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„Inversion of Myths, Mixture Of Plotlines and
Representation of 'Orature' In Thomas King's *Green
Grass, Running Water*“

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Lucija Todorić, BA

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emer. o. Univ.-Prof. Dr. Waldemar Zacharasiewicz

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To my beloved, who can calm every storm.

Zahvaljujem se svojoj obitelji na neizmornoj podršci i razumijevanju koje su mi pružili.

“So.

In the beginning, there was nothing. Just water.” (GGRW 1)

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Figure 1: Cyclical Stories Template in *Green Grass, Running Water*

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GGRW	<i>Green Grass, Running Water</i>
OGSTO	“One Good Story, That One”
CEA	“Coyote and Enemy Aliens”
ASG	“A Seat in the Garden”
<i>Godzilla</i>	“Godzilla vs post-colonial”
Young Man	Young Man Walking On Water

1. Introduction

“And here’s how it happened.”

(*Green Grass, Running Water*, 469)

Thomas King is a true postmodern renaissance man. He is a photographer, writer extraordinaire, movie director and writer, comedy radio show writer and host, an academic and (attempted) politician with a myriad of acknowledgements from many of the fields listed. He is currently a professor emeritus at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada and has recently published yet another novel, *Indians on Vacation* in August 2020. His non-fiction book *An Inconvenient Indian* from 2012 has been adapted into a documentary that was released in September 2020 in Canada during the 45th Toronto International Film Festival. His works have garnered critical acclaim and been taught at universities worldwide. King’s mastery of various media helped him gain a wide and versatile audience, although he claimed he does not care for white audiences in an interview with Janice Weaver in 1993 (qtd. in Shackleton 192). His most fervent supporters are in the top echelon of Canadian writers, such as Drew Hayden Taylor and Margaret Atwood. His colorful life is reflected in his works and he uses personal experiences as well as his knowledge of Indigenous cultures and histories to write amazing pieces of fiction, among which is the focal point of this thesis, the novel *Green Grass, Running Water* from 1993.

Green Grass, Running Water is a novel that eludes the prescribed notions of what a novel should be. It is an extraordinary text about the characters preparing and going to the Sun Dance, a once-a-year celebration of the Blackfoot tribe. There are the four masquerading elders/mythical women that escaped from a hospital in Florida that take turns telling their origin stories in-between the ‘main’ or ‘realistic’ plot. This ‘realistic’ plot consist of characters such as Lionel, Charlie, Alberta, Eli, Latisha etc. who all represent a variety of realities of Blackfoot people and their lives. There is, of course, the trickster Coyote and his companion, the narrative ‘I’, who are also a part of the novel, appearing as commentators of both the ‘realistic’ and the ‘magical’ realms of the novel. Their entanglement is visible as all characters end up in the same place at the same time and experience an earthquake caused by the trickster Coyote that destroys the dam on the river imposed on tribal Blackfoot lands by the Canadian government. With a cyclical plot and ever-entangling crossovers between character groups and plotlines, GGRW manages to offer political critique, satirical retelling of the Bible, unmasking of pop-culture myths and an insight into the consequences of settler colonialism. The novel has deservedly earned its place in Cana-

dian and Indigenous literary studies, as it combines elements of both a Eurocentric approach to writing and Indigenous methods of conveying a story *orally* in writing which King is famous for.

King's works are often subversive, destabilizing the power or authority of an accepted system and they help disrupt the *status quo*. His works repeatedly topple the grand narratives superimposed on the Native, as well as non-Native, populations of North America by the Euro-western regimes. GGRW, like many other King's fictional and non-fictional texts, explicitly expresses disdain toward grand narratives of white supremacy and alleged Indigenous extinction. In his works, King manages to discuss major issues such as racism, genocide and prejudice with candor and humor. Through the blend of Native and non-Native cultures and mythologies, he envelops his readers into a world not so far off from our own. The phrase 'inversion of myth' in the title of this thesis designates King's subversion of myths superimposed on North American Native people and immediately replaces the myths with Indigenous ones that generally make more sense in a non-Judeo-Christian setting. These inversions of myth then lead to the subversion of longstanding metanarratives present in North America. The novel mocks everyone, from the biblical Noah and archangel Gabriel to historical figures such as George Custer and E. Pauline Johnson to fictional pop-culture figures such as the Lone Ranger and Hawkeye. The novel instigates the subversion of longstanding myths concerning Indigenous religions, histories, cultures and differences between whites and Natives. King "challenges the legitimacy of Eurocentric paradigms by installing a framework of Native beliefs and perspectives that reveal the absurdity of specific aspects of the former" (Andrews, Davidson & Walton 35), which is exactly how he successfully subverts the omnipresent grand narratives that are etched in the minds of North American non-Native populations.

This thesis is dedicated to piercing through the layers of plot, humor, storytelling and individual characters that are too often reduced to inconsequential parts of the plotlines in the novel and (re)examining their importance. This thesis should also serve as a relevant guide for the overlooked or neglected parts of the novel for students and researchers alike. Joel Deshayé claims that the novel "is a well-researched text--thirty-seven studies naming it in their own titles" (2015) and I must disagree with this notion. There are sources on the novel itself and many on King's other works that are truly very helpful and offer insight and various approaches to King's texts (Andrews, Davidson & Walton 2003, Cox 2000, Deshayé 2015, Ibarrola-Armendariz 2010, Matchie & Larson 1996); however, this novel is, in my opinion, still under-researched. In my search for secondary literature on King's works and on this novel in particular, I have noticed

that some characters, elements of plotlines and narrative techniques did not get the amount of attention they deserve and this thesis will try to remedy that.

The world today is in an ontological crisis and it has become increasingly easy to manipulate facts and histories in order to create a warped reality and this novel participates in these processes. Therefore, this thesis must examine what exactly this novel does to the reader, how it manipulates (hi)stories and creates both realistic and magical worlds as well as how those two worlds interact with one another.

In his essay “Godzilla vs post-colonial”, King expresses his adversity towards grouping Indigenous literatures in with the postcolonial texts of the rest of the world. This stance of his prompted me to think how else I could describe the genre of his works and how to remove myself from the postcolonial readings done on King and GGRW. This complex novel offers an abundance of possible approaches and methodologies; however, I will be looking into this text from a (post)postmodernist stance advocated by Linda Hutcheon. The novel itself is a postmodern masterpiece, exhibiting various elements of postmodern and anticolonial literature: “discontinuity, disruption, dislocation, decentring, indeterminacy, and antitotalization” (Hutcheon 3). The novel not only exhibits these elements but elevates them into new heights- superimposed myths and grand narratives are inverted through parody (a popular tool of the postmodern author); the plotlines provide anachronistic and synchronistic timelines which disrupt the classic ‘beginning-middle-end’ story structure; the relationship between oral and textual narration is another extremely important column in the arcade of postmodernism and this novel displays the balance between the two techniques of narration. GGRW is essentially a postmodernist novel due to the presence of the aforementioned elements of the postmodern, as well as pastiche, fragmentation, metafiction etc. Furthermore, GGRW is a perfect blend of postmodern literature and Indigenous storytelling, (re)telling stories of creation, religion, race and history in general. It is reconstructing and rethinking history and myth, thus acting as a tool of subversion of grand narratives.

Myths and grand narratives, as we know, are formed over time and subtly injected into the psyche of the people through various media. Likewise, we know that history is written by the victors and victors tend to glorify themselves, *ergo*, history is also a grand narrative. Linda Hutcheon’s *Poetics of Postmodernism* investigates the link between historical and literal in the postmodern sense and has established that the two are more similar than they are different (3). The focus on the similarities between history and literature allows me to investigate GGRW more closely;

GGRW offers revised (hi)stories as well as fictional and oral histories (e.g. the transformed western) that are reparative to the written history of Native populations of North America.

The plotlines of the novel are rarely analyzed as important pieces of a puzzle and little to no importance is given to the way the characters are grouped in the novel and how the plotlines interact. King's fiction rarely presents a single protagonist, "the relationships among various community members form a web of interactions" (Andrews, Davidson & Walton 43). The novel exploits orality to the extreme. In order to understand the joke, the reader must read the novel out loud. The novel's dialogues, especially in the plotlines that are 'magical', seem to be written for a stage performance which includes an interaction with the audience and heckling.

In chapter 2 I provide an overview of Thomas King's works. I will also discuss postcolonial readings of GGRW, which are prevalent even though King himself condemns the use of postcolonial literary theory for Indigenous literature in his 1990 essay "Godzilla vs. post-colonial" as it implies that "contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression" (12). I will try to steer clear of the somewhat outdated postcolonial vocabulary and instead approach the novel with (post)postmodernism while also including a more novel and critical approach to postcolonial literary theory. In this chapter I will also include short analyses of some of King's short stories such as "One Good Story, That One", "Coyote and Enemy Aliens", "A Seat in the Garden" and "A Short History of Indians in Canada" and commentary on his non-fiction in order to show similarities and differences between the aforementioned texts and GGRW and how they are analyzed.

Chapter 3 investigates the grand narratives and myths that are inverted in the novel by means of parody- this includes the pop-culture references, historical and literary figures that appear in the novel. I will offer a detailed account of the inversions that happen in the novel in both the 'realistic' and 'magical' worlds of GGRW. This account will include most of the pop-culture and biblical references made throughout the novel as well as a discussion of the metareferences within the novel made by the four storytellers who transcend both the realistic and magical worlds.

Chapter 4 reviews character groups and individual characters and their role in their own plotline as well as in the mixtures and intersections of plotlines. Chapter 4 also focuses mostly on the overlooked characters of the novel, who are, incidentally, all female. Alberta Frank, the independent teacher of Indigenous history, Babo Jones, an often overlooked custodian from the mental institution from Florida who resembles a trickster figure and Latisha Red Dog, the owner of the Dead Dog Café who encounters historical figures disguised as tourists. I will also revisit the

first encounters between the characters and character groups and what importance these encounters hold.

In chapter 5, I will discuss oral literature, its revival in postmodern *and* postcolonial literature and the overall representation of orature in the novel. Moreover, an overview of narrative techniques employed in the genesis storytelling of the four elders and between Coyote and narrative ‘I’ will also be provided in this chapter. The novel’s overall structure with its cyclical and framed format is also thoroughly discussed in this chapter.

Finally, chapter 6 will bring forth my conclusions based on the research done in the thesis.

2. Overview of Thomas King’s works

Thomas King has been an active writer for over three decades now and since his debut as a novelist with *Medicine River*, and he has proven time and again that he is a very skillful and refined writer. He has written both fiction and non-fiction, screenplays and radio plays, children’s books, mystery books and academic works all in a span of thirty years. His latest novel *Indians on Vacation* published in August 2020 is already critically acclaimed, as observed by Drew Hayden Taylor:

The beauty of King’s writing is that, like all good authors, it seems effortless. Like those words always have and always should be in that specific order on the page, and that was the way the great literary gods planned it. . . . I like reading Tom King because he does, succinctly and cleverly, what all good writers should do – he educates, illuminates and entertains with every paragraph.¹

King’s oeuvre is as diverse as it gets for a writer, and a brief analysis of his other works is pivotal in understanding GGRW as well. Not only are the characters that appear in the novel present in some of his other works, but they are also based on King’s own experiences and resemble real-life people from his life.

After his debut with the novel *Medicine River*, King published *Green Grass, Running Water* in 1993, as well as a collection of short stories entitled *One Good Story, That One*. The stories from the collection are also the subject of widespread debate as some characters appear in both the collection and the novel. For example, the ever-present trickster Coyote, who not only retains the same sort of child-like narration but is actively disruptive and defiant, appears in some of the

¹Quoted from Harper Collins website < <https://www.harpercollins.ca/9781443460545/indians-on-vacation/> >

short stories in OGSTO collection and keeps appearing in King's subsequent work. The stories that I would like to review from this collection is the titular OGSTO and "A Seat in the Garden" (ASG).

Another short story collection that has been a great success is *A Short History of Indians in Canada* published in 2005. *Coyote and Enemy Aliens* (CEA) from the collection deals with the topic of Japanese internment during World War II and Coyote here is the 'bad guy'. Coyote actively participates in the internment of Japanese Canadians and helps the government which is extremely interesting and I felt it would be necessary to analyze it in order to receive a more complete, rounded picture of the trickster in King's fiction. Although the trickster from CEA was published several years after the trickster from GGRW and OGSTO, the trickster still employs the same manner of 'speaking'.

King's non-fiction is extremely important to this thesis, as it provides a round, three-dimensional analysis of his thoughts on Indigenous literatures. The non-fiction that is included in this paper is the aforementioned essay "Godzilla vs post-colonial" from 1990 and the book *The Inconvenient Indian* from 2012. These two texts provide a theoretical background as well, as King discusses what Indigenous literature could be called instead of 'postcolonial' in "Godzilla vs post-colonial", and introduces the definition of Dead and Live Indian in *The Inconvenient Indian* which influence my theoretical frame.

2.1. Selected short stories

Thomas King's short fiction is well-known for its sharp humor and subtle, however serious mockery of the subject matter exemplified in "One Good Story, That One", "A Seat in the Garden" and "Coyote and Enemy Aliens". Moreover, they were not picked solely because of the subject matter they discuss, but they are an extension of GGRW. "One Good Story, That One", "A Seat in the Garden" and "Coyote and Enemy Aliens" provide a distinct view of characters that also appear in *Green Grass, Running Water*. OGSTO is a story within a story, a framed narrative, just like the novel. In short, the Native narrator tricks white anthropologists into listening to a retelling of the Genesis which is extremely similar to First Woman's story in GGRW. First Woman's name in OGSTO is Evening, and she is accompanied by Ah-damn who is a variant of Adam. Evening is filled with good qualities and the narrator asserts that Evening is an "Indian woman" (OGSTO 6), whereas Ah-damn is perceived as dumb and white. In both OGSTO and GGRW, Ah-damn/Ahdamn is naming the animals and writing all their names down, which is reminiscent of the colonial practice of renaming already named entities. Ah-damn/Ahdamn is

also oblivious to Coyote's tricks, while Evening/First Woman notices the trickster lurking. When god appears to cast Ah-damn/Ahdamn and Evening/First Woman out of the garden, it is the female companion that saves the male and creates safety for both. In both stories, the Native woman is far more advanced and knowledgeable than the white male who assumes a stereotypical patriarchal role only to be exposed as an unfit 'ruler'. Not only does OGSTO have the same plot and protagonists as the story of First Woman from GGRW, it also evokes a similar goal: the grand narrative of one true story, the one version of Genesis from the Bible is disputed and so is the notion of the one true god who is omniscient, omnipresent and all-powerful. God, in both stories adopted from the Book of Genesis is presented as a childlike, vengeful and selfish self-proclaimed owner of nature. Both stories refute man's supremacy over nature and mock the very notion of ownership of nature. The theme of nature ownership is also present in ASG; the careful cultivation of Joe Hovaugh's garden is disrupted by the appearance of the spirit of a 'big Indian', who tells Joe that "If you build it, they will come" (ASG 85). Without providing context for the utterance, the gardener is determined to expel the intruding spirit out of *his* garden with the help of his friend Red and three Native men who 'translate' the words of the spirit. When Joe first sees the spirit of the Native man he exclaims:

"This is private property. You people ever hear of private property?" (ASG 86)

However, the spirit keeps standing in the garden. Joe's insistence on ownership of the garden is evocative of OGSTO's and GGRW's god insisting that the garden in which Evening/ First Woman live is actually his property. Joe Hovaugh's name is also a pun, revealed to the reader only when the name is spoken out loud and fast: Jehovah. Dr Joe Hovaugh is also a character in GGRW, and he, along with Babo Jones, goes on a journey to find the four elders who escaped from his mental asylum. Unlike the two already discussed short stories, CEA does not have any particular character that appears in GGRW besides the trickster Coyote; however, it does represent a phenomenon that appears in GGRW as well: retelling history. When history is concerned, it is up to the historians to tell the story of the past, but King's retellings, no matter how unrealistic or magical, have a superior understanding of how history works and how it helps occlude the savagery of the settler-colonial powers in North America. CEA is a story on Japanese internment in Canada during WWII, and, as such, is a great reminder of how fighting fire with fire does not usually help. The Japanese-Canadians were evicted, branded, had their belongings taken and were forced to relocate and work as unpaid labor (slaves) throughout Canada. The story reflects on how similar the plight of the Japanese-Canadians during WWII is to the story of Indigenous peoples in Canada. CEA's narrator and Coyote also have a relationship similar to that of the

GGRW Coyote and narrative ‘I’. They often spar and bicker, especially when Coyote interrupts the story with his comments. Moreover, CEA’s narrator acts as a conscience (like Pinocchio’s Jiminy Cricket), warning Coyote that his actions have consequences. King’s masterful toying with history and its accuracy is a reminder that no story is the one true version and, that there are always multiple versions of history, depending on who is asked about it. All of these stories are connected through the act of narration and phrases that connect them to each other and to GGRW. Finally, the narration and the way Coyote ‘speaks’ in CEA is extremely similar to GGRW’s Coyote and his way of ‘speaking’. The short stories and the novel share an unspoken, undefined bond through similarities and differences between them. It would certainly be an overstatement to say that the short stories are connected with the novels; however, it would also be an understatement to say that there are no connections. In “One Good Story, That One”, *Green Grass, Running Water* and in “Coyote and Enemy Aliens” there is similar warning/ advice given to the reader:

OGSTO: “*Have some tea.*

Stay awake.” (5) [*my emphasis*]

GGRW: “*Stick around. This is how it happens.*” (114) [*my emphasis*]

CAE: “*Stick around. Have some tea. Don’t move those toes.*” (52) [*my emphasis*]

Although not identical, the warning and advice given by the narrators are very similar in syntax and phrasing, indicating an inconspicuous connection.

In the whirlwind of King’s fiction, it is important to remember that stories, much like humans and nature, show an interconnection and interdependence. One story comes out of another and every story already told can influence the next. Stories are fluid and ever-changing, especially to King.

2.2. Selected non-fiction

King’s body of work is diverse and covers a wide range of topics, therefore it is necessary to include his academic/non-fiction works, and the two texts chosen for analysis in this chapter are academic only in their content and not so much in style or register. “Godzilla vs post-colonial” offers a personal story from King’s life that unravels before us as he masterfully compares his high school basketball coach to postcolonial theorists and critics who wrongfully lumped every piece of Indigenous literatures in with postcolonial literature. King not only presents this wrongful categorization, but also offers a number of possible names for the subgenres of existing Indigenous literatures.

The second non-fiction text by King that should be included in any discussion of his work is *The Inconvenient Indian*, a text that is equally theoretical, historical, educational, political, critical, humorous and enlightening. It is a cornerstone of understanding the relationship between the Indigenous and the white settlers in North America. King's polite, albeit deadly dismantling of various stereotypes, populist parables and historical inaccuracies is pivotal for this novel, as *The Inconvenient Indian* explains the difference between the myths of Dead, Live and Legal Indian which I would like to employ in this thesis as well. The trope of the 'Dead Indian' does not actually illustrate deceased Native people, but it is a term King uses to describe the amalgamation of "stereotypes and clichés that North America has conjured up out of experience and out of its collective imaginings and fears" (53). Being a 'Dead Indian' is to don a full collection of regalia and appear in public spaces, which is the only way the Euro-American can identify someone as a Native. King names Sacheen Littlefeather's Academy Awards appearance as an example of this phenomenon; Littlefeather came to the Oscars wearing regalia and refused an award on behalf of Marlon Brando who disagreed with the representation of Native Americans in Hollywood and wanted to raise awareness about the occupation of Wounded Knee. Although an act of triumph, King argues that Sacheen's appearance would not have the same impact if she had come to the ceremony wearing a designer gown (54-55). King compares the buckskin, feather headdresses and other regalia as an equivalent to the antiquity of Greece and Rome and as signifiers of Native authenticity (54-55). Additionally, he discusses the use and importance of 'Dead Indian' imagery in marketing and branding throughout North America. 'Live Indian', in contrast, is the actual Native person living in North America today. The endurance of 'Live Indian' is annoying to the white majority. King mockingly points out that sadly "[...] Live Indians didn't die out. They were supposed to, but they didn't" (61). 'Live Indians' are invisible, forgotten, put onto reservations and reserves and generally far away from the public eye. King also discusses an episode where he went on a guided tour through a reservation and a white tourist complained about the presence of TV antennas on the houses, as "Real Indians [...] didn't have televisions" (63). The white expectation of 'Dead Indian' in full regalia, with that Hollywood-produced voice and noble stature is in direct conflict with the living, breathing 'Live Indian' that does not conform to the stereotypes. King explains the distinction:

Dead Indians are dignified, noble, silent, suitably garbed. And dead. Live Indians are invisible, unruly, disappointing. And breathing. One is a romantic reminder of a heroic but fictional past. The other is simply unpleasant, contemporary surprise. (66)

'Legal Indian', the third term that King discusses, comprises of the Indigenous people who are known as 'Status' in Canada and 'federally recognized' in the US. 'Legal Indians' are hated by

both governments as they have rights which were afforded to them via the signed treaties. King also notes that “Legal Indians are Live Indians, because only Live Indians can be Legal Indians, but not all Live Indians are Legal Indians” (68), and that the number of ‘Live Indians’ is much higher than that of the ‘Legal Indians’. He discusses how the treaties ‘granted’ rights as well as gave the power to both the Canadian and US governments to remove those same rights. ‘Legal Indians’ are the remnants of those signed treaties but both governments have tried very hard to convert the ‘Legal Indians’ into simply enfranchised ‘Live Indians’. When discussing the three classifications offered by King, I cannot help but wonder how these terms can be applied to GGRW. I intend to use these three terms as a point of reference when discussing several encounters between white and Indigenous characters in GGRW and reveal how the white characters expect/demand a ‘Dead Indian’ instead of a ‘Live Indian’.

Another extremely important non-fiction text by King is his essay “Godzilla vs post-colonial”. It does not simply criticize the postcolonial approach to Indigenous literature, it also poses a very important question: *how, then, do we analyze Indigenous literature?* I would argue that it is necessary to take some of the long-established terms and theory from postcolonial literary theory; however, academia must always take into account that not one literary theory can be all-encompassing. Though *Godzilla* does not sound as academic as some other essays on the problem of postcolonial literature, it accomplishes a similar goal: it points out several miscarriages of postcolonial theory. King firstly takes offence at the term postcolonial itself, as it purports that the only Indigenous literature worth analyzing comes from the period *after* colonization and disregards the rich Indigenous pre-colonial literature. His most memorable take-away from this discussion about Native postcolonial literature is as follows:

[...] the idea of post-colonial writing effectively cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question, traditions which have come down to us through our cultures in spite of colonization, and it supposes that contemporary Native writing is largely a construct of oppression (185)

This notion of the empire writing back, subsuming all Native authors and literatures is harmful. As King points out in the above quoted excerpt from *Godzilla*, the idea that all Native writing comes from oppression and oppression only is simply inaccurate. Thus, he proposes the following four terms to describe and analyze Native literature: “tribal, interfusional, polemical, and associational” (189). To clarify, tribal literature includes the texts that are available in the language of a singular tribe and often not as accessible to outsiders. These texts are written in a particular tribal language and kept from translation. Parts of GGRW are tribal: the words spoken by the four elders to start the story properly and the titles of the sections of the novel are in Chero-

kee which is inaccessible to most non-Cherokee readers. Interfusional literature, as King calls it, is concerned primarily with blending the oral and written literature. In *Godzilla*, he gives the example of a poem by Harry Robinson which shows the change from oral to written, interaction with the audience and the poem's self-awareness (186). King admits that Robinson is a source of inspiration, and this admiration for the blend of oral and written literature can be seen throughout GGRW. Polemical literature's prime example would be *The Inconvenient Indian*. Polemical literature, according to King, discusses the relationship between Native people and whites in America. This descriptor of Native literature "chronicles the imposition of non-Native expectations and insistences [...] on Native communities and the methods of resistance employed by Native people in order to maintain both their communities and cultures" (186). Finally, associational literature is a term that best describes the complexities of Native people's lives. Associational literature is most often centered around an Indigenous community and explores "the daily activities and intricacies of Native life and organizing the elements of plot *along a rather flat narrative line that ignores the ubiquitous climaxes and resolutions that are so valued in non-Native literature*" (187) [my emphasis]. The emphasis put on the flat narrative line and the exclusion of the 'climaxes and resolutions' perfectly describes GGRW's plotlines involving the Blackfoot community. Their daily lives are impacted by the appearance of the four elders, but not much actually changes and the highest peak of the plot is the Sun Dance and, subsequently, the demise of the dam that is built on the reserve. All of the terms described by King in *Godzilla* are extremely helpful to me in my analysis, as I can disregard the outdated and often Eurocentric view on postcolonial literature and use terminology coined by an Indigenous author specifically for Indigenous literatures. With this terminology, researchers can do what postcolonial theory so far could not: explain the ins and outs of the relationship between whites and Native people of the Americas, deepen their understanding of the 'flat' narrative in Native literature that refuses to comply with the Eurocentric notions of the elements of a plot and its sequencing, and, lastly, clarify the connection between the oral and the written in Indigenous literatures.

2.3. Green Grass, Running Water: a methodology

In the concluding remarks of her book *Toward a Native American Critical Theory*, Elvira Pulitano summarizes the difficulty as well as the necessity of identifying a critical theory that could encompass Indigenous literatures:

On the border of various discourses, inside and outside the West, always in the shifting and shimmering fluid zone of trickster, Native American theory calls for multi-directional boundaries that will continue to be crossed as we as a community keep pursuing a cross-cultural dialogue (191-192)

The ‘crosscultural dialogue’ Pulitano speaks of is achieved by incorporating theoretical fundamentals of other already existing theories to create a hybrid; exactly what I will attempt to do.

Combining the basic elements of postcolonial theory with multiple other theories is essential to understanding a text and analyzing it closely, despite the text not being postcolonial originally. As discussed in the previous subchapter, King is not a fan of postcolonial theorists branding all texts by Indigenous authors postcolonial; however, postcolonial theory has given theorists all over the globe a vocabulary that is oftentimes necessary for a close reading of a text. Terms such as ‘settler-colonialism’, ‘colonial discourse’, ‘eurocentrism’, ‘globalization’ and so many more have been closely defined (e.g. by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*), and widely used to analyze non-postcolonial texts and phenomena.

Linda Hutcheon’s *Poetics of Postmodernism* is another crucial theoretical text for my analysis. Hutcheon’s extensive knowledge of theory is indisputable and *Poetics of Postmodernism* established an entire field of theory and cemented its place in literary criticism for decades to come. The concept of historiographic metafiction, for example, is a perfect tool to analyze the retellings of Genesis by the four elders. The novels that employ historiographic metafiction are, according to Hutcheon, “intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (5), which is exactly what *Green Grass, Running Water* does. As the four elders take turns telling stories and attempt ‘fixing the world’ by changing (hi)stories, it is abundantly clear that King employs historiographic metafiction in order to subvert the grand narrative looming overhead. For the analysis of GGRW, historiographic metafiction is definitely a useful tool, still, postmodern literary theory offers many other concepts that will aid me in my decoding. Another extremely important piece of the puzzle is the intertextuality, which King employs in most of his works and uses as means of inversion of myths. Hutcheon describes intertextuality as “a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context” (118). Intertextuality in *Green Grass, Running Water* has been explored many times (e.g. Jane Flick’s thorough “Reading Notes for Thomas King’s “Green Grass Running Water””); however, with every new reading of a phrase or an excerpt, the words reveal another meaning and a new intertextuality, which was previously unseen.

Other postmodern techniques that I shall be seeking out in GGRW are fragmentation (nonlinear narration), magic realism and the three ever-present elements of King’s trickster narratives: mockery, parody and irony. Hutcheon claims that parody, for instance, represents “a perfect

postmodern form [...] for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies” (11).

King’s own concepts discussed in chapter 2.2. from “Godzilla vs the post-colonial” and *The Inconvenient Indian* are also, in my opinion, crucial for the analysis of GGRW. I will uncover the numerous instances where King portrays and then mocks the trope of the ‘Dead Indian’, how he creates an interfusional piece of literature, or discusses the white-Native relationship in the novel, producing what he calls a polemical text.

In this mix of updated postcolonial and postmodern critical literary theory and King’s terminology for Indigenous literatures, I find the perfect hybrid approach for a thorough analysis of *Green Grass, Running Water*. GGRW consists of several plotlines, including multiple characters who all serve a different purpose and perform independently of one another. Some characters interact with characters from another plotline, while some do not; some characters’ introspection is offered to the readers, whereas the thoughts of others are not; some characters are rounded and three-dimensional, others are one-dimensional. The readers are thrown *in medias res*, and are introduced to characters gradually, through ambiguous analepses. Absolutely no context is provided for the four elders, who are able to transform themselves into deities and back into America’s pop-culture fictional sweethearts. The readers are left in the midst of all this to fend for themselves and must connect the dots in order to make sense of the apparent chaos. This confusing blend of fact and fiction is augmented by the appearances of the narrative I and Coyote who trick the readers further and interrupt essential moments of the novel with their bickering and nonchalant commentary. The mixture of oral and written literature elements does not aid the readers either; the average readers who do not have any experience with oral literature and its elements might be taken aback by the mysticism and veiled intertextual references. Furthermore, GGRW is extremely packed with retellings of (less-known) historical events, classic literature and (well-known) biblical stories which require at least some research to understand, unless the readers are privy to Indigenous and Canadian popular cultures. *Green Grass, Running Water* tackles an abundance of issues in a subtle way and inverts and subverts the grand narratives, such as the extinction of Indigenous peoples and stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous peoples in popular media and literary canon.

Deshaye claims that GGRW “encourages us to read the texts as critiques of popular culture rather than as revisionist histories” (2015). While he is right, Deshayé is also neglecting the importance put on ‘fixing the world’ and offering a counter-narrative to the prevailing grand narra-

tive of white supremacy. GGRW is a text essential to King's opus, not only because it is a masterful piece of literature, but because it sets out, from the beginning, to undo the damage done to the Indigenous communities. Using irony and parody to invert the widespread false grand narratives, *Green Grass, Running Water* attempts to set the record straight and fix the world.

GGRW also emphasizes the importance of representation in the media. Today, the term representation is used very loosely, but in GGRW it is obvious that King attempts to uncover the greater harm done by Hollywood with its representation of the Indigenous people. In her essay "Ethnic Identity in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*", Jovana Petrović states that "King emphasizes the role of Hollywood as a generator of stereotypes and negative representations of Native Americans perpetuated through not only numerous Westerns but also unjust treatment of Native American actors" (155-156). King's takedown of Hollywood stems from the fact that Hollywood produced and advertised innumerable negative stereotypes of so many minority groups. Portland's story in GGRW especially highlights the plight of Indigenous actors, who are typecast and have to fit into a certain Hollywood standard of 'Nativity'. Portland, for instance, alters his appearance with a rubber nose in order to get hired for a role that is ultimately disrespectful to Native peoples (GGRW 168). In this episode with Portland and the fake rubber nose, we do not only witness Hollywood's perpetual stereotyping of Indigenous populations but we also observe its obsession with the 'Dead Indian' trope. It is obvious that Hollywood only perceives Indigenous peoples as Indigenous when they are dressed in full regalia beating a drum while smoking a pipe.

Throughout this chapter, I have established the theoretical frame that will be used as an efficient way of analyzing *Green Grass, Running Water*. This novel is not only provides a whirlwind of various postmodern and postcolonial elements but King's own theoretical terminology pertaining to Indigenous literatures. Dispersed and hidden, all the elements of King's postmodern Indigenous novel ought to be deciphered, methodically and carefully and I am confident that this hybrid approach will prove to be the most efficient.

3. Inversion of Myths

Green Grass, Running Water starts with the words "So. In the beginning, there was nothing." (1), immediately pointing towards with the proverbial "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void" (*King James Version*, Gen 1.1-2), indicating the difference between the story that is yet to unravel itself to the reader and the story that

the reader is already familiar with. The Bible, for one, is turned on its axis and dismissed in the novel as an incomplete report. Along with presenting an alternative version of four biblical stories and characters, GGRW also attempts and succeeds in inverting various myths presented in the North American literary tradition and popular culture, especially Hollywood's portrayal of Native Americans in western movies. Essentially, GGRW provides a 'spinoff' version of not just the Bible but also of the pop-culture and literary canon; the spinoff presents the Indigenous perspective and the *true* (what is true anyway?) account of the events. In this chapter, I will dissect the various myths presented in GGRW and how they are turned upside down by the Indigenous storytelling elders of the novel.

3.1. Popular culture

Popular culture has an immense impact in the way people view their surroundings and influences the behavior of people all around the world. Popular culture also equips us, as avid watchers, listeners and followers, with subtle bias as well, hidden within the major motion pictures. Hollywood stereotypes, according to Cones,

fall within the categories of race, ethnicity and/or national origin. Included in this group are negative and/or stereotypical portrayals of Arabs and Arab-Americans, Asians and Asian-Americans, Hispanics and Latinos, African-Americans, along with Native Americans. (13)

Cones also discusses "somewhat more sympathetic portrayals" of Native Americans in recent Hollywood movies, but recognizes the tradition of Hollywood's disrespectful portrayals (36-37). Moreover, Hollywood has maintained, for decades, a "binary depiction of the Native characters" in the western genre (Berny 1). The binary consists of the bloodthirsty savage and the more positive "noble Indian" (Berny 1). A similar discussion of stereotypes occurs in King's book *The Inconvenient Indian*: the Dead Indian trope is, as described before, the imaginary collection of signifiers of Native American authenticity and breeds other stereotypes such as the "Noble Savage", adorned with signifiers of Nateness such as a headdress, buckskin, moccasins, holding a ceremonial pipe and speaking in a low, bass voice with a stereotypical inflection. This image of a Native American has been presented to white Americans through pop culture in the 20th century and the rise of the western genre. One of the biggest names of the genre is, of course, John Wayne. This novel's infamous, or, better yet, notorious John Wayne sequence that turns the narrative of cowboys versus Indians upside down is an example of a myth inversion. The narrative that cowboys or whites always win against the savage Natives is entrenched in Hollywood; so is the trope of the honorable chief and the sexualized warrior *Other* who returns the white damsel

back to her people only to be killed by them mere moments later, in a battle. The western movie endings are always simple: the Natives lose. But in *Green Grass, Running Water*, the western movie is grounds for reform, rebirth. GGRW's four storytellers/deities who are trying to change the world transform the John Wayne western and I intend to analyze how exactly they manage to do so and what is accomplished by the transformation. As readers we are first introduced to the western as multiple characters from different plotlines converge in watching TV and seeing the western. Alberta, Charlie, Latisha and her children, Lionel, Bill Bursum, Babo and Dr Hovaugh all saw the western play on the TV. The movie titled *The Mysterious Warrior* includes a romance between a noble savage Native chief and a white lady captured by the Natives, a fight between the Natives and whites led by the John Wayne character and the demise of the Native warriors and their noble chief who sent the white lady back to her people before the fighting began. This plot, typical for a western movie, is uprooted by the four deities who manage to infiltrate the movie:

On the bank, four old Indians waved their lances. One of them was wearing a red Hawaiian shirt. But Lionel saw none of this. (GGRW 243)

But it wasn't the chief that caught Babo's eye. In a small knot of Indians standing off to one side was an Indian in what looked to be a red shirt, as as Babo looked closer, she saw Hawkeye, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and the Lone Ranger smiling and laughing and waving their lances [...] (GGRW 246)

[...] while on the riverbank four old Indians raised their lances, encouraging their comrades, cheering them on. It didn't reach Dr. Hovaugh all at once. When it did, he sat up in the chair. (GGRW 246-247)

The four elders appearing in the western that united everyone is very significant: their role was to change the outcome of the battle in the movie. This battle requires a white victory in order to perpetuate a myth of the truly dead Indian, the extinct Indian. This battle facilitates the westward expansion and the triumph of the white settlers, silencing the Native resistance. The four elders are also watching the western and they realize that it is a movie they "fixed" (247).

"“Oh, oh,” said the Lone Ranger. “Looks like we got to fix this one again”” (248)

Their failure to fix the movie's ending the first time round calls for another try and thus the myth inversion begins.

The next day, the four elders converge with Lionel, Eli and Charlie at Bill Bursum's store. They are all watching the same western as the night before, but this time, the four elders are excited about the outcome. Bursum, as a fan of the movie and the western genre, comments on the style and technique used to film the movie:

“The next scene”, said Bursum, “used over six hundred extras, Indians and whites. And five cameras. The director spent almost a month on this scene before he felt it was right.”

“He didn’t get it right the first time,” said the Lone Ranger.

“But we fixed it for him,” said Hawkeye. (GGRW 351-352)

The movie, of course, needed fixing. The battle between the Natives, led by Charlie’s father Portland, and the white cowboys, led by the legendary John Wayne rages, and after a rousing speech by the chief, the Natives start their offensive. They “kept coming, relentlessly, moving through the water” but then the cavalry support for John Wayne appears (GGRW 355). The elders become worried, thinking their attempt at fixing the western failed again (GGRW 356).

There at full charge, hundreds of soldiers in bright blue uniforms with gold buttons and sashes and stripes, blue-eyed and rosy-cheeked, came over the last rise.

And disappeared. (GGRW 357)

After this miraculous disappearance of the backup troops, John Wayne and Richard Widmark, his sidekick, were left defenseless against the Native offensive. The battle rages on and soon the whites are out of ammunition, Wayne and Widmark dead and their men running to save their lives. This inversion of the outcome is particularly satisfying for Charlie, as his father stars as the Native chief. It is especially reparative for him because he had to witness his father’s humiliation in Hollywood. Portland was often typecast as a savage Indian and had to wear a rubber nose in order to look ‘more Indian’ (GGRW 168), but while watching the ‘fixed’ version of the western starring his father, Charlie cheers for his father:

Charlie had his hands out of his pockets, his fists clenched, keeping time to the singing. His lips were pulled back from his teeth, and his eyes flashed as he watched his father flow through the soldiers like a flood.

Get ‘em, Dad,” he hissed. (GGRW 358)

The reparative effect of the changed outcome of the battle pleases not only Charlie, but the rest of the viewers, especially the four elders who succeeded in their mission. The transformation of the battle in the western is accomplished through magical properties of the elders: they infiltrated into the movie and removed the cavalry coming to aid John Wayne and assisted the Native warriors in their victory. This inversion of outcome helps destroy the myth created by the western genre: cowboys win, always. The myth of white superiority, perpetuated by Hollywood through western movies, is turned on its head through the ‘divine intervention’ of the four elders who are not only trying to fix this one western but also Lionel’s perception of Wayne and the world in general.

Another pivotal moment of the novel includes a character that is related to the Hollywood western. After being banished from the garden, First Woman and Ahdamn go west they see bodies of

dead rangers (GGRW 74). They are soon surrounded by some more rangers, who accuse them of killing the dead rangers and First Woman decides to mask herself:

[...] and that one takes some black cloth from out her purse. She cuts some holes in that black cloth. She puts the cloth around her head. (GGRW 75)

First Woman masks herself into the iconic Lone Ranger, who, according to John Shelton Lawrence, represents a “twentieth-century mythmaking franchise” (81). The Lone Ranger, at first created as a radio show character and later popularized through comic books, novels, commercials and other media (Lawrence 81), became a household name and a symbol of westward expansion. Similarly to the John Wayne figure, the Lone Ranger, with the help of Tonto, his Indigenous sidekick, wants to “make the West a decent place to live” (“Enter the Lone Ranger,” TV genesis episode of 1949 qtd. in Lawrence 81). As soon as First Woman masks herself as the Lone Ranger, she is given power over Ahdamn’s life, who is still an ‘Indian’ and therefore ostensibly guilty of killing the rangers in the canyon. First Woman saves Ahdamn by giving him a new name: Tonto.

“His name is Tonto.

That’s a stupid name, says those rangers. Maybe we should call him Little Beaver or Chingachgook or Blue Duck.” (GGRW 76)

Tonto, of course, means silly or stupid in Spanish and implies the lack of intelligence of the bearer of the name. The rangers suggest a few other names for Lone Ranger’s Indigenous sidekick, mentioning the names of other sidekicks: Little Beaver², Chingachgook³ and Blue Duck⁴. The invocation of other Native sidekicks is deliberate and it illustrates how common it is for white protagonists/heroes to have a Native sidekick that is dumb or the very personification of the ‘noble savage’ trope. Both representations are damaging and both helped create and perpetuate stereotypes about the Indigenous peoples in North America. Lone Ranger’s mask is only a temporary measure of safety and as soon First Woman takes it off, she is arrested by some soldiers for “being Indian” (GGRW 77). Once imprisoned, First Woman again puts Lone Ranger’s mask on and is recognized by guards as the Lone Ranger, a white character, and she escapes together with Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye (GGRW 106), setting off the events in *Green Grass, Running Water*.

² Little Beaver is the sidekick of Red Ryder, a popular comic turned TV-series in the 1950s (Flick 149)

³ Chingachgook is Nathaniel ‘Natty’ Bumppo’s sidekick in the *Leatherstocking Tales* by James Fenimore Cooper (Flick 141)

⁴ Blue Duck was a real-life Cherokee outlaw, best known for his association with the gangster Belle Starr <
<https://www.legendsofamerica.com/blue-duck/> >

3.2. Biblical stories

Green Grass, Running Water is based on multiple stories of Indigenous geneses in combination with Biblical stories from Genesis (the story of Adam and Eve and Genesis flood narrative) and the New Testament (Annunciation and Jesus walking on water). By combining Judeo-Christian and Indigenous elements, GGRW mocks the supposed superiority of the imported religion over the Indigenous religions and religious traditions. The novel's combination of the biblical stories with elements of Indigenous mythologies is revolutionary; it points out the inconsistencies and prejudice of the Bible and its protagonists and unmasks Christianity as the inferior system of belief as it relies on the oppression of all other religions. This dismantling of Christian superiority myths is spearheaded by the four deities- First Woman, Changing Woman, Thought Woman and Old Woman who hail from various Indigenous religions. First Woman's roots are questionable, but Jane Flick's 1999 guide for reading GGRW explains First Woman's roots: she comes from a common genesis story of the Seneca tribe and her story is reminiscent of the Cherokee story of Star Woman. Moreover, she notes that the story in the novel begins 'properly' only when the Lone Ranger invokes Star Woman in Cherokee (147). First Woman's role in GGRW is simple; she is an expression of Eve or Eve's Indigenous version. Similarly to OGSTO, where Evening is purported to be Indigenous by the narrator, the reader knows that GGRW's iteration of Eve is Native. First Woman falls from the Sky World into the Water World and she creates a garden for herself and Ahdamn who simply turns up in the garden spontaneously (GGRW 39-40). In First Woman's story god is not the almighty creator of the world and of Adhamn/man in his own image, on the contrary, Ahdamn simply appears out of thin air and joins First Woman in the garden. What I have noticed is the similarity with which First Woman's story and the story of Evening from OGSTO intersect: they are not only the Indigenous counterpart of Adam, they are also uninterested in ruling the existing creatures. They both 'own' the garden, they are the creators of the garden; however, they do not partake in the typically western traditions of ownership. Neither of the two women is interested naming the animals in the garden, unlike the novel's version of the biblical Adam. It is clear that both GGRW and OGSTO are parodying the naming of animals that is reported in the Bible:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and *brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.* And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. (Gen 2.19-20) [*my emphasis*]

God is the one who brings the animals to Adam in order for the animals to receive a name and Adam has absolute authority on the names of the animals present in the Garden of Eden. The western tradition conflates naming an object with owning it, which is obvious in the Bible and in the two texts where the first chapters of Genesis are reimagined. Naming is perceived as sacred in many Indigenous cultures such as Cherokee, Lakota and Blackfoot, and a name can be changed throughout an individual's life based on their accomplishments. Name-giving is often a community-based process where an elder is invited to bestow a name upon a child or an individual. Adam's solitary act of naming of all the animals is essentially his assertion of dominance and supremacy over the natural world. This assertion is parodied in both GGRW and OGSTO, as Adam is represented as daft and unintelligent:

Ahdamn is busy. He is naming everything.
You are a microwave oven, Ahdamn tells the Elk. [...]
You are a garage sale, Ahdamn tells the Bear. [...]
You are a cheeseburger, Ahdamn tells Old Coyote. (GGRW 41)

I think he [Ah-damn] is busy then, writing things down. All the animals' names he writes somewhere, I don't know. Pretty boring that.
Deer come by, says Me-a-loo.
Elk come by, says Pa-pe-o. (OGSTO 8)

By parodying the biblical naming King dismisses the connection between naming and owning as justification for man's ownership of nature. The connection between OGSTO and GGRW is clear through the wording used to parody the naming process, but there is one clear distinction. In OGSTO, Ah-damn is writing down the names of already named creatures in Cherokee (not realizing that Coyote is tricking him) while in GGRW, Ahdamn is ascribing names to already named entities and the names he is ascribing are related to what I could only describe as signifiers of American white suburban lifestyle.

Through the intertextuality and the humor employed in the novel to unmask the Bible's shortcomings, GGRW manages to invert the myth of not just creationism but also god creating the first man in his own image. GGRW questions the almighty-ness of the Judeo-Christian god and his reported creation of the world in a seven day window and through this seed of doubt it exhibits the original confusion and doubts that Indigenous might have had during the first contact with colonists and the imported religion. The notion of a sole creator and owner of nature was so foreign to many Indigenous peoples and King's OGSTO and GGRW both help illustrate what a perplexing and absurd text the Bible truly is, especially in the hands of corrupt individuals.

In Lone Ranger's story, Changing Woman encounters the biblical Noah. Their encounter is not a positive experience for her at all, as he attempts to sexually assault her. This story reminds the reader of shocking realities of Indigenous women in North America:

[...]113 per 1,000 Indigenous women self-report sexual assault compared with 35 per 1,000 non-Indigenous women (Department of Justice Canada, 2017). Both Amnesty International (2009) and Klingspohn (2018) state that Indigenous women (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) are 5 times more likely to disappear and 6 times more likely to be killed than non-Indigenous women. (Baskin 2084)

These horrifying statistics are also mirrored in Noah's forceful insistence on seeing and touching Changing Woman's breasts and procreating with her. Through exposing Noah and other Biblical characters as sexist *Green Grass, Running Water* is inverting the myth of female inferiority that has been forced upon Indigenous peoples via the use of biblical texts. Prior to colonization "women were the wisdom-keepers; they taught children about the qualities of a good leader and were responsible for resolving internal disputes and healing their communities." (Baskin 2085). Moreover, several tribes, such as the Shawnee, Cherokee, Winnebago, and Natchez, reportedly had female chiefs (Baskin 2085). Stripping away female agency was also one of the goals of colonization and the colonizers successfully implemented sexism as well as homophobia into the Indigenous consciousness. Changing Woman resisting and fighting off Noah and his sexual advances is a tool of inversion of the colonial female inferiority myth; Changing Woman not only outsmarts Noah, she is also able to keep her agency despite Noah's insistence on "Christian rules" (GGRW 160) that dictate how she should behave. The set of rules Noah enforces in his ark are clearly mocked in GGRW. Some of these rules are telling of the enforcement of white/western/Judeo-Christian/puritanical values:

"This is a Christian ship. Animals don't talk. We got rules. [...] Talking to animals again [...]. That's almost bestiality, and it's against the rules." (160)

Noah's continued dismissal of the communication between Changing Woman and the animals on the ark is the epitome of the myth of anthropocentrism and the superiority of humans in contrast to the natural world. Similarly to Noah, the Great Chain of Being, a purely western invention that originated in Ancient Greece, also spreads similar notions of man's rule over the natural world. In its medieval form, the Great Chain of Being dictates the position of all living creatures of the world. These positions have been ordered by god, as he gave Adam the permission to rule over the land and the animals on it. It has also been used as a justification for the destruction of nature in order to advance the human population, but I digress. The Great Chain of Being clearly puts the human above the animal world and differentiates the two categories, while most Indigenous beliefs are based on the interconnectedness of the natural and human world; "all my rela-

tions”, a symbolic saying by the Lakota, expresses the connections between all living beings and objects on the earth. To Changing Woman the rules that Noah presents her with make absolutely no sense; she is supposed to care for the animals that are on the ark, not rule them together with her male counterpart.

Changing Woman discovers that Noah threw his own wife and children overboard because “It’s the rules” (162) and that the first rule of this supposedly Christian ship is “Thou Shalt Have Big Breasts” (162). Noah, in this story, is not a pious old man deserving of surviving the great flood and ensuring the continued existence of people and animals on the earth. On the contrary, he is a predator who wants to sexually assault and rape Changing Woman in order to fulfill his duty:

“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth.” (Gen 9.1)

“Time for procreating, shouts Noah, and that one leaps out of the boat and begins chasing Changing Woman up and down the beach” (GGRW 161)

After she resists him, Noah leaves Changing Woman on a deserted island and leaves her there to die without any means of survival. The inversion of the good and pious biblical man is complete: he is a cold-blooded killer, a would-be rapist and a nefarious person.

The story of Thought Woman begins with her taking a bath in a river and accidentally floating away and falling off the edge of the world. She lands into the ocean and floats to the shore where she is greeted by A.A. Gabriel, GGRW’s version of archangel Gabriel who is “a little short guy with a big briefcase” (GGRW 298). A.A. Gabriel presents Thought Woman with a business card that reads “Canadian Security and Intelligence Service” on one side and “Heavenly Host” on the other side and begins interrogating Thought Woman:

“Name? [...] Social Insurance Number? [...] Any Fruit or plants? [...] Any firearms? Any alcohol or cigarettes? Are you now or have you ever been a member of the American Indian Movement?” (299)

This story is packed with little jokes and jabs at the Canadian government and the Bible. A.A. Gabriel notes down Thought Woman’s name as “Mary” and has her sign a “Virgin verification form”. Thought Woman is thus given the opportunity to become the next Virgin Mary, she is to bear a child through Immaculate Conception:

“Let’s have you lie down here, and we’ll get on with the procreating Ready? Hail Mary/ Full of grace [...] *I don’t think so*, says Thought Woman. Wait, says A.A. Gabriel. There’s more. Blessed art thou among women/ And blessed be the fruit...” (GGRW 301) [*my emphasis*]

A.A. Gabriel starts preparing Thought Woman for the process of procreation (reminiscent of Noah and his idea of procreation) when she makes it known that she is not a willing participant, A.A. Gabriel continues pressuring her into the process:

“No, says Thought woman. Absolutely not. [...] So, says A.A. Gabriel, you really mean yes, right?” (GGRW 301)

Thought Woman then returns to the water from which she came and floats away from A.A. Gabriel and his coercive techniques of Immaculate Conception.

Much like the previous story of Changing Woman and her encounter with Noah, Thought Woman and the representation of Archangel Gabriel expose the biblical men as sexual harassers and misogynists. A.A. Gabriel’s quest to find a Mary and procreate despite the lack of Changing Woman’s consent is evocative of the statistics mentioned at the very beginning of this chapter relating to sexual assault and rape of Indigenous women of North America. When Changing Woman denies A.A. Gabriel access to her body, he refuses to accept it and continues convincing her that she is Mary and is required to give birth.

During the forced procreation incident the business card that A.A. Gabriel gives Changing Woman is singing Hosanna continuously and another paper from the briefcase of the supposed archangel says “As long as the grass is green and the waters run” (300). Bureaucracy comes alive in this excerpt in a wonderful mixture of parody and intertextuality: A.A. Gabriel is not only a Heavenly Host, an avatar of the biblical Gabriel, he is also acting on behalf of the Canadian government. His briefcase contains a number of papers and forms, some of which relate to the biblical assignment of finding a proper Mary and others relating to the removal and disenfranchisement of Indigenous populations through treaties. Bureaucracy becomes part of religion: there are forms to be filled and expectations to be met before Thought Woman can become the Virgin Mary. Moreover, the vocabulary A.A. Gabriel employs is that of a government official, only saying the “Hail Mary” prayer once Thought Woman complies with his requests and hears his questions. A.A. Gabriel also has Thought Woman pose for pictures with a supposed snake, an invocation of Eve and the snake from the Garden of Eden; however, the snake turns out to be Old Coyote and only Thought Woman is able to see that.

Old Woman’s story is similar to the three stories discussed in this chapter— she falls through the sky and floats in the water, but this time Coyote is commenting on the possible directions this story might take:

““Old Woman fell through that hole into the sky and then she fell into—”

“I know, I know,” says Coyote. “A whale! [...] A fiery furnace! [...] A manger! [...]” (GGRW 386)

Coyote’s guesses evoke the past story of Changing Woman and the whale but he also imagines the places where Old Woman could land that are taken from the Bible: the fiery furnace from the Book of Daniel represents punishment for the three Jewish men who refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar’s blasphemous “image of gold” (Daniel 3.1-30) and the manger is an obvious hint to the story of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2.7). Coyote continues guessing and bickering with the narrator:

““Old woman falls into that water. So she is in that water. So she looks around and she sees—”

“I know, I know,” says Coyote. “She sees a golden calf! [...] A pillar of salt! [...] A burning bush!”” (GGRW 387)

The narrating I is attempting to steer Coyote in the right direction, but Coyote keeps invoking different biblical stories and symbols such as the golden calf that represents false idols from Exodus 32, or Lot’s wife turning back and becoming a pillar of salt in Genesis 19, or God in the shape of a burning bush appearing before Moses in Exodus 3. The invocation of these symbols is obviously a tool of parody and mockery as previous stories always included motifs from Indigenous mythologies and from the Bible and Coyote somehow knows that the next story will be similar to the ones told before. Coyote is also aware of “the book”, meaning the Bible, but the narrating I tells Coyote to “forget the book” (GGRW 387) and to remain focused on the story being told. The story then continues and it is revealed that Old Woman meets Young Man Walking On Water⁵, an allegory on Jesus walking on water. Old Woman is, of course, floating in the water and offers to help Young Man find a fishing boat but he refuses. It is obvious that he is not as polite as Old Woman, he does not accept her help nor does he acknowledge the fact that she helped him. He also invokes “the rules” (388) and forbids Old Woman to help him calm the storm, which she disregards as she can see that the men in the fishing boat are in distress. Young Man’s approach to calming the storm is commanding the waves and the boat to stop rising and rocking, respectively, while Old Woman calms the storm by singing a song to make the waves and the boat go to sleep and saves the men in the fishing boat. Old Woman also scolds Young Man for behaving in such an authoritative way:

“You are acting as though you have no relations. You shouldn’t yell at those happy Waves. You shouldn’t shout at that jolly Boat.” (390)

Acting as though one has no relations is the worst mistake and the gravest sin in multiple Indigenous cultures. It implies that a person has not been raised well, that a person has no respect for

anyone and that the person is not acquainted with the customs necessary to live in a community. Old Woman scolding Young Man for behaving in such a manner only underlines the novel's aversion to biblical men and their behaviors. Young Man is the last biblical character of the novel and as he refuses the help of Old Woman, yells at nature trying to assert his ownership and supremacy of it and then claiming he calmed the storm is just the final nail in the coffin of the biblical men. By being ignorant, authoritative, spoiled, entitled, obnoxious, sexist and racist, the biblical men and the myths they represent become obsolete through humor and parody.

To sum up, all four mythical women have the power of seeing through deceptions and disguises put in front of them and all four of them defy attempts at rape, harassment and westernization. In their defiance they all expose the misogyny and sexism that is interwoven with 'Christian rules' and the western way of life that has entered the psyche of the Indigenous populations through forced assimilation and myth-making. Yet, the four mythical women are powerful through their connection to the land and the natural world as opposed to their male counterparts who assume ownership and/or control over nature through the word of god who, in this novel, is a small angry man shouting for no reason. The authority of god and his emissaries is questioned and their virtues opposed by the four female deities who can see through their pious disguises.

3.3. Literary figures

Literature is a powerful medium and its influence on people in pre- and post-digital era is undeniable. What we consider as classics of literature often convey timeless messages and remain relevant through their ability to withstand the tests of time. *Green Grass, Running Water* criticizes a number of the 'classics' of literature, beginning with.

Changing Woman, after being abandoned by Noah on a desert island, sees a ship and the voice from the ship asks her if she saw a white whale (GGRW 217). The obvious reference to Moby Dick signals that another piece of literature will become inverted. Changing Woman is invited on board the Pequod and is introduced to Ahab "a short little man" and Ishmael, "a nice-looking man with a grim mouth" (GGRW 217-218). Her name, again, has to be changed and Ishmael insists that her name is Queequeg:

"Here, he says, poking a page with his finger. Queequeg. I'll call you Queequeg. This book has a Queequeg, and this story is supposed to have a Queequeg in it [...]" (GGRW 218)

After being denied her own name, Changing Woman asks Ahab what a whaler ship does. Ahab replies that the ship Changing Woman has boarded has rules and that killing whales is one of the rules. The reason behind the killing of the whales is profit and the fact that in a "Christian world"

in which people “only kill things that are useful or things we don’t like” (GGRW 219). Unlike Moby Dick from Melville’s novel, this novel’s whale is black, female *and* lesbian and her name is Moby Jane. Changing Woman, like the rest of the crew, receives orders from Ahab and has to go overboard to try and kill the Great Black Whale (GGRW 221). Changing Woman starts talking to Moby Jane and after Moby Jane sinks the Pequod, the two escape Ahab and his crew together, swimming towards Florida. Once they arrive, Moby Jane has to leave Changing Woman ashore and go away, to repeat the cycle of teasing Ahab and sinking the Pequod. Changing Woman is then caught by soldiers who demand a name and she says “Call me Ishmael” (GGRW 249). The soldiers can see through Changing Woman’s disguise and they decide to take her to Fort Marion because they “know just what to do with unruly Indians here in Florida” (GGRW 249-250).

Following the ordeal with A.A. Gabriel, Thought Woman floats away and reaches an island with a “famous shipwrecked writer” who, according to the suddenly animate Island Thought Woman bumps into, “writes lies” and not novels (GGRW 324). Robinson Crusoe, of course, is a novel ever-present in the English literary canon. Much like Coetzee’s 1986 novel *Foe*, this episode tries to rewrite the legendary Crusoe and present its author as false. As part of the literary canon, Robinson Crusoe is a widely read and often interpreted piece of literature. It is responsible for kick-starting the castaway novel trend, aptly named the Robinsonade. Robinson Crusoe, in GGRW, is not alike to the enlightened Robinson written by Defoe: he is a symbol of imperialism. Robinson Crusoe notices Thought Woman on the island and greets her:

“Thank God! says Robinson Crusoe. It’s Friday!
No, says Thought Woman. It’s Wednesday” (GGRW 325)

Besides making the obvious TGIF reference, Robinson renames Thought Woman immediately; she is supposed to be Friday, just like she is supposed to be Mary. Robinson is also making lists, just like Ahdamn was. He writes down Thought Woman’s good and bad points:

“Under the bad points, [...] all my clothes have worn out until I have nothing to wear. [...] Under the good points, [...] the climate is so mild and pleasant, I do not need clothes. [...] Under the bad points, [...] as a civilized white man, *it has been difficult not having someone of color* whom I could educate and protect.” (GGRW 325) [*my emphasis*]

Robinson has been missing a sidekick of color, as he himself claims and decided that Thought Woman should become his Friday: a servant, someone to *educate* and *protect*. King’s rewritten version of Robinson exposes the grand narrative of white supremacy, once again. By having Robinson shamelessly patronizing all people of color, King, once again, inverts the myth of white supremacy. Robinson is the one walking around naked, without any culture, manners or

regard for others' presence, he is not the superior being in this story. Thought Woman, refusing to be Friday, suggests she could be Robinson and Robinson could be Friday; once Robinson refuses, she jumps back into the water and floats away again. While floating, Thought Woman starts making lists of her own, after the lists that Robinson made. She reaches land again and is apprehended by soldiers who have flowers in their hair. She tries to assume the identity of Robinson Crusoe, but the soldiers can see that she is "another Indian" and they send her to Fort Marion (GGRW 361).

Old Woman, after parting from Young Man Walking On Water, floats in the water, washes ashore and suddenly encounters Natty Bumppo. He, just like the other characters acting as the contrasting white figure to the Indigenous deities, mistakes her for his sidekick Chingachgook. Natty Bumppo is the central character of the *Leatherstocking Tales* written by James Fenimore Cooper. Published between 1827 and 1841, the books narrate the life and adventures of Nathaniel Bumppo, also known as Hawkeye.

Nathaniel Bumppo introduces himself to Old Woman as "Nathaniel Bumppo, Post-Colonial Wilderness Guide and Outfitter" and says that his friends call him "Nasty" (GGRW 433). He insists that Old Woman is Chingachgook, despite her repeated protests:

"But I'm not Chingachgook, says Old Woman. [...] Nonsense, he says. I can tell an Indian when I see one. Chingachgook is an Indian. You're an Indian. Case closed." (GGRW 433)

Similarly to how the media and many westerners cannot tell a difference between two different people of color, claiming they 'all look alike', so does Nasty Bumppo conflate all Indigenous people with a singular Indigenous person, Chingachgook. Both the Lone Ranger and Robinson Crusoe require Indigenous sidekicks and confuse the four female deities with the stereotypical characters from popular literature and Nasty Bumppo, as it turns out, is no different. His repeated attempts to change Old Woman's name and his blatant racism materializes itself as he starts talking about "Indian" and "white gifts" (GGRW 433). Nasty Bumppo presents his view on the difference between Indians and Whites:

"Indians can run fast. Indians can endure pain. Indians have quick reflexes. Indians don't talk much. Indians have good enough eyesight. Indians have agile bodies. [...] Whites are patient. Whites are spiritual. Whites are cognitive. Whites are philosophical. Whites are sensitive." (GGRW 434)

It can be noted that all the 'gifts' that Nasty says Indians have are physical and can be somehow exploited, while all the white 'gifts' are intellectual and have little to do with physical prowess. Nasty also implies that despite the supposed physical superiority of the Natives, the whites have

class, they are sophisticated and cultured and the opposite of the uncultured and unsophisticated Natives. Just like Robinson, Nasty fashions himself as superior to his Native counterpart and again, he is the one who is uncultured. After failing to shoot Old Coyote, Nasty turns to Old Woman and attempts to shoot her because she refuses to play the role of Chingachgook; however, Nasty Bumpo is suddenly shot by an unknown person and before dying tries to give Old Woman yet another name, a “killer name” like Daniel Boone, Harry Truman or Arthur Watkins, before finally settling on Hawkeye (GGRW 436-437). In a snide comment, Coyote and narrating I agree that the name Hawkeye “sounds like a name for a white person who wants to be Indian” (GGRW 437). When Nasty is shot, Chingachgook hears the explosion and comes to see what happened, meeting Old Woman, but the two of them are soon surrounded by soldiers who ask them for their names. Old Woman tries using all the names that Nasty gave her before he died but only Hawkeye exists on the soldiers’ list and they claim that Old Woman has to go to jail for a long time for “trying to impersonate a white man” and again, the story ends by the apprehension of the female deity and her journey to Fort Marion (GGRW 439).

It is fairly obvious how King achieves his inversions of myths: he quite literally rewrites the white characters as caricatures, ascribing certain qualities to all white male characters in the novel, be they from the Bible, Hollywood or the western literary canon. These characters are all angry, frustrated, murderous, harassing, greedy, child-like and ‘rapey’. They are the caricatures of white colonizers, presented in the same way as Native characters are presented as a monolith, as either stupid or savage or noble or a combination of three, but never given much depth or space to develop. King, in *Green Grass, Running Water*, gives the white characters a taste of the stereotype medicine. *How do they like it?*

4. Mixture of plotlines

Green Grass, Running Water consists of several different plotlines that are entwined, diverge and converge throughout the novel in order to be brought together, first by a Western movie and later, during the Sun Dance, by an earthquake that causes the destruction of the dam at the very end of the novel. These episodes of overlaps that bind multiple character groups and plotlines are often the center points of academic critics’ works and there is a variety of explanations and analyses of these overlaps between characters and character groups (cf. Cox, Davidson et al., Schorcht, Smith). The plotlines are extremely important and have profound meaning, besides just introducing new characters and offering their individual perspectives. The interaction between characters are mesmerizing, and their interconnectedness and how they enrich the novel must be closely examined.

In this chapter I will be exploring the mixtures of plotlines and the characters of *Green Grass, Running Water*. I will examine how the plotlines and characters interact and merge and investigate why this aspect of the novel remains important.

4.1. Character groups

When discussing GGRW and analyzing the characters in the novel, a reader must first untangle the plotlines that are present in order to make sense of the plot. There is also the natural instinct to group characters together based on their similarities and proximity, in order to determine how they relate to one another and influence each other's actions. In my opinion there are at least 5 different plotlines and groups of characters which are intertwined. The first group are the four elders/storytellers, who are both on a magical and the realistic plane of this novel, but on a magical plane they do not interact with Coyote and narrating I. The second group consists of the purely 'magical' characters: Coyote, the trickster and occasional comic relief, and the narrating I, the calming, shapeless and unidentified narrating commentator. The third group consists of all characters who live on the reserve or near it, including Lionel, Latisha, Norma, Eli, Bill Bursum, as well as Charlie Looking Bear who comes to the reserve only to see Alberta. The fourth group consists only of Alberta: she is connected to group three, but the novel offers a deeper understanding of Alberta, her motivations and her life, therefore I sequestered her from the rest. The fifth and final group consists of Babo Jones and Dr. Joe Hovaugh who come to Canada from Florida in search of the four elders who have escaped from the asylum, where the two work.

The four elders who escape from a hospital in Florida are fascinating characters; they are both in the 'realistic' plot and outside of it, telling the stories of Genesis inspired by Indigenous mythology. In their human, or better yet, anthropomorphic shape they mask themselves as Euro-American pop-culture and literary icons: the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye. At the hospital they are registered as Mr. Red, Mr. White, Mr. Black and Mr. Blue, their disguises are as the aforementioned literary and pop-culture characters when, in fact, they are the mythological women of Indigenous stories: First Woman, Thought Woman, Changing Woman and Old Woman. I have separated them into a category independent from the Coyote and the narrating I due to the fact that, unlike Coyote and narrating I of the second group, they are able to interact with the 'realistic' characters in the novel. They act as mediators between the 'magical' and 'realistic' realms of the novel and belong to both worlds.

Coyote and the narrating I are in group 2 as a kind of border between the ‘realistic’ and the ‘magical’ realms of the novel. Although there is some evidence that Babo may be able to communicate with them, their presence is mostly undetected and their comments are unheard by the characters in the ‘realistic’ setting of the novel.

The characters from the Blackfoot reserve and the white characters who profit off the dam’s construction are all mixed in together in the third group. The reason behind this is the simple fact: they interact with one another on a regular basis and their plotlines are more or less synced chronologically. However, special attention will be given to Latisha Red Dog and her relationship with George Morningstar in chapter 4.1.3. She, like Alberta, is introspective, offering personal thoughts and experiences that provide a great amount of detail about Latisha’s life on the reserve and experiences from her marriage to George Morningstar.

Alberta’s plotline differs from the plotlines of the rest of the characters from the Blackfoot reserve. She lives and works outside of the reserve, in Calgary, but loves coming back home, unlike any other character who has lived outside of the reserve. Moreover, her point of view, when offered, is more introspected and a much more detailed account of her life; her previous failed marriage, her childhood, her relationship with Lionel and Charlie, as well as her quest to become pregnant without getting married.

The fifth group is a source of constant wonder and inspiration for this thesis. Babo, the only explicitly Black character in the novel is seriously undervalued in the novel’s overall outcome and Dr. Hovaugh is reduced to a panicked conspiracy theorist and a finicky gardener. Their joint excursion to Canada in search of the four elders is extremely important and yet seriously neglected. Their journey to find the escapees and take them back to the asylum in Florida is constantly, albeit subtly, undermined by Babo, who is friends with the four elders and can see them as women in their original form, without their disguise. Babo is modeled on a character from Melville’s novella “Benito Cereno”. In said novella, Babo is a leader of a slave rebellion and GGRW’s Babo’s subtle rebellion against the capture of the elders is a nod to Melville’s Babo. This connection between Melville’s and King’s Babo will be analyzed further in chapter 4.2.1. Moreover, Dr. Joe Hovaugh appears not only in GGRW but also in another short story by King titled “A Seat in the Garden” (ASG), and is a subtle allegory on Jehovah. The short story and novel both mock Joe Hovaugh for being silly and obsessed with gardening; this offers another possibility for inversion *and* subversion of the Genesis myth. Joe Hovaugh is not as demanding, childish, rude or as angry as GOD in the story told by the First Woman, but he is determined to bring the

four elders back to his hospital, their prison, before they can cause further destruction, as he has been following their ‘work’ throughout the centuries. Dr. Hovaugh also carries a book with him at all times that shows the years and the dates of catastrophic events that he suspects the four elders caused.

Now that I have established the system of organization concerning the characters, I wish to examine their relationships and offer an analysis of how their interconnectedness moves the plot forward, affects past and future actions and brings about the fixing of the world in *Green Grass, Running Water*.

4.1.1. Fascinating First Encounters

First encounters often have a lasting influence on the relationship between two people. First encounters can also be deceiving. First encounters in *Green Grass, Running Water* are both. They reveal and conceal the truth of interpersonal relationships and in this chapter I would like to investigate some of the most fascinating first encounters of the novel and how they influence the subsequent relationship between two characters or plotlines.

This complex novel is overflowing with encounters between plotlines, characters and spheres, creating an intertwined narrative where the magical and non-magical characters continue each other’s sentences and repeat phrases from characters beyond the realistic storyline. Sometimes, the first encounters between characters and character groups provide breakthrough textual evidence of the constant trickery of the novel.

A classic exemplar of a first encounter, and the first one that comes to mind, is the one that sets the tone for the rest of the novel: the encounter between Coyote, narrating I and Coyote’s dream-turned-GOD. On the very first pages of the novel, Coyote is dreaming and his dream becomes conscious:

“[...] Coyote is dreaming and pretty soon, one of those dreams gets loose and runs around.” (GGRW 1)

The dream that the Coyote is having believes it is in charge of the world, it is noisy, shouts and awakens Coyote. Narrating I is there and, when Coyote wakes up, he warns Coyote that a dream has gotten away and that it thinks it deserves to rule the world. In a very surreal chain of events, the dream proclaims itself to be GOD and the story told by the Lone Ranger to be false. Narrat-

ing I and Coyote try to calm GOD and tell a story where they explain how everything happened, a creation story.

Coyote and narrating I, together with the four elders, are the two all-present characters with their retelling of the Genesis and Western literary canon. They also offer commentary on and participate in the 'realistic' realm of the novel. Their relationship with the rest of the biblical characters they encounter all stem from their dislike of the noisy dream that proclaimed itself GOD.

During the first encounter between Coyote, narrating I and GOD, GOD immediately asserts ownership over all of creation that was not exactly his to claim; he takes over the creation that Coyote has dreamed up and becomes a caricature of a spoiled child who throws a tantrum when not given everything it wants. GOD's insistence on the world starting as a formless void is mocked by Coyote and Coyote continues to explain to the angry GOD that the Sky and Water worlds were already created, without him in mind. GOD, similarly to colonial powers of Western Europe, claims ownership of the creation of the newfound world, disregarding Coyote and narrating I's explanation that these worlds already existed before he entered their story. GOD protests the existence of Sky and Water worlds:

"This is all wrong, says that GOD. Everybody knows there is only one world." (GGRW, 38)

This encounter between Coyote, narrating I and dream-turned-GOD is a clear reference to the colonization of the New World, reminiscent of the phrase 'discovery of America' which implies that the Americas began existing only when colonial powers realized it exists and could then profit off it. It is also a reference to Christianity, and how it was presented to the Indigenous populations of the Americas: the story that has been going on for thousands of years is now interrupted by a very loud, very condescending dream that calls itself GOD and assumes ownership of all living creatures and all lands, claiming there is only one true and right god. The first encounter and many other encounters with the misinformed GOD are all references to the undeniable mistreatment of the Indigenous religions and stories by Western colonizers. The constant 'corrections' of the biblical stories, as told by the four elders, with comments from Coyote and I, are evocative of the forced and violent Christianization that countless Indigenous peoples have had to endure; their religions mocked and stories distorted by those forcing the word of GOD onto the 'savages'.

The first encounter with GOD sets the tone for any future encounters between Indigenous deities and the Judeo-Christian god's parody. The sarcastic and dismissive tone with which the Coyote,

narrating I and First Woman deal with GOD sets the precedent for any future dealings with GOD and/or any other characters from the Bible in the novel.

In the first encounter between the characters from the ‘magical’ and the ‘realistic’ realms, the four elders meet Norma and Lionel on the road and the four are offered a ride to Blossom. Lionel is not as receptive to the elders as his aunt Norma is, and he mocks them when they reveal they have come to ‘fix the world’, while Norma agrees, saying that “the world could sure use some help” (GGRW 133). Lionel’s initial dismissal and Norma’s immediate acceptance of the elders show the generational gap between the old and the ‘young’ (Lionel is middle-aged after all). As he grew up, he stopped believing in the supernatural forces of the elders or anything resembling the otherworldly or mythical. Besides, their odd appearance dissuaded him from taking the elders, or their mission, seriously. Norma, on the other hand, immediately accepts the fact that the elders may possess some powers that could potentially change the world. Norma is constantly trying to discipline Lionel and have him show respect toward his elders, to accept the traditions and the culture he was born into, and to accept the possibility of the supernatural.

As their encounter happens at a turning point in Lionel’s life, Lionel’s childish rejection of the elders is reversed later on in the novel. He then realizes that the elders are helping him change his life, while simultaneously changing the world, during the Sun Dance. Lionel is turning 40 and is trapped, mentally and physically, without any knowledge of what he should do with his life. The elders bring Lionel a gift, a jacket that makes Lionel look like his hero John Wayne, and it ultimately makes Lionel realize that his quest of trying to become John Wayne is futile. He rejects the symbol of the Western that was “suffocating him” and “began to smell” (GGRW 421-422). During the climax of the novel, Lionel is the one confronting George Morningstar, when George is caught taking pictures of the Sun Dance, continuing the cycle of defending the Sun Dance from the prying eyes of photographers and cameras. Thus, Lionel becomes part of the tradition and is set on the right path.

Finally, one of the most fascinating encounters is the one between Alberta Frank and Coyote, which lead to the repetition of the Immaculate Conception. Alberta’s encounter with Coyote, although indirect and not at all physical, profoundly changed her as she became part of the new Immaculate Conception, previously reserved only for the biblical Virgin Mary. Alberta’s wish to have a baby without having a husband or choosing between two of her lovers, Lionel Red Dog and Charlie Looking Bear, came true. When the four elders find out that Coyote has been ‘helpful’ they scorn him:

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

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

“We haven’t straightened out *that* mess yet,” said Hawkeye.” (GGRW 456) [*original italics*]

Hawkeye implying that “*that*” mess has not been fixed yet, implies the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and the formation of Christianity. This excerpt of the novel is deeply subversive, as the sacred premise of Christianity, god being born a man through Immaculate Conception, is inverted in just two snarky comments by the elders directed toward the trickster who wanted to help Alberta.

As brief as these three first encounters were, they set the tone for the novel’s beginning, middle and end, correcting the progression of events and setting a path for the reader to follow. It is crucial to understand these three encounters, as they lay the foundation of the cyclicity of the novel.

4.2. Close analysis of chosen characters

This novel offers an abundance of interesting characters and to closely analyze them all would be a herculean task, so I have chosen the following characters and character groups to analyze in the following chapters: Babo Jones and Dr. Joe Hovaugh and their journey to find the four elders, Alberta Frank, Lionel Red Dog and Charlie Looking Bear’s ‘love triangle’ and, finally, the relationship between Latisha Red Dog and George Morningstar. These characters and their personal motivations, connections with other characters and interpersonal relationships in the novel are essential to deciphering the novel’s objective.

4.2.1. Babo Jones and Dr. Joe Hovaugh

These two characters constitute the fifth character group in my analysis, and they are endlessly fascinating for their intertextual names, their origin stories and how they relate to the four elders. Babo Jones, the only Black character in the novel, is seriously overlooked and I find her character to be a true treasure chest of information. She is much like Coyote, a trickster, and has much contempt for the search after the four old Indians by the police and Dr. Hovaugh. In her first appearance in the novel, she talks to the police officers on the day that the four elders escaped from the hospital in Florida. She is already toying with the police, clearly stalling the investigation process and avoiding giving any straight answers pertaining to the four elders. She is essentially dodging questions on the disappearance of the elders and has decided to strategically waste the

police's time, perhaps in order to help the elders to run as far away as possible before the police can pinpoint their location:

““[...] What do you want to know?”

“Everything,” said Sergeant Cereno. [...]

“It was six o'clock, [...] Like it always is on the days I work, which is six out of seven. I'd work seven if they let me. Kids give you lots of energy. You got kids?” (GGRW 22)

Her insistence on asking the Sergeant Cereno personal questions and stalling her answers is obvious, she is remotely trying to aid the four elders that have escaped. As she sits in the room she can also witness a “yellow dog [...] sniffing at the rear tire” (GGRW 20) of her red Pinto and water appearing around the car, as if it is a prophetic episode of what is to come at the end of the novel.

Moreover, Babo's name comes from a certain character from Melville's story “Benito Cereno” and Flick explains the connection between the Babo of GGRW and Melville's Babo:

Babo is the black [sic.] slave who is the barber and the leader of the slave revolt on board the San Dominick. He *deceives* the visiting Captain Amasa Delano into thinking that “it's business as usual on board,” though *Babo is in control* and the ship is under sail for freedom in Africa. King provides lots of little jokes that reinforce the connection between Babo and a ship. For example, she carries around Life Saver candies (145) [*my emphasis*]

The novel is obviously full of intertextual references; Babo's name is not coincidental and neither is the car that she drives. Schorcht explains that the cars floating on the dam on the day of its destruction also represent a certain kind of revenge, or, at least, a little jab at Columbus and his ships that arrived in the New World in 1492: “the Nissan, Pinto, and Carmen Ghia standing in for Columbus's ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria” (205). Apart from Babo's character clearly implying that she is not innocent in the disappearance of the elders, she is also endlessly humorous. Babo, throughout the novel, seems as a comic relief but she is also as an extension of a trickster character and my suspicions toward Babo grew as I read the novel again, carefully piecing together Babo's appearances in the novel and her interaction with the police, Dr. Hovaugh and the four old elders. Babo's relationship with the four old elders is evidently close, as they shared a reinvented Genesis story with her, and she knows their plan is to ‘fix the world’. She tries to repeat the story to the officers interrogating her:

““There was just water,” said Babo, [...]

“That's what they said... nothing but water. Now, there were some animals, but they didn't live on the water. They lived in the sky”

“Heaven? Asked Jimmy Delano.

“I don't think so. No, it was just another place [...]” (GGRW 97)

Babo shows the same passion for teasing the officers, just as Coyote and narrating I tease the reader with unplanned and irregular breaks and going on tangents while the elders are telling their stories. She is a very suspicious character, from the very start. She also uses the same phrases as the characters from the second plotline, and there is textual proof of her possibly being an extension of the Coyote:

“Canada,” says Coyote. “I’ve never been to Canada.”
“Canada,” said Babo. “I’ve never been to Canada.” (GGRW 261)

This is not the first instance in the novel where the more ‘realistic’ characters mimic the ‘magical’ characters. The novel is littered with instances of characters from the ‘realistic’ character groups repeating sentences uttered by Coyote. However, placing Babo right after Coyote, in succession, and having both of them say the same thing is proof enough that Babo is somehow involved in the plot to ‘fix the world’. If she is not an outright trickster, she is at least parallel with Coyote and connected to the ‘magical’ realm. She sees Coyote next to her car, next to the puddle her car is in with a flat tire, which happens to the other two characters whose cars disappear mysteriously. She is not the only one who sees the ‘yellow dog’; however, the way she acts and speaks and her catchphrase “Isn’t that a trick” or variations of this phrase appear at least four times (GGRW 262, 350, 447, 767) imply that she might be a trickster herself, just from a different mythology than the four elders. She interrupts Dr. Hovaugh’s thoughts, disrupts the interview with the police and stalls the entire plan to find and capture the four elders.

Furthermore, Babo is the only character who sees the four elders as women. She is able to see beyond the masks that the four magical characters adapted to be safe from persecution in the ‘real’ world:

“Were you friends with...[...] Mr. Red, Mr. White, Mr. Black and Mr. Blue?” “Who?” said Babo. “The escapees” Babo frowned and drank some of her coffee. [...] Babo laughed and shook her head. [...] “I never heard of those guys,” she said. “The Indians in F Wing had different names. Weren’t any Reds or Whites or Blacks or Blues, or any other colors for that matter. [...] They didn’t hurt anyone. *And they were women*, not men. [...] We used to talk, you know, life, kids, fixing the world.” (GGRW 54-56) [*my emphasis*]

This dialogue between Sergeant Cereno and Babo evidently reveals that Babo, as opposed to the rest of the employees at the hospital, sees the escapees as women and knows their names. She also knows they are ancient and magical, but no one believes her. It is implied in the novel that they spend many hours together in the asylum and she often talks to them. The elders, in exchange for her kindness, probably already told her about their plans to ‘fix the world’, although

there is no textual evidence thereof. The elders have also taught her how to tell stories properly and how to begin stories with a ceremonial invocation, just like they do:

“Now, you got to remember that this is their story. I’m just repeating it as a favor. [...] *Just got to remember how to start.*”

“Start at the beginning.”

“No, you don’t understand. *There’s a way...*” (GGRW 56) [*my emphasis*]

Babo’s reluctance to start the story, without the proper way of starting it, reflects the struggle happening to the characters from the first and second plotline; the hesitation occurs when the storytellers fail to remember the proper ceremonial words used at the beginning of a story. Babo, similarly to the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye, does not want to ‘mess up’ the story and make a mistake while telling it to Sergeant Cereno. At the end of the novel, Babo greets the escapees back to their rooms:

“Hello, Babo,” said the Lone Ranger.

“Good to see you again,” said Ishmael. [...]

“So how was the trip?”

“It was very good,” said Robinson Crusoe.

“Yes,” said Hawkeye. “*We fixed up part of the world.*”

“*All right!*” said Babo. (GGRW 466) [*my emphasis*]

Babo not only seems as if she was part of the plan of the four Indians, but she is an active participant and collaborator. The plan she and the four elders might have hatched together, depended on Babo stalling the investigation of their escape and supposedly aiding Dr. Hovaugh in the search, while subtly leading him both towards and away from the escapees.

Dr. Hovaugh is yet another fascinating character. Stemming from another short story, “A Seat in the Garden”, Dr. Hovaugh’s name is, as mentioned before, a wordplay. His name, when read out loud turns into ‘Jehovah’. Even Babo refers to him once as “Dr. Joseph *God Almighty* Hovaugh” (GGRW 245) [*my emphasis*]. His repeated appearance in King’s fiction is deliberate and his characterization is strangely similar to GOD in *Green Grass, Running Water*. He is somewhat neurotic, a ‘control-freak’, and enjoys gardening. The latter is obviously a joke on the creation of the Garden of Eden. In ASG, Joe Hovaugh finds a large Native man’s spirit standing in his garden and starts asking him to leave, as the garden is Joe’s *property*. Hovaugh, in both GGRW and ASG, is not the most benevolent character. He insists on perfection and order, much like GOD in GGRW.

The dynamic between Joe Hovaugh and Babo Jones in the novel is reminiscent of the relationship between GOD and Coyote, who they could be representations of in the ‘realistic’ realm. They bicker sometimes, Babo stalls their adventure, as she is in charge of organization, makes

snide comments and oftentimes angers Dr. Hovaugh, who only wants to go back to Florida- back to his *garden*, his *property*. There are some obscure and some very obvious references, alluding to the fact that Dr. Hovaugh is god, or, at least, another representation of GOD in GGRW. For example, the first time readers encounter Dr. Hovaugh, he is in his office, watching his garden through the window:

Dr. Hovaugh sat in his chair behind his desk and looked out at the wall and the trees and the flowers and the swans and the blue-green pond in the garden, and he was pleased (GGRW 13)

This immediately reminded me of the closing of the first chapter of Genesis, where god sees everything he has created and simply enjoys the view:

“So the earth produced all kinds of plants, and God was pleased with what he saw.” (Good News Bible, Gen 1.12)

Dr. Hovaugh, upon learning that the four elders have escaped once again, calls for Dr. John Eliot who, according to Jane Flick, might be a reference to the missionary John Eliot, the “Apostle to the Indians” (148). He and Dr. Eliot compare notes and realize together that whenever the elders escape, a natural disaster occurs. Some of the examples given were the Krakatau eruption of 1883 and the eruption of Mount St Helen’s in 1980 (GGRW 47-48). When he is questioned by the police officers, Dr. Hovaugh contests the information Babo has given them and tells Sergeant Cereno the four escapees were men, not women. He also gives the reasoning behind locking the elders’ room: it is because of the federal government. Essentially, the four elders’ room in the asylum becomes a prison, an extension of Fort Marion.

Babo and Dr. Hovaugh both watch the Western and notice the four elders standing on the side of the screen, “smiling and laughing and waving their lances” (GGRW 246). They then team up to track the four elders and bring them back to Florida. On their trip, they also follow a star, which appears to be leading them directly towards the four elders:

It hung in the sky, low on the horizon. [...] “Maybe it’s an omen,” said Babo (GGRW 261)

This star, undoubtedly, represents the star that led the Three Wise Men, following the Star of Bethlehem to see the newborn Jesus. Dr. Hovaugh argues that the star is not an omen, but a miracle:

“In ancient times [...] primitive people believed in omens and other superstitions. [...] What they thought were omens [...] were *actually miracles*. [...] When we get back, [...] I’ll lend you *a book I have*.” (GGRW 261-262) [*my emphasis*]

While Dr. Hovaugh represents the Judeo-Christian god, Babo might be the potential link between the ‘realistic’ and the ‘magical’/mythic realms. Babo’s knowledge “crosses cultural boundaries, including that between the positively “real” and the mythic, and makes her a participant in the vital tradition of oral storytelling” (Fast 37). Fast also presupposes that Babo might be connected with narrating I, while I, on the other hand, see her as an extension of the trickster figure as the overwhelming evidence suggests she can hear and see the magical realm of Coyote and narrating I and communicate with them directly:

““What do you think?”, said Babo. “Omen or miracle?”
 “Wow!” says Coyote. “Omens and miracles. We haven’t had any of those yet.”
 “Get you head down,” I says. “*He’s going to see you.*”” (GGRW 262) [*my emphasis*]

Babo, in my opinion, acts as a link between the realistic and the magic realms of the novel. This also explains why she is the *only* character in the novel that can see the four elders as women, not men. She sees through their disguises because she is also in disguise as a janitor at the asylum, helping the elders trick the system and the men upholding it.

4.2.2. Alberta Frank, Lionel Red Dog and Charlie Looking Bear

The ‘love triangle’ between Alberta, Lionel and Charlie has often been analyzed, especially with regard to Alberta’s well-known aversion to marriage. As a divorcee, Alberta is not keen on marrying again, especially not either of the men she has sexual relationships with. Alberta also wants to have a child, but she cannot have it without a spouse, as Canadian laws at the time are not yet as progressive. She is subjected to endless questionnaires and procedures only to be rejected by the clinic for not bringing a spouse for the appointment. Her desire to have a child while single also subtly mocks yet another ever-present literary trope. The ‘fallen woman’, who breaks societal norms by being promiscuous and/or bearing a child out of wedlock, appears in novels throughout history as a cautionary tale to show the female readers what would happen to them if they dared to disregard the set norms. Alberta flaunts all pre-established societal rules by firstly being an established professor of Native studies and a career woman, secondly by juggling two male partners and having a sexual relationship with both of them and finally by deciding to have a child on her own, via artificial insemination. The final point, according to Davidson et al., “actively inverts yet another feature of the seduction plot [...]. In its prototypical form, the epitome of a fallen woman’s disgrace was the illegitimate child she bore, a shameful legacy that regularly proved fatal” (171). Lionel and Charlie are not suitable matches for her and she occasionally ponders whether she would be able to marry either at all. Lionel and Charlie are also cousins,

which complicates their relationship and the dynamic between the three is endlessly fascinating and amusing. Alberta, of course, becomes the new Virgin Mary through Immaculate Conception with some magical help from the trickster Coyote, and, in the end, decides to raise the child on her own.

In this chapter, I wish to examine the ways in which the three characters interact and perpetuate the trope of the love triangle that has been so present in literature, especially young adult literature, and how said love triangle ultimately fails to reach its usual goal: the female choosing a partner.

The function of a love triangle is to create conflict between the interested parties, Charlie and Lionel in the case of this novel, and, as they compete for the attention and the affection of Alberta, they also examine themselves, giving the reader insight into their psyche. Charlie is a successful lawyer who works for a large firm in Edmonton and his father is a former Hollywood actor. Lionel, on the other hand, works at Bill's shop selling TVs, lives on the reserve and is going through a mid-life crisis, pondering what he should do next in his life. These two men are vastly different and both witness the wondrous events that take place towards the end of the novel. They both encounter the four elders in disguise and interact with them, which leads them both to a breakthrough and coming to terms with the fact that Alberta does not wish to marry either of them.

When we as readers first encounter Alberta Frank, she is at school, teaching a lesson on the Plains Indian Ledger Art in history class, showing them examples of art made in Fort Marion in Florida, where all four mythical women are imprisoned. After class she comes to her office and she has a conversation with Charlie: he asks her to come to Edmonton, but she rejects his offer because she plans to go to the reserve for Lionel's birthday. Charlie mockingly replies:

"Lionel? You're joking. I mean, he's a nice guy, but you're not serious about him, are you?"

"No," said Alberta, [...]. "*And I'm not serious about you either.*" (GGRW 43) [*my emphasis*]

She immediately reveals that, although she cares for both men, their relationships are not serious and she rejects the idea of either relationship becoming serious. After the conversation ends, Alberta drives to Blossom, to the reserve, and during her drive she ponders both relationships:

Alberta liked having two men in her life, especially when they were both over two hundred kilometers away. [...] She was not happy chasing after them [...]. But having both Lionel and Charlie relieved her of the anxiety of a single relationship in which events were supposed to rumble along progressively, through well-defined stages. First dates, long talks, simple passion, necking, petting, sex, serious conversations, commitment, brief stops along the line to marriage and beyond. (GGRW 45-46)

Alberta obviously does not want to take the road to marriage again and is avoiding serious commitment with both men. She juggles both casual relationships and once she feels as though one man wants to take the relationship to the 'next step', she would go to the other one and vice versa. She has both men wrapped around her finger and is using them for sex, without giving them any hope of potential marriage, she "inverts the notion of domestic, dependent womanhood in a deliberately comic fashion by playing one man off against the other" (Davidson et al. 170). Both men are aware of the fact that she is in a sexual relationship with another person and they both envy one another because they wish she would pick them as a long-term partner.

Lionel and Charlie grew up together, they are cousins and they have known Alberta since they were children. The rift between Charlie and Lionel began with Lionel revealing his love of John Wayne to Charlie. Lionel shows a John Wayne ring he had ordered to Charlie, and Charlie is, of course, unimpressed and boasts about his father, a former Hollywood actor, knowing John Wayne:

"When the ring arrived [...] Lionel put it on and showed it to Charlie.

"So, what does it do?"

"It's a John Wayne ring."

"My father knew John Wayne. [...] My father knew all the big stars." (GGRW 266)

Lionel and Charlie's strained relationship becomes even more complicated when both men become involved with Alberta. They are not only persistently fighting for her affections, but they keep comparing themselves, evaluating themselves, doubting themselves and ultimately resenting one another, as well as Alberta.

Charlie is almost a direct opposite of Lionel in terms of maturing. Charlie, just like Lionel, worked at Bill Bursum's shop but unlike Lionel, Charlie left the reserve, finished university and was employed in a 'fancy' legal company in Edmonton which made him financially very successful. When Charlie comes to visit Bill's shop, he shows off his Porsche with personalized registration plates and offers encouraging, but also condescending, words to Lionel:

"Hey, if I can do it, so can you. Look at me. Do you believe it?" (GGRW 89)

As he is approaching his 40th birthday, Lionel ponders his life and accomplishments and realizes that his life was basically dictated by the three crucial mistakes he has made in his life. The first was wanting to remove his tonsils and, despite warnings from Norma, Lionel's mother took him to the hospital to have the procedure. During his hospital stay, Lionel was mistaken for another boy in the hospital who needed to have heart surgery. This mistake impacted the rest of his life; his insurance providers asked him to have heart evaluations, he was turned down from jobs and even though it was a clerical error, it still haunted him for the rest of his life. Lionel's second mistake was going to an AIM protest, while he was working for the government. During the pro-

test, Lionel was arrested and, although he had not participated in defacing public property or any other unlawful acts, he was jailed and consequently fired from his position. The third mistake he made was taking the job at Bill Bursum's shop. He kept postponing going back to university and he continued working at Bill's shop for years. Alberta, when thinking about Lionel concluded that "[w]hat Lionel really needed [...] was some help with his life. It had sort of drifted away from him" (GGRW 201). She also knows that Lionel is not a career man like Charlie is:

Lionel wasn't pushy or slick like Charlie. He was sincere and dull. (GGRW 201)

Charlie, on the other hand, knows that his career and appearance have many advantages. He often ponders why Alberta chooses Lionel over him. While thinking about what could set Lionel and himself apart, Charlie concludes that Alberta may think of Lionel as a 'project' and that Lionel's helplessness is an asset. Despite Charlie's advantages in terms of money, physical appearance, possessions and education, Charlie lacked the helplessness that Lionel clearly exhibits:

Charlie was better looking. [...] Charlie had the better job, the better education. He made more money. Drove a better car. Better clothes. Better, better, better. (GGRW 204)

Lionel was helpless. That's what Alberta saw in him. Helplessness. [...] Charlie was self-sufficient. [...] Act helpless. And Lionel didn't have to act. Charlie wasn't sure he could act as helpless as Lionel looked. (GGRW 206-207)

Charlie fails to realize that Alberta is not looking for a long-term, serious partner and he cannot come to terms with continued rejections by Alberta. Although Charlie is not a romantic, he does wish for Alberta to become more attentive and loving toward him:

Charlie didn't need that kind of romance from Alberta, but it would be nice if she was more attentive, too. And supportive. His job was tough enough without the woman he wanted to marry criticizing him. (GGRW 234)

The excerpt above shows that Charlie does, in fact, resent Alberta to a certain degree. She criticizes him, she challenges him, she rejects him as a serious partner and potential husband and he believes he is being wronged by her. His job is 'tough' and he wishes Alberta were more maternal with him, softer and non-confrontational.

Charlie comes to the reserve after Alberta tells him she will be there for Lionel's birthday and he purposefully goes to Bill's shop to see Lionel, hoping Alberta would be there as well:

He'd catch a taxi to Bursum's, say hello to Lionel [...]. It might be fun to have Lionel show him around. He'd joke around with Bill [...]. Sooner or later, Alberta would show up. (GGRW 323)

Once he meets with Lionel at Bill Bursum's store, Charlie is subtly provoking Lionel, commenting on Alberta's absence and suggesting that the three of them could go to dinner together:

“Too bad Alberta’s not here,” Charlie whispered to Lionel. [...] “Hey, if she was here, we could all go out to dinner.”

“Well, actually, she and I are going out to dinner tonight,” said Lionel. (GGRW 352)

Charlie and Lionel sparring and showing off to each other their relationship with Alberta is exactly why Alberta wishes to avoid becoming pregnant with either of the men. She knows it would ultimately lead to a “masculine muscle-flexing contest” and she wishes to avoid the ordeal of both men asking if they are the father (GGRW 70).

Lionel has a realistic vision of himself, he knows he lacks Charlie’s charm, physical appearance, wealth and career. On the morning of his 40th birthday, Lionel wakes up and observes his life and his looks:

[...] he did not want to look at what he had become— middle aged, overweight, unsuccessful. (GGRW 263)

When Lionel wakes up on the morning of his fortieth birthday, he decides he will change three things in his life. Among these three items on his agenda was to engage Alberta in a discussion about their relationship:

[...] he would talk to Alberta about his new life, about commitments, about babies. [...] “I’m going back to university. I expect to be a lawyer. Are you interested in coming along?”

“I just want to be where you are.”

“What about your career?”

“It can wait. I can always pick it up.”

“And children?”

“Lionel, I’d love to have your children.” (GGRW 307-308)

In his imagination/delusion, Alberta is completely willing to renounce her independence and career in favor of being with Lionel and starting a family with him. Although Lionel instinctually knows that Alberta would never agree to come to Toronto with him, he fantasizes about her relinquishing all her accomplishments so she could be a loving wife to him and the mother of his children. This, in my opinion, points toward an innate jealousy he has for her and her success as well as Charlie’s success. As the two men are constantly competing for Alberta’s attention and are trying to win her favor, Lionel knows that in comparison with Charlie, he is the less successful and the less accomplished option. This resentment also manifests itself when Lionel thinks about going back to university. According to him, obtaining a university degree signifies success and as he does not have a degree, he is an embarrassment:

Life [...] had become embarrassing. His job was embarrassing. His gold blazer was embarrassing. His car was embarrassing. Norma was right. Alberta wasn't about to marry and embarrassment. (GGRW 263)

He is hyperaware of the fact that he was supposed to hold a degree, just like Alberta, Charlie and his uncle Eli:

Alberta had a degree. Charlie had a degree. Eli had a degree. (GGRW 265)

Besides wanting to get a degree and proving to Alberta he is a worthy partner, Lionel must reassert control over his identity. Norma criticized Lionel for wanting to be like John Wayne, for wanting to be white, and she urges him to come to the Sun Dance. During the Sun Dance, Lionel has a breakthrough as he takes a stand against Latisha's estranged husband, George, and prevents the publishing of the photos of the Sun Dance, as it goes against all tribal traditions. He reemerges from the Sun Dance a new man. At the end of the novel, he is no longer tethered to Bursum's store or wishes to prove himself to Alberta. He decides it is finally time for him to reenroll university and move from the reserve, fully taking control of his life.

A month after the Sun Dance and the earthquake, the three meet again at the base of the dam, where Eli's cabin once stood. Alberta comes to terms with being miraculously pregnant, and, following Latisha's advice, refuses to pick between the two men, opting for raising her child on her own. Although Lionel asks if the child is Charlie's, Alberta gives no definitive answer, she asserts her privacy and independence and stays to help Lionel, together with Charlie. The three work together and uncover the post with engravings of the demolished cabin's previous inhabitants. All three also realize they have diverging paths and decide to each focus on what is important to them: Lionel is leaving for university, Charlie is leaving for Los Angeles to reconnect with his father and Alberta is preparing for (single) motherhood.

Perhaps by forcing the female interest to choose between two possible male partners has been such an important part of Western literature that this novel insists on destroying it in such a subtle, yet powerful way. The love triangle is dismantled by all three parties and all three agree that it would be best if they each follow their own path toward self-fulfillment.

4.2.3. Latisha Red Dog and George Morningstar

Latisha Red Dog is Lionel's sister and the owner of the Dead Dog Café. She is an independent single mother of three, running a business that profits off of white tourists and their prejudice against Native Americans and a deeply complex character, especially with regard to her marriage and relationship to George Morningstar. He is abusive, physically and mentally, and is constant-

ly belittling Latisha, her nationality and heritage. Davidson et al. suggest that George Morningstar is a version of George Armstrong Custer, the commander of US cavalry in the 19th century, famous for losing the battle of Little Bighorn during the Great Sioux War (1866). His limited views of Indigenous practices and lack of respect for both Latisha and her people lead to his defeat at the end of this novel. Just like Custer, George Morningstar is defeated and leaves the Sun Dance empty-handed.

The relationship between Latisha and George developed after he came to the reserve during ‘Indian Days’ and George was thrilled that Latisha was “a real Indian” (GGRW 145). Latisha, on the other hand, was attracted to George’s ability to listen and curiosity and believed she was in love with him:

She had felt the itch early on and thought it was love. Six months later, they married, and before the first year was out, Latisha realized that the reason George wondered so much about the world was because he didn’t have a clue about life. (GGRW 147)

After they were married, George began to point out all the “essential differences” between Canadians and Americans (GGRW 172):

“Americans are independent,” George told her one day. “Canadians are dependent. [...] Empirical evidence. In sociological terms, the United States is an independent sovereign nation and Canada is a domestic dependent nation.” (GGRW 172)

George attributes independency, sovereignty, being adventurous and ‘in charge’ to Americans, while noting conservatism, dependency and passivity as Canadian traits.

[...] as George made these comparisons a trademark of his conversations, Latisha became annoyed, then frustrated, and then angry. After a while, she began to lay in wait for him. (GGRW 174)

After the birth of their first child, Christian, Latisha would avoid the Canadian versus American debates by seeking refuge in the nursery where she would “[...] stroke her son’s head and whisper ferociously over and over again until it became a chant, a mantra, “You are a Canadian. You are a Canadian. You are a Canadian.”” (GGRW 176). Latisha’s Canadian identity quickly became prominent, as she was antagonized by George in every discussion, and although Latisha considers herself a Canadian she “also comes to recognize that she is Native and [...] belongs to a group that has been traditionally ignored within constructions of national identity” (Davidson et al. 73). Her being Indigenous, a ‘real Indian’, was the exoticism that George sought in his adventure and she is acutely aware of her position as an Indigenous woman in Canada. George not only disrespected her Canadian identity, but her Blackfoot identity, belittling their customs and traditions, especially with connection to the Sun Dance. When they were married, George pro-

posed they spend their honeymoon at the Sun Dance and when Latisha showed him the lodge where they would be staying, George noted that it is “[j]ust like the movies” (GGRW 373). He was also displeased by the core value of the Sun Dance, which is visiting relatives and being visited by relatives. After their honeymoon, George never went to the Sun Dance again with Latisha, claiming that “[t]he first time is always the best” (GGRW 377).

During the nine years Latisha and George were married, he frequently changed jobs and had affairs. George not only belittles, but also physically assaults Latisha. After Latisha publicly embarrassed George at the Dead Dog Café, commenting on a fringed jacket he inherited, he punches her at home, in front of their son, warning her:

“Don’t you ever do that again,” he kept shouting, timing words to the blows. “Don’t you ever do that again.” (GGRW 215)

After this incident, George decided to be a stay-at-home father, taking on household responsibilities. Although Latisha is a professional cook and a restaurant owner, George frequently ‘mansplains’⁶ cooking to Latisha, saying:

“After all, the best cooks in the world are men.” (GGRW 270)

George inevitably becomes bored with household duties and abandons Latisha, leaving a letter explaining that he was going back to the US:

There was a long letter that said he was going home to get his life together. To find his roots. To Michigan first. Then to Ohio, where he was born. (GGRW 275)

At the same time Latisha learns that she is pregnant with her youngest child, Elizabeth. Despite being angered by George’s sudden departure, Latisha quickly adapted to being a single mother, managing two children, a restaurant and pregnancy. George still sent letters and poems to Latisha:

They were long letters, longer than the first one, but filled with the same enthusiasms and plans and dreams. There were poems, too, about love and the moon and the stars and the seasons. They came at regular intervals, and for a while, Latisha looked forward to them. Then she began to laugh. And then she began to take them to work. [...] And finally, they became boring. Just like George. (GGRW 275-276)

Latisha then began to ignore the letters and stored them in her closet, unopened (GGRW 276).

⁶“ to explain something to a woman in a condescending way that assumes she has no knowledge about the topic”
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mansplain>

When George comes to the Sun Dance in order to both come back into Latisha's life and to secretly take pictures of a ceremony that is not supposed to be photographed by anyone, he exhibits 'cultural voyeurism', described by Appiah as

[...] the process by which mediated or indirect experiences provide a window into a culture or subculture that would otherwise be difficult for the voyeur to observe or access. Cultural voyeurism is a deliberate, recurrent, and proactive effort to acquire information about another culture or cultural phenomenon, sometimes from a distance and sometimes as a participant observer (234)

As George does not belong to the Blackfoot tribe, he tries to infiltrate the Sun Dance in order to take pictures of the sacred ceremony. His voyeuristic approach is uncovered and stopped by Latisha, Lionel, the four elders, Eli, Harley and Alberta. Latisha's estranged abusive husband takes advantage of his knowledge of the Sun Dance and his relationship with her and decides to intrude and make profit off of the photographs he would covertly take. When Latisha and her family members confront George, he utters racist remarks, belittling and derogating the Sun Dance and Blackfoot traditions:

"I mean, *it's not exactly sacred*, is it? More like a campout or picnic." (GGRW 420) [*my emphasis*]

"You can't take pictures at the Sun Dance," said Eli. [...]

"No law against it," said George. "What are you going to do, *scalp me?*" (GGRW 425) [*my emphasis*]

"Come on! It's the twentieth century. Nobody cares about *your little powwow*. A bunch of old people and *drunks* sitting around in tents in the middle of nowhere." (GGRW 427) [*my emphasis*]

George is consequently overpowered by Latisha, her family and the four elders. His camera is dismantled and the film is exposed in order to destroy the photographs he took. He is powerless to stop it and is banished from the Sun Dance. He is denied access to Latisha, their children and the Sun Dance, in a powerful display of community and unity. As one of the novel's antagonists, George is disposed of and prevented from violating the Sun Dance. He no longer has access to Latisha or her culture and is renounced by all member of her family.

Latisha is victorious as she confronts her abusive former husband. The cycle of exploitation and violence ends through this display of resistance and rejection of white US-American voyeurism.

5. 'Orature' and Story(re)telling

Oral literature plays a huge part in the history of the world. Before orthography was available, the only way to convey stories and ensure the transfer of information was through the spoken word. The most famous stories we know today are essentially oral stories that were eventually written down by someone; the epic of Gilgamesh, the Bible, as well as the stories of Cinderella and Little Red Riding Hood. They all became written texts after centuries of being passed down through generations, eliciting additions such as extra characters, embellishments or various endings, which changed based on the context of where and to whom the story was told.

According to Eva Gruber's article "Aboriginal Oral Traditions", oral literatures represent "bodies of cultural expression and knowledge comparable to Western literatures, and they are in no way to be considered anachronistic, inferior, or as stages preceding the development of a "true" (that is, written) literature" (28). In the same article, Gruber explores the transcriptions of the oral stories made in the 19th century by Western transcribers who "exaggerated their [...] "Indian" flavor" (29), distorting the stories to fit the narratives of European fables and fairytales. Oral literature entails several important features such as "modulation of voice, the effects of rhythm or onomatopoeia, gestures, and facial expression", and all of these were missing from the earliest known transcriptions of Indigenous stories (29). These mangled versions of Indigenous stories were then passed down to an uninterested audience. Many Indigenous oral stories shared similar fates; their rich and non-linear stories, filled with knowledge were distilled into stories that were adapted for a non-Indigenous listener. Jo-Ann Episkew in her book *Taking Back Our Spirits* discusses how impactful oral tradition is for Indigenous peoples:

Passed down through the generations, oral narratives explained the history of the peoples, reinforced cultural practices and norms, and articulated the peoples' relationship with the world. And, oral narratives were adaptable because they could be revised to meet the changing needs of their societies and, therefore, could evolve as their contexts changed.
(4)

Through oral texts, Indigenous peoples of North America have kept their language, traditions, religions, identity. To underestimate the influence of orality on Indigenous authors would be a grave mistake for any researcher. King has time and again employed oral elements into his works, and *Green Grass, Running Water* is perhaps the most well-known example of that.

Another element that is often present in King's fiction in the (re)telling of widely known stories. For example, in King's 1993 short story "One Good Story, That One", the narrator is tricking the anthropologists into thinking she is telling them an original Indigenous creation story, but the

truth is she is using motifs from the Bible and Indigenous cultures to create a hybrid story, knowing the anthropologists would ‘fall for it’. This story was published the same year as *Green Grass, Running Water* but the correlation between the two, especially on the topic of orality and oral traditions, is important.

When I discuss storytelling techniques in GGRW, I will also have to discern between the uses of those storytelling techniques. Firstly, I will use the terms oral and written, although both modes are written down in the novel. I also differentiate between the plotlines in which these two techniques are used: ‘magical’ and ‘realistic’. As part of the ‘magical’ realm, Coyote and the four storytellers employ oral storytelling techniques, while the ‘realistic’ characters and their narrator conform to the pre-set norms of novel-writing and adapt to the written format. Some of the markers of oral storytelling are repetitions, comments, grammatical errors, asides, and a cyclical, seemingly never-ending, plot.

In GGRW, the four storytellers begin the story with a ceremony, an invocation (similar to the invocation of the muses in Greek epics), and only then do they start telling a creation story by mixing elements of the Bible with Indigenous North American creation myths. It is no coincidence that the story of Genesis, as told by the Lone Ranger, is so similar to the story told by the narrator of “One Good Story, That One”. It is evident why Eve is replaced by First Woman or Evening in the supposedly Indigenous versions, to produce and present a Native point of view on the biblical story. There are two different techniques or, rather, genres or storytelling in the novel. One is oral and another one is written. The oral appears in the ‘magical’ realm of the four elders, while they are retelling of creation stories. The written is placed in the ‘realistic’ realm of the novel. It encompasses the narration of events on the reserve and the focalizations of characters. It is a typically Western narration, with a 3rd person omniscient reliable narrator. There is a strong contrast between the two styles of storytelling: the narration in the ‘magical’ realm offers four similar stories, interwoven with commentary from Coyote and narrating I, frequent breaks, pauses, repetitions, grammatical errors and cyclical plots, while in the ‘realistic’ realm, the narration is streamlined and linear.

5.1. ‘Orature’

In the *Encyclopedia of African Literature*’s section on oral literature and performance, orature is described as a “strategic communal tool for non-literate societies in their consolidation and so-

cialization processes, and its spoken nature guarantees its widest circulation”. Orature’s relationship with performance is best summarized as

an important instrument in the educational system, for not only does it act as an incentive to and reward for socially approved actions, but also its recital is a reminder to all present of what qualities and conduct are praiseworthy. It re-establishes communal values and discourages individual tendencies by keeping the oral tradition not only a “secret” known to the few initiated, but also a group “heritage,” communally owned. In orature and performance, *focus is on the collective*, on group action, and *the performer is always surrounded, encouraged, prompted, and accompanied*—the performer is never alone on the stage [*my emphasis*]

This applies to the King’s short stories selected for this thesis as well as to *Green Grass, Running Water*’s four storytellers and their accomplices, Coyote and narrating I.

Orature is an integral part of Thomas King’s written works of fiction. His insistence on using orality in his writing is dismantling the longstanding difference between oral and literate cultures (Schorcht 200). In his works, the narrators employ an array of techniques to make the reader not only read the text, but also hear it. Be it using colloquialisms, breaks, asides or other, his texts are, in principle, oral. If one reads any of King’s texts aloud, they will, at some point, catch themselves making up different voices for the characters and laughing at all the word plays and puns that are included in the text. One of the most pronounced examples of this is the example given by Schorcht:

In *Green Grass, Running Water*, not only does the reader have to speak the name out loud to understand the pun—for example, [...] the Nissan, Pinto, and Carmen Ghia standing in for Columbus’s ships, the Nina, Pinta, and Santa Maria—but each name contains within it and refers to another story, another piece of history embedded in the larger narrative. (205) [*original italics*]

Other oral texts by King that also belongs to this category of word play mastery are “Coyote and Enemy Aliens” as well as “One Good Story, That One”. In order to get a full picture of the stories, the reader must try reading the stories out loud and make them completely oral. As Schorcht also suggests, the oral stories are not supposed to be authenticated, but understood and given meaning by the reader/listener (202). Furthermore, when one reads the stories by the four storytellers in GGRW, one ascribes them meaning, a deeper analysis, one makes connections between the story before them and the underlying stories from religion, history, culture, the media, movies and songs one has seen or heard; the story is an amalgamation of many other stories from different times and different genres. The novel itself is aware of its conflicting and analyzable contents, poking fun at the reader through Coyote and narrating I:

“Hmmm,” says Coyote. “All this floating imagery must mean something.”
 “*That’s the way it happens in oral stories,*” I says.
 “Hmmm,” says Coyote. “All this water imagery must mean something.” (GGRW 391)
 [my emphasis]

In “Godzilla vs Postcolonial”, King proposes the term interfusional as a terminological tool to use for a type of literature he and other Indigenous authors produce (186). He explains that this type of literature blends the boundaries between the written and the oral and creates a unique genre of literature that he believes represents Indigenous literature better than the widely used marker of postcolonial (186). Interfusional is exactly what GGRW is; it fuses and entwines the two different ways of presenting a story to create a separate entity, one that is both oral and written. His four storytellers fuse the oral tradition with the written mode of communication. Their stories are told *and* written down and in the following chapters I will analyze the four prominent elements of orature: cyclical plot, repetitions, comments and asides and finally, grammatical errors.

5.1.1. Cyclical plot

Cyclicity is a major part of oral storytelling; the cycles either continue or happen again and again, looping the story, seemingly making the story never-ending. The cyclicity of oral literature can be seen multiple times in *Green Grass, Running Water*, most prominently in the repetitions of elements in stories told by the four elders. All four stories follow the same template, as visualized below:

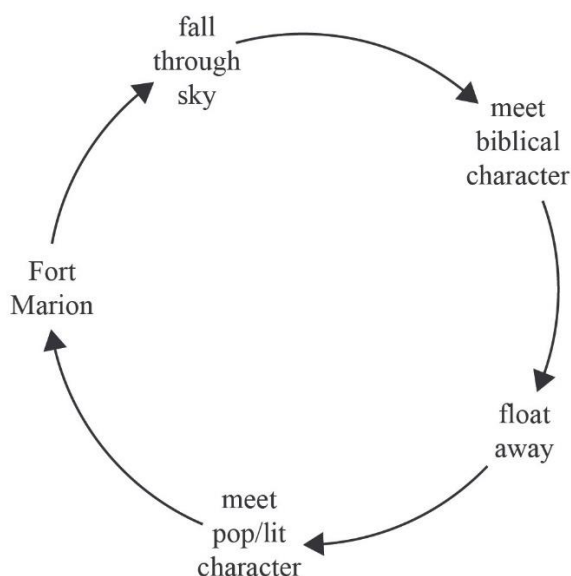


Figure 1: Cyclical Stories Template in *Green Grass, Running Water*

The cyclical nature of the magical plotlines and all of them leading to Fort Marion is no coincidence. Fort Marion in the novel is transformed into an asylum, from which the four elders escape, as discussed in the previous chapter. The cycle of a story clearly ‘ends’ at Fort Marion; however, from Dr Hovaugh’s explanation, it is obvious that the four elders have escaped the prison/asylum on multiple occasions in the past and were responsible for catastrophic events throughout the world.

When the story ‘begins’, a mythical woman falls from the sky into water, just like First Woman in the Haudenosaunee creation story (Gruber 27). After the fall, the mythical women are introduced to a biblical character: Adam, Noah, Archangel Gabriel and, finally, Jesus. After a failed interaction with these men from biblical stories, they escape by returning to the water and they float “for a long time. Three months. Six months. Nine months. You get the idea.” (GGRW 298). When the floating in the water is over, they chance upon a fictional character, from popular culture or literature. All of the fictional characters are, in their own stories, paired with a Native sidekick. In their respective stories, The Lone Ranger has Tonto, Ishmael has Queequeg, Robinson Crusoe has Friday and Hawkeye has Chingachgook. Pairing the four mythical women with these fictional men creates a contrast of values and the perception of the Native sidekick. In every one of the four stories told, there are always soldiers who come to ask the mythical women to name themselves, and once they name themselves after the fictional men, they are taken to Fort Marion and the cycle continues in the next story. The four stories have the same structure and a very similar content. When the four stories are told consecutively, they morph into one, forever-repeating and never-ending story that unmasks various injustices and offers commentary on the position of Indigenous peoples in the Western world.

At the beginning of the novel, the four storytellers hint at the fact that they have continuously told stories. The conversation that takes place reveals that they repeatedly take turns telling the stories:

“Whose turn is it?” said Ishmael.

“Mine,” said the Lone Ranger.

“Are you sure?” said Robinson Crusoe. “Maybe it’s Hawkeye’s turn.”

“No,” said the Lone Ranger. “Hawkeye has already has a turn.” (GGRW 9)

Further evidence of the continuous storytelling is that, in this novel, Hawkeye is the last one to tell the story, indicating that the cycle starts again with the Lone Ranger’s story of First Woman. It is a never-ending process, just like their attempts to fix the world.

5.1.2. Repetitions

The influence of oral literature is apparent through numerous repetitions of phrases. As stories contain shared knowledge of the world, these repetitions serve as reminders to the audience. If repeated multiple times, they become long-term knowledge. Some of the phrases in the novel that have come to my attention through their repeated appearance come from the ‘magical’ characters. They are in charge of teaching through their stories and their own actions, they set the example to follow. One of the first such phrase that appears in the novel and reveals that one of the morals of the story is ‘mind your relations’:

“First Woman [...] she says, *mind your relations* [...]” (GGRW 38) [*my emphasis*]

“*Mind your relations*, says grandmother Turtle. (GGRW 39) [*my emphasis*]

“*Mind your relations*,” Latisha shouted after them. (GGRW 410) [*my emphasis*]

Being considerate and polite towards everyone is one of the key lessons all parents wish to pass onto their children and in many Indigenous communities it is the most important one. Latisha knows the importance of passing this virtue onto her three children, especially during Sun Dance, when the goal is to reconnect to the Blackfoot community, visit, talk to and share food and drink with family and relations. Minding one’s relations is a quality widespread in North American Indigenous cultures, where community and togetherness are the pillars of bands and tribes. ‘Relations’, in many Indigenous cultures, do not just include cousins, aunts and extended family, but all the people of the tribe and even the flora and fauna. On the other hand, acting as one has no relations is the worst criticism one can get. Out of the four mythical women, two warn their biblical counterparts:

“What bad manners, says First Woman. You are acting as if you have no relations.” (GGRW 73)

“You are acting as though you have no relations. You shouldn’t yell at those happy Waves.” (GGRW 390)

When GOD becomes angry and refuses to share the abundance of food in the garden with everyone else there, First Woman warns him that he should mind his manners and relations. She urges him to share, explaining that there is enough food and space for everyone there. Old Woman, in her story, criticizes Young Man Walking On Water when he yells at the waves, instead of politely asking them to stop rocking the boat. She scorns Jesus’ counterpart for acting as though he is not connected to everyone and everything around him and proves to him that there is a way to calm the storm without being rude.

As for Coyote and narrating I, Coyote's impatience oftentimes interrupts the stories told and the narrating I must remind him to 'pay attention' to what is being said and the hidden lessons in the stories:

"All right," I says, "*pay attention*. In the beginning there was nothing. Just the water." (GGRW 107) [*my emphasis*]

"Was it like that water in Toronto . . ."
"*Pay attention*," I says, "or we'll have to do this again." (GGRW 112) [*my emphasis*]

"Forget November," I says. "*Pay attention*."
Pay attention, says Ahab. Keep watching for whales." (GGRW 218) [*my emphasis*]

In order to fully grasp the stories and their morals, as well as the traditions and the creation myth, Coyote must pay attention. The troublemaker Coyote must understand these stories and learn from the past to prevent him from making mistakes and being 'helpful', which ultimately leads to various disasters. Narrating I's task is to make sure the Coyote is listening and learning through the stories.

The theme of Christianity is interwoven with the novel, especially in the four stories. Christianity is often ridiculed, criticized and turned on its head by the four mythical women. There are many mentions of 'Christian rules' that must be followed within the novel. Those 'Christian rules' may be obeyed by GOD, Ahdamn, Noah, A.A. Gabriel and Young Man Walking On Water, but they certainly have no influence over the four women.

"Anybody who eats my stuff is going to be very sorry, says that GOD. There are rules, you know.
I didn't eat anything, says Old Coyote.
Christian rules." (GGRW 73) [*my emphasis*]

"Talking to the animals again, shouts Noah. That's almost bestiality, and it's against the rules.
What rules?
Christian rules." (GGRW 160) [*my emphasis*]

"And if you can't follow our *Christian rules*, then you're not wanted on the voyage."
(GGRW 163) [*my emphasis*]

Christian rules in the novel uplift the sense of individualism, ownership of nature as well as ownership of women. Oftentimes the rules are explicitly funny and nonsensical, just like Ahab explaining to Changing Woman that they are in the Christian world, which has an 'eat or be eaten' rule:

"This is a *Christian world*, you know. We only kill things that are useful or things we don't like." (GGRW 219) [*my emphasis*]

Although the Christian world has a rule against killing, it approves of killing things Christians ‘don’t like’, such as infidels. Ahab’s comment directly unveils the true nature of Christianity: ‘us’ against *the other*.

Furthermore, when Old Woman encounters Young Man, he enumerates three of the Christian rules that do not agree with her own worldview:

“*Christian rules*, says Young Man Walking On Water. And the first rule is that no one can help me. The second rule is that no one can tell me anything. Third, no one is allowed to be in two places at once. Except me.” (GGRW 388) [*my emphasis*]

“Sing songs to waves? says Young Man Walking On Water. Sing songs to boats? Say, did I tell you about our *Christian rules*?” (GGRW 390) [*my emphasis*]

When Young Man explains to Old Woman the rules of Christianity, and she lets him perform a miracle; however, when he fails at calming the storm, he throws a tantrum. Old Woman sees him “stomp his feet [...], yell at those Waves [...], shout at that Boat” and decides to intervene despite the Christian rules that take precedence (GGRW 390). When Old Woman manages to calm the storm by singing to the waves, Young Man is angered by her audacity to disrespect his rules and he takes credit for her actions, hailing himself as a miracle-worker.

The repeated mention of the Christian rules seems to point out their true goal, which is to instill a notion of man’s ownership over nature, white supremacy and misogyny.

The title *Green Grass, Running Water*, according to the author’s article in *Hazlitt Magazine*, comes from the long history of treaties between white colonists and the Indigenous peoples (par 42). The phrase ‘as long as the grass is green and waters run’ appears in the novel as a signifier of the treaties that have been broken. As one of the major themes of the novel is the fight for Eli’s cabin that is blocking the operation of the dam built on Blackfoot land, the phrase is all the more important and serves as a reminder, a warning for the future generations. It appears a total of four times throughout the novel, and every time it is mocked as empty words:

“My darling,” the woman on the television was saying, “I don’t ever want to leave your side.”

As long as the grass is green and the waters run,” said the chief, holding her in his arms. (GGRW 234)

The phrase in the excerpt above appears in the Western, which all the characters are watching. In this instance, it reminds Charlie of the love and care he wishes he received from Alberta. In reality, the phrase here is that of ‘eternal love’, which the chief offers to the white woman his tribe rescued/kidnapped. It is both serious and funny, because the novel wishes to invert the meaning of the phrase from ‘forever’ to ‘temporarily’.

Another mention of the phrase comes from Eli himself, during his conversation with Bill Bursum:

“Can’t stay there forever.”

“As long as the grass is green and the waters run.”

As long as the grass is green and the waters run. It was a nice phrase, all right.” (GGRW 295-296)

And again, the phrase is used as meaning ‘forever’, but Eli knows that the treaties are not “sacred documents”, they are contracts and contracts never last forever (GGRW 296). He is aware of the fact that, at some point, he will have to relocate and that the corporation will win. Eli is being pressured not only by the corporation, but by Bill and others on the reserve who would profit off the dam’s completion and that is why he uses the phrase: to show that a treaty has been signed and that he has a right to stay where he is, at least ‘temporarily’.

The final mention of the phrase comes from Changing Woman’s story, uttered during her encounter with A.A. Gabriel. When asked to sign a paper that would make her the Virgin Mary, a White Paper announces:

“As long as the grass is green and the waters run, says that White Paper in a nice, deep voice. Oops, says A. A. Gabriel [...]. Wrong paper, he says. *That one is for later.*” (GGRW 300) [*my emphasis*]

While being asked to sign away her bodily autonomy in order to become Mary, Changing Woman peeks into the future of treaties. White Paper’s words are ‘for later’ according to A.A. Gabriel, implying that he will ask someone else to sign over their autonomy/sovereignty to him, which is exactly what happened in 1969. The White Paper in the story represents the 1969 White Paper which was supposed to abolish the reserve system and introduce ‘full integration’ of First Nations peoples into Canadian society⁷.

During her Ted Talk titled “The danger of a single story”, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie warns her listeners about the power stories have in cementing the opinions of the masses. Similarly to Adichie, King is well-aware of what stories can do and how powerful they are. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, he employs the power of the four stories told by the elders to dismantle the grand narratives about the Indigenous peoples that have been widely supported by a colonial-based society of North America. GGRW essentially re-educates its reader/listener as well as the characters in the novel and instills this new knowledge by repeating the key phrases. After all, *repetitio est mater studiorum*.

⁷ <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/the-white-paper-1969>

5.1.3. Comments and asides

I wish to further examine the comments made mostly by Coyote and narrating I in *Green Grass, Running Water*. In order to understand the difference between the comments and the storytelling that is going on, one has to take a closer look at the punctuation. At first, the punctuation in the novel is different for the creation story as opposed to regular dialogues, but as I started analyzing the text closer I realized that using different punctuation was a conscious choice by the author. There is a clear lack of quotation marks for dialogues when an elder is telling a story, but there are quotation marks when the elders interact outside of the story:

“What are you doing?” said Hawkeye.
“Okay, I’ll begin again,” said the Lone Ranger.
“Okay,” said Ishmael.
“Okay,” said Robinson Crusoe.
“Okay,” said Hawkeye.” (GGRW 9)

The quotation marks are only used when different voices are present. In this case, all four elders have a voice, therefore the reader should read each of the words in quotation marks as different voices. However, when a story is told, it is told by only one of the four elders and presumably, whoever speaks in the story does not need quotation marks, as it is all told by one character who has one voice:

“What was that? says one of the Pigs.
Sounded like a fart, says one of the Raccoons.
Okay, says one of the Moose, who farted?” (GGRW 159)

The example above is from Ishmael’s story of Changing Woman. As Ishmael is the one telling the story, there is no need for quotation marks throughout the story. On the other hand, the characters who are hearing the story, Coyote and narrating I, still have their own voices. They frequently use their voices and they argue, bicker and comment on the events transpiring in the creation stories. By observing the lack or presence of quotation marks, I was able to discern between the narration of the creation stories and comments and asides by Coyote and narrating I.

Audiences always participate in a performance, and in *Green Grass, Running Water*, the narrating I and Coyote are the only audience to the four stories, besides the reader/listener. Their participation via comments is important as they offer insight into the world and draw poignant parallels between the stories told and the reality. For example, during Changing Woman’s encounter with Noah, Coyote notices that this second story is very similar to the story of First Woman and that the rules Noah mentions are the ‘Christian rules’ from the previous story:

“Rules?” says Coyote. “Rules?” Coyote says that again. “Is this that contrary dream from the garden story?”

“Of course,” I says. “It’s all the same story.”
“That makes sense,” says Coyote.” (GGRW 162-163)

Narrating I confirms to Coyote and also to the reader/listener that the story of Changing Woman is the same story as the one before. This also confirms the cyclicity of the stories, where the four mythical women experience very similar things and have encounters with various characters, but the story remains the same.

During Changing Woman’s encounter with Ahab on board of the Pequod, Coyote is struck by the mention of Moby-Dick and starts to tell narrating I everything he knows about the novel:

“She means Moby-Dick,” says Coyote. “I read the book. It’s Moby-Dick, the great white whale who destroys the Pequod.”
“You haven’t been reading your history,” I tell Coyote. “*It’s English colonists who destroy the Pequots.*” (GGRW 220) [*my emphasis*]

The narrating I corrects Coyote, and reminds him of the Pequod tribe and the famous Pequot War of 1673 when 1500 Pequot tribesmen were massacred by the colonists in present-day Connecticut (Flick 158). The narrating I’s comment serves as a reminder of history of colonization and its effects on the Indigenous population.

Many of the topics covered by Coyote and narrating I are controversial and poke fun at different institutions of power:

“In a democracy, everyone gets a turn,” says Coyote.
“Nonsense,” I says. “In a democracy, only people who can afford it get a turn.” (GGRW 365)

An extremely telling comment made by the narrating I, pointing to the very essence of the issue of democracy in the United States as well as Canada. It could perhaps denote the lack of the right to vote in so-called democracies in North America. For example, in the US, the Indigenous population was denied the right to vote until 1924, with the states of New Mexico and Arizona extending full voting rights to Native Americans in 1948⁸. In Canada, First Nations men could vote, provided they gave up their status and the unconditional right to vote was only granted in 1960⁹. Narrating I seems to poke fun at the fact that, unlike many other groups, the rich have always had the right to participate in democracy.

Coyote and the narrating I comment on the lyrics of a gospel song in the story of Thought Woman. When Thought Woman encounters A.A. Gabriel, he gives her a card that sings a song whose lyrics awaken different memories for the two commentators:

⁸ <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/right-to-vote/voting-rights-for-native-americans/>

⁹ <https://electionsanddemocracy.ca/voting-rights-through-time-0/brief-history-federal-voting-rights-canada>

“I know that song,” says Coyote. “Hosanna da, in-in the highest, hosanna da forever...”
“You got the wrong song,” I says. “This song goes ‘Hosanna da, our home on Natives’ land” (GGRW 299)

For Coyote, the song reminds him of a church choir’s song, but the narrating I points out that the song is actually the Canadian national anthem. Hosanna da, when read or sang aloud, sounds very much like “Oh Canada”. Narrating I also changes the lyric “our home and native land” to “our home on Natives’ land” purposefully, to point out the hypocrisy of Canada. Canada’s national anthem, in its lyrics, implies indigeneity of Canada’s entire population, which is incorrect. As it is their joint task to fix the world, narrating I also fixes the lyrics of Canada’s national anthem.

When Old Woman encounters Nasty Bumpo and he begins to name the differences between ‘whites’ and ‘Indians’, Coyote and narrating I subtly comment on the racist undertones of his assertions:

“Oops,” says Coyote. “We have a problem.”
“Only if you’re an Indian,” I says.
“You’re right,” says Coyote. “I’m probably a Coyote.” (GGRW 435)

Narrating I points out that the problem lies with being Native in Nasty Bumpo’s world; one would be considered inferior and savage. Another comment that illuminates the relationship between the white population and the Indigenous in North America is the following:

“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.” (GGRW 437)

Summarizing the fetishization and racism experienced by the Indigenous, narrating I concludes that the name Hawkeye is apt for a white person pretending to be Native. On the other hand, Old Woman is reprimanded and arrested for doing the opposite. While it is alright for Hawkeye to ‘play Indian’, Old Woman is punished for trying and assume a white identity (GGRW 439).

There are some instances of the narrators replying to comments made by Coyote and narrating I, most notably in the Lone Ranger’s story, when the narrator replies to the narrating I:

“So that’s the way the story starts,” I says. “That’s the way it is beginning.”
No, no, says that GOD. That’s not the way it starts at all.” (GGRW 40)

This proves that Coyote and narrating I’s comments are heard by the storytellers and is proof of the novel’s oral nature. The story is essentially a performance, and the comments help enhance it.

5.1.4. Grammatical errors

Although I have strayed from the field of linguistics, I will attempt to employ my knowledge of pronouns, especially demonstrative pronouns, which are predominantly ‘incorrectly’ used by the four elders while telling creation stories in *Green Grass, Running Water*. The elders use demonstrative pronouns frequently and, oftentimes, they replace personal pronouns or articles *a*, *an*, *the* with demonstrative pronouns *this*, *that*, *these*, *those*.

“*That* Coyote was asleep and *that* Coyote was dreaming. When *that* Coyote dreams, anything can happen.” (GGRW 1) [*my emphasis*]

“So *that* one walks off the edge of the world.
So *that* one starts falling.” (GGRW 39) [*my emphasis*]

“So there is *that* garden.” (GGRW 40) [*my emphasis*]

Some of the examples above show how the Lone Ranger uses demonstratives in English; however, when considering what language could be the elders’ L1, it is obvious that English is their second language and that the reason for all the demonstrative pronouns could be language transfer. No matter which language is their first, all four make grammatical ‘mistakes’ when telling the stories by employing demonstrative pronouns instead of articles and personal pronouns. As Alonso Alonso and Odlin explain, “many second language missteps do indeed involve forms and meanings related to the learner’s native language” (xiii). In order to understand the use of demonstratives, I began to research Algonquian languages like Blackfoot and Miswaki, and their grammatical persons to determine why this happens in the text. Frantz, in his article on “Person Indexing in Blackfoot” explains that there are five grammatical persons in Blackfoot:

first person = speaker
second person = addressee
third person = primary topic
fourth person = secondary topic, subordinate to third person
fifth person = topic subordinate to fourth person (51)

In English, and other Indo-European languages, the third, fourth and fifth person are considered third person. The elders, perhaps as a way to differentiate the third, fourth and fifth resort to using demonstrative pronouns. Moreover, it is important to note that obviation plays a major role in Algonquian languages. Henke and Brittain agree that “[o]bviation is a quintessential linguistic characteristic of Algonquian languages” (89). In Meswaki, Thomason explains, the “obviative is a third person viewed in relation to a proximate person, or viewed from a proximate person’s perspective” (142). The following example perfectly showcases this:

“So Changing Woman falls out of *that* sky. And *she* falls into *that* canoe.” (GGRW 114)
[*my emphasis*]

Changing Woman is obviously the protagonist and the nouns ‘sky’ and ‘canoe’ are the fourth person, the secondary topic (according to Frantz), so the storyteller highlights their secondary nature by employing demonstratives to show how ‘sky’ and ‘canoe’ relate to Changing Woman. Moreover, examples of this can be found throughout the novel, confirming my suspicions of language transfer within the elders’ speech. The use of demonstrative pronouns is intentional and it proves that the elders’ first language is from the Algonquian family. Being limited by the English language, the four elders use demonstrative pronouns to retain the difference between the fourth and fifth persons in Algonquian. The ‘incorrect’ use of demonstratives in English is part of the oral storytelling, as it provides linguistic context of the story as well as its narrators. It also highlights what is lost when a language becomes extinct and ever so subtly emphasizes the importance of learning Indigenous languages to gain the knowledge held within them.

5.2. (Re)Telling stories in *Green Grass, Running Water*

Green Grass, Running Water’s concern is trying to correct the story, the grand narrative, and thus, fix the world. In order to do that, each elder must tell their story and correct a piece of information provided by Christianity and the media about the Indigenous people. These retellings are essential to the reeducation of the trickster Coyote as well as the audience and, by extension, the world.

Trying to begin a story is tricky, and a story must start right, with the right words otherwise the story will turn into a mistake. Even Babo, who had continued exposure with the elders, knows that the story must begin the right way, with an invocation (GGRW 56). Before the four elders start telling their stories, they must get the beginning absolutely right. In the novel, when the cycle begins again, it is possible that they forgot how to start it, and so they try to remember the proper way to begin. The Lone Ranger tries to start telling the story, and makes a mistakes with the beginning:

“A long time ago in a faraway land...” (10) [*original italics*]

This beginning is immediately discarded by the other three storytellers who are listening to The Lone Ranger’s story. The Lone Ranger then starts over and over again, every time with a different beginning, even trying to start the cycle with the following phrase:

“In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep— [...]”
“That’s the wrong story,” said Ishmael. [...]

“Everybody makes mistakes,” said the Lone Ranger.
“Best not to make them with stories.” (GGRW 11) [*original italics*]

The Lone Ranger tries to begin the story by using the first verses of Genesis from King James’ Bible which, again, is not the true beginning of the story. This beginning is wrong on many levels. First of all, King James’ Bible is a symbol of the Church of England and a symbol of forced Christianization of the Indigenous population in North America. Secondly, it represents yet another wrong beginning of the story because it is not an invocation. In this novel, making a mistake with a story is not allowed and all of the elders are aware what can happen when the wrong story is told.

Moreover, Ishmael’s claim that the story the Lone Ranger begins with is wrong is a hint of what is to come: a new story of Genesis will be told by each of the four elders. The Bible will also be mocked and discarded as an untrue and inaccurate text. The Lone Ranger’s mistake in beginning of First Woman’s story is egregious and, as the four storytellers are determined to repair the damage done by the colonial religion, they must begin the story properly. They have to start over, with a proper beginning by invoking water:

“Gha!” said the Lone Ranger. “Higayv:ligé:i.”
“That’s better,” said Hawkeye. “Tsane:hlanv:hi.”
“Listen,” said Robinson Crusoe. “Hade:lohó:sgi.”
“It is beginning,” said Ishmael. “Dagvyá:dhv:dv:hni.”
“It is begun well,” said the Lone Ranger. “Tsada:hnó:nedí: niga:v duyughodv: o:sdv.”
(GGRW 12)

The above, according to Jane Flick’s “Reading Notes for Thomas King’s “Green Grass Running Water””, is a “ceremonial opening of storytelling in a Cherokee divining ceremony, divining for water and so in a sense for the future” (144). This is the only proper way to start the story, according to the four elders.

The stories the elders are telling, or better yet, retelling in *Green Grass, Running Water* all indicate the single most important story: *the creation story*. Narrating I says “[i]t’s all the same story”, proving that the four stories are meant to reeducate and unveil the ‘truth’ by repeatedly trying to retell the stories of genesis (GGRW 163). While taking turns at telling the same story again and again, the elders reveal that the true nature of the world has been tainted with Christianity and popular media, such as novels, TV series and movies, distorting the ‘true’ story. Their stories, on the other hand, wish to shed the grand narratives pestering the world and do so through the use of the four mythical women and their companions from the Bible and popular media.

One of the first stories that is retold, and in my opinion the most important one, is the story of creation of the world. The Lone Ranger, through the retelling of the creation story, essentially “dismantles the Christian origin story and recontextualizes it as a circular “oral” story with no real beginning and no end (Schorcht 201). The creation of the world is a collective effort in *Green Grass, Running Water* as well, not just the work of one all-powerful god. In First Woman’s story, she falls from the Sky world into the Water world, she is not the only one credited with creating land. The creation of land is a joint process which includes First Woman and grandmother Turtle, as well as other animals who are already present in the Water world:

“I guess we better make some land. So they do. First Woman and grandmother Turtle. They get some mud and they put that mud on grandmother Turtle’s back and pretty soon that mud starts to grow.” (GGRW 39)

The creation of land in the Water world is of course a very important step and signifies the creation of Turtle Island, which is the name used by some Indigenous people to refer to the continent later renamed America. The land creation process is then seen by Old Coyote who “comes floating by on that air mattress” (39) and he offers his help and advice:

“This is beautiful, says Old Coyote, but what we really need is a *garden*. Exactly, says that backward GOD.” (GGRW 39) [*my emphasis*]

Old Coyote and GOD interrupt the process of the world’s creation by inserting the idea of a garden into the story. GOD then usurps the story, claiming that this beginning is not the ‘true’ beginning of the world:

“No, no, says that GOD. That’s not the way it starts at all. It starts with a void. It starts with a garden.” (40)

GOD, whenever he appears in the novel, exhibits crass, childish behavior, belittles the power of the Native characters and takes credit for their contributions, just like all the other male biblical characters. Further in First Woman’s story, she is in a garden, which is not GOD’s creation, but *First Woman’s garden* (GGRW 40). GOD, observing the story, keeps complaining and tries to take ownership of the garden:

“Wait a minute, says that GOD. That’s my garden. That’s my stuff.” (GGRW 42)

GOD’s insistence that First Woman’s garden belongs to him alludes to the thought process behind colonization; a group of people arrives to an already populated land and presume that they are allowed to take it from the Indigenous population because they are ordained by their god. GOD interferes and confronts First Woman, claiming the garden is his property:

“And so just we keep things straight, says that GOD, this is *my world* and this is *my garden*.” (GGRW 72) [*my emphasis*]

GOD claiming ownership over the world created by First Woman with the help of grandmother Turtle, already rife with life and culture, also mimics the forced settlement of European colonists. When the elders retell the stories from Genesis from a Native standpoint, it also “shows how illogical and foreign the natives found the Christian religion [... and ...] illustrates how white culture misinterpreted, ridiculed and even outlawed native beliefs” (Turbide 1993 qtd in Ibarrola-Armendariz 73).

Yet another important retelling in *Green Grass, Running Water* is the new ending of the Western movie, whose plot changes drastically when the four elders intervene. The Westerns, as part of the popular culture, have a profound impact on their viewers as well as the people who are supposedly represented in Westerns. Petrović argues that “Hollywood Westerns only further entrench the belief of Native American inferiority in the world of white domination embodied in the white heroes such as John Wayne.” (149). Much like the Bible, Westerns helped further the indoctrination of the public and introduced new grand narratives about the Indigenous population of North America not just in North America but worldwide. The four elders wish to dismantle those grand narratives as well, and offer a new story as opposed to the well- and widely-known one.

The elders manage to change the typical Western ending with the warriors prevailing over the white cavalry soldiers. The fictional Western’s name, *The Mystic Warrior*, invokes all the stereotypical plot points of a classic Western: a white damsel in distress is saved by the noble young warrior, the two fall in love but their love is impossible, the army comes to collect her, a battle ensues and the Native characters are defeated. There are many other variations of the Western movie, but in most of them, the Native characters die and there is never a chance of a Native victory over the might of the US/Canadian forces. When Latisha finds the Western on the television, her son Christian asks her:

“Mom, is this the one where the cavalry comes over the hill and kills the Indians?”

“Probably.”

“How come the Indians always get killed?”

“It’s just a movie.”

“*But what if they won?*”

“Well,” Latisha said, watching her son rub his dirty socks up and down the wall, “*if the Indians won, it probably wouldn’t be a Western.*” (GGRW 216) [*my emphasis*]

Latisha, like every other Indigenous character in the novel, is aware of the stereotypical depictions of Indigenous people onscreen and knows that it is impossible for the *Indians* to win a bat-

tle against the cavalry. However, when the Western is changed, that is exactly what happens. The elders changed the outcome of the movie by singing:

The Lone Ranger's voice was soft and rhythmic, running below the blaring of the bugle and the thundering of the horses' hooves. Then Ishmael joined in and then Robinson Crusoe and then Hawkeye. (GGRW 356)

The movie thus miraculously turned from black and white to color and the charging cavalry that was supposed to save John Wayne and Richard Widmark from the warriors' attack disappeared. The Western's end presents an alternative to the expected victory of the white protagonists and turns them into the antagonists, while the Indigenous warriors are victorious and repel the attack of the invaders.

To some of the characters watching the new version of the Western, this change in the movie represented more than an alternative ending. Charlie's father Portland worked as an actor in Hollywood, where he portrayed "Sioux eighteen times, a Cheyenne ten times, a Kiowa six times, an Apache five times, and a Navaho once" (GGRW 166). Portland performed in so many Westerns and 'died' in them countless times, so when the outcome of this Western was changed, it especially affected Charlie. When Charlie realizes his father is in the movie and he is winning the battle, he rejoices and says "Get 'em, Dad" (GGRW 358). Deshayé describes this moment as cathartic, "a vicarious release of his frustrations with the popular culture of the Western that costumed his father [...] to suit a stereotype and directed him to perform his own defeat in Western after Western" (Deshayé par. 16). Lionel experiences a similar feeling as well, his hero John Wayne is defeated and Lionel no longer admires him. The supposed superiority of the white cowboys portrayed by John Wayne and Richard Widmark is completely demolished, leaving them in soiled trousers and arrows in their hearts, while the Native warriors remain unscathed and unharmed by their bullets. The elders, yet again, take a notoriously famous story and manage to correct by putting it through an Indigenous lens.

6. Conclusion

By analyzing the inversions of myths, the perplexing plotlines, the novel's fascinating characters and the elements of orature, this thesis has pierced through yet another layer of Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*. The novel's complex structure with its multitudes of intertextual references and its highly subversive nature has proven to be an endlessly intricate piece of post-modern Indigenous literature. It pokes fun at grand narratives enforced through religion or the media, and unveils the 'truth about stories'. When analyzing the various and numerous inversions of myths in *Green Grass, Running Water*, it became apparent that the novel wishes to offer

an alternative to the grand narratives by employing parody, irony and intertextuality as tools of said inversions. A postmodern novel through-and-through, *Green Grass, Running Water* employs language and its many uses to create a rollercoaster of a novel and reeducate its audience through retelling widely known stories and inverting grand narratives.

By parodying the biblical characters and stories, the reader gets to laugh while imagining Ahdamn and First Woman feasting on some pizza and fried chicken in the Garden of Eden (GGRW 41), Noah's ark being "full of poop" (GGRW 159), Archangel Gabriel being a clumsy insurance salesman (GGRW 298) and Jesus as an entitled brat (GGRW 388), but these humorous episodes also reveal how strange and bizarre Christianity was and, sometimes, still is to Indigenous people. The sacred dogmata are completely discarded in the novel, overturned by the power of the four mythical Indigenous women and Coyote, with almost no effort. Moreover, the novel portrays all white men as a monolith: spoiled, corrupt, power-hungry, ignorant and badly mannered. It makes the audience to see how ridiculous it is to portray multitudes of people with stale stereotypes for centuries. The novel mocks Eurocentric values that insist on white supremacy and man's ownership of nature.

Through closely examining and untangling the web of plotlines and character interactions, it became apparent that, just like nature, all actions and interactions in *Green Grass, Running Water* are intentional. From Babo being able to see through the elders' anthropomorphic disguises, Lionel's rejection of the fringed leather jacket to Alberta's miraculous conception, this novel is filled with mystery and, much like a detective, the reader must piece together the scarce information provided by the four storytellers, Coyote and narrating I.

While discussing the importance of oral literature and its influence on Thomas King's work, and through identifying elements of orature, the complex inner structure of the novel unfolded. When all the elements are taken into account, orature's significance for this novel is unmistakable, from the use of demonstrative pronouns to the placement of quotation marks. *Green Grass, Running Water* applies elements of oral literature as a reminder of its cultural importance: this is how information has been shared for millennia and when oral literature is discarded as unreliable, terrible events unfold. The novel's commentators, especially the narrating I, reinforces Indigenous teachings by warning Coyote to behave properly when a story is told, to pay attention, while the frequent repetitions of phrases emphasize the importance of being well-mannered and considerate. On the other hand, the repetitions are also a tool of parody, with the example of the phrase "as long as the grass is green and the waters run" (GGRW 234, 295-296, 300). The

aforementioned phrase shows how language's meaning may change over time and become just empty words; from a vow, to dismissal.

Although this novel was published 28 years ago, it is still a source of new information, filled with clues and references to both fictional and real-life figures that have either directly harmed or helped create stereotypes of Indigenous peoples of North America. The novel wants its audience to unlearn all of the falsities they might have seen, read and heard in the media about the Indigenous people. This is Thomas King's legacy: an intricate piece of literature overflowing with knowledge, passed onto the world.

Word count: 29661

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8. Appendix

8.1. English abstract

This thesis revisits Thomas King's novel *Green Grass, Running Water* and examines its present-day importance through the lens of postmodern and postcolonial theories, as well as employing Thomas King's non-fiction and academic writings in order to analyze the inversion of myths, mixture of plotlines and characters and the significance of oral literature. The thesis investigates the novel's discussions on grand narratives about the Indigenous peoples and cultures in North America. Furthermore, the analysis' focus are the four elders and their versions of the Genesis stories, character groups that form the novel's structure and the various elements of oral literature found within the novel.

(103 words)

Keywords: Thomas King, Indigenous Literature, postmodernist literature, postcolonial literature, Canadian Literature, myth, grand narratives

8.2. German abstract

Die vorliegende Masterarbeit greift den Roman "Green Grass, Running Water" von Thomas King auf und untersucht dessen gegenwärtige Wichtigkeit durch die Perspektiven von sowohl postmodernen als auch postkolonialen Theorien, sowie durch die Anwendung von Thomas Kings Sachliteratur und wissenschaftlichen Arbeiten, um die Inversion von Mythen, das Gemisch von Handlungsfäden und Charakteren und die Bedeutsamkeit von mündlichen Erzählungen zu analysieren. Diese Arbeit erforscht die Meistererzählungen über autochthone Völker und Kulturen Nordamerikas, die in diesem Roman erörtert werden. Des Weiteren sind der Fokus der Analyse die vier Stammesältesten und deren Fassungen der Geschichten aus dem Buche Genesis, Charaktergruppen, die die Struktur der Romans gestalten und die verschiedenen Elemente von mündlicher Literatur, die ebenfalls im Roman zu finden sind.

(116 Wörter)

Schlagwörter: Thomas King, Literatur der amerikanischen Ureinwohner, Postmoderne Literatur, Postkoloniale Literatur, Kanadische Literatur, der Mythos, Meistererzählung