

A Reading Model in Positive Discourse Analysis of World Literature for Sustainable Peacebuilding

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Abstract

In a world ridden with “direct, structural and cultural violence” (Galtung & Fischer, 1973), education’s role in alleviating conflict has never been more critical. Peace education offers a systemic-systematic pathway to engage in sustainable ways of transforming individuals into ethical inhabitants of a strained planet. This paper delineates the way Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) of world literature can enable Critical Peace Education (CPE) as curricular-pedagogical praxis. Literary humanistic inquiry presents a powerful approach to peacebuilding by fostering affective, ideological and ethical engagement with the realities around us through its multidimensional representation of conflict. Strengthening critical reading and interpretive competences enables holistic evidence-based interrogation of structural and cultural conflicts. World literature, characterised by globalisation and cosmopolitanism (Damrosch, 2003), organically disrupts generalised discourses on conflict and peace, emphasising their multicultural, multiethnic and pluralistic episteme through commentaries. Reading world literature therefore builds ethico-political intercultural competence and global citizenship, with PDA offering a “counter-hegemonic” pedagogical pathway to create discerning readers of the world through the word (Freire & Slover, 1983). Situating the disciplinary focus of peacebuilding within world literature, I present a reading model with PDA as an interpretive methodology to achieve CPE in adaptive, locally sensitive ways, mapping it to Monisha Bajaj’s four coordinates of CPE that build idealistic-ideological-politicisational-intellectual competencies (Haavelsrud, as cited in Bajaj, 2008). I conclude with a reading model based on PDA for CPE and comment on the normative, aesthetic and ideological pathways as three interconnected aspects that reading world literature can achieve as a pedagogy of peace.

Keywords: world literature, critical peace education, positive discourse analysis, peacebuilding

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Introduction

Peace studies as an academic discipline emerged in the wake of the second World War, with an emphasis on understanding war, disarmament and armed conflict. Subsequently, the discipline has expanded in its scope to a consideration of peace in civil society, tapping into discourses of human rights, justice and sustainability. Education is one of the tools to ensure sustainable peacebuilding. In this paper, I outline select theoretical frameworks that can shape the understanding of peace, focusing in particular on two peace theorists who laid the foundations of the discipline. I then discuss the imagination of critical peace education as a praxis that is informed by the philosophy of these theorists. This is advanced to a specific discussion in the literary humanities and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) as a critical reading model that can be mobilised in the (world literature) classroom for interpretation of literary works as a peacebuilding praxis. I conclude by reflecting on the value of this praxis for sustainable peacebuilding.

Understanding Peace and Peacebuilding

Peace studies as a field of inquiry has its formal origins in the work and praxis of the Norwegian, Johan Galtung, who systematically theorised on the typologies of violence and proposed models and tools for promoting peace. Galtung's formulations placed the typologies of peace and conflict under three broad categories – “direct”, “structural” and “cultural” (Galtung & Fischer, 1973, pp. 35–36). For Galtung, these categories helped to construct a negative peace, which was seen as an absence of conflict. Galtung proposed, though, that a more sustainable approach was that of positive peace built on principles of dialogue that are proactive and constructive rather than preventive, in order to foster harmony.

Understanding the types of violence and conflict is important in visualising positive peace. Direct conflict, for Galtung, involves armed repression, killing, maiming and other acts of destruction that are visible and reprehensible. Structural violence, by contrast, comes with ideological control and exploitation, fragmentation, segregation and penetration, where civic bodies, socio-cultural structures of knowledge, and truth frameworks channelise and control human life. Cultural violence, for Galtung, is the most subtle and the most pervasive because it works through social and cultural systems, beliefs and worldviews. Cultural violence is hegemonic and therefore requires a continuous critical engagement for its redressal (Galtung & Fischer, 1973). Possibilities of peace, social and ecological justice are most feasible when they address cultural violence and conflict to envision sustainable solutions that transform thoughts, beliefs, identities and dispositions. Galtung developed several tools that, as a diplomat, he used to negotiate (armed) conflict between parties at diplomatic levels, the most notable being the TRANSCEND approach. He identified communication as a critical tool for ensuring long term sustainable peace, which, he claimed, is impossible to achieve in the event of a breakdown of communication. Keeping channels of dialogue open and alive, alone, can ensure sustained peace and harmony.

The emphasis on cultural conflict and communication was highlighted by Betty Reardon as well, who, like Galtung, worked towards defining, contextualising and enabling long term peace. Reardon's work evolved in the specific context of gender and human rights. Reardon emphasised ways of empowering women to deal with conflict of various kinds, the most debilitating being cultural conflict within patriarchy. For Reardon, it was imperative to view peace as the preservation of human dignity, agency and empowerment that are essential human rights. Her development of a 7R model – Reflection/Reflective Listening, Responsibility (for

and to), Risk taking (risk perceptions of how we live and perceive ourselves and the world), Reconciliation, Recovery, Reconstruction (envisioning, imaging modeling) and Reverence – was an output of this belief where each R informs human action and can lead to respect and reverence for life in all forms (Reardon & Snauwaert, 2015). This emphasis on agency and empowerment guided by ethical standpoints takes on additional significance within discourses on peacebuilding, a concept that Galtung proposed in the context of diplomatic and international relations to contain (armed) conflict. Peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding emerge as three arms along which conflict can be countered (Galtung & Fischer, 1973). Of these, peacekeeping and peacemaking carry notes of prevention and protection, while peacebuilding carries an implicit message of collaboration, positive peace and agency that is organically derived from sites of conflict. Peacebuilding as a discourse presents possibilities for imagining and mobilising action that is community-based and community-driven. Along a spectrum of strategies for peacebuilding that include armed interventions to curb direct violence at one end of the spectrum, to dialogue and mediation at the other end, the most desirable peacebuilding praxis is communication. Communication has the potential to negotiate, identify points of discord and address them continually. Peacebuilding then posits the achievement of peace as a process, rather than viewing it as a product, and emphasises communities taking ownership of peacebuilding that would be adaptable to their needs and realities (Coning, 2018).

In recent years, peace studies and peacebuilding has expanded in scope, informed by movements in academia on critical race and ethnicity, critical gender, globalisation, new aesthetics, critical media and more recently, the environmental humanities. These theories focus on systems and structures of control, regulation and oppression that eschew agency and outline the many ways in which individuals/groups are targets of oppression, violence and conflict. Identity, spatio-temporal positioning, nationalities and socio-economic cultural orientations become some ways in which structural and cultural violence manifest, which critical theories unpack systematically. Peace studies has, therefore, taken on a modification in its nomenclature, adopting “critical” peace as its new direction. The critical aspect, in its turn, focuses on interrogating construction of truths and power that play out through political discourses, and repositioning human subjectivities and standpoints. There is, then, a need for sustained “difficult dialogues” (Trifonas & Wright, 2013, xv) on the constantly evolving and morphing forms of conflict in everyday experience that become the core of effective communication for peacebuilding. It is within this context that education has a central role to play in sustainable peacebuilding.

Critical Peace Education

Scholar and peace educator Monisha Bajaj’s theorising about critical peace education offers a pertinent lens to understand and visualise the role of education for sustainable and “adaptive peacebuilding” (Coning, 2018). Critical peace education, for Bajaj, must create awareness of socio-cultural inequities and sensitise us to the many ways in which they create hierarchical structures of power and control. Bajaj cites four approaches to peace education – the idealistic, the intellectual, the ideological and the politicisational – that lend different dimensions to its praxis. The idealistic works with theories of the ought, where the emphasis of study is on universal notions to problems and solutions rather than their societal transactions. The intellectual approach looks at an academic study of peace to build knowledge among learners. The ideological approach is rooted in a neo-Marxist perspective to schooling, where educational spaces are seen as sites for reproducing dominant ideologies. The fourth politicisation approach believes that education has a role to play in transforming reality and

building peace through concrete action (Haavelsrud, as cited in Bajaj, 2008). Although the approaches signpost different pathways to peacebuilding, Bajaj indicates the way critical peace education enables a critical construction, reflection and dissemination of knowledge about societies and cultures. Critical peace education, as praxis, is an intentional act that can enable sustainable societies by knowledge building, working with learners, critiquing curricular and educational aims and goals and approaching schools as Althusserian ISAs. Critical peace education is therefore aptly positioned to interrogate structures of knowledge and control by fostering critical dispositions in learners towards their surroundings and supporting difficult dialogues around direct, structural and cultural violence. These difficult dialogues would entail honest engagement with issues of conflict to better understand systems of power and control. It is within this context that we can locate the teaching and learning of literature as a site of peacebuilding.

Literature and Critical Peace Education

As a core discipline in the humanities, literary studies address all four approaches to critical peace education articulated by Bajaj. Good literary works are aesthetic pieces and works of art that comment critically on social and cultural structures, present normative frameworks, hold mirrors up to society and offer philosophical reflections on states of being (Showalter, 2003). While late 19th and early 20th century liberal humanist traditions in literary studies held it as canons and moral lodestones in culture, the influence of critical theory on the literary humanities from the 1990s enabled interdisciplinarity, highlighting the instability of language and identities, and the fluid and political nature of reality (Barry, 2009). The turn of the century, in the meantime, re-introduced affect as an integral part of literary studies that negotiates ideological critique with empathy and critical feeling (di Leo, 2023; Reber, 2016). Literary humanities then occupy a unique position of connection with readers because of their aesthetic and ideological qualities (Showalter, 2003). As communicative discourses in multimodal forms and genres, literature captures everyday experiences through creative expression. It “defamiliari[z]es” (Shklovsky, 1917, p. 16) the ordinary by aestheticising social and cultural experiences, making us view our daily lives with a fresh eye. Good literary works are structured around conflicts that place actions and enactment within critical perspectives. Thematically, literary works address a range of issues and contexts, which include postcolonial experiences, gender and queer theory, globalisation, neo imperialism, climate change, ecology and cultural studies (di Leo, 2023). Reading and teaching literature then has a powerful impact on not merely building ideal worlds as utopias but also constructing intellectual commentary, ideological reflections and ethical standpoints that function dialogically to reflect on the imperfect realities we inhabit. Feminist and literary critic Elaine Showalter has proposed in this regard that literature bears the moral responsibility of helping us cope during dark times and navigating discourses around difficult themes like war, death, self harm, violence etc. (Showalter, 2003) Good literature is non-didactic and teaches tolerance, acceptance, respect for human and environmental rights and resilience that become values integral to fostering long term peace. Within the context of (critical) curriculum studies, these can be mobilised through the choice of content, pedagogical praxis, dialogue and self exploration within the classroom (Malewski, 2010).

The notion of representationalism is a significant element to factor in this argument. Representation works with several meanings simultaneously. One understanding of representation is to stand in, or substitute for something. This is often accompanied by political connotations, wherein a representative “speaks” for another. A consequence of this stand-in is that the resulting “representation” is both reliable and partial. As a stand-in, the representative

speaks with authority for the substitute but also presents a shadow of a perspective because it is a mirroring or reflection of the original experience. A second related meaning shows representation as a re-presentation. In this scenario, the re-presentation can be a transformed version of reality or perspective. The causes for this re-presentation could be aesthetic or ideological. It however works with the self-consciousness that it is a reflection and transformed depiction of reality and therefore makes no claims to factuality. A final perspective that representation embodies is that it shows, rather than tells, us about reality. This presentation, borrowing from visual discourse, operates as a visualising technique to help us get an image of the canvas of ideas.

These ideas find echoes in concurrent formulations of world literature that offer a robust entrypoint into the convergence of these perspectives in a literature classroom. World literature as theorised by David Damrosch in his earliest formulations lists it as a discourse and a methodology. As a discourse, world literature evokes principles of cosmopolitanism, based on syncretism, plurality and polyphony that aspire for inclusivity (Damrosch, 2003). As a methodology, world literature constructs a way of reading and meaning making that brings together translations across space, time and culture. In contexts of syncretism, polyphony and plurality, however, conflict between perspectives becomes inevitable. World literature is then a principled approach to engaging with the world, its social and cultural realities, and the conflicts that arise therein through their creative representations. World literature also creates space for connecting values and realities across cultures, recognising comparable elements alongside their divergent means of unfolding representations. Reading (about) cultures implies a critical engagement with processes, ideological and hegemonic structures, and the corresponding conflicts that emerge with diversity and heterogeneity. In its scope, reading world literature offers a potential pathway to better understand structural and cultural aspects of violence/conflict through their thematic and representational aspects that are pluralistic, discursive and contextualised in experience.

Models for Supporting Peace Education: The Hermeneutic Circle and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

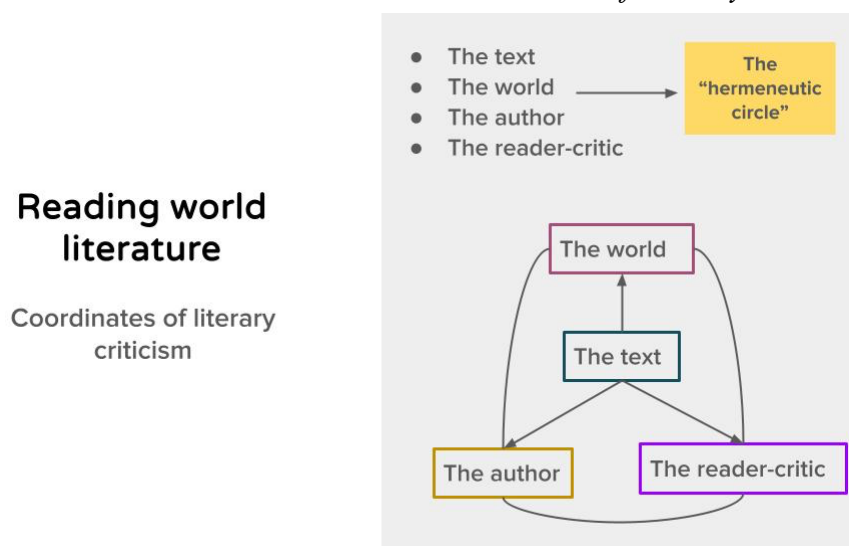
Several models of meaning-making exist across multidisciplinary domains that address some of the objectives of peace education in their distinct ways. In this section, I source two such models from the literary and critical humanities that talk to the needs of critical peace within educational contexts. I then present a synthesised model that captures the core elements of each practice that can promote an evidence-based reading process for peace education. This model is also refined through this author's own practice of using these reading models in her classroom over the last decade as a humanities, language and literature educator.

The Hermeneutic Circle

The figure below presents the coordinates of literary criticism proposed by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp* (1953) and that remains a popular reading model in literary studies.

Figure 1

The Hermeneutic Circle – M. H. Abrams' Coordinates of Literary Criticism



The four coordinates depict one form of reading that draws from established traditions of literary criticism. The central coordinate – the text – is the heart of the reading process. Close reading of texts draws on Russian Formalist traditions of stylistic analysis as well as the New Criticism and formalist traditions of reading. These traditions proposed that meaning resides within the words on the page and they considered speculative interpretation and reading beyond the work fallacious acts of meaning making. Engaging with the prose, poetic components and structural elements of the text is sufficient to infer the meaning of the work. The latter half of the 20th century however presented other ways of reading, influenced by postmodernist philosophies, critical theories and cultural studies, thereby adding new dimensions to the idea of the text as a mirror/*mimesis* of the world as originally framed by Abrams. Contextual reading arose through a recognition of the universe or world as a source of theme as well as the material site of production, circulation, consumption and interpretation of the text. Good literary works are structured around conflicts that place actions and enactment within critical perspectives that are historically and culturally determined (Veeser, 1994). Thematically, literary works address a range of issues and contexts, which include postcolonial experiences, gender and queer theory, globalisation, neo imperialism, climate change, ecology and cultural studies (di Leo, 2023). The contextual framing highlights these aspects in the act of reading the work, adding new dimensions of understanding to the positioning of the work as commentaries, judgments, evaluations or ironic reflections of/on the universe (Anker & Felski, 2017; Chatman, 1978). The author as the third coordinate enables us to situate them as creative beings as well as ideologues who have something to communicate. Reading texts within the larger body of works by the author allows for engagement with writerly discourse, their styles, their thoughts and their positionality with respect to the themes they write about. A similar approach to the reader-audience as a critic allows us to view reading as a reflective act and the audience (which is us) also as approaching the text through pre-established presentist standpoints. In the two latter instances, there is the danger of bias, but reader-response and presentism requires us to be aware of these biases and read the text with critical awareness of our preconceived notions. Constantly revisiting the text and context to reassess authorial and audience standpoints enables a systematic self-reflexive and evidence-based mode of reading.

Reading through the hermeneutic circle is, thereby, a recursive dialogic one whereby ideas from each coordinate is synthesised to compose holistic, situated and scoped interpretations of the themes in the text.

Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA)

Martin and Rose's PDA offers another model of analysis and interpretation of discourses within multimodal texts, elaborated in *Working with Discourse* (2007). This approach is rooted in functional linguistics and links discourse with social activity through grammar. PDA works through three metafunctions of language as discourse. The first is interpersonal, where we enact our social relations. The second is ideational where we represent our relationships to each other. The third is textual, which helps us organise our interactions and representations as meaningful texts (Martin & Rose, 2007). PDA provides a useful analytical foothold in the process of reading through the hermeneutic circle, where authorial discourse, the world and the reader-critic situate the discursive text within these three frames for intentional reading.

A Reading Model for Critical Peace Education

A synthesis of the hermeneutic circle and PDA with the four approaches to CPE – intellectual, idealistic, ideological and politicisational – that act as value-based frames in reading can help a world literature classroom operate as a site for sustainable peacebuilding through ESD. The reading model below presents a visualisation of this synthesis and reading praxis.

Figure 2

A Reading Model in PDA for CPE

A Reading Model for CPE



The core of the reading model lies in the essence of world literature as not just a discipline but a Discourse that combines stylistics and linguistic expression with representations of social reality. World literature, which is a mode of reading and circulation, organically draws on the influences of international economic and cultural capital in its production. This circulation is therefore also a dynamic cosmopolitan movement of ideas, aesthetics and socio-cultural discourses on normative, ideological and political thought. Discourse in and of world literature in the context of education and peace can be approached initially through two arms of interpretation – the rhetorical and the methodological.

1. *Discourse as rhetoric*: This aspect comprises all the rhetorical strategies in creative and cultural expression, which include the expository, the descriptive, the narrative, the argumentative and the persuasive rhetorics, each of which brings its unique representational discourse to bear on depictions of reality in language. From depicting factual information to narrativising events for cause and effect, detailed descriptions for immersive understanding of the theme and essays that debate and take stands on issues, the rhetorical modes of representation enable diverse ways of relating to the world through the word.
2. *Discourse as methodology*: This aspect derives from Damrosch et al's debates on the poetics and politics of doing world literature. As a mode of reading, the circulation and engagement with world literature rests in methods of interpretation. Methodology as an interpretive discourse is therefore necessary for meaning making. In this regard, the "hermeneutic circle" that entails re-reading of works through different lenses that then synthesise meaning making provides pathways to concretise a CPE methodology. Four broad vectors define this hermeneutic circle as they balance the identity of the work with a contextual reading that provides perspective to literary representations of reality. The diffusive vectors of author, genre, literary traditions and cultural contexts that derive from the hermeneutic circle frame world literature as discourse, and situate narratives as creative works within socio-cultural contexts of their productions. Reading is therefore not an unintentional decontextualised act. Rather, it foregrounds the way texts need to be approached as discourses, and the act of reading as a research-based act.

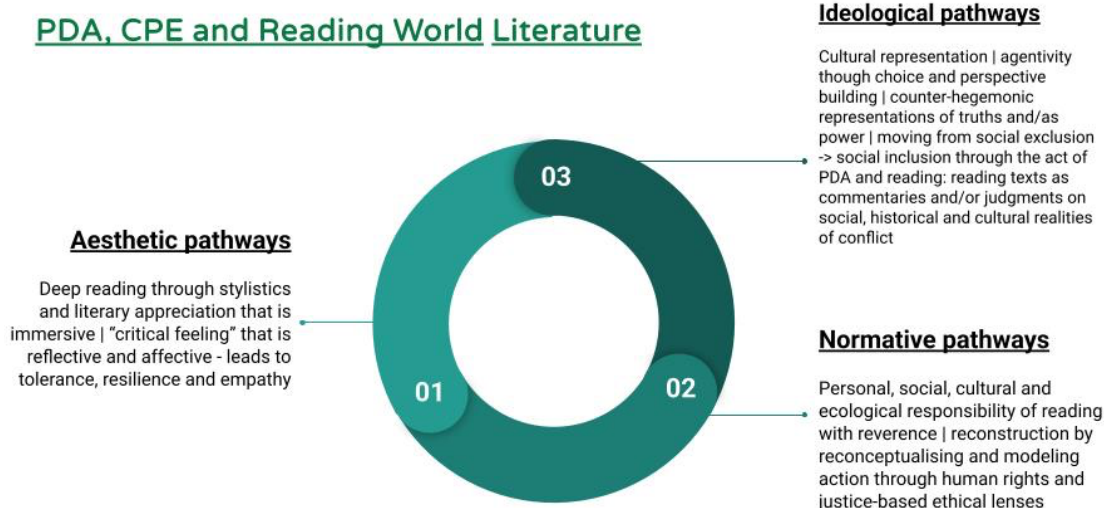
Bajaj's four approaches to CPE discussed earlier operate as values that guide questions along interpersonal, ideational and intertextual lines that PDA evokes as analysis frameworks. The intellectual, ideological, idealistic and politicisational aspects of CPE support the process of PDA whereby the questions that we as readers take to the text, and by extension, the worlds we inhabit help us adopt ethical standpoints towards our reading praxis. Reading the text, for instance, by asking who speaks, whose perspectives are represented and whose are re-presented in the text, what the effects of these re/presentations, how are actions constructed, what kinds of knowledge do these constructs reveal and what does the work problematise can spotlight the "structural" and "cultural" attributes of the conflict depicted in the works. Similarly, examining what the dominant genre is and what literary traditions inform the creative representation provide schemas within which textual analysis situates itself. Recognising therefore that texts are not straightforward narratives but intentional motivated acts of production is an important first step in peacebuilding. The intentionality of creative representations helps us understand the discursive nature of human experiences, and initiates readers into the process of Trifonas and Wright's "difficult dialogues" (Trifonas & Wright, 2013, xv) as the characteristic of any communication that must lead to sustainable peacebuilding. The difficulty of engaging in these dialogues with the text, it should be noted, can arise equally from the thematic construct of texts dealing with conflicts, as well as recognising biases and our own positioning within these conflicts as sometimes internalised values and perceptions that require honest re-evaluation and reconstruction (Verma, 2017). The difficult dialogues rest, in this case, both within and without, and well written works of literature initiate us into this journey of understanding ourselves and the world around us.

PDA, CPE and Reading World Literature: Pathways to a Pedagogy of Peace

The reading model in Figure 2 signposts three pathways through which a combination of positive discourse analysis of world literature and CPE can create sustainable peacebuilding praxis. These are interconnected pathways that inform each other.

Figure 3

Pathways to CPE Through a PDA of World Literature



The scope of PDA, CPE and world literature indicate that sustainable peacebuilding can emerge through aesthetic pathways, ideological pathways and normative pathways. Creative representations are aesthetic acts. Principles of creativity, art and beauty embody an epistemic logic that is distinctly their own, and that work with critical feeling (Reber, 2016) alongside critical thinking. Philosophies of aesthetics and representation establish that the evocative nature of art embodied through rhetoric as one representational element evokes affective responses and feelings that are also sites of knowledge formation that derive from long and rich literary-cultural traditions. Literary appreciation as an aesthetic act provides one path to peacebuilding when it requires humility, empathy building, tolerance, acceptance and resilience in the act of evidence-based meaning making.

Ideological pathways become a second avenue to approach peacebuilding through CPE when PDA of world literature delineates the cultural and ideological nature of representations of social reality and conflict. Recognising the constructed nature of truths through and within language and its hegemonic nature is an important flagging point in reflective reading and composing critical commentaries on themes. This aligns organically with the prevalence of structural and cultural violence conceptualised by Galtung as core challenges to sustainable peacebuilding. They also comprise the first step to positive peace.

Normative pathways are, in this respect, the most urgent approach to positive peace. The identity of literary discourse as philosophy that is often rooted in moral and ethical dilemmas that plots and characters delineate, mirror corresponding choices in life. Literature acts as a space for contemplation and reflection on values, norms and principles of a just life in society and on the planet. As normative pathways, literary discourse and its analysis evoke Reardon's

7Rs and Galtung's requirements of positive peace that is guided by reverence, responsibility towards and respectful listening to voices around us. Difficult dialogues that fold these into the reading model for CPE through the hermeneutic circle can thereby create spaces for reflection and, by extension, positive action towards sustainable peacebuilding.

Some Concluding Reflections

If peace is located within ethical decisions, standpoints and actions that are sustained and continuous, then normativity that is informed by social and ecological justice, respect and reverence for human and planetary rights, and acceptance are necessary lenses to achieve CPE. Literature that delineates these through its thematic, non-didactic and discursive concerns are aptly positioned to construct normative, ideological positions through aesthetic representations. These may draw equally and dialogically on liberal humanist and critical theoretical perspectives to project a crisis critique (Barry, 2009) through imaginations of ideal societies and cultures, and of positive peace through education.

Education has the power to transform thoughts and, by extension, human actions. The aesthetic, ideological and normative pathways that the reading model provides show three trajectories through which affective and aesthetic sensibilities, critical insights into structural and epistemic constructions of conflict, and ethical paradigms that inform individual and social decision making as we read about our world can structure educational praxis as systematic processes of evidence-based inquiry. Reading as a formalised, intentional, cultivated act driven by the analysis of rhetorical discourses presents one pathway to achieve this transformation for sustainable peace.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

The author declares that no AI or AI-assisted technologies have been used to generate, refine, or correct the content in the manuscript. The ideas, design, procedures, findings, analyses, and discussion are originally written and derived from careful and systematic conduct of the research.

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