

NATIVE AMERICAN HUMOR AS RESISTANCE: BREAKING IDENTITY MOULDS IN THOMAS KING'S *GREEN GRASS, RUNNING WATER*¹

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Certainly the time frame we presently inhabit has much that is shabby and tricky to offer; and much that needs to be treated with laughter and ironic humor; it is this spirit of the trickster creator that keeps Indians alive and vital in the face of horror.

Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*

The trickster is a comic liberator in a narrative and the sign with the most resistance to social science monologues: if not in narrative discourse the trickster is 'released' as an 'object' in translation.

Gerald Vizenor, "Trickster Discourse"

While on the surface a heavily dialogical and tremendously funny novel, *Green Grass, Running Water* (1993) presents readers with one of those unlikely turnarounds in postcolonial history in which a human collectivity on the verge of extinction finds new ways to resist the colonizer's epistemological and spiritual prerogatives. Author Thomas King, a writer of Cherokee, Greek and German ancestry, makes that resistance effective by engaging in the active recuperation and comic use of Native Americans' endangered cultural heritage. This is by no means an easy task because, as Said (1993: xiii) reminds us, "the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them". It is probably for this

reason that King has chosen to highlight the comic potential of his fiction at the expense of other more subversive purposes that it, no doubt, also serves (see Gzowski 1999: 65). Certainly, one of the most remarkable effects of his use of humor is, as several scholars have maintained (Goldman 1999; Daxell 2003), its capacity to reconcile the stark facts of tribal annihilation with the tradition of continuance and bonding so common among Native American cultures. As a result of this ‘reconciliation of opposites’, instead of representing his culture as superior to others, King is seen to find a balance between cultures by exposing the truth and the falsity in all of them. In this reading of the novel, its greatest achievement would lie in its ability to help readers from very diverse backgrounds to cross borders into different cultural traditions and to find out for themselves their virtues and shortcomings (Cf. Matchie and Larson 1996; Andrews 2002). Or to use Fee and Flick’s (1999: 132) words to describe the same phenomenon, “the reward for following King’s merry chase is the pure pleasure of getting the point or the joke, the pleasure of moving across the border separating insider and outsider”.

While it is true that this ‘mediating’ component may seem momentous in analyses of the novel focusing on the interaction and border-crossing between traditions of a distinct kind, I believe that King’s narrative also sets out to elicit more critical responses from the audience. Beneath the humorous veneer of the work, there is also a severe critique of the type of socio-surgical incisions that colonial ventures inflict on indigenous territories. Fanon (1968: 39) accurately rendered these cleavages in his classic *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he argued that “[t]he zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rules of Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity”. Although this exclusivity is not immediately apparent, for some Native characters seem to be allowed to cross the border between the white and the reservation worlds unobtrusively, the novel gradually attests to the impossibility of establishing communication and harmony between the two. Not only does this fact become evident every time characters from the two cultures meet to try to settle their irresolvable conflicts but, more importantly perhaps, the book pits two radically different narrative forms—one oral, the other written—against each other to show that no complementariness is attainable between them. The object of this contribution is to demonstrate that King’s use of Native humor transcends the idea of a felicitous symbiosis between two traditions by means of “a complex interweaving of people’s backgrounds, experiences, attitudes, and choices” (Matchie and Larson 1996: 154). Instead, as my discussion hopes to show, his ultimate aim is to undercut some of the most prevalent and injurious discursive practices deployed by Western civilization.² Novelist Margaret Atwood (1990: 244) has probably come closer to the mark in this sense when, in a review

of two earlier stories by King, she concluded that “his humor becomes a subversive weapon to invert white ways of thinking”.

Before I move into my analysis of King’s novel, I will briefly discuss a parallel example of the use of humor in narrative, which may also prove illustrative of what Vizenor (1993: 196) has called “the [comic] sign with the most resistance” to the monologic discourse of social science. A number of years ago the Basque Television Network (*eitb*) launched a series of commercials which were intended to apprise the audience of the policy of broadmindedness and interculturalism pursued by the channel. With witty humor, not unlike that present in King’s fiction, these TV advertisements suggested that past and present, the native and the foreign, can successfully cohabit in a new Basque Country, in which different traditions will eventually merge into interesting cultural formations. Nevertheless, under the motto of *Zabal Zabalik* (Wide Open), these commercials could be seen to signify on two distinct levels. On one level, they were meant to entertain and to arouse self-complaisant feelings in the spectator by means of a ludicrous treatment of the subject, while, on another level, they unwittingly preempted the foremost implications of foreign incorporations into Basque culture. In one of these commercials, for instance, we see a young *baserritarra* (Basque countryman) wearing a traditional regional outfit and flexing his muscles to lift a massive stone. Behind him, seated on a bench, there are four elderly characters looking proudly upon him. As everybody is waiting for the young man to bend down and raise the stone from the ground, he makes a stylish swing and we hear the sound of a golf club hitting the ball. The camera shifts to the four elders, one of whom has fallen backwards as a result of the shock and another, open-mouthed, loses his cigar as the golf ball whizzes past his nose. After breaking a window, the ball ends up in a henhouse sharing a nest with two or three eggs, while a hen looks down on it quite puzzled. Predictably, what most viewers saw was the ingenious and amusing combination of a Basque rural sporting tradition and a more modern and universal game. Little thought was given, in fact, to the inconsistencies deriving from the kind of landscape, the set of rules, the number of players, or even the social status that golf-playing usually entails. To the attentive viewer, however, a subliminal message will be conveyed in the commercial: the likelihood that these two sports will be played by the same people in the Basque Country nowadays is almost non-existent —at least, as long as the socio-cultural connotations associated with them remain so at odds. The bewildered gaze of the hen at the end of the ad speaks volumes about the distance separating the worlds being allegedly reconciled in it. Hence, while a surface interpretation of the commercial is likely to bring the gentle and politically-correct message of the campaign to the foreground, a deeper reading would unveil some more resistance-laden connotations by now familiar to those of us living in the region.

In the introduction to *Black Literature and Literary Theory*, Gates discusses at some length the need of African-American artists to become “masters of the figurative”, since learning to say one thing to mean something different was very much at the root of their survival as a race with its own cultural tradition.³ Something similar could also be said about Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*, which conceals, behind the façade of easy comicality and high volatility of the linguistic sign, a stubborn resistance and unflagging aspiration to change the ways in which Native Americans perceive themselves and are perceived by others. Benito (1999: 328) notes in an article entitled “The Poetics and the Politics of Resistance” that “if literary texts were crucial to the formation of colonial discourses, they are also a means of appropriating, inverting and resisting dominant ideologies”. King’s novel accomplishes precisely this type of re-appropriation and inversion thanks to a Native brand of humor that effects “a subversive re-ordering of relations in the prominent fields of imperialist, capitalist, and masculinist power” (Donaldson 1995: 40). As will become evident in the ensuing pages, King manages to subsume important passages of Euro-American religious, intellectual, and historical doctrine in an overall Native framework that reveals their nonsense and ill will. This is done by introducing such widely-used techniques among American Indian storytellers as the inclusion of a trickster figure, anachronistic elements, subversive intertextual references, plays on words, or the satiric treatment of stereotypes. All these comic resources are brought into the text with a foremost aim in mind: to undo the Western performance of epistemological and spiritual domination. Arteaga (1999: 336) has eloquently commented on the great importance of humor for groups who have been dispossessed of their culture and homeland:

In unequal power relations, laughter can have tremendous power; it can afford the weak the means to disarm the powerful. Making light of a situation diffuses the tense relations and undermines the rigid order of those relations. By laughing with, and laughing at, the oppressor, the oppressed upset the established order, if for a moment, and allow for an alternate relationship. And beyond humor, irony accomplishes the same thing.

Beginning with the very title of the novel, which obviously refers to the white man’s unfulfilled promises to keep the treaties with the Indians “as long as the grass is green and waters run”, King funnels all his intelligence and narrative skills to challenge the margins and identity moulds that non-Native teleology and epistemology have imposed on their cultures. He takes advantage of all kinds of ‘narrative chances’ to resist —although rarely to reverse— the subjugation of the mind and the annihilation of the spirit that have characterized the histories of the (mostly white) people who have subdued other cultures.⁴

Green Grass, Running Water can hardly be said to exhibit the type of plot we are used to in the landmarks of the Western canon. On the contrary, the work

resembles much more a piece of jazz in which a number of instruments keep composing their contrapuntal melodies in a syncopated manner. King himself has explained that his goal in writing such a broken and discontinuous narrative is to create a sense of movement and the effects of oral storytelling:

[...] if you have a deck of cards, you know, you can see each individual card, but if you take that deck and you flip it really quickly it gives you the illusion of movement. Each individual card is a rather short section, but if you snap'em [sic] fast enough then you wind up with this sense of movement and that is what I wanted to do in the novel. (in Gzowski 1995: 66)

This rapid interpolation of different story lines does, if nothing else, succeed in keeping the readers' attention, as they are required to shift gears in their reading at every other turn of a page. The book comprises a minimum of four different sub-plots which, at least at the outset, seem to be only obliquely related. On the one hand, we find the unlikely love triangle formed by Lionel Red Dog, a hapless TV salesman who has turned John Wayne into the beacon of his life; Alberta Frank, a university history professor who longs to have a baby although, ideally, without a male partner; and Charlie Looking Bear, a lawyer working for *Duplessis International Associates*, a firm involved in a legal battle against the land and water rights of the Blackfoot Indians. On the rival front of this unequal battle is Eli Stands Alone, Lionel's uncle, who is also a university professor and whose mother's house happens to be located downstream from the spillway of the Grand Baleen Dam. After his wife's death, Eli goes back to the reservation and risks his life to defend the Native rights to the land beneath the dam. A third sub-plot is put together by interweaving several Christian and Indian creation narratives. Four mythical Native Women run into personages from the Old and New Testament, with the most unforeseeable developments:

First Woman's garden. That good woman makes a garden and she lives there with Ahdamn. I don't know where he comes from. Things like that happen, you know. So there is that garden. And there is First Woman and Ahdamn. And everything is perfect. And everything is beautiful. And everything is boring. So First Woman goes walking around with her head in the clouds, looking in the sky for things that are bent and need fixing. So she doesn't see that tree. So that tree doesn't see her. So they bump into each other. Pardon me, says that Tree, maybe you would like something to eat. That would be nice, says First Woman, and all sorts of good things to eat fall out of that Tree. Apples fall out. Melons fall out. Bananas fall out. Hot dogs. Fry bread, corn, potatoes. Pizza. Extra-crispy fried chicken. Thank you, says First Woman, and she picks up all that food and brings it back to Ahdamn. (King 1993: 40-41)

The last sub-plot concerns four uncannily ancient Blackfoot Indians (Robinson Crusoe, the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, and Hawkeye) who, after running away from

a mental asylum, set about “fixing the world” with the invaluable assistance of tricky Coyote and the first-person narrator. The main function of these two liminal figures is to help —and sometimes hinder— the telling of everybody’s story (Cf. Matchie and Larson 1996: 155). In spite of the diversity of the characters’ personalities and goals, and although the novel’s structure is heavily indebted to some important tribal features —orality and cyclical character, most conspicuously—, all these characters and story lines converge in two climactic events at the end of the book: a Sun Dance ceremony and the bursting of the Grand Baalen Dam.

According to Donaldson (1995: 29), *Green Grass, Running Water* reveals the kind of longing for the signifier and volatility of intertextuality that are typical among oppressed peoples engaged in the postcolonial struggle against cultural and religious domination. Like Gerald Vizenor or Sherman Alexie, King also seems to be convinced that the absorption and transmutation of one cultural system by another is a useful material practice enabling the recuperation and empowerment of traditions that would otherwise be doomed by current politics and economics. Thus, via a highly contesting intertextuality in which “writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis” (Kristeva 1980: 77), King’s novel manages to transmit the dialogical matrix of Native oral discourse while, at the same time, also undermines some of the foundations of Western myths. One of the most successful instances of this ‘deconstructive’ intertextuality is found in the indictment that Judeo-Christian anthropocentrism and sexism receives when biblical narratives are seen in the light of Native creation stories:

Are you all right? Changing Woman asks Old Coyote.

Pssst, says Old Coyote.

Why are you talking to animals? says the little man. This is a Christian ship. Animals don’t talk. We got rules.

I fell out of the sky, says Changing Woman. I’m very sorry that I landed on Old Coyote.

The sky! shouts the little man. Hallelujah! A gift from heaven. My name’s Noah, and you must be my new wife.

I doubt that, says Changing Woman.

Lemme see your breasts, says Noah. I like women with big breasts. I hope God remembered that.

Don’t do it, says one of the Turtles. He’ll just get excited and rock the canoe.

I have no intention of showing him my breasts, says Changing Woman.

Talking to the animals again, shouts Noah. That’s almost bestiality, and it’s against the rules.

What rules?

Christian rules. (160)

Evidently, Noah becomes a laughing stock during this lively conversation because of his blatant misreading of a number of elements that are commonplace in Native creation stories, which ends up making him sound like a despotic male chauvinist. Nonetheless, it is more than likely that King's most corrosive criticism is being directed at the kind of attitudes that the white man exhibited toward Native spirituality when they first came into contact. In connection with this point, Turbide (1993: 44) wrote in an early review of the novel that "[b]y portraying biblical stories from a native point of view, King shows how illogical and foreign the natives found the Christian religion [...] and] he illustrates how white culture misinterpreted, ridiculed and even outlawed native beliefs". In passages like those quoted above, King is able to retrieve some of the ideals of wholeness and reciprocity —so central to Native religious sensibility— by setting them side by side with the misogynous and often brutal ways of Western theologies.⁵ Thanks to these intertextual cross-references, the author achieves a reversal of power relations that, besides increasing the comic temperature of the text, also contributes to the continuance of important tribal values and rituals.

But if biblical stories are certainly one of King's favorite targets in his efforts to dismantle Western myths, the same could be said about his handling of some literary classics and cowboy movies. Evidently, the names adopted by the four old Indians —whose intertextuality is also beyond any question— are an initial sign of this writer's keenness on literary allusions that contravene the significance of the original scripts. Early in the novel, we begin to realize that the runaway Indians are none other than First, Changing, Thought, and Old Woman, "the four archetypal Indian women who come right out of oral creation stories" (Gzowski 1995: 67) in disguise:

It looks like the work of Indians, says those live rangers. Yes, they all say together. It looks just like the work of Indians. And those rangers look at First Woman and Ahdamn.

Definitely Indians, says one of the rangers, and the live rangers point their guns at First Woman and Ahdamn.

Just a minute, says First Woman, and that one takes some black cloth out of her purse. She cuts some holes in that black cloth. She puts that black cloth around her head.

Look, look, all the live rangers says, and they point their fingers at First Woman. It's the Lone Ranger. Yes, they says, it is the Lone Ranger.

That's me, says First Woman.

Hooray, says those rangers, you are alive.

That's me, says First Woman.

Boy, says one of the live rangers, that's good news. I'll just shoot this Indian for you.

No, no, says First Woman. That's my Indian friend. He helped save me from the rangers.

You mean the Indians, don't you? says those rangers.
That's right, says First Woman with the mask on. His name is Tonto.
That's a stupid name, says those rangers. Maybe we should call him Little Beaver, or Chingachgook or Blue Duck.
No, says First Woman, his name is Tonto.
Yes, says Ahdamn, who is holding his knees from banging together, my name is Tonto.
Okay, says those rangers, but don't say we didn't try to help. And they gallop off, looking for Indians and buffalo and poor people and other good things to kill. (75-76)

Smith (1997: xii) notes that trickster-like figures, such as those represented by these four mythical women, "revel in the hazardous complexity of life" in colonized settings and that their main function is "to shake things up, splinter the monologic, shatter the hierarchies" so as to permit a closer study of difference. Although King's use of subversive allusion is admittedly attenuated by the comic brushstrokes, there is little question that his cross-textual intrusions are an attack on the values and interpretations frequently attached to some of the classics in Western literature. This Copernican revolution in literary meaning is achieved most often by engaging in modes of figuration completely different from the teleological storyline on which the Euro-American tradition has usually relied. Notice, for example, the unexpected and hilarious turn that Melville's classic *Moby Dick* takes in King's hands when Ahab is displaced from his all-dominant position:

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We're looking for the white whale, Ahab tells his men. Keep looking.
So Ahab's men look at the ocean and they see something and that something is a whale.
Blackwhaleblackwhaleblackwhalesbianblackwhalesbianblackwhale, they all shout.
Black whale? yells Ahab. You mean white whale, don't you? Moby-Dick, the great male white whale?
That's not a white whale, says Changing Woman. That's a female whale and she's black.
Nonsense, says Ahab. It's Moby-Dick, the great white whale.
You're mistaken, says Changing Woman, I believe that is Moby-Jane, the Great Black Whale. (219-220)

Like Morrison's (1992: 31-59) ground-breaking reassessment of Poe, Melville, and Twain in *Playing in the Dark*, King, instead of concentrating on the hegemonic white patriarchs, also shifts the reader's attention to black, female, and even lesbian America. Moreover, in this re-invention of the original sea epic, not only are Ahab's perceptions and disquisitions proven to be clamorously incorrect but, when he finally decides to throw everybody overboard for challenging his viewpoint, "the great male adventure story turns into a female friendship story" (Fee and Flick 1999: 135). To the reader's bewilderment and amusement, Changing Woman and Moby-Jane are portrayed riding the waves in an overtly erotic embrace:

Perhaps we could swim some more, says Changing Woman.

That would be lovely, says Moby-Jane, but I have to get back and sink that ship again.

Moby-Jane and Changing Woman hug each other. Changing Woman is very sad.

Good-bye, says Changing Woman. Have fun sinking that ship. (249)

No need to explain that the sinking of the *Pequod* in this subaltern narrative represents the vanquishing of something much larger and more dangerous than egocentric Ahab. It is the whole Western binary and hierarchical way of seeing that is being sabotaged here. In this regard, Bakhtin's (1981: 366) reflections on carnivalesque techniques seem particularly appropriate for examining King's fiction, since the release of alternative voices brings to an end "the hegemony of a single and unitary language" and causes "a verbal and semantic decentering of the ideological world". The key aim of all these intertextual references is to upset previously controlling ideologies by means of the intervention of voices and perspectives that had been hitherto excluded or, at least, relegated to the margins.⁶

Although the impact of these Western master-narratives on the psychology and lifestyle of many of the Native characters in the novel should never be underestimated, yet, what most effectively seems to subjugate them is the existence of representations that construct them as a 'fixed Other', needed by the white world to maintain a given order. Bhabha (1994: 66) defines stereotype as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated [...]"; it is this ambivalence —and the silence of other actors— that ensures both its perdurability and discriminatory power in colonized contexts. Aware of the centrality of stereotyping in processes of conquest and domination, King engages some of the malign ways in which the image of the Indian has been manipulated by the Western mind in order to reify its difference. Late in the novel, Old Woman meets "a short, skinny guy in a leather shirt with fringe standing behind one of the trees" who mistakes her for Chingachgook. Predictably, he is Nathaniel Bumpo, "Post-Colonial Wilderness Guide and Outfitter" (433), who is known by his friends as *Nasty* Bumpo. Like Ahab and Noah earlier on, Nasty displays the same narrow-mindedness and prejudices that distinguish most non-Native characters in the novel:

Indians have Indian gifts, says Nasty Bumpo. And Whites have white gifts. [...]

Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes. Indians don't talk much. Indians have good eyesight. Indians have agile bodies. These are the Indian gifts, says Nasty Bumpo.

Interesting, says Old Woman.

Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sophisticated. Whites are sensitive. These are all white gifts, says Nasty Bumpo.

So, says Old Woman. Whites are superior, and Indians are inferior.

Exactly right, says Nasty Bumpo. Any question? (434-435)

It could be argued, of course, that King decides to take the easy path every time he wants to show the intolerance and racism of the white world, as one can fairly easily recast these literary figures into plainly detestable beings. But if this were so, he could be held responsible for resorting to tactics similar to those used by the colonizer since, as Allen (1983: 189) warns us, when authors and critics “[s]implistically delineate unifying characteristics of contemporary Indians [and whites], they will repeat the sins of the fathers by manipulating new stereotypes to suit their concepts of ‘ethnic’ or ‘minority’ literature”. Nevertheless, King avoids this pitfall by never using his re-appropriation of colonial discourse to institute a similar form of govern(ment)ality or domination; on the contrary, his repetitions and irony are continually producing their own slippages and differences (Cf. Slapkauskaitė 2006).

It is in his portrayal of the more contemporary and realistic characters that King is at his best, for it is in them that his “cartographies of difference” (Goldman 1999: 20) become more subtle and accomplished. The synopses of the sub-plots above should have made clear that it is diversity and heterogeneity that characterize the gallery of Native portraits appearing in the novel. Owens (1992: 18) notes that most contemporary Indian novelists eschew in their fiction the poetics of the American gothic with its guilt-burdened wilderness and doomed, one-dimensional Natives, “[...] emphatically making the Indian the hero of other destinies, other plots”. Still, in spite of the conspicuous differences the reader observes between characters like Alberta, Charlie, Lionel, or Latisha, the latter are quite often perceived by Anglo-Americans as the embodiment of an aboriginal identity and age-old traditions. Clifford Sifton, the constructor who built the Grand Baileen Dam, is a case in point as he can rarely see beyond inherited stereotypes and his own business interests:

“Hell, Eli, those treaties aren’t worth a damn. Government only made them for convenience. Who’d of guessed that there would still be Indians kicking around in the twentieth century”.

“One of life’s little embarrassments”.

“Besides, you guys aren’t real Indians anyway. I mean, you drive cars, watch television, go to hockey games. Look at you. You’re a university professor”.

“That’s my profession. Being Indian isn’t a profession”.

“And you speak as good English as me”.

“Better”, said Eli. “And I speak Blackfoot too. My sisters speak Blackfoot. So do my niece and nephew”.

“That’s what I mean. Latisha runs a restaurant and Lionel sells televisions. Not exactly traditionalist, are they?”

“It’s not exactly the nineteenth century, either”.

“Damn it. That’s my point. You can’t live in the past. My dam is part of the twentieth century. Your house is part of the nineteenth”. (155)

In the best tradition of Socratic dialogue, but also borrowing heavily from the kind of rhetorical contests often played in Native gatherings, this conflictive exchange conveys overtly the kind of pigeonholing that indigenous peoples have been subjected to in Euro-American minds and histories. Sifton exhibits a typically colonialist attitude toward the Natives that, in marking them out as uniform and inferior, tries to simplify and reduce their variegated spheres of activity. Bhabha (1994: 70-71) argues, following very much the same line, that “colonial discourse produces the colonized as a reality which is at once an ‘other’ and yet entirely knowable and visible”.

Lionel Red Dog, the TV salesman, is very likely the best example in the novel of a Blackfoot Indian who has completely lost his sense of selfhood and orientation in a world where Natives are confined to roles as losers and ‘limited beings’. As his aunt Norma constantly reminds him, Lionel was driven from very early in his purposeless existence by the illusion of turning into a white hero:

By the time Lionel was six, he knew what he wanted to be.

John Wayne.

Not the actor, but the character. Not the man, but the hero. The John Wayne who cleaned up cattle towns and made them safe for decent folk. The John Wayne who shot guns out of the hands of outlaws. The John Wayne who saved stagecoaches and wagon trains from Indian attacks.

When Lionel told his father he wanted to be John Wayne, his father said it might be a good idea, but that he should keep his options open. (265)

Lionel, who is nearing the troubling age of forty, promises himself on several occasions that he is going to talk to Bill Bursum, his abusive and insensitive employer at the TV store, about his intention of resuming his university studies. Likewise, he intends to update Alberta on his plans for the future in a final attempt to gain her affection. However, the pressure of Western myths has lain too heavily on him for his life prospects to be able to change overnight and, at the end of the book, it is still unclear whether he will show the courage to make that definite turn. Yet, unsure as Lionel is, he enjoys a glimpse of hope in the late stages of the novel when the four runaway Indians and Coyote play a funny trick on the predictable Westerns that Bursum loves to watch on his TV sets:⁷

The soldiers ran back to their logs and holes and rocks, shooting as they went. But as Lionel and Charlie and Eli and the old Indians and Bill and Coyote watched, none of the Indians fell. John Wayne looked at his gun. Richard Widmark was pulling the trigger on empty chambers. The front of his fancy pants was dark and wet.

“Boy”, said Eli, “they’re going to have to shoot better than that”.

And then Portland [Charlie's father] and the rest of the Indians began to shoot back, and soldiers began falling over. Sometimes two or three soldiers would drop at once, clutching their chests or their heads or their stomachs.

John Wayne looked down and stared stupidly at the arrow in his thigh, shaking his head in amazement and disbelief as two bullets ripped through his chest and out the back of his jacket. Richard Widmark collapsed facedown in the sand, his hands clutching at an arrow buried in his throat.

"Jesus!" said Bursum, and he stabbed the remote even harder. (358)

This radical revision of the closing scenes of *The Mysterious Warrior*⁸ is no doubt the most valuable birthday present Lionel could receive from Coyote and the four mythical figures, since it should allow him to see the kind of lie he has been living in as a result of his reliance on Western modes of representation. Goldman (1999: 28) has observed that readers become aware that "the younger generation's inability to reckon their place in the world stems, in part, from the fact that generation after generation of Native peoples have been forced to take direction from non-Natives, who expect them to play stereotyped, over-determined roles". Once the illusion of the white myths is destroyed and the linear trajectory of their narratives challenged and contested, Native characters are able to go back to their cultural roots in search of more organic and congenial paths of self-realization. Although Lionel and Charlie may need the guidance of their elders and some figures deeply-rooted in the oral tradition to relinquish the false idols they have been taught to venerate, *Green Grass, Running Water* makes it clear that there is hope for the retrieval of a Native identity and its rituals.

In fact, the two main female characters in the novel, Alberta Frank and Latisha Red Dog, seem to be much better equipped than their male counterparts to face the pressures that the non-Native world exerts on them. This may well derive from their adherence to their Indian heritage and the people who unconditionally work to preserve it. In the case of Alberta, her position as a professor of Native history at the University of Calgary has long familiarized her with the kind of misconceptions and disinterest that white Americans usually exhibit towards her people. Her lecture early in the novel on the Fort Marion Ledger Art (1874) fails to open her students' eyes to the incredible endurance and solidarity that this classic 'text' of Native art reveals in the face of dispossession and exile. Only one of her students —non-coincidentally named Helen Mooney⁹— seems to show some concern for the fate of the seventy-two Native prisoners who produced those marvelous drawings of a race on its way to extinction. But even more injurious to Alberta's unstable sense of selfhood than her pupils' lack of interest in her people are her encounters with other characters who, generally, project her into identity moulds utterly foreign to her nature. For instance, when she arrives in Blossom to celebrate Lionel's fortieth birthday and decides to stop at the local Lodge because

she detests driving at night, the desk clerk immediately categorizes her as the 'average' Indian wife:

"I'd like a room for the night".

"Mr. and Mrs.?"

"No, a room for one".

The desk clerk looked over his glasses at Alberta.

"As I recall, you have a university discount", she continued

"And does the lady work at a university?"

Alberta pulled out her university identification card and her driver's license.

The desk clerk smiled and handed her cards back to her. "You can't always tell by looking", he said.

"How true it is", said Alberta. "I could have been a corporate executive". (194-195)

As is the case here, due to her education and her experience in non-Native contexts Alberta is able to retaliate on most occasions when her individual freedom and identity are offended in such gross ways. Still, the kind of damage done to her personality and self-esteem by these frequent encounters with characters suffering from an 'image distortion disorder' cannot be easily estimated. Michael LeNoir (1998: 326) comments on this point that "[t]he perception painted by television of people of color becomes a reality, and it creates a background of anxiety and fear in America that is dangerous". It would be rather naïve to expect these Native women to walk out psychically unaffected by their collisions with all the rudeness and negativity that whites—and especially men—display toward them. Yet, Alberta's resistance to the power of Native stereotypes to set specific agendas for her future is rewarded in the last stages of King's novel by her full immersion in her people's Sun Dance ceremony and her unexpected pregnancy by a rain far more 'arousing' than Charlie's or Lionel's personalities:

Alberta felt a little weird sitting at the table, looking out the window at the parking lot, wrapped in a heavy blanket, holding a hair dryer on her lap. But it felt wonderful. And it was drying her clothes. Already she was beginning to feel her breasts again, and her panties had lost that awful clammy texture. In fact, working the nozzle of the hair dryer in particular directions felt slightly erotic. (392-393)

Latisha Red Dog's confrontation with white ethnocentrism and her combat against the process of stereotypical representation take a more truly Native and effective form. Unlike Alberta, she has remained closely attached to the Blackfoot Reservation and has allowed her parents and extended family to have an important influence on her lifestyle and world view. Despite her mistake in marrying George Morningstar,¹⁰ a lazy and irresponsible white American, she has managed to bring up and keep her three children together, and to run her family business quite successfully. In order to do so, she has relied on the organic strategies of the cycle and performance that in many ways permit her to escape the teleological narrative

patterns of the Western culture and to engage in alternative modes of self-representation. Rather than upsetting Native stereotypes by changing the expected path of her existence, the way Eli or Alberta do, Latisha prefers to fetishize them so as to be able to employ them as an affirmation of wholeness and solidarity and, at the same time, of anxiety over their inevitable difference with respect to other identities. She seems to have learnt that stereotypes are not harmful in themselves but may easily become so in the power relations between colonizer and colonized, if they are permitted to dispossess the Others of their right to be different. Bhabha (1994: 75) has formulated this same idea in the following terms:

The stereotype is not a simplification because it is a false representation of a given reality. It is a simplification because it is an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (which the negation through the Other permits), constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations. (emphasis in the original)

Latisha's "Dead Dog Café" is very likely the clearest manifestation of her profound understanding of the workings of stereotypical representations. As several conversations with her husband reveal, she is aware that what may hurt the psychological poise of her people is not so much the sweeping statements and foolish generalizations made by other groups about them but, rather, their inability to see beyond the kind of false fixity that they imply. With the invaluable assistance of her elders, she transforms a small town café into a successful tourist restaurant by keeping things simple and just going a bit beyond the usual expectations of her customers. Thus, the choice of a few pictures depicting Indians and dogs on the walls of the premises, and the change of name of the beef stew they cook every day bring about the miracle:

The food at the Dead Dog was good, but what drew tourists to the café was the ambience and the reputation that it had developed over the years. Latisha would like to have been able to take all the credit for transforming the Dead Dog from a nice local establishment with a loyal but small clientele to a nice local establishment with a loyal but small clientele *and* a tourist trap. But, in fact, it had been her auntie's idea. "Tell them it's dog meat", Norma had said. "Tourists like that kind of stuff".

That had been the inspiration. Latisha printed up menus that featured such things as Dog du Jour, Houndburgers, Puppy Potpourri, Hot Dogs, Saint Bernard Swiss Melts, with Doggie Doos and Deep-Fried Puppy Whatnots for appetizers. (117)

Latisha's consciousness that racist stereotypical discourse is not merely a question of setting up a flat and inaccurate image of the Other—but, also, of how those images are projected and introjected—allows her to reverse the positionings of her power relations with the white world. This reversal is important because it reveals a great deal of the 'fantasy' (always related to defense and desire) involved in the colonizer's habitual position of mastery (Cf. Bhabha 1994: 85-92). Her

observations near the end of the novel on the need to rebuild their grandmother's house beneath the dam —although, again, it is her aunt who takes the initiative— further suggest that there may be alternative ways for her people other than simply adopting the roles that non-Natives are constantly defining for them: “Latisha put her arm around Alberta. ‘Come on’, she said. ‘We’ll catch lunch at the Dead Dog, get changed, and get to work’” (464).

Although characters like Norma, Alberta, and Latisha do contribute significantly to the preservation and transmission of some of the essential values in tribal cultures —dignity, solidarity, and continuance, most noticeably—, the narrative would never have managed to create those “new cartographies of difference” without the active roles played by Coyote and the I-narrator. These figures have two fundamental functions in King's novel: on the one hand, they incorporate into the written text some of the key features of Native oral storytelling, thus forcing the reader to deal with two signifying codes and two forms of cultural dissemination all at once; on the other, they succeed in recovering a certain balance amid the apparent chaos of most situations by means of a type of humor that they believe to be integral to all kinds of life on this earth. Coyote, in particular, displays many of the features we associate with trickster figures in Native stories: he is versatile and ambiguous, a deceiver, shape-shifter and situation-inventor, and he is a sacred and lewd bricoleur (see Hynes 1993: 34). Again, King uses these two characters —or, rather, their voices— as counterpoints to the heroes depicted in Western myths, who often gain their stature in static fragments of written narratives. Unlike those personages, who are guided by a very rigid set of moral principles, these figures learn to live in a context of duplicity and volatility, tension and contradiction that hardly allows for the consolidation of more stable and definite values. On this point, Vizenor (1995: 4) further clarifies that “the trickster is comic in the sense that he does not reclaim idealistic ethics, but survives as a part of the natural world; he represents a spiritual balance in a comic drama rather than the romantic elimination of human contradiction and evil”.

It is no wonder that readers should sometimes feel disconcerted by the swiftness with which these characters oscillate between the Native and the non-Native, the sacred and the sacrilegious, the fantastic and the real, or the living and the dead. After a conversation between Old Woman and *Nasty* Bumpo, during which the latter tries to decide on the most adequate name for the former (Daniel Boone, Harry Truman, Arthur Watkins, or Hawkeye), Coyote and the narrator go on deliberating upon the issue:

“Hawkeye?” says Coyote. “Is that a good Indian name?”

“No”, I says. “It sounds like a name for a white person who wants to be an Indian”.

“Who would want to be an Indian?” says Coyote.

“Not me”, I says.

“Not me, either”, says Coyote. (437)

As usual, these dialogical structures seem to undermine the authority of several earlier written texts —most conspicuously those in Cooper’s *Leatherstocking Saga*— by means of highly ironic comments on those novels. Unlike Western narratives, though, rather than assuming that authority for themselves, these conversations exhibit a fluid and incomplete quality that makes meaning dependent on situation and historical context. By saying that neither of them wants to be an Indian, Coyote and the I-narrator are not just parodying and deconstructing Cooper’s script of Native romantic idealization, but also questioning some of the ways in which the Natives (mis)represent themselves in the novel. In this new light, it is not so surprising that the acts and judgments of these trickster figures should sometimes misfire or prove utterly incorrect. After all, they do not seem to be any freer than anyone else of the imperfections that plague most human beings. Hence, when the four old Indians accuse Coyote of having caused a terrible mess by destroying the Grand Baleen Dam near the end of the book, he can only reply:

“I didn’t do anything”, says Coyote. “I just sang a little”.

“Oh, boy”, said the Lone Ranger.

“I just danced a little, too”, says Coyote.

“Oh, boy”, says Ishmael.

“But I was helpful, too”, says Coyote. “That woman who wanted a baby. Now, that was helpful”.

“Helpful!” said Robinson Crusoe. “You remember the last time you did that?”

“I’m quite sure I was in Kamloops”, says Coyote.

“We haven’t straightened out *that* mess yet”, said Hawkeye.

“Hee-hee”, says Coyote. “Hee-hee”. (456)

Coyote’s hilarity is likely to derive from his consciousness that because his behavior does not respond to any preconceived moral principles, it is quite impossible to foresee the kind of meanings that it will give rise to: in a contrary spirit, like life itself, he just follows certain cycles that may result in happy denouements or some fatal consequences. In this sense, the connection made between Alberta’s impregnation by rain water and that of the Virgin Mary —by the Holy Ghost (?)— seems truly appropriate since in both cases it is for the storyteller and the audience to decide whether the signs left by these events on the narrative may help us understand something about the current plight of American Indians and about ourselves. As Hirsch (2004: 170) rightly explains, what King’s work ultimately creates is “human space, to the extent that we embody its ambiguities and contradictions, recognize the sweep and shifting tenor of its joys and sorrows, and remain open to various ways of perceiving and expressing all these things”.

Now, although it is a fact that the oral character of much of King’s text is intended to undermine not only the authority of the Western narratives it constantly interacts

with but also that of the ‘revisions’ it usually puts forth, it would be inaccurate to assume that the book is devoid of any final meaning or significance. Much has been written about *Green Grass, Running Water* as a novel that, by using a multivocal and oral discourse, “rejects the single plot which builds coherently to a significant climax and an all-encompassing resolution” (Bailey 1999: 46). And, indeed, the fact that it is difficult to speak of a single main character or a principal story line in the book may contribute, initially, to this impression that the story is only meant to stir up a feeling of amusing disorder that readers are to enjoy as pure entertainment. Nevertheless, as I remarked at the beginning of this article, it is quite characteristic of King to hide the most disruptive and critical elements of his fiction behind a mask of comicality that may divert the readers’ attention from what the text is truly doing. As most ethnographers well know, besides offering the audience a merry way to pass the time, Native storytelling also plays a part in the healing rituals aimed at repairing the physical and psychological damage inflicted by the dominant culture (cf. Daxell 2003). Hyde (1998: 12) notes in this regard that trickster stories are important to Native ‘survivance’ both as entertainment but also as medicine that “[k]nits things together again after disorder has left a wound”. It would then be a serious analytical blunder not to notice the key transformations undergone by most of the characters as a result of their trying experiences and the new equilibrium attained by the Blackfoot community after the ‘deluge’ that follows the bursting of the dam.¹¹ While it is true that many of the characters—especially those of the younger generation—pay a substantial price for breaking the identity moulds they had previously relied on, it is also clear that their participation in the Sun Dance ceremony and the regenerating effects of the collapse of the dam mark a profound change in their relation with their own culture. It seems only logical in this sense that the four old Indians should conclude after their short visit to Blossom, Alberta, that “we have fixed up part of the world” (466) since, at least, they have managed to make a handful of Native Americans aware of their ties with and responsibilities toward their people.

In order to render this resolution, King resorts once again to some of the comic techniques he has deployed throughout the novel: puns, anti-logocentrism, overlapping historical references and anachronisms, mocking stereotypes, and so on. Perhaps one of the most climactic moments in the book is the scene in which we are privy to the destruction of Sifton’s beautiful, shell-like construction—which, ironically, Eli compares to “a huge toilet” (148). Interestingly, the dam is not destroyed by an attack of Native activists or, even, solely by the effects of Coyote’s unruly singing and dancing, which are said to cause an earthquake:

Clifford Sifton and Lewis Pick watched the Nissan, the Pinto, and the Karmann-Ghia float into the dam just as the earthquake began. Almost imperceptibly, the waters swelled and the cars were thrown into the dam, hard, insistent. And before either

man realized what was happening, a tremor rolled in out of the west, tipping the lake on its end.

Pick and Sifton were knocked to the ground, and as they tried to stand, they were knocked down again. It was comical at first, the two men trying to find their footing, the cars smashing into the dam, the lake curling over the top.

But beneath the power and motion there was a more ominous sound of things giving way, of things falling apart. (454)

84 Readers are likely to find the comical “dance” of the dam keepers to the rhythms of its destruction funny. King’s depiction of the event, however, ostensibly conveys a serious critique of the ways the white man has been paving the way for his domination of the American landscape and its earlier settlers, and how that domination has later been historicized by Western culture. To the repeated references to the (re)creation of the world after the Flood, King adds on this occasion several allusions to the myth of the discovery of the New World, which according to many historians marked the beginning of modern times. Columbus’s caravels, the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa María*, are refashioned here as the three cars which fall into Parliament Lake and, eventually, precipitate the collapse of the huge construction. Any reader failing to get the in-joke about the consequences of the arrival of the white man’s technological innovations to the Americas would be missing much of the negative judgment that King is passing on this intrusion. While the West has usually interpreted this meeting of the two worlds as the initial step towards more developed and progress-driven societies, from the point of view of Native Americans this confluence of radically different cultures represented the beginning of their decline. The “ominous sound of things giving way, of *things falling apart*” (my emphasis) is, of course, related to the literal bursting of the dam and the flushing out of automobiles, concrete, steel, and other similar ‘detritus’ generated by civilization. And yet, by echoing the title of Achebe’s (1994) well-known novel about the impact of missionaries and commissioners on a small African village, King is also commenting on the disastrous consequences of the encroachment of Western culture upon the American landscape and its indigenous population.

For most critics, Eli Stands Alone becomes another innocent victim of this encroachment and his death tinges the ending of the novel with an unusually tragic tone. In trying to preserve the house that his mother built log by log right on what is now the spillway of the dam, he is fighting not only to retain his family’s properties but also to keep alive his tribe’s cultural heritage, which is being gradually annihilated by the introduction of modern technologies. It is only natural that the survivors in his family should feel sad and obliged to him when, a little over a month after the flood, they visit the place where his mother’s cabin used to stand. However, while the younger members believe that Eli’s demise represents

a sombre conclusion to his battle over the land and water rights of his people, Norma tries to convince them that his life and self-immolation were an example to be followed. She immediately sets to work on the reconstruction of her mother's cabin by looking around for the main posts:

“Not much left”, said Charlie.

“Everything's still here”, said Norma.

“Well, the cabin's not here”, said Charlie. “And neither is Eli”.

“Charlie!” said Alberta. “God, you can really be sensitive”.

Norma waved Charlie off. “Eli's fine. He came home. More than I can say for some people I know”. (461)

Despite the grief she must be feeling after those difficult circumstances, Norma finds the humor and strength necessary to try to entice all her relatives to join in the crusade against the invading civilization that Eli only partly completed. In her eyes, Eli “had a good life, and he lived it right” (460) and his disappearance, rather than a cause of sorrow and despair, should encourage others to take up the attitudes and responsibilities that the ‘survival’ of culture requires (Lousley 2004: 41). It is no coincidence that Eli meets his fate at dawn on the day of the tribal Sun Dance that he so much cherishes and that he enjoys a brief but reassuring conversation with the four ancient Indians who are intent on bringing some sense of order and cohesion to his community:

The old Indians turned to watch the sun rise. It was above the horizon now, too brilliant to look at directly.

“This is a nice place to live”, said the Lone Ranger.

“Is that the dam?” said Ishmael.

Eli turned and nodded. “That's right. Government built it to help Indians. There's a lake that goes with it”.

“Is the lake for Indians, too?” said Robinson Crusoe.

“So they say”, said Eli, turning away from the dam. “We're all supposed to be millionaires”.

“It doesn't look like an Indian dam”, said Hawkeye. “It doesn't look like an Indian lake”.

“Perhaps it's a Coyote dam”, says Coyote. “Perhaps it's a Coyote lake”.

Eli went into the kitchen and brought out more coffee cups. “Here”, he said. “Just brewed”.

“It's going to be a good day”, said the Lone Ranger. “I can feel it”.

“You bet”, said Eli, and he arranged the coffee cups on the porch. But as Eli reached for the coffee pot, it began to rattle and then bounce. Eli grabbed the railing of the porch and tried to stand up. And as he did, the land began to dance. (149-150)

The irony and double entendres present in this lively dialogue suggest once more that the battle to bring the exploitation and annihilation of Native cultures to an

end is far from being over. Eli's acceptance of his role as a scapegoat in his people's struggle to keep their rituals and traditions alive should never be understood as a defeat or a pitiful accident to mourn over. Hirsch (2004: 165) has rightly noted that the fact that he is killed "is by no means a judgment upon him. Life and death comprise the natural order. They are part of a single process and generate each other. Eli dies because people die. He lives in the flow of the river he sought to free". The fact that he is able to find a funny side to his existence and that of his tribesfolk, even when he realizes that the end must be near, speaks clearly of both his belief in humor as a powerful weapon in contexts of postcolonial domination and his conviction that resistance will continue even after the fall of some of the braves. In this regard, *Eli Stands Alone* is not unlike the author of the novel himself who can also be considered a contemporary warrior-artist as he relies on the comic to challenge and resist Western modes of representation and identity moulds that have imprisoned Native Americans for centuries.¹² King would definitely agree with Allen (1986: 158) when she maintains that laughter and jokes become more habitual in Native American communities when their life is especially squalid and limited: "many [of the jokes are] directed at the horror of history, at the continuing impact of civilization, and at the biting knowledge that living as an exile in one's own land necessitates".

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To conclude, Thomas King's novel *Green Grass, Running Water* should be read primarily as a narrative of resistance in which a Native American artist embarks on an in-depth revision of the content of the relations between his people and the mainstream culture. Arteaga (1999: 334) sees the emergence of this kind of narratives as a sign of physical and political empowerment and he notes that "it is for this reason that a people resisting oppression constructs an alternate reality, constructs narratives of resistance". King can be said to do just that since he uses the comic strategies that his culture and intelligence afford him to wrestle with the religious, literary, and historical discourses of the West in order to redefine the content of the reality Native Americans have to face on a daily basis. As I have shown above, although a superficial reading of the text may suggest that we are dealing with a light-hearted humorous literary experiment mostly aimed at entertaining the reader, there is an undercurrent of very serious and contesting critique intent on subverting some of the key ideals and myths of Western culture. Perhaps the strongest evidence to support this claim is the fact that, in the last pages of the novel, Coyote is asked by his fellow world-fixers to apologize "in case we hurt anyone's feelings" (468). Readers are also likely to be greatly disturbed by the presence of the mythical Native figures that, eventually, are seen to determine the fate of the more realistic characters in the book. About this possible objection, King himself has said that "the line that we think so firm between reality and fantasy is not so firm at all, that there's a great deal of play in it, and that the line itself is an

imaginary one [...]” (Gzowski, 1999: 70). And, in fact, it could be argued that while it is true that Lionel’s, Alberta’s or Eli’s fates are deeply affected by the doings of those magical figures, one could equally assert that those Native ‘figments of imagination’ only make sense when we consider them in the circumstances that Blackfoot Indians face in the real world. These circumstances are in great part shaped by the deep physical and psychological wounds that the Euro-American colonizers have historically inflicted on their culture and way of life.

Notes

¹. A shorter version of this article was presented at the Conference “Mapping the Hybrid Space: Inter-Ethnic Approaches to American Literature”, held at the University of Castilla-La Mancha in Ciudad Real the Fall of 2003. I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to all the other participants in the Conference for their challenging and illuminating comments after I delivered my paper.

². In this sense, my analysis is more in line with the literature produced by authors such as Vine Deloria, *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (1969) or Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (1970). I am aware that some contemporary scholars would find these discussions excessively nationalist and ‘essentialist’ in character but, as I see it, they marked the beginning of a project of cultural revitalization that has not been fully completed yet.

³. Obviously, Gates’ idea of African Americans as “masters of the figurative” is deeply indebted to W.E.B. DuBois’ well-known discussion of black psychology in his *The Souls of Black Folks* (1903). In particular, DuBois’s usage of the concept of “double-consciousness” —which he probably borrowed from his mentor at Harvard, William James— is essential to understand why African Americans developed this capacity to mean at two distinct levels.

⁴. In this regard, Thomas King closely resembles the ‘postindian warriors’ that Gerald Vizenor so well describes in Chapter 1 of *Manifest Manners: Postindian Warriors of Survivance* (1993).

⁵. For a revealing analysis that connects religion —or, rather, some religions in particular— with violence, see Ken Derry, “Religion and (Mimetic) Violence in Canadian Native Literature” (2002).

⁶. Gayatri C. Spivak sets out to theorize the changes occurred in modes of production by the dialogues and confrontations of the subaltern/colonized groups with their histories of domination and exploitation in “Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography” (1988).

⁷. Bill Bursum has put up a magnificent and spectacular display in his store by building a map of the US and Canada using over two hundred TV sets of different kinds and sizes. For the storekeeper, this ‘cultural construct’ represents the ultimate “unifying metaphor” and one that is “beyond value” (140) as it is associated in his mind with issues of power and control, like Machiavelli’s *The Prince*.

⁸. *The Mysterious Warrior* is a composite of different western movies that King invents. The title could well allude to the TV film *The Mystic Warrior* (1984), which

caused incendiary protest from several Native groups on account of its outrageous misrepresentations of the Sioux.

⁹. Helen Mooney's name is probably connected with James Mooney, an early ethnographer who wrote about Cherokee sacred formulas and their Ghost Dance.

¹⁰. This character's name alludes quite clearly to George Armstrong Custer — Union General and famous Indian fighter—who was referred to as "Son of the Morning Star" by the Natives in Dakota territory. Furthermore, Latisha's ex-husband is fond of dressing in the uncommon and extravagant outfits that Custer wore.

¹¹. In her study of trickster aesthetic, Smith (1997: 8) underlines that "though often bawdy and even anarchic, trickster tales teach through comic example and define culture by transgressing its boundaries. It may only be a Western aversion to paradox and disorder, then, that so distorts the trickster's image in the popular imagination".

¹². Ibis Gómez-Peña reaches very much the same conclusion in "Subverting the 'Mainstream' Paradigm through Magical Realism in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*" (2001).

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