a collective construction of knowledge but we don't have a theoretical chain we have appropriated that we can call our own. It's a junction of theories which speak to respect for the human being and that's where Paulo Freire comes in. We are working for liberation. The group work has to do with trying to stimulate and say to a person that she was a victim but she can get out of this situation and give new meaning to the process, transforming it, overcoming conflicts caused by this violence. If we aren't careful, the victims of domestic violence will remain 'poor things,' eternal victims. We are very careful not to become a crutch for them. We can assist someone by taking them in [to one of the groups] but the women have to find their own ways. For example, we offer a course on generating business. If a woman can't look for work outside the house because her husband won't allow it, we stimulate her to develop work inside the house to increase her possibilities of getting out of there. We give the first course and then stimulate people to look for additional training in other places. We have courses on how to generate income by manufacturing snack foods [*doces e salgadinhos*], hairdressing, dressmaking, lingerie creation, jewelry-making. (8/5/04 interview at WLC, *Casa Caiada*, my translation)

The first publication I was shown when I began to spend time at the Setúbal *Coletivo* is entitled *Turismo Sexual, Tráfico, Imigração – o que nós temos a ver com isso?* (Sexual Tourism, Trafficking, Immigration—what does it have to do with us?) The first thing that impressed me was the number and variety of the *Coletivo*'s sponsors: four German organizations, two Dutch, three Italian, three Brazilian and one each Swedish, British, and Japanese are listed. There is a separate list for the *Padrinhos* (Godparents) of the

¹⁷⁷ See *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994, Chapter 3), *Letters to Cristina* (1996, particularly the 11th letter) and *Teachers as Cultural Workers—Letters to Those Who Dare Teach* (1998, 7th and 10th letters) for different, though similar, discussions of what Freire calls the "authoritarian cultural traditions" and "antidemocratic tendencies" of purportedly progressive educators.

Projeto Criança Feliz (Happy Child Project) that attends to 200 children and adolescents from ages 7 to 18 as well as 50 women who are their mothers or guardians, listing seven individual sponsors. Cecy is a skillful and persuasive money-raiser.

Turismo Sexual, Tráfico, Imigração, a 169-page book on recycled paper, the first hundred pages of which contain transcripts of first-person narratives of call-girls who work the beach and nightclubs of *Boa Viagem*, begins with a quote from Nietzsche :

No one can build the bridges you will need to cross the river of life – no one but you, just you. There are all sorts of short-cuts, of course, and bridges and demigods who will offer themselves to carry you beyond the river; but that would cost you your very life: you would offer yourself as collateral and you would lose. In the world, there is but a single road for you to take. Where does it lead? Don't ask – follow it! (WLC, 2003, s/n)

This seems an odd citation for an organization dedicated to the collective therapeutic process to choose for the epigraph of a book featuring painful stories of sexual tyranny, betrayal and abuse. When Allan Bloom paraphrases Rousseau's view of sex as the "conquest, mastery and possession of another" he is coming very close to the Hegelian master-slave dialectic that inspired and informed Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Like Hegel's 'master,' the sex tourist, wants to 'win' a beautiful young consort and be recognized by her as financially and sexually potent so a pact is formed in which 'freedom' is the ability, on the part of the slave/prostitute, to transform her fear and distaste into a dependent but mutually satisfying relationship with her privileged client, one that will benefit her materially as well as socially.

Cecy's Nietzschean prologue seems to imply that she believes that abused and addicted Brazilian girls, relying on sex appeal and intuition to survive and prosper in situations where they are totally dependent on the kindness of strangers, can aspire to and attain independent, self-actualized lives.

Rousseau and Freire shared a belief in the "modern" Social Contract proposed in an

eponymous work (*Du contrat social, L'Emile*, 1762) by Rousseau who was fascinated by community, as befits the forefather of liberal, egalitarian democracy. He intends to unite nature and society through a genial, idiosyncratic tutoring of specially selected, well-born boys. Like Freire, he believes that "it is necessary to study society through men, and men through society; whoever wants to treat politics and morals separately will understand nothing of either one" (Rousseau, 1979, 40-41). For Freire, in order to avoid objectification and oppression, people must become 'subjects of their own stories' and citizens through participation in political and social movements and projects which shape and condition who they are. Our 'liberation' as human beings can only take place within the historical period and circumstances into which we are born and revolves around how we deal with the 'limit situations' we encounter there. If we develop a critical consciousness that allows us to 'read' the world into which we are inserted at birth and with which we must contend all our lives, we have a chance to become 'self-actualizing' beings.¹⁷⁸

The boy Emile is an embryonic "homme naturel" and his tutor, Jean-Jacques, does little to interfere with his development. He is educated to base his conduct on reason, to be autonomous and not to depend on other's opinions. His amour-propre, his libidinous self-esteem, is carefully cultivated because Rousseau believed that the sexual is the only urge in man that can potentially unite him with another soul. Sophia, the object of Emile's amour-propre, is defined as a comparatively limited being, a woman. Freire, too, was taken to task by twentieth-century feminists for failing to mention women, even pronominally, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Although his recommended path to self-

¹⁷⁸ The term is from a 'Hierarchy of Needs' proposed by Abraham Maslow (1908-1970). Self-Actualization needs include the realization of personal potential, self-fulfillment, seeking personal growth and peak experiences. The model was developed between 1943 and 1954 and first diffused in Maslow's 1954 book, *Motivation and Personality*. (www.businessballs.com/maslow.htm)

esteem is more dependent on an understanding of politics, class and culture and the shedding of self-abnegating and self-deluding consciousness, Freire would probably see Emile as a member of the elite-in-training whose amour-propre and overblown sense of self-sufficiency would blind him to his dependency on others and halt his democratic growth.

Cecy Prestrello has the passionate, crusader's expressiveness of a latter-day Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). While Rousseau saw "gentleness" as a woman's most important quality and advised that "she...learn to submit injustice and suffer the wrongs inflicted on her by her husband without complaint" (Wollstonecraft, 1988, fn 4, p. 25). Wollstonecraft calls this "nonsense", adding that, given the right education, "women would acquire sufficient character to enable them to earn their own subsistence." Today, women make up the great majority of primary educators throughout the world. Thus, they have direct influence on the fate of humanity, birthing, nurturing and educating children throughout their most absorptive and susceptible phase. Mary Wollstonecraft, writing at a time when British intellectual life was controlled exclusively by men, had the good fortune to be accepted and promoted by a group of extraordinary intellectuals including the philosopher William Godwin, who would become her husband and father of their daughter, Mary Shelley, the Irish revolutionary Thomas Paine whose book, *Common Sense*, lit the wick of revolutionary fervor in the American colonies, and William Blake, poet, painter and mystic whose *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1789) provided the English with a poetic link to the Romanticism of Rousseau. Wollstonecraft's book proposed women as partners in a more expansive and enlightened social contract in 1792, more than a century and a half before feminist marches and demands for gender parity. Like Rousseau, she tutored the sons of

the aristocracy but argued for British national education that would include women and prepare them to be more worthy companions, mothers and wives. Wollstonecraft saw French women as loose and overly sensual but envied their freedom and place in society, especially *les grandes dames Parisiennes* who transformed their drawing rooms into literary and intellectual salons, something she would emulate in England. At the outbreak of the French Revolution, Wollstonecraft rushed to Paris and witnessed the turbulence, fear and fervor. She carried the revolutionary spirit back across the Channel like a torch and wrote inspiringly about what she saw as a struggle for democracy. Her rational arguments for women's liberation focused on its benefits to men: educated women would be more independent and better able to satisfy their own physical, emotional and ethical needs; their lives would be more meaningful if they went to school; men's love for women would flourish in a sustainable way if they had worthy partners instead of slaves for wives; at the same time, women's self-respect would increase with education which could be of long-lasting benefit to their spouses and children.

Three centuries after the publication of Wollstonecraft's *Vindication...*, Cecy Prestrello's "Introduction" to the *Coletivo's* 2003 publication, *Sexual Tourism, Trafficking and Immigration (what does it have to do with us?)* looks at the situation from the other end of the social telescope, focusing on women who have had little or no education and, in desperate circumstances, "acquire sufficient character to enable them to earn their own subsistence" as adventurers in the flesh trade. Most of the women interviewed are honest and even philosophical about the unremitting brutality they have suffered at the hands of men, for many starting at a very early age and, often, *en famille*. Nonetheless, like the prototypical English feminist, they must still depend on men to rescue them:

At the end of this second millennium, at this juncture of growing social inequalities between classes and countries, a new slave trade is flourishing, mainly involving poor, black women from the Third World. This is sexual tourism. Now it is the victims who deliberately, desperately search for their executioners, tall blond men with blue eyes; grown-up, sexualized angels who fly in birds of steel and whose smiles hold the promise of escape from an opaque, futureless world.

This encounter of woman-child and “Viking Prince” occurs in Northeastern Brazil amid surroundings of exotic tropical beauty. The child-women, born on the periphery of life—many of them still suck their thumbs and sleep with dolls despite their age—dare to believe that a better life lies over the ocean. They dream of happiness. (Prestrello, 2003, 12, my translation)

The Woman Life Collective has been conducting research among sex-workers in and around Boa Viagem since 1992 when the first Latin-American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter Against Domestic and Sexual Violence declared Recife as a center of international sex tourism and trafficking. This research includes questionnaires which women involved in the study helped formulate and distribute to their colleagues. The end result was the first book published in Brazil exploring the phenomenon – *Sexo turismo: o que a gente não faz para realizar um sonho?* (Sex tourism: what won’t we do to make our dreams come true?). The book was translated into German and published in Germany and Austria, at the behest of the *Coletivo*’s German and Austrian sponsor-NGOs. The latest version is based on a sampling of 50 questionnaires distributed, from December 2002 to March 2003, to “girls and women who frequent Boa Viagem beach and who seek or sought an alternative life in sexual tourism” (Prestrello, 2003, 13). Several dozen one-on-one interviews were conducted, although the decision to eliminate the interlocutor’s questions and present them as monologues raises questions about agency and authorship. Here are four women’s stories:

Flávia

I’m 27. I’ve been a call girl since I was sixteen and began to go to the clubs when I was 18. My childhood was difficult. My mother beat me a lot so I grew up a little rebellious. I left home in search of my autonomy because my mother was never going to accept my sexual option. I used to work at Detran (the Dept. of Transit) where I earned very little, four salaries.¹⁷⁹ In ‘the life,’ I make a lot more. I live with my woman. I don’t like men

¹⁷⁹ Brazilian wages are computed on the basis of the number of monthly minimum salaries (*salários*)

of any kind, Brazilians or foreigners. But I like their money so, if they pay me, I'll screw anyone.

I never had kids. I've had three abortions and suffered from violence of all kinds. When I was 15, I was raped by a neighbor and got pregnant. That was the first time I hated a man and my first abortion. I have four [female] friends who carry the HIV virus but even so sometimes I don't use a condom. I'm not afraid to die. I think death can't be worse than the life I have lived and [still] live.

I have had offers to go to Europe but I never wanted to go. I think Brazil is the best place to live, in spite of everything. (72)

Vera Maria

Everyone tells me I'm beautiful. I don't know what good it has brought me. My father is alcoholic. When he comes home, the first person he looks for is me. The other day he got home at 11 at night and woke everyone up beating me. Everybody at home prays he will forget us and never bother us again. I have nine siblings. My mother works as a housekeeper for some rich people. She makes one salary (\$66 per month) which doesn't do any good at all.

I had a good friend at school and I used to go to her house all the time. One Sunday, I was spending the day there and when I came out of the bathroom, there was her father with a pistol in one hand and a knife in the other. He said that if I let him do anything he wanted with me, nothing would happen. After doing what he wanted, he threatened me if I said anything to anyone. I was 12 years old at the time.

Today, I'm 16 and I date the foreigners. At least they pay me in dollars. I'm in the life because I think I can help my mother and my little brothers and sisters. If it wasn't for them, I don't know what I would have done with my life. (45)

Bianca

My childhood was the saddest part of my life. My mother didn't take very good care of me and I ended up suffering something so terrible that I didn't know how to understand it, I just knew it was wrong. I was raped when I was eight years old by my own father. By the time I was conscious of what he had done, it was too late; he had taken my virginity, my soul, my dream of being a virgin when I got married. He stole all of that from me. It still hurts today. I will never again be the same, I'm certain of that. I have had boyfriends and none of them understand why I am so reluctant to make love. When I start to do it, my head is filled with pictures of the rape I suffered, so I end up in tears or stopping halfway through. Many boyfriends stopped dating me because of this.

I only got free of my father when he died. I was 15 and instead of grieving, I wanted to throw a big party to commemorate his death because I hated him. For him to die was all I ever wanted. I wanted to shout and celebrate my freedom.

I began to perceive other things, to think more about my future and myself, to love myself, to live. I was doing well for quite a while until, one day, another tragedy happened to me. It was less painful than the last time with my father, but it made me think and remember what had happened in the past.

I was raped again. This time by a stranger. I was 18 and with a girlfriend, coming from a show and he came up to us with a gun, took us to a dark place and raped us both, then he went away. All I know is that it hurt less, in my body and in my heart. I try to forget all I've suffered, it's difficult, but I have to try.

I come to the beach in Boa Viagem to have fun and, as it happened, I met a German and went out with him for two months before he left. I never heard from him again.

Now I'm seeing a Swiss guy and, God willing, he'll come back to get me and make my dream come true—we'll marry, have a child and I'll live in another country. (40)

Letícia

I'm 32, I live in Igarassu and I'm an artisan. I live here in Brazil because I was expelled from Europe for not having a visa so I could stay. I know many countries: Germany, Italy, Spain, France, Holland, Denmark and Switzerland. What I liked most about

mínimos) a person earns. Four minimum salaries are the equivalent of approximately \$267 a month.

Europe was the weather, the way people treated me and the financial conditions it offers.

I don't like Brazil, no one treats me well, especially these little people in Boa Viagem who treat me like garbage.

My childhood was terrible, my mother didn't let me leave the house, I was locked inside and I had to do all the housework. When I hadn't swept well, if there was a bit of sand on the floor, she beat me a lot. I got married very early so I could be free of her. Now I have three kids and all of them live with their father. I have been married twice, but it didn't work out. Brazilian men are pigs.

My biggest dream is to get a good job, make my home in Europe and have enough money to survive. (91)

The majority of the book is devoted to these first-person narratives, some of them comprising a couple of pages, many limited to a paragraph or two, some just a sentence, in which the women interviewed offer their opinions on sex, drugs, AIDS¹⁸⁰, dreams,

¹⁸⁰ In a July 23, 2005 New York Times article entitled "Prostitution Puts U.S. and Brazil at Odds on AIDS Policy," Larry Rohter writes from Rio de Janeiro: "rather than comply with an American demand that all foreign recipients of AIDS assistance explicitly condemn prostitution, Brazil has decided to forgo up to \$40 million in American support...Brazil, which spends more than \$400 million annually on what is regarded as the most successful AIDS program in the developing world, is taking a pragmatic approach in combating the global epidemic, the experts say, while the United States, increasingly, is not. In order to receive American aid, according to Mark Dybul, deputy coordinator and chief medical officer for the Bush administration's global AIDS initiative, a country must 'acknowledge that prostitution is not a good thing and be opposed to it.' One gauge of Brazil's success in confronting AIDS is to compare the situation here with that of other developing countries, many of which have sent delegations to study the Brazilian program. In 1990, Brazil and South Africa had roughly the same rate of prevalence of HIV among their adult populations, just over 1 percent. Today some studies indicate that 20 percent or more of South African adults of reproductive age are infected with HIV or have AIDS, and estimated total of more than 5 million of the country's 44 million people. In Brazil, in contrast, the rate has dropped nearly by half, and the number of patients being treated has held steady, at about 600,000 out of a total population of 180 million...But the Brazilian approach is anathema to many conservatives in the US because it makes use of methods seen as morally objectionable. Brazil not only operates a needle and syringe exchange program for drug addicts but also rejects the Bush administration's emphasis on abstinence, being faithful and the controlled use of condoms, the so-called ABC approach, in favor of a pragmatism that recognizes that sexual desire can sometimes overwhelm reason. "Obviously abstinence is the safest way to avoid AIDS" Dr. Pedro Chequer, director of the Brazilian government's AIDS program, said in an interview in Brasília, "But it's not viable in an operational sense unless you are proposing that mankind be castrated or genetically altered, and then you would end up with something that is not human but something else altogether. If we increasingly focus the prevention of AIDS along these lines, we are generating carnage, a slaughter. It's not a realistic vision, and the epidemic is going to grow larger and larger...The White House in 2003 announced a five-year \$15 billion program known as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Congress has authorized financing, but required that all groups getting American money make an explicit statement of policy opposing prostitution and sex trafficking. Brazilian AIDS groups that work with prostitutes argue that they are not endorsing the sex trade. Because many of those involved in the Brazilian program are prostitutes themselves, they know the risks involved. "With what we do, we are definitely not encouraging the sexual exploitation of women and girls," said Ivanilda Lima, 64, the director of Fio da Alma [a Brazilian NGO which has been distributing condoms to prostitutes in Rio for years and is partly financed by USAID], who said she had been a prostitute herself since age 13. "We just want women who are already on the streets to be able to protect their health." Under Brazilian law, two people having sex in exchange for money is neither a felony nor a misdemeanor, but an infraction much like a traffic violation (although procurement is a crime)...Brazilian labor law recognizes "sex worker" as a profession. That entitles prostitutes, call girls and street hustlers to contribute to the official government pension fund and to receive benefits when they retire. "We view prostitutes as partners in this effort, partners who are efficient and competent" in getting Brazilians to give up dangerous sexual behavior, Dr. Chequer said.

family, flirtation, and foreign men—comparing Brazilians with Germans, Italians and Swiss. Interspersed with these monologues are editorial pieces, unsigned, but clearly expressing Cecy's perspective:

Chapter 1. Sexual Tourism: OK! Two versions.

On the sidewalks of Boa Viagem beach there is a parade of people with very different life stories. There are the rich who stroll along appreciating the beauty of the sea, of nature, of a beach installed in an urban center that manages to maintain its cleanliness. There is no garbage, nothing rotten or dirty or ugly in this landscape! Amazing!

Other people are looking for life, relaxation. Enjoying the sea, the sun. There are also things for sale, for barter, offered freely, lost!

Just things?

Some people seem so happy on the outside and full on the inside. While others look so sad on the outside and empty within.

There are those who know God and there are those who suffer the pains of hell.

Some have just arrived from far off places while others are about to depart.

Some have respect, others only disrespect. Some notice everything and some are blind hypocrites.

Here there is love, hate, hope, disbelief, humility, arrogance, faithfulness, betrayal, tolerance.

So then, it's a dichotomy, a duality, like yin and yang, day and night, man and woman. Like everything in life: there are always two sides to the coin. And speaking of coin, I just remembered—there is also prostitution.

The girl who participates in sexual tourism wants to have a house, a car, brand-name clothes, the latest color TV, a VCR. But there is no way because she is from the excluded populace, those who dare not even dream. So she creates the illusion that Europe is paradise. A pretty place with the best working conditions, where people respect each other and there is a lot of information. Brazil is only great if you have money. So they start looking for a European 'prince charming' who will take them away from poverty and despair. The image of this 'prince' is constantly present for 80% of these child-women.

A powerful component of the sex tourist industry is that the Brazilian Northeast is home to an extremely patriarchal society. Culturally, women are seen as inferior. Man is still the breadwinner, boss and family-head. Women, especially the pretty ones, are constantly sexually harassed by their bosses, managers, co-workers, neighbors, etc. Many of the young girls who are part of sexual tourism were raped, some of them repeatedly. Even worse, the life stories of these girls are marked by physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence within their own families. Many of them were victims, in childhood or adolescence, of (attempted) rape on the part of their biological fathers, stepfathers, uncles or grandfathers.

The girls are also likely to have been sexually abused by their mothers' boyfriend, lover or eventual companion. This person, who should be her protector, ends up oppressing her even more so that, in most cases, she is forced to leave the house so as not to create "problems" for her mother, or because she can no longer stand to be the target of violence.

A "commonsense" variant of this patriarchal culture is the fact that the woman is constructed, in its imaginary, to want to have a home and a husband who will be the father of her children and sustain and protect her, in other words, a man who makes her feel safe. The woman's world is always seen as private, the public world is reserved for the man.

"Prostitution exists everywhere in the world, including the United States, and we have a commitment to work with this group and respect them." (nytelectronicedition.com, 7/24/05, excerpts)

“Tie up your nanny goats, my ram is on the loose” is a common saying in the Northeast. Women are expected to safeguard their virginity while men are out on the street hunting and carrying on. If the girls do not obey this ritual, they are often thrown out of the house, considered prostitutes and discriminated against.

The overwhelmingly negative vision among the women surveyed of Brazilian men motivates them to attempt to realize their dream of starting a family with a European.

A more subliminal aspect is the globally-disseminated value of the aesthetic of the “white man” as the most beautiful one. To be like Xuxa¹⁸¹ is fantastic. In no comic book or fairy tale is the princess black, she is always a light-skinned blonde who finds a blue-eyed prince who will give her golden angel babies. This violent form of internalized discrimination ends up as an incentive for sexual tourism. Many families think that, by marrying a white man, their daughter will have lighter-skinned descendants and “clean” their blood line.

But, in Pernambuco, there is a crescent flow of women seeking the “golden dream” of marriage and a better life in Europe, preferably Germany. Just go to the airport and you will see them. (Prestrello, 2003, 16-18)

The *Coletivo Mulher Vida* is not in the business of ‘reforming’ sex-workers. The NGO is too pragmatic and too short-handed to undertake such a task. Adriana Pinangé, who has a major role in Holly Mosher’s documentary, “Hummingbird,” is 22 and has an 11-year-old daughter. She ran away from an impossible family situation at 6 and found a job in a *feira* (street market) where she worked until she was raped and became pregnant. When the baby, Adriana was eleven years old. She gave her new-born daughter to her mother and returned to the streets where she was a thief, a *cheira-cola* (glue-sniffer) and a prostitute. She saw her daughter rarely because she was so much “in the life.” When Mônica turned four, Adriana says she realized that, unless she got out, the girl had little chance of avoiding her mother’s fate. So she joined the *Casa de Passagem*, an NGO which works with at-risk adolescent girls, and struggled to leave “the life” behind. When Holly met her two years ago, she was working as an *empregada* (domestic servant), living with her daughter in a miniscule but clean apartment and ‘dating’ a military policeman. According to Holly, Adriana is “a success story”: a conscientious, loving mother and sober, life-affirming veteran who does volunteer work with adolescent street

¹⁸¹ The Aryan ideal of a blue-eyed blonde from Rio Grande do Sul, “Xuxa,” also known as the “Queen of the Short Ones” (*a rainha dos baixinhos*) because of her daily kid’s show on TV Globo, is the Teutonic ideal. She first gained national attention as soccer idol, Pelé’s girlfriend.

girls for whom she serves as a role-model. She is able to articulate the benefits of sobriety and self-respect so that they understand there is an alternative to the self-debasing and often lethal consequences of sex-for-hire.

The “Prince Charming” fantasy of the sex workers of Boa Viagem is a functional illusion. They see the possibility of escape from a life of penury and violence by connecting with foreign tourists who come to Recife, fulfilling their sexual fantasies and involving them emotionally. Meanwhile, the European men enact the role of post-modern *conquistadores*, often with guileless aplomb. A Swedish acquaintance of advanced middle age recently wrote me after a week in Fortaleza, Ceará, another coastal hot spot on the sex tour itinerary 788 kilometers north of Recife, that he was surprised to find the girls so beautiful, warm and inviting and equally amazed that young Brazilian men “seemed to care more about playing soccer on the beach than being with them.” Sexual tourism is but the latest wave of colonial domination of the Third World by the First. That the *garotas de programa* of Boa Viagem and Fortaleza say they find Brazilian men brutal and selfish may be part of the self-hypnosis required to service the invading army of lonely men and sex addicts who, in global post-modernity, brandish credit cards instead of spears and muskets. It may also be true. But brutality and selfishness is a byproduct of centuries of enforced labor, abuse and neglect. Prostitution is not about intimacy. Yet intimacy can be born of amorous contact between people, even if the initial urge is mercantile. Therein lies the hope of an earthly savior that keeps the girls in thrall. Damaged, vulnerable young women in a perilous trade need to believe that someone can cherish them enough to want to take them out of harm’s way. For most, it proves an illusion as pernicious as it is durable. Of those who manage to reach the *terra prometida* of Europe, many are abandoned by their benefactors and forced to return.

Sex and sexual conduct is one of the last frontiers of human behavior. Alfred Kinsey, did his groundbreaking research on human sexuality fifty years ago and caused a furor in conservative mid-twentieth-century North America. Nothing close to the ‘Puritan ethic’ entered into the Brazilian colonization process nor were there ‘settlers’ resembling its progenitors, the Pilgrims, English merchants and their families who had broken away from the Church of England and formed communities of religious seekers intent on establishing the Kingdom of God in the New World. According to historian Bradford Burns (1993, 38):

The Portuguese monarchs customarily sent out on their global expeditions a combination of soldiers, adventurers, and petty criminals condemned to exile. The Portuguese female was noticeably rare during the first century of Brazilian history. Her scarcity conferred a sexual license on the conquerors, already well acquainted with Moorish, African, and Asian women. The Indian women submitted to the desires of the European males. Men like Caramurú attested to the Iberian potency by siring villages of miscegenated offspring. As a result, there appeared almost at once a “new race,” the *mameluco* or *caboclo*, a blend of European and Indian well-adapted physically and psychologically to the land...The Indians provided more than sexual gratification: they facilitated Portuguese adjustment to the new land.

The indigenes were protected, from the start, by Jesuit missionaries intent on bringing them into the Catholic fold. In 1511, a decade after Brazil’s ‘discovery’ by the Portuguese, King Manuel I “ruled that no one was to harm his Indian subjects upon pain of the same punishment as if he had injured a European.” In 1609, King Philip III “declared that all Indians, whether Christian or heathen, were by nature free, could not be forced to work, and must be paid for their work when they volunteered it. Strong pressures from the planters, including riots in Brazil, induced him to modify his position in 1611 in order to permit once again the enslavement of war prisoners, a concession much abused. The high death rate among the Indians exposed to European demands and diseases, their retreat into the interior, their amalgamation and into the new Brazilian society through miscegenation, and the increasing importation of Africans to meet the

growing labor needs of the colony did more to solve the complex question of Indian-European relations than did all the altruistic but impractical or ignored legislation of the Portuguese kings” (Burns, 1993, 40-41). No such altruism was extended to the Africans. Slaves were imported into Portugal from the West African coast as early as 1433 and, by mid-sixteenth century, “the trade between Angola and Brazil reached such proportions that the former became practically a dependency of the latter. (...) By the close of the eighteenth century, the merchants of Rio de Janeiro alone were dispatching twenty-four ships a year to that African colony. (...) A conservative estimate of the number of blacks surviving the Atlantic crossing to Brazil, over the span of three centuries, was about 3.5 million. (...) Precise origins are difficult to ascertain because of the mixing of the slaves in Brazil as well as miscegenation with whites and Indians, and because the government in 1890 [two years after Abolition] ordered destroyed many official records relating to slavery” (Burns, 1993, 42-43). In the *mestiço* (mixed race) origins of Brazil, “the notion of who is black, mixed or white...may change greatly...depending on the classifier, the situation, or the region...meanings about race are not fixed but relational and subject to redefinition in different cultures...the term *côr* (color) is more commonly used than race...one’s color in Brazil commonly carries connotations about one’s value according to...Western racial ideology” (Telles, 2004, 79).

Sexual tourism in Recife, historically “the first truly bourgeois commercial center in Brazil” which was a “village of 150 houses” when the Dutch invaded in 1630 and a “bustling port with over 2,000 houses” (Burns, 1993, 54) when they were defeated and expelled by Portuguese and Brazilian forces 24 years later, picks at the scabs of the country’s slave-dependent past. The majority of the sex workers are impoverished women of color and their European clients are affluent and white. The young women have

escaped from broken homes where they have been abused and dominated by the men in their lives. Unschooled and unskilled, they can make far more money selling their bodies than by engaging in menial work. The young men playing soccer on the beach are not uninterested in female company, they are aware of the income it generates when tourists are around and accustomed to life on the margins of illicit but profitable pursuits. As pimps or street-sellers and delivery boys for drug pushers and audio/video pirates, they are an endangered species—the first to die when deals go sour. In the Northeast, the master-slave dialectic has not changed for the majority of the populace since Padre Antônio Vieira, a Jesuit priest and early Abolitionist, described it three hundred and fifty years ago:

O inhuman traffic where merchandise is men! Few masters, many slaves; masters richly dressed, slaves despised and naked; masters banqueting, slaves dying of hunger; masters swimming in gold and silver, slaves loaded down with irons; masters treating their slaves like brutes; slaves in fear and awe of their masters as if they were gods; masters present at a whipping, standing like statues of might and tyranny, slaves prostrated, their hands strapped behind their backs, like debased emblems of servitude... Can there be a greater want of understanding, or a greater error of judgment between men and men than for me to think that I must be your master because I was born farther away from the sun, and that you must be my slave because you were born nearer to it?...An Ethiope, if he be cleansed in the waters of the Congo is clean, but he is not white; but if cleansed in the water of baptism, he is both (Burns, 1993, 45-46).

The “waters of baptism” for the children, adolescent girls and women who participate in the *Coletivo*’s three main projects: *Criança Feliz*, *Viva Menina Adolescente* and *Mulher Cidadã*, have been sullied by destitution, inadequate and overcrowded housing and inappropriate sexual pressure from adults. Children sexually manipulated by people on whom they depend bear psychological scars for the rest of their lives. If they become prostitutes, their traumas are constantly catalyzed so they anesthetize the pain by ‘numbing out’ with alcohol, drugs and self-destructive behavior like unprotected intercourse. Vânia Sueidy, a psychologist and supervisor of the *Viva Menina Adolescente* program writes:

To speak of sexuality sends us to other aspects of human life. Society and family exercise fundamental roles in the construction of concepts, beliefs, values and taboos

about sexuality. Such ideas permeate people's lives and are expressed in feelings, thoughts and attitudes that will facilitate or retard the formation of bonds necessary for the healthy development of emotional, social, cultural and intellectual occasions for each individual.

First, however, we have to reflect on the importance of speaking about sexuality in a clear, simple and natural way because nowadays the media, with all their power, range and influence, often determine how people ought to think, act and behave in relation to sexuality. In the majority of cases, young people absorb such information without evaluating what is being presented critically.

Thus, information is passed on in an erroneous and distorted manner, unleashing a series of extreme behaviors leading some young people to become involved in extremely coercive situations.

It is not enough to just offer information; it is essential that parents and educators create safe places where children and youths can communicate their ideas, opinions, fears and curiosity about sexuality in a healthy and positive manner.

When an individual accepts her sexuality, she is immediately connected to all her creative potential and able to take responsibility and make commitments, aspiring to a state of well-being, balance and confidence that can make her happier. After all, speaking of sexuality is speaking of LIFE. (WLC Workshop Book, 2002, p.10, my translation)

The Woman Life Collective's sexuality workshops focus on participants' self-esteem and acceptance of their bodies as sources of pleasure. One of the ways the adolescent girls and women who are their clients get in touch with their bodies is by moving them to music—not the frenetic rhythms and acrobatic steps of the native *frevo* but the slow and sensual music of the Middle East that accompanies *a dança da ventre*, the belly dance. As Shakespeare's Richard III anthropomorphizes: "Grim-visag'd war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front,/And now, instead of mounting barb'd steeds/To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,/He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber/To the lascivious pleasing of a lute" (Act I, sc. 1, lines 8-13). The older women, stiff and battle-scarred after years of subjugation and abuse, confront their fears and inhibitions while loosening the tension in their limbs and joints to the hypnotic strains of *dumbek*¹⁸², *oud*¹⁸³ and flute. The younger women and adolescent girls need no urging, they giggle and wiggle their shoulders and hips—most of them are so skinny they have no bellies to work with but they go with the

¹⁸² An hourglass-shaped Middle Eastern and North African hand drum, traditionally made of clay with a goatskin drumhead.

¹⁸³ A ten-string Middle Eastern or North African lute, with a long, fretted neck and a hollow, pear-shaped body with a vaulted back.

flow. At some point, the leader turns off the light, lowers the volume of the music and asks the participants to close their eyes and keep moving around the room. When the music stops they are to reach out and touch the nearest person. In pairs, they choose who is the “banana” and who is the “apple”. The bananas stand still as the apples approach and initiate body-to-body contact sans hands. The exercise proceeds amidst gales of nervous laughter from the participants. Then the leader calls for the groups to switch roles and the bananas become the mobile ones. A classical piece by Debussy, Scarlatti or Ravel may be the next selection. The participants are asked to close their eyes, feel the music and let their bodies respond. Some of the women sway their hips with outstretched arms while others stand still, their eyes shut and their hands clenched. The corporal rigidity that forms around fear does not melt in a day. Next, participants are asked to get back into pairs and touch one another as they would like to be touched, excluding genital contact. After this is over, the leader invites the group to discuss the exercises and what they brought up. The women are tentative, shy, embarrassed. The leader asks them what they felt: who was able to go with her feelings? Who had difficulty? Most say it wasn’t easy but they enjoyed it. They are asked to consider their own bodies a source of pleasure and to touch them with the same respect and attention with which they touched those of their partners in the exercise. Similar techniques are employed to deal with the ‘sub-themes’ of virginity, masturbation, safe sex, homosexuality and prostitution. Music and movement are interspersed with discussion. The group leader in a discussion on the importance of virginity asks the participants’ views of pre-marital virginity and encourages them to talk about their own sexual indoctrination. The group discusses some popular virginity ‘myths’: that you can tell by looking into a girl’s eyes or by the way she walks that she is no longer a virgin; that by sacrificing your virginity before marriage you

sacrifice the respect of the community and disgrace your family; that heavy petting may cause the hymen to break; that adolescents who do not have sex become homosexual.

On the 24th of September, 2004 I accompanied Vânia Sueidy to a weekly *Mulher Cidadã* (Woman Citizen) meeting in the working class Recife neighborhood of *Alto da Bondade*. Vânia is slight and fair with flashing blue eyes and fulsome energy. We spent the 40-minute bus ride from the *Coletivo*'s headquarters in *Casa Caiada* to the *Praça Treze de Maio* in Recife talking, Vânia telling me of her 19-year-old daughter's recent trip to Italy where she went as part of a troupe of Brazilian dancers and drummers and about her own imminent voyage to Berlin with Ilcéia Alves Soares, a psychologist at the Setúbal *Coletivo*, to demonstrate some of their *oficina tematica* (thematic workshop) techniques to the German NGO, *Asas*, which has been funding their work with adolescents. She spoke of the *Coletivo*'s growing collaboration with two other Recife-based NGOs, Canal 3 (which specializes in teaching teens the basics of TV production) and TV Capibaribe, a local station that is the closest thing Recife has to 'public access,' one of whose functionaries, Marcos, suggested that the two organizations had overlapping interests. It was Marcos who brought the idea of making cardboard 'pinhole cameras' to the *Coletivo*. His introductory photography classes were a great hit with the children. As anyone who has seen *Born Into Brothels*¹⁸⁴ knows, oppressed children, when given cameras, film and freedom to photograph their world, have as much talent as the best of us.

On the bus to the *Alto*, Vânia told me a story about a young German volunteer who, after working at the *Coletivo* for several months, objected to the emotional nature of their explorations into the minds and hearts of troubled teens until one day he broke down and

¹⁸⁴ A 2004 Oscar-winning documentary, by Zana Briskie and Ross Kauffman, shot in Calcutta's Sonagachi 'red light district, celebrates the resiliency and photographic talent of a small group of prostitutes' children for whom Briskie finds cameras.

admitted that his relationship with his father was both repressive and violent and that he had accepted being beaten as something he deserved. I think the German-Brazilian connection is an interesting one, each nationality possessing characteristics the other lacks—the Brazilians punctuality and discipline and the Germans spontaneity and human warmth. The fact that the majority of the *Coletivo*'s sponsors are German is proof positive of the extent to which they have opened themselves to the non-Aryan world since the death of the *Führer* and his *Reich* sixty years ago. My disgust at Hitler's refusal to personally award Jesse Owens his four gold medals at the 1936 Berlin Olympics of which I learned as the sports-loving, American-born son of a German Jew, is somewhat assuaged by the knowledge that German philanthropies support the *Coletivo*'s work with black and *mestiço* children in the world's largest black nation this side of Africa.¹⁸⁵

When we finally arrived at the *espaço aula* (class space, in this case a church) in the *Alto da Bondade*, we were momentarily stunned by the *mormaço* (overwhelming heat and humidity) in the room. I went to buy some bottled water for Vânia as the participants, neighborhood women, began to appear. By the time the *oficina* began at 3 PM, there were a dozen women sitting on the wooden pews we moved into an angular approximation of a culture 'circle.'

The veteran *educadora*, Maria, a very *simpática* Afro-Brazilian lady who has taught continuing education classes in the *Alto da Bondade* for many years, planned the entire program, starting with repetitive sound and movement exercises (which appeared difficult for some of the less coordinated and retentive members of the group) followed by a creative project for which we divided into three groups, were given pencils and

¹⁸⁵ Hannah Arendt writes (1958, 50-51): "the most intense feeling we know (...) the experience of great bodily pain (...) deprives us of our feeling for reality to such an extent that we can forget it more quickly and easily than anything else." Historical pain lingers. As a boy, reading about Hitler's spurning of the great negro athlete, Jesse Owens, in the 1936 Berlin Olympics encapsulated the Nazi menace that changed my family's fate. The fact that I had a non-Jewish mother made me one of the *mischlingskinde* (miscegenated children) by Nazi standards. This is another reason I identify with Brazilian *mestiçagem*.

crayons and chose folded slips of paper with subjects to draw (mine read “tractor”) in collaboration with the three other members of the group. All of this was done in absolute silence. I appreciated the quiet and struggled with basic tractor design, finally coming up with something that suffered in detail but seemed to fit with the work of my companions in terms of scale and expertise. The works were then displayed to all assembled and each group spoke about the connections between their individual drawings and what they felt the assemblage represented. Although I was freed of this burden, my tractor was a definite hit since it blended with the other drawings (of a steer, a pig, and a fence) arranged as a *collage* on the same piece of paper by the other members of the group. I was asked to speak to the women about the reason for my being in Recife and presence at their *reunião* (meeting) and, when I mentioned that I lived in Los Angeles, there were questions about whether the way the U.S., and particularly California, was portrayed on TV was *verídico* (true to life). One of the women asked me about all those houses without fences and prosperous-looking people. I said that those images were meant to create hunger and yearning in the viewing audience, as were the *novelas* (serialized dramas) on *TV Globo*. I added that the media was controlled by corporate conglomerates in the hands of a worldwide elite and that that meant the rest of us needed to read and watch what they called ‘news’ and ‘entertainment’ very carefully. I was also questioned about the upcoming U.S. elections and the sentiment against Bush. Vânia then spoke about the sexual harassment of children in the home that has reached epidemic proportions in Brazil. She asked us to guess how many cases had been reported in the nation as a whole in 2003 and we all guessed low. Nine million cases! We closed the workshop with a ‘*roda de beijo*’ (round of kisses) in which all the participants form a circle, receiving a kiss on the cheek from the person on one side and transmitting it to the

person on the other side of them (the kiss is sent twice, clockwise and counterclockwise). This closing ceremony is very much in keeping with the ‘pedagogy of affection’ Cecy and her *Coletivo companheiras* spouse.

The next day I went to *Chão de Estrelas* (Floor of Stars), one of the oldest *favelas* in Recife, with another *educadora* from the *Coletivo*, Monica, where we met with 15 mostly younger women and a very sharp *monitora* who, with the elections barely a week away, chose to focus on politics. I traveled from the Port of Recife all the way out to the *Coletivo* in *Casa Caiada* on a bus, passing the aftermath of a drowning in Olinda—a crowd of people onshore and a little boat bringing back the body from the choppy green sea beyond the breakwater. I waited 20 minutes at the *Coletivo*, reading the special *Diario de Pernambuco* issue on Josué de Castro. Mônica is, by her own description, a *cafusa* (the descendant of blacks and indians) who grew up in the Olinda neighborhood of Ouro Preto and graduated from Catholic University with a degree in social work. She has been working as an educator and, most recently, an administrator at the *Coletivo* for the past eight years. Monica is married and has two children, a four-year-old daughter and a son of eighteen months. We hit it off from the start – the extra trip was worth it just to be able to have time to talk on the bus back to Recife.

Whenever I mentioned *Chão de Estrelas* to my friends in Olinda, their response was “*é muito perigoso*” (it’s very dangerous) or “*aí só dá ladrão e marginal*” (there are only crooks and marginal people there). What I saw out the bus window was different than what they had led me to expect: lots of small but sturdy houses (some with verandahs) from a bygone era. Recife’s oldest *favela* looked and felt like a neighborhood with its roots in the 1940s, more habitable in every way than the horrors built during the dictatorship twenty years later (the Olinda neighborhood of *Rio Doce*, for instance) which

reminded me of Stalinist, proletarian apartment houses on the outskirts of Moscow: dismal ‘projects’ seemingly built to shame and oppress their inhabitants¹⁸⁶.

There were fifteen women present in the small high school classroom where we met, excluding Mônica, their *monitora* and me. After warm up exercises and introductions in a circle, we broke up into three groups and were given two questions each. Those given my group were: a) There is a popular saying that ‘people get the government they deserve.’ Agree or disagree?; b) What’s the difference between a nullified vote and a blank ballot?" I suggested to the five women in the group to which I was assigned that I play the interviewer and they agreed. We ran through it once so that everybody would have a chance to speak within the 10 allotted minutes. No one agreed with the first statement and three women, Marineide, Maria José and Jeanete Giane argued the point. Ana Maria and Marta Xavier explained the difference between a *voto nulo* and a *voto em branco*: the former is nullified because of some irregularity and rendered useless whereas the latter is left blank by the voter and goes to the frontrunner after all of the marked votes are tabulated. The other two group presentations were both ‘role-play situations.’ The first and best featured an Afro-Brazilian lady who had arrived complaining about a badly swollen gland in her armpit but was totally convincing as a door-to-door canvasser.

Afterwards, I was encouraged to speak about what brought me to Brazil and asked to explain the present U.S. administration which I tried to do by telling the story of the last election and how thousands of "*votos nulos*" in Florida helped turn the tide toward Bush. There was a lot of good dialogue with people listening to each other and speaking openly and frankly about issues—especially the core group which had been attending weekly meetings for years. The newcomers were very shy, especially in the presence of an

¹⁸⁶ I traveled in what was still the Soviet Union in 1988 and, taking the Moscow subway to the end of the line, surfaced to find a welter of such buildings standing forlorn in an urban no man’s land devoid of hope.

unknown man. Later Monica explained that the '*caracol*,' an intensification of the *roda de beijo* in which the women wind themselves into a tight, snail-shell formation for a group embrace was eschewed due to my presence. It takes some women months, even years, to feel comfortable with such an open display of affection. We did the *roda de beijo* in both directions and, although there was no food served at the end (like the delicious fruit salad with condensed milk at the *Alto da Bondade* meeting the day before) I felt nourished by the experience. I exchanged addresses with some of the women in the group and told them I would return the next time I came to Recife.

Two things I learned: 1) there are no public pre-school programs in Pernambuco so kids start school in *primeira série* (6 years old) and the *bolsas escolas* (small school stipends) do not kick in until then; 2) the idiom "chá de cadeira" (literally, 'tea in a chair') is used to describe a long waiting period. One of the women, describing a day spent in the vestibule of the Chamber of Deputies (*Câmara dos Vereadores*) in Recife, said "*A gente toma chá de cadeira naquele lugar.*" [We waited forever in that place.]¹⁸⁷

Several of the women in the workshop accompanied Mônica and me to the bus stop and, while we waited, one of them spoke about a job she had in Rio de Janeiro cleaning the Municipal Theatre, a baroque landmark still very much in use. She said that a number of *fantasmas* (ghosts) inhabited the artists' dressing rooms. She worked from midnight to 6 AM and it was in the 'small hours of the morning' that the apparitional

¹⁸⁷ *Vereador* is an entrance into local politics. In Brazil's multiparty system before a national election, every candidate gets a few minutes of local TV time to talk about the issues. Most of these are candidates for *vereador*. In Recife, where the municipal Chamber of Deputies is composed of 39 *vereadores*, there were 580 candidates in last year's elections. The diminishing interest in suffrage currently threatening the democratic autonomy of the U.S. is the antithesis of the compulsory-for-everyone-sixteen-and-over Brazilian vote and the street demonstrations (*comícios*) that prepare for it. Having survived three months of trucks, and even bicycles, with half a dozen speakers blaring campaign slogans at top volume circumnavigating the plaza in front of my house, I left a week before election day, my chronic tinnitus exacerbated by the sonic onslaught, my friends incredulous that I chose not to witness the grand finale of the Brazilian electoral carnival.

activity grew most intense: “*As vezes, quando abrí a porta de um camarim, era uma senhora fazendo a maquilagem em frente do espelho. As vezes era um senhor ensaiando uma canção. Ninguém gostava das minha interrupções. Deixei o serviço depois de três meses por causa dos nervos—vivia estatelada! As almas penadas fazem muito barulho! Deus me livre, quasi morrí de pavor!*” [Sometimes, when I opened the door of a dressing room, there was a lady putting on her makeup in front of the mirror. Sometimes it was a gentleman rehearsing a song. No one liked my interruptions. I quit after three months because my nerves couldn’t take it—I was on the verge of collapse! Souls in pain make a lot of noise! God spare me, I almost died of fright!] By the time the bus arrived, I was totally enthralled by this Scheherazade¹⁸⁸ and regretted having to leave *Chão de Estrelas* so soon. Speak to the people in any city, town, village or hamlet in South America and you begin to understand that the so-called “magic realism” of writers like Graciliano Ramos, Machado de Assís, Jorge Amado, Jorge Luís Borges, Mario Vargas Llosa, Gabriel Garcia-Marquez and Guillermo Cabrera Infante is derivative, a mimetic distillation of *la voz del pueblo*. The great Latin American *literati* are but amanuenses, scribes, who take dictation, burnish and shape what they glean from the ‘unlettered’ multitude.

The *Coletivo* has three “principles: 1) to believe in the potential and ability of human beings to be happy; 2) to comprehend that each person is the subject of her own history and responsible for the transformation of her humanity and her relation to the ecosystem; 3) to understand that world peace includes respect for differences.”¹⁸⁹ The *Coletivo*’s

¹⁸⁸ In the *Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* Scheherazade, a captive Persian princess in the harem of the Sultan of India, tells him a tale every night so he will spare her life. Russian composer Nikolai Rimski-Korsakov set the story to music in an 1888 symphonic suite.

¹⁸⁹ This and the following definitions are from a one-page, tri-fold, multi-colored, glossy handout with four photographs of smiling, energetic, outspoken adolescent girls in action which is impressive—eye-catching, positive, informative and succinct. In one of the pictures a young woman of color is wearing a sign with the words “*Tapinha não doi?*” (A slap doesn’t hurt?)

“Vocation is to develop methodological instruments focused on rescuing self-esteem and building collective knowledge to respond to situations of domestic and sexual violence.” There are two “Target Public(s): a) children, adolescents and women from low-income communities in Metropolitan Recife whose fundamental rights have been infringed [so that they are] passive and/or in situations of domestic violence, abuse and sexual exploitation” and, b) “multiplying agents – students, leadership groups, diverse technicians and professionals – interested in the Woman Life Collective’s training and prevention methodologies.” These methodologies are diffused through four projects: *Criança Feliz* (Happy Child) which “supports 200 children and adolescents, from 7 to 18-years-old and 50 women in ‘at risk’ situations in the Boa Viagem neighborhood;” *Mulher Cidadã* (Woman Citizen) which “acts in the area of prevention and confrontation of domestic violence against women, developing a training program in gender, human rights and citizenship;” *Viva Menina Adolescente* (Long Live The Adolescent Girl) which “develops the work of prevention and confrontation of domestic and sexual violence with 360 adolescents from the Recife Metropolitan Region;” and *Núcleo de Formação e Capacitação* (Training and Enabling Nucleus) which “promotes the training of students, educators, technicians and representatives of civil society in preventing and combating domestic and sexual violence.” The “*Coletivo*’s Mission is to prevent and combat the domestic violence, abuse and sexual exploitation experienced by women, adolescents and children. The Woman Life Collective accomplishes this work through direct action and the development of forums for training, valuing the respect for differences and for different people, seeking to solidify a culture of peace.”

The Woman Life Collective is impressive on paper. But what impressed me most was the openness and altruism of the people who work there and the people they work

with, children, adolescents and women, who always made me feel welcome and at home when I was among them. Among the *Coletivo* events I attended were rehearsals for theatrical productions, public performances of the productions (one involving children and the other adolescents) and two conferences where adolescents from the *Coletivo* mixed with peer groups sponsored by other NGOs. The first of these was a three-day *Encontro de Jovens* (Youth Encounter) held at the *Colégio Salesiano*, an elite parochial school in the upscale Recife neighborhood of Boa Vista. There were 200 teenage participants from a network of NGOs including Caritas, the Dom Helder Câmara Foundation of Paraíba, the National Organization of Street Children, Coletivo Mulher Vida, Casa de Passagem, indigenous representatives from the Xukuru tribe in Pesqueira, the high sertão of Pernambuco, and the descendants of a escaped slaves (*quilombolas de Conceição das Crioulas*) in Salgueiros. The final day, Sunday, August 29, presented an interesting contrast between what the program offered—*relatórios* (student reports) of the work in Saturday's *oficinas temáticas* (workshops on regional dances, theater, politics, history, digital design, and circus arts, all led by experts) and what the young people were interested in after several days of intense intermingling: "*recadinhos*" (little *billets doux* of romantic interest and sexual attraction) brought up to the front of the auditorium and read over the PA system by various student MCs. At one point, Lídia Lira, the event coordinator, voiced her disappointment with the lack of attention being paid to what was going on "on stage." I had to change my seat to one three rows from the proscenium in order to be able to hear what was being said by the various groups of jovens who were there to show and talk about the production of the various workshops. I recalled the phrase "*aprender de aprender*" (to learn to learn) from a 'mission statement' mural at CEFET, a teacher's college in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte which I had visited the week

before. With all their energy and enthusiasm, these young people have not learned to exercise self-restraint when it comes to listening and learning from each other in situations like the one they themselves helped create. The fact that the “Adolescents Alive...Adolescents in Life” encounter was organized by the participants themselves” was a point of pride. Many of these young people were in their teens and very intelligent and prepossessing individuals but when they gathered en masse in the large Salesian highschool auditorium, the socio-erotic vanquished the dialogic and pedagogical aspects of the program with astonishing ease. Much of this, I am sure, was due to the young people’s excitement about being together in such a place, well fed, heard and encouraged to speak out about a variety of interesting and polemical topics--gender, education, history, sexuality, pregnancy, social exclusion, violence, citizenship, work opportunities, human rights, differences between rural and urban life, public policy regarding youth, adolescents and the media, etc.¹⁹⁰

¹⁹⁰ The ‘Adolescents Alive’ workshops that I attended seemed very Freirian in their methodology. For example, in his theater workshop, Professor Jader Austragésilo asked for eight ‘generative words’ from the 18 participants. They came up with *Alegria, Amor, Solidão, Forte, Adolescente, Violência, Mulher, Caminhar* and used them to compose the following *cartazes* (posters): “*Alegria com amor não traz solidão, tornamos adolescentes fortes para combater a violência em geral e contra a mulher, por isso caminhamos para um mundo melhor*” [Happiness with love does not bring solitude, we become strong adolescents to combat violence in general and against women, that is why we march for a better world]; “*O Adolescente na Caminhada encontra forte solidão/Mas a alegria do Amor nos preenche o coração*” [Adolescents encounter a lot of loneliness along the way/But the happiness of Love fills our hearts]; “*A violência é forte com o adolescente e a mulher, por isso temos que caminhar com alegria e amor no coração*” [Violence is strong among adolescents and women, we have to keep on with joy and love in our hearts]; “*Forte é encontrar no caminho do amor a verdadeira alegria, o difícil é a solidão acompanhar a vida de um adolescente!*” [It is powerful to find true happiness on the road of love, what is difficult is the solitude that accompanies adolescent life!]; “*No caminhar do amor, o adolescente precisa ser muito forte para superar os obstáculos à sua frente, é necessário ser alegre para superá-las. A vida tem a cor que voce pinta.*” [On the road of love, the adolescent needs to be very strong to overcome the obstacles in her path, you have to be happy to overcome them. Life is the color that you paint it.]; “*Ser adolescente é ser forte, caminhar com amor e alegria e mesmo na solidão, não partir para violência, principalmente contra a mulher.*” [To be an adolescent you must be strong, walking with love and happiness and even in loneliness, not resorting to violence, especially against women.] In another *oficina*, sponsored by *Caritas* and led by Professor Marcia Acioli of the University of Brasília, the generative theme was “What have I got to do with adolescent social exclusion, violence and citizenship?” and the medium was portraiture. Here the keywords were *olho, nariz, boca, orelha, sobancelha* [eye, nose, mouth, ear, eyebrow]. Participants were divided into groups of four or five, and given cardboard boxes to cut into pieces and on the back of each piece write one of the keywords. Then, posing for each other, each participant drew his/her assigned part as large as the cardboard piece and painted it. The results were mammoth composite portraits of the colorful young artists themselves.

My friend Marcos, whom I convinced to join me for the final presentations, remarked that the current state of affairs is very bleak as far as the availability of federal, state and municipal funds is concerned—so it is up to the NGOs to lead the way. There has been lots of criticism lately about their accessory role in the neo-liberal, global takeover but from what I witnessed at this conference which brought a number of NGOs together to *tecer parcerias* (weave partnerships) by funding grass-roots programs like the *Coletivo*, *Caritas* or *Casa de Passagem* which have spent years analyzing and penetrating the complex regional realities, they are a positive force for change unlikely to be duplicated or supplanted by the slow-moving machinery of the hegemonic bureaucracy.

I last saw Cecy a few days before I left Brazil, on the 24th of September, 2004, center stage at a morning meeting of ARC (the Regional Children's Associations) held at the Eufrânio Barbosa Theater in Varadouro, Olinda. She had dyed her gray hair bright orange and was leading a packed house of boisterous adolescents of both sexes in a rousing rendition of the Brazilian equivalent of "We Shall Overcome," a protest song against the leaden years of the military dictatorship. Those times are not dead for her and yet she seems immune to the "memory disease" that Maria Rita Kehl describes as afflicting "those who do not want to right wrongs but cannot forget them" because she lives her possible dream. Cecy is striding back and forth across the stage like *La Pasionária*, one fist in the air and the other holding a microphone as she leads 200 adolescents, arms linked and swaying from side to side, through *Coração Civil*¹⁹¹

*Quero a utopia, quero tudo mais:
Quero a felicidade dos olhos de um pai,
Quero a alegria, muita gente feliz,
Quero que a justiça reine em meu país.
Quero a liberdade, quero vinho e pão,
Quero ter amizade, quero amor, prazer,
Quero nossa cidade sempre ensolarada,*

¹⁹¹ A song by Milton Nascimento and Fernando Brant from the album, *A Arte do Milton Nascimento*, 1988. My translation.

Os meninos e o povo no poder, eu quero ver.

[I want the utopia, I want everything
I want the happiness of a parent's eyes,
I want joy, lots of happy people,
I want justice to reign in my country.
I want liberty, I want wine and bread,
I want friendship, love and pleasure,
I want our city always filled with sun,
I want to see children and the People in power.

Guiomar Albuquerque Barbosa was the first popular educator whose interview I recorded when I went to Recife for the CLACSO conference in November, 1999. The trip to Brazil, my first in nine years, was overshadowed by my mother's violent death in Staten Island, New York the day I returned. Transcribing and translating Guiomar's stories of her early days teaching fishermen on the Ilha do Maruim was occupational therapy for me at a difficult time. To have survived a difficult childhood in a challenging environment, to have found her vocation at the tender age of thirteen, to have persisted and triumphed as a teacher despite all the obstacles—all of Guiomar's accomplishments and her indomitable *joie de vivre* testified to the adaptability and endurance of the human spirit. In succeeding interviews, recorded in 2002 and 2004, Guiomar's story became more complex. In order to evenings with her children, she decided to leave the CEJA and take a desk job as the principal of the Norma Coelho elementary school in the same building, the CAIC, where for years she taught Portuguese literacy to youth and adults. As an educational appointee of the Mayor of Olinda, she has become involved in party politics despite negative feelings about the political pressure that forced her and her CEJA colleagues out of the CAIC in 1997. As a popular educator, a school administrator, a wife and a mother, she is being pulled in different directions and has begun to feel the strain. The following is her story as she related it to me on several occasions from 1999-2004—the odyssey of a passionate pedagogue from 13 to 35.

4.2 Guiomar's Story

When Guiomar was thirteen, she began to teach fishermen in the *Ilha do Maruim* (Mosquito Island) *mocambo*¹⁹² of Olinda, how to read and write. A top student in the seventh grade of the local parochial school, Guiomar already understood that literacy is a passport, not a birthright. It was 1984. She had watched her father struggle to sign his name so he could vote in the upcoming elections, the first in twenty years. The generals who had ruled Brazil since 1964 were still in power. Guiomar had a job in the national literacy program, MOBRAL, which did not specify that *monitoras*¹⁹³ have any special education: as long as they could read and write, they could teach others to do the same. She was also a volunteer in the Baptist Community Action Center of the Ilha do Maruim (CBACIM) where needy children, many of them the sons and daughters of local fishermen, were cared for, taught and fed.¹⁹⁴ The fishermen were attempting to set up a cooperative. Guiomar and another member of her church conducted a survey to determine how many of them would be interested in learning to read. "There was no one there to teach me how to teach," she remembers, "MOBRAL had no training courses. So I used children's books, primers, to give a lesson in the traditional way, that had nothing to do with the lives they led."

One day a group of *pesquisadores* (researchers) from the *Josué de Castro*¹⁹⁵

¹⁹² *Mocambo* is synonymous with *favela* in Northeast Brazil. It describes the common abode of the poor: a one room hut with walls of sticks and mud (*pau a pique, taipa*) or a rough mix of sand and cement (*capim*) and a dried grass roof (*teto de palha*).

¹⁹³ The term for a woman who teaches an adult literacy class. Other variants are *facilitador/a* and *animador/a*. Generally, a *monitora* is a teacher's aide or paraprofessional without official credentials or a license to teach.

¹⁹⁴ Founded in 1983 by the Second Baptist Church of Olinda, among CBACIM's first projects was "an auxiliary study program for children from preschool to fourth grade with three snacks a day and medical and nutritional checkups by trained professionals." (from a "Brief History" of the organization published in 2000, p. 1, translation mine).

¹⁹⁵ Josué de Castro, a Recife native, is described as a "physician, nutritionist, human geographer, and humanist without equal" by Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1993, 153). In his 1946 magnum opus, *Geografia da Fome*, de Castro reported that the average daily intake of a rural worker in the *Zona da Mata* was 1,700 calories, a startling statistic that has been, scandalously, reduced to 1,500 calories in more recent reports! Scheper-Hughes also mentions a 1990 statistical survey that found that "40 percent of all rural children in

Foundation, an NGO, came to work with the fishermen. Like Paulo Freire, whose Reading Circles had been popular on the Ilha before the generals assumed control in 1964, they proposed to study the fishermen's world before suggesting any changes. As a resident teacher, Guiomar was invited to join them. The researchers, university-trained natural and social scientists, immersed themselves in the fishermen's day-to-day existence and Guiomar was asked to pay particular attention to their language, determining which were the key words (*as palavras chaves*) by how frequently they were used in conversation.

The men wanted to learn to read, to write and to calculate because they were being exploited by shrewd middlemen, *atravessadores*, who advanced them money to mend their nets and patch their canoes but bought their fish for a pittance. The fishermen expressed their *ansiedade*, strong desire, to be literate so they could sell their catch directly to the public and have more money to spend on existential necessities.

At first, it was difficult for Guiomar to control a class of forty men. The youngest was seventeen and the oldest sixty-three. From the start, they challenged her authority ("Who do you think you are? You're just a kid!"). One man tried to take her watch so he could pawn it. They said she didn't know what it was to go hungry, to be part of the unceasing battle they waged with life. She lived through these difficult situations by making them part of class discussions about respect, the futility of envy and how people could learn to live without threats or violence. The men were embarrassed to be taught by a fourteen-year-old girl who seemed to know more than they did. Being part of the remedial MOBREAL program was shameful too. They insisted that Guiomar close the classroom door so they would not be overheard struggling with words that everyone else already knew. But there was a wall around the place that the neighborhood children the Northeast could be classified as nutritionally dwarfed."

climbed to taunt them: "Hey! Mobral! Mobral!"

When the men told Guiomar they would be absent for a few days because the moon was right and the tides were good for fishing, she had a sudden inspiration:

"I'll go with you. We'll have class in the boat."

"No, no, there's no way. It's dark. The boat could spring a leak."

"Yes, there is a way. We're going to do this. We don't need light to have dialogue. Besides, I'm not going as your *monitora*. This time *you'll* teach *me*."

It was pitch black when they left, and raining. This was Guiomar's first real experience of the fishermen's world, an opportunity to see them work. As they launched the boats, rolling them down to the surf on palm logs, the men began to talk. They explained to Guiomar the difference between high tide and low tide, how to cast a net, how to separate the different types of fish and keep them fresh without ice, how the catch was divided with the *atravessador*. Out beyond the coral reef that gives Recife its name, the swell was large and constant and she began to be sick. Nevertheless, it was a worthwhile experience. She had never before thought seriously about teaching. Adrift on stormy seas in a small boat with no land in sight, nauseated, surrounded by students-turned-teachers on whom her life depended, she discovered her vocation.

When they returned to class, at Guiomar's urging, the men produced a book, illustrated and in their own words, about their life as fishermen. The accumulated experiences of that night supplied enough material for three weeks of study. They started with what Paulo Freire called *palavras chaves*, 'key words,' that they had always used to describe their world. Sometimes it is difficult for learners to trust this process. To Guiomar's surprise, the fishermen resisted. "Why do we have to study the word *pescar* (fishing) when it's all we talk about every day? *Pescar*, não!" Their shame had resurfaced. They wanted to make sentences with words unrelated to their daily life. This became a

problem. Because the words were foreign to their reality, they failed to give them any real pleasure. Guiomar's solution was to go fishing with them again, this time by day, and point out that while the pelicans, cormorants and dolphins fished instinctively, men used strategies and tools: weaving nets and traps, building boats, using landmarks to locate their otherwise unmarked lobster pots. The men began to see themselves as producers of *culture*. They understood the relation between illiteracy and being pawns in the *atravessadores*' game. Forming a cooperative so they would have more control over their catch was self-assertion and good business. If they sold their fish directly to the public, customers would pay less and buy more. They could put food on their tables, buy shoes for their children and not have to purchase everything on credit. This strengthened their resolve. They realized that *pesca* was their link with life; a 'root-word' that defined their ancient profession as harvesters of the sea and providers of sustenance—they started to feel proud to be *pescadores*.

By the time Guiomar left the Ilha, at sixteen, to become part of a team which was training teachers to work with youth and adults in the Olinda municipality, the fishermen had produced two books--one about their lives at work and another which dealt with their classroom progress and experience. She also gave them *charges* (political cartoons) as codifications. By 'decoding' them, the fishermen became aware of events in the news and learned to read the tides of popular opinion. *Charges* carry a lot of information. They codify what Freire called 'generative themes' – provocative subjects affecting the lives of students from the popular classes which, when 'decoded,' make them conscious of the number and nature of constraints placed upon them by the hegemony which objectify and dehumanize them but which they had accepted as their due. To Guiomar, the revelatory impact of the *charges* on the men was similar to what she felt when she began

to read economics and sociology at UFPE. The men understood them in their own way and used them as subjects for discussion and debate.

Guiomar is thirty-five now, the mother of two children and among the most respected and sought-after teachers in Olinda. She is the director of the *Escola Professora Norma Coelho* at CAIC¹⁹⁶. But her heart belongs to the CEJA, the Youth and Adult Educational Center, housed in the same building, where, in the mid-1990s, Professor João Francisco de Souza and a group of students specializing in adult education at UFPE put together an experimental program that seemed to work. She smiles at a memory: “when you came the first time [in 1999] we had the best structure you can imagine. Since most of the teachers were taking notes on their work in class for their monographs, we were enthusiastic about your coming to study us. João Francisco had managed to win some grants, so everything was new: the computer library, the equipment, everything! When accountants came from Brasília and also from a foreign NGO, to do the books and make their report, they congratulated us: they said we had capitalized on the investment they had made. Then the directors of the government building that housed the CEJA decided to use it for job training courses for which people would be willing to pay. So the CEJA lost its space.”

Guiomar’s voice drops. “We went to the *Fina Flor*, a dance club, and there we put up dividers and improvised classrooms. We maintained regular attendance (thirty-four students in each class) with people sitting on the floor, tremendous heat, teachers getting sick. But we managed to complete a year there.” There were elections that year and a conservative party inimical to the PT-run CEJA took over. “When we got back in, we

¹⁹⁶ The school, named for one of the authors of the Adult Reader discussed in Chapter 3, goes from the Brazilian equivalent of the first grade (*educação infantil*) through junior high school (*ensino fundamental II*). CAIC, the acronym for *Centro de Apoio Integral à Criança e ao Adolescente* (Support Center for Children and Adolescents) contains both the CEJA (*Centro de Educação de Jovens e Adultos*) which Guiomar directed two years ago until the birth of her second child and the *Escola Prof. Norma Coelho* which she directs currently at the request of Olinda’s Mayor Luciana Santos, now in her second four-year term.

found the building totally empty. They had taken the computers ... they stole everything! We had left fifty computers there, belonging to the CEJA. When we came back, we had two! Before we left, we had natural science labs, social science... Did you see any labs when you went back? When you went to the faculty room, you probably saw a skeleton above the closet. Before we left, we had a science lab with microscopes, the least expensive microscope cost R\$13,000 [US\$430]. And the most expensive was almost R\$80,000. We left this equipment there and that was the last we saw of it. This is being investigated in the courts. It's a criminal case."

CAIC is struggling back from this nadir. During the day the Norma Coelho School is in session but conditions are chaotic. In addition to 1500 children from the immediate neighborhood, 400 more have recently been added from the *Lixão*, the municipal garbage dump, where their parents live and work as *catadores* (scavengers). Guiomar was one of a group of volunteers who started a school at the dump. "They took 400 kids out of the *Lixão* and deposit them here at CAIC. All the classrooms are completely filled. So where do we put them? In the schoolyard. In the corridors. In the cafeteria. The teachers are upstairs giving classes, and the kids from the dump are lying around in the corridors." Recently, Guiomar was asked to take charge of the school by Luciana Santos, the PCB (Brazilian Communist Party) mayor of Olinda, substituting for the daytime principal, who is on an extended sick leave. "So here I am, teaching classes two mornings and three afternoons a week, from pre-school through eighth grade, trying to work with the teachers, because by doing this work during the day, we can help save things at night—at least the infrastructure." The first day that she showed up at the CEJA as pro-tem director of teachers, her car was attacked: "'That's the principal's car!' That's all they had to say. The kids ran over, picked up rocks and did this to my car (she imitates someone feverishly

scraping the paint) and kicked it over and over! By the time I heard about it and came downstairs, the car was a wreck. The real principal has done nothing for the school, she's a political appointee who never even shows up here! This happened on Wednesday afternoon. They said they did that so she would learn to show up at the school. But it was my car, since I came to direct the teachers, they thought... Yesterday, one of the teachers was hit on the head by a rock thrown by a student and had to be taken to the *pronto socorro* (emergency clinic). Some of these teachers are poor examples—sleeping in the faculty room while the students stand around outside, waiting for them to teach. 'Damn, Guiomar, I'm so tired and these kids are so badly behaved.' Unfortunately, the public competitions (*concursos*) for prospective teachers rely solely on written tests. None of the winners are interviewed beforehand. The reality is that the majority of teachers at the CEJA today teach in private schools as well. I've been in the private instruction business myself for seven years—first at *Americano Bautista* and now at *Educar* [Academy]. But, until now, I have not had to deal with 'monsters.' I have 'monsters' at the CEJA, teachers who lack any kind of sensitivity. They take an hour to return to the classroom after a twenty-minute break. Meanwhile the pupils direct their anger at the school. One student picked up a metal plate the other day and threw it downstairs. It landed on another kid's head and almost killed him! When my husband loaned me his car yesterday, I told him 'keep my handbag.' So there I am, going to school on the bus without a handbag frightened of being mistaken for the principal and getting shot. Yesterday, I met with the parents and they didn't even give me time to introduce myself.

"So you're the principal. You decided to show up. You remembered that the school exists." Finally, I was able to explain: "I'm just beginning, it's my first week, I came to help straighten things out."

And let me tell you something else – this is Olinda’s ‘model school.’ It doesn’t look like a school. It’s a *manicomio*, a complete madhouse, at the moment. But you know, I’m glad that Luciana asked me to take the job. I’m up for it, Peter, because if I’m not and I don’t find other people who are, the whole thing is going to collapse. We have fifteen hundred kids in there. Fifteen hundred children being left to God knows what.”

It was two years before I saw Guiomar again. On a cloudy August morning I took the bus from Ouro Preto to Peixinhos with my friend José Ataíde and found her in a small director’s office at the CAIC, looking somewhat older and more maternal and exhibiting her customary candor and enthusiasm about the Educational Center for Youth and Adults (CEJA). “When you were here two years ago, the CEJA had just returned to CAIC and was being restructured”, she told me, “today it has a better structure because the school has resumed its partnership with UFPE and we have Professor de Souza as a partner once again. The CEJA used to be a project—today it is a school.” We are using all the classroom spaces here plus the cafeteria and the library because of the number of students enrolled.” I asked her about the 400 students from the *Lixão* for whom there was no room two years before. “Olinda came through. Today, all those students are in classes. If not here, then in other schools within the municipality. There is a citizenship project at the *Lixão* itself where the children spend the full day¹⁹⁷ in a school that was built there just sixteen months ago. Other pupils are in other schools nearby. These students receive ‘*bolsas-escola*’¹⁹⁸ and stay in school all day. That was one way to

¹⁹⁷ This is called *tempo integral*, as opposed to split sessions, each four hours long (*tempo parcial*).

¹⁹⁸ There are two kinds of *bolsas* presently available: the PETI Program (to end child labor) which is administered by the federal government and pays parents R\$40 (US\$13) per month to attend school 8 hours a day (*tempo integral*) and a municipal program for low-income families which requires their children to attend for only 4 hours and pays R\$120 (about US\$40) per month. Critical educators, including João Francisco de Souza and Danilson Pinto, consider them retrograde. “In an educated country, people aren’t paid to go to school—the opportunities are there and the people take them. Here it’s different: they addict the people...The government’s obligation is not to offer *bolsas*, it’s to provide classrooms, books and desks so that people can have a chance to study, and feel good about going to school—‘I’m going because it’s going to help me overcome my barriers.’ Not ‘the government has to pay me to go.’ That’s an addictive

remove them from the garbage dump. There is also a recycling project. I stayed informed about the CEJA because Youth and Adult Education is in my blood – although working for the municipality has taken me away from its day-to-day reality.” Even as the director of the *Escola Norma Coelho* and a 17-year employee of the Olinda Municipality, Guiomar makes the equivalent of \$446 a month. So she spends three mornings and two afternoons a week at CAIC and the rest of her time at a co-educational private school, Menino Jesus, in the Jardim Brasil neighborhood of Olinda, where she is the curriculum coordinator for fifth grade through the third year of secondary school.

I asked Guiomar whether she missed teaching:

G: Totally. It's not a 100% distancing because, as I am the director and want to feel that I'm bettering the profession, I have developed a project with the first- to fourth-graders where I teach a class a week on transversal themes: citizenship, ethics, discipline, culture. It is a personal project I have worked on together with the whole technical team. Independent of my function as director, I spend part of every Friday in the classroom. I develop an activity in the auditorium or outside of class, depending on what I have programmed for that week. For instance, next week is an art week at CAIC, so I have developed something to go with that. It gives me a chance to return to the role of teacher. But it's not like being in the classroom every day.

P: The project is called 'transversal' because it cuts across various subjects?

G: It is interdisciplinary because it includes various areas of knowledge. It has been determined by the Law of Guidelines and Bases¹⁹⁹ that transversal themes should work across all areas of knowledge. These are themes that all teachers ought to work with in their subject areas, but we know that a math teacher is not going to launch into a deep discussion of citizenship. History and geography lend themselves a bit more to that sort of thing. I did an evaluation and found that teachers are very limited by the content of Portuguese and Science courses and that these themes are not being worked with. So the pedagogical team of the school is working with them. I am one of its facilitators. The young man who was here when you arrived is an art teacher and we were organizing the art week. We are doing a folklore project. As director, I could administer solely from my office but I cannot do this. So I am the facilitator. I do workshops. Next week, I'm going to do a workshop on paper-folding—like Japanese *origami*. It's not my area. But I

point-of-view.” (D. Pinto interview, Recife, 7/25/04, my translation).

¹⁹⁹ The current *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education), promulgated in 1996, regulates Brazilian education covering different levels, age groups, and disciplines in funding, teacher education, professional development, etc. The LDB covers basic and tertiary education. In Brazil, basic education refers to early childhood education, fundamental education and mid-level education. Fundamental education is divided into two four-year periods: grades 1-4 (first years of fundamental education: ages 7-10) and grades 5-8 (final years of fundamental education: ages 11-14). According to the LDB, "Fundamental education, with its minimum duration of eight years, is compulsory and free in public schools, its objective being a basic preparation for the citizen." (Brazil, 1996, Article 32). <http://www.maydaygroup.org/figueiredo.htm>

saw it was needed and I put together a course. The week after next, I'll be working with ethics and citizenship. I go into all the classrooms in this capacity. If the teacher is absent, I step in. I organized a data bank so we always have someone to substitute for an absent teacher, always with a different subject. The week before last, I took the students to see a play, "Dom Casmurro" [based on a novel by Machado de Assis]. I had worked with them on the book in class. But it's not just about going to the theater and returning from the theater together, we have to bring it back to the classroom and 'socialize' it. Everything I do has to have a moment of socialization because, otherwise, we aren't always able to reach everyone. Since I'm doing this project, I feel a little better but, regardless of what government will be in power next year, I have already decided (and I won't be dissuaded even it means a less comfortable position) to return to the classroom. I am looking forward to going back to teaching EJA next year. I have not grown professionally. As a person, I have been able to grow because the responsibility [as director of CAIC] is much greater. As a teacher, I am responsible for 30 to 40 students. As the director of *Escola Norma Coelho*, I am responsible for 1280 students. (...) What saddens me is that bureaucratic and administrative [affairs] take up most of my time. Today I had a meeting with the art teacher. I have another director's meeting to discuss administrative affairs. Many meetings mean that I have to leave the school often. I am one of the directors who attends the least meetings. I suffer because I am not present. Most meetings are outside the school and, since I am only here three days a week, I insist on remaining here. If I were a full-time director, I could afford to do this. Because, when I don't go to these meetings, the school is less informed. Sometimes these meetings are for exposing projects that would be of interest to the school. Whenever we send representatives, even in this "government of the people,"²⁰⁰ we have no more than the director and the vice-director. Our staff is so reduced that it doesn't work to send someone else in your stead. If we can't attend we try to find out what went on at the meeting, what was on the agenda, and catch up. It isn't good. My heart is still in EJA.

Talk turned to politics, local and national, which was inevitable on the eve of national elections for governors, mayors and aldermen. Guiomar, a critical supporter of the PT (*Partido Trabalhista*) of President Lula and a political appointee of Olinda's Mayor Luciana Santos, extolled her *Orçamento Participativo* (participative budget) initiative:

This government has done something that no other government has. Every week, the Mayor goes to a different community and the people from the neighborhood get together in a pre-determined space and she discusses with them what they consider their priorities and what can be done about them. She presents the funds that the Prefecture has to spend and the community decides where to spend them. This doesn't happen in Recife: taking the Prefecture's budget and discussing it with the population. It's one of the things that she always mentions in her speeches—that the public works undertaken by her administration were chosen by the people. But people come to these meetings to act out. The space for discussion quickly becomes a political one. In the political history of Olinda, this is a first. Luciana arrives unarmed, sits down, gives everyone a chance to speak and responds to everyone. All Olinda communities have had meetings like this. But there are always people who come to make politics [*politicagem*]. They are offensive. Luciana has a lot of guts to keep on doing this. No one can say that there wasn't democracy. This is a very important matter in this government.

Political issues include school directorships. In 1993, when Germano Coelho was the

²⁰⁰ The motto of Mayor Santos's Brazilian Communist Party administration is "*um governo popular*."

mayor of Olinda and João Francisco de Souza the Secretary of Education, de Souza proposed to the *Câmara dos Vereadores* (City Council) that there be direct elections for the heads of the municipality's public schools. The Council had always appointed them so they vetoed the proposal. The way it is now, according to Guiomar, "it doesn't matter what kind of job the person developed or if (s)he is a pedagogue or not, because although it's a legal requirement that the director have a degree in education, it really doesn't matter – there have been physical education teachers and psychologists running the schools." The only important qualification is a director's political allegiance. Right-wing mayors remove all left-leaning directors as a matter of course and vice-versa. Education is, as Freire never tired of reminding us, inextricably political. There is also the matter of *cargos commissionados*, public sector sinecures – perquisites assigned to loyal retainers (or family members) by the people in power. At one point during our dialogue, a man came in to complain to Guiomar. She listened with little comment and he left. When he was gone, she turned to us and said: "This guy is functioning as the school's athletic director but is seldom here. He doesn't want to bother with the students because he thinks they are all undisciplined and badly behaved. He has a *cargo commissionado* from the Prefecture and has only showed up to sign for his paychecks for the past two years. I mention him as a living example of what we are talking about." Ataíde seemed incensed by this. "I worked for the Olinda City Hall for thirty-five years as a public functionary. You can look it up in my files – not one *cargo commissionado*. They wanted to give me one, but I wouldn't accept. Nobody buys my freedom of expression."

There is also a problem with the *contratados*, formerly unemployed people who have been given a chance to become salaried employees of City Hall.²⁰¹ When we

²⁰¹ This is why Ataíde refers to the *Prefeitura* as "*a mãe de todos*" (everyone's mother).

arrived, Guiomar was on the phone, explaining that attendance at Luciana's political rally that afternoon was more of an obligation than an optional invitation. I asked her about this:

G: City Hall has a whole bunch of people on contract now. What is a *contratado*? They are unemployed people who have an opportunity to work. The *contratado* is a person on whom the mayor counts to diffuse her actions. So the Secretary of Education asked me to mobilize all the *contratados* for today's meeting, because it makes no sense for them not to be there. The vice-director of this school is Ana Maia. Yesterday I told her, 'You are asked to be present and if you don't show up, you're going to lose your contract.' I would never dare to be that way. No one is obliged to be there. People have to be conscious, to be grateful. Someone who was obliged to be present might go to the streets to campaign against Luciana. There wouldn't be a discourse. What kind of government would that be, if the people who didn't show up would be fired? I am sure that Luciana would not order such a thing. It's just that the *cargos commissionados* who are there gathering votes [for other candidates] instead of helping the mayor's campaign, end up doing it damage. Luciana's way is too *laissez-faire*. She ought to tell it like it is to the functionaries, tell them: look guys, this government has done such and such, if we want it to continue we're going to have to take to the streets. We need everybody's support. We need word of mouth marketing. Because there's no money left for advertising, we have to hit the streets. I don't see the people with *cargos commissionados* doing that. I have never worked this way before.

Guiomar is not always so circumspect when it comes to letting school employees know what she thinks. She admits that the 'goldbricking' gym teacher was once her student at the CBACIM school on the Ilha. "I told him, 'you embarrass me. You're a phony leftist.'" He's a community leader. He got all the way through the eighth grade. How can someone who represents an institution not appear to work, to teach? The only time I see him is when he stops by to pick up his paycheck."

Finally, there was the rain. The winter of 2004 was the wettest most people could remember. The daily downpours caused disastrous flooding in the interior. In Recife and Olinda, the ubiquitous *alagados* (floodplains) were saturated by the overflowing Beberibe and Capibaribe rivers and many of the jury-rigged hovels on their banks were washed away.

G: You came in the year of the vote and the rain. The CAIC became a shelter for about twenty days, in July. We sheltered 580 families who were homeless because of flooding. We were also a center for receiving donations. It was one of the most painful experiences of my entire life. We weren't prepared to receive these people. Yet we were

responsible for everything. Social workers and civil defense workers were here daily. What was most shocking was the way these people behaved—without the slightest notion of hygiene or education. The classroom walls were dripping with feces. I'm saying this because, if a person has no sense of hygiene, how is he or she going to have political consciousness? When the mayor came bringing food baskets²⁰², they threatened her. They wanted two or three each.

Ataide: These people don't want rules, or commitments. Not for their own wellbeing or the community's. They destroy all the public telephones. They're vandals.

P: What causes this? Is it a revolt of the poor? Anger?

G: When they'd been here 15 days, it wasn't raining any more but they only wanted to go back to where they had been living if the mayor gave them new houses. We had 130 families that refused to leave.

"It is divine grace to begin things well, it is a larger grace to persist on our righteous journey, but the grace of graces is not to quit, whether or not we are successful, and even while falling to pieces, to see things through." **Archbishop Helder Câmara**²⁰³

Guiomar started teaching at an age when most children are starting junior high school.

The Ilha do Maruim *mocambo*, where she was born and raised, was founded by former slaves-turned-fishermen after Abolition in 1888. They lived on the half-mile crescent of beach and dried and mended their nets and built boats in the grassy meadow behind the dunes. Today the Ilha is home to approximately 3,500 families, many of them

²⁰² A *cesta básica* ("basic basket") represents the monthly allotment of rice, beans, beef jerky and condensed milk the government considers adequate for a marginal family. It is the lowest common denominator of Lula's *Fome Zero* (Zero Hunger) project and a metaphor for the Brazilian notion of welfare. Here is an excerpt from my December 20, 1999 interview with Brazilian sociologist Pedro Demo, at the time a visiting scholar at UCLA's Latin American Center:

PD: I think that the finest concept of citizenship is this one: linked to that idea of democratic control. A citizenship that comes from the critical capacity of the person; people organize themselves first, and then the State. The citizenry takes care of the State, not the other way around. The Welfare State inverted this through assistance. I think public assistance has this ambiguous side: you can be doing something very important for the people but usually you assure total dependency.

PL: Infinite.

PD: Infinite and it never leaves there. In some cultures, like this (U.S.) one, there exists a certain 'discomfort-meter' as we call it in Brazil. The people don't let themselves be so easily helped. I saw this a lot in Germany: people feel bad about being helped. But in Latin America, in our culture, people want to be helped. Including the capitalists! A Brazilian joke: If there were a distribution of *cestas básicas infinitas*, the first one in line would be Antônio Ermírio de Moraes, the richest man in Brazil. He would be on line, waiting for his little basket of basic foods. It's our culture, you see? We belong to a ludic culture with parasitic tendencies that doesn't invent in its own resources and doesn't pay the bill."

²⁰³ "É graça divina começar bem, é graça maior persistir na caminhada certa, mas a graça das graças é não desistir, podendo ou não podendo, e embora caindo aos pedaços, chegar até o fim." Dom Helder assumed his bishopric a week after the military coup in 1964. One of the founders of the CNBB (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops), Archbishop Câmara died at age ninety in 1999.

unemployed. When I lived there as a Peace Corps Health and Community Development Volunteer (1966-68), people subsisted by fishing, clamming, crabbing and netting shrimp in the *mangue*.²⁰⁴ Many fishermen lived in makeshift, driftwood and *lata* (tin can) shacks on the sand. But, with the expansion of the contiguous cities of Recife and Olinda which now have a combined population of over two million people, and the dearth of a sanitary infrastructure, coastal waters have become extremely polluted. The consequent diminishment of both food supply and livelihood is one of the reasons that the extreme poverty that Brazilians call *miséria* has increased in recent years.

In 1984, one of the last years of the military dictatorship, the local fishermen were still heading out to sea in *canoas* and *jangadas*.²⁰⁵ As a schoolgirl, Guiomar took part in the beginning of an educational campaign aligned with the ‘World Vision’ of the Second Baptist Church of Olinda. Twenty years later, these programs are still functioning and activist teachers like Guiomar are still working with them as volunteers. Two factors made her first teaching experience unique: 1) MOBREAL²⁰⁶ existed as a well-funded, well-documented national literacy campaign; 2) professional researchers and social scientists from the *Fundação Josué de Castro* offered assistance and training. I plan to discuss the specifics of these programs and her relationship with them in future interviews with Guiomar. Hers is not a complete portrait. I have merely attempted to describe three stages of Guiomar’s career as a ‘popular educator’ – from schoolgirl volunteer to skilled

²⁰⁴ Shrimp, which now cost R\$12 a kilo, were then the ‘bread of the poor.’ According to José Ataíde, “when you saw someone eating broiled shrimp and manioc flour for breakfast, you knew he was totally broke.” Crabs, shrimp, oysters and other crustaceans were everyday fare in the *mangue* (mangroves). Ataíde claims that, although cow’s milk was a luxury, few *Ilhenses* alive at the time suffer from osteoporosis because their steady diet of shellfish contained so much calcium. He mentioned an eighty-five-year-old woman whose femur and pelvis were broken when she was hit by a car and who was walking without a cane four months later because her bones were so strong. (excerpts of our interview, Olinda, 7/12/02)

²⁰⁵ Two types of homemade wooden boats: the former a canoe with paddles, the latter a gaff-rigged sailing raft, used by Northeastern fishermen.

²⁰⁶ See Chapter 2.9, above, for a fuller description of this program.

and committed professional teacher to school administrator and director. The intensity, clarity and depth of her narrative make Guiomar an extraordinary informant. Her dedication to the survival of the CEJA is paramount. She is the keeper of the flame of a utopian dream and nothing, not even the destruction of her automobile in a case of mistaken identity, will divert her from her task. She rarely pauses when she speaks and there are few deviations from the point she wants to make.

Our several interviews over a five year period have provided me an opportunity to begin to reflect on the specific circumstances which led to Guiomar's choice of a vocation and how that vocation has changed over the last twenty years. The fact that she was a resident of the *mocambo* where she began to teach is not unusual. Women the world over gravitate to the teaching profession because it affords them social status and respect. Northeast Brazilian teachers' salaries fall far short of the cost of living, so many of them remain with their families until they marry or work several jobs simultaneously to be able to afford a place of their own. Guiomar's father was a widower and an alcoholic so she was 'on her own' from an early age. One of the things that most of the people I portray²⁰⁷ share with Guiomar is a materially impoverished childhood. But that does not mean that they were culturally deprived. Growing up under strained financial circumstances in a Northeastern *mocambo* is often a goad to early social awareness and participation in the communal network of mutual assistance known as *mutirão*. The *Aurélio Século XXI minidicionário da língua portuguesa* defines *mutirão* (and its orthographic variant, *muxirão*) as "free help, interchanged by members of a community to the benefit of all, as in the case of local improvements."²⁰⁸ It is a prevailing philosophy in poor neighborhoods throughout the Third World. On the *Ilha do Maruim*, the Second Baptist Church of

²⁰⁷ Professor de Souza is the exception.

²⁰⁸ *Auxílio gratuito que prestam uns aos outros os membros de uma comunidade, em proveito de todos, como no caso de melhorias locais.* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Nova Fronteira, 2000), 477

Olinda has provided organization and infrastructure, channeling the *mutirão*'s spirit of industrious collaboration into over twenty years of voluntary social assistance.

Guiomar's pedagogical resourcefulness was stimulated by the discomfort of being a young and inexperienced woman educator in charge of a sizable group of initially antagonistic older men. Not only did the fishermen-students challenge her physically, they questioned her legitimacy as an instructor. Had Guiomar 'caved in' to their threats and insults, her worth as an educator would have abruptly diminished. Fishermen are a notoriously independent and isolated group, marginal by choice. They have their own customs, their own jargon, their own ways. The sea, as poets and singers have proclaimed for centuries, is their mistress and their scourge. "*É doce morrer no mar/Nas ondas verdes do mar,*" (It's sweet to die at sea/In the green waves of the sea) – a couplet from a *canção* by Bahian troubador, Dorival Caymmi—makes romance of the constant risk that storms will sink their fragile craft. But fishing in depleted and often polluted waters is romantic only to those who do not depend on it for subsistence. Fishermen tend to remain aloof from everyone but their families and fellows. Their wives and daughters weave their nets. Their sons, as soon as they are old enough, help to mend them and, when they are strong enough to pull an oar or hoist a lobster pot, begin their apprenticeship at sea.

Guiomar had to penetrate this closed society and find a way to become part of their 'family' before the men would accept her as their *educadora*. Undaunted by their initial aggressions, she eventually entered their world by relinquishing her premature 'expertise.' In her willingness to be the student of her students, Guiomar embodied a Freirian principle: dialogic education is a two-way street that can only function if 'horizontal' and trust exist between *educadora* and *educandos*. Her time at sea was both a rite of passage and a leap of faith. She demonstrated that she was willing to put her life in the

hands of the men in her class to learn their ways. The negotiation of trust is an essential part of ‘education as the practice of freedom.’ Feelings of fear, shame and depression are part of the emotional vocabulary of youth and adult literacy-learners—they must be acknowledged, valued and discussed or confidence will not grow. The emotional bond between teacher and student is an essential ingredient, according to Freire. Unless love and respect are a durable part of the daily regimen, ‘banking education’ is inevitable and oppression persists.

In continuing to attempt to ‘save’ the CEJA years after Professor de Souza and most of the original cohort of specially trained Youth and Adult educators have departed, Guiomar briefly became the target of the wrath of a suffering community. When I returned to the site in 2002, the CEJA had deteriorated. The whole place smelled of sewage. Classrooms were full of broken desks and chairs. Student attendance was sporadic. The teachers whose classes I observed and with whom I spoke were mostly novices who had won their jobs in municipal competitions based entirely on written response. They had been assigned to Youth and Adult Education (EJA) positions without any special training and/or proclivity and, in many cases, their lack of experience was apparent. Students ‘acted out,’ voicing negative opinions or ignoring the teacher entirely. Books were few and shared. The several ‘veteran’ teachers whose classes I attended seemed similarly overwhelmed by the oppressive atmosphere and impatient with the restless and unruly students. I noticed few attempts to establish dialogue on either part. Anger and despair are the enemies of education. The negative atmosphere that Guiomar described as prevalent at the overcrowded and chaotic day school had begun to infiltrate the evening classes for youth and adults.

I think that Guiomar’s decision to accept the directorship of the Norma Coelho

primary school after entering the breach there as substitute director in 2002 at great personal risk and sacrifice was a decision she made after the birth of her second child, at the urging of Olinda Mayor, Luciana Santos. She seems to regret not being part of the CEJA and being unable to teach everyday. As school director, wife, mother of two young children, and a veteran teacher at the age of 33, Guiomar has left the favela behind her.

Twenty years of sacrifice, study and dedication as a popular educator and Baptist Church volunteer have made Guiomar a critical thinker and an embattled member of the Brazilian middle class. When she equates the lack of hygiene of the flood refugees housed at the CAIC with a lack of political consciousness, Guiomar (and Ataide, who agreed with her) fall into a systemic, isolationist way of thinking that divides those who have managed to ascend the bottom rungs of the societal ladder from those who have not. The walls “dripping with feces” were the product of the flood victims’ rage, as was their demanding that the mayor provide two or three *cestas básicas* per person and their refusal to leave until new homes were provided. Such violent demonstrations, including the students’ attacking Guiomar’s car two years earlier, are ‘political’ although they may seem inchoate and tragically misguided²⁰⁹.

Power is a continuum. When the oppressors’ power is threatened, they get furious (i.e., George W. Bush’s “you’re either for us or against us!” reaction to the U.N.’s attempted sanctions of early U.S. escalation in the War in Iraq) or, as in the case of the flood refugees at CAIC, when the existential indignity of the oppressed turns to

²⁰⁹ Frantz Fanon writes: “The colonized’s sector, or at least the ‘native’ quarters, the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation, is a disreputable place inhabited by disreputable people. You are born anywhere, anyhow. You die anywhere, from anything. It’s a world with no space, people are piled on top of each other, the shacks squeezed tightly together. The colonized’s sector is a famished sector, hungry for bread, meat, shoes, coal, and light. The colonized’s sector is a sector that crouches and cowers, a sector on its knees, a sector that is prostrate. It’s a sector of niggers, a sector of towelheads. The gaze that the colonized subject casts at the colonist’s sector is a look of lust, a look of envy. Dreams of possession. Every type of possession: of sitting at the colonist’s table and sleeping in his bed, preferably with his wife. The colonized man is an envious man (...) there is not one colonized subject who at least once a day does not dream of taking the place of the colonist.” (Fanon, 2004, pp. 4-5)

indignation as a normally invisible sector becomes, briefly, visible and demands attention from the authorities with what little ‘leverage’ they have at their disposal—threats of physical violence and a signature fecal smear—*cago ergo sum*²¹⁰. The mangrove swamps of Recife and Olinda were, before their pollution, sites of an existential exchange between man and crab:

The *mangues* of Recife are a crab’s paradise. If the earth was made for man, with everything to serve him well, the *mangue* was made especially for the crab. Everything there is, was, or is going to be a crab, including the mud and the people who live in it. Mud mixed with urine, excrement and other scraps which the tides bring, while not yet a crab, will soon become one. The crab is born in it, lives off it. It grows by eating mud, getting plump on its filth, making it into the bit of white meat in its legs and the greenish jelly of its sticky innards.

On the other hand, the people there live to suck its claws, to eat and lick its shells until they’re as clean as a glass. And with this meat made of mud, they make the meat of their bodies and the meat of the bodies of their children.

There are two hundred thousand individuals, two hundred thousand citizens, made of crab meat. What the organism rejects returns as detritus to the mud of the *mangue* to turn into crab again. (De Castro, 2001b, 26-27, my translation)

In the rainy season, when Recife’s rivers, the Beberibe and the Capibaribe, overflow and the “crab-people” who live in makeshift hovels on their banks are rendered homeless and harbored in a school-turned-municipal asylum, they bring the violence and misery of the slum (*mocambo*) with them. There is a reprehensible but ubiquitous Brazilian saying: “*Nego, se não caga na entrada, caga na saída*” (“If niggers don’t crap when they enter, they crap when they leave”). Like the thousands stranded and destroyed in post-hurricane Katrina New Orleans, the great majority of Recife and Olinda flood-victims are black. Neither Guiomar nor Ataíde are racist by North-American standards. Ataíde’s maternal grandmother was *negra* and to Guiomar, as to many Brazilians, to be *afrodescendente* is a point of pride.

Educação is a word that implies a moral standard in Latin America: its lack (*falta de educação*) is an ethical pejorative: to call someone *maleducado* (m.) or *maleducada* (f.) is

²¹⁰ I have bastardized the Cartesian dictum. The verb *cagar*, in Portuguese and Spanish, means to defecate.

to rebuke them without resorting to *xingamento* (coarse revilement). Guiomar admits that neither the school facility nor the staff at CAIC “was prepared to receive these people [the flood victims],” yet she equates their “lack of hygiene” with a lack of “political consciousness.” While, to Ataíde, they are simply “vandals.” These are harsh judgments, particularly coming from long time residents and survivors of the Ilha do Maruim *mocambo*—‘working class heroes,’ in John Lennon’s words—who have escaped pariahdom by persistent accomplishment in the exercise of socially viable skills like writing and teaching. They recall Paulo Freire’s definition of the “central problem,” in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: that “only as they discover themselves to be ‘hosts’ of the oppressor can [the oppressed] contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy”. Guiomar and Ataíde still “live in the duality in which *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor* (...) the pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestations of dehumanization” (Freire, 2000, 48).

Frantz Fanon’s mid-twentieth century equation of colonial society and the madhouse is also apt:

The pathologization of the colonized was the projection, Fanon argued, of the colonizers’ own pathology. ‘Is the colonial lazy?’ Fanon asked, and answered: ‘The laziness of the colonized is a form of protection, (...) a measure of self-defense on a physiological level.’ His conclusion was: ‘The colonized person who resists is right’ (*‘Le colonisé qui résiste a raison’*.) The argument moved from the insane [person] as alien, excluded from his society, to the colonized [person] alienated and excluded from his own society. The necessity in both cases was to break the chains of alienation. (Read, ed., 1996, 58).

One of the male nurses at the Algerian psychiatric hospital at Blida-Joinville, where Fanon was a volunteer physician during the French-Algerian war in 1953 describes him (in Perinbam, 1982, 44) as “a man at the crossroads between the strong and the weak, [who] chose to identify with the weak.” The same could be said of Freire, who drew inspiration from Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* for *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Patricia Redondo is the cousin of my good friend Jorge Vismara and an *educadora popular* in Argentina. I did not know of her existence, much less her ideological proximity to this study, until he handed me an interview with her in the January 19, 2004 edition of the Buenos Aires newspaper, *Página/12*, under the headline *Para el pobre, la escuela es una oportunidad histórica* (“For the poor, school is an historic opportunity”). I was so impressed with what she had to say and how she said it that I sent her an English translation of the interview with an e-mail expressing my interest in Brazilian popular education, my admiration and support. Several months ago, she sent me her first book, *Escuelas y pobreza*, a few of whose pertinent passages seem to fit here.

4.3 Patricia Redondo & Adão Pinheiro: other voices, other rooms

Public schools are becoming ‘poor schools,’ in this time of experimental democracy and economic crisis in Latin America. Argentinean educator Patricia Redondo asks “What is a school when it ceases to be a school? A space of control and discipline?” She writes about provincial schools in the general vicinity of Buenos Aires so poor that there is no water for the children to wash their hands before meals although they are encouraged to pantomime the motions of handwashing “to acquire certain hygienic habits that, living where and how they do, they may not possess” (Redondo, 2004, 114). Yet in these ragged, unhygienic schools there are “educators, aligned with Freirian thinking, who have come to see knowledge as an act of political consequence and, in the tension between the school of the past and the one they want to invent, are advancing the idea of a new kind of school experience — one which, undertaken with their pupils in mind, also benefits them” (ibid., 113):

To construct a more just or less inequitable school gives these teachers’ daily labor meaning. Students, too, are caught up by the possibility in a gradual and heterogeneous way. All of this takes place in contrast to the resourceless and deteriorating school space; a tin-roofed building that has sporadic water, latchless doors, and many windows missing panes of glass. The limits and possibilities of education cut across subjects, school space and community. This school proposes to sustain a symbolically different space despite its

physical deterioration and state regulations and controls that not only fail to construct educational policies which would better the teachers' situation but go so far as to demand that they 'model' moralistic and exemplary demonstrations of hygiene that go against pedagogical intentions and educational proposals the faculty supports. (ibid, 114, my translation)

After the motions of hand washing, the *directora* tells Redondo, the children line up to receive “humanly terrible food” for which they are required to give thanks before being handed stews and cutlets (*guisos, milanesas*) without plates. “Despite the conditions of the building, the desks and the chairs” the *directora* insists, “we have managed to provide a worthy space (*un espacio digno*) for the children.” Thus, the whole question of worthiness and non-worthiness in relation to poverty is codified by “situating the subjects of poverty as deserving or undeserving of charity, beneficence and, in this case, dignified treatment (*un trato digno*). “To broach the problem of education and poverty requires the construction of an overview of this dichotomous and binary relationship,” Redondo writes, so as “to situate and name the human condition...to speak of hunger, of suffering” and, at the same time, to be aware that someone may “invent a new possibility...and through some small action demonstrate the freedom of their thought” (ibid., 115). She cites Alain Badiou²¹¹: “I no longer have utopias, just dreams...All man’s dreams are impossible. The relationship between the possible and the impossible is the art of invention” (Redondo, 2004, 117, my translation). To serve millions of impoverished and oppressed people, educators and schools must deal with their rage and bewilderment at having been consigned to the social scrap heap in a world where the material advantages of prosperity are constantly broadcast. In countries like Brazil and Argentina where vast stretches of land and infinite care and resources are dedicated to crop, mineral and meat-production,

²¹¹ Author of “La ética. Ensayo sobre la conciencia del mal” (Ethics. Essay on the consciousness of evil”) in Tomás Abraham’s *Batallas éticas* (Buenos Aires, Nueva Visión, 1995): “*Utopías ya no tengo, solo sueños...Todos los sueños de los hombres son imposibles. La relación entre lo posible y lo imposible es el arte de la invención.*”

the social inequities that produce soaring rates of malnutrition, unemployment and violence in the majority of the populace are as offensive and morally malodorous as a classroom wall “dripping with feces.” Patricia Redondo writes:

Hunger, the structural violence of a system of exclusion, the assassinations, persecutions and suspicions that hover over poor and marginalized children and adolescents obscure the meaning of school and the teachers’ motivation to go to there day after day. However, the pallet of colors of the historical present to which these impoverished schools belong, provokes new vibrations and intensities and, despite a great deal of opacity, allows us to think of the future, of a time “that is not here now, because it is always here. We are not in some dark tunnel with the possibility of discerning a tenuous light at the other end. Godot is not going to come... We can only make three wishes so we should wish for something related to our historical existence. There is one wish that cannot be annulled by any other: to share responsibility for our contemporaneity.”²¹²

Adão Pinheiro and I first met in Olinda in 1966 and have kept in contact during the four decades since. He lives in São Paulo now and his filmmaker son, João Miguel, maintains his *ateliê* (a combination house, studio, gallery) across the street from the Olinda City Hall where we first met and began our often-interrupted decades of dialogue. My wife and I spent four weeks in July-August 2002 on the top floor of the *ateliê* at Adão’s insistence but he was unable to join us. In fact, I had not spent more than an hour in Adão’s presence (and that at the airport in São Paulo on my way from Los Angeles to Recife) for more than 30 years. So this time I scheduled five days in São Paulo expressly for that purpose. Adão lives in a neighborhood with the pungent name of *Morro do Querosene* (Kerosene Hill), not far from the spacious estate that the Vital Brazil Serumtherapeutic Institute, Museum and Serpentarium shares with the University of São Paulo (USP) in Butantan, not far from the Pinheiros River.

A chiaroscuro mix of Brazilian *axé*²¹³, Adão Pinheiro is 67 years old and 6’7” tall. With his gray beard, graceful hands and quizzical blue eyes, bundled against the winter

²¹² The quote at the end of the passage is from Agnes Heller’s *Teoría de la historia* (México City: Fontamura, 1993, my translation).

²¹³ Spiritual power, see fn. 218.

cold in an Army surplus jacket, he looks like an elongated version of one of Aleijadinho's²¹⁴ Old Testament saints. His São Paulo digs, which he designed and built, are a tidy compound of main house, guest house and workshop on two levels with circular, exterior stairs winding around a mighty pine tree (*pinheiro*), a koi pond and a kingsize bathtub/shower with its own wall-mounted aquarium. Painter, filmmaker, sculptor, jeweler, educator and veteran of Recife's *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (MCP) of the early 1960s, Adão was Paulo Freire's friend and is acquainted with most of the Movement's major figures. My point in introducing him at this point is that, in Agnes Heller's words, we "share[d] our contemporaneity" in two extended, recorded dialogues from which sprang some material that reflects on issues I have attempted to broach throughout this dissertation.

On the second day of our stay, Adão returned from Recife where he had spent a week as the art director for a documentary on the history of the Jews in the city's Dutch colonial period and told a story illustrative of the current psycho-social chasm between the rich and poor in Brazil. Paulo Francis and Samuel Wainer, two journalists²¹⁵, are driving on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro when they pass a group of boys and men playing soccer with a *bola de meia* ("the most primitive stage of improvising a ball,

²¹⁴ "Antônio Francisco Lisboa, bastard son of Manuel Francisco, the most important ecclesiastic architect in Ouro Preto [Minas Gerais] until his death in 1767, suffered from leprosy, syphilis or a virulent strain of rheumatism which caused grotesque deformations of his body as he defined and 'peopled' the Brazilian baroque, in the naves, transepts and courtyards of the churches of Ouro Preto and Congonhas do Campo, Minas Gerais, with its most exalted baroque sculpture. As if he needed additional piques to bitterness and resentment, at age 47 (or 39, if he was born in 1738) he suffered the first attacks of an incurable disease which began by nibbling away at his feet until it rendered him impotent...claiming the fingers of both hands whose use he lost little by little. Thus the sobriquet *Aleijadinho*, 'the little cripple', an affectionate diminutive, beyond doubt, with an echo of Brazilian sweetness, but cruel nevertheless. Having lost all his toes, he walked on his knees. Armed with devices that were attached to his hands, he ordered his apprentices to amputate his fingers as their pain became unbearable" (Fernandez, 1993, 327, my translation).

²¹⁵ Paulo Francis wrote for the Rio de Janeiro satirical newspaper, *O Pasquim* and was the author of a number of novels. Samuel Wainer Filho was the publisher of the Rio newspaper, *Última Hora*, for which he once hired Brazilian poet Vinicius de Moraes to write a column of romantic advice for the lovelorn. A Communist, he was persecuted by the military after their takeover. The 'bola de meia' incident is recorded by Francis in his book, *Cabeça de Negro*.

according to Adão, “You take a woman’s stocking, fill it with fabric and roll it up and you have a little ball-shaped thing”). “Paulo,” Wainer says, “these people ask for so little and we refuse them even that.” To Adão this is a paradigmatic statement:

Because I think it’s true. For instance, in Recife, you pass avenues where luxury buildings sprout like mushrooms and just behind them are *favelas*. I always remember Samuel Wainer’s observation. For me the whole point is that if it’s not given, it must be taken. (Adão Pinheiro interview, São Paulo – 7/9/04, all translations mine)

Adão employs Gilberto Gil’s trope, *a geléia geral brasileira* (“the general Brazilian jelly”) to describe the fact that “there is no radicality in Brazil, nothing has an edge. Everyone knows you can’t fight the elite. The only growing things are the concessions the oppressed make to the oppressors:

That’s how ‘the general Brazilian jelly’ works. In other words, “don’t mess with me, let’s all live together”—that whole thing. I’m against it, I prefer how it is in the States: ‘set it all on fire!’ Because then things change. Here the whole thing ends up as a process of accommodation, I’ll give you a place at the university, come and consume. There is a black middle class now that is into consumption and will serve as a buffer against any revolution. The 1888 revolution, the liberation of the slaves, was spurred by Princess Isabel²¹⁶ herself, so you see what a convoluted thing it is. Abolition occurred in a certain social and historical context; England was interested in getting a foot in the door here, so it wasn’t right to have slaves. England was already industrialized, selling machines, so why have negroes? This Brazilian process of adjustment is part of the national character and I think it harms everyone. (excerpt of our interview, 7/9/04).

According to Adão, this exaggerated Brazilian respect for authority (*o mando*) goes back to the time of the emperor and has always led to self-serving behavior on the part of those in power. He believes that this trait has managed to “transform NGOs...which today have become powers in Brazil. They are metastases—the country functions on the basis of metastases. They drive things along for a while and then they get diluted, dissolve and die.”

Adão studied at the *Escola de Belas Artes*, the Fine Arts School, in Recife, at the time Paulo Freire and Maria do Carmo Tavares de Miranda competed for the Philosophy of

²¹⁶ “In the absence of her father, Dom Pedro II, Princess-Regent Isabel, a committed abolitionist, signed the so-called ‘Golden Law’ on May 13, 1888, liberating the remaining three-quarters of a million slaves” (Burns, 1993, 223-224).

Education Chair there in 1958. He describes Tavares de Miranda as “the favorite philosopher of the traditional, right-wing Catholics” and infers that “she was chosen by a process that had less to do with ability, with quality” than with politics and power. “Power is the chair itself, not who’s sitting in it, because that hardly matters.” This kind of power is akin to Bourdieu’s notion of “cultural capital” which, in a time of political crisis and upheaval, allows those who possess it to “escape to France and go to graduate school” while the cane-cutters who flocked to the *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) were “tortured, killed or left to die of hunger” by the military dictatorship. For Adão, Paulo Freire, the educator, was very much a product of this time:

All the traditions, all the passions inspired by the Popular Culture Movement affected him like a process of internal alchemy—which his exile exacerbated. He was a viscerally Pernambucan person who suddenly found himself confronting big intellectual ideas, great collisions of ideas, and this transformed him. I think, if he had continued in Pernambuco...a person who had access to the universe of the poor, a person from Jaboatão...because what happens in Pernambucan education is that you always think about the sugarmill and the street—you’re not thinking about your housemaid. Paulo was able to adjust his optic and see everyone.

I asked Adão to compare the ‘two Freires,’ Gilberto and Paulo. Paulo Freire was known to be an avid reader of Gilberto’s work but what would Gilberto have thought of Paulo? He called Gilberto “monolithic,” explaining “there is something very mordant about the intelligentsia of Pernambuco. They have only one place...when one person dies, another takes his place and takes on the same manias—for instance, Paulo and Gilberto both did this by distancing themselves. It is personally disorienting to sit in the chair of power—you may have a sudden temptation to put it on your head! But you can’t do that. If there hadn’t been all this stuff [revolution, exile, etc.] Paulo would have been Gilberto’s successor. They had little vices in common, like using the ‘third person singular’ to refer to themselves. Gilberto only spoke of himself in the third person... Because he left, Paulo was able to see Pernambuco with another kind of vision, not only

Pernambuco but all the minorities of the world, and see that Pernambuco is just a part, Brazil is a single part of a more general program.” He compared Freire to Leonardo da Vinci’s drawing, known as “Vitruvian Man”:

Paulo Freire is a man in himself, that almost Platonic thing, a man by all measures. Leonardo Da Vinci has a drawing of a man and an aspect of modules—a guy with his arms and legs spread, his legs embracing the entirety and inscribed in a circle, in other words, man as the universal measurement. That, for me, has a lot to do with Paulo Freire.

PL: The Renaissance ideal.

AP: The Renaissance ideal. When I was studying History of Art in the 70s, to be able to understand the great revolution of Modern Art, it was important to know that the head was inviolable. People were seen from the outside. Freud opened this up and said let’s look at how we act. After that, it was no longer possible to see oneself externally as an icon because there’s always something motivating you from the inside. You give up smoking because you’re not really smoking, you’re sucking your mother’s breast—psychoanalytic exaggeration. Jung brings us back to the archetype and archetypes are important, they’re inside and outside you. I think Paulo redrew the circle and in so doing, he became the ‘Abrahamic’ Christian. There are a lot of archetypes in Christianity: the St. John Evangelist or visionary Christian; the St. Peter or institutional Christian; the St. Paul Christian who is propagandistic; the St. John the Baptist type who is esoteric. All are facets of Christianity. But there is the older, Abrahamic phase: the guy who becomes illuminated and goes his own way...When God asks you for your son’s head, you don’t argue. We are back to the Shiite thing—no prophets—direct dial God. What I mean to say is that Paulo reconstituted the sound of the universe which today has a diminished circumference, a lowered head, is inhabited by *homo consumista* – ‘Consume and I’ll tell you who you are—class A, class B, class C, etc’.²¹⁷ Luso-Iberian Catholicism has nothing left of this potent Abrahamic thing. I don’t want Christ to sacrifice himself for me, damn it! I don’t want to see his blood transformed into rubies running down an ivory body on the wall of a baroque Brazilian church. That is repugnant to me. There is a dimension where you pass through something transcendent. I want to be the agent of my own transformation. An Abrahamic Christian understands this. (AP, São Paulo, 7/9/04)

Adão (Adam) speaks of *Abraão* (Abraham), father of Isaac and Ismael, ancestor of both Jews and Arabs, as a human being in God’s thrall. God commanded him to sacrifice

²¹⁷ Adão is referring to the *Mídia Dados* (Media Data) ranking system, issued annually by *Grupo de Mídia*, a consortium of Brazilian advertising agencies, to delineate the acquisitive power of various population sectors. The *classificação econômica familiar* (economic classification by family) is based on the *Salário Mínimo* (Minimum Salary) of R\$ 240 (approx. US\$ 80) a month. Classes A1 and A2, comprising 9 per cent of the national population of 179.1 million people of whom 150.6 million live in cities, make the equivalent of 23.3 minimum salaries a month (US\$ 1864). Classes B1 and B2, comprising 28 per cent of the population, make 9.7 minimum salaries (US\$ 776 per month). Class C, comprising 36 per cent of the population, makes 4.2 minimum salaries (US\$ 336 per month). Class D, comprising 24 per cent of the population, makes 2.3 minimum salaries (US\$ 184 per month). While Class E, comprising 2 per cent, makes just 1.3 minimum salaries (US\$ 104 per month). The average family size is 3.58 people. In *Grande Recife* (which includes Recife and Olinda), 5 per cent of the population is classified in the A categories, 18 per cent in the B categories, 37 per cent in the C category, 19 per cent in the D category and 5 per cent in the E category. The Brazilian gross domestic product per capita was R\$ 8.565 (US\$ 2855) in 2003, according to the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics).

Isaac, his oldest son, to test his obedience and, had he not been stopped by an angel's hand, Abraham would have heeded the command. Adão esteems this kind of direct, Abrahamic connection to his higher power and a XVII century baroque version of the body and blood of Christ hanging in the nave of Olinda's *Igreja de São Bento* does not supply it. So he looks to the *candomblês* and *terreiros* that the Africans brought to Brazil:

In Olinda, it's very interesting—you see all the people of the *candomblé* following the saints' processions. There wasn't a polarization here, as there was in Haiti. The slave when he arrived here came face to face with white, blue-eyed Portuguese and included them in his pantheon. You understand how it is, it's another *axé*²¹⁸, something else, the other's *axé*, but he incorporates it. There's a fantastic film by Jean Rouch called *La Chasse au Lion d'Arc*, about an African community where the *orixás*²¹⁹ who descend are of an inspector of vehicles, the *orixá* of the locomotive. Pernambuco is full of this, and they have it here in São Paulo too, the *boiadeiro*, the *caminhoneiro*,²²⁰ these are new entities which have appeared. One of the African keys is here, but since Africa is very far away, there was no renovation, so let's look at the *axé* to see what kinds of things have been incorporated. This is one of the keys, one of the nuclei of orthodox *candomblé*, a kind of mother, which comes from the indians and passes through the *caboclo*.²²¹ It is adopted by the people, especially in the interior of Pernambuco.

Adão's mention of the "*orixá* of the locomotive" recalls Robert Farris Thompson's description (1983, 155-156) of the "mock tomb" the black Kentucky stonemason Henry Dorsey constructed for his "late and beloved sister," Bernice. When other members of his family purchased a "commercially rendered granite marker and placed it on her grave rather than a headstone that he had made in 1963 with his own hands...he took the handcrafted headstone and set it up, in a corner of his yard, flanked with an abstract silhouette of a locomotive...A train beside a tomb...a spirit-train." Thompson also

²¹⁸ According to Robert Farris Thompson, "A thing or a work of art that has *àshe* transcends ordinary questions about its makeup and confinements: it is divine force incarnate. This richest of all privileges is merited by the highest women and men of the land: the master priestesses, the diviners, the kings, the most important chiefs. All have *àshe*. And even their words are susceptible to transposition into spirit-invoking and predictive experiences, for *àshe* literally means 'So be it,' 'May it happen.'" (Thompson, 1984, 7)

²¹⁹ "Thus the deities—the *orisha*—of the city-states of Oyo and Ketu were introduced to Cuba and Brazil (...) A remarkable fusion of *orisha*, long separated by civil war and intra-Yoruba migrations, took place in the New World." (Thompson, 1984, 17)

²²⁰ The *boiadeiro* (cowherd) and *caminheiro* (truckdriver) are modern representations of the autochthonous urge to consubstantiate human archetypes and deities.

²²¹ A person with a mixture of white and indigenous ("indian") blood.

points out (1983, 74) that “the awesome image of the “all-devouring, all-seeing Earth” is the *àshe* of *àshe*, a pure force [which] militates against...total male dominance...the threat of class formation and drastically unequal distribution of wealth...the human arrogance of Western technocratic structures.”

Today, the traditional *axé* of *candomblés* and *umbandas*²²² is being usurped by the unfettered theatricality of certain Pentecostal sects, particularly the *Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus* (Universal Church of the Kingdom of God) of Bishop Edir Macedo. The IURD is one of Brazil’s leading exports, with ‘temples’ in 46 nations around the world, many of them in formerly abandoned cinemas, including a burgeoning Latin-American congregation in the old State Movie-palace in downtown Los Angeles. The IURD has been described by John Burdick as “a cult of affliction” which creates a “bond of suffering among petitioners that permits a temporary suspension of social roles and status.” An IURD pastor, interviewed by Burdick, says the Church offers a refuge “where people are freed from a sense of personal responsibility for their problems,” particularly domestic discord, which is considered “the work of the devil” (1993, 145). It is also a source of income since congregants are encouraged, some say coerced, to tithe 10 percent of their earnings to the Church.

In Brazil, the IURD reproduces the fervor and drama of the Afro-Brazilian cults, including spirit possession, exorcism, counseling and the selling of sacred amulets, oils and unguents at the same time that it condemns *macumba* as superstitious fetishism. Two-hour services are held four times daily and there is growing concern in Japan, Belgium, Holland, and the United Kingdom, about the sect’s strangle-hold on the poorest

²²² Three regional variations of what Brazilians call, generically, *macumba*: the religion of the Nagô-speaking Yoruban people brought to Brazil in the 18th and 19th centuries as slaves. *Candomblé* is the Bahian manifestation, purportedly that which has remained closest to its African roots. *Umbanda* is a syncretic urban mélange with Amerindian influences as well as elements of Buddhism and Kardecian spiritism prevalent in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. *Xangô* is what they call the mysteries of drumming, possession, sacrifice, dance, divination and ancestor worship throughout Pernambuco and the Northeast.

and most superstitious sectors of the populace; people who are convinced by persuasive pastors that their problems will be replaced by the blessings of material prosperity if they serve the Lord by volunteering to reach ever deeper into their pockets and bank accounts.

Although there are bigger Pentecostal churches in Brazil,²²³ the IURD is an emblematic 21st century religious export, offering *sola fide, sola scriptura* evangelism²²⁴ to “the wretched of the earth.” It could be argued that, were it not for the Vatican’s quashing of grassroots Liberation Theology and the Base Ecumenical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, there would be a smaller and less gullible audience for Bishop Macedo’s brand of ‘televangelism.’²²⁵ His apparent success may have more to do with the spiritual despondency of unskilled workers trapped in dead end jobs or cycles of sporadic employment with no ‘coping skills’ beyond anesthetizing themselves with alcohol, drugs, gambling and sex, who find that peer support and fundamentalist ethics restore their damaged self-esteem. That may be why it is so difficult to indict IURD clergy, although stories of greedy pastors ‘fleecing’ their sheep abound on the chat lines. There *is* psychological relief in the purgation of sins through confession followed by a program of prayer, meditation, tithing and voluntary labor to save other souls. As Paulo Freire reminds us (2000, 65):

The peasant is a dependent. He can’t say what he wants. Before he discovers his dependence, he suffers. He lets off steam at home, where he shouts at his children, beats them, and despairs. He complains about his wife and thinks everything is dreadful. He doesn’t let off steam with the boss because he thinks the boss is a superior being. Lots of times, the peasant gives vent to his sorrows by drinking. This total emotional dependence can lead the oppressed to what Fromm calls necrophilic behavior: the destruction of life—their own or that of their oppressed fellows. It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves.

²²³ *Assembléia de Deus* (Assembly of God) churches boast 13 million adherents in Brazil alone.

²²⁴ *Sola fide* is “salvation by faith alone.” *Sola scriptura* means “the Bible is the lone source of authority for Christians.” (Peter J. Boyer, “A Reporter at Large: The Big Tent”, *The New Yorker*, 8/22/05, p. 50)

²²⁵ He owns TV Record, Brazil’s third biggest network, and sermonizes nightly on *Univisión*, international Spanish-language network TV.

By apostrophizing physically and psychologically destructive behavior as ‘Satan’ and literally choking the devil out of reprobates in dramatic public exorcisms, IURD pastors often manage to eliminate the ‘necrophilic’ urge. Cybernetically enhanced²²⁶ ‘movie palaces’ are used as houses of worship and the repentants’ gratitude, in the form of cash and property, is funneled back into the crescent ministry. Again, in Freire’s words:

Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their *reflective* participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building; it is to lead them into the populist pitfall and transform them into masses which can be manipulated. (ibid., 65)

In the ‘burning building’ we have made of Earth and are doomed to inhabit, the IURD, a fundamentalist Christian church, appears to ‘liberate’ some of its adherents from their self-destructive tendencies. However, in the process, ‘reflection’ is diminished and mass manipulation wins the day. In fact, Freire’s “populist pitfall” exists whenever and wherever the communications media are controlled by the hegemony. *Rede Globo* (Global Network), the family-owned media empire which grew to be the world’s fourth largest producer of news and entertainment television, was owned and operated for more than sixty years by a wily oligarch from Rio de Janeiro, Roberto Marinho, Sr., who supported the military dictatorship throughout its twenty-three-year tenure, shoehorned Fernando Collor into the Presidency in 1989 and controlled public opinion like a master marioneteer.²²⁷

²²⁶ High-tech sound systems and theatrical lighting underscore the human drama of confession, diabolical expulsion and miraculous ‘cures’ staged by IURD pastors as demonstrations of faith.

²²⁷ Starting in 1962, with \$6 million ‘seed money’ provided by Time-Life, Inc., Marinho and a handful of trusted associates built a media empire around serial dramas with Brazilian themes, using what salesmanager Marina Feital called ‘drug culture tactics’ to vanquish competitors: “You give it away, wait for people to get ‘hooked’ on the product and then sell for the highest possible price” (Herz, 1988, 22). Globo is the most politically-influential media empire in the developing world – by 1990 it owned 78 stations in Brazil, with more than 50 million viewers, ad revenue of \$600 million a year, 8,000 employees, more than 30 subsidiaries in the Soviet Union, Italy, Portugal, Cuba, Japan, and was producing and exporting TV programming to 112 countries. Until he died on August 6, 2003, aged 98, Marinho used his vast, conservative power to shape public opinion “in a patriotic manner, trying to correct things, seeking a better way for the country and its states. We would like to have enough power to fix everything that does not work in Brazil and we dedicate all our efforts to this” (Roberto Marinho, Sr., from an undated interview

When I asked my friends about adult education in Pernambuco, during my week-long stay in Olinda and Recife in November, 1999, “João Francisco” was the name I heard again and again. Unfortunately, the brevity of my stay did not permit a meeting at the time. So I had to wait until 2002. In the meantime, I wrote him a letter saying that I had seen the results of his work at the CEJA in Peixinhos and requesting that I be allowed to conduct research there and at the Center of Education (CE) at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) where he was Director. Of NUPEP (the Nucleus of Instruction, Research and Extension in Youth and Adult Education and Popular Education) I knew nothing. When we finally met in 2002, Professor de Souza granted me a wide-ranging hour and a half interview in the course of which he invited me, as a participant-researcher, to collaborate on any of NUPEP’s growing list of projects. By the time we finished, it had become clear to me that most of the EJA educators I had met, people like Guiomar and Danilson, Almeri Freitas de Souza and Beatriz de Barros, were his ex-students or collaborators, or both. I began to understand that the author of the fiery 1987 treatise, *Uma Pedagogia da Revolução* had evolved into a widely respected scholar and pedagogue with a growing list of publications and first-hand experience in Mexico, Spain and Portugal. Thus I was pleased when he asked me to translate and edit parts of his 2001 book, *Atualidade de Paulo Freire*, in preparation for several seminars he delivered at the Drama School of the University of Manchester, England in 2003. When I returned to Recife in 2004, he was just getting back from six months as a CAPES scholar at the University of the Minho in Braga, Portugal and the University of Barcelona, Spain. I began to attend the weekly meetings of his PROMATA project team and to travel to municipal schools in the northern and southern *Zona da Mata* to watch them conduct

with Alain Riding of the New York Times cited by Herz, 1988, 24, my translation).

teacher-training sessions. On September 3rd, I traveled to João Pessoa, the capital of the neighboring state of Paraíba, with João Francisco and a group of his graduate students for a joint seminar with graduate students from the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) on multiculturalism and diversity, focusing on the work of the French sociologist Alain Touraine. By the time I left Brazil, a month later, I felt attached to the family of dedicated adult educators João Francisco calls “*Crionças*” — melding the Portuguese words for children and jaguars.

4.4 Professor João Francisco de Souza

João Francisco de Souza, director of the *Centro de Educação* at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) and head of NUPEP (Nucleus for Teaching, Research and Educational Extension for Youth and Adults and in Popular Education), is a dyed-in-the-wool Freirian who today occupies a place in the state’s educational hierarchy similar to the one Freire himself inhabited, albeit briefly, in 1960-62. As a teenage volunteer involved in the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (MCP), de Souza helped set up the *Praças da Cultura* (Culture Plazas) where public TV was a popular attraction at a time when very few Pernambucans had sets of their own. After viewing the programs, people discussed them publicly and soon theatrical and musical performances were added to the Movement’s public offerings — ultimately leading to the creation of the *Círculos da Cultura* (Culture Circles).

JF: There were five plazas here in Recife...at that time it was only in Recife, because the MCP initially only took place in Recife. Its leaders were Germano Coelho, Chico Weber, Anita Paes Barreto, Abelardo da Hora, Paulo Freire...at that time Paulo was beginning to experiment with literacy processes. Before he had conducted the Culture Circles without a literacy segment, just the debate. He had been working on that since he was a director at SESI. He would hold a debate with the workers, with the machine operators say, and they voted for a bunch of themes that they wanted to study, so...

PL: The 'educandos' chose their own curriculum?

JF: Yes, although there was no scholastic part yet, no literacy methodology, Paulo was

very impressed because they got very involved in these debates and participated.

PL: They wanted to know.

JF: They wanted to know, and that's how it all began. Paulo wondered 'wouldn't it be possible to do something similar with scholastic input? Because the problem was that the majority couldn't read. So, starting with the Culture Circles, Paulo began to introduce the part with words too, because there was already lots of debate around the so-called 'generative themes.' So he started to bring into these discussions about the 'generative themes,' the 'generative word' as well so that they became part of the linguistic work and the gradual appropriation of writing and reading. The first ten sessions were spent on the 'codifications', what he called the ten 'situations,'²²⁸ without written words. With the eleventh session, he introduced the reading part and the part about mastering the alphabetic 'code'.

PL: Had he already had the experience in Angicos?

JF: No, no, this was before Angicos. The Angicos experiment wasn't until 1963 when he was the Coordinator of the Cultural Science Service at the university. Before that he was doing experiments in Poço da Panela, near his house in Casa Forte, with some of the housemaids who lived around there.

PL: And you were part of this group?

JF: Of that group no, I was part of the one in Praça da Torre, closer to the central city. In our work, initially, there wasn't anything about literacy, it was just the work around television, music, theater, readings, the mobile library, okay? But every Saturday we had a meeting with the coordinators, Paulo Freire and Paulo Rosas...where we mentioned any problems we might be having and they would discuss them with us, analyzing how we could continue to work on questions the people raised.

PL: And you were a teacher in a secondary school?

JF: No, I was a student, I was a boy, sixteen or seventeen, *yo era un niño!* (laughs). There was a group of us, a group there from the Pernambuco [state] *colégio* [high school] and we developed all this ... all this work, it was a group of some thirty kids and we were involved in all these activities with them.

PL: You were already politicized?

JF: Yes, at that time it was eminently political work. It was a moment of a lot of political effervescence here in Pernambuco and there were many university and high school students involved who were responding to the appeal of the Popular Culture Movement and got involved working in the neighborhoods afterwards as literacy teachers when the scholastic part actually began, you see? So all of us got involved in this mobilization.

PL: It sounds very much like in Cuba in 1961.

JF: Yes, more or less, but it didn't have that...the revolutionary process wasn't the same as in Cuba, but there are some similar things in terms of the mobilization and the involvement of the youth. The MCP was created in 1960 and, at the end of three or four months, there were already more than four hundred youths involved in all these neighborhoods working on all manner and nature of projects, you know?

PL: And how long did it last?

²²⁸ See appendix, below.

JF: Oh, the MCP didn't last long, it began in 1960 and in the coup of 1964, in July, it was all...not in July, no, what July! (laughing)

PL: In April.

JF: In the month of April they invaded the Movement HQ, burned the whole library, the documents, everything...Absolutely nothing was left...They burned everything. There was a library called “*A Brasileira*” which was one of the most complete in the entire country and they set fire to all the books, the personal documents of the people, (...) everything! It was a bonfire...everything, everything...a whole day of burning.²²⁹

Radicalized as an adolescent by the opportunity to work with adults in the rich socio-political ferment of the MCP in Recife, it is not surprising that de Souza has devoted most of his pedagogical career to EJA (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*). His latest book, *Atualidade de Paulo Freire* (“The Currency of Paulo Freire”) is an “analysis of politics in Brazil, especially so-called ‘social policies,’ on the basis of various situations generated by relations of production and cultural configurations (cultural diversity), in their potential for coexistence (‘intermulticulturality’) which are able to help us overcome the exasperating socio-economic inequalities, cultural exclusions and cultural inequalities through democratic transculturation (‘multiculturality’).”²³⁰

De Souza cites Immanuel Wallerstein’s *Global Culture* (1996) as the source of the question “how can the social sciences deal seriously with the vast array of concepts in the world, without losing sight of the idea that there is a chance of knowing and understanding value-systems that in fact can be, or become, common to all humanity?”²³¹ He credits Steve Stoer and Luiza Cortesão, of the PFI-Porto (Portugal), for pointing out that Wallerstein’s question has a lot to do with “the Freirian proposal, already made at the end of the 1950s and early 1960s, which considers the confrontation of meaningful

²²⁹ Excerpt from the transcript of an interview I conducted with Dr. de Souza at UFPE on July 31, 2002, my translation.

²³⁰ This and several of the citations that follow are from a series of three papers under the title “Ethics, Politics and Pedagogy in the Perspective of Paulo Freire” which I helped translate for a series of seminars Professor de Souza conducted in 2003 for the Drama Dept. of Manchester University (U.K.).

²³¹ Wallerstein, *ibid.* pp. 122-123.

themes as the basic content of learning for those in the process of acquiring scientific knowledge in educative processes.²³² The main hindrance, according to de Souza, to what Freire (1996) defined as “a political ethics for the advancement of life” is the “huge number of assistive, or paternalistic, public policies that abound in Brazil.” Of these, he exemplifies one: the Brazilian government’s Program for the Eradication of Child Labor (PETI) that sponsored a research study he coordinated and directed for NUPEP in 2003 in Feira de Santana, Bahia, with technical and financial support from the Brazilian Ministry of Culture and UNICEF:

This was a broad study that basically examined the economic and cultural transformations of the parents of the children and adolescents included in the PETI project and the MOC/UNICEF Complementary Program. The study also focused on changes in the schools, in local public policy-making and, in particular, the management of several projects, e.g.: the Longer School Day, the Reading Suitcase, the Family Agents Project, and the Training of Teachers and Monitors. From an economic point-of-view, the only significant change was nutritional improvement in the diets of participating families.²³³

In one of the papers he delivered at Manchester, “Brazil as Seen Through a Political Ethic for the Betterment of Life,” De Souza referred to the “horrific scenario of the Brazilian Government’s Social Service System, including PETI.” Only one program escapes his scorn: *A Jornada Ampliada* (The Longer School Day). In fact he credits it, in Freirian terms, with “bring[ing] about the transformation of its beneficiaries, children and adolescents, into historical-cultural subjects,” adding that they benefitted in “cognitive, emotional, and operational terms.”²³⁴

The subject of the research project was “an abandoned population that has been (...) a mere object of charity for local authorities, victims of the inclement climate and objects of exploitation by the region’s few wealthy people—in addition to those at a national and

²³² The relevant works by Freire are *Educação como a prática da liberdade* (1967), pp. 85-150 and, for a discussion on the problem of universal human ethics, *Pedagogia da Autonomia* (1996), pp. 16-22.

²³³ De Souza, op. cit., p. 52

²³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 53

international level.” Their only champions were “certain NGOs and Church programs [which sought] to redress the balance of these situations.” Despite serious misgivings about the Brazilian social welfare system, De Souza believes that the study “represented an extraordinary opportunity for the identification of changes in the material, intellectual and operational aspects of the lives of parents, children and adolescents who have been part of PETI since it began in 1997, as well as changes in their expectations.” The researchers were looking for “cultural transformations” in the lives of adolescents served by PETI, in their families and schools, in local policies and in the regional economy. Changes in participants’ “cultural agendas” might also signify changes in the “relations of domination” of a population that suffers from lack of land to cultivate and inhabit, from unemployment and from scant social and organizational participation. De Souza notes that the people of Feira de Santana were “holding onto ideas that nourish attitudes which accompany submission, such as *machismo* and passivity, a kind of fatalistic religiosity, a mythical awareness of reality, of the world, of themselves and of others.”²³⁵ It seems that not much has changed in the forty years since Freire wrote about the existence of what he called “naïve” and “mythical” consciousness among Northeast Brazilian peasants.

According to De Souza, 1,459 people took part in the research process, 416 children and adolescents were interviewed and “psycho-social activities and tests were given to 160 adolescents from the sample for confirmation and comparison with the interview findings.” Schools and *Unidades de Jornada Ampliada* (UJAs) were visited and teachers, monitors, advisors and school directors were interviewed. The parents and adolescents from this sisal-growing region of Bahia are among the 54 million people in

²³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 53-54

Brazil who currently live on less than half a minimum salary per month.²³⁶ That number represents 32.1 percent of the total population. More precisely, these families make up part of a group of five million Brazilians who declared no income for the year 2002, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geographical Statistics (IGBE). This served to further stigmatize them, according to De Souza: “Local vendors, entrepreneurs and even the social workers and food-providers in projects and activities where they were participants called them ‘the families in PETI.’ Their social identity was that of a family assisted by the government because it is not able to survive on its own.”²³⁷ In the U.S., generations of families on Welfare prompted the Clinton Administration to tighten the program’s parameters, obliging many recipients to seek employment training and minimum wage jobs so as to maintain their entitlement to food stamps and state-subsidized health care. In Brazil, where there is no government safety-net and 32 percent of the population is scraping by on little more than a dollar a day, such families are a constant reminder of the human toll of global capitalism.

De Souza’s conclusions are far from optimistic: “This is a grave problem that a serious government, committed to social transformation, cannot avoid. Even international organizations that work in situations of destitution around the world, such as the United Nations, through its Program for Development (PNUD), know this. Their representative in Brazil, Henry Jacklen, maintains that ‘this is a structural problem that will take generations to solve. The PNUD is searching for policies that can accelerate these changes. It will take time to measure the impact of the school-grant and other similar programs of income redistribution.’”²³⁸

²³⁶ US\$35.

²³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 55

²³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 55. De Souza does not provide the provenance of the Jacklen quote.

The study indicated a number of impacts on different fronts, but not on the redistribution of income because this is not within the purview of the PETI program. Time is unlikely to alter the nature of the Brazilian welfare state. The impact will not go beyond palliative improvements even though, according to de Souza, “cultural changes in the children and adolescents, as well as in some parents, could be observed.” But all such assistive initiatives, if not accompanied by substantive and adequate land reform and a massive investment in the creation of work and income for needy families, will not go beyond this threshold. If unmodified, PETI and the school grant will only have impact at the level of minimum consumption (food, clothing, shoes and some physical improvements in the home). It is all too apparent that, without basic structural reform, nothing significant can be achieved. Families ‘on the dole’ do not make or expect miracles. With programs like PETI, according to the NUPEP report, the Brazilian government is throwing people who already live like dogs a ragged bone.

According to de Souza:

The family is seen as the designated place for the production and reproduction of intimate social relations: the satisfaction of biological needs, endo-culturation and the inculcation of moral, sexual and ideological choices that define broader areas of the social structure. Eternally grateful for what they are given, families can only survive in this culture by fulfilling important functions as a means of socialization, forming the structure of personality and intimacy, using codes, symbols and implicit or explicit power relations. Nonetheless, these families are aware of the importance of school and, in particular, of the longer school day [*a jornada ampliada*] that guarantees their children and adolescents better chances of studying and growing intellectually. Understanding this, families complained about the infrastructure of the UJAs (Longer Day Units) because they thought it important for their children to have a study environment that they themselves did not have. However, while the children attended school, they had no time or means to study. In reality, they did not study. This is why there was complete panic among the families about the idea of losing the grant.²³⁹

His research on the PETI project has convinced de Souza that “public assistance in the form of social welfare is inhuman and dehumanizing. It keeps human beings from achieving a decent life.” He cites Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality I: The Need to*

²³⁹ Ibidum, pp. 55-56. My translation.

Know (1994 Mexican edition, p. 125)

The great struggles which question perennial power are not being waged, as they were in former times, in the name of reviving erstwhile rights or as a result of some millennial dream of a temporal cycle or a golden age. We no longer await the emperor of the poor, nor the kingdom of the last days, nor even the re-establishment of justice believed to be ancestral; **what people want and what they are fighting for is life itself, understood as the basic necessities, the concrete essence of what it is to be human, the fulfillment of this potential, the plenitude of the possible.** It doesn't make any difference if this is part of a utopia, what we have is a very real struggle for life itself as a political object (...) The right to life, to the body, to health, to happiness, to the satisfaction of basic needs; the 'right,' above all other 'alienations,' **to find out what one is and what one can become.** (Foucault's boldface emphases, my translation).

When I mentioned my interest in working on issues of popular culture from a more intimate, biographical perspective and that I was thinking of investigating a community in Olinda faced with many of the same issues as the one in Feira de Santana,²⁴⁰ de Souza smiled: "So, you're going to remake *The Children of Sanchez*?" Having read and been moved by Oscar Lewis's work when it first appeared forty years ago,²⁴¹ I was pleased by the allusion. De Souza elucidated on the scholarly importance of social ethnography:

Insofar as you are able to document a situation like that, a thousand reflections can be made with it as a starting point, as much from the perspective of understanding the relationships that are woven in the interior of such families, as for the implications of a social program, an educational program. How can we put together an educational program if we don't understand the culture of the populace, what it is they value, what kind of expectations exist or don't exist, what are the frustrations ... So we keep on working, playing with things, who is able to choose, who has been picked, who has not. ... Because you don't have a more serious, documented approach in the majority of these cases... that's what I would like to be done with the youth, from the suburbs and the interior. Find out what's going on in their heads: what are their survival mechanisms? Because there are, no doubt, very interesting things we don't have the slightest idea about. So you start an educational program without knowing what you're playing with, just to keep people busy. Just to pass the time. And it ends up being something less than serious. Without a scientific basis, you know? It's not for nothing that you have 80 percent of the population of this country over fifteen who did not conclude their primary education within eight years. It's all about opinions and impressions, you see." (excerpt from an interview with Professor de Souza at the University of Pernambuco, 7/31/02, my translation.)

I was back in Olinda to conduct a pilot study at a Freire-inspired school for youth and

²⁴⁰ This project is still in the works. It will be done in collaboration with José Ataíde, author of *Olinda, Carnaval e Povo* (1983) and take the form of a social history of the Ilha do Maruim *mocambo* where I was stationed in the Peace Corps (1966-68) and Ataíde lived most of his life (1941-2001).

²⁴¹ *Five Families: Mexican Case Studies in the Culture of Poverty* and *The Children of Sánchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family* were both first published in 1959. *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York* was first brought out by Random House in 1965.

adults: the CEJA (Educational Center for Youth and Adults) in the working class neighborhood of Peixinhos to which I had been led by friends while in Recife for the CLACSO conference in November, 1999. It was apparent that, in less than three years, the once vibrant school had vanished. Only a few of the original educators remained, the science and computer labs had been stripped and the septic tank's malfunction was noisomely evident. In interviews with teachers and administrators, I began to piece together the story of CEJA's demise. The school, administered by the Olinda municipality, was started during Germano Coelho's second mayoralty by de Souza, who was then the Municipal Secretary of Education. When the Coelho regime was defeated in the 1996 mayoral election by Jacilda, a conservative, the new *Prefeita* (Mayor) forced the CEJA to move to a small, under-equipped social club in the neighborhood and most of de Souza's university-trained faculty dispersed. The CAIC was turned into an elementary school, although the current PC do B (Brazilian Communist Party) "people's government" of *Prefeita* Luciana Santos²⁴² has managed to restore EJA classes there at night.

As Olinda's Education Minister, de Souza aggressively pursued government and NGO grants, obtaining sufficient financial and material support to realize his possible dream. He turned his graduate students at UFPE, the Federal University of Pernambuco, into a disciplined and enthusiastic corps of research collaborators. In addition to studying the pedagogical precepts of their professional forebears, they experimented in their own classrooms, researching new ways to teach dialogically and submitting detailed analyses of their experiments at the end of a two-year course in Youth and Adult Education at the Center of Education (CE) at UFPE.

²⁴² Luciana Santos won her second consecutive four-year term as mayor of Olinda in the municipal elections of October, 2004.

In 1999, no longer in charge of the daily operations of the CEJA, João Francisco published an important series of workbooks, based on Freirian ideology and the daily praxis of his teachers. The books are produced by NUPEP (the Nucleus of Instruction, Research and Extension in Youth and Adult and Popular Education) which was “created in November, 1988 with professors from the Departments of Social Services and Socio-Philosophical Foundations of Education in a Participative Action Research proposal to study the phenomena of youth and adult education and popular organization from the perspective of Popular Education.”²⁴³ They are divided into two modules: 1) "The Historicity of the Human Being" and 2) "The Sociability of the Human Being" and cover five subject areas: Portuguese Language; Mathematics; Natural Sciences; Social Sciences; Art & Culture.

The series is being used in municipal youth and adult schools throughout the state of Pernambuco. I was handed copies on three separate occasions while visiting local schools. In the Module I—Portuguese Language workbook there are lyrics by well-known Brazilian composers: Chico Buarque ("Minha Infancia") and Pixinguinha²⁴⁴ ("Carinhoso"), verses by Jorge Luis Borges ("Instantes") and Bertolt Brecht ("Elogio ao Aprendizado") and a short piece by Paulo Freire ("O Ato de Estudar") in which two men bringing a van full of cocoa beans to market solve the problem of how to cross a flooded patch on their route.²⁴⁵ There are also photographs and graphics from the worlds of art and

²⁴³ This declaration is printed, in boldface capital letters, on the inside cover of the entire NUPEP series, beginning with the *Experimental Edition* of 1998. The workbooks are published by the *Centro de Educação* at UFPE as a “Federal Public Service” and supported by grants from the Brazilian National Foundation for Educational Development.

²⁴⁴ The stage name of Alfredo da Rocha Viana Filho (1898-1973) the grandson of an African slave and a genial composer, saxophonist and flautist credited with over 2,000 musical compositions blending classical and popular instruments and melodies to create the virtuosic, improvisatory music known as *choro*.

²⁴⁵ This story, part of a ‘Reader’ that Freire and his Geneva-based Institute of Cultural Action (IDAC) created for the former Portuguese colony of São Tomé e Príncipe, was reproduced in Freire’s *A Importância do Ato de Ler: em três artigos que se completam* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1983) which was also published in a special edition of the *Harvard Educational Review* (February, 1981). See fn. 204, above, for further exegesis.

advertising and images of well-known characters from animated films. Readers are asked to engage in a series of interactive exercises based on these texts: making collages of images describing their reaction to a song or story, adding facts from their own lives to fill-in-the-blank *cloze* exercises, dividing words into syllables. As they are read by the teacher or sung, chanted, repeated, examined, and interpreted by members of the class, these texts represent what Freire termed "codifications: cognizable objects, challenges towards which the critical reflection of the decoders should be directed."²⁴⁶ North American educators looking at such a sophisticated and eclectic collection, might be dubious about its use as a literacy primer for people who have spent their adolescence and adulthood without being able to read. Literacy researcher Nelly Stromquist, in her critique of the São Paulo MOVA program, found that it "endorsed the philosophy of Paulo Freire, but did not mandate a set curriculum:

As several Brazilian educators have highlighted, there is an industry of cultural production which renders almost impossible the emergence of an autonomous culture of the oppressed classes...The existence of strong currents to maintain the dominant ideology raise a major challenge to those promoting literacy for citizenship: their task is not only to enable illiterates to have access to materials that will foster their progression to higher levels of literacy but also to enable them to read publications that will further expand their critical consciousness. (Stromquist, 1997, 209-210)

The 'expansion of critical consciousness' is what Professor de Souza has in mind. A recent article²⁴⁷ of his contains copious quotes from Freire's 1967 book, *Educação como prática da liberdade*, on the need for an education which "goes to meet those people immersed in the urban centers...an education that ... must be courageous, proposing to the people that they think about themselves, their times, their responsibilities, about their role in the new cultural climate of this transitional age."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Freire, 2000, 115.

²⁴⁷ "O Pensamento de Paulo Freire e a Educação do Trabalhador e da Trabalhadora" in *A prática política e pedagógica da CUT no nordeste—um diálogo com as experiências* (Watanabe et. al., Recife: Edições Bagaço, 2000), 61-79.

²⁴⁸ "Ir ao encontro desse povo emerso nos centros urbanos...uma educação que...haveria de ser corajosa,

NUPEP readers and workbooks are currently contributing to another viable program for youth and adults: the Scholastic Elevation Project for Rural Men and Women Workers, sponsored by the Syndical Training School of the Northeastern CUT. The CUT reader, "...*Já sei ler, vou ler mais...*" ('I already know how to read, I'm going to read more') bears a formidable subtitle, "The historicity and the spatiality of the human being: my history, our history, my city, my region," and is more specific, contextually, than the CEJA series. This is in keeping with Freire's dictum *a leitura do mundo precede a leitura da palavra* ("the reading of the world precedes the reading of the word") and with his lifelong love of Pernambuco and its culture.

Almost half the forty-three texts are from a single source, *A invenção do nordeste e outras artes* (The invention of the northeast and other arts) by Durval Muniz de Albuquerque, Jr. Albuquerque's book is published by Editora Massangana, part of the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation, founded by Recife's other famous Freyre, Gilberto, author of *Casa-grande & Senzala* (The Masters and the Slaves), "the greatest of Brazilian books and most Brazilian essay ever written", according to Darcy Ribeiro, by "such a petty reactionary on the political plane."

The Foundation has a couple of sites, houses numerous workshops and scholarly conferences and includes a research library, a bookstore, a cinematheque and fully-equipped video and animation editing bays and is staffed and supported by members of Recife's elite class. Several of my artist friends in Olinda were treated less than well by Foundation staff when they appeared in person to inquire about grants for personal projects. They describe it as a kind of 'old boy's club' of oligarchic intellectuals whose doors remain closed to working-class people, no matter how talented or capable.

propondo ao povo a reflexão sobre si mesmo, sobre seu tempo, sobre suas responsabilidades, sobre suas responsabilidades, sobre seu papel no novo clima cultural da época de transição." (Freire, 1967, 59)

In choosing Editora Massangana as publisher of a worker's 'reader,' de Souza seems impervious to such controversy. The third text in the book is taken from *Casa-grande & Senzala*. Under the title "*O Nordeste Construído Desde A Saudade, A Memória, O Passado*" (The Northeast Constructed From Longing, Memory, The Past), de Souza and co-creator Beatriz de Barros have chosen one of the opening paragraphs from Freyre's Fourth Chapter: "*O Escravo Negro Na Vida Sexual E De Família Do Brasileiro*" (The Negro Slave in the Sexual and Family Life of the Brazilian Man) which they call *O Berço Do Nordeste* (The Cradle of the Northeast):

Every Brazilian man, even those with fair skin and blond hair, carries in his soul, or in both body and soul, (...) the shadow, or at least the trace, of the indian and the negro. (...) In the tenderness, the excessive affection, the catholicism which delights our senses, in our music, the way we walk, our speech, the lullabies we sing our little children, in all our sincere expressions of life, almost all of us bear the mark of negro influence: from the slave or nanny who rocked us to sleep, who suckled us, who fed us, first softening each bit of food with her hand. From the little black boy who was our first playmate. From the old black 'mammy' who told us our first tales of ghosts and goblins. From the brown-skinned girl who plucked our first chigger, expertly scratched the itch, and, later, in the squeaking cot, initiated us in physical love and our first complete feeling of manhood. (Freyre, 2001, 343, my translation).

Freyre conjectures about the psycho-sexual effects on the sons of the 'Big House' of having being suckled by black *mães de leite* (wetnurses) and, in the concupiscent style for which he is famous, describes a young man from a "well-known southern slave-owning family" who, in order to consummate his marriage to a woman of his class, has to smuggle his slave paramour's odorous shift into bed on their wedding night. In a text under the heading *A Convivência do Branco com o Negro* ("The Coexistence of Whites with Negroes"), de Souza and Silva have chosen another patrician novelist, José Lins do Rego, whose 1932 classic *Menino de Engenho* (Sugarmill Boy) was the first of a trilogy²⁴⁹ celebrating plantation life around the time of the passage of the 1888 *Lei Aurea* (Golden Law) which abolished slavery in Brazil. Although the tone is less provocative

²⁴⁹ The other books were *Doidinho* (1933) and *Bangüê* (1934). The three novels were published jointly in English as *Plantation Boy* (New York: Knopf, 1966).

than that of *Casa-grande & Senzala*, authorial emphasis on the benevolence, docility and maternal qualities of the former female slaves is similar:

The old slave quarters was left standing – twenty rooms with the same porch in front. My grandfather's negresses, even after the abolition, all remained at the mill, they didn't leave the 'street', as they called the slave quarters. And they all died there, of old age. I remember four of them: Fat Mary, Generosa, Galdina and Romana.

My grandfather continued to feed and clothe them. And they worked without pay, with the same joy as when they were slaves. Their two daughters and granddaughters followed them in service, with the same love for the master's household and the same passivity of good domestic animals. In the 'street', the children of the mill met their friends: the black boys, who were their playmates, and the negresses at whose breasts they had nursed; the good servants in whose arms they were raised. We lived mixed together with them there, being scolded by the older negresses just like their own ragamuffins, sharing their affection and their scorn. (Rego, 1976, 90, my translation)

There is little possibility that such controversial material would be taught in public schools in the U.S., particularly in the South. To see how the CUT workbooks contextualize such material, we turn to the accompanying *Livro de Atividades* (Activity Book). There, in an introductory page to the Social Sciences section, João Francisco posits the existence of “three traditions in the construction of different Northeastern identities” each of which has “different versions or visions: the vision of the writers/intellectuals, the vision of politicians and entrepreneurs (large landowners, industrialists and businessmen) and the vision of artists. We suspect that what we are and how we are living today is a result of the mixing of these different traditions with their different versions or visions” (Souza, 2000, 64, my translation). He argues for the supremacy of the “artists' vision” because it is an outgrowth of “popular organizing and the struggle for the transformation of Northeastern society in accordance with the interests of the majority of the people: men and women who work in the fields and streets and factories of the cities, salaried and unemployed, as well as native Brazilians, intellectuals, politicians and artists who make common cause with them in the hope that they will have a better life.”

Questions and instructions follow: 1) Which [of the three 'traditions'] seems most right? 2) What can we do to enhance the spread of 'the understanding which seems most right' in our environment? Why? 3) Synthesize in a word, a poem, a sentence, in a piece of music, a drawing, a painting or a written composition the best idea!" (ibid., 64). Student-readers are told to preserve their answers to these initial questions so they can compare them with the answers they come up with at the end of the course. Three verses from songs by three composers of color, Ataúlfo Alves, Dorival Caymmi and Gilberto Gil, are supplied as bases of comparison to the Freyre and Rego texts, shifting focus from the world of print to the realm of music and from the literary reminiscences of white and creole intellectuals to composers 'of color' writing, with self-abnegating humor or bitter irony, in a New World idiom akin to the blues²⁵⁰.

João Francisco and his NUPEP colleagues have risen to the challenge of providing consciousness-raising didactic materials for working-class youth and adults. While their student readers may struggle to understand the sophisticated, hegemonic language of such texts, they will be rewarded for their diligence with an expanded insight into the Procrustean²⁵¹, European gloss on their Afro-indigenous culture.

João Francisco de Souza is known as "João" to his students, colleagues and co-conspirators at the Center of Education and NUPEP—a big, balding bear of a man, born in 1944, whose combination of brilliance and bonhomie provides him opportunities to carry the torch of Youth and Adult Education abroad. Recently, he received a CAPES

²⁵⁰ In the selected segments, Alves's *Mulata Assanhada* ("Juicy Brownskin Gal") wishes that slavery would return so he could 'purchase' his provocative mistress and hold her captive in his heart; Caymmi's *Sinhôzinho* describes the "Little Master" at nightfall seeking out "an old black lady with a warm bosom" to tell him a story and sing him to sleep while Gil's *Mão Negra* ("Black Hand") decries "the slave hand that spent a lifetime cleaning/what the white man dirtied/even after the abolition of slavery/black is the hand that cleans/washing soiled clothes, scrubbing the floor/the cleaning hand is black."

²⁵¹ Like the mythical robber, Procrustes, who amputated or stretched the limbs of his victims to make them conform to the length of his bed, pre-twentieth century Brazilian literature strained to conform to thematic and stylistic archetypes imposed by French *literateurs* like Balzac, Hugo and Dumas. See Schwarz, 1992.

fellowship from the *Ministério de Educação do Brasil* (MEB) that allowed him to half a year as a visiting professor at the *Universidad de Barcelona* and the *Universidade do Minho* in Braga, Portugal where he coordinated and led a fifteen-week seminar on the Sociology of Non-Scholastic Adult Education for Master's degree candidates. Out of this experience came a book with a pointedly colloquial title – *E a Educação: Quê?* (“And Education: What?”) and a provocative subtitle – *A Educação na Sociedade e/ou a Sociedade na Educação* (“Education in the Society and/or the Society in Education”) in which the author “seek[s] to understand the new tasks (*tarefas*) of education in a postmodernity/world context from a sociological focus, pedagogically implied” (Souza, 2004, 11). De Souza's style, for a translator used to the sculpted and often melodious prose of Freire, Brandão, Romão and Demo, is prosaic and adjectivally dense:²⁵²

The post-modernity/world is challenging us to promote the construction of other kinds of economic relations, as well as political, institutional, interpersonal, emotional and cognitive ones, if we want to continue the construction of our humanity, to overcome the obstacles and the negativities that have made us humanly less, while turning us technologically and militarily more competent. (ibid., 11, my translation)

De Souza laughed when I told him this. Style is not his concern. If he were competing for academic or literary prominence, he would not be content to publish in Recife. *Edições Bagaço*²⁵³, his publisher, is rooted in the anarchic Pernambucan tradition, as its name implies. De Souza is, first and foremost, a researcher and a polemist. He knows when to let the facts speak for themselves:

Merely to give an example of our dehumanization, we supply a few statistics gathered by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) about the 11 million children and adolescents living in the 11 Brazilian states that comprise Brazil's Semi-Arid Region (SAR). 390 thousand of these are illiterate adolescents; about 75 percent of the boys and girls live in families with a per capita income of less than half a minimum salary (about 30 Euros a month); more than 317,000 children and adolescents work instead of attending school. In 95 percent of the region's cities, infant mortality is higher than the national median which, in 1996, was 37.5 deaths per 1,000 children born alive. In the Northeast,

²⁵² *A pós-modernidade/mundo está nos desafiando a promover a construção de outras formas de relações econômicas, políticas, institucionais, interpessoais, emocionais e cognitivas se quisermos continuar a construção de nossa humanidade, a superar os obstáculos, as negatividades que nos fazem menos humanamente, ainda que tecnológica e militarmente nos tenhamos tornado mais competentes.*

²⁵³ *Bagaço*, from *bagasse* (Fr.), is the pulverized residue of sugarcane after the juice has been extracted.

infant mortality was 60.4 per thousand.

Certainly, we won't overcome these challenges with cash incentives for school attendance (*'bolsas-escola'*) or other kinds of social welfare. If we don't build other kinds of economic relations, nothing will come of these little "generosities." In the case of the SAR, only agrarian reform projects, including credit and commercialization, accompanied by broad educational improvements, will be able to adjust and reorient the process of humanization in Brazil. "The problem of poverty will only be resolved by the 'capitalization' of such families, allowing them to "participate more equitably in the distribution of the final value of their product, retaining a greater part of the wealth they generate so as add value to their patrimony"²⁵⁴ and by promoting the construction of another culture that, besides allowing them to cope with the drought, takes the opportunity to exploit other kinds of relations—as we saw in a study sponsored by a UNICEF project called PETI (the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor) in the sisal-growing region of Bahia (Souza, 2003).

When I interviewed him two years later, on 9 September 2004, de Souza had struggled through eight months as the pedagogical ideologue and epistemic administrator of the PROMATA project and was weary of hassling with federal, state and municipal powers.²⁵⁵

PL: It's been eight months.

JF: It's been a permanent collision, a difficulty of understanding... First, we speak different languages.

PL: And the students too.

JF: That's another problem. It's an understanding among white men to kill all the remaining indians.

PL: Kill whom?

JF: The rest of the remaining indians.

PL: Shiuuu!

JF: I don't have many illusions about the results of all this. First, it's a complicated action. For this population [cane cutters and their families] it's not clear that school is important. Everyone says it's important but they don't see how school serves the workers. No one is

²⁵⁴ The quote is from Eugênio Giovenardi's *Os pobres do campo* (Porto Alegre: Tomo Editorial, 2003, 14). In a subsequent footnote, de Souza continues to cite Giovenardi (ibid., 28, 30): "Perhaps it is necessary to invert some concepts and considerations generally accepted about rural poverty and see them as effects rather than causes of a *poverty that is fed by its very capacity to generate wealth*. It would not be exaggerating things to say that poverty is part of the absurdity of 'exclusive' economic growth. The capacity to generate wealth turns the producers poor because the wealth they generate accumulates 'down the road' from them. Thus, their organization must also retain the wealth that feeds other points of accumulation in the rural economic complex. (...) It is beyond doubt that the struggle against poverty should now be a combination of national forces and international cooperation within the field of a new world economic order, a new focus on development on a human and solidary scale, according to the new requirements of the so-called 'natural resources' and ecological protection about which there seems to be a strong unanimity in the rhetorical discourse" (Giovenardi in de Souza, 2004, fn. 1, 12, translation mine).

²⁵⁵ These included the Pernambuco state government, the International Development Bank, NUPEP, IPAD and 27 different municipal secretariats of education.

clear about this. There is no answer to the question 'what use is school to the working class?' School serves us here in the university; it professionalizes us, gives us a certain status, the possibility of entering the labor market in some way. But primary school, whether you go to school for those first eight years or not, in terms of the world of work and getting along socially, doesn't make a big difference. School only makes a difference in people's lives at the university level. And, to some degree, at a secondary, 'trade school' level.

PL: So why do you do this?

JF: At the present moment, I'm not exactly sure.

PL: Interesting, because when I read the report you wrote about the experience in the sisal-growing region in Feira de Santana, in the interior of Bahia, it was very depressing.

JF: Five years invested...to create a new illness in the region which I called "the fear of losing the *bolsa* syndrome" because the families there were terrified that, when their child reached the age of fifteen, they would lose their *bolsa* [government scholarship] and be unable to survive. One child is worth 50 *reais* [\$20 per month], two children in school bring in R\$100 and that's the limit of the *PETI* (Program for the Eradication of Child Labor). And this illness is irreversible because every child advances chronologically! When they get to 15, they lose the *bolsa*. And the families have nothing to show for it because they have no work, no land, no prospects. They go back to 'ground zero.'

PL: And you put your heart and soul into this program?

JF: We are always under the illusion that it is worth something to 'problematize' these things. At least so people in the groups with whom we're working begin to deepen their discussion. That's what 'old man' Freire was talking about: 'problematizing', 'questioning': "What is this? Could it be done differently? Is there a better way?" I think this is the great role of the intellectual.

PL: It's not a question of winning, having victories or realizing dreams, then?

JF: Just discussing, discussing, discussing, discussing.

PL: Opening up the subject.

JF: Opening up the subject...until, one day, the population starts to organize itself and sits down at the table with the cards in its hand. We can't do this for them, we middle-class intellectuals! The most we can do is ask 'why is this happening?' Supply some information so they understand what's going on. Now that you have this new way of thinking, could this be done another way? I think this is our most significant contribution. How many people are going to read my report on PETI? Half a dozen?

PL: I found it very depressing, hopeless.

JF: But there were some interesting points.

PL: The '*jornada*'?²⁵⁶

JF: The *jornada*, the teachers began to do new things, the kids began to look fatter, cleaner, they became more active...

PL: Because they were eating regularly.

²⁵⁶ The *jornada ampliada* (longer school day) was the most successful part of the Bahian PETI project according to de Souza [see p. 322, above].

JF: But without any perspective for the future. Everyone was asking 'when my kid turns fifteen, what am I going to do? I can't go to the city, while (s)he is studying.'

PL: But all the programs here are short-term, all of them--it's all 'Russian Roulette.'

JF: That report was very problematic—UNICEF, the program sponsors, were extremely upset!

PL: Why?

JF: Because they thought I was very cruel, that I saw nothing worthwhile about the program, no positive aspects, blah blah blah.

PL: They didn't witness the experience themselves? They didn't send anyone?

JF: They came but they were content with episodic aspects. They didn't venture an in-depth analysis of the program's implications. If the children were having fun, if they were at school rather than working, they were satisfied. "Isn't it great that the kids aren't working?" It's wonderful! But what are we offering them as far as the future is concerned? It's not enough that they are content, that they have something to eat today. We have to make sure that tomorrow there will still be food. What are we offering that will create conditions so that they will be able to take care of their own survival and not have another existential crisis? It becomes a 'vicious cycle.' [JF draws a diagram on a small piece of paper] The child enters the program at age 0-6 with a *bolsa de alimentação* [meal subsidy]. From 7-15, (s)he has a *bolsa escola*, and they recently invented a *bolsa gente jovem* [young person's scholarship] which goes from 15-18. So when they get to the age of 18, they marry and make children who qualify for the cycle so they can continue to live off the *bolsas*.

PL: But can you really 'live' on these *bolsas*?

JF: Live, no! But...

PL: Sustain yourself.

JF: Eat beans with flour and water. It's not really a life but, as they say, 'we have nothing.' When work appears, they work all day for a dollar! Cutting sisal or at the quarry breaking rocks! Three *reais*...

PL: And here in the canefields?

JF: In the canefields you can make a bit more because they pay by the ton. So they bring their wives, their kids, their cousins, nieces, nephews. Ten people working together can bring in 10, 12, 15 *reais* per day. But ten people working equals R\$1,50 each! So what can we do in this context? Problematize it, discuss it. Not just with the populace, but with the authorities. Wherever I go, I tell this story. Some people become furious. With others I say, 'let's stop being cynical--let's get serious. If we aren't willing to change their socio-economic situation, let them die! It's better that they die now, less cruel than having all this dialogue and delaying death by a week or two!'

PL: And what happens when you go to Europe now, or when you take part in an international project like this one at the University of Barcelona? What is the contribution of your vision to the European Union? Does it 'blow their minds' when you speak of Brazil?

JF: It would be great if it did. I would have done my job! [laughs] Just to get them to discuss these problems. Because they have serious problems too, just as you do in the

States.

PL: You mean with 'illegal' immigration from North Africa, Turkey and Eastern Europe?

JF: No, national problems—the level of unemployment in Europe is very large. Almost everyone in Europe is 'subsidized.' I don't know how long they will be able to sustain this. They have the same '*bolsas*' that we do!

PL: Really?

JF: France, Spain, Portugal, Greece—all of them!

PL: *Bolsa escola, bolsa alimentação?*

JF: All of them. They're called 'subsidies.' Today half the population of Europe is 'subsidized.' From 100 to 300 *euros*, depending on the type of subsidy and the social group. It's enough to live relatively well—you have enough food, you can buy brand-name clothes, circulate around the city, but the young people [gestures putting a needle in his arm], have a coffee, look at the world, go to the plazas. There's no work! As one of them said to me, "Professor, do you know what it's like, at daybreak, to have nothing to do? Where are we going? What are we going to do?" It's a phenomenon that is growing. Because technology has done away with the labor force! With every technological advance less and less people are needed. Some interesting professions are beginning to appear: reading to old people, accompanying old people. Doing garden work.

PL: These are also the professions of many immigrants in Los Angeles. Giving baths to old people. There are a lot of what we call euphemistically "retirement homes."

JF: There are folks [in Europe] paying for their doctorates by giving baths to old people. I know people who paid for graduate school by spending their weekends taking care of old people, making 100 or 200 Euros a day—enough to pay for food and the tax on gasoline!

PL: So the situation, as Chico says, 'is black.'²⁵⁷

JF: It's 'black' but, of course, you can't compare it with things here in Brazil. Poor people in Europe have enough food to eat, they have social security, health care. If they want to go to school, they can. Not that they learn anything, but at least there are schools. New immigrants have a right to all these so-called 'social benefits' from the moment they arrive but it is extremely burdensome for the state so there are proposals afoot that would limit these benefits to those with at least five years' residence. There is a very powerful outcry, a growing xenophobia, in France, Germany, even Portugal – 'We are being invaded by foreigners!'

PL: I saw a lot of Africans when I was in Lisbon.

JF: Not just Africans, they're coming from the 'Eastern' countries too—Ukrainians, Slavs, Hungarians, Turks. So, on the one hand, it's good for the EU because the cultural level is accelerated, since a lot of these immigrants – doctors, engineers, people with graduate degrees – are working in civil construction. Many inhabitants feel this is raising the cultural level of the cities. On the other hand, there is a growing rejection—anything calamitous is blamed on the immigrants. Noise at night, fights, any kind of public mishap —'it must be the Africans or the people from the East.'

PL: Aren't these merely the 'discontents' of what you call 'pluriculturalism?' You and

²⁵⁷ In "*Entre Amigos*," an epistolary samba, singer-composer Chico Buarque, written from Rio to his sometime collaborator, Francis Hime, in Paris, reports: *a coisa aqui 'ta preta* ("things here are black"). The samba was written in the mid-1970s, during the heaviest years of the dictatorship.

[French sociologist Alain] Touraine are writing about pluricultures becoming multicultures, right?

JF: It's very Paulo Freire. He said that what the world is going through is not multiculturalism but a phase of cultural diversity. There are lots of diverse groups but that is not to say that there is any cooperation or collaboration or solidarity between them. They are at opposite ends of the city, in ghettos. This is the current situation of cultural diversity. For Freire, 'multiculturalism' only occurs when these groups begin to cooperate, start to realize common projects which could lead to the construction of another way of life. That's what Freire meant when he spoke of 'multiculturalism.' When different groups cooperate, collaborate, work together on projects that have some common interest. If everyone is worried about his or her own individualism, we won't be able to cooperate. This is a vision that challenges the majority of European sociologists who think we are already in a situation of multiculturalism.

PL: What about Touraine?

JF: Touraine, no. Touraine is more discrete—he thinks it is a 'possible construction' but doesn't claim that we are already living in a multicultural society. He sees some signs that there may be an intracultural dialogue but doesn't see it as the predominant situation today. What predominates currently is assimilationism, ghettos, discrimination. Not collaboration and joint construction that respects individualities and differences.

PL: Why is Touraine the expert of the moment, especially on Brazil? Has he lived here? Done research here?

JF: A long time ago he lived in Chile. He married a Chilean and spent some time there. He was there in the 1970s.

PL: And [Edgar] Morin also, right?

JF: Right.

PL: But Touraine is someone you like, someone with whom you've worked?

JF: I think reading him helps us formulate questions. I think it's important, from my 'questioning' perspective, to read as many other perspectives as possible to see how and where we can establish interlocations and see things from other perspectives. So that we don't get stuck on a particular way of seeing the world. We must do our best to establish a kind of dialogical approach where we can be mutually enriched by different angles of analysis.

I asked João Francisco de Souza about Alain Touraine because I had read some interesting comments Touraine made about Brazil as part of a “dialogue of civilizations” at a 2004 symposium in Alexandria, Egypt²⁵⁸ where he criticized Lula’s administration for adopting policies focusing on hunger and agrarian reform. According to the French sociologist, these are marginal problems. He sees Brazil as an overwhelmingly urban

²⁵⁸ In an article written by Merval Pereira which appeared as a two part article in *O Globo*, a Rio de Janeiro daily published by the Marinho family (see fn. 274, above), on April 24 and 25, 2004.

country with emergent ‘big city’ problems: lack of affordable housing, infrastructure, basic sanitation, education, health, transportation and public safety. To begin to transform the twin megalopoli of Rio and São Paulo, where millions of excluded people live without any social protection, would be like triple-bypass heart surgery for a moribund society.

Touraine describes those who manage to survive in the jungle of the cities²⁵⁹ as leading a “sublife.” He believes that social change only occurs through mass mobilization and that it is lacking in Brazil where labor unions like the 150,000 São Paulo assembly line workers Lula led in strikes that paralyzed the country’s industrial complex in 1978 no longer exist. As the willing partners of management, Brazilian unions are interested in a piece of the pie regardless of the human cost of advanced technology. The absence of mobilization provokes social exclusion in what Touraine sees as an implicit pact between government politics and social apathy that makes it logical for the State to protect middle-class wage earners and marginalize the bulk of the population. From his perspective, there are no social classes in present day Latin America. There are the privileged – and the rest. He believes that rampant ‘clientelism’ (what the Brazilians call *cavação*, ‘digging’) must be eliminated if “republican collective spirit” requiring a citizen to accept duties and sacrifices is to persevere. He sees the lack of opportunity to protest and debate in public spaces²⁶⁰ as a result of successive dictatorships since the Empire ended in the late XIX century, with only sporadic democratic interludes, which have diminished the concept of

²⁵⁹ I saw an unforgettable production of Brecht’s play, *Na Selva das Cidades*, in Rio in 1969. The tragic aftermath of the disastrous flooding of New Orleans, following Hurricane Katrina’s 145 mph assault on August 29, 2005, brought it vividly to mind. The spectacle of North America’s most ‘Brazilian’ city filling up with water, following a breach in the 17th Street canal which has immersed a hundred thousand predominately Afro-American citizens too poor to flee. The fact that poor black people were left to struggle for survival in the deluge of a capitalist “Mahagonny” is *echt Brecht*.

²⁶⁰ Henry A. Giroux spoke about this same phenomenon in the U.S. in a presentation at Moore Hall, UCLA in 1998. Although we cannot claim dictatorship as a cause, the steady vitiation of trade unionism in the claws of big business with its top-down, paramilitary communication channels and rewards and the hegemonic control of news and entertainment has put the lid on the free expression of public opinion since the 1960s. Touraine’s suggestions recall Napoleon Bonaparte’s motto: *l’audace, toujours, l’audace!* (“daring, always, daring!”).

citizenship to a “mere right of consumption” and made the “substantive experience of citizens that of alienation” (Touraine, 1997, 205-206, my translation).

While the concept of Brazilian ‘citizenship’ may have been to some degree rescued by the Constitution of 1988, I agree with Touraine that any consolidation of human rights has been vestigial and is more likely the result of concessions made by the ruling elite than a conquest of the people.

Antonio Gramsci wrote of what he saw as the necessary tension between political society and civil society with the former having as its primary function the exercise of coercion and the maintenance of the status quo and the latter bridling against anything that attempted to confine or control it, seeking social justice in the dialectic of revolutionary discipline and personal autonomy.

Touraine’s 2003 book, *Can We Live Together? Equal and Different* was the dialogical springboard of a study group Professor de Souza and some of his graduate students at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) invited me to attend at the Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB) in João Pessoa, the state capital, on September 3, 2004. There were 18 graduate students of education present, including several doctoral candidates from UFPB, the only university in the Northeast that grants a Ph.D. in Popular Education. The UFPB campus had been shut down by a professorial pay strike the majority of students were supporting. So, after an hour and a half van ride north from Recife, we walked into a pleasant classroom in a preternaturally quiet building. The two groups of students (Yolanda, Fabiana, Rosângela, Francisca, Fernanda, Danilson, Josariel, Karla, André and me from UFPE and Socorro, Neuma, Graça, Cesar, two Evas, Rita and Fabian from UFPB) met and mixed immediately as is the way with Brazilians. I was shown a display of books published by the UFPB Press for sale in the teacher’s lounge and accompanied to

the copy shop where I triplicated a paper I had written in Portuguese²⁶¹ for Socorro, Graça and Rita. After half an hour or so of social repartee, we took our places in an oval of desks in a sunny classroom and got down to the business of dialogue. João Francisco and Professora Maura Penna of UFPB were the co- coordinators but there was no special order or formality to the proceedings. Everyone, except me, had been reading Touraine's 1997 book, *Pourrons-nous vivre ensemble? Égaux et différents* in its Brazilian Portuguese translation (Touraine, 2003) and simply spoke up whenever they had a point to make. João Francisco talked about the radicality of closed 'glocal' communities as the antithesis of neoliberal universalization. He emphasized the importance of continuing to respect the identity of the Subject in a cold, 'postmodern' world where progress has been cynically disassociated from hope, solidarity, modernity, culture and citizenship. This raised questions from certain of the students about culture and the economy. 'Pirating' recordings by burning compact discs of popular Brazilian and international artists had opened a whole new path in the informal labor market and scores of ghetto youth were now pushing handcarts outfitted with sound systems around the streets of Recife, earning their daily bread by selling contraband sounds at R\$5 a pop. Was this ripping off their brothers, artists who had come from the margins themselves and were bringing new sounds to a saturated marketplace? Or was it ethically justifiable as a healthier, safer way of survival than taking or dealing drugs? What was the difference between the 'popular culture' that Anita Paes Barreto, Chico Weber, Paulo Freire, Paulo Rosas and Abelardo da Hora had encountered in 1962 and the mediatized, mass culture currently available?

The question Professor de Souza kept asking: "are we global or not?" depended on resurrecting the democratic idea of a multicultural society. But how this was defined depended on whose 'analytical lens' you looked through. Europeans like Touraine and

²⁶¹ "Notas de um educador popular em Los Angeles" (2000)

Morin call the current phenomenon ‘interculturality,’ and recognize that education provides a fertile ground for discussion and analysis of the new global society. De Souza sees current fragmented conditions as an opportunity to change from education as an offering to those who can afford it to education on demand. He sees today’s schools being used as “places of passage where some people reinforce their identities by denying the identities of others.” At one point, while the group discussed the difference between cultural dialogue and mere “communication where people accept being represented by others,” de Souza said: “I prefer confrontation. What we Freirians call ‘the subject’ is composed of instrumentality and experience. Whereas ‘ethnic communities’ tend to be tyrannical and dictatorial – the whole idea of “identity” is a disgrace—it has to end! What is missing in all this is a mass movement of the oppressed struggling for liberation. Unfortunately, the urge to protest has been cooled and shrunken in our present catastrophic condition, to a postmodern question of inclusion or exclusion with global business as the arbiter.” De Souza claims to have witnessed what he calls “neo-xenophobia” at a moment of crisis after the tragic terrorist bombing of the Madrid commuter train during his time at the University of Barcelona.

For most of Latin America and Europe, George W. Bush typifies the insensitive, ‘bully with a big stick’ diplomacy that started with Teddy Roosevelt and his ‘Rough Rider’ tactics in the trumped-up Spanish-American War of 1898 and has had its regional variants in home-grown autocrats like Franco, Salazar, Trujillo, Somoza, Perón, Batista, Vargas, Castro, Pinochet and the generals that ruled Brazil from 1964-1987. When Touraine (2003, 216) calls for the “recomposition of the world” based on ‘the subject’s’ ability to remember, distance herself/himself from what may be happening on the global stage at any given moment and take ‘instrumental action’ based on her/his historical and

tragic suffering, he is proclaiming the need for people to take heed of and respond to the feelings which arise from the facts. Rosângela, a woman who functioned as de Souza's program officer for the PROMATA project, reiterated the need for an emotional response to the current state-of-affairs, claiming that Maxim Gorky's monumental novel of the 1905 Russian Revolution, *Mother*, 'gives a more accurate picture of the Brazilian rebellion than Karl Marx.' Although I have never read Gorky's novel, it is not difficult to recall the visceral intensity of his short stories and the dramatic indictment of "The Lower Depths," his 1902 play about the suffering of marginalized Muscovites in a flophouse hotel.

If *educador* and *educando* are to connect in dialogue and foment educative action of a revolutionary nature, the connection cannot be merely cerebral or ideational—it must be grounded in shared feelings of human suffering, anxiety and deprivation which will otherwise implode in shame and self-loathing or explode in the terrorist violence that victimizes us all. César Vallejo, a *mestizo* schoolteacher from Peru, a poet and a Marxist who died in Paris in 1938, age 46, and whose portrait was drawn posthumously by Picasso,²⁶² used to sign his letters "¡Salud y sufren!" ("Health and suffer!"). *Los Heraldos Negros* ("The Black Heralds"), written during World War I and published in an eponymous 1918 volume, is an ode to what Freire calls "man's insertion into history."

LOS HERALDOS NEGROS

Hay golpes en la vida tan fuertes . . . ¡Yo no sé!
Golpes como del odio de Dios; como si ante ellos;
la resaca de todo lo sufrido se empozara en el alma
¡Yo no sé!

Son pocos; pero son . . . abren zanjas oscuras
en el rostro mas fiero y en el lomo mas fuerte,
Serán talvez los potros de bárbaros atilas;

²⁶² Both men militated for the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Vallejo's *España, aparta de mi este cáliz*, published in 1940, is considered by many to be the poetic equivalent of Picasso's "Guernica" as a testament to human suffering and an artistic indictment of the 1936 Nationalist bombing of civilians in the Basque city which heralded the Nazis bombing London and the Allies [bombing Dresden](#) in WWII.

o los heraldos negros que nos manda la Muerte

Son las caídas hondas de los Cristos del alma,
de alguna adorable que el Destino Blasfema.
Esos golpes sangrientos son las crepitaciones
de algún pan que en la puerta del horno se nos quema

Y el hombre....pobre...¡pobre!
Vuelve los ojos,
como cuando por sobre el hombro
nos llama una palmada;
vuelve los ojos locos,
y todo lo vivido
se empoza, como charco de culpa,
en la mirada.

Hay golpes en la vida, tan fuertes . . . ¡Yo no sé!

THE BLACK HERALDS

We take our lumps in life . . . I don't know!
Absorbing blows like the wrath of God until
the sediment of all we have suffered
is as thick as mud in our souls . . . I don't know!

The blows, though few, are...they open dark furrows
in the fiercest faces and the strongest loins,
Maybe they are the colts of barbaric Attilas
or the black heralds sent to us by Death.

These deep collapses of soulful Christs,
of anyone adorable blasphemed by Fate.
These bloody blows are the crepitations of some
Bread which burns as we're lifting it from the oven

And poor...poor...man
shifts his eyes, as though his shoulder
were waiting to be tapped
by a summoning hand;
rolls his crazy eyes,
and his whole life
stagnates, like a puddle of guilt
before his eyes.
Life beats us like a brute...I do not know!²⁶³

Los Heraldos Negros reminds us that we are all the victims of fate and circumstance and, when it comes to anything beyond the present moment, we must echo Vallejo's refrain: "I don't know." Much of the power of critical pedagogy, at the level of praxis, comes from the immediacy of interpersonal relations and the willingness to examine and

²⁶³ My translation of a 1918 poem by Vallejo downloaded on 9/5/05 at <http://www.blythe.org/peru-pcp/newflag/nf9801/vallej.htm>

discuss dimensions of human experience ordinarily considered outside the bounds of public education. The experiential openness of *educador* and *educando* and the willingness of each to combine teaching and learning by honoring the experience, pain and wisdom of the other makes the Freirian approach as exciting as it is unpredictable. In a chapter entitled “Education as a Key for the Humanization of Human Beings,” (2004, 223-225, emphases his, translation mine) João Francisco de Souza returns to the idea of human incompleteness as the source of Freire’s pedagogy:

The human being (each and every human being) is full of possibilities for humanization, but also for dehumanization. We human beings are born INCONCLUSIVE, UNFINISHED, as Paulo Freire reminds us in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. He makes this idea the basis of his proposed pedagogy and claims that our vocation is TO BE INCREASINGLY HUMAN. We are either going to make ourselves more HUMAN or become more dehumanized in the course of our lives, depending on the experiences we have and the conditions we create in our personal and collective lives. Thus, we ought to EDUCATE OURSELVES FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.²⁶⁴

Paulo Freire’s vision about this lifelong education is justified by human inconclusiveness and by our continual search to construct a human project for the whole of society, for each of us and for the cultural groups to which we belong. This HUMANIZATION can only be constructed collectively. The I (identity) of every human being is constructed in the collectivity (WE). Humanization implies ideas, thoughts, reflections, sciences, arts (TO THINK), feelings, wants, passions, experiences (TO EMOTE), as well as activities, actions, practices (TO DO), within determined social relations (CULTURAL MEANS) and relations with nature (NATURAL MEANS). These social and natural relations are permanently changing and transforming for better or for worse.

To ruminate about the HUMANIZATION of human beings is to think about one of life’s most difficult problems (...) human existence, its possibilities and impossibilities, facilities and difficulties. Each of us not only regards himself or herself as human, (s)he always thinks of (her/him)self as the MOST HUMAN of all human beings. Less human or dehumanized conditions and situations are always about other people or other places.

Thus, to work with the hypotheses of EDUCATION regarding the CONSTRUCTION OF THE HUMANITY OF HUMAN BEINGS AND OF THE PLANET is tremendously complicated. It is “a task for the fearless, a mission that defeats the weak and in which only the strong and the brave can exalt.”²⁶⁵

I met Danilson Pinto in 2002 at the CEJA in Peixinhos where he was teaching Art and Culture classes—as he had ever since the school opened in 1996. We began to sense our

²⁶⁴ De Souza notes that “the idea of *lifelong education* was reduced, in the diffusion it received from UNESCO, almost exclusively to questions of professional recycling relevant to the market. The contents of the research report on educational needs in the XXI century, contained in Jacques Delors’ *Educação: um tesouro a descobrir* (Porto: UNESCO, Edições ASA, 1996), were only slightly more complex than this reductionist stance” (2004, fn 93, 224).

²⁶⁵ The final quote is from “*Canção do Tamoio*” by Gonçalves Dias (1849-1923), a Brazilian romantic poet.

connection in the course of an extraordinary interview a couple of weeks later in which he spoke openly of his childhood in Fortaleza, Ceará, his parents, his working class upbringing, his difficult school years during the dictatorship, his first jobs, his life as a postulant in the Salesian order, his decision to revoke his vows and his subsequent life as a popular educator. Of all the extraordinary educators I have met in Brazil, Danilson is the one I regard as indispensable to my own understanding of the complexity and pain of life on the brink of survival. That is because he is what Gramsci called an “embodied intellectual;” someone who has dedicated his life to his people, who belongs to them and among them, drinks with them, sings their songs, knows them intimately as relatives, lovers, neighbors and comrades and yet has the ability to pull back at any moment, to analyze and theorize about them in a way that makes sense. Paulo Freire sensed this about him and asked him to explain his pedagogy, his mission among them to him. João Francisco removed him from a desk job when he took over as Minister of Education in Olinda and sent him to the CEJA to start the first *Colônia de Férias* (Summer School).

Danilson is open about his incompleteness. I have seen him become irate because a woman we were with made a remark about his smoking at a restaurant table. I spent a Sunday night with him and know he loves to drink beer for hours with his friends. I met Lucinha, his long-time partner, who lives in her own house in a neighborhood close to Danilson’s. I admire their steadfast independence and their decision not to have children. Danilson is a very *human* human being and I am proud to call him a friend. My decision to include our unexpurgated dialogue on a variety of subjects comes from the desire to share his unique perspective with my readers just as he shared it with me.

4.5 Danilson Pinto: Life with The People

Danilson had a brief and unexpected apotheosis as a popular educator when he was

asked by João Francisco de Souza to accompany Paulo Freire and videographer Julio Weiner to the Cabo Gato *mocambo* in Olinda on Freire's last trip to Pernambuco in 1996, a year and a half before his death. Weiner videotaped their unrehearsed dialogue on the Cabo Gato bridge.²⁶⁶ Midway through the conversation, Paulo pointed to some children playing in the mud below the bridge and asked Danilson:

...What do you think about this? I mean you see this every day, you work as an educator with children, youth and adults who come out of this. What can you say to me to teach me, Paulo Freire, the well-known educator? Either I learn from men like you how to improve or I...or I stop.

DP: (taken aback) Uh huh.

PF: What do you think? What would you like to teach me?

DP: To teach you? (laughs) It's a bit complex. Because I come here every day, every day...For example, in this experiment we're doing now, the *Colônia de Férias* (summer school), the kids constantly remind me: "Teacher, it's only fifteen days and the next *colônia de férias* isn't until July, we'll have to..." (the people have an expression here) "We'll have to *ficar no rato* (act like rats) until July!" It means to go without eating until July.

PF: Good God!

DP: They also ask: "When we start regular school again, are we going to have school lunch?" No one knows. I think the anguish of these suffering people is the antibody that enables them to survive this misery.

PF: Excellent! I understand and I completely agree with you. That's why I said to you: if they would leave me here, as I don't have this antibody, I would die before acquiring it! (Freire laughs) ... Before I could create it and that's why I couldn't survive with these people who have been manufacturing it for years. So you can see how unjust we are. Generally, we begin by being afraid of the entire *favela*.

DP: Right.

PF: For us, every slum-dweller is a potential enemy. He may not be an enemy at the moment but he can become one at any time.

DP: Uh huh.

PF: So, even when we see the *favelado* from a distance, we're already defending ourselves. And, even if we don't perceive it, while we're protecting ourselves from him it's just as if we were attacking him.

DP: It's an interesting thing and a very big lesson to be learned from the people who live here: the matter of solidarity. Friday, Saturday and Sunday, a group of kids who are

²⁶⁶ The videotape, part of George Stoney's video biography of Freire, has not yet been released. Freire writes about his encounter with Pinto in *Pedagogia da autonomia* [see p. 111, above]. A photograph of the two men, Freire's hand on Pinto's shoulder, from the "Paulo Freire Archives" graces the cover of a compendium of essays from the 1999 CLACSO conference in Recife (Carlos A. Torres, org., 2001).

members of a rock band gave a concert called "Alternative Rock in Peixinhos" to collect food and used clothes from the inhabitants themselves.

PF: ...From the inhabitants themselves.

DP: In other words, those who have two, give one. There's a spirit of solidarity that exists among them. They're not waiting for anyone else.

PF: No, no, no.

DP: It has to come from the people themselves

PF: Yes.

DP: Especially here in a place which has seen many struggles and many conquests. Even though there's still a long way to go. But it's handled from the inside, just among them.

PF: Of course.

DP: They make their own internal campaigns. They distribute and share their own wealth and goods. It's a mission without precedent. I am very proud to be part of a community that follows the Biblical dictum that "there is no one so poor that he or she has nothing to give." In other words, despite all this misery, there are still people willing to share with those who are even more destitute.

PF: Exactly.

DP: I may be poor but there are those who are even poorer. It's like a lady said as she was filling her little plastic container with beans, "I'm going to put a little bit of beans in here for the people who live next door to me." I said "but have you gotten your own food?" And she said: "Yes, teacher. It happens that I am needy but there are people here who are needier than me." The spirit of solidarity is still circulating, ventilating the community. And I think this is also a form of...

PF: Pain itself engenders this. One of the things that very much interests us as educators, educators *with* the people and not above the people, in these conversations about the spirit of solidarity, is to show that this spirit cannot and should not disappear, even if the reason for it, which is pain and misery, disappears.

DP: Right.

PF: We no longer live in solidarity. I think one of the greatest lessons that those who live in misery, in hunger, in self-abnegation can give to those who live in abundance is precisely that solidarity, independent of the conditions in which we find ourselves, solidarity makes us...is a necessity which makes us able to be more of what we were meant to be.

DP: It redeems our human side.²⁶⁷

The human side of Danilson needs no 'redeeming.' I first met him, briefly, in 1999 and ran into him again in 2002, when I visited the CEJA in Peixinhos and he

²⁶⁷ My translation of dialogue transcribed from a half hour videotape of their conversation filmed by Julio Weiner for a documentary in progress by George Stoney about Freire's life and work.

agreed to be interviewed. He turned out to be as passionate and articulate as Guiomar but, ten years her senior and with a Salesian education and practical experience as an educator and labor organizer, much less volatile, much less ‘the star’. It would be hard to imagine Danilson’s car getting kicked or his being mistaken for an absentee director and incurring the wrath of the community. He is virtually indistinguishable from the people to whom he has dedicated the better part of his life: he lives in the Roda do Fogo (Circle of Fire) *mocambo* not far from UFPE and has a long-term, affective relationship with a woman in an adjacent neighborhood, no car and no children.

Danilson is, as the French say, “at home in his skin” whether arguing a point with João Francisco in a graduate philosophy seminar, running an all-day teachers’ training session in the *Zona da Mata* or waving a banner in the stands of the Estádio da Arruda when his soccer team, Santa Cruz, plays its crosstown rivals, Sport and Náutico. A compact, brown-skinned, black-bearded man, he has lived in Recife since 1977 when, at the age of sixteen, he was chosen to study for the priesthood as part of the *Pastoral Jovem do Povo*, a Catholic youth group representing the Brazilian Northeast. Laughter, the all-purpose solvent, comes easily to Danilson. The morning set aside for our meeting was marked by a major *contretemps*. I went to the wrong place and waited for over an hour. Meanwhile Danilson, waiting in the right place, had to figure out where I had gone wrong as I didn’t have a cell phone. Although it took him over an hour to locate me, there was nothing but relief in Danilson’s face when we finally met. He took me back to his office at the *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (CUT)²⁶⁸ and told me his story as if there were nothing else scheduled.

²⁶⁸ A *Partido Trabalhista* (PT) innovation. Public disappointment with Lula’s first four years threatens the accomplishments of three decades of progressive politics and labor-organizing throughout Brazil.

Danilson is one of the few faculty members trained by Professor João Francisco de Souza as specialists in Youth and Adult Education who is still associated with the CEJA. He graduated from the Catholic University in Recife with a degree in philosophy in 1992 and has been teaching for more than a dozen years. At one point, he worked in the Olinda Secretariat of Education when Professor de Souza was in charge, from 1993-96. João Francisco knew Danilson's real strength was in the classroom so, together, they instituted Art and Culture workshops which they called *Colônias de Férias* (Vacation Colonies) at the CAIC, the largest scholastic edifice in Olinda, during the fifteen-day carnaval break. Danilson, an Art and Culture specialist, was released from his desk job to go back to working with kids.

Stoney's videographer shot footage of and interviewed some of Danilson's students at an exhibition of their work at the fourth annual *Colônia* in 1996. The students, most of them *secundaristas* ages 11 - 14, are initially shy in front of the camera but they become less inhibited as they speak about their *artesanato*: woodcuts, posters, banners, and carnival costumes – many of them made from *sucata* (recycled newspapers, bottle tops, cardboard, tin cans). They formed two carnival marching bands: *o Bloco*²⁶⁹ *da Sucata Brincando e Estudando* (“The Recycled Material Playing and Studying Carnival *Bloco*”) and *o Bloco de Arte Decorativa* (“The Decorative Arts *Bloco*”). One boy, interviewed on camera, says that he complained about the difficulty of designing and making a woodcut until his *oficineiro*²⁷⁰ told him ‘it would be difficult for him not to do it.’ Woodcuts (*entalhos*)

²⁶⁹ A *bloco* is a relatively small, informal carnival group that has no specific schedule and “plays” (*brinca*) on streets adjacent to the major festive arteries. In Rio, they are called *blocos sujos* (dirty *blocos*) and include such historical entities as *Bafo da Onça* (Leopard Breath), a *bloco sujo* with which I became briefly but joyously entangled in the 1969 carnaval.

²⁷⁰ *Oficina* can mean workshop or class, so an *educador* who helps in an *oficina* becomes an *oficineiro* (m.) or *oficineira* (f.)

are a specialty of Olinda *artesanato* (craftwork) and many of the students' *entalhos* are detailed and beautiful. An *oficineiro* singles out Edna, a shy 13-year-old, and says that she was able to produce a finished work in three hours on the first day she was given the tools. She has "great ability" and may be able to pursue a career as an *artesã* (artisan). Danilson points out that the relationship between *oficineiros* and students is *carinhoso* (affectionate) and built around dialogue while they work together producing things. He says he had an average of 14 young people in his class for the morning session and from 20 to 30 in the afternoon. The *colônia* took place in what is now the Norma Coelho school in Peixinhos and the site looks spacious and clean in the 1996 video. CAIC is the same building that housed CEJA which I visited, briefly, in 1999 and that was the site of Mayor Lucilda's destructive *politicagem* in 2000. By 2002, it had become an overburdened and contested space (see Chapter 6.2, above).

However, in the 1996 video, we see that Danilson and his colleagues have been successful in turning the largest public school in Olinda into what he calls "a more pleasurable learning experience" where students whose daily lives are often existentially difficult have created an amazing amount of art in fifteen days. According to Danilson, "by planning, working and thinking culturally and having a good time doing it, they are able to turn a school that usually seems irrelevant into the school of their dreams."²⁷¹ There is no doubt that Freire is being enthusiastically 'reinvented' in the *Colônias de Férias*. For Danilson, "culture has

²⁷¹ Danilson's videotaped words, which he repeated almost verbatim in our interview six years later: *Tornar a escola mais prazerosa, mais alegre, mais lúdica e mais vivenciada através da cultura...Essa escola que por muitas vezes parece ser um pouco careta, durante esses 15 dias vive a auge da expressão da escola dos seus sonhos.* (To make the school more pleasurable, more joyous, more playful and more livable through culture...This school, which usually seems a bit antiquated, lives at the peak of expressiveness as the school of its dreams for 15 days.)

the power to re-educate and re-socialize students by inviting them to bring the experience of their day-to-day lives into the *oficinas* and portray it in the strength of their work.” When videographer Julio Weiner asks him how basic math and Portuguese are taught in the *colônias*, Danilson seems caught off guard and speaks somewhat less convincingly about counting bottle caps used to decorate costumes, weighing their newspaper fabric, and discussing the lyrics of carnival *frevos* “to see if the composer is expressing the reality of Olinda.” He is more enthusiastic when he mentions the “confrontation of cultures and mixing of values in the *educador-educando* relationship” – another Freirian theme. Some of the most joyful scenes in this part of the video are silent ‘takes’ of the students putting on their colorful costumes – handmade *papier maché* masks of monkeys and lions, ‘dancing’ oxen and donkeys whose *papier maché* heads and flexible wire and newspaper bodies are suspended from the shoulders of their creators, brilliantly decorated ‘sandwich-boards’ of *cartolina*²⁷², hats, crowns, capes and banners, gigantic pencils carried as spears—and descending the *ladeiras* of the *Cidade Alta* on the first day of Carnival, drumming, singing and dancing *frevos*, a double-time Northeastern cousin of *samba* at which young and limber bodies excel.

Danilson is in the midst of the *brincadeira*²⁷³, wearing a paperbag hat with streamers, dancing around the edge of the *Bloco da Sucata* with a video recorder in

²⁷² A heavy construction-paper similar to cardboard.

²⁷³ The pre-Lenten festivities are considered *uma brincadeira*, a chance to play like a child. By tapping into the young people’s ludic nature and channeling it into a fifteen-day apprenticeship in woodcarving and costume-making conducted by local masters with their own tools and techniques, Danilson reveals the essential irony captured by a French writer (Fernandez, 1993, 155) who found it “astonishing,” when visiting Olinda, that “the precarious conditions of existence whet the people’s instinct for beauty rather than extinguishing it.” Watching a *capoeira* group practice in a schoolyard, Fernandez marveled that “in such a poor, far away and forgotten city” where people have been “flayed and abandoned by fortune, they prepare themselves with such scrupulous passion to execute an extremely sophisticated art form purely for pleasure.” The rich culture of Olinda contradicts Oscar Lewis’s assertion (1965, lii) that “the poverty of culture is one of the crucial aspects of the culture of poverty.”

his hand. He may be the group's director and founder but the only things that distinguish him from his students are his video-recorder and his beard. When he calls for a break, the group's forward motion stops but everyone continues to vibrate with enthusiasm. *Educadores* like Danilson who bring epistemic techniques and tools to socially marginalized people can change their perception of life and their place in it by setting high standards and affectionately encouraging them to meet them, at the same time affirming their right, as subjects rather than objects of charity, to create and dream their "possible dreams."

Danilson's own educational adventure began at the Salesian high school (*Colégio Salesiano*) in Fortaleza, a coastal city 788 kilometers north of Recife, where he and a group of about forty other neighborhood kids were permitted by the *Padres* to use the recreational facilities for a couple of hours on Sunday if they would take catechism classes and "submit" to attending Mass. In Danilson's words:

DP: We entered as a group. At the time, we weren't aware that it was a political group but we knew we had to occupy that space if we wanted to increase the time we spent there. Within a month or two, we were coordinating the Mass [presumably as acolytes] and the catechism class. The priest celebrated the mass and decided who would sing, who would read from the Gospel and as this Mass, which was called the Youth Oratory, took place very early, at 7 on Sunday morning, and most of us partied hearty on Friday and Saturday nights (drinking beer and *cachaça* is a major adolescent diversion in the Northeast) so there weren't many of us who got up early enough to participate. Since the priests wanted to

involve us *cachaceiros e arruaceiros*²⁷⁴ in their community outreach, we suggested that Saturday afternoon might be a good time for them to get in touch with another segment of neighborhood youth. We reminded them that St. John Bosco, the founder of the Salesian order, was the protector of abandoned youth and adolescents. The elitist Salesian priests were only reaching part of the youth we wanted them to get in touch with the ones that really needed it, that were left behind by public politics, religion, everything. I was 15 at the time. At first, I kept all this hidden from my family because in Fortaleza people are very traditional, and falsely moral. The older men drank lots of *cachaça* right in the living room, first sending the kids to the kitchen so they wouldn't participate in the drunkenness. But when we boys got older, we got to participate in these drinking circles so as to become men. The women and children went behind the houses, to the kitchen, the backyard, or their rooms. When my father gathered his men friends at our house he said something like: "This is for adults and no place for children!" A boy wasn't able to talk to adults like we speak to our children today. When there were adults present, we kept our mouths closed. Our space was the street where we played ball and hung out with our friends. But the idea of organizing to fight for a space of our own began through the church. It was there that we made our first attempts to dispute spaces, to organize ourselves so we could have a space of our own. I studied in municipal public schools until I went to a private high school (*Ensino Médio*) at night because I worked all day and the public schools had too many rules.

²⁷⁴ "Rum-drinkers and rowdies."

PL: What kind of work?

DP: I sold law books. I worked days and went to school at night. Inside the Courthouse, a bookseller called Almeida, Ltda. had a stand and was selling lawbooks from São Paulo. I began as a collector of promissory notes because they sold the books on the installment plan and hired young men to pick up the monthly payments. I went by bicycle to certain law offices to collect what they owed. One of the managers thought I would do better as a salesman because I wasn't having much success as a bill-collector. So I sold books at the Courthouse and spent time chatting up potential customers. I've always had the gift of gab so this entrepreneur figured I could sell. I was 17 or 18 at the time.

PL: Do you think being a teacher is also, in a way, about selling books?

DP: Naturally. I still say to people; 'I've got to go because I have a class to teach'²⁷⁵ but I stopped 'giving classes' long ago, today I 'sell' them. We have a little handout we prepared for 'The Power of Letters' program in which we write about how education and technology have become items of merchandise. Education is no longer used as an instrument for bettering the quality of life, it's first and foremost a product—something to be sold.

²⁷⁵ Danilson used the familiar expression *dar uma aula*, literally 'to give a class' in this, our final interview at CUT, 9/24/04.

The same goes for ‘quality of life’ issues. (...) To enter into the company of lawyers, I had to adopt another posture: well dressed and well groomed. I provoked [adverse] reactions when I entered their offices to collect because my appearance was made fun of and I reacted, in turn, because I didn’t take insults home, I demanded respect. If they didn’t make good on their payments I would threaten to take them to small claims court (*o cartório*). Selling books was easier. From 11:30 AM until mid-afternoon, things would slow down and I could peruse the books since I needed to be familiar with their contents, to know what laws had been emended since the last publication, in order to sell them. People would pass by and ask if there were anything new and I would tell them. On the other hand, I was mean to another boy who had to stop selling and become a bill-collector because he couldn’t read. It’s complicated to sell something you don’t understand. You need to be able to read what you sell. I admit that I didn’t then (and still don’t) have the patience to read an entire book. I just read what attracts me.

Danilson spent two years selling books to pay his secondary school (*Segundo Grau*) tuition because he realized that, under the military dictatorship, he would have more autonomy in a private school. In 1978, public school directors and coordinators were admirals and coronels. He had been left back a year in Middle School at a time when the Hippy Movement was “effervescent” and he was “at the height of rebellion — not accepting what the teachers said and cutting class.” After wearing his hair “divided in the

middle with a ribbon” and falling under the influence of Bahian ‘Tropicalia’²⁷⁶, Danilson grew tired of the hippies’ “self-absorbed peace and love sentimentality” and drifted into the “idea of anarchism” that was part of the Punk Movement’s “proposal for a new society.” He also participated in *rodas de capoeira*²⁷⁷ that were broken up by the police, even though they knew it was only “kidsplay.” Fortaleza is a highly conservative and “prejudiced” city, according to Danilson: “My father is the same color as I am and he said he would scrape off his skin if he could, because negroes are worthless. My family is very eclectic, very diverse. No one declares his (or her) religion.”

Danilson plotted his escape from Fortaleza with the help of the Catholic Church:

The first step was to enter into the Salesian religious organization and I came in as part of a group. We organized the Youth Oratory in three periods: Sunday, Saturday afternoon and Wednesday night. Saturday and Sunday were the Oratory and Wednesday we called ‘young blood’ (*sangue juvenil*) because there was no catechism in the middle of the week. It was just leisure activities. *Futebol de salão*,²⁷⁸ basketball, ping-pong, volleyball were the instruments the *bourgeoisie* used during the day and we borrowed at night. We were all about the same age and the priests recruited the leaders for a religious vocational group—people who desired a religious life. There were forty of us and not everyone was interested. There were a total of 1,500 young people signed up for the three days. It began with 500 kids from the neighborhood surrounding the Salesian school and soon others came from other neighborhoods where there was no recreational space. At first, the priests were worried that fights would erupt between the neighborhood groups. But that never happened. People came from all over Fortaleza. The public schools had no courts or sports equipment so people went there for classes and used the space at the *Colégio Salesiano* on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesday nights. The Youth Center was open from 7-10 PM. At first, it was just table tennis, basketball and *futebol de salão*. But they had enormous sheds which had once been used as sawmills where the priests held occasional workshops they called *artes e ofícios* and we asked if we could use the sheds to do plays and they said it was impossible because they were full of scraps of construction material (*entulhos*). We asked if we might try and we made a *mutirão*²⁷⁹ of young people and cleaned everything up, fixed up chairs for an audience and with those we couldn’t

²⁷⁶ A musical style started by Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil who, after several years of exile in London (1965-68) came back to Salvador, Bahia and created a phantasmagorical musical style emulative of the Beatles’ Sergeant Pepper-Abbey Road period and featuring Northeast Brazilian rhythms and themes..

²⁷⁷ *Capoeira*, an Afro-Brazilian martial art form purportedly brought to Brazil by West African slaves, has two basic ‘schools’—Angola and Regional, and is enjoying its own kind of globalization as the result of a new generation of itinerant Brazilian *mestres* (masters), most of them blacks and mulattoes, who have the linguistic and technological skills required to diffuse its performance aspect (percussive, recitative, terpsichorean, acrobatic) and the underlying ethics of its spiritual philosophy. ‘Capoeiras,’ as its adherents are known, are often model citizens despite their ‘sport’s’ violent past (pedal ‘punches’ can be lethal, if not ‘pulled’ and *capoeira* was once an underworld purview). 25 years ago, when Danilson was participating in the ‘rodas’ (circles), public demonstrations of any kind of ‘black power’ were rebuked.

²⁷⁸ Soccer played on an outdoor court of reduced size with a smaller, heavier ball and five players to a team.

²⁷⁹ A group of volunteer laborers with a common goal in mind.

repair we made an enormous platform with a stage and went to a carpet store to ask for odds an ends which they gave us. With these we lined the stage and produced an open-air Passion of Christ, open to the public, to which many people came. When the *padres* saw this they knew it wasn't happening by chance and invited us to the vocational group.

Danilson's introduction to Salesian monasticism happened at a crucial time in the life of the Church. There had been a conservative-progressive split in the 1960s and, in Danilson's words, "the progressive priests called us to the vocation to fortify the progressive wing of the Church which was all about emancipation. The big campaign was about 'life in abundance, in plenitude:'"

DP: We were the perfect public because because we had leaders who were able to read and reflect about certain things. We entered the Church in the progressive's line and they funded us. That was when I went to Pernambuco for the first time for the Encounter of Northeastern *Vocacionados*.²⁸⁰ There were people there from both sides, progressive and conservative, including those who made up the training team (*equipe de formação*). Our group from Fortaleza was highly regarded, especially by those who said that, if we were invited to be priests, it would improve the identity of the Church as belonging to the people and not the elite. There was a lot of internal struggle. I began to understand that the dispute was about space. We saw that we had to ally ourselves with certain priests who would defend us. We were weak in the eyes of the Church because we were in the process of acceptance so we needed people within the Church to safeguard us. It was a game of social interests. We needed those progressive priests to find safe passage within the Church so we could use it as a way of getting out of that disagreeable situation in Fortaleza. Of our group of forty, fifteen of us made the trip to Pernambuco for the Encounter. The following year we traveled to Carpina, Pernambuco for the second Encounter. The third time they made the cut. These trips were financed by the Church. I am the son of craftspeople; my father made shoes, my mother crocheted. But I lived very well considering our economic level. I played elite sports: *futebol de salão*, volleyball, basketball, soccer. I had seven siblings, five brothers and two sisters. The youngest died so I became the youngest boy—after me, there were just the girls. Even though we were a big family, the same opportunities were available to all. But not everyone stayed in school.

PL: And you are becoming more and more Catholic because you are accepting the call?

DP: The thing that attracted me to the organization was that there was a counter-proposal within the Catholic Church itself. The Catholicism we had seen was the emotional one of constant prayer, prayer at a distance from life. But when we began to familiarize ourselves with the artifices of the Church, we perceived that it was not really like that at all. Inside there were two positions: those who thought that the church should be closer to the people and those who defended an elitist church. We saw that it was possible for us to battle for our dreams inside the church.

PL: Did you have friends on the elitist side?

DP: No. In Fortaleza there was a separation—bourgeois people did not mix with the poor. The Mass of the young *bourgeoises* was at 7 on Sunday evening. They had guitars and amplifiers and the priest sang along with them. Our priest was an old priest, not old chronologically but old in terms of ideas, a crank (*carrancudo*). Our Mass was at 7 on

²⁸⁰ Those called to the priesthood.

Sunday morning. It was truly exclusive. The only people who would go to Mass at 7 in the morning were the truly brave ones or people from the working class who have a quiet religion, one that keeps them passive, hoping God will do everything so they won't have to do anything for themselves. This is the vision of the colonizer. We didn't go to the Sunday night Mass because that was for very with-it people wearing nice clothes and driving up in cars smelling of French perfume. At night, we hung out in the plaza and the bourgeois kids stayed inside the church. When the Mass ended, they jumped in their cars and headed home while we stayed in the plaza talking about our stuff.

PL: When you used the recreation area were there priests watching over the property?

DP: There were many priests both on our side and on the side against us. They were waiting to see if there were any slipups in closing the doors. Before we left there, we were given the key to the church. With it, we opened and closed the doors, got our own materials, and managed to leave everything in order.

PL: Were you able to do non-religious theatrical presentations?

DP: Many. For example, we did a philosophical presentation. The three characters were the past, the present and the future. The future introduced himself to the audience as a utopia. The character representing the present spoke as if he were made up of vestiges of the past that could be used to project a future. They were based on stories Paulo Freire told. The future complained about the present. It was a very philosophical play. There were also characters that represented everyday life like that hellhound, Satan, the terrible *persona* that the Church puts in people's heads. There was a representation of the people that were on Satan's side. When Satan went to speak his 'good sense' to them, they rebelled. In the play, the present was the one who demarcated people's limits, not the past or the future. The present was the leader. It was a very interesting play. I played the past and argued that nothing would ever go right unless I had my say. We even used expressions made famous by mothers and grandmothers: "it used to be fine when I was young, young girls didn't walk around showing their panties," or "in my time, no one spoke of politics – today that's all they talk about." I defended the past. Rinaldo, Reginaldo's brother, was the present who clung to the past and justified the way we are today which is a reflection of the past from which we project the future. This is where the future started to gripe, saying that she didn't care for this particular present. It was a very good dialogue and not at all religious.

PL: But was it a written play?

DP: Yes, we had lines to learn. Our director, Rinaldo, was also an actor and our age. There were both men and women but the group that came to Recife was all men because the vocational corps was one of future priests and the Encounters were not mixed. Men met with priests and women with nuns. The Salesian high school was a boy's school but our Oratory was for boys and girls. When we started it was men only on Sundays and Wednesdays and Saturdays were mixed but then it all became mixed. We had many negotiations, many internal fights with the priests. Fights to defend and justify what we wanted.

PL: How many of your group became priests?

DP: None. Simon is also from Fortaleza and from the same militant time as me and we came in together. I was the first one to come to Recife [to study] and I came alone. After the first semester, I went home on vacation and spoke with the others, told them it was cool and possible to find a good space.

PL: You were in a seminary?

DP: A center of religious training—the first one, for aspirants, was in Carpina and then

we went to Jaboatão²⁸¹ for the novitiate. I went through all these stages until it was time to take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience when I decided to leave because just as there had been an advance of the progressive church, there was a dismount (*desmonte*). Many progressive priests left. The dismount began in 1998.

PL: So you remained inside for twenty years?

DP: No. I spent six years in the seminary but my involvement with the church began with these organizing movements. It took a year to change the priests' thinking about accepting our group's presence on Saturday. Nothing happened quickly. It was another year before they agreed to Wednesdays. After about four years, when they saw that things were really growing, they invited to enter vocational training. Then another year passed in Fortaleza while they studied us. After that, they invited us to the vocational Encounters.

PL: How did they study you?

DP: There were meetings of the vocational group where we studied Mariology, the life of Our Lady, Mary and Cristology, the life of Christ. We also had Introduction to the Bible 1, 2 and 3: to study and understand the Gospels, New Testament and Old Testament. I came to an even clearer understanding that the Bible is a patchwork quilt that, if you look straight at it, some things don't jibe with others. You read it once think that it has a logic but if you read it again you see it's a patchwork quilt (*colcha de retalhos*). There is Aramaic thinking, Hebraic thinking, various crosscurrents. There are things written by the apostles and other things written by someone who was with them and registered what they said.

PL: So you were cloistered in Recife for six years?

DP: There was an entire regimen. We were interned and could only go out once a week, on Sunday, when we went to Mass in the mother church (*matriz*) in Carpina. Otherwise we stayed inside, studying, playing sports, praying. Saturday was reserved for what they called 'pastoral work' when we would go to the communities to catechize, and do apostolic work in the simplest communities. I worked in the Cohab Vila²⁸² which was very far from central Carpina and we had to walk about twenty minutes to get there. We worked in a very different way than the elite seminarians who were sent to the Cajá neighborhood where the population was well-heeled, public servants, ex-mayors and their families, etc. There were seminarians who did very well for themselves serving this group. But there were internal struggles. After three years of Encounters, I returned to Fortaleza and they said either stay here or leave, once and for all. They wanted us to decide. I said I would stay and the others returned. In my fourth year, Simon, Íbis, Rinaldo, Reginaldo, Chicão, Zezinho, Quica, ten people of the original fourteen came to the Encounter. Of these ten, only five stayed—Íbis, Vicente, Simon, Djalma and me—I had been there for a year already. As I was a year older, I had status over the new group which was entering and it was my job to recruit some of these novices for our side of the political schism. What disillusioned me about the Catholic Church? Everyone said that we had to have charity and fraternity because we were part of the community from the moment we entered and that's not what I saw so I began to protest during time scheduled for the community sermon since we had no other spaces and began to understand that the only time we had to denounce the contradictions of the church was during and through the sermons. We selected excerpts from the Gospels, for instance, when Jesus enters the Temple and, indignant, destroys everything, expelling the money-changers. We took this text and applied it to our lives in the seminary. We said that there were money-changers within and that we needed to destroy the church which harbored these speculators of the

²⁸¹ Jaboatão dos Guararapes, which was a rural outpost when Freire's family moved there during the first years of the *prontidão* (economic depression) of the 1930s and where his father died in 1932 when Paulo was twelve, is now a part of metropolitan Recife which has nearly 8 million inhabitants.

²⁸² A housing project for pensioners and families of very limited means.

people's faith and build a church with which they could identify as the chosen people of Jesus Christ, the excluded and marginalized ones. It caused great confusion, because each was going to reflect upon this according to his own religion, by sticking pins in the other.

PL: So, when you sermonized, you questioned the life around you?

DP: Yes, we questioned our own lives. We spoke as if it were a sermon. For example, 'pardon me, Lord, for my lack of respect.' There was a priest who threw one of our comrades out the first month he was there. Because we came into the church wearing shirts that were not stamped with portraits of saints. We came with shirts bearing images of Ché Guevara, Ortega, Ghandi. I had a shirt with a very large portrait of Ché Guevara and the words "We have to endure without losing our tenderness." They went crazy. The progressive church was recruiting people in every nook and cranny and this was at the Northeastern Encounter with representatives from all the states. There were more than 80 youths and adolescents, most of them from conservative families. So there were a lot of internal battles. The priests knew that I smoked and drank and you couldn't do that inside but our group covered it up. Everyday there was a different team that went shopping in the city and bought stamps so that we could write letters which someone else took to the post office. On the days when this was in the hands of a conservative team, we would be without our drugs. We bought *vinho de alcatrão* [a fermented fruit wine] which was very cheap or *jurubeba* [another flowering, fructiferous bush from which 'spirits' can be produced]. My mother, when I left home, said I wasn't going to be able to stay [in the seminary] for two days. I lasted six months before coming home for vacation and in a month did everything that I hadn't done there. The priests sent spies [*olheiros*] – not progressives who knew of our coherence, but the others sent spies to see if we were drinking, having affairs and other vices. That's all we did. In Carpina, there was an attic which was home to the bats and I cleaned it out so I could use it. People started to talk. When it was time to take a bath during the lunch break I would climb up there and have a smoke. As for wine, many of us drank in the bathrooms. We played guitar. In the *padres'* cooler there was *cachaça* but not in ours. So we stole theirs. We weren't allowed to see the faces of the [female] cooks, there was a wooden dumbwaiter into which we put our empty plates and pans and we couldn't see who was on the other side. No one was allowed to have contact with other people. The dumbwaiter could hold a person and I was very skinny at the time so I'd get in and they would push me, I'd jump out in the kitchen where there was another [dumbwaiter] for the priests' dining room. So we took the priests' drink until they began to notice that it was missing. That started a lot of struggle and persecution. The first person expelled from our group was Roberto from Bahia. He was still an aspirant while I was a postulant because I'd completed the second level of *Ensino Médio* and was ahead of those who were still on the first step of *Ensino Fundamental*. The aspirants had to spend two or three years in Carpina while I had only a year there before entering the novitiate. But there were lots of battles, confusion, torment, tragedies that benefited us and tragedies that made me aware of the hypocrisy of the Church. For instance there was a tragedy in Fortaleza, an automobile accident with two priests who were sent to the emergency ward. There was a priest who was always after us in Carpina, Giovanni Rollo, an Italian. Naturally, he was a traditionalist and defended the system in Rome. The Salesian fathers have their headquarters in Rome. He detested us, called us half-cocked revolutionaries and good-for-nothings. It was he who threw the *baiano* out and said I would be next. But I told him I was different. I connected with the philosophers, the people there who were studying philosophy, and with the theologians who were mostly progressives-in-training. They put Roberto out and we protested saying that he shouldn't go, that this was authoritarianism and Padre Rollo said that he was the one in charge and that Roberto would leave bright and early the following day. I called the philosophy students and they called the theology students and they arrived in three vans and we began to put pressure on Rollo, saying that Roberto had been threatened and asking what kind of charity were threats, torture and torment? What kind of priest was he? I used Christian discourse to support my argument. When they saw that I had support they softened a bit and two days later the accident occurred in Fortaleza. The priest who was giving us a hard time was very ambitious and interested in money and he was tired of

working in the training house (*casa de formação*) because instead of bringing in money it depended on money from the inspectorate to finance the training and he wanted to be in the *colégio* which brought in money. He was dissatisfied. So when this car accident happened he was very excited because one of the two priests was the school's director and the other was in charge of tuition at another big *colégio* in Fortaleza. He immediately bought a plane ticket and went to visit them in the Intensive Care Unit. One of the injured priests saw him and said "Get out of here, you miserable cur. I don't want you here. Just waiting for me to die so you can take my place!" Both priests died and Father Giovanni became the school's director. The tragedy benefitted us because he left and things got better after that.

PL: And Roberto?

DP: Roberto was kicked out because the church authority did not permit the director's word to be undone. I began to be impacted violently because you go to Mass and see the priest speaking of beautiful things, of life, of the world and the relations within it and you know how petty he is. This is when I decided to continue my initial training. Because I said to myself 'this church has to change.' But it was complicated because there were inhuman rules. For instance, chastity was understood as a sexual act. I understood chastity not as having to do with sex but as fidelity to something or someone, to the group. I took the vow of chastity from this angle and not as a question of sexuality. I think the only way one can remain sexually chaste is through castration. We are given to pleasure, to eroticism because we are human. I was put on probation on several occasions because of affairs with girls. This occurs whether or not you look for it and you end up becoming emotionally involved.

PL: You never had any intention of being chaste as the church conceives it?

DP: No. Chastity doesn't exist in there. I know priests who bought airplane tickets for people they liked so these people could spend the weekend with them. I told them while I was there that we shouldn't create inhuman things for ourselves that we cannot live up to as humans. I said that we took vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and that we didn't keep any of them...

I interrupt the dialogue at this point, to point out several emerging themes in Danilson's narrative—themes that I believe tie into the Freirian notion of the existence in Brazil of "a culture of silence" which has been one of the foci of this dissertation. One of the reasons I include a large verbatim swath of interview material at the beginning of this final portrait is that I consider Danilson's in many ways the most 'catholic' of the many Brazilian voices I have recorded, transcribed and translated, whether from field notes and interviews, documents accumulated as part of my research or texts I have cited and rendered into English so my readers might enjoy an indigenous perspective on Brazilian educational politics. I use the word 'catholic' in its non-sectarian sense: "1. broad or wide-ranging in tastes, interests, or the like; having sympathies with all; broad minded,

liberal. 2. universal in extent; involving all; of interest to all. 3. pertaining to the whole Christian body or church.”²⁸³ My five interviews with Danilson were all revelatory—he has been an extraordinary informant, capable of brilliant analysis and fearless about speaking (or demonstrating) his very human traits and foibles. Although he comes from a culture of silence, his own voice is incisive, tempered by passion and experience, extremely personal (as when he quotes his father wishing he could flay his brown skin) and resolute in its humanity. One of the *leitmotifs* of Danilson’s autobiographical narrative is the social separation of the poor and elite classes. This occurs inside and outside the Catholic Church as Danilson describes it and infects relations between his cohort and almost everybody with whom they come in contact on their postulant path, with the possible exception of the philosophy and theology students, some or all of whom have received ‘elite’ training, who support him in defying Padre Rollo’s banishment of Roberto from Bahia.

Danilson is not a Brazilian ‘everyman.’ He has absorbed the philosophical and spiritual doctrines of the Catholic Church, the ‘Marxisante’ socialism of Che Guevara and Paulo Freire and the *fin du siècle*, tribal anarchism of the Goths and Punks. Like Adão Pinheiro, he draws nourishment from a *Nordestino* aesthetic²⁸⁴ which exults in its tangled Amerindian, African and European roots. His is a combative pedagogy suited to the struggle for equitable youth and adult education in a country that takes from the poor and

²⁸³ Definition from *Webster’s Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Random House, 2001), 328

²⁸⁴ Ariano Suassuna (1974, 7) calls “Brazilian Armorial Art that which has as its principal common feature the connection with the magical spirit of Popular Northeastern ‘string literature’ (*Literatura de Cordel*), with with the music of the viola, the rabeca (fiddle) or pifano (fife) that accompanies its recital, and with the woodcuts (xilogravura) that illustrate its covers, as well as the spirit and form of the Arts and popular spectacles related to this same Romantic literaure. The illustrated chapbooks (*folhetos*) of our Cordel Literature can really serve as our banner because they join three paths: one, toward Literature, Cinema and Theater, through the narrative Poetry of their verses; another, toward the fine arts like Engraving, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics or Tapestry-making, through the designs made in cashew-bark for the woodcuts that illustrate their covers; and finally a third path toward Music, through the *sofás* and *ponteados* that accompany or constitute their recital, the singing of their verses and strophes.” (my translation)

gives to the rich. It is also full of humor, tenderness and affection, a pedagogy soaked with love. I spent one Sunday night in his partner Lucinha's guest room in the working class neighborhood of San Martín, next to the *Roda do Fogo* (Ring of Fire) *mocambo* where Danilson has a house. We had to travel to the Zona da Mata first thing the next morning. I woke up early and discovered I was sleeping under a poster of *Carlinhos*, as the Brazilians call Chaplin's "little tramp," in the 1940 anti-totalitarian film, "The Great Dictator." The underlying text is a monologue from the film:

The road of life can be one of freedom and beauty but we stray from it. Greed has poisoned men's souls...erected walls of hate in the world...and made us march in goose-step toward misery and the slaughterhouse. We have created the age of velocity and feel cloistered²⁸⁵ inside it. Machines that produce abundance have reduced us to penury. Our knowledge has made us cynics; with all our intelligence, we have become insensitive and cruel. We think too much and feel too little. More than machines, we need humanity. More than intelligence, we need affection and sweetness. Without these virtues, life will be about violence and everything will be lost! We are not machines! Men is what we are!
– Charlie Chaplin (my translation)

Chaplin's prescience is legendary. Danilson is 'Chaplinesque' in his man of the people persona, his refusal to put on airs, to play the intellectual and in his steadfast allegiance to his concepts of camaraderie, class and community:

DP: This is the way I conduct myself. I've always been outspoken. I speak first, without weighing my words. Sometimes, it's good to have literate language at your disposal, but in life it's not necessary to use it all the time. In our daily life at the seminary, in confinement and prayer, it was necessary to use a language that would enable us to enter the climate. But the ideology of the cloister can be seen and reflected about from another angle—that of the existence of life. Twelve of us were accepted and moved from Carpina to Jaboatão. Of these twelve, they only processed two from the Northeast. The other one was from the North and hadn't been accepted there so he came here [to Pernambuco] for the novitiate. It was like an academic career. He represented the traditional church. So, with him, the remaining twelve became thirteen. Ten left so we were three, two from the northeast and this boy from the North, from Manaus. It was like a sieve, a funnel that depends on political articulation when the faith in Jesus Christ is erased. Only three of us took the vows, the three famous vows, of poverty, chastity and obedience. At the end of the year, the head priest told me I couldn't take the vows. I told him that they had messed up my life for two years, a time when I could have been working, and they couldn't stop me from taking them now. Then I articulated the worker's cause for the *padre*, showing him what I had produced. Intellectual production and religious production because, like it or not, I was busy shepherding my faithful flock to the Catholic Church.

PL: What was your intellectual production?

DP: I became the vocational coordinator. After I left Jaboatão, I came to Recife to the

²⁸⁵ *Enclausurados* – a word which reminds us of the world Danilson describes.

Institute of Salesian Philosophy (ISAF). This was the first job they gave me after taking the vows. So I had to read and prepare myself for convincing young people so as to attract the faithful and those with a calling to the congregation. I was studying philosophy but I also had certain tasks—we had to clean the house where we lived. We studied not for ourselves but to be prepared to defend the congregation. We never made our scandals public—we hashed them out among ourselves. When Mass began, I could be sitting beside my worst enemy, communing in the name of the institution. We were institutionally chaste. But sexual chastity does not exist in the religious life. Ask the saints, the young ones. Not the old men—everyone's a saint in his dotage—they've already done what they had to do. Father Anthony, my first director in the philosophical institute, understood me very well. He was an extremely orthodox Aristotelian but every month we had what we called a 're-encounter.' The director called all the trainees together to make an evaluation of the month, what went well and what did not. He always made a point of saying 'these aren't bad things, they are your human attitudes and we need to see if they fit the religious life or not.' For everything he presented, I had a counterpoint. Because I questioned whether the saints themselves would have followed such orientations. He invited me, once, to join him for dinner in a high-class restaurant and I said that I wasn't going to go because I wouldn't feel comfortable there. Truth is I had a date with a girl and pretended that I had to study. But as the Catholics say, 'the devil drives' (*o cão atentou*) and the priest said they wouldn't go, they'd just have some cake and come right back. The whole thing was very quick, about forty minutes. By the time I called Ephigenia to come because I was alone in the house and gave her a couple of hugs, the van arrived with its headlights shining right at the two of us. She noticed and we pretended we were just another couple. But Father Anthony saw and when my friend Rolin got out of the car to open the gate he muttered that I was screwed (*fodido*). As the van was driving in, I ran around to the other entrance and up to my room. When the priest came in, he wished me goodnight and said that the dinner had been postponed. Then he asked how my reading had gone and I said that I hadn't begun yet and he answered that he knew. At breakfast the next day he said he wanted to talk to me after lunch. I thought I would be expelled. But he understood me and said that, had it been another priest or a faithful worshipper of the congregation, it wouldn't have been good for me or for the church. He said I had to make a decision: either not to do it again or, if I wasn't willing to control myself, to reflect. There are many things that cause us to take positions and define ourselves, after all. The Catholic Church had given me a lot of support, both in terms of my attitudes and intellectual makeup. Within the Church, I took a course in philosophy and came in contact with various elaborate systems of thought, philosophers who taught me much about the world. Our introduction to philosophical thought was through Aristotle and Plato. They also offered some theology classes to demarcate (*balizar*) the way we looked at life. So I spent three more years in the Philosophical Institute. I needed to renew my vows for three more years but I decided not to. I had spent three years in my initial training and three more as a monk. I wrote a letter of renunciation. I didn't choose to be a priest. I chose to be a member of the laity, a consecrated lay brother. The Salesians have priests and they have coadjutors who are brothers that take the same vows and live in the community but don't celebrate Mass and aren't very bound to such things. They wanted me to take a course in administration and I wanted to do pedagogy. The pressure increased in the second year. They said that I had to be a cleric rather than a coadjutor and that I shouldn't study either pedagogy or history, I should study administration. So I thought it better to leave. I asked to leave about thirteen years ago and Father Anthony said that I should think about it some more. But I thought that it was high time because I wasn't going to make it. The majority of the progressive priests had already departed. The ITA (Recife Institute of Theology) was closed. Dom Helder [Câmara] was still Archbishop [of Recife and Olinda] so they forced him into retirement and a representative of the traditional church, Dom José Cardoso, who has been here twenty years already, assumed the archbishopric. Dom Lamartine Barros, one of the great thinkers of the progressive church, died. Progressive priests who were foreigners were sent back to their countries. They dismantled the progressive church. I became disillusioned and asked to leave. Nonato, who took the vows with me, is the only one still a priest. He's from Juazeiro do Norte but he studied Theology in Rome and represents the conservative church. If I had continued, I would

have studied Theology here in Brazil because I want to understand the theology of my reality not Europe's. All of the progressives left and those who remained had to change their discourse. Padre João Carlos was on our side, today he's the inspector of the Northeast. I knew him as a philosophy and theology student, as a deacon and a priest, but he had to change his discourse to become inspector. He chose to live in small communities because the Church began to form small small cells within the poor communities. João Carlos lived in these communities and now he's inside the palace. Most of my [intellectual] formation began in the Catholic Church. There were many things that depressed me but there were many good things too. I bear neither rancor nor fear toward the Church. The traditional priests used to say to their progressive brethren: "you raised a snake and now it has swallowed you!"

PL: Was it because of the tenor of the times that you were released?

DP: The charismatic movements²⁸⁶ have taken over the Church. Like Padre Marcelo Rossi²⁸⁷ singing alleluia without making people reflect about their lives. The evangelical movement which draws masses of people without offering alternatives is equally alienating. When the progressive movement began [in the late 1950s] it wasn't only about politics, it was also about religion – a moment of ecumenicism that included Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Anglican Episcopalians. Remember the *Missa dos Quilombos*?²⁸⁸ At that time, the Brazil people were demanding amnesty for political prisoners and exiles. We wanted our lives and freedom of expression back. Dom Helder celebrated the Quilombo Mass. He said: "*Mariama* [Mother Mary], we aren't here to ask that today's slaves be tomorrow's slave masters. Enough of slaves! Enough of masters! We want liberty!" The beating of the drums was overpowering, they exploded like the screams of our souls! I was there. A lot of fire, torches, drumming (*batuque*). It was held in the tricolor (*Náutico*) soccer stadium—in those days religious retreats were in stadiums. The cultural and political climate of the time required the entire population—all the sectors, cultural, religious, political. The people had had enough of that oppression, that situation. That was a very educational time for everyone, for me. Our group had to use the religious space to get together, to converse. We couldn't meet in the public squares because the police would disperse us. The only place we had in which to talk, to build relationships was inside the Catholic Church.

PL: Was João Francisco [de Souza] part of this?

DP: He was here in Pernambuco. He was secular, not part of a religious congregation. The secular and the congregation are all Catholic. There are the congregations, the orders and the seculars. The seculars are priests who don't live communally but, rather, in the churches. The monks in the Franciscan and Salesian orders live in communities. João Francisco also came close to being a priest. He was a deacon, which is one of the steps to priesthood. The majority of our militants in the popular [education] movement come from the Catholic Church. We have a saying: *todos têm um pé na água e um na cruz* ("everyone has one foot in the water and the other on the cross") meaning we're both Catholics and *macumbeiros*, *umbandistas*. The Catholic Church made a great contribution to the formation of this militancy because it had the great *pastorals* – the workers' pastoral, the youth pastoral, the pastoral of the infirm. The word *pastoral* comes from *pastor*, shepherd; *pastorear* is the work of herding sheep. There are still pastorals today but they are weak. The TJLP which is the pastoral of working class youth was expelled from the church. The worker's pastoral is more involved with the rural syndical

²⁸⁶ See my discussion of the IURD, *et alia*, pp. 317-319, above.

²⁸⁷ A 'rock-star' priest who has built a thriving congregation in the Santo Amaro neighborhood of São Paulo by bringing his dramatic voice and personal magnetism to the pulpit to stem the flow of parishioners away from the Catholic Church.

²⁸⁸ The *Quilombo* mass was based on the Nigerian *Missa Luba* which was popular in the early 1960s U.S. and which the Italian filmmaker, Pier Paolo Pasolini used in his 1964 film *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, set in rural Sicily, which portrays a revolutionary Christ militating on the peasants behalf.

movement than with the church itself. They decided to ally themselves with the organizers rather than be bound by the rules of the Catholic Church which has regressed. Even [Pope] John Paul II rebelled because he was a foreigner. When Daniel Ortega was defeated in Nicaragua and Dom Oscar de Melo was assassinated we had big demonstrations. Our formation was very much based on these martyrs.

A lot of blood has been shed so we can speak about these things today. The era of the Brazilian military dictatorship was very cruel but it was also very instructive. I broke with my family. It had nothing to do with adolescent rebellion, it was something I worked for. I spent three years preparing myself to leave Fortaleza and come to Pernambuco. My mother was very worried because she knew that I was involved with these movements and thought it was dangerous. My older brother said that there were many revolutionaries in Pernambuco and that I could die if I were involved with such things. When I got here in 1982, the population was already in the streets, demanding direct elections, denouncing, scrawling graffiti on the walls pleading for freedom of speech, the end of the dictatorship and amnesty for our comrades. Writing on the walls of the city was the only available way to express these things. By 1983, the generals were shaky but there was still persecution. My family had no religious or political involvement. My parents gave us what they could in the way of opportunities but never said what we should or shouldn't do. They said what they thought was the best way, but the choice was ours. They always knew I was no saint as far as social rules are concerned. They were never called to school for any violence I had committed but always because of stances I took in class. I would go to school with a green bookbag on which a US flag had been embossed with a big red X through it and two machineguns also with red X through them to protest militarism, while everyone else was in starched white shirts, blue slacks or skirts. The directors prohibited this display and called my parents because of my position vis à vis the rules of the dictatorship. I like discipline but not the kind that kills human beings. The news we got [in Fortaleza] of Pernambuco was that its people were confronting the military powers. The 8th of October Revolutionary Movement (MR8) was very active. It was born after they killed Ché Guevara in Bolivia, something that had great impact in Brazil. There were even *guerrilla* training centers. I did not participate because you had to change your name, tell no one where you lived, sometimes you weren't even allowed to see the person's face. It was a security measure. But I thought the whole thing very strange. It was necessary because if you were captured by the military you wouldn't have information about anyone else. Also, you weren't able to leave the group after it became a cell. If you tried to escape they'd kill you. A popular poet said 'flesh is a traitor' (*a carne se trai*) when torture is applied. No one knows whether they will be able to withstand it and remain silent. We know that many people underwent torture and even died. I don't like to speak of such things because it eats the soul.

PL: How did you and Paulo Freire meet? Was it on the day of the filming?

DP: It was. The day we shot on the Cabo Gato bridge was the first meeting. He wanted to write an article on literacy and misery. He was here in Recife and he wanted to use the scene, the atmosphere to write this article. So he asked João Francisco if he knew anyplace where there were people with whom he could speak that had something to say about what he wanted to write. João Francisco was the Secretary of Education [of Olinda] at the time and very busy so he said he would put him in touch with someone, a popular educator, who would show him around the Peixinhos neighborhood. It was January and we were doing the *Colônia de Férias* [two week summer school] and then a teacher training for the school district. So João Francisco asked me to take Paulo Freire to places that would inspire him to write an article on literacy and misery. I knew he would be spending a week in Olinda because [Mayor] Germano Coelho had invited him to speak with the public school teachers. At first, I didn't know whether it was really *the* Paulo Freire because there are so many Freires in Pernambuco. I thought it might be another Paulo Freire. I almost forgot about it until the day before when I told some people I was going to be Paulo Freire's guide and they were surprised, but the idea of it being the great thinker did not enter my mind. He arrived at nine in the morning, said he was sorry to be late, introduced himself and we started to talk in the car. At that moment Julio [Weiner,

the videographer] turned on his tape-recorder. I filled him in on what was going on in Peixinhos at that moment and about where we were headed, for the Cabo Gato community. I said that we were going to see a lot of suffering but that there the people were organized and had a history of many struggles. The people there react to their struggles in different ways, depending on what side of the bridge they are on. The misery is the same on both sides but on one side you can see some organization in the architecture and the way the streets are laid out. The other side has the same conditions but the misery is more noticeable. The river, by separating the two versions of misery, calls attention to them. So Paulo began to get interested in the conversation and how I presented that situation. Because when someone comes to ask me about something, I don't just give the facts, I say why the situation is the way it is. Contextualizing. He asked how I saw that situation of misery because, even though the people had a certain organization, misery was installed inside there. I began by situating Olinda within the state of Pernambuco. Olinda doesn't have the income to support its population, it's a city that lives off its great festivals, especially Carnaval. Olinda isn't able to assimilate its work force and the only alternative it finds is ambulant, informal commerce. And even this is persecuted because it doesn't pay taxes. Freire asked if this was happening in Germano's government and I said yes, because he was the government. He has to collect taxes and ask those who can't pay to leave. I told him it was a cruel situation where the administration itself, the political and economic organization, pushed people into such situations. After we got out, [Julio] began to shoot and we repeated the same discussion, contextualizing Olinda so as to comprehend that terrible, inhuman scene but which Paulo Freire later saw so beautifully when he writes, in *Pedagogia da Autonomia*, "I had recently, in Olinda, on a morning that only the tropics know, both rainy and sunny, a conversation I would call exemplary with a young popular educator who lives his democratic and popular option, at each moment and with every word and thought. We walked, Danilson Pinto and I, with our souls open to the world, curious, receptive, along the paths of a favela where one learns early that only by being obdurate can one manage to weave together a life in its seeming absence or negation — out of privation, out of threats and despair, out of injury and pain" (see p. 111, above, for full citation)²⁸⁹

Everyone, even here at the university, criticized me for having taken Paulo Freire into a *lixão* (garbage dump). We talked a lot. He never got my name straight but we talked, in my view, as if we had known each other for quite a while. To me it seemed as if we were synchronized in time and space without ever having spoken before. We were tuned in. Why—because he believed in something that I believe too. When we parted, he thanked me profusely and said that if he had more time, if he lived five more years, he would come back to continue the conversation. Last year made five years. I wanted to show Luciana [Santos, Mayor of Olinda] the tape and propose that we do something in his memory, not change the name of the bridge to Paulo Freire but something more metaphorical. How do you get from one side of the river to the other? On the bridge. (...) When I tell him that poverty forces people to create 'antibodies of resistance', I mean that the resistance is cultural in the broadest sense, in the survival strategies that keep people fed, communicating, active and mobile. And when he says that he really doesn't have this

²⁸⁹ "Tive, recentemente em Olinda, numa manhã como só os trópicos conhecem, entre chuvosa e ensolarada, uma conversa, que diria exemplar, com um jovem educador popular que, a cada instante, a cada palavra, a cada reflexão, revelava a coerência com que vive sua opção democrática e popular. Caminhávamos, Danilson Pinto e eu, com alma aberta ao mundo, curiosos, receptivos, pelas trilhas de uma favela onde cedo se aprende que só a custo de muita teimosia se consegue tecer a vida com sua quase ausência —ou negação— com carencia, com ameaça, com desespero, com ofensa e dor." This passage, from Freire's final book, reminds me, in its lyric-elegiac swoop of Whitman's 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. In stanza 52 of that epic poem, the 36-year-old New Yorker foresees his death in lines that seem to apply to the 74-year-old Pernambucan strolling, soul open to the world, with his younger self a year before his death: "I depart as air—I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,/I effuse my flesh in eddies and drift it in lacy jags./I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,/If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles./You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,/But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,/And filter and fibre your blood./Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,/Missing me one place search another,/I stop some where waiting for you." (Paschen & Mosby, 2001. 24)

antibody, that he wouldn't survive a month in the *favela*...Those kids playing in the garbage beside the cows, dogs, horses, on the bank of that river full of garbage that represents no life at all.

PL: There's another interesting moment when he asks you, "What do you want to say to me, Paulo Freire, well-known educator?"

DP: That was the moment when I realized whom I was facing! For a person to strip away all his knowledge to ask someone else for a response, as he said himself: "I've all these titles, but what do you have to say to me? I let go of all I know to ask you a question as if my own answer was lacking. If I can't believe in someone like you, I cease to exist." In other words, these are the answers we want for ourselves in these confrontations. It was at that moment that he said: "what is it you have to teach me?" It was at that very moment... The word 'to teach' is so heavy! Because teaching implies a bunch of things, it isn't so simple. Paulo Freire was asking me to teach, to construct an opinion. For a moment, I was in shock. Because he used the word, *ensinar*, to teach.

PL: It seems to me that he had to decide at that moment: shall I withdraw my ego or remain a famous person? Up to that point, you were two people having a conversation... He was both a very simple and a very famous person. You gave an interesting answer about solidarity.

DP: It's one of the elements which is most discussed these days, the question of solidarity. No one understands where solidarity comes from. The feeling itself, not the strategy. I don't want to be left owing someone a favor. Between simple people, there's none of this 'I owe you a favor' stuff – it's real solidarity. We're all in the same boat, if we aren't together... They protect the guy who sells grass (*maconha*) because it's a strategy he's found to survive, they protect the prostitute and the kid who sniffs glue because it's through such complicity that they become part of the same miserable embryo.

We had our conversation there on the bridge, trying to breathe in that atmosphere not with our lungs but to comprehend that what we were talking about was where we actually were, looking at the people. It was one of those moments where we perceive that we have definite tasks in the world, social roles. It was a very important occasion in my life, in my existence because I was able to converse with a person who saw this more clearly than I, who could put it into words and into the world with more precision and science. I was there with a person who had a planetary vision, not just of this place, but of the larger world—Africa, United States, Central America. I felt I was relating not just to Paulo Freire, but to a world full of people! I didn't think of that while we were talking but it came to me soon after. The next day I was *filming* Paulo Freire at the CAIC. The *Colônia de Férias* had ended and this was the opening of the municipal training session for new teachers. All the teachers in the district were there trying to speak to him, to stand next to him. It was then that I realized what a privilege I had had. People had come from all over. Two days later it began to sink in whom I had been with but not very much because I was busy filming the event. He referred to me frequently in his speeches and everyone kept looking at me but I still didn't understand what that improvised conversation had meant. We never had another chance to speak. He went to a meeting, I think, in Condado, a town in the Northern *Zona da Mata*-- something to do with [former Governor] Miguel Arraes' program at the Center of Culture and Education for Youth and Adults. There he spoke again about our conversation on the bridge. It began to multiply. As he was about to leave [for São Paulo], Julio Weiner [the videographer] told me that Paulo Freire declared that, if he would die today, he would be happy because "the conversation I had with that boy was worth all of the conferences and classes I had in my life." It made me sad [to think] it was like a trophy he received while he was still alive for all his travels through the world. Later, Julio telephoned me saying that [Freire] had transformed our conversation into a class he gave at a university in the United States, I don't remember which. Then Julio wrote to say that they were editing the tape but that he was going to send the uncut version to me. Then he called to get my authorization to use my image for something they were doing, but I never heard anything more about that.

PL: A final question – how is the notion of solidarity compatible with the existence of those ‘islands’²⁹⁰ you spoke about? Are they different or can there be solidarity between one island and another? Can solidarity vanquish isolation?

DP: Ultimately, we have to have solidarity in our social, economic and political relations. What is solidarity? First, it’s seeing yourself as *gente*, as a human being, but that’s not all—you’ve got to affirm your own humanity by fighting for [other] human beings. We were just talking at the restaurant²⁹¹ about something that has to do with solidarity—that the great sin is to harbor the dominators inside ourselves. To construct a feeling of solidarity it’s necessary to free ourselves of this guest oppressor. For example: I am poor and unemployed and my neighbor is in the same situation economically but I consider him a good-for-nothing bum because of my internal oppressor who is only conscious of its own reality, not the other guy’s. I see an addicted and abandoned street kid and I call him a marginal and a thief and wish he were dead, even though I know that we belong to the same social class. The oppressor inside me desires his death. The oppressor who creates the misery is the same one who represses it. In order to be solidary, we must first free ourselves from our internalized oppressors so we can see that we don’t make those islands, it’s the System. If we don’t join in solidarity with other human beings then we’ll remain isolated and die from this parasite! We didn’t manufacture the weapons but we use them to protect ourselves from each other: by judging other people, distancing ourselves from them and considering them either more or less than our equals. Youths and adults who want to learn to read and write need more than a literacy program. Let’s begin with their teachers. There is no solidarity among them. When they are together it’s to defend their municipality, not the dignity of their existence. When they think about the themes, they don’t relate them to their own lives—they want to understand them *for* their students because they think they are different *from* their students. This has nothing to do with solidarity, which requires recognizing yourself as a human being. Pity, pain and remorse are not solidarity. You have to believe in yourself as a human being and understand that the same respect you have for yourself you should have for others.

PL: Aren’t suffering and terrible experiences a rude awakening to this feeling of solidarity?

DP: No, because the suffering of caused poverty, of the impoverishment of the working class, is not human. The suffering of Professor Paulo Freire face to face with that situation was solidary. He got indignant when he saw that people like him were in that situation. That’s different from the suffering of those people, which is an inhuman solidarity provoked by inhuman suffering. It’s a suffering that makes you accept a plate of food when you have just eaten because there are people close to your house who haven’t eaten. It’s so that people will continue living. It’s a struggle for survival. They unite to defend themselves...Solidarity comes into focus when I suffer for someone else’s reality. When this fails to happen, it’s all about being merciful, having pity, pain, a heavy conscience.

²⁹⁰ In a previous interview, on 7/25/04, Danilson explained his theory of an ‘archipelago’ of oppressed and isolated people: the ‘island’ of the street children, the ‘island’ of single mothers, the ‘island’ of the unemployed, the ‘island’ of the landless peasants and the ‘island’ of those exploited at work, that keeps the oppressed under the thumb of the hegemon because they don’t yet have the critical consciousness to see that these ‘islands’ are systemically linked.

²⁹¹ I had a farewell lunch that Friday, September 24, six days before my departure, with Danilson and a group of his bibulous buddies at a restaurant in the Torre neighborhood of Recife specializing in *dobradinho*, a bean and tripe stew, accompanied by a constant stream of *cerveja* and *cachaça* to brighten an otherwise cloudy afternoon. Bachelor party toasts (“*Brindar sem beber são dez anos sem meter/Beber sem brindar são dez anos sem trepar*”) aside, Danilson spoke of the danger of cultural pollution by global megamarketing which seeks to appropriate exotic local dancers (we had seen a Michael Jackson ‘wannabe’ perform at a training-session in Riberão the day before) and to annihilate the ‘glocal’ aspect. He compared Brazil to a child who doesn’t want to let go of her mother’s hand, saying that the country was bound to the ‘oppressors within’ through fear, ignorance and force of habit.

When we transfer this to a more formative dimension it's so people can understand that it all begins with the economy (we live in a capitalist system of concentrated income) so how can we speak of a more concrete solidarity—like Paulo Freire asked on the tape: *how can you speak of 'hope' to people encumbered by so much misery?* So we start with the most concrete things they have—their relationships. The first essential we talk about regarding solidarity is the confidence the populace has lost. Human beings no longer trust each other. I waited for someone to say in the citizenship classes I taught that it is still possible to organize and change history. Now people say they want to change but they have no confidence that the next person won't want to trip them up. And when confidence is lacking there can be no solidarity. For a solidary economy to exist there must solidary social relations. I have a tape of a community in Fortaleza where the solidary network is visible. They created their own barter system with no interest payments. I see a lot of this in the simplest communities. One of the axes of solidarity is the question of trust and the system constantly places instruments of distrust among the people. It's difficult but not impossible to build solidarity. First, you have to build the feeling of humanity. For you and me it's easy to understand solidarity, but those people on the bank of the river are in another situation, without any opportunity. No one chooses to be poor. Solidarity cannot exist in its plenitude among those suffering people. Because suffering makes them create resistance and create solidarity just to survive – rather than to exist. They conform to the violence, they create a kind of solidarity of violence.²⁹² They are solidary with a person who kills someone else in cold blood simply because he doesn't like the guy's looks.

PL: My Brazilian friends often laugh when they tell stories of holdups and shakedowns.

DP: I can't understand how people get used to violence. It's no wonder that people don't believe in solidarity when such things occur regularly in their daily lives. People look at each other with distrust. It's possible to build solidarity but it is not born on its own.

PL: After witnessing various [PROMATA teacher-] training sessions in your company, I am not confident that that program is going to work.

DP: That's why I'm often in anguish at the university.²⁹³ The last meetings have been so bureaucratic and so far from what they could be that I catch myself becoming nastier each time I attend. Now they call me 'João Francisco,' [Prof. de Souza had been attending the IV Paulo Freire Forum in Portugal and Danilo had been vocal and critical in his absence] but I cannot agree with what I don't believe. Just because I argue against making stupid mistakes doesn't mean I'm a dictator. There is no time to be wasted in mental masturbation about what's going to happen. I've lost patience. They say that the students aren't going to want to do anything we propose because they're so tired. But it's the teachers themselves who are resistant and tired and don't care to step back from themselves (*se desprendem*) to get a perspective on things. I proposed that, before meeting with the teachers to discuss the themes for their reading circles, we do art and communication workshops with them so they can relate to each other for a moment. Some of the teachers have never traveled outside their own municipality. I am fighting for the most human training for these people, not for the bureaucratic concerns of the university. Karla [one of João Francisco's two daughters involved with the project] wants to explain

²⁹² This was evident in an experience my wife and I had with a family to whose house we went for dinner one Sunday afternoon shortly after we arrived. We had met Edimar and Graça and their children, Dalila (8) and Davia (6) in 2002 and sent them money to finish building a house in the K-8 *mocambo*, near Varadouro, Olinda. They wanted to show us what they'd done. Graça cooked a nice meal but there was nothing to drink so I gave Edimar 10 *reais* (about US\$3.50) to get some mineral water for us and Coke for the kids. He came back twenty minutes later, head hanging, and said he'd been robbed on the way to the market. Three young thugs whom he described as local drug dealers had seen us go in to his house and were waiting for him around the corner. There was no violence involved. Edimar handed them the money when they asked for it, knowing they were armed and dangerous.

²⁹³ The PROMATA teacher-training program was directed by Prof. João Francisco de Souza at the Center of Education (CE) of the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE).

the structure of the territory and I said the focus should be on the training, to see if this kind of education is necessary or not...

I became aware of some of the strains in the PROMATA project which Danilson is referring to at a regional convocation of project teachers, with Professor de Souza presiding, at the University's Educational Center, on July 30, 2004. Danilson had told me things were scheduled to begin at eight but, by 8:35, when de Souza began to try to dialogue about the chosen topic, gender, only about half dozen of the twenty-two *educadores* (19 women and two men) expected were present. While the others arrived, he kept a rather desultory conversation 'alive' and took two calls on his cell-phone – the first of which he answered "how'd you find me at this motel?" (This turns out to be the punchline of a Brazilian joke: a Portuguese guy and his mistress are in *flagrante delicto* when his wife calls him on his cell-phone. He answers, "How'd you find me at this motel?") A couple of interesting points arose from what became a de Souza monologue: the existence of two conflicting tendencies in Northeastern mores: 1) a chain of command in which man bosses woman, woman bosses child, child bosses weaker or poorer children (in the old days, slaves), poor kick their dogs, dogs chase cats, cats chase rats, etc. and, 2) a bottom-up reaction of disrespect and criticism toward those in power. De Souza also pointed out that it was usually 'rebellious and courageous people' who were responsible for social change and the struggle for justice and equality, he mentioned Joan of Arc. "Equal but different" was his shibboleth: "differences give things flavor. Even the fingers of our hands are different (displaying his, right thumb encircled by a thick silver ring) each one has its own function."

According to João Francisco, differences of gender, ethnicity, finances, taste and behavior are felicitous, they enrich and add color and spice to life. It is rationality that is man's double-edged sword: differentiating him from animals but also containing the seeds

of competition, prejudice and cruelty. "Ideas only have power when people appropriate them, they're completely worthless when they remain in books. People who don't like to make mistakes end up doing nothing. "

The central issue seemed to be how to get these *educadoras de apoio*²⁹⁴ to increase their 'pedagogical participation' in PROMATA, to enter the political life of the municipalities to some extent so that they could insure the contextual relevance and appeal of their instruction. "How can we help you realize your abilities?" I heard this question throughout the day-long conference, from João Francisco and others of his NUPEP staff. Various barriers had arisen in the five months already elapsed in an eight- month program and there was apparently some uncertainty that it would be funded for an additional year.

Danilson told me privately that one of the problems was that the youths who were, originally, the targeted students would sporadically 'disappear' from the *zona da mata*, particularly between sugar harvests, when economic necessity forced them to seek other means of survival. The current student body, older and predominately male, was also threatened—September is the season when the harvested fields are burned and cleared to make room for a new planting season and the fires are set and tended in the evenings when they would otherwise be coming to school. There were also a host of other services; the distribution of eyeglasses, food baskets, clothes, etc. which were tangential to the educators' main focus but which they could help facilitate if they were aware of the various municipal and NGO services provided. João Francisco referred to these as the *conteúdos operativos* ("operative contents"), ways of combatting unemployment and

²⁹⁴ The 19 female and 3 male teachers who ultimately attended the meeting were *educadores de apoio* ('support educators') in the sense that each was responsible for 10 different literacy classes (or 'reading circles' as they were sometimes called in Freirian terms) most of them supervised by *monitoras* from the community who, although they might be more literate than their pupils, were not necessarily licensed teachers. The *educadoras de apoio* were the focus of NUPEP's pedagogy in the PROMATA program. Thus, Danilson and a half dozen other 'regional coordinators' were responsible for the cultural enrichment of the teachers of the '*monitoras*' who were, in turn, responsible for the progress of the *alfabetizandos* (literacy-learners).

attending to matters of client health and welfare that “needed to be socially negotiated.” What the International banks that sponsored these programs were interested in, above all, was ‘sustainable development.’ If 75 percent attendance was not a figure that could be reasonably maintained during planting or harvest, so be it! What really mattered in Youth and Adult Education is “the product”: in this case, functional literacy.

The current Law of Directories and Bases²⁹⁵ allows that adult and continuing education attendance be irregular, it doesn't demand the presence of the pupil night after night. The PROMATA agreement specifies that each worker should attend at least 25 classes. Thus, it is up to the teachers to negotiate class times with the students and hold four two-hour class meetings a week. The all-important issue, according to Professor de Souza, is that the literacy-learners (*alfabetizandos*) feel they are making progress in reading and that the ability to read will better their lives. De Souza confessed, at one point, that he had remained in school because “he wasn’t brave enough to plant potatoes” and joked that the sons and daughters of the middle class go to school because, lacking agricultural or manual skills, it is better than living in the street or under a bridge²⁹⁶.

The lack of punctuality continued in the afternoon session: after an hour and a half lunch break, people began to drift back. The organizers themselves did not reappear until 2 PM. Then there was resistance from the participants to following the scheduled program. Rather than tackling the work at hand, group preparation of *Jornadas I and II*²⁹⁷,

²⁹⁵ *A Lei das Diretrizes e Bases*, which has governed Brazil’s educational standards since the 1950s, was overhauled to be in tune with the new national Constitution drawn up in 1988. The government has ‘decentralized’ public schools by granting decision-making powers to the municipalities. This means that there are many more people who have to be consulted about every change or innovation that is proposed. For more on the LDB, see fn. 250.

²⁹⁶ Many homeless people in Recife live under the dozen bridges that cross the Beberibe and Capibaribe rivers. In the bourgeois imaginary, they are conflated with the trolls in *contos de fadas* (fairytales)—ragged and misshapen beings who lurk under bridges and must be propitiated with alms.

²⁹⁷ Two day-long cultural enrichment programs designed by de Souza and the regional coordinators to supply the *educadoras de apoio* with a thematic, regional approach to literacy in keeping with the NUPEP workbooks.

individual teachers aired petty complaints. This went on for an hour or more as the organizers stood with the worksheets they wanted to distribute under their arms, attempting to justify the work. Finally, Professor de Souza introduced Danilson who took those assembled through the first exercise of Jornada I in which we chose different colors of crepe paper ribbon which we waved as we sang Guilherme Arantes' *música brega*²⁹⁸ "Cheia de Charme." I was reminded of the 'professional workshop' I attended in Olinda in 2002, where song and dance was also used as an ice-breaker. An appendix of thematic questions was meant to introduce the concept of gender: a) What do we learn about being women and being men? b) What have you observed about the relations between genders, that is, about social relations between men and women in the family, when engaged in leisure activities, at work, in education? c) In your opinion, what causes unjust and inequitable relations between genders? d) To what extent is this humanizing/dehumanizing? e) If we think of a model man/woman relationship which would support sustainable human development, what might it be like? f) Referring to the colored ribbons you chose in the opening activity, what can you say about the relationship of colors and gender in society?²⁹⁹

The questions were answered in a lackluster fashion by one or two people and only at Danilson's urging. Professor de Souza reappeared around 4 PM and stopped to look at the

²⁹⁸ *Música brega* is the Brazilian equivalent of U.S. Country & Western with an emphasis on romantic ballads (*boleros*). In *Cheia de Charme* ("Full of Charm") the singer celebrates love's aphrodisiac powers: "When I saw her/So close to me/So within reach/So distant, so real/Such good perfume/I don't know!/I invested everything in my glance/So many words/In a brief sigh/This kind of passion/Doesn't happen every day./Full of charm./An enormous desire/For adventure./Full of charm./An enormous desire/To make revolution!" The song mollified the rebellious teachers who sang along, waving the crepe-paper *serpentinhas* over their heads as if it were carnival.

²⁹⁹ These discussion-topics, which were meant to open participants' minds to the question of gender inequities and permeate the ensuing activities, lacked the referential cogency of Freire's ten situations (see appendix, below) or their 'codifying' force. The first activity, in which teachers were supplied with magazines and asked to clip and construct collages of pictures they felt represented masculine and feminine images, occupations, roles, etc., intended the ensuing dialogue to focus on media images of gender and had limited relevance to the lives and relationships of PROMATA's clients, itinerant cane-cutters and sharecroppers struggling for subsistence. Intellectualizing and academizing the topic served no purpose but to emphasize class and economic disparities.

two sheets of collages lying, unglued and undiscussed, on the floor. The day would end as it began, in a welter of passive-aggressive resistance.

Three days later, on the second of August, 2004, I had an opportunity to discuss the meeting and the PROMATA program with Danilson at his house in Roda do Fogo. This conversation allowed me to appreciate the extraordinary difficulties inherent in the project. As already mentioned, the original audience, 15 to 25-year-olds, had been difficult to hold because of the seasonal nature of work in the canebrakes. Danilson explained that this cohort had been singled out in a demographic study by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) as disproportionately non-literate. But it was physically elusive because, although the majority of the men and women who cut and hauled the cane were older, these youths performed multiple tasks, often moving from one plantation to another, planting, cutting, burning and seeding new fields or finding menial work in regional mills where the cane is processed. Others migrate to the cities where they sell manioc root (*macaxeira*) and yams (*inhame*) or work as apprentices and haulers of material in construction projects. So the program needed to be adjusted and redesigned with a 25-year-old-and-up public in mind. According to Danilson:

When the program was directed at this younger public, it was thought of as a medium-term development project—something can only be developed if the target population is attending school. When this public changed, so did the intentions and desires of the people involved. These older people thought of themselves as well past school age and did not have the same motivation as younger people to use the instruments of reading, writing and mathematics to overcome the barriers. They are more content with [or inured to] the status quo and don't think that school will be useful for their development or change their reality. They don't think they are capable of using the knowledge acquired for change that will involve personal and sustained human development.

The ten didactic themes are linked directly to the principal problems of the *Zona da Mata*: questions of cultural appropriation, care of the environment, progress in school, and economic diversification since it's an area of sugarcane monoculture. The overriding question is one of sustainable human development from the perspective of a territory that contains various municipalities. People tend to look at the *Zona da Mata* as a territory despite the fact that it contains dozens of municipalities, north and south of Recife. If one municipality manages to develop and prosper and the others don't, the problems of the region remain latent but present. The younger people have more energy and desire (*garra*) to change the reality of their lives. The older ones are no longer concerned with this. They say, "old horses don't learn to canter." They think their time has passed. And our

didactic materials are not adequate. You see the difficulty we are having finding workbook texts and activities that connect to the theme of gender relations. We have to stay with the books we have for now. There are new didactic materials proposed for 2006 that take into account the learning needs of this [older] public. We are also getting away from the concept of illiteracy—we propose to talk about ‘continuing education’ because many of these people have a lot of skill and wisdom—they should not be seen as ‘illiterate.’

Danilson also mentioned the limited resources for reproducing materials for the 12,000 people enrolled in the program. Class size is not to exceed 25 people so there are a lot of teachers involved and costs are high. One of the biggest problems is that the school calendar in the rural zones does not fit the work schedules of youth and adult students. The Program for Sustained Human Development in the Pernambucan Zona da Mata (PROMATA) allowed de Souza and his NUPEP team ten months to structure and execute the program but in reality they had eight months to carry out the didactic part of the program because that was the period coincident with the *ano letivo* (school year), excluding weekends, saint’s days and national holidays. So the amount of actual class-attendance (*momentos presenciais*; moments of physical presence) is very limited. Chronological limitations bedevil programs of this kind. After spending eight months in PROMATA, some students become sufficiently motivated to enroll in the local school districts and are able to receive federal government funding in the form of *bolsas escola* which subsidize primary instruction for youth and adults as well as children. The pedagogy of those responsible for the program has exigencies of its own:

DP: When we try to make the program work within all this complexity, we still have our own contradictions as people who are thinking of a more just and better school for these people. That’s why the problem of the didactic material not being compatible with the pedagogical proposal that should orient it is so hard to bear. As far as I am concerned, the planning we are doing now ought to be catalogued to provide the basis for making new didactic material because it outlines objectives and proposes activities. This is what you saw us attempting to do in the training session (*capacitação*) the day before yesterday.

PL: Explain the concept of the *capacitação*, please.

DP: We develop an itinerary. First, I’ll tell you how it was. We are modifying everything. There used to be one territorial coordinator. I was in charge of nine municipalities. Now we are forming territorial teams, two other professors and I. We believe we can work with the nine municipalities more quickly that way. Another change:

we used to prepare all this in the training team at UFPE and deliver it to the *professoras de apoio* (support teachers) and *educadoras* (class teachers) to use in their classes. Now we put together a proposal and bring them here to discuss it with us before they execute it with their teachers in the field.

PL: So the support teachers are used as intermediaries. They come to discuss the new ideas with you and then they go test them on the students by passing them on to their classroom teachers. Why aren't you in the field every week?

DP: No. They are there daily. Our link is more with the support teachers because they are the ones who connect with the other teachers. Every support teacher has 10 class teachers under her. They work on the scholastic coordination of the program. And I have been working with nine support teachers in the nine municipalities. Now we are putting more university people in the territories to oversee the municipalities.

PL: Where do these people come from?

DP: From the team that was there, although that's not the whole team. Many people were missing. There were 25 people. There should be 22 now. We are going to divide these people among the diverse territories. We bring the support teachers here so we can discuss our plans with them and then train the class teachers together. The central question of my report³⁰⁰ is how is our practice going to diminish the distance between NUPEP's pedagogical proposal and the practice that these support teachers and class teachers have been repeating the whole of their professional careers, the practice of literacy teachers in the southern *Zona da Mata*? These teachers have accumulated educational experience that we consider hierarchical education. It comes from schools that continue to prove they are incompetent when it comes to guaranteeing workers knowledge that they can use to lead higher quality lives. It's a matter of writing techniques. It's one thing to help someone learn the technique of forming letters and another to help people in a process of the construction of knowledge where they think about and know what they're writing and reading. That is why our practice is built on themes. If I construct a theme, a debate around a problem, you are going to be able to learn to read and write with more meaning because of it. For instance, if the discussion is about gender relations and you understand it, when you go to write the word *gender* you'll know what it means and in what context it is placed. When you learn to write a sentence that is imbued with a problem, that sentence also bears significance. It has a whole meaning. The traditional school used nation-wide didactic materials. Brazil is multicultural and pluriethnic, how can you make one book for a whole country? So they created standards, 'plaster-casts,' of practice and the *professoras* were restricted to following the contents of the book. It was just reading for reading's sake. So there are people who will tell you, "I can read but I can't write" or "I know how to form letters and join syllables but I don't know what I am writing." Our proposal is imbued with the culture of a school that wasn't of much consequence to the working class. So how can we approach the practical proposals of these *professoras* without debasing everything they have constructed? It's not all bad. But how can it be redone? What ingredients can be added to this practice to give it a new flavor, something more interesting than salt and water? What elements can we add so that they can see whether or not their students are learning faster than before? My report is coming from that perspective. To bring the contents of the *professoras'* lives more in line with the NUPEP proposal. Their ages are varied—there are *professoras* from 20 to 60. To approach a *professora* with many years of experience and propose that she do things differently is complicated. She has spent her life with the ABC primer³⁰¹ presenting vowels, consonants. It's not easy to convince her that adults don't need to go through this process because they are already in contact with literate society and with words and should

³⁰⁰ Danilson mentioned a dissertation proposal for a Master's degree in education that João Francisco was urging him to write as part of a program that he is supervising in conjunction with the University of Barcelona. I believe that this is what he was referring to when he used the word *relatório* (report).

³⁰¹ See Chapter 2.8 for further mention of the *Cruzada ABC*.

not be taught to read and write like a child. There are some things that coincide with motor coordination. We orient people who have spent a long time away from school [or never attended] with various techniques before handing them a pencil. Exercises like crumpling paper, drawing circles and lines. Many quit because they are unable to make even an *o*.

PL: There's also shame, low self-esteem...

DP: The *professoras* understand that the first meetings are for this—getting to know the student. The common notion is that they are people who never went to school. But we want to discover who this student is, if she or he participated in some cultural group, some movement with leaders, to know a bit of the life story of each one. Who are they and what perspectives do they bring to school with them? The great challenge is how to conquer these people who have spent so long away from school. What do I need to do as an educator so that they understand that the knowledge they are going to construct cannot be commercialized or sold? It will be theirs. What am I going to do with this knowledge to better my life? It's easier to have a conversation like this with a young person because she or he has a greater life perspective. For a more mature person, someone on the other side of 50, it's difficult because they don't see any future. They are 'waiting for the train to pull out:' to die. How can I address this as an educator inculcated with and rooted in an inhuman reality, without structure, without sanitation, without the prospect of employment? The educators who come to our meetings come with this perspective. How can such educators become seducers of such students? And will such students, in turn, seduce others? The idea is to construct a project for the transformation of their reality, not just to appropriate the skills of reading and writing and leave it at that. What can I do after I finish school? I want school to help change my life.

PL: Freire observed in the MCP that what he called the 'reading of the world' preceded the 'reading of the word.' He used the 'ten situations' first so that the 'culture circle' preceded the 'reading circle.' Do we still have time to do this?

DP: The proposal considers this. But I don't know if we have a starting point from which this can be diffused. I think this is something that is necessary, as Paulo Freire used it — it's important to be able to 'read the world' and to write about this world. But we have to 'model' this pedagogy—to work with the teachers in the same way that they are going to work with the students. Otherwise, how are we going to approach the NUPEP proposal with their antiquated practice? This practice comes from another age. From an age in which Brazil had 'official' books that negated information, where history was a list of commemorative dates and students were not expected to reflect about what had actually happened on such and such a day but just to remember the date it occurred.

PL: What use are dates?

DP: When we passed through the military dictatorship, the first thing that was removed from the process of instruction was any material that taught us how to think. Philosophy and psychology were both sacked. They removed them from the schools. They kept them in the scholastic curriculum of the Social and Political Organization of Brazil (OSPB) but not as material requiring reflection, just as facts to memorize: "On the 22nd of April, 1500 Cabral's caravelle makes port in the Northeast and Brazil is discovered." They didn't qualify it as a European invasion of a culture where 'indians' were massacred, decimated—the Europeans are the ones who called us 'indians' because they knew the Indies. Our whole knowledge liquidation process begins with the coming of the Europeans. In his letter, Pero Vaz de Caminha writes *não existe pecado debaixo do equador* ("there is no sin beneath the equator") because they came fully dressed and the 'indians' here in the heat of a tropical climate were walking around naked. Some people covered their sexual organs, but not the majority. So, from that point on, the process begins to be castrated. Thought-provoking pedagogy was not for everyone, just the noble class. Indians and blacks were supposed to work, not to think.

PL: Getting back to the dictatorship...

DP: They removed these thought-provoking disciplines from basic education. Whoever wanted to learn had to have that primer. The press was censored, artists were unable to express themselves. Inside the schools, there was the SOE (Service of Educational Orientation) to keep an eye on the hyperactive students, the ones who thought about things and asked a lot of questions. I was born in 1961, three years before the coup, so I grew up in the dictatorship's climate of prohibition. I was taken to the so-called SOE (*Serviço de Observação Educacional*) on various occasions but I had no political clarity about things. The false liberalism which was established during those thirty years of repression gave birth to an apathetic generation of young people who are blind to their own identity, who don't question the meaning of school. At the same time, it produced many good people, like Lula. But the generation between the military dictatorship and the new cultural climate that followed amnesty was apathetic and now they are in power. The most culturally restless of these are the ones producing the Hip Hop literature as a cultural language coming from the oppressed people, from the massacred youth. The police are selected from the ranks of the poor and then used to repress other poor people. The rappers denounce this in their lyrics and in the clothes they wear. Here [in Recife] there was the cultural movement of the mangroves, *Manguebeat*, which was Pernambuco's new eye on the world.

PL: *Manguebeat* included elements of many of the musics indigenous to Pernambuco, didn't it?

DP: Various elements of the local culture, mixed with elements that come from rock, from pop, from funk. I was just talking with some of the young people who work with cultural animation in the municipal schools on weekends in a project called *Escola Aberta* (Open School). The school functions normally from Monday through Friday and is open, on Saturdays and Sundays, to extra-curricular student activities like graffiti,³⁰² theater, *capoeira*. I was invited to speak about the question of youth identity in this new political scene. I made a history of cultural movements, most of them started by young people—great national and local movements and others which are on the way to becoming movements, started by young people and adolescents. I began with the Hippie movement when we were in an era of worldwide war and the youth pleaded for peace. The hippies isolated themselves, created an alternative society and wanted nothing to do with that world of complexes and wars or the exploitation of a country in development by a superpower. But they didn't retreat passively. They had an entire literature, a music, a manner of dressing. It wasn't just *ôba-ôba*.³⁰³ It had a lot of meanings that weren't interesting to the world-at-large and therefore remained unexploited. When the Hippie movement began to lose power, the Punks appeared. In Brazil, there were the *baianos*³⁰⁴ who borrowed Hippie elements and Raul Seixas³⁰⁵ calling for an alternative society. The Punk movement appeared with its anarchistic thought that "any kind of power is a way to die for nothing," that we must do away with the powers that be and create a new form of government that is not about power and imposition. In Brazil it began to consolidate other movements, like *Tropicália*. National and international movements began to dialogue. This is where *Mangue*, the local movement, began—as a consolidation of Hip-hop, Funk, and Punk with greater durability than the Hippies because it brings a more anarchistic, more political idea when it presents Heavy Metal as an alternative, declaring that people are in chains and need to free themselves. There's a lot of iron, a lot of metal in the

³⁰² Graffiti is recognized as a popular art-form in Brazil where a distinction is made between mural art (*grafite*) and public defacement (*pixação*).

³⁰³ An expression denoting sensual pleasure, often associated with carnival frolic. An Italian producer, Franco Fontana, toured the world in the 1980s with an eponymous stage show which featured semi-naked *mulatas*, *capoeira* and *samba canção*. It came to Los Angeles' Pantages Theatre twice, in 1987 and 1992.

³⁰⁴ The *tropicalistas*: Caetano, Gil, Gal Costa, Tom Zé, etc. See fn. 337, p. 368, above.

³⁰⁵ A Bahian *rockero* and composer with a huge fan base—a Brazilian Springsteen.

instrumentation.

PL: With all this cultural ferment, it seems to me there is a lack of promotion. Is there an ongoing concert scene? Are there music classes in the public schools?

DP: The schools don't really value cultural movements promoted by the youth. I remember a *professora* who said that the young people had to remove their caps before they came into her class. At the time, it was like asking a kid to take off his skin! The cap was a symbol. The principal's office was full of caps because she didn't permit them in class. If she had explained that in buildings with roofs you don't need to protect your head, it might have helped but just to say 'it's not allowed!' resolves nothing. Punks in Pernambuco joined the Mangue movement and don't spike their hair or wear Mohicans. Instead, they shave their heads. They go for tattoos, wear their pants low, use sandals. They have their own local version of Punk identity but their thinking is the same as the cold-weather punks'. The anarchist movement is still alive and well. This year [2004] marks the tenth anniversary of the Boca do Lixo (Garbage Dump) movement. The space they occupy today used to be a slaughterhouse. Every year we hold the *semana de cultura* (culture week) in August. It used to be that August was Folklore Month but we replaced the word 'folklore' with 'popular culture.' When Jacilda³⁰⁶ arrived, she removed the CEJA from the CAIC³⁰⁷ and prohibited young people from ever using the place. That's when they spotted the abandoned slaughterhouse (*matadouro*) and proposed its refurbishment as a project for the Prefecture, but Jacilda turned them down, saying that the old slaughterhouse building belonged to Recife. So the young people changed the proposal's wording and took it to the mayor of Recife. He tried to evade responsibility by saying the building belonged to Olinda. So the young people got together, brought brooms and because they had no paint began to *grafitar* (paint graffiti) and that's how the movement started. The following year the Culture Week festivities began to make money because people brought things to sell. That generated a financial strategy beginning with the development of cultural activity. Until 1995, we used the CAIC. When Jacilda threw us out, we went to a popular club.

PL: Who discovered the locale? Did you have leaders?

DP: It was young people from the *Boca do Lixo* movement. Many of those studying at the CEJA were leaders of the PX gang in Peixinhos³⁰⁸ and it was a time when people were panicking about the *galeras* and *arrastões*.³⁰⁹ The PX was the biggest gang in the Metropolitan Region and its leaders were all enrolled at our school. We were five teachers with 500 students—the place was a madhouse! They committed many 'terrorist' acts. These are the same people who are now leaders of the *Boca do Lixo* movement. We knew their potential even then because they could easily get 600 people together to create havoc in the streets. We wondered how to transform this potential into something healthier. I think the CEJA made a great contribution at that time.

PL: Didn't you also form a student union (*um grêmio estudantil*) while you were teaching at the CEJA?

DP: All the people who eventually made up the leadership of the *grêmio*, began by demonstrating their leadership in another way. Organizing a *mutirão* (volunteer group) to clean up the school. We did a glass bottle collection campaign and purchased ventilators for the school with the proceeds. They pay ten *centavos* a liter for glass. That was their

³⁰⁶ The ex-Mayor (1996-2000) of Olinda, she ran again in 2004, despite pending charges of graft, corruption and fraudulent use of campaign funds. She was defeated by the incumbent, Luciana Santos.

³⁰⁷ For more details of this pivotal event in the history of municipal EJA in Olinda, see "Guiomar's Story," Chapter 6.2.

³⁰⁸ The working-class neighborhood (*bairro*) where the CEJA, CAIC and slaughterhouse are located.

³⁰⁹ *Galeras* are gangs, an *arrastão* is a 'dragnet' where a large group of gang-members will stage a mass assault in a public place like a beach or concert, robbing people at will.

idea. All schools receive municipal support but it's not enough to pay for the building. We opened a savings account. Norma Pinheiro (de Souza's co-coordinator of educational research at UFPE) was enchanted at the time. She was doing research to discover the how schools can conform to the lives of the workers and how students can rethink the schools at the same time they are contributing to them. All this is to say that schools don't privilege the voice of the cultural movements that young people promote. This is one reason why young people are avoiding them.

PL: The slaughterhouse (*matadouro*) doesn't have a school?

DP: It had but they used it for different things. For instance, some of them worked with children from the community while others worked with NGOs or within the Prefecture (Olinda City Hall). There were artisans and musicians—the movement spawned lots of bands. [Danilson shows me several CDs made by former gang members in the *Boca do Lixo* movement]. You see how school can give new directions to people's lives.

PL: These guys don't look very young.

DP: Their faces today are the same as they were ten years ago. Mature, punished by time, by the hardness of life. There are some who have achieved international fame, like Canibal. His band was called 'The Devotees of Hate'—they had to drop the 'Hate' in order to record. They are part of the Mangue movement that came out of the Boca do Lixo movement.

PL: What happened to the movement? I was happy to discover that, on the tape of you and Paulo Freire, there was additional coverage of the *Colônia de Férias* summer school.

DP: The same things we did with the children, we did with the adults – teaching them to preserve and give continuity to cultural traditions. When we created the CEJA, it wasn't meant to be an isolated school. One of the things that we worked at was making it part of the surrounding community. The priority as far as all major events were concerned was the community. With all the woodcarving, painting and handicraft workshops the first thing we did was ask if there were someone in the community who had developed these abilities because it was a way for the school to dialogue with the community. And for the community to prove that it had knowledge that could be socialized. Academic knowledge, schooling, doesn't own the truth. The people have experience that they can bring to school. As people began understand what the CEJA was about, they started to bring this experience to school. There were young people who would have spent the whole day at school, if it were permitted. They took care of the school as they would their shoes or their hair. This is what Jacilda brought down, with all her public power, in such an inhuman way, with total disrespect for their feelings. She said we were training the gangs here. Peixinhos is a major focus for politicians because it has more registered voters than any other neighborhood in Olinda. And it's one of the places where people start movements. Peixinhos and the Ilha do Maruim. But they're both very problematic.

PL: Is anyone there going to vote for Jacilda [in the upcoming election]?

DP: The Popular Government³¹⁰ has weakened. Part of the populace of Olinda doesn't understand that Olinda doesn't have a recipe for self-sustainability. Olinda survives on Carnaval and São João.³¹¹ You can't even say that Olinda survives on tourism because it has no structure. The tourists stay in Recife and visit Olinda. And the entrepreneurs who

³¹⁰ Luciana Santos, the incumbent, called her Brazilian Communist Party administration *um governo popular* but had inherited a depleted treasury because of all the money her predecessor, Jacilda had mismanaged and purloined as Mayor from 1996-2000.

³¹¹ St. John's Day, June 18, marks the height of the 'winter' harvest season with a host of cultural traditions: bonfires in the streets, corn-based cuisine, squaredancing and a 'Sadie Hawkins' night where the women get to choose their partners.

live in Olinda don't treat the city as their patrimony, they prefer to invest in Recife, Natal.

The people are thin-skinned in terms of politics; the current administration began to unravel over the issue of the number of potholes in the streets. They remove Jacilda from power and insert Luciana but, internally, Parties of the Left have had little administrative experience. They have done better in Recife³¹², but in Olinda it has been disastrous because Luciana's is a fragmentary government made up of little bits of many parties. The mayor is from the PC do B but her vice-mayor is PT and they don't dialogue because each one wants to carve out her/his own political territory so that, in the next election, the PT doesn't wind up with only a vice-mayoral candidate. This fragments the struggle but the majority of the populace doesn't understand. Luciana is concluding four years in power with very poor prospects. And the PT can't launch its own candidate because that would undo an alliance that is weak to begin with. Historically, they should be able to consolidate for re-election but many people are saying that if it's not working now, it's not going to work in the future.

We have the *Petista* (Worker's Party) mayor, João Paulo, in Recife and a PMDB³¹³ governor, Jarbas Passarinho, who is well-known for having been a leftist at the time of the dictatorship when the ARENA (*Aliança Democrática Nacional*) and the MDB were movements rather than parties. With the end of the dictatorship, they became the PDS (*Partido Democrático Socialista*) and the PMDB. Jarbas and Miguel Arraes were PMDB leftists. Then came the PDT (*Partido Democrático Trabalhista*) of Léonel Brizola.³¹⁴ But the workers wanted a party that would represent their own interests rather than those of the hegemony. The CUT (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*) was created and from within it came the PT (*Partido Trabalhista*). With this opening to democratization, new political parties were created by established groups. That's when the Communist Party (PC) had its resurgence in reaction to the PMDB and PDS. But Communists couldn't realign so there was a schism (*uma racha*). The PC represented the German ideology, so the dissidents created the Brazilian Communist Party (*PC do B*). After thirty years of banishment, the reopening of political discussion seemed sudden and a bunch of new parties began to appear, each one saying that it wanted to better the lives of the poor. It was a very confusing time.

PL: Why thirty years? I've heard people say sixty.

DP: If we're going to play that game, it's been even more. Because people have inculcated the fact that we haven't been able to change the structure or the course of history. There are people my age who long for military dictatorship, people who can't see that the conditions of life are better now. Then, if you worked you had the right to go to a public hospital. If you didn't have a job you were indigent. Today, anyone, whether or not they work, whether or not they contribute to INSS (Social Security), can go to a public hospital. They are more possibilities but still very little structure. Because there were many years of misery and a lot of disease, the hospitals are still not equipped to deal with all the sick people and public policies do not guarantee health insurance for the people. It's absurd to keep creating medical clinics instead of health education classes so people can learn to take care of themselves! Clean up the sewers, the mud! Creating more health posts and more penitentiaries is not going to the root of the problem. For instance, to fight against violence you have to begin by understanding what leads to these disturbances. When the head of a household, a father, holds up a supermarket he's not there to kill someone—he's there to take the food his family needs to survive. Whereas when a middle-class kid murders his parents, it's a psychological disturbance and should be treated like one. If we can't come up with serious, democratic policies, education will continue to bang its head against the wall. The State has to guarantee these things. It may seem that education can take care of this but it can't. The education I'm talking about is school education. We can't bring all these problems into the schools because the schools

³¹² João Paulo, the incumbent Recife mayor and a member of the PT, was re-elected to another four-year term in October, 2004 despite being opposed by a conservative (PMDB) state governor.

³¹³ Acronym for the conservative Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement.

³¹⁴ A veteran progressive politician from Rio de Janeiro who has been a mayor, governor and senator.

are already saturated with problems they don't know how to solve.

PL: What about the new generation of teachers? If they aren't brought up to speed on all these changes, how are they going to serve the future?

DP: If you look at the "ethnographic diary"³¹⁵ of one of these educators, there is no reflection, no writing technique. It's very deficient. To keep track of all that has happened in eight months when you have only eight years of schooling yourself...If it were just a warm-up for teachers coming into the program, I could get behind this part of the project—because it would be part of the preparation.

We know what is possible but there is a whole structure that prevents it. Not a single child should go without school but the schools are not structured to receive these children. We have to give the *professoras* much more support. [Danilson sings an old campaign song] *O povo quer aquele que faz mais/Arraes, Arraes, Arraes/Aquele que faz mais!* ("The people want the one who does more/Arraes, Arraes, Arraes/The one who does more"). When the *frevo* music begins, the people finish the phrase: *Aquele que faz mais*. The politicians don't even want to listen to this music because it reminds them of the public fervor surrounding [Miguel] Arraes³¹⁶ when he campaigned for governor after the dictatorship. I was still in the seminary. I remember it well.

From dialogues like this, I began to understand the enormity of the hole torn in the socio-intellectual fabric of the country by two and a half decades of military dictatorship preceded by 450 years of unbridled commercial rapacity. The 1964 coup d'état erased political pluralism because a populist government was attempting to bring suffrage to millions of people who had never voted before. The oligarchs were threatened and brought in their minions, the military, who erased any trace of democracy by injecting the Brazilian people with a soporific serum of pain and prevarication from which it is still recovering.

Danilson Pinto never loses sight of this fact. The last time I heard him speak out about one of its consequences was on Monday, the 20th of September, 2004 at the *Teatro Brum*, a 500-seat theater on the bottom floor of the mammoth Pernambuco Convention Center, built on what used to be marshland between Recife and Olinda. The occasion was the IX *Semana de Cultura* (Culture Week) of the *Centro de Educação de Jovens e Adultos*

³¹⁵ Professor de Souza has always asked his graduate students at the UFPE Center of Education to keep detailed diaries of their classroom experience teaching youth and adults. This was one of the components of the PROMATA program. Both for the regional coordinators and the *professoras de apoio* but there was so much dissension and anxiety about 'turning them in' to be read by João Francisco and the program coordinators that I never felt emboldened to ask anyone, including Danilson, to share his or hers with me.

³¹⁶ The former populist Mayor of Recife (1960-62) and Governor of Pernambuco (1962-64, 1984-88).

(CEJA) and its 10th anniversary which would be celebrated for the rest of the week at the CAIC in Peixinhos, its politically embattled home. I took a bus from Ouro Preto, my neighborhood in Olinda, which let me out a block from the giant, whale-shaped structure. I followed a woman who looked like a teacher and seemed to know where she was headed. She led me to an open gate and I wandered into the behemoth's belly where scattered groups of men and women were readying the main hall for a large agricultural exposition.

The sparsely attended event was held in an overly airconditioned theater without proper lighting so that the opening slide show was totally invisible. This was followed by ten or twelve emotional tributes to a 'glorious' past which various *professoras* attested to but not one described in a way that conveyed more than generalized regret that things were not like that anymore. The featured speaker was Norma Pinheiro, a former CEJA director who referred to Youth and Adult Education (EJA) as *educação para os empobrecidos* ("education for the impoverished"), leaving little doubt as to her 'assistive' perspective. Later in her protracted address, she remarked that João Francisco [de Souza] had pointed out the "compensatory character" of *noblesse oblige* and that it was healthier and more uplifting for teachers to think of EJA as "life-long education." She now sees EJA as "a direct public path to citizenship" and has done considerable research, gathering information about CEJA alumni and teachers.³¹⁷

The original group of teachers, including Guiomar and Danilson, who took João Francisco's graduate course in EJA, endured more than 2,500 hours of class study before receiving their degrees. Their monographs represent what Prof. Pinheiro called "a fundamental step, made with the hands, the head and the heart"—'ethnographic diaries' kept by individual teachers while developing the practice and theory of EJA in an

³¹⁷ Professora Pinheiro is a well-known researcher in the field of Northeast Brazilian popular education.

experimental ‘class-space.’ When Professora Pinheiro finished, the astatic-looking young man who served as the afternoon’s master of ceremonies, repeated Edgar Morin’s *bon mot* that schools had gradually taken on the transient character of shopping malls. Most of the remarks were about what a gratifying experience working at the CEJA had been for the teachers. One older woman was acknowledged as representative of the faculty-at-large and invited onstage to receive a small bouquet. She wept and referred to having left the CEJA against her own wishes and when I leaned toward Guiomar to learn more of this she whispered that the students had demanded her withdrawal. Indeed, most of those present, on a purely physical plane, seemed like middleage *tias* (‘aunties’) and likely practitioners of ‘banking education.’ Vera Lúcia dos Santos, an energetic *pesquisadora* (researcher) in a bright red dress, referred to João Francisco (whose “special participation” was announced in the flyer although he was attending the Paulo Freire Forum in Porto, Portugal) as ‘our eternal master’ and said that the great challenge for his 96 teacher-students, all graduates of an intensive specialization course which began in 1995, was “to work to rescue citizenship and social inclusion.”

By this time the hyperactive airconditioning had turned the auditorium into a mini-Alaska and I was thinking of leaving. Vera Lúcia ended her address by saying: “We were expelled from the CAIC but not from Olinda! We have preserved Olinda for the *Olindenses*.” The problem, according to Guiomar, was that after ten years no one in the Olinda Municipal administration, including the present Secretary of Education, Sra. Leocádia da Hora, understands the original purpose of the CEJA as conceived by João Francisco. The best Vera Lúcia could do was to call it a “different kind of school” – one which saw the *educandos* as multi-dimensional human beings, citizens and students.” She called “the existing limitations a challenge to continue with the construction of whole

women and men” and closed by stressing the need for the CEJA to have a space of its own, adding that “her honor, the Mayor” was well aware of this.

Finally, audience-members were asked to come forward and speak on stage. Danilson, who had arrived with Rigoberto shortly after the program started and was sitting in the back row, was the third or fourth person to take the microphone. He spoke of the presence, in Peixinhos, of “the biggest gang in the metropolitan area, the PX and the 500 original students at the CEJA, including many of the gang leaders and what an overwhelming challenge they presented the eight teachers on the faculty at the time. He spoke of what he called the students’ outcry (*grito*): “We are here and we need our space!” and of how young people are “always pushed out of beautiful and comfortable spaces they can call their own.” He asked why representatives of the *Boca do Lixo* movement were not present—a question that taken as rhetorical and met in stone-faced silence by the mostly female attendees who would have been terrified had that motley crew of punks and heavy-metal rappers been allowed to attend.³¹⁸ Danilson closed by saying that “integral education must also be inclusive, working with and for students so that they can “understand their own reality and seek elements of literate culture so as to become more equal.” Also, he said, he objected to the term “ex-CEJA teachers” which had been used throughout the program since most of the teachers were still teaching. He suggested to the MC that a better term might be “pioneer teachers” (*professores pioneiros*) since the other alternative, *antigos professores* (old teachers) sounded pejorative. Danilson left soon after he spoke and I didn’t get to talk to him again until that Friday when we had lunch in Torre and our final interview at CUT.

³¹⁸ Although examples of their *grafite* and several of their CD ‘jewel boxes’ were on display at the CEJA, I did not see any of the people in the pictures Danilson had shown me at the tenth anniversary festivities.

Chapter Five: Reinventing Critical Pedagogy

5.1 Freire *Redivivus*: Cultural Literacy & the MST

The most interesting pedagogy to emerge from the Brazilian Landless Peasant Movement (MST) is the brainchild of a Welsh professor and community theater activist, Dan Baron, who recently devoted several years to a variety of projects as a theatrical and artistic ‘animator’³¹⁹ working with communities of *assentados* (settlers) on formerly disputed landholdings in southern Brazil. His 2004 book, in Portuguese, is entitled *Alfabetização Cultural, a luta íntima por uma nova humanidade* (“Cultural Literacy, the intimate struggle for a new humanity”) and consists of “proposals for a pedagogy of self-determination based on art-education through transformation.” On the title page is a quote by Paulo Freire from *Alfabetização: Leitura do Mundo, Leitura da Palavra* (Literacy: Reading the World, Reading the Word) a 1990 “talking book” with Donaldo Macedo:

The understanding of resistance allows one to perceive the ‘astuteness’ of the oppressed classes as a way of defending against the dominant classes. This astuteness is social insofar as it is part of the social network of the oppressed class. This sagacity is clearly demonstrated in their use of language, in their art, in their music and even in their philosophy. The bodies of oppressed people develop an immune system to protect them from the hard conditions to which they are submitted. (Freire, in Baron, 2004, my translation)

Baron writes that “if we want to build an inclusive and democratic world, we need to redefine literacy to include all our intelligences and their languages and apply this new understanding through methods of liberation:

We need to situate the written word as *one* language among others that compose a permanent process which we call *cultural literacy*. I am not proposing a new way to bring culture to the masses’ or to promote ‘the conscientization of the masses.’ I am proposing the valorization of other languages and intelligences that we use intuitively all the time, transforming them into tools of wisdom, sensitivity, self-reading, reflexive identification and liberation,³²⁰ through a pedagogy of self-determination. I believe there is no better way to learn how to interpret ourselves in the world, emphatically and dialogically—in *solidarity with* others instead of *against* them—and to experiment creatively and collectively with the construction of a just and human future. (ibid., 38)

³¹⁹ Freire called the conductors of the 1960s Reading Circles *animadores* (male) and *animadoras* (female).

³²⁰ These are what Baron calls “key-words.”

Baron's book is imbued with deep hope and fellow-feeling, a celebration of the enduring legacy and quotidian actuality of Freirian education in the MST, replete with hundreds of photographs of the people and projects with whom and on which he and his "permanent interlocutor and collaborative companion," Manoela Souza have worked.

Cultural Literacy is divided into three books and seven chapters. The first book traces the evolution of the concepts and stories that continue to motivate his "cultural search for a pedagogy of self-determination, accumulated in the *wise tears of resistance*." The second offers detailed, photo-documented accounts of seven of the eight Brazilian 'cultural processes' Dan Baron and Manoela Souza inspired and oversaw as artist-participants between 1998 and 2003, "collaborations which were balanced on the threshold of *resistance to liberation* where the cultural methodology of self-determination is purposely situated." The third book recounts an eighth and final collaboration and presents the transformation of this methodology into a pedagogy-in-process that seeks to *go beyond fear* (all italics denote Baron's emphases).³²¹

In an article written in January, 2000 for the *Revista Sem Terra* (Landless Peasant magazine) which he includes in *Cultural Literacy*, Baron records what happened when he "traded his sturdy Welsh university shoes for the flip-flops of apprenticeship and collaboration with the MST in the anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America" (op. cit., 51):

...I never imagined myself traveling with a multitude of excluded families in the back of a truck, singing and shouting, feeling the pulse of a collective dream. I never imagined myself witnessing *misticas*³²² of courage and hope deep in the forests, under improvised tents of plastic sheeting and inside condemned buildings. I never imagined myself

³²¹ Not since Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992), have I encountered a book written by a non-Brazilian that evinces comparable faith in the survival, strength and ingenuity of Brazilian workers, rural and urban. Baron's years of training and experience as an activist and 'art-educator' in working class communities in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, like Scheper-Hughes' as a Peace Corps health worker (1965-67) and anthropologist, enable them to delve into the histories of individual lives and communities as well as to register their opposition to the injustice and "violence of everyday life in Brazil."

collaborating with communities massacred and made invisible, constructing monuments for a project to change the world – with rubber sandals, seeds, chalk, black plastic sheeting, *própolis* [a nutritional extract of honey and beeswax preserved in alcohol], guitars, rice and beans. I never imagined [this] because I knew nothing about the Landless Peasant Movement.

In twenty years of militancy, I never encountered a proposal for such a practical, ethical and inspiring experiment toward solving the inequities inherent in the production of foods, health, education and gender through democratizing the land using an educational pedagogy based on the ideas of Paulo Freire.

I was surprised that such a proposal existed despite having read about Latin American agrarian reform as a student in England involved in solidarity campaigns with [the people of] Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Chiapas. I came across Paulo Freire's ideas when I was fifteen. I'll never forget my feeling of euphoria when I finished reading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in a London café in 1972! We used Freirian methods in socialist campaigns for human rights and against nuclear arms at the end of the '70s and adapted Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in the marginalized neighborhoods of Manchester (England) and Derry (North Ireland) in the '80s and '90s.

(...) Brazil. Even after seven years of conflict in Northern Ireland and working in Africa, [to be in] intimate touch with an undeclared civil war was shocking: to bump into so many 'invisible' and 'deficient' wanderers scavenging the garbage and begging for change in such a rich and fertile country; to see such fear in the barbed wire fences and shards of glass on top of so many walls and security gates in such an immense, beautiful and open hearted country; to confront such a hungry and thirsty humanity and land so dry and burned in a country so full of life. And such silence and timidity in the land of carnival! Silence, passivity and fear in people so honest and enduring. The whole country seemed like an open wound to me, a monument to five centuries of clandestine massacres, routine injustices, destroyed languages, burned archives, illegible identities, censored news and mutilated self-esteem – a dangerous history trembling beneath a collective amnesia.

After my first collaboration with the MST, in April 1998, as a visiting professor of community theatre at the State University of Santa Catarina, I understood why there is a wall of silence around the Landless [Peasant] proposal. If it only applied to the excluded ones, it would not be subject to such repression in the cities. Even today, one Brazilian government after another has had to dehumanize it and the neo-liberal governments of Europe and the United States have made it completely invisible, because it offers hope in a visionless age, solidarity in an age of zero tolerance and inspiration in an age of fatalism and self-destruction. As long as the world is full of isolated and unemployed people, prisoners, suicidal youths, consumers biting their tongues for fear of losing their jobs, men and women locking themselves into their houses and cars, fearing the streets of their cities, neoliberalism must appropriate, devalue or silence all possible and worthwhile alternatives. (...) When I discovered that there are approximately fifty million Brazilians struggling to survive on a minimum salary of less than seventy-five dollars per month, I understood the necessity of accelerating agrarian reform by occupying unproductive yet fertile land, and the ideological and military resistance of the Brazilian State.

How many Brazilians know that today there are more than 135,000 families camped under plastic sheeting, awaiting their occupations to be legalized by the Ministry of Agrarian Reform? This improvised ambience can last up to five years while the settlers slowly reclaim and rebuild their humanity, learning to read and write, to organize themselves collectively, to plant and harvest medicinal herbs, to care for the land, to raise independent children, to teach new gender relations and to become self-sustaining. The settlers evacuate the area when there is risk of confrontation with gunmen and police. How many Brazilians know that, only when they are granted legal claim [to these lands], do they begin to build their new community of *agrovilas* and schools? How many are

³²² "An evocative performance without dialogue, typically accompanied by a narration written by regional leaders, which open all MST events. The *mística*'s purpose is to renew the Movement's values, principles and symbols by dramatizing its moments of struggle and their significant ideas" (Baron, 2004, fn. 18, p. 52, my translation).

aware of the existence of agro-ecological schools where, in the morning, the young people study science, history, geography, languages, religion, physical education and modes of production from an anti-imperialist perspective and, in the afternoon, participate by working in the community's collective gardens? This social movement involving almost 2 million people – the largest in Latin America today – not only critiques imperialism but seeks to construct a new socialist society in a country with the greatest disparity in the world between rich and poor. (Baron, 2004, 52-55, my translation).

Generally, the Landless Peasant Movement is a subject that garners little attention in the Brazilian news media and, when it is mentioned, the perspective is almost always pejorative. Here, for instance, is the 'hegemonic standpoint' from an illustrated article in the September 8, 2004 edition of VEJA, the Brazilian equivalent of TIME magazine:

The Socialist Cells of the MST

Just like Muslim terrorist cells, the schools of the landless peasants teach hate and instigate revolution. The infidels, in this case, are the rest of us" by Monica Weinberg

The Landless Peasant Movement (MST) has created its own version of the 'madraçais'—Muslim schools where children learn to recite the Koran and sacrifice their lives for the glory of Islam. In the 1,800 schools installed in MST camps and settlements, children between 7 and 14 learn to defend socialism, to 'develop a revolutionary consciousness' and to create cults around Communist heroes like Karl Marx, Ho Chi Minh and Che Guevara. "Little landless peasants in action make the revolution!" the students shout, holding hands, at the conclusion of school events and presentations. At least 1000 of these schools are recognized by state educational councils—which means they have a status identical to any other educational establishment in the public system and that the teachers are paid with public funds. They were born informally, fruit of the need to alphabetize and educate the children of the movement's militants—who spent years encamped on the farmlands they occupied, waiting for them to be disappropriated. At the end of the 1980s, responding to a demand of the MST, the government began to integrate these improvised schools into the public system. Some of them function in old, occupied farmhouses, others were built by the states and municipalities. In all, the MST schools include 160,000 students and employ 4,000 teachers.

VEJA correspondents visited two such schools, both in [the southernmost Brazilian state], Rio Grande do Sul. The New Society School, in Nova Santa Rita, and the Chico Mendes [School], in Hulha Negra, display the MST banner in classrooms and on the patio; the curriculum includes subjects missing from the Ministry of Education primary curricula which transmit the Landless ideology. For instance, teachers use an alternative calendar that includes celebrations of the Chinese revolution, the death of Che Guevara and the birth of Karl Marx. The 7th of September has become the 'Day of the Excluded' while "Independence Day" is bracketed by quotation marks. "Brazil continues to depend on the rich countries," says history teacher Cícero Marcolin. Last year his students celebrated their "independence" by marching while carrying signs criticizing the Free Trade Area of the Americas (ALCA). At Chico Mendes School, teachers play videos that attack the *latifundia* [large-scale land holdings] and exalt the virtues of family agriculture, a model the MST would like to see spread throughout the nation: "Small properties are oppressed by the mammoth mechanized agricultural industry that steals the jobs of the people," claims one film. The same videotape is used to teach students that products which have been genetically altered "contain poison." VEJA reporters attended one of these classes. When the film ended, the teacher asked how many of his students

ate margarine. Most of the children raised their hands. The sermon began: “Margarine is based on soy which may be genetically altered and contain poison!” The next activity was a theatrical display. On the patio, students carrying MST banners, sang “Bring the battle flag/Let the flag pass/This is our way/Let the flag fly for change.” At the end of the ceremony, they repeated their revolutionary battle cry.

The MST implemented a parallel system of education, over which the public system has no control. The Ministry of Education has little idea of the number or even the exact location of many public schools that display the MST banner. And the state and municipal secretariats, although they support the schools, face difficulties when it comes to staffing them with teachers unaligned with the Landless movement. “The MST turns the life of a teacher coming from the outside into hell,” says Gislaine do Amaral Ribeiro, state coordinator of settlement schools in the region of Bagé, Rio Grande do Sul. In the settlements, at least half the teachers are MST members. In the squatters’ camps, all teachers are part of the movement. Many have not completed their teacher training courses – a basic prerequisite for public school teachers – and some have not even finished their own primary education. (...) The [state] government claims to have its hands tied since it inherited a great number of teachers contracted by the former, PT [Worker’s Party] government. (...) In its nightly *Education Notebook* on channel 8, the MST makes it clear that the education it intends to give its students must have “the commitment to develop class consciousness and revolutionary consciousness.” And nothing prevents the MST, as an organization, from propagating its ideology on children who have barely learned to write their names. The problem is doing this within a public education system supported by tax contributions. Brazilian law preserves the autonomy of schools as long as they fulfill the curricula required by the States and remain consonant with the 1996 Law of Directories and Bases which upholds the “pluralism of ideas” and the “appreciation of tolerance” – basic elements in the development of children’s ratiocination and critical spirit. These are not the criteria adopted in the territories of the Landless movement. “These schools are imprisoning the children in a unitary model of thinking,” says pedagogue Sílvia Gasparian Colello, of São Paulo University.

A failed model, one might add, from the standpoint of history and a mistaken one from the standpoint of philosophy. What we are talking about here is Marxism. It failed because it brought totalitarian regimes to power that imploded socially, politically and economically. It was wrong because, although it presented itself as a science and a philosophical endpoint, it is nothing more than messianism. In fact, Marxism is no different from a religion that, like all the others, manipulates the data of reality by beginning with empirically unverifiable suppositions. Also, like all religions, it violently rejects difference. “The bourgeoisie don’t pick up a hoe/They don’t plant beans/They don’t worry about anything/They are slowly ruining the nation,” are the lyrics of one of the songs taught to the ‘little landless peasants’. In the same way as the members of Muslim cells are taught, the children of the MST are trained to learn that which is practiced by the adults around them: intolerance. (VEJA, 9/8/04, 46-49, my translation)

I have translated these two rather lengthy excerpts because I think they illustrate opposing ideologies operative in present-day Brazil. The VEJA article, which voices the neo-liberal concerns of the hegemony, focuses on the price to taxpayers of the antiestablishment, neo-Marxist MST schools and compares their students to fundamentalist Muslim suicide bombers-in-training, being led astray by their ‘intolerant’ preceptors. However, its critical impact is undercut by three large color photographs

which accompany the text: one of nine healthy, well-fed and well-dressed fourth-graders in a neat, well-lit classroom listening attentively to a long-haired, bearded, sweat-suited teacher standing before them with the globe of the world in his hands. Another is a portrait of twenty-eight normal, happy-looking elementary students in front of the barracks-like Escola Chico Mendes, most of them smiling, some with stalks of sugarcane in their hands.³²³ A third photo is of a *mística* (see Baron's text, above) featuring a quartet of kids with the caption: "the script of a theatrical play includes the condemnation of genetically altered crops, revolutionary songs and a battle cry: "*Sem terrinha em ação, pra fazer a revolução!*"(Little landless one in action, to make the revolution!). In the skit, two straw-hatted girls and a boy in a baseball cap rake, seed, and water the ground while a fourth child lies dormant (or 'dead') under a red banner with the white circular shield of the Landless Rural Workers of Brazil plainly visible. Perhaps it is meant to illustrate the words of a song which, in the VEJA layout, is prominently displayed on a superimposed chalkboard:

Let the landowners weep so the children of those who gather the bread may smile
We would even stop the struggle for agrarian reform
If the agrarian bourgeoisie would finally have the courage
To teach its children how to eat hay³²⁴

The black and white snapshot Baron places next to his text about the 50 million impoverished Brazilians is of a skinny little black boy wearing nothing but a pair of ragged shorts and holding a large plastic bag in one hand while, with the other, he puts something into his mouth. It is entitled "*Dança nas sobras do mito*" (Dance on the remains of the myth) and the accompanying text states: "Hundreds of infantile workers

³²³ Chico Mendes, syndical leader-organizer of the *seringueiros* (rubber-tappers) in Xapuri, a jungle town in the westernmost Brazilian state, Acre, was murdered on December 22, 1988 by local cattlemen who opposed his preservationist stance toward the rainforest and its natural resources. He has since become a symbol of Brazilian and international environmental resistance movements.

³²⁴ "...*Que chore o latifundiário para sorrir os filhos de quem colhe o pão/E a luta pela reforma agrária a gente até pára/Se tiver, enfim, coragem a burguesia agrária/De ensinar seus filhos a comer capim*" (VEJA, 9/8/04, 49)

follow every *trio elétrico* ³²⁵ and flatten every empty beer and soda can with their feet, collecting them in a continuous rhythm which is worth about 50 *centavos* [15 cents] for a full garbage bag...” (Baron, 2004, 54). While it is not the purpose of this dissertation to choose between conflicting ideologies, it is clear to me that the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra do Brasil* represents the continuation of Freire’s “possible dream” of which the Pernambucan *Ligas Camponesas* (Peasant Leagues) and the *Movimento de Cultura Popular* (Popular Culture Movement) of Recife were mid-twentieth century harbingers. It is also apparent that, without such large scale land-reform movements, the only remaining alternative for the millions of peasants and tenant farmers who have tilled the mineral-rich soil of Brazil from time immemorial will be to continue to pile into the cities and try to survive as scavengers and thieves, unable to participate in the moveable feast of global hypercapitalism except as miserable dogs groveling for the scraps which fall from the well-greased hands and mouths of their banqueting masters. Anyone who travels overland in Brazil becomes aware of the thousands of square miles of arable acreage surrounding most of the major cities—something no longer found in the U.S.A. The ‘neo-Marxism’ of former sharecroppers hunkering down in makeshift quarters for as long as three to five years in order to be part of a functioning *kibbutz* ³²⁶ is not a security threat to the Brazilian government or to hemispheric hegemony. It will not lead to ‘Mussulmanish’ terrorist cells, as the VEJA article suggests. At best, it may be one of the ways for an ‘invisible’ and ‘silenced’ people to reclaim their communal and individual worth as culture-makers and citizens

³²⁵ The *trios elétricos*, a late 20th century addition to the Salvador (Bahia) carnival festivities, are huge motorized bandstands-on-wheels each sponsored by a different transnational corporation, featuring high-amperage guitarists, drummers and singers accompanied by a dancing crowd which has paid to be inside the ‘blue rope’ (*a corda azul*) of protection, Baron calls this the “rope of apartheid,” secured by the military police, separating middle-class Brazilians and foreign tourists from the ragged *hoi polloi*. (ibid., 2004, 53)

³²⁶ The simile works because agrarian reform offers ‘promised land’ to a wandering ‘tribe’ of oppressed rural workers perennially stymied by the pharaonic rule of landed oligarchs.

and to put roofs over their heads, food in their mouths and clothes on their backs. Dan Baron, Welsh art-educator turned MST militant, describes the challenges of his work from a familiar perspective, employing concepts and language similar to those Paulo Freire used to write about his literacy experiments in Recife, Angicos and Brasília 40 years before:

It is interesting how militants and educators who participate in our workshops frequently *recognize* one of its principal roots in the methodologies of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal, but they do not *apply* them in their own activities. Similarly, none of the social organizations with which we collaborated was practicing *liberation pedagogy* in its day-to-day events or meetings. Not even the cultural sectors or ‘work-groups’ fluent in all its arguments! Everyone defines himself or herself as ‘victims of the pressure of time’ or of the ‘resistance of those higher up.’ At most, a poem, a song, a *mística* or a *dinâmica* opens or closes the event, or animates the meeting after a desperately-needed break. The question frequently arises: how to *intervene* to transform this ‘banking aesthetic’ in our classrooms, meetings, campaigns and projects – characterized by monologues, passivity, silence, tension, non-motivation and even open conflict – into an aesthetic of liberation, characterized by dialogue, participation, motivation, creativity and daring? First, we have to transform our own language. “We need a *dinâmica*³²⁷ [dynamic],” is something we frequently hear. Today we no longer use the noun *dinâmica* to define the ‘contribution of the culture in our activities.’ If any moment is not dynamic, it is neither alive nor human. It is dead time, monological and alienated, in which human creativity (our motivation, imagination and arousal) has been rationalized to the sidelines.

(...) However, such proposals provoke resistance because they threaten and reveal the existent structures and practices of non-democratic power. That is why our workshops and projects always end with the question: “So how am I going to implement all this come Monday?” Those in power speak eloquently in the name of democracy while they resist democratizing their stage, because they do not want to transform it or themselves. They want to maintain their privilege, self-justifying in light of ‘the objective needs and contradictions of the present state of affairs’ or ‘the inevitable demands of responsibility.’ Without a solid, committed and organized base, it can be dangerous to confront such resistance. The only possible intervention, perhaps, is within the audience itself, slowly transforming its complicity with [those] onstage or its fear of them into a capacity for freedom. There are others—educators, militants and leaders—who really want to construct a democratic stage, but lack methods and self-confidence, mainly about how to deal *pedagogically* and *coherently* with institutional resistance or the resistance of the participants in their activities. And finally, there are those without power – the great majority of participants—whose barricades of passivity and silence can destructure any pedagogy!

And there is us. We can agree to respect and study the diverse *subjectivities* of resistance, but we have to recognize how they permeate the cultures of the projects and organizations we have experienced and how they have become internalized in our own subjectivity and praxis. Thus, it is not enough to map the resistances of *others* so as to create our pedagogy and culture of self-determination. We have also to study *ourselves* as *intimate and didactic texts*, to guarantee that we will act reflexively and with *respectful solidarity* as a basis of our practice. (Baron, 2004, 399-401, author’s emphases in italics, my translation)

³²⁷ “*Dinâmicas* are [kinesthetic exercises] commonly used to ‘break the ice’ at the beginning of a meeting, to promote participation. The pedagogy of self-determination reads this ‘ice’ as anesthesia or resistance, to be respected and melted by the participant herself or himself in an atmosphere of solidarity and care.” (Baron, 2004, fn. 1, p. 400)

This continuous process of introspective ‘mapping’ is necessary, Baron believes, to reveal the weft “of all the external and internal resistances we can imagine —the forts and barricades—so as to anticipate how they will interrelate and develop dialectically, when we are constructing strategies for our processes of intervention. For, although we know that every strategy is specific to its context, we can foresee some fundamental fears” (ibid., 401):

We need to anticipate and respect *fear of experimentation*—of risking losing everything already accomplished—and create safe spaces to explain and rehearse new [material] so that it becomes non-threatening. We need to anticipate and respect *fear of judgment*—to fall in public—and recognize that lowering the barricades (including that of the ‘table of authority’) requires courage to risk the possibility of failure (in a society that scolds, fines, condemns and disqualifies the weak), of humiliation, and courage to look at ourselves. We need to anticipate and respect *fear of losing status* – of being denied the pleasure and affirmation provided by the adoring regard of the ‘audience,’ of no longer sitting at the ‘table of invited guests’— to practice seeing *resistance as knowledge* rather than as an obstacle so as to make it the *principal focus* of the activities we design.

For some, formed in a culture of resistance, this praxis—concerned with the liberation and self-determination of each individual, including the coordinator (educator or militant) herself/himself—will collide with their Manichean history and culture and with its principle of self-sacrifice. But we need to recognize that the binary gaze (we/them) and the ideology of self-sacrifice serve as necessary barricades only in *oppositional struggles*. In an optional, proactive struggle—in a ‘landed movement,’ on land reclaimed, in a city with ‘roofs’³²⁸ for everyone—that beckons [us] with open hands to construct bridges of cooperation, the ideology of self-sacrifice should be donated to the museum of living history and transformed into a pedagogy of self-determination. (ibid., 401-402)

Here are Baron’s final recommendations for “four interlinked cultural necessities” which he believes will “integrate in the construction of a new humanity” (op. cit., 411). It is interesting to compare them with Bowers’s five ‘schematic changes’:

- *Train all educators in dialogic pedagogies, based on artistic languages, to be applied in all areas of school life. What other cultural politics will make new humans as empathic, reflexive, expressive and dialogical as we want them to be?*
- *Train cultural pedagogues to participate in the coordination of every school, social movement, public institution and organization, to stimulate and implement continuous processes of cultural literacy. I believe we will need to save one day a week for internal training, to generate community cultural projects as well.*³²⁹

³²⁸ The urban counterpart of the *Movimento dos Sem Terra* is the *Movimento dos Sem Teto* (literally, ‘the Movement of the Roofless,’ i.e. homeless) which uses the same acronym.

³²⁹ “This training process, an *internal* community project, will function as the basis for *intercultural*

What other cultural politics will allow our educators, militants, public and political functionaries to learn how to practice the cultural rights and intercultural relations that we want?

- *Cultivate and validate dialogic creativity in every individual.* In what other way will we learn to interpret, respond cooperatively and collectively determine the path of the technological revolution that we are living, instead of being determined by the mercantile forces and cultures that are currently in charge of this revolution?
- *Cultivate and validate the praxis of dialogue in every phase of education, training, planning, presentation, coordination, production and evaluation,* by means of three fundamental decisions: to place individuals in dialogic pairs, to create time for dialogue and and to work on circular stages. In what other way can we validate and develop public and intimate voices in each individual and collective, so as to create the participative and democratic processes that we want? (ibid., 411-412)

I am partial to Baron's theatrically-based pedagogy, particularly in terms of adult education, because as someone who has been using theatrical techniques³³⁰, impetus and training for years in my English as a Second Language classes, I have seen how well they work in breaking down the barriers adults construct. I am currently teaching an ESL Forum class at Menlo Avenue Community Adult School in the Pico Union neighborhood. A 'Forum' is LAUSD jargon for a mixed-level class. Consequently, when they arrive, some students are still attempting to translate from their native language³³¹ into English while others are already voluble and relatively fearless practitioners. Dialogue is the lifeblood of the class. By asking questions and answering them to the best of their

processes. It will be essential to integrate such projects with environmental concerns. We cannot construct resistant, democratic, and sustainable cultures-with-roots at a distance from the production and reproduction of life, of democratization and of care for the earth. Cultures based on consumption weaken and create neediness in human beings." (Baron, 2004, fn. 12, p. 411)

³³⁰ The work of "Theater Games" pioneer, Viola Spolin is particularly appropriate to the ESL classroom: i.e., *Theater Games for the Classroom: A Teacher's Handbook* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1990)

³³¹ This is the most difficult stage of adult language acquisition. The speaker has navigated his or life entirely in the 'mother tongue' and misconstrues it as an anchor in the storm when in reality it is dead weight and must be circumvented to make room for the culture and music of another idiom. "Total immersion" is impossible in public adult schools where students are surrounded by their linguistic cohort and exhausted from the menial labor they perform to survive. The main reasons to speak English are to advance professionally and to stay in touch with and attuned to one's English-speaking children.

abilities, students soon understand that basic communication does not demand a great degree of fluency or syntactical precision. If they are not afraid to communicate and know how to listen with empathy and focus, they can master ‘survival English’ in a matter of weeks. How far and fast they go is dependent on self-discipline, making time to read and write, and dialoguing with other English-speakers whenever possible. Baron, whose time with his clients/collaborators is relatively brief, recommends that they be “placed in dialogic pairs.” At the school where I teach, classes remain together for four months so the pairs have time to develop into quartets and sextets, to unfold, dissolve and reform. I ask the young people and adults with whom I interact to ‘stand and deliver’ on an imaginary stage in front of the class: whether that means singing a song they have learned in English, talking about their ‘possible dreams,’ practicing telephone dialogues in pairs seated back to back in front of their classmates who ‘direct’ them by deciding their relationship. Are they two people ‘hooking up’ after having met on a cyber-dating service?; husband and wife?; mother and daughter? landlord and tenant? The ‘spectactors’³³² supply the ‘who, what, when, where and why’ which the actors ‘flesh out.’³³³

Baron defines ‘cultural alphabetization’ as “a pedagogy that proposes the decolonization of memory and the human imaginary through cultural dialogue with others, using processes of sensitivity-training, self-reading, self-conscientization and collective transformation. Utilizing theater, dance, music, sculpture and poetry—languages of expression, reflection and performance—this pedagogy seeks an alert reading of the world through an intimate and inquisitive self-reading, one which

³³² Augusto Boal’s “Theater of the Oppressed” terminology for interactive audience members.

³³³ These are “the given circumstances” which we reinvent for every character, scene and circumstance. Acting, in the words of Neighborhood Playhouse guru Sandy Meisner, “is being real under imaginary circumstances.” Languages are learned in ‘real life’ and by making classrooms lifelike: dialogic, kinetic.

questions our subjectivity, generating stories of subjugation, self-sacrifice and exclusion inscribed in our everyday gestures and reflexes, transforming the results into resources of personal and collective self-determination. It is not offered merely as a pedagogical option or a new curricular discipline but as a way of life that decolonizes *political unconsciousness* and *sense memory*³³⁴ to intervene in the reproduction of the past; a pedagogy that cultivates the intercultural sensitivity and performative consciousness necessary for the formation of new solidary and cooperative communities, and a new democratic politics of liberation” (op. cit., 419). This is a lot to ask of most ‘popular educators,’ especially those (over)working in Brazilian public schools. Next to his photo of a young woman concentrating on manufacturing a mosaic tile (ibid., 369), Baron writes:

Courage: Professora Regiane works on her own mosaic side by side with her pupils. She is one of the few educators among the nine [from the 25th of May Farm School] who took part in most of the *cultural literacy* process. In general, teachers from the state-system are deliberately placed in impossible and counter-creative working conditions which don’t allow even minimal preparation, mutilate their motivation, eliminate the possibility of pedagogical experimentation and dialogue and profoundly undermine their health and self-esteem. As a general result, although they all understand their shortcomings and the need to innovate pedagogically, few have the self-confidence to experiment with new artistic languages and new pedagogical methods, especially along with their students on a collective public stage.

5.2 *Saudade*³³⁵ and the Tyranny of the Past

A crumpled letter in an old chest of drawers, a piece of clothing we haven’t worn for

³³⁴ Baron refers to this as *memoria corporal* but the first generation of U.S. interpreters of Konstantin Stanislavski’s (1863-1938) “method”, including Lee Strasberg, Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, Sanford Meisner and Robert Lewis, called it “sense memory” and believed that the moment-to-moment ‘truthfulness’ of theatrical representation depended upon the actor’s ability to plumb the subconscious.

³³⁵ “Most linguists agree that the word comes from the Latin *solitudo* and is related to *soledad* (Sp.) and *solitude* (Eng.) ... But in Portuguese, Galician, Catalan, and archaic Castilian *soledade*, meaning a deserted place or the sadness of someone alone or abandoned, has been transformed into *saudade*, a nostalgic spiritual state provoked by the memory of people and things distant or deceased and accompanied by the desire to once again see them or possess them ... Portuguese is the only language in which someone can ‘have saudade for’ someone else (*está com saudade de alguém*) ... For the Portuguese and Brazilians, *saudade* is neither taught nor learned, it is sung.” (excerpts from an article entitled *Fado e frevo—Uma saudade só* in the February, 2005 issue of *Continente Multicultural* magazine in which Portuguese poet Antonio de Campos traces the arrival in Recife of “*Saudade*, the daughter of absence,” a migratory bird bringing a “mixture of happiness and grief, dance and tears” to a pioneering Pernambuco *frevo* band, *Os Caiadores*, in the 1887 carnival, translation mine).

years, the smell of burning charcoal or the earth after rain; such things often trigger feelings of loss and yearning to be reunited with people and places that we have loved but are no longer part of our lives. Portuguese-speakers have a word for this feeling: *saudade* (pronounced *sow-dá-gee*). *Saudade* is an evanescent state of mind; it arrives unbidden and lingers for as long as we tolerate or cultivate it. It reminds us of our mortality—that we are temporary guests at life’s on-going feast.

Historians, ethnographers and social scientists, whose work involves detailed scrutiny of the past, are confronted with what Paulo Freire called “limit situations” imposed by their own mortality. Author Hannah Arendt reminds us of the “melancholy wisdom of *Ecclesiastes* —‘Vanity of vanities; all is vanity...There is no new thing under the sun’ and cautions that “without speech to materialize and memorialize, however tentatively, the ‘new things’ that appear and shine forth, there is no remembrance” (Arendt, 1958, 204). *Saudade* may be a goad to creativity but it can just as easily lead to solipsism and inaction, what Brazilians call *umbigismo*, the contemplation of one’s navel. If not checked or channeled creatively, it can also degenerate into fatal moping and self-pity. *Nordestino* poet and troubador Antônio Pereira, alias “Pajaú”, puts it this way:

*Se quiser plantar saudade,
Escalde bem a semente,
Plante num lugar bem seco
Onde o chão seja bem quente.
Porque se plantar no molhado
Quando crescer, mata gente.*³³⁶

[If you want to plant *saudade*,
Boil the seeds a long time,
Plant in a very dry place
Where the ground is real hot.
Cause if you plant them where it’s wet
When they grow, they kill people.]

Maria Rita Kehl, a Brazilian psychoanalyst, finds that, in the rush to shut the door on

³³⁶ This poem was one of many recited from memory by Sr. Antenor Vieira de Melo in a gathering at the home of Sra. Aneide Santana in Olinda on Saturday afternoon, 9/11/04.

more than two decades of military dictatorship (1964-1985) with their grievous toll of exile, loss and torture, Brazilians bear a stifling residue of deep-seated resentment which she calls a “disease of the memory...the suffering of those who do not want to right wrongs but cannot forget them” (Kehl interview, Oct. 2004, my translation).

Indeed, remembrance of the past can be very painful, especially when we fail to heed the lessons of history. In *The Human Condition*, written nearly half a century ago, historian Hannah Arendt described the epistemic core of our current predicament:

The earth is the very quintessence of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice. The human artifice of the world separates human existence from all mere animal environment, but life itself is outside this artificial world, and through life man remains related to all other living organisms. For some time now, a great many scientific endeavors have been directed toward making life also “artificial,” toward cutting the last tie through which even man belongs among the children of nature. It is the same desire to escape from the imprisonment of earth that is manifest in the attempt to create life in the test tube, in the desire to mix “frozen germ plasm from people of demonstrated ability under the microscope to produce superior human beings” and “to alter [their] size, shape and function”; and the wish to escape the human condition, I suspect, also underlies the hope to extend man’s life-span far beyond the hundred-year limit. (...) There is no reason to doubt our abilities to accomplish such an exchange, just as there is no reason to doubt our present ability to destroy all organic life on earth. The question is only whether we wish to use our new scientific and technical knowledge in this direction, and this question cannot be decided by scientific means; it is a political question of the first order and therefore can hardly be left to the decision of professional scientists or professional politicians. (Arendt, 1958, 2-3)

“Escape from the imprisonment of earth” succinctly describes one of the motivating forces of the praxis of Paulo Freire whose seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), written in political exile in the late 1960s, demands that landless peasants and the urban poor be able to exercise the rights and duties of citizenship. Politics and education were parts of a whole for Freire, as were reading and thinking. But the current struggle in Brazil has new elements and new demons. Padre Vilson Groh, a popular educator and militant priest who has worked for 22 years in the slums of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina where 356 young people of color have perished in the drug wars in the last two years, writes of the need for a “continual and dialectic dance between resistance and liberation

that...transforms consciousness into sensitivity, class into barricade, argument into empathy and the clenched fist into an open hand:

Culture is a way to preserve and bring forth the beauty sleeping in the intimate depths of every person. (...) This intimacy opens a window for militants and educators to give their practices new meaning in the relation between the quotidian and history, making room for the construction of a new subjectivity...the aesthetic power of liberating the laughter that exists in all of us, that utopian capacity which increases as we let ourselves become culturally literate. This *intimate struggle for a new humanity* produces another way of looking at the meaning of life, a highly transgressive and provocative laughter that creates the possibility of a passage from self-loathing, suffering and self-sacrifice to a practice of pleasure, art and lightness, without losing the force and vigor of the revolutionary mystique. A daring proposition! (Groh, in Baron, 2004, 13-14, my translation)

Freire's most famous book, and the one he wrote just prior to it, *Educação como a prática da liberdade* (1967) which appeared in this country as *Education for Critical Consciousness* in 1973, examined the socio-political and psychological effects of oppression in the Brazilian Northeast where the boundaries of what Arendt refers to as "the human artifice of the world [that] separates human existence from all mere animal environment" are often blurred by conditions of abject misery.

Freire's original 1962-63 'codifications,' ten existential situations made into slides from original paintings by Francisco Brennand, make the point that, unlike animals, man is a culture-maker: the indigene shoots the bird with arrows propelled by his force and their feathers, hunters track their prey with guns they have designed, dogs they have trained and mass-produced bullets while the cat pursues the mouse with instinct and claws. Freire was concerned with human artifacts: if unlettered, fatalistic people who accepted their suffering as God's will could be shown that a daub and wattle house they built or a well they dug, a clay vase they shaped and painted or the lace and leather garments they sewed were 'culture' and that their perpetual pursuits: fishing, planting and tending to crops and animals, were as valuable to society as an educator's ability to teach them to read and write the *lingua franca*, they could learn to hold a pencil, sign their

names and vote for progressive candidates in the next election.

Freire and his collaborators encouraged their literacy students to relate to the world in a ‘critical’ way, through reflection rather than by rote or reflex. The *alfabetizandos*, as they were called, grasped the essence of this problem-posing, political approach as the chance to become ‘subjects of their own stories’ rather than remain the objects and pawns of others’ will.

But there were problems. Brazil in the 1950s and early 1960s, was not poised for widespread change. Freire understood that, for Brazil “to move toward becoming a homogeneously open society, the correct perception of new aspirations and a new perception of old themes were essential.” He saw mid-twentieth century Brazil as a “massified” society of “adjusted and domesticated” people manipulated by the elite into an unthinking and manageable labor force whose “raw material export economy was determined by an external market located abroad—a ‘reflex’, ‘object’ society, lacking a sense of nationhood. Backward. Illiterate. Anti-dialogical. Elitist” (Freire, 1973, 8-9).

The Brazilian Northeast was the most fertile and the most difficult site for the sweeping societal changes envisioned by the progressive forces guiding the economic expansion of the 1950s and early 1960s. Emigrant northeastern labor built the new capital of Brasília. At the same time refugees from the perennial drought of the northeastern *sertão* flocked to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where jobs, food and housing were plentiful. Within a decade, Brazil shifted from a rural-agrarian to an urban-industrial nation.

In the words of Freire’s son-in-law and fellow exile, Francisco Weffort, whose preface to the 1967 Brazilian version of *Education as the Practice of Freedom*, entitled “Education and Politics, Sociological Reflections about Liberation Pedagogy,” provides a

retrospective analysis of the rise and fall of the Goulart government, “right wing groups never made a secret of their negativity toward any attempt to broaden the electorate” (Weffort, in Freire, 1967, 26, my translation). According to Weffort, “the popular education movement was one of the seeds of a real threat to the power of the large landowners. The 1964 plan would have permitted the electorate to swell in various regions, a fact that could have transformed into a major risk for the traditional groups.” Functional literacy, the ability, for instance, to sign one’s name and read the names of the candidates, was then a precondition for suffrage. It is no longer. When I was in Brazil in August, 2004, the mayor of Tamandaré, a municipality in the sugar-producing *Zona da Mata*, was found to be functionally illiterate but had acquired sufficient power and popularity for a group of his supporters to travel to Brasília where they successfully petitioned the federal government to allow him to run for re-election despite his handicap.

“From the elite’s point of view,” Weffort wrote, “the question is perfectly clear: they must try to accommodate the emerging popular classes, to domesticate them by some power scheme that appeals to the dominant classes... [Their] positions of power were conquered and maintained, among other reasons, by the legal nullity of the political citizenship of the majority of the adult Brazilian population. In 1960, there were 15.5 million voters in a population of 34.5 million people 18 or older. The exclusion of non-literates, that is, of the great majority of the popular classes, meant that...the social composition of the electorate was distanced from the real social composition of the people” (Weffort, in Freire, 1967, p. 25, my translation). This is no longer true: since 1985, Brazilian suffrage is compulsory for all persons over 16 and the electorate has expanded enormously.

Another of the ‘escapes from imprisonment to the earth’ that Arendt mentions as

“manifest in the attempt to create life in the test tube, in the desire to mix ‘frozen germ plasm from people of demonstrated ability under the microscope to produce superior human beings’ and ‘to alter [their] size, shape and function’” – all of which has come to pass. Although she does not specifically mention the scientific experiments carried out in the Nazi concentration camps, they add subtextual weight to her pronouncement that “this future man, whom the scientists tell us they will produce in no more than a hundred years, seems to be possessed by a rebellion against human existence as it has been given, a free gift from nowhere (secularly speaking), which he wishes to exchange, as it were, for something he has made himself.”

Science and scientific theories have played an important part in the founding and shaping of the New World which has been used as a natural laboratory since its ‘discovery’ by European explorers in the last years of the XV century. In the next section I examine how XIX century theories of evolution, natural selection and human intelligence were received in the lecture halls of Harvard and tested in the rain-forests of Amazonia .

5.3 Louis Agassiz and William James in Brazil

Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* was published on November 24, 1859. “The word ‘evolution’ does not appear in it. (...) The purpose of *On the Origin of Species* was not to introduce the concept of evolution; it was to debunk the concept of supernatural intelligence—the idea that the universe is the result of an idea” (Menand, 2001, p. 121):

Many scientists by 1859 were evolutionists—that is, they believed that species had not been created once and for all, but had changed over time. The French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck had advanced his theory of progressive adaptation in *Philosophie zoologique* in 1809; the English philosopher Herbert Spencer had published his evolutionary theory of mind and behavior, *Principles of Psychology*, in 1855. Darwin’s book decisively tipped the balance of educated opinion to evolutionism; but even after

1859, more nineteenth-century evolutionists were (whether they identified themselves as such or not) Lamarckians or Spencerians than Darwinians (...) Evolution is simply the incidental by-product of material struggle, not its goal. Organisms don't struggle because they must evolve; they evolve because they must struggle. Natural selection also explains *how* changes occur in nature—by the relative reproductive success of the marginally better adapted. But natural selection does not dictate *what* those changes shall be. It is a process without mind. (ibid, 121, 123)

On the other hand, there were scientists who held to “a pre-evolutionist theory of creation; believing “that all life-forms had been created in the same numbers as currently inhabit the planet, and in the same geographical locations. Nothing had changed since the creation” (Menand, 2001, 106). Among these was Harvard anthropology professor Louis Agassiz and his friend, the eugenicist Samuel George Morton. Agassiz, a Frenchman who had studied with the Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, joined the Harvard faculty in 1848. Among his students was William James, author of *Varieties of Religious Experience* and brother of novelist Henry, whom he took as a research assistant on a scientific expedition to Brazil from April 1865 to August 1866, intending to gather evidence that would disprove Darwin's theories. After all, “natural selection was only a hypothesis. And since Darwin did not know the science of genetics (he gleaned his evidence for the inheritability of variations from domestic dog and pigeon breeding), he was unable even to explain how characteristics get passed on. He could only claim that he had come up with a way of thinking about living things that did a better job of accounting for what we do know and what we can see than any previous scientist” (Menand, 2001, 124).

This left room for the “American Golgotha” of Samuel Morton, an assiduous collector of human crania and author of two influential books, *Crania Americana* (1839) a study of the skulls of Native Americans and *Crania Aegyptiaca* (1844) which “analyzed skulls that had been retrieved from ancient Egyptian tombs, measured the interior capacity of the skulls and then ranked the human races (as Morton classified them) by cranial

capacity. In descending order of volume, these were: Caucasian, Mongolian, Malay, Native American, and Negro. Subdivisions showed that Teutonics—Germans, English people, and Anglo-Americans—had the largest cranial capacity among all groups, and that American-born Negroes, Hottentots, and aboriginal Australians had the smallest” (Menand, 2001, 103).

In imperial Brazil, the other great slave-holding country in the hemisphere, European eugenics theories were as prevalent and as self-serving as those in the United States. Sociologist Edward Telles (2004, 26-27) mentions Count Arthur de Gobineau whose *Essai sur L’Inégalité des Races Humaines* (Essay on the Inequality of Human Races) was published in 1856 and who served as “the Representative of France in Brazil” from 1869 to 1870 and “Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso, famous for measuring cranial capacity to determine intelligence.” Among Lombroso’s Brazilian apostles was “Dr. Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, a professor at the prestigious medical school in Bahia [who] was perhaps the first Brazilian scientist to examine the subject of race. (...) He predicted that Brazil’s future, especially in the North, would become ethnically black or mestizo. In his well-known ethnographic study of the African-origin population in Brazil, Rodrigues declared unequivocally that Africans were inferior” although “he decided to divide the mulatto population into superior, ordinary, and degenerate or socially unstable types—reflect[ing] his own mixed race identity.”

In his Brazilian research, Agassiz “was trying to do with pictures what Morton had done with skulls: he was attempting to document the hierarchy of racial types and the deterioration of mixed-race populations” (Menand, 2001, 133). The young William James reports dropping by his friend Walter Hunnewell’s field photography studio in Manaus to find “Prof. [Agassiz] engaged in cajoling 3 *moças* [young women] whom he

called pure indians but who I thought, & as afterwards appeared, had white blood. They were very nicely dressed in white muslin and jewelry with flowers in their hair and an excellent smell of *pripioca*. Apparently refined, at all events not sluttish, they consented to the utmost liberties being taken with them and two without much trouble were induced to strip and pose naked” (James, in Menand, 2001, 132). For Agassiz, attempting to document Morton’s hierarchy of racial types and the consequent inferiority of mixed race populations, this kind of concupiscent ‘research’ was apparently justified.

Elizabeth Agassiz accompanied her husband on the expedition as a diarist and fellow researcher. William James described her as an “excellent but infatuated woman [who] will look at everything in such an unnatural & romantic light that she doesn’t seem to walk upon the solid earth” (in Menand, 2001, 136). She was amazed by the variety of races on the streets and docks of Manaus: “perhaps nowhere in the world can the blending of types among men be studied so fully as in the Amazons, where *mamelucos*, *cafuzos*, *mulattoes*, *caboclos*, *negros* and whites are mingled in a confusion that seems at first inextricable” (E. Agassiz, in Menand, 2001, 134).

Menand writes that crossbred white and Indian “mestizos were the dominant class socially and...tended to determine the mores of race-mixing. Their numbers and social position did not suggest declining fertility rates among ‘hybrids’ but that is what Agassiz was looking for. He was seeking to reinforce the polygenetic theories of the American school of anthropology, of which he was by now the leading light, and to back up, with more science, the case against racial amalgamation” (Menand, 2001, 134). It is clear that both Agassiz and his wife, in attempting to separate and rank Brazilian racial types, were blind to the extent of the *mestiçagem* (racial blending) of ordinary Brazilians. Whereas William James, a pragmatist-in-training, seemed more interested in the context

and interactions between people. Menand cites an illustrative passage from James's diary about an early morning meeting on the river:

About sunrise, we met a large *montaria* [canoe] coming up close to the bank manned entirely by Indian women 7 in all. The patronessa little old lady sat at the mouth of the *toldo* [onboard canvas tent] smoking her pipe. As we met we hailed her and stopped together. Altho' they spoke Portuguese I could not make out whether all their men had gone to the war [against Paraguay] or whether they had stayed back for fear of being sent to the war. How can a population with such habits and aims as this care for the war or wish to enter the army? I marveled, as I always do, at the quiet urbane polite tone of the conversation between my friends [the Indians in his boat] and the old lady. Is it race or is it circumstance that makes these people so refined and well bred? No gentleman of Europe has better manners and yet these are peasants. (James, in Menand, 2001, 136)

Although he is describing mid-nineteenth century Amazonian indigenes, the same quiet dignity and gentility was evident in people of many colors and ethnicities among whom I lived and worked while a Peace Corpsman. What they had in common was the fact that they were poor, hard-working and in touch with the natural world. Most of them lived without running water or electricity in hovels they had built of packed earth and mangrove branches or shacks ingeniously constructed from recycled crates and tin cans. They were humbled, but not devastated, by their difficult circumstances. Though some of them drank and were susceptible to destructive outbursts of violence, sometimes killing each other in fits of jealous pique, they were proud of their survival skills and had created a tenuous community spirit, based on a nothing-left-to-lose fraternity and the belief that life was short, brutal and must be borne with as much dignity as could be mustered amid the ceaseless labor required for survival.

5.4 Paulo Freire as a Utopian Romantic

Today, some things are very different. The growing chasm between the haves and have-nots in Brazil is the product of centuries of abuse, corruption and resentment. But never before has there been an insurmountable skill factor as there is now between those who can respond to the demand for accelerated knowledge and communication skills and

those who cannot. Never before have huge segments of the population been discarded, trashed, left without a glimmer of hope that anything will ever change, no matter how hard they try. There are 35 million people over fourteen in Brazil today who have not completed primary school of whom at least 20 million cannot read or write a simple sentence.³³⁷ They live in misery and squalor—their only way out a life of crime or prostitution. Education is not the antidote to this poison, any more than drugs. But many young people, living in impoverished and violent communities, choose the latter as a source of cash and status, despite its mortal toll. In countries like Brazil, where social inequities are rife and a large portion of the population lives in abject poverty with little social support or political representation, low levels of school attendance are directly tied to other forms of economic and political exclusion.

The people know they are being abandoned. They are angry, rebellious and vulnerable. Half a dozen to a dozen young men are murdered every weekend in “greater Recife” because they are in the wrong place at the wrong time and have the wrong pigmentation. There were sixty thousand people killed by bullets last year in Brazil, a nation proud of its ability to stay clear of war. Schools are routinely assaulted, looted, stripped of anything saleable—computers, cables, kitchen supplies, even sewer pipes—whatever can be carried away at night or on the weekends and sold to the nearest dealer. One of the few solutions seems to be to find ways of keeping schools open at night and on the weekends and organizing cultural programs so the young people have a place to go and something to do that keeps them off the murderous streets. Here is an excerpt from an article in Recife’s venerable *Jornal do Commercio*, dated the 10th of August, 2004:

The success of the Open School Program, sponsored by UNESCO and the State Secretary of Education, shows that you don't have to spend rivers of money to give a bit of self-esteem to the youth. That's right, because the reduced crime in the schools, after

³³⁷ IGBE statistics, based on the 2000 census.

they began to remain open on the weekends to distance boys and girls from violence, was the direct result of valuing the community.

When something other than classes in Portuguese and Mathematics were offered, the kids felt that they were taken into account. They saw that their potential was perceived and stimulated with workshops in dance, music and arts & crafts (*artesanato*). They were able to express, through the arts, their discontent in living on the margin and their desire to have some social visibility. Taking part in the school, it no longer made sense to destroy it. It was necessary to be careful so that the dream didn't end.

Even though social problems do not totally explain the violence, it is hard to deny that inequality and exclusion are the root cause of many ills. With just a *real* and a half (US\$.50) a head, UNESCO and the State can remove the sword from over the heads of many people. It also makes it evident that, when it wants to, the State knows how to protect the citizen. (byline; Claudia Parente, my translation)

Psychoanalyst Maria Rita Kehl speaks of “the relationship between identity and resentment” among her countrymen as “complex:

In Brazil, we have created an identity based on what Brazil has represented and still represents in the eyes of ‘the Other,’ the colonizer. This ‘other’ is not just Portuguese, but also English and Dutch, powerful nations which had interests here. Brazil, exploited in an indiscriminate way since its colonization, represented for the Europeans the image of a land of liberty, abundance and sensuality, inhabited by a people who offer no resistance to the foreigner, who demand little and give much. Our whole exploitative, violent history is erased by this image of a peaceful, agreeable, genteel people. (op cit, 2004)

She sees history as a mirror reflecting the prismatic image of a people in search of a viable identity. Brazil’s reputation is ludic and lubricious, based on the untrammelled libertinism of the annual carnival celebrations and the sexual availability of women of all ages, shapes and skin tones—an image largely created and imposed by foreigners. Ultimately, “being the last happy country in the world interferes with the hard work of consolidating democratic and, especially, republican institutions that are even more important because they are inclusive and participative (Kehl, 2004, 2).”

Paulo Freire thought he had found a way through the psychic interference of antagonistic images. His later career as an internationally respected author, educator and lecturer was dedicated to the restoration of human rights and the politics of education. From 1964 until 1980, when he was finally granted amnesty and allowed to return to

Brazil, he was one of the most influential ‘homeless people’ in the world. His books were read and discussed in more than a dozen languages. In his late sixties, he joined the faculties of two universities (PUC-SP and UNICAMP) and threw himself back into the political struggles both as a founding member of the *Partido Trabalhista* (PT) and as São Paulo’s Municipal Secretary of Education (1989-1991). After two years spent implementing a new educational model for the city’s rundown K-12 schools and instituting MOVA, a youth and adult literacy program based on his pedagogy, Freire resigned.

Nicaraguan poet-priest, Ernesto Cardenal writes (2003, 664, my translation): “It is true that democracy cannot exist without elections, but elections are no guarantee of the triumph of truth and justice because people can be manipulated. How many of the world’s tyrants and despots have been launched by the vote of the people?” In Brazil, Lula has traded his organizer’s overalls for suits and ties³³⁸ and is playing ball with Wall Street, the IMF and World Bank, safeguarding his country’s credit by repaying its monstrous debt.

I believe that Paulo Freire was as much a Romantic as a Marxist, existentialist or Catholic educator and one of the points of this dissertation is to show that his search for socially just public education in Brazil continues to be a chimera for those who have the highest stake in “reinventing” him, Brazilian popular educators. In the first full page of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000, 44), he states his theme:

“Dehumanization, which marks not only those whose humanity has been stolen, but also...those who have stolen it, is a *distortion* of the vocation of becoming more fully human...The struggle for humanization, for the emancipation of labor, for the overcoming of alienation, for the affirmation of men and women as persons...is possible

³³⁸ In a recent documentary, *Entreatos* (2004) by João Moreira Salles, filmed during his victorious 2002 campaign for the Presidency of Brazil, Lula joked about the sweaty *macacão* he wore as an assembly-line worker at the Volkswagen plant in São Paulo. He is a fastidious dresser and takes great pride in the elaborate knotting of his collection of silk cravats.

only because dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is *not* a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressors, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed.”

We are swept up by the rhetorical power of Freire’s pronouncement, his “theology of hope, utopian in its denunciation of injustice and annunciation of freedom and justice, imbued with a vision of a God who empowers people to make history through their efforts at liberation” (Elias 1994, 138). Freire has been considered a thinker with Christian-existentialist-Marxist roots by many writers (see C. de R. Beisiegel, 1982, C. R. Brandão, 1980, D. Collins, 1977, M. Gadotti, 1989, P.V. Taylor, 1993, C.A. Torres, 1977 *inter alios*).

I believe there is another tradition at work here, the Romantic-Utopian. Freire’s insistence, on the same page, that the “great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed” is “to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” is Romantic in the same way that the English artist and writer William Morris was Romantic when he asked, rhetorically, in a January 1884 speech, “How can we of the middle classes, we the capitalists, and our hangers-on help the workers? By renouncing our class, and on all occasions when antagonism rises up between the classes casting in our lot with the victims...There is no other way.”³³⁹ This is what Freire’s West African mentor, Amílcar Cabral, called “class suicide.” The author Frantz Fanon is thought to be the originator of this notion, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965).

The historical vocation of an authentic national middle class in an under-developed country is to repudiate its own nature in so far as it is bourgeois, that is to say in so far as it is the tool of capitalism, and to make itself the willing slave of that revolutionary capital which is the people. (Fanon, as cited by Coben, 1998, 83)

I am not suggesting that Freire read E.P. Thompson or knew about Morris but that they are, a hundred years and a hemisphere apart, brothers in the same Romantic-Utopian

³³⁹ Cited by E.P. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955, 228-229).

tradition. Morris, according to Thompson, “could (and did) take certain Marxist propositions as his point of departure, but used these as a springboard from which his imagination made a utopian leap” (op. cit., 1955, 252). The same could be said of Freire. What grounded Freire’s romantic-utopian belief in our “ontological vocation,” as human beings, to be “Subjects” acting upon and transforming the world in ways that will lead to increased individual and collective awareness is his ability to use autobiography as a cornerstone of his pedagogy. ‘Conscientization’ is basically a growing awareness of oneself as a ‘being inserted in history’ with certain existential choices. Freire never tired of examining these choices (and the illusions we cultivate to avoid or anesthetize the painful emotions that accompany them) because he believed that only through self-awareness and the sharing of experience can we grow individually and collectively stronger and overcome the restraints and ‘limit situations’ imposed by oppressors of various kinds. This is the gist and genius of the pedagogy of hope, of autonomy, of amalgamated love and reason that catapulted a diminutive, chain-smoking, Portuguese-speaking professor of educational philosophy from one of the hemisphere’s least known loci into international pedagogical prominence.

More than seventy years ago (1932, 48, 51) Otto Rank wrote, “to the Romantic, experience of his own appears to be an essential preliminary to productivity...the Romantic must justify both life and experience by his work and, further, must have the witness of his life to justify his production.” Freire reveals the extent to which earlier experiences in Recife, Jaboatão and Olinda prepared him for his life’s work in two retrospective and illuminating books, *Pedagogy of Hope* (1994) and *Letters to Cristina* (1996), autobiographical works written for a general (and perhaps more youthful) audience where he speaks of his childhood, his early failures, his depression and the

importance of his years as Director (1947-54) and Superintendent (1954-57) of Education and Culture at SESI (Industrial Social Service). In *Pedagogy of Hope*, he writes of “a man about forty, still rather young but already worn out and exhausted...[who] gave me the clearest and most bruising lesson I have ever received in my life as an educator.

I do not know his name. I do not know whether he is still alive. Possibly not. The wickedness of the country’s socioeconomic structures, which take on stronger colors in the Brazilian Northeast—suffering, hunger, the indifference of the mighty—all this must have swallowed him up long since...In almost every academic ceremony in which I am honored, I see him standing in one of the aisles of that big auditorium of so long ago, head erect, eyes blazing, speaking in a loud clear voice...”We have just heard,” he began, “some nice words from Dr. Paulo Freire. Fine words, in fact. Well spoken. Some of them were even simple enough to understand easily. Others were more complicated. But I think I understood the most important things that all the words together say. Now I’d like to ask the doctor a couple of things that I find my fellow workers agree with...Dr. Paulo, sir—do you know where these people live? Have you ever been in any of our houses, sir?” And he began to describe their pitiful houses. He told me of the lack of facilities, of the extremely minimal space in which all their bodies were jammed. He spoke of the lack of resources for the most basic necessities. He spoke of physical exhaustion, and of the impossibility of dreams for a better tomorrow. He told me of the prohibition imposed on them from being happy—or even of having hope...I was slouching in my chair, slouching because I was trying to sink down into it... to find some hole to hide in. (24)

But the accusatory laborer does not stop there. In an apparent act of clairvoyance, he gives Freire a detailed description of his house, a description so precise that, at the end of it, Freire writes: “There was nothing to add or subtract. That was my house. Another world, spacious and comfortable.” And in this magical act, this reading of an intellectual’s privileged world—down to the “room where you toss your books, sir—a ‘study,’ a library” – the laborer triumphs. As Freire the writer recreates his moment of shame for us, he leaves his own ‘slouching’ body and enters that of his prescient antagonist:

...with head erect, eyes blazing, speaking in a loud, clear voice, sure of himself, speaking his lucid speech...In his intonations, his laborer’s syntax and rhythm, the movements of his body, his orator’s hands, in the metaphors so common to popular discourse (...) he called the attention of the educator there in front of him, seated, silent, sinking down into his chair, to the need, when speaking for the people, to understand their world. (ibid, 24, 26)

Erich Fromm, whom Freire met circa 1968 at Ivan Illich’s Center for Intercultural

Documentation (CIDOC) in Cuernavaca, Mexico and whom he cites in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, writes about the subconscious rationale behind this kind of projection or transference in a 1962 book, *Beyond the Chains of Illusion: My Encounter with Marx and Freud*, from which Ernest Becker quotes (Becker, 1973, 143):

In order to overcome his sense of inner emptiness and impotence, [man]...chooses an object onto which he projects all his human qualities: his love, intelligence, courage, etc. By submitting to this object, he feels in touch with his own qualities; he feels strong, wise, courageous, and secure. To lose the object means the danger of losing himself.

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire follows his description of the confrontational SESI meeting with two anecdotes that confirm Fromm's analysis. The first is a snatch of conversation with his first wife, Elza, who has accompanied him to the lecture and to whom he complains "in the car on the way back home." Since neither Freire drove, it is probable that the car was chauffeured by another clear-eyed laborer. "I don't think they understood me," Freire complains "rather bitterly." To which Elza replies, "Could it have been you, Paulo, who didn't understand them? I think they got the main point of your talk. The worker made that clear in what he said. They understood you, but they needed to have you understand them" (Freire, 1994, 26-27). But Freire's "sense of inner emptiness and impotence" is not so easily allayed. He describes seven years of intermittent depression "experienced between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-nine... this lack of interest in the world, this pessimism...occurred more often in the rainy season, and mostly at or around the time of the trips I would make to the *Zona da Mata* to speak in SESI schools to teachers' and pupils' families on educational problems" (ibid, 28). Invited to São Paulo for a conference, he experiences heavy rain but "one thing was lacking...by comparison with the pouring rain that would be accompanied by such deep depression. What was missing was the green of the canebrakes and mud—the black earth soaking up the water...*massapê*, the black clay of the Northeast" (29). Having

connected “his depressions” to the muddy, rainy landscape of the *Zona da Mata*, Freire goes back to Jaboaão “in quest of my childhood.” Although he attempts to put things in a positivist light: “What I needed now, in order to gain a clear understanding of the experience of my suffering, was to discover the remote framework in which these elements had won or had been winning the power to spark my depression,” Freire’s is an essentially romantic vision akin to that of Goethe in his *bildungsroman*, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) or to the novelist Marcel Proust’s in his memory cycle, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927):

I stopped in front of the house in which I had lived—the house in which my father died in the late afternoon of October 21, 1934 [when Freire was 12]. I saw again the long lawn that stretched before the house at the time, the lawn we played soccer on. I saw again the mango trees...I saw my feet again, my muddy feet, going up the hill and me soaked to the skin. I had before me, as on a canvas, my father dying, my mother in stupefaction, my family lost in sorrow.

Then I walked down the hill and went to see once more certain areas where, more out of need than for sport, I had hunted innocent little birds, with the slingshot I had made myself and with which I had become an excellent shot.

That rainy afternoon, with the sky dark as lead over the bright green land, the ground soaked, I discovered the fabric of my depression. I became conscious of various relationships between the signs and the central core, the deeper core, hidden within me. I unveiled the problem by clearly and lucidly grasping its “why.” I dug up the archeology of my pain. (1994, 30)

In his ‘remembrance of things past,’ Freire leaves us just a hint of the ‘why’ hidden within his ‘central core:’ it is confined to a trio of phrases in the second paragraph cited, one seemingly tangential to the family tableau he conjures around his dying father—but not to death, or guilt—“...more out of need than for sport, I had hunted innocent little birds, with the slingshot I had made myself and with which I had become an excellent shot.” We know from the Ninth *Letter to Cristina* that October 31, 1934 was a watershed day in twelve-year-old Paulo’s life: “When I returned to the room between 5:00 and 5:30 P.M., I saw father struggling to sit up, screaming with pain. His face twisted as he fell back in agony. I had never seen anyone die, but I was sure then that my father was dying. I was overwhelmed by a sensation of panic mixed with anticipated nostalgia, an

enormous emptiness and an inexpressible pain” (1996, 74). But the adult investigator, Freire, is still grappling with his conflicted feelings as the killer of “innocent little birds.”

The post-mortem reduction of his father’s small pension to “an insignificant sum” meant “the worsening of our family’s situation,” he informs the reader in the Ninth Letter. Is he implying, in the passage from *Pedagogy of Hope* when he writes that he killed the birds “more out of need than for sport,” that his family was so poor that he had to hunt to feed it? Perhaps not. “Things got better a year or two later,” he writes, “with the help of my older brother, Armando, who got a job in the city hall of Recife; my sister, Stela, who began to work as a first grade teacher; and my other brother, Temístocles, who spent his entire day in Recife running errands for a business office” (ibid, 75). Everyone went to work—everyone, that is, but Paulo whose mother succeeded in placing him, on full scholarship, in a prestigious private school in Recife. As in many struggling families, the most intellectually promising boy is given the chance to continue his studies while his siblings sacrifice theirs. Paulo was referred to as *franzino* (weak, rachitic). “I was poor, skinny, awkward, bony and ugly” (ibid., 62-63). Perhaps killing the “innocent little birds” was a rite of passage into manhood. Nevertheless, it was difficult for the adult Freire to reconcile:

What I want to say is that the sequence of learning in which we all participate inculcates the love of life or the love of death in us, shapes the way that we relate from a young age to animals, plants, flowers, toys and people; the way that we think about the world; and the way we act in the world. If we treat objects with meanness, destroying them or devaluing them, the testimony we give to our offspring is a lack of respect for the powerless and a disdain for life. (Freire, 1996, 75).

The birds were emblematic ‘objects’ for Freire. Writing about them, sixty years later, he still cannot bring himself to say he killed them. Because there is something else at work here—his pride in his skill as a hunter and as a maker of weapons like the *bodoque*, the homemade slingshot “with which I became an excellent shot.” This ‘anthropocentric’

pride in human creativity becomes the basis for two of the ten ‘coded’ situations Freire commissioned Francisco Brennand to paint for his Reading Circles in 1963: the *indio* (situation 3) with his bow and arrow and the peasant (situation 4) with his shotgun are both shooting birds. Paulo’s slingshot, like the *indio*’s bow, is a cultural object made from natural materials. When pre-literate ‘readers’ were asked what represented ‘culture’ in situation 3, they usually answered the bow and arrow and the feathers in the indian’s headdress. When the *animador* (group leader) challenged this, saying the feathers belonged to nature, the *educandos* answered ‘only when they are on the bird’—they become ‘culture’ when they are made into something to wear. By whittling a forked stick into a *bodoque* and killing small birds with it, skinny, fatherless Paulo, becomes, in some sense, a culture maker and a hunter. But what the mature Freire acknowledges as a “sequence of learning” is, by definition, communal and ethical—it is something “in which we all participate [that] inculcates the love of life or the love of death in us.” Seen through a romantic lens³⁴⁰, what was situational becomes historical, Jabotão becomes ‘the world,’ and a boy killing birds, whether for sport or sustenance, becomes a potential tyrant—someone with “a lack of respect for the powerless and a disdain for life.” Freire makes ‘teachable moments’ of such stories, sharing troubling and even shameful experiences from his past as humanizing ‘learning sequences’ and letting readers draw their own conclusions — as I have done here. In the next section, I compare what I see as Freire’s romantic notion of pedagogy to those of French *philosophe*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and British craftsman-aesthetician, William Morris.

³⁴⁰ The idea that a literary work can discover the universe reflected by the spirit and considered in the light of eternity, which is also that of art, in the mundane life of a human being. The other face of Paulo Freire, social scientist is Paulo Freire, poet. The melding of the two bewilders his critics, like Coben and Bowers.

5.5 Freire, William Morris and Jean-Jacques Rousseau

To Brazilian educator Danilo Streck, the boy Emile “does not have his own history because, for Rousseau, he represented the counterpoint of the corrupt society to which, one day, he would have to return—unfortunately, not very well-prepared:

In Paulo Freire, contrary to Rousseau, (...) autonomy is there from the start as an expression of the historical nature of men and women. Autonomy does not exist in the abstract, just as human beings do not exist unless mixed in history. Utopia, for Freire, is neither a return to an ideal past or the dichotomy between a state of perfection and a present to which we are fatalistically bound. (Streck, 2003, 100-101, my translation)

Freire might be called a historical Romantic. For him, Utopia is “exactly the history that we have to create with our hands...the time of transformations we need to bring about. It is the time of [our] historical commitment. That’s why only utopians—revolutionary utopians like Karl Marx and Ché Guevara – can be prophetic and hopeful at the same time.”³⁴¹

Karl Marx died in 1883. William Morris, who joined the English Socialist Party that same year, was unknown to him. But not to Marx’s erstwhile collaborator, Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) who, according to Thompson, “snubbed him as a ‘rich artist enthusiast’ and ‘sentimental socialist.’” Thompson says that Marx’s “early revolt was germane to the Romantic tradition” but, as “tendencies toward determinism and positivism grew”, especially after his death, “the Romantic critique of capitalism... became suspect as ‘moralism’ and ‘utopianism’ (Thompson, 2001, 249). What Morris did, according to Miguel Abensour, a Frenchman whose doctoral dissertation Thompson translates in part³⁴², was to “turn away from the forms of classical Utopianism—those of juridico-political model-building—and (...) towards a more open heuristic discourse (...) And we enter into Utopia’s proper and new-found space: *the education of desire*. This is

³⁴¹ Paulo Freire, in conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres (1977, 112, my translation).

³⁴² M. M-H. Abensour, “Les Formes de L’Utopie Socialiste-Communiste,” thèse pour le Doctorat d’État en Science Politique, Paris 1, 1973, esp. chapter 4.

not the same as ‘a moral education’ towards a given end: it is rather, to open a way to aspiration, to ‘teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way.’”

Abensour may be thinking of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Émile* (1762) when he mentions ‘a moral education.’ What Morris desired was something akin to what Rousseau wanted too. Hannah Arendt calls it “a close relationship between the social and the intimate,”³⁴³ that led, 109 years after *Émile* was published, to the brief but halcyon days of the Paris Commune (18 March-27 May, 1871): a Society of Equals, a Socialist Community. Rousseau was the philosophical founder of *la Commune de Paris*. “My Socialism began where that of some others ended,” William Morris wrote in “How Shall We Live Then?” (1894), “with an intense desire for complete equality of condition for all men.” For a Marxist historian like Thompson, “there is a sense in which Morris, as a Utopian and a moralist, can never be assimilated to Marxism (...) because one may not assimilate desire to knowledge, and because the attempt to do so is to confuse two operative principles of culture:

Marxism requires less a re-ordering of its parts than a sense of humility before those parts of culture that it can never order. The motions of desire may be legible in the text of necessity, and may then become subject to rational explanation and criticism. But such criticism can scarcely touch these motions at their source...What Marxism might do, for a change, is sit on its own head for a little in the interests of Socialism’s heart. It might close down one counter in its universal pharmacy, and cease dispensing potions of analysis to cure the maladies of desire. This might do good politically as well, since it would allow a little space for the unprescribed initiatives of everyday men and women who, in some part of themselves, are also alienated and utopian by turns. (2001, 265)

This dialectic of desire and knowledge is pertinent to Freire’s prismatic personae: educator, philosopher, autobiographer and champion of the oppressed. Now that only a couple of “counters” remain open in what Thompson tropes as Marxism’s “universal pharmacy”, it is increasingly clear that inspired and inspirational thinkers and feelers,

³⁴³ “The first articulate explorer and to an extent even theorist of intimacy was Jean-Jacques Rousseau...He arrived at this discovery through a rebellion not against the oppression of the state but against society’s unbearable perversion of the human heart, its intrusion upon an innermost region in man which until then had needed no special protection...The modern individual and his endless conflicts, his inability to be at home in society or to live outside it altogether, his ever-changing moods and the radical subjectivism of his emotional life, was born in this rebellion of the heart.” (Arendt, 1958, 38-39)

people like William Morris and Paulo Freire, are what the Brazilians call *Marxisante*.³⁴⁴ Like Morris, Freire is primarily a Socialist of the heart, a Romantic, whose theoretical writing contained multiple prescriptions for the “unprescribed initiatives of everyday men and women...alienated and utopian by turns” with whom he clearly identified.

William Morris’s pioneering Arts & Crafts Movement began as a protest against what he saw as the inappropriate restoration of ancient English churches and cathedrals and developed into an artisan protest against mass production that quickly spread to Ireland, Scotland, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Scandinavia.³⁴⁵ Morris was born respectable and rich and was able to stand for years on the banks of what he called the “river of fire,” the class division in English society, before joining the Marx-inspired Democratic Federation on January 13, 1883. Freire’s ‘river of fire’ began to rise when he was still a child:

Through my troubled childhood, and my experience of my parents’ moral pain—a pain almost always treated with disrespectful language—I learned to respect those who find themselves in a position of weakness or frailty. In particular, I learned that from my mother... [who] would kindly and timidly apologize to the butcher for not having paid for an insignificant quantity of meat from last week and would ask for more credit to buy an additional half pound, she would also promise to pay both debts. In reality, she was not lying or trying to take advantage of the situation. She needed to promise, on the one hand, for a very concrete reason (her family’s hunger) and on the other, for an ethical reason (the ethics of a middle-class, Catholic woman). And when the sexist butcher replied scornfully his aggressive words hurt, destroyed and silenced her. I can see her now, at this very moment, crushed, frail, teary-eyed...I do not want to imply today, nor did I believe then, that the butcher should have financed our crisis out of his own pocket. What angered me was the disrespect of those in positions of power toward those who have none. It was the humiliating, offensive, and undignified way the butcher spoke to my mother. The censoring tone, the judgment in his tirade which went on and on so that all the people in the shop heard – the whole thing made me ill so that, even now, I have a hard time describing the experience. (Freire, 1996, 41-42)

Paulo and his mother were publicly humiliated by a sneering butcher during the early years of the *prontidão*, the world economic collapse, brought about by the ‘crack’ of the New York Stock Exchange while William Morris wrote about the ‘class divide’ among lovely books and paintings in the comfort of his study nearly a half century before.

In 1932, the Freire family moved to Jaboatão dos Guararapes, now a Recife suburb but then an isolated rural village, where his father, Joaquim, died penniless and his widow Edeltrudes (“Tutinha”) and her four children narrowly avoided what Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, called the “slough of despond.” The transmutation of childhood pain into adult purpose is an archetypal literary theme. Freire, the poet-educator, does not hold the drama of his childhood shame and suffering at arm’s length or attempt to make it parabolic. In the *nordestino* narrative tradition, he probably told these stories for years, repeating the best parts, honing them for different audiences and from different perspectives until the desired effect had been attained. Only then were they ready to be

³⁴⁴ *Marxisante*, in Portuguese, denotes someone who sympathizes with Marxism without being a dyed-in-the-red Communist, what used to be called a “fellow traveler.”

³⁴⁵ A recent Arts & Crafts exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art provided eloquent testimony to Morris’s skill as a designer and a seminal influence on the revivification of artisanship at the dawn of the industrial age.

committed to paper. It is common knowledge that Freire did this with his theoretical work as well, discussing and eliciting opinions about the main ideas expressed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* for years before he actually wrote the book.³⁴⁶

The paradigmatic utopian, Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that citizens should have direct participation in community life. But he had little faith in society as witnessed by his famous observation that “man is born free and finds himself everywhere in chains.” Streck contrasts Rousseau’s belief in community as the setting for freedom and equality with John Locke’s view of liberty as based on individual property rights (ibid, 2003, 75-76). But Streck also points out that Rousseau was interpreted differently in Europe than in the ‘New World.’ In Europe, where ‘decentralized’ feudalism had prepared the ground for a ‘contractualist’ concept of political power, a discussion of the social contract was *comme il faut*. In Latin America where, for three and a half centuries, slaves performed the bulk of the work at the behest of the patrimonial elite, Rousseau’s books were banned by the Inquisitors and any influence he might have had—Simón Bolívar was a Rousseau devotee—dissipated after the wars of independence were won and the People no longer needed to be mobilized. Church and State joined hands and libertarian *philosophes* like Rousseau were deemed heretical. In Brazil, José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, a native son educated in Portugal, Italy and Germany and an admirer of Rousseau, was named ‘Minister of the Kingdom’ by Emperor Dom Pedro II in 1820. Bonifácio favored “the incorporation of liberal and democratic ideas into a traditional but constitutional monarchy (...) [in which] individual liberties [were] subordinated to social order. In fact, he fretted a great deal about order and the need to defend property (...) in reaction to the French Revolution (...) [and] felt a strong monarch could defend both and prevent excesses of liberty” (Burns, 1993, 121). A hundred and fifty years later, under the martial laws imposed by the military dictatorship, it was deemed an ‘excess of liberty’ for two or more citizens to converse.

According to Charles W. Mills, an historian cited by Streck, Rousseau’s Social Contract soon became a “Racial Contract” whereby “Europeans became the masters of the world with the right to reduce all other peoples to slaves, when not extinguishing them in the name of the superior white, masculine, Christian civilization” (Mills, in Streck, 2003, 80-81). This was accomplished little by little in the quotidian, by papal bulls, pacts between ruling elites, questioning the ‘humanity’ of non-Europeans and the steady self-aggrandizement of the hegemony. The only book Émile’s tutor deems worth reading is Daniel Defoe’s 1719 classic, *Robinson Crusoe*. In the relationship between Crusoe and his manservant Friday, generations of young masters learned how to tame and enslave the Other (‘natural men’/savages) “so as to prevent their being able at any time to do [them] any hurt” (ibid, 2003, fn 17, p. 82). Roberto Retamar’s well-known study of Caliban, Prospero’s slave in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*³⁴⁷ is also mentioned – a book in which Retamar proposes that Latin American history be ‘rethought’ from the side of the ‘other’, the exploited millions, the Calibans. In a sense, although he was not a historian,

³⁴⁶ Stories abound about Freire’s buttonholing young men who came to his house to see his daughters and using them as sounding boards for ideas from the first chapters of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire so monopolized the attention of his future collaborator Francisco (“Chico”) Weffort, his daughter Magdalena’s fiancé, that she had to remind him more than once that it was she whom Chico was courting.

³⁴⁷ *Caliban: apuntes sobre la cultura en nuestra América* (2nd edition, México, D.F., Diógenes, 1974). *The Tempest* (1613) is set on “an uninhabited island” thought to be Shakespeare’s version of Bermuda, a contemporaneous British discovery. Caliban, an indigenous inhabitant, is the ‘monstrous slave’ of Prospero, the shipwrecked Duke of Milan.

this is what Freire attempted to do—shift the perspective from the official story to the *paideia* (pedagogy and politics) of the oppressed:

Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of their quest for it. And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness which lies at the heart of the oppressor's violence, lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity. (Freire, 2000, 45)

Streck reminds us that Rousseau saw no reason for the poor to be educated at all. In *Émile...*, he writes “The poor do not need education...So let us choose a rich boy; at least we can be sure to have made one more man; whereas a poor boy can become a man on his own” (ibid, 2003, 86, my translation). This has been the prevailing view during five centuries of Brazilian history and it is one of the reasons why Paulo Freire, progressive pedagogue, adult educator, literacy teacher extraordinaire, was exiled as a ‘subversive’ enemy of the Brazilian state for sixteen years. Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Paulo Freire, born centuries and continents apart, are both ‘utopian romantics.’ In the next section, I discuss the neo-Rousseauian concept of a “citizen school” as outlined by Freire’s long-time confederate and Director of the Instituto Paulo Freire of São Paulo, Moacir Gadotti.

5.6 Moacir Gadotti and the ‘Citizen School’

In *Os Mestres de Rousseau* (2004, 10-11), Gadotti writes:

We learn from life itself, according to Paulo Freire. Nothing better than showing what we learn from it, by means of it, to discover the meaning of education—which ought to be central to life. Life is manifested through who we are, our identity, our trajectory, our *curriculum vitae*: family, religion, love, community, friends, school, political party, labor union, social movement, coexistence with nature...in other words, our deepest ties to other beings and the universe. As Rousseau says in his book, *The Vicar of Savoy's Confession of Faith*, he learned everything through “inspecting the universe”...through what Freire would call “reading the world” (...) Freire’s work illustrates this: it is shot through with autobiographical narrative. Invariably, when he speaks of education, he speaks of his education, the education he had and was having. That is why he could speak of education “in general.” Introducing educators’ **life narratives** into the curriculum would bring life into our schools.³⁴⁸

The last line of the passage above may seem a non-sequitur but fits into Gadotti’s (and the PFI’s) agenda for Brazilian public schools. Originally proposed in 1992, the *Escola Cidadã* (Citizen School) is, at least in part, a response to what he and Freire experienced at the Secretariat of Education of the City of São Paulo (1989-1991)³⁴⁹. Despite the wholesale dismantling of their extraordinary “Inter” and MOVA-SP Projects by the

³⁴⁸ Italics and boldface emphasis are Gadotti’s, translation mine.

³⁴⁹ Gadotti was Freire’s Chief of Staff at the Secretariat of Public Education in São Paulo.

subsequent mayoral regime³⁵⁰, Gadotti's vision remains firm: "The public school's great challenge is to guarantee a standard of quality for all and, at the same time, to respect local diversity. The bourgeoisie nationalized the school. To build a public school for the people, we need to unify the national and the regional, inserting the popular into the public, passing over the national school to arrive at a people's school." This "universal public school," fruit of utopian thinking from Rousseau to Durkheim to Gramsci, Lenin and Dewey was "aborted by Stalin. So socialism had to go through a long passage of *estadolatria* (State worship) to discover a very simple truth: bureaucratic schools shape the governed, not the governors" (Gadotti, 1992, 55).

Here are what Gadotti calls *o decálogo*; 'ten commandments for autonomous public schools:'

- 1) The autonomous public school is, first of all, *democratic*³⁵¹ (for all), democratic in its administration, democratic in terms of access and permanence. What is more, it is popular, that is, it has a social community character and space for the public to elaborate its culture.
- 2) As it is autonomous, it cannot be dependent on *intermediary organs* that elaborate policies of which it is merely the executor. So, in the sole decentralized system, the technicians of the central organs must serve in the schools themselves. A school can have more than one building or campus, like universities. But they must all be in the schools.
- 3) The citizen school must value teachers' 40 hour week contract with *exclusive dedication*: 4 hours daily in the classroom and 4 for other activities and substituting (in an interdisciplinary team). Valuing the school means not taking work home unless there is no adequate space at the school. In that case, the teacher's homework time should be paid for as if it were time at school until such space is provided. The end of *professores bicos* and have-chalk-will-travel professional mercenaries.³⁵²
- 4) *Direct action*. Valuing personal initiative and school projects. The problem is not schools in crisis but a system in crisis (in the routine it produces). The system in crisis imprisons the school in standards under the pretext of providing equal employment opportunities.
- 5) An autonomous school cultivates *curiosity*, passionate studies, a love of reading and producing texts, written or not. Creative (rather than mechanical) learning and nonconformist spontaneity.
- 6) It is a *disciplined school*. The discipline comes from the specific role of the school (systematic and progressive).
- 7) School is no longer a closed space. Its link to the world comes from the *work*. The autonomous school attempts to join the outside world through the social spaces of labor, the professions and a multiplicity of human activities. It is a laboratory for the world that penetrates it.
- 8) School transformation is not possible without *conflicts*. It happens slowly. Small but

³⁵⁰ The Paulo Maluf administration's attempts to discredit and destroy the achievements of Luiza Erundina's PT *prefeitura* are standard behavior in the divisive party politics that, with obligatory suffrage for anyone over 16, lend a media-inflated, carnival atmosphere to the electoral process in Brazil. With municipal, state and national elections drawing candidates from a *smörgåsbord* of parties, the country goes into political paroxysm every two years. O'Cadiz, Wong and Torres (1998) provide eye-witness accounts of Freire's and the PT's attempts to put theory into practice in the public schools of São Paulo.

³⁵¹ All italics are Gadotti's, translation of 'the decalogue' is mine.

³⁵² Since many Brazilian public schools are on split session schedules, "*professores bicos*" teach at one school in the morning, another in the afternoon and, sometimes, a third in the evening, attempting to amass a living wage. Gadotti's use of '*profissionalização*' is pejorative: 'exclusive dedication' of a single school to the teacher and the teacher to one school would obviate the exhausting itineraries of these transient teachers.

continuous actions are better than spectacular but impermanent events in the process of change. Only the direct action of every teacher, of every class, of every school, can change education into an enriching process.

- 9) *No two schools are alike.* Each school is the product of the development of its contradictions.
- 10) Every school ought to be autonomous enough to *organize its work* in the way it wants, including hiring and firing according to the criteria of a truly deliberative School Council.

Freire called neo-liberal ideology "the market ethic" and felt that it belittled dreams. School Councils depend on the participation of parents, teachers, students and members of the community in which the school is located. If the school is to function as a truly autonomous entity, the Council must make decisions regarding curriculum, the school calendar, class sizes, periods and schedules, cultural activities—the governance of the school as a whole. It should also have a say in the division of labor, on how the school functions and even in the choice of administration, including the directorship. It is also the Council's responsibility to find solutions to problems associated with the school budget, allocation of resources, employee work schedules, planning the school year, student matriculation and overall welfare. The more people that get involved with school matters, the greater the possibility of strengthening the 'autonomous project' of each school. All of this hinges on the 'democratic choice' of Council members which, according to Gadotti, "depends upon the specific school – every region should incorporate practices adequate to the local reality. More complex educational systems are going to require Cabinets (*Colegiados*) of School Councils to perfect the channels of communication between the Administration and the Schools" (Gadotti, 1992, 52).

The ninth 'commandment,' "*No two schools are alike.* Each school is the product of the development of its contradictions" would make no sense to proponents of the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) with its homogenizing approach to educational achievement based on nationwide standardized testing. Whereas, for Gadotti (2004, 18):

The adventure of life begins when we seek autonomy, since we are born so dependent. As Rousseau said [of *homo sapiens*], 'I see an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but the most organized of all.' The etymology of the word (auto+nomos) refers to the faculty of self-governance, becoming the master of one's fate and utopias at the same time that it presents itself as 'realism,' declaring that the current world is the only one possible, that unemployment is structural and necessary, that there is no other way. Neoliberalism is presented as the plenitude of the age. Paulo Freire refused to accept this fatalism, insisting on the thesis that the future always represents possibility. We cannot foresee it, but we can invent it through the reinvention of the present.

While the present U.S. administration divests educators of their power to educate, providing them with prepared scripts³⁵³ because their opinions and interpretations of standard subject matter might not jibe with the fundamentalist party line, Gadotti writes that "an educator who does not dream is not competent because, truly, one can only educate with the dream of the kind of society that one wants to see be born and grow...

³⁵³ To call a nationwide elementary school reading program "Open Court" that asks teachers to follow standardized lessons word-for-word is a misnomer – part of the NCLBA's assault on teacher autonomy.

The ethical and political commitment of an educator is part and parcel of her/his technical competence” (ibid, 2004, 24). When the enforced disjunction of an educator’s “ethical and political commitment” and her/his practice leaves “technical competence” as the sole measurable function, teaching loses its “problem-posing revolutionary futurity” (Freire, 2000, 84). ‘Virtual’ instruction, impersonal, efficient and endlessly reproducible, wins the day. Education and isolation become one and the same.

In keeping with Freire’s famous dictum that “reading the world precedes reading the word,” Gadotti exhorts Brazilian educators to make use of their own and their students’ life histories which he calls “part of the historical methodology in which biography is a priceless source of information to better understand not just a person, but also a social group, a society.

We need to create new educators so that the schools of the future deal more with the love, the pain, the life projects, the deaths, the daily lives of the people, with emotions. People are afraid to find themselves, to hear their own silences, mainly because schools have not made these themes important. Personal and subjective matters are always relegated to a secondary plane, when they should be an essential part of the curriculum of every school. (...) If to educate is to humanize, as Paulo Freire said, then educative action ought to be exercised in the quotidian, in lived practice, taking into consideration existential matters lived day-to-day (...) To live well and meaningfully, we need constantly to reflect on our lives, writing and rewriting them (...) Autobiography is a very efficient way of making sense of our lives, of centering education in life. (Gadotti, 2004, 12)

Projects like the “Citizen School” with its unwavering belief in the creativity and humanity of teachers are what make Freire’s and Gadotti’s utopian vision so appealing to progressive educators around the world. Gadotti expounds his vision of the ‘Citizen School’ not atop a mountain of theory but from a chair in the faculty lounge. Twelve years later, in *Os Mestres de Rousseau* (The Masters of Rousseau), he is still thinking in practical and Freirian terms when he suggests that autobiography could well provide a basis for instruction; particularly in a country where there are still not enough books (or desks or chairs or paper) to accommodate those who deserve them.

Wherever there are historical sites in Northeast Brazil, there are children who will accompany visiting tourists and speak in some detail about that history, some of them are sufficiently polyglot to engage the visitor with a smattering of his or her native language. They warm to their subject when they see that their audience is interested in what they have to say. I had the good fortune, from July through September, 2004, to have Marcos Bezerra, a PM (Military Policeman) and a high school history and geography teacher, as my occasional companion. Occasionally, young people would offer to show us around a Portuguese colonial church or a seaside Dutch fort in exchange for a *real* or two. Marcos would listen to their ‘rap’ for a while and perhaps add a few details to or question a point they had made. Sometimes, it was clear that our guide had learned his or her lines by rote. But there was always genuine warmth in Marcos’s way with them, a transmission of love and respect. It was unclear whether or not these children were literate. But they personified what Freire defined as the essence of study: they were ‘serious and curious when faced with the problem’³⁵⁴ of narrating an intelligible version of the history of a

³⁵⁴ This dictum appears in *A Importância do Ato de Ler em três artigos que se completam*, a book which includes Freire’s literacy primer for cocoa farmers in the West African island nation of São Tomé e Príncipe. Two men, Pedro and Antônio, with a van full of cocoa fruit must ford a large muddy patch in the

cultural site.

This connection with culture is one of the many things missing in the ‘No Child Left Behind’ version of education in this country—the unparalleled opportunity for dialogical unity in diversity is stymied when both students and teachers are under constant administrative surveillance to improve test scores, particularly in economically and racially marginalized public schools where amenities are scarce.

“This is a book moved by existential reason,” Gadotti writes in the opening pages of *Os Mestres de Rousseau*, “by a life logic rather than an instrumental logic. It is a liberating reason based on a historical understanding of existence, both personal and social. Every age has its own conception of reason: instrumental reason, dialectical reason, communicative reason. Existential reason is ‘wet with emotion’ as Paulo Freire used to tell us, reason that *emancipates* in the etymological sense of the word – ‘taking it out of the hands of...’” (ibid, 2004, 17). He does not need to finish the sentence. He clearly believes, as did Freire, that political power must be taken out of the hands of the oppressors who have held it for 500 years—the hegemonic, patrimonial elite. Gadotti was the translator and contributed a prefatory essay entitled “Education and classist order” for four essays Freire had written in the mid-60s in Santiago de Chile that appeared as *Educación y cambio* in Argentina. The Portuguese version was finished in time to commemorate Freire’s return to Brazil on August 7th, 1979:

In a class society all education is classist. And, in a classist order, to educate has only one acceptable sense: to fight against this order and, by making people conscious of it, to subvert it. (...) The dialogue of which Paulo Freire speaks is not a romantic dialogue between oppressed and oppressors but dialogue among the oppressed about overcoming their condition. This dialogue supposes and, at the same time, is completed by class organization, by common struggle against the oppressor and, thus, by conflict. (...) If Brazilian education always ignored politics, politics never ignored education. We are not politicizing education. It was always political. It was always at the service of the dominant classes. This is a fundamental principle for Paulo Freire, one that underlies every page he wrote here. (in Gadotti, 2004, 286-287, my translation).

I cite this paragraph because I think it represents a historical attitude that no longer accords with Brazilian reality. Gadotti uses the word “romantic” ironically to describe “dialogue between oppressed and oppressors”—something he believes will never occur. Then he proceeds to enunciate its antithesis: “dialogue among the oppressed about overcoming their condition...entailing class organization, common struggle against the oppressor and, thus, conflict.” It is important to remember that Gadotti’s prefatory piece refers to writing Freire produced in his first years in Chile as part of a community of radical intellectuals who were inspired by the Cuban revolution and approved of Che

road after days of torrential rain. After wading through the mud in their boots to gauge its thickness, they “think and discuss how to resolve the problem—deciding to place stones and dry tree branches in the water to keep the tires from getting stuck.” Aphorisms follow: “It is not only in school that we study. Pedro and Antônio studied while they worked. To study is to assume a serious and curious attitude toward a problem...If a text is difficult, insist on understanding it. Work on it like Pedro and Antônio worked on the problem of the muddy patch. Study requires discipline. It is not easy because, to study, we need to create and recreate and not repeat what others say. Study is a revolutionary duty!” Freire cites Gramsci in a footnote: “...in any physical work, no matter how mechanical or degrading, there is always a minimum of technical quality, that is, a minimum of creative intellectual activity.” (Freire, 1983, 66-67, fn **, 68. My translation)

Guevara's attempts to transplant it in neighboring Bolivia. When Guevara was hunted down by the troops and his bullet-riddled corpse displayed in a jungle schoolroom, the world's most articulate revolutionary became the hero of a lost cause.

Times have changed. Now resistance movements around the world employ indiscriminate terrorist acts to demonstrate their anger. It is difficult to distinguish friends from foes when living monuments to world trade are pierced by planes and crowded commuter trains dynamited, killing thousands of innocent people and provoking retributive actions which kill many more. Fear of violence and destruction has alienated and isolated us. We lash out in anger and frustration and our dependents are frequently the scapegoats because they are vulnerable and close at hand. In this chaotic state, the Marxist prescription – class organization, common struggle against the oppressor and [armed] conflict – seems a historical relic, like a piece of the Berlin wall.

In the next section, I visit São Paulo and am taken on a tour of the University of São Paulo (USP) and the Paulo Freire Institute (IPF) by Professor Moacir Gadotti and Ângela Antunes who introduce some of the pedagogical projects with which the Institute is currently involved.

5.7 São Paulo, 7 July 2004

Although I never met Paulo Freire, I have stood in his study, seen his well-thumbed and annotated books and held his favorite pen in my hand, guided by his longtime friend, Moacir Gadotti, who preserves them not as hagiographic relics but as useful tools and makes them part of his workday at the Paulo Freire Institute, committed to the 'possible dream' he and Paulo collaboratively articulated for more than two decades. When I met Gadotti in São Paulo he had, by his own admission, "still not recovered physically" from a leading role in the organization of the "World Forum of Education, the greatest educational event of all times, in which 106,000 people took part. It was very stressful because we received a hundred and thirty foreign guests from all the continents. I made a speech in front of 13,000 people." Gadotti and Angela Antunes, another of the leaders of the PFI, took my wife and I on a tour of the University of São Paulo (USP), with 70,000 students one of South America's biggest, which had been shut down for two months by a professorial pay-strike. With 6 percent annual inflation, the professors demand for a 9 percent raise and been turned down flat. UNE, the National Student Union, was supporting the professors who had decided to return during the winter holiday to make up for lost time. Gadotti is proud of the university, calling it "a privileged work space...in the area of research, it's the pioneer in Brazil. Our university is recognized for economics, technical and naval engineering, we have a ship which takes scientists annually to Antarctica. Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Florestan Fernandes are graduates. The University City has its own prefecture." As Gadotti drove, Angela described the Institute's recently augmented profile in São Paulo and the nation-at-large:

AA: In São Paulo we have, for the second time in the city's history, a Worker's Party administration [Marta Suplicy was still Mayor]. The first experience was when Paulo Freire was Secretary of Education, after which we suffered through two right-wing governments that uprooted everything that Paulo Freire constructed. And now we are in the final year of this second PT government with a chance for re-election. We are rooting (*torcendo*) for a victory so the party can continue. It was because of this political convergence that the Institute was contracted as an educational consultancy. We are

assessing the training of youth and adult education and helping to reorient its curriculum. These are two different contracts: one, with the municipal school board, is for formal EJA (Youth and Adult Ed.) instruction. We act as consultants, along with several other NGOs, and go over the youth and adult curriculum with teachers who are part of the São Paulo municipal school district. We also serve as assessors of the MOVA (Adult Education Movement) which, as you know, is composed of popular and grassroots organizations and has nothing to do with formal schooling. There is another project as well. We are the consultants for the new politico-pedagogical experiment of the CEUs (Unified Educational Centers).³⁵⁵ We hope you have the opportunity to visit one while you are here. Various NGOs are involved in this assessment process, the Institute is one of them and our focus is on teacher-training. Each CEU is supervised by a management council made up of representatives of the community, the director of the CEU, representatives of the different teams (*equipes*) that compose the CEU, the theatrical team, the cultural team, the sports and recreation team, all of which have representatives on the management council. The Paulo Freire Institute (PFI) is offering politico-pedagogical training to the CEU management councils because they are democratic, participative and attempting to construct a politico-educational project from a Freirian perspective. Another of our consultancies has to do with the creation of a children's participatory budget. I don't know if you are familiar with the Brazilian experiment with participatory budgets.

PL: I know a bit about some of the things that have happened in Porto Alegre, from having spoken with Danilo Streck.

AA: It's about the participation of the populace in the definition of priorities for the use of part of the city's resources. The participatory budget doesn't have decisional power over São Paulo's or Porto Alegre's total budget. It is actually an almost insignificant portion – around five percent. But it's meaningful in that it points to the possibility of appointing a new city administration with the populace becoming directly involved in the city's management, through the definition of its priorities. It's direct participation, an exercise in citizenship. The São Paulo municipality defined the democratizing of access and

³⁵⁵ Although I was unable to visit a working CEU during the five days I spent in São Paulo in July, 2004 due to inclement weather and school holidays, I had a chance to interview Enoque Santos who, as an art-educator, dancer, choreographer and producer employed by the municipal network, has had a hand in the opening of all 21 CEUs. Here is some of what he told me: "They got this name (the Centro Educacional Unificado acronym, CEU, also means "heaven") because it is a giant space which holds many people. Each CEU holds four thousand children. There's a childcare center (CEI), a primary school (EMEI) and a middle school (EMEF) as well as a cultural bloc for community use and the disk (disco) which is a nursery so that children from 0 to 14 or 15 can study in the CEU. It is a fantastic structure, designed by a USP architect who is also an educator. All the CEUs are patterned after the same format. Some reduced their size due to the proportions of the property where they are located, but all have similar blueprints and house the same quantity of children. The Butantan CEU, quite near here, is spectacular. The educational part has a computer laboratory, science lab, videoteque, telecenter with computers, as well as a library with more than 5,000 books and a reading room with 2,500 books where the children have access to television, dvds, videos...incredible! The first CEU, in the working-class *bairro* of Jambéiro, was inaugurated on August 1, 2003, almost a year ago. All the CEUs are constructed in socially excluded communities. The Secretariats of Education, and Sports and the Prefecture are co-sponsoring them so poor and marginalized people can have cultural activities. While your child is studying, you can use the swimming pools, two smaller ones and one semi-olympic, the court (*quadra*), skating rink and the culture bloc that includes an *atelier* (art studio) and a music room with classical instruments. At the moment, the CEU-Jambéiro has four symphonic orchestras! I was there for the official donation of instruments to the children and we were surprised because the kids were onstage, each with his or her instrument, ready to play. I attended one rehearsal and was amazed by their skill. The CEUs were constructed to rescue children from the *escolas de lata* (tin can schools), the same ones Freire and Gadotti dealt with in the 1990s. The biggest concern with the CEUs is maintenance but I trust that the people will take care of them. They are jewels! (from an interview with Enoque Santos, São Paulo, 7/7/04)"

guarantee of permanence, the democratizing of school management and the social quality of education as priorities in its educational policies. There is also the proposal for a 'network of educator cities' (*rede de cidades educadoras*), I don't know if you're aware of that.

PL: I'm not.

AA: Porto Alegre belongs to the Educator City (*Cidade Educadora*) network and São Paulo is joining this network which proposes to transform the city into one big, open-air school. Schools aren't the only places that educate. Health clinics, banks, public places educate too. The educator city network discusses and presents proposals about how to transform every space in the city and make it intentionally educational. The São Paulo municipality, learning from the Porto Alegre experiment, has incorporated the participatory budget proposal since 2001, but mainly for adults. Adults in an adult city. As the 'educator city' is for everyone and not just one age-range (*uma faixa etária*) the PFI, in partnership with the Municipal Secretary of Education and the participatory budget alliance, is conducting the experiment (*vivenciando a experiência*) of a children's participatory budget.

Angela's and Gadotti's enthusiasm was infectious but I had to remind myself that all of these novelties and advances were happening in São Paulo, the most populous and economically advantageous city in South America and that things in Recife would be different—slower-moving and subject to the perennial entropy of Northeast Brazil.

Another sagacious commentator on Brazilian education, sociologist Pedro Demo, has called teaching "the most strategic profession that society detains in this age of perplexities... [although] it treats teachers "like lesser beings and pays them miserably while asking them for a miracle, which is the construction of popular citizenship and, with it, the competence to make a life of one's own. But the real miracle is to live with dignity on a teacher's salary. It is hard to work for the inclusion of the poor when you seem excluded yourself."³⁵⁶ The dream of an autonomous public school, which Gadotti calls a "Citizen School," is being preserved in Brazil like a precious flame in a maelstrom of windy rhetoric and amnesiac abuse.

In Chapter Six, I recount the highlights of the final days of my three months of fieldwork in Recife and Olinda and add some conclusive remarks.

³⁵⁶ Demo, *Aprendendo a Aprender com o Professor* (Learning to Learn with the Teacher), 1998, 7-8 (my translation)

Chapter Six: Final days & Conclusions

6.1 The Wandering Poet's Workshop

The following evening, I went to the CEJA with my friend Marcos Bezerra to attend a poetry workshop given, as part of the tenth anniversary celebration, by a man named França, who calls himself *o Poeta Errante*, the Wandering Poet. Marcos picked me up at my house in Ouro Preto at about 7 PM and drove me (using back roads that only an *Olindense* would know) to the CAIC in Peixinhos where we squeezed into a candlelit classroom where França was already weaving his spell. He is a wiry, dark-skinned, 'dreadlocked' gentleman with the nobility of Othello and the creative passion and daring of a born Freirian. He had moved the desks into a large oval and lit candles in the corners of the room and on the windowsills to create a mood of quiet intimacy. He blew these out when things got underway, handing out paper and crayons to the participants as he recited several of his own poems, elliptical and brief: "To Death – for being immortal/I raise my

glass in a toast:/ ‘To Our Life!’/ and she answers, offended:/**You won’t escape me!**”³⁵⁷

We were invited simply to recite, compose, draw, and share our work. Outside, there was the customary clamor of students in the corridor. Occasionally, someone would open the door and stick his or her head in to see what was going on.

Marcos and I entered late and sat at two of the few remaining seats at either end of the room. There were half a dozen active participants in the group of eighteen: myself, a lady named Vilma who declared herself a CEJA graduate and recited several poems she had written from memory, another young man with a baseball cap who read several short and, unfortunately, low-pitched poems, the young lady in the chair beside mine who read very well, and a lady literature teacher whom Marcos recognized as a grade school classmate of his, who recited Carlos Drummond 's 1930 *Poema de Sete Faces* (Seven Faced Poem) which begins, *Quando nasci, um anjo torto/desses que vivem na sombra/disse: Vai, Carlos! ser ‘gauche’ na vida.*³⁵⁸ Marcos read a 'dialogue' about child-raising in the media-age which sounded like the germ of the 'play' he has been speaking about since we began to be friends. França went around the class asking everyone to say something—when it came to me, the talk was of culture so I started to speak about the difference between popular culture and media culture and, about a minute and a half into my learned disquisition, the *Poet Errant* gently but firmly cut me off and invited the person on my left to speak. I was not offended because I understood that the time restriction applied to everyone. The one guy who complained about the brevity of the time accorded him left early. França's own demeanor throughout was gracious but firm. He had primed the dialogic pump and now he wanted everyone to be heard. At one point, he offered a challenge: if we would recite our poems he would answer in return with something of his

³⁵⁷ *À MORTE—por ser immortal,/ergo um brinde, dizendo:/À Nossa Vida!/e ela responde ofendida:/Não me escaparás!*

³⁵⁸ “When I was born/a crooked angel/one who lived in the shade/said: Go on, Carlos, be ‘gauche’ in life.”

own, either already implanted or made up on the spot. And we were off! I recited Pajaú's terse, epigrammatic *Saudade* that I had recently learned from Ataíde's architect friend, Antenor.³⁵⁹ Dona Vilma recited an ode she had written to one of her teachers:³⁶⁰

Ao Mestre Com Carinho

*Minha mestra mora aqui
Dentro do meu coração
Foi este o anjo bom que um dia
Vendo que eu nada sabia
Me conduziu pelas mãos*

Linda fada com ternura

*Pôs-se o mundo a mim mostrar
Na terra, espinho e flores
A vida ardente, fulgores
Todo o mistério do mar*

Santa!

*Ensinou-me a ser boa
A ser alegre e feliz
A praticar a virtude
A cultivar a saúde
Com meus sonhos infantis
Minha mestra, minha amiga
Até minha gratidão
Pelo bem que a mim tens feito
Terás meu culto respeito
No tempo de Amor perfeito
Que guardo no coração*

Vilma Almeida da Silva

[To Sir with Love

My teacher lives here

³⁵⁹ See Chapter 5.2, above.

³⁶⁰ *Ao Mestre com Carinho* ("To Sir with Love") was the title, in Portuguese, of the 1967 movie starring Sidney Poitier, about a London engineer who cannot find a job in his chosen profession and ends up teaching in a multicultural slum school. Dona Vilma's poem is about a *mestra*, a woman teacher. When I asked her about the title, Dona Vilma, a proud black woman, told me she wanted to honor Sidney Poitier as well as her teacher.

Within my heart
She was the angel I caught
Who, seeing I knew nought,
Led me by the hand.

Beautiful tender fairy

She spun the planet into view
Our earth, its thorns and flowers
Ardent life, sparkling showers
All the mystery of the sea

Saint!

She taught me to be good
To be joyous and content
That virtue is wealth
To cultivate health
With my childish dreams

My teacher, my friend
All my gratitude
For the good you have done me
I'll always respect and adore you
In the time of perfect Love
I keep here in my heart]³⁶¹

França responded with three quick ones ‘by heart.’ After we went around the room, I recited the first couple stanzas of Keats's “Ode To A Nightingale” in English. França knew the poem and began to speak about Keats. I mentioned Noel Rosa, a Brazilian prodigy of the 1920s and 30s, who had been consumed by ‘consumption’ at almost the same age as Keats.³⁶² França asked if anyone knew a song of Noel's and I couldn't resist:³⁶³

³⁶¹ My translation attempts to preserve the simple dignity of Dona Vilma's ode. Its recitation was one of the evening's high points.

³⁶² The premier samba composer of the first half of the twentieth century, Noel de Medeiros Rosa died, like Keats, of tuberculosis – in 1937 at age 28.

³⁶³ My *a capella* rendition didn't have the same effect as when I sang the same song at a meeting of the *Grupo de Trabalho de Educação e Sociedade* (Education and Society Work Group) at the Recife CLACSO conference, November, 1999. I prefaced that performance by asking the assembled professors and

Filosofia

*O mundo me condena
E ninguém tem pena
Falando sempre mal do meu nome
Deixando de saber
Se eu vou morrer de sede
Ou se vou morrer de fome.*

*Mas a filosofia
Hoje me auxilia
A viver indiferente assim.
Nesta prontidão³⁶⁴ sem fim,
Vou fingindo que sou rico,
Pra ninguém zombar de mim.*

*Não me incomodo
Que você me diga
Que a sociedade é minha inimiga
Pois cantando neste mundo
Vivo escravo do meu samba,
Muito embora vagabundo.*

*Quanto a você
Da aristocracia
Que tem dinheiro
Mas não compra alegria,
Há de viver eternamente
Sendo escrava dessa gente
Que cultiva hipocrisia. [1933³⁶⁵]*

[Philosophy]

The world condemns me
And no one has pity
Always disrespecting my name.
No longer wanting to know
If I'm going to die of thirst
Or if I'm going to die of hunger.

researchers to imagine the singer as an *educador(a) popular* singing to the Minister of Education, substituting the word *ensinando* (teaching) for *cantando* (singing).

³⁶⁴ Literally, a state of alert or military readiness, the word *prontidão* was used in Brazil to describe the economic Depression of the 1930s. My translation, 'emergency' is a comparatively colorless compromise. Using 'depression' would have given the false impression that the poet-singer was psychologically depressed.

³⁶⁵ Máximo & Didier, 1990, 259-260

But philosophy
Helps me today
To live indifferently
In this endless emergency,
I go around pretending to be rich
So no one will make fun of me.

I could care less
When you tell me
That society is my enemy.
Since as a singer in this world
I am the constant slave of samba
Even though I'm a vagabond.³⁶⁶

As for you
From the aristocracy,
Who have money
But can't buy happiness,
You'll live as an eternal
Slave to those people
Who cultivate hypocrisy.]

França went around the room one more time, making sure all of us (including the quiet ones) had a chance to say in a few words about what we got from the *oficina*. Many of the participants said they had been inspired to write and recite, they felt poetry was important since it had the power to change the way people felt and thought. I was glad to have come with Marcos and was sure that the idea of Adult Education had entered his mind as a viable alternative to his current job as a secondary school history teacher. He said that França's *oficina* had got him thinking about teaching EJA classes which students attended of their own free will. He had been agonizing about an adolescent student who had challenged his authority. The boy had threatened him physically and when Marcos reported the incident to his principal she scheduled a meeting with the boy's mother who

³⁶⁶ There is little doubt that Noel, an inveterate cinephile, would have seen *The Vagabond Lover*, Rudy Vallee's 1929 debut "talkie" and may have even been thinking of the rich society girl played by Marie Dressler with whom the saxophone-playing 'crooner' falls in love, when he composed his bitter *Filosofia*.

reacted defensively, alledging that Marcos had provoked her son. No one, not even the principal, knew he was a PM³⁶⁷. I told him how the Poet Errant's workshop had reminded me how important it is to share your passion with your students. Our affections and enthusiasms are the glue that binds *educadores* and *educandos*. The best antidote to self-consciousness and demeaning self-judgment is to focus on things we love and admire—França had done that by demonstrating his unequivocal love for language and making the class-space safe for us to share his passion. Allied enthusiasms counteract the need to isolate. The etymology of *enthusiasm* is *enthousiasmós*—an ancient Greek word meaning “possession by a god, having a god within.”³⁶⁸ In the next section, I transcribe and translate a short but enthusiastic speech by Almeri Freitas, the current director of the CEJA, that encapsulates their pedagogical stance after a decade of practice.

6.2 Tim! Tim! – CEJA's Tenth Anniversary Toast

Almeri Freitas, the current director of the CEJA, spoke to me about her enthusiasm on Monday night when there was a celebration at the CEJA with a lot of people, birthday cake, music and dancing. She said she would try to make me a disc of her dissertation and might have a hard copy of her monograph that I could xerox. Both sound very interesting: the monograph charts her in-class activity as a Portuguese teacher in a class of *alfabteizando/as* (perhaps the one in Azeitona about which she spoke at the *Teatro Brum*) while the Master's dissertation goes more into theory, attempting to meld the contiguous worlds of Portuguese literacy and linguistics. She said that her piece, “Tim!

³⁶⁷ Marcos' two careers—military policeman by day and teacher by night, fascinated and confused me—although he intended to take me to visit both barracks and classroom, the opportunity never arose. Instead, we had great times visiting historical sites together, discussing books and talking about lives. He took me one Sunday morning to a Baptist *culto* (service) on the grounds of a leper colony near the town of Abreu e Lima. The disease is called *Hansenismo* in Brazil, after the Norwegian physician, G.H. Hansen (1841-1912) who discovered *Mycobacterium leprae*. We spoke with several older men inflicted with Hansenism who had been living on the grounds of this rural hospital for half a century. They were grateful for the care they had received and, to a man, spoke about confinement and seclusion as spiritual paths.

³⁶⁸ Webster's, 2001, 649.

Tim!” (pronounced '*chin chin*') was meant as a *brinde*, a toast to the 10th anniversary of the CEJA. It was written in homage to her mentor, Timothy ('Tim') Ireland, who guided her M.A. dissertation at the Federal University of Paraíba and is now in Brasília working at the *Ministério de Educação e Cultura*. Here is Almeri Freitas de Souza's toast:

To celebrate ten years of the Educational Center for Youth and Adults (CEJA) does not mean merely to commemorate the existence of one more school of Fundamental Instruction.

It means much more...an expression of the feeling and attitude of political resistance and pedagogy that sees education as the right of every woman and every man, a right guaranteed for as long as they live, in and out of school. This obviously includes but is not limited to literacy classes. Moreover, the CEJA's 10 years honors and adds to the force of a larger movement in favor of Popular Education in Latin America.

As a possible and necessary instance of Popular Education, Youth and Adult Education (EJA) is starting to win legal recognition in Brazil. However, we have yet to make concrete an ample, solid and articulate EJA policy. Financial resources destined for this sector are insufficient. Investments in literacy campaigns still seem to be the priority. On the other hand, the necessary refurbishing of EJA demands that its educators have access to the different kinds of knowledge that have been historically constructed and the opportunity to think about them.

We need to be clear and coherent about what we want for EJA and why we want it, as well as to perceive the kinds of knowledge that can contribute to the formation of strategies that will fortify and guarantee the concretion of our goals: the construction of a non-exclusionary societal model on a more human scale that includes the possibility of happiness.

In the humblest evaluations, those representing the results of a historical struggle, the CEJA is an educational proposal that looks toward the personal and collective training of working men and women, with respect for the social, cognitive, affective and volitional characteristics of all such subjects.

The CEJA, as a research space for educatees and educators, has contributed and will continue to contribute to the discovery of how these young and adult men and women think, feel and act. We believe that our growing knowledge of this reality can open new paths for the (re)elaboration and life-experience of political and pedagogical propositions based on ethical-democratic values that guarantee satisfaction of the cultural needs of young people and adults from the subaltern class.

If we make use of at least one of the sources on which President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva bases his thought we will first learn to do what is necessary, then what is possible and very soon, if we keep the faith, we will be doing the impossible (impossible, that is, for those who underestimate the power of the political organization of men and women workers).

Let the CEJA's first ten years serve as our emblem in the fight for better days. Let it lead to a kind of impulse which, when put in motion, allows us to visualize and experience the possibilities—even if we have to dig for them. I propose a toast! “Tim! Tim!”

The penultimate paragraph paraphrases something Lula's said during a televised debate between the candidates for the Presidency of the Brazil broadcast to the nation by TV Globo on October 4th, 2002. Exactly three years later, the Workers' Party (PT) is a shambles and many of the fervent hopes and possible dreams it has harbored since its founding have been jettisoned after the revelation of a widespread campaign fund kickback scheme involving José Dirceu, Lula's right hand considered by many the most powerful man in Brazil, who immediately resigned as Minister of Civil Affairs and José Genoíno, President of the *Partido Trabalhista*. The 'impossible' may now include Lula's winning a second term in office—something that, until several months ago, seemed fairly certain. In the next section I write about a teacher couple, Monica and Evaldo, who invited me to a teletraining and media pedagogy workshop sponsored by TV Globo and, several days later, took me to Araçoiaba, a hamlet in the northern *Zona da Mata* surrounded by canefields, where they had both taught. Although the school was closed, the experience was memorable.

6.3 Monica & Evaldo

My rented house in Ouro Preto, midway up the highest hill in Olinda at whose zenith the first TV Globo transmitter in Northeast Brazil was erected in the mid-1960s and still stands, was often without running water. In Olinda, water is off one day on the next. Houses at higher altitudes with miniscule storage tanks and finicky retention valves are especially vulnerable. I had been without a drop for a couple days and was performing my ablutions at Ataíde's or his daughter Carmita's place a few minutes' walk down the hill from my house, both of which had larger tanks than mine. I paid my final water bill on Tuesday and, on Wednesday and Thursday the 23rd and 24th of September, had to haul

water up the hill in buckets to flush the toilet and wash my dishes. Wednesday morning I awoke at cock's crow (5 AM) from an aqueous dream with an old English 'round' in my head: *Row, row, row your boat/Gently down the stream/Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily/Life is but a dream*, that I used to sing in grade school.

Two teacher friends, Monica and Evaldo, picked me up at the house at 7 AM. I knew Monica's mother, Djanira, when I lived on the Ilha do Maruim in the mid-1960s and we were reunited in 2002. She has three daughters. Two of them, Marcia and Monica, have stayed close to home and have families of their own. Evaldo is Monica's second husband and a loving stepfather to her two teenage children. Our first stop was the *Escola José Firmino da Veiga*, the 'central' Municipal secondary school in Paulista where Monica teaches part-time. She wanted me to see it in contrast to the State school in Tabajara that I visited two weeks before. In the Paulista school, there is more space, the kids wear some sort of uniform and the classrooms and grounds are better kept. Monica took me to the *sala de informática* (computer room) where I spent a few minutes with the educator-in-charge. Students use the dozen and a half closed-circuit computers under his supervision and he does all the upkeep on the machines. We spoke of Paulo Freire (whom Monica claimed 98 percent of all Brazilian teachers have read), of the neoliberal investment in cyberspace and the exciting 'democracy' of the Internet. Meanwhile, Evaldo was waiting patiently in the car to take me to Igarassu where there was a teacher training session at one of the schools at which he teaches, so the visit was brief. As we bade goodbye to Monica, she introduced one of her students, a young woman who had just arrived and asked where I was from. When I mentioned Los Angeles she said she'd been there. Apparently there is a place with a similar name somewhere in the interior of Pernambuco. When Monica added "California", the student rolled her eyes and laughed. California is a media mirage

available on TV screens around the world. One of the women in the Alto da Bondade *mocambo* to which I went with Vânia from the Woman Life Collective later that day asked if the beautiful, fenceless houses and well-dressed people on the *telenovelas americanas* were real. I told her they were images of an ‘ideal America’ and mentioned a friend in Lithuania who said that, if she believed such images were ‘real,’ she’d kill herself—her own life was so drab in comparison. The woman nodded her head.

Monica mentioned that Evaldo's mother, a retired schoolteacher, had completed her *magistério* (what we call ‘Normal School’) at *José Firmino da Veiga*, the school we’d just visited. On the way to Igarassu, I asked him to explain what had become of the term *magistério* which is no longer used. He said it is now called *Ensino Normal Médio* and is still the basic teacher's course, chosen primarily by women as a way to become elementary school teachers without having to pay for a *Faculdade* (college course). They can start at 16 but most are 18 or 19 years old. The main courses are Portuguese, Math (3 classes of each per week) and several years of *ciências humanas*: philosophy, ethics and pedagogy. Evaldo has taught the basic Portuguese course in that program and said he would introduce me to a teacher who taught all the *materias didáticas* for the first two of the four years required to complete the course. Another question I had concerned the CAIC, which Monica referred to as a Northeastern version of [Leonel] Brízola's CIEP (*Centro Integral de Educação Popular*) in Rio. Evaldo explained that Brízola had come up with the idea while running for governor in the 1989 elections and that it was basically a move to make popular education full-time (integral). The difference between the CEJA and a regular *curso do segundo grau* is that, at the CEJA, the curriculum includes literacy classes. Evaldo, who has taught *segundo grau*, says that many of the classes start at 7 PM and are difficult for people who work all day and must struggle to stay awake. (This is similar to

the situation in the Community Adult Schools of Los Angeles where evening classes start at 5:45 and end at 9 PM. Apart from a few Spanish language 'literacy' classes like the one my wife teaches, the Department of Adult and Career Education is focused on getting ESL students to a point where they have enough English to enroll in vocational classes or qualify for a high school equivalency diploma.) *Segundo grau* is the Brazilian equivalent of high school, when you finish you can take the vestibular exams and, if you pass with high enough marks, study in the Federal University system where there are no tuition fees.³⁶⁹ There has also been a change in the nomenclature at this level: what used to be called *ginásio* (5th to 8th grade) is known now as *primário*. What was *colégio* (9th to 11th grade) is now *secundário*.

Evaldo studied for nine years at the *Escola Eúrico Pfisterer* in Cruz de Rebouças where he now teaches Portuguese to *secundário* students. In the 1960s, Eúrico Pfisterer (which also included primary classes) was a model school sponsored by the *Aço Norte* processing plant owned by the Canadian mining company, Alcoa, in nearby Igarassu. Eúrico Pfisterer was the Brazilian factory's CEO. According to Evaldo, they still recycle high-class *sucata* (scrapmetal) in the forges there. *Escola Eúrico Pfisterer* reverted to State control in the 1970s and what had been a model school became just another impoverished one. Evaldo remarked that, after Alcoa withdrew their support, the school was stripped of all amenities and students lacked even the most basic materials. He said he would show me a school that had been run by the biggest sugar refinery (*usina*) in Araçoiaba³⁷⁰ which had suffered a similar fall from corporate grace.

When we got to the school in Igarassu, Evaldo introduced me to several of his

³⁶⁹ Competition is steep and the exam, or *provão* (big test) as it is known, given annually at the end of November, favors those who possess what Bourdieu called 'cultural capital:' the children of the elite.

³⁷⁰ Araçoiaba is a small town in the northern *Zona da Mata* where Evaldo taught public elementary school for seven years and Monica for five and where they met. When we went there on my next-to-last day in Brazil, we were disappointed to discover the school closed due to a celebration held there the night before.

colleagues including the teacher he had mentioned, Ana Luna, who had been his *professora* in the 1980s. She entered the *sala de aula* (classroom) singing and later told a joke about a monkey driving a schoolbus which I will not attempt to reconstruct. Professora Luna lent me a first-year *Ensino Normal Medio* Philosophy text. I noticed a poem by Bertolt Brecht dedicated to *O Analfabeto Político* (“The Political Illiterate”) which seemed a gloss of something he might have written in the 1930s stressing the need to become politically aware. Taking notes on this book kept me awake as the room got progressively colder (windows shut tight, or unopenable as in many U.S. schools, and a hyperactive air- conditioner are the enemies of learning). By the time things got underway at 9 AM, it was time for *lanche* (mid-morning snack). The *Futura Telecourse*³⁷¹ training began with our slender, blue-eyed blonde instructor, Lusitana, leading us in gentle calisthenics. There were 47 people in the room, excluding me (42 *professoras* and 5 *professores*). I refused the roll of yellow crepe paper she offered me, so I would not have to participate. I wanted just to sit and observe. Lusitana asked the four teams to each make ‘a construction’ with their rolls of crepe paper and then present what they had made to the group. The room was so cold I had to put on my Panama hat, roll up the collar of my shirt and bury myself in *Fundamentos da Filosofia: Ser, Saber e Fazer* (“Foundations of Philosophy: To Be, To Know and To Do”). The ‘construction’ that caught my attention was a representation of teacher imprisonment. Its builders talked about their puny salaries and fear of violence. Each team selected a spokesperson and, although women outnumbered men by almost 9:1, two of the four were spokesmen and one of them a loquacious bore. Effervescent, proactive Lusitana explained that these paper *fitas* (ribbons) were *ferramentas* (tools) to demonstrate intention. Actions must always be

³⁷¹ Another *TV Globo* product, the closed-circuit classroom telecourses are ‘teacher-proof’ in the same way as ‘Open Court’ or, for that matter, Freire’s ‘Ten Situations’: teachers simply follow the script.

based on specific goals. Nevertheless, in a Brazilian training session, the 'festive' generally dominates the 'reflective': a participant whose birthday it had been the previous day was made much of despite the fact that she seemed not to desire the attention.

Finally, at 10:15, the first video is shown: raspy-voiced Regina Casé, a TV Globo regular, narrates the 'fashion history' of Brazilwood³⁷²—intercut with illustrations of European royalty wearing red robes due to the massive importation of the dyewood from *Vera Cruz* (the original name given their New World possession by the Portuguese). I found the rapid tour, in which Casé³⁷³ appears in billowy red garments and frequently dons dark sunglasses, very sophisticated for a student audience. There was brief mention of the fact that *pau brasil* is still used to manufacture bows for stringed instruments and no mention at all of its prominence in this state which I learned recently³⁷⁴ provided wood's alias: "Pernambuco." When I mentioned this to the assembled teachers it inspired little interest although the trainer, Lusitana, confirmed that Pernambuco is the leading producer of *pau brasil*.

After another activity in which paper cutouts of hands were handed out and each group wrote on them the things they'd like to change at their schools, another video was shown. This had to do with puberty. At a secondary school in Paulista,³⁷⁵ a confident young man is shown interviewing several of his classmates costumed as different environmental issues (water pollution, air pollution, garbage) in a student-produced videotape. At the

³⁷² *Pau-brasil* (*Caesalpinia echinata*), also called *Pernambuco*, was one of the first colonial exports. It was prized for the brilliant red dye it provided which was used for tinting royal robes, manufacturing the bows for stringed instruments and providing literate Europeans with dramatic and indelible ink. The tree, which was once so prevalent in the *Mata Atlântica* (coastal rainforest) that it gave the country its name, is now nearly extinct although there are several plantations, one of which we visited on the way to Araçoiaba, funded in part by players of high-quality violins, violas and cellos who still swear by Pernambuco bows.

³⁷³ Casé, the Brazilian Lucille Ball, was one of the stars of a funny series on Globo about two women executives who join a 'temp service' and have hilarious misadventures.

³⁷⁴ "Saving the Music Tree" by Russ Rymer (*Smithsonian Magazine*, April, 2004)

³⁷⁵ Olinda's neighbor to the north, Paulista, was once the site of an important *fabricade tecidos* (clothing factory) run by a family of Swedish descent, the Lundegrunds, of whom many tales are told. The sprawling municipality, once part of Olinda, maintains the appearance and character of a factory town.

end of the three to five-minute clip, Lusitana mentions that, at this school, students have taken charge of classroom cleanup and have many independent study projects with teachers as collaborators and fellow researchers rather than as typical ‘depositors’ of knowledge in what Freire would call a ‘banking education’ scenario. Other students are shown studying and extracting various uses from the local *jenipapo* (genipap) fruit—also used as a red dye by the indigenes—in very hands-on and productive ways. In response to the oft-mentioned theme of malfunctioning or non-existent equipment in the participants’ skits, Lusitana mentioned that the absence of high-tech paraphernalia may also be a goad to teacher creativity and ‘making the most of what we have.’ Students should be ‘mobilized’ to collaborate with teachers on interesting ‘projects.’ A ‘taste for reading’ must be stimulated.³⁷⁶ She then distributed a two-page handout entitled, *Fala, Mestre* (Speak, Master) excerpted from the September, 2000 issue of *Revista Escola* (School Magazine).

The first piece, by Philippe Perrenoud, reinforced her idea:

To develop competence, it is necessary, first of all, to work with problem-solving and projects, proposing complex tasks and challenges that incite the students to mobilize their knowledge and, to some degree, complete them. This presupposes an active, cooperative pedagogy, open to the city and the neighborhood, whether [the school] is in an urban or rural setting. The teachers must stop thinking that giving classes is the marrow of their profession. Teaching today should be more about conceiving, enclosing and regulating learning situations, following active constructivist pedagogical principles...

³⁷⁶ In a front page article by Henry Chu in the 10/2/05 Sunday edition of *Los Angeles Times* entitled “This Illiterate Brazilian’s Home Speaks Volumes,” which tells the inspiring story of a couple, Carlos Leite and Mária da Penha, who have transformed their home in the working-class municipality of São Gonçalo, Rio de Janeiro into a library with more than 10 thousand volumes of give-away books, Chu writes “Illiteracy, poverty and the seduction of modern entertainment have made Brazil a country with one of the lowest levels of book-reading in the world. The average American reads five books a year, as does the average Briton. In literary-minded France, that number rises to seven. In Brazil, it’s fewer than two. Brazilians are handicapped by lack of access. Government officials say that nearly 1000 of the country’s 5,500 municipalities have no public library. Buying a book is even less of an option. (...) A study in 2001 estimated that 16% of the population owns nearly 75% of all the books in Brazil—hardly surprising considering that a standard paperback routinely sells for about \$15, or one-eighth of the minimum monthly salary. Moreover, illiteracy remains high; 16 million Brazilians older than 15 cannot read or write. ‘There’s just not the habit of reading,’ said Cristina Fernandes Warth, vice president of the Brazilian Editors League. ‘And now there’s competition with other things: cellphones, internet, DVDs. Let’s say there’s a shop where there’s a book and a CD of the same price. It’s the CD that will probably be bought.’” “It might be too late for me,” says the 51-year-old Leite, a grade school dropout who has had to work hard for a living and now sleeps with his *companheira* Penha in a ‘back alcove’ of the converted house, displaced by books, “but not for others. Those of us who grew up around here...know what the needs of the community are. There’s not a single library. So I said ‘let’s make this dream come true.’”

The second excerpt, by Pedro Demo, projected the same theme on a global screen:

While the First World studies, the Third World teaches classes. To do away with this picture, we need to create an atmosphere of learning in the classroom where the student can reconstruct experiments as well as concepts. If you give a student material to compare and interpret, you are creating an ambience of learning centered on doubts – that can include those of the teacher her/himself. The teacher should allow her/his students to *quebrarem a cabeça* (to wrack their brains) rather than offering the solution [to a problem]. This is something new in Brazil where it is believed that teachers exist to take away doubts. We need to live with doubts because they are at the center of learning. This does not mean accepting any error, but knowing that you cannot think for the student. This imbecilizes her/him. When the teacher encourages the search for arguments and counter-arguments instead, (s)he develops various things, from autonomy to respect for others, as it is necessary to stop and hear the arguments of classmates. To learn to criticize someone else with a logical basis or accept criticism—this is all part of an enormous exercise of citizenship."

Meanwhile, my perusal of the Philosophy text³⁷⁷ revealed the following:

In ancient Greece, the term 'culture' corresponded to the so-called *paidéia*, the process by which man realized his true nature, developing philosophy (the knowledge of self and the world) and the consciousness of life in community. (...) Used by anthropologists and sociologists, the word 'culture' came to indicate the combination of ways of life created and transmitted by one generation to another, among members of a determined society. This meaning includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and whatever other capacities men have socially acquired. We can add, finally, from a philosophical perspective, that culture is the response offered by human groups to the challenge of existence. A response that is manifest in terms of knowledge (*logos*), passion (*phatos*) and behavior (*ethos*). In other words, according to reason, emotion and action. (Edward Tylor).

Professor Robert Braidwood, a University of Chicago scholar believes that culture is:

- acquired through learning and not inherited through instincts
- transmitted from generation to generation
- an exclusive creation of human beings and a distinctive sign of humanity
- the bearer of all the material and non-material creations of men & women
- capable of forging structures that endure but undergo historical evolution
- an indispensable instrument for the adaptation of individuals to their social settings, enabling human beings to express their potential. (ibid., 1997, 16)

I was contemplating Professor Braidwood's final words and thinking of the difficulty of

³⁷⁷ *Fundamentos de Filosofia*, 13 edição (São Paulo: Saraiva, 1997), pp. 14-16

sensing your ‘potential,’ much less expressing it, when your “social setting” is a garbage heap you must scavenge, daily, to survive when Lusitana, sensing her participants’ fatigue and pre-prandial restlessness in the ice-cold *sala*, let them go to lunch at 11:50. Although my attendance was limited to the first half of the program due to a previous commitment, I am quite sure the afternoon segment did not begin before 2:00. The teachers were determined to enjoy their ‘pupil-free day” and a leisurely lunch was one of the perquisites.

I asked Evandro to show me the house he is building in Igarassu. We went in the car to the non-historical hub of the town and had a quick lunch before heading out into the countryside on a road that runs parallel to and a couple kilometers closer to the *Santa Cruz* canal than the one Marcos and I took to *Itamaracá* the week before.³⁷⁸ Evaldo turned right several minutes later onto a pothole-riddled dirt road where he had purchased a lot in the year 2000 for R\$3600 on property that had belonged to a small *fazenda* (farm) which fell into disuse and was then subdivided and sold by the owner, under a law that prohibits land from lying fallow. Evandro's piece of land looks like it may be half an acre and has a nice view of the green hills on the other side of which lies the *Canal de Santa Cruz*. The house is sturdy-looking, brick, has most of its doors and windows installed and rooms delineated, the bathroom and kitchen equipment already bought. Evaldo says he is waiting for hotter weather to begin to work on the place and will start by cutting back the grasses that have grown quite high since the last time they were trimmed in February. He has done most of the work himself and it looks good.

In the next section, the purposeful sabotage of what was supposed to be the culminating event of the CEJA’s tenth anniversary celebration, a Friday night dance, leads

³⁷⁸ One of the original *capitanias*, extensive landholds granted to royal favorites by the Portuguese crown. What is now Itamaracá island originally stretched from the Bahia de Traição, on the border of the *capitania* of Rio Grande, to the Santa Cruz canal that separated it from the *capitania* of Pernambuco in what was then *Nova Lusitânia* (*Lusitania* was the Roman denomination for Portugal). Itamaracá was already a bustling community when the Portuguese explorer, Duarte Coelho came to survey the immense territory he had been granted by Dom João III in 1534. (Guerra, 1985, 83-4).

me to include a final dialogue with Danilson in which he discusses a basic misapprehension on the part of the oppressed that perpetuates the ability of “the oppressor minority,” in Freire’s words (2000, 141), to “subordinate and dominate the majority (...) in order to remain in power.”

6.4 The Archipelago

Friday night, at what was supposed to be a community dance celebrating the conclusion of CEJA’s tenth anniversary week, I was reminded how much a political plaything Brazilian public education can be. It was to be a night of multiple bands (a couple of these headed by former gang members) and non-stop dancing on the CAIC basketball court. But none of the bands showed up. There had been a pro-Luciana demonstration at the school the night before and word of it had gotten back to the community organizer, a Jacilda-supporter, who was booking the bands. This woman cancelled the entertainment without telling anyone at CEJA, effectively sabotaging what was to be the culmination of a weeklong festivity. At 9:30, after a couple hours of high-volume heavy metal CDs to warm up the crowd, CEJA Director Almeri de Freitas mounted the bandstand to let everyone know they might as well go home. She offered me a lift back to Ouro Preto in the school van on her way home to Maranguape and gave me a CD with her M.A. dissertation, *A Construção da Competência Discursiva na EJA: O papel da leitura de textos verbais em língua portuguesa*.³⁷⁹ I had heard from several people, including professor João Francisco de Souza (one of the members of her committee and no relation despite their similar surnames), that the dissertation is outstanding and I told her so. We briefly discussed the delicate balance of graduate school, career and family—Almeri has three sons to whom the dissertation is dedicated.

³⁷⁹ “The Construction of Discursive Competence in Youth and Adult Education: The role of reading verbal texts in the Portuguese language” by Almeri Freitas de Souza, Federal University of Paraíba, 2003.

Despite taking responsibility for the demise of a long-planned celebration, she was still smiling and communicative at the end of a very busy week.

Seeking an explanation for the continual onslaught popular educators in Recife and Olinda face in their daily dealings with needy students, beleaguered communities and internecine politics, I remembered a theory Danilson proposed during a dialogue at CUT³⁸⁰ which began when he drew what looked like a hand by the Colombian surrealist painter Fernando Botero with the tips of five fat fingers protruding and the rest underwater. He wrote the word *sistema* (system) on the submerged palm, *consciência ingênua* (naïve consciousness) in the air above the waterline and *consciência crítica*³⁸¹ (critical consciousness) in the depths below it.

DP: The people do not understand that it is an entire system that makes, that generates their problems. To make an analysis of the current state of affairs, I draw an 'archipelago': the island of the street children, the island of the single mothers, the island of the unemployed, the island of the landless peasants, the island of those exploited at work. But, underneath, these islands are not independent, they are attached—if they were loose, they would separate and float away. But they remain. The system is here below holding these 'islands' in place: the street children, their single mothers, the unemployed, the landless peasants, the exploited workers...all of us inhabit one or another of these islands, right? We are stranded and our naïve consciousness makes us look at them very superficially, you see? As an exploited worker, when I see a street kid, I protect myself. Because they live on another island and I don't see any association between my island and theirs. The single mother whom we call a 'prostitute' produces these children, gives birth to them and, since she has no means to educate them, throws them on this island. And these same women say, 'here come the little pickpockets, the glue-sniffers, the little thieves' and don't see the slightest connection between this island and theirs. So I use this image to make an analysis of the pervading condition—to point out that these islands all have a common link which is the underlying 'system' that produces them. As far as 'the system' is concerned, the more islands there are, each one separated from the other, the better it is.

So what is our role as educators? To understand these 'islands' by diving beneath the surface to find out how and why they are formed. And this submersion is not easy because it can be a jolt to begin to understand that the entire system is set up to produce the *status quo*. Either you dive below and stay there, trying to transform this—in other words, trying to make these islands into a continent of organized people who want another world than this. Or you return to your own island and say "there's no way!" All political positions have an effect: if I cannot prepare myself to dive in and face this, I come back feeling incompetent and impotent and say "there's no way at all." But if I have prepared myself, I dive in and say "no, I'm going to confront this world and change it—I want another one, a different one!" That's where critical consciousness comes in. Professor Paulo Freire always spoke of naïve consciousness and critical consciousness, didn't he? But it isn't easy to move from one to the other. I have been working almost fifteen years to understand this

³⁸⁰ July 25, 2004.

³⁸¹ These are same terms Paulo Freire used in a discussion of the stages of 'conscientization' in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

and, today more than ever, I see that it isn't easy because, on the surface, things are increasingly difficult. The submerged 'system' is constantly producing hindrances so that this population cannot access it. They have the right to be citizens but with every little handout, every crumb they are thrown, the populace becomes more willing to say 'things are getting better.' So we [educators] need a critical consciousness to be able to dive down and discover why nothing changes, why everything remains in place. If you explore underneath these 'islands,' you soon perceive that the prostitutes, the landless peasants, the unemployed and exploited workers, even the street kids, are all attached. It is the system that creates this, an unjust system controlled by a very small group that doesn't want to share their profit on all this.

That's why I'm no longer surprised—I used to say, self-righteously, "the People don't want to know." I didn't deny the dictum "everyone gets the government they deserve." But it's not true! Each government manufactures the people they want! The government makes the people—not the other way round! But for a long time I thought that the people wanted to live like this. But no one wants to live in misery. We were born to live in harmony with one another. Human beings are not born violent. I was born poor because a 'system' created my family's poverty—so my children would be born poor and their children too. That's why they create the mechanism that exists—poor schools, public schools, for the poor and private schools for the rich. Of course, when we get to the university, the process is inverted. The poor people pay and the rich get a free, public university. So the roles are inverted as we reach the educational goal. I think this is really perverse! If I come from a poor family and want to enter the university, I have to use my entire monthly salary to pay for my studies—it's that expensive! But the bourgeoisie doesn't pay anything because they're all in Federal Universities so the MEC³⁸² in Brasília foots the bill. They say there's no exclusion, that everyone has a chance. But ours is a very precarious education without many books, without real knowledge or contact with other kinds of knowledge—the all-important dialogue with other cultures. How are we going to be able to read Hegel, Marx, Rousseau? Some of us are exposed to the work of sociologists and psychologists but if we don't have the educational background to contextualize them, we will end up as incompetent teachers. Yes, we have certificates granted by private schools of higher education because you don't really have to earn them, they're given. You have to have the critical consciousness to say 'No, I want to understand! I have to understand this because I want to interfere with reality! If I don't understand this, I cannot understand the way things are!'

Insofar as I understand, I see the People beginning to open a 'loophole', a *brechazinha*, so they can cast a peripheral glance at what is happening. They don't yet want to look at the whole thing. That's why we work with art and culture – to start to look at reality. So that the students begin to see that when we say "we're going to study economy," it is a political economy rather than a monetary economy we are talking about. Because various models exist and most people only know one of them—the one offered by the system. The systemic model isn't serving us because it puts all the profit in a few people's hands and kills the rest with hunger. The health data say so many people are dying from AIDS and so many people are dying from tuberculosis but hunger is at the root. They are starving so they contract tuberculosis or are infected with the virus and, because they are malnourished, they die. It's hunger not AIDS, that kills so many people. When someone contracts the AIDS virus, if they don't have a good diet, they die twice! Because they're in no shape to coexist with that disease.³⁸³

So when they are ready to discuss the economy, we use this example³⁸⁴, okay? And [marginalized people] begin to perceive that unemployment is growing. When people lose their jobs, they are going to look for other ways to create income, legal or illegal. Most

³⁸² The *Ministério de Educação e Cultura*, which oversees and finances the federal system.

³⁸³ Anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992, 139) in a chapter entitled "Delírio de Fome" (Delirium of Hunger) elaborates: "the bi-polar psychic rhythms of the *Nordestino*, who is said to possess a kind of 'manic-depressive' personality, result (...) from the cyclical drama of drought and famine. Modernist Brazilian writers referred more romantically to the 'Brazilian melancholy,' the celebrated *tristeza brasileira*, as the lasting signature of *Nordestino* hunger."

³⁸⁴ The 'archipelago' of interconnected 'islands.'

end up in the 'informal economy.' Some start a little, informal and illegal, business at home. They sell sweets, homemade candies, popcorn and the like. Others open a mini-market—even smaller than a *mercado*.³⁸⁵ Others make fried potatoes—all they have to do is buy a deep-fry machine. They are lots of ways to make a living, as long as they're outside the range of legal activities. Because you don't pay taxes, you're constantly running from the inspectors, the city hall, the government. The law says if you open a business, you have to register it. Most people won't keep that business for more than a month because they know nothing about profit or collecting money. For all those coins to create a force field, they have to remain in circulation. If you start hoarding, you endanger the system. Money has to be in your pocket, has to be circulating. The more it circulates... So we talk about the capitalist system: when you put ten *centavos* into circulation, it comes back as fifty. You take this fifty and put it into circulation, it comes back as a hundred, you spend this hundred so that it circulates and returns as a thousand. That's the law of the capitalist system: money has to constantly circulate to attract more. So they started to get it, bit by bit. Later, as the shortcomings of the capitalist solution become clearer, we propose another kind of economy for our country – a 'solidary' economy. Say a guy loses his job and uses his unemployment insurance to buy a potato-fryer. His neighbor watches a lot of people buying potatoes and thinks, "*Fulano*"³⁸⁶ is doing well so I'm going to get into this too." He takes his money, goes to the store and buys a potato-fryer on credit because he has no money. He sets his machine right beside his neighbor's and begins to fry potatoes, to compete with his neighbor because this is what the [capitalist] system encourages: let the strong survive and the best man win! We say: "Look, if so and so puts a little cart of fried potatoes in the marketplace and he's doing well, why would his neighbor want to buy one also? Why not buy potatoes to supply him? Understand? Instead of starting a business to compete with his business, I start a business to sustain it. To collaborate, okay? In this way, I begin to create an economic network of solidarity. Right? Because another person can create a shop to sell salt, eggs, paper bags to help the fried potato-seller. That's how to start a cooperative network, rather than one based on competition." I'll give you an example from the community where I live now, *Roda do Fogo*. A woman opened a little clothing store there. A lot of people came because each time a store opens it's a novelty, right? The next door neighbor saw this and went to Santa Cruz do Capibaribe, a place that sells a lot of clothes, jeans, t-shirts, etc. She got a loan, went to Santa Cruz, bought a big sack of clothes and opened a store right next to the first woman. I said, "my friends, there are so many people out of work—if the clothing store is doing well, let's organize the seamstresses so that they can make clothes for the store." While the seamstresses are getting it together, someone else can open a little shop that sells thread, buttons and zippers. You have to build a network with solidarity, not one based on competition! So they started to look at each other differently—let's do it! We don't just have one economic model—we have several. The present economy is the one that kills people, the one that creates those 'islands.' The more money that circulates within the community, the more development. I won't have to spend my money in the shopping-center, I'll spend it in the little community shops. Because the bigger these shops get, the more people from the community they'll employ. That's the way a network functions.

So this study of the Recife Prefeitura's³⁸⁷ was a very good one because it gave us a chance to discuss solidary economy, new ways of organizing workers to cope with unemployment by forming associations and cooperatives. I liked the way the study was set up; that we got to discuss these things with them before beginning—for instance, one day when things were still getting organized I asked them: "Are there many *papudinhos*"³⁸⁸

³⁸⁵ Small 'convenience markets' typical of working-class *bairros*.

³⁸⁶ *Fulano(a)*, *Beltrano(a)*, *Sicrano(a)* are typical names in Brazil, like *John Smith* or *Jane Doe* in the U.S.

³⁸⁷ The *Voz Pública* program was an initiative of the Municipality of Recife, in the final months of PT Mayor João Paulo's first term (1999-2003). It trained and employed poor people as 'researchers' into alternative economies. Unfortunately, the allotted funding lasted only three months.

³⁸⁸ *Papudinho*, the diminutive of *papudo*, refers to neighborhood alcoholics who manage to stay drunk all day without visible employment by cadging drinks and money from passers-by. *Bater um papo* is a colloquial expression for making conversation. *Papudinhos* have the 'gift of gab.'

where you live? There are what the people call 'syndicates of *papudinhos*'—they lose touch with time and, in any poor neighborhood, you can observe a group—generally made up of young and older men, who do nothing but walk around drinking *cana, cana, cana*³⁸⁹. They harm nobody but themselves. So I asked "are there many of these *papudinhos* where you live and they said "alot! they're nothing but vagabonds!" "Are there many unemployed youths?" "A lot! All they do is smoke dope, they're worthless, crazy kids, they don't want to work!" This is the way they thought when they first arrived. They believed in the 'islands,' you see? They saw the curtain but they didn't get behind it, they didn't see that there was something there that created these situations — a System that doesn't favor these people. They couldn't go into the streets and start the survey with this kind of thinking, this *naïve consciousness*: believing that the inhabitants of these 'islands' live there because they want to. That's not the case. No one wants to be a street kid, a prostitute, no one wants to be unemployed, everyone wants without a piece of land or a place of their own so they can have their family near and live with dignity. No one wants to be a slave. We all want to love and be admired for our work. So these 'islands' are never built by the people who inhabit them.

We wanted to take the discussion into the 'field' and create another kind of vision—a more 'humane' one that would simultaneously critique this reality and contribute to changing it. What do most studies and research accomplish? They collect information without making any contribution to the people studied, so they can change their situation. But our 'diagnostic research' program had something new—the people themselves were learning to do the research. Although it lacked scientific quality, it had educational content so that, at the same time that they were investigating the reality, they were helping to change it, from 'the inside'.

For instance, one of the men said: "What are the the young people's possibilities of making money? None. What is the possibility of their finding work inside the community?" None. So what are they doing to create income? They're selling 'pot', shoplifting and stealing. But that's not all – the ones that want to stay 'clean' are offering transportation in the supermarkets—carrying people's purchases in a cart or wheelbarrow. Others are taking courses in automobile mechanics, either paying per class or twice a month. Some are working as mason's assistants so there are other means of making money."

There is another way of making money—'pirating' CDs—young people outfit bicycles, fill them with CDs that they sell on the streets. Although they pay no taxes, it is a 'legal' activity. And, for the moment at least, the police are not arresting the vendors, they're trying to catch the ones reproducing the CDs. The person who's doing the selling has nothing to do with that. He just receives the CDs and tries to sell them—at the end of the day he takes stock of what he sold and goes home. The one who records and reproduces the CD is the scofflaw. This is all because, not having legal employment, people have to arrange a means of survival. There are many young people involved in the CD business.

We need a policy to organize the working masses, most of them young, so that they have legitimate working conditions. If the 'system' doesn't facilitate this, they are going to create illegal things on top of all these 'islands' so the population can survive. No one is born to die of hunger. We're born to live with dignity and the respect we crave as human beings: to dream, to enjoy themselves, to study, to raise a family, to have a home, love and health. So our primary concern in leading this course was to prepare the contents of the course so they would have something to counteract this *naïve consciousness* before they started their surveys so they would not believe that people endured these conditions because they wanted to live like that. At the same time that they were asking questions about the principal problems, At the same time they were asking questions about the problems, some people were saying "No, it's not like that: the young people aren't this way because they want to be." Eventually, people began to question the government's policies: "What is the way out of this situation for the youth? If something were offered and they

³⁸⁹ Cane alcohol; also *pinga, cachaça, água-dura, dengosa, engenhoa, gás, gramática, mamãe-sacode, pernambucana, quebra-goela, sour-de-alambique, teimosa, zuninga*, etc. (Navarro, 2004, 361). As the song says: *Cachaça não é água, não! / Cachaça vem do alambique e água vem do ribeirão.* ("Cachaça is not water, no! / Cachaça comes from the still and water from the stream.")

said "no"—that would be an option. But no one is offered the option of living elsewhere or differently from the way they do now."

That was our experiment in the final months of 2003 with the *Voz Pública* program. It went really well. It's a shame it lasted only three months—people were very thirsty for more. They were constantly asking "when will we have another [course]?" And this course had no *bolsas* (funding) attached. At first, it was open to the public and there were people who were paid—parents who were receiving a *bolsa-escola*³⁹⁰ to send their kids to school. There are two kinds of *bolsas-escola* these days: the PETI Program (to end child labor) which is administered by the Federal government and pays parents R\$40 (about \$12 US) a month and requires the children to attend school 8 hours a day and the Municipal Program for low-income families which requires them to attend for only 4 hours and pays R\$120 (about \$40 US) per month. Our course on diagnostic surveys was for families who received the municipal scholarships. Unfortunately, the majority of these people had never attended school and had minimal reading skills, so we used a lot of tapes. Our population here in Brazil has little experience in reading so people are quickly wearied by written texts. We weren't educated to read. So we use a lot of non-verbal texts, a lot of images so that reading can start to happen. In an educated country, people aren't paid to go to school—the opportunities are there and people make use of them. Here it's different: they 'addict' the people, as if it were the only way. The government's 'obligation' is not to offer *bolsas-de-estudo*, it's to provide classrooms, books and desks so that people can have a chance to study and feel good about going to school: "I'm going because it's going to help me overcome my barriers." Not "the government has to pay me to go"—that's an 'addictive' point-of-view.

PL: But the *bolsas* work well for politicians, don't they?

DP: Sure, 'I have five *bolsas* for your family—one for you, one for your sister, your aunt, your grandmother, etc.' With one *bolsa*, a politician can get the votes of a whole family. So he dismembers it—he takes the daughter away from the father, like a lot of teenage girls she is pregnant—so she gets an additional *bolsa de natalidade* while maintaining her *bolsa-escola* for being an adolescent and in school. It's enough to divide the family. It's a Mafia! I don't know how else to describe it.

PL: Isn't this what Freire objected to as "assistentialism"?

DP: It's not even that—because assistentialism requires some minimal existential conditions—this is just a handout! What we're trying to do here is get people to look at reality with new eyes, critically, and begin to see the contradictions so they can point them out to other people. For instance, the relationship between the inhabitants of the 'islands' and the handful of people who control the income of the 'system'—that it's become a tradition! So they can go back to the street with another perspective than the one the system teaches. The street kid (*pixote*) and I are interrelated—granted I earn a salary so I'm a little more protected than he is—I can hang onto a pole on the inside of one of these sardine-can buses while he has to ride the rear bumper, but we both belong to the same unjust system. His situation may be much worse than mine, but then there's someone else whose lot in life is slightly better than mine—there are gradations of suffering—that's how these seemingly separate 'islands' are formed. One degree of separation leads to another. The exploited worker humiliates the landless peasant who humiliates the jobless urbanite who humiliates the single mother/prostitute who humiliates the child she put on the street. It's complicated to get people to understand the role the System plays in this scheme. They need to read more and think more about it.

Reading and thinking are both the means and the end of Paulo Freire's problem-posing, dialogical pedagogy. Danilson is in touch with the struggles of the oppressed people of

³⁹⁰ For Prof. João Francisco de Souza's opinion of the *bolsas-escola* see pp. 335-337, above.

Recife and Olinda as a popular educator and the only one of my informants who has ties to the municipal governments of both cities after years of assiduous campaigning and community organizing for progressive candidates, to the *Universidade Federal de Pernambuco* (UFPE), to the *Centro de Educação de Jovens e Adultos* (CEJA), to the *Central Única de Trabalhadores* (CUT) and, as a former Salesian monk, to the Catholic Church. Our burgeoning friendship and his generous spirit permitted us to explore a number of subjects in detail. Paulo Freire was right: Danilson's is a remarkably coherent, democratic and pedagogically passionate 'reading of the world.' I present segments of Danilson's, João Francisco de Souza's and Guiomar's translated interview transcripts verbatim because I believe that their involvement with and perspective on the day-to-day reality of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) makes them experts whose views contextualize a world. Freire believed (2000, 54) that "the pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, presents itself as a pedagogy of humankind." As an educator, Danilson's "humanist generosity" is analytical and exhortatory. His pedagogy and praxis are prime components of his dedication to popular conscientization, which is why his dialogue with Freire on the Cabo Gato bridge was so inspiring to them both:

The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through the praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all people in the process of permanent liberation (Freire, 2000, 54).

Danilson's 'first stage' proposal that the oppressed practice 'solidary' community economics is being instituted throughout Latin American, most notably by the descendants of the Maya in Chiapas, in the *villas miseria*³⁹¹ of Argentina and *favelas* and

³⁹¹ "The term *villa* or *villa miseria* is used in Argentina to denominate a neighborhood of precarious habitations. The expression appeared in 1955 to designate poor communities which had sprung into

mocambos of Brazil. In the southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, the *orçamento participativo* (“participatory budget”) has, in the words of João Verle, the Mayor of Porto Alegre, led “around 50,000 people [to take] part in regional meetings and theme-oriented ones:

Our idea is to get more people involved in such a process. (...) People who live in cities and towns experience serious social problems. Nevertheless, the 5,561 Brazilian municipalities currently receive less than 14% of the total taxes, compared to 62% for the [Federal] Union and 24% for the States. Expenses and resources have to be made compatible (...) Taxes in Brazil are high but we need to increase public revenue by improving resource distribution. To diminish social problems in the cities, it is necessary to decrease unemployment. In order to achieve that, the economy has to grow, generating jobs, income and more public sector revenue, thus lowering social security demands. This is one of the toughest challenges Lula’s administration has to face.³⁹²

Danilo Streck, a university professor from Porto Alegre, traces the original social contract’s roots from Locke and Rousseau to a “new contract disseminated within various movements” since the pivotal symbolic event of the New York World Trade Center attacks of September 11, 2001. According to Streck (2003, 57-58, my translation), the World Social Forum is “a kind of meeting point for people and groups who believe in the Forum motto, ‘another world is possible.’

The concept [of a new social contract] seems to have acquired a life of its own, rather than being strictly tied to authors known as ‘neocontractualists’ in a more restricted academic sense, and serves as a banner in the search for new kinds of social and political organization. Perhaps it is a rare case of appropriation, or reappropriation, by progressive sectors of a concept traditionally more present in liberal discourse. For example, in 1971, David Rockefeller foresaw that the changes accompanying globalization would imply a revision of the social contract with these words: ‘With the social contract newly open for revision, new social problems are generating growing pressure for the future modification and regulation of business enterprises. By acting quickly, businesses can guarantee their power to decide the form and content of the new social contract.’ (...) In this same political and historical context, we also have the new social contract as the opponent of the neoliberal politics of Ronald Reagan. This ‘new social contract’ would be anchored in a democratic alternative in which there would be increased participation of workers, consumers and citizens in decisions regarding housing, health and services, based both on the market and on democratic and public planning.

existence as a consequence of internal migrations with the flourishing of light industry. Principally in Buenos Aires and afterwards in other cities, this attracted a numerous populace from the interior of Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. It is equivalent to *cantegril* in Uruguay, *población* in Chile, *favela* in Brazil.” (Redondo, 2004, fn. 1, 17, my translation)

³⁹² From a translated interview in *III World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil January 23 to 28, 2003* (São Paulo: Carta Maior, 2004, 21, 23)

6.5 Araçoiaba

Social and democratic progress in housing, health and services still seems a long way off in Pernambuco. On my next-to-last day in Olinda, Evaldo and Monica took me to Araçoiaba. We drove north on BR 101 through Tabajara, Paulista, and Abreu e Lima and then turned left and entered *o mar verde* (the green sea) of sugarcane. Some of the fields had been cut and burned already but, for the most part, the brilliant green of the rolling, hilly landscape stretched as far as the eye could see. Just before turning left off the BR 101, we stopped in a grove of brazilwood trees which Evaldo knew about and which, in fact, were right on the highway. Although the trees were still young, their bark bristling with thorns like a rose stem, it seemed 10 degrees cooler in their shade. Monica, a biology teacher, pointed out that what I saw as leaves were the foliate components of a single leaf; that lichens and fungi had combined to mottle the bark of the trees furthest from the highway; that such mottling was generally a sign of superior air quality; that the earthen 'nests' in some of the trees I thought were the product of a mud-daubing bird called *joão de barro* were actually constructed by *cupins* (termites); that the scarlet dyewood craved by lords and ladies the world over in the 16th-18th centuries was a product of the 'entrecasca,' the inside of the bark.

Later that afternoon, I mentioned my fascination with *pau-brasil* to an affable science instructor, Adilson Monteiro Ribeiro, at the prize-winning *Escola Professora Jandira de Andrade Lima*³⁹³ in Limoeiro, a town in the farming region known as the *agreste* and he

³⁹³ The school, a public middle school with 2200 students and 82 teachers and staff, won the 2003 Roberto Marinho Foundation/Channel Futura National Award for being the best-administered school in Brazil. I have been corresponding with the principal, Ana Maria Xavier de Melo Santos. One factor in the school's success is the remarkable cohesion of its core faculty, many of whom have taught there for years. Monica, Evaldo and I identified ourselves as teachers and were given an extensive guided tour of the school by the adjunct director (the principal, Sra. Xavier, was away on business) although we had not made a previous appointment. The school was remarkably clean and orderly and the pride both staff and students took in it was obvious.

showed us a 20-year-old tree on the grounds under whose spreading boughs he located seeds, a spiny new *vagem* (the beanlike seedpod) and an older one which had already opened, dried and curled. He neatly packaged these natural artifacts in an expertly folded sheet of paper (to which I afterwards added the dried body of a giant *libélula* (dragonfly) I found on the stairway of the *Escola de Pesca* in Tamandaré a few days before, creating a small collection of natural souvenirs.

When we finally got to Araçoiaba we stopped on the *praça* (plaza) to drink *água de coco*³⁹⁴ where Monica and Evaldo were welcomed by several former students. Monica described the town as a *povoado de três machas*, referring to the fact that, by the time you shifted a car into third gear, you were already out of town. The school where they had met was closed due to a local festivity that had been held there the night before. The life of the town revolved around it and, as we sat in the *praça* that now included a bubbling fountain, they regaled me with stories of the provincial naiveté of the locals. How *Cuscuz* (Cornmeal), a local bigwig and two-time mayor (so-called because he instituted an annual *fubá* and *charque*³⁹⁵ feast for which he built a monumental, fifteen foot tall *cuscuzeira* (steamer) in the shape of a rocketship which still stands in a central square.

We drove back through Araçoiaba on our way back to Olinda at dusk. There I witnessed brief but poignant scenes of poverty and deprivation I hadn't seen in previous trips to the region with the PROMATA team because we spent our days in the local schools and never wandered far afield. The only place I had stayed overnight was Tamandaré, a seaside community whose prime industry had been coconuts, not cane. There I suffered the

³⁹⁴ The refreshing water of young, green coconuts is readily available in Pernambuco. The coconuts are kept on ice in little shops and kiosks, the tops lopped off with a machete and the fruit handed to you with a couple of *canudinhos*, thin paper straws. After you finish the juice, you can hand the *coco* back to the man who sold it to you for 25 or 30 cents and he will split it with a mighty *machetada* so you can scrape off the glistening flesh (*carne*) that clings to the walls of the interior nut.

³⁹⁵ *Fubá* is coarsely-ground cornmeal, *charque* sun-dried beef jerky.

intestinal consequences of a surfeit of local shellfish and was unable to participate in a *comício* (political rally) on my one night in town.

I felt as if I were back on the *Ilha do Maruim* in the mid-1960s as I waited outside for Evaldo and Monica to finish their conversation with the mother of one of their former students' in her *pau e pique* (daub and wattle) hut. Three people on a bicycle stopped directly in front of me; a little boy on the handlebars, a thin brown weatherbeaten man with a battered fedora in the saddle and a tiny hunchbacked woman perched on a homemade wooden seat above the rear wheel. The ensuing drama was about the little boy's having to get off the bike, something he had no desire to do. The woman, perhaps his mother, was not impervious to his screams of protest as her *companheiro* loosened the child's grip on the handlebars and put him on the ground. *Oxente! que menino safado!* ("Damn, what a nasty pest!") the man exclaimed, giving the boy a cuff on the ear before dragging him, screaming, into an earthen hut just like the one in back of me. All of this took place in a matter of seconds. The people involved were aware of me, watching.

The nutritional deficiencies of the population of Araçoiaba are obvious. They are thinner, smaller and more clenched than the people in Recife, the youngest children naked, others in rags. Most of the men had weary faces after a day spent cutting and burning cane. Black ash from the fires coated their houses and yards. On the way back to the highway after nightfall, we saw several *queimadas* (burnings). The cutters dig paths between the *canaviais* (canefields) so the fire cannot jump from field to field and set blazes too big to control.

I left Brazil on the last day of September, 2004. My friends found it difficult to understand that I did not want to stay an extra week so as to be present on election day which they described as a *carnavalesque*, particularly as it had begun to look like the

progressive incumbents, Luciana and João Paulo, would be reelected as *Prefeita de Olinda* and *Prefeito de Recife*. In São Paulo, the PT *Prefeita*, Marta Suplicy, ended up losing to the PSDB candidate José Serra, who had lost the Presidential election of 2002 to Lula and is considered his most likely rival in the 2006 rematch. But I had had it with street rallies and high-decibel political jingles played in ear-splitting tape loops from multiple *alto-falantes* (loudspeakers) mounted on bicycles and trucks. On the last night of my stay, Jacilda's campaign fund-raisers staged an all-night rally with beer and non-stop campaign songs on a prefab stage in the plaza below my house and I spent a sleepless night packing my bags and gritting my teeth. The next morning Ataide and his daughter, Karla, took me to the airport in a taxi and Danilson and Rigoberto showed up at the last minute with gifts and hugs.

I had to readjust to Los Angeles. I missed the heavy air of the tropics, the sudden squalls, the lush green foliage of the mango, avocado and breadfruit trees, my daily pineapples and coconut water and getting up with the roosters to greet the dawn. In late September, the early morning air still bore a hint of coolness. The mango trees were in bloom and the torrential rains of July were a memory. I waited, on my final morning in Olinda, for the familiar streetcries of the pudding man (*Mungunzá! Mungunzá e arroz doce!*) and the woman with her wheelbarrow full of cassava (*macaxeira! Ô macaxeira!*) but they were obscured by a ceaseless loop of campaign songs and the drunken shouts of Jacilda's crew as they took apart the stage.

6.6 Conclusions

My phenomenological approach to Freirian pedagogy has focused on my quest to reacquaint myself with a place and people I left behind, in all but memory, thirty-eight years ago. Phenomenological research depends upon the mutability of perspective. Thus,

my first conclusion is that I am not the same observer or recorder now that I was then. I see Paulo Freire's first books, *Educação como prática da liberdade* (1967) and *Pedagogia do Oprimido* (1970), as an attempt to respond to the massive and ubiquitous suffering of the oppressed – to get close enough to the permanent emergency of their marginal survival to learn their language and understand how they cope with life. I have lingered on Freire's early years in Recife and Jaboatão – his father's death, the family's descent from urban respectability to rural penury, his physical frailty and the student role that was reserved for him while his siblings worked—because I believe they explain the psychic urgency with which he embraced the concept of human 'incompletion' as a goad to what Dom Helder Câmara and his Catholic Action brethren called *conscientização*.

Since it is part and parcel of the human condition to suffer oppression, physical or psychological hunger and ineluctable death, Freire was 'curious and serious' in his study of those who, in their marginality, lived close to the edge of oblivion. Although it might be argued that he allowed himself to be 'used' by the populist government of João Goulart as a man whose literacy method produced voters quickly, I believe that Freire's enduring concern was with the liberation of the human intellect through study—a transformation he experienced in 1936, at age fifteen, when his mother convinced Aluizio Pessoa de Araújo, headmaster of Recife's prestigious Colégio Oswaldo Cruz to admit her son as a scholarship student. He flourished in the life of the mind and believed that, by engaging adults whose survival depended on physical labor in epistemic dialogue, he could influence the way they thought. As a twenty-something Peace Corps Volunteer living among the oppressed in a shantytown not far from Freire's natal city, I was inspired by the courage with which they eeked out their day-to-day existence and astonished by their obvious inconsequence to the greater social scheme. As deracinated beings, the

descendants of indigenes and slaves, living as what Josué de Castro called “crab people” in the mangrove swamps and tidal estuaries of Recife they were able to survive on their natural bounty. Forty years later, increased population and pollution have virtually eradicated the ciliar mangroves and deprived them of that source.

When my friend Adão Pinheiro told me he remembered Paulo Freire as someone who “reconstituted the sound of the universe which today has a diminished circumference, a lowered head and is inhabited by *homo consumista*,” I understood. In 1967, Adão and I pored over copies of *The Village Voice*, following the manhunt for Che Guevara in the Bolivian jungle. Forty years later, a capitalist demiurge blesses “them that got.”³⁹⁶ Olinda is a backwater. Those who live there wait for the annual carnaval to magnetize consumers and prime the economic sluice. Dominique Fernandez (1993), a Parisian epicurean researching its baroque churches, described Olinda as “a poor, far-away and forgotten city” and marveled that “the precarious conditions of existence whet the people’s instinct for beauty rather than extinguishing it.” Danilson Pinto’s pedagogical response to the ongoing hunger, as co-founder (with João Francisco de Souza) and organizer of the *Colônia de Férias* (Summer School) at CAIC in Peixinhos, was to make sure the kitchen stayed open to provide the daily *merenda* (meal). His faculty members were artisans with enough recycled material and talent at their disposal to mount an animated, embellished *Bloco da Sucata* (Junk Band) in the 1996 carnaval. For fifteen days, the young people who participated in the *Colônia* were able to experience school as a locus of nourishment, creativity and delight.

I have been specific, throughout this dissertation, about the problems teachers of EJA face in Brazil today and some of the ways they try to combat them. There have been major demographic shifts since the 1960s. What was then a predominately agricultural

³⁹⁶ A phrase from Billie Holiday’s and Arthur Herzog, Jr.’s 1939 ballad, “God Bless the Child.”

country has become an overwhelmingly urban one. São Paulo is, today, the continent's largest city. One of the things that has changed for the better in Brazilian education is that things are no longer pegged to a monolithic nationalism. The global economy has brought an expanded sense of citizenship to those who can read and write. The country is more than ever united by the media—it is now possible for its inhabitants to imagine a monolithic Brazilian nation rather than numerous regional Brazils. Nevertheless, the desperation of the populace has increased along with their number. There is a clear distinction between the rural and urban poor. Pupils in out of the way places like Araçoiaba are able to enjoy teacher-student relationships while public schools in the cities are overcrowded and understaffed. Guiomar, the administrator, complains about having to cope with student *and* teacher abuse. The fact that public schools are routinely looted is indicative of their debasement in the eyes of working class students who no longer associate education with future employment or personal growth. The fact that greater Recife has the highest youth homicide rate in the country is indicative of their despair.

The solution to Brazil's manifold educational challenges seems dependent on an ever-increasing number of NGOs. While some of these, like the *Coletivo Mulher Vida* discussed in Chapter Four, are engaged in combating social stigmata like sexual harassment and child prostitution, there are those who see the NGO phenomena as the metastases of a societal cancer that no amount of money or outside help can cure.

School decentralization has meant that municipalities and states have had to pick up the slack. The federal government's support for public instruction has been confined to providing financial incentive, in the form of meager welfare checks, for penurious families to keep their children to school. Since the recent enforcement of child labor laws, this is the only way some families, like those involved with Professor de Souza's PETI study in

Feira de Santana, Bahia, manage to stay afloat. In the public schools of Olinda, ‘goldbricking’ is protected by *cargos comissionados*, political sinecures given to public employees, including putative *educadores*, who only show up to get paid.

There is a nationwide problem with over-worked teachers who teach at multiple schools to make ends meet and thus have allegiance to none. Finally, there is the ineluctable fact that the federal university system excludes the very people for whom it is meant to provide, the children of the working class, who cannot qualify for admission because they lack the cultural capital to pass the highly competitive and biased entrance exams. Their only hope is to pay for private cram schools while the children of the middle and upper classes, preparing for the *provão* (big test) at private academies, win the coveted ‘seats’ and attend the Federal University system, Brazil’s best, tuition free.

In the midst of enduring inequity, there is the perceived failure of Brazil’s proclaimed ‘working-class President.’ An unprecedented national alliance of trade unionists, artists and intellectuals, businessmen and ordinary people saw Lula da Silva’s triumph in 2002 as the democratic counterweight to five centuries of oligarchic abuse. The Workers Party (*Partido Trabalhista*) was vigorously supported by Paulo Freire who served Mayor Luiza Erundina as an innovative Secretary of Education during São Paulo’s first municipal PT government from 1989 to 1991. Moacir Gadotti, Freire’s constant collaborator and his successor as Director of the Paulo Freire Institute in São Paulo, oversaw the PFI’s expansion under the city’s second PT *Prefeita*, Marta Suplicy. During her administration, the Institute received numerous commissions as educational consultants and teacher-trainers in both private and public sectors but, with Suplicy’s defeat in the 2004 election, its continued activity in these important areas is questionable. The constant swing of the political pendulum from progressive to conservative municipal governments makes

concerted educational reform efforts rare. What Brazilians call *politicagem*, the vengeful retribution of politicians against their rivals, has been a scourge in Olinda, as illustrated by the CEJA in Peixinhos described in Chapter Four.

Recent scandals in the upper echelons of Lula's cabinet have imperiled his bid for re-election in 2006. Many of his former colleagues in the São Paulo trade union movement feel that he has become a plebeian version of his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who played eight years of capitalist hardball with the World Bank, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund.

The future of Freirian literacy campaigns and dialogical pedagogy is just as uncertain. Based on my research, Brazilian educators in Recife and Olinda have yet to develop an effective didactic infrastructure or curriculum for EJA. The "generative" words, themes and codifications that Freire used in the early 1960s are of no more value in the present global market economy than the pages I discovered disintegrating in police files. What Freire called 'banking education' is still the norm as affectionate but autocratic schoolmarms (Freire called them *tias*, "aunties") are replaced by closed circuit *tele-escolas* and other robotic appurtenances of the Information Age. "Holdfast, dragon of the status quo"³⁹⁷ reigns supreme in the boardrooms of Ministries of Education throughout the developing world. Unless teachers are paid a living wage and public school pedagogy becomes a priority on national agendas, nothing will change. Yet, in a fearful time, exacerbated by the US government's bellicose adventurism under the banner of a worldwide 'war on terror,' Freire's ideas and enthusiasm are as apt to the situations in which progressive educators and activists are embroiled today as they were when *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published in 1970.

Spending a total of four months in Olinda and Recife as a participant-observer

³⁹⁷ The phrase is Joseph Campbell's, from *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1949)

interviewing, traveling and working with teachers of Youth and Adult Education (EJA) on the reinvention of Paulo Freire's pedagogy in Northeast Brazil, forty years after his banishment and seven years after his death, has helped redefine my own teaching methods. My ESL class is a mixed Culture and Reading Circle in which the students and I explore issues of personal and political import as collaborative learners and teachers engaged in on-going dialogue. We have the benefit of bilingual dictionaries, a decent ESL workbook and a gamut of reading matter, from articles in the daily newspaper to poems and stories by U.S. and Latin American authors, to songs, jokes, jobs and situations the students encounter in their daily lives. The students and I spend time discussing what is important to us. We deal with emergent issues by examining them when possible, analyzing their contents along with the emotions they engender, the hopes and doubts they inspire. For recent Latin American immigrants in Los Angeles, life is a *chile relleno* (a stuffed chili pepper) — the context looks familiar but the content is different from anything they have eaten before. The dialogical, problem-posing pedagogy that Freire advocated is open to such eventualities and they are certain to expand as the planet's man-made borders and limit-situations are transgressed, mutate and/or are reimposed in years to come.

Peter Michael Lownds, Los Angeles, 3 January 2006

Appendix: The Ten Situations of Freire and Brennand

Excerpted from *Educação como prática da liberdade* (1992) with the gracious permission of Moacir Gadotti and *Universitas Paulo Freire*, São Paulo, Brazil. All translations from Portuguese to English are the work of the author.

1st Situation

People in the World and with the World. Nature and culture.



In debating this situation, in which people are discussed as relational beings, we are able to distinguish two worlds – one of nature and the other of culture. We understand that the normal human state is both *in* and *with* the world. As beings, we are both *creative* and *recreative* and change what we call *reality* through our work. With simple questions such as “Who made the well?” “Why...? How...? When...?” asked about all the *elements* in the situation, two basic concepts emerge: culture is first explained on the basis of subsistence, of the

need to work. People make wells because they need water. They relate to the world by making it the object of their knowledge. By working *in* and *with* it, they transform it. The man in the picture made his house, his clothes, his tools. With this as a starting point and in simple but critically objective terms, the group discusses human relationships; no longer in terms of domination and transformation, but as subjects.

2nd Situation

Dialogue mediated by nature

In the preceding discussion, we analyzed relations between people as relations between subjects which cannot be ones of domination. In this one, the group is encouraged to consider communication between people and their consciousnesses as *dialogue*. What is the role of the world in such communication? How is it transformed and humanized by people? The group analyzes the loving, humble, hopeful, critical and creative basis of the dialogue. The next three situations constitute a



series whose analysis reaffirms the concept of culture at the same time that other interesting aspects are discussed.

3rd Situation Unlettered hunter

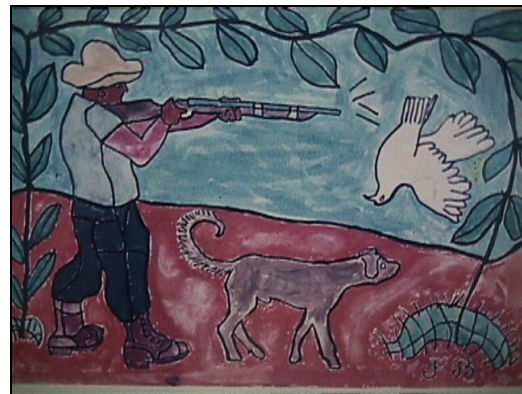


The debate about this situation begins by distinguishing between what is 'natural' and what is 'cultural.' Many people said: "In this painting, culture is the bow and arrow and the feathers worn by the indian." And when they were asked if the feathers weren't 'natural,' they always answered: 'as long as they are on the bird, they belong to nature. But when the bird is killed, plucked and transformed by people's work, the feathers are no longer 'natural' but 'cultural.' We got this answer often, in different parts of the country. By distinguishing the hunter's

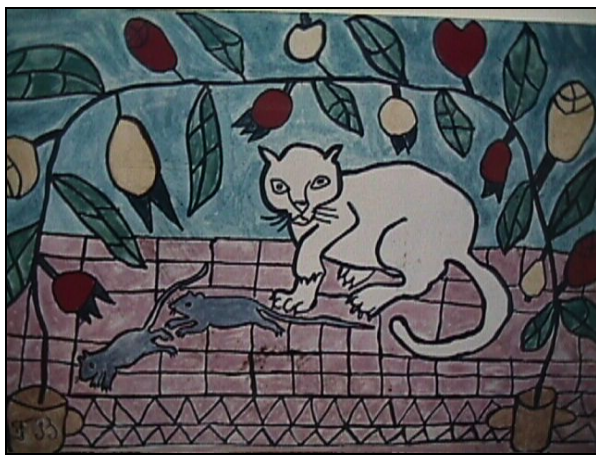
historico-cultural phase from their own, the group comes to see that his is an 'unlettered' culture. They discover that when people were able to extend their reach 20 or 30 feet by creating a tool that made it unnecessary to catch their prey with their hands, they made culture. By transferring the details of the instrument's use and manufacture to the next generations, they made education. The process of education in an unlettered culture where what we call 'illiteracy' does not exist is also discussed. People immediately perceive that 'illiteracy' means belonging to a 'lettered' culture without having mastered the techniques of writing and reading. This perception can be quite dramatic.

4th Situation Literate hunter (literate culture)

When this slide was projected, people identified the hunter as someone from their culture, literate or illiterate. Technological progress is discussed when the rifle is compared to the bow and arrow. The increase in people's prospects is analyzed is their potential, through the creative spirit their work and relationship with the world, continuing to transform it. However, such a transformation only makes sense if it contributes to people's humanization by pointing them toward liberation. Finally, implications of education for development are analyzed.



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5th Situation The cat as hunter

One of our intentions in this series was to make clear the difference in phase between the first two hunters and the difference in ontology between them and the cat.

Obviously we were not going to use these terms in the debates. But people perceived and expressed them in their own way. We will never forget a man from Brasilia who stated with absolute self-confidence: “Of these three only two are hunters – the two men. They make culture before and after they hunt. (He might have also said they make culture while they hunt.) The cat is not a hunter because it does not make culture before or after the hunt. It is a pursuer.” He established a subtle distinction between ‘hunting’ and ‘pursuing.’ Essentially, the fundamental point, the making of culture, was captured. While we debated these situations, a wealth of observation about men and animals, about the creative power of freedom, about intelligence and instinct, about education and instruction surged forth.

6th Situation

People transform natural materials in their work

The projection of this situation began with a discussion of what it represented. “What are we looking at? What are the men doing?” “They’re working with clay,” said some. Others said: “They’re altering the material of nature with their work.” After a series of observations about work (there were even those who spoke of “the joy of making something beautiful,” like a man in Brasilia), they were asked if the product of such work would be a cultural object. “Yes,” they said, “a vase, a clay cup, a frying pan.”



7th Situation

A vase, the product of work with natural materials



With what emotion we heard a woman say, during a discussion of this situation in a ‘culture circle’ in Recife, “I know how to do that. I makes culture.” Others, referring to the flowers in the vase, exclaimed: “as flowers, they belong to nature but as ornaments, they belong to culture.” What is being reinforced at this point is something that has been aroused by the preceding discussions -- the esthetic dimension of the work created. And this will be thoroughly discussed in the next situation, when culture is analyzed in terms of spiritual needs.

8th Situation

Poetry

First, the debate coordinator slowly reads the projected text. “This is poetry,” everyone generally agrees. The poetry is characterized as ‘popular.’ Its author is a simple man of the people. The discussion revolves around whether or not poetry is culture. “It’s just as much culture as the vase,” they say, but the two things are different.” By discussing this, they perceive, in critical terms, that poetry answers a different need with different material. After discussing various aspects of popular and erudite artistic creation, not just in the realm of poetry, the coordinator re-reads the text and opens it up for group discussion.



9th Situation

Patterns of behavior



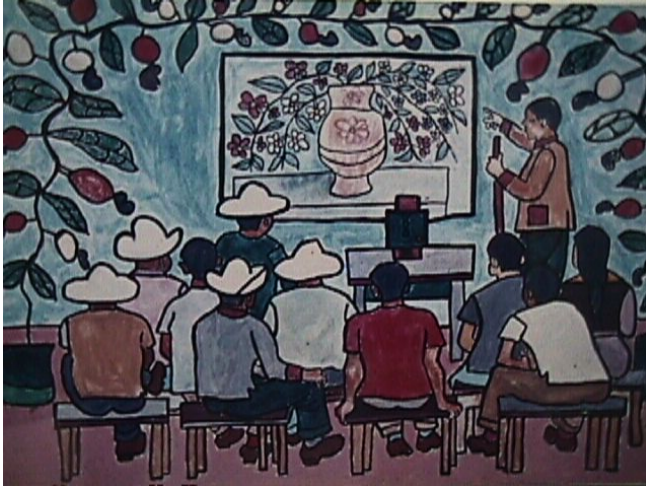
to dress like this: one in thick wool, the other in sturdy leather. Sometimes, the tradition remains after the need disappears.” The analysis of this situation, like the other nine, was always provocative. We got what we wanted – the characterization of behavior as a cultural manifestation.

In this situation, we analyze patterns of behavior as a cultural manifestation so we can then discuss the resistance to change. The painting presents a gaucho from the South and a cowboy from the Northeast of Brazil, each dressed very differently. By examining the way they dress, we initiate a discussion about the way they act. On one occasion, in a Culture Circle in a state in the Brazilian South, someone said: “Here we see two traditions of clothing from the South and the Northeast. But, before they became traditions, there was a need

10th Situation

A functioning Culture Circle

Synthesis of the preceding discussions



This situation presents a functioning Culture Circle. The participants easily identified themselves in the picture. The debate examined culture as a systematic acquisition of knowledge and focused on a fundamental, democratizing culture like the one in process in Brazil at the time [the early 1960s].

“Democratic culture,” one of those anonymous, non-literate masters said at the time, “has to start with who we are and what we do as a People. Not with what others think about and want for us.” Aside from these

debates about the democratizing of the culture, the function of a Culture Circle was examined in terms of its dynamic significance, the creative power of the dialogue, the elucidation of consciousnesses. These situations were discussed for two nights, creating intense motivation among the people to begin their literacy-training on the third, now that it was seen as a key with which they could open written communication for themselves.

Only in this way does the struggle for literacy make sense, as a consequence of the reflections people begin to make about their own capacity to reflect. About their position in the world. About the world itself. About their work. About their power to transform the world. About the meeting of consciousnesses. Reflections about literacy, which ceases to be something beyond them and seems to be inside them, something which can be drawn out, in relation to the world, like a creation.

Only when the word is understood by people in its true meaning as a force for the world’s transformation is the work of learning to read and write worthwhile. Only then does learning the alphabet make sense. To the degree that illiterate people discover the relativity of ignorance and wisdom, they take back one of the foundations of their manipulation from the false elites. Only then does learning to read and write make sense. Insofar as all the effort expended by people reflecting about themselves and about the world in which and with which they are involved leads them to discover that it also belongs to them, that work is not the penalty they pay for being humans, but a way of loving and helping the world be better.

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