

storica) investigates the domain of intercultural encounters. After having offered a historical background to the much unknown history of Italosomalis, the author exposes their condition of *in-between* through five life-stories that unveil several layers connected with the post-colonial Italian presence in Somalia. Not only the cultural construction of ‘otherness’ reifies both ‘us’ and ‘them’, but this process reveals its fragile architecture when ‘us’ is seen from the perspective of ‘them’. As both history and individual stories show, diversity is a relative and protean notion: Sartore then advances that Freirian ‘coscientization’ could pave the way to a renewed and critical understanding of a transformative intercultural education able to question and impair power relations, but also to read both global and individual processes as a complex and interconnected whole.

In *A Matter of Perspectives. Ethnography of Education and of the Relation between Sinti and non-Sinti (Una questione di prospettive. Etnografia dell’educazione e delle relazioni tra sinti e non sinti)*, Federica Setti engages in a critical reflection regarding the construction of ‘the other’ by majority groups, investigating how the supposed marginality of the *Sinti* minority shapes the social and educational policies of public institutions in the nearby of Trento, a town in the north-east of Italy. Examining both the educational context and the condition of resident *Sinti* families living in a multicultural neighbourhood, Setti’s ethnographic research shows their perspective, exhibiting how the *Sinti*, who have been present in the area since decades, perceive themselves deeply interwoven with its social network and its historical tradition. Thus, the author challenges the cultural divide and the folklorization of the ‘other’, suggesting that people’s lives and choices are often determined not by a supposed cultural belonging, but rather by more complex transcultural processes and intercultural contacts.

The ethnographic approach taken in all these studies, and the insights this gives into different cultures found in schools (as well as outside of school) highlights how intercultural encounters and the processes evolving within multicultural societies are far more complex and multifaceted than prevailing narratives portray. Critical reflection, advocated and realized by both Interculture and Ethnography, can unfold the cultural layers of the institutions and suggest diverse educational approaches, offering new viewpoints and practices in light of a renewed critical pedagogy.

Paola Giorgis

Language teacher and Independent Researcher

*Anthropology of Education and Intercultural Education, University of Turin, Torino
Italy*

paola.giorgis@womaned.org

© 2014, Paola Giorgis

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.925706>

Unsafe gods: security, secularism and schooling, by Lynn Davies, London, Institute of Education Press/Trentham Books, 2014, vii+248 pp., £23.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-85856-525-5; (Kindle eBook) 978-1-85856-551-4

Living in a world fraught with extremism, terrorism, warfare and violence is now the norm. Fear and hatred of the ‘other’ is pervasive. The threat of terrorist attacks

is always with us. Every day the media worldwide brings reports and frightening photographs of growing terrorist violence bringing destruction and death for innocent civilians, for children and their families. This can occur anywhere in the world – in public market places and shopping malls, in places of religious worship and in schools. In an increasingly interconnected, interdependent, and globalized society, Lynn Davies' daring book, *Unsafe Gods: Security, Secularism and Schooling* makes an important contribution to our global educational enterprise.

Davies creatively combines information on national security with discussion of the societal structures of education and religion utilizing complexity theory and complex adaptive systems (CAS) as a framework for her carefully wrought argument. Her work in the field of comparative education in conflict-afflicted areas in a number of nations has led to her to embrace dynamic, inclusive and contextual secularism. She makes a strong case for making education, both formal and informal, more influential in security studies and for developing school students' capacities to think for themselves.

In her opening chapters, Davies outlines how the theory of CASs becomes relevant to religion, secularism, and education. Here, she develops the position that complexity theory helps us understand the relationships between education, religion, and security, and urges the adoption of a model of dynamic secularism. Following chapters focus on education, learning, and the need for safe and secure schools throughout the world. The author brings in examples and instances of attacks on schools, as well as exemplary educational practices from various regions – the Middle East, Southeast Asia, the US and North America and Europe and the UK. Writing in a reader-friendly and informal style peppered with humour, Davies draws from her earlier book, *Educating Against Extremism* (Trentham 2008) to develop complex elaborated theoretical perspectives. The summarizing table in her concluding chapter (199) portrays how 'Unsafe Gods' contends with 'Turbulence for Security' and spells out her advocacy for dynamic secularism. With characteristic humour, Davies clarifies what she means by this by means of an analogy to what goes on in restaurants. She writes:

In complexity terms there is a multiplicity in any country. There is no Master Chef in the Sky who directs operations. Instead there is provision for all tastes and a great deal of learning, interaction, creativity and fusion across different cookery styles. Immediate feedback enables a restaurant to respond to the clientele. From the state there is basic health and safety protection, inspection of kitchens, protection for workers, possible noise and parking regulations, but otherwise restaurants are allowed to get on with it. (197)

The way the book relates so many current issues certainly captured this reader's interest. Personalities, organizations and groups, most with international reputations, fill the pages of *Unsafe Gods*. The references and citations are current and range widely across theory and disciplines. Among the many important topics she gives thoughtful considerations are: Islamophobia, issues of gender discrimination and FGM, the teaching of evolutionary theory vs. creationism and human rights and children's rights. Davies presents her point of view on children's rights in these words:

The implications of both equity and inclusiveness can be contentious for education. Do children have the same rights as teachers? The formulation of the Universal

Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was an important and necessary breakthrough in extending rights to children and hence school students, but can imply that there are different sets of rights for adults and children. ... The key binding principle is the recognition of individual human dignity whereby both teachers and students have equal rights to dignity and should treat each other accordingly. (108)

In her discussions of religion, secularization and education, Davies utilizes personalities and organizations that have recently attracted publicity on a global scale, such as the Russian punk musicians Pussy Riot, the violent Boko Haram of Nigeria, the horrendous British-Muslim killer, Michael Adelbolajo, and the amazing young Pakistani woman, Malala Yousafzai, who astounded the world by standing up to the Taliban after their vicious attack on her. Lynn Davies acknowledges that we do not yet know the outcomes of the huge international campaign in support of Malala, and whether this will change attitudes to girls and women in Pakistan and in the Pakistan Taliban., 'But', she says, 'it has to make a dent' (221).

Davies balances her efforts to cover the intricacies of complex adaptive theory, secularization and orthodox religion as they interface with education and schooling with humour – but the humour is there to deepen the reader's understanding. She quotes some of the cartoons in an Afghan Women's Association book about female oppression in Kabul under the Taliban, for example: the sketch where one burka-clad woman photographs four identical others, saying 'Smile please'. Another says to her friend 'Sorry I'm late, I didn't know what to wear.' (Bassano di Tuffillo and Mujahed 2008) Davies observes about them that, 'the juxtaposition of the disturbing accounts of being imprisoned in the burka with gently humorous illustrations is much more powerful than either would be alone' (208).

Unsafe Gods: Security, Secularism and Schooling, takes a global perspective that offers direction, possibilities and workable examples of complex ideas. For those in intercultural education and all who are concerned about educating our youth on this turbulent planet, this book suggests a way forward. Lynn Davies tells us that unless we ensure that young people learn the skills and habits of healthy doubt, healthy politics and healthy satire in school, we leave them vulnerable to dogma. Education that allows for alternatives and ambiguity can combat the extremism and terrorism continually threatening humanity worldwide. And this book will make a dent.

Reference

Bassano di Tuffillo, S., and J. Mujahed. 2008. *Burqa! Ma vie en Kabul* [Burqa! My life in Kabul]. Paris: Editions de la Martiniere.

Edith W. King

Worldmindedness Institutes of Colorado, 3734 South Niagara Way

Denver, CO, USA

ekingwm@hotmail.com

© 2014, Edith W. King

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2014.925707>