

PEACE CHRONICLE

THE MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE
AND JUSTICE STUDIES ASSOCIATION



PEACE CHRONICLE

The Magazine of the Peace and Justice Studies Association

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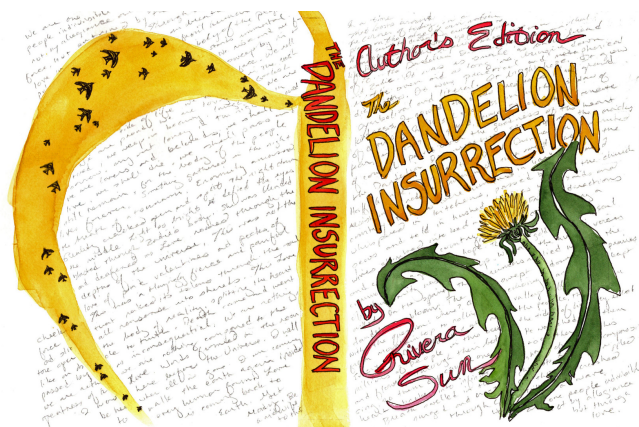


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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

It's been a little over three years now since Wim Laven, Emma Lovejoy, and I joined the Peace Chronicle staff as part of Shatha Almutawa's vision to transform the PJSA newsletter into a PJSA magazine. Our publications chair, Matt Johnson, was also part of that initial team. Early on, we were all still figuring out our roles. I was listed as activism section editor for the first issue, and in that capacity interviewed Amira Abouhusein of the International Center for Religion & Diplomacy. That experience provided some clarity regarding what my role should be, so I've been the interviews editor ever since. Emma started with us as an editorial intern, but has acted as our production manager from the beginning. Eventually, their official title caught up with their responsibilities. As for Wim, he took on a heavy load with those early issues and was the natural choice to step in as editor in chief after Shatha moved on. Since then, he has provided us a steadier hand at the helm than Wim himself often appreciates.

Around the time that Wim took over as editor in chief, I started pitching the idea of a themed issue on narrative. "What do you think of these upcoming themes?" he would ask. "They're great," I'd reply, "but when are we doing an issue on narrative?"

"Should I reach out to Rivera Sun to arrange an interview?" he would ask. "Not yet," I'd reply, "I want to save her for the issue on narrative. When are we doing that one?" After being asked some variation of "so are we ever going to do a narrative issue?" for the half-dozen time, Wim finally answered, "Yes. And I think you should be the guest editor for it." Thus it came to pass. (Always one to cast a wide net, Wim also brought Michelle Collins-Sibley on board, who provided valuable insights during the early planning stages for this issue.)

Having anticipated this issue for so long, I'm incredibly pleased with how it turned out, and that's thanks to our amazing roster of contributors. We open with the short story "A White Sky with Black Stars" by Natalie Keller, which first appeared in the September 2018 issue of *Mirror Dance*. This fairy tale, here reprinted with authorial revisions, emphasizes the power of truth and civil resistance as heroic action. These are also the key themes of Konrad Hodgman's essay "Truth-force, Not Truth-By-Force," the winning entry of Ashland University's 2022 Martin Luther King Day Writing and Communication Center contest. Despite being written in very different genres, there's a powerful resonance between these two pieces when read side-by-side.

Three more works of creative writing follow. This first is mine, a philosophical dialogue that riffs on the story of the “Three Little Pigs” to explore some basic ideas of conflict transformation theory. This work also reflects my personal premise about the dialogue genre; namely, that it occupies an intermediary space between drama and essay. Next comes Lauren Michelle Levesque’s lovely free verse poem “Wooden Buttons and Teal Thread,” a testimony of resilience in the face of our ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The final piece of this creative cluster is the nineteenth century abolitionist poem “Eliza Harris” by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, which tells of a slave mother’s flight to freedom with her infant son. An important African American writer and activist, Harper is less well remembered than she deserves to be. This seems a good opportunity to resurrect her voice.

Next we have a cluster of pedagogy articles. The first is Vanessa Meng’s “Little Dragons for a Better World, Part 1.” An independent writing teacher and recipient of the first PJSA Mini-Grant, Vanessa describes her virtual summer camp for Asian and Asian-American children which focused on social justice writing. She also shares a portfolio of her student’s work. The article title is aspirational, as we hope to see more “Little Dragons” contributions based on the themes of future issues. This is followed by the first in another new series. PJSA member Julia Skeen has struck on the wonderful idea of interviewing our board members, starting with the newer ones. Her first interview subject is Michelle Harris, our new Mini-Grants Program Co-Coordinator. Michelle discusses future plans for the Mini-Grants Program as well as her own work in peace pedagogy and restorative justice.

Our final pedagogy article comes from Kyra Whitehead, who also created this issue’s cover art.

Kyra, who teaches ESL and Graphic Design courses for Wenzhou-Kean University in China, explains both the basic features of her narrative peacebuilding pedagogy and how she adapted her curriculum for the virtual classroom during the COVID-19 epidemic. Kyra insists that “design is storytelling,” which certainly resonates with our last creative contribution for the issue. Mike Klein shares photographs of his sculpture “We Are All Downstream,” currently on public display in Dubuque, Iowa, along with a meditation that explores the sculpture’s meaning. Both a critique of colonialism and a testimony to interconnection, Mike’s work is a powerful reminder that narrative goes beyond the verbal.

Next come a pair of poetics articles. In “Solarpunk and Peace Poetics,” I look at examples of civil resistance and conflict transformation in an emerging fiction genre. Solarpunk leans more toward optimism than pessimism, and so may prove especially fertile ground for peace studies influences. After that comes my interview with Rivera Sun. (Holding out to feature her in this issue paid off!) Perhaps no one has thought more deeply than Rivera about how to marry peace studies with the craft of fiction writing. That certainly shows in this interview. She notes that her personal reading list includes civil resistance case studies, and these influence what she is able to imagine in fictional worlds. We see a similar confluence of praxis with theoretical reflection in Selina Gallo-Cruz’s excellent book review of *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining*. Published by Routledge and edited by Caesar A. Montevecchio and Gerald F. Powers, this book should provide valuable inspiration to writers, scholars, and activists alike.

The last article, “Narratology and Narrative Change: Defining Terms,” is also one of mine. Given my other

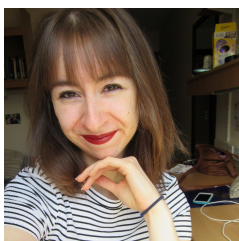
pieces, I hesitated over whether to include this one. The truth is, I wanted to have something about narrative change work in this issue, but ran out of time in which to find another contributor. Writing my own piece on the topic seemed like the lesser sin. I've attempted to provide a "translation key" to facilitate interdisciplinary exchange between the fields of narratology and narrative change work. I hope that those already familiar with the latter field will find my modest contribution useful, and that those new to the field will be inspired to learn more.

From peace education to creative literature and art to practical activism, narrative pervades our work for peace and justice. The contributions in this issue reflect that range. I'm proud to shepherd it into your hands, or at least onto your screen, and grateful to everyone whose hard work made this possible.

CONTRIBUTORS



Gabriel Ertsgaard is the Interviews Editor for *The Peace Chronicle* and Copy Editor for the literary journal *Drifting Sands*. He earned his Doctor of Letters from Drew University with a dissertation on environmental themes in a medieval legend. He has taught college-level English courses in the United States and China. His criticism, poetry, and fairy tales have appeared in over a dozen publications.



Natalie Keller is a graduate of Kenyon College and currently works in the world of libraries. Her fiction has appeared in *Mirror Dance* and *Asymmetry*, and she writes a monthly news column for the Irish news magazine. She loves to hear from readers at nataliekeller.writer@gmail.com.



Konrad Hodgman is a member of the Peace Scholar program at the Ashland Center for Nonviolence (ACN) in Ashland, OH. He has previously served on the ACN Steering Committee and Programming Committee. Konrad will be graduating with a BA from Ashland University in May 2022 with majors in Political Science, History, and International Studies, and with minors in Ethics and Religion.



Lauren Michelle Levesque is an assistant professor in the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada. Her current research and teaching interests include engaged scholarship, spatial approaches to local peacebuilding and nonviolent social change. She is co-founder of the Research Group on Imagination, Storytelling, and Spaces (<https://imaginestories.space>). Lauren Michelle contributes to community-facing projects using arts for social change as well as to scholarly conferences and peer-reviewed publications on arts, practice and peace.



Frances Ellen Watkins Harper (1825-1911) was an abolitionist, women's suffragist, and writer. One of the first African-American women published in the United States, she had a very successful literary career. Although best known as a poet, Harper published several novels later in life. Her literary work consistently reflected her lifelong activism in progressive causes. She helped found and lead several organizations, including the National Organization of Colored Women.



Vanessa Meng grew up between Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Beijing. She graduated with high honors from Swarthmore College with a major in Philosophy and a minor in Peace and Conflict Studies. Upon graduation she started her own business, teaching writing and poetry to kids ages 7-17 privately and in small group settings across three different countries. She also writes music for a children's book company called KK English based in Taiwan and is working on her own book. She is currently a student in the M.A program for Applied Psychology at the California Institute of Integral Studies.



Michelle Harris is a graduate student at Portland State University (PSU) studying Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice. She is also a Peer Connection Network Navigator for the Transfer & Returning Student Resource Center (TRSRC) and a Leadership Fellow for the Student Sustainability Center at PSU. She serves on the PJSA Board of Directors as Mini-Grant Program Co-Coordinator.



Julia Skeen is a senior at Georgetown University pursuing a B.A. in Justice and Peace Studies and Government. Her areas of interest are international conflict resolution and transformation, climate justice, sex and gender violence, and refugee rights.



Kyra Whitehead is an English/Design Lecturer at Wenzhou-Kean University, Wenzhou, China. She was previously a teacher's assistant for a Global Religion course at Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, and an English Lecturer at Kean University, Union, New Jersey. Dr. Whitehead successfully defended her dissertation titled *Ambassadors for Peace: a Literature and the Arts-Based ESL Classroom Model*, in completion of her D.Litt. Degree in February 2019.



Mike Klein, Ed.D. is Associate Professor and Program Director of Justice and Peace Studies at the University of St. Thomas, Minnesota USA. He teaches undergraduate courses in Leadership for Social Justice, Active Nonviolence, Qualitative Research, and Art for Social Justice. He teaches graduate courses on critical education in social movements, and the pedagogy of Paulo Freire. His research, publishing, and consulting focus on democratizing leadership, critical pedagogy, racial justice, and developing creative capacity. He is also a public artist working in sculpture, murals, and photography. Klein was a 2007 Bush Foundation Fellow and completed the James P. Shannon Leadership Institute in 2011. He develops personal and collective agency for structural and cultural transformation to advance social justice. His art portfolio is available at his personal website: <https://mikekleinedd.wixsite.com/artportfolio>.



Rivera Sun is a change-maker, a cultural creative, a protest novelist, and an advocate for nonviolence and social justice. She is the author of *The Dandelion Insurrection*, *The Way Between*, and other novels. She is the editor of Nonviolence News. Her study guide to making change with nonviolent action is used by activist groups across the country. Her essays and writings are syndicated by Peace Voice, and have appeared in journals nationwide.



Selina Gallo-Cruz is Associate Professor of Sociology at College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts and author of *Political Invisibility and Mobilization: Women against State Violence in Argentina, Yugoslavia, and Liberia* as well as many other peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on peace and conflict and women's studies.

IMAGE CREDITS



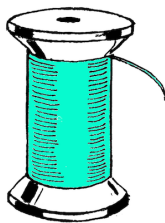
ESA/Hubble & NASA; [Hubble Peers into the Storm](#)
(with color inversion added)



[Gandhi leading the 1930 Salt March](#)



["The wolf blows down the straw house"](#) (1904) by L. Leslie Brooke



Courtesy of [Pearson Scott Foresman](#); colorization added



The Underground Railroad by Charles T. Webber



Poster for 2021 Little Dragons summer camp (cropped)



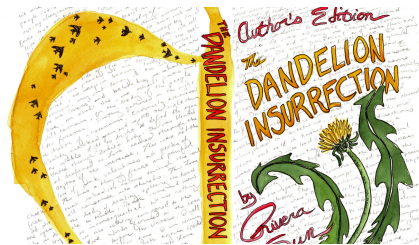
Streetscape near Portland State University; courtesy of the [National Archives at College Park](#)



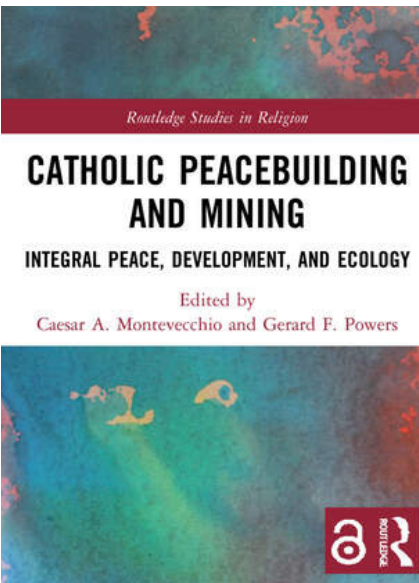
Artwork by Kyra Whitehead



[The Sun by Edvard Munch](#)



Rivera Sun's original cover artwork for the *The Dandelion Insurrection* author's edition



Original cover



This story first appeared in the Fall 2018 issue of Mirror Dance. We are pleased to bring this revised version to our Peace Chronicle readership.

Once upon a time there lived a man who could change Reality.

Dolos was not a warlock, a sorcerer, or even an illusionist. He had no exceptional hallucinatory skills or nature-bending abilities, possessed neither sword nor scepter nor staff. By all appearances, there was nothing remotely impressive about him. He was short, squat, and his skin hung on his face in fat flaps that suggested he might be a reptile in a human skinsuit. In fact, the most terrifying thing about him was that he wasn't a reptile at all — but as human as you or me.

One day, Dolos went to a pub and boasted of his ability. "I have the power to change Reality!" he announced, hoisting his mug of ale high in the air.

This outburst was met with a few raised eyebrows, a handful of snorts, and some uncomfortable shuffling.

"Are you a warlock?" one villager asked.

Dolos shook his head.

"A sorcerer?" demanded another.

He shook his head again.

"Illusionist, perhaps?" ventured a woman in the corner.

His fat flaps quivered with denial.

"Then you're a lunatic!" the woman shrieked, and the pub erupted with laughter.

"I admit I do not possess any magical tools or abilities," Dolos said, though everyone had returned to their drinks and their conversations. "I do, however, possess a mouth, and I will prove to you all its power."

And after one final swig, Dolos hurled his mug at the wall, where it shattered, and left the pub without a backward glance. The barkeeper spat a few choice profanities while the pub goers glanced at each other.

"Lunatics aren't a threat," said one of them, and

washed down his worry with a mouthful of ale.

The others nodded in agreement and swept all thoughts of Dolos from their heads just as the barkeeper, mumbling darkly under his breath, swept the shards of glass from the floor.

In the fabric of Reality around them, however, Dolos's words remained like a dark stain.

On the road leading away from the pub, Dolos encountered a man named Hydrin. Hydrin had a cheery disposition and a malleable mind, much like steel before it has been forged into a dagger.

"Hello, friend," Dolos greeted him, although Hydrin was not his friend. This was the first deception.

"Greetings!" Hydrin exclaimed, startled but charmed. As they shook hands, Dolos caught a strong whiff of alcohol on Hydrin's breath. He smiled, and Hydrin, mistaking this for another display of camaraderie, smiled back.

"Now listen close," Dolos said, resting his hand on Hydrin's shoulder and dropping his voice to a whisper. "I have secret, sacred knowledge to share with you and you alone. You cannot analyze, argue, or ask questions — only listen. Can I trust you to do so?"

Hydrin nodded, his curiosity prevailing over a twinge of caution.

"The secret is this: I see the world exactly as you see it. This perspective — your perspective — is the True One. All that you imagine is Reality. You are the eyes and ears and mind of the gods themselves."

This was the second deception. Hydrin, who had his

whole life been overshadowed by the glories of nine older brothers, stood in awe of his newfound importance.

For the next hour — without sword, scepter, or staff — Dolos simply talked to Hydrin, and Hydrin became more and more convinced that his beliefs were truths. This was rather alarming, as Hydrin believed such things as "all magic folk are criminals and should be imprisoned without trial" and "it is morally permissible to assault women."

Finally, after Hydrin was absolutely, unwaveringly sure of his Reality, his companion delivered the third and final deception. It was an absurd experiment — the first to pop into Dolos's head — and it was born from sheer, sadistic delight in stretching Reality as far as it could possibly go. The only person who might believe such a falsity would be divorced from all five senses under the influence of advanced spellcraft or a dangerous, magical elixir.

Hydrin hiccupped.

"Did you know," Dolos leaned in close, glancing up at the darkening sky above them, "that at night, if you look closely enough, the stars are black and the sky is white?"

Dolos had stretched too far, and Reality tore. It was a noise undetectable to Hydrin's ears, but to a dog, perhaps, who can hear such high-pitched things, it might have sounded like a strangled scream. It was a scream of death and a scream of life, for it was the birth of a new Reality. False, impure, and powerful, it metastasized in a single star above Hydrin's head that faltered and flickered and went dark.

Hydrin did not keep his secret, sacred knowledge to himself. When he returned home, he spread the news far and wide that his perspective was the True One, that Reality had revealed itself to him, and that – if you squinted long and hard enough, until all the world went fuzzy – it was clear that the stars were black and the sky white. He had seen it with his own eyes, the eyes of the gods.

He told his wife and he told his friends and he told his nine older brothers, and though most only laughed at him, a few curious souls followed him to the hut of Dolos.

And Dolos told them what he had told Hydrin. And they believed. And more stars went dark.

The word spread into the village and the neighboring village and then to the mountains and the mines and the fisheries and on and on until, from a rocking chair on a porch on the other side of Domun, Fydia could see that half the night sky was wrong.

She blinked a few times. Hers were old eyes, after all, but they saw things for what they were. “This looks like trouble,” she told the fireflies, who blinked fretfully.

Fydia was the oldest of the hill people, and she liked a quiet life – two qualities that contradicted each other, as she was oft sought after for her wisdom. She had crow’s feet and owl eyes, and the skin on her face was soft and warm like dough you could pinch between your fingers. She knew a time when dragons had ruled the skies, when lava had flowed and carved the hills, when human beings had bought and sold other human beings. In her youth, she had toppled tyrannies with brute force and united fractured kingdoms with nothing but a

white flag and gentle words. She knew about cruelty and compassion, war and resistance, truth and deceit.

And she was tired.

She helped those who came for healing and advice, but turned away any who asked her to interfere in larger matters.

“I don’t want trouble,” she told them. “I’ve had enough for a lifetime.”

But trouble was on Fydia’s doorstep, and she knew in her bones that it was not the kind to turn away from. She ran a hand through her hair, which was not grey, but wild and strong because the head beneath it still contained wild and strong thoughts.

Meanwhile, Dolos was weaving a web of Reality with threads of fear, hatred, and trickery, and in its center he sat like a fat spider. Every person who came to him, listened, and believed made the web stronger – and in return, Dolos catered to their whims and fancies. Many aspects of the new Reality were ridiculous, as some requested broccoli taste like licorice and insisted cats would be better pets if they acted more like dogs, but others were more sinister. Those who had harbored hidden prejudices and evil desires saw it was now safe to emerge from the shadows and join the legions of the man who could mold Reality to their most wicked dreams.

“I think it is fair to rob and pillage,” said some.

“This is the truth,” Dolos told them. “Go forth and pillage.” And they did.

“I think it is morally permissible to assault women,” said Hydrin and his minions.

"This is the truth," Dolos assured them. "Go forth and assault women." And they did.

"I think it is right to kill those who are inferior to me," said others.

"Your thought is Reality," Dolos declared. "Go forth and kill." And they rained down terror on all those who were unlike them.

All the while, the night sky grew whiter and the stars blacker, because even a foolish idea can become Real if enough fools believe it.

Not everyone liked this new Reality, though. There were those who watched in horror as Dolos's scheme unfolded, but remained silent. The children, fresh and wise on fairy stories, knew Dolos for the villain he was, but few listened to their concerns.

And then there were those who saw the white sky, the black stars and, like a wart over once-healthy skin, the new world that lay atop the old one — and they knew something had to be done.

For their leader, they chose a woman of the hills who had been alive longer than anyone else, who had wielded swords and commanded armies, and who knew how to mend the torn threads of Reality like a seamstress mends a hole-riddled blanket.

So they came to the house of Fydia.

She had been expecting them. "Where are the sorcerers?" she asked, squinting out at the crowd on her doorstep and finding no magic folk among them. "The warlocks? Illusionists, even? Spellcraft would be of use right now."

"They've been imprisoned," replied a young maiden, a tear glistening on her cheek. Her father was a warlock. "All of them, in magic-proof cells. Dolos himself decreed it."

"Ah," said Fydia. "We will have to do it the old way, then."

The most fierce among them proposed killing Dolos. "He sits in the heart of it all, like a spider," they said. "If he dies, his false world will collapse with him."

Fydia knew this was not a battle against one man, but the war of one Reality against another. She shook her head. "The web of a dead spider can still catch flies."

"Then what options are left?" demanded a blacksmith, struggling to retain hold of his cat. "This is getting out of hand." The cat wriggled out of its owner's arms and bounded down the road after a rodent, barking all the way.

Fydia looked taken aback, as if the solution were as obvious as salve for a wasp sting. "We will use his methods against him, of course," she said. "We will speak."

And with the help of her walking stick, she descended the steps of her porch and set out down the dirt road, her dark hair bouncing in the wind.

As the sun set, Fydia made her way to the town square where the hill people gathered every evening to sell produce, wash laundry, and — when the mood struck them — discuss politics. Fydia rarely ever came to the square, but when she did, she was met with warm smiles and eager

questions. Everyone had a problem and everyone needed Fydia's help.

Except today. Today she was met only with silence and distrustful stares. One man spit at her feet as she passed. Ignoring the hostility of her neighbors and the protest of her knees, Fydia hoisted herself up onto the fountain and stood, towering above the crowd.

"Listen to me," she said over the chatter and the rush of water behind her. Her voice was soft as wind chimes, but the square fell silent as if she had screamed.

"Don't you remember," she went on with a smile, "a time when the stars were bone-white and the sky black as lava stone? When cats meowed and broccoli had a crunch?" She gestured at the stars that had just begun to emerge in the sky above them, black as patches of frostbitten skin. "I am old, and have seen the rise and fall of many Realities. This one, the one you see around you, is as far from the truth as your toes from your teeth."

The villagers looked up at the sky and then back at the old woman.

"Did Dolos say so?" they asked.

There was a long, heavy silence.

Fydia's jaw was set. "Dolos does not speak for me."

There was a longer, heavier silence.

"Then you're a lunatic!" shrieked a woman pushing a cart of candy asparagus, and the town square erupted with laughter.

Even so, there were a handful of curious eyes in the crowd. Some glanced up at the sky, uncertain. One young man, seeing Fydia wobble slightly, even rushed over to the fountain and extended his hand to her. Some of the hill people hissed at this, but not all.

Fydia looked down at the young man and saw his eyes were kind, so she took his hand and stepped down from the fountain.

She was still smiling.

She had accomplished what she came to do.

Because there is no one more intriguing than a lunatic, Fydia found people everywhere who were eager — or at least willing — to listen to what she had to say. And when she found those people, whether in taverns, shops, or simply walking on the road in the same direction, she talked to them. She told them of a world beneath the one they currently inhabited, the true world that Dolos had disgraced and defiled with his deceptions. She reminded them that just because something is Real doesn't mean it is true, and that questioning Reality — like encouraging your children to eat broccoli, no matter the taste — makes it grow healthy and strong.

Thus, without fear, hatred, or trickery, Fydia helped others to see the world through her eyes. And it was a world more beautiful, warm, and kind, perhaps, than the old one ever was or any future one could be.

After her audience had analyzed, argued, and asked questions in all the right amounts, they began, slowly, hesitantly, to believe her. They considered Fydia's Reality an advanced form of truth —

something that is not true yet, but certainly should be.

Fydia even talked to the children, and they turned out to be the best listeners of all. When they caught a glimpse of her Reality, it was as if a window had opened in a room of stale air, and above each of their heads, not one, but two stars shivered and shook and began to shine white.

By this point, Dolos had convinced many people of many ridiculous things. The worst of these included that he was tall, handsome, and the rightful heir to the throne — and so he grew several inches and watched with dreamy, dark eyes as his followers staged a coup and chased the old monarchs from the kingdom.

Thus, the man who could change Reality became king of all Domun.

But Fydia was the oldest and wisest of the hill people, and she could change Reality, too. Besides, she had the children on her side — and that is the deciding factor in any battle.

So with walking stick in hand and a small group of protesters behind her, Fydia marched through the gates of the castle and demanded an audience with the king. It was sunset, and their shadows stretched out in the grass before them, tall as giants.

Dolos was waiting in the courtyard, for word had reached his ear about a hag of the hills who was turning stars white again, and he was eager to destroy the one person who stood between him and dominion over all Reality. There were archers hidden behind the hedges, waiting only for his signal.

But Dolos was curious about the flies that had not stuck to his well-spun web, and he wanted to entertain them first. So as Fydia approached, he dropped into a low, dramatic bow and reached for her hand, his lips puckered slightly.

Fydia recoiled. "I know the havoc you have wrought with that mouth of yours, and I would be a fool to ever let it graze my skin."

Dolos's temper rose so rapidly that he nearly gave the signal for his archers to attack, but Fydia continued to speak, and curiosity stayed his hand.

"Your Reality has destroyed Reality," she said, waving up at the night sky — which, to my eyes and yours, might have resembled a static television screen. "Now there is only Nothing."

Dolos grinned and grinned until his grin was more of a leer. "I have fulfilled the wildest dreams of my people, have catered to their deepest desires and molded the world to their every liking. You would call that Nothing?"

"Perhaps not," Fydia replied coolly. "A Reality crafted for wicked men is far worse than Nothing."

All semblance of civility vanished from Dolos's face, and his handsome features became so warped with rage and indignation that they no longer seemed handsome. He glowered down at Fydia's wrinkled face, her toothless smile, and the arthritic hands that hung limply at her side. What threat was this woman, whose fingers were more adept with sewing needles than swords?

"Stupid hag," he hissed, and signaled the archers.

Nothing happened.

Dolos signalled twice more before resorting to waving both arms above his head. "Archers!" he screamed.

One of the archers poked his head out from behind the hedge, his bow slung over his shoulder. "She makes a compelling argument," he said.

"What?"

The archer broke into a cold sweat. "What I mean to say — with all due respect, my liege — is that the men have been talking, and we're not so sure we like this new Reality anymore. It was good fun in the beginning, messing with vegetables and animals and such, but now it's people that are changing, and..." He was lost in thought for a moment, but found his voice again as his eyes fell on Fydia. "And we've heard rumors about the woman from the hills. They're saying she can change Reality just as well as you can."

The rest of the archers emerged from the hedges, nodding in agreement and gazing at Fydia as if she were a relic from the golden age of a lost civilization.

"That's nonsense," Dolos spat, his eyes bulging. "She's nothing but a warty toad, and I'll squish her under my boot like one!" And he raised his foot threateningly.

Everyone looked at Fydia, but she did not turn into a warty toad.

"It seems to me," said Fydia with a biting smile, "that there is nothing remarkably amphibian about me, but rather something reptilian about you."

Everyone looked at Dolos, and to their

bewilderment, his distinguished jawline, regal nose, and plush lips began to bubble and morph. The archers gasped, because they had forgotten the true face of their leader, and another thread of his web snapped.

"You won't be rid of me easily," Dolos hissed as his dark, luscious hair faded to a dull, brittle blonde. "My Reality is thick and strong and sticky."

"Your Reality is frail and false, and time will unstick it," countered Fydia. Everyone heard her, and knew it to be true.

Dolos covered his face with his hands and fled. He ran from the courtyard, down the road, and through the town square where the hill people were wringing out their laundry. He ran past the mountains and the mines and the fisheries and on and on until he crossed over from Domun into the realm where things are Not, and there he stayed.

He is there still. There are those who miss him, and so he has power enough to darken a distant star from time to time. We call these black holes, and there is nothing Fydia can do to stitch them up. After all, Reality is an imperfect, holey thing, which is sometimes worth lamenting and sometimes worth celebrating.

Her work done, Fydia turned towards home. The struggle with Dolos had aged her in a million ways, making it harder to walk and speak, and so hers was a slow pilgrimage. Still, not a hair on her head had gone grey, and though most of her teeth had fallen out, her words were carried far and wide on other lips. The remaining threads of Dolos's Reality became cobwebs, with time.

Those who loved Fydia held her arms as she moved

across Domun. Occasionally, when she lost her footing, she leaned on them, and they held her.

When the group reached her house, Fydia stepped away. A young man, the same one who had helped her down from the fountain, rushed forward but she shook her head and smiled sadly. He and the crowd watched as Fydia ascended the stairs of her porch alone and, with a soft groan, lowered herself down onto her rocking chair.

She sat there blinking up at the stars. After a long, heavy silence, her crowd of protesters dispersed and disappeared back over the hills. The children walked in pairs, weaving the day's adventure into a story they could share with their friends, but the adults walked alone, and more slowly.

Like grass bends back after the traveler, like a pond settles after the skipping stone, the thoughts of Fydia were quiet and still. She rocked back and forth, her gaze fixed on the sky, admiring her handiwork.

Reality was stitched well, and all the right colors.



TRUTH-FORCE, NOT TRUTH-BY-FORCE

KONRAD HODGMAN

Satyagraha may sound like something preceding a chorus of “bless you” and “gesundheit,” but it is a concept which could save this angry and bloodied world from its darker impulses. Commonly interpreted to mean “Truth-force,” *satyagraha* is a word coined by Mahatma Gandhi that has become deeply ingrained in the greater nonviolence movement in the Gandhi-King tradition (1). Before hearing more about what *satyagraha* means and represents, I would have shuddered to hear advocacy for anything translating to “Truth-force.” I am no enemy of responsible education, respectful discussion, or factual reporting; however, I fear any movement which brands itself as holding too jealously to truth. The worst threats to peace, justice, and mercy in our day – perhaps in any day – come from those who hold so tightly to their vision of truth that they think themselves truth’s sole guardians. Truth is a continuous and collective process in understanding; it takes place on all levels of society, but there are always some who try to determine one truth from the top down, and this leads to truth’s inverse. Indeed, in some circles “truth” has become Newspeak; a mirror image of itself. Armed with “alternative facts,” some have found a way to create two tensely coexisting realities in American society. However, *satyagraha*

does not only mean “Truth-force” but also “Love-force,” and here lies the distinction. Truth exists, but love reminds us how it operates. A “Love-force” can guarantee that a “Truth-force” does not become “Truth-by-force.”

Individual conceptions of “truth” have been forced upon society by those who would manipulate the world to their benefit with little consideration for others. Disagreement has become treason to small but significant portions of the country, and we are witnessing a logocide of a tolerant definition of truth followed by its replacement with an exclusionary definition. Dr. Lee McIntyre of Boston University writes in his book *Post-Truth* that because “objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief,” we are now seeing political actors who “feel emboldened to try to bend reality to fit their opinions, rather than the other way around” (2). Truth can be manipulated; facts can be selectively displayed to tell the opposite story from what is really going on, and this can be immensely powerful in the hands of opportunists. For example, the deluge of factually questionable statements coming out of the administration of former president Donald Trump was often so vague and so

self-assured that those inclined to believe in his worldview could drown out hundreds of frazzled fact-checkers after hearing the slightest of factual aspects in their leader's speech. Additionally, from McIntyre's observations, Trump at times "seemed to feel that his believing something somehow made it true ... [and] spoke as if he had the power to change reality" (3). This is plain to see even from the first days of the Trump presidency, when he proclaimed against objective evidence to the contrary that his inaugural day crowds were larger than President Obama's (4). So much for the famous modern conservative mantra: "Facts don't care about your feelings" (5).

Even the Gandhi-King tradition that birthed the principle of satyagraha has become a victim of this kind of falsification and selective reading of truth. Each year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we hear a sanitized and partial form of the real King's message; usually we are privy to the plea for a colorblind society grounded in the following phrase: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" (6). While it is true that King said and believed this noble statement, it is still a distortion of the truth when our education system, media, and politicians treat it as a key to adequate understanding of King. Instead of reducing King's legacy and the entire nonviolent movement for racial justice in America to one flowery phrase, we can turn to other recordings and writings for the fuller truth. Henceforth, we can recognize that we have not defeated the "triple prong sickness that has been lurking within our body politic from its very beginning[,] ... [namely] the sickness of racism, excessive materialism and militarism" (7). We have barely even looked outside the most famous portions of the aforementioned "I Have A Dream"

speech to its more radical points, such as where King claimed that "We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality" (8). King was a revolutionary to whom society still needs to catch up; we feel and act as though we are at or beyond his vision, but this is the "truth" crafted from the top by proponents of the status quo, not the broader truth found through critical reflection.

Hopefully, I have been clear that truth – or that which people can be convinced is true – can be weaponized for ill ends; this is "Truth-by-force." Disciplined, fanatical minority factions can and have wielded their specific and marginalizing perceptions as new truth when given the chance. This is what tyrannies across the political spectrum have in common, whether Communist or Fascist, Christian or Islamic. Name one dominating idea as truth – even if the objectivity of that "truth" is in question by experts – and the rest becomes dangerous lies. As the author and journalist Chris Hedges explains, "When only one 'truth' is allowed, empirical data becomes irrelevant. Intellectual, scientific and moral inquiry becomes unnecessary. In this new world followers are robbed of the capacity to think" (9). Ego-boosting lies about crowd size may be amusing, but what about nationwide whitewashing of a major historical figure? Both examples remain dangerous because shrugging off the small distortions makes the next ones larger. Accepting the existing large distortions also causes new smaller ones to fly under the radar. The cycle can grow exponentially if we do not hold on intentionally to rational democratic deliberative traditions.

When thinking about pushing back against these bastardizations and forgeries of truth, a revival of Gandhi's mindset and principle of satyagraha

sounds pleasing. But what does one do if facts really are less influential than emotional appeal or personal belief? The answer is in the name; satyagraha is a "Truth-force," which means those of us committed to nonviolence cling to what is true, but it is also a "Love-force," and this keeps us centered on the characteristics and practices which deflect "Truth-by-force." Humility, empathy, openness, responsiveness, honesty. Traits of a loving movement prevent the traits of a "Truth-force" from becoming its own worst enemy. Humility keeps man from believing in the invulnerability of individual truth; the same mountain can look very different from the summit instead of the base. Empathy and responsiveness place us in one another's shoes and prompt us to use truth for action that helps as many people as possible. Openness and honesty are vital sources of truth, and they foster trust in academics, scientists, doctors, public servants, and other professionals who should be operating in the parameters of rational consensuses of truth.

I can say little more on the matter if I wish to avoid hypocrisy. I do not hold the sole understanding of the matters of truth in our time, but with this information perhaps others can work together to bring a more reality-based foundation to contemporary discourse. Do not give in to despair, but be guarded in your hope for the short-term. Instead, we need to embrace our uphill battle against a now-entrenched culture of misleading or outright incomprehensible guiding "truths." Part of the solution is the "Truth-force" of satyagraha: the relentless persistence of those who believe in educating and reasoning through the problems of the world. The other half of the solution is the "Love-force" of satyagraha: the habit of caring for more than oneself and escaping the inner citadels of our predispositions. Only then can we convince the

nation and the world in the manner of Gandhi and King – lovingly, but never submissively; nonviolently, but never passively.

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I'LL HUFF AND PUFF AND GO TO CONFLICT MEDIATION

GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

A coffee house; fairy tale illustrations adorn the walls. A realist and a fabulist share a table (with the latter dressed more colorfully than the former). Regarding the gender, age, and ethnicity of these characters, imagine them as you wish. For those who prefer more parameters, however, let's stipulate that the following conversation takes place on a Wednesday at precisely 3:13 pm.

Fabulist: Lately, I've been thinking a lot about the story of the Three Little Pigs.

Realist: I beg your pardon?

Fabulist: You know the one. "Little pig, little pig, let me in!" Then the wolf blows down the house made of straw and eats the first pig. "Little pig, little pig, let me in!" Then the wolf blows down the house made of sticks and eats the second pig. But the wolf can't blow down a house made of bricks, so he goes down the chimney instead—which is a bad idea because he lands in a cauldron of boiling water and suffers this painful, horrible death.

Realist: Yes, I'm familiar with the fairy tale. I might regret asking, but why have you been pondering the Three Little Pigs?

Fabulist: Well, if you really think about it (which again, I've been doing a lot of lately) that story doesn't end well for anyone involved. The first two pigs, they get gobbled up by the wolf. So that's definitely a bad outcome from their perspective. Then the wolf does that whole jacuzzi of doom thing. As for the third little pig, he may be physically unscathed at the end, but survivor's guilt is going to haunt him for the rest of his life. Nobody gets a happy ending.

Realist: Well, that's an interesting take. So the tale is a tragedy rather than comedy. Characters caught by the cruel whims of fate, if you will.

Fabulist: But that's just the thing, it wasn't fate. It didn't have to go that way.

Realist: No?

Fabulist: Not at all. Thanks to this life-altering Zoom workshop I recently attended called "Alternative Dispute Resolution for Gummies," I have a whole new perspective on the fairy tale.

Realist: Did you say "for Gummies"?

Fabulist: They changed the name after a trademark complaint.

Realist: Of course. Please continue.

Fabulist: You see, the pigs and the wolf are caught in a conflict trap, so they need the help of a good mediator to work their way out.

Realist: I don't know if a mediator could do much. This fairy tale scenario seems like an especially tricky dispute, given that one of the disputants tries to literally consume the others.

Fabulist: Tricky, but not impossible. The key, of course, is to find a real pro—one who's read *Getting to Yes* at the very minimum. Otherwise, you might get stuck with some woodblock who thinks the only solution is to split the difference between the two parties' opening positions: "Let's see, so Mr. Wolf, you wish to eat three pigs. And let me check my notes, the Pig family, you maintain that Mr. Wolf should eat zero pigs. Well, obviously a fair settlement is for Mr. Wolf to eat 1 1/2 pigs." That's not a wise solution. (Why not? Ask half a pig.)

Realist: Point granted, but what's the alternative?

Fabulist: A real pro would push both parties to dig past their initial "positions" to their underlying "interests." So what are the pigs' interests? Safety, security, not getting eaten. Let's add "not living in fear" to that list. And the wolf? Well he doesn't want to starve, obviously. For that matter, the wolf might want some safety and security as well. No getting boiled alive.

Realist: I think I follow you. We're not trying to find a midway point between their positions. Rather, we're trying to address all of their interests, or at least as

many as possible. Basically, we just need to figure out how to feed the wolf without feeding him the pigs, and how to provide safety and security for all.

Fabulist: That's it exactly! Let's start with feeding the wolf. He can't just waltz into Trader Joe's, of course, but this is the golden age of grocery delivery services. That's an easy work-around. The bigger issue is that someone has to pay the grocer, and this wolf is clearly broke. You don't knock down houses and eat the inhabitants if you have food money sitting in your checking account.

Realist: Agreed, that's uncommon behavior. Well, there's a rather obvious if mercenary solution. Just have the pigs pay the wolf off. Not a lump sum, which the wolf might very well blow through, but smaller, monthly payments. Better to help the wolf buy his lunch than to become the wolf's lunch.

Fabulist: I see where you're coming from, but I can't quite get on board with that. It just feels too much like a mafia insurance scheme for my comfort. Besides, it misses some important interests. The pigs would worry about the wolf getting greedy for more. The wolf would worry about the pigs bumping him off to eliminate an ongoing expense. No one would feel safe or secure.

Realist: Let's not reject my idea too quickly. Even if isn't perfect, at least it improves the situation.

Fabulist: Don't get me wrong, I think we're on the right track. But dig a level deeper, and what we're really talking about is a steady income stream for the wolf.

Realist: I suppose that's true.

Fabulist: Well, we can handle that the old-fashioned

way. We need to find this wolf a job.

Realist: I'm always on board with capitalism as the answer. But to put it crudely, this can't be a "crap job" if we expect the wolf to change his life.

Fabulist: Absolutely. It has to be meaningful work suited to his gifts. And I know just the industry for that.

Realist: Which is ... ?

Fabulist: Wind energy.

Realist: Really?

Fabulist: Think about it. It's a fantastic, clean source of power, with one big limitation: you can't schedule the wind. That's why you still need something messier as backup. This wolf, though, can huff and puff and blow up his own windstorm.

Realist: Granted. But there's a flaw with your plan: We perpetually need energy. Yet a single wolf, no matter how talented, cannot serve as a full-time energy source. To even come close, he'd have to be chained to the windmill (literally or figuratively).

Fabulist: It's true, of course, that he can't work 24/7, but he doesn't need to. Just schedule the wolf during peak times, and that's a clean energy game-changer. Power companies would climb over each other to hire him.

Realist: I'm not so sure about that. After all, he's still a wolf. Would he even get an interview? Bias against wolves isn't covered under our labor laws.

Fabulist: Maybe he doesn't need an employer, then. You know what would really make this worthwhile

for the wolf? Controlling the means of production. That's right, forget about working for somebody else. Our wolf should go into business for himself and sell straight to the grid. He'd couldn't do this alone, though. No, he'd need a business partner. Someone with construction and engineering skills. Someone who could build a specialized power plant. Someone with a head for project management.

Realist: Surely you don't mean ...

Fabulist: Someone like the third little pig. The Big, Bad Wolf and Pig of Brick House. If instead of being mortal enemies, those two went into business together, they could become the barons of wind energy. Now that's a wise solution.

Realist: To be honest, this is starting to seem rather far-fetched. Moving past their differences, leading a green energy revolution ... that's quite a lot to accept.

Fabulist: So let me get this straight, you're willing to grant me three talking pigs and a wolf who blows down walls—but conflict mediation and renewable energy, those are what you find unrealistic? That attitude, my friend, will get this world stuck in a mess. It's hard for good things to happen if you refuse to imagine that they're possible.

END



WOODEN BUTTONS AND TEAL THREAD: A PANDEMIC NARRATIVE

LAUREN MICHELLE LEVESQUE

(September 24th, 2021)

The button.
Pull absently.
I watch it
bounce,
softly. Curse.

P-u-l-l off the dress.
List the emails,
deadlines, unread
stack
of
articles
on my desk. Shout:
"I don't have time for this!!!"

After a moment:
sit on the e
d
g
e
of a freshly made bed.
Reach over.
Choose teal thread.

It is unlikely anyone will
notice the color
against
the slightly
r n l
w i k e d
linen.

I will know that,
some mornings:
I stop.
Defiantly
stitch
on
a
wooden
button
with
thin
teal
thread.

This poem emerged from a moment when I had a visceral realization of the need to SLOW DOWN in the midst of the pressures and uncertainties of the continued COVID-19 pandemic. As Tanya J. Behrisch asks in her own discussion of cooking as a small act of love and rebellion in these COVID times: "What is worth doing right now?" (2021, p. 668).

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Like a fawn from the arrow, startled and wild,
A woman swept by us, bearing a child;
In her eye was the night of a settled despair,
And her brow was o'ershaded with anguish and care.

She was nearing the river—in reaching the brink,
She heeded no danger, she paused not to think;
For she is a mother—her child is a slave—
And she'll give him his freedom, or find him a grave!

It was a vision to haunt us, that innocent face—
So pale in its aspect, so fair in its grace;
As the tramp of the horse and the bay of the hound,
With the fetters that gall, were trailing the ground!

She was nerv'd by despair, and strengthened by woe,
As she leap'd o'er the chasms that yawn'd from below;
Death howl'd in the tempest, and rav'd in the blast,
But she heard not the sound till the danger was past.

Oh! how shall I speak of my proud country's shame?
Of the stains on her glory, how give them their name?
How say that her banner in mockery waves—
Her "star-spangled banner"—o'er millions of slaves?

How say that the lawless may torture and chase
A woman whose crime is the hue of her face?
How the depths of the forest may echo around
With the shrieks of despair, and they bay of the hound?

With her step on the ice, and her arm on her child,
The danger was fearful, the pathway was wild;
But, aided by Heaven, she gained a free shore,
Where the friends of humanity open'd their door.

So fragile and lovely, so fearfully pale,
Like a lily that bends to the breath of the gale,
Save the heave of her breast, and the sway of her hair,
You'd have thought her a statue of fear and despair.

In agony close to her bosom she press'd
The life of her heart, the child of her breast:—
Oh! love from its tenderness gathering might,
Had strengthen'd her soul for the dangers of flight.

But she's free!—yes, free from the land where the slave
From the hand of oppression must rest in the grave;
Where bondage and torture, where scourges and chains
Have place'd on our banner indelible stains.

The bloodhounds have miss'd the scent of her way;
The hunter is rifled and foil'd of his prey;
Fierce jargon and cursing, with clanking of chains,
Make sounds of strange discord on Liberty's plains.

With the rapture of love and fulness of bliss,
She plac'd on his brown a mother's fond kiss:—
Oh! poverty, danger and death she can brave,
For the child of her love is no longer a slave!



VANESSA MENG

When I conceptualized the project “Little Dragons for a Better World,” funded by PJSA’s Mini-grants projects, I had only been a freelance teacher of writing and poetry for half a year. I graduated during the pandemic, and as I was job hunting without much luck, teaching writing seemed to find me. It was a nice surprise; I started with only one or two students, and soon a small community grew out of their networks. Because of the nature of organic networks, many of my students were Chinese Americans, and soon enough I had students in Taiwan as well.

During this time (late 2020 early 2021), the Chinese-American identity seemed to be undergoing a national conversation for the first time in a while. My students were hearing the news of violence, of racism, of politicians who blatantly blamed China, but many were unsure how to approach the topic of race, violence, and politics. In fact, most of us Chinese people in this time frame tend to put our heads down and focus on working hard on our own lives. We often joke about how Chinese people are the least “團結”(united), especially compared to Koreans or Japanese communities. This means that often Chinese-American children tend to be less aware of how

they are connected to larger social movements or dynamics, and also less conscious of how they can make an impact in that fabric.

Personally during this time, right after my education at Swarthmore College, I was feeling a deep sense of urgency and responsibility. The world felt like it was imploding; the ugliness of the world was rising to the surface like an oil spill on water and I found myself calling everything into question. Everything needed to be dismantled and reshaped. I was turning to thinkers like Angela Davis and Grace Lee Boggs and craved for revolution, for action, for change.

So “Little Dragons for a Better World” was a project born out of these two sentiments, one my own observation about the children I was teaching and another out of my personal yearning to address the revolution. The aim was to create a summer camp inspired by Grace Lee Bogg’s Detroit Summer, to expose Chinese-American children to environmental and social issues, and giving them an opportunity to realize that they do not only have a voice in these larger fabrics, they also can make an impact with that voice. Although the original idea of a summer camp was not fully realized due

to many factors, I was able to give lessons on Chinese-American history, Asian American and Black American connection and history, endangered animals and plant-life interactions, as well as zero waste in relation to a local incinerator with the plan created.

Through my conversations with these children my own views changed immensely. My intensity softened. My hard edge that craved a total revolution, that viewed everything to do with our late-stage capitalist world with a feeling of despair, became much less bleak. The children all have a strong sense of right and wrong, but they also have a strong sense of what is important and a reminder that we have the power in choosing what world it is we want to live in. Which is to say, we are in control of the narrative we choose to live in daily, and it simply depends on what colors we want to use to paint our life. Teaching children taught me that yes there are problems, but it doesn't mean we sink into despair. Yes everything exists in a system that is both violent and heinous, but what is important is how we choose to live and exist in the day to day. In Buddhism, the lotus is an important symbol for the way it rises out of murky waters pure and clean. The children I've had the privilege of teaching have been like lotuses, not only pure, but purifying the waters around them.

Below are three writing samples from the workshop on Chinese-American history. Young students are not often asked directly about how they feel or what they think about more serious issues in the world. I was surprised at the expression of anger and sadness, as well as the sharp intuition about what is right and wrong present in the students' works. It was rewarding to see these children expanding their own understanding of themselves and placing their own story against a bigger

backdrop. Each student was allowed to choose their own direction on what they wanted to focus on and what kind of writing they wanted to do, and together we planned, workshopped and edited.

Angel Island

Cadence Liu, 12

Imprisoned,
There is no way out,
I try to shout,
But no one answers,
I wonder if I will get cancer,
These officers force us Chinese to clean floors,
Doors,
And drawers,
We only eat twice a day,
My sight is always grey,
I wonder what my family is doing, away.
I look to see who is happy,
But everyone only sits quietly.

Nights are always cold,
Sorrow fills my body,
Just like everybody.

We are always waiting,
To hear the slap of the whip,
I have to have grit,
Or else I will slip.

For Cadence, what stuck out to her was the treatment Chinese people received at Angel Island. Angel Island was an infamous immigration station for Chinese families immigrating to the United States between 1910-1940. Officers were trying to deport as many Chinese people as they could, so they would interrogate the immigrants with difficult questions and forced them to live in harsh conditions.

Choosing to use the first person to write a poem from the perspective of someone who was stuck at Angel Island showed me how she directly sensed a connection with the narratives of Chinese people. She empathized and imagined what it might've felt

like. As I was teaching, I was careful not to fall into the trap of “victimhood” and wanted to ensure that students did not walk away feeling a sense of weakness, or perhaps worse, a sense of entitlement to better treatment. My goal was simply for students to understand the history, and in that way perhaps celebrate strength. Cadence did that especially in the end when she writes the lines “I have to have grit/ or else I will slip.” She highlights endurance of Chinese-Americans, and she highlights strength despite the hardships.

Derek Meng, 10

I think that anti-Asian notions are ridiculous because some non-Asians are being very mean to Asians for no particular reasons.

I feel sad about Asians being discriminated against and now I feel even sadder because there has been some violence towards Asians. An anti-Asian act is what happened in Atlanta, U.S. where eight people were killed. Six of them were mothers who were all Asian descendants including four who were Korean. This action caused indignation towards anti-Asian groups or people to appear in the media. Other actions similar to this include Asian elders being targeted by people in big cities. Some of these actions were caused by the former president because he said that coronavirus is a Chinese virus. This statement got racist people to become more angry at Asians and particularly at Chinese people. I think that this is very, very unfair for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (a.k.a AAPI) because they are being discriminated against and they are being attacked. This is very unfair and many people also know how it feels to have no rights. After black people were freed from slavery, they were still attacked and discriminated against. Black people would think ‘Oh, I do not think it is right to hurt these people because my ancestors were also treated similarly. I do not want that to happen to anybody else so I should treat everyone like my friend.’

These actions are rooted in history because when Chinese people came to the U.S. they were being discriminated against. Chinese immigrants came to America looking for jobs so that they could support their own family. This is because of Japan and western countries. So the Chinese government gave away land to other countries. This left little land in China for people to live on and work. When Chinese immigrants first came, they were hired at jobs and were paid little money. They worked hard and saved most of the money they received. White people saw that the Asians were getting rich and Whites were not, so they protested. They said that the Asians were stealing white peoples’ jobs, but Asians were not. The government did not bother to look further into this case though. Instead, they said that Chinese immigrants were to be deported. Later, other Asian immigrants came to America including Japanese and Korean immigrants. Some of these immigrants were deported from the U.S. and all were discriminated against. After many years, laws changed and some Asian immigrants were allowed to come back to the U.S., including Chinese. These Asian immigrants had to be quarantined on Angel Island. They were asked very private and stupid questions that the immigration officers do not even know. For example they asked: “What is the name of each of your family members?” and “What are the names of the villagers you live with?” If they could not answer they were imprisoned in a wooden house and later deported. I think that the wooden houses were very squalor. Asians who resisted were whipped at. These people were treated abysmally. I think that Americans should accept everyone and understand that it does not matter what type of race you are, it is not like Asians are aliens from the other side of the universe.

In conclusion, I think that anti-Asian notions are ridiculous. Things that we can do to be nice is to stop anti-Asian notions and respect Asians. Instead of treating them poorly, treat them like your friend. If we can apply this to everybody in this world then life would be peaceful!

Derek, who is 10 years old, chose to write an essay that discussed his thesis “I think that anti-Asian notions are ridiculous.” He reacted the most strongly to the news and current events of that

time. I appreciated how straightforward he is with expressing his anger, frustration and sadness. To him, this is simply "all ridiculous" and he is absolutely correct. It was refreshing for me to hear a perspective that was so simple and to the point when it came to these discussions.

Derek tied all of the historical ideas together and showed how it tied into current events. Interestingly, he mentioned how he thinks the treatment of black people in America's history would inform black people's treatment of Asians as another minority group. I thought this was interesting, since he is beginning to seriously draw the connections of race relations in America. I only hope that this is more true in the world. Derek also learned a lot from his family, and his sense of history is strong.

Derek was straightforward in his reaction, and straightforward in his suggestions to all, and I think it's an opinion worth sharing. As he said: we should treat everyone like our friend.

Chinese American Food

Chloe Chen 12

They took our culture's food
and twisted it into American culture.
They called this
Chicken n Broccoli dish,
Chinese food. But it's not,
Orange Chicken
isn't
even
Chinese.
All those take-outs you go to?
they aren't even selling
their
customers
authentic Chinese food. If you
really want
Chinese food, you should go to China.

All the restaurants
and
take-outs just make their food,
call it a day
and sell it to their customers like it's
nothing.
They market it.
They market
off
our culture
and twist it into our society
and play it off like they didn't just take our culture.
Now i'm pretty sure
you
didn't know
most of the things
in a Chinese restaurant/takeout aren't even real
Chinese food.

Americans winded our culture into theirs
and expect us to stay silent. But no,
we deserve more recognition. Imagine you just
immigrated
from China
and your culture is just chiseled
and fit into American land without credit.
You walk into
a takeout store
and are surrounded with
all these smells and food you've
never seen
or
smelt before.

The smell of spices
in the air
surround you as you walk in.
It wafts into your nose as you experience a new
scent.
You wonder what these foods could be,
the sticky
orange,
tangy smell of chicken.
Bright yellow noodles approach your sight
as the waitress walks out of the kitchen doors.
The oily noodles glisten while the waitress walks by,
Her hair slicked back into a
tight bun
as she hurries
around the restaurant
delivering
orders to impatient customers.

You look and overhear her speaking
to a customer
What was this language?
It was Vietnamese.

All this,
All of this
Is a show of
"China" and "Chinese food"
You soon realize how unfair and sinister this act
feels.
They took our culture's food and twisted it into
American culture.
They expect us to stay silent, but no
We deserve more recognition.

In class we had an amazing discussion where Chloe began to realize and react to her own personal experiences. It may also come from the fact that she has a more distant relationship with her Chinese heritage. Her emotion was indignation. This poem comes from her frustration at how "China" is packaged and sold. In some ways this indignation could also be seen as a reflection of her own frustration at how these are the ways she was being exposed to her own heritage.

What is fascinating about this poem is her repetition of the fact that "they market it [the 'Chinese food']" and how "they took our culture's food and twisted it into American culture." A part of me wonders how she feels about herself, as someone who is growing up in America without a strong connection to Chinese language and culture. I also found it fascinating that she focused on this idea of the Vietnamese waitress in the Chinese restaurant. She points at the constant blanketing of Asians as similar and therefore the same.

In the end she says "this is a show of "China... They expect us to stay silent, but no/ we deserve more recognition." I find her dismay at China as put on show extremely prescient, for it points at the

strange fetishization of Chinese culture as well. Amongst the more blatant violence, hatred, and racism, there's also this craving for "Chinese foods." She ends with the idea that "we deserve more recognition," implying not this kind of recognition, but another kind, a more authentic kind. I often wonder what that would look and feel like and I know that many other Chinese-Americans feel the same way.

Throughout these classes, conversations and writing assignments we all added to the narrative as well. Now here we are, small pockets of young Chinese-Americans who are learning from one another and discussing what we feel, what we wish for, and how we can grow too. To me, this is a hopeful image, and I wish it is for you too!



Michelle Harris is a graduate student at Portland State University (PSU) studying Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice. She is also a Peer Connection Network Navigator for the Transfer & Returning Student Resource Center (TRSRC) and a Leadership Fellow for the Student Sustainability Center at PSU. She serves on the PJSA Board of Directors as Mini-Grant Program Co-Coordinator.

JS: Could you tell us a little bit about your background and what set you on your current path?

MH: I've come back into higher education after raising my daughter. We're actually both in master's programs at the same school—per her prodding, not mine! I came to Portland to finish my undergrad after I'd been out of school for about twenty years. I now have two terms left in my master's in conflict resolution at Portland State University before pursuing an Ed.D. My ultimate goal is to write and teach curriculum to teachers-in-training around restorative practices in classrooms. I've worked with our College of Education to guest lecture on this topic, including in some of my daughter's courses.

JS: What drew you to studying conflict resolution and restorative justice in the first place?

MH: My undergraduate degree is in psychology, and I honestly thought that I'd go into counseling or something like that. During the last year of my undergraduate studies, though, I began feeling disconnected from that process and the way that most therapies work. I just didn't feel like the one-on-one was enough for what I wanted to do in life. I had an amazing professor who teaches conflict resolution. More than that, she works in the field of restorative justice. She helps build bridges that allow for healing and restoration between people who've been convicted of something and families on the other side of an issue. Even if someone's prison sentence doesn't change, the ability to heal from it changes. She was a huge inspiration for me.

I was having a very difficult time. My stepfather was really ill in the hospital, and I was trying to apply for grad school. I just really felt lost. I sat down with her one day and had tea, and we talked for about three hours. She introduced me to the fact that we even had a conflict resolution program on campus. The thing that drew me to this program is that everyone I've found here is not just teaching it; they

are also out in the field doing work. They're working at the UN. They're working at NATO. They're doing peace talks. They're working in all of these fields.

JS: What's something that everyone should know about restorative justice work?

MH: When doing work in restorative justice and restorative practices, I think it's important to remember that this is based on indigenous culture. I'm working with a huge network of wonderful people who have taught me so much about that history. Being in Oregon, we're really close to a lot of communities that have been practicing restoration for thousands of years. So this isn't something new; it's already been done. It's just that our modern society is coming around to where, hopefully, we can alter our systems to be better.

A second thing everyone should know is that restorative practices start at home. My partner has four kids—so I actually have five kids total. One is an adult, but the others range in age from eleven to seventeen. I find myself forever preaching restorative practices to them. This is something for all of us doing peacework to remember: to pass things on to the next generation. We're laying foundations for those who are going to do this work in the future.

JS: Why did you decide to specialize in peace education and restorative practices in the classroom?

MH: Education has been key for myself, for my daughter, for really changing how our lives work. Coming to Portland and going back to school has altered everything about my life. I think it's important that everyone has the ability to access that. Over the years, as I've dived into the research

and worked in the community, I've seen the barriers. I feel like there's a better way, and it starts in the community and goes up through our school systems. It's important to break those systems that are set up to prevent students from reaching higher education, or education in general. That's what drew me to it.

JS: What drew you to join PJSA, and then to join the Board of Directors as Mini-Grant Program Co-Coordinator?

MH: I do a lot of things in the peace and justice space. What drew me to PJSA, in particular, was one of my professors, Harry Anastasiou. The work that he's done in his lifetime and his emphasis on the necessity of peace work was really inspiring. We were talking one day, and he said, "You should really check out this organization." That's how I found out about PJSA. So I became a member and followed along with everything that was going on. I felt like I needed to consume all of it.

Right before the annual conference, an email went out looking for new board members. I emailed Harry and asked him if he thought I should do this. After all, I was still a student. Was PJSA looking for people who already had their master's degrees? He told me that given how active I already was in the field, I should just apply. So I did. It's been really great, so far. Everybody has been so kind and helpful, and I love my co-coordinator, Doles Jadotte. I feel like I'm always learning. No matter what I've done or what experiences I've had, there's nothing I love more than learning stuff from other people who are doing things.

JS: What are your plans for the future of the Mini-Grant Program?

MH: This is only the third year of the mini-grants, so I'm excited to be involved so early on. We're looking to coordinate the program more tightly with the PJSA conference in the future. Conference Co-Chair Nicole Johnson had done such an amazing job. She sat down and went through everything that happened: reviewing all of the old applications, reviewing how things have been processed. It's been so helpful. I feel like I'm going in with a huge team. We did a little fundraiser at the end of last year and managed to add fifty percent more to the fund, so that was great. There's a little bit more money this year to be given out.



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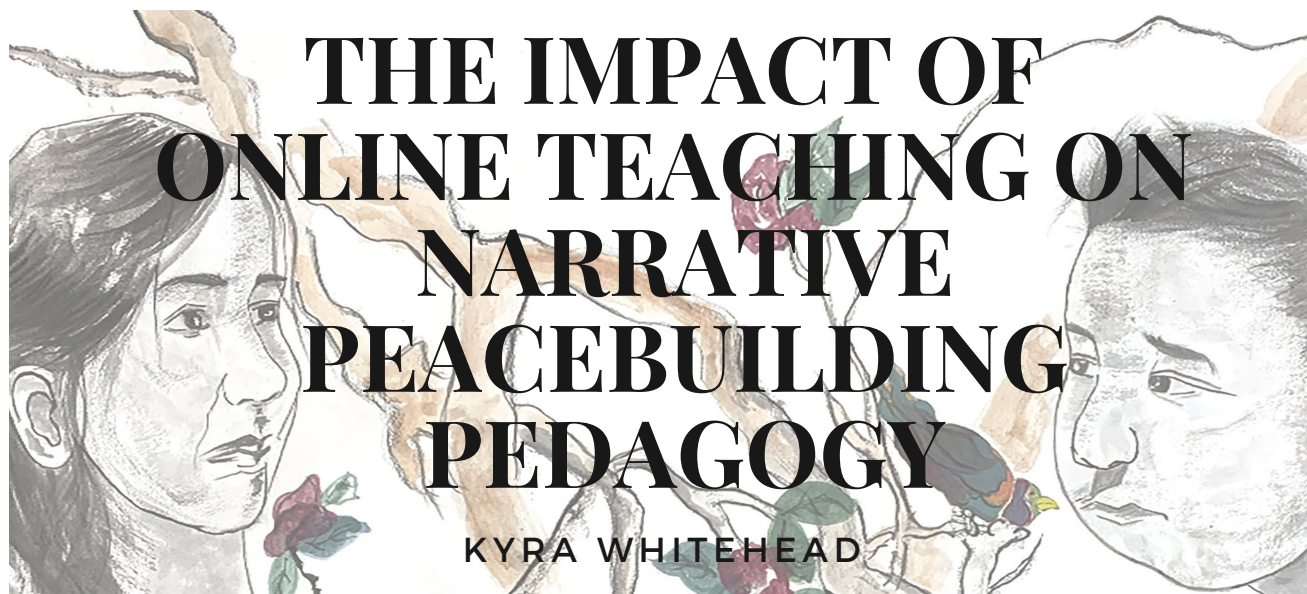


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THE IMPACT OF ONLINE TEACHING ON NARRATIVE PEACEBUILDING PEDAGOGY

KYRA WHITEHEAD

I have spent the past five years working for Wenzhou-Kean University (WKU), Wenzhou, China, after teaching previously at Kean University, NJ, USA. Located in China's mountainous region of the Zhejiang Province, WKU is a Chinese-American-run institution established by Kean University in 2011. All students at WKU are required to complete English courses through the English Department in support of their major coursework and future employment opportunities after graduation. Through these intensive English requirements and challenging major course loads in a second language, WKU prepares students for global opportunities in furthered education and the workforce once they leave campus.

Throughout my work at WKU, under the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) and the Michael Graves School of Design (MGC), I have taught a range of English and Design courses. To address the language challenges that especially Graphic Design students at WKU face, from 2018 on, I have acted as our school's English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Specialist for Graphic Design.

For several years I have aligned my research on peacebuilding pedagogy with my classroom

curriculum and the materials I have created as EAP specialist, using the design ESL classroom as a microcosm for peacebuilding. To cultivate this environment, I designed ESL lesson plans centered on storytelling through literature and the arts.

Storytelling has served as a natural medium to combine peacebuilding, ESL, and design throughout my work, as storytelling is a prominent tool in each of these fields. Indeed, design is considered storytelling.

As a result of my efforts in design ESL and accumulated research and experience in the subject matter, I requested and was approved to teach for the Design Department. I then joined the Design Department under the same role as EAP specialist in 2019. This transition meant that rather than working under the English department, I began teaching design classes geared toward enhancing students' design-specific English skills under the Design Department. As much of my research has been on peacebuilding pedagogy specific to the ESL classroom and the arts, I combined that research with design pedagogy for my EAP work and design classroom curriculum. Simultaneously, my efforts to merge the fields

further informed and enriched the work I have been doing as an EAP specialist.

In other words, since working in the Design Department, I have begun to use the design classroom, in place of the English classroom, as a laboratory for adapting and expanding my peacebuilding pedagogy research while merging that research with my EAP work and design class curriculum. Having accumulated experience in both departments, I have a first-hand understanding of how the ESL materials are applied to both English and design classrooms. However, COVID-19 altered this study further when my curriculum was tested on an online platform.

Peacebuilding in the ESL Classroom

Initially, as mentioned, when teaching and integrating peacebuilding pedagogy in the English department, I was explicitly focused on storytelling through literature and the arts. In this interdisciplinary literature and the arts-based classroom, I encouraged students to weave a world of connections for themselves, where culture and community develop deeper meaning and become defined by relationship through communication and comparisons. This notion is reinforced by The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) National Standards for Foreign Language Learning, better known as the 5 Cs (Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities).

My classes encouraged cultural and self-expression through a student-centered method while acknowledging common cultural misconceptions that occur in a Chinese classroom taught through western-style education. I sought to support relationship-building in my courses, recognizing the

potential inhibitors of intercultural connection and communication between students as well, given the geographic and ethnic diversity within China. Through intercultural understanding and student autonomy, I intended that the classroom would prepare students for global leadership after leaving WKU. These intentions aligned seamlessly with the school's mission to do the same.

Students engaged in various literature and the arts-based activities in my ESL classes to facilitate interaction. They wrote poetry, letters, songs, film scripts, creative fiction, and nonfiction. They acted, sang, danced, listened to folktales from around the world, shared stories, and learned about other cultures and lifestyles, as learning a second language also means learning about people's concerns, attitudes, feelings, and challenges. The classroom became a space where students could share their stories, experiences, and future concerns through several creative mediums, partly to determine the diversity expected in navigating a global lifestyle.

Toward an Online Design Curriculum

Upon merging my EAP work with my design courses, I integrated activities to encourage practical, constructive, and peaceful communication through design. Design is communication, and innovation is a critical quality in any effective design, so utilizing the course to encourage broad-minded, autonomous learners was a feasible transition from my ESL courses. However, since my classes are inherently hands-on and interactive, COVID certainly posed challenges in adapting those materials to an online setting. By the same token, the pandemic also posed an opportunity to consider how designers can respond to the global crisis.

When news first broke about the severity of the virus, I was home in the United States for winter break, preparing my "Introduction to Design and Visual Culture" course to be taught in the spring of 2020. This course introduces design as a creative and cultural medium. It is essentially an examination of the designer's role in shaping cultures and identities across the globe. Within this context and throughout the semester, we investigate advertising design, architecture, graphic design, industrial design, and interior design.

At that time, I was preparing to teach face to face. Nearing the end of our winter break, WKU decided to go online for the spring semester, leaving our instructors, like many others around the world, scrambling to begin navigating the online setting. We had approximately one week to complete a Blackboard training course and work with a course designer to adapt and upload our materials online. Thus, alongside completing the Blackboard training, I began adapting my materials to suit the online setting, yet recognized an opportunity to integrate an additional element into my courses; that is, the designer's role in responding to a global crisis. Hence, the underlying question throughout our semester became, "What is the designer's role in response to a global crisis, and how can that response help to facilitate peacebuilding?"

The first challenge was to adapt these materials created for a student-centered, interactive environment to an online setting. The second was to encourage students to consider the pandemic, this added element of our course in its relation to global design and visual culture. Several questions came to mind before, throughout, and at the end of the semester. At the outset of the term, I thought about the potential benefits of online instruction for an unconventional peacebuilding model specific to

design and the English language. I also considered how best to utilize the online setting to enhance my curriculum. During the semester, I measured ways to improve our discussion forum to enhance student participation. On reflection, at the end of the semester, I considered how online instruction changed discussion and in-class activities.

I found that online teaching was advantageous to my curriculum and research in many ways. For one, it pushed me to test these materials in a new forum, which was, in itself, beneficial. And as a result, I realized that online education could extend these lessons globally. Students could potentially engage with the materials from anywhere, which would help to broaden the conversation and expand peaceful dialogue. In this case, the online setting offers the opportunity to extend my curriculum beyond the classroom and potentially share it in other online forums, where participants can take part from anywhere.

Since we were using Blackboard Collaborate, I utilized breakout groups to facilitate interaction between students. Additionally, China's widely-used app, WeChat, proved to be a valuable tool for announcements and document sharing. To my surprise and delight, I found that, at times, breakout groups encouraged conversation. I often visited the various breakout rooms to ask questions and facilitate interaction, only to find students busy collaborating on the given activity. I also found that some students seemed more comfortable sharing their ideas behind a computer screen, though this perpetuated a slew of reasons students could not turn on their cameras.

Adapting to the Online Classroom

Candidly, online interaction did not come without

its challenges. Many of the more introverted students remained silent throughout group discussions leading me to elicit attention by cold-calling in the breakout rooms or making announcements in our WeChat group. Though, I often find that the best way to engage the more passive students is by allowing them to discuss in pairs then share their ideas in larger groups or with the class. Accordingly, I often utilize the Think, Pair, Share (TPS) method rather than cold calling.

I also integrated more videos and online resources than I had in previous semesters, which were well-received by students. The success of integrating these resources was partly demonstrated in students engaging in-class discussions of the subject matter. For instance, I would ask students to come up with their own discussion questions based on a video clip they watched on their own during the week. They would then respond to those questions as a group during class. This gave them ample time to consider the subject and their responses, evidently easing the pressure of interacting with the topic for the first time in class. However, the discussion forum proved to be the most significant addition to my courses. Each week, students were to communicate through an online discussion forum, where they would post an initial response to a weekly question and maintain a conversation on that subject throughout the week. I would respond to students, as well, to ensure that the discussion remained structured and on track.

I also altered discussion questions throughout the semester in response to global news updates surrounding the pandemic. These updates allowed students to consider how they, as designers, could respond to a worldwide crisis. For instance, one of our discussion questions was to assess the various reactions among Americans to COVID-19 in the

United States. I then asked, "If you were a designer in the U.S., how could you respond to this divide that we are witnessing between Americans partly as a result of the pandemic?" Student responses varied; however, some noted that they would take an informative approach by relaying medical information about the virus. Others wanted to establish mutual understanding through interactive design, to offer the public a chance to share differing perspectives. Some, for instance, proposed apps that would allow for fruitful exchange while discouraging any unproductive or combative discourse.

Overall, I found our class discussions to be more abundant and rewarding in the physical classroom; however, giving students the opportunity to share their ideas in a written discussion forum added depth and thoughtfulness to our conversations. For this reason, this discussion platform is a tool that I continue to use in the physical classroom, though I assign postings less frequently. Apart from oral and written discussion, the online platform and the pandemic also altered some of our in-class activities, in certain ways, I would argue, for the better.

Adapting a Narrative Peacebuilding Activity

One of the activities that I created to align with this unconventional peacebuilding model was further altered for the online setting. However, I found this beneficial. Since adapted to suit my design classes, the activity is to first teach students the target design vocabulary for the lesson. Students then discuss the various countries they would like to visit, explaining why they want to go there. Students first discuss in pairs and then share their commentary with the class. They then individually create an advertisement about the country they hope to visit.

The advertisement must include images, descriptive language, and the target vocabulary.

Following the first draft of their advertisement, students research the country of their choice and add five learned facts to their work. Subsequently, students create a sales pitch for why classmates should visit their chosen country while explaining personal interest or experience in the country as part of the storytelling component.

Finally, each student chooses one of the presented countries to visit and writes an imaginary journal entry about a day in that country from his or her perspective based on information learned from the presenter. The English language outcome of this activity is for students to demonstrate effective presentation skills. The design outcome is for students to exhibit a successful advertisement. The peacebuilding outcome is that students will display a newfound interest in or understanding of the country of their choice.

Mostly, for this activity, the physical classroom was mirrored by Blackboard. Students used the breakout rooms for discussion, I used the whiteboard function to teach the target vocabulary, and otherwise, students used their computers for research as they would in class. While I've noted that there are benefits and disadvantages to using Blackboard in presenting their advertisements, the platform made for a seamless transition between presentations, given that students could share their screens one after another. This assignment is just one example of how I could adapt my narrative peacebuilding pedagogy to the online environment.

Lessons Learned

Going forward, I am still processing what my students and I learned from the overall online experience. I am continuing to experiment with materials to combine that learning with my previous curriculum now that we have returned to the physical classroom. Weaving my peacebuilding pedagogy and EAP materials into "Introduction to Design and Visual Culture" created the perfect marriage from a research and teaching standpoint; however, online teaching has expanded the scope of this study.

Although incorporating the insights from my year of teaching online is a work in progress, I am convinced that the experience strengthened my research and made me a better teacher.



WE ARE ALL DOWNSTREAM

The Peace Chronicle is excited to share this public sculpture created by Mike Klein, a PJSA member and Program Director of Justice and Peace Studies at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. This sculpture is part of Art on the River, an annual temporary art exhibit by the city of Dubuque, Iowa. The theme for this year's exhibit is Resiliency Flows, and it will be up through late July 2022. The photographs in this article were taken by the artist, who also wrote the accompanying text below. To learn more about this sculpture, you can [visit its page](#) on the City of Dubuque website. (It's also worth following the breadcrumbs back to the exhibit's main page.)

To be downstream is to change our view, to consider our relations upstream of this time and place.

To be downstream is to wonder how people are treating the river as that water flows to us. We might realize our interdependence with people upstream and with the river.

To be downstream is also to realize we are upstream from others. They too might wonder about our respect for this river before it gets to them.

To be downstream is not just a matter of geography, it's also a matter of chronology. If time is said to flow like a river, then we are downstream from the original people of this land: the Sauk and Meskwaki, the Kickapoo and Dakota. Their stories have been too often disregarded and submerged, but we can hear them today as they cry out: Mni Wiconi! – water is life!

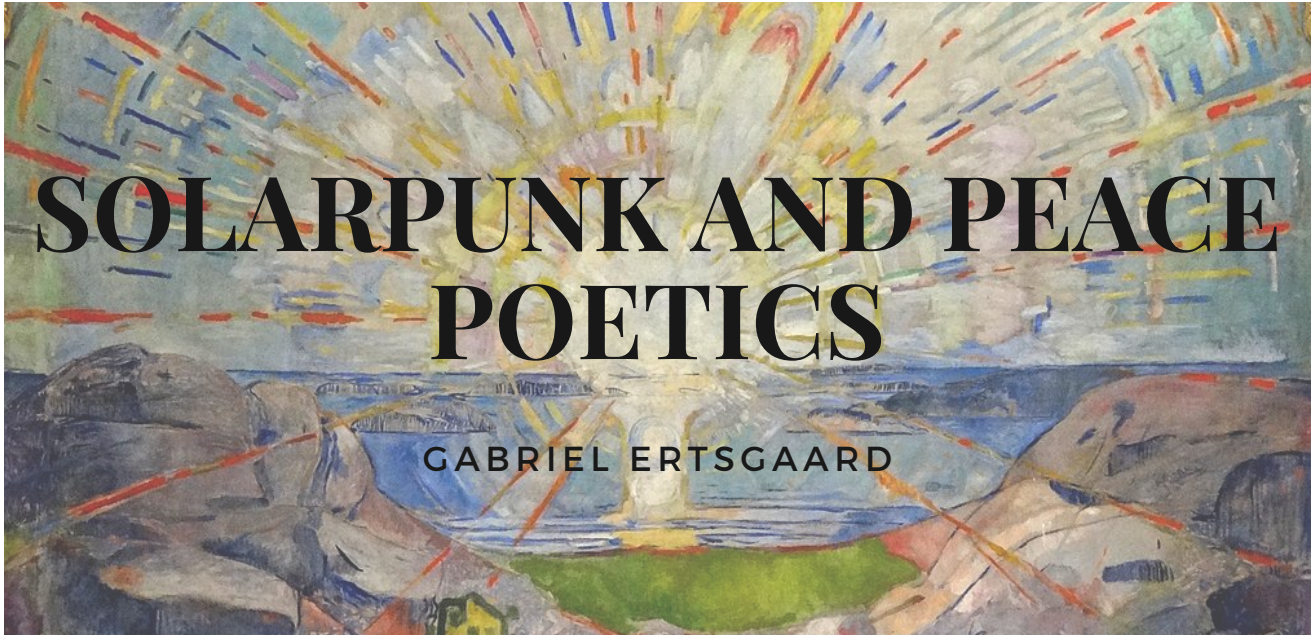
Our upstream ancestors have treasured and used and abused this river. What kind of ancestors will we be to our downstream descendants in the flow of time? Will they shake their heads or nod in approval at the way that we have treated this river?

There is a third aspect to we are all downstream: As we grow in relationship to the river and to each other, we look upstream to the systems that influence and affect the water. We are individuals, yes, but also inter-dependent members of a larger community and of larger systems: food and energy, transportation and recreation...

Let's go upstream from our individual places to see how our communities and our systems are either helping and sustaining this life-giving river - or how we need to go upstream to fix destructive systems through policy and legislation by imagining new approaches to the way we live our lives - to working together to create the future we want for our water, for ourselves, for our communities.

We are all downstream: what does it mean to you?
What will you do for each other and for the river?





SOLARPUNK AND PEACE POETICS

GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

Every fictional story, I'm convinced, has cosmic laws embedded within it. These determine what's possible in the narrative world. In speculative fiction, the story's metaphysical ground is often explicit. The Force in *Star Wars* is arguably the most famous example, a cosmic power that animates the fictional universe. But even in ostensibly realistic fiction, there are implicit laws, and these are often linked to genre. Consider two Shakespearian plays: both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Much Ado About Nothing* feature heroines who fake their own deaths. The first play is a tragedy, so this stratagem leads to doom. The second is a comedy, so the same ploy leads to redemption. For Juliet and Hero, one could argue, genre is destiny. What kind of genre, then, is solarpunk? What possibilities does it allow?

In general, solarpunk imagines a future that is at least moving toward environmental justice, a future in which human technology finds harmony with the natural world. Consider the "Solarpunk Manifesto" that first appeared on the Regenerative Design website in 2020. It reads in part,

"Solarpunk can be utopian, just optimistic, or concerned with the struggles en route to a better world, but never dystopian. As our world roils with calamity, we need solutions, not only warnings.

Solutions to thrive without fossil fuels, to equitably manage real scarcity and share in abundance instead of supporting false scarcity and false abundance, to be kinder to each other and to the planet we share."

As this passage makes clear, solarpunk arcs toward hope, not doom. For that reason, this genre is highly compatible with peace poetics.

What, you may be wondering, do I mean by "peace poetics"? Let's start with the second word, "poetics." It originally comes from the Greek work for making or crafting. Aristotle used this term for the craft of creative writing in his *Poetics*. Now, words have a tendency to slide around in meaning over the course of centuries, especially if they cross between languages. That's why we also have the word "poetry" for a specific type of creative writing. But "poetics" can analyze any type of verbal or narrative art.

So how does peace come into this? I use the term “peace poetics” for exploring how to craft certain types of stories—namely, those that promote nonviolent conflict transformation and the possibility of peace. These aren’t passive stories. Rather, nonviolent civil resistance is a form of heroic action, an alternate to heroic violence. To tell a story featuring nonviolent heroism, though, a writer needs to know (1) how nonviolent campaigns function, and (2) how to shape compelling narratives that feature such campaigns. Also, different aspects of peace and conflict studies may serve the needs of different stories. (In *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, Lisa Schirch provides an overview of this broad field.) For example, a story that focuses on conflict transformation might not feature civil resistance.

In fact, we can already find this range in the existing corpus of solarpunk stories. For this essay, I’ll focus on two examples, both from *The Weight of Light: A Collection of Solar Futures*. In this interdisciplinary project, speculative fiction writers teamed up with scientists and other scholars to imagine a range of future societies, all based on plausible solar power technologies. Fair warning: what follows is full of spoilers. Fortunately, the [Center for Science and Imagination](#) at Arizona State University has made the entire collection available for free online. The first story, “For the Snake of Power” by Brenda Cooper, offers an example of civil resistance. The second, “Big Rural” by Cat Rambo, offers an example of conflict transformation. Both stories reflect *SolarPunk Magazine’s* utopia/dystopia qualification: “Not all solarpunk stories take place in idealistic utopias” but “solarpunk stories are decidedly *not* dystopias.” Together, these stories model diverse possibilities for peace poetics in the solarpunk genre.

In many ways, my arguments about peace poetics flow into an intensifying current in speculative fiction. It excites me that so many writers today are explicitly addressing this craft question: How do we write about peace and justice in fiction? To list just a few relevant articles from the last year: “The Fiction of Peace, the Fantasy of War” by C. L. Clark in *Fantasy Magazine*, “How science fiction can help us imagine a nonviolent future” (an interview with Joan Slonczewski) by Stephanie Van Hook in *Waging Nonviolence*, “Activist SFF Isn’t Just About Good Intentions” by Vida Cruz in the *SFWA Bulletin*, and even my “Nonviolence and the Hero’s Duel” in *SFWA Blog*. To this ongoing conversation, I’d like to add my thoughts on nonviolence, solarpunk, and the craft of fiction writing.

Solarpunk and Peace Education

Before digging into the stories themselves, we need to start with some peace studies concepts. In *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding*, Lisa Schirch outlined four cornerstones of her topic: (1) waging conflict nonviolently, (2) reducing direct violence, (3) transforming relationships, and (4) building capacity (25-27). The first and third are lenses that I’ll apply to Cooper and Rambo’s stories further on, although using the alternate terminology of “nonviolent civil resistance” and “conflict transformation.” Of the last cornerstone, “building capacity,” Schirch wrote:

“Societies reflect a culture of peace and justice when they address the needs and rights of all people and are fully capable of expressing conflict through democratic processes. Rather than seeing culture as static, building the capacity for justpeace requires people to know how to take responsibility for shaping their culture and all of their society’s architecture, including structures, institutions, policies, and organizations that support it” (56).

One way to build a society's capacity for peace is through education. According to Schirch, "Peace education explores the causes of conflict and conditions of peace." She also advocated educating people about human rights and environmental issues in order to promote peacebuilding. Schirch further noted the practical skills that can be learned through conflict transformation training. Finally, she highlighted how "peace media" can "provide objective information about violent conflicts ... and increase awareness about peaceful alternatives" (57-58).

Fictional stories can contribute to peacebuilding in a way that resonates with peace education, but there are important differences. Yes, there's such a thing as instructional fiction. For example, the popular Magic School Bus series, first created by Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen in the 1980s, uses fictional stories to educate children about science. Certainly, someone could create a similar series for peace education. Most fiction, though, doesn't try to teach an explicit curriculum. The first priority isn't the lesson, but rather the story.

How might non-instructional fiction help build a society's capacity for peace? Fiction, I believe, affects our matrix of imagination. That is, the stories we consume help shape the worlds we can imagine. If fictional stories are dominated by violent heroism, it becomes harder to conceive of nonviolent alternatives. If fictional worlds are filled with tragedy, it becomes harder to embrace hope. Stories of nonviolent heroism and conflict transformation, on the other hand, lay a narrative foundation for peace education. Fiction can contribute to peacebuilding by making peace imaginable.

In an article for *The International Journal of Engineering, Social Justice, and Peace*, Juan David Reina-Rozo made a similar argument specifically about solarpunk when he wrote, "Imagination, then, is a mechanism through which we can transform our collective future using speculation" (53). In this case, though he was not speaking about peacebuilding, but rather the genre's decolonial possibilities. Similarly, Isaijah Johnson argued in his article for *The Journal of Sustainability Education*, "Solarpunk fiction can be considered pedagogical: through depiction and sparking the imagination, the knowledge, skills, and creativity necessary for producing an ecological future make their way into the hearts and minds of readers." Although my present essay fills a gap by focusing on peacebuilding skills, I certainly recognize the deep importance of environmental justice issues. In fact, peacebuilding and environmental justice are often integrated in solarpunk worlds. That is certainly the case for Cooper and Rambo's stories.

Civil Resistance in "For the Snake of Power"

Brenda Cooper's "For the Snake of Power" begins as an amateur detective story. The protagonist, Rosa, is a power company employee in a future version of Phoenix, Arizona. A massive dust storm has damaged the "snake," an enormous solar array that provides the city with power. The resulting brownouts leave poorer residents without A/C during triple-digit heat. In some cases, this proves deadly. But more power is missing than the damage can explain, so Rosa goes digging for answers. With the help of the AI program HANNA, she finds them. The governor has agreed to sell off 20 percent of their power out of state, and that contract takes priority over local needs. No contingency has been made for emergencies. Both Rosa's supervisor and her best friend Callie insist

that nothing can be done. The problem is way above their paygrade.

Cooper could have stopped there with a hopeless, Chinatown-style ending. (“Forget it, Jake. It’s the Association of Solar Power.”) That’s not what solarpunk is about, though. Instead, Cooper pivoted from the detective story to a related genre—the caper story. This fits with one of my core ideas about peace poetics: caper stories offer a structural model for portraying civil resistance campaigns in fiction.

How does a caper story work? First, you come up with a scheme, usually a heist or a con. You assemble a colorful cast of characters, each with unique skills. Then you put the scheme into action and see if they pull it off. (These stories also feature growth arcs, complications, etc., but those elements aren’t unique to the genre.) In a story featuring nonviolent heroism, a civil resistance campaign can serve as the scheme. That’s why caper stories offer a model for narrative structure.

Indeed, this is exactly what we see in “For the Snake of Power.” Rosa tells Inez, a friend from her old neighborhood, what’s going on. Inez convinces Rosa to turn whistleblower and connects her with underground media contacts. Local activists use this coverage as a springboard to call for mass protests. These spread throughout the city, even to better off neighborhoods, with residents demanding the governor’s resignation. This draws the attention of the major news channels.

Although Rosa is the point-of-view character, she isn’t actually the lead organizer for this civil resistance campaign. Rather, Inez and her contacts quickly organize things once they discover that Rosa is willing to turn whistleblower. For that reason, much of the planning happens behind the

scenes. Nonetheless, the basic elements of a caper story are there: coming up with a scheme, assembling a diverse cast of characters with unique skills, putting the scheme into action.

The story even has a surprise twist at the end, a common feature of caper stories. Rosa’s friend Callie shows up at the protest. She reveals that, with the help of the AI HANNA, she has shut down the transmission line sending power out of state. Rather than admit that their AI went rogue, the governor must save face by claiming to have made the decision herself, thus ending the brownouts. Although their actions cost both Rosa and Callie their jobs, the civil resistance efforts prove effective. Cooper’s Phoenix may not be a utopia, but it isn’t a dystopia either. Like the solarpunk genre as a whole, the story insists on the credibility of hope.

In real life, it’s important to acknowledge, campaigns like this one don’t accomplish their goals in a single day. Rather, the road to victory takes months or even years. As George Lakey put it in *How We Win: A Guide to Direct Action Campaigning*, “The trouble is, when I look back on the one-off protests I’ve joined over the years, I don’t remember a single one that changed the policy we were protesting” (4). However, this sort of narrative condensation is a common literary device. Take the movie *Love, Actually*, wherein characters learn new languages, learn new instruments, and fall deeply in love in under a month. These are real life activities, but presented on an abridged timeline. The same is true for the events in “For the Snake of Power.” Although the timeline is very condensed, the elements of civil resistance are believable.

Conflict Transformation in “Big Rural”

Cat Rambo’s “Big Rural” also begins with a mystery.

The protagonist, Trish Soledad, returns to Tierra del Ray, her hometown in rural Arizona. Like Rosa from "For the Snake of Power," Trish works for a power company that is unpopular with local residents. Sol Dominion has planted a massive solar farm on the outskirts of town and intends to roll out an even larger phase two. The plant, though, has suffered serious vandalism, and the culprits haven't been caught. If the problem continues, it could jeopardize the project. Trish's future with Sol Dominion depends on her ability to stop the vandalism.

Neither local law enforcement nor the solar farm security guards show much interest in helping Trish solve the mystery. Nonetheless, she eventually realizes that her high school boyfriend, Jeff, is the ringleader of the vandals. But Trish also realizes that Sol Dominion hasn't taken local concerns into account. The solar farm itself is considered an eyesore that ruins the view from their favorite bluff. Why would they want to see it expanded? The shift to solar power coincided with the shut down of the local coal plant, one of the small town's largest employers. Finally, Sol Dominion's acquisition of water rights threatens to crowd out agriculture.

At the end of the story, Trish and Jeff meet atop the bluff. He knows that she's figured things out and waits for the metaphorical hammer to drop. Instead, Trish surprises him. She's cashed in all her favors at Sol Dominion to arrange a change in the phase two design. "Ever heard of agro-voltaics?" she asks Jeff, "Imagine crops growing between the panels, sheltered from some of the heat." (119). Now the space will be dual purpose, benefitting both the power company and the community. Rather than a black hole, the view from the bluff will look down on a giant garden.

This solution illustrates one of the key ideas in conflict transformation theory, the distinction between interests and positions (popularized in Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton's *Getting to Yes*). Basically, a "position" is whatever the parties on each side of a conflict are demanding. The position of the power company is that phase two needs to proceed without interference. The position of the vandals is that this expansion must be stopped. An "interest" is whatever needs or wants the parties are trying to accomplish through their positions. By looking a level deeper, Trish finds an alternative that addresses everyone's needs.

Indeed, pushing through this alternative is Trish's key heroic act in "Big Rural." The closest thing to civil resistance in the story is Jeff's vandalism campaign. (There's disagreement within the field of peace and conflict studies as to whether vandalism counts as nonviolence.) Trish never diverts from her purpose of stopping this vandalism, but she finds a way to transform the conflict, to move past winners and losers.

Like "For the Snake of Power," "Big Rural" relies on an abridged timeline. In real life, it would probably take a lot more effort to convince a company like Sol Dominion to change their design plans. The same is true for convincing the vandals to stand down. The power company and the local community might go through several rounds of negotiations before arriving at the agro-voltaics plan. With that said, the solution itself is realistic, and it reflects a key concept in conflict transformation theory. Through narrative condensation, Rambo has gotten the essentials across in a compelling short story.

Conclusion

The exploration above hardly exhausts the links between peace poetics and solarpunk. In particular, I've prioritized heroic action over worldbuilding. The former, however, depends on the latter. An action can only happen in a world in which that action is possible. For this reason, let's briefly consider crucial elements of solarpunk worldbuilding in these two tales from *Weight of Light*.

Both stories imagine plausible advancements in solar technology, but they don't stop there. Both also pay attention to the aesthetic form these technologies take. The "snake" in Cooper's story is an architectural marvel, bordering on public sculpture. When working properly, its form and function alike contribute to the well-being of Phoenix residents. In Rambo's story, the solar farm is ultimately redesigned to satisfy both the practical and visual needs of local residents. Rather than techno-dystopias, these are worlds where leadership must consider the holistic impacts of technology, although it takes pushback from ordinary citizens to insure this consideration.

Furthermore, both stories imagine social structures wherein such pushback can prove effective. Neither story depicts a utopia, of course. In both, powerful corporate or governmental institutions threaten to trample those on the margins. But unlike Orwell's *1984*—which predated Star Trek's Borg in portraying resistance as futile—these solarpunk societies have space for advocacy, negotiation, and effective resistance. Such narrative worlds allow for nonviolent heroic action.

Upon reflection, I must acknowledge that this essay is really a blend of literary criticism and poetics. That is, I've spent as much time analytically reading two

solarpunk stories (criticism) as I've spent exploring how to write in this genre (poetics). Nonetheless, I hope that you take at least two insights away from my analysis of "For the Snake of Power" and "Big Rural": (1) compelling alternatives to violence are possible in fiction, and (2) solarpunk is a genre where those alternatives can thrive.

By reading these stories carefully with an eye toward narrative craft, other writers can pick up ideas for attempting similar effects in their own work. To be clear, I'm not claiming that Cooper and Rambo thought about their work using the same terms I've used. Reading the second half of "For the Snake of Power" as a caper story helps us figure out how to replicate a form of action, whether or not Cooper conceived it that way. Similarly, I don't know if Cat Rambo deliberately drew on conflict transformation theory in "Big Rural," but that field helps us understand why the story's resolution works.

Beyond craft specifics, for civil resistance or conflict transformation to work in fiction, writers must believe that these methods can succeed. That is, writers must craft worlds that allow nonviolent heroism to triumph. Certainly, Cooper and Rambo have done this. If these two stories are any indication, there's a bright future for peace poetics within solarpunk worlds.



HOW TO PORTRAY NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE IN FICTION: AN INTERVIEW WITH RIVERA SUN

INTERVIEWED BY GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

Rivera Sun is a change-maker, a cultural creative, a protest novelist, and an advocate for nonviolence and social justice. She is the author of *The Dandelion Insurrection*, *The Way Between*, and other novels. She is the editor of *Nonviolence News*. Her study guide to making change with nonviolent action is used by activist groups across the country. Her essays and writings are syndicated by Peace Voice, and have appeared in journals nationwide.

GE: Over the past decade, you've written numerous novels that feature nonviolent campaigns. Could you tell us a little bit about your background, both in the arts and in activism, and how that has led to the work you're doing now?

RS: I was working as a dancer and theater in Santa Cruz, CA, when the Occupy Protests erupted. The local protest encampment took place right across the street from my house. That was kind of my initiation into activism. The Occupy Movement was wild and fantastic—and it made me curious about what structurally lay behind it in terms of organizing work. As I learned more, I wove it into my fictional writings. I think one of the most helpful things I ran across was the work of Gene

Sharp codifies power and struggle in a digestible and understandable way that can feel really empowering. His work supplants the narrative of how change happens that we inherit from our culture. In the US, we tend to believe that if we just shout loud enough, change is going to happen. But Sharp articulates why we might need to non-cooperate with the system, or intervene and get in the way, not just make our voices heard.

At that point, I started to write novels that are based on nonviolent struggles. I try to make those as representative as possible of the movements we see globally in terms of how actions are portrayed, the sequencing of tactics, the strategies that are used, etc. That in turn led me to become a better activist. As I went on book tour with the novel, I also arranged trainings in strategy for nonviolent movements. The two have just kept blending together over the past ten years.

Beyond writing my novels, I've done a lot of work with various projects on translating nonviolent struggles into popular education. This work includes essays, short stories, and social media efforts. This also includes editing *Nonviolence News*, which collects and shares 30-50 stories of

nonviolent action each week.

GE: What have you learned through your own writing process about how to craft stories of nonviolent struggles?

RS: My first novel, *Steam Drills, Treadmills, and Shooting Stars* was about coal and climate change. At that point in my evolution, it definitely hinged on the “if we shout loud enough, change will happen” mentality. It was while writing *The Dandelion Insurrection* that I discovered Gene Sharp. In the novel, I had posited a hidden corporate dictatorship. I realized very quickly, that while I could invent the terrible scenarios of that speculative fiction novel, I didn’t really know how to get my characters out of their predicament.

So, I actually Googled “how to bring down dictators nonviolently.” Four million hits came up! I learned about hundreds of types of nonviolent action, the strategy behind successful campaigns, and so much more. I realized that dozens of nonviolent revolutions have happened since I was a child in the 1980s. Ultimately, I rewrote *Dandelion Insurrection* to incorporate what I was learning. It was a much better book because of this. The portrayal of nonviolent struggle had teeth in it. It was accurate. It was powerful. It blended protest and persuasion with non-cooperation and intervention. Where there were strategic missteps, I held the characters accountable.

Nonviolent struggle requires sacrifice, but it has tremendous power and potential. It’s also a science as much as an art. There are reasons why it works. If novelists and writers portray it that way, we are doing ourselves and our societies a service. We’re helping to illuminate for the average reader what goes into a nonviolent struggle.

GE: Are there any unique pitfalls that writers need to avoid while writing stories featuring peace skills and nonviolent action?

RS: Compared to other fiction, we have an even greater task in making sure that we’re not writing in a preachy or didactic way. Nothing turns off the reader faster than that. We also want to be careful not to replicate the prevalent misconceptions about nonviolence. When I looked for other people’s writings that might show some nonviolent struggles, I found an over-portrayal of massacres. They’re very dramatic. There’s nothing more heart-wrenching in a fictional setting than to have protesters getting massacred by the opposition group. But we know from the study of nonviolent and violent conflicts that you’re ten times *less* likely to get killed in the context of a nonviolent struggle. So as writers, we want to make sure that we’re portraying these things as accurately as possible.

That means digging into the science of how nonviolent struggle works. At this point in time, I feel like every writer should update themselves with this knowledge. If we were going to write a book about 18th century New England whaling culture, we’d research what kind of ships they’re sailing on, how many masts they have, what it smells like on the ship, etc. We need to bring that same rigor and critique to our portrayals of conflict.

GE: What advice do you have for crafting compelling, nonviolent characters in fiction?

RS: Often, stories of nonviolent struggle focus on the people on the podium or with the bullhorn. But you have to use your imagination to find other heroes. Who is there risking arrest? Who is making the sandwiches? Who is funding the movement? Who are all the characters making this happen?

One of the core things about nonviolent struggle is that it's participatory. It takes lots of people. It's not just a single, powerful leader waving their magic wand and making things happen.

It takes a lot of courage to be involved in a nonviolent movement, and for writers, that's golden material. How does someone who isn't very courageous step into their courage? How does someone who thinks they're courageous get tested? How do you talk about digging for our deepest human values in the context of very difficult struggles where people have done wrong, and people have been harmed? We're not all saints in nonviolent movements. That tension in characters makes them interesting.

One of the cool things about nonviolence in real life is that it's a much more inclusive form of conflict management. Violence often prioritizes the able-bodied, the strong, and the young over anybody else. In nonviolent heroism, you have much more space for people of varying physical abilities, varying ages, and varying backgrounds. They're all going to bring their life experiences to how they approach struggle.

GE: We've discussed *The Dandelion Insurrection*. What are some other examples of how nonviolent action is featured in your work?

RS: For the past seven years or so, I've been working on a young adult series called the Ari Ara Series. This is set in a completely made-up world. It's classic fantasy in many ways, but I'm not hinging on war and violence as the conflict method. I'm trying to show that nonviolent action and peace skills can replace those.

This is a genre that's completely happy with magic,

dragons, and unicorns. But when you look at its motifs of conflict management, they're often using some very unimaginative, uninventive methods: picking up a sword, fighting in a war. My question to myself was this: Is fantasy fiction still compelling if you take that violence out and replace it with nonviolence and peace skills? What I found with the Ari Ara Series is that yes, it absolutely works. In fact, it may be even more compelling as fiction.

In that series, I'm drawing on examples of peace work such as Bacha Khan's 80,000 person peace army or Gandhi's Shanti Sena network that grew out of the Indian self-rule struggle. I also draw on the idea of peace teams, like what Nonviolent Peaceforce does. I weave in some ideas that come more from the "peace" side of "peace and conflict studies" than from the "nonviolent action" end of the field. The field of peace and conflict studies is really a continuum—or maybe even an ecology—of tools and practices. Sometimes, there are spots where different approaches are not super-compatible, but it's very minor compared to the ways in which they work together to resolve conflict without violence or the use of war.

In my writing work, I try to include a range of peace skills, because if we can't imagine it, we can't use it. In our society, we have a complete failure of imagination around conflict skills. That's why, in fantasy, sci-fi, and movies, we see the repetition of "might makes right"—with war as the theater upon which we prove our valor and violence as how we save the day. This is a tragedy, because we are now more articulate about the skills of peace than ever before. But if our storytellers don't start portraying these skills, how will popular culture, and thus the populace, learn to integrate them as naturally as breathing? This is what I'm after. This is my mission with my work.

BOOK REVIEW: *CATHOLIC PEACEBUILDING AND MINING*

SELINA GALLO-CRUZ

Montevecchio, Caesar A. and Powers, Gerald F. Eds.
2022. *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining: Integral
Peace, Development, and Ecology*. London:
Routledge. ISBN 9780367545086. £ 120.00.

Reviewer: Selina Gallo-Cruz, PhD, College of the
Holy Cross

With express concern that wars of the future will be fought over access to minerals, it is time we all pay more attention to extractive politics. A new volume on the topic edited by Gerald Powers and Caesar Montevecchio, the respective directors of Catholic Peacebuilding Studies and the Catholic Peacebuilding Network at the University of Notre Dame, provides an invaluable resource. In *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining*, Church leaders, theologians, peace scholars, and practitioners, all experts in the field, bring us an engaging and in-depth exploration of the Church's role in protecting the most vulnerable communities affected by mining around the world. The volume contains two sections, the first exploring a sample of illustrative cases, and the second providing an exegesis on how Church teachings guide us to respond to the industry's ongoing itinerant involvement in inequities, displacement, poverty, war, and violence.

From the World Bank's strategic push to open public lands in Africa to foreign investment in the 1990s, through the industry's direct involvement in terrible civil wars, to a recent and tragic spike in the targeting killings of anti-mining activists, the contributors note how the Church has often been one of the strongest and most powerful advocates for affected communities. Scholars interested in learning more about third-party solidarity will appreciate the many compelling elaborations of how the Church community has been a strong ally in consciousness raising, education and movement building, lobbying, building multi-level alliances, facilitating dialogue and consensus, and influencing and inspiring political will to protect the environment. Readers will appreciate the comparative insights gained from diverse and important cases of countries where mining has long been foundational to the political economy like Peru, from countries that have successfully resisted new mining contracts as in El Salvador, and from case studies of countries that have experienced dramatic shifts in how they manage concession agreements, like the Philippines and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The volume also boldly confronts some of the most difficult paradoxes that pervade both the industry and the infrastructure of modern life that it sustains. Many

of the chapters draw on *Laudato Si*, the Church's encyclical on care for our common home, calling out the cultural foundations of exploitation and environmental degradation, the rapidification of modern life, the technocratic paradigm, excessive anthropocentrism, rampant individualism, maximizing profits and self-interested pragmatism. Finally, although rooted in a Catholic framework on peacebuilding, readers also learn about interfaith dialogue and allied advocacy with the international network of Engaged Buddhists, the Church of England, the Episcopal Church, Allied Religions for Conservation, and the G20 Interfaith Forum. Indeed, there seems to be a freedom in claiming a moral commitment to clearly defining what is good for the earth and good for the human community intrinsically dependent on our one precious and finite planet. *Catholic Peacebuilding and Mining* gives us a strong start to developing the field from such a place of moral courage, one enlightened by rigorous historical and ethnographic study.

This text will make a valuable addition to a number of different kinds of courses. Certainly, Catholic colleges and universities will want to include it in Theology and Religious Studies Courses and I expect to see it on a number of Peace and Conflict Studies and Environmental Studies syllabi in courses that take a social science approach.

From the perspective of social movements study, this book offers an important glimpse into how and why religious communities constitute essential "free spaces" for doing the kinds of organizing and advocacy work other political actors are unable to. Their respected authority often shields them from repression, a dynamic I have explored in my own work on women's strategic use of "political invisibility". Catholic leaders and organizers' long-standing ties with and dedication to local communities also gains them the confidence of

acting in ways social movement scholars have noted as unique to indigenous community organizations. Finally, religious leaders and community workers bring an explicit moral commitment to these issues that alters the terms of negotiations and advocacy in a way that secular approaches cannot. This merits much more consideration among social movements scholars and I believe it will generate enlivening discussion in the classroom.

I hope to see a follow-up conversation on how other faith perspectives view the issue of mining and peace and conflict. I believe that the point of contemplating humans' place among other species as described herein in different ways merits further attention in the field—some authors praise God's commandment to humans to manage the earth's resources while others emphasize the sin of usury and the harms caused by conspicuous consumption and global capitalism. Future discussion may foment new insights on the rights of the industry to continue to expand with known risks to vulnerable ecosystems for practitioners as it may also help scholars to expand inquiry into clarity over the ontologies that undergird different stakeholders' responses. Indeed, there have been many attempts in environmental law, as of late, to expand the rights of living places and the non-humans who inhabit them and the field of ecology has long nurtured a more-than-humanist approach that embraces humans as part of but not lords over the earth and its other inhabitants. Finally, I also hope to see that the book galvanizes new reflective analysis in peace studies where an orientation to environmental peacebuilding is giving growing attention to mining conflicts, but has thus far followed a conciliatory working relationship with the development as growth model that many now call into question.



NARRATOLOGY AND NARRATIVE CHANGE: DEFINING TERMS

GABRIEL ERTSGAARD

What is a “story”? What is a “narrative”? Are they the same thing or not? The answers to these questions can vary. A lot depends on who you’re talking to, and just as importantly, what exactly you’re talking about.

It’s common for specialized fields to take terms from ordinary language and give them narrow, technical meanings. This redefinition doesn’t suddenly invalidate how the “person on the street” uses the word, of course. The broader meaning still applies in everyday life. The new, technical meaning simply serves the needs of that specialized field. Sometimes, words that are near-synonyms in everyday language take on important distinctions in particular fields. As a veteran composition instructor, I’ve even caught cases of plagiarism by “reverse-engineering” misguided substitutions.

It’s also possible, though, for different fields to give different technical meanings to the same term. Neither field is wrong; both are responding to their particular needs. As long as the fields never intersect, those alternate definitions can simply exist in their own zones. But sometimes such fields might benefit from cross-fertilization. Ideas from one field may prove beneficial to the other. If those

fields are using the same words in different ways, such cross-fertilization requires a translation key.

This is the situation, I believe, for the fields of narratology and narrative change work. “Narrative” is a key concept for both fields, but they define this and other terms in divergent ways. For that reason, I’ve put together an initial, very basic glossary to facilitate interdisciplinary work between these fields. Let’s start by defining the fields themselves.

- *narratology*: A field of literary studies that focuses on the structure of literary works. Early on, it was sometimes referred to as “structural poetics.”
- *narrative change work*: A field of peace and justice studies that focuses on changing deep cultural narratives in order to facilitate positive social reform. This field applies insights from diverse disciplines, including sociology and literary studies, to activist campaigns.

To complicate matters, the term “narrative” isn’t always used consistently even within literary studies itself. We can see the difference by looking at two sets of terms that I’ll call narratology 1.0 and narratology 2.0. Consider the following terminology for narratology 1.0. (I’ll also list a key work in the field.)

- narrative: The story being told.
- narration: The act of telling the story.
- narrator: The one who tells the story, or seems to tell the story. For example, if a story is told from a fictional character's point of view, that character is the narrator.
- narratee: The implied audience, or imaginary person that the narrator is speaking to.

Key work: *The Nature of Narrative* by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg (1966); revised edition with a new chapter by James Phelan (2006)

Now contrast that with this terminology for narratology 2.0.

- *story*: The events that happen in a tale in their chronological order. In the early 20th century, the Russian formalists used the word *fabula* to describe this, and some theorists still prefer the Russian term.
- *discourse*: How a tale is told. For example, events may be told out of order, or in differing degrees of detail. In the early 20th century, the Russian formalists used the word *syuzhet* to describe this, and some theorists still prefer the Russian term.
- *narrative*: The combination of story and discourse that constitute a distinct tale or literary work.

Key work: *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* by Seymour Chatman (1978)

Basically, the terminology shifted as scholars began to study different issues. The new definitions didn't actually supersede the old ones, though, even within literary studies. Rather, they supplemented them. The former are still taught in many introductory literature courses. However, it is the

latter set of definitions that offer intriguing juxtapositions with the field of narrative change work—especially with how the latter field defines “narrative” and “story.” Consider the following terminology for that field.

- story: A work in any medium (textual, visual, or oral) that follows a plot arc and portrays specific characters and events.
- narrative: A story pattern or story template that is pervasive in a culture. Individual stories may fully or partially reflect/reinforce a prevailing narrative.
- narrative change: A long-term effort to shift a prevailing cultural narrative toward one more compatible with a social cause.

Key work: [“The Features of Narratives: A Model of Narrative Form for Social Change Efforts”](#) from the Frameworks Institute (2021)

The “bootstraps” narrative is an example often used by organizations like Narrative Inquiry and the Frameworks Institute. In this narrative, the hero starts off in difficult circumstances, but overcomes the odds through talent and determination, thereby pulling himself up to fabulous success. The Will Smith movie *The Pursuit of Happyness*, based on the autobiography of Chris Garner, is a *story* that relies on the bootstraps *narrative*. The protagonist, a single father, pursues a prestigious, unpaid internship at a major brokerage while simultaneously he and his son face homelessness. His sacrifice pays off when he earns a high-paying job at the firm. This sets him on the path toward becoming a millionaire.

Two common critiques of the “bootstraps” narrative are (1) that it isn't scalable, and (2) that it downplays how help from others can contribute to personal

success. Intriguingly, if we look back to an earlier point in Will Smith's career, the episode "Will Gets a Job" from *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* picks up on this second critique. Will explains to his Uncle Phil that he got a restaurant job because he wants to be self-reliant, just like his uncle. Uncle Phil, though, rejects that characterization. He insists, "Nobody does anything without help, Will. People opened doors for me, and I've worked hard to open doors for you. It doesn't make you any less of a man to walk through them." In this case, the narrative of "everyone needs a helping hand sometimes" is offered as a direct rebuttal of the "bootstraps" narrative.

As for why this rebuttal matters, think about issues like poverty or homelessness. The "bootstraps" narrative could lead one to blame the poor and homeless for their own inability to pull themselves up. The "helping hand" narrative, on the other hand, encourages us to think creatively about how we can "open doors" for other people "to walk through."

Now let's pivot back to our main topic, the overlap between terminology for narratology and narrative change work. In both cases, *narrative* represents a higher order concept, and *story* represents a lower order concept. However, the two fields are offset from each other. The term *narrative* in narratology is of the same order as the term *story* in narrative change work. Using "nc" to indicate a narrative change term and "n" to indicate a narratology term, we can map the orders as follows.

narrative(nc)
 story(nc)/narrative(n)
 story(n)
 discourse(n)

Viewed this way, it becomes clear what needs to be done. For narratology to make use of insights from narrative change, we need an alternate term for "narrative(nc)." And for narrative change work to draw more deeply from narratology, we need an alternate term for "story(n)." Inspired by Joseph Campbell and Ernst Cassirer, I propose "myth" as narratology's alternative to "narrative(nc)." Similarly, "plot" should serve the field of narrative change work as a more than adequate substitute for "story(n)."

Thus, for a narrative change audience, we could use this terminology:

narrative
 story
 plot
 discourse

For a narratology audience, the following terminology would work:

myth
 narrative
 story
 discourse

With the above key in mind, theorists from one field can read work in the other field, while keeping track of what the common words mean. Just as importantly, theorists can import concepts from one field to the other without confusing readers in their primary field. Admittedly, this is a somewhat clunky solution, but it should work. (Perhaps it will even inspire someone else to come up with a more elegant system.) It's important to note that the vocabularies of both fields are much richer than what I've included here. My main purpose has been to address a particular source of potential confusion. I hope, nonetheless, that my modest effort paves the way for a deeper exchange of concepts between narratology and narrative change.