Home-Work

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Karleen Bradford’s *There Will Be Wolves*, written in 1992, won the Canadian Library Association Best Young Adult Book Award and was nominated for several others. As one of my students in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Ottawa pointed out, “students will enjoy this historical novel because it is similar to the popular TV program *Survivor,* except there is far more bloodshed and no bikinis.” Bradford’s book transports you back to medieval times and demythologizes our romantic notions of the period. This medieval board of chess is a time when streets stank, people did not bathe, and seeing yet another execution was just another day at the market. There is none of the typical pageantry of the knights and ladies in waiting that still holds the fascination of our culture as evidenced in what is popularly read and watched by children. In this juvenile historical fiction, Bradford presents a story in which the religious and political belief systems of European medieval life around the time of the Crusades affect human existence and thinking in deeply profound ways.

Bradford insightfully plays with the archives of colonialism, as *There Will Be Wolves* is set in Cologne, Germany, the city that was built over the ruins of one of the most powerful cities of the Roman Empire—Colonia Agrippa. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary,* by the middle of the fourteenth century the word *colony* was used to describe the Roman
Colonia, or colonialism describes the Roman experience of "settling, creating outposts, or occupying lands outside of the Roman city-state" (Yew 1). As Leong Yew points out, "the term colonialism emerged around the nineteenth century to reify European practice that followed the same pattern of the distant Roman Empire" (1). Such practice and patterns are intimately connected with imperialism. Bradford provides an entry point into this concept that begins with the colonial subject or the sovereign subject of religious authoritarianism—the Crusader. In its treatment of the Eurocentric associations underpinning the Crusades, the novel moves the pieces around the board and recreates the movements of the colonialist psyche.

_There Will Be Wolves_ is one of the texts I am using to carry out a cultural study of teachers' reading practices (the other is Karen Cushman's 1995 _The Midwife's Apprentice_). A study of textual reading practices provides partial access to the hidden histories and possible implications of identificatory processes. My doctoral research investigates reading practices of pre-service teachers through historical fiction. My inquiry is grounded in the rationale that teachers' reading practices have important implications for their actions and behaviours with children in classroom learning situations. Juvenile historical fiction presents challenges and difficulties to classroom literature teachers. These affective and epistemological obstacles exist because stories about historical occurrences frequently engage readers with difficult knowledge, as exemplified in _There Will Be Wolves_. In this study, it is not only the psychic dimensions of such representations that interest me, but also how they function epistemologically. For example, when teachers read juvenile narratives about medieval life, to what extent do they think about being in history and the possibility of history, the historicity of human existence, and the historicity of narratives? Because teachers decide how and if a historical fiction will be formally studied in a classroom, their reading practices are culturally productive sites deeply implicated in identity, community formation, ongoing social memory, and collective historical understanding.

Postcolonial and feminist excursions into literature by researchers such as Roberta Seelinger Trites, Carolyn Steedman, Valerie Walkerdine, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak reveal that dynamics exist in learning/reading situations that result in the repetition or repression of social and psychic histories, including colonial pasts, racism, misogyny, and hetero-
normativity. Psychoanalytic educational researchers demonstrate how meanings that readers construct from literary texts rely in part on unconscious realities that grow out of readers’ histories as they engage dynamically with the aesthetic qualities of the narrative (Robertson, “Art” 39–42; Britzman and Pitt 121–23). In this paper, my purpose is to explore how teachers’ reading engagements with such juvenile historical texts as Bradford’s *There Will Be Wolves* may be used as a site for postcolonial education. A postcolonial pedagogy calls for the same opening of space that Bradford allows in her feminist rewriting of the medieval colony.

*There Will Be Wolves* deals with the first Crusade called the People’s Crusade that set out in the spring of 1096 CE to liberate the Holy Land and Jerusalem from the heretic Moslems. As experienced by Ursula, the 15-year-old protagonist of this historical fiction, the Crusades are a murderous spree rather than a glorious mission. The Crusades are a fanatic drive against non-Christian “Killers of Christ,” particularly the Jews (Bradford 32). Early on in the story, we learn that Germanic law marginalized the Jews. Jews were not allowed to own land, including the land their own houses stood upon. While many of them depended on trade and usury as a form of economic survival, Christians equated usury with sin and despised the Jews for it; their disdain turned to hatred when they became deeply indebted to them (Bradford 14–15). Undermining all traces of the romance, heroism, and spirituality conventionally associated with the Crusades, Bradford’s narrative takes us through chapters of intense drama. Before leaving Cologne, Germany, where the story begins, Christian Crusaders kill Jews. During their march for God, where they invade towns and people’s homes for food and goods, the Crusaders kill Christians and Moslems. Avenging the Crusaders’ crimes against their people, the Turks go after the Crusaders and slaughter almost everyone on the Crusade. Bradford shows the devastating conclusion of a crusade spurred by the rhetoric of absolution, cleansing, eternal salvation, and land.

In “Books and Reading in Young Adult Literature Set in the Middle Ages,” Rebecca Barnhouse critiques the representation of medieval life in *There Will Be Wolves* as being inaccurate. Barnhouse suggests that Bradford is perpetuating “anachronistic fallacies, allowing [her] didactic tendencies to overshadow historical accuracy . . . [which] unintentionally reinforce misconceptions about books and literacy in the Middle Ages” (364). Barnhouse charges Bradford with creating in Ursula an accomplished
female reader in an historical period when few individuals outside of the clergy could read. Ursula uses her literacy to do what others cannot. Through reading what is deemed a holy book that a sick priest, labelled as insane by his peers, gave to Ursula on his death bed, this young girl knows how to use more than just herbs to treat common ailments, as, for instance, when she sets the broken bones of a dog, saving its life. Distrusted because she can read, and disliked by her neighbours because of her sharp wit and impatience with the ignorance of others, she is accused of being a witch. Following this accusation, Ursula is condemned as a witch by an ecclesiastical court and, subsequently, when she denies this verdict, is charged for having opposed religious authority. In exchange for her life, Ursula's father, Master William, one of the city's apothecaries, strikes an easy bargain with local authorities (church and state). He will go on the Crusade and provide the herbal remedies they require and Ursula will accompany him to atone for her sins.

This historical narrative provides possible avenues for learning that are much greater than Bradford's simple goal—presumably to inspire literacy. Margaret Atwood argues that "Fiction is where individual memory and experience and collective memory and experience come together, in greater or lesser proportions. The closer the fiction is to us as readers, the more we recognize and claim it as individual rather than collective" (3). Ursula's reading practices propel the plot. The possibility of a young girl being able to read during this time period is a strange twist of circumstances, but it is through such a twist that the young reader may identify with the character's desire and struggle. Barnhouse works from the premise that historical fiction's usefulness for learning depends singularly and straightforwardly on the accuracy or inaccuracy of the representations. What this premise forgets is that meaning is made for learners in a dynamic encounter with representations where some form of identification takes place (Brooks, *Discourse* 9–11).

As teachers struggle to understand how to develop children's understanding of historical events through the use of narrative forms, it would be alarming if literature teachers avoided texts that present profound knowledge about a particular time and place because they contain elements of fiction. Ursula's ability to read may not be historically accurate. Yet the Church and local community's reaction to her reading practice underscores how colonial discourse is an "apparatus of power" (Bhabha 70).
In *There Will Be Wolves*, the invasiveness of colonial discourse is enacted through the major disagreement and intellectual debate about the Crusades between Master William, Ursula’s father, a respected member of the community, and Bruno, Ursula’s friend, a character who questions the prevailing attitudes. For Bruno, the “holy venture” is “an insanity” (31), while in response to the killing of the Jews, Master William can only whisper: “The Crusade is to be a glorious endeavour. How can it be born out of such things? Out of such evil?” (50). For a moment and only in a whisper, Master William challenges the party line, but quickly declares his allegiance to the Church when he exclaims to Bruno that the Crusades have been authorized by the Pope himself. To understand this surveillance of self, Homi Bhabha stresses the need to explore the colonial subject in psychoanalytic and historical terms (66–84). Master William pays homage to the Church’s authority, illustrating Bhabha’s point that “Like voyeurism, surveillance must depend for its effectivity on the ‘active consent’” of the colonial subject (76). Bradford uses the Crusades as a representation to point out how the vicissitudes of ethnic hatred are connected to what Bhabha calls the “conflictual economy of colonial discourse” (85). This portal to the past may be useful in moving to the kind of “communicative action” that Cameron McCarthy suggests will get us beyond the “implacable categories of Eurocentrism and the reductive forms of multiculturalism” (21).

Considering the enabling and distinctive educative value of the aesthetic experience of literature (see Nussbaum 343–65; Ricoeur in Valdes 5; Bruner 64–66), it is interesting that in Ontario many teachers are turning to historical fiction as a convenient means of addressing the many expectations of a new interdisciplinary curriculum. Yet this goal of fulfilling curriculum expectations is fraught with complexities. For instance, in teacher education at the University of Ottawa, *There Will Be Wolves* is taught under the heading of “risky story” because the story presents “graphic” scenes of “degradation, pain, and death” (Simon and Armitage 264). The concept of “risky stories” is developed by Roger Simon and Wendy Armitage Simon and refers to stories that require a pedagogical response because the story represents painful issues or events that may be emotionally invasive for young readers (Robertson, “Teaching” 278). For teachers, a pedagogical response means using classroom practices that provide adequate space and time for students to work through the difficult
knowledge by developing historical literacy and actively reflecting on their own reading of the text through oral and written expression. What students struggle with in their learning can become constructive in the way it forges insight for the individual. As Robertson argues, in teaching risky stories the key element is to assist readers in recognizing the connection that exists between the impossible past and one's own ongoing implication in it (Robertson, "Teaching" 283). Later in this paper I will return to the implications of this argument. Now, I would like to point to a study that documents the riskiness of Bradford's story because of its contradictory treatment of the "glorious crusades."

Explaining the phenomenon of dealing with the risky story, Shoshana Felman argues that one's desire to ignore is "less cognitive than performative... it is not the simple lack of information but the incapacity—or the refusal—to acknowledge one's own implication in the information" (79). Robertson presents her experience of how teachers will resist memory and protect their own subjectivity by blocking pedagogical interference in relation to difficult knowledge. Asking students to read There Will Be Wolves, Robertson suggests that her students "imagine how the novel might be used to instigate thinking in an elementary classroom" ("Art" 27). In response, some students adamantly assert that they cannot imagine using this text with children. While the first reactions of the teacher candidates focus on the obstacle of the text being "too sensitive" or "parents would find the portrayals offensive" (29), they eventually respond by writing, "Bradford's portrayal of the atrocities perpetrated by Crusaders against European Jews in 1096 represents 'a demotion of Catholicism.'" And with disquieting anxiety, they concluded: We don't talk about these things" (30).

The subjects in Robertson's study perform like Bradford's Master William when they are destabilized by what challenges their system of beliefs. Master William responds with outrage to Bruno's equation of Church rhetoric with violence, just as Robertson's students respond with hostility to this exercise of reading. As Deborah Britzman and Alice Pitt assert, "the stakes are most obvious when the teacher's self becomes destabilized in her encounter with others who refuse the role of self-reflecting mirror to the teacher's desire" (122). The outpouring of anger projected onto Robertson in her classroom and onto the book itself is understandable if reading encounters are related to identity formation in teacher
education. By avoiding a text because of its supposed sensitive issues, a teacher can hope to protect the fantasy of self and the power he/she obtains through collective avoidance. A denial of the struggle with unconscious realities emerging from the readers' histories as they engage dynamically with texts sanctions, as Robertson asserts, “new practices of authority: the Jew outside of representability, outside of culture, outside of education, and outside of human values” (42). This example is a devastating sign of the dynamics in reading and learning situations that result in the repetition and repression of social and psychic histories.

From Robertson's study, it is obvious that what should be read and what should not be read is not divorced from a world where power continues to play out in particular ways. Part of the process of teacher education is to provide a space where the students can do the work of learning so they can attach what they have learned and who they are to their new identity as “teachers.” In Ontario, there is a visible authority structure that still defines teacher education. Robertson's research reveals that:

Faculties of Education in Ontario are juristically bound by virtue of a Constitution Act in 1867 and the Education Act of Ontario to provide programmatic support for the doctrinal education of aspiring Roman Catholic teachers. Despite a United Nations bias ruling that Canada permits religious discrimination because Ontario funds Roman Catholic schools and not the schools of other faiths, the government has not rectified this relationship between religion and schooling in Ontario, nor addressed the injurious effects on non-Catholic groups who are denied privileged access to a similar sanctioned canonical education. (“Art” 33)

History is not a hidden factor here; practices and patterns of conquest and settlement are visible and contemporary. Yet teacher education programs appear to provide little space for teachers to understand the “psychological self” by placing themselves in a cultural context. In “Cultural Myths in the Making of a Teacher,” Britzman summarizes the predominant model of teacher education. It is organized on the implicit theory of immediate integration of the student into the classroom: “the university provides the theories, methods, and skills; schools provide the classroom, curriculum, and students; and the student teacher provides
the individual effort; all of which combine to produce the finished product of a professional teacher” (442). Drawing on her own experience as a teacher educator, Britzman argues that this training model “ignores the role of the social and political context of teacher education while emphasizing the individual's effort” (442). Further research in teacher education supports how the anxiety of student teachers over mastery is provoked by “the structure of teacher education and the epistemology of education itself, with its push toward remedy, control and expertise” (Britzman and Pitt 119).

The teacher willing to support the construction of knowledge through the story worlds of historical narrative will be open to strategies that help learners to work through difficult knowledge (Simon and Armitage Simon 267; Robertson, “Teaching” 289–90). Providing spaces within the classroom for students to express how they feel is essential to helping them understand why a text evokes emotions that may be difficult. The emotionally charged reconstruction of history allows students to connect more fully to human experience of the past and avoids the popular hegemonizing of the experience where a “false empathy” results from the belief that one’s suffering is the same as another’s (Morris 12). What educators must consider is what happens to the possibilities of children’s learning if the historical representation is treated as a cultural artifact about which teachers say, “This is what was,” rather than dealing with how the text affects the students. In my recent experience as a teacher educator, the pre-service student teachers rushed to collect lesson plans and master the practical methods of delivering them. This rush to have and apply knowledge while not fully understanding the implications of it struck me as problematic. It is this pressure for mastery that hinders the teacher from forming a crucial link with other learners. A focus on mastery separates the individual from the “dynamics of locations” such as race, gender, class, and sex, requiring him or her to imagine the past as “discontinuous with the present” and leaving little space for any new conditions of learning (Britzman and Pitt 123). Between the teachers’ own refusal to discuss a text and the teacher education program’s limitations, the “I am teacher” (all knowing) and “you are student” (empty vessel) model remains entrenched despite all of the well-intended talk about student-centred learning and critical thinking skills.

According to Marla Morris, who assesses issues of curriculum,
memory, and history, historical fiction reflects much more than just a writer’s success at reproducing the authenticity of the context. Discussing the recent surge of attention to historical fiction, Atwood explains that now “part of the interest for writers and readers of historical fiction, . . . [is that] by taking a long hard look backwards, we place ourselves” (27). Yet Atwood insists that historical fiction is more than just a representation of the time; it also reminds us that history is about individuals because it is at such points that “memory, history, and story all intersect” (7). Atwood goes as far as to say that historical fictions are about human nature: “pride, envy, avarice, lust, sloth, gluttony, and anger. They are about truth and lies, and disguises and revelations; they are about crime and punishment; they are about love and forgiveness and long-suffering and charity; they are about sin and retribution and sometimes even redemption” (38–39). If we identify with this human quandary of being part of a world where love and hate and truth and lies operate at the same time, Atwood reminds us that we are not on an easy reading field. The convenient tendency of forgetting and the hard work of remembering is central to the dynamics of the mind when it comes to difficult knowledge, but there always exists “the lure of the unmentionable—the mysterious, the buried, the forgotten, the discarded, the taboo” (19). Throughout her discussion, Atwood plays with the idea that some historical fiction can move us towards the cliff of remembering. On this cliff, we may come close enough to the edge that we make a life-saving grab at a relation of the self to an essential moment of human loss or suffering. But there is also an impulse to repress certain knowledge of this nature, and, thus, as Atwood says, the “unsavoury repressed memories [are] stored in our heads like rotten apples in a barrel, festering away but essentially unknowable, except for the suspicious smell” (11–12). This is the knowledge that Lacan qualifies as “knowledge that can’t tolerate one’s knowing that one knows” (qtd. in Felman 77).

Self-reflexive reading practices have much to contend with when it comes to the dynamics of the mind. Being aware of the “suspicious smells” and appreciating that learning is a psychic event is essential to understanding the self before teaching others. In There Will Be Wolves, Bradford represents some of the psychological effects of colonial authority. Historical novels offer a portal, a frame of observation, and, here, one cannot help but think that Bradford’s opus actually provides a space through which the colony may look back upon itself. This is a perilous venture. Following
Lacan's theorizing of ambivalence, Bhabha asserts that the gaze of colonial authority never rests easy, for it is well known that colonial identity owes part of its constitution to that colonized other and that revolt is potentially immanent (86). Therefore, in Bhabha's formulation, teachers are positioned hegemonically to mimic the forms and values of dominant culture because this is whom they represent (85-86).

The relationship between reading, narrative experience, and learning is not well understood, especially in relation to its interdisciplinary significance. Deborah Thacker sees the study of children's literature, its readers (adults and children), and the psychic and social uses of these texts as an area that has been "astonishingly" understudied considering the impact these texts have upon the social construction of readers (2). She also suggests that the historicity of readers must be considered. Such observations clearly connect to my own research where I am presently studying the connection between the emergent classroom practices of pre-service teachers and their reading practices; what these implications say about identity formation and reading practices; and how specific pedagogies of reading may support the conditions of learning about identity and our reading practices in the study of education.

Studying the interpretive process and contextual factors of reading, I rely on cultural reception theories (Staiger 8-48) stemming from the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies that displaces the focus from the literary work to the reader. Psychoanalytic theories of narrative are also important to this study of how narrative functions in teachers' reading practices. Peter Brooks' theory of how the aesthetic form of narrative acts as a place where we may understand the affective and epistemological implications of identification complements Richard Johnson's idea of how cultural forms enter into the subjective realities and life-worlds of readers. Brooks argues that "students need in their work on literature to encounter a moment of poetics—a moment in which they are forced to ask not only what the text means but also how it means, what its grounds as a meaning making sign system are and how we as readers . . . activate and deploy systems that allow us to detect or create meaning" ("Aesthetics" 517). Johnson calls for a "structuralist ethnography" to look at the social or cultural forms of knowledge that are made available in a discursive field (13, 58). The following research questions, developed from Johnson's "Cultural Circuit" model (11-15), inform this study:
1. What are the conditions of production of the works of historical fiction written for children and adolescents?
2. How does the textual form work to influence the literary forcefulness of the historical narratives?
3. How does the development of the teachers' identity within the institutional conditions of their formation influence the conditions of readership?
4. How does the reading of historical fiction reflect the lived struggles within communities that have an influence on social memory, pedagogy, and collective historical understanding?

Specific questions about the form of narrative are the means for investigating some of the larger questions above. Johnson says that formal elements of a text "realize and make available subjective forms" (58). Brooks suggests that to "slow up the work of interpretation, the attempt to turn the text into some other discourse or system, and to consider it as a manifestation of the conventions, constraints, and possibilities of literature" (517), the aesthetic as a constituted domain must be reasserted.

Observing the vicarious relationship between narrative and reader so that the interpretive processes and contextual factors are revealed, I am asking the participants to take a formalist approach to analyzing the texts and then asking how they would employ this analysis in their teaching methods. A formalist approach also coincides with what teacher candidates are required to undertake in relation to the Ontario Curricula Grades 1–10 English. Participants' responses to the literary aspects (plot, setting, narrative point of view, characterization, author's context, theme, style, and so forth) of the historical fictions will create a medium through which I can study the meanings and uses of historical fiction by beginning teachers.

To study the relationship between literary forms produced for juveniles and teachers' uses of these texts in developing their own conditional selfhood within the institutional forces of their formation, I need to understand the dynamics between the texts and the readers. The term rhetorical analysis refers specifically to the relationship between readers and texts because it relates to "how humans are constantly engaged in the productive deployment of texts, a cultural practice that involves meaningful but complex negotiations of power and desire through language"
(Robertson, "Cinema" 14). Employing specific strategies that will be useful in addressing this phenomenon with pre-service teachers, I utilize the rhetorical methodology of Felman. I am collecting data on the participants by examining and analyzing their oral and written responses to the two adolescent narratives for the repetition of ideas, themes, and memories in response to the formal structures of the historical narrative, their biographical background, and their pedagogical perspectives. The participants' level of engagement with the representations of medieval life offered in the text, as well as their consciousness of how their own responses to these representations may affect classroom life, will be examined.

Teacher education and practices of pedagogy intersect with ongoing problems of domination and oppression. The promise of using historical fiction in the classroom to place ourselves may provide a means to interrupt the colonialist cycle. Without the opportunity to think about learning in relation to difficult knowledge, beginning teachers may not understand the value of and need for self-reflexive reading practices. From my very preliminary observations of the participants in my study, beginning teachers who are trying to understand how to develop children's understanding of historical events through the use of the narrative form benefit from thinking about their reading subjectivity. As I see Bradford's project, the feminist and "othered" character of Ursula offers a departure point for thinking about reading practices. While beginning teachers are understandably anxious about their first teaching experiences and preoccupied with having the perfect lesson plans, thinking about reading practices in relation to teaching practices is essential to an anti-colonial project. For those willing to go there, and the participants in my study have volunteered on this basis, the aesthetic form of narrative can act as a place where we can explore and discuss the affective and epistemological implications of identifications within the framework of learning how to teach others to learn.

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