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Sofia Diane Skavdahl

University of San Francisco, sofiaskavdahl@gmail.com

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University of San Francisco

THE CAGED BIRD STILL SINGS: THE POETICS OF PEACE

by

Sofia Diane Skavdahl

January 2019

ABSTRACT

Although poetry has been used as a method of peacemaking since Homer's *Iliad*, little research, theory, or analysis has been done evaluating precisely what role poetry holds in the realms of peacemaking and conflict resolution. Poetry, along with other arts-based practices of peacemaking, is beneficial because of its ability to encourage personal autonomy and emotional communication, while offering an open and creative space to heal from violent conflict. In terms of the arts, poetry is especially unique because it holds the ability to transform relationships between adversaries and the relationship with the self. This paper seeks to analyze both the historical and contemporary role of poetry in personal, communal, and international conflicts, including where it is being utilized and determining its effectiveness in addressing genocide, state violence, and processes of reconciliation.

KEY TERMS

By *resistance*, the authors mean the refusal to accept or comply with the action's of a government, institution, or prevalent socio political norm.

By *peacemaking*, the authors mean the process of bringing about peace, especially by reconciling with adversaries or with oneself.

By *poetry*, the authors are referring to an established literary work in which special intensity is given to the expression of feelings and ideas by the use of distinctive style and rhythm.

By *transforming relationships*, the authors mean a form of peacemaking that prioritizes the re-creation of broken relationships individually, culturally, and socially by addressing past traumas and working to resolve relationships between perpetrator and victim.

By *building capacity* the authors mean a form of peacemaking that focuses on cultivating existing capacities like education, research, and development. Through the process of building capacity peacemakers aim to build just structures that support a sustainable culture of peace (Shank & Shirsch 2008).

By *waging conflict nonviolently*, the authors mean a peacemaking practice of strategic nonviolence as a way of addressing conflict. Waging conflict nonviolently generally includes practices of creative expression, advocacy, and monitoring (Schirch 2004).

By *reducing direct violence*, the authors refer to attempts to restrain perpetrators of violence, prevent and relieve the immediate suffering of victims of violence, and create a safe space for peacebuilding activities (Shank & Shirsch 2008). The practice of reducing direct violence is apparent at the both the state and community levels.

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INTRODUCTION

In Plato's (428-348 B.C.) *Republic*, the ancient Greek philosopher suggests that in an utopian state, poetry would be banished. Plato's stance rests on his impassioned fears that poets are dangerous imitators, seeking to invite corruption and unrelinquished passions into an otherwise ideal society "and therefore, like all other imitators, he is thrice removed from the king and from the truth." Plato's expansive thesis asserts that any writing which is not philosophy, is "a crippling of the mind" that encourages the individual to act on emotion rather than logic. To him, poetry promotes ethos and forebodes consciousness: "poetry feeds and waters the passions instead of drying them up; she lets them rule, although they ought to be controlled, if mankind are ever to increase in happiness and virtue." Plato's claims have not lost their boldness through time, but further analyses of the *Republic* have noticed "it is not the least paradox that Plato is both the western philosopher who more than any other cites, or alludes to, works of poetry, and the one who is at the same time the harshest critic of poetry" (Destree & Hermann, 2011, p. 13). Yet, could it be that Plato's assertions are only a matter of perspective? Poetry, like all literary forms, can surely be used as a weapon, but is simultaneously a tool for brokering peace. Indeed, poetry waters passions. It releases them, begs them to be primarily resolved, and ultimately freed. Poetry demands the ears of the oppressive forces, requires the dictator to ponder an emotion, communicates tension between lovers, asks that we consider all who have been deemed the "other." Plato's argument selectively looks at poetry as poison, instead of poetry as medicine— but maybe his assertions just needed to develop further. Perhaps in a perfect society, poetry is no longer needed, simply because it has already accomplished what it was created to do: to liberate, come forth, and bring peace.

METHODOLOGY

In Steven Caton's (1993) *Peaks of Yemen I Summon: Poetry as cultural practice in a North Yemeni Tribe*, he recounts his almost immediate experiences with poetry while riding in a taxi in Saudi Arabia:

“I am next in a taxi, which is hopelessly stalled in traffic. To help pass the time, the Bedouin driver begins to recite a poem to himself [...] I ask him to stop at a corner kiosk so that I can buy a newspaper, thinking it will provide more accessible entertainment than a poetic recitation, only to find displayed on the front page a text of a new poem about the Israeli-Arab conflict” (Caton 4).

Examples like these are surprisingly, plentiful. Documented instances of people using poetry as a tool for peacemaking begin in the ancient civilizations of Greece and Egypt and continue until today. Their variety includes the poets of slaves in the colonized Americas, of prisoners of war in the Soviet Union, of current remote tribal communities in Yemen. Poetry's demands for peace were present at the death camps in Auschwitz, in the hills of Granada during the Spanish Civil War, and throughout the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Today, poets are writing for their liberation and peace in Bashar al-Assad's Syria, in Ferguson, Missouri, in the West Bank, and in migrant camps along the Mediterranean. Why, then has poetry and its relationship to peace seemingly gone so undiscovered within the larger, international system? For one, the poetry that is widely studied, at least in the western world, is largely limited to a certain genre of poets. Their works, while notable and influential, do not articulate a particular longing for peace. In order to explicitly acknowledge how this paper will approach poetry, I draw on

civil-rights activist and poet, Audre Lorde's essay "Poetry is Not a Luxury" (1977), wherein she writes:

"I speak here of poetry as the revelation or distillation of experience, not the sterile word play that, too often, the white fathers distorted the word poetry to mean — in order to cover their desperate wish for imagination without insight. For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives" (para. 7).

Although Lorde is explicitly addressing women here, her sentiments ring true for any victim of oppression or violence. Her essay is revolutionary because it articulates an ability for poetry to move beyond its ordinary consumptions of limited pleasure and into a social space where its capacities are boundless and crucial. By acknowledging poetry as a tool in the peacemaking process, we concurrently acknowledge the value of our emotions and the ways in which we communicate them to be of value. Lorde (1977) continues: "We can train ourselves to respect our feelings, and to discipline (transpose) them into a language that matches those feelings so they can be shared. And where that language does not yet exist, it is our poetry which helps to fashion it. Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives" (para. 10). I would like to push this assertion one step further— poetry is an architecture of peace.

This thesis builds on previous scholarship in the fields of peace and conflict studies, cultural studies, and literary studies. By utilizing the already established benefits of poetry and its uses throughout history, this paper seeks to further evaluate the role of poetry in processes of peacemaking by first challenging the traditional conceptions and schoolings of poetry in order for it to be seen as a legitimate tool, and secondly by analyzing select poems which can then be interpreted as calls for peace. The former will consist of evaluating interactions with poetry like Steve Caton's (1993) in Yemen and further analyzing approaches to poetry like Lorde's (1977). It will simultaneously build on the notion that poetry is able to act as a tool for brokering peace because of its ability to: wage conflict nonviolently, transform relationships, build capacity, and reduce direct violence. It also requires seeing peacemaking as a fundamental individual and community effort instead of solely an institutional one, and approaching peacemaking from a bottom-up method as opposed to top-down. This thesis also sets forth the idea that poetry is unique from other art forms in its ability to be all encompassing, to categorize the unspoken moments, and pauses of light. Through surveying this literature, I seek to demonstrate the ways in which poetry is already effective in processes of peacemaking, at the personal and institutional level.

In the data analysis portion of this paper, nine poems are utilized as a case study. Each poem will fall under one of three categories: poetry in response to genocide, poetry under state violence, or poetry of truth and reconciliation. The selected poems are structured this way in order to best organize their thematic intentions while also signaling the variety of conflicts in which poetry is applied. Poems could very well have the

potential to fall under multiple categories, and by listing a particular poem within a certain category, does not mean I aim to view it under that circumstance exclusively.

While my analysis begins with the exploration of traditional poetic aspects: diction, tone, imagery, and structure— each study is not solely a literary review, but a social scientific one as well. In order to determine which area of peacemaking a poem can fall under: waging conflict nonviolently, transforming relationships, building capacity, and/or reducing direct violence; the analysis will evaluate whom the speaker is writing to and the subsequent impacts of the poem on its immediate and long-term surroundings. Moreover I aim to draw on the consistencies of these incredibly varying poems, which span over 100 years and include writers from Armenia, Italy, Poland, Palestine, Cuba, Spain, the United States, and two North American Indigenous communities. By exhibiting the variation of poetry's uses in midst of conflict and highlighting its abundant practice, my analysis gathers that poetry has not only a significant role in peacemaking, but a thoroughly impactful one.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the historical and contextual knowledge of the relationship between poetry and peace is important, the primary reason poetry has been ignored is because modern peacemaking greatly favors the top-down approach. Simply put, many institutionalists, lawmakers, and diplomats do not favor the more creative practices that contribute to peacemaking which are typically found in bottom-up approaches. As a result of this, Michael Shank and Lisa Schirch (2008) assert there is very little “solid theory, research, or evaluation of arts-based peacebuilding” (p. 217) *not* because it is ineffective or unreliable but because it is not prioritized.

Additionally, the call to move towards more arts-based methods of peacemaking is an argument developed well beyond the simple rhetoric of “the arts are powerful” but a much “richer articulation of how they function in peacebuilding, when to use them, what they can do, and how to evaluate their usage” (p. 217). And, while this research agrees with Shank and Schirch’s argument that there is an underutilization of the arts in the efforts to achieve peace, there is even a further lack of representation among the literary arts, particularly poetry. For example, there is a decent amount of literature on the role of performing arts in peacemaking, take Augusto Boal’s (1995) *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* or Patricia Sternberg’s (1998) *Theatre for Conflict Resolution*. Likewise, there is some literature that points to the benefits of visual arts in peacemaking, examples include mural projects in Northern Ireland, Africa, and the Middle East (Zelizer, 2003, p. 65).

Still, then the arts remain marginalized within peacemaking processes, “perhaps because they are seen as “soft” approaches to the “hard” issues of conflict and violence, or because peacebuilding practitioners frequently originate from social and political sciences rather than the arts and humanities fields, or because the methodologies are not readily available” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 218). This research builds on Hiroshi Oda’s (2007) definition of peace; where he suggests “contrary to the dichotomic, static, negative view of peace as signifying “no war”, peace [is] an ever-changing, dynamic, non equilibrium process. Peace can be generated by human endeavor even in the midst of war or conflict” (p. 5). Those who work in arts-based practices of peace, generally accept this more positivist view of peace and its definition.

Why then, consider poetry? Lederach (2005) sets for the idea that “there is no single technique by which [peacemaking] can be pursued and at the same time it cannot be created

without discipline (p. 71). He further suggests that all of these unconventional, creative tools for peacebuilding have incredible potential if only they are embraced and utilized at both the personal and institutional levels. Additionally, arts-based practices of peacebuilding should be taken seriously not only because of their record of effectiveness, but because “formal psychosocial support is often inconsistent, inaccessible, or culturally inapt” in some of the most violent and conflict-prone areas of the world (Hanebrink & Smith, 2013, p. 195). Moreover the communities that have prided themselves on their practices of art in peace and reconciliation, are not currently being well represented; whether it be at the United Nations or on mainstream media. Their absence from these platforms is counterproductive to discussions of peacemaking and even, diplomacy. Simultaneously, it is important to note that a dependence on the state to provide peace does not guarantee the results that those would anticipate from conscious peacemaking. The state can be treated as a necessary actor in the processes of peace, but the exclusion of ordinary people from peace-related responsibilities is wholly detrimental to perpetual peace. The primary and most beneficial actors in peacemaking are ordinary people (Oda 2007) and often the most accessible way for them to utilize their capacities are through the creative act. Lederach’s (2005) work on the complexity of conflict and violence, calls for more complexity among methods of peacemaking:

“Knowing and understanding conflict does not take place exclusively, nor perhaps primarily, through processes of cognitive analysis, the breaking down of complexity into manageable pieces. Knowledge and, perhaps more important, understanding and deep insight are achieved through aesthetics and ways of

knowing that see the whole rather than the parts, a capacity and pathway that rely more on intuition than cognition” (Lederach, 2005, p. 69).

The question that then arises is when, where, and what are the best ways to utilize poetry as a tool for bringing about peace? Or, more boldly “what is the place of poetry in the needy world, where a deficiency of peace for much of the population means hunger, violence, and disease?” (Pinsky, 2007, p. 396). To answer these, it is important to categorize four primary methods of peacemaking as Schirch (2004) does: waging conflict nonviolently, reducing direct violence, transforming relationships, and building capacity. Poetry, in its variety and myriad of uses is an appropriate method of peacemaking in each of these four categories. In order to clarify poetry’s usefulness, the four peacemaking methods should fall under two broader concepts: *poetry as medicine* and *poetry as resistance*.

Poetry as Medicine

In choosing to treat poetry as a medicine, its role is emphasized as a tool for healing. This stems from the belief that a relationship with poetry— either as an active reader or writer, enables poetry to take on a heuristic value (Blumenfeld 2011). Peace initiatives are unlikely to succeed “if only material dimensions of conflict are addressed while ignoring identity needs and dynamics” (Hanebrink & Smith, 2013, p. 200). In these prevalent issues relating to identity, poetry is able to act as a medicine most effectively within the subcategories of peacebuilding in transforming relationships and building capacity. In the realm of creative expression, poetry is unique to other literary forms because of its ability to be all-inclusive. Pinsky (2007) notes poetry’s distinction:

“Great rhetoric may talk as though there is only politics. Great erotic passion may talk as though there is only eros. Poetry, in contrast with these, somehow acknowledges or implies the All—or, if that sounds too misty, it checks the box “All of the Above.” Less confident of settled knowledge than any language purely of love or purely of politics or purely of psychology, poetry is more confident in its inclusive, sweeping ambition. It excludes nothing. Irritably, it looks beyond everything” (p. 398).

Transforming Relationships

Thus, Pinsky argues that poetry’s healing and peacemaking capabilities expand just as widely. Engagement with poetry demands an active emotional, psychological, and warranted response. Poetry, more than other artistic forms, can do this because of its ability to act as an “autobiographical testimony to trauma, violence, and violation...it calls on the human heart to hold and remember and to hear and feel the inhumanity of war, genocide, and abuses of human rights” (Blumenfeld, 2011, p. 71). In poetry’s most powerful calls for peace, it does not let the reader merely glance and walk away, but “creates an experience that reminds us of something beyond any particular feelings and ideas: always beyond, always in process, always headed somewhere new” (Pinsky, 2007, p. 397). Whereas one might absorb a powerful mural in a museum, witness a theatre performance one evening, or pass by a protest in the streets; the quickness and rather brief experiences with those creative outlets are much more difficult to take home. Poetry demands a more permanent space as a screenshot on your cell phone, a book at your bedside, the same words echoing in your ears. Forché (1993) draws on poetry’s creative distinction: “[Poetry] is an experience entered into voluntarily. Unlike an aerial attack, a poem

does not come at one unexpectedly. One has to read or listen one has to be willing to accept the trauma” (33). These capabilities are what allows poetry a role in the process of transforming relationships:

“In the aftermath of violence, to be convincing, communication and learning must reach people’s bodies and spirits, as well as their minds. Methods involving arts and cultural work are uniquely suited to enhance coexistence, precisely because they engage people on all these levels simultaneously. Through them, one can learn not only the facts about one’s former adversary, but also how to listen to him, how to imagine her experiences, and how to express oneself so the other can hear” (Yalen & Cohen, 2007, p. 2).

The transitioning of relationships, especially ones that are deeply rooted in ethnic, religious, or cultural divisions takes time. It is possible that one might see a performance once that invokes a deep emotional response, but conflict resolution is more successful with continual practice. Reading a particular poem each night before bed, or rewriting the same couplet over and over— gives both the poet and the reader continual time to reflect, to consider. Blumenfeld (2011) alleges “[how] In testifying to the inhumanity of violence, poetic testimony simultaneous insists both on our humanity and on the possibility of poetry” (p. 71). In other words, to change or heal the trauma that pervades a perpetrator or victim in conflict, an individual needs continuity and potential. Poetry is a comforting paradox, the reader can return changed but the poem remains the same.

Building Capacity

Simultaneously poetry can act as a medicine and has been acknowledged in its benefits to build capacity. Sustainable peace must acknowledge that expressionism is an inherent biological

need. Without it, the peace process is foreboding the long-term well-being of the individual. Shaun McNiff (1992) writes that the arts have already been established as “both physically and psychologically beneficial particularly for those who have been exposed to events that may threaten their psychosocial well-being” (as cited in Kanyako, 2015, p. 107). The arts build capacity by serving as a “tool for expressing views, establishing safety, and exploring identities at both the macro- and micro- levels between individuals and their communities” (Kanyako, 2015, p. 107). Poetry, as an art form, specifically does this because it allows the poet and the reader to hold hope, honor despair, and nurture compassion towards oneself and others (Blumenfeld, 2011). In their work with war-afflicted populations in Northern Uganda, Hanebrink & Smith (2013) furthered this notion by witnessing “[how] creative expression can enable transformation, both individually and communally, of their realities from the wreckage of war towards acceptance and a construction of peace that includes social rehabilitation and conflict prevention” (195). Meaning the benefits of poetry within the process of peacemaking do not stop at the poet’s creation or the reader’s initial intake. It is merely a step towards a more thorough reconciliation.

Zelizer (2003) writes that “arts are only one of a number of peacebuilding processes that can have an impact on both the conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding efforts” (p. 65). In the peacemaking process of building capacity, both realms are dire. Improved capacity influences both the way an individual is able to manage conflict in the midst of it and the ways they are able to process the possible trauma and violence.

Poetry as Resistance

Poetry's power to act as a medicine should not dissuade from the idea that it can very much be utilized at a larger, institutional level. The second way to evaluate poetry's role in peacemaking is by viewing *poetry as resistance* and therefore a call for peace. This is not to suggest that the two practices of poetry as medicine and poetry as resistance cannot coexist—as Lederach (2005) points out, they very much do: “At times the parallels are remarkable, for the process of paying attention to poetry, listening to a voice that seems to come from nowhere in the midst of turbulent inner seas, is very much like sorting through the storms of protracted conflicts” (p. 66.) The challenge lies therein encouraging the victims or members of the oppressed to see poetry as a valid method of peacemaking in response towards violent or oppressive forces. Simultaneously, it requires the state to see or even care, about poetry.

“The creative act brings into existence processes that have not existed before. To sustain themselves over time, processes of change need constant innovation. As the study and practice around social change in violent contexts have evolved, we have pushed for acceptance and legitimacy mostly by making the case that these fields are professional. Professional excellence increasingly has emphasized the technology, the technique, and the skills of process management as tool that legitimate and make possible training, replication, and dissemination. This is not bad, but it also is not the only source of knowledge, understanding, and sustenance” (Lederach, 2005, p. 73).

Lederach's analysis rings true for many scholars of peace studies. As our understandings of conflict evolve, so should our methods of resolving them. If the popular slogan “the artist

speaks truth to power” is accepted then, as Pinsky (2007) writes “we can hope not only the artist does that; we would truly despair if we thought only poets were capable of speaking truth to power. Eminently, governors and magistrates should speak truth to power.” (p. 401). Yes, this is what those within our institutions *should* do. In the meantime, poetry as resistance proves promising because it incorporates the two other subcategories of peacebuilding: waging conflict nonviolently and reducing direct violence.

Waging Conflict Nonviolently

In this peacemaking approach, “advocates and activists seek to gain support for change by increasing a group’s power to address issues and ripen the conditions needed to transform relationships and structures” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 220). Art and artists “can bridge the gap [nonviolently] between official peacebuilding processes and people at the grassroots, generally those who have suffered the most from human rights abuses and whose voices are all too often marginalized” (Yalen & Cohen, 2007, p. 4). This is arguably the form of peacemaking where artists are most present today. Poets are able to highlight the most pressing areas of society, from war to poverty to inequality, which is what much of poet activism has done in the 20th and 21st centuries. In Carolyn Forché’s (1993) extensive analyses of 20th century witness poetry, ranging from the Armenian Genocide to South African apartheid, she notes that “these poems will not permit us diseased complacency. They come to us with claims that have yet to be filled, as attempts to mark us as they have themselves been marked” (p. 32). These poems creations were a path to wage conflict nonviolently and moreover, a cry for help. Yet it is through engaging with poetry consciously and acting as observant citizens, that these cries in the midst of acute

desperation can be interpreted as a form of peacemaking. As opposed to throwing their fists, these poets let out an honest call for peace.

The artistic purpose of a vast amount of creative works can be “crafted to non-violently call attention to injustices, acknowledge unheard stories, and can sustain hope in contexts of cultural and political repression. They can invite civic dialogue that acknowledges complexity” (Yalen & Cohen, 2007, p. 1). When considering this I return to Audre Lorde’s (1977) essay: “The white fathers told us, I think therefore I am; and the black mothers in each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams, I feel therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary awareness and demand, the implementation of that freedom” (para. 12). Lorde’s assertion is not far off from Yalen & Cohen’s. The fight for freedom is crucial. And if at minimum, peace requires a freedom from violence; it is not short of remarkable that the fight for freedom can be waged nonviolently, through poetry. “In many regions of the world, international and local NGOs and artists are conducting arts-based peacebuilding processes, whether it is organizing community theater in war-torn regions of Africa, an inter-ethnic MidEast Symphony, or the grassroots work of Augusto Boal (1985) type of theater in local communities worldwide” (Zelizer, 2003, p. 72). Thus there is a need to move beyond the question, “how can poetry, painting, theatre, or music wage conflict nonviolently?” and to reply to skeptics with “here, are the ways it already is.”

Reducing Direct Violence

Reducing direct violence is an attempt to suspend the immediate succession of violence and creative initiatives for peacemaking in three ways: preventing victimization, restraining offenders, and creating a safe space for other approaches. Using poetry to reduce direct violence

is neither a simple nor uncomplicated task, however, “the arts have the capacity to prevent, if only temporarily, further victimization” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 223). Interaction with the poetic form is able to disrupt the process of emotional, spiritual, physical, and/or psychological violence by serving as “a safe place for victims to find respite and security from ongoing racial, political, or economic conflict” (Shank & Schirch, 2008, p. 223). In his work in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Zelizer (2003) noted that in the process of the reducing violence the arts also helped to “raise awareness of the dangers of impending conflict and speak out in favor of peace” acted an essential component of anti-war demonstrations and protests for social justice and equality”(p. 65). Especially in conflicts on the verge of violence, the arts can also help raise awareness of immediate danger and speak out in favor of peace.

Data Analysis

Poetry in Response to Genocide

In studying poetry as a response to genocide, the most prominent and written about remark comes from Theodor Adorno's (1951) statement "to write a poem after Auschwitz is barbaric." Such a declaration can be rephrased to imply:

"that no adequate expression of poesis or mythopoesis can take place in the wake of such a cataclysm as the Nazi extermination of six million Jews, along with many millions of other innocent victims. No amount of talent, skill or discipline is sufficient to rescue the human spirit from the mortal blow dealt by Auschwitz"

(Kovel, 1999, p. 241).

Joel Kovel (1999) has written that this assumption is empirically false and argues that Adorno saw the Holocaust as a challenge to poetry as opposed to the end of poetry (p. 242). The writers studied in this analysis: Siamanto, Primo Levi, and Tadeusz Borowski, further Kovel's interpretation. In fact, both Levi and Borowski survived Auschwitz and devoted the majority of their remaining literary careers attempting to reconcile with the atrocities they had experienced. Similarly, we can view Siamanto's poetry as a response to genocide, in which his writings call desperately for resolutions in the days leading up to his execution. All of these poets are essentially calling for peace either in the midst of great conflict or in the aftermath. Their poetry can even be treated as documentary evidence, due to their ability to "generate a common sense of place, [create] spiritual uplift, deepest feelings of attachment, a longing for retreat, or a patriotic swell" (Lorimer, 2008, p. 181). It is by these creative acts Siamanto makes an effort to wage conflict nonviolently with the Ottoman Empire, Levi attempts to reduce the violence inflicted on

him and other Holocaust survivors, and Borowski seeks solace and the opportunity to maintain a sense of capacity even in Auschwitz.

Siamanto (1878-1915)

Born Adom Yarjanian in Turkish Armenia, the poet known as Siamanto, wrote in the years leading up to the Armenian Genocide. Largely considered to possess a bardic style, Siamanto's poems carry a sense of prophecy that produce both an eerie foretelling and alarming indicator of his people's fate that would soon follow. Siamanto's poems are thought to be considered eyewitness accounts of the heightened turmoil taking place under the Ottoman Turkish government, beginning with the first massacre ordered in 1909 and leading up to his execution in 1915. My analysis begins with his poem "Grief" not only for chronological purposes but for strategic ones. It is in beginning with poetry from the Armenian Genocide that [we] are at first alarmed by rising sentiments of nationalism and ethnic cleansing, and then reminded that the mass genocide of Armenians served as a disturbing symbol of encouragement for the largest genocide of the 20th century—the Holocaust. Siamanto's execution also prompts the reader to consider that poetry which defies the oppressor is not merely an act of expressionism but a political act with the severest of consequences.

Grief

You, stranger, soul-mate,
 who leaves behind the road of joy,
 listen to me.
 I know your innocent feet are still wet
 with the blood of yours.
 Foreign hands have come and yanked out
 the sublime rose of freedom
 which finally bloomed from the pains of your race...

...As you walk through the cross-road of merriment,
 don't let a speck of gladness or a tear
 stain grief's majesty.
 Because for the vanquished tears are cowardly

and for the victors, the smile is frivolous, a wrinkle...

...And this evening before sunset
 all of you will go back to your houses,
 whether they are mud or marble,
 and calmly close the treacherous
 shutters of your windows.
 Shut them from the wicked Capital,
 shut them to the face of humanity,
 and to the face of your god. . .
 Even the lamp on your table will be extinguished
 by the whispers of your clear soul.

Tr. Peter Balakian and Nevart Yaghlian

Kovel (1999) writes that “poetry is a praxis for which the poet may take individual credit, but which can never be severed from its collective and communal being”— as is the case with Siamanto (p. 240). In “Grief” it is evident that Siamanto’s speaker is at first an individual in distress, but moreover assumes a collective identity which is being persecuted. In writing, “You, stranger, soul-mate/who leaves behind the road of joy, listen to me” the cautionary speaker appears to address a mass, regardless of their relationship. The tone is imploring, pleading with the reader to remain alert, while remaining decisive as the speaker quickly assigns the Armenians as innocent: “the sublime rose of freedom/which finally bloomed from the pains of your race...”, and the Ottoman Empire as guilty, describing them as the “wicked Capital”. It is through the fierceness of his diction that Siamanto is able to utilize colloquial language while relating an image of horrors coming with the looming genocide. The speaker’s symbolism is blatant—partnering images of wildlife and freedom with the Armenians and alluding to evil and physical violence with the Empire. In the thick of great conflict, the speaker greatly empathizes with the Armenian reader, pressuring them to go in search of peace physically: “And this evening before

sunset/all of you will go back to your houses,/[...]calmly close the treacherous/shutters of your windows” and personally: “by the whispers of your clear soul.” The speaker’s insistence suggests that the subject and/or reader of the poem should find peace emotionally knowing they are innocent victims with “clear souls” who have only met this fate because of “the pains of your race”. Their mourning tone seems to insinuate the speaker finds their violent, hellish fate inescapable but coaxes the subject to remember their innocence. “Grief” maintains character which deems it as both a poem of medicine and a poem of resistance. The poem seems to be reminding the speaker of their morality while simultaneously defying the oppressor. It is potentially both Siamanto and his speaker’s way of waging this catastrophic conflict nonviolently and calling to a larger audience for assistance in the peace process.

Primo Levi (1919-1987)

Arguably the most well-known writer who survived the Holocaust, Primo Levi was born in Turin, Italy and was a professionally trained chemist. Upon being sent to Buna-Monowitz in 1944, his background in chemistry is credited for his survival until the camp was liberated in January 1945. Among Levi's writings, his poetry appears to be the most overlooked. His lyric rings of his battles with trauma and duels with the collective guilt of having survived. Referring to Levi's suicide in 1987, Jewish writer Elie Wiesel (1992) proclaimed "Primo Levi died at Auschwitz forty years later" (3). Levi's poetics were perhaps a forty year long process of peacemaking that ended in tragedy. In "For Adolf Eichmann" Levi writes of the infamous Eichmann trial in Jerusalem, and seeks to answer the question: what proper justice can be brought to actors of evil?

For Adolf Eichmann

The wind runs free across our plains,
 The Live sea beats for ever at our beaches.
 Man makes earth fertile, earth gives him flowers and fruits.
 He lives in toil and joy; he hopes, fears, begets sweet offspring.

. . . And you have come, our precious enemy,
 Forsaken creature, man ringed by death.
 What can you say now, before our assembly?
 Will you swear by a god? What god?
 Will you leap happily into the grave?
 Or will you at the end, like the industrious man
 Whose life was too brief for his long art,
 Lament your sorry work unfinished,
 The thirteen million still alive?

Oh son of death, we do not wish you death.
 May you live longer than anyone ever lived.
 May you live sleepless five million nights,

And may you be visited each night by the suffering of everyone who
 saw,
 Shutting behind him, the door that blocked the way back,
 Saw it grow dark around him, the air fill with death.

20 July 1960

Tr. Ruth Feldman and Brian Swann

Immediately presenting a stark contrast to the assumptions of the poem's title, the speaker of Levi's poem begins with a quatrain detailing a paradisaal environment. The reader is introduced to a Mediterranean climate, one that is fruitful, fertile, and long-awaited. When continuing to the second stanza, wherein Levi writes "...And you have come, our precious enemy,/Forsaken creature," we can assume this is evidence, along with the title and dating of the poem, that the speaker is referring to Eichmann's capture and arrival in Israel in the summer of 1960. The remainder of the poem ceases to make reference to Israel's allure and abundance, but instead harrows in on the poem's tribute, Adolf Eichmann. The poem begins to take a vindictive stance and the second stanza's syntax is structured with question after question, as if the speaker is addressing Eichmann on the stand: "What can you say now, before our assembly?/Will you swear by a god? What god?". By their spiteful and unapologetic tone, the speaker is making reference to what a mockery they find this trial— highlighting the ridiculousness of having a man who is accused of perpetrating genocide swear by a god and accusing the subject of [lamenting his] "sorry work unfinished/the thirteen million still alive?". Yet despite the poem's early candor, it is in the last stanza we are presented with Levi's skill at articulating Holocaust imagery. In a matter of a dozen lines, the speaker has figuratively left the Garden of Eden and arrived in Auschwitz, wherein Levi relates a description of the infamous gas chambers: "may

you be visited each night by the suffering of everyone who/saw,/Shutting behind him, the door that blocked the way back,/Saw it grow dark around him, the air fill with death.” Here, the speaker takes the writer by surprise, and without reserve reveals he does not wish Eichmann death but immortality, and that he be haunted each night by the millions of lives he took. Though his poem is far from forgiving, Levi’s wish that Eichmann not be put to death *is* an effort to reduce direct violence and transform the relationship between the Jewish survivor and the perpetrator. To accept this, it is important to understand that the initial steps of healing and moreover peacemaking are not always all-embracing, optimistic, or forgiving. Sometimes it begins with simply acknowledging one’s emotions, whatever they may be, and asking for help. It is through encompassing these qualities that “For Adolf Eichmann” falls under the category of poetry as medicine. Furthermore, Levi’s poem is proof that just because a poem calls for peace, does not necessarily mean the call is answered. While writing the poem may have served as the initial steps of reducing direct violence and transforming relationships, Levi’s poetry and life exemplifies the emotional and institutional support needed to make peace after trauma. His life also draws heavily on the suggestion that perhaps transforming the relationship with oneself post-violence, is significantly more important than transforming the relationship between perpetrator and victim.

Tadeusz Borowski (1922-1951)

Under Nazi-occupied Poland, Tadeusz Borowski began publishing his poetry in underground newspapers in 1942. Soon after his first publications, Borowski was initially sent to Auschwitz and then deported Dachau, where he remained until the camp's liberation in May 1945. His literary work thereafter was focused on his time in concentration camps and the exploration of nationalism, identity, and expressionism. Borowski committed suicide on July 1, 1951, at the age of 28. Forché (1993) notes he committed suicide by gassing himself, choosing the fate he had miraculously escaped during his internment (p. 383).

The Sun of Auschwitz

You remember the sun of Auschwitz
 and the green of the distant meadows, lightly
 lifted to the clouds by birds,
 no longer green in the clouds,
 but seagreen white. Together
 we stood looking into the distance and felt
 the far away green of the meadows and the clouds'
 seagreen white within us,
 as if the color of the distant meadows
 were our blood or the pulse
 beating within us, as if the world
 existed only through us and nothing changed
 as long as we were there. I remember
 your smile as elusive
 as the shade of the color of the wind,
 a leaf trembling on the edge
 of sun and shadow, fleeting
 yet always there. So you are
 for me today, in the seagreen
 sky, the greenery and
 the leaf-rustling wind. I feel
 you in every shadow, every movement,
 and you put the world around me

like your arms. I feel the world
 as your body, you look into my eyes
 and call me with the whole world.

Tr. Larry Rafferty, Meryl Natchez, and Tadeusz Pioro

Of the formerly studied poems, Borowski's "The Sun of Auschwitz" is arguably the most blatant attempt at peacemaking. Throughout the poem, the speaker's tone remains earnest and slow, and the reader does not feel the sense of urgency or distress that exists in the aforementioned poems. The poem's form consists of one lengthy stanza in which the speaker describes the scenery of Auschwitz, so drastically opposing our traditional presumptions of a concentration camp. The speaker also surprises us by taking on a romantic tone, as they address their surroundings and a companion: "the far away green of the meadows and the clouds'/seagreen white within us,/as if the color of the distant meadows/were our blood or the pulse/beating within us, as if the world/existed only through us and nothing changed". In these lines we are introduced to images of the pure and biological, issuing the reader to no longer associate Auschwitz with the barbaric machinery of the Nazis but inviting them to consider the vulnerability and innocence of those who reside there. Themes of nostalgia and wonder are present, as the speaker longs for both a return to nature and the company of a friend or lover. The diction is simplistic, as if Borowski was penning a letter: "I feel/you in every shadow, every movement/and you put the world around me/like your arms./I feel the world/as your body, you look into my eyes/and call me with the whole world." Here, the speaker's ability to make peace is dependent on their perspective. In focusing on elements their oppressors have yet to deny them (the sun, shadow, wind) they are attempting to build capacity in sustaining their emotions and faith in the beings that remain outside of fascist control. Both literally and figuratively, Borowski

and the speaker of the poem nurture compassion towards themselves and others, implying a more institutional peace cannot be achieved if the personal is neglected. Again, it should be noted that poetry's most heuristic value lies in its ability to spark transcendence in the reader and writer, as is done in this poem. "The Sun of Auschwitz" proves that through building capacity, peacemaking is possible both in the heart of conflict and in the aftermath; and speaker strikingly decides to not wait for peace to arrive but to cultivate it.

Poetry under State Violence

All the poetry in the following selection has been written by poets who at the time, were experiencing direct violence by a state authority. As a result of this, Fadwa Tuqan was pronounced a collective voice for the Palestinian suffering, Heberto Padilla was imprisoned and forced into internal exile by the Castro Regime, and Federico García Lorca was assassinated by the Spanish right-wing militia under Francisco Franco. Their poems serve as both an act of resistance and as an attempt to come to terms with their realities. It should not be taken lightly that in all three of these individuals situations, the poets risked becoming a target and their lives to respond to the violence that was being inflicted on them and their communities. Their resistance to terror “is what makes the world habitable: the protest against violence will not be forgotten and this insistent memory renders life possible in communal situations” (Forché, 1993, p. 46). In each of these three poems, the poets attempt to search for peace in the face of violence and we see all four methods of arts-based peacemaking explicitly utilized.

Fadwa Tuqan (1917-2003)

Considered to be one of the greatest poets in the Arab world, Fadwa Tuqan published six decades worth of poetry in her lifetime. Born in Nablus, Tuqan spent her career writing critically of the Israeli Occupation, patriarchal structures in the Arab world, and life under military rule. Her popularity became increasingly heightened in the aftermath of the Six-Day War and her poetry came to be considered a rising symbol of Palestinian resistance. Tuqan died in 2003 during the Second Intifada.

Face Lost in the Wilderness

Do not fill postcards with memories.
Between my heart and the luxury of passion
stretches a desert where ropes of fire
blaze and smoulder, where snakes
coil and recoil, swallowing blossoms
with poison and flame...

...Why did my country become a gateway
to hell? Since when are apples bitter?
When did moonlight stop bathing orchards?
My people used to plant fields and love life
Joyfully they dipped their bread in oil
Fruits and flowers tinted the land
with magnificent hues—
will the seasons ever again
give their gifts to my people?

Sorrow— Jerusalem's night is silence and smoke.
They imposed a curfew; now nothing beats in the
heart of the City but their bloodied heels
under which Jerusalem trembles
like a raped girl.

...A rush and din, flame and sparks
lighting the road—

one group after another
 falls embracing, in one loft death.
 The night, no matter how long, will continue
 to give birth to star after star
 and my life continues,
 my life continues.

Tr. Naomi Shihab Nye

It is only due to great poetic skill, that “Face Lost in the Wilderness” can serve as both a poem of optimism and of mourning. Immediately we can sense the speaker is grieving their beloved land, describing scenes of violence and chaos: “where ropes of fire/blaze and smoulder, where snakes/coil and recoil, swallowing blossoms/with poison and flame”. Commonly in peace poetry, we are presented with imagery that produces little to no sense of peace and shown violence in places that might be historically associated with peace, like the wilderness. The absence of peace thus becomes a glaring omission, alluding to a void that need be filled. Tuqan’s diction permits this notion and positions the reader’s assumption of the wilderness in disarray. The fire is no longer a source of warmth but a weapon, the snakes stalk the land, and all sources of life are brutalized by both. When the speaker questions: “Since when are apples bitter?/When did moonlight stop bathing orchards?”, they metaphorically suggest their land and most basic elements have been tainted. Even when the speaker transitions to imagery of the city, their tone is dressed with turmoil: “They imposed a curfew; now nothing beats in the/heart of the City but their bloodied heels/under which Jerusalem trembles”. Again, the theme of the natural invaded by the mechanic, merciless outsider is addressed. Although, at first, the poem speaks of violence and danger— the act of writing the poem is an attempt to mediate this conflict nonviolently. By drawing on the state’s violence and choosing to respond to it in the way that she does, Tuqan is

acknowledging the perpetrator's violence but not participating in it. It is as if Tuqan awards her speaker a bird's-eye view, allowing them to respond to violence from a remote place. This is an act of reducing direct violence; of engaging in the conflict without physical force. Furthermore, the poem concludes with a statement that is simultaneously auspicious and promising. When Tuqan writes: "The night, no matter how long, will continue/to give birth to star after star/and my life continues,/my life continues" she allows her speaker to consider this dark night's inevitable daybreak, and assures one that surviving, too, is an act of resistance.

Heberto Padilla (1932-2000)

Native Cuban Heberto Padilla was arrested and imprisoned in 1971 by the Castro regime after the publication of his poetry collection *Fuera del Juego*. Padilla was ordered to internal exile until the 1980's, where he then moved to the United States. Considered to have mastered the personal and political, Padilla's poetry is filled with both tones of defeat and greater aspirations in which he attempts to reconcile with dictators, history, and fate.

Song of the Juggler

General, dein Tank ist ein starker Wagon.

— Brecht

General, there's a battle
between your orders and my songs.
It goes on all the time:
night, day.
It knows neither tiredness nor sleep—
a battle that has gone on for many years,
so many that my eyes have never seen a sunrise
in which you, your orders, your arms, your trenches
did not figure.

A rich battle
in which, aesthetically speaking, my rags
and your uniform face off.
A theatrical battle—
it only lacks dazzling stage sets
where comedians might come on from anywhere
raising a rumpus as they do in carnivals,
each one showing off his loyalty and valor.

General, I can't destroy your fleets or your tanks
and I don't know how long this war will last
but every night one of your orders dies without
being followed,
and, undefeated, one of my songs survives.

Tr. Alastair Reid

“Song of the Juggler” is a notable peace poem because it showcases not only the ways in which poets seek peace in the midst of state violence, but also demonstrates the means a state will take to silence any expression of resistance. Padilla’s choice to emphasize the slowness of peacemaking can also be interpreted as a call to the reader to resist the urge to give up on the process of peace or healing just because it can be slow. The poem also draws on the capability of the individual, something the peace process often neglects. The speaker’s diction and direct acknowledgment of the General, is an intentional tactic that assigns responsibility for the setting’s chaos— by assigning a party as guilty, there is someone to hold accountable and someone to rise up against. In refusing to interact with the perpetrator (the Castro Regime in Padilla’s instance) on *their* stage and instead responding to violence by way of literary expression, Padilla is indeed reducing direct violence and waging this conflict nonviolently. When Padilla writes, “there’s a battle/between your orders and my songs” the reader is invited into a space of tension, one in which there exists a conflict of message and morale. As the poem progresses, by the second stanza it becomes clear that this not merely a conflict of ideas but a struggle between violence and truth. Moreover, Padilla is concise and direct in the final stanza of his poem. By writing, “every night one of your orders dies without/being followed,/ and, undefeated, one of my songs survives” he makes an effort to prove his autonomy both to himself and to his perpetrator. The poem’s theme is simple: there is power in saying what needs to be said.

Federico García Lorca (1898-1936)

Largely considered one of the greatest artists of the twentieth century, Federico García Lorca used his talents in poetry, theatre performance, and music to respond to the early stages of the Spanish Civil War. Born in 1898 to the west of Granada, García Lorca's affinity for his homeland and rural Andalusia would become a defining characteristic of his literary voice. In the company of other great Spanish artists and intellectuals— Salvador Dali, Luis Buñuel, and Juan Ramón Jiménez, García Lorca ventured to support the Republican cause in both the avenues of literature and theatre. Maurer (1994) notes that “no matter what [Lorca] is writing about, he is a writer of elegy” (p. 28). Demonstrated throughout his later poetry, García Lorca is indeed writing a perpetual elegy to his beloved Spain as he senses an ending is near. Knowing he was considered an enemy of the state for his socialist views and homosexuality, in a letter to Rafael Martínez Nadal, García Lorca wrote “Rafael, there will be bodies all over these fields. I've made up my mind, I'm going to Granada. God's will be done” (Forché, 1993, p. 153). In August 1936, he was abducted by right-wing nationalist forces and executed “on the orders of one of [Francisco] Franco's generals” at the age of 38. “Casida of Sobbing” was among his last poems, and was published posthumously (Forché, 1993, p. 153). Incredibly lyrical and surreal, García Lorca's poetry is expansive and filled with a celestial desire— for personhood, acceptance, and peace.

Casida of Sobbing

I have shut my balcony door
 because I don't want to hear the sobbing,
 but from behind the grayish walls
 nothing else comes out but sobbing.

Very few angels are singing,
 very few dogs are barking,
 a thousand violins fit into the palm of my hand.

But the sobbing is a gigantic dog,
 the sobbing is a gigantic angel,
 the sobbing is a gigantic violin,
 tears close the wind's jaws,
 all there is to hear is sobbing.

Tr. Robert Bly

In Lorca's "Casida of Sobbing" he experiments with the *qaṣīda*, a poetic form of Arab origins. Aside from the poem's restraints in terms of meter and end rhyme, the *qaṣīda* traditionally takes on elegiac qualities. In Lorca's case, the elegy is not necessarily clear. In the opening lines, when Lorca writes "I have shut my balcony door/because I don't want to hear the sobbing" it is obvious the speaker is in a state of agony. This sentiment carries the rest of the poem and within the first stanza we can recognize the apparent guilt in the speaker's tone and the distinguished dread they feel. By shutting the door, it is indeed an attempt to turn inward from the violence existing beyond the place in which the poem permits us to enter. This action, although subtle, is the reader's first indicator of what is to unfold. One can then infer that "Casida of Sobbing" is an elegy for what is to be lost, without knowing exactly what is lost. We do know the sobbing is all consuming and possessing a dual role throughout the poem: in the second stanza it blurs visions of angels, silences the barking of dogs, music is nonexistent. Yet in the third stanza Lorca presents a contrasting image; the sobbing takes on the configuration of a "gigantic dog", "gigantic angel", and "gigantic violin". This image validates the notion that the speaker's lamenting is larger than life and incapable of disregarding. Lorca's description calls for

the reader to imagine a scenario where a consequence of violence breeds further violence. By no means is this reference a stretch, state violence often imposes physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering on a population despite knowing their actions will not lead to conflict resolution nor make way for a peace process. In Lorca's case, he is writing poetry as the backdrop of a civil war devastates his country. He and his people are in mourning, and he rightfully predicts the Republic will not prevail. This is a seemingly consistent message that presents itself throughout the poetry written under state violence. All three of the writers surveyed: Tuqan, Padilla, and Lorca, know that for the time being their state maintains the threshold of power. Their work emphasizes the point that the desire for peace is infinite, always existing even when hope is slim and fear is abundant. Poets of peace do not authorize their emotions and subsequent expressions thereof to be diminished by state forces. "Casida of Sobbing" is therefore an ideal poem of peace. In a dozen lines, Lorca attempts to wage the Spanish Civil War nonviolently, reduce direct violence by doing so, reinforce his own sense of capacity within his final days, and transform the relationship between him and his perpetrators of violence. Published posthumously, this poem's effects did not stop with its creation. Lorca's legacy as an artist superseded the fascist state, reiterating the note that all who work in the name of peace already know— the truth, no matter how battered, no matter the fight, always survives.

Poetry of Truth and Reconciliation

A poetry of truth and reconciliation is more about the personal than anything else. These three poems, arguably more than the others surveyed, provide a space of relief in the thick of conflicts that are not likely to be resolved in the short term. Paul Laurence Dunbar is navigating the end of the 19th century and discovering what it means to be a black man in a post-slavery United States. Both Karenne Wood and Joy Harjo are exploring the roles of Indigenous identity in 21st century America. All three poets are writing in response to direct and structural violences that have persisted against their respective communities for centuries. Their poetry reiterates the possibility that “poesis might be regarded as a form of speech in which [the] inner being finds collective representation” (Kovel, 1999, p. 239). Their cries perform both personally and publically, and point out how institutions have often neglected the personal. In “Sympathy” the reader is forced to confront the reality that the abolishment of slavery did not signify absolute freedom for black Americans. In “Too Keep Faith” and “Sunrise” Wood and Harjo stress that Indigenous Americans have faced unprecedented violence and injustice since the first colonizers arrived. These poets demonstrate that conflicts which have deep historical and institutional roots are often unceasing because there is a failure to recognize the great trauma certain populations have withstood. Despite this notion, they are in seek of peace and unwillingly to wait for institutions to reluctantly provide it. A consistent technique throughout each of these poems is the utilization of land and nature to convey these politicized messages. The return to nature is a common thread throughout peace poetry, because the land is not violent and yet is still a victim of extraordinary violence. The land has not hurt these communities like the metropolis has, the earth has no political or social preference. When man holds a bird captive, sets fire to the forest,

or extracts the earth's minerals; Dunbar, Wood, and Harjo know too, what this must feel like.

Their practices of peacemaking should be seen as efforts to reduce the structural violence they feel trapped by and resolve these prolonged conflicts nonviolently. Their poetry allows the reader the privilege of grieving and healing with them, giving the reader an opportunity to transform their relationships with these conflicts and hopefully encourage a sense of capacity.

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

A son of freed slaves, Paul Laurence Dunbar was born in Kentucky in 1872. By the age of 14, Dunbar had published poems in the *Dayton Herald* and was on his way to becoming one of the first black poets to gain national recognition in the United States. Despite being born after the Civil War and living his entire life in northern cities, Dunbar “became the poet of the southern, rural black folk” due to his ability to experiment with dialect and popularizing of the “negro song” in which he utilized various poetic types like “love songs, lullabies, songs of homelonging, [and] martial narratives” (Cohen, 2007, pp. 247-248). His poem “Sympathy” coined the famous line “I know why the caged bird sings” which would become popularized by poet Maya Angelou and come to serve as a symbol of African-American resistance. In *A Singer in the Dawn: Reinterpretations of Paul Laurence Dunbar*, Nikki Giovanni (1975) writes of Dunbar: “there is no poet, black or nonblack, who measures his achievement” (as cited in Poetry Foundation, 2018, para. 17). Dunbar died of tuberculosis at the age of 33.

Sympathy

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!

 When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;

 When the first bird sings and the first bud opens,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing

 Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
 And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—

I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
 When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
 When he beats his bars and he would be free;
 It is not a carol of joy or glee,
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
 But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
 I know why the caged bird sings!

In “Sympathy” both the speaker and the subject are in captivity. The two are unable to free themselves, both physically and spiritually, and for now are acting as spectators withheld from the natural, unbridled world that surrounds them. In the opening stanza, when Dunbar writes “When the first bird sings and the first bud opens,/And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—/I know what the caged bird feels!”, it becomes apparent that “Sympathy” is a poem of profound empathy. The speaker’s position, although never clarified, is assumed to be representative of what it means to be a black person in America at the start of the 20th century. The poem, written in 1899, speaks to the incredible structural violence black Americans were enduring and continue to face into the 21st century. Interpreting the speaker’s position as representative of this struggle thus makes the imagery of the caged bird even more sincere. Their cries are for true deliverance— not solely the abolishment of slavery, but the abolishment of hatred, racism, and the laws that fuel these sentiments can in turn provide genuine freedom. The speaker’s knowingness of the caged bird’s condition stems from the limitations placed on black Americans both in the physical and spiritual realms. The song the caged bird is singing can be interpreted as a lamenting for the oppressed everywhere, who no matter the reasoning, can empathize with the imprisoned: “I know why the caged bird beats his wing/Till its blood is red

on the cruel bars; For he must fly back to his perch and cling.” Again Dunbar’s imagery evokes visuals of such tension: the wings are bloodied, feathers matted, the caged bird allowed a brief taste of flight but never freedom in whole. This image asks the reader to consider the experiences of black Americans at the time: what is it like to be granted legal freedom and yet not feel free? What was it like for Dunbar to be born into the first generation of emancipated black Americans, and still feel limited in mobility and flight? “Sympathy” highlights the belief that the peace process is insufficient if it neglects the feelings of the individual. Peace is as much personal as it is institutional. Dunbar’s attempt to reconcile with what it means to be a black man in the United States through poetry reiterates this belief and forces us to remember the necessity of the peace of the spirit. The speaker *knows* why the caged bird sings because he also fulfills that role. Likewise, the bird sings because he has something to say. At first intake this might seem obvious, but for Dunbar “Sympathy” is a deliberate act to reconcile with these feelings. Dunbar’s poem is a trial to increase his capacity despite pervading inequality and an attempt to transform the relationship he has with his identity. Line after line, we are reminded that sound carries: how walls and bars do not prevent speech but amplify it, how our ability to speak to one another and ourselves stays with us until our final moments.

Karenne Wood (1960-)

Karenne Wood is a member of the Monacan Indian Nation and directs the Virginia Indian Programs at the Virginia Center for the Humanities. Her poetry often centers on the relationship between Indigenous identity and the environment, and she frequently emphasizes the practice of ritual throughout her work.

To Keep Faith

It's an idea like light, the star's trajectory
over a sacred place that rises from its landscape:
dark butte, dark desert tower, dark river swelling
across the shadowed plains of the republic.

This is your passion: to save the earth's cathedrals.
The machinery of our country's interests works against it.
In another city, you might have disappeared,
blindfolded at sunrise with hands behind your back.

In another time, not long ago, I might have
found you face up in a field of silence among the still-
beautiful bodies of Dakota men. To speak
for the land: even our history is against us here.

But I have imagined loving you— the perfection of your skin,
its holiness— tongues like salmon coupling in the rush
of white rapids, flash of bodies entwined through
the waterfalls tumult, and wondered whether I would do it,

as though you hadn't already recalled who i was
before I learned to be wary of histories or as though
your words hadn't entered me like light,
small wavecaps riding on all that darkness.

For you, then, some words about light. Relentless,

earthly light. incantatory words we could lick
 like blue sparks. Words to keep faith with each other
 and the earth's searing love, which still claims us.

In common Indigenous fashion, "To Keep Faith" centers on the speaker's relationship with the land and the simultaneous treatment of a land and its people. Wood's references to colonialism and her exploration of history can be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile with the United States government's genocide of Indigenous peoples throughout the colonial period. The speaker in "Too Keep Faith" is in search of a peace that provides both a space and an identity for them to feel safe in. When Wood writes: "To speak/for the land: even our history is against us here" she is touching on the truth that within this conflict there is no individual perpetrator but an entire system working against her people's interests. The speaker's tone maintains a romantic quality but her visuals are surprisingly eerie—"In another city,/you might have disappeared,/ blindfolded at sunrise with hands behind your back." Moreover, the speaker is seeking the truth of their identity: what does it mean to be a native in a nation that has attempted to erase and invalidate their existence? It is one thing to reconcile with an adversary, it is another to make peace with a government and institutional policies. Thus this is a practice of peacemaking by way of transforming relationships with one's identity. Wood understands the pain but, if only for a moment, moves past it. The speaker in "Too Keep Faith" realizes the complexity of what it means to be an Indigenous person in North America, the challenges one faces do not linger outside the front door, but enter the bedroom. Identities that are under attack in the public sphere will consequently face similar challenges in the private sphere; yet how individuals heal from violence, whether it be structural or direct, primarily takes place in the private sphere. Often this healing comes by way of acknowledging the truth and then making peace with it. "To Keep

Faith” demonstrates not only the necessity but the ability one has to build their own capacity regardless of any institutional support. This poem is then a poem of resistance by its refusal to omit the Indigenous identity, and a poem of healing due the space it offers the speaker to creatively recognize and move past this trauma. In the final stanza, the speaker offers the suggestion that while perhaps corporate and historical interests are working against Indigenous communities, the land has always been on their side.

Joy Harjo (1951-)

Joy Harjo is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Critically-acclaimed, Harjo has been awarded the Ruth Lilly Prize in Poetry, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas, the Wallace Stevens Award from the Academy of American Poets, and the William Carlos Williams Award from the Poetry Society of America. Mancelos (2006) writes that Harjo's poetry "seeks historical responsibility for the expropriation, removal, genocide, and cultural annihilation of Native Americans" and offers a surprising response as she is "ready and eager to forgive five hundred years of atrocities perpetrated by the colonizers" (p. 277). Still, Harjo claims her poetry has one sole purpose: "Ultimately a poem has an electrical force field which is love. (...) A poem may be about death or destruction or anything else terrible, but I somehow want it to resolve, and in some manner I want the resolution of that poem to be love" (Moyers, 1996, p. 47).

Sunrise

Sunrise, as you enter the houses of everyone here, find us.
 We've been crashing for days, or has it been years.
 Find us, beneath the shadow of this yearning mountain
 crying here.
 We have been sick with our sour longings, and the jangling of
 fears.
 Our spirits rise up in the dark, because they hear,
 Doves in cottonwoods calling forth the sun.
 We struggled with a monster and lost.
 Our bodies were tossed in the pile of kill. We rotted there.
 We were ashamed and we told ourselves for a thousand
 years,
 We didn't deserve anything but this—
 And one day, in relentless eternity, our spirits discerned
 movement of prayers.

Carried toward the sun.
 And this morning we are able to stand with all the rest
 And welcome you here.
 We move with the lightness of being, and we will go
 Where there's a place for us.

Harjo's poem partakes in an endeavor the peace process often neglects: forgiveness. "Sunrise" is an ode to new beginnings, community, and light. The poem encourages the reader to unpack the heavy burden of the past and move onward into the unknown. Still, it does not deny the pain nor the tragedy that took place. The poem simply decides to resist the pull of history and embrace the possibility of a fresh start. Harjo manages this by bringing forth the voice of the land—which is always impartial. She calls on the sun to find the speaker, "Find us, beneath the shadow of this yearning mountain/crying here./We have been sick with our sour longings, and the jangling of/fears." The speaker, recognizing the pain that has been inflicted upon them, asks only for the sun's assistance. Not only is this symbolic of a common Indigenous ritual, but it allows the reader to witness the intersection of the natural world and man-made fear. Harjo's diction makes way for the evocation of guilt and shame, which manifests as an infliction of violence. It becomes clear that the violence the speaker is facing is in fact direct *and* structural: "Our bodies were tossed in the pile of kill. We rotted there./We were ashamed and we told ourselves for a thousand/years,/We didn't deserve anything but this." The speaker's creation of these images along with the poem's spiritual undertones, suggest that they see their existence as a mark of triumph. A common spiritual belief across a majority of faiths, is that a body's end does not indicate a hindering of the spirit. Harjo's speaker knows this, and sees that the peace process requires a fundamental acknowledgement of both bodily and spiritual harm. In order to move out of the darkness, one must first admit that the darkness is there. In tasks relating to

conflict resolution, this implies both the survivors and perpetrators accepting that acts of hatred, violence, and irrefutable harm have taken place. "Sunrise" does this, and is now focused on the process of reconciliation. Perhaps her poetic skill makes it look easy, but Harjo manages a feat that most governments and institutions are afraid to. Peace is only sustainable if it is a product of honesty. To look towards one's adversary, without hostility, and forgive them even when they have not expressed remorse is a gesture of awe-inspiring courage. In doing so, Harjo transforms a relationship without forcing the other party to behave a certain way. In the end, her speaker asks: where can we go from here? After the chaos and destruction of violence, Harjo reminds us how each day the sun rises and we are free to begin again.

CONCLUSION

If, after all this literature has been surveyed, and we return to Plato's sentiments in the *Republic*, it would be even easier to critique his intense fears. If poetry and emotion are to be used in place of logic, it is only in efforts to oust brutal tyrants, to raise one's arms in place of a gun, to give words to what otherwise might not be said. Poetry holds incredible potential and the peace process has already welcomed it so. Scholars of peace and conflict studies should no longer debate whether poetry *is* effective, and instead put forth efforts into further exploring instances where poetry, along with other literary arts, can best be utilized within peacemaking.

Further work begins in analyzing its effects, understanding why certain communities have particularly embraced arts-based peacemaking and others have ignored it. For example, scholars might attempt to discover why arts-based peacemaking is currently utilized in the more "off the map" nations of Yemen, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Palestinian territories and less frequently in Northern and Western European countries. Much of this research would likely begin with understanding why particular communities approach bottom-up methods of peacemaking, and whether negligence by the international system might influence what sort of peacemaking practices are prioritized.

These notions further suggest that social scientists begin to study the issue of subjectivity in processes of peacemaking. In the current socio political domain, conflict resolution specialists generally prefer objectivity. By evaluating international affairs solely from what is objective or can be literally measured, we neglect the reality that individuals address violence in many different ways and often partake in their own processes of personal healing. Even if critics

consider these actions imperfect or incomplete, this research suggests that they are nevertheless utilized and should be taken seriously.

In the meantime, specialists in conflict resolution should be encouraging both local communities and states to explore methods of creative conflict resolution. It also requires a conscious effort to prioritize the importance of the creative act in a world that is increasingly becoming more technologically and scientifically dependent. Moreover, this work could lead to a refined definition of peace, one that concerns the more emotional and psychological well-being of individuals, as opposed to solely the security of nations. Much of this work fundamentally begins with broader, socio economic issues, as in access to education and funding for the arts. Simply put, one is not going to practice creative conflict resolution, if they do not know it exists. To return to Shank & Schirch's point, "the arts are powerful" simply does not do justice to what art, and in this case poetry, are capable of. A poetry of peace, "like the peace movement that it anticipates, reflects, and argues with—is part of a larger human conversation about the possibility of a more just and pacific system of social and ecological relations" (Poetry Foundation, 2018).

I would like to end this paper with a story. During the Arab Spring protests of 2011, a Syrian poet named Ibrahim Qashoush rose to popularity. Qashoush, who was nicknamed the "nightingale of the revolution" wrote both poetry and music criticizing the Bashar al-Assad regime. One of his poems, "Syria is Longing for Freedom" became a common chant at protests:

[...] When we demanded freedom
They called us terrorists
When we demanded our rights back
They called us fundamentalists...

It is written on our national flag that
Bashar has betrayed the nation

It is written on our flag that
Our aim is bring the regime down[...]

[...]Death rather than humiliation
Syria is looking for freedom!

Tr. Ghias Aljundi

Shortly after he began receiving national recognition, Qashoush was found murdered in the summer of 2011, by way of removing his vocal chords. No perpetrator was ever confirmed, but Bashar al-Assad's regime is of primary suspicion.

While I am aware that at first intake, poetry might seem very arbitrary or a rather passive act of resistance, Ibrahim's story reminds us how in many places around the world poetry is a political act with quite literally the severest of consequences. Despite the advancement of modern weaponry and the disturbing practices of twenty-first century violence, speaking truth to power still maintains its place as one of the strongest forces we have to encourage social change and bring about peace. The ability to use one's voice still alarms even the biggest perpetrators of violence...and if one poet, can frighten even the cruelest of dictators, imagine what thousands might do.

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