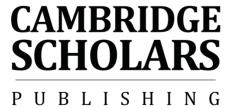# Thinking and Practicing Reconciliation

Thinking and Practicing Reconciliation: Teaching and Learning through Literary Responses to Conflict

Edited by

Leo W. Riegert, Jr., Jill Scott and Jack Shuler

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

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Part III: Practice

FOREWORD

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It is a hot Mississippi summer day. Twenty-eight students, black and white, from across the state are gathered on the University of Mississippi campus for the Summer Youth Institute (SYI).

Known by many as "Ole Miss," a moniker that harkens to its establishment as the state's flagship university, an institution founded to teach the ideology of slavery to its future leaders, the University of Mississippi is a site of conflict and of efforts to reconcile beyond its painful history. SYI is designed to make use of that historical context, convening students to address issues of racism and structural inequities in order to remediate them.

Many of the students at SYI come from segregated public high schools. The divisions are created now by residential segregation and custom rather than by law. But they are segregated just the same.

The purpose of the camp is to create a safe space for learning about historic divisions in the state as well as the ways in which ordinary people have resisted those separations and worked to build bridges for a better Mississippi. Through a ropes course and a scavenger hunt, the students forge bonds and create a sense of team unity. Next, the students are assigned into seven groups of four students each to research and creatively present the life of an overlooked civil-rights figure from Mississippi. For the first time, these students begin to see Mississippi not simply as a place of pain and strife based on race but as a place of hope and courage and accomplishment.

Using stories from a variety of cultures, as well as poems and songs, we continue through SYI to create a circle of trust in which the students get to know each other more deeply. With that foundation of new relationships, as well as some initial understanding of the history of the state, we introduce them to an exercise called the "Race for Life."[i]

The game is deceptively simple: the students all begin on the same "starting line" and are asked to take steps forward or backward, depending

on their answers to certain questions: "How many books are in your home?" "Have you ever been followed by security in a store?" "Has anyone in your family received public assistance?" "Have you ever been discouraged from taking a class or applying for a job because of your gender or race?"

As the exercise progresses, the students who generally move forward the fastest are white and male. Just behind them are white females. The students who stay behind and move backwards are those identified as ethnic, with the darker-skinned African American males the farthest back.

After the exercise, counselors and students gather in a circle to process what they observed. Many feel angry at the unfairness of their circumstances. Others feel guilty that they have benefited from privilege they did not earn. A lot of them feel shame, a sense that their classmates might now think less of them.

Over time, the students begin to see the larger structures that have been put in place to reinforce such inequities. They become resolved to challenge that system; a prime motivator to their determination is the fact that they have become friends and want all of society's opportunities to be available to all of them.

These students are each now embarked upon a local community project that they designed to address these issues in their hometowns; they have asked that we design a course that will allow them to delve deeper into the study of conflict and conflict transformation, including learning of other global contexts and struggles.

It is easy, of course, to be reminded of another generation of young people who came to Mississippi to work with local leaders to challenge Jim Crow. And there are footprints of those earlier leaders in the lives and passion of these students today. But the world they face now is infinitely more complicated, with information being circulated at the speed of sound through new technology. In the midst of chaotic and often conflicting messages about how to live a meaningful life, it is challenging for our students to know how to move forward in ways that are respectful and effective. And yet they possess a deep desire to make their worlds a better place.

This anecdote speaks to the motives behind the essays gathered here. They are part of a larger vision to provide college-aged learners and their instructors with the tools to do the work of "thinking and practicing reconciliation." It is this hunger of our students to create a brighter future for all of us, using all possible tools for critical thinking and learning, which this work attempts to address. It is our obligation as educators and our hope for a just and reconciled world to support their journey.

Notes

[i] A fuller description of this activity, including a lengthy list of questions, may be found at the following website: "Horatio Alger Exercise" (*campusministry.com*, 1 Nov. 2007, Web, Accessed 18 Feb. 2013). The site notes that this is an adaptation by Ellen Bettmann of an activity developed by Martin Cano, Valerie Tulier, and Ruch Kacz of "A World of Difference."

PREFACE

LEO W. RIEGERT JR., JILL SCOTT
AND JACK SHULER

The two central claims of *Thinking and Practicing Reconciliation* are that literary representations of conflict offer important insights into processes of resolution and practices of reconciliation, and that it is crucial to bring these debates into the post-secondary classroom. As literary-studies researchers who care passionately about the pursuit of better outcomes to conflict, the authors of this anthology believe that teaching these topics in deliberate and engaged ways is the best approach to maximize the impact of our work. To that end, the essays collected here aim to help teachers think deeply about the ways in which we can productively integrate literature on/as reconciliation into our curricula. Until recently, scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education has not been widely accepted as equal to research in other fields. This volume seeks to establish that serious analysis of pedagogical practices is not only a worthy and legitimate academic pursuit, but also that it is crucial to our professional development as researcher-educators.

In the past few decades, reconciliation has become a political, social, and sometimes personal project. In places as diverse as South Africa, Northern Ireland, Argentina, Canada and Mississippi, communities and governments have worked together to address past human-rights injustices through hearings, dialogues, and various other forums. In some cases, but not all, participants have been given legal amnesty for testifying about their participation in these abuses. These models of Restorative and Transitional Justice present an alternative to the retributive "eye for an eye" model and are viewed by many as a more productive means of addressing large-scale wrongdoings of the past. But do they really work? The jury is still out on the effectiveness of quasi-judicial processes in many of the places where reconciliation efforts have been made. Since the early 1990s, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the dismantling of South African apartheid, and the aftermath of violent ethnic conflicts in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland, scholars across

the globe have taken up this question. Indeed, researchers across the humanities and social sciences have turned their attention to the development of peace processes, power sharing, transitional and restorative justice, and quasi-judicial processes such as truth commissions. The essays collected here address reconciliation and other forms of conflict resolution as they are portrayed in literary texts from many of these regions.

Thinking and Practicing Reconciliation was inspired by a panel discussion at the 2009 meeting of the Northeast Modern Language Association in Boston. The size and interest of the audience was our first indication that there is a great deal of interest in the role of reconciliation in creative literature. The discussions among panelists and members of the audience centered largely on theoretical frameworks of forgiveness and reconciliation in Western humanist traditions. While such debates provide much-needed clarification of models and intellectual traditions, this volume seeks to enrich the conversation through a greater focus on pedagogical practices as they unfold in college classrooms. In recent years writers from a wide variety of disciplines have explored this trope using the tools of literary analysis. Others have addressed the relationship between literature and human-rights discourse in general. Still other critics are concerned with identifying specific pedagogies of reconciliation and instructing students in post-conflict areas to engage in conciliatory practices.

The scholarly output has become so vast that several sub-disciplines have now emerged, including Peace Studies, Conflict Studies, Reconciliation Studies, and Trauma Studies. In the post-secondary landscape, national security has also become a powerful buzzword, and Security Studies are taking center stage at our institutions. The discipline of Literary Studies has been relatively late in responding to post-conflict frameworks, however, and there has been even less substantive scholarship that addresses the teaching and learning of reconciliation and resolution at the post-secondary level.

Thinking and Practicing Reconciliation seeks to remedy both of these gaps in scholarship. The essays in this volume take seriously both the academic study of literature dealing with the aftermath of gross human-rights violations and the teaching of this literature. The current generation of college-aged students is deeply affected by the proximity of violence in our global world. This collection recognizes educators' responsibility to enable future generations to analyze conflict—whether local or global—and participate in constructive discourses of resolution. We bring together instructor-critics from a variety of disciplines, each of whom discusses a

particular aspect of reconciliation, including US slavery, the Holocaust, apartheid South Africa, post-genocide Rwanda, and ancient Greece. The essays investigate not just how literature approaches the thorny issue of reconciliation but also how the often-contradictory demands of this literature confront the unambiguous demand for ethical action provoked by ultimate horrors. In some cases, literary texts themselves demonstrate the ambiguities of resolution or point to ways forward for the work of reconciliation. In other cases, it is the pedagogical approach the instructor brings to the text which combines the theory and practice of reconciliation.

Because literary texts are inherently creative, they serve as platforms to explore responses to conflict. When students respond critically and creatively to these texts, they also learn to engage critically and creatively with conflict, whether close at hand or at a distance. At a time when large-scale conflict would seem to be on the rise—witness the violent uprisings during and in the wake of the Arab Spring or the protests in response to the economic collapse of Greece—it is all the more important to help students develop a critical vocabulary and theoretical framework to be able to understand and cope with conflict. While security and defense will continue to be indispensable fields of study in our current age of conflict, it is also important to offer students alternative lenses, including discourses of reconciliation and conflict resolution. The fictional worlds found in literary texts offer students the opportunity to articulate their private anxieties around conflict and to explore alternative responses, be they social, political, military, or otherwise. Interpreting texts provides students with the analytical skills to address complex problems. Furthermore, holding multiple—and even contradictory—interpretations simultaneously enables us to view conflict from multiple positions, a skill required for successful conflict mediation.

The contributors to this volume analyze texts written in response to prolonged violence and historical oppression on five continents. They consider a wide variety of genres, including memoir, historical fiction, literary non-fiction, classical epic, novel, poetry, and journalism. Recent theoretical and literary approaches to the aftermaths of large-scale atrocity typically insist on the impossibility of any ultimate "truth and reconciliation." While many of our contributors acknowledge the value of open-endedness, their larger goal is to bring students to an open-ended practice, not just to "understand" reconciliation intellectually as ongoing, but also to engage in it as such. By showing how literature can play an "active" role in political and social reconciliation, this book also participates in current debates about the meaning and role of the humanities in higher education.

The volume divides literary representations of reconciliation into three categories of teaching and learning: theory, reading, and practice. Our larger purpose is to bring these elements into conversation, to connect readers' interpretations of the text, the teacher's engagement with students, and students' engagement with post-conflict reconciliation. Each section and chapter is thus situated within an arc linking the thinking and practicing of reconciliation, and there is often significant overlap between categories.

The "Theory" section of this volume begins with Jill Scott's "The Language of Reconciliation: Evolving Terminology and the Ethics of Teaching," which also serves as an introduction. Scott maps out a conceptual framework of the terminology of peace building and gives some concrete examples of how to introduce these in the classroom. She also shows the limitations of definitions and theory and argues for the constant evolution of the language of reconciliation as an ethical practice of reading, thinking, and teaching. Like Scott's essay, those that follow in the first section outline some of the larger theoretical conundrums presented by the study and teaching of reconciliation. Joy Arbor also examines the limits of the language of reconciliation, as well as those of teaching post-conflict reconciliation and moral engagement in the classroom. Arbor argues for an approach to teaching literature rooted in an interventionist praxis, a set of pedagogical principles informed by the psychological study of genocide and reconciliation. Sarah Gendron's essay on Elie Wiesel's *Night* and André Schwartz-Bart's *The Last of the Just* also draws from the psychological study of genocide, noting the relationship between perceived Holocaust memory "norms" and two very different yet equally paradigmatic Holocaust narratives. In what ways, she asks, do conflicting memories promote or problematize reconciliation? Emil B. Towner suggests that, perhaps, reconciliation begins less with acts of memory but rather with acts of apology. Focusing on post-genocide Rwanda, Towner's essay offers an overview of the practice of apology, how apologies are discussed in the current literature on Rwanda, and how, ultimately, instructors can incorporate these issues in the classroom.

The second section of *Thinking and Practicing* is entitled "Reading" and offers critical analyses of texts from diverse places and time periods. Though the lens of the Australian novel *Landscape of Farewell* by Alex Miller, Sheila Collingwood-Whittick outlines the pitfalls of reconciliation discourse, noting the limits of creative literature as a means of achieving reconciliation. While some Australians perceive a 2008 government apology to Aboriginal Australians as marking a form of closure, others see it as merely the first step in a longer process. Anne Goarzin senses this

"longer process" in the complex expressions of violence in Irish poetry. In the "critical distance" that poetry can produce, Goarzin suggests that poetry subtly dodges the expected competing narratives of radical repression and mythified sacrifice to produce instead a "redressing" discourse. In this sense, Irish poetry of conflict moves towards healing and reconciliation and allows for new readings of history that reach beyond arbitrary myths of the nation and its heroes. For her part, Modhumita Roy shows how South African writer Gillian Slovo's memoir, *Every Secret Thing*, operates within the paradigm endorsed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that revealing is healing. At the same time, however, Roy's discussion of the interplay of individual and collective history shows how *Every Secret Thing* modulates and interrogates the TRC's assumption of *a* truth that can be uncovered. Jean Wilson offers a transition to the last section of this volume, a scholarly reading of the "spectacular reconciliation" of Achilles and Priam at the end of the *Iliad* and a comparison of Homer's use of such spectacle with similarly astonishing scenes in works by the nineteenth-century German writer Heinrich von Kleist. The power of such scenes to disturb and provoke becomes, ultimately, a pedagogical invitation to students to engage in their own literary "peace research."

The essays in the final section, "Practice," provide some practical methods for teaching the literature of reconciliation. The strategies, questions, and exercises which these authors provide for approaching specific texts, as well as discussions of their own experiences in teaching, may serve as models for teachers in similar and other fields of literary studies. Elena M. DeCosta examines the literary rehabilitation of the memory of Pinochet's dictatorship by three Chilean writers, Ariel Dorfman, Isabel Allende, and Marjorie Agos'n, as well as the impact of these writings on the North American student of literature. DeCosta describes strategies that enable instructor and student to collaborate in applying the open-ended questions and narrative strategies posed by these texts to new realities not contained in the literary pieces. In what becomes a classroom investigation of reconciliation after the Rwandan genocide, Catherine T. Nerney first examines with her students the general uses of narrative for the study of forgiveness and reconciliation. She invites students to enter narrative as characters who are themselves questioned and challenged by the events recounted in stories. Nerney then turns to classroom recounting of stories of spectacular reconciliation that she herself heard while visiting Rwanda. In the end, her course becomes a study of human relationships, namely, our capacity to hurt and to heal, to forgive and be forgiven. A monument to the abolition of the Atlantic slave

trade in Amsterdam serves as a touchstone for Jack Shuler's exploration of how students can be made witnesses to historical traumas in an effort to address present-day injustices. Shuler describes how, during a course that "read" the monument in Amsterdam, one of his students had an encounter that brought the complicated truths of America's slaving past to the surface in a very personal way when she was threatened with a lawsuit because of an oral history she recorded. Finally, Leo W. Riegert Jr. examines contemporary German writer Uwe Timm's semi-autobiographical text, *In My Brother's Shadow*, which investigates Timm's family's involvement in the crimes of the Third Reich. Timm's text alternates between two modes of representation, one reconciliatory, one retributive. In so doing, Riegert argues, it becomes an example for the student/reader of how to read the Holocaust in a way that both remembers the past and serves to create a better present and future. Finally, Riegert describes how the use of service-learning in conjunction with courses on the Holocaust mimics the process of dialogue that Timm's text embodies and models.

Ultimately, the essays in this volume chart a course from theory to practice and offer new perspectives on the very human endeavor of storytelling as a way of addressing—and, at least in part, overcoming—human-rights injustices. In their focus on pedagogical strategies and frameworks, the contributions gathered here also demonstrate that, as post-secondary educators, our engagement with students can indeed produce practices of reconciliation that start in the classroom and move beyond it.

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Acknowledgements

PART I:

THEORY

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION:
THE LANGUAGE OF RECONCILIATION;
EVOLVING TERMINOLOGY
AND THE ETHICS OF TEACHING

JILL SCOTT

In recent years, college and university curricula have begun to reflect the growing public interest in processes of reconciliation and transitional justice. Since the 1980s, there have been concerted efforts to acknowledge and think through the complex cultural discourses around the Holocaust and its aftermath, but the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the dissolution of South African apartheid in the mid-nineties ignited widespread interest in processes of reconciliation. In addition to specific programs, such as Trauma Studies, Holocaust Studies, and Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies, a great number of disciplines—from political science and sociology to philosophy and literary studies—have begun to offer courses on these topics. This collective inquiry has led to fruitful debate and reflection, both inside and outside academic institutions.

But questions of terminology and appropriate theoretical frames present a challenge to the study of peace building in literature and culture. Teachers quickly come up against a thorny conundrum: we want to help our students develop a vocabulary around conflict and resolution, so that they can think, speak, and write in articulate ways about interpersonal and political conflicts. Yet we are soon confronted with the reality that, whether we are talking about real-world events or narrative accounts, the nature of conflict and the business of reconciliation are complicated and messy and do not fit easily into tidy definitions or paradigms.

In this essay, I will map out some of the terminology relevant to reconciliation and peace building. I do not provide an exhaustive discussion of these concepts, since the splitting of hairs can get in the way of making useful distinctions.[1] Rather I tease out the relationships between

terms, draw out commonalities and differences, and provide some tips on introducing conceptual frameworks in ways that support student learning. Next, I spend a bit of time on examples where terminology really matters and talk about how to address the discursive construction of reconciliation. But I also show the limitations of definitions and theory—after all, it's important not to clutter up the classroom with big words. Lastly, I argue for the constant evolution of the language of reconciliation as an ethical practice of reading, thinking, and teaching.

Before I go further, I want to say a few words about my own approach to teaching. At the end of the day, my work is less about teaching and more about learning. We often talk about dissolving the teacher/student dichotomy and creating learner-centered environments. But for me, it's all about *learning to learn*. Learning to learn is the most important endeavor in higher education, whether for teachers or students. I am passionate about reconciliation and conflict resolution, but I am more passionate about engaging with students in an ongoing learning opportunity for all of us. The material is important, but I see it as a platform for learning. I also put emphasis on an open learning system, where students learn to be tolerant of difference, to live with ambiguity, and to develop strategies for acknowledging and resolving the conflicts that inevitably arise when we engage passionately with any topic. The conflict-resolution classroom can be a place where product meets process head-on, and where learning becomes a transformational experience.

I take an outcomes-oriented approach to the learning endeavor and so emphasize the development of transferable skills, including critical reading, analysis, interpretation, argumentation, and oral and written expression, but also foster a sense of social responsibility and ethical practices within the classroom and beyond. I encourage students to take risks and to understand that real learning involves stretching beyond our comfort zone, both in terms of how we engage and what we attempt. This also goes for myself as instructor—I consciously choose to teach material that is new to me and about which I do not yet have fully formulated ideas. As teachers, it is tempting to hide behind our knowledge and to use it as a shield—especially terminology—but we also know that real learning happens when we step out from behind the lectern and take risks of our own. Where curiosity meets creativity and cooperation, the results often surpass expectations for all learners, whether teachers or students.

Terminology

How and what terminology to introduce is a key aspect of learning about reconciliation. In *Reconciliation(s): Transitional Justice in Postconflict Societies*, Joanna Quinn makes developing a vocabulary around reconciliation and conflict resolution one of the central goals of the edited volume. She writes that the contributors "all attempt to come to terms with the many-headed beast that is reconciliation" (12). In *Imagining Justice: The Politics of Postcolonial Forgiveness and Reconciliation*, Julie McGonegal also attaches importance to definitions, but she is aware of the limitations of imposed categories:

> Let me note that although my readings attend carefully to the semantic refinements and differences between forgiveness and reconciliation, and an array of related terms such as apology, confession, and reparation, I have found it impossible to treat these concepts as self-contained, isolated, or discrete units of meaning. (18-19)

McGonegal goes on to say that reconciliation and forgiveness are "fundamentally entangled" and that the "globalization and secularization of Judeo-Christian traditions" requires that they be analyzed together with atonement, repentance, expiation, salvation, and transformation (19). My own experience of writing about forgiveness in a literary context confirms this approach. In *A Poetics of Forgiveness*, I write: "There is definitely a place for establishing clear definitions for the vocabulary of resolution, but literature, like life, is often a messy business, and the terms of reference are like moving targets" (3).

Even if we acknowledge the limitations of terminology, we do need a working vocabulary as a place to start. Let's begin then with *reconciliation*. Below are a few examples of definitions.

> The action of restoring estranged people or parties to friendship; the action or an act of bringing a thing or things to agreement, concord, or harmony. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

> Building or rebuilding relationships today that are not haunted by the conflicts and hatreds of yesterday. (Priscilla Hayner, qtd. in Quinn 4)

> Building relationships of trust and cohesion. (Quinn 5)

> Establishing new conditions of interaction—conditions centered on the ideals of negotiation, collaboration, and reciprocity. (McGonegal 33)

> A consensual process in which the "work" of reconciling is not assumed only, or even primarily, by those who have been wronged. (McGonegal 33)
>
> Setting aside of past animosities, and the possibility of former enemies working together in the future. (Hamber and Kelly 287)
>
> Developing a mutual conciliatory accommodation between antagonistic or formerly antagonistic persons or groups. (Priscilla Hayner, qtd. in Hamber and Kelly 287)
>
> A preparedness of people to anticipate a shared future. (Andrew Rigby, qtd. in Hamber and Kelly 287)
>
> The act of two people coming together following separation. (Robert Enright, qtd. in Hamber and Kelly 289)

While there is quite a bit of variation, certain themes do emerge, such as rebuilding relations, establishing trust, and developing a shared future. Fundamentally, reconciliation is future-oriented. This is not to say that the past is not important, but rather that reconciliation is first and foremost about moving forward and that it involves the participation and cooperation of at least two parties. Taking into consideration many perspectives, Hamber and Kelly develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted definition of reconciliation, which involves several stages:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society;
2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past;
3. Building positive relationships;
4. Significant cultural and attitudinal change;
5. Substantial social, economic, and political change. (291-292)

Hamber and Kelly's model refers to restoring social relations in post-conflict situations. However, it can be adapted to address interpersonal conflict. Reconciliation may also involve other elements, such as rehumanizing the "other"; expressions of remorse; providing explanations and establishing the context of a conflict or wrongdoing; finding ways to heal old wounds; respecting mutual difference; and recognizing mutual dependence (296).

    Reconciliation is often a pragmatic response to conflict, a compromise that is of mutual benefit to all parties involved. It is also useful to conceive of reconciliation as a continuum, which spans various stages: agreeing to cease aggression (political or interpersonal); coexisting with little

interaction; working together on mutual projects; building trust and friendship; embracing a shared vision for a better future.

Where reconciliation is primarily future oriented, forgiveness is a response to past actions, which nonetheless impact on the future. Below are some common definitions of *forgiveness*:

> To give up resentment; to pardon an offence . . . or an offender; to make excuse or apology for [something]. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

> To forswear resentment, anger, or other reactions to their having done something that justifies such responses. (*Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*)

> Letting go of resentment for moral reasons, as well as of revenge, without forgetting the wrong that was done, and even in some cases (re)accepting the offender as a friend. (Griswold 40)

> The resolute overcoming of the anger and hatred that are naturally directed towards a person who has done one an unjustified and non-excused moral injury. (Jeffrie Murphy, qtd. in Sarat and Hussain 4)

> An event, a gratuitous gift, and a personal relation with the other. (Vladimir Jankélévitch, qtd. in Sanders 89)

> Pure forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. (Derrida 32)

> Forgiveness is a matter of working over, amending, and overcoming attitudes, and it is a process, not an event. (Govier 43)

Forgiveness is at least as complex as reconciliation. There is general agreement that forgiveness involves letting go of resentment, but there are those who attach a great number of conditions and those who feel it must be given as a free gift. Charles Griswold develops a comprehensive conditional model of forgiveness, which requires that the offender (1) acknowledge responsibility for the wrong; (2) repudiate her deeds; (3) express regret; (4) commit to becoming the sort of person who does not inflict injury; (5) demonstrate that she understands the damage caused; and (6) give some sort of narrative account for how she came to do wrong. In other words, Griswold's version of forgiveness is intimately linked to apology and atonement (49-51).

On the opposite extreme, Jacques Derrida maintains that forgiveness must not have any conditions attached, that it must be a free gift (44). Conditions, exchange, or negotiation contaminate forgiveness with politics, says Derrida, and transform it into reconciliation. Time is also a consideration—some see forgiveness as a promise and a one-time decision

regarding a single wrongdoing in the past, while others see forgiveness as a process with many steps or stages. As with reconciliation, forgiveness too can be seen as a continuum from the awareness of resentment to the desire to be free of this resentment to complete acceptance of the individual. In a religious context, forgiveness is granted by God, a priest, or a pastor, and it may involve atonement, redemption, and salvation. Where reconciliation requires the involvement of two parties, forgiveness can be unilateral, whereby the victim forgives the wrongdoer, or bilateral, whereby the wrongdoer makes amends and the victim forgives. Unlike reconciliation, however, it is not usual to have a third party mediate forgiveness. Also, as I indicate above, where reconciliation is a future-oriented process, forgiveness addresses wrongdoings of the past (although it paves the way for a better future).

The Relationship of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

Forgiveness and reconciliation represent two central categories of conflict resolution, but there is little agreement about which ought to come first or whether they need both be involved. For example, let's say a woman forgives the man who stole her purse, but there is no reconciliation because she has no desire for a friendship or partnership in the future. Conversely, a man who learned about his wife's extramarital affair decides to reconcile for the sake of their children, but he is not ready to forgive her. Forgiveness and reconciliation may go hand in hand, but it is not always the case. Furthermore, there is no definite sequence—forgiveness may precede reconciliation or reconciliation may lead to forgiveness. Finally, where reconciliation is often invoked in political and social contexts as a result of prolonged conflict (groups), forgiveness is often associated with private and interpersonal matters as a response to a specific wrongdoing (individuals).

While there is general agreement that reconciliation and forgiveness are positive responses to conflict, neither will be successful if there is any hint of coercion. Such processes require that active conflict have ceased, and it is wise to wait until tempers have cooled. Moreover, resolution can be hindered by any stated expectation of reconciliation or forgiveness. While mediation can be very effective to resolve specific misunderstandings, reconciliation is at its best when it unfolds as an organic process that takes many forms—it may for example arise without ever speaking about the particular conflict in question. In fact, some experts in the field of conflict resolution suggest that it is unwise to bring parties together with the aim of

forgiveness or reconciliation and that using these words may put too much pressure on parties involved (Peterson Armour and Umbreit 493).

One very effective way of coming to a mutually beneficial resolution is to recognize, share, and celebrate common values. An example of this was the 2010 Vancouver Winter Olympics, which ended up building positive relations between English Canada and Quebec. For decades, there has been a strong separatist movement in Quebec, but when the Canadian men's hockey team was involved in a gold-medal match against the United States, Québécois and English Canadians found themselves cheering for the same side, united by their shared passion for ice hockey. In another scenario, in the summer of 2010 Pakistan experienced such intense flooding that it was declared a natural disaster. Sandwiched between Afghanistan and India—with tensions on either side—Pakistan nonetheless received aid from both countries. People from all sides worked together to build dikes, ensure access to emergency medical services, and provide famine relief. The shared value of humanity and human lives can lead to surprising resolutions. That said, it is best not to wait for a crisis to address conflict. Where tension is rising in a family, for example, planning a fun activity—a trip or a special outing—may be an important supplement to psychotherapy. Where there is abuse, violence, or serious dysfunction, however, professional intervention is indispensable.

When it comes to processes of conflict resolution, there are differing views on the issue of process and sequence. For example, Veerle Opgenhaffen and Mark Freeman see reconciliation as the overarching theme, with repentance, acknowledgement, and forgiveness as critical components thereof (Quinn 9). Quinn sees "social healing" as the core process, and includes acknowledgement, forgiveness, social trust, democracy, and reconciliation as key elements. Quinn goes on to say that reconciliation might be more appropriately called "social cohesion" (10). For his part, Stephanus du Toit points to tensions between political discourses of human rights and more holistic versions of reconciliation (Quinn 11). Brandon Hamber and Gráinn Kelly see reconciliation as the key word, which includes elements of shared vision, acknowledgement, the building of relationships, and cultural, attitudinal, social, economic, and political transformation (Quinn 11). Linda Radzik, on the other hand, posits atonement at the center of restorative measures with reconciliation as a related concept (80).

The Importance of Context

It is one thing to speak in abstract terms about concepts and definitions, but students need to be made aware of the powerful factor of context. What are the specificities of time, place, and person that color our use of these terms? What are some potential areas of misunderstanding? In this section, I discuss factors that influence the development of conflict and processes of resolution.

Cultural Difference: First-World models of human rights are often unwittingly imposed upon very different geographical and cultural sites of conflict. In order to get at the rich dialogue of resolution that has developed over the last decades, teachers should attempt to draw upon diverse examples of regional conflict—such as the Balkans, Rwanda, Ireland, and Israel/Palestine. Diversity within regions is another complicating factor. For example, discussions of apartheid and post-apartheid South Africa have often been dominated by the racial divide between whites and blacks. Yet within the so-called white population the division between Afrikaans-speaking Afrikaners and those of British descent who speak English is vast, and the cultural and linguistic diversity among black South Africans is staggering, with eleven official languages (not including regional dialects) and many more ethnic groups. Add to this the so-called Coloured and Indian minorities as well as the heterogeneous mix of world religions and Indigenous spiritual traditions, and the interstices of race, ethnicity, religion, and language are unimaginably complex.

But we do not have to leave our own continent to encounter vast differences in experience and worldview. We need look no further than the oppression and abuse of American Indian and First Nation peoples, African Americans, or Japanese Americans and Canadian Americans during World War Two. It is not realistic to develop specific expertise in every region and culture that appear on a curriculum. However, it is essential to understand the limits of our knowledge, admit that we are likely to unconsciously make assumptions about peoples and places, and be prepared to examine, question, and even set aside some of our deeply held values and beliefs when engaging with cultures and contexts other than our own.

Given the challenge of addressing cultural difference and diversity, it is important to seek out secondary sources by scholars with local knowledge and experience and/or to respectfully engage directly with local communities (see Jack Shuler's essay in Chapter Eleven). Attending to questions of cultural difference involves instructors and students together

examining and critiquing our own assumptions and worldviews; the classroom can be transformed into a space for open and honest investigation of what we really care about and why. Once we become more conscious of our own core values and beliefs, then we are better able to question our assumptions about others.

Historical period and changing worldviews: Discourses of conflict resolution have tended to privilege contemporary examples—roughly 1990 to the present—for the simple reason that there has been a concerted effort in recent decades to approach political conflict with the view that reconciliation is a desired outcome. But for earlier times, whether we are talking about Homer's *Iliad*, Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, or Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front,* it is important to consider the vast differences in worldviews, and the very real possibility that reconciliation is not at all a desired outcome. For example, Homer's Achilles making peace would mean losing face. He must avenge the death of Patrocles or he will forfeit his honor. Achilles can acknowledge Priam's pain, but to properly reconcile would be a sign of weakness according to the dominant social codes (see Jean Wilson's essay in Chapter Eight). Even as recently as the Vietnam War, peace talks were not the norm. The war ended with a ceasefire and then a settlement was negotiated. Reconciliation would have meant the admission that the war had been unjust or somehow avoidable. That said, just because ancient and even relatively recent worldviews do not actively support a conciliatory model does not mean that it is not fruitful to take up these examples with students. The discord between worldviews is a valuable opportunity to consider our own assumptions about what is right and wrong and why we cling to these oppositional categories.

Religious Beliefs and Practices: When it comes to religious values, it behooves teachers to tread lightly. It is not that we ought not to raise religion as a category of difference; rather, religion has become such a hot-button topic in public education that debates that consider religious values risk high-jacking the opportunities to truly engage with students. However, religion does matter a great deal. For example, in the case of South Africa, much of the scholarship on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) privileges a secular human-rights perspective and is silent when it comes to the role of the Church of England in orchestrating the end of apartheid and paving the way for a public conversation about forgiveness.[2] I will say more about this later, but the interstices of Christianity and Indigenous spirituality present a complex landscape of values, which played a decisive role in the outcomes of the TRC and so requires thoughtful consideration.

Gender and Sexuality: The role of gender in processes of conflict resolution has received less sustained attention than questions of culture and ethnicity. Wanda Malcolm, Nancy DeCourville, and Kathryn Belicki write in their edited volume, *Women's Reflections on the Complexities of Forgiveness* (2008), that, traditionally speaking, forgiveness has been considered the work of women. There is a common perception that women and children make up the majority of victims of violence and sexual abuse, and that the majority of perpetrators are men. While there is far more female/female and female/male violence than stereotypes project, women do often find themselves in the role of the forgiver or at least spearheading discussions of peace and reconciliation within families and societies. In the South African TRC, women played prominent roles as forgiver/reconcilers. In *Bearing Witness: Women and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa*, Fiona Ross argues that women were often relegated to the role of victim of sexual abuse and excluded from the larger discussions of politics and nation. Regardless of the circumstances of conflict, it is important to keep in mind the dynamic of gender and power and to confront the socially constructed nature of both categories.

Texts for Combining Terminology and Context

I turn now to some examples of terminology in context, including the case of South Africa's TRC, teaching the Holocaust through literature, and terminology as it relates to matters of curriculum—what we study, what we don't, and why, as well as the ways terminology can be integrated into dynamic inquiry-oriented classroom activities.

In the case of the South African TRC, terminology couldn't be more important. The word "reconciliation" is in the title of the commission and so one might think that this is the major focus and desired outcome of the process. In the early 1990s, a plan for a peaceful transfer of political power was being negotiated between the apartheid government's National Party, under the leadership of F. W. de Klerk, and the African National Council, led by Nelson Mandela, who was, after twenty-seven years in prison, released on 11 February 1990. But this was also a time of extreme violence, which escalated to catastrophic proportions. There was widespread fear—justifiable fear—that a bloody civil war was unavoidable. Many critics lamented that the TRC was a political compromise, that it was a whitewashing of ideals, when ideology caved in to the demands of Western notions of liberal democracy, industrial capitalism, and globalization (see Grunebaum-Ralph and Jolly). Still others would argue that it allowed South Africa a glimmer of hope that Nelson Mandela's

dream of an integrated, diverse, and inclusive Rainbow Nation was somehow possible (see Ignatieff and Gobodo-Madikizela, "Remorse").

The mandate of the TRC was to allow perpetrators to come forward and receive amnesty—release from legal consequences for criminal wrongdoing—in exchange for a full confession of their involvement in "gross human rights violations" committed during the "political struggle against apartheid." The Commission, which began its proceedings in 1994 and published a final report in 1998, had legal authority to pass judgment on perpetrators—and not all applicants received amnesty. In this way, the Commission's role was "quasi-juridical." But in other ways, it was a civilian process; there were no lawyers, no judges, and it was presided over by Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop in the Church of England in South Africa and an outspoken proponent of forgiveness. In his memoir, *No Future without Forgiveness*, Tutu is adamant that the TRC exposed the horrors of the crimes against humanity; that it avoided state-mandated retribution, which would have led to endless criminal trials and the incarceration of countless numbers of the country's most educated and capable leaders; and that it very likely averted a civil war that would have ripped South Africa to shreds—a country already crippled by political violence. But Tutu also demonstrates that bringing together victims and perpetrators elicited a kind of reciprocal humanity in all parties and fostered courageous acts of confession and forgiveness.

Even this brief introduction to the TRC reveals the complex network of discourses—legal, political, and religious—and serves as a good example of an instance where words both matter and don't matter. The three key concepts are *reconciliation*—political negotiations and restoring relations of trust and understanding; *amnesty*—release from legal consequences of criminal wrongdoing (but not pardon);[3] and *forgiveness*—moving beyond hatred and anger and working to recognize and embrace the humanity of the other/wrongdoer. A fourth and equally important term here, is *ubuntu*, the African ethic and practice of reciprocal humanity: seeing my humanity through the humanity of the other and recognizing that we are interconnected and mutually dependent. While *ubuntu* has no official role in the TRC, the integration of this notion within the discourse and actions of the commission adds a crucial component of cultural specificity and draws on the rich resources of Indigenous traditions of Africa.

It is important to distinguish between these categories—*reconciliation, amnesty, forgiveness,* and *ubuntu*—but it is equally vital to recognize that they are entangled in necessarily complicated ways and that the results of the TRC are not immediately measurable. For example, the TRC dealt exclusively with perpetrators and victims of politically motivated crimes

committed during the struggle against apartheid between the years of 1960 and 1994. A very small percentage of South Africans was included in this group. And yet, all citizens were encouraged to follow the proceedings of the TRC, either by attending public hearings in person or through the extensive media coverage. Individuals on all sides were affected and the resulting social impact was significant.

As an international observer, Michael Ignatieff remarked that the TRC did not work miracles, but that it "reduced the number of lies in circulation" (qtd. in Nolan 146), and that all those who participated and many who followed through media coverage would have to admit that "something happened" (Ignatieff 20). This nebulous *something* is the palpable yet unnameable mystery of conflict resolution. This example illustrates that words and definitions are simultaneously important and not important at all. I have found the example of the TRC to be extremely useful for illustrating broad concepts of terminology to students because the overlap of spheres is at once very overt, and yet we can clearly see the pitfalls that come from making assumptions about categories of conflict and resolution.

My next example comes from teaching Simon Wiesenthal's *The Sunflower*, a Holocaust narrative, in which a dying SS officer seeks out a young Jewish prisoner, confesses his participation in heinous genocidal crimes, and begs forgiveness. This narrative offers multiple opportunities to engage with questions of terminology and frames of reference for conflict and resolution. One of the most significant hurdles in this case is the power differential between the two parties: the SS officer/perpetrator asks for forgiveness from the Jewish prisoner/victim. In such circumstances, the balance of power—at least rhetorical power—normally shifts to the victim, who has the authority to deny the request. But even though he lies dying in his bed, the soldier still has the potential to inflict suffering on the Jewish prisoner. A further complication arises from the fact that the conflict is ongoing. The Jew is still imprisoned within a concentration camp and his life, like the lives of millions of Jews imprisoned elsewhere, is in constant jeopardy. Students tend to agree that true forgiveness requires that the conflict have ceased and the parties be on somewhat equal footing.

The next question that arises regards the authority to grant forgiveness. In a religious context, forgiveness is granted by God or a religious leader; in an interpersonal situation, the right to forgive rests with the victim. But the victims of the SS officer's crimes are dead; the young man is merely a symbolic representative—a synecdoche—for a whole disadvantaged group. Students often conclude that one Jewish member cannot forgive on

behalf of a whole people. The class also discusses the question of conditional forgiveness—whether religious or interpersonal—involving various means of making amends: confession, apology, expressions of remorse, material and moral compensation, as well as a commitment to reform or even a demonstration of new behavior. Apart from the immediate verbal admission of guilt, the SS officer has no means to atone for his crimes. Students often find that because the normal conditions of forgiveness cannot be met, any forgiveness granted would be compromised or partial.

Finally, we consider what forgiveness means in this narrative context: Is this religious forgiveness, and if so, which theological tradition—Christian (Catholic or other denomination) or Jewish—is invoked? How does historical period influence the notion of forgiveness—would a person feel more or less inclined to forgive sixty years ago? There are many features that make this narrative useful for a learning exercise: it is a relatively short text; the narrative contains a self-reflection on the part of the young Jewish man with his fellow prisoners; and the second part of the text collects very brief responses by dozens of respected thinkers, including survivors, religious leaders, and other prominent intellectuals from many different backgrounds and cultures, including the Dalai Lama and Bishop Desmond Tutu. Analysis of a few of these short responses and reflections provides an opportunity to think through questions of intercultural difference regarding forgiveness and reconciliation. I have also had success in probing these questions further by using role-play and directed debate followed by summary discussions. In this way, the students and I are able to expand and complicate terminology; students are confronted with the notion of emerging vocabulary, and they learn to create and revise definitions for themselves.

These are but two examples of the ways in which I have introduced and problematized questions of terminology. Curricular frameworks are related to the terms we use because the material we choose informs the focus of our learning. I teach in a German and International Studies context, and so it is natural to treat the example of the Holocaust, contrasting mostly German-language and Anglo-American creative and critical responses. Another now-common example in reconciliation studies is the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and this too is appropriate, given that it marks a political and historical watershed in terms of global responses to gross human-rights violations and the aftermath of prolonged violent conflict and serves as a model for subsequent truth commissions. I would, however, caution against focusing solely on conflict that is far removed in both time and space, because we