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MOVING HORIZONS: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF STORIES IN DECOLONIZING THE LITERACY EDUCATION OF WHITE TEACHERS

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INTRODUCTION

Accounts of teachers journeying to outlying communities follow certain conventions. They begin with a trip through difficult terrain, a laborious route that entails more time and energy than “civilized” people would tolerate. First impressions of place and people follow, succeeded shortly afterward by culture shock. Prejudices are brought to the surface that with time, are reinforced, assuaged or changed. (Wilson, 2000, p. 1)

So begins a story of a white teacher’s journey to an Indigenous community in Canada; the teacher is Canadian, of Anglo-Saxon descent. This article considers the place of stories in literacy formation and thus, in producing colonialism, as well as the role they can play in decolonizing formation; a story is understood to provide a perceptual horizon that influences how the teacher carries him/herself in the world. My interest in this subject stems from my experience of teaching in that same Indigenous community, later writing about that experience using short narratives and critically examining those stories for how they fell into, as well as resisted, colonial discourses. Acknowledging that self-study using such autobiographical narratives was only one method for critical self-examination, I then also became interested in other ways in which white teachers could identify the stories that had formed them (see Strong-Wilson, 2006b). Eighteen white teachers, living in Canada, were invited to be part of a study in which they examined their constructions of “difference” through the reading and discussion of children’s stories in teacher literature circles held once a month. Twelve of the teachers were predominantly of white (European or Euro-Canadian) ancestry while six were Indigenous teachers; four were male, fourteen were female. They all taught within a school district situated on traditional Indigenous territories, that is, on lands orig-

inally belonging to Indigenous nations who, further, had not relinquished their claim to the land nor to be recognized as nations in their own right. Many of the teachers taught Indigenous students, and all were responsible for teaching a provincial curriculum that, resting on a liberal ideology, advocated responsiveness to Indigenous peoples' histories, stories, and practices. All also taught in the context of a nation-state in which Indigenous peoples, like other Indigenous peoples around the world, are involved in a struggle for self-determination, including reclamation of lands, greater control over education from pre-school to post-secondary, and along with that, recuperation of domain over which stories are told, how those stories are told and who tells them, such as in Canada, the story of Indigenous peoples' actual experiences in the state-run residential school system that spanned almost a century until the 1980s: the one that lies behind the smiling faces of children in school photographs (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Cook-Lynn, 2004; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004; Miller, 2004; Smith, 1999).

Teachers are charged with the job to "transmit, critique and interpret" knowledge deemed important for a society's members to know. In this respect, the teacher can be seen as an "intellectual" or cultural worker (Mellouki & Gauthier, 2001, p.1). In large part, though, this cultural knowledge remains embedded in stories and memories of stories, which become formative of unconsciously held, perceptual "horizons" and thus not readily available to critique (Alcoff, 2006, p. 95). While stories have long been identified as central to reader formation (e.g., Lewis, 2000; Rosenblatt, 1938) as well as key to social change (e.g., Ladson-Billings, 1999), the processes by which white teachers learn and "unlearn" (Cochran-Smith, 2000), that is, uncover, their understandings and perceptions of "difference" are less understood and in particular, with how stories play a role in shaping as well as moving horizons (Florio-Ruane & deTar, 1995, 2001; Lewis, 2000).

"White" teachers, research tells us, are among the most recalcitrant of learners when it comes to social justice education (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Roman, 1993; Rosenberg, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 1987) so much so that the term "white teacher" has become virtually synonymous with resistance; resistance to acknowledging the significance of constructions of race to identity formation and of perceiving themselves as white and therefore implicated in systems of domination: "whites must be seen to be white [for their power to be maintained], yet whiteness as race resides in invisible properties and whiteness as power is maintained by being unseen" (Dyer as cited in Byrne, 2006, p. 24). "White" here is not understood phenotypically, "as a fixed set of physical attributes" (Byrne, 2006, p. 26) but as "a

historicized and contextualized construction" (p. 26) that gives rise to a perceptual "horizon" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 95), one that is deeply embedded but capable of being shifted and de-colonized. The teachers needed to be voluntarily (that is, in some sense, autobiographically) involved in critically re-examining their own stories.

Maxine Greene (1978b) said that "we identify ourselves by means of memory" and that memory helps us "compose the stories of our lives" (p. 33). Decolonization of stories entailed that the white teachers elicit those "touchstone" stories invisibly shaping their perceptions of self and other (Strong-Wilson, 2006b) and be confronted by a "counter-story" (Smith, 1999, p. 2; Thomas, 2005, p. 242) that challenged the "master story" (Greene, 1995, p. 118) implicit in their touchstones. By juxtaposing their touchstone stories with "counter-stories" (Smith, 1999; Thomas, 2005), a context was created in which teachers could produce a "story of confrontation" (Greene, 1965, p. 423), one that would challenge their "original" encounter with Indigenous peoples (the "native-newcomer" story; Miller, 2004) via the reading of literature. More extended examples of the teachers' learning processes as well as that of the researcher can be found elsewhere (see Strong-Wilson, 2005, 2006a, 2006c, in press; Wilson, 2002, 2003).

This article focuses on the processes involved in moving and decolonizing storied horizons. It is divided into four sections: (a) "decolonizing" the imagination and what that term means when applied to white teachers; (b) a brief description of the study conducted with the teachers; (c) how colonial formation proceeds through stories; and (d) decolonizing the imagination through story. This is followed by an example of one teacher from the study, "Faye" (all teachers' names are pseudonyms).

DECOLONIZING THE WHITE SUBJECT?

Is it even possible to speak of decolonization of a *white* subject? Decolonization refers to a political process of previously colonized states gaining their independence from "white" colonizers, and thus more properly pertains, within the context of this article, to the international struggle of Indigenous nations and peoples to regain territory and voice. Whereas the literature rightly continues to be concerned with the problem of white academics "speaking for" (Alcoff, 1991) "the subaltern" (Spivak, 1988) (e.g., see Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004), Spivak (1990) said that this does not mean that whites should not speak at all. She recounted a typical situation in which a young, white male student who, trying to be politically correct, refused to speak at all, on the grounds that, given his historical inheritance, he had

no remaining ontological or epistemological authority. Her response was: "Why not develop a certain degree of rage against the history that has written such an abject script for you that you are silenced?" By developing a "historical critique" of one's position, she said to the student, "you will see that you have earned the right to criticize, and you [to] be heard" (Spivak, 1990; p. 62; emphasis in the original).

At the present time, one of the most widely accessed and discussed sources for decolonization is Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (1999) *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, a book that broke ground when it was first published. The task of "deconstructing" Western scholarship involves more than Indigenous peoples telling stories that have been suppressed: "In a decolonizing framework, deconstruction is part of a much larger intent" (p. 3) of achieving self-determination. Decolonization is about changing lives and, in connection with research, conducting studies in different ways that directly benefit Indigenous peoples, instead of once again subjecting them to a research process that has "extract[ed] and claim[ed] ownership" of Indigenous ways of knowing only to "reject the people" responsible for those ways of knowing (p. 1).

Decolonization of the "white" subject, I would argue, is a different kind of project from the one Smith (1999) described, although it shares with it the goal of social change. Feminist theorists Smith and Watson (1992), in *De/Colonizing the Subject: The Politics of Gender in Women's Autobiography*, adopt Mohanty's definition of colonization as "a relation of structural domination, and a suppression—often violent—of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question" (Mohanty as cited in Smith & Watson, p. xvi) and of decolonization as a set of "strategies" to address these "colonial practices" (p. xvi) via "the deformation/reformation of identity" (pp. xviii-xix). The deformation/reformation needs to happen to the "I" or "autobiographical subject" (p. xvii), one that, for white women, addresses hegemony and colonization. Decolonization of the white subject is thus best seen as a subset of a larger project of decolonization: "If a field of 'white studies' exists at all, it is at most a subset of other concerns around 'race' and identity" (Byrne, 2006, p. 8).

With regard to story, which is what this article is primarily about, the white subject needs to engage in a decolonization of his or her own stories. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1989) argued that "the study of English and the growth of Empire proceeded from a single ideological climate and that the development of the one is intrinsically bound up with the development of the other" (p. 3). By English, they mean both language and literature. These values of Empire have been transmitted consciously (viz.,

through propaganda) but just as, or more, powerfully via the unconscious, through language and literature, leading to “the naturalizing of constructed values (e.g. civilization, humanity, etc.) which, conversely, established ‘savagery’, ‘native’, ‘primitive’, as their antitheses” (p. 3). This naturalizing process has been well documented in recent studies of literature (Groening, 2004), including children’s literature (Kutzer, 2000).

In post-colonial literature, “the subaltern” (Spivak), “peripheral,” “marginal,” and “un-canonized” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989, pp. 3-4) talk back to the white center. The task for white teachers becomes to re-visit the center, *their* center, not in a project of recovery but, as mentioned earlier, using “historical critique” (Spivak, 1990). Like Smith’s decolonization, though, such a project needs to have a political purpose, the kind that can generate a sense of agency and change. “Only recently have whites in large numbers felt self-conscious as white, aware of themselves as not only having a gender, a nationality, an occupation, perhaps an ethnic origin, but also as having a race” (Alcoff, 2006, p. 118). In teacher education, this new reflective attitude, while a positive development in making visible what has been rendered invisible, has also been accompanied by feelings of shame, guilt, anger, or paralysis on the part of white teachers (Cochran-Smith, 2000; Roman, 1993; Rosenberg, 1997). Historical critique is central, but not enough to motivate change. What is further required is to address what Alcoff (after Gadamer) called the “horizon”; here, the teacher’s horizon.

Horizons

Alcoff (2006) suggested that identity formation is embodied within a relation between self and Other. Drawing on hermeneutics, she used Gadamer’s hermeneutic notion of “horizon” (p. 95) as well as Merleau-Ponty’s (1964) “phenomenology of embodiment” (p. 108) to argue that as (human) subjects, we see what is within our purview. That horizon has been shaped consciously and unconsciously by “social identities of race and gender” (p. 102), leading to the development of “orientation[s] to the world” (p. 127). Gadamer (1975/1998) defined horizon as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point” (p. 302). The prejudices we bring with us to a situation constitute the horizon of a particular present “for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see” (p. 306). Rarely are horizons completely closed, though: “To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand—not in order to look away from it but to see it better” (p. 305). Hermeneutics is about producing change as well as discerning meaning: “We must always already have a horizon in order to be able to transpose

ourselves into a situation" (Alcoff, 2006, p. 305). Thus, "it is the knower's very embeddedness in the world" that creates the conditions for openness to alternative knowledge and understanding (Alcoff, 2006, p. 94). A decolonizing education for white teachers involves "bringing forward" the storied history presently subsumed within their teaching but in relation to post-colonial or counter-stories for the purpose of provoking a different story that can open and shift their horizon (Strong-Wilson, in press).

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

In the study in which this paper is grounded, eighteen teachers engaged in critical memory work of formative stories that reached back to childhood. The teachers gathered together in teacher literature circles that met once a month; there were four groups, each composed of three to six teachers from different schools. A teacher literature circle is a forum for discussing books. Teachers often use literature circles with students, while adults regularly meet in book clubs. Researchers began to see possibilities in gathering teachers together so as to critically examine their own attitudes and perceptions (Lewis, 2000; Smith & Strickland, 2001). The study was designed to create a space in which teachers could critically examine their constructions of difference through the discussion of children's literature and remembering which stories they most enjoyed and why. Key to the study was that the particular stories read in the circles bore a close, or near, relationship to the ones that the teachers themselves had read. For that purpose, the very first activity in which the teachers engaged was the writing and sharing of a literacy autobiography in response to prompts intended to elicit the favorite stories they had read in childhood or adolescence, as well as those that they inclined towards in teaching. Stories selected from these lists were then juxtaposed with stories that bore similarities in plot or subject matter but coming from a different perspective.

For example, one teacher's favorite story was Lois Lenski's (1941) *Indian Captive*, which purports to tell the "true" story of Mary Jemison, kidnapped from her family, her parents killed and brought to live with the Seneca; it belongs to the genre of the once popular "captivity narrative" (Cook-Lynn, 2004). While not all teachers in the literature circle had read this story, they had read others like it, wished they could have read it, or could remember dreaming of having the life of an "Indian" roaming the plains on horseback with braids streaming behind in the wind. In the literature circle, this story was juxtaposed with another "captivity" story, Sterling's (1992) *My Name is Seepetza*, which likewise tells a "true" story but one based on her

diaries as a young girl when she was taken away to live in a residential school. This rising genre within children's literature, which is based on the real life stories of Indigenous survivors of residential school, presents a "counter-story" to the traditional captivity story told from a white point of view, demonizing Indigenous peoples or, in the case of *Indian Captive*, also positioning Mary Jemison as a missionary who "civilizes the savages" (Strong-Wilson, 2006a).

The literature discussions were followed by monthly individual interviews intended to deepen teachers' reflections on how their literacy histories informed their teaching. Combined, the literature circle discussion, literacy autobiography and interviews continually brought teachers back to the particularity of their own storied horizons, for the purposes of recognizing their colonial formations as well as moving their horizons through a deepening consciousness. The rest of the article is devoted to describing these two processes in greater depth.

COLONIAL STORIED FORMATIONS

Cairney borrowed the word "cauldron" from J. R. R. Tolkien to describe the "soup" of stories in which we become steeped in childhood and adolescence (Cooper, as cited in Cairney, 1990, p. 478). When we ask adults to remember their childhood reading or when we read literacy memoirs, these accounts are often filled with images of "gobbling" or "devouring" (Wilson, 2003). Reading has aptly been likened to a digestive process (Grunmet, 1988). An attunement towards story begins with hearing repeated language patterns in song and rhyme, often from a familiar voice and that French feminist psychoanalysts, like Kristeva (1986), have associated with pre-language, the grounding or "chora" for linguistic communication (p. 93). As young children learn language, they also imbibe an understanding and expectation of how stories sound.

The image of the "cauldron" depicts a whole "world of story" into which children are recursively "dipped." Because of its size relative to other pots and pans, Tolkien no doubt chose the cauldron to suggest the *large* size of the repertoire. However, stories are not unique; they are cultural, being linked to what is or is not imagined as permissible within a society (Rogoff, 2003). Repetition and familiarity, while conducing to a deepening sense of story, also serves to constrain understanding. Using the lens of the study of the political economy of children's literature (Taxel, 2002), we need to ask questions about how stories become available, who publishes them, how they are being marketed, through which venues they become accessible,

as well as how they come to be seen as credible and desirable sources for children's enjoyment. We then need to also ask: what is being left out?

Despite the ostensible wealth of stories, much of the stories that have been, and are still being made, available to children are the same; the same in reproducing whiteness. In 1965, Nancy Larrick (1965) called the corpus of children's literature "the all-white world of children's books." She discovered that while many children's books featured non-white characters, the stories were told through a prism that placed an implicit value on portraying and maintaining "whiteness." If a non-white character was featured, it was his or her "difference" from a norm that was implicitly communicated. Her finding has since been replicated (Chall, Radwin, French & Hall, 1978; Sims, 1985). While modest inroads have been made in the publishing industry, the problem of a mainstreaming or "white-streaming" of children's stories remains (Agosto, Hughes-Hassell & Gilmore-Clough, 2003; Bradford, 2004; Mendoza & Reese, 2001), in part because editors, even those who work in presses devoted to publishing minority authors, remain subject to the prisms of their colonial storied formations (Atkins, 2005).

The "cauldron" of stories becomes a "given," in Grumet's (1991) sense; it becomes the background of a child's existence for which another "given," that of white privilege, also becomes unquestioned. Stories acquire *particular* meaning, though, because of the emotional value that individuals attach to them. When stories become significant markers within the formation of personal identity and are not easily dislodged from an individual's personal repertoire or "world," they become "touchstones," deeply shaping teachers' perceptual horizons (Strong-Wilson, 2006b).

"A touchstone is the name given to a smooth, dark stone that, when rubbed against gold and silver, was once used to verify the quality of alloys." Figuratively, it has come to signify "that which serves to test or try the genuineness of anything" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2004, as cited in Strong-Wilson, 2006b). Matthew Arnold first popularized the term, using it to set apart literary passages that were most deserving of being committed to memory. Because Arnold was an English Victorian essayist, poet, and school inspector, he favored passages derived from authors such as Shakespeare and Milton (Arnold, 1960). As Kermode (2004) noted, Arnold's touchstone passages "cannot, for all time and for everybody, bear the broad cultural significance he claims for them. If a culture is involved at all, it must be that of the Victorian professional class, perhaps especially that of men educated at Rugby and Oxford" (p. 41). Arnold was enormously influential, though, in linking such consciously formed touchstones with the consolidation of literary formation and along with it, a particular cul-

tural formation; literary touchstones have thus also operated within the curriculum as a “civilizing” influence of imperialism and colonialism (Said, 1993; Willinsky, 1998) and, along with that, the shaping of *topos*.

In medieval and Renaissance times, a *topos* was a specific place (as in a building) in which memories were stored so that a speaker could retrieve the various elements of an argument (Yates, 1984). The Renaissance understanding of *topos* functioned to deliberately prompt memory (through the *ars memoria*). *Topos* now work in more unconscious ways, becoming those places within a teacher’s “landscape of learning” (Greene, 1978a, p. 2) to which he or she returns to interpret and make sense of experience:

Stories are related to our being-in-the-world because the stories of ourselves arise out of ‘the patterns and schemata’ that ‘we use in the process of sense-making’ and these cultural patterns, which are also narratives, have been ‘made available to us’ by previous stories, the ones that we read or were read to us in childhood, studied in school and comprised the canon on which our literary and cultural education was based. (Greene, 1978b, p. 24)

One of the primary sources of attachment to story during early childhood occurs in connection with family or community. As Margot [pseudonym], one of the teachers in the study, commented: “When you give a book, you’re giving a gift of knowledge. But I think when you read together, it’s a bigger gift. It’s a gift of sharing time together. Sharing something enjoyable together” (Wilson, 2003, pp. 236-237). She was remembering the time that she used to spend on the couch snuggled up to her mom while her mom read to her. Building on reader response theorist Louise Rosenblatt, what we actually become attached to is the lived-through *experience* of the story, which resonates and connects with other lived experiences (Strong-Wilson, 2006b). Together, these experiences come to constitute a storied geography, a “landscape” (Greene, 1978a, p. 2) that shapes our “standpoint” on the world (Greene, 1978b, p. 33).

Teachers need opportunities to reclaim their own stories or “landscapes” so as to recognize their “standpoints.” However, reclamation becomes a truncated process of reification if touchstones are not recognized as formative, are allowed to re-subside into the unconscious, and fail to be counterpoised with stories that challenge them with an alternative perspective. Within a decolonizing education for white teachers, “counter-stories” fulfill this role while a “story of confrontation” represents a teacher’s decolonizing of his or her storied history.

DECOLONIZING STORIED FORMATIONS

A “counter-story” challenges a dominant or “master” story (Greene, 1995, p. 118). Bouchard (1977) explained that Foucault used the word “counter-memory” to describe those aspects of life that are “inscribed with the history of our otherness,” namely, “violence, transgression, madness, sexuality, death and finitude” (p. 8). Within a nation, “counter-memories” belong to those who the nation has excluded, subjected to violence, or attempted to suppress through policies of assimilation. Robina Thomas (2005), an Indigenous (Qwul’sih’uah’mat) scholar, writes about the stories that she grew up with. These stories comprised “idle chat” told in the course of daily interactions of Thomas’ people, who were Coast Salish (p. 237). Thomas can remember her grandmother telling her

why it is important to process fish this certain way. She reminds me how important fish was to her and how it was the main staple of their diet. She talks about how at one time the fish stocks were so plentiful and how the stocks were becoming depleted to that point where access to fish was very limited. And oh yes, I can hear her remind me that it is so wasteful to throw out the heads and tails when you could brew up the best fish head soup. (p. 237)

It might seem odd to characterize stories of everyday life as “counter-stories” but educational formation is embedded within lived experience (Grumet, 1991). That formation begins in the family or community, with the shaping of “generational memory,” a form of social memory that Misztal (2003) compares with Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of *habitus*. For the dominant group, generational memory subsists in “a set of embodied practices, tastes, attitudes, preferences and dispositions, which are sustained by collective memories” and “enforced by control” including “through rituals of exclusion” (Misztal, 2003, p. 88). Grumet (1991) reminds us that “for most of us, the location of our earliest and most poignant experiences of fear and pleasure, disgust and comfort, boredom and excitement, was home” (p. 74). The formation of “taste” is historically linked with the aesthetic (Gadamer, 1975/1998). Such experiences also become charged with cultural and political meaning, including the practices surrounding which texts we find pleasing to eye and ear.

Lutz (1997) documented the “dearth” in Canada in stories written by Indigenous authors. Prior to George Clutesi’s (Nuu-chah-nulth) (1967/1994) publication in the sixties of a collection of myths and legends from his own people, any Indigenous stories that appeared in print were written by non Indigenous authors. Emma LaRoque (Cree/Metis) has traced, within the Canadian context, the names of those Indigenous

storytellers and poets who were telling stories yet whose stories were not recognized, acknowledged, or published. For Emma LaRoque (1996), any story told or written by an Indigenous person constitutes “resistance literature,” that is, literature not written within the “civ/sav dichotomy” but by living human beings whose very presence is testimonial to resisting colonization: “we stand here to say, we have endured and we are not ‘the Other’ of White invention ... We have been dispossessed, marginalized, censored and appropriated, yes, but the message is resistance” (p. 118). A counter-story is not simply an alternative version of a story; it is a story told from the point of view of the colonized, and thus “post-colonial” in the sense that Ashcroft et al. (1989) intended, but with “colonized” understood, as Smith (1999) clarified, as speaking from a privileged position.

From the viewpoint of decolonizing education taken in this article, the situation cannot be fixed solely by improving white teachers’ access to stories through the greater availability on library and store shelves of counter-stories. Nor is it enough to make teachers aware of “cultural authenticity” (that is, whether an Indigenous, rather than a non-Indigenous, author wrote the story). The pedagogical challenge is that counter-stories have been forgotten or suppressed: “Teaching ... has to deal not so much with *lack* of knowledge as with *resistances* to knowledge” (Felman, 1982, p. 30; emphasis in the original). In order to overcome resistance on the part of white teachers, they need opportunities to (a) revisit their literacy memoirs, in social contexts with other teachers, to perceive that the “cauldron of stories” is bound by implicit criteria of inclusion and exclusion; (b) re-experience and acknowledge the significance to them, personally and professionally, of touchstone stories; and (c) experience “counter-stories” that challenge the “master story” implicit in their touchstones and the “cauldron” of stories. For teachers to genuinely appropriate the learning process as their own and instigate change/decolonization, they need to produce a “story of confrontation,” which is a story about *their* confrontation of their storied past. Such a story would represent the beginning of a shifting of horizons.

“A story of confrontation ... brings us back to where we began” (Greene, 1965, p. 423). It brings us back to our beginnings in story (in home, family and community); to the beginnings of story, which need to be sought in the places where we first heard and imbibed stories (in early childhood); to the *topos*, or touchstones, from which our own stories began to be told; in short, to formation in and through story. A “story of confrontation” is a narrative that a teacher creates through examining the interstices pro-

duced between their storied sources; in Grumet's (1981) words, the places where the pieces do not quite meet. This project of decolonizing the white subject, which very much begins with the local and autobiographical, thus becomes one part of a larger international project of decolonization led by Indigenous peoples.

What follows, in an endeavor to make this decolonization process more concrete, is a highly condensed version of a "story of confrontation" that Faye [pseudonym], a white teacher who participated in the 2003 study, began to compose as she re-examined the sources of her construction of Indigenous peoples (see also Strong-Wilson, in press). This composing process happened over time (January to June 2003) and through discussion of children's literature with other teachers in the monthly book club and reflective interviews conducted with the researcher. Her thinking on the topic began with remembering stories from her childhood—particular genres and titles—but then also moved into remembering living in a remote and rural part of British Columbia, Canada, and how she gained access to books. This led to reflections on her family context: that her father owned a farm as well as a sawmill.

Her story of confrontation was sparked when, in one of the literature circles, another teacher's touchstone story, Ballantyne's *Coral Island*, was set beside Olsen's (2001), *No Time to Say Goodbye*. The excerpt from *Coral Island* depicted a scene in which three white British boys on a deserted island "tame" the cannibalistic Natives while the excerpt from *No Time to Say Goodbye* told of the experiences of First Nations children in the Kuper Island Residential School and of the children's resistance to their "education." After reflecting further on the stories and literature discussion, in which she had been a vocal participant in commenting on the white boys' arrogance, Faye began to remember her own involvement, as an adult, with Indigenous teachers and their families who had gone to that very same residential school depicted in Olsen's book. At that time, Faye's attention had been directed on mentoring a novice Indigenous teacher; however she now began to recall things that this teacher had also told her about her history and family.

Faye returned to her memories of family: her father's position of power as owner and employer on the farm and in the sawmill. She further remembered that the workers were often Indigenous, that her father picked up and dropped off the workers at a certain place, that she had often accompanied him, and that the place where they were picked up was the residential school just outside of town, although she had repressed the memory of the place as being a residential school.

We went by the Indian reservation. As you come into town, it's right there. And years later, I heard that there had been all kinds of abuse going on at that place [the residential school] and I couldn't help but think to myself that all those years when we drove by there, that that was going on for those children and what a terrible thing, and we didn't even really realize that. We weren't aware. It was as if they were a different part of the world. (Wilson, as cited in Strong-Wilson, in press)

The facts about residential schools were known, or strongly suspected, but not acted on because it was easier to say that "they were a different part of the world" and therefore not her family's responsibility. However, her construction of her family's innocence is contradicted by her memory of a man who was like an uncle to her.

They [my parents] offered work to them and we often had lots of First Nations people working on the ranch or at my father's sawmill. I can remember one person who spent a lot of time with us, and had come to us as an older teenager. Even in hard times, he would stay on. He battled alcohol and other substance abuse in his own life but he was such a wonderful person. He was almost like an uncle to me. He helped take care of us kids. (Wilson, as cited in Strong-Wilson, in press)

She remembered her parents' attitude towards this person:

We were, as children, encouraged not to have conversation and contact with the working men, because they were rough and uncouth and beneath our standard, according to my mother. So, we didn't get to know them. If we had, we might have heard some of the things that went on there and been able to speak out, but they weren't considered someone that we should get to know. (Wilson, as cited in Strong-Wilson, in press)

Faye begins to produce a "story of confrontation" based on re-examining her own relationship and that of her family to Indigenous people; that relationship is contained in specific memories from childhood. Key to production of a "story of confrontation" is that the teacher produces it from his or her own memories and examination of those memories.

If story is as formative as is claimed, and if the influences of this formation are initiated in childhood but are also felt throughout the lifespan, then it is clear that story will not entirely disappear with its "deconstruction." For instance, a "story of confrontation" is not one that is likely to elicit attachment in the same way as hearing a picture book read aloud while snuggled beside a parent. While teachers are not likely to re-cleave to the same touchstone story upon which a shadow has been cast (e.g., Strong-Wilson, 2006b), or at least not in the same fond way as before (e.g., Strong-Wilson, 2006a), they can, and in the context of this study, did seek

out another “touchstone” story, one that connected with their own lived history but in such a way as to also incorporate their new awareness. Several chose a “counter-story” as a new touchstone.

Decolonization cannot eliminate attachment to story; nor should it. A decolonizing education needs to keep in mind a human tendency to cleave to story. “It’s turtles all the way down,” Thomas King [Cherokee/Cree] (2003, p. 1). If you listen carefully to the ways in which teachers speak about their touchstone stories, ties of affection run deep and form an inter-textual nexus with other stories, thus shaping a “horizon” by which they implicitly judge other stories and experiences. This is why it is important to provide alternatives, such as well-told counter-stories, ones that teachers could relate to. Increasingly, one form that counter-stories take is incorporating the perspective of “white traitors”; I am thinking, for instance, of Karen Hesse’s (2001) novel, *Witness*.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, based on the results of a study, I have addressed what decolonization for white teachers might involve, outlining the role that stories play in educational formation and the significance of teacher engagement in decolonizing their own stories. Touchstones are particularly resilient to being dislodged, and require that teachers, in Maxine Greene’s words, have opportunities to become aware of their standpoints on the world. White teacher awareness of their constructions of “difference” begins with, as well as becomes rooted in, teachers’ memories and knowledge of their own “landscapes” (Greene, 1978a, p. 2). Awareness of a landscape is a teacher’s starting-point for learning. A landscape is also the background against which learning takes place. Drawing on Merleau Ponty’s (1964) language of “primordial” or “pre-reflective” landscapes (Greene, 1995, p. 73), Greene (1978a) explained that “landscapes” refer to those “personal histories” or “lived lives” in which individuals feel “grounded” (p. 2). This landscape becomes a “horizon” (Alcoff, 2006) that shapes what it is possible to see and experience. Touchstone stories need to be challenged by counter-stories in order to produce a shifting of horizons, a movement signaled by the teacher’s production of a “story of confrontation.” Such a story necessarily “brings us back to where we began” (Greene, 1965, p. 423): to the formative stories that, like Arnold’s rendering of “touchstones,” become invisible measures by which others, and others’ stories, are judged.

One of the key points of this article has been to emphasize the formative power of stories, whether they are picture books that a child imbibes

in a haze of sleepiness or oral stories told animatedly by a family member. The affective ties associated with participating in, and identifying with, a story are formative of horizons. The other essential point is that teachers, including white teachers, need to be full, autobiographical participants in reclaiming these stories from the recesses of memory so as to see them in a broader, historical and ultimately, international perspective, in the sense of having broader implications beyond the local and immediate and thus, in participating in an international project of decolonization through the moving of horizons.

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