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# Re-Marking on History, or, Playing Basketball with Godzilla: Thomas King's Monstrous Post-colonial Gesture

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## **Re/marking on History, or, Playing Basketball With Godzilla: Thomas King's Monstrous Post-colonial Gesture<sup>1</sup>**

Suddenly on the literary horizon has appeared a beast of somewhat dubious appearance. It has a sweet sensuous mouth, but under the soft invitation, the sharp teeth are ready to bite. This beast is called postcolonial literature, and like all predators it will eat your writings up, digest them, and shit them out as turds of colonial bullshit.  
**Mudrooroo**<sup>2</sup>

We had a basketball team at the high school and a basketball coach who considered himself somewhat of an authority on the subject of talent.... He told me I had a talent for the game, and that I should come out for the team. With my size, he said, I would be a natural player. I was flattered ... But the truth of the matter is, I wasn't even mediocre.... Assumptions are a dangerous thing.  
**Thomas King**<sup>3</sup>

### PROLOGUE

The act of colonisation is articulated through the language of Western epistemology: through “scientific” discourses and reasonings — such as cartography, historiography, law and taxonomy — and through the language and practices of Christianity: collectively what Stephen Slemon has termed the “cognitive legacies of imperialism”.<sup>4</sup> The inevitability and rightness of this on-going act — this “false totalization”<sup>5</sup> — have been recorded, perpetuated and naturalised through a series of Master Narratives which organise and police the boundaries of the tale. Those who seek to resist being interpellated into such narratives frequently find that they are called upon to engage in a counter-discursive battle whose terms and conditions — even the language of the battle — have been predetermined by the very structures they seek to oppose. Like all sophisticated and organic structures, after all, imperialism has known how to bend and incorporate that which opposes it — to mask, absorb, transform or elide contradictory accounts — so that not all counter-discursive gestures against it are successful.

It may even be said that many revisionist enactments, many radical re-writings, often come to uphold the very conditions they initially opposed, or find themselves co-opted into a mainstream agenda so that their “edge” is dulled entirely. One could point to the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia, as a potential victim of this

kind. Arguably one of the most “radical” and carnivalesque of celebrations, the Mardi Gras was once a *succès de scandale*, generating more heated ire than it did enthusiastic acceptance. Over the years, however, as the event has become institutionalised as Sydney’s most exciting street party, and one increasingly profitable to the New South Wales Government, the event has been in danger of being “neutralised” or appropriated, of being turned into a Mardi Gras *per se*, with its explicit celebration of a Gay and Lesbian sexuality deflected, just as the original purpose of “Fat Tuesday” has been lost in an increasingly secular age. It is an on-going and demanding task for the organisers to resist such interpellation into the mainstream.

Similar “moments” occur in literary and cultural practice. Post-colonial theory, for example, has been accused of being a politically correct “methodology” developed by white cultures as a way of redefining themselves as non-racist and in order “to divert attention away from social and political oppression” or as a “linguistic manoeuvre on the part of some ‘white’ theorists who find this a comfortable zone that precludes the necessity for political action” (Trees & Mudrooroo, 265). Ella Shohat has raised “questions about its ahistorical and universalizing deployments, and its potentially depoliticizing implications.”<sup>6</sup> Russell Jacoby has claimed that “While post-colonial studies claims to be subversive and profound, the politics tends to be banal; the language jargonized; the radical one-upmanship infantile; the self-obsession tiresome; and the theory bloated.”<sup>7</sup>

Post-colonial theory has increasingly been charged with enacting or perpetuating the appropriative gestures it is, “in theory”, meant to disable. This occurs throughout the various “modes” or practices of post-colonialism in general, but for the purposes of this paper it may be useful to focus on one such manifestation, as it emerges via the articulation of post-colonial theory which Patrick Williams has labelled “overly celebratory”.<sup>8</sup>

Williams’ comment is directed at the inflection of post-colonial theory posited by, for example, the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, a book which sought to locate

post-colonial theory in, and to empower, the “margins” of Empire; in other words, to celebrate the strategic potential of “writing back” against oppressive hegemonies and “centres” and to interrogate the “privileging norms ... enthroned at the heart of the formation of English Studies as a template for the denial of the value of the ‘peripheral’, the ‘marginal’, the ‘uncanonized’”.<sup>9</sup> For the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, and the many who shaped this “school” of post-colonial thinking, post-colonialism was a way to re-focus debate onto the once unfashionable or even unseen fringes, to (re)introduce the silenced voices of nations, peoples, cultures ostensibly occluded by the great Empires, old and new, in particular, it seems, by England and (for certain critics) the US.

For some, the rapid refocussing of the post-colonial debate *in* England (via Cultural Studies for example) and in the US — albeit through figures such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and Edward Said — may well have seemed a case for exasperation: the Imperial centres *Take Back*; the centres *can* hold. Such a reading, however, does not vitiate a more legitimately distressing inflection of the “celebratory” school of post-colonialism which has seen the field criticised for itself perpetuating the practices of imperialism: for speaking *for* indigenous peoples, for establishing its own empire, and perhaps even for scripting what it believes is *the* appropriate revolutionary strategy for the disempowered or the disenfranchised.

These latter criticisms are particularly relevant to this paper, since they implicate the practices of this critic, and because they are the subject of Thomas King’s own criticisms about post-colonial theory. On the first point it is certainly crucial to acknowledge that it is impossible to dis/locate this study from the contexts which authorise it, in particular the academic/English/post-colonial studies background that informs my reading. This background, as Pugliese has argued, produces “a double movement which stages a critique of colonial practices and which, in the same instance, re-inscribes a form of complicitous neo-colonial parasitism of the colonial subject” (348).<sup>10</sup>

In working through this paper then there is a need to be conscious of avoiding, and yet also of acknowledging the unavoidable, anthropologising discourse which King satirises in a number of his stories. It is crucial to be alert to what bell hooks describes as “a politic of domination [which] is easily reproduced wherein intellectual elites assume the old colonising role, that of privileged interpreter — cultural overseers”.<sup>11</sup> It is not sufficient merely to gesture towards the fraught terrain of such inquiry, “as though the self-consciousness ... of one’s practice were sufficient guarantee of not re-instating colonising traces (of the will to power) and unconscious desires (for mastery)” (Pugliese, 352). And yet, as Fee has argued, “to abandon writing about the others for fear of inadvertently oppressing them is to stop listening altogether [sic], to stop a conversation that has just started”.<sup>12</sup> For Spivak, silence in certain circumstances “is a much more pernicious position”, a way of “not doing your homework”. It is crucial instead that we unlearn our privilege.<sup>13</sup>

To speak of a conversation, however, suggests that the critic’s voice is responded to, or that both parties desire such a dialogue. By staging the following reading of King’s work, my intent is in large part to enter into a dialogue with King on the issue of post-colonial theory which he has himself initiated through his article entitled “Godzilla vs. Post-colonial”, and to acknowledge the fracture which his anti-post-colonial gesture produces.

## DIALOGUE

In “Godzilla vs. Post-colonial”, King chooses to interpret post-colonialism in a way which many theoreticians have expressly resisted — as suggesting *after* colonialism. This isn’t the place to rehearse the at times tortured lengths many critics have gone to to insist that post-coloniality does not chart causality — that the ‘post’ in post-colonialism does not “imply ‘business as usual, only *more so*’”<sup>14</sup> — or to mount the arguments which maintain that it does. Rather, it is important to insist, as King does, that *however* the interpretation of post-colonialism is structured, there is no escaping the fact that at

least one eternally present reading of the compound word (with or without the hyphen) suggests that Native writing (and culture) “begins” with European contact. As King puts it,

While post-colonialism purports to be a method by which we can begin to look at those literatures which are formed out of the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor, the colonized and the colonizer, the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America. At the same time, the term organizes the literature progressively suggesting that there is both progress and improvement. No less distressing, it also assumes that the struggle between guardian and ward is the catalyst for contemporary Native literature, providing those of us who write with method and topic. And, worst of all, 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. (11–12)

In this article King argues for a series of terms by which to read Native writing — terms such as tribal, interfusional, polemical and associational — which “do not establish a chronological order nor do they open and close literary frontiers. They avoid a nationalistic centre, and they do not depend on the arrival of Europeans for their *raison d’être*” (16). He concedes, however, that “these terms will not do in the end at all. Yet I cannot let post-colonial stand — particularly as a term — for, at its heart, it is an act of imagination and an act of imperialism that demands that I imagine myself as something I did not choose to be, as something I would not choose to become” (16).

It will also not do, however, to try to pin King down too inflexibly to the terms and arguments he himself engenders. Because as well as launching an important attack on the dangers of assumptions, and on the potentially regressive effects of a post-colonial strategy, King is also inhabiting the position of Trickster throughout his article, mobilising a series of terms and arguments, and then doubling back on them.

What I would like to argue is that, despite quite legitimate concerns with post-colonial practices, and despite his own insistence that he is wary of argumentative structures which posit Native writing as *merely* responsive to European modes, King is frequently engaged in quite deliberate “celebratory” debunkings of specifically

“European” Master Narratives. In this sense his practice aligns itself with strategies identified in some quarters as consciously post-colonial and deconstructive, although King’s own terminology is more appropriate here.

Many of his stories would fall into the category which he calls “polemical”, that is, “literature either in a Native language or in English, French, etc. that concerns itself with the clash of Native and non-Native cultures or with the championing of Native values over non-Native values” (13). The term polemical itself insists on reading through opposition and debate — through a dialectic of sorts, between Native and non-Native terms. His terminology insists on politicising the space of the Native and non-Native in a way which the post-colonial, at times, does not. Shohat, for example, points to the way the term post-colonial becomes for some a type of benign label, which through a “diplomatic gesture” relinquishes “the terrorizing terms ‘imperialism’ and ‘neo-colonialism’ in favour of the *pastoral* ‘post-colonial’” (321, italics added). And yet, as the epigraph to this article makes emphatically clear, what is pastoral to some is positively gothic to others.

King’s work can be read according to specific post-colonial strategies of resistance and abrogation. His primary mode is an appropriative one, largely “involv[ing] the exorbitant rewriting of canonical literary texts from the other side of the colonial divide” (Slemon, 188). And yet it is also true to say that much of his work refuses such a focus. In “Godzilla vs. Post-colonial” he suggests a number of categories of writing that ignore this emphasis in favour of Native issues (13–14). In an interview with Herman Lutz King maintained that he was “tired of negative descriptions of Indians, whether Indians develop them or whether non-Indians develop them, and I’m tired of romantic images too! So, I would like to see some very calm, very ordinary images, Indians doing ordinary things”.<sup>15</sup> This is in fact the way his first novel, *Medicine River*, is framed.

King’s writing also frequently focuses on material which non-Native people simply have no access to, reminding them that they are outsiders to this culture which they

often so readily feel they own or to which they feel they should have unrestricted access. This is especially true about the Sun Dance ceremony which plays such a key role in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*.<sup>16</sup> Fran Kaye argues as much when she points out that “A recurring theme in each of the Sun Dances that occurs in the book is the attempt by dominant culture ‘shadow catchers’ to photograph the Sun Dance and the determined and successful resistance of such appropriation by the people themselves” (4).<sup>17</sup> She goes on to say, “it is not surprising that the Sun Dance is not described, the stories are not glossed, and the Cherokee titles are printed in the Cherokee alphabet devised by Sequoia, neither translated nor even presented phonetically” (4).

One advantage of producing a somewhat perverse reading of King through the prism of post-colonial theories, then, is that it signals the fraught nature of the post-colonial exercise itself, suggesting that it may indeed be possible to “parasitise” the post-colonial. When King satirises James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*, as he does in *Green Grass, Running Water*, and writes of “Nathaniel Bumpo, Post-Colonial Wilderness Guide and Outfitter” (327), he dismisses, in one deliciously monstrous gesture, the legitimacy and canonical authority of both settler/explorer fantasies about their own inevitable indigeneity *and* post-colonial theorisations — equating and diminishing them in equal measure.

King’s collection of short stories entitled *One Good Story, That One*,<sup>18</sup> and *Green Grass, Running Water*, devastatingly re- and de-construct a range of Master Narratives, including that of post-colonialism. His works misread, pervert, re-write and assail specific “foundational” myths of beginnings — the story of Genesis, flood narratives, stories of discovery/Columbus. His novel has a serve at *Moby Dick*, *Benito Cereno*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, and *The Lone Ranger*, not to mention *Young Man Walking on Water* and his team of what one Native character mischievously calls his “Deputies? ... Subalterns? Proofreaders?” (292).<sup>19</sup>

Western commodification trends are powerfully yet succinctly addressed in the story “Totem”, a brief but stinging attack on the practice of collecting indigenous



artefacts in museums. The illegitimate imposition of borders by settlers upon ancient lands is neatly and scathingly investigated in one story in which a Blackfoot woman becomes trapped between the spurious borders of Canada and the U.S. — a geographical paradigm which is at the heart of his latest novel *Truth and Bright Water* — King’s work invokes post-colonial practices and terminology directly, and it also insists on the illegitimacy of the post-colonial vision, illustrating how it too is just another in a long line of “disempowering cognitive legacies of imperialism”.

If, as de Certeau has maintained, historiography is “writing that conquers”,<sup>20</sup> then it is possible to argue that Thomas King’s writing is a type of guerilla warfare — a counter-discursive resistance to a victory that has never been conceded by all the parties involved — a resistant re-writing of the historiography of the supposed victors. The eponymous title story “One Good Story, That One”, is a case in point. In that story King literally re/marks on “history”. The notion of re/marking is used here to suggest both his active commenting on the eurocentric account of progress, colonisation and mastery which is perpetuated in on-going practices of collecting, recording, categorising; and the act of writing over — of covering the supposedly unassailable Master Narratives so that they can no longer be read as self-evident or obvious. Indeed, at times they simply can’t be read; they are too comprehensively de/scribed — the ultimate act of erasure. Under King’s deft manipulation, they are submerged — overcoded — beneath a heavy script of Coyote tracks. Put another way, King effects an excavation of indigenous stories from beneath the accretion of Imperial testimony — effectively decolonising archaeological practices by overturning these “authoritative” methodologies.

The title story of his first collection, “One Good Story, That One”, offers an excellent account of this process. Three anthropologists descend on a Native Indian man in search of a “good” story. The scientists are portrayed as gullible and removed, intent only on capturing an authentic tale on film and tape: “Your friend Napiao, they says, that one says you tell a good story, you tell us your good story” (4). The three whitemen with the good teeth refuse to sit. They stand, ready to record every authentic note of

wisdom from their native informant. The storyteller is quite happy to oblige and begins a tale about Jimmy and his car, and Billy Frank and the dead-river pig, stories, in other words, about local Native Indians and their day-to-day lives. The anthropologists are not impressed.

“Those ones like old stories, says my friend, maybe how the world was put together. Good Indian story like that ... those ones have tape recorders...” (5). So the storyteller, ironically, changes mode, europeanising his delivery. “Once upon a time”, he says, and then observes, “Those stories start like that, pretty much, those ones, start on time.” And he begins to tell the story of Evening’s garden, and of Ah-damn, her not-too-bright, partner. It is the story of beginnings, of the naming of the animals, of a tree with a forbidden fruit, and of what leads to the expulsion of the whiteman Ah-damn and the Indian woman Evening from *Her Garden* — rather unreasonably as it turns out — by a touchy white guy called god. That the Dominant power here is white, and that he should be expelling the Indian woman from her own land is, of course, significant.

The narrator keeps the story short because he is worried about the anthropologists’ attention span, and when he is finished he says, simply, “That’s all. It is ended.” The men “push their tape recorders, fix their cameras. All of those ones smile. Nod their head around. Look out window. Shake my hand. Make happy noises. Say goodbyes, see you later. Leave pretty quick” (10).

A central target of this tale is, again, the expectations which the scientific community bring to the meeting, expectations which shape which story is of value and which is not. King quite cleverly highlights the narcissistic dimension of anthropological enquiry demonstrating that the search for the Other is in fact articulated through a search for the familiarity of our own stories.<sup>21</sup> For the anthropologists, the story about everyday contemporary Indian life is of no interest. What they are seeking is material which simultaneously reassures them that their preconceptions (their own stereotypes about the Other) are valid and locates the First Nations peoples in what Anne McClintock has called “anachronistic space”<sup>22</sup> ensuring that they are easily

objectified and *known*. This conveniently “fixes” the indigenous peoples as past tense and makes the stories in the present tense not simply unimportant but impossible. The narrator, here, challenges this deadening fixity, in part by deconstructing the notion that authentic Nativeness resides in the past. It is precisely this fixity which he parodies in a later “science fiction” story where the Indians turn to stone.

The narrator’s choice of an “authentic” Indian story is Genesis, subversively and knowingly “corrupted”, although every indication suggests that the anthropologists devour it unsuspectingly. Presumably they will transcribe and transmit it as a piece of “authentic” folklore, and their presentation will be proof of their authoritative control of Indian knowledge and culture.

The use of Genesis is crucial here for a number of reasons. King’s “appropriation” of a White creation myth reverses the traditional scenario wherein non-Native intellectuals, curators or anthropologists seize on and interpret Native culture or appropriate indigenous cultural and sacred production. Furthermore, given the narrator’s memory lapses, his changes of direction, his anachronisms and his fracturing of linearity, the sacrosanct unity and primacy of the Biblical text — arguably *the* foundational text of the Dominant culture — is brought into relief and undermined.

A similar desacralisation takes place in King’s novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, in which God is shown to be one of Coyote’s bad dreams. King literalises, although he does not refer directly to, a well-known joke. “Have you heard the one about the dyslexic, agnostic insomniac? He lies awake at night wondering whether there really is a dog.” The joke is enacted in the opening pages of the novel where Coyote’s dream begins to take itself seriously eventually waking its master and entering into dialogue with Coyote.

Who are you? says that Dream. Are you someone important?  
“I’m Coyote”, says Coyote. “And I am very smart.”  
I am very smart, too, says that Dream. I must be Coyote.  
“No,” says Coyote. “You can’t be Coyote. But you can be a dog” (1–2).

The dream, however, “gets everything backward” — dog becomes god, and unhappy with being a little god, it makes itself into GOD.<sup>23</sup>

King, from the beginning of his story, makes Christian order the product of Indigenous disorder. Specifically, he resists the Bible’s definitive opening — the beginning of all order.<sup>24</sup> The resistance here takes the form of repeated false starts, so that the story is recommenced over and over again, spoken by a range of characters, from the very first page until virtually the very last.

That these re-tellings are meant to interrogate traditional Western narratives is obvious from the opening sentences from these sections: on page 1, “In the beginning...”; on page 7, “*Once upon a time...*”; on page 8, “A long time ago in a faraway land...”; on page 9, “Many moons” (which can be read as a satire on the typical Hollywood parody of Native storytelling); and on page 10 we are back to “*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth.*” Finally, all of these false starts are discarded, and the four Old Indians begin again, this time in Cherokee.<sup>25</sup> And at last, the story begins ... sort of. As Blanca Chester has argued, “By playing with stories that have no beginnings, middles, and endings, King maintains the dialogic fluidity of oral storytelling performance in a written text”.<sup>26</sup>

King’s stories constantly rupture linearity of time and disrupt historical method through anachronistic references which deny European taxonomies of control and the primacy of Western narrative method/order. In the beginning, before Indians and Whitemen, King tells us, god created

So-see-ka, call her flint.  
A-ma-po, call her dog.  
Ba-ko-zao, call her grocery store.  
Pe-to-pa-zasling, call her television. (6)

In “One Good Story, That One”, the falsely naive narrator seems genuinely not to notice the offensive behaviour of his inquisitors, but his story repeatedly satirises their methods. In his account of how Ah-damn records the names of all the animals, for example — a moment in the Bible which instantiates white patriarchy as Master of all

things, Adam as he that names — the reader is told, “All those animals come by. Coyote come by maybe four, maybe eight times. Gets dressed up, fool around” (8).<sup>27</sup> That Ah-damn’s lack of intelligence is somehow linked to his whiteness is soon made clear. “That Ah-damn not so smart. Like Harley James, whiteman, those. Evening, she be Indian woman, I guess” (8). Evening, unlike her unimpressive partner, catches on immediately by following the coyote tracks. In the end, significantly, the narrator wraps up the story and dismisses the anthropologists. Afterwards, “I clean up all the coyote tracks on the floor” (10).

As with most of Thomas King’s writing, this story is about assumptions — about the prejudices which shape *how* stories are heard and the potential this has of shaping what stories *say*. Kateri Damm has commented on the way such preconceptions influence what is heard, and therefore, what is remembered or admitted into dominant spaces. “Too often”, she says,

the image of the Indigenous writer which comes to mind will be one of a ‘storyteller’, ‘traditional’ in appearance and dress, dark skinned, raven haired, who uses ‘legends’ or ‘myths’ to teach the audience about his or her culture. This highly romanticized image discounts those who do not fit easily within it. Many indigenous writers have had the unpleasant experience of not meeting someone’s stereotype. Metis writer and professor Emma LaRocque tells of her experience with a CBC radio journalist who after an hour long interview during which she regaled him with ‘cultural sorts of information’ suddenly realizes that she is a professor and ends the interview asking, ‘Could you tell me where I could find a *real* Metis storyteller?’<sup>28</sup>

As Damm goes on to say, “Indianness can be erased when the reality of Indigenous life confronts the fiction of Indigenous stereotypes” (4). Time and again, however, King deliberately invokes such stereotypes, foregrounding the very ambivalence of the stereotype against the attempts at fixity which mark colonial discourse, and hence refusing the clear-cut roles traditionally assigned to Native and non-Native players. Frequently King achieves this through satire, reversal or outright parody.

Indeed, King’s very use of humour in itself can be read as a reversal of (white) expectations, away from what Margaret Atwood has claimed is the “utmost gravity”

with which the First Nations peoples are frequently constructed, “as if they were too awe-inspiring as blood-curdling savages or too sacrosanct in their status of holy victim to allow of any comic reactions either to them or by them”.<sup>29</sup> Humour, as Atwood goes on to argue about two of King’s stories, is “a subversive weapon” which King uses to “ambush the reader” (244).

Several of the stories in the collection *One Good Story, That One* feature Coyote characters actively involved in messing up the world, by creating Europeans in a fit of boredom or malice. In both “A Coyote Columbus Story”, and “The One About Columbus Going West”, King makes the by-now obvious point that Columbus didn’t “find” the Indians because they were never lost. “Everyone knows who found us Indians. Eric The Lucky and that Christopher Cartier and that Jacques Columbus come along later” (68–69). King emphasises this in a clever way by relocating white origin theories so that *they* are the product of indigenous mythologies, by misremembering famous explorers’ names and hence by explicitly refuting the primacy and importance of European historical records.

In his collection of short stories, King circles around his subjects using humour and inversion to illustrate the process of stereotyping in action. He is concerned not so much with disputing or rejecting stereotyping — though he achieves this — but rather to reveal the tenuous ground it rests upon.

In one of his most powerful stories, “A Seat in the Garden”, King enters into a direct dialogue with those writers who exploit and hence perpetuate offensive and reductive images of First Nations people.<sup>30</sup> Joe Hovaugh,<sup>31</sup> pottering innocently in his garden, looks up one day only to see a “big Indian ... naked to the waist” with his hair “braided and wrapped with white ermine and strips of red cloth” standing in the corn. Joe, outraged by this, shouts at him to leave, upon which the Indian answers, “If you build it ... they will come”.

The line, from W.P. Kinsella’s *Shoeless Joe*, which was the basis for Kevin Costner’s *Field of Dreams*, actually has nothing to do with First Nations people. But

Kinsella himself, like V.S. Andrews, is one of those writers who has repeatedly been criticised by First Nations groups for his appropriation of Indigenous stories. In an interview with Constance Rooke, King points out that “Writers like Tony Hillerman and William Eastlake do a pretty good job” of writing about indigenous communities: “Other writers — well, Bill Kinsella is certainly the easiest target”.<sup>32</sup> King goes on to say:

Kinsella has, what, six collections of Hobbema stories out now. And out of all of them, maybe ten percent are really moving stories. Very well written ... but the majority of the stories are just sort of eight-grade playground jokes that have been elaborated into short stories with Indians affixed to them.... I find that poor writing. I also find some of the images offensive. (70)

In “A Seat in the Garden” King turns the tables on Kinsella, by recontextualising and appropriating the by-now famous phrase and using its resonances to parody the mystification and other-worldliness frequently attached to First Nations people. In satirising the offensive way Indigenous peoples are appended to stories as a way of adding an exotic blush of local colour to the accounts, King indirectly censures Kinsella and other “non-Native writers [who] write poorly about Indians or use Indians for purposes that don’t really have anything to do with Indian people or Indian culture” (70).

King’s approach to the question of stereotypification is not diatribe but metaphor. Joe, incensed by the intrusion on his land by the big red Indian, tries to tackle him only to find that he is immaterial — literally. He jumps right through him. Day after day he attempts to rid himself of the intruder. He contacts the RCMP, for example, and is told to stay indoors, “that the big Indian might be drunk or on drugs” (85).

“He’s walking on my corn. Does that mean anything to you?”

The RCMP officer assured Joe that it meant a great deal to him, that his wife was a gardener, and he knew how she would feel if someone walked on her corn. (85)

In the end, Joe is forced to speak with three local Indians who frequent the area. At first he plans to have them translate what the Indian is saying, but then his friend

reminds him that the Indian speaks English. So they wait for the men to appear and then, for the first time ever, Joe and his friend make contact. The scene is an exquisitely drawn picture of white prejudices and misunderstandings. Joe is surprised that the men do not smell as bad as he expected. His offer of beer is turned down by the Indians who are teetotallers, though Joe and Red don't realise this. They see the large glass bottle which one of them carries and assume that the "Lemon water" is something stronger.

"I'll bet you guys know just about everything there is to know about Indians," the ironically named Red says to the three Indians, echoing Kateri Damm's complaint that Native people "are expected to know everything about our own cultures and histories from land claims to spiritual practices to traditional dress" (5). The first Indian answers modestly that, "Jimmy and Frank are Nootka and I'm Cree. You guys reporters or something?"

"Reporters? No."

"You never know," said the second Indian. "Last month, a couple of reporters did a story on us. Took pictures and everything."

"It's good that these kinds of problems are brought to the public's attention," said Red.

"You bet," said the third Indian. "Everyone's got to help. Otherwise there's going to be more garbage than people." (89)

The misunderstanding here is based, clearly, on Joe and Red's racist typecasting of the Native men, who are engaged in a campaign to clean up the environment. Red "naturally" assumes that the reporters were covering a story on Native drunkenness. The Indian in the garden, however, is a product of white fears and imagination, hence the old Indian men cannot see him. In fact, throughout the story Joe and Red try to figure out who the Indian looks like, and it is significant that their terms of reference are idols of the Hollywood era which did so much to typecast and misrepresent Native people. "He looked a little like Victor Mature, Red thought, now that he had time to think about it, or maybe Anthony Quinn, only he was taller. And there was an air about the man that made Red believe — believe with all his heart — that he had met this Indian before" (94).



And indeed he has, for the Indian is the product of white constructions of indigeneity — the always already written savage trampling insensitively through European space ... not to mention on white man's corn. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, King develops this focus making clear how Hollywood functions as one of the most powerful of the myth-making Institutions. As Fran Kaye has argued, King “links Hollywood directly to the process of colonisation by a series of aural puns on characters' names and by the ironies in which the ethnic make-up of the cadre of actors who play Indians recapitulates that of the cadre of explorers who ‘discovered’ America”.<sup>33</sup> Kaye goes on to observe that in the American West the language of settlement was akin to the language of exploration. The frontiersmen opened up the “terra nullius” of the West, though they were “in fact dependent upon indigenous people for subsistence and guidance” (14).

The play on Orientalism here is further drawn out. One First Nations character, Portland, has to wear a fake nose in order to get roles playing a “Real” — ie. a Hollywood — Indian. That such objectification is profoundly obscene is made increasingly clear as the story progresses, and Portland is shown participating in a pornographic strip show, simulating sex with a nubile “fiery savage, Pocahontas!” (179) because he can no longer find work in B-grade Westerns. The climax of the strip show has a cowboy running up on stage and defeating Portland, before claiming his Native prize.<sup>34</sup>

Another equally powerful comment on the appropriative and humiliating discourse of Hollywood — the new Master Narrative which replaces European hegemony with US American hegemony — is the map which Bill Bursum,<sup>35</sup> the White video store owner, designs out of television sets. The TVs form a map of Canada and the US, and naturally, this map is encoded by the genre of the Western itself. As Florence Stratton puts it, “By making *The Map* part of a complex television and video display, King highlights the function of maps as technologies of power” (96).

The values of US American media map the role of Whites and non-whites. When the Old Indians change the ending of a well-known John Wayne film so that the Indians win, they are in a sense wiping the Whites from the map, and replacing the Black & White stereotypes with the Colour of Indigenous lives. But King makes it clear that this is a temporary victory (indeed they had changed the ending once before); that the cowboys will win again — that subversion does not overthrow, as Derrida makes clear, it can only “displace”. But that is reason enough to maintain the struggle. As Stratton puts it, “The map scenes in Thomas King’s novel are about colonial power and anti-colonial resistance. They are an attempt to reclaim First Nations territory through a strategic intervention in the long and bitter struggle over land between First Nations and successive Canadian governments” (97).

King deploys stereotypes and de-naturalises them — he obliterates what Bhabha has referred to as their “normalizing judgement”<sup>36</sup> — reminding his audience that for these to have currency they need collusion. The more pointed “message” is that stereotypes — and ideologies — can be turned against those who putatively “own” them. Hence King’s continuous rewriting of canonical texts, of historical accounts, of academic discourses. If Russell Jacoby is correct when he asserts that “Post-colonial theory is all over the map”,<sup>37</sup> then King is, in every sense, redrawing the map of our systems of belief. For example, and as mentioned earlier, King’s discomfort with the nationalist terms which a post-colonial reading can produce is addressed in the closing story of *One Good Story, That One* which deals overtly with a particularly obscene Master Narrative — borders. The story “Borders” deals eloquently with the plight of First Nations peoples who quite rightly insist on thinking of themselves according to their own Indian nationalities and yet who are forced to conform to and function within imposed White regimes of mapping and control. It is a regime which institutionalises their post-colonial status in the negative sense which King insists the term must be understood.

At a border crossing, travelling from Canada to the US, a Blackfoot woman is asked her citizenship. She replies “Blackfoot”, and then refuses the customs officer’s pleasant, and then increasingly shrill attempts, to locate her within Canadian or American space. She refuses, in other words, to be read according to this imperial design, as a product of European structures. “Just so we can keep our records straight, what side do you come from?” (135) the US American customs officer asks. She is refused admittance into the US and forced to return to the Canadian side where, once again, she is asked the same questions. Her answer is unchanged: “Blackfoot”. The customs officer replies with the ineffable and patronising logic of bureaucracy: “I’d be proud of being Blackfoot if I were Blackfoot. But you have to be American or Canadian” (139). Once again she is denied entry, except that now she and her child are stuck between worlds for several days, in that grey area which is neither Canada nor the US — the Duty Free zone. It is not until reporters arrive that pressure is brought to bear on the respective bureaucrats and the woman and child are permitted through without compromising their identity.

As Thomas King himself observes,

I’m supposed to say that I believe in the line that exists between the US and Canada, but for me it’s an imaginary line. It’s a line from somebody else’s imagination; it’s not my imagination. It divides people like the Mohawk into Canadian Mohawks and US Mohawks. They’re the same people.... So the line is a political line, that borderline. It wasn’t there before Europeans came. It was a line that was inscribed across the country after that.... (Rooke, 72)<sup>38</sup>

It is here, in discussing borders, that King’s language is particularly relevant to his earlier comments about post-colonialism. King’s rewriting of Master Narratives, whether they reflect foundation narratives, discovery narratives, commodification narratives, nationalistic narratives — or indeed, post-colonial narratives — have to do with refusing the imaginary act of the other Other — of dominant culture. As King puts it, “that kind of border and that kind of nationalism create centres that I don’t think do Indian people any good. It suggests things to us that we should become, things I’m not interested in becoming” (Rooke, 72). This statement echoes his view on post-colonialism cited earlier and which bears repeating: “I cannot let post-colonial stand —

particularly as a term — for, at its heart, it is an act of imagination and an act of imperialism that demands that I imagine myself as something I did not choose to be, as something I would not choose to become” (16).

#### EPILOGUE

Edward Said has argued that, “Stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history”.<sup>39</sup> Kate McGowan, building on Said’s observations, argues that “narratives are also strategies through which cultures legitimate themselves, and in this sense, are strongly linked to culture itself.”<sup>40</sup>

Hence, when a writer like Thomas King chooses to re-write “classic” narratives of Imperialism, his gesture is not imitative; it is not a sign of defeat, or a strategy of celebrating the “original” through mimicry. On the contrary, it is a gesture which at once valorises Indigenous culture and which de-constructs and dis/locates the primary texts of dominant culture. The title, *Green Grass, Running Water*, makes this point effectively in the way it re-presents and condemns White promises for equity, fair play, negotiation and accountability. As Laura Donaldson puts it, the title “reiterates and transforms a phrase known all too well to Indian people: the (in)famous promise by the United States Government that they would honor their treaties for ‘as long as the grass is green and the waters run’” (29).<sup>41</sup> Repeating this phrase — indeed making it the title of the novel itself — is not a gesture which valorises the primacy of the text being reiterated. King uses such moments to make it obvious that European narratives can never have been prior to the indigenous narratives, and he certainly makes it clear that the European narratives will never be as vital or as “legitimate” as Indigenous narratives.

The subject of Thomas King’s fictions, then, are monstrous in the European framework in that they reject constructions of First Nations peoples as abject, as invisible, as that which must be eradicated or controlled, frequently “for their own

good”. Racialised writers throughout the world are re-scripting this particular narrative of disempowerment which figures *them* as monstrous. The controversial author Mudrooroo deliberately reverses the metaphor and argues that it is post-colonialism which is “a monster”: “I fail to see why the postcolonial was let loose on us Aborigines, and why, whether we like it or not, we are to be digested and displayed as part of the postcolonial. In fact, I, as an Aboriginal writer, feel that this non-Australian predator should be captured and taken back to its own native land, wherever that might be” (265).<sup>42</sup>

King, on the other hand, and in typically (dis)appropriative fashion, posits First Nations culture as the beast which will ingest the post-colonial, as his cryptic title to his essay on post-colonialism infers: it is “*Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial*”. This reversal is typical of his methodology. In *Green Grass, Running Water*, for example, the Old Indians are named after canonical literary figures — Hawkeye, Robinson Crusoe, the Lone Ranger and Ishmael<sup>43</sup> — while many of the White characters have “Indian” names: George Morningstar, for example, or Dr Hovaugh who runs the asylum from which the Old Indians have fled.

Godzilla, then, seems entirely appropriate: the star of Japanese pop culture is forever being chased out of his own space by a well-armed, militaristic nation.<sup>44</sup> And yet Godzilla returns again and again, in sequel after sequel, never to be defeated despite the insistent narratives which proclaim his inevitable extinction. Godzilla is invariably the star of the show. King’s title is a typically irreverent, anachronistic, and yet no less pointed, comment on monstrosity and abjection, and on the reclamation of the imaginary. It is a brilliantly monstrous re/mark on history. Or, to put it another way: post-colonial critics have assumed that they owned the court; now it turns out that all along they’ve been playing basketball with Godzilla.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This paper was first presented at the ACSUS 1997 (Association for Canadian Studies in the United States) Minneapolis Conference in November 1997. An expanded version, focusing on *Green Grass, Running Water*, was delivered at *A Visionary Tradition: Canadian Literature & Culture at the Turn of the Millenium* in November 1999 at the University of Guelph, Ontario. In that time an enormous amount of work has appeared on King's work, and in particular on *Green Grass, Running Water*. One particularly rich source was a special issue of *Canadian Literature* devoted to his work, published in Summer/Autumn 1999. I am grateful to the many people who have offered suggestions for improving this paper, including conversations with Helen Hoy and Thomas King in Guelph 1999.
- <sup>2</sup> Kathryn Trees and Mudrooroo, "Postcolonialism: Yet Another Colonial Strategy?", *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies*, Special Issue: Postcolonial Fictions, Issue 36, Vol. 1 (October 1993), 265.
- <sup>3</sup> Thomas King, "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial", *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1990): 10.
- <sup>4</sup> Stephen Slemon, "Post-Colonial Critical Theories", in Bruce King, ed. *New National and Post-Colonial Literatures: An Introduction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998): 187.
- <sup>5</sup> Mudrooroo, *Writing From the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990): 8.
- <sup>6</sup> Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'", *Contemporary Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Padmini Mongia (London: Arnold, 1996): 321.
- <sup>7</sup> Russell Jacoby, "Marginal Returns: the Trouble with Post-colonial Theory", *Lingua-Franca* (September–October, 1995): 37.
- <sup>8</sup> Patrick Williams, "'No Direction Home?' — Futures for Post-Colonial Studies", *Wasafiri*, Issue No. 23 (Spring 1996): 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989). The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* argue that they "use the term 'post-colonial' ... to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). See Williams for his views of this claim in the article cited above. Certainly *EWB* has been criticised by a number of commentators (some of these are canvassed below), but as Slemon reminds us: "Since no text has been as influential as theirs has in advancing the claims of Commonwealth or post-colonial literary studies to a place at the table, *The Empire Writes Back* itself has to be seen as the primary factor in bringing about a disciplinary moment in which this specific part of its own argument is no longer as necessary as it once was" (188).
- <sup>10</sup> Joseph Pugliese, "Parasiting 'Post'-colonialism: on the (Im)possibility of a Disappropriative Practice", *Southern Review*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (November 1995): 348. Whilst Pugliese stages an important critique of the post-colonial, he also produces an odd justification for theoretical language which sees him equate theorists from a non-English background, or indeed "from countries previously colonised by the British" (350), who use what some might term difficult terminology in order to effect an "interrogative" moment, with the marginalised, disenfranchised other, potentially displacing the question of institutional power which such a critic acquires through her or his implication in the academy. This is somewhat ironic given that institutional power is the focus of the article's opening gambit. For other comments on the question of obfuscatory terminology see Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory", p. 459 and Bart Moore-Gilbert, p. 166.
- <sup>11</sup> bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990): 9.

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- <sup>12</sup> Margery Fee, “Why C.K. Stead didn’t like Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*: Who Can Write As Other?”, *Australian and New Zealand Studies in Canada*, No. 1 (Spring 1989): 27.
- <sup>13</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Questions of Multi-Culturalism”, with Sneja Gunew, *The Post-colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (London: Routledge, 1990), 62.
- <sup>14</sup> As Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, quoting Terry Eagleton, put it. See “What is post(-) colonialism?”, *Australian Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. John Frow and Meaghan Morris (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), 31–32. For various views on this see Mishra and Hodge; Pugliese (“The very process of having overcome colonial practices is marked by the prefix ‘post’” [348]); Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997): chapter 5; or Anne McClintock: “The term post-colonial ... is haunted by the very figure of linear development that it sets out to dismantle”, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (New York & London: Routledge, 1995) 10. See also Bill Ashcroft’s defence of the term post-colonial (and of *The Empire Writes Back*) in his article, “On the Hyphen in ‘Post-Colonial’”, *NLR*, 32 (Winter 1996): 23–31, and his comment that, “Admittedly the hyphen can be misleading, particularly if it suggests that post-colonialism refers to the situation in a society ‘after colonialism’, an assumption which maintains a tenacious hold despite constant rebuttals by post-colonialists” (24). Perhaps the assumption maintains this hold because rebuttals have not adequately dislodged the objections to the contrary. The simple erasure of the hyphen, however, is a far from satisfactory remedy to the situation.
- <sup>15</sup> *Contemporary Challenges: Conversations with Canadian Native Authors* (Saskatchewan: Fifth House Publishers, 1991): 114.
- <sup>16</sup> Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water*. (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1993).
- <sup>17</sup> “The Nissan, the Pinto, the Karmann Ghia: Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*. Paper presented at the Association for Canadian Studies in the US 1997 Biennial meeting, November 19–23, 1997, Minneapolis. Pagination refers to the manuscript pages. See Goldman’s description of the Sun Dance in “Mapping and Dreaming”. Her argument that “readers lacking knowledge of the Sun Dance miss the numerous and intricate allusions to the ceremony scattered throughout the text” (34), are more than valid. One wonders, however, of the wisdom of delineating the dance in detail — does this not, somehow, make us complicit with the shadow catchers?
- <sup>18</sup> Thomas King, *One Good Story, That One* (Toronto: HarperPerennial, 1993).
- <sup>19</sup> For a remarkably detailed annotation of the many characters, events, and clues in the novel see Jane Flick’s “Reading Notes for Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*”, *Canadian Literature*, No. 161/162 (Summer/Autumn 1999): 140–72.
- <sup>20</sup> De Certeau, Michel, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia, 1988): xxv.
- <sup>21</sup> Margery Fee makes a related point in her discussion of white appropriation of First Nations stories: “if we do not leave the task of writing as Other to those who have experienced life as Other, what we will hear is not difference, but the distorted echo of our own monomaniacal voices” (27). She also illustrates the way the response to Indigenous texts has frequently been determined by assumptions about what the authentic constitutes. Using the case of non-Maori responses to Keri Hulme’s *the bone people*, Fee points out that Simon During, for one, has argued that European conventions of the novel actually “deny” *the bone people*’s Maoriness: that Hulme’s turn to the novelistic conventions themselves in a sense defeats its aim of establishing a “precolonial” Maori culture. “The Maori have been living within the Pakeha discursive formation for generations, however, and to imply, as During does, that somewhere a ‘pure’ Maori precolonial convention exists, is at best to advocate a retreat into the past.... I

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- would define her [Hulme] as a postcolonial writer who uses postmodernist techniques only to help her undermine the powerful discursive formations she is of necessity writing within" (22).
- 22 "According to this trope, colonized people — like women and the working class in the metropolis — do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans, atavistic, irrational, bereft of human agency — the living embodiment of the archaic 'primitive'" (McClintock, 30).
- 23 King is also playing with Nietzsche here. See Flick, "Reading Notes", page 143, and Chester, "Theorizing the World of the Novel", page 55–56
- 24 King also brilliantly rewrites the story of the Flood to similar effect. Laura Donaldson argues that "King attempts to displace and counteract the Christian transposition of aboriginal sign systems by rewriting one of its foundational narratives: the biblical story of Noah, which itself rewrites several ancient Mediterranean flood myths" (28–29). See "Noah Meets Old Coyote, or Singing in the Rain: Intertextuality in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*", *Studies in American Indian Literatures: The Journal of the Association for the Study of American Indians*, 7.2 (Summer 1995): 27–43. She makes the point that this is poetic justice since "Euroamerican accounts positioned Native Americans as descendants of Noah's disgraced and exiled son, Ham" (29). See also Gundula Wilke, "Re-Writing the Bible: in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*", *Across the Lines: Intertextuality and Transcultural Communication in the New Literatures in English*, ed. Wolfgang Klooss, Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1998: 83–90.
- 25 See Jane Flick, "Reading Notes for Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*, for a commentary on the headings in the Cherokee syllabary, p. 143. See also Margery Fee and Jane Flick, "Coyote Pedagogy: Knowing Where the Borders are in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*": "the Cherokee syllabics: this is Cherokee territory, but even when we translate the words, when we know the colours and the directions, we still don't know what they mean to the culture that uses them. There is no reader of this novel, except perhaps Thomas King, who is not outside some of its networks of cultural knowledge", 131.
- 26 Blanca Chester, "*Green Grass, Running Water*: Theorizing the World of the Novel," *Canadian Literature*, No. 161/162 (Summer/Autumn 1999): 54. See also Marlene Goldman, "Mapping and Dreaming: Native Resistance in *Green Grass, Running Water*", for a reading of King's attack on western culture's reliance on "teleological narrative structure[s]", 30.
- 27 See Florence Stratton's reading of this scene in "Cartographic Lessons": "In this hilarious parody of colonial (mis)naming practices, King highlights, as he does repeatedly in the novel, the values of imperial culture ... a belief in hierarchy, technology, exploitation, mastery over nature, progress, private property" (92).
- 28 "Says Who: Colonialism, Identity and Defining Indigenous Literature", *Looking at the Words of Our People: First Nations Analysis of Literature*, ed. Jeannette Armstrong (British Columbia: Theytus Books, 1993): 3.
- 29 "A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King", *Native Writers and Canadian Writing*, ed. W.H. New (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990): 243–44.
- 30 In fact this story emerged as a response, not to a writer as such, but to "a guy at Victoria who got up after I gave a paper and wanted to know why I didn't picture Indians realistically as drunks, and down-and-outers, suicides, and whatnot. He had really bought into the stereotype" (111). See also his comments in that interview on page 113.
- 31 Or "Jehovah when you say it fast", Herb Wyile, "'Trust Tonto': Thomas King's Subversive Fictions and the Politics of Cultural Literacy", *Canadian Literature*, No. 161/162 (Summer/Autumn 1999): 120.
- 32 Constance Rooke, "Interview with Tom King", *World Literature Written in English*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (1990): 70.



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- 33 “The Nissan, the Pinto, the Karmann Ghia: Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*. Paper presented at the Association for Canadian Studies in the US 1997 Biennial meeting, November 19–23, 1997, Minneapolis.
- 34 See Dee Horne’s reading of this scene and her observation that “King savagely satirizes Portland’s mimicry by describing his acts as a form of prostitution.... In changing his name and his nose, Portland loses himself and unwittingly becomes a tragic caricature — an imaginary Indian”, “To Know the Difference: Mimicry, Satire, and Thomas King’s *Green Grass, Running Water*”, *Essays in Canadian Writing*, Vol. 56 (Fall 1995): 269.
- 35 Bursum is named after the Bursum Bill “which was introduced into the U.S. Senate in 1921 by Senator Holm O. Bursum of New Mexico and which proposed the opening of the Pueblo land to European American settlement” (Stratton, 95). King also alludes to Buffalo Bill in this naming. See Flick, 148.
- 36 Homi Bhabha, “The Other Question: the Stereotype, discrimination and the discourse of colonialism”, *The Location of Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 1994): 66–84.
- 37 Jacoby, “Marginal Returns”, 37.
- 38 See also his comments in his interview with Hartmut Lutz who asked if King considered himself a Canadian given that he had lived there only ten years. King replied: “There’s only a problem in the sense that I am not originally from Canada, and the Cherokee certainly aren’t a Canadian tribe. Now that becomes a problem only if you recognize the particular political line which runs between Canada and the US, and if you agree with the assumptions that that line makes”, *Contemporary Challenges*: 107.
- 39 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993): xiii.
- 40 Kate McGowen, “Colonial discourse, Postcolonial Theory”, *The Year’s Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, ed. Kate McGowan (London: Blackwell, 1993): 133.
- 41 See Sifton’s comments on this point which further ironise the title, in particular his comments on pages 116–19. “Hell, Eli, those treaties aren’t worth a damn. Government only made them for convenience. Who’d of guessed that there would still be Indians kicking around in the twentieth century” (119).
- 42 The debate about Mudrooroo’s questionable identity as an Aboriginal man is long and complicated. For a summary of the critics and debate see Maureen Clark, ‘Unmasking Mudrooroo’, *Kunapipi: Journal of Post-Colonial Writing* 23.2 (2001), pp. 48-62.
- 43 As Horne points out, they are characters who “symbolize settlers whose relationship with the ‘noble savage’ is that of patriarchal Europeans on a civilizing mission. All four have Native accomplices who symbolize the ‘noble savage’: Lone Ranger-Tonto, Robinson Crusoe-Friday, Ishmael-Qeequeg, and Hawkeye/Natty-Chingachgook” (Horne, 266). See King’s pointed references to Caliban, and Crusoe’s admission that “as a civilized white man, it has been difficult not having someone of color around whom I could educate and protect” (King, *Green Grass*, 245).
- 44 Ironically, in the most recent US incarnation, it is French nuclear testing in the Pacific which brings him back to life, somehow obscuring the US’s long-term implication in nuclear terrorism, but more pointedly, re-writing the original 1954 Japanese version in which US bombing — that is, American science — first awakens Godzilla. Such elisions of unwanted “details” of course are not uncommon in big budget US films. See for example the deletion of the Hiroshima reference from *The English Patient* film which has the effect of shifting the critique of Imperialism from the US back to an earlier model of British culpability. For two useful readings

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of the Godzilla legend see Susan J. Napier, "Panic Sites: the Japanese Imagination of Disaster from *Godzilla* to *Akira*", *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, ed. John Whittier Treat (Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996): 235–62 and Chon A. Noriega, "Godzilla and the Japanese Nightmare: When *Them!* is U.S.", *Hibakusha Cinema: Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Nuclear Image in Japanese Film*, ed., Mick Broderick (London & New York: Kegan Paul International, 1996): 54–74.

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