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Towards post/critical peace education? A meditation-in-progress

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Towards post/critical peace education? A meditation-in-progress¹

Abstract

This chapter is an attempt to share and reflect on a series of explorations I have been engaged in with MA students at the Department of Peace Studies and International Development, University of Bradford. At their core, these have been explorations of who we are, how we got here, where here is, and where we might be going. Introducing ourselves, listening to the self-introductions of others, entering into dialogue and noticing our silences has supported rich reflections on our own positionings within wider systems, on privilege, marginalisation and trauma within our learning community, on the emotional dimensions of these dynamics, and on how we might learn to negotiate them together with courage, honesty and care.

I have tried to convey not only the content but also the look and feel of these spaces, to bring different experiences and perspectives into conversation with each other and to engage readers both intellectually and emotionally.² Alongside the content, then, the form of this chapter suggests one way of responding to the questions that animate this book – what it might mean to imagine peace education in post/critical, trans/rational, affective, decolonial, aesthetic modes.

1.

The invitation to contribute to this book was framed around the idea of post/critical peace education. My response was ambivalent. The vocabulary of postcriticality, transrationality or ‘new onto-epistemic possibilities’ did not strongly resonate. It sounded incongruous: an abstract, intellectual call to transcend the abstract and intellectual. I wasn’t sure engaging on these terms would help me name my own emerging practice, the inspirations that have shaped it or the questions it has generated.

And yet: Perhaps my own initial impulse to critique was equally incongruous – at odds with my longing to explore different modes of being, of reading, of writing; to connect in ways that feel mutually enriching rather than competitive.

2.

Pádraig Ó Tuama talks of *narrative hospitality*: an attitude to readers or listeners that welcomes them in, that doesn’t try to catch them out. I love listening to what this sounds like—to the warmth in his voice, the weaving together of personal story and larger explorations, the care for his listeners that is conveyed via words that are simple but rich in meaning.

What might it mean to talk, to listen, to write and to read in ways that are *imaginative enough, broad enough, spacious enough, open to the imagination, open to the possibility of creating curiosity and relationships where there currently are none, open to the possibility of trust in the capacity to ask a good question?*

¹ This is an experiment with a more creative form of writing. To avoid breaking the flow of the text, I have put direct quotes in italics and included citations and notes – including references to other literature that has informed my thinking - at the end of the document, following the same numbering system as in the main text. All photos are my own.

3.

This is an attempt to convey both the feel and the substance of a series of explorations. One way of framing them is this: How, in engaging with peace and conflict in an academic setting, do we balance critique and encouragement, confrontation and care, inspiration and doubt, creativity and the demands of accreditation? How do we do this in classrooms that are themselves part of ‘the real world’ – that hold dynamics of power and privilege, experiences of violence and trauma, hopes and dreams of various kinds?

4.

This is an invitation to dialogue more than an argument. Many of the reflections I articulate here emerged and then deepened in conversations, often with students – sometimes within classrooms but more often beyond them. Sometimes as annotations on the margins of each other’s work. The most meaningful of these conversations have circled and deepened over time, via vulnerability and challenge and the building of trust. They have resonated inward and outward and into other spaces. ‘Other spaces’ include the processes behind that helped this book take shape: conversations with editors, fellow contributors, colleagues and alumni about earlier versions of this chapter.

This is an effort to continue these conversations, to figure out where they might go next.

5.

In process, format and methodology, this piece is inspired by John Paul Lederach’s ‘Advent Manifesto’:

Start with one idea. Notice where it goes. Number each idea. Keep them short. Don’t worry if you hop around. Read and play with what emerges. It may take a while to understand what you are trying to say. To yourself.

6.

One way in:

In September 2016, I heard James Thompson talk about ‘the art of peacebuilding and an aesthetics of care’. The purpose, he told us, was to *explain a move away from critique*. His case was that *‘fault finding’ can shift into a sense of superiority where academic prowess is demonstrated by how much we condemn*. Those of us who have been trained in critique, he suggested, have had a limited, poorly developed *vocabulary for the good in arts and peacebuilding*.

How, he asked, do we search for and fashion the good? *How do we write about joy, celebration, moments of community, moments of gathering?* How do we care for emergence and possibility without denying the problems of messy real-world engagements? How might we *maintain a capacity both to talk with warmth about our field, and also to talk of warmth – to engage the positive, heated, powerful moments that energize what we do?*

7.

At the time, I needed to hear words like these. I had spent several years in a mode that at times felt like resistance, at times messier and more complex than that. In September 2016, I was tired of feeling pushed into the role of a troublemaker, exhausted of critique, in need of healing, inspiration and a sense of community. Against this background, the plea for *care-ful* practice, the explicit valuing of *tiny acts of taking care* resonated both with my sense of grief for *what could have been otherwise and was not* and with my longing for what might yet be possible.

The idea that our spaces and interactions can and should *model and exhibit the fairer and more mutually sympathetic world that is sought* had been at the heart of this conflict; my capacity to put it into practice had been eroded.

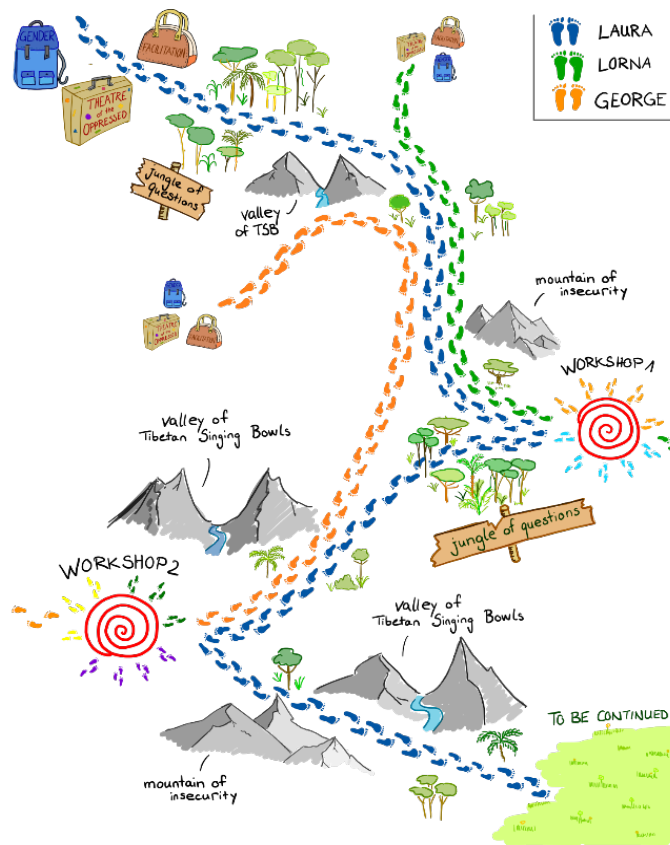
8.



9.

Experience has taught me that more often than not, how we got here matters as much as the spaces we share and the arguments we put forward. Or put differently, that our understanding of shared spaces, reasonings and disagreements is truncated without an appreciation of our journeys and the timings of their intersections.

10.



11.

For most of my students, their time in the spaces we share falls somewhere along their journey towards making sense of themselves and the world, developing their capacities and seeking to engage in the work of conflict engagement and peacebuilding. For me, these spaces are where much of my own journey has taken place, where I am seeking to engage in this work: 'the field'.

12.

My journey is more circular than those of my students. There is a seasonal, cyclical quality to it, a sense of repetition and deepening over time. This, too, is reflected in this piece.

13.

In some of the courses I teach, I make space for our stories of how we got here, for reflection on how we tell these stories and what we leave out. There's been a real richness in this.

One of the hardest things about writing, rewriting and editing this chapter has been working out how to re/present both my students and myself. What does it mean to get this 'right', to do justice both to the ways in which all of us are positioned within larger structures of privilege and violence and to our particular stories? How do we resist representations and readings of ourselves and each other that fall into cliché? What does it take to feel seen and heard? How do we allow ourselves and each other to know that our self-understandings and stories are work-in-progress, drafts rather than final versions? What does it mean to translate such tellings from the contained, interpersonal, embodied space of a classroom into a book chapter?

14.

The first version of this chapter contained vignettes of particular students – glimpses of the stories they had told in our classes and the ways in which they had told them. They had agreed to being included; some of them, I think, were glad to be named and visible in this way. Their stories were true. I know that it is the details that bring things to life, that allow us to connect with ourselves and each other.

The details included postcards and baseballs, photos, childhood stories and family histories, burning questions, the particular shapes of trauma, experiences of being caught up in revolutionary moments, everyday challenges.

And yet, as early readers challenged me to edit them down to the most compelling, and as more and more time passed between the original tellings and the editing, I became less sure about including them.

15.

The second version looked like this:

My students get here in a number of different ways, from many different places: Colombia. Portugal. Afghanistan. Sri Lanka. Nigeria. Argentina. Cyprus. Jamaica. Jordan. Uganda. Korea. Georgia. Brazil. Germany. Cote d'Ivoire. The US. Japan. Zimbabwe. Egypt. Indonesia. France. Morocco. Botswana. The UK. Pakistan. Syria. Poland. Austria. Sudan. Italy. Ethiopia. Turkey. Yemen. Naming these places suggests some things but conceals others.

For some, getting here means overcoming barriers: Lack of money. Trauma, personal or collective or both. The disapproval of family or friends. Struggles with language.

'Here' is 'not there'. In some of my students' stories, 'here' is an escape, temporary or longer-term, from poverty or violence. In others, it is an attempt to respond to the sense of guilt that can arise from privilege, from having grown up in places of security and wealth.

For many, it is linked to dreams: of a better future, of finding meaningful work and a sense of purpose, of adventure, of peace. Desires to heal, to understand, to help, to connect, to be seen.

Some are here because they followed a sense of vocation. Some are here in defiance of voices that have told them they don't belong here. Some are trying to build their own voices. For some, all of these things are true.

Some of these stories go back a long way.

16.

In her book *Appropriate*, Paisley Rekdal poses a series of important questions to those who might write about or from the perspectives of others:

Whose desire animates your text?

In what ways does this desire replicate hierarchies and stories you are already familiar with?

Does this desire expand or contract historical memory, and in what ways does this desire encourage you to investigate your own racial meaning?

...

in what ways does your desire free your characters, and in what ways does it continue to constrain them?

I wonder, now, which version is a better response to these questions.

17.

These questions feel relevant not just to writing about others but also to the challenge of responding to the editors' request that I say more about my own positionality.

How do I say that I am white, a woman, middle-class? That I agree it is important to acknowledge and examine this particular intersection, the histories it slots into and the privileges that it carries? That I am unsure how to do this without falling into a performance of virtue? That nevertheless, I also feel constrained and unseen by what is evoked in discussions of 'white women'? That it feels difficult to say this? That I know the desire to attend more closely to individual stories than to collective identifications can itself be a function of privilege? That still, I am interested in stories—not least because some of my least privileged students have told me that personal stories and connections matter as much as discussions of structures that are bigger than any of us?

I encourage both students and myself to take care with what we reveal and what we withhold. To remember that always, there is more. To practice making space for multiple, complex and contradictory truths. To resist desires for easy resolution.

18.



19.

Sometimes, the most important stories lie in the silences between us. I hear some of these later, tell some of them later, in personal reflections or one-to-one conversations. With some, it takes months or years. Some remain untold.

20.

There are many kinds of silence: The uncertain silence of people who have things to share but need more time to gather the courage. The deliberate silence of people who want to leave space and time for others to speak. The chosen silence that protects ourselves or others or both. The silence that arises from cultural pressures to avoid confrontation. The silence of trauma and shame. The reflective silence that makes it possible for the voices of others to resonate in our own internal spaces. The silence that feels like resistance – against the desire of others to know or their assumption that they already do. The silence that feels like violence. The silence of work in progress that may not be voiced or visible.

21.

In *When Blood and Bones Cry Out*, Lederach and Lederach recount a lesson from Somalia: a heated discussion in which *all hell seemed to break loose*. Trying to intervene, international facilitators were pulled aside by a Somali colleague: *'There is a proverb we have,' he said, ' "Before we understand each other my spear must enter you." This means, we have to test the emotions, provoke the justification before we talk. Don't stop us. When we are loud, direct, even angry, we are engaged. But if we go silent and separate, then violence is near.'*

22.

My classrooms are rarely loud or angry. Sometimes, I wonder whether they need more conflict, more confrontation, more rage. More open expression of the untold stories that might challenge our assumptions of common ground. Pedagogies that take us into discomfort, into engagement with difficult knowledge. Pedagogies that force us to test messy emotions, that shatter worldviews, that interrogate problematic assumptions.

I find arguments for such pedagogies persuasive. I have made such arguments myself, cited them as inspiring examples of what encounter work in asymmetric conflicts could and should look like. And yet, I have not found it easy to introduce open confrontation into my classes and nor have most of my students.

23.

It is not that I don't do confrontation or challenge. I have come to realise, though, that I don't do them in spaces I host for others. There are some interesting questions in this, about power and process and care.

24.

In his proposal of what an aesthetics of care might mean, Thompson makes a case against artistic practices that champion discomfort. Performances, he suggests, *might need to move from a suspicion of the audience, to one where the range of life experiences of the spectators is not assumed. This means that an exhibition ... might display respect for the different possible capacities of the audience and also a recognition of the different expectations and purposes for attendance. The presupposed need for shock and disruption ... is replaced by an awareness that an audience ... each brings different concerns and desires into a space that need to be acknowledged.*

25.

There are different takes on how educators might work with trauma. For some, the focus is on creating a safe context in which students who have experienced trauma can learn effectively. Others talk of how classroom encounters that students – and potentially their teachers – experience as traumatic and disturbing might be necessary ingredients for transformative learning.

In my classes, there are students who carry trauma and are living with its impacts. There are students who have never experienced humiliation, violence, poverty or discrimination. There are those of us who, knowingly or otherwise, help to sustain systems and practices that continue to perpetuate trauma, even as we're engaged in these conversations.

It isn't always obvious or easy to tell who needs what.

26.

I believe that both are important – the disturbance that comes with confrontation and challenge and the practice of care and acknowledgement for everyone involved. I wonder what it might look and feel like to bring them together in practice.

27.

One of the ways in which I describe my practice is as a *pedagogy of vulnerability*—a way of teaching and learning that brings more of ourselves into the classroom, that encourages us *to teach and learn with depth, meaning, and connection across differences of all sorts.*

Invitations to practice vulnerability, however, are complicated. Much depends on how vulnerable we actually are, how likely to be hurt and how able to recover. Reflections from educators and students suggest that the ways in which we are positioned in relation to each other and to wider structures matter: For the most part, those who are more secure risk less and get more credit for performing vulnerability than those whose positions are precarious or subject to questioning.

28.

The spaces we share at the University feel more like home for some of us than for others, designed for *certain kinds of bodies to gather* while others (are made to) feel *out of place*. I have learnt that this is true even when I try to make them hospitable, sometimes in ways I don't see, or not until later.

29.

In different ways, both the loud and disruptive testing of emotions and the affective connections suggested by an aesthetics of care are moves towards intimate forms of engagement. I know that not all of my students feel ready for these moves, not within the limited time and space of semesters and classrooms, and sometimes not at all. I know also that some long for them. I have felt both in myself, the pull and the resistance.

30.

Reading the reflections that students write outside our classes reminds me that for many of us, the important work takes place under the radar and behind the scenes. Not all disturbance is noisy or visible.

31.

Much of Claudia Rankine's collection *Just Us* unpacks conversations and silences, the moment-to-moment dynamics of particular interactions and the bigger picture. *If no sameness of status is possible, she asks, how to account for closeness? What form of relation can include knowledge of historical dynamics and societal realities without preventing or interrupting intimacy? How might we find the words that carry us, the care that carries? What does it mean to understand how what I want and what I want from you run parallel – justice and the openings for just us?*

32.

We explore dynamics of othering, intersectionality and the challenges they pose for us as scholars and practitioners. There are no easy answers but the questions matter.

33.



34.

*What is it we want to keep conscious, to stay known, even as we
say, each in our own way, I so love I know I shrink I'm asked
I'm also I react I smell I feel I think I've been told I remember I
see I didn't I thought I felt I failed I suspect I was doing I'm sure
I read I needed I wouldn't I was I should've I felt I could've I
never I'm sure I ask...
You say and I say but what
is it we are telling, what is it
we are wanting to know about here?*

35.

I ask students to notice what feels Other to them.

Somewhere near the top of my own list is this constellation: hierarchies, leadership, management. Ambition, status, power. Pomp and pretentiousness. Suits. Deference to any or all of the above. Among the images I pick up when we explore Otherness are a couple of photos our department has used in marketing our courses. I struggle to relate to the dreams these images convey—ideas of a cosmopolitan elite operating in *Peaceland*.

36.

To some of my students, my critique of these systems and discourses feels like a failure to see that they offer ways of surviving, of escaping poverty, violence, shame. I have needed to hear this more than once, more than twice, before it started sinking in.

37.

Some of my students are hoping to work in the very contexts that others are trying to escape. This is true in more than one direction.

38.

Sometimes, feeling able to engage in critique is a privilege. Sometimes, *the self-perception that in being critical we do not have a problem or that in being critical we are over it is used and performed in ... academic spaces* as a shield against the recognition of cognitive dissonance or complicity. Sometimes, the impulse to critique is an expression of fragility, white or middle-class or otherwise. Sometimes, it is a quest to be seen and heard, to overcome erasure.

39.

When I put together a series of prompts to encourage students to reflect on their sense of vocation, some are surprised by the questions about rage. It is not, they say, an emotion they have felt in themselves.

40.

A former student tells me that in Tamil, there's a proverb that goes something like this:
a village bird may fly but it will never become an eagle.
She is trying to escape the limits of this way of thinking.

I notice, again, my gut reactions to stories of eagles: my suspicion of high-flyers, my distrust of narratives that focus on individual achievements, my ambivalence about being seen and my need to feel grounded. My rage. But this too: how hurt, anxiety and fear of judgement can manifest as physical pain. How deeply entangled shame is with histories of violence, oppression and humiliation. The courage it takes to fly. How stories of eagles can help.

41.

In trying to respond, I am reminded of something I found while taking part in a 5-day poetry challenge with Malika Booker. The task was to *write a poem using a myth, folklore, fairy tale, fable, religious tale and/or historical tale as a starting point*. On day 2, we were asked to build up a palette of words and images to play with. *Think of an animal and do some research. Jot down five to seven random facts that you discover about your chosen creature.*

Canada goose (*brants canadensis*): Canada geese lay eggs once a year. Also once a year, the adults lose the capacity to fly, regaining it around the same time as the goslings learn to fly. Canada geese fly in formations, take it in turns to lead, cheer each other on. When a goose is not well enough to carry on, others will go down with them. Several Indigenous American nations have origin myths in which the first woman falls from the sky. A flock of geese cushion her fall and carry her down to earth.

For a long time, I had been afraid of Canada geese. These days, I listen and watch out for the flocks of geese that fly over our house, over the paths I walk. I can hear them in the background as I respond to her message.

42.

In some classes, we explore metaphors: of conflict and violence, of structures and peacebuilding, of resilience. In different languages and beyond language. Our classrooms have turned into interactive exhibitions designed to encourage experiments with images, sounds, touch, movement. Some students

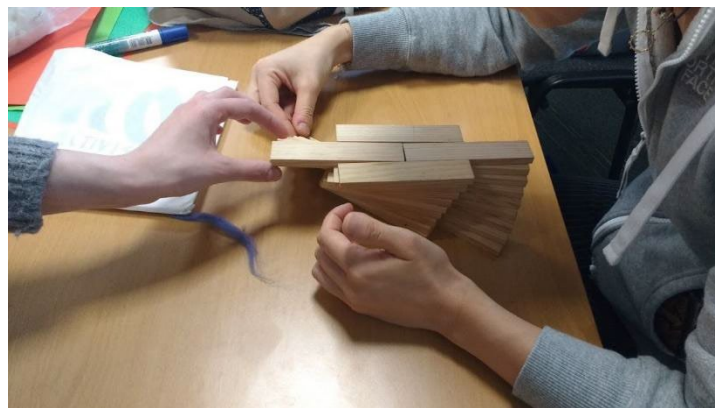
struggle to enter into the spirit of these spaces. I tell them of the passage in *The Moral Imagination* that suggests *there is no scientific evidence that seriousness leads to greater growth, maturity, or insight into the human condition than playfulness.*

43.

Potential exhibits for interactive exhibitions:

Wooden bricks. Stones. Seeds. Paper butterflies, paper cranes. A handmade basket. Paper, paint, printing equipment. Videos of spiders weaving webs, of people walking on a public stage in Manchester while their stories are projected on a screen. Photos of family, friends, dogs. Leaves. Entangled threads. Tools of various kinds. Rags. A pack of *with/out modernity* cards. Sweets. Postcards. Zines. Poems. Songs.

44.



45.

One of the things I remember most from a hands-on metaphors class is the realisation – more embodied than intellectual – that building peace takes a different kind of energy and movement than engaging in conflict or violence – slower, more careful, more patient. More in touch or differently so.

Another is the healing, calming quality of these spaces themselves: the therapeutic effects of playing with wooden bricks or printing with leaves, the sense of freedom in moving around a space, the nature of the conversations that emerge on the margins and those that gather in circles.

46.

Suggestions for peacebuilders (an evolving list):

Take care in packing your bags. Bend your own spear first. Extend a blessing to all who are present. When unravelling knots, take care to keep the chain intact. Know who you are choreographing for. Adapt to local tastes. Think carefully about which gifts you accept. Let the dust settle. Consider the seeds that may be hidden in the soil. Remember the forest that made the chair possible. Learn to speak sheep language. Take what you thought had lost its value. Shed old skin. Notice when the breath changes. Listen for resonance.

Move in spirals, watch snails. Weave. Can you see the big picture?

47.

Half-way through his century of reflections, Lederach suggests that bridge builders ought to prepare not just to listen but to glisten, like rain that coincides with the sudden appearance of sun. *To glisten: To be present with others in ways that help them shine into their deepest color, purpose, and wisdom.*

48.

Finally, X, in what ways does your desire let you imagine, and create, joy?

49.

where does it come from –
the courage, the art and soul
that undoes numbness?

50.

Not long before the first Covid lockdown in Spring 2020, the women in our class visited OneVoice, a women's group in Halifax. OneVoice is led by a creative practitioner whose approach is grounded not in academic study but in intuition and experiment. We drew, wrote, listened to music, sang, guided each other, moved. A sense of community emerged between the women in our group and those from OneVoice. Much of this was down to their hospitality, their way of holding us. One of the OneVoice women was amazed that she, who struggles to read and to write, was in a room with students. One of the students realized that her struggle to connect with others is also a struggle to feel connected to herself. In a guided drawing exercise working with another student, I could feel the tension in her body, her reluctance to relax.

OneVoice embodies one way of building voice in the wake of violence – a way that looks, sounds and feels like an aesthetics of care, a spirit of encouragement, an absence of judgement.

51.

For some of us, invitations to be creative feel intimidating. I wonder whether sharing inspiration makes us more vulnerable, less able to hide, than articulating critique.

52.

The more I do of this work, the more ambivalent I feel about the part of my job that involves judgement. It's not that I don't enjoy reading students' work: I like seeing other people's thoughts take shape and the way in which conversations can be continued on the margins. The thing that I find myself resisting is grading.

When it comes to assessment, I am finding it difficult, now, to talk of fairness.

53.

For some of my students, the impacts of trauma include having to work much harder than others to read, write and structure academic work, for reasons that are deeply embodied and difficult to dislodge. More often than not, students from more privileged backgrounds find it easier to write in the ways that earn good grades.

54.

Students whose lives have been shaped by disadvantage need accreditation and good grades more urgently than those who are not. For many, accreditation from a UK University has higher value than the equivalent from their home countries.

55.

In our *Creative Practice* class, students work together on group projects that are not formally assessed: small-scale experiments with collaborative autoethnography. The brief is to explore a question that will support their development as scholar/practitioners in conflict engagement and peacebuilding. The invitation is to do this in ways that foster reflection, dialogue, and care for themselves and each other.

56.

The way I frame this work is inspired by the Lederachs' discussion of what it takes for voices to build and resonate in meaningful ways: Circling and friction. Deepening. *containers large enough to create spaces of interaction yet close enough to be felt and heard.* Expansion into a wider space.

57.



58.

Themes that students choose to explore together:

Personal identities. Journeys into the field of conflict engagement and peacebuilding. The ways in which emotions shape their experiences of studying. Vulnerability. Inspirations. Turning points. Social pressure. Personal experiences of challenges and what it takes to overcome them. Responses to a pandemic that has had profound implications for their experiences of studying. The different ways in which we might interpret a shared experience and the challenges of unpacking the power dynamics involved.

59.

When groups of students share their work, an aesthetics of care feels tangible, both in the classroom itself and in the glimpses that groups of students share about the processes that have got them there. The atmosphere is closer to celebration than critique.

60.



61.

And still, behind the scenes, this too: silences of more than one kind, shame and pain and missed opportunities. Loose threads and questions unasked and unanswered. My own unanswered questions about how to balance celebration and acknowledgement with challenge and critique.

62.

Shortly after our classes shifted to online meetings in spring 2020, a student discovered a talk by John Paul Lederach on YouTube. We decided to watch it together, online. The language felt therapeutic: haiku as a pause in which to stop and notice, to take a step towards compassion, to hold space. Haiku as a bridge to the inner self, to place, to the fierce now, to nature and beauty. Haiku as a practice that can make us feel like a person again. The moral? *When you feel caught between a dragon and a tiger, hanging by a thread or a branch, don't forget to pause. ... Let beauty and love lead. Stay in touch.*

63.

As we watched, another student wrote her first haiku:

*I am growing down
As time and lessons go by
My feet sink deeper*

64.

Her haiku reminds me of Wendell Berry.

Thirty More Years

*When I was a young man,
grown up at last, how large*

*I seemed to myself! I was a tree,
tall already, and what I had not
yet reached, I would yet grow
to reach. Now, thirty more years
added on, I have reached much
I did not expect, in a direction
unexpected. I am growing downward,
smaller, one among the grasses.*

65.



66.

I am still unsure whether we need a language of the post/critical or what it might look and sound like. I wonder whether the idea of downward growth might help.

67.

Whose work are we not seeing when we frame post/critical approaches to peace education as moves beyond the limitations of past or current thought and practice?

Ó Tuama reminds us always to say this: *People were doing this before me*. And this: not all of this work is sparkly. And this: much of this needs to be said, and done, not once but year on year on year.

68.

A metaphor that I have been mulling over is of mulching:

First, observe. Notice the places that are compacted or eroding, whether from the overuse of heavy machinery or grazing or exposure to sun or rain or wind. Notice the places that don't need your intervention. See what you can learn from them. Avoid digging when it isn't needed – there are other ways to go deep. Consider sources of mulch, ideally ones that are close by. Try to turn waste into new inputs. Allow air and water to circulate. Invite the many creatures that can bring out fertility to come and do their work, even while you're not watching. Listen to worms. Be patient. Soften. Add new layers when the time is right. Build up space and texture for things to sink in slowly – water, warmth, seeds. Watch for new growth. Repeat.

69.



70.

Almost in passing, I come across a message from a group of indigenous leaders and organisations that cautions against *subscribing to good and bad. Tilling is bad; not tilling is good. Mulch is good; not mulching is bad. ... Indigenous cultures often share the view that there is no good, bad, or ideal – it is not our role to judge. Our role is to tend, care, and weave to maintain relationships of balance. ... No one is tainted by our touch, and we have the ability to heal as much as any other lifeform.*

71.

I wonder whether, taken together, the metaphor and its limitations might convey something of what post/critical peace education and peacebuilding might be.

72.

In some of my classes, we have considered questions posed by the with/out modernity pack of cards from the Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures Collective. Here's a selection:

How can we engage and be taught by different systems of knowledge and being, while remaining (a)cutely aware of their gifts, limitations, and contradictions, as well as our own mis-interpretations and potential for appropriation?

What could help us not turn our backs to the violence that keeps the current systems in place and that underwrites our livelihoods?

What could help us decolonize our hopes and dreams? How can we honor our yearning for wholeness and connection without feeding our desires for certainty, order, continuity, validation, and control?

*How can we offer critique with/out self-righteousness, redemptive narratives or virtuous protagonism?
random invitation to embrace the whole of humanity (the good, the bad, the ugly and the broken) within yourself*

In what ways could you be operating from deep seated insecurities?

Learn through paradoxes and contradictions

this is a call to improvisational responsibility

73.

Peace (a working definition): a quality of connection that encourages and embodies care – with/for ourselves, others and the human and non-human world around us.

74.

beauty and shadow -
this, too, is the real world:
care for emergence.

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Notes and citations

1.

Email from the editors of this book, July 2020. After I had written this chapter, the project moved away from the idea of the post/critical as the main framing. Since my chapter and the conversations with editors and other authors as part of the process behind the scenes were an attempt to respond and engage with this idea, though, I have decided to keep the references to it here.

2.

narrative hospitality: Ó Tuama, 2020b. *imaginative enough...*: Ó Tuama, 2016.

5.

Advent Manifesto: Lederach, 2018. In addition, I have taken inspiration from Colum McCann's *Apeirogon*, a novel in 1001 fragments that includes the real-life story of a past Peace Studies MA student, and which I was reading at the time of receiving the invite to contribute to this book.

6.

Thompson's talk, and quotes in first paragraph: Thompson, 2016. *How do we write about joy...*: Thompson, 2016. *maintain a capacity...*: Thompson, 2021, p. 173.

7.

care-ful practice/tiny acts of taking care: Thompson, 2016. *what could have been otherwise and was not*: Anders and Lester, 2019, p. 925. *model and exhibit...*: Thompson, 2015, p. 439.

10.

Image created as part of Laura Tovar Bohórquez's dissertation (2019, p. 63), visualising her journey towards becoming a facilitator working with Theatre of the Oppressed.

11.

For a discussion of problematic discourses about what constitutes 'the field', see Kester, 2019. Following the challenges that some 'in the field' addressed to me during PhD fieldwork (Bühler, 2002) and in response to arguments against air travel (Anderson, 2017), I decided to work closer to home. I now open most of my modules with a reminder that this, too, is 'the real world'.

12.

Metaphors of circling and deepening inspired by Lederach and Lederach, 2010.

16.

Text in italics: Rekdal, 2021, pp. 56/57.

17.

On some of the things white women evoke: Miller, 'The White Women and the Language of Bees', in Miller, 2021; diAngelo, 2018; Matias, 2019; Rankine, 2020; personal conversation with Juleus Ghunta in May/June 2020. 'what we reveal and what we withhold'/'the important things': inspired in part by Miller, 2021. 'I encourage students...': Kelly, 2018-2021.

20.

These thoughts are partly inspired by the contributions to Boler, 2004, particularly a questioning of the 'Talking Cure' by Alison Jones and a chapter on 'Rethinking Silencing Silences' by Huey Li Li. For earlier versions, see Kelly, 2019a, 2019b.

21.

Lederach & Lederach, 2010, pp. 104/105.

22.

Discussions of such pedagogies include Berlak, 2004; Boler, 2013; diAngelo, 2018; Halabi, 2004; Jones, 2004; Matias, 2013; Matias, Henry & Darland, 2017; Saad, 2020; Zembylas, 2014. I argued for a similar approach in Kelly, 2004, and reflected, with Rhys Kelly, on the challenges of confronting our students with difficult knowledge in Kelly & Kelly, 2020.

24.

Quote from Thompson, 2015, p. 439.

25.

For discussions of trauma-informed pedagogy, teaching traumatic content and/or the disruptive potential of trauma in higher education contexts, see Berlak, 2004; Carello and Butler, 2014, 2015; Erickson, 2004; Harrison, Burke and Clarke, 2020; Matias, 2013; Nikischer, 2018; Zembylas, 2007, 2014, 2020.

27.

teach and learn with depth, meaning...: McKenna and Brantmeier, 2020, p. 2. For discussions of how the practice of vulnerability is affected by how we are positioned, see Brantmeier and McKenna (eds), 2020. On the complex ways in which pedagogies of care are gendered, see Zembylas, Bozalek and Shefer, 2014; Burke, 2017.

28.

certain kinds of bodies.../out of place: Sara Ahmed, in Antwi, Brophy, Strauss & Troeung, 2013, pp. 116/117.

31.

If no sameness of status is possible...: Rankine, 2020, p. 189. *the words that carry us/to understand how what I want...*: Rankine, 2020, p. 11.

32.

See also Kelly, 2019a and 2019b; Leeven, 2020.

34.

Rankine, 2020, p. 11.

35.

'I ask students to notice what feels Other to them': Kelly, 2019a. The reference to *Peaceland* is from Autesserre, 2014. I wonder how the broader tensions I am exploring here relate to ideas of 'poststructural violence' and 'second-order reflexivity' (Kester & Cremin, 2017). Perhaps it is my own turn towards 'second-order critique' that has in turn become problematic. For discussions of similar tensions in peace education and ostensibly less hierarchical pedagogies, see Cremin, 2016, and Kester, 2019.

38.

the self-perception...: Ahmed, 2017, p. 155, cited in van Duyvenbode, 2020, p. 152. *White fragility:* diAngelo, 2018. *Erasure:* Rankine, 2014, p. 24.

39.

A series of prompts: Kelly, 2021.

40.

Personal communication with Thurka Krishnasamy, December 2020.

41.

write a poem...: Booker, 2020. Facts about Canada geese from McClary, n.d.; story of Skywoman from Wall Kimmerer, 2013, chapter 1. Stories of Skywoman are documented for several Indigenous American nations and tribes: see *Native Languages of the Americas*, n.d.

42.

there is no scientific evidence...: Lederach, 2005, p. 160.

43.

'people walking on a public stage in Manchester': Manchester International Festival, 2017.

45.

For an earlier discussion, see Kelly, 2019c.

46.

The idea of writing sets of 'instructions for peacebuilders' was inspired by Shaw, 2020, Lederach, 2005 and Lederach, 2020b; the metaphors/instructions themselves by students I have worked with.

47.

To glisten: Lederach, 2018, 50.

48.

Rekdal, 2021, p. 57.

49.

Haiku inspired by Lederach, 2020a.

50.

On OneVoice, see verddegris, n.d.

51.

On some of the risks involved in creative engagement, also see McNiff, 2007, Lederach, 2005; on how talking of the good feels countercultural, see Thompson, 2021.

53.

Some of my students have documented the impacts of their own trauma on literacy and academic study via autoethnographic work. For courageous discussions of this, see Ghunta, 2018/2021 and Krishnasamy, 2020.

55.

On collaborative autoethnography, see Chang, Ngunjiri & Hernandez, 2012; Lapadat, 2017. On collaborative autoethnography in teaching and learning, see Emiko Blalock & Akehi, 2017. I have asked students to engage in collaborative autoethnography projects in the module 'Creative Practice in Conflict Engagement and Peacebuilding', Peace Studies and International Development, University of Bradford, 2020 and 2021.

56.

Metaphors from Lederach and Lederach, 2005, chapter 7. *containers large enough...: Lederach and Lederach, 2005, p. 102.*

60.

Artwork by Gaviota Acevedo Espinosa, Surraya Amiri and Meklite Balcha as part of their collaborative autoethnography project, February 2020.

62.

'A recent talk' / *when you feel caught...: Lederach, 2020b.*

63.

Haiku by Nabila Auliani Ruray, April 2020.

64.

Thirty More Years: Berry, 1998, p. 151.

67.

Ó Tuama, 2020a.

70.

subscribing to good and bad...: Cultural Survival et. al., 2020.

72.

with/out modernity cards: Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures, 2019.

74.

Haiku inspired by Thompson, 2015, 2020 and Lederach, 2020b.

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