

hardships met and overcome which may serve to fortify and sustain them in their arduous first years of teaching.

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K. Casey. *I Answer With My Life: Life Histories of Women Teachers Working For Social Change.* New York: Routledge, 1993. Pp. 196.

I Answer With My Life: Life Histories of Women Teachers Working For Social Change appears as part of Routledge's Critical Social Thought Series. Series editor Michael Apple recommends the work to readers as "a model for democratically working with teachers so that they are not silenced, and in the process helps us see new ways in which nonexploitative research can be carried on" (p. xv). The work is cast in neo-Marxist orientation built upon the assumption, as the title states, that teachers must work for fundamental changes in schools as a part of a larger social transformation. Casey describes the work as "historical sociology" (p. 16) which utilizes life-history narratives to explore the "relationship between teaching and political action in the lives of ordinary teachers" (p. 10).

The study, based on Casey's dissertation, was "given 'ground to stand on' by Michael Apple" (p. 10). The six chapters outline the methodology and report the results of interviews with thirty-three women teachers. Only women were selected as subjects be-

cause Casey's intent is to give voice to women who have been historically silenced and stereotypically portrayed. Casey's definition of "ordinary" is "women teachers who were progressive political activists" (p. 14). She concludes, "the more interviewing went on, the more ambiguous the issue of political naming became" (p. 14). She is now convinced that "living persons do not conform to abstract definitions...the contemporary progressive political scene is diffuse and diverse [yet] progressive teachers [are] out there" (p. 14).

After rejecting current models of collecting teachers' narratives as losing the uniqueness of the individual, Casey creates a theoretical framework with the writings of the Popular Memory Group (1982) and Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) as key works. It is from Bakhtin's work that Casey takes the title for the book—"I answer with my life." Naming for Casey is most significant. The titles of the chapters which present collective biographies of three groups of women indicate both her naming of the groups and her chosen framework. These titles—"An Existential Discourse of Catholic Women Religious Teachers Working for Social Change"; "A Pragmatic Discourse of Secular Jewish Women Teachers Working for Social Change"; "A Signifying Discourse of Black Women Teachers Working for Social Change"—emerge as problematic.

Casey begins her analysis with a personal narrative, her own life history, thereby situating herself within her research. She describes how she came to her research topic and her chosen methodology, explaining that "oral

history, read in all its rich wholeness, will illuminate conscious human activity in a way positivism never can" (p. 13). Yet the life histories and group biographies presented, and the way in which the book evolves, leave the reader with many questions.

In her chapter on Catholic women religious, Casey remarks that "the irony of church organization is that the marginality of Catholic women religious has also given them a great degree of autonomy" (p. 66). This observation, and the acknowledgement that the experiences of women religious have been largely ignored by researchers studying teachers, is a valid one. Casey concludes that "these women are authors of new social relations and new social meanings" (p. 67). This collective group whom Casey celebrates as working for social change represents a lifestyle which is rapidly passing. Communities of women religious are attracting few new members. It would have been useful for Casey and her subjects to engage in dialogue on this aspect of life history as well as on other topics such as what they felt the role of the women religious was in the contemporary world; how they and their communities addressed internal issues such as power, race, class, and gender; why they remained within their religious communities. Yes, women religious are working for social change—but many define this change in broader perspectives than those outlined (and emphasized) by Casey.

Although Casey planned to write about another group of women working for social change, women labelled communist, "the Communists never

materialized" (p. 29). She attributes this failure to her own lack of personal network, lack of trust between researcher and subject, and a question of "whether those women would still feel connected to what was essentially a fifty-year old label" (p. 71). This last comment is quite significant: what makes people hold on to ideas for change? Do people working for social change move from one cause to another in an effort to sustain change? It is unfortunate that the author did not pursue this line of questioning. Since she unsuccessfully attempted to find a "cohort of 'classically' Left women teachers" (p. 70), Casey instead came to assemble "a group of women who demonstrated a collective political understanding...[and] share a secular Jewish background and teaching experiences in inner-city public schools" (p. 72). She concludes that while her analysis did "not reveal any connection between Judaism and progressive politics" (p. 76), each member of the sample emerged as "a chronicler of some part of the story of the American Left" (p. 72).

The collective experience of black women teachers was included within Casey's sample because she believes that they and their experiences have been systematically ignored. Given Casey's belief about the complexity and richness of personal narrative and the challenge she found in constructing groups, this reader wondered about the use of race and religion as organizers. These classifications negate the fact that women teachers may hold multiple identities, for example women of colour who are members of religious communities or who practice a variety

of religions and affiliate with larger political movements. Casey concludes her analysis of black women teachers by stating that "being a black teacher means raising the race; accepting personal responsibility for the well-being of one's people, and especially for the education of all black children" (p. 152). The reader is left to wonder why Casey ascribes these features to black teachers and not, to paraphrase the words of Bakhtin, to all teachers who work for social change.

Casey's study draws heavily on neo-Marxist analysis and is continuously grounded in the author's own personal experiences. It provides an example of how one researcher constructs a framework and utilizes personal narrative—of both the researcher and the subjects—in the construction of meaning. Casey defends her chosen framework as a means of giving voice to voiceless teachers. Her subjects "cannot be separated from the contexts in which they originated" (p. 166); yet she supplies few references through which the reader can link the experience of these women to a more broadly defined historical context.

Perhaps the author's own description of the work as "historical sociology" should serve as a guide for readers. In spite of the author's concluding exhortation, this reader did not find the work inspirational.

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Lorraine Smith Pangle and Thomas Pangle. *The Learning of Liberty.* Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1993. Pp. 350.

The Learning of Liberty began life as Lorraine Smith Pangle's senior thesis at Yale University. It has, however, a direct link to political theorist Thomas Pangle's previous book, *The Ennobling of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1992). In that book Pangle addresses what he sees as the most serious problem facing modern republican regimes: the scepticism with which elites and the general population consider the rational basis of modernity. *The Ennobling of Democracy* is a thoughtful challenge to postmodernism. He argues that Heidegger's critique of classical rationalism provided the philosophic groundwork for postmodernism and therefore those who care deeply about the political good must demonstrate the perfidy of Heidegger's claims. Pangle asserts that only through Socratic rationality can modern republicanism be sustained; he establishes that modern republicanism needs classical civic rationalism. Pangle also argues in *Ennobling* that modern republicans have failed to build a secure moral and educational foundation for the political regime. It is this failure of modern republicanism the Pangles address in *The Learning of Liberty*.

The single most important problem the Pangles see in the current crisis in American schools is the inability of schools to uphold the principles which form the basis of modern republican-