

Book Review Symposium: Peter Mayo and Paolo Vittoria, (2021) *Critical Education in International Perspective*. London and New York. Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN HB: 978-1-3501-4775-1

Manuel Joseph Ellul

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto (UofT), Ontario, Canada

Kurt Borg

University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Massimiliano Tarozzi

University of Bologna, Italy

Maria Nikolakaki

University of Peloponnese, Corinth, Greece

Manuel Joseph Ellul, *Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto (UofT), Ontario, Canada* and **Kurt Borg**, *University of Malta, Msida, Malta*

In 2019, Peter Mayo published an article in the Italian journal *Educazione Aperta*, titled ‘Critical Pedagogy: An international perspective’, writing that ‘while often open to the criticism of being somewhat Eurocentric, critical pedagogy often owing to the presence of students from Southern diasporas in the North, broadened its areas of concern’, such as Jamaica Afro-America, Turkey, and Italy (p. 154). For Mayo, critical pedagogy is therefore ‘not something new and confined to a specific context’ (p. 154).

Mayo and Vittoria's (2021) new book, *Critical Education in International Perspective* and published by Bloomsbury extends from Mayo's 2019 article. The book consists of twelve chapters (including an extensive introduction) and is divided into four parts, followed by an Epilogue. It is our belief that it would make for an excellent course book to present critical education from an international dimension, something which is decisively lacking in higher education.

The Introduction of the book outlines its mission statement to 'critically address the relationship between education and power and issues concerning social justice' (p. 2). The authors refer to Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a crucial source of critical pedagogy, and the influence Freire received from various thinkers, philosophers and educators, such as Dewey, the Frankfurt school, Foucault, Gramsci, Habermas, the 'Jamaican-born Stuart Hall and Afro-Americans such as Angela Davis' (p. 3). There are also Italian influences such as Don Lorenzo Milani, Aldo Capitini, Danilo Dolci and Ada Gobetti who 'anticipated many insights associated with critical approaches to education' (p. 3). These diversified sources enrich the archive of critical pedagogy alongside North American theorists such as Giroux, McLaren and others.

In the Introduction (Chapter 1), Mayo and Vittoria underscore the need for critical pedagogists to 'take sides and not remain indifferent' (p. 6). This claim echoes Antonio Gramsci, who was said to 'hate those who are indifferent', as did Lorenzo Milani, who provocatively maintained that it was 'better [to be] a fascist than indifferent' (p. 6). Ada Gobetti is also cited in the fifth chapter as reiterating this hatred of 'all sort of indifference' (p. 45). Present in all three pedagogical perspectives are unmistakable Dantean undertones. In the *Inferno* canticle, one reads about Dante's passionate hatred of 'gli ignavi', people who 'visser senza 'infamia e senza lodo' (Alighieri 2001, p. 60), the ones who

remained neutral and never assumed any position on any issue. For Dante they are ‘sciaurati che mai non fur vivi’ (Alighieri 2001, p. 62); never alive.

Part 1, titled ‘Education, Markets and Alternatives’ consists of two chapters. Chapter 2, titled ‘Lifelong Education/Learning: An Alternative Critical Approach’ critically distinguishes between the terms lifelong education (LLE), which focuses on ‘adult education,’ ‘non-formal education’, and lifelong learning (LLL) (p.11). The authors make the wary observation that over time, LLL became more prevalent since ‘it’s more attractive for funding purposes’ (p.12) but its focus on ‘employability, on ‘learning to earn’’ (p.11) does not necessarily translate into employment. The authors therefore emphasise that what is needed ‘are forms of education that enable people to learn to express critically with work’ (p. 16). Yet, in the wake of Freire, this is only possible if students learn to critically engage with issues through a problem-posing form of education rather than a banking one, which would place the former within LLL pedagogy rather than LLE. The final part of the chapter makes particular reference to eco-pedagogy, or ‘a process of LLL predicated on people being conceived as relational beings in harmony with the rest of the cosmos’ (p. 18). This idea is also borrowed from Freire, a figure who looms large in all aspects of critical pedagogy examined in the book, who in his *Pedagogy of Indignation* (2004) prophetically lamented the world’s ‘contradiction to engage in progressive, revolutionary discourse and [...] a practice which negates life, one which pollutes the sea, the water, the fields, devastates the forests [and] destroys the trees’ (p. 120).

Chapter 3, titled ‘Philosophy of Differences and Social Creation: Anna Maria Piussi and Antonia De Vita,’ focuses on two contemporary Italian feminist authors. Piussi embraced feminist philosophy in the 1970s following work she did on a project related to working class education, in which ‘knowledge [...]

was shared in a process of creation characterized by [...] the spirit of feminism and [...] Freirean pedagogical politics' (p. 22). De Vita and Piusi contributed various publications on 'alternative conditions, embedded in the alternative social relations that allow for different and more humanistic types of social relations and social creation' (p. 24). The idea of an 'alternative' again leads back to Freire (2001), who believed that hope, 'an ontological dimension of our human conditioning' (Freire 2001, p. 58), can make things 'alterable' (p. 103) and open to transformation.

Part 2 of the book, 'A Critical Reading of the World,' consists of four chapters, each centering on a figure whose life and work, even if marginal, contributed to critical pedagogy. Chapter 4 discusses 'Gabriela Mistral: Poet of Education,' a pseudonym for Lucila Godoy y Alcayaga, the first Latin American recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature in 1945. Alcayaga's influences were Gabriele D'Annunzio, José Martí, and Frédéric Mistral (himself the 1904 Nobel Prize in Literature), from whom Alcayaga borrowed her pseudonym. One aspect of Mistral's work which deserves mention is her idea of a rural educator, who represents the true spirit of the vocation and who is 'itinerant [and] move[s] from locality to locality imparting a minimum of instruction: rewarding, writing, counting' (p. 32). This arose as a response to an issue Mistral addressed to the UN, indicating the need for educators for 'small communities without schools [where] parents do not send their children to schools in neighbouring localities [...] because of the time lost when travelling on foot [as well as] the dangers that might be encountered along the way' (p. 32).

The anti-fascist Italian teacher and journalist Ada Gobetti and her writings, notably *Diario Partigiano* and *Il Giornale dei Genitori*, are discussed in Chapter 5. Gobetti claimed that all those who 'struggle for democracy, peace and progress' (p. 42) are, in fact, educators. Children are not pets to be

controlled and trained, but are to be ‘listened’ to (p. 43), as Freire (2001) himself believed of critical education (p. 107). Gobetti also ‘regarded paid employment as the basis for women’s emancipation’ (p. 42). Furthermore, she presciently anticipated the dangers of a socially mediated world when observing ‘that television would deny children opportunities for natural and spontaneous play, so important for social and cognitive development’ (p. 44).

The life and works of Don Lorenzo Milani, another renowned Italian educator, are addressed in Chapter 6, titled ‘Lorenzo Milani and the Schools of San Donato and Sant’Andrea a Barbiana.’ Mayo and Vittoria notice ‘the regime of austerity and discipline imposed by Milani at his school’, which was based on Milani’s idea that ‘working-class students need to work hard, shedding ‘blood, sweat and tears,’ to acquire that which comes almost naturally to middle-class children, through their cultural capital and habitus’ (p. 52). Back in the 1950s, Milani had already noticed that the educational system privileges the middle-class, an issue revived later in the Anglo-Saxon world through Ray Rist’s (1970) study, *Student Social Class and Teacher Expectations: The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy in Ghetto Education*. Freire’s ideas are evident here as well, especially his notion of ‘class suicide’ as a solution to eliminate a strong middle-class educational system. In a sense, this echoes Milani, who ‘renounced his own privileges being careful not to live above the level of the impoverished parishioners’ (p. 44).

Chapter 7, titled ‘Paulo Freire, Globalization and Emancipatory Education,’ presents some of Freire’s key ideas, which are drawn upon, extended and transformed by the critical pedagogists mentioned in this book. Contrary to the deterministic tendencies of neoliberalism, Freire believed that since humans are unfinished creatures, we can hope to create possibilities (pp. 67-69). A significant aspect mentioned in this chapter, often neglected by educators, is the

lack of love present in the curriculum. For Freire, love was fundamental to education (p. 69). Furthermore, the authors refer to Freire's problem-posing education as one based on a social constructivist epistemology, where knowledge is co-created and 'co-investigated' by 'educator and educatee', both learning from one another (Freire, 2017; Darder et al., 2009, p. 13; Mayo and Vittoria, 2021 p. 74).

Part 3, titled 'Education and Migration,' consists of two powerful chapters that approach diversely the relation between anti-racism and education. Chapter 8, 'Towards an Anti-Racist Education and Human Solidarity in the Mediterranean in the Context of Migrations,' opens with the acknowledgment that, despite its promises, the intensification of globalization has led to what Zygmunt Bauman has termed 'an entire human waste disposal industry' (p. 79) that condemns lives to unlivability and precarity. To counter Bauman's notion, the authors draw on Giroux's portrayal of education as encouraging participants to become 'border-crossers' and cultivate an 'Educated Hope' that emphasizes 'authentic dialogue' (p. 83), listening¹, and a commitment to a democracy which struggles against marginalization. Such educational practices would entail 'confrontation of ideas and not sanitized exchanges' (p. 84). This education, following Gramsci, also cautions against the dangers of homogenizing people's identities, and unwittingly reproducing stereotypes with racist elements that could be embedded in the popular creative spirit (pp. 84-86). Thus, out of different communities, social movements and a plurality of wisdoms, an anti-racist education that foregrounds human solidarity can emerge, as opposed to the 'hegemonic neoliberal discourse exasperatingly full of pragmatic technicism, competitiveness, individualistic overtones and productivity' (p. 90).

¹ For Freire (2001), listening entails the ability to be open 'to the word of the other, to the gesture of the other, to the differences of the other' (p. 107).

Chapter 9, 'Hegemony, Migration and Mislplaced Alliances: Lessons from Gramsci,' takes as its cue misplaced alliances created by the discourses of fear surrounding migration. The authors demonstrate that such misplaced alliances are the result of 'an ideology that obfuscates the reality that both immigrants and 'autochthonous' workers are members of an international class exploited by international capital' (p. 91). Unscrupulous employers and governments seeking to lower local wages benefit from the waves of migration that they discursively construct as a 'crisis'. This enables the intensification of capitalist relations of exploitation upon which their economies have become dependent, while at the same time criminalizing these same migrants, 'othering' them and fostering xenophobic affects that prevent solidarity among the working class. To shed critical light on this contemporary situation, the authors turn to Gramsci's diagnosis of the North-South divide in Italy, and his call for solidarity among subaltern people on both sides of this divide. Gramsci insisted that Turin's communists had the task of bring the Southern question to the attention of the workers' vanguard to strengthen global working-class solidarity. In the contemporary age, misplaced alliances are often detrimental in the long-run to subaltern class interests since they bring about labour market segmentation, often on ethnic and racist lines. An educational anti-racist programme, in concert with other types of action (after all, as the authors emphasize repeatedly, 'education is not an independent variable' (p. 99)) can only be effective when grounded in political economy and an understanding of colonialism. Following Gramsci, the authors argue that an educational strategy is necessary to generate a revolutionary class consciousness without which people living in precarity might be swayed towards populist right-wing and neo-fascist discourses that capitalized on their fears.

Part 4, 'Popular Education, Social Movements and the Struggle for Independence,' consists of three chapters that take as their subject matter,

respectively, the Bissau-Guinean anti-colonial Amílcar Cabral, the former Tanzanian politician Julius K. Nyerere, and social movements and critical education in Brazil. Mayo and Vittoria highlight how the critical pedagogical potential within these figures played out in historically- and culturally-specific moments.

Chapter 10, co-written with Amilcar Araujo Pereira, is titled ‘Amílcar Cabral and Paulo Freire: Struggle for Independence and Popular Education in Guinea-Bissau’. Freire was fascinated by Cabral’s ability to wed revolutionary practice with people’s education, and initiated literacy programmes in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde after Cabral’s assassination in 1973. The authors identify crucial characteristics of such popular education, namely its rejection of colonizing models of colonization and its efforts to restore faith in people’s cultures, revealing the colonial falsification of history, ‘decolonizing the mind’ (echoing Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, and reminiscent of Fanon) and, in Cabral’s words, to ‘facilitate the re-Africanisation of mentalities’ (pp. 109-110). These qualities are also necessary to resist what Boaventura de Sousa Santos terms ‘cognitive injustice’ and ‘epistemicide’ (p. 110). Drawing on post-, de- and anti-colonial writings, such as Fanon and Said, the authors show how colonial arrogance and colonialism manipulate one’s acquired sense of reality, creating a false ideological conviction of one’s inferiority resulting in a ‘parallel realities’ syndrome, ‘cultural schizophrenia’ and ashamedness (p. 113). The popular education programmes set up in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde therefore served as a liberatory alternative to colonial education and were intended to destroy colonial myths and to reconnect people with their territory by helping to cultivate a democratic practice, criticality and to develop their own literature. It was a programme of integrated learning combining literacy with popular education, where education did not signify a specialized activity divorced from life and production (typical of the ‘technicist, heartless, atomizing and

decontextualized' learning of neoliberal education (p. 118)) but instead foregrounded cultural action and community politics.

Chapter 11, 'Julius K. Nyerere's Signposts for a Postcolonial Education,' examines the contribution of the former President of Tanzania who promoted a political philosophy known as *Ujamaa* (familyhood). This entailed an educational concern revolving around equality, respect and the sharing of resources. At the time of its independence, education in this region was limited to elitist colonial education, characterized by cultural invasion and the lack of transmission of Tanzanian values and knowledges. This chapter highlights how, under Nyerere, this was slowly being replaced by participatory and educational communal being, ensuring the provision of universal primary education by 1977. Nyerere and Freire admired each other's writings, with both holding that educators should be disposed to learn from the learner. Nyerere's educational outlook focused on providing a sense of self-reliance and the development of an agrarian economy. Nyerere's principle was: 'if they farm well they can eat well... if they work badly, then they themselves will suffer' (p. 124).

A criticism of this approach can centre about the devaluation of individual liberties in the direction of one's education, the content of such education, and whether there is scope for education beyond immediate economic interests. Mayo and Vittoria acknowledge this critique when they write that some of the imperatives of economic viability run counter to the principles of this supposedly liberating education. Moreover, the authors refer to and question whether the 'ideological training' offered to lower-level government officials can be considered as genuine critical political education or an exercise in partisan party indoctrination. The authors argue that this 'remains a moot point', asking rhetorically, 'is there a fine line between the two?' (p. 130). However, one could argue that there is, and ought to be, a crucial distinction

between critical education and indoctrination, no matter how hard it may be to delineate precisely where one stops and the other begins. The authors conclude the chapter on a sombre note, highlighting that while adult education was at the forefront in Tanzania in the 1970s, it became dependent on foreign funding, which diminished in the neoliberal climate of the 1980s, pushing Tanzania's development today far away from the politics of Nyerere.

Chapter 12, 'Social Movements and Critical Education in Brazil: From the Origins of Popular Education to the Struggle for Democratisation,' is co-written with Roberto Leher. It presents a wide-ranging genealogy of the role of social movements as learning sites in Brazil, especially the Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST). The chapter also refers to other 'southern' and subaltern social movements (p. 134) in Mexico, India, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, the various Indigenous and First Nations movements, as well as the dispossessed Palestinians and landless peasants. The chapter commences with a consideration of popular education in Brazil in the early 1960s, such as the work of Freire, the Popular Culture Movement and the Basic Education Movement in the context of the 'developmentalist' agenda that dominated the political landscape in Brazil at the time. The 1964 coup resulted in the arrest and exile of various militants, including Freire, who had become too dangerous for 'turning the undifferentiated mass or rural workers into conscious people aware of their legal social rights.' Literacy had now become 'a political act as it enabled them to vote' (pp. 141-142).

Freire's literacy campaigns were 'based on generative words arising from the everyday language of the community, in cultural circles' (p. 142). This *problem-posing* pedagogy also involves praxis i.e. 'reflection upon action for transformative action' (p. 143). In this spirit, 'groups of land workers in Brazil continued to organize clandestinely with the support of the progressive Church'

(p. 144) and trade unions, resulting in the formation of the Landless Workers Movements (MST) in the 1980s. In this regard, the chapter crucially turns to Florestan Fernandes, tracing the activities and leadership of the MST since its formation in 1984, and the establishment of its first university courses in the late 1990s (p. 152). What the chapter emphasises is that the ‘Pedagogy of the Movement’ centres on education and training, and is inseparable from social struggles pertaining, for example, to land reform and expropriation. In this regard, the class struggle itself has an educational function since ‘[o]nly through struggle does the exploited class become educated. Only through struggle does it begin to realize the magnitude of its own power, widen its horizons, enhance its abilities, clarify its mind and forge its will’ (p. 154).

The book’s Epilogue reiterates the book’s intention ‘to contribute to further internationalize the discourse on critical approaches to education’ (p. 157). Mayo and Vittoria’s contribution succeeds in shedding light on authors, movements and ideas that may have not yet enjoyed the recognition they deserve in the critical education archive. Animating and reviving these figures, ideas and historical moments is an illuminating gesture that counters the darkness of the hopeless contemporary age. Reading Mayo and Vittoria’s (and their co-authors’) own writing is an educational experience in itself. The struggles identified in this book are multi-faceted and occupy diverse positions: the university, the school, the policy-making channels, state apparatus, social movements and grass roots, trade unions, popular education initiatives, and more. Mayo and Vittoria warn that if education is ‘aloof from concrete experiences, this education does not fully develop a critical stance and constitutes an easy target or corpse for the vultures of marketization and commodification’ (p. 167). The authors of this book end with the promise of hope in an education praxis that transcends, echoing the late Mark Fisher (2009), ‘capitalist realism,’ recognizing that critical education is an antidote to

the homogenizing culture of neoliberalism which for long has inculcated the belief in the absence of alternatives. As Mayo and Vittoria conclude, ‘there are so many engaged in struggle [...] to give up on hope’ (p. 168).

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Massimiliano Tarozzi, *University of Bologna, Italy*

What is most striking about Peter Mayo and Paolo Vittoria's book is perhaps the attempt to broaden the perspective of critical education beyond the North American context in which it has been primarily established.

According to the authors, the perspective that examines the relationship between power and education and promotes social justice goes beyond the Anglo Saxon world, and can also be found in other latitudes, in other historical eras, and with other political and cultural references. Of course, if nowadays we can refer to ‘critical pedagogy’, ‘critical studies in education’ and so forth in the political discourse within education, it is because of the scholarly work of Giroux, McLaren, Apple, Torres (to name a few north American critical scholars), who

followed in the footsteps of Paulo Freire during the American period of his political exile.

Yet Mayo and Vittoria argue that a critical view to education cannot be confined to a ‘Northern’ perspective, but also embraces a ‘Southern’ one, and this south-north trajectory marks the theoretical itinerary that the authors offer us in this book. Along this trajectory, the Mediterranean, ‘the south of the north and the north of the south’, plays a particular role as a cultural watershed: historically a crossroads for cultures that shared that hybrid ‘lingua franca of the Mediterranean’ - a pidgin language composed of Italian, Arabic and other Romance languages (Wansbrough, 1996) - which we currently use to define, by extension, any language shared by the international community. But the Mediterranean is also the place where the brutal tragedies of neoliberal globalisation take place, with the massacres of migrants shipwrecked at the gates of Fortress Europe.

The book is the culmination of an intellectual journey to explore critical education that the two authors, both together and separately, have undertaken over the last decade. It contains the joint revision of papers originally drafted separately, two of them with co-writers. Mayo and Vittoria’s sodality led to a co-authored book originally published in Italian in 2017 (Mayo, Vittoria, 2017) for which I had the honour of writing the preface, and which already contained the essential elements of the thesis and the theoretical framework presented in this text. Compared to that first overview in Italian, *Critical education in international perspective*, revises and updates the critical itinerary around five thematic axes and eight authors. The choice of authors and social movements that expand the horizon of critical education on a global scale is not, and cannot be, comprehensive. Mayo and Vittoria deliberately choose to focus on Mediterranean and Latin American perspectives on critical education which they know best because of their

biographies: Peter Mayo is a Maltese scholar with an Anglo-Saxon background. He is a fine connoisseur of Mediterranean cultures as well as of the Italian language and culture. Paolo Vittoria, born and educated in Italy, lived and worked for years in Latin America, teaching at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro before returning to Italy, bringing with him the vast treasure of knowledge and experience gained in Latin America. The result is a rich and fascinating theoretical and critical itinerary that crosses three continents: the philosophy of difference by Annamaria Piussi and Luisa Muraro; Luisa Mistral as poet of rural education; the anti-fascist pedagogy by Ada Marchesini Gobetti; Don Milani's emancipatory approach; Freire's critique of neoliberal globalisation; Gramsci on south-north migrations; Cabral and Nyerere's struggle for anti-colonial emancipatory democracy.

It is worth noting that, compared to the previous text, two new figures of critical educators ante litteram are introduced here - Gabriela Mistral and Ada Gobetti - two extraordinary women who from different hemispheres fought against fascism and political and cultural imperialism. We are grateful to Mayo and Vittoria for acknowledging the often invisible role of women in 20th century struggles for social justice.

Popular education as critical education

By drawing on contributions from Latin America and the Mediterranean, and in particular from Italy, the authors establish an original connection between the recent development of critical education grounded in the framework of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and popular education, especially the one built on a solid tradition developed in Italy after the Second World War.

What makes this fusion of horizons possible is precisely the contextualisation of the critical debate in the Mediterranean basin (see Chapter 8), a crossroads that

enables the exchange of emancipatory cultures and imposes on continental Europe a critical de-colonial reflection.

Here, the ‘Mediterranean’ is primarily regarded as a symbolic place of encounters and conflicts, a crossroads of cultures, migrations, exchanges, discriminations and hybridities, and therefore an emblematic space of the conundrums of globalisation and at the same time an ideal terrain for the flourishing of the critical and popular education presented in the various chapters. Thus, the Mediterranean is a social construct, not just a geographical one, which reveals the tensions between defensive modernity and cultural and migratory flows, between the ancient and the modern, between cultural heritages and ecological devastation. Mayo and Vittoria delineate a project of a meridional and Mediterranean pedagogy, which arises both from the millenary identity of the Mediterranean basin and from its condition of meridionality with respect to the North of the boreal hemisphere.

This gives rise to a very thought-provoking proposal, long cultivated by Peter Mayo, which recalls the idea of an Epistemology of the South, launched by another Mediterranean, the Portuguese Boaventura De Sousa Santos (De Sousa, 2014), who nevertheless related it to the Global South and not only to the South of the North. Against this framework, the Mediterranean is seen as an emblematic place of conflicts, crossed by new diasporas and displaced people and by the tenacious resistance of a Europe entrenched in its own privileges. But it is also a place of emancipation from which innovative critical perspectives arise, combining a global discourse on critical pedagogy with traditions of popular education historically embedded in Mediterranean culture.

‘Popular education’ is a polysemic term used differently in different scholarly traditions (Crowther, J., Galloway, V. and Martin, I., 2005), but in this context,

the stimulating connection between critical pedagogy and popular education proposed in this book owes its origins to the critical action of Paulo Freire. There it has been widely used by teachers, educators, social movements in Latin America and, more recently reinvented in Africa, the United States and Europe.

In addition to Freire's work in north-eastern Brazil and the Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, which are discussed respectively in chapter 8 and 12 of this book, a militant popular education is also deeply rooted in Italian post-WWII education, about which Gobetti (chapter 5) and Milani (chapter 6) are only two examples. Here in the 1960s and 1970s outside academia flourished innovative pedagogical experiences and analyses, which played a fundamental critical role in schools, their contents, methods, and approaches, provoking and sustaining a broad movement for educational reform, sometimes supported by progressive local policies. It was a tradition that spanned across different political cultures, all located in a solid progressive and anti-fascist culture (Guimaraes, Lucio-Villegas and Mayo, 2018).

There have been significant experiences in the catholic sphere, such as that of Don Milani in Barbiana, well reconstructed in chapter 6, or that of Don Zeno Saltini, also in Tuscany, and his idea of an educating community for the excluded and marginalised.

On the secular front, to name a few, there have been the experiences of Danilo Dolci in Partinico, Sicily, mentioned several times in the book, and the work of Bruno Ciari (who would deserve to be included in the book), a great educational innovator in primary schools who also promoted a renovated, inclusive, and universal idea of kindergarten (D'Ascenzo, 2020).

Along the same line, in addition to the aforementioned Ada Gobetti, who was the driving force behind the ‘Giornale dei genitori’ (Parents' Journal) underpinning an emancipatory pedagogy rooted in the values of the anti-fascist resistance, are the teacher Mario Lodi and, more generally, those popular political grassroots movements for pedagogical reform from below, which demonstrated a unique capacity for innovation and independent experimentation in schools, such as the Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa (Educational Cooperation Movement). But this incomplete list should also include a non-standard educator like Gianni Rodari and his militant and participatory children's literature.

Even before the fruitful contact with Freire, popular education in Italy was strongly rooted in the political and pedagogical culture of the country. Mayo and Vittoria's main argument indicates a way along which the combination of the current critical education and the indigenous tradition of popular and militant education can revitalise, without any nostalgia, a political season of commitment that has never been so necessary considering the neoliberal erosion of public educational systems. This combination is also important for other reasons: to bridge the gap between academia and educational practice, reconnecting an alliance that seems to have been lost. But above all, to give a voice to all those militant educators who resist in the school; often unknown, ignored and undervalued, who are in search of that theoretical and political horizon to become agents of change and active promoters of school reform.

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Maria Nikolakaki, *University of Peloponnese, Greece*

This book could not have come in a more urgent time. Living under the repercussions of the pandemic and the volatility of war on top of the destructive neoliberal policies, educators are in need of more tools to rethink and practice critical education. In one way or the other we are confronted by an all front attack by the ruling class, who want to destroy the social contract for a Great Reset. This is a unilateral decision that needs to be challenged but we need tools for thinking about the challenges of our times. This book opens the discussion of what is the call of our generation: a Critical International Education to transform the world into social justice and peace.

Education is the projection of the future of society; it is no less than the materialized philosophy for the formation of the future generation (Nikolakaki, 2022). By projecting an international critical education, this book appears to be like a response to the New World Order that the transnational ruling class envisions to more like the L'Ordine Nuovo, of which Gramsci took part in the early 1920s (Martin, 2002). L'Ordine Nuovo was a weekly paper launched in the city of Turin by Gramsci and three other young intellectuals:

They had launched the paper at a time of unparalleled upheaval in Italy. Right across Europe, the First World War had caused a horrendous death toll and immense hardship for the lower classes. There were huge strikes and clashes between workers and the forces of order nearly everywhere. (Harman, 2003)

The workers loved L'Ordine Nuovo because in it they found something of themselves, the best part of themselves, because in it they sensed their own inner striving: how best can we be free? How can we become ourselves?' wrote the 28 year old Antonio Gramsci in August 1920. (quoted in Harman, 2003)

Peter Mayo and Paolo Vittoria, the distinguished scholars in their field who put together the book, are coming from the Mediterranean space and both have deep connections to Latin America. They have been working around Paulo Freire's ideas, among others, more noticeably Gramsci, for decades. They have co-authored a collection of articles in this book that focuses on the past, the present and the future of education on a global scale. In that way they are connecting theory and praxis, since as Lenin (1918) said in "What Is to Be Done?": 'Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.'

The book is divided in 5 parts and apart from the main authors, there are 6 co-authors of various chapters. Chapter one is the special introduction from Mozambique-Greek Joao Paraskeva, who sets the tone of the book. As he states, the objective of this book is not another book on critical theory but to do critical theory (p. xxi). He explains how this book aims to go beyond the eurocentrism found in contemporary education and to envision viable alternatives to it. The discrepancies between the Global South and the Global North appear as challenges to bridge cultures in order to include excluded social groups of the global society, what Gramsci referred to as the subaltern. As Gramsci (1971) wrote in *Prison Notebooks*:

The awareness of the worker masses cannot be a genuine class awareness if the workers do not learn...to observe each of the other social classes in all the manifestations of their intellectual, moral and political life—if they do not learn to apply in practice a materialist analysis and a materialist evaluation of all sides of the activity and life of all classes, strata and groups of the population.

Overall the book describes global issues and practices of critical education. It is inspiring, and the issues it addresses are theory and practices of pioneer educators on different countries and times. These chapters can be used as a guide of comprehensive struggles in international education by critical educators on a series of levels, including the most important stakes of capitalism in crisis. Although the choice of social movements and endeavours is not exhaustive, the book portrays challenging social problems and how leading intellectuals are addressing them.

The chapter on lifelong learning, following the path of Paulo Freire, grapples with alternative visions of lifelong learning away from its capitalist commodification. The main thesis is that what we really need is forms of critically engaging in the economy, to read the word and the world as Freire has said in order to emphasize the role of the citizen as a social agent.

This book does not neglect to include important features of feminist studies and struggles. The third chapter of this book, about the work of two powerful Italian feminists of difference, Anna Maria Piussi and Antonia De Vittta, is exhilarating in addressing patriarchy. These feminists' work suggests processes of learning and self-learning to collective learning in order to create social solidarity creation for social change. Two more feminist figures are introduced in this book, Gabriela Mistral, the poet of resistance and Ada Gobetti, who bravely fought against fascism and cultural imperialism.

The book has dedicated two chapters on Paulo Freire. As noted above, both co-authors have experience in working theoretically and on the field based on Freirian pedagogy. Freire provided us with a multi-dimensional and multi-level pedagogy that can be used as a compass of how to create a connection of constant improvisation through conscientization and renewing the connection between theory and praxis. The chapter on Globalization and Emancipatory

education gives the stigma of how Freirian pedagogy can be utilized to address neoliberal policies and imperialist globalization. The issue of democracy and social justice is one of Freire's basic concerns throughout his life.

The second chapter on Freire is included in the last part of the book, which I personally find very exhilarating, on Popular Education, Social Movements and the Struggle for Independence. This chapter is co-written with Amilcar Araujo Pereira and connects Freire's work with Amilcar Cabral's, one of Africa's most powerful anti-colonial leaders. This chapter addresses the emancipatory anti-colonial struggles in education in Guinea-Bissau that can be understood as a model of resistance under imperialism. Post-colonial education is also addressed by chapter 11 on Julius K. Nyerere, the political theorist from Tanzania, and chapter 12 addresses the anti-colonial struggle and its connection to popular education in Brazil, which is co-written with Roberto Leher on the work in north-eastern Brazil and the Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra. Part three of the book is on Education and immigration, connecting anti-racist solidarity to the Gramscian theory of the misplaced.

Without hesitation, I must admit, this book is a fascinating read and can be used as a textbook in classes, and a general informative and uplifting read for those engaged in critical education, philosophy, sociology and political science. In our dystopian times, this book brings hope to its readers, by exemplifying not only what can be done but what is actually done. It opens new directions for the dialogue needed to bring hope again to this world. Because as Paulo Freire (1994, p. 3) said:

One of the tasks of the progressive educator, through a serious, correct political analysis is to unveil opportunities for hope, no matter what the obstacles may be. After all, without hope there is little we can do. For hope is an ontological need...The attempt to do without hope in the struggle to improve the world, as if

that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion.

This hope will make us stronger in the morbid symptoms we are observing, according to Gramsci (1971, p. 276): ‘[t]he crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.’

Overall, this co-authored book by Peter Mayo and Paolo Vittoria, based on the theoretical work of Gramsci and Freire, follows the inspiring work of exceptional educators across the globe, connecting three continents, past, present of and future struggles in education is a gift to us all and a promise for future struggles. For this is what our call as educators is; to struggle for social justice and peace through education in turbulent times. As Greek poet Konstantinos Kavafis (1975) said:

Che Fece ... Il Gran Rifiuto

For some people the day comes
when they have to declare the great Yes
or the great No. It's clear at once who has the Yes
ready within him; and saying it,

he goes from honor to honor, strong in his conviction.
He who refuses does not repent. Asked again,
he'd still say no. Yet that no—the right no—
drags him down all his life.

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Author Details

Manuel Joseph Ellul is a PhD candidate within the Department of Social Justice Education (SJE), at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto (UofT). Contact details: mjellul01@gmail.com

Kurt Borg holds a PhD from Staffordshire University and is a Lecturer in Philosophy of Education at the University of Malta.

Contact details: kurt.borg@um.edu.mt

Massimiliano Tarozzi is full professor of Education Studies at the University of Bologna, Italy, and is the UNESCO Chair in Global Citizenship Education in Higher Education. Contact details: Massimiliano.tarozzi@unibo.it

Maria Nikolakaki is full professor of Pedagogy and Education at the University of Peloponnese, Corinth, Greece. Contact details: mnikolak@yahoo.gr