# BOOK REVIEW


Carmel Borg and Michael Grech. *Lorenzo Milani'sCulture of Pace: Essays on Religion, Education, and Democratic Life.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, pp. 253, ISBN: 978-1-137-38210-8.

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The biography and thoughts of Don Milani, and his school, are enriched in this edited work by approaches from different perspectives. The two editors, Carmel Borg and Michael Grech, have utilised their strengths in education and philosophy to organise a set of readings especially focusing on peace with a thrust that becomes a pedagogy and a stance that iscritical not passive.

Part I, entitled'Peace and religion: Then and now' is arguably the most directly related to themes raised by the *Letter to the military chaplains* of Don Milani. In the first reading,with a number of brushstrokes,Borg &Grechdepict the *Letter*'s catholic, Italian, and Tuscan ecclesiastical contexts. Amongst others, a context they describe is the one when theCatholic Church was ready for a marriage of convenience with Nazism and Fascism, along with their war rhetoric. Eventually, following their demise, the Church changed. Darren J. Dias sticks to the then/now temporal order as he discusses'Peace and the religions in a changing world'. Dias, a Roman Catholic and western academe, refers to the 1993 'Declaration toward a global ethic' by the Parliament of the World Religions(p.32),with its set of core values and claim for consensus.The focus is on inter-religious dialogue. The conceptis transformational and envisions peace as a community-in-difference with its recognitionof "a 'deep' appreciation of difference" (p. 38), not to beneutralised or eradicated. Michael Attridge also refers to change, this time as discontinuity in the conciliar hermeneutics ofVatican II's

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teachingon peace and war. Equally, he recognises continuity in the process. Discontinuity was especially evidentin the Church's opening up to pacifism and conscientious objection, part of a response to the radical change in the quality of weapons of destruction. Recalling 1965, the yearDonMilani was put on trial for advocating conscientious objection,Attridge reminds that *Gaudium et spes* – the document issued the same year by Vatican II –was to recognisethe legitimacy of such an objection.Poised toward the future is Brian Wicker's elaboration on the church as a sacrament of the future. If Attridge (p. 49) reported the Church's claim it was not only an abstract mystery but also "a historical reality", for Wicker, the decline of the sovereign-state organisation suggests an attractive opportunityand challenge for it to take a stand in the new global reality.

Peter van den Dungenstarts off Part II of the book entitled 'Peace, memory, and education' as he combines the threewithin his novel suggestion of a peace museum and the possibility ofvisualizing peace through one hundred objects.He selects ten items, deliberately leaving number ten vacant and open-ended. Besides being interesting, van den Dungen argues, this museum has to be truly educational. On the matter of memory, Clive Zammit balances myth and history, as he draws a passage from one to the other.Elsewhere in his piece, Zammittakes on the claim of a genetic inscription of a culture of war that has normalised the latter. He does not hold much on pedagogic efforts to overturn this culture. Claiming her critical pedagogy is not "prescriptive" (p. 96), Antonia Darder proposes a social class basis for understanding the social consequences of war as she further articulates violence and war (p. 92).Like Zammit, she does not see too much of a promise in pedagogic attempts to teach for peace; her target is clearly defined in liberal programmes of peace education especially those, no matter how well meaning, wrapped in idealism. Marianne Papastephanoudiscusses the limits of a cosmopolitan basis to peace she considers, "an anodyne, lukewarm ideal of a society" (p. 107). Such cosmopolitanism promotes diversity but displaces resistance; in turn, diversity props personal enrichment but grounds engagement with others. Isabelle CallejaRagonesi recounts the passage fromconflict to conflict resolution as shedetails the teaching of the history of Cyprus in the buffer zone. Unlike other writers in this book, she finds a role for idealism in conflict resolution against the realism she associates with the sovereign-state.Yigal Rosen tackles a common feature in this edited book: how to deal with teaching peace in a culture of war.This means, as his title recommends, overcoming'reality dissonance' by revisingpeace education in highly conflictual contexts. He pushes the argument beyond conflict resolution (p. 133), wherein, positive effects tend to be dissipated, even within months. What is required is more complex thinking, self-regulation and empathy, and, action against over-simplification in cognitive, emotional, and behavioural goals.Francois Mifsud's solution to intractably abrasive social relations is Don Milani's"I care". This isinterpreted through Chantal Mouffe's positing of agonism against antagonism, the former pedagogically leading to transformation, the latter to destruction. Just as idealism clashes with realism, similarly, it can be argued, democratic agonism clashes with the exploitative economics of social class dynamics such as that elicited from Darder's reading. Mifsud also discusses the truth factor by reviewing positivist objectivity, considering it an obstacle in the development of subjectivity.

Following the relatively more consistent attention to the pedagogic in Part II, there is more democracy, sexuality and aesthetics in Part III of the book. John P. Portelli deals with some challenges to democracy in neoliberal times whilst Duncan P. Mercieca elaborates on how Ranciere perceives democracy that promotesand leads to peace. This reading is structured on a number of assumptions: democracy leading to peace; the equality assumption that requires placing equalityat the starting point as a presupposition and condition rather than as a goal; and, a radical and unconventional way forward to achieving peace by means ofdemocratic politics described as a radical "break" out of the fix (p.179). Within this theoretical model, radical democracy means exiting from assigned roles in the community, such as teacher-pupil roles.It also assumes human agency: "we have to make it happen" (p. 183). Away from academic theoretical models, LGBT Christians Mario Gerada, Clayton Mercieca, and Diane Xuereb offer a couple of highly personalised reflectionsin search of harmony between sexuality and peaceful co-existence, with oneself and others. Mark Debonoalso focuses on human (political) agency as he posits art against politics. He explores the creative order of art - an artist who stops a moment in time to eternalise it - against the potential of political agency to create.His arguments are stacked on the side of aesthetics. NicosTrimikliniotis heralds the case for a sociology of conflict and reconciliation. Conflict entails different forms of violence, and is activeeven whenapparently absent.Like Rosen above, Trimikliniotis sees limits in conflict resolution. This is elicited from the lack of attention therein to fragmented social structures in ethnic groups. Similarly, he criticises other sociologicallysensitive shortcomings.Western bias ignoresothertraditions and models, albeit refined, are imposedfrom outside. Presenting a basic frame for a sociology of conflict and reconciliation, he calls for a broad public sociology that is thick, interdisciplinary, enriched by a focus on ethnicity, nationalism, race and war, does not separate reconciliation from conflict, as well as assists to broaden the scope of society by recognising internal subunits.NathalieGrima presents her research on Muslim women living in Malta. This exposes the underbelly of progressive but anthropologically insensitive crusades aiming to liberate Muslim women in the Islamic world.

In their critical epilogue, the editors do not merely recall the main arguments in the book but they point out strengths and weaknesses in the various readings.They also set the historical terrain of the readings and consequently their place (and that of the book) in the series 'Postcolonial studies in education' published by Palgrave Macmillan. It is a post-war and postcolonial world with imperial decision-makers retracting their administrative and military infrastructure and concurrently investinginternally in welfare. At the same time, however, military capital was still valorised by means of the Cold War (accompanied by claims of 'permanent war') and its politico-economic juxtaposition of capitalism against communism. Within this framework, peace continues to beperceived, reasonably, as "a multifaceted value" (p. 233). What emerges however are not just different facets but contradictory ones including abrasive and discordant visions of social justice superimposed on peace. Dialectically, an erratic picture results from the different readings (with some exceptions): the contradiction of peaceful and conflictual social relations leads to the absorption of peace within different shades of conflict; some are explicit, others more implicit.Notwithstanding,

the editors understand that the debate sustaining peace – especially critically rich versions of it as discussed in this book − cannot be stopped. They prefer toconcludeona more positive note nominating Don Milani and his school's *Letter* for the Peace Museum promoted by van den Dungen.