

erable advance over the heavy emphasis given in many instructional writings on an interpersonal point of view, which pays relatively little attention to the dynamics of the group performance, and its effect on individual members.

The only drawback to this book is that it may induce drama teachers and students with little experience and training to misuse these techniques. Even though Ms. Gold suggests that they have to be adapted to specific situations, she neglects to say that to apply these techniques one must have adequate training. It is hoped that the drama instructor who uses these techniques is very aware of their risks and will be able to develop awareness in their students. A weakness of the author's approach is the lack of a clearly established point on the principles of confidentiality and professional responsibility. As one that has been trained and who has worked with these principles and these types of techniques in education, and family, couple and group therapy, I do have some concerns about their applications.

To summarize, despite my reservations regarding the clinical risks, the book reads well and is didactic, yet entertaining. It leaves the reader with a great respect for the author and her dedication and motivation to make a difference in her drama students' lives. The authors' model or strategy, "The Fictional Family," is an acronym for trust, autonomy, closeness, interdependence, and closure, presented in a sequential way. I recommend this book to trained drama teachers who would like to use it as an experiential approach to learning.

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**Roger I. Simon**

**TOWARDS A LANGUAGE OF HOPE AND POSSIBILITY:  
TEACHING AGAINST THE GRAIN.**

**Toronto: OISE Press, 1992, 172 pp.**

This is one of the latest books in the Critical Studies in Education and Culture Series. It is the third time that Simon appears as an author in the series. On the two other occasions, he first appears as a co-editor (with Henry A. Giroux) of a volume entitled *Popular Culture, Schooling and Everyday Life* (1989) and then as co-author (with Don Dippe and Arlene Schenke) of *Learning Work: A Critical Pedagogy of Work Education* (1991). This time, though, he is sole author of the text at hand. Roger I. Simon is regarded as an important figure within the Critical Pedagogy movement

and, unlike some other authors, he provides us with no unsmoothed collation of previously published articles but with a coherent volume consisting of an analytic exposition of his pedagogical ideas expressed within the context of the development of a "project of possibility" - a project which highlights the importance of human agency in the process of social transformation. Simon defines a project of possibility as "an activity determined by both real and present conditions and certain conditions still to come, which it is trying to bring into being" (p.22).

The title suggests a work which contains a signpost for the provision of counterhegemonic pedagogical experiences. Schools and other educational agencies are conceived of as important sites of struggle in this regard. This book, therefore, immediately calls to mind earlier works in the radical pedagogical tradition, including one which goes back several years, namely *Teaching as a Subversive Activity* (rooted in the humanism of the sixties), and others of a more recent date, notably Ira Shor's *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, this being closer to Simon's project since it is itself considered to be a landmark within critical pedagogy.

Simon's book, as well as that by Ira Shor, and some other works within the area of critical pedagogy, constitute a ray of hope in a period characterized by exhortations to raise standards, ensure marketability, go 'back to basics' and teach the 'great books'. It is a period during which we are also constantly being exposed to an instrumentalist view of education. Classic examples of the foregoing are the publications *A Nation at Risk* and *What Works: Research about Teaching and Learning*. As the title of the last mentioned publication suggests, the present is considered, if we can play around with Simon's sentence, "definitive of that which is possible." Not so, says Simon, who links the project of possibility he carries forward in this book with the tradition of the radical 'no'.

Like Giroux, he regards pedagogy as a form of cultural politics, and teachers as cultural workers. Cultural politics is to be considered as a terrain wherein a struggle for social transformation takes place. It is a struggle which is carried out in a variety of sites. Simon, therefore, poses, to his colleagues in the teaching field, the question regarding how teachers must connect their efforts with those operating in sites of cultural production other than schooling. As such, he calls for an alliance among the various cultural workers in a collective bid to counter dominant forms of cultural production in the interest of advancing an emancipatory and transformative project. This is a project devoted to the advancement of human dignity that leads to a process of "self-formation", which entails that people constitute themselves as subjects of their own history.

Chapter 5 offers his most explicit analysis of what can take place during a pedagogical process. In this chapter, entitled "Fear of Theory", Simon reflects on his 20-year-experience as an educator at The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He shows remarkable insight into the anxieties and apprehensions experienced by different students regarding the dominant theoretical discourse constituting the social form that delineates the boundaries for discussion within the particular academic niche with which Simon is associated. Simon regards the "Fear of Theory" not as an individual problem but as "a product of a particular conjunction of human capacities and histories and social forms". (p.94) It is a product of "symbolic violence", to use Bourdieu and Passeron's phrase, that can be inherent in institutional forms of pedagogic action - in short, the imposition of what the two French writers call a "cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power" (*ibid.*).

We regard Simon's comments in this respect as quite frank and commensurate with the feelings that we, as foreign scholars at OISE, have experienced when first encountering the particular social form that Simon is talking about. Zunade Dharsey (in Borg, Dharsey, 1992), a South African scholar, within the same institution, writes:

In the first few days after my arrival here, I attended several lectures, one on Habermas and Post-Modernity, and another on Critical Pedagogy and Practice. I was stunned by the fact that much of what transpired was alien to me in spite of the experience I had with the subject matter. I began to feel totally alienated because I felt that whereas I was a practitioner, I had come into a world of ideas. I felt extremely alienated from the whole process and I felt that I had no place here. It seems that experience which cannot be quantified or labelled according to rigorous academic terminology is deemed to have no place in the realm of valid knowledge (p.3).

Silence is considered by Simon as the most pervasive manifestation of fear. What, in our view, Simon fails to consider is that silence could be a form of resistance, a refusal to engage in the "game". Serracino Inglott (1990), albeit writing about questioning, makes a similar point with respect to what could normally be misconstrued as passivity:

In fact, asking no questions is quite liable to very different interpretations. For instance, rather than acceptance of any (colonial, ecclesiastical, etc.) authority's claim to superiority, it could be the expression of a refusal to play the game. It could be the opting out of an exchange which assumes that it is up to the authorities to provide the answers!

Despite his remarkable insights into the different ways in which students are receptive or otherwise to the prevailing theoretical discourse,

Simon provides no indication that his pedagogical approach is one of *praxis*, that is to say a process characterized by action-reflection-transformative action. Does the theoretical baggage change as a result of the dialogical encounter between the educator and learners, given the different reactions manifested by different students? While acknowledging, as Simon does (cf. p.115), that student voices should not be celebrated uncritically, we would ask whether these reactions, a product of different locations within the social structure, can have a direct bearing on the nature of theoretical production within the course. One gets the impression that, for Simon, the theoretical baggage does not change. It is the student that has to come up to the level required by the theoretical discourse. This can be construed as a sign of intellectual arrogance and constitutes another facet of the transmission model, therefore standing in contradiction to the very project of possibility that the author wants to carry forward.

The issue of classroom pedagogy is not simply discussed within the context of a graduate school but also in relation to schooling and work. This is hardly surprising, considering that this book, by Simon, immediately follows the one on *Learning Work*. As a matter of fact, Don Dippo, one of Simon's co-authors in the 1991 book, appears as second author of the Chapter, in the book under review, dealing with the school-work relationship. Some readers would be familiar with this chapter since it originally appeared in the *Journal of Education* (Vol. 169, No. 3., 1989). This chapter problematises the "taken for granted" notion that work experience is valuable per se. The fact that students in the co-op education programme have to return to schooling allows pedagogues the possibility of introducing critical pedagogical approaches into an area which has hitherto been strictly vocational and therefore narrow in scope. By virtue of a problematising education, with respect to students' work experience, one would be creating the possibilities for social transformation which, we would add, can include a transformation in the social relations of work. We regard this as an imaginative attempt to challenge the "new vocationalism" that has characterised educational policy in the U.S. as well as other countries.

One of Simon's most interesting sections deals with the issue of critically appropriating, for one's own political project, works that form part of the "canon". In his piece on the Yiddish rendering of *The Merchant of Venice* and Chinua Achebe's insurgent reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Simon effectively demonstrates how this process of critical appropriation, for a subordinate group's ends, can take place. Simon makes the point, with regard to insurgent readings of such texts, that, as teachers, we should be clear as to "what is at stake when we support or resist others in questioning dominant or conventional interpretations" (p.115). He posits

that one has to identify what discourse is supporting the insurgent reading, and whether, given one's project, it is possible to support it as a counterdiscursive/counterhegemonic position (*ibid*).

Arguably, his most powerful pedagogical strategy within his project, centres around the issue of what Walter Benjamin, who together with Phil Corrigan constitutes one of the important sources of influence in this work, calls "redemptive remembrance". According to Simon, "Remembrance is the practice in which certain images and stories of a collective past are brought together with a person's feelings and comprehension of their embodied presence in time and space" (p.149).

What we are confronted with are two historical images, one connected to the issue of the dispossessed First Nations people in North America, and the other relating to the plight of immigrant workers in post-war Germany. These codifications, one extracted from an old family album and the other being more recent, are powerful images relating to present day struggles which call to mind long collective histories characterized by racial discrimination. They can be employed as pedagogical tools to link present with past with a view to exploring possibilities for a better and radically more democratic future - that which is "not yet". As McLaren and da Silva (1993) remark, "Remembering in this instance conceives of history not as a constraint on the present but rather as 'source or precondition of power' that can illuminate our political project of emancipation" (p.75).

While we consider this chapter as well as other works in the same vein (e.g., McLaren & da Silva, 1993), as capable of providing signposts for a new pedagogy of possibility, we have misgivings about a few points in Simon's text. It seems that Simon has opted for a selective brushing of history against the grain. In confining himself to portraying his people consistently as the oppressed, he misses on the important issue of multiplicity of subjectivities involved in processes of structural and systemic oppression. This can be construed as an excellent example of a politics of absence, an exercise that unknowingly may lead to legitimising oppressive social relations.

While also underlining the forcefulness of Staeck's illustration, we should like to point out that there is always the danger that the pedagogical exercise involved can have a contrary effect. While it would be foolish to minimize Germany's role in the perpetration of the Holocaust and as a contemporary site of racial struggle, the recurring focus on this country, in both past and present, could serve to assuage the collective guilt of other nations implicated, through a conspiracy of silence, in the Holocaust, as

well as de-emphasize their role in racial exploitation in general. With respect to the first issue, we cannot, as people emerging from a predominantly Christian culture, deny this culture's centuries-long hatred of Judaism, which hatred culminated in the Holocaust. So, while Hitler and Nazi Germany are perceived as the prime perpetrators, we would argue that a whole culture centering around Christianity, which culture both of us embody, is implicated in this and other genocides. The foregoing should not, however, obscure the Chapter's major contribution which lies in the use of codifications to engender a dialectical process juxtaposing past and present with a view to transforming the future.

The emphasis on the Holocaust, as well as constant reference to Judaism throughout, underline what we regard as one of the merits of this text. What Simon affords us is an excellent example of an embodied text, one which reveals the author's politics of location. He is also careful of not confining himself to the particular struggle in which he has an obvious investment, being an Askenazi Jew. His work constantly demonstrates solidarity with other struggles, notably those relating to the dispossessed First Nations people and Africans. Staeck's illustration of Italian workers in Germany, evocative of the Holocaust experience, follows, in the final chapter, an image relating to the struggles of natives in North America. The piece regarding the Yiddish reinterpretation of Shylock is followed by another piece, not one dealing with the obvious but by now belaboured theme of Caliban, but with Achebe's insurgent reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

The many Hebrew phrases and terms used throughout require translation for the non-Hebrew reader. There are also other technical faults. The Italian *tricolore*, so central to one's appreciation of Staeck's photograph, is nowhere to be seen in the black and white illustration provided. The colours of red, white, and green, within the Star of David, could have been indicated in the caption. As for teachers, in different spheres of education, there are some important insights to be derived. For one of us (Borg), for three years a History and Social Studies teacher, Simon's linking of past codifications with present struggles proved to be an enriching experience in that it provided him with a stark contrast to his use of images from the past to extract factual knowledge or, at best, unveil past sufferings. For the other (Mayo), for several years a teacher of English, Simon's chapter on insurgent readings of canonized texts also provides a contrast to the tendency he experienced, during his school teaching days, to rely on interpretations by some of the established literary critics (normally white, western and male, and linked to the hallowed walls of Europe's and North America's centres of cultural domination). As Roger I. Simon powerfully indicates in this work, canonical works and history can be read against the grain in the interest of an emancipatory project.

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**SHAKESPEARE AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN.**

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**135 pp.**

Shakespeare will probably survive current attempts to purge the literary canon of overvalued, dead, white, European, male authors, but whether he can overcome the dazzle of popular electronic culture and the reluctance of teachers and students is quite another matter. Will Shakespeare become, like Aristophanes, a playwright of the ancient past — studied in departments of classics but rarely read or performed by adolescents? The purpose of Mary Ann Rygiel's book is to halt this slide into obscurity by bringing the Bard's plays to life in the secondary classroom.

Rygiel is only partly successful in her task. As a secondary teacher writing to her colleagues, she fills a gap in the literature by offering a book