

Université de Toulouse II – Jean Jaurès
UFR de Langues, Littératures et Civilisations Étrangères (LLCE)
Département d'Études du Monde Anglophone

Crossing the Mirror:
The Theme of Haunting in *Truth and Bright Water*
by Thomas King



Présenté par **Laura Schall**
Sous la direction de **Madame le Professeur Héliane Ventura**
Année 2016-2017

If I am getting ready to speak at length about ghosts, inheritance, and generations, generations of ghosts, which is to say about certain *others* who are not present, nor presently living, either to us, in us, or outside us, it is in the name of *justice*.

Derrida, “Exordium.”
***Specters of Marx*. New**
York and Oxon (UK):
Routledge, 2012: xviii.

Cover Illustration:

Portrait of Colonel Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye (Captain David Hill), by Benjamin West. Oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1776.
<<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/benjamin-west-colonel-guy-johnson-and-karonghyontye-captain-david-hill>> Last consulted on April 27, 2017.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Héliane Ventura, who accepted to supervise this research project even before we had the occasion to meet in person. Thank you for your patience, support and enriching advice throughout this year.

I am also deeply grateful to my parents for their constant support and cheerfulness. In addition, they have given me the possibility to travel around the world and discover a multitude of foreign cultures and stories for as long as I can remember.



Special Thanks...

...to Professor Françoise Besson, who accepted to read this research project.

...to Professor Charlotte Sturgess, who introduced me to Thomas King's "associational literature."

...to Jean-Noël Fischer, with whom some of the ideas contained in this research project were thoroughly discussed and debated. Thank you for accompanying me during all the steps of this work, through multiple brainstorming sessions, occasional despair and great enthusiasm.

Table of Contents

Introduction 6

Chapter One—A Native Uncanny: Discursive Ghosts in a Haunted Narrative 10

A. An Uncanny Narrative Haunted by a Discursive Ghost 10

 1. Writing Back to Theories of the Gothic and the Uncanny 10

 2. Human Beings as Ghosts 12

 3. The Unsettling Feeling of the Inanimate Becoming Animate 16

 4. Interchangeability, or the Abolition of Borders 23

B. Writing Back to Gothic Conventions in Order to Create a Native Ghost Story 33

 1. The Parody of Embedded Ghost Stories 33

 2. The Use of Magic Realism 37

 3. The Gradual Appearance of a New Genre: the Native Prairie Ghost Story 43

C. The Revenge of the Landscape: the Native Version of the Colonizers’ “Return of the Repressed” 44

 1. Eurocentrism as a Reassuring Process of Appropriation 44

 2. The Landscape as a Dangerous Force Which Seems to Escape Control 46

 3. Two Distinct Conclusions 52

Chapter Two—The Discursive Ghost as the “Return of the Repressed” in a New, Contemporary Era of White Colonization 54

A. A Sense of the Unhomely, or Finding Oneself “a Stranger in One’s Own Country” 54

 1. Displacement from Home 54

 2. Living in Truth and Bright Water: A Feeling of the Unhomely 55

 3. The Positive Theme of Love and Flowers 61

B. A Native Uncanny: The Contemporary “Return of the Repressed,” or the Past Haunting the Present.	64
1. Traces of Former White Settlement Still Pervade the Landscape	64
2. The Quilt as an Uncanny Map of the Natives’ Mind	67
3. The Burden of a Violent History.	69
C. Jagged Worldviews and In-Betweenness.	76
1. Eurocentrism, or the Domination of White Culture and Standards	76
2. In-Betweenness: the Voluntary Marginalization of Native People from their Original Culture	83
3. The Performance of Indianness as the Only Way to Survive in the Contemporary World.	88

Chapter Three—Truth and Bright Water: a Ghost Dance Teaching, or a Revival in the Art of Telling Stories. 92

A. Purpose and Outcomes of the Ghost Dance Teaching in <i>Truth and Bright Water</i>	92
1. The Ghost Dance Teaching: a Dauntless Art of Revival	92
2. <i>Truth and Bright Water</i> as a Ghost Dance Teaching	94
3. The Other Side of the Mirror: a Diversity of Truths.	99
B. Ghosts as the Art of Telling Stories.	108
1. A Modern Revival in the Art of Telling stories	108
2. The “Pervasiveness of Storytelling”.	109
3. Perpetuating the Native Ghost Story in Order to Give a Future to Native People.	117

Conclusion 120

Bibliography. 123

Introduction

Before the last four decades, Canada was considered a down-to-earth, matter-of-fact nation, a place totally devoid of ghosts. However, this vision changed when an increasing number of majoritarily Native scholars and artists unveiled the notion of Canada as an uncanny territory, an in-between, disunited space, neither American nor European—in other words, the stage of a crisis of identity.¹ Moreover, as a former settler-country built on a persistent colonial past, Canada reflects a painful and complex history of colonization, deportations and both physical and discursive marginalization of First Nations—be they Indian, Metis or Inuit people. As a consequence, the Canadian landscape was and is still inhabited by a diversity of specters.

Now, in order to further our analysis of Canadian ghosts, it is first necessary to study the meaning and etymology of the concept of “haunting.” Nowadays, this notion cannot but trigger the paraphernalia of the Walpolean imagination for horror stories aficionados—that is to say, mysterious appearances and disappearances, gloomy settings and thrilling fear. Nevertheless, although the hyponym notion of “haunting” first appeared in the XIIth century under the form of the verb “to haunt,” it was not before 1597—with the Shakespearian play *Richard II*—that it came to be associated with the meaning we know nowadays: “to be subject to the visits and molestation of disembodied spirits.”² In this respect, the association of “haunting” with “ghost” is nothing but the outcome of a complex semantic evolution of the verb “to haunt.”

“To haunt” originally derives from the French “hanter” and was a synonym for regularity, frequency and familiarity—one “practise[s] habitually (an action, etc) or [...] frequent[s] habitually (a place).” Two centuries later, it took the meaning of “frequent[ing] the company of (a person).”³ Interestingly, the notion of haunting was thus associated in the first place with positive feelings of the homely, the familiar, the comfortable. Even

¹ Marlene Goldman and Joanne Saul. “Talking with Ghosts: Haunting in Canadian Cultural Production.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 645.

² Oxford English Dictionary, “haunt, v.” Last consulted on November 01, 2016.

³ *Ibid.*

more interesting, the verb “hanter” itself derives from Old Norse “heimta,” meaning “to get home,” or “to recover.”

Yet, in the XVIth century, “haunting” took what can be considered a premature psychoanalytic meaning, for it came to refer to “unseen or immaterial visitants”—these “visitants” being recurring “diseases, memories, cares, feelings, thoughts.”⁴ In other words, it can be considered an anachronistic reference to Sigmund Freud’s work from the moment when it verged with an impression of the unhomely, the unfamiliar, of feeling uncomfortable in one’s own mind, of being deprived of any form of secure identity and stable ground. Indeed, in his famous essay entitled *The Uncanny*, Freud states that the uncanny is “that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well-known and had long been familiar.”⁵ Furthermore, the famous psychoanalyst goes on blurring the boundary between familiar and unfamiliar, between canny and uncanny. Indeed, the positively-connoted adjective “canny” derives from the verb “can” in its obsolete meaning “to know.”⁶ However, Freud states that whenever “canny” refers to something that is concealed, secret, kept hidden, it merges with its presupposed antonym “uncanny,” evoking “everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open.”⁷ In addition, the prefix un- bore the pejorative sense of “bad” or “evil” in Old English, and therefore inevitably links the notion of “canny” with anything “arousing uneasy, fearful horror.”⁸

At the end of the day, the notion of haunting seems closely linked to the uncanny and even, sometimes, with a sense of the supernatural, but it is an obsessional, psychoanalytical haunting, a form of return of the repressed that is not necessarily paired with an actual specter to produce a ghostly effect. It is thus interesting to study the recurrent use of the trope of haunting and what Warren Cariou calls “the Aboriginal ghost motif”⁹ in First Nations literature of the past forty years.

The novel *Truth and Bright Water*, written by mixed-blood author Thomas King and published in 1999, is an eminent and innovative example of this trend. The story unfolds in a contemporary, realistic setting, and although there seems to be no ghostly

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 124.

⁶ Oxford English Dictionary, “can, v.” Last consulted on November 01, 2017.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 132 and 134-136.

⁸ *Ibid.*: 131.

⁹ Warren Cariou, “Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal ‘Ghosts’ and the Spectres of Settlement.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): *Ibid.*: 727.

appearance, a mysterious force pervades the apparently flat postmodern narrative. In fact, King uses a gothic style of writing in order to create a linguistic ghost designed to act on the reader's unconscious. He then uses the magic realist mode in order to exploit the Gothic in a Native way, therefore creating a new genre—the Native ghost story. One may thus experience feelings of terror and total loss of bearings, but to the difference of the European Gothic, fear is exploited in a thought-provoking aim. Indeed, King's ghost motif is inspired from colonial history in order to convey the sense of a past overwhelming the present and even future of the Canadian land and populations.

In *Truth and Bright Water*, the haunted narrative gradually transforms into a haunting narrative, a “return of the repressed” for both the reader and the Native characters. The First Nations, as descendants of a colonized people, have to cope with the past traumas—“trauma” originally meaning “wound” in Greek¹⁰—provoked by the whites' domination. On the other end of the spectrum, the reader is invited to remember his indirect bonds with former colonizers, be they legal authorities or population. In addition, the novel unveils that this relationship between dominant and dominated remains persistent even today, in a new and modern era of colonization. King's discursive spectre thus mainly targets a eurocentric vision of reality and history on the one hand, and a stereotyped vision of Indianness on the other hand.

In fact, although he considers himself a “Native author,”¹¹ King is of Cherokee, American, Canadian, Greek and German descent. In this respect, he knows about in-betweenness—and the differences between the Native and European cultures. Since his birth in 1943, King spent a great part of his life going to reserves and listening to Indian storytellers;¹² he also travelled around the world to see the Maoris in New Zealand and the Aborigines in Australia.¹³ Today, as a prolific award-winning essayist, novelist, poet and children's books author, King invites his readers to envisage reality from a variety of perspectives by using and then writing back to traditional European techniques. Besides, as a photographer, King has experience in visual arts as well as matters of perception and perspective.¹⁴

¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, “trauma, n.” Last consulted on November 01, 2016.

¹¹ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 30.2 (1990): 185.

¹² Teresa Gibert, “Written Orality in Thomas King's Short Fiction.” *Journal of the Short Story in English* 47 (Autumn 2006): 98.

¹³ Thomas King, “You're Not the Indian I Had in Mind.” *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 31-60.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Therefore, this research project will be centered around the following line of argument: how does King's manipulation of a discursive ghost signalling the return of the repressed and a fragmented identity enables the author to replace eurocentric monologism by universal dialogism, therefore writing back to the remnants of a past colonial domination, rectifying the present and designing a more optimistic future for marginalized Native people?

It will be interesting to analyse in the first place King's creation of a discursive and ghostly force by both using and writing back to the common Gothic aesthetic before using it in a Native way. Nevertheless, what first appeared to be a haunted narrative turns out to be a haunting narrative, where the past re-emerges to haunt the Native characters and, on a more subtler level, the reader himself. *Truth and Bright Water* is thus transformed into a literary act of resistance. King eventually attempts to write back to the dominant eurocentric worldview, techniques and constructed history in order to re-establish a dialogue between a diversity of cultures and build a new future for the so-called "disappearing race." "We'll be there, you know," King asserts as an introduction to his anthology *All My Relations*.¹⁵

¹⁵ Thomas King, "Introduction." *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990: xvi.

Chapter One

A Native Uncanny: Discursive Ghosts in a Haunted Narrative



Can a narrative which appears at first totally devoid of any actual ghost be considered a “ghost story?” This is possible indeed, since a diversity of linguistic ghosts emanating from King’s rhetorical strategies pervade *Truth and Bright Water* and reverberate in one’s unconscious. Following a psychological or even psychoanalytical approach, the author draws his inspiration from the Western aesthetic codes of the gothic as well as from the famous Freudian concept of the “uncanny,” before writing back to them in a Native way.

This first part will thus focus on King’s reproduction of all the “familiar” *topoi* of the frightening uncanny before pushing them through a “Native grinder”¹⁶ and thence obtaining a new thought-provoking and innovative genre: the Native ghost story.



Part One—An Uncanny Narrative Haunted by a Discursive Ghost

Writing Back to Theories of the Gothic and the Uncanny

After examining the numerous uncanny themes pervading *Truth and Bright Water*, it seems that King majoritarily drew his inspiration from Sigmund Freud’s famous 1919 essay *The Uncanny*. In this work, where the famous psychoanalyst seeks to “distinguish

¹⁶ Peter Gzowski, “Peter Gzowski Interviews Thomas King on *Green Grass, Running Water*.” *Canadian Literature* 161.2 (Summer–Autumn 1999): 70-71. Thomas King uses the metaphor of the “grinder” to illustrate the way he uses Western material in a Native way. King explains how, in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, he rewrote the Western creation story of Genesis “along more Native lines:” “[O]ne of the things I wanted to do, was to sort of drag that myth through Christianity, through Western literature and Western history, and see what I came up with—sort of push it through that, that *grinder*, if you will, as Native’s culture’s been pushed through that sort of North American grinder.”

the ‘uncanny’ within the realm of the frightening,”¹⁷ one can make out two major motifs contributing to the creation of a sense of the uncanny—“intellectual uncertainty”¹⁸ and the “omnipotence of thoughts.”¹⁹

On the one hand, Freud tackles Jentsch’s concept of “intellectual uncertainty” as the most “guaranteed” effect to create a sense of the uncanny, for the reader is left with the impossibility to decide whether an object is animate or inanimate. Moreover, other elements impede one to focus one’s attention directly on the uncertainty, thus leaving one in doubt and constant loss of bearings.²⁰

On the other hand, the “omnipotence of thoughts” corresponds to “the old *animistic* view of the universe, a view characterized by the idea that the world was peopled with human spirits, by the narcissistic overrating of one’s own mental processes.”²¹ It corresponds to a primitive phase in human development that adults have surmounted, but which can still be visible in young children’s behaviour. Besides, this primitive phase left “residual traces” in modern men, and the uncanny “prompts [these remnants of animistic mental activity] to express themselves.”²²

Freud concludes that the uncanny first relies on the irruption of the unfamiliar into the reassuring familiar, since “[t]he uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well-known and had long been familiar.”²³ Moreover, the uncanny foreshadows a form of return of the repressed. Besides, semantically, “[t]he negative prefix *un-* is the indicator of repression.”²⁴ Freud eventually borrows a sentence from Schelling to state that “[t]he term ‘uncanny’ (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open.”²⁵

The essay is structured around a variety of examples showing how such famous authors as E. T. A. Hoffmann employed a variety of uncanny strategies in order to arouse paradoxically pleasant feelings of terror and doubt in the readers’ mind. Nevertheless, in *Truth and Bright Water*, King focuses not only on the fear-provoking power of the uncanny, but rather on its border-crossing capacity. Indeed, the uncanny abolishes all sorts

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 123.

¹⁸ *Ibid*: 125.

¹⁹ *Ibid*: 147.

²⁰ *Ibid*: 135.

²¹ *Ibid*: 147.

²² *Ibid*: 148.

²³ *Ibid*: 124.

²⁴ *Ibid*: 151.

²⁵ *Ibid*: 132.

of dichotomies between homely and unhomely, primitive and civilized, childish and adult, public and secret, living and dead or animate and inanimate.

This “border-crossing capacity” of the uncanny is firstly exemplified by King’s writing back to a major gothic theme—ghosts.

Human Beings As Ghosts

A variety of characters possess ghostly traits which seem at odds with the seemingly realistic setting. The character of Rebecca Neugin concentrates the greatest number of ghostly characteristics. Her sudden and unexpected arrivals and departures can be compared with a ghost’s gradual “appearances” and “disappearances.” Before their first two encounters, Tecumseh says he “does not see [the girl/Rebecca] rightaway” (101 and 147), because she is both immobile and hidden in obscurity, either “standing in the shadows of one of the trailers” (101) or “sitting quietly inside the tent” (147). Paradoxically, Tecumseh “can’t see her clearly” (213) whenever she stands in the sunlight: “The girl steps out of the shadows. In the shade she looks fine, but in the light, she looks strange, pale and transparent” (102). This is the reason why, on their third encounter, Tecumseh can *feel* more than actually see or hear Rebecca’s arrival: “as I speak, I feel something move at the edge of the camp. Something that flutters in the shadows of the bridge” (196). The anaphora of the vague pronoun “something,” combined with the sense of an irregular, palpating motion, announces that an unidentified object is gradually taking shape.

Moreover, Rebecca seems to be constantly avoiding the light, where she becomes barely visible: “The girl steps back into the shadows as if there is a line drawn in the ground past which she is not willing to go” (102). The theme of an edge or an invisible demarcation line stresses her belonging to a world of darkness and shadows.

In fact, each episode with Rebecca comprises signifiers pointing at her apparent immateriality, as if she did not belong to the real, physical world. As Tecumseh observes her gait, he notices that “[i]n her long dress, in the long prairie grass, she looks as if she’s floating” (198). Although the modal sentence stresses the fact that this is nothing more than an optical illusion, it stresses her barely touching the ground. Her strange, supernatural gait recalls a ghost’s.

Finally, Tecumseh stresses the suddenness of each of Rebecca’s departures. The verb “to disappear” is used twice (102 and 213). Moreover, the narrator never directly

attends to each of her departures: either he was looking in another direction, or he sees her “disappear[...] among the trailers” (102).

Moreover, the confusion of Monroe Swimmer with a ghostly woman tends to lend him ghostly traits. The narrator is haunted by the strange woman figure who apparently plunged to her death in the Shield River: “The woman appears to float on the air, her body stretched out and arched” (10). This slow motion, close-up perspective on the woman’s body seems to cause time to stop, while the narrator describes the woman’s body with great accuracy. The choice of the verb “appear,” combined with the verb “float,” creates a strong echo to the lexical field of ghosts and is all the more relevant since, a few lines further, the woman “vanishes into the night” (10). This image must have made a powerful echo on Tecumseh’s mind, since she reappears later in his dreams:

[M]y dreams are about the woman on the Horns. She’s pale blue, like the pad, and in the moonlight, as she rises out of the water and wades ashore, she looks cold and lonely. (180)

This passage concentrates an unsettling system of echoes between a human being, a ghost and a dead body. Her movement of “ris[ing] out of the water” and her “pale blue” colour recalls Rebecca’s paleness. Nonetheless, this colour, combined with the comparison with the pad and the adjective “cold,” cannot but remind one of a dead, drowned body. After all, in the preceding chapter, Tecumseh confused a “pale blue and swollen” pad with the woman’s water-logged body (171). The repetition of the word “body” eight times on pages 171 and 172 is enough to anchor this visual and frightening image permanently.

Moreover, Monroe Swimmer also resembles a ghost in the sense that he seems to haunt the church he lives in. His arrival in Truth and Bright Water comes as a surprise since people “[t]hought he was dead” (24). Nevertheless, he refuses to “ma[k]e an appearance” (28) in the Native community and only the lights going on at night signal his presence—but still, it “could be an electric eye” (28), as Miles Deardorf rightly points out. In fact, Monroe is merely trying to remain discreet in order to prepare his “surprise” (49): “Don’t tell anyone you saw me” (49), he tells the narrator after their first encounter.

As a consequence, Monroe and Rebecca Neugin possess uncanny traits since their apparently human condition is often betrayed by their ghostly characteristics. Nevertheless, they are positive ghosts, in the sense that although their appearance may seem frightening or repellent sometimes, they are not frightening *per se*.

Moreover, a great number of main animal characters are given ghostly features. For example, there is a profoundly uncanny aspect to the group of three indissociable dogs

nicknamed “the Cousins.” They “were hanging around the church” before the Baptists’ arrival (38), “in the forties” (1). This reference is all the more unsettling that the narrative takes place at the end of the XXth century, and there is very little likelihood that the Cousins survived until then. A little later, Tecumseh associates the dogs with the mythical time of stories, for “[his] father said that some of the people told him that the dogs were there before the church had even been built” (38) in the XVIIIth century. The grapevine echoes the numerous rumours and stories circulating about the dogs, thus reinforcing one’s uncertainty about the dogs’ blurred origin.

Nevertheless, the strongest sense of the uncanny is triggered by their seeming more inanimate than animate:

Sunday mornings, when the church was up and going, you could always find the Cousins sitting on the porch of the church like crows on a wire, their bodies leaning into each other, their heads cocked at the same angle, their pink tongues hanging out of their mouths. They never barked, which made them seem friendly, but if you got up close and looked into their eyes, the only thing you would see was your own reflection. (39)

As a consequence, the three interchangeable dogs resembling still expressionless china statuettes seem as animate as automata or puppets.

Moreover, ghosts appear under the theme of “psychological haunting,” or characters being haunted by the memory of people they loved but who are now dead. For example, Lum’s sorrow after his mother’s departure verges on insanity. He is so firmly convinced that his mother will come back that he mistakes the woman on the Horns for the person he wants to see—his mother. The character of Cassie is also haunted by the memory of her daughter, Mia, who died when she was a baby.

Nevertheless, the narrative also enables the author to deal with his own “ghosts.” For instance, Elvin, the narrator’s father, bears numerous similar features with King’s father, Robert King. Since both are drunkards who left behind their wife and very young children, both Elvin and Robert King are characters in the narrator’s and the author’s personal story. Moreover, both Tecumseh and King were raised in a basement without windows where their mother—a hairdresser—had her beauty shop:²⁶

[W]hen [my father]’s been drinking too long, he’ll come by the shop to tell my mother that he’s sorry he left us. Sometimes he gets sad and wants my mother to take him back. (6)

²⁶ Thomas King, “‘You’ll Never Believe What Happened’ is Always a Great Way to Start.” *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 1-29.

Since the narrative keeps parodying the figure of Elvin who multiplies desperate and unsuccessful attempts to be part of the family again, writing appears as much a way to exteriorize one's ghosts—or, in this case, personal stories—as a privileged medium to explore one's unconscious. For this very reason, King disseminates a variety of words belonging to the lexical field of death, haunting and decay. These words stand out vividly throughout the narrative, not only because they are recurrent, but also because they tend to appear in random contexts. As a consequence, a passage which was not necessarily unsettling at first takes an uncanny or frightening tone. The verb “to disappear” recurs most regularly in the narrative. Its antonym “to appear” and its synonym “to vanish” come in second position. A diversity of objects and people thus tend to leave as stealthily and suddenly as ghosts. For instance, the verb “to float” is more regularly used in the sense of “mov[ing] slowly or hover in [...] the air” than of “rest[ing] on the surface of a liquid without sinking.”²⁷ Nevertheless, the narrator predominantly uses modal expressions merely suggesting ghost-like abilities: the characters “seem[...] to float” (7), “appear[...] to float on the air” (10) or “look[...] as if [they are] floating” (198).

Moreover, King frequently uses the metonymy of the “voice” as an efficient rhetorical device evoking presence in the absence. Indeed, the narrator often hears a voice coming out of nowhere, signalling a presence he had not been aware of until then. For instance, the first thing Tecumseh gets to know about Monroe is his voice:

It's tricky climbing steps you can't see, but when I step inside the church, I can't see anything in there either. I have to stop just inside the door and close my eyes so they can adjust to the darkness.
“Don't mind the mess,” says a voice (45).

King is actually writing back to an uncanny gothic device commonly used to create thrilling suspense—a voice suddenly coming out of the darkness, causing Tecumseh to startle. The narrator then “tr[ies] to find the voice, but the church is still black and the voice sounds far away” (45). The voice keeps talking to Tecumseh whose vision gradually adjusts to obscurity as he answers “to no one in particular” (45). The word “voice” appears for the fourth time, signalling that this personified metonymical participant leads Tecumseh “to the front of the church. In the far corner, a man sits in a chair” (45). As a consequence, the voice may appear uncanny in the first place, but it gradually transforms into a play on perspective culminating in the eventual characterization of a central character in the narrative—Monroe Swimmer.

²⁷ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, “float, v.,” 545.

What is more, the lexical field of ghosts and immateriality is somewhat counterbalanced by the more concrete lexical field of physicality, the decay of the body, bones, gore and corpses. The semantic field of death, burial and bones is omnipresent. For example, auntie Cassie is not lying, but “buried” in the couch (137) and Soldier’s head is “buried under his back leg” (165). King also relies on a variety of syllepses: “My father is standing in the shop next to Soldier’s body” (168). Here, the word “body” involves a metonymical focalization on the dog’s physical structure, while the syllepse of the “body” implies a morbid reference to the corpse. As for the small skull Tecumseh and his cousin found on the prairies, it acts as a powerful and omnipresent baroque symbol for death.

King disseminates these signifiers through the narrative in such a way that they are both discreet but omnipresent. More than the creation of an obsessive “memento mori,” they act upon the reader’s unconscious like a recurrent litany, creating a sense of uncanny confusion. It actually reflects one of King’s most prominent strategies—combining fear-provoking situations with a sense of vagueness. Vagueness can be elevated to the rank of a real narrative strategy in *Truth and Bright Water* since Tecumseh often creates a sense of blurriness by refusing to give too much information. Hence the recurrent use of the passive form, which creates a form of confusion leading to the sense of a ghostly presence. When telling Emery Youngman’s accident, Tecumseh merely says that he “was thrown off the bridge decking” (41), as if raised by a mysterious force, the same force being at the origin of his leg being “jammed tight in the rebar and the wire” (41). By refusing to give too many details and to describe the origin of the action, Tecumseh reinforces the sense of fear and uncertainty of the scene.

The Unsettling Feeling of the Inanimate becoming Animate

The unsettling reversal between animate and inanimate is another efficient “psychological manoeuvre”²⁸ spotted by Freud. By stylistically reproducing this uncanny effect in his own personal way, King both writes back but also rewrites *The Uncanny*.

To begin with, the human body is scarcely taken as a whole. Indeed, King often uses synecdoches enabling him to operate a restrictive focalization on specific limbs and body parts. Although amusing at first, this technique quickly proves unsettling, as in the following example: “I turn around, and see Lum’s arm sticking through the shower curtain.

²⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 135.

In his hand is the skull” (64). The double synecdoche of the “arm” and “hand” is even stranger since the narrator seems faced all of a sudden with a limb belonging not to his cousin, but to the skull. The effect is reinforced when Lum adopts “a stupid tiny voice” and “moves the skull up and down as if it’s talking” (64).

As a result, the author operates a play on perspective which proves rather unsettling, since it conveys the impression of body incompleteness or, even worse, of independent parts endowed with such an independent will that they escape control. Besides, according to Freud, “[s]evered limbs, a hand detached from the arm [...], feet that dance by themselves—all of these have something uncanny about them, especially when they are credited [...] with independent activity.”²⁹ Later in the narrative Cassie just heard that “Monroe Swimmer is back in town” (55), and the sudden violent movement of her hand betrays that her smile is nothing but pretense: “Auntie Cassie sits back. She’s smiling, but the hand with the tattoo is clenched and the letters on the knuckles are pulled tight and stand out against the skin. AIM” (55-56). This focalization effect induces a close-up on physicality: the hand has taken an aggressive position, like a creature baring its teeth. The passive form suggests the presence of a strange force beyond Cassie’s will, feeding on both anger and sheer despair. This sentence seems to provide the reader with a key to the understanding of the story, for “AIM”³⁰ is actually the anagram of Mia—the name of Cassie’s long-lost daughter. In parallel, the fact that it was the mention of Monroe’s that created such hatred may remind one that, after all, Monroe is rumored to have fled the town because he “got someone pregnant” (26). As a consequence, one is left with the unconfirmed supposition that Monroe is Mia’s father.

Furthermore, constant personification and animism convey the unsettling feeling that the landscape and animals are alive. For instance, in the following passage, the transition from daylight to twilight seems initiated by some sort of collaborative teamwork on the part of natural elements:

The sun is behind the mountains now. The sky darkens down, the shadows stretch out, and for that moment, just before evening finds its way into night, the air freshens, the colours swell, and the prairies burn with light. (109)

The stylistic effect—here, animism—relies on a play on perspective. Yet, one begins to consider the possibility of nature being actually alive when confronted with

²⁹ *Ibid*: 150.

³⁰ The acronym “AIM” refers here to the American Indian Movement. It is a sort of “Indian civil rights movement” which defends Indian rights and culture since 1968. Cf “A Brief History of the American Indian Movement.” <<https://www.aimovement.org/ggc/history.html>> Last consulted on May 05, 2017.

prosopopoeia effects. When Tecumseh tries to spot Lum's camp on the other side of the river, it is "the smoke that hangs in the evening sky [that] tells [him] [Lum]'s come home" (221). In fact, natural elements never speak directly—it is the narrator who informs the reader of their talking ability.

A different strategy is used when it comes to deal with prosopopoeias implying Soldier. In the following passage, Soldier gets hurt while playing in the prairies and Monroe says in a reproachful way: "I'll bet [the Cousins] didn't mention the barbed wire." The trickster then "puts his face next to Soldier's. 'I'll bet they didn't tell you about the barbed wire at all'" (128). This scene testifies of the almost uncanny bond existing between Monroe and Soldier. As a trickster, the former is able to communicate with and be understood by animals. Besides, the reader gets increasingly convinced of Soldier's ability to speak because of a discursive strategy one may call "deceiving prosopopoeias." It occurs when Tecumseh personifies Soldier to the point of addressing him like a real human being:

Soldier comes out of the bedroom, wanders over to the couch, and shoves his nose into the quilt.

"Watch out for the fish hooks," I tell him.

"What fish hooks?"

One may need a few seconds before realizing that the answer does not come from Soldier, but from another character Tecumseh had not noticed in the first place—in this particular case, auntie Cassie. As a consequence, King relies on confusing discursive device in order to constantly surprise his reader.

Other instances of "deceiving prosopopoeia" occur whenever Lum uses a "tinny voice" (177) in order to establish an infantile dialogue with the skull. In fact, the uncanny effect emanates from Lum's identification with it: according to him, both of them are "silly bab[ies]" (176) vainly waiting for their mother to come back. In other words, Lum uses the skull as a double of himself in order to exteriorize his own suffering:

Lum tosses the skull into the air. "She's not coming back!" He catches the skull and throws it up again. "She's never coming back!"

Soldier and I hear the danger at the same time, but it's too late. Lum wheels around and grabs my shirt and pulls me close. "Can you hear it?" he says. His eyes are black and slitted. His mouth trembles. I nod, but I don't say anything. Lum smiles and presses the skull against my ear. "Have you seen my mummy?" he says in his tinny voice and gently rocks the skull against my neck. "Do you know where my mummy is?"

I close my eyes and stand as still as I can. So does Soldier.

"Answer the baby!"

"Nope," I say, my eyes still closed. "I don't know where your mother is."

I don't think Lum is going to hurt me, but there's always the chance of an accident, of something happening when he's not paying attention. (176-177)

This scene literally vibrates with the weight of uncanny themes: as Lum's identity and the skull as his double gradually melt into one single whole, suffering turns into madness. Danger, violence, abuse, and a certain sense of the primitive gradually overpower Tecumseh and Soldier, for the dog, who usually runs to the narrator's rescue, is as paralyzed and helpless as his master. Indeed, Lum gets carried away by pain and his whole attitude turns into uncanny "manifestations of insanity," which "arouse on the onlooker vague notions of automatic—mechanical—processes that may lie hidden behind the familiar image of a living person."³¹ The double metonymy of Lum's eyes as "hard slits" and his mouth which "trembles," as well as his violent gestures of "toss[ing] the skull into the air," "grab[bing] [Tecumseh's] shirt" and "press[ing] the skull against the [narrator's] ear" as if it were actually a genuine gun signal that a strange force has taken possession of Lum's body. Invoked by Lum's despair, this violent double seems directly linked to some sort of castration or Oedipus complex he developed after the loss of his mother and which reverberates through the novel. Tecumseh's sense of an imminent danger comes from his knowing that Lum is not able to control this violent ghost, and that there is always the possibility that someone may be hurt when "he's not paying attention." Moreover, the lexical field of body parts—"mouth," "ear," "neck" and the triple mention of "eyes"—draw one's attention on the physicality of the body, suggesting that both Tecumseh and Lum's bodies are being abused. Nevertheless, although Lum's smile suggests that he is taking a perverse pleasure in torturing his cousin, Tecumseh never loses control of his own body. The association between the action of closing his eyes with the subject "I" shows that he is still his own master in the sentences "I close my eyes" and "I say, my eyes still closed."

The whole scene echoes the "omnipotence of thoughts" principle described by Freud, which highly depends on the discrepancy between reality and magic. In other words, Freud states that this primitive belief that one can "make contact with the souls of the departed"³² is linked to the similarly primitive conviction that the "'immortal' soul was the first double of the body."³³ Freud argues that modern man's fear of the dead, the double and ghosts is a form of return of the dead reminiscent of these old, primitive times:

³¹ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny." *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 135.

³² *Ibid*: 149.

³³ *Ibid*: 142.

It appears that we have all, in the course of our individual development, been through a phase corresponding to the animistic phase in the development of primitive people, that this phase did not pass without leaving behind in us traces that can still make themselves felt, and that everything we now find “uncanny” meets the criterion that it is linked with these remnants of animistic mental activity and prompts them to express themselves.³⁴

According to Freud, as “secret harmful forces,” “death, dead bodies, spirits, revenants and ghosts” may very well be “the most potent example of the uncanny.” He adds that, since most people think that there is “ample opportunity” for a contact with ghosts when we die,

it is not surprising that the primitive fear of the dead is still so potent in us and ready to manifest itself if given any encouragement. Moreover, it is probably still informed by the old idea that whoever dies becomes the enemy of the survivor, intent upon carrying him off with him to share his new existence.³⁵

The psychoanalytical interpretation of ghosts which are systematically associated with fear-provoking violence reverberates in the image of the Double, which also belongs to a primitive phase of our development that we have surmounted: “having once been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death.”³⁶ As a consequence, King’s choice to portray Lum’s double as a skull conveys a doubly uncanny image reminding the reader of a primitive fear of death. This is also the reason why the presence of the skull and a variety of bones which pervades the narrative proves so unsettling. During Tecumseh’s grandmother divination of the skull’s former human life, the reader needs to read between the lines in order to deduce that it belonged to a victim of past slaughters:

“She had a short life,” says my grandmother.

“Who?”

“And she died hard.”

“So, is it prehistoric?”

“But she wasn’t from around there,” says my grandmother. “She’s a long ways from home.”

[...] My grandmother cradles the skull in her lap and begins humming to herself the way my mother does when she’s thinking. Or when she’s sad. (160)

Contrary to Tecumseh, an attentive reader is able to draw a parallel between the skull’s violent death and a “jagged and uneven” hole situated “on the side of the skull” (112) which has been mentioned previously. Moreover, this skull is but one of the numerous bones of Indian children who were “a long ways from home” and that Monroe stole from

³⁴ *Ibid*: 147.

³⁵ *Ibid*: 148-149.

³⁶ *Ibid*: 142.

museums. As a consequence, the skull's interpretation reflects a double suffering—it was surely killed by a colonizer's bullet and could never receive a traditional Indian burial. Moreover, a series of comparisons and metaphors accompany the skull's personification and ghostly feature conveys the idea that it is endowed with a form of life. As Lum plays with the skull as if it were a yo-yo, Tecumseh describes the way Soldier “watches the skull float above him” (13). A little later, Lum puts the skull on the table where it “rocks from side to side like the drunks you see outside the Silver Spur on Friday night” (66), thus adopting a rather wobbly and mocking gait. In another passage, Lum drops the skull into the bathtub where Tecumseh is washing. The multiplicity of verbs of action signal that the bone is actually endowed of a life of its own:

Lum balances the skull on the edge of the tub and then lets it slide down the porcelain. It hits the water, tumbles over and floats up against my leg. It bobs around in the soap suds for a moment and then settles to the bottom of the tub. The skull looks funny sitting there, half-submerged, the soap slick floating in and out of the eye sockets.

The skull seems to be innocently taking a stroll around the bathtub, before eventually beginning to cry. But there is a more disquieting aspect to it. On page 67, as Lum “nudges [Tecumseh] along with the skull,” one imagines the cold and hard contact of the bone on the narrator's leg just like a biting. The skull also seems to be able to move by itself since, later on the narrative, Tecumseh cannot find the bone in the exact place where he had left it:

I crawl along the rafter all the way to the middle, but the skull isn't there. I go back and try another rafter. Same thing.

I find the skull on the third rafter, but by then, I'm feeling uneasy and I'm thinking that the skull may have been moving around in the dark, playing a game. (112).

If the narrator is feeling uneasy because of the skull's ability to move, the fact that Lum has cast himself into the role of the skull's official protector or even foster mother, wrapping it into a blanket “like a baby” (196), may prove even more unsettling. Moreover, Lum is able to communicate with the skull. For instance, as they are apparently looking for their mothers, “Lum holds the skull up so it has a clear view of the church. ‘Oh, you think that's where she went,’ he says. ‘Is that what you think?’” (177).

As a consequence, the skull provokes uncanny fear because it still bears the marks of suffering and seems animated by the ghost of its former owner. The reader is thus reminded of his indirect proximity with white colonizers—the authors of Indian massacres. In parallel, the narrative may very well exorcize a form of “return of the repressed,” the fear of a revenge of the dead. Moreover, animism, the theme of the double and a certain

sense of the primitive may remind one that the Natives—the “Other”—were sources of fear for the first colonizers, because of their savage state and incomprehensible culture. As a consequence, choosing to “go Indian” proves rather uncanny a theme. It implies one’s deliberate choice to adopt stereotypical Indian attitudes linked to the primitive and the strange. *Truth and Bright Water* deals with the tourists’ “passion” for going Indian. King parodies “Germans and Japanese” (22) who are “so keen on dressing up like Indians” (25) during Indian Days:

Three men are moving through the cars and pickups. They’re all dressed in buckskin shirts and fringed leather pants. One of them is wearing a good-looking bone breastplate. Their faces are painted so I can’t see who they are, but they don’t move as if they’re from around here.

“Germans,” says my father, and he takes out his comb and runs it through the wave.

“They’re from one of those Indian clubs in Germany.”

“They want to talk to an elder,” says Lucy.

“Bunch of wannabes,” says my father.

“I think that’s sweet,” says Lucy.

“That’s because you wannabe Marilyn Monroe.” (210)

The characters are mocking the fact that Germans are unknowingly parodying what is already a mere construct—that is to say, the stereotypical looks and behaviour of the Hollywood Indian. They look like children in disguise, trying to put into practice some “trendy” Indian attitudes. Contrary to the Germans, the Native characters know that the “buckskin shirts,” “fringed leather pants,” “bone breastplate[s]” and facial paintings are not a guarantee to look Indian. On the contrary, they are part of the whole paraphernalia of the Native folklore the Natives try to reproduce during Indian Days in the sole aim of pleasing the tourists and making money. This is the reason why the German tourists and the Natives can be put exactly in the same basket—they are nothing more than a “[b]unch of wannabes.” In addition, the anaphora of the verb “to move” shows that even in disguise, Germans are easily noticeable because of their gait and thus fail to pass for Indians. Although Elvin’s pun mocks Lucy who tries by all means to look exactly like Marilyn Monroe, the tourists’ arrival causes him to brush his “wave” in order to mimick Elvis Presley’s haircut. Lucille Rain also tells how Monroe himself used to wear a German *lederhose*, puffing on a tuba and pretending to be the “Bright Water German club” because it was “the least he could do” (25). The annual Indian Days celebration thus becomes a huge amusement park built on an accumulation of clichés. Nevertheless, there is something uncanny to these childish tourists who seem to be in their second childhood, combined with a voluntary return to so-called primitive Indian attitudes. It is even more unsettling that Lucy Rabbit comments that

times change and that now everyone wanted to be an Indian. “Look at Adolph Hungry Wolf.”

“The German guy?”

“He speaks good Blackfoot and lives in the woods.” (202)

Lucy suggests that “becoming Indian” implies a return to the primitive Europeans are keen on reproducing. Indians—and, by extension, Canadian land—symbolize a form of danger, or uncanny resurgence of a past savage behaviour modern men think they have repressed. It also reminds one that Canadians, as descendants of white European colonizers, remain the real “Other” in a country they claim as theirs but which originally belongs to Native tribes.

Interchangeability, or the Abolition of Borders

The theme of the double as a most prominent uncanny feature is also extensively explored in King’s novel, mostly through the apparent interchangeability between Cassie and Helen. Tecumseh often insists on the fact that “Cassie and [his] mother look a lot like each other” (55) and keeps mistaking one for the other:

I glance over my shoulder just in time to see my mother come into the garden. In the moonlight, she looks pale and thin, and she’s limping as if she’s been injured or has a cramp from sitting too long. And it is only when she turns and walks towards the trailer that I realize I’ve made a mistake.

“Don’t blame me.” Auntie Cassie smiles and opens the trailer door. “Everyone was alive when I left.” (58)

In this passage, the confusion is caused by both a natural light effect and Tecumseh’s ability to jump to conclusions too quickly. The moonlight sets the tone for a gothic scene while its silver glow seems to reverberate on the woman character and makes her appear as “pale and thin” as a ghost. One understands that her limping is caused not by an injury or a cramp. Instead, the emotional pain from the mysterious discussion she just had with her mother and sister appears at a physical level. The conjunction “[a]nd” signals a rupture as Tecumseh realizes his “mistake,” leaving the reader to guess what this “mistake” is until Cassie’s uncanny cue.

In *The Uncanny*, Freud finds two origins to the double’s uncanny effect. Firstly, the double corresponds to the child’s and primitive man’s “primitive narcissism,” which consists in believing that human beings possess an immortal soul which remains after death. After this phase was surmounted, its meaning evolved from an “assurance of immortality” to an “object of terror” as “the uncanny harbinger of death.” Again, the

uncanny effect is due to a primitive phase in our mental development that we have surmounted. The double thus becomes our “conscience,” taking our ego as an object and “performing a function of self-observation and self-criticism, exercising a ‘mental censorship.’”³⁷

King majoritarily exploits the second cause of the uncanny effect: the loss of one’s own uniqueness, one’s specific and static identity. Indeed, Freud attributes an uncanny effect to the “[a]pppearance of persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike.” This turns into a form of schizophrenia in which “the one becomes co-owner of the other’s knowledge, emotions and experience.” The self thus becomes malleable and can be “duplicated, divided and exchanged.”³⁸ In *Truth and Bright Water*, in Chapter Twelve, one is invited to explore the uncanny porousness of the borders of the self, emphasizing the theme of a constantly moving, unspecific and exchangeable identity. Indeed, when they were young, Cassie and Helen used to copy each other to such an extent that “[p]eople began thinking they were twins” (92). Tecumseh then focuses on a story he heard from three different storytellers—his mother, Cassie and his grandmother. While in college, Cassie and Helen went out to the restaurant with two dates and decided to exchange their identities. Tecumseh repeats he had to “imagine” the clothes-switching scene, terminating on a strange animism implicitly referring to both woman’s hair and reinforcing the strangeness of their actions: “‘Yours went up,’ said auntie Cassie, ‘and mine went down’” (95). The two sisters’ dates did not even notice the switch, and at the end of the meal, one of the men—Tecumseh “figured” (95) it was Franklin—“took [the narrator’s] mother’s hand and announced that this was the woman he was going to marry” (95). Nevertheless, the passage ends on an unsettling uncanny note: “That should have been our clue” (95), Cassie remarks, implicitly saying that had the man been really in love with her, he would have noticed the “sister switch.” Helen’s answer is bitter too: “As if we had a clue” (95) suggesting that these two men—whom Tecumseh systematically associates with Franklin and Elvin—are the cause of misfortunes and sorrow they could not even imagine at that time. Hence the double-entendre which ends the chapter: “I wondered how long it took them to figure out the switch and what they said when they discovered that they were with the wrong women” (95).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*: 141-142.

As a consequence, the theme of the double unveils primordial key elements for the understanding of the narrative, but it also emphasizes the power of stories. Numerous indicators such as the iterative “would” and “used to” set the narrative in the past, while the verb “remember” appears no less than ten times in this short chapter. Memory can be treacherous, and the confusion is reinforced by the fact that Tecumseh hears the story from three different narrators whose telling keeps “wandering off in different directions” (92) and who even contradict each other: “We were lucky no one came in,” Cassie says, referring to the time when they switched clothes in the bathroom. “What do you mean? [...] Everyone came in!” Helen retorts (94). Moreover, a story is never told twice in the same way: “Sometimes auntie Cassie and my mother laughed a lot when they told the story and sometimes they didn’t” (95). As a consequence, a diversity of markers indicate Tecumseh needs to rely on his imagination and to piece together what has been left behind: “all I knew for sure was” (93) “she had probably gotten bored” (93) or “I figured that” (93 and 94).

The narrative also establishes constant echoes between Monroe and Elvin as trickster, father and artist figures. One often recognizes words previously uttered by one in the other’s cues. For example, while Elvin is talking about the price of the little wooden coyotes he carves, Skee Gardipeau remarks: “You’re beginning to remind me of Monroe” (34). Skee is thus drawing a parallel between Elvin the wood-carver and Monroe the painter. Moreover, for his last appearance in the narrative, Monroe is “dressed like [Tecumseh’s] father” (265).

Moreover, Monroe brings about the theme of the double as “gender interchangeability.” Indeed, the famous Indian artist is often mistaken with a woman, probably because of his long “streaming hair” (7), a metaphor actually referring to his wig. Later, unable to recognize Monroe’s silhouette because of a blinding blacklit effect, the narrator “can’t tell if it’s a man or a woman” (192). This gender confusion is also echoed by Tecumseh and his female double, little Mia. Chapter Fifteen is structured around this humorous and yet unsettling theme: while travelling around the world, Cassie keeps sending girl gifts to Tecumseh: “a doll with dark blue velvet dress” or “a box with a mirror in the lid and little drawers that pulled out” (117). Two pages later, Tecumseh shows Helen the mysterious photograph of a baby, and his mother’s sudden sadness combined with her vague answer—“Who knows?” (121) —suggests that she recognized baby Mia but refuses to talk about her.

Even more unsettling, Tecumseh's constant personification of Soldier turns into a projection of his personal feelings and reactions on his dog. In Chapter Two, Tecumseh is making a list of the musics he likes before switching suddenly to Soldier's musical tastes:

Some of the songs are okay. I don't mind "Ol' Man River" [...]. *Carmen* has a couple of good tunes and Soldier likes one of the pieces from *South Pacific* that sounds like a lullaby. (16)

As a consequence, some of Soldier's reactions should be read as Tecumseh's: "He's heard all Lucy's ideas about Marilyn Monroe before and would rather go out and play" (19).

Moreover, Freud links the double with another theme which appears regularly in King's novel—the factor of circularity and “repetition of the same thing.” According to Freud, “such a feeling [can be evoked] under particular conditions, and in combination with particular circumstances—a feeling, moreover, that recalls the helplessness we experience in certain dream states.”³⁹ This idea is symbolized in *Truth and Bright Water*, where the circle evokes a feeling of fate, closure and entrapment. For instance, Lum's numerous attempts to commit suicide often go hand in hand with circularity since they seem to foreshadow the end, where Soldier follows Lum as he jumps off the bridge and plunges to his death into the river. Tecumseh cannot help feeling nervous each time he sees “Soldier with Lum that near the edge” (176). The end is actually announced right from Chapter One, as Tecumseh tells Lum's strange disappearance from the bridge:

Soldier stands frozen by the fence, his ears arched as if at any moment he expects Lum and the skull to tilt and fall. But Lum moves gracefully, effortlessly along the girders, like a dancer, until the curve of the bridge begins its descent into Bright Water, and he vanishes over the edge (15).

In fact, this episode takes a particularly uncanny tone from the moment when one realizes its resemblance with the final description of Lum jumping off the bridge in Chapter Thirty-One:

Lum is moving easily now. He glides along the naked girders gracefully, Soldier hard on his heels and closing, until the curve of the bridge begins its descent into Bright Water and Lum and Soldier disappear over the edge. (258).

The narrative thus seems to open and close on the same characters, themes and setting. King even reproduces the same themes and sentences: Soldier watches Lum as he runs towards the bridge, Lum moving as “gracefully” (15 and 258) as a bird, suddenly freed from physical pain. The skull is also present in Chapter Thirty-One: Lum lets go of it and it

³⁹ *Ibid*: 143-144.

“disappears between the girders” (257). Even more unsettling, King reproduced almost exactly the same sentences to describe Lum’s final disappearance: “until the curve of the bridge begins its descent into Bright Water, and [he/Lum and Soldier] [vanishes/disappear] over the edge” (258). The story seems to signal that to disappear or to die is exactly the same thing. As a consequence, instead of evolving towards final closure, the narrative seems to have come full circle and resulted on an inconclusive end. The reader remains suspicious: either Lum is not really dead and will come back sooner or later, or he is condemned to die again and again. Freud explains that the idea of inescapable fate becomes uncanny because it goes hand in hand with the theme of circularity:

In another set of experiences we have no difficulty in recognizing that it is only the factor of unintended repetition that transforms what would otherwise seem quite harmless into something uncanny and forces us to entertain the idea of the fateful and the inescapable, when we should normally speak of “chance.”⁴⁰

One thus needs to be “steeled against the lure of superstition”⁴¹ in order to resist the uncanny effects provoked by the regular appearance of the word “circle” throughout the narrative. It signals either centrality or a “pattern” (111), except in the case of Monroe who, as a figure of subversion, draws a “large semicircle” in the prairie grass and “[ies] in the centre on his stomach” (123). The semicircle—and not full circle—seems to foreshadow Monroe’s acting against traditional forms of representation and repetition. It reflects what happens at an extra-diegetic level, where King uses common representations and symbols of the circle before appropriating them in a Native way. First, he uses the psychoanalytical interpretation of the circle as an uncanny symbol:

In the unconscious mind we can recognize the dominance of a *compulsion to repeat*, which proceeds from instinctual impulses. This compulsion probably depends on the essential nature of the drives themselves. It is strong enough to override the pleasure principle and lend a demonic character to certain aspects of mental life: it is still clearly manifest in the impulses of small children and dominates part of the course taken by the psychoanalysis of victims of neurosis. The foregoing discussions have all prepared us for the fact that anything that can remind us of this inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny.⁴²

The reader may not know that the circle is actually a Native symbol, conveying all sorts of Native representations of the universe. Leroy Little Bear explains that in Aboriginal Philosophy, everything is in “constant motion,” and

⁴⁰ *Ibid*: 144.

⁴¹ *Ibid*: 145.

⁴² *Ibid*: 145.

[i]f everything is constantly moving and changing, then one has to look at the whole to begin to see patterns. For instance, the cosmic cycles are in constant motion, but they have regular patterns that result in recurrences such as the seasons of the year, the migration of the animals, renewal ceremonies, songs, and stories.⁴³

As a consequence, the theme of the circle is not perceived in the same way by Native people and Western people. In *Truth and Bright Water*, the Natives use this symbol to their own advantage. During Indian Days, Edna Baton tries to sell “the secret of authentic frybread” (211) to a German tourist, and while behaving like a stereotypical Indian in order to please the man, she “trac[es] a circle in the sky with her arm” (211) and “starts singing a round dance” (211). As expected, “[t]he German guy is suddenly all smiles and he can’t get his hand into his pocket fast enough” (211). Comedy functions here on the discrepancy between the desacralization of the circle which is clearly appropriated and used in a random way, while the potential buyer naively believes it has a predominant symbolism charged with obscure, primitive meaning.

In another passage, the circle is dealt with in a more serious way. The signifier “circle” appears five times on page 59, since it is used as a patronym referring to “a young white man named Arthur Circle,” “the principal of the elementary school on the reserve” which taught Helen and Cassie when they were young. One day, he showed up on Tecumseh’s grandmother doorstep in order to complain about her daughter’s behaviour:

My grandmother listened to Mr Circle for a while, and then she snuggled down in her sweater and began to cough. At first, they were just low chuffing coughs aimed at the floor, but as Mr Circle turned each page in the folder, the coughs gathered force and took on weight and shape and began to fill the room. (59)

At first, the action of “snuggling down” suggests Tecumseh’s grandmother is putting herself in proper conditions to invoke *something*. Animism and the anaphora of “cough[s]” renders the transformation of initially “low,” discreet coughs into an increasingly invasive being whose presence occupies the room. Moreover, the final anaphora of the conjunction “and” creates a quaternary trochaic rhythm which insists on “hard” first consonants “g,” “f,” “t,” “w,” “s,” “b,” “f,” and “r.” Trochees emphasize the gradual transformation of the void into a shape, but it also results in imitative harmony—their brutality signals that the spirit is neither necessarily friendly nor benevolent. For this reason, Mr Circle becomes increasingly ill-at-ease and ends up leaving the house “without even saying goodbye” (59):

⁴³ Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Worldviews Colliding.” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000: 78.

My mother and auntie Cassie watched him from the front window as he walked and then ran to the band office, turning back every few steps, looking back over his shoulder to see what was coming up behind him. (59)

Although the ghost is not exactly visible, Mr Circle's uncertain and restless attitude signals some kind of presence. The vague "what" and the passive form in "what was coming up" recalls a form of helplessness as one senses danger coming from behind—hence the double appearance of "back" and "behind," suggesting one is followed by something one cannot see. This example also presents Tecumseh's grandmother as an uncanny figure, since she uses some sort of magic powers in order to cast a bad spell upon the white man. Indeed, according to Freud,

[w]e can also call a living person uncanny, that is to say, when we credit him with evil intent. [I]t must be added that this intent to harm us is realized with the help of special powers.⁴⁴

Tecumseh's grandmother actually stands as a highly uncanny figure since she concentrates almost "all the factors [listed by Freud] that turn the frightening into the uncanny," which are "considered animism, magic, sorcery, the omnipotence of thoughts, unintended repetition."⁴⁵

Indeed, Tecumseh's grandmother is systematically associated with magic, since she seems able to dialogue with the dead—an ability which is, of course, largely obtained through stylistic effects. For instance, she literally "lets the skull float in her hands" (159) before deciphering its story. Animism and the verb "float" give the impression that the skull is literally levitating in her hands, ready to communicate, as if the grandmother were a clairvoyant with her magic crystal ball. Tecumseh and Lum bring her the skulls they find because she "kn[ows] her bones" (69):

My grandmother would bring the bone up to her ear, as if she were listening for something. Sometimes she'd smell it. And then she'd set to running her fingers all along the length and around the curves until she found what she was looking for. "Cow," she'd say. "Cow." (69)

This passage concentrates the senses of hearing, smell, touch and sight. The grandmother is both "listening" to the bone's voice and trying to "read" its shape, smell and edges like a text. She does the same with the little girl's skull, before she "cradles the skull in her lap and begins humming to herself the way [Tecumseh's] mother does when she's thinking. Or

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny." *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 149.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

when she's sad" (160). In other words, "listening" to the skull's story caused her to adopt a motherly attitude and try to comfort it.

The unsettling effect of Tecumseh's grandmother also emanates from her being able to cross the boundaries between the human and the animal, thus symbolizing a return to the primitive and the instinctive. Her grandson keeps drawing amusing parallels between her and a variety of animals—"a bear" (124), "a cow" (151), "an alligator" (159) or "a hawk" (209). From time to time, she produces typical animal movements or sounds, but the animals she evokes are not directly referred to:

[M]y grandmother sits quietly, perched in her chair, her chin thrust out like a beak, her thin, leathery arms folded against her body like wings, waiting for something to move in the grass. (53)

The numerous comparisons and metaphors, the metonymies referring to a bird's bodyparts and the visual description of the "thin, leathery arms" tend to signal the interchangeability between the grandmother and a watchful bird of prey. Although amusing at first, this example of the "malleability of the self" combined with a return to primitive instincts becomes all the more unsettling that it is often associated with violence and cruelty. "My grandmother would have chased him down and torn his throat out" (163), Tecumseh comments about a television character he finds despicable and pathetic. The metaphor of the bird is pursued a few pages further:

She waited until Soldier forgot where he was, and as he turned his back to sniff at the cooler, she dropped out of the air like a hawk and snatched him up. He yelped once, more surprise than fear, and then he was out the flap on the fly. (209)

The grandmother's attitude echoes a hawk appearing out of nowhere, swooping down on its prey and violently seizing Soldier in its claws. Soldier's surprised "yelp" echoes the gratuitous violence with which the grandmother seizes him and takes him away before he knows it.

The theme of the Double and the variety of different themes revolving around it all seem to be intricately related to a variety of mirror effects pervading the narrative. In fact, the looking-glass itself can be considered an uncanny object. Since it is "a placeless place," looking at one's reflexion results is the equivalent of an uncanny experience: "In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 25.

The narrator sees a variety of characters including himself—always human beings—reflected through mirrors, screens, (sun)glasses and windows. Moreover, in the narrative, mirror effects put things into perspective, both literally and figuratively, therefore providing key elements for the understanding of the narrative. In the sentence “[My mother] has her back to me, but I can see her face in the mirror” (122), the looking-glass gives Tecumseh the possibility to see what he could normally not visualize from his own perspective. This moment is even more significant since Helen has just seen a photograph representing Mia, and “now, she’s not as happy as she was before” (121). Since the face is often described as the mirror of one’s personality or emotions, she turns away in order to hide a sorrow Tecumseh is not supposed to see. As a consequence, it is the *mise en abyme* of her face, and not Tecumseh, which signals her sadness. Nevertheless, on a more general scale, the *mise en abyme* may reflect the whole solid ground on which rests the whole novel: plays on perspective enabling one to see something in a way one had not imagined before. A similar effect is reproduced in a passage where Tecumseh tries on a pair of sunglasses: “The sunglasses are the mirrored kind, and when I look right at them, I can see everything going on behind me” (210). The narrator then spots a reflection of the scene taking place behind his back, which may be a *mise en abyme* of the whole reading enterprise—the reader should always keep in mind that the book is nothing but a mere reflection of reality, and that every character, every action, serves a very precise purpose.

Moreover, King may echo one’s uncanny fear of looking behind oneself through a mirror, afraid of discovering a presence he had not even suspected, or—even worse—of someone creeping silently in one’s direction. Hence a feeling of entrapment, since the mirror duplicates the presence and gives one the impression that danger comes from the front *and* the rear. King cannot resist the envy to echo this old ghost story or detective intrigue in the following sentence: “[My father] looks in the rearview mirror a couple of times, as if he suspects that someone is sneaking up behind him” (212). The image appears both vague and extremely vivid since King plays on a fear anyone is familiar with.

Finally, mirrors can help to isolate and literally point at significant elements of the narrative, such as in the following scene, when Cassie is watching a movie on television:

The good-looking guy is pleading with the woman to take him back. They’re in an old, dark mansion. The only light comes from a candle, and as the woman cries and the man begs, I can see parts of auntie Cassie’s face reflected in the screen. “Maybe there isn’t an evil queen,” I say quickly. “Maybe in this version the queen turns out to be a good sister who saves Snow White.” (162)

At first, the dimly lit setting echoes picturesque baroque still lives, but obscurity also reveals Cassie's face "reflected in the screen" as if she were part of the scene. Her stillness offers an odd contrast with the melodramatic outbursts of love, sorrow and hope worthy of the most poignant soap operas. The "pleading," "cry[ing]" and "beg[ging]" echo Elvin's repeated and worthless attempts at winning back Helen's heart, but Tecumseh's cue suggests Cassie also has her own role to play in this soap opera situation. After all, right before this passage, she was contemplating her "mak[ing] a good evil queen." Does it mean she hurt or at least failed to protect Helen in the past? That she feels remorse after they fell in love with the same man and Cassie eventually stole her sister her prince charming? Nevertheless, given Helen and Cassie's relationship of interchangeability, this scene may intrude into Cassie's own reflections about her past setbacks with men. The fragmentation of the screen may echo her own severed ego or identity.

Nevertheless, as usual, the reader is presented with a scene overloaded with meaning without being able to settle for one stable interpretation. One feels lost between Tecumseh's vague insinuations on the one hand and his inattentiveness on the other hand. As a consequence, mirrors—as well as postcards and photos—mostly establish plays on perspective as well as constant *mises en abyme* of the novel, pointing at another "truth" without revealing it completely.

Finally, the theme of interchangeability is also reflected through a complex network of surprising comparisons and metaphors, indistinctively drawing parallels between categories commonly understood as "opposed"—the organic, the natural and the artificial, or the living and the inanimate. For instance, the movement of the ghostly woman's car is compared with "a cow in thick water" (7), and a few moments later, the woman spreads her arms wide "as if she were a bird trying to catch the wind" (7).

Nevertheless, these comparisons can be found at such regular intervals throughout the narrative that one gets the feeling that there is much more to this strategy than a mere way of unsettling the reader by transcending and abolishing all sorts of boundaries. After all, the narrator ends up imagining extremely far-fetched comparisons to conciliate things which are by nature incompatible. Moreover, how can the decaying "plywood decking" of the bridge, which has "begun to weather, to twist and bubble up" remind Tecumseh of "pieces of thin meat in a hot pan" (15)? How can Lucy Rabbit's laughter "sound[...] like a herd of crows stampeding through a minefield" (21)? It actually appears that the reader is endowed with a participatory role in this particular instance. One needs to use one's five senses and the force of one's imagination in order to find the implicit similarities existing

between these examples. In fact, the sensation verb—either “look,” “sound” or “feel”—which is used in order to draw these sorts of sentences already gives part of the answer.

As a consequence, although these comparisons may appear unsettling or humorous at first, they establish the novel as an oral performance into which the reader is invited to participate.

King manipulates a variety of linguistic strategies in order to write back to common uncanny effects in a Native way. Ghosts thus emanate from discourse exclusively. In addition, King also needs to write back to traditional gothic narratives and conventions before he can achieve the creation of a Native prairie ghost story genre.



Part Two—Subverting Gothic Conventions in Order to Create a Native Ghost Story

The Parody of Embedded Ghost Stories

The narrative contains a subtle reference to one of the most eminent stories of the gothic trend—Henry James’ 1898 novella *The Turn of the Screw*. One instance of the title explicitly appears in one of Elvin’s cues, as his son questions him about his carving business: “Couldn’t figure out a way to keep the screw from turning” (32). King parodies the obscure meaning of the original title by employing it in an everyday-life, totally non-gothic context where it makes even less sense. The multi-layered original title may be interpreted figuratively, as the reader and the governess—James’ main character—both “turn the screw of interpretation,” but also draw attention to the disquieting aspect of the screw. “Screw” is a syllepsis which can also refer to thumbscrews, “an instrument of torture formerly in use,” or to “a prison warder, a turnkey.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, King may be accentuating the sexual innuendo suggested by James’ title, since one may draw a parallel between the phallic shape of the screw and Elvin’s being rumored to “mess[...] around with Lucy Rabbit” (14).

⁴⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, “screw, n.” Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

Moreover, King also parodies the governess' constant tendency to adumbrate, that is to say, to jump too quickly to conclusions and present events as overshadowing and "more prominent or important than they really are."⁴⁸ Adumbration thus proves an efficient way to frighten the reader and create a sense of suspense. Nevertheless, as one gradually realizes the trick, one increasingly puts into question the narrator's reliability. King parodies these themes at the end of Chapter Twenty-One, as Tecumseh and Soldier are walking in the prairies waiting for Lum. The narrator takes the skull out of his pocket and props it against a tree in such a way that "it can see what is happening," while "Soldier watches [it] out of the corner of his eye. Every so often, he leans over and licks at it and then pulls away" (171). As a consequence, the personified skull seems to become alive, watching the scene as if something incredible were going to happen, or maybe invoking some strange ghost. Tecumseh's mind soon begins to drift away until he is brutally called back to reality by Soldier's barking, and tries to figure out what he found:

it's a frog or a snake or something he hasn't seen before. There's always the chance that it's a bone, something to go along with the skull, but that's the sort of thing you see in movies and not in real life (171).

The movement from living animals to an unspecified "something" which ends up in the appearance of "skull" and "bones" shows that the narrator gradually gets carried away by his own wish to find other parts of the skull and complete it like a puzzle. The conjunction "but" shows that reason eventually triumphs over imagination—this fantasy was caused by his watching too many movies. Nevertheless, Tecumseh drifts towards fantasy again:

The next thought catches me when I'm not looking. I'm still thinking about auntie Cassie [...], but as I stand up, I start thinking about that night on the Horns and the woman and how she stepped off the edge and disappeared. And as I walk towards Soldier, I know that what he's found in the water is a body, the body of the woman from that night, washed ashore.
"Don't touch it!" (171)

A personified "thought" seems to take possession of Tecumseh as he is "not looking" —that is to say, caught off guard, but also literally not looking at what Soldier has found. Nevertheless, the anaphora of the verb "thinking" shows the transition from his personal thoughts to the haunting memory of the woman who mysteriously "disappeared" off the Horns. In the next sentence, the assertion "I know" and the anadiplosis putting the focus on "the body" illustrate his sudden conviction. At this point, the reader may doubt the character's reliability, but his attention is diverted by the increasingly precipitated

⁴⁸ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, "adumbrate, v.:" 18, and "overshadow, v.:" 1021.

rhythm of Tecumseh's panting sentences, culminating in a both fearful and excited exclamation: "Don't touch it!"

Further on, the narrator draws a parallel between the depiction of dead, drowned bodies he saw "in movies" and their incomparable, palpable horror "in real life:"

I've seen those kinds of bodies in movies, and they never look very good, white and bloated with pieces missing, and as I hurry across the flat to the river, I'm sure that dead bodies in real life look even worse. (171)

The consonance of the sound "ies" in "bodies" and "movies", and the assonance of the sound [u] in "look" and "good" are a prelude to the cacophony created by the repetition of hard first consonants in "bloated," "pieces" and "missing," insisting on the horrifying and coarse aspect of the body and tricking the reader into believing that this image equals utmost horror. Nevertheless, the modal expression "I'm sure that" —an equivalent to the modal "must" which represents a maximal degree of certitude—promises a horror beyond anyone's imagination. Moreover, suspense increases as Tecumseh constantly delays the final, unavoidable view of the body: "I can see the body now. It glistens in the night, pale blue and swollen. I'm surprised by the colour, which is even worse than I imagined" (171-172). This "pale blue and swollen" body does not seem much different from the original "white and bloated" corpse, and yet the narrator keeps insisting on its unimaginable ugliness. Yet, the suspense is brutally put to an end when

[Soldier] charges into the water and begins dragging the body into the shallows. As he gets it to shore, I can see how you could be fooled. It's the evening light. It hangs along the top of the mountains, slants down the slopes, and floods the prairies. In the glow, everything comes back to life. (172)

As a consequence, the reader is not able to fully understand why he has been "fooled." Indeed, he lingers to admit that this "body" is in fact a "thin plastic tarp" (172), a "pad covered with dirt and junk" (173-174), something, as Lum puts it later, one normally sticks "under sick people" (174) in hospitals. In fact, the modal "can," the passive form "be fooled" and the pronoun "you" convey the feeling that Tecumseh is directly addressing the reader in a condescending tone, as if telling him: "you realize you have been tricked, but I understand what caused you to expect a real body."

Yet, the narrator actually pretends he was willing to fool his reader without admitting that he was himself fooled by personified thoughts and the evening light. The use of animism as the light gradually descends from the mountains and "floods" the prairies below mimicks the transformation of nature into a huge waterfall—echoing the theme of nature turning into water which pervades the novel. This sublime image conveys

the representation of the landscape as a living and overwhelming force. The antithetical subject “evening light” is the initiator of a play between light and shadow which casts a supernatural glow over the landscape and makes “everything come back to life.” Moreover, there is a huge difference between using the phrasal verb “to come back” and “to come,” since the adverb “back” signals the state of something which existed before and is happening again, thus confirming that “everything” in nature is alive.

The use of visual effects of light and shadow is another recurrent strategy in ghost stories. In King’s novel, these effects are less often provoked by artificial lights than by natural elements—the sun and the moon. Firstly, plays between light and shadow often reinforce the suspense and theatricality of a scene, working hand in hand with the sense of vision. Absence of light may signal “someone hiding in the shadows” (131). Very often, Tecumseh cannot make out the origin of a mysterious “voice” because the shadow is too deep or because he is blinded by the sun, such as in the following example, where Tecumseh is startled by his father’s sudden appearance: “The voice scares the hell out of me. I spin around, but all I can see are shadows” (139). The narrator is only able to see his father when he “walks out of the shadows” (139). As a consequence, King uses the pictorial technique of *chiaroscuro* in order to announce—or, at least, pretend to announce—the appearance of a ghost.

Moreover, the recurrent gothic theme of “darkness” and “shadows” is used to signal a dark, disquieting aspect of nature. At the beginning of the novel, Tecumseh describes the river. “The water is nothing but a dark blur” and “you can hear it hiss” (10). The hostile effect created by the dark, vague, shapeless water is reinforced by its disquieting “hissing” like a snake. As a consequence, one gets the feeling that one can “be fooled” (172) by a strange force inhabiting the landscape. Nature seems to have power over one’s vision since it can choose to leave someone in complete darkness, for as Tecumseh and Lum are walking towards the church, “the moon goes behind a cloud” and the building “disappears into the night,” forcing Tecumseh to “stop and wait for the church to reappear” (177). As a consequence, the narrator needs to compensate for the loss of his vision by using his other four senses: walking through his house plunged in “dead black” obscurity, Tecumseh “feel[s] for the wall” (110).

King thus writes back to the usual theatrical appearances of ghosts in gothic novels, since their appearance is often announced by gloomy settings, plays between light and shadow and sudden silences. Nevertheless, there is no ghost to be seen and suspense comes

to a dead end. Instead, the author manipulates the narrator's senses and the reader's perspective in order to direct the focus towards the prairies.

The Use of Magic Realism

Since King's creation of a discursive ghost relies majoritarilly on a play on perspective, his idea of inscribing *Truth and Bright Water* in a magic realist vein seems particularly appropriate for his Native uncanny genre.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as magic realist “any artistic or esp. literary style in which realistic techniques such as naturalistic detail, narrative, etc., are similarly combined with surreal or dream-like elements.”⁴⁹ What is more, the oxymoronic combination of “magic” and “realism” foreshadows the transgression of contradictory boundaries,

whether the[se] boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magic realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds [...]. The propensity of magical realist texts to admit a plurality of worlds means that they often situate themselves on liminal territory between or among those worlds [...]. So magical realism may be considered an extension of realism in its concern with the nature of reality and its representation, at the same time that it resists the basic assumptions of post-enlightenment rationalism and literary realism. Mind and body, spirit and matter [...]: these are boundaries to be erased, transgressed, blurred, brought together, or otherwise fundamentally refashioned [...].⁵⁰

The use of this transgressive mode thus enables King to travel between “the historical and the imaginary”⁵¹ in order to show the reader a variety of possibilities he had not envisioned yet.

Nevertheless, King also uses the magic realist mode as an efficient writing back strategy to eurocentrism and Freud's theories of the uncanny. Indeed, Freud states that “an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between reality and fantasy is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary [...]”⁵² He actually links magic with intellectual uncertainty and the “omnipotence of thoughts,” stating that magic practitioners and practices bring one back to an “old animistic

⁴⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, “magic realism, n.” Last consulted on May 10, 2017.

⁵⁰ Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris (eds.). “Introduction.” *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1995: 5-6.

⁵¹ *Ibid*: 1.

⁵² Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 150.

view of the universe” which is commonly found among primitive peoples.⁵³ As a consequence, one feels ill-at-ease whenever the stable ground on which reality is built begins to erode. Magic realism thus proves a particularly unsettling mode since one constantly oscillates between reality and magic without any possibility of settling for any of them. Subsequently, this constant undecidability impedes one to settle into a passive reading, but rather to use one’s imagination in order to conciliate two diametrically opposed elements.

What is more, in addressing “the uncanny of fiction” in the third part of the essay, Freud presents the author as a major agent in the creation of a sense of the uncanny and as the main figure of authority in the narrative.

Firstly, the author must “put himself in the way of experiencing a sense of the uncanny,” provided that “[i]t is a long time since he experienced or became acquainted with anything that conveyed the impression of the uncanny.”⁵⁴

Secondly, the author is free to set the action in a world which either corresponds to the reader’s reality or on the contrary deviates from it. The author can even—temporarily or not—prevent the reader from guessing the real nature of the world the stories unfold in.⁵⁵

In addition, the reader needs to adapt to the author’s choice: “if he chooses [...] to set the action in a world in which spirits, demons and ghosts play a part, [...] we must yield to his choice and treat his posited world as if it were real for as long as we submit to his spell.”⁵⁶ In other words, the author gains a certain control of his reader’s feelings from the moment the reader decides to accept and conform to the codes of this new, fictional world:

To the writer [...] we are infinitely tractable; by the moods he induces and the expectations he arouses in us he can direct our feelings away from one consequence and towards another, and he can often produce very different effects from the same material.⁵⁷

At this stage, Freud asserts that literature is particularly appropriate a field since its playful and creative character enables the author not only to reproduce the same uncanny effect one can feel in real life, but also to “intensify and multiply this effect far beyond what is feasible in normal experience.”⁵⁸ Hence a “sense of dissatisfaction,” of betrayal,

⁵³ *Ibid*: 147.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 124.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 156.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 139.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*: 157-158.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*: 157.

when one senses one has been tricked into leaving the everyday reality one expected to find in the story in order to experience a feeling of the uncanny “we thought we had ‘surmounted.’”⁵⁹

To conclude, King’s use of magic realism as a stylistic device enables him on the one hand to create linguistic ghosts leading to a sense of the uncanny, but also, on the other hand, to play a subtle and constant participatory role. In fact—as the following example will demonstrate—magic realism is directly linked with the presence of Monroe Swimmer as the main trickster-figure of the narrative. He can thus be considered a metamask enabling the author to act at an intra-diegetic level. This metamask also enables him to use an “indigenous-related” mode in a Native way, and to consider the events from a Native—and not Gothic—point of view. After all, although he is a mixed-blood, King considers himself a “contemporary Native writer.”⁶⁰

The “Buffalo Episode” stands as a major instance of magic realism. It takes place in Chapter Sixteen and in Chapter Twenty-Four. It demonstrates King’s ability to write back to traditional codes of the gothic and the uncanny through magic realism, but also the way Tecumseh’s perception of seemingly “impossible” or “magic” events slowly causes him and the reader to adopt the trickster’s perception. It eventually leads them to acknowledge the possible existence of supernatural events within the narrative.

In this passage, the narrator and Monroe find themselves inside the church, as the trickster introduces the narrator to his “new restoration project” (130) in order to “save the world” (131). Indeed, the trickster intends to disseminate three hundred and sixty “[f]lat iron wire[s] bent into the shape of a buffalo” (130) throughout the prairies. Although he is now accustomed to Monroe’s strange ideas, Tecumseh cannot help noticing that the trickster has attempted to represent the buffalo in a most realistic way since they are “all different shapes and sizes” (131).

A few moments later, the narrator and Monroe are literally “nail[ing] the [buffalo] into the prairies” (132). Monroe “walks up a small rise and looks at the grouping” (132) — he is actually taking another perspective. “Then he runs down and [they] move one of the buffalo so it’s facing east” (132). The trickster may be giving a melancholic attitude to this buffalo which faces the direction the colonizers came from when they first arrived in America. Stricken by this gesture, Tecumseh asks hesitatingly: “Is this sort of...art?” (132).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 185.

Monroe then gives him a most surprising answer: “My trade and my art is living” (132). This sentence echoes his previous assertion that “[his] brushes [are] magic” (129). As a consequence, Tecumseh wonders what they are actually doing: is it installation art? Or the resurrection of old buffalo from the past? In any case, nature seems to cast a positive look on Monroe’s project:

The wind is back now, and there are heavy clouds in the sky. But they are the thick, white kind that the wind kicks loose from the mountains and blows across the prairies in tall piles, and not the kind that bring rain.

The anteposition of the conjunction “[b]ut” shows that nature is represented as friendly here. Indeed, the personified wind seems to play with the clouds, assembling them in “thick, white,” “tall piles” which echo bones or the firewood Tecumseh will find scattered around the prairies at the end of the narrative.

Nevertheless, although Monroe’s magic begins to operate, Tecumseh is not completely convinced: “This is a bad habit Monroe has. Making hard turns when I’m not looking. I figure this is what happens when you go crazy” (133). In fact, he thinks the iron buffalo are but another of Monroe’s whims, and he only follows the trickster because he earns money for it. This is why, when Monroe asks him to “[w]atch the buffalo in case they try to run away again” (133), Tecumseh simply decides to take a nap:

The buffalo aren’t going anywhere, so I close my eyes and curl up in the shade of the truck. The wind picks up speed, and as it does, I hear a low moaning hum. At first, I think it’s Soldier having a bad dream, but when I look, I see that it’s just the buffalo leaning into the wind like rocks in a river. (133)

In this passage, magic begins to work at the level of perception since the narrator is tricked by his senses and by a natural element—the wind. The very precise description of three different sound effects—“low,” “moan” and “hum”—indicates a living, even human presence. The narrator then opens his eyes and associates these strange noises with the buffalo. In fact, this uncanny effect is even reinforced by the comparison between the personified iron buffalo and natural elements in the phrase “buffalo leaning into the wind like rocks in a river.” The buffalo seem to be animated by natural elements, leaning and whispering to each other. This last image seems to haunt Tecumseh as he falls asleep, for when he wakes up a few hours later he comments: “The buffalo are still standing on the prairies, and for a moment, they look just like the buffalo on the reserve” (133). But another surprise awaits Tecumseh as he is looking for Monroe:

I’m not expecting more buffalo, and for a moment, when I get to the top of the hill and they pop out of the grass, they startle me. There are three of them, all facing in my direction. (134)

The use of the “-ing” form in “I’m not expecting” followed by the three action verbs “pop out,” “startle” and “facing” directly present the iron buffalo as active agents causing the narrator to jump. The number “three” followed by the adjective “all” reinforces their unsettling outnumbering effect. This is all the more uncanny since everything in their attitude indicates that they were waiting for Tecumseh. Besides, the narrator does not seem to realize Monroe is actually the one who put them there.

A bit later, as the day draws to a close, Monroe “sits on the tailgate of the truck” (134), purposefully taking another perspective in order to admire his work:

[Monroe] looks back the way we’ve come. You can’t see the church, and you can’t see the bridge, and you can’t see Truth and Bright Water.

“Look at that,” says Monroe. “Just like the old days.”

I look, but I don’t see much of anything. Beside the river, there is only the land and the sky.

“As far as the eye can see.”(134-135)

This passage is structured around the anaphora of “see” and “look,” highlighting the fundamental difference between both verbs. “To look” means “to direct one’s gaze in a specified direction,”⁶¹ whereas “to see” is “to perceive with the eyes” and implies a certain level of deduction and understanding.⁶² The juxtaposition of two syntagms structured around the verbs “look” and “see” in “I look, but I don’t see much of anything” confirms what was already foreshadowed in the anaphoric ternary rhythm at the beginning of the passage: the church, the bridge and the two towns have been erased by the power of vision and perspective. Another ternary rhythm, structured around natural elements—the river, the land and the sky—signals the final success of Monroe’s enterprise. The artificial has been annihilated to the profit of the natural, and the landscape has almost returned to pre-colonial times, since “it’s only a matter of time:” “[e]ach day,” Monroe foretells, “the herd will grow larger and larger. [...] Before we’re done, the buffalo will return” (135).

As Tecumseh grows more and more confused between reality and perspective shifts, Monroe puts a trickster object—his wig—on the narrator’s head. Even though Tecumseh “can see even less now,” he paradoxically succeeds in “us[ing] his imagination” (135) and, after Monroe’s departure, he “stand[s] on the running board of the truck” and attempts to adopt a trickster vision by “tr[ying] to see what [Monroe] sees” (135).

Faced with the narrator’s hesitation and an increasing effect of confusion, the reader himself is invited to adopt the trickster vision and to “see” or “imagine” an

⁶¹ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, “look, v.,” 841.

⁶² *Ibid.*: “see, v.,” 1301.

alternative reality. Monroe thus succeeds in reversing the course of history. Indeed, the untiring and intensive buffalo hunt which developed in the 1860s stroke a fatal blow to herds and led to the disappearance of the buffalo from the North American landscape. They were actually quasi-extinct by the 1880s.⁶³

Nevertheless, Monroe is not finished with his restoration project yet. As Tecumseh increasingly rallies to the trickster's perspective, Monroe abruptly reminds him that "[t]hese buffalo aren't really real" (135):

I don't want to make the same mistake again. "I don't know," I say. "They sort of look real."

Monroe's face explodes in smiles and tears. "Yes," he says. "Yes, that's exactly right."

We stand in front of the church. Monroe keeps his arm around me, squeezes me from time to time as the light turns and slants into the grass. "What do you see?"

"The church."

"I'm working on that," says Monroe. "What else?"

"The prairies?"

"How about the sky?"

"Sure."

"Anything else?" Monroe turns to me so I'm facing the iron buffalo.

I don't want to say that I see the buffalo just in case I'm not supposed to see them. But I've run out of options. "Buffalo?"

Monroe smiles and shakes his head. "It would fool me, too," he says. "But you can't tell anyone."

"About what?"

"If they hear about it, it won't work." Monroe dips his head and puts his mouth to my ear. "Real buffalo," he whispers, "can spot a decoy a mile away." (135-136)

In the passage where Monroe eventually sets up the last buffalo, the boundary between animate and inanimate, artificial and natural, past and present seems definitively erased since both the trickster and Tecumseh come to picture the herd as real:

By the time I get back to the truck, Monroe has finished setting up the last of the buffalo. "What do you think?"

They're all facing the river. Off to one side, Monroe has staked a small buffalo by itself, away from the rest, looking back towards the church.

"Is that supposed to be a baby?"

"Magic," says Monroe. "If you want the herds to return, you have to understand magic."

"Where's the mother?"

"Realism will only take you so far." (198)

⁶³ The Canadian Encyclopedia Website: « La chasse au bison.» <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/fr/article/chasse-au-bison/>> Last consulted on May 15, 2017.

The name of “magic realism” appears explicitly in this passage, indicating that the metamorphosis which has gradually taken place enabled Monroe to transcend the established order, imitation of realism and natural laws underlying the text. Even more surprising, he drew a parallel with former systems of belief, “an old animistic view of the universe”⁶⁴ which, according to Freud, should be considered uncanny. To conclude, this example proves another attempt on King’s part at writing back to old assumptions, since in this case, Monroe’s magic appears less uncanny than genuinely sympathetic.

The Gradual Appearance of a New Genre: the Native Prairie Ghost Story

Truth and Bright Water may prove unsettling at first because of the author’s tendency to constantly defy one’s expectations. The narrative copies, parodies and resists the clichés of the Gothic paraphernalia while suspense always seems to come to a dead end. Moreover, the author’s omnipresent irony and the narrator’s inattentiveness and his tendency to adumbrate sets them both as unreliable points of view.

On the other hand, vivid descriptions and verbs of sensation target the reader’s unconscious and appeal to the power of one’s imagination. Indeed, a great number of the sources of the uncanny described by Freud can be found throughout the narrative, such as the double, physicality or ghosts. These fleeting and unsettling appearances are to be found but occasionally, but they may eventually create the same obsessive feeling of repetition and pervasiveness as recurring thoughts. As a consequence, the actual “ghost,” or haunting, is entirely created by King’s style of writing and recurrent linguistic effects, which puts particular focus on natural elements and the Natives’ body. Similarly, the landscape becomes the place where King’s linguistic ghosts get ready to manifest themselves—as if the author were using and then re-writing Freud’s theories of the uncanny in a Native way.

In continuation, one may get the feeling that King puts on a metamask and uses black humour and irony in order to abolish all sorts of boundaries and to conciliate opposites. The border between familiar and unfamiliar seems especially fragile, and gradually verges into chaos. Nevertheless, fear is meant to be but a transitory state, for, as a “psychoanalytical subject,” the reader may experience a feeling of recognition and remember that he is, in fact, the descendant of the same colonizers who appropriated the

⁶⁴ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 143.

land and massacred First Nations. This “remembrance” stands as an invocation of a variety of figures whose voices and stories have been muted or omitted over time, the re-emergence of a past which should be buried and forgotten, thus creating what Warren Cariou calls “the Aboriginal Ghost Motif.”⁶⁵ This motif echoes the neologism “hauntology” evoked by Derrida in *Spectres of Marx* and referring to works mediating the voices of past spectres—in other words, how the past keeps influencing the present.⁶⁶

As a consequence, a new innovative genre gradually transpires through this “apparently artless but secretly designing story”⁶⁷—the Native prairie ghost story. This genre implies a form of “return of the repressed,” which, at first consideration, seems to target predominantly the white reader as a descendant of white colonizers.



Part Three—The Revenge of the Landscape: the Native Version of the Colonizers’ “Return of the Repressed”

Eurocentrism as a Reassuring Process of Appropriation

The concept of “appropriation” appeared towards the end of the XIVth century and refers to “the making of a thing private property, whether another’s or (as now commonly) one’s own; taking as one’s own or to one’s own use.” More concretely, it also designates “the thing so appropriated or taken possession of.”⁶⁸

“Appropriation” is also the concept qualifying the colonizers’ attempts at making the place familiar and homely by taking possession of the land. Indeed, the New World was considered a strange and unhomely place, a hostile and unfamiliar land submitting newcomers to its hard life conditions. Since they found themselves strangers into a foreign country where they had no history, no clear sense of identity, colonizers attempted to appropriate Canadian land both physically and ideologically—and in this sense, the concept of appropriation as a way of counteracting the anguish of the unknown is closely related to

⁶⁵ Warren Cariou, “Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal ‘Ghosts’ and the Spectres of Settlement.” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 727.

⁶⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York and Oxon (UK): Routledge, 2012.

⁶⁷ Margaret Atwood, “A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King.” *Canadian Literature: Native Writers and Canadian Writing*, William H. New (ed.), 124-125 (Spring and Summer 1990): 244.

that of eurocentrism. Indeed, they were obsessed with classifying, defining, categorizing everything they discovered in the new continent, be it human beings, objects or natural elements, replacing some already existing Native names by European ones. They were also obsessed with mapping—that is to say, with discovering the borders of America and design a precise cartography in order to gain an exhaustive knowledge of the land.

Moreover, the sense of space, of the vastness, wilderness and width of the American landscape, was another source of both awe and fear awaiting the first colonizers, because of the sublime feeling it caused.⁶⁹ One may draw a parallel between the sublime and the uncanny in the sense that one experiences a total loss of bearings and the abolition of the boundaries of the self—in Freudian terms, it triggers “intellectual uncertainty.”

Truth and Bright Water echoes the notion of the sublime through the theme of “space.” Besides, the narrator regularly uses a ternary construction in order to describe the omnipresence of this land which expands in all directions: “there is nothing but grass and water and sky” (42). Furthermore, Elvin tells his son “why tourists come out to [Bright Water]”—not to see “Indians,” nor “[b]uffalo,” nor “the mountains,” but to see “[s]pace:” “[t]hey travel around the world to Bright Water because they’ve never seen space like this” (107). One of the reasons why Bright Water is stated as “the centre of the universe” (251) is that it still presents a genuine sense of space—triggering a paradoxical sense of awe for tourists. In fact, what seems uncanny in the American landscape does necessarily appear frightening in the Natives’ eyes:

I’m thinking that my father is probably wrong about the tourists who come west to take in the sights. There’s nothing scary out there, just the land and the river and the mountains. Out here, space is just the distance between two towns, and the only thing you have to worry about is the weather or the next gas station being open. (146)

The ternary rhythm “the land and the river and the mountains,” which signals the vastness of the land, is thus opposed to the adjective “scary.” The restrictive adverbs “nothing,” “just” and “only” tone down the idea of nature as a dangerous place and convey the Natives’ opinion that one should not fear the land. In this sense, the theme of space reflects a *mise en abyme* of the whole novel, transforming the fear it creates into food for thought which eventually leads to an understanding. Here, more than writing back to traditional conceptions of space, the reader is made to wonder why vast nature appears harmless to the Natives while it represents a danger to white people.

⁶⁸ Oxford English Dictionary, “appropriation, n.” Last consulted on May 29, 2017.

⁶⁹ Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery.” *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836).

To conclude, appropriation can be defined as a Western physical and ideological weapon aiming at countering an unsettling sense of the unfamiliar, unhomely, unusual—uncanny—and make oneself “at home” in the American land. In other words, this concept is built on a sense of anguish and fear, implying that in the absence of bearings and stable ground, the land becomes fearsome again and everything turns into chaos for white people. In fact, one of King’s favourite techniques is to play with the fragility of the artificial border between canny and uncanny, homely and unhomely, in order to create the sensation of an uncanny form of resistance of the landscape.

In addition, the presence of the Natives can no longer be ignored when it comes to appropriating the land, since they were the ones inhabiting the land in the first place. At this stage, appropriation turns into physical and ideological resistance to the Natives. For instance, colonizers kept negotiating and inventing treaties in order to take possession of ancestral Native land. Elvin mocks these treaties through scatological humour—“This is the way we should have signed those treaties” (107), he bitterly tells Tecumseh while peeing. Moreover, colonizers also established the borders between Canada and the United States as well as the different states without taking the tribes’ territories into account.

Chapter Two will study more closely the way *Truth and Bright Water* implicitly deals with the way the Natives deeply suffered from colonization and forced assimilation into European society. Indeed, the novel alludes to a multiplicity of historical references hinting at past battles and massacres, and at the way colonizers used to get rid of the Natives when the latter resisted assimilation or were reluctant to leave their ancestral land. These painful memories created permanent marks on the Natives’ mind and are still visible today.

The Landscape as a Dangerous Force Which Seems to Escape Control

In *Truth and Bright Water*, the landscape stands as a major source of fear because of the gratuitous violence which pervades it. Not only does King describe nature as violent, but violence seems to characterize animals themselves since they are represented as either violent or in pain or dead. This theme pervades Chapter Eleven, for instance, where Tecumseh and his father transport dangerous waste across the border. The narrator tries to find the “answer to the dead animals along the side of the road” (86). He figures out it must

be the speed, then their ability to blend in with the landscape, before deciding that it is a matter of being smarter than the others:

The only other thing I can figure is that some animals are smart and some are stupid. From the number of ground squirrel bodies along the side of the road, I'd guess that ground squirrels are close to brain-dead. Deer must be pretty dense, and skunks aren't much better. Porcupines may be slow, but they've got enough sense not to try to cross the road when there's a car coming. And magpies. Magpies look witless, but in the animal world, they could be geniuses. (89)

In this passage, the narrator establishes a comic classification announced by the antithetic balancement between “smart” and “stupid” animals. Combined with the modals “must,” “would” in its contracted form, “may” and “could,” the verbs “figure” and “would guess” symbolize Tecumseh's hesitation as well as the progression of his thoughts. Not only is the metaphor “close to brain-dead” an unsettling reappearance of the lexical field of death, but it is also the first outstanding instance of the author's black humour on Tecumseh's reasoning. Indeed, the whole gradation is based on the narrator's comic—but not necessarily true—assumption that the more a species can be found at the side of the road, the dumber it is. Besides, the personification of various species—“ground squirrels,” “[d]eer,” “skunks,” “[p]orcupines” and “magpies”—may exemplify Tecumseh's tendency to generalize and classify.

The short and sudden noun sentence “And magpies” implies that Tecumseh reached the conclusion to this strange gradation. The anadiplosis of the plural noun “magpies” induces a focalization on these birds. In continuation, a restrictive clause formed by the conjunction “but” and the anteposition of the adverbial phrase of place “in the animal world” reinforce the strength of a second antithetic parallel between the adjective “witless” and the noun “geniuses.” Magpies thus become in some sort the “queens” of the animal world, because they are able to *think*. They prove actually so smart that they outlive all the other animals:

Whenever you see a dead animal on the road, you generally see magpies. They hop about on the body, pecking and squawking, fighting with each other over the soft parts. Cars don't spook them. [...] Even at a distance, you can't miss them. They don't blend into anything and they aren't particularly fast. And you never see a dead magpie by the side of the road. (88)

Magpies show particular resistance to all forms of death and can adapt to any forms of potential danger. The metonymy “cars” combined with the verb “to spook” belonging to the lexical field of haunting shows their adaptation and their proving stronger than forms of modernity and artificiality. As a consequence, magpies symbolize a disquieting form of a

superior nature, nature as an unhomely place. The binary rhythm structured around the double negative form “[t]hey don’t blend into anything and they aren’t particularly fast” emphasizes the idea that at first consideration one would not say magpies are not necessarily favoured by nature. In contrast, the other two other negative forms—“you can’t miss them” and “you never see a dead magpie” reinforces the magpies’ paradoxical omnipresence in the landscape. Besides, the specific noun syntagm “dead magpie” echoes the more generic expression “dead animals” at the beginning of the passage. Contrary to other animals, magpies owe their survival to their unmerciful and cruel intelligence. They let other animals be killed before feeding on their remains. A lugubrious deathly reference can be spotted here as the verbs of action “pecking,” “squawking” and “fighting” referring to the birds intermingle with the lexical field of physicality—“body” and “soft parts.”

Nevertheless, the unsettling character of this passage comes more specifically from the fact that a strange parallel is gradually created between the animal world—and, more specifically, natural selection—and colonization:

Or maybe ground squirrels and skunks and deer and porcupines and magpies are just like people. Some are lucky, and some aren’t. Some get to drive nice cars, and some wind up by the side of the road. (91)

The coordinated accumulation of the various animal species which have been previously mentioned finally ends up on one conclusion: “people.” Here again, the author’s irony transpires through Tecumseh’s discourse. Two binary rhythms based on the anaphora of the pronoun “some” confirm the hidden consequence of an underlying parallel existing between the Natives and white people. King humorously suggests that colonization was only a matter of bad luck for Indians, since they were not intelligent enough to foresee and escape danger. Elvin suggests that, on the contrary, Indians should have taken buffalo as an example: “Soon as the smart ones got a good look at Whites, they took off.” And he concludes: “That’s the mistake we made. [...] We should have gone with them” (91). In fact, this mistake places the Indians on the same level as ground squirrels, below the buffalo which stand at the intermediary level of the scale, while whites “get to drive nice cars” and reign over the American land.

Nevertheless, although the previous example testifies to Indians’ and nature’s inferiority to whites, the land seems to remember the violence provoked by white settlers in colonial times. Contrary to Natives, nature cannot remain a passive observer while white people appropriate the land. On the contrary, it catalyzes and returns the violence inflicted by artificiality and settler constructions. As a consequence, personification of all sorts of

objects tends to demonstrate diverse forms of violence. Tecumseh describes visual violence in the sentence “a yard engine slams into a line of cars” (70), while audible violence is similarly present in “the train roars past [Tecumseh]” (73), with the verb “roar” imitating the disquieting and potentially dangerous cry of a beast.

Moreover, recurrent references to the junk and landfill that pollute the earth and the river are also linked with the theme of the violence done to nature. The theme of harm done to For instance, in Chapter Eleven, Elvin is transporting barrels reading “[b]io-[h]azardous [w]aste,” or “the junk hospitals can’t toss down the sink” (82), across the border to Canada. Although there is “[n]o telling where those barrels have been” (83), Elvin throws them in nature because he is “just pai[d] [...] to make [this junk] disappear” (82). Using the passive voice enables him to gloss over who the people paying him are. Nevertheless, he has capitalistic motivations in polluting nature, for this “landfill economics” (152), as Lum phrases it, or “cleaning up the mess for other people” (141), is “the kind of shit that pays” (149). The lexical field of sticky stains, which characterizes the junk Elvin is transporting, indicates that this junk is, undeniably, soaked with dangerous toxic products polluting the earth. Indeed, “they’re [...] covered with an oily slick that sticks to [Tecumseh’s] hands and pants,” “[his] gloves are covered with a reddish-black stain” and although the narrator scrubs his hands, they “still feel sticky” (83).

The problem is, the Natives seem to have no environmental concern and treat the land as if it were a huge landfill. Tecumseh himself has “[no] idea what’s buried out there” (22) and explains that his people’s carelessness caused the junk to pervade nature:

A lot of junk winds up in the river this way. Some of it gets washed out of the Bright Water landfill and some of it gets blown off the prairies by the wind. But most of the garbage—car tires, glass bottles, oil drums, shopping carts—comes from people who figure that [...] tossing plastic bags and roofing materials off the bank isn’t going to hurt anything. (8)

As a consequence, nature decides to fight back against violent artificial intrusions, and the first targets of the revengeful landscape seem to be artificial settler constructions. When realizing that “[t]he entire east side of the church [...] looks gone,” Tecumseh adds that “it blends in with the prairies and the sky, and “it looks as if part of the church has been chewed off” (43). Although the missing part is obviously Monroe’s work, the phrasal verb “chewed off” conveys the visual image of a huge beast going out of the land and biting effortlessly into the church. Later, Tecumseh tells how, the year the band opened the RV park for Indian Days, “the septic tank stopped working,” and suddenly, inexplicably, the whole camp was “covered with a soft mustard-coloured slick” because “there were

animals and other creatures in the earth who were tired of having shit dumped on them and that they had finally done something about it” (100). Despite the burlesque and scatological humour, there is something unsettling about the personification of animals and of vague undefined “creatures.” The adverb “finally” signals that nature has finally settled for rebellion for a change, covering the so-called “Indian camp” with the most natural product they could think of—“shit” (100).

These previous examples illustrate how nature gradually escapes control and attempts to erase all artificial constructions and presence from the landscape. In other words, it turns into a threat for white people who are constantly reminded that Canada is not their “home” properly speaking.

To illustrate, Chapter Nineteen unveils a case of “death by landscape.” The sudden passage to preterit detaches this passage from the frame narrative in the present tense. Tecumseh tells that “[a] few summers back,” a couple of German tourists—Helmut and Eva May—were found dead in their Grand Cherokee in the middle of the prairies (155). At first, Tecumseh adopts a detective’s realistic tone, giving a detailed analysis of the facts, clues and incongruities that could have caused the tourists’ death. The recurrent use of “you” stands as a direct address to the reader who is considered a witness to the scene: “the sort of things you would expect tourists to take” or “if you did get yourself lost” (155).

Nevertheless, the ending remains inconclusive: “the cause of death was simply listed as ‘exposure’” (155). Was it “[e]xposure” to the sun, or to the landscape? By using the passive form, which creates uncertainty and blurriness by avoiding to give any precise subject, the narrator almost manipulates the reader into privileging a supernatural explanation:

The windows were rolled up, the doors were locked, and there were no signs that they had ever gotten out.

Robbery was ruled out, and because there were no signs of foul play and nothing to indicate suicide, the cause of death was listed simply as “exposure.” (155)

The passive form reinforces Tecumseh’s detective tone as he attempts to give factual statements. Nevertheless, in the first sentence, the passive form suggests the car was not necessarily locked up by Helmut and Eva, but that they may have been trapped into the Grand Cherokee by a mysterious force. Magic Realism thus appears from the moment when one begins to doubt whether nature is a dynamic and active entity or not. The narrator—and the reader—have thus once more tricked one into acknowledging the limits of objective, realistic Western representations and adopting another perspective. Besides, this questioning of a Western narrative tradition is accompanied by plays of perspective

linking narratorial and pictorial representations. Indeed, “Helmut May was a famous fashion photographer” (155), and the lexical field of photography pervades the text: “cameras,” “rolls of exposed film,” “pictures from the exposed rolls” were found into the car.

All of the photographs were panoramas, landscapes, the sort of thing that you would expect tourists to take. But the neat thing was that everything in the distance, the rivers, the mountains, the clouds, the prairies, was slightly blurry and out of focus, while everything in the foreground, the steering wheel, the windshield wipers, the hood, was crisp and sharp. (155)

While observing the lexical field of photography—“panoramas,” “landscapes,” “the distance,” “the foreground”—one may get the sense that the two German tourists attempted to enclose the landscape into a frame. For this reason, the landscape resisted and even thwarted their attempt. Indeed, the quaternary enumeration “the rivers, the mountains, the clouds, the prairies” and the ternary enumeration “the steering wheel, the windshield wipers, the hood” are respectively associated with antonymic binary rhythms—“blurry and out of focus” and “crisp and sharp.” Besides, the smoothness of the consonants “b” and “f” offers a sharp contrast with the combination of “hard” consonants “c” and “s” as well as a consonance in “p” in “crisp and sharp.” The distancing between the natural and the artificial is thus enhanced by the parallelism of construction as well as by sound effects. As a consequence, one gets the impression that everything can appear and disappear on the prairies, and in this sense the theme of photography recalls Monroe’s restoration work with the help of his paint and brushes. Chapter Nineteen presents a syncretic text, since art and pictorial strategies link the visual and the narrative, realism and magic, thus enabling one to take into account cultures which remained ignored until then. Indeed, this hybrid narrative draws a parallel with Native trickster myths which rely on magical transformation. In other words, art is intricately linked with the “revenge” of the landscape, which rebels against artificiality and careless tourists while treating whites like “strangers in their own land.” This interpretation is all the more relevant from the moment when one puts the theme of German tourists in perspective with the whole *Truth and Bright Water* text. The Natives “pray[...] for Germans” (22) to attend Indian Days because Germans generally try to imitate the Indian way of life, thus causing the Natives to hide their real identity in order to please the tourists. Besides, the mention of their taking a “Grand Cherokee” is undoubtedly another humorous allusion to assumptions and Indian stereotypes. Maybe their disappearance into the landscape is a playful allusion to their

losing their own identity by trying to imitate others. Therefore, they may have been literally “erased” from the landscape just like Monroe does with the church.

To conclude, King’s style of writing ends up giving one the impression that an angry invisible force haunts nature. The landscape thus turns into a powerful and dangerous enemy from the moment when it tries to erase all traces of white presence in order to return to pre-colonial times.

Two Distinct Conclusions

Not only does nature remember gratuitous violence but it also seems to transform into a dangerous enemy. As a consequence, *Truth and Bright Water* may actually symbolize the eventual triumph of nature over white presence.

On the one hand, every settler construction seems doomed to decline and decay. The church gradually lost its original aura of religiosity since, although the Methodists originally built it “on the highest point of land they could find” so that “you could always see it,” now “the church has all but disappeared behind the Chinook Motel, the Farmer’s Bank, and the Continental Oil Tower” (42). As for the iron bridge, it is compared with a huge rotting carcass:

From here, as far as you can see, the bridge is nothing more than a skeleton, the carcass of an enormous animal, picked to the bone.

“You smell it?” says Lum. “The whole thing’s rotting.”

From the end of the decking, you can lean out and stare through the dead openings between the ribs and see the fog boil up off the river a thousand miles below. There’s nothing to hold on to out there and the wind knows it. It grabs at my arms and legs. (256)

The metaphor of the bridge as an “enormous [dead] animal” depends on what one may call an unsettling “optical illusion” which reinforces a sense of physicality and the world of meat. Indeed, the reader is made to imagine the visual similarity between the iron mesh and a “skeleton” with “bones” and “ribs.” Indeed, the lexical field of bones systematically refers to iron. Moreover, the image of the carcass becomes even more vivid from the moment when the reader is invited to use both the senses of sight and smell in order to imagine the interchangeability between rust and blood. The “smell” indicates that although the “carcass” has been “picked to the bone”—the verb “pick” alluding once more to birds devouring corpses—it is still in a state of putrefaction and decay. The reader is thus invited to adopt a perspective where the organic and the artificial blend seamlessly within the landscape, an image which is all the more unsettling that the adverbial phrase of place “as

far as you can see” gives one the impression that the bridge goes on endlessly—as endlessly, in fact, as the wide American prairie. Moreover, the adjective “dead” and the personification of the wind signal the presence of a hostile force. The sense of touch is evoked as the wind tries to “gra[b]” the narrator’s limbs in order to force him into an extremely long fall, signalled by the hyperbole “a thousand miles below.” The fog, as frightening as ever, seems to be eagerly waiting as it “boils up off the river” in a sure intent to burn its next victim.

As a consequence, *Truth and Bright Water* stands as a positive omen for the Natives. Indeed, King’s representation of nature resembles Thomas Cole’s cycle of five sublime paintings entitled *The Course of the Empire*: while civilizations fade away one after the other, nature always regains its rights. The characters thus see their ancestral land gradually returning to its initial state, “[j]ust like the old days” (134), under Monroe’s magical brushes.

On the other hand, the strange force inhabiting the personified landscape stands as a strong metaphor for the white reader who is invited to remember violence and past massacres caused by his or her ancestors. Landscape becomes fearsome from the moment when one projects one’s deepest fears—the return of the dead and the revenge for past violence—on nature. The personified landscape thus becomes a catalyzer for the “return of the repressed,” or an unconscious fear of the past returning to haunt the present. The author thus uses the fear provoked by the Native ghost story and the Aboriginal Ghost Motif in order to make the reader *think* and *remember* past deeds and massacres on the Canadian land. Nevertheless, Native people are also still haunted by both a physical and ideological specter of colonization—a spectre, or “return of the repressed,” which takes a diversity of forms in their everyday lives.

Chapter Two

The Discursive Ghost as the “Return of the Repressed” in a New, Contemporary Era of White Colonization



Part One—A Sense of the Unhomely, or Finding Oneself “a Stranger in One’s Own Country”

Displacement from Home

In order to explore the sense of displacement experienced by the characters in *Truth and Bright Water*, one should analyze the strong cultural link existing between Native people and the land.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, although this sense is now outdated, the noun “Native” was initially used at the end of the XIVth century in “feudal and similar systems” and referred to “a person born in bondage; a person born to servants, tenants, etc., and inheriting their status.”⁷⁰

The emphasis on bondage and birth remained central to the concept of “Native” when this word took, in the first half of the XVIth century, the meaning we know nowadays—that of “relating to birthplace or country of origin.” Indeed, a Native is “[a] person born in a specific place, region, or country, whether subsequently resident there or not.” Hence the fact that this word was usually followed by the particle “of” which specifies one’s origin.⁷¹ As a consequence, although a Native does not necessarily live on his or her homeland, he or she feels a strong relationship to it: a sense of attachment, of belonging, of being associated with or rooted in the said place. Moreover, this strong bondage leads to a third meaning of “Native”—that of “fellow-countrymen,” or “compatriots.”⁷² In other words, sharing the same birthplace leads to the creation of a

⁷⁰ Oxford English Dictionary, “native, n. ” Last consulted on March 15, 2017.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

specific sense of community, of a group of people sharing the same roots, stories, relatives and friends.

Living in Truth and Bright Water: a Feeling of the Unhomely

In contrast, in *Truth and Bright Water*, the bond existing between the Natives and their homeland barely resembles the relationship described in the preceding subpart. Indeed, the characters' feeling of being strangers in their own country divides the community. As a matter of fact, living in Truth and Bright Water—the characters' *home*—implies coping with a feeling of the unhomely, and most of all with an inescapable sense of boredom: "Nobody gets lost out there. Just bored" (7), Lum states as an explanation to the strange presence of a woman on the Horns in the middle of the night. Later in the novel, Skee Gardipeau ironically figures out Monroe "ha[s] gone to Toronto because no one kn[ows] him there and because, in a city, there [are] lots more interesting ways to kill yourself than staring at the bottom of a beer can or breaking through thin ice" (26).

As a consequence, the Native characters find a variety of reasons to justify the so-called acceptance of their hopelessly flat everyday life. While Skee Gardipeau says that "[f]amily's only good reason to stay in Truth and Bright Water" (26), Elvin asserts his opinion in a sharp, nominal, single-word sentence: "Business." He clarifies his position further on: "Only reason to go to Bright Water is business" (85).

Two characters visibly crave to escape the border town and reserve, yet without achieving it. On the one hand, Helen—the narrator's mother—makes desperate attempts at a geographical escape:

A couple of months after my father left Bright Water and moved to Truth, my mother began writing letters to cities all over Canada—Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Regina, Toronto, Montreal—and in no time at all, we began getting packages in the mail stuffed with brochures and magazines and maps and posters. (138)

Further on, Helen asks Tecumseh: "If you could live anywhere in the world, [...] where would you want to be?" (138). The reader thus understands that Helen would be ready to choose a random destination for the sole purpose of escaping her birthplace. She eventually suggests Vancouver, where there is "a good theatre community" and where, in Tecumseh's words, she could fulfil her dream of becoming an actress. "My mother would smile when I said this," the narrator concludes, and no matter what city we settled on, you could see that moving out of Bright Water, away from the reserve, and becoming a real

actress was one of her dreams” (138). Nevertheless, Helen remains unable to leave Truth and Bright Water but for a few days.

On the other hand, Lum’s dreams of freedom echo a metaphorical escape. “You ever think about just taking off?” (151) he asks the narrator after both rode their motorcycles at full speed across the prairies. At this point, the verb “to take off” can be understood in both a literal and figurative meaning. Indeed, while Lum means “to take off like a bird or a plane,” Tecumseh understands “to leave” and answers: “Sure, [...] [m]y mother and I were going to move to Toronto” (151). This discrepancy reveals Lum’s desire for a very precise and unreachable level of freedom, and this is the very reason why he is so often compared with a bird.

In conclusion, one may wonder why all these characters’ explicit or implicit dreams of freedom remain unfulfilled. After all, in the novel, the notion of the “homely” paradoxically verges on that of the “unhomely.” Although Truth and Bright Water *is* home, it does not seem to match such reassuring notions as those listed by Freud in *The Uncanny*—that is to say, “local,” “native,” “domestic,” “familiar,” “tame,” “dear and intimate,” “peaceful,” “tranquil,” “restful,” “cosy,” “cheerful” or “serene.”⁷³ It is not a place that “arous[es] a pleasant or quiet contentment, of comfortable repose and secure protection.”⁷⁴

As a consequence, if home is such an unhomely and boring place, why is everybody unable to leave? At this point, the justifications of business and family—as important as these notions may be—appear insufficient, or even irrelevant. The notion of “home” thus needs to be redefined since Truth and Bright Water are, after all, the most appropriate places to be labelled “home.” Indeed, since the town and the reserve stand for both the characters’ birthplace and the place where they spent their whole life, the Natives should feel a strong connection to the land. Leaving this space implies leaving one’s roots, stories, relatives and friends—a diversity of ties they can find nowhere else. At this point, one may remember Dorothy’s statement in Victor Fleming’s 1939 *The Wizard of Oz*: “there is no place like home.”

This sense of forgetting and the loss of identity whenever one leaves his or her birthplace is exemplified by the depiction of Monroe’s life. Indeed, the “big-time Indian artist” (14) left the community a few years before and moved to Toronto where, in Skee

⁷³ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 128-131.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*: 127.

Gardipeau's words, "no one kn[ew] him" (26). Therefore, he lost his ties with his former friends and family—indeed, Tecumseh could very well be Monroe's child—to such an extent that the characters eventually ended up thinking he was dead.

As a consequence, the Natives share a strong sense of belonging to Truth and Bright Water even though it appears as the unhomely place *par excellence*. Besides, the narrator seems to be the one character who expresses the strongest attachment to it, for he speculates that

[m]aybe Monroe and auntie Cassie didn't come home because they had no place else to go or because they were crazy, but because there was no place in the world they wanted to be. (232)

The novel is, indeed, the story of a variety of characters coming back home after a long period of absence: Cassie, the three Cousins and Monroe. Their return seems contradictory with Lum's peremptory assertion that "[n]obody comes back to Truth and Bright Water, [...] unless they're crazy or dying" (67). Indeed, although all five characters may appear "crazy or dying" at first consideration, they serve different purposes which are directly linked with the notion of "home."

Firstly, "auntie Cassie" escapes Truth and Bright Water whenever she can. "She travels all over the world," Tecumseh explains to his father. "She's got some great stories" (106). Yet, as if tied to invisible bonds, "Cassie always come back" (92). Paradoxically, she finds it very hard to call her birthplace "home" and experiences a sharp feeling of displacement. Confronted to her mother's hostile attitude, she is at a loss for words. As a matter of fact, with Cassie, the notion of "home" is intricately linked with the second, unsettling meaning of "heimlich"—that of something which is kept secret or hidden. Indeed, her return to Truth is surrounded by an aura of mystery: when Tecumseh asks her how long she intends to stay, she answers: "Long as it takes" (54). But long as it takes for what? The narrator gradually finds out what Cassie does not dare to tell her own mother:

"She's pregnant" [...]. "Auntie Cassie is going to have a baby." I figure my mother knows and that the two of them are keeping it a secret from my grandmother. "That's why she came home. That's why she wants my old baby clothes." (165)

On the contrary, the Cousins' and Monroe's return takes a completely different significance. Although Lum mentions the Cousins right from the first chapter, the reader has to wait until page thirty-eight to get to know them. They are dogs which were doomed dead, since they literally "disappeared" after the Sacred Word Gospel people abandoned them three years before. Yet they "went home" (254) and their return occurs concomitantly with Monroe's arrival in Truth. The Cousins—which are considered "tricksters"—

participate in one of the tasks Monroe has planned: the restoration of a sense of community.

Indeed, the severed community is one of the major problems plaguing life in the border town and reserve. This is also the reason why the characters hesitate to call the place they live in “home.”

In *Truth and Bright Water*, the theme of separation is represented geographically. Indeed, the Shield River emblemizes an absurd border which violently “splits the land in two,” for “Truth and Bright Water sit on opposite sides of the river, the railroad town on the American side, the reserve in Canada” (1). Since the bridge connecting the two places was never finished, the characters need to accomplish a complicated drive by car, or to use “the Toilet,” which is the nickname for an “old iron bucket suspended on a cable over the Shield” (42). In addition, the railroad tracks and Division Street act as additional obstacles which greatly reinforce separatism between both communities.

For the most part, Division Street runs east and west through Truth, but like the river, it doesn’t run straight. It comes into town from the south, turns west, and follows the tracks to the level crossing. Then it heads north for half a mile, turns east, and runs straight until it deadens in front of the fire hall. All of which can be confusing for tourists and other people who come to town because, essentially, there are two Division Streets, one that is north of the tracks and one that is south of the tracks. For example, my father’s shop is on Division Street South along with Safeway, Tucker’s Sporting Goods, Deardorf’s real estate office, and the Coast to Coast store, while my mother’s shop, Railman’s, Santucci’s grocery, and the Frontier theatre are all on Division Street North. (30)

This passage thus emphasizes a fragmentation created not only by the actual, physical border between two countries, but also by the separation existing inside the city itself. Florian Schwieger demonstrates how the text problematizes “the disconnected existence of the Blackfoot community,” a community symbolizing both “two nations” but also “two models of social organization” linked to an economical and racial discrepancy created by the border.⁷⁵ Indeed, according to Schwieger, “Truth quite literally represents the truth about Native American life in contemporary American society,” staging “high unemployment, racism, crime, and alcoholism.” To conclude, Truth “reflects continuing racial tensions” between “mainstream American society and Native American minorities.” In opposition, Bright Water belongs to the other end of the spectrum since it “lacks signifiers of capitalist domination,” thus “represent[ing] the promise of self-governance

⁷⁵ Florian Schwieger, “A Map to the Truth: Sacred Geographies and Spaces of Resistance in King’s *Truth and Bright Water*.” *South Atlantic Review* 76.2 (Spring 2011): 32.

and tribal autarky.” Yet, the Canadian reserve cannot be considered an “Indian utopia” devoid of social, racist and economical discrepancies, since it actually “emerges as a site of economic despair, ruthless corruption, and cultural masquerading.”⁷⁶

In addition, the omnipresent theme of separation is also represented on a subtler level, under the form of uncommunicative dialogues and unattentiveness manifested between the characters. By alternating between a tragic and a comic tone, they emphasize King’s both omnipresent and unsettling play between comedy and tragedy. The following passage is but only one instance of the numerous uncommunicative dialogues pervading the novel, staging the narrator and his mother:

“What’s for breakfast?”
“The railroad might be hiring for the summer,” says my mother.
“Sausage?”
“You should check with Wally Preston over at the job gate.”
“Eggs would be okay.”
[...] “Cereal’s in the cupboard,” she says.
“French toast?”
“Spoon’s in the drawer.”
“Lum and me found a skull up at the Horns.”
“I hope you left it there,” she says.
“Lum says it’s human.”
“I hope you didn’t let Soldier chew on it.”
“We saw a woman, too,” I say. “Guess what she did.”
“I hope you weren’t spying.”
“She jumped off the Horns into the river.”
[...] “I have to go to Bright Water after work.” (17).

This passage creates an unsettling and yet predominantly comic effect, since the so-called dialogue ends up in monologue. Indeed, each of the characters talks about what *they* want to say while remaining deaf to one another. Even worse, they do not even seem to realize that the other is not listening. Tecumseh’s abrupt passage from a light to a serious talk provokes exactly the same attitude of indifference and detachment on Helen’s part. One would expect Helen to behave like an adult, worrying about the fact that a woman may have died as well as about the shocking effect this scene may have made on her son, but she keeps on working on her quilt and decides to change the subject. Conversely, Tecumseh does not listen to his mother’s advice to find a job and prefers to concentrate on more down-to-earth matters—eating.

As a matter of fact, this passage is representative of the characters’ general tendency of not listening to one another—either out of selfishness or boredom, or because

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

they simply do *not* want to. The mono-dialogue quoted above also reflects the numerous attempts on the narrator's part to talk about serious matters—although the said attempts are systematically thwarted by his interlocutors. Tecumseh is indeed eager to learn why his parents get divorced, or why Cassie dropped school, joined the American Indian Movement and got her hand tattooed, or how many times Elvin went to jail. Yet, although he is often explicitly invited by his father or his aunt to ask questions, his interlocutors end up talking about what *they* are willing to talk about. When Tecumseh asks Cassie if she was ever married, his aunt answers: “Don’t believe anything you hear [...]. If you want to know anything, ask me” (163). Nevertheless, the narrator’s question remains unanswered as expected.

Of course, the characters may feel reluctance to open up to the narrator for the good reason that he is still a child, and, as such, he needs to be protected. This may also explain his occasionally naïve opinion on situations he cannot understand; the reader is thus invited to read between the lines. For instance, Tecumseh thinks the reason why Helen gets a little tense when Cassie comes home is “because they’re sisters and are excited to see each other and don’t know where to start” (50). But the reader guesses that Helen’s reaction may be the consequence of obscure and complex family secrets. In fact, most of the time, answers are to be found in gaps in discourse created by one’s refusal to talk. Silences thus prove more eloquent than utterances. Nevertheless, the narrator seems the only one to believe in the power of words since he tries to find a way to re-create dialogue:

Sometimes the best way to get my mother talking about a particular topic is to change the subject and then work your way back to where you wanted to be. It starts her mind moving in a different direction, and after a while, she might forget about what she didn’t want to tell me. (204)

The narrator thus tries to restore a sense of cohesion in a community plagued by unattentiveness. As a consequence, the community is unable to save Lum from his tendency to suicide which eventually leads him to death. Tecumseh is angry at his father for leaving him and his mother, while Elvin does not really seem to care about his son’s age or what he wants to do with his life.

To conclude, the failure of a sense of community is summed up by Lucy Rabbit’s sentence: “Everybody’s related [...]. The trouble with this world is that you wouldn’t know it from the way we behave” (202).

The Positive Theme of Love and Flowers

Although references to flowers are more recurrent than references to love, the former often appears simultaneously with the latter. In fact, these flowers serve as metonyms for “love.”

Flowers and love are usually associated with positive, universal values such as beauty, tenderness or joy. Yet, in *Truth and Bright Water*, love is perceived as an awful or painful feeling and flowers are systematically associated with death. Even worse, both notions are paired with hopeless attempts at restoring a sense of community. Margot Northey comments that the characters in Roch Carrier’s *La Guerre, Yes Sir!* “are grotesques because they cling to outworn truths,”⁷⁷ which is exactly the case in King’s novel. As a consequence, whenever they feel disappointed or lonely or neglected, the characters turn towards their relatives and friends for comfort or affection. For instance, the expression “just looking for attention/sympathy” is used four times in the narrative, referring to the woman on the Horns, Lum, Soldier and Elvin. Indeed, “looking for attention” seems the only way of feeling alive, of existing within the community. It is also the sole outlet to the characters’ sorrow. Tecumseh supposes the mysterious woman he saw on the Horns committed suicide accidentally, while she originally intended to make other people worry about her (68)—this is the very reason why he decides to investigate about her death. Lum, who is beaten by his father and haunted by the memory of his deceased mother, runs away from home and intends to become “[t]he Indian Days long-distance champion” (4). As for Soldier, he keeps trying to get everyone’s attention, a strange attitude that surprises the narrator: “You’d think he’d fall over from all the love that my mother and I give him, but he’s always looking for more” (253). This sentence echoes another passage in the narrative, where Helen explains to Tecumseh that Soldier is merely trying to find compensation for a lack of affection:

“You don’t play with this dog enough.” My mother rubs Soldier’s ears. “He needs love, you know.”

“Lum and me take him everywhere.”

“It’s not the same,” says my mother, and she scratches Soldier’s rib cage until his back leg begins jerking up and down. “It’s not the same.” (137)

Indeed, Helen perceived what the other characters—except Monroe—failed to see: love is not absent from the community. Neither is it worthless. In fact, the characters’ sorrow emanates from the fact that they are not loved the way they would like to be. For example,

⁷⁷ Margot Northey, *The Haunted Wilderness: the Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976: 83.

Lum has a strange way of showing affection to Soldier, spending his time scarrying him or calling him insulting names. Nevertheless, what Soldier really wants is being petted and cuddled, but he only ends up getting the “right” to follow his master around constantly.

This rather strange way of loving one another is echoed in Elvin’s attitude. After leaving his family a long time before, he tries to redeem himself by spending more time with his son and buying his ex-wife a Volkswagen Karmann Ghia, whereas all they need is “help with the bills” (144). Conversely, Elvin often expresses his need for love. For instance, he frequently asks the same conundrum—“You know what’s wrong with this world?”—which gives him the occasion to list all the banes plaguing the Natives’ everyday life. Unexpectedly, one of the correct answers is: “Just needs a little love” (169). This remark seems quite mysterious due to the context of utterance. Is Elvin talking about Soldier, who is lying on the floor beside him because he is “just looking for attention” (208)? Or is he talking about his own disappointment at realizing that his former relationship with Helen is definitely over? In the second case, Elvin’s way of expressing his love for his family is quite a peculiar one. He draws attention on himself by being occasionally caught by the police and wearing the disguise of a white icon during Indian Days. After telling his son that there is “[n]othing wrong with a spanking from time to time”—which is, of course, an understatement—Elvin makes attempts at restoring a sense of complicity between them: “My father smiles at me and taps me in the chest with his fist. ‘I love you, son,’ he says. ‘You know that, right? [...] Tell your mother I love her, too’” (141-142).

In conclusion, love is no outlet to despair and loneliness, and all demonstrations of affection converge on a dead end. Elvin does not get his family back, and the only comfort Helen can give to her son is an assertion that she loves him and that he is not responsible for these deaths.

Nonetheless, Helen is the only character who can be associated with the positive and negative values of love, since the said values go hand in hand with the references to flowers. Indeed, Helen is passionate about them:

Two or three mornings each week, before she opens the beauty shop, my mother goes out behind Stantucci’s grocery and picks up any flowers that Mrs Stantucci hasn’t been able to sell. Most of the bunches are in pretty bad shape, but my mother trims the stems, cuts off the dead parts, and arranges them in a vase. (16)

Therefore, Helen is characterized as an optimistic character, a sensitive woman able to find beauty even in ugliness and to resurrect what belongs to garbage. As a consequence, one may draw a parallel between the flowers and the dying Native

community. Hence the parallel created by Lum and the flowers in the following passage, where Helen attempts to save the flowers, even those which are in an alarmingly bad shape:

My mother holds a flower up to the light. Most of the blossoms are dead, and I figure she's going to dump it. But she snips at it here and there and she winds up with a single flower on a spindly stem. (69)

According to Helen, "[t]here's nothing like flowers" (121). In the previous quote, Helen is actually talking with Lum while arranging the flowers. It is an instance of a dialogue where a little is said and a lot is evoked. Helen seems aware of Lum's suffering, but all she can do to comfort him is to invite him home and say he is always welcome. She also evokes "the accident," which may refer to his mother's recent death. "For a moment," Tecumseh comments, "I think she's going to say something else, but she doesn't. Instead, she runs her fingers gently through the flowers, fluffs them so they spread out like an umbrella, and sets them in the sun" (69). One understands that Helen feels so helpless that she is suddenly at a loss for words. Although her initial intent may have been to "ru[n] her fingers gently" through Lum's hair, she dedicates this comforting gesture to the flowers. These flowers thus become an outlet for Helen's painful sympathy, a way of protecting herself from the banes and death in the world. She becomes a magician by transforming her and the others' sorrow into a beautiful bunch of flowers. At this point, King makes a colorful comparison of the personified petals with an umbrella, demonstrating Helen's talent at restoring health and beauty to what was once ugly and decaying.

Moreover, the evocation of the flowers goes hand in hand with the dichotomy between life and death. Although there are but ten passages about flowers in the whole novel, the flowers systematically become a synonym for death. The adjective "dead" is mentioned six times and the progressive "dying" is mentioned once, whereas there are only two occurrences of the adjective "live." Indeed, despite Helen's efforts, flowers and whatever beauty the world contains always seem to end up in death and decay. Besides, this unsettling dichotomy takes its whole significance from the moment when flowers become a subtle allusion to the death of love between Helen and Elvin. In one passage, Elvin pays a visit to his ex-wife, "wearing a suit" and "holding a handful of flowers twisted up in green paper" (168)—flowers which he undoubtedly picked on his way to Helen's and hurriedly wrapped to make the whole thing resemble a bunch of flowers. He is "wobbly" and visibly ill-at-ease since "[h]e holds the flowers out in front of him like a stick, as if he expects that someone is going to leap at him from the shadows or come bounding out from

behind a door” (168). The comparison of the flowers with a stick transforms the former into an object of violence representative of the hyperbolic tension between both people. A few paragraphs further, the personification of the flowers which “look weary and limp” (170) reflect the uselessness of trying to recuperate something that once existed and is now definitively fading away. Seeing that Helen is absent, Elvin does not even try to put the flowers into water and drops them into the sink. When Helen eventually finds them, they are dead and Tecumseh understands that “there is nothing to save” (204). The vagueness of the pronoun “nothing” conveys ambiguity: is Tecumseh referring to the flowers or to the love between his two parents? In any case, one could not find a better exemplification of Cassie’s bitter statement that romance “[l]asts about as long as cut flowers” (113).

Feelings of in-betweenness and estrangement seem to be intricately linked with the lack of cohesion within the community. We will therefore study in what measure these symptoms are caused by the spectres of colonization haunting the Natives.



Part Two—A Native Uncanny: The Contemporary “Return of the Repressed,” or the Past Returning to Haunt the Present

Traces of Former White Settlement Still Pervade the Landscape

Truth and Bright Water presents a new form of Native uncanny and return of the repressed which echoes Freud’s following statement: “[t]he uncanny is something that was long familiar to the psyche and was estranged from it only through being repressed.”⁷⁸ The use of the passive form enables Freud to gloss over the exact origin of the estrangement—an origin which is, in contrast, revealed in *Truth and Bright Water*. Indeed, this research project aims at demonstrating that *colonization* is the origin of the Natives’ loss of a sense of attachment to both their community and their homeland.

Firstly, the church “sits on a rise above Truth, overlooking the river and the bridge” (1) The personified “beat-to-shit” (24) building is thus indirectly compared with a sentinel,

⁷⁸ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 148.

or maybe with a proud sovereign watching over the land. Tecumseh adds that the Methodists built the church “on the highest point of land they could find, so no matter where you stood, on either side of the river, you could always see it” (42). By giving the church a superior position, the Methodists guaranteed its physical omnipresence and domination on the landscape, but also the metaphorical domination of the colonizers’ religion on the Native’s minds.

Likewise, King makes a subtler reference to “an old residential school for sale” (248) at the end of the narrative. From the moment when a non-Native reader is aware of what a residential school actually is, he or she is able to understand that it conveys the same symbols and references as Church: religion, colonization and assimilation. Indeed, residential schools were state-financed religious institutions which aimed at “provid[ing] Indigenous youth with an education and to integrate them into Canadian society.”⁷⁹ As a consequence, from the 1880s to 1996, about 150 000 Indian, Inuit and Metis children were separated from their families at a very young age—six or seven years old—and taken to the numerous schools built all over Canada.

Even today, occasional reminders of residential schools can cause Native people to shiver. Indeed, the initial intent to care and educate turned into physical and mental traumas for the pupils. Their testimonies revealed stories of child labour, gender segregation, physical and sexual abuse, starvation, loneliness and denigration. What is more, the children were obliged to give up and even feel ashamed of the Native side of their culture. From the moment they entered the school, their Native names were changed either into Christian names or into numbers. They exclusively had to talk and write in English or French, even in the letters they addressed to their families. Of course, huge importance was given to religious observances.⁸⁰

To conclude, attending residential schools resulted not only in physical or medical problems, but—even worse—it caused life-long identity and mental traumas. In addition, the real strength of the signifiers “church” and “residential school” relies on their ability to *suggest* references to the past rather than directly referring to it. Indeed, as harmless as these three words may be, they have the power to unfold a whole universe of shock and suffering for Native people. Although this universe may appear as old and forgotten as unconscious memories, it is still there, ready to leap out unexpectedly, at any moment.

⁷⁹ Canadian Encyclopedia, “Residential School.” <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools/>> Last consulted on March 15, 2017.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

King uses exactly the same techniques when it comes to deal with the border notion, which symbolizes much more than a disruptive divider. Indeed, both author and narrator insist on the artificiality and absurdity of this line of separation, which is no more than another ironical hint to the past. Indeed, the US/Canadian border—often referred to as “the forty-ninth parallel”⁸¹—was designed artificially, without taking into account the multiplicity of Native territories which pre-existed to the first colonizers’ arrival. In King’s novel, Monroe claims the absurdity of this line running right through Blackfoot territory:

Monroe walks to the lip of the coulee and looks out across the river. “There’s Canada,” he says. Then he turns and spreads his arms. “And this is the United States.” He spins around in a full circle, stumbles, and goes down in a heap. “Ridiculous, isn’t it?” (131).

Similarly, during a boat ride on Waterton Lake, Tecumseh discovers that “the Canadian/United States border r[uns] right through the middle of the lake” (78). As a consequence, the narrator expects to

see a floating fence or inner tubes with barbed wire and lights, something to keep people from straying from one country into the other. There was a cutline in the trees along with border posts on opposite sides of the shore, and a small border station to mark the line. (78)

The absence of conjunction between both sentences reinforces the strangeness of the unexisting border, especially when opposed to the numerous terrestrial division markers. Due to this absence, the river seems to be a place of innumerable possibilities, a “water-road” of freedom leading directly to the other side. Nevertheless, this invisible border is in fact guarded by the spectre of colonization. Indeed, the “r[uns] right through the middle of the lake” stands as an example of imitation. Indeed, King combines the use of one- or two-syllable(s) words with an alliteration in “r,” “th” and “d,” as well as with the “t” and “k” consonants. Should the text be read out loud, the effect would be even more surprising: the juxtaposition of short words with harsh sounds conveys an impression of sudden, metronome-like brutality, mimicking thick spikes violently hammering the border into the lake.

Therefore, the spectre of colonization pervades the landscape as a constant reminder of a haunting past. In this respect, it may be interesting to study the meaning of the quilt Tecumseh’s mother is sewing as an unconscious reflection of these past traumas.

⁸¹ The “forty-ninth parallel” is a reference to the title of an article written by Jennifer Andrews and Priscilla L. Walton—“Rethinking Canadian and American Nationality: Indigeneity and the 49th Parallel in Thomas King.”

The Quilt as an Uncanny Map of the Natives' Mind

The quilt on which Helen stitches “all sorts of odds and ends” (17) corresponds to an intricate mapping of the Natives’ mind, thus reflecting the traumas haunting their unconscious. Florian Schwieger considers that the quilt serves both a “narratological function” and a “map function” in *Truth and Bright Water*.⁸²

Firstly, Helen uses the quilt as a way to tell “a never-ending story” of herself, of the people she loves and of her own people. Indeed, the quilt has a memory of its own since it mirrors—or rather “lives” on—other people’s emotions. Helen began to work on it after Tecumseh’s birth (61) and, “when [her husband] left Bright Water and moved to Truth,” [she] didn’t yell and throw things the way you see women do in the movies. She stayed in the house and worked on the quilt (65).” Tecumseh comments: “I was pretty sure she was angry, but maybe she was sad at the same time” (65). During Indian Days, she “has the quilt wrapped around herself” (243) and finally “wraps it against her sister’s shoulders” (246). She is actually trying to bring solace to devastated Cassie while she is throwing baby clothes into the fire. Tecumseh also thinks Cassie’s story is inscribed on the quilt under the form of “a purple and red Flying Bird. I’m guessing that this is probably auntie Cassie come home, but I know it’s too soon to tell” (145). In fact, the Flying Bird may refer to Lum since he is so often compared with a bird.

Moreover, on a more complex level, the quilt also bears similarities with a “map” since it represents “the key to unlocking the sacred geography of *Truth and Bright Water*.”⁸³ Indeed, one needs one’s imagination to decipher “the squares and triangles and circles of cloth that have been sewn together” (61). According to Tecumseh,

[t]he geometric forms slowly softened and turned into freehand patterns that looked a lot like trees and mountains and people and animals, and before long, my father said you could see Truth in one corner of the quilt and Bright Water in the other with the Shield flowing through the fabrics in tiny diamonds and fancy stitchings (61).

Schwieger states very rightly that, in this precise passage,

the quilt [...] functions as an alternative map that visualizes the geographical setting of the novel and defines the spiritual landmarks of its sacred geography. As a guide to the text’s ‘counter-cartography,’ the quilt is not an exact topographical survey of

⁸² Florian Schwieger, “A Map to the Truth: Sacred Geographies and Spaces of Resistance in King’s *Truth and Bright Water*.” *South Atlantic Review* 76.2 (Spring 2011): 41-42.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: 41.

the region, but instead represents the mystical, trans-historical literary landscape of *Truth and Bright Water* designed to counter western notions of space.⁸⁴

In other words, King uses the quilt as a way of writing back to usual western conceptions of geography and history. The quilt enables one to gain an alternative perspective on the narratological events. When Monroe talks about the Western tendency to represent the Canadian landscape as a peaceful or on the contrary wild nature with “[c]raggy mountains, foreboding trees, sublime valleys with wild rivers running through them,” Tecumseh answers that “[his] mother has a quilt with some of that stuff on it” (129). He is thus protesting against the traditional representations of the Canadian landscape.

Moreover, the quilt also triggers unconscious references which prove to be key elements for the understanding of the narrative. For instance, at Monroe’s, “pieces of woven cloth” remind Tecumseh “a little of [his] mother’s quilt” (127). The reader may take this parallel as a confirmation of the possible romance between Monroe and Helen which is suggested throughout the narrative. A little later, Tecumseh makes another parallel between Rebecca’s ragged dress and the quilt (148), suggesting that the quilt still bears the unconscious marks of a violent colonization. In fact, as the bearer of personal as well as communal emotions, bearing the weight of numerous traumas and sufferings, the quilt is also haunted by the linguistic spectres of colonization.

In addition, Tecumseh suggests that the quilt has gradually become “a problem” (61). Indeed, Helen sews and stitches all sorts of things on the quilt: “[p]aperclips, coloured stones, pieces of fur, candles, buttons, fish bones, sticks, glass, and bits of dry stuff that look as if they should have been thrown out long ago” (17). This enumeration of “unexpected things” (61) becomes increasingly unsettling since it ends on the presence of unidentified objects. In fact, the quilt contains such unpleasant, potentially dangerous and “weird things” (61) that it draws a parallel with the themes of wounds, danger and hostility. “Chicken feet,” “hair,” “porcupine quills,” “clusters of needles,” “fish hooks” (61) are mentioned. Although Elvin figures “the quilt was a way [Helen] had to deal with frustration and disappointment” and “helps calm her down” (62), it seems to be gradually endowed with a life of its own, on the same level as witchery and magic. This impression is majoritarilly created through the personification of its diverse components:

What I liked best were the needles. When you held the quilt up, they would tinkle like little bells and flash in the light like knives. (62).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*: 42.

The narrator talks about the needles as if they were a pet ready to play with him. The use of animism conveys a rather pleasant image of the needles at first, with the innocent comparison of “little bells” creating a harmonious sound. In contrast, it is immediately followed by its exact antithesis: the needles’ surreptitious “flash” into the light reminds one of dangerous weapons. Terror is triggered by the discrepancy between the childish reference to bells and death instruments. As a consequence, one may consider the quilt as a potentially dangerous living object. This is all the more interesting that Tecumseh and the other Natives do not seem aware of the danger it represents. Tecumseh feels “comfortable” into the quilt into which he likes to “wrap [himself] up like a baby” (206). At some point, Cassie is “hiding under the quilt,” as if looking for protection, and unaware of the dangerous “fish hooks” surrounding her (120).

The Burden of a Violent History

The unconscious remnants of the colonizers’ arrival are also visible in the fact that the Natives are still haunted by the memories of past violence, which has the paradoxical effect to reinforce their initial relationship with the landscape.

Several references to the colonizers’ past violence are embedded within the narrative and symbolized by numerous signifiers and names: the church, the residential school, the narrator’s name “Tecumseh...” Moreover—and maybe because of his Cherokee origins—King makes numerous allusions to the Trail of Tears. This historical event corresponds to a time of forced relocations of Cherokee people from their ancestral land, thus enabling the US government to appropriate these territories. According to Ellen Holmes Pearson,

[t]he “Trail of Tears” refers specifically to Cherokee removal in the first half of the 19th century, when about 16,000 Cherokees were forcibly relocated from their ancestral lands in the Southeast to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) west of the Mississippi [that had been designated as ‘Native land’]. It is estimated that of the approximately 16,000 Cherokee who were removed between 1836 and 1839, about 4,000 perished.⁸⁵

In fact, not only is King creating a politics of remembrance of the Trail of Tears, but he is also targeting the US acts of appropriation for Native lands on a global scale. At that time,

⁸⁵ Teaching History.Com: “A Trail of 4,000 Tears.” <<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/25652>> Last consulted on May 22, 2017.

US government and white settlers coveted Indian lands and considered intruders and aliens the Indians who occupied these lands. In 1835, following the Indian Removal Act of 1830,

a few self-appointed representatives of the Cherokee nation negotiated the Treaty of New Echota, which traded all Cherokee land east of the Mississippi for \$5 million, relocation assistance and compensation for lost property. To the federal government, the treaty was a done deal, but many of the Cherokee felt betrayed: after all, the negotiators did not represent the tribal government or anyone else. “The instrument in question is not the act of our nation,” wrote the nation’s principal chief, John Ross, in a letter to the U.S. Senate protesting the treaty. “We are not parties to its covenants; it has not received the sanction of our people.” Nearly 16,000 Cherokees signed Ross’s petition, but Congress approved the treaty anyway.⁸⁶

The name of John Ross (1790-1866) also appears as a fleeting name floating in *Truth and Bright Water* (102). One thus needs to know Native history to recognize this Scotsman, who was one eighth Cherokee. He first worked along with the US government before eventually rallying to the Cherokee’s cause.⁸⁷ Moreover, he partly wrote the 1827 Cherokee Constitution—which was modeled after the US Constitution—and was elected Chief of the Cherokee nation. In the next decade, he fought against white appropriation of Indian land—“not with weapons, but with words.”⁸⁸ He was eventually defeated and forced to lead his people towards Indian territory, on the Trail of Tears. Since many Cherokee people refused to leave their ancestral homeland at first,

in May of 1838 federal troops began to round up the Cherokees and imprison them in stockades to await removal. Many died in the stockades as they waited. U.S. soldiers then accompanied the Cherokees as they traveled 1,200 miles westward. Most made the journey on foot.⁸⁹

This is the moment when the character of Rebecca Neugin enters the stage. This ghostly girl actually embodies the “living dead” testimony of the Trail of Tears. At the beginning of the novel, Lum tells Tecumseh that a “[b]unch of Trailers from Georgia showed up at Happy Trails yesterday,” and that they are “Cherokees. On their way to Oklahoma.” For the first time, Tecumseh hears about a “weird” (214) and “skinny” (219) girl called Rebecca Neugin. She “is younger than [him] and thin, with dark eyes and long thick hair

⁸⁶ History.Com: “Andrew Jackson’s Controversial Decisions.” <<http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.

⁸⁷ Legends of America: “Native American Legends—Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation.” <<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-johnross.html>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Teaching History.Com: “A Trail of 4,000 Tears.” <<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/25652>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.

tied back with a red ribbon” (101). Actually, Rebecca Neugin reveals at each of her appearances her own personal experience of the Trail of Tears:

“You and your folks staying for Indian Days?”

Rebecca nods. “Then we have to go.” She looks tired, as if she’s walked a long ways today and still has a long ways to go. I wonder if she is one of those girls who eat and then throw up after each meal in order to stay skinny.

“Your duck will probably be back by then.”

“If she’s not,” says Rebecca, “Mr Ross says we’ll have to go without her. He says the soldiers won’t wait for a duck.”

“So, you folks are in the military?” (197)

As a survivor of this difficult and deadly journey, Rebecca is often depicted as “tired” (197), “unhappy” (220), on the verge of tears (219) or as literally starving. Tecumseh describes the way she literally devours the stew his grandmother gave her: “I can see that she wants to be polite and take her time with the stew. But she must be hungry, too, because she never puts the spoon down until the plate is empty” (219). Rebecca Neugin’s body draws attention to physicality, since it seems to concentrate the suffering of thousands of Cherokees who knew and sometimes died from starvation, sickness and exhaustion on their way to Oklahoma. As a consequence, there is an uncanny side to her, not only because she is a particularly eminent figure of the Trail of Tears, but also because she embodies thousands of spectres. This is actually all the more unsettling that the lexical field of war and the army appears simultaneously with Rebecca’s “visits.” It pervades pages 147 and 148 particularly: “stand,” “sentries guarding the camp against surprise attack,” “Dogs,” “get shot,” “killing,” “shooting.”

Nevertheless, the Trail of Tears is always tackled with a touch of black humour, originating from the discrepancy between the seriousness of the matter and the characters’ inappropriate reactions to it. For instance, the narrator is far from the truth when he supposes that Rebecca is an anorexic and that she is the one who chose to be accompanied by soldiers. Moreover, Lum nicknames the Cherokee “skins” (72)—a metonym referring to their painful history. In fact, Helen seems to be the only one to understand the real implications of these travels when she says that “Georgia’s a long way to come” (20).

Apart from historical references combining personal and collective stories of colonization, King uses the theme of the wound as a vivid reminder of haunting. In addition, wounds can be either physical or metaphorical. For example, Cassie’s tattoo is described as a wound: “Each letter is thick and jagged and bent, as if they were cut into her knuckles with glass. They look like wounds, and they look as if they still hurt” (162). Pain is expressed here at both a lexical and grammatical level. The ternary rhythm “thick and

jagged and bent” creates a sort of hammering, insistent sound as if the image were gaining always more precision with the utterance of each terrible word. The semantic field of pain “cut” “glass,” “wounds,” “hurt” conveys the violence and randomness of Cassie’s movements, while the use of the passive form “were cut” reinforces one’s impression that madness guided her hand as she printed an indelible mark on her skin. Moreover, the balancing rhythm with the anaphora of the verb of perception “look” marks the passage from the physical to the metaphorical.

Indeed, a little later, when Tecumseh asks her whether it hurts indeed, she “relaxes her hand and rubs her fingers over the tattoo. ‘Yes,’ she says. ‘Sometimes it does’” (163). Indeed, she had her tattoo done little after the death of her baby daughter, as a permanent reminder of Mia. As a consequence, it is the very first meaning of “trauma”—wound—that applies here. This is even more obvious when it comes to examine the description of Lum’s own wounds:

even though I’ve seen him beat up before, the bruises are a surprise. Some of them are little more than abrasions. Others are yellow, the result of glancing blows. But the one that runs down his high hip is the colour of blood, dark purple and black. (152)

The lexical field of blows intermingles with the evocation of a diversity of different colours and nuances. Although they are the “result” of Franklin’s beatings, blows seem to literally colonize Lum’s painful body. Personification increases by degrees as the comparison between the bruises and abrasions turns into “glancing blows,” which caused Lum’s body to turn yellow. Finally, animism is used as a stylistic device to describe the worst blow of all, which “runs down” Lum’s hip. The lexical field of fire—“abrasions” and “yellow”—conveys the feeling that a strange war is being waged on Lum’s body. In fact, everything seems to suggest that Lum’s skin is a sort of palimpsest expressing a memory of its own.

To put things differently, in the examples of Lum’s bruises and Cassie’s tattoo, the Natives’ skin acts as a map pointing at both the field of physicality but also past suffering. Not only do Cassie’s tattoo and Lum’s body evoke metonymical forms of pain endowed with a will of their own, but they possess an uncanny tendency to self-destruction. This argument appears even more vividly in the following example:

The whole time he’s talking, Lum is hammering the door with his fist. It’s as if he’s forgotten what his hand is doing. The fist is moving pretty fast, but you can see that the skin around the knuckles is beginning to redden and crack.” (72)

As the lexical field of the body—"fist," "hand," "skin," "knuckles"—eventually ends up in a binary rhythm evoking the wound—"redden and crack"—two uncanny events occur simultaneously. Firstly, the separation between "he"—Lum—on the one hand and the metonym "his hand" on the other signals that Lum is gradually losing control over a part of his body. The use of animism implies that the hand is moving as though it possessed a will of its own, giving way to an automatic gesture which is even more unsettling that it intermingles with a certain form of violence. Indeed, the stylistic effect obtained by the anaphora of the metonym "fist" and the metaphor of "hammering" creates the impression that the hand is working at its own self-destruction. Worse still, given Lum's constant tendency to suicide and the fact that he has presently "forgotten what his hand is doing," the independent movement of body parts reveals a deeply-anchored, unconscious drive that he cannot control.

The theme of the wound also implies that Natives form one single entity with the landscape. Firstly, recurrent comparisons and metaphors create parallels between the Indians' body or body parts and natural elements. In the following passage, Monroe's hair is compared with water:

[Monroe's] hair has been slicked up so it looks like a large wave, the kind you see in travel magazines that curls up out of the ocean before it hits the beach. (209).

This extremely visual image is introduced by the verb "look" combined with the passive voice. Vision is even enhanced by the comparison with images from travel magazines and the two phrasal verbs "slicked up" and "curls up." One is thus invited to use one's imagination and personal representation of a paradisiacal beach in order to picture the progression of this wave from the open sea to the shore. Moreover, the whole Native body is sometimes compared with natural elements:

Lum's father and my father are brothers, but you would never know it to look at them. My father is tall with small hands and long hair. Prairie clay and willow. Franklin is shorter, all chest and shoulders, with a crewcut. River rock and fast water. (5)

One is thus free to use one's imagination when it comes to interpret—or picture—the parallel Tecumseh establishes between metonymies referring to the human body and natural elements. Moreover, this passage is mostly built on a combination of coordinated or juxtaposed binary and ternary rhythms, with the recurrent use of the prepositions "and" and "with." It isolates the two noun sentences "[p]rairie clay and willow" and "[r]iver rock and fast water," reproducing an impression of smoothness as if the similarity between the organic and the natural went without saying. In addition, fluidity is reinforced by the use of

poetic imitative harmony relying on the alliteration in [w], [h], [r] and the consonance of the sounds [er], [all], [w].

What is more, the reference to “clay” reinforces the impression that human beings are like dough which nature has molded to its own image. King may be writing back to the Biblical myth that human beings were created by the hand of God. In fact, the metaphor of “the belly of the prairies” (1), in the Prologue, creates an echo to “Mother Earth,” or nature as a matrix giving birth to all living things. Besides, the author may also be proposing a counter-discourse to Freud’s presentation of women’s genitals as uncanny because

it is actually the entrance to man’s “old home,” the place where everyone once lived. A jocular saying has it that “love is a longing for home,” and if someone dreams of a certain place or a certain landscape and, while dreaming, thinks to himself, “I know this place, I’ve been here before,” this place can be interpreted as representing his mother’s genitals of her womb. Here too then, the uncanny [the “unhomely”] is what was once familiar [“homely,” “homey”].⁹⁰

As a consequence, King may be saying that, unlike former colonizers, the Natives in *Truth and Bright Water* did not lose their initial connexion to the land, much on the contrary—both are still intricately interrelated. In fact, because of this uncanny relationship of interchangeability between nature and the Natives, the landscape is often compared with a huge suffering body which, like the Natives’ body, still bears the traumatic marks of colonization. The prologue is actually entirely structured around the metaphor of the gratuitous marks of violence inflicted by settler constructions on the Canadian landscape: the bridge “bend[s] over the Shield and slip[s] back into the land like a knife” (1), while “[the] steeple [of the church] is squat and flat with a set and angle that make it look as if a thick spike has been hammered into the prairies” (1).

Moreover, interchangeability goes as far as suggesting that, should either the Natives or the land be made to suffer, the other would immediately suffer equally. For example, Emery Yougman was “thrown off the bridge decking” and, “when he tried to get up [...], he discovered that his leg was jammed tight in the rebar and the wire” (41). Later, two Natives “see Emery laid out against the sky like a trout in a net” (41). At first, the double use of the passive voice as well as the lexical field of artificial bridge parts—the “bridge decking,” “the rebar and the wire”—enhances the impression that a strange colonizer spirit haunts this settler construction and pushed Emery off the bridge. The association of the verb “jammed” and the adjective “tight” conveys an extremely visual

⁹⁰ Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 151.

and almost painful image. Later, the metonymy of Emery's "leg" is paralleled with "the trout" which is similarly stuck into a human object—"a net."

What is more, the lexical field of bones often replaces that of physicality when it comes to refer to natural elements. For instance, clouds take the shape of bones:

In the distance, clouds are on the move, thick and white. But as they clear the bridge, they begin to separate and change, and by the time they reach the church, they look like long, slender bones. (49)

The personified clouds seem endowed of a will of their own as they "separate and change" in order to adopt the aspect of "long, slender bones," as if, while passing over the church, they remember the past violence they attended to and take the consequent shape to signal it.

Similarly, the theme of the landscape as a huge Indian cemetery pervades the narrative. After many attempts at trying to figure out where the little skull came from, Tecumseh draws the conclusion that it was dug out of the earth with the passage of time:

Or maybe the bluff was once a burial ground. Maybe at one time we buried our dead there and then forgot about it. Maybe if you dug down a little in the grass you'd find entire tribes scattered across the prairies. Such things probably happen all the time. A little rain, a little wind, and a skull just pops out of the ground. (71)

The confusion between the lexical field of the grave—"burial ground," "buried," "dead," "skull"—and the lexical field of the landscape—"grass," "prairies," "rain," "wind," "ground," as well as the phrasal verb "dug down" implying that the one who digs gets his hand covered with earth, again suggests this intricate belonging of the Natives to the landscape, as if they were indistinguishable from a protective, caring Mother Earth. With the anaphora of "a little," Tecumseh seems to be singing a song about the power of natural elements to unveil what is hidden: Tecumseh found the skull because it was the earth's will. The landscape thus seems to possess a memory of its own.

As a consequence, the text reveals that Canadian settlement is first and foremost the story of the violence inflicted upon the Natives and the land. The personification of nature and the lexical field of physicality cannot but allude to historical conflicts between Natives and colonizers that the land still remembers, thus justifying the uncanny revenge of nature. Indeed, as Warren Cariou appropriately pointed out, "this land doesn't get mad, it gets even."⁹¹ The land is thus perceived as an unsettling force, and since the Natives seem intricately connected to it, one has the impression that they are united against colonizers.

⁹¹ Warren Cariou, "Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal 'Ghosts' and the Spectres of Settlement." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 729.

This is why the Aboriginal ghost motif becomes unsettling—it unveils a fear of the dead returning to haunt the living.



Part Three—Jagged Worldviews and In-Betweenness

The concept of Eurocentrism appeared in the 1960s and refers to “Eurocentric ideas or practice; a focus on Europe to the exclusion of the rest of the world.”⁹² The concept actually derives from the adjective “Eurocentrist” which appeared in the 1920s and is given an even more precise definition: “[h]aving or regarding Europe as its centre; focusing on Europe to the exclusion of the rest of the world; implicitly regarding Europeans or European culture as pre-eminent.”⁹³ The legacy of Eurocentrism is actually a predominant part of *Truth and Bright Water*.

Eurocentrism, or the Domination of White Culture and Standards

In King’s novel, the characters’ life entirely revolves around a parody of the “American way of life.” In other words, they are constantly influenced by American culture and standards. This is particularly visible in the sense that they are obsessed with money, profit and economy—in other words, with capitalism.

Firstly, the characters are constantly thinking of objects and real estate property they could possibly sell. Miles Deardorf, who “can sell anything,” manages to sell “a beat-to-shit church” to Monroe and says ironically that “the big chief’s got a wad of money and a fine eye for real estate” (24). Moreover, Elvin, who is good at “messing up” (231) and “smuggling” (31), literally embodies this endless race for money. He occasionally carves wood in the shape of wooden coyotes for the sole reason that “[e]verybody’s going crazy over traditional Indian stuff,” and signs the carvings with his name so that tourists “know it’s authentic” (32). He pushes the artificiality of his enterprise as far as taking example on a guy who signs his wood carvings with his Indian name and “gets little cards printed up” with an explanation of what the object symbolizes. As a consequence, Elvin specializes in

⁹² Oxford English Dictionary, “Eurocentrism, n.” Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

⁹³ *Ibid*: “Eurocentrist, adj.” Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

the creation of simulacra—objects considered “traditional” but which are actually devoid of meaning since they are created for mass culture. A little later, Elvin presents his son with the dreamcatchers he made for Indian Days: “The fat cats from the city will eat these up. If I put them in an oak case and sign and number each one, I can get a hundred and fifty apiece” (80).

But in fact, the whole community life revolves around the annual Indian Days ceremony, which is considered “a real money-maker” (99) and “the only time [the Natives] can make any money without filling in a form” (22). Indian Days, as a display of all possible clichés about Indian life, is paradoxically the only event which really unites the community. It is turned into a huge economic event, highly publicized by “the television stations in Calgary and Prairie View” (156), presenting the tourists with a variety of expensive activities, such as thirty-five dollars [buffalo] run[s]” (156). As a consequence, Indian Days eventually turns into a huge celebration of mass consumption:

Indian Days are going strong. [The camp of] Happy Trails is completely full, and there are RVs and trailers waiting to get into the park. The crowd at the buffalo run is larger now, and the line is longer. Even the big tent is jammed with tourists, and the dancing hasn't even started [...]. Everybody has a T-shirt or a dream-catcher or a beaded necklace. (214-215)

Although the event may appear as a huge triumph on the Natives' part, it actually represents the vicious circle Indians are trapped into. Indeed, globalization—and, more precisely, tourism—is represented as a new physical appropriation of North America. As a consequence, the battle motif pervades the Indian Days passage as the artificial attempts to conquer the natural:

The concrete pads for the speakers have been poured, and the speakers have been set in place and wired. They stand at the corners of the tent, tall and black, facing out over the prairies, east, south, west, and north, looking for all the world like sentries guarding the camp against surprise attack. (147)

At first, the passive voice gives the impression that artificiality—symbolized by the “concrete pads,” the “wire[s]” and the insistent anaphora of the plural noun “speakers”—is being installed by invisible hands. The personification of the speakers quickly verges into a blatant comparison with massive “tall and black” “sentries guarding the camp.” Their literally “standing” in front of the tent, and the enumeration of the four directions illustrates their omnipresence as they literally stand their ground against the enemy. This historical reference is thus adapted to a more modern context where the natural and the organic are replaced by dehumanized, reproducible, mass artificiality. The loudspeakers' hostility, directed to both the landscape and human beings, becomes uncanny when they

suddenly “come to life” at Indian Days and “begin blasting out powwow songs across the prairies, and for a moment, the people at the buffalo run turn back towards the tent” (211-212). The electric devices seem to possess a will of their own as they perpetuate the artificial clichés of Indian Days by playing stereotypical songs. Even worse, their call for war seems to frighten the tourists themselves, echoing the new twentieth-century fear that one day, the world would be dominated by machines. In any case, pretty soon, “the big tent is ablaze with lights and sound. The drum is going pretty good, and the speakers send the song out to the mountains and back, and if you use your imagination a little, it looks like thunder and rain” (220). The adjective “ablaze” draws a parallel with the metaphor of fire, symbolizing the triumph of the artificial in the last remnants of its fight against the natural. From now on, one needs to use one’s imagination in order to remember that “thunder and rain” formerly reigned over the American land.

Moreover, the metaphor of war is also visible in human behaviours. Tecumseh compares “white runners, men and women” in “Nike sweatsuits and Nike shoes and Nike headbands, setting their Nike stopwatches” (215), with “a bright herd on the move” (216). Tourists are thus compared with the buffalo which once ran across the prairies. “[T]he world is quiet” as they “take a breath and spring away, and all you can hear in their going is the earth trembling beneath their feet” (216). Nevertheless, Tecumseh signals that “[i]n the old days, the race was just for the men of the tribe,” but Franklin decided to let them run for free because it “was good for business.” In other words, as long as they can make money out of it, runners can freely appropriate the camp with very little resistance. Only Monroe used to make fun of the tourists by “march[ing] through the booths and tipis, [...] pretending to be the Bright Water German Club” (25).

On another level, the domination of white culture and standards is also represented in the great series of Western icons who are conjured up throughout the novel, such as Marilyn Monroe (in the whole of Chapter Two), Elvis Presley (209-210) or Graham Greene (45). As a matter of fact, King makes fun of the artificiality of these icons and parodies them in a Native way. For example, Monroe’s hair “reminds [Tecumseh] of Graham Greene’s hair in *Dances With Wolves*” (45), echoing an Indian stereotype regularly repeated in westerns. As for Marilyn Monroe, Lucy Rabbit has a theory that she “was ashamed of being Indian,” and “[t]hat’s why she bleached her hair” (201) in order to become a blonde. As a consequence, Lucy Rabbit wants to bleach her hair “[s]o Marilyn can see that bleaching your hair doesn’t change a thing” (201). But the problem is, Lucy’s hair is “so black it probably doesn’t have a clue what blonde looks like,” and “the closest

[Helen] has been able to get to the kind of baby-soft-yellow-white-dandelion hair that Marilyn has is flaming orange” (19). As a consequence, Lucy Rabbit does become famous in the community—not because she is blonde like Marilyn, but because her “flaming orange” hair differentiate her from the other Natives.

In fact, King uses Lucy Rabbit as a way of writing back to icons and standards of beauty in modern society. The fact that white people prefer blondes is turned into a form of “unbridgeable” racial discrepancy between white icons and Native people. By parodying Marilyn Monroe, Lucy Rabbit turns her model into a comic figure, enabling King to link literary parody to a wider field—that of visual arts—and, more precisely, to Native Canadian Shelley Niro.

Niro is “a multidisciplinary artist” whose work “challenges stereotypical images of Aboriginal peoples” and “illustrates the notion that all cultural stereotypes and pop culture images are constructions.”⁹⁴ Like King, she uses humour, “[m]asquerade, parody and appropriation” in order to tackle serious issues and suggest counter-discourses. In 1992, she produced a series of self-portraits in which she is dressed as Marilyn Monroe and reproduces a famous scene from the film *The Seven-Year Itch*, renamed *The Five-Hundred-Year Itch*, in a playful echo to American colonization.

In addition, the domination of White culture and standards is also visible in intertextual and intermedial references to American and European music, theatre plays, movies, poetry, novels, appearing either implicitly or explicitly in the discourse. One can spot in Lucy’s cue “*hasta la vista, baby*” (221) an undeniable reference to *Terminator*. Cassie offers her nephew a copy of the book *Anne of Green Gables*, which is a well-known children’s novel written by Canadian author Lucy Maud Montgomery. Tecumseh lists a great number of opera masterpieces his mother listens to regularly: “*The Student Prince, Tosca, Damn Yankees, La Bohème*,” but also “*La Traviata*” and “*Carmen*” (16).

Moreover, the instances of Native cultural references are thoroughly appropriated and presented in a eurocentric way. For instance, the title song of *Oklahoma!* is mentioned twice in the novel. To white people, it evokes a famous musical created in Broadway in 1943,⁹⁵ whereas Native Americans may think of a famous event in Native history. Indeed, on November 27, 1868, Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer led

⁹⁴ National Gallery of Canada: “Shelley Niro.” <<https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artist.php?iartistid=24542>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

⁹⁵ History.com: “*Oklahoma!* premieres on Broadway.” <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/oklahoma-premieres-on-broadway>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

a treacherous surprise attack on a camp of about three hundred Cheyenne in western Oklahoma. They were survivors of the massacre at Sand Creek, in Colorado, which took place four years earlier. Their chief, Black Kettle was leading them “to reservation land and out of harm’s way.” The attack, “known as the Battle of the Washita River, is hailed as one of the first substantial American victories in the wars against the Southern Plains Indians.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, calling the incident a “massacre” would be more appropriate since Custer’s men slaughtered numerous Indians before destroying their village and killing their horses and mules. We are thus very far from the entertaining cow-boy romance of the American musical. Hence Monroe’s surprising reaction during the “ceremony” preceding his disseminating the buffalo throughout the prairies:

we stand on the prairies and sing part of the honour song I know, and then Monroe insists that we sing the title song from *Oklahoma!* Monroe leaves his wig on for the honour song, but takes it off for “Oklahoma!” Soldier joins in, and when we finish, Monroe turns away and wipes his eyes.

“That was moving,” he says, “wasn’t it?” (132)

As a consequence, Monroe clearly puts himself into the position of the saviour and restorer of Indian history. In fact, his solemn gesture of taking off his wig while singing the title song makes him appear as a fool if one is not aware of the heavy historical reference hidden behind the name “Oklahoma.”

In addition, white people are often characterized by their violence in *Truth and Bright Water*. Indeed, the aggressivity of the Hollywood movies Tecumseh watches on television reverberate into his speech. At only fifteen, he talks about suicide and guns in a way that is not appropriate for his age. In the first chapter, Tecumseh enumerates the various games Lum and he invented since his cousin “began carrying the gun[,] a couple of months ago” (4). They “put[...] the barrel of the gun down a ground squirrel hole and pull[...] the trigger,” or they “sh[oo]t at their own feet and tr[y] to come as close as [they can] without hitting anything” (5). In brief, “[t]he gun was a lot of fun” (4), the narrator states, apparently unaware that what he is holding is an instrument of death and not a toy: “I hold it the way the cops hold their guns on television, one hand over the butt, the other cradling the first hand to keep everything steady” (4). And a little later:

With each shot I take, I jerk the gun up, pretending it is a heavier weapon than it is and has one hell of a kick. Sometimes I make an explosion sound under my breath. Sometimes I blow on the barrel. (5)

⁹⁶ Indian Country Today Website: “Native History: Custer Attacks Peaceful Cheyenne in Oklahoma.” <<https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/native-history-custer-attacks-peaceful-cheyenne-in-oklahoma/>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

These attitudes are even more distressing that Tecumseh just evoked “a real long movie” he watched, where the characters played “Russian roulette,” “taking bets on who is going to live and who is going to die” (4).

In addition, movies and paintings implicitly mirror the theme of a eurocentrically constructed history. The novel comprises many descriptions of movies which systematically represent brave white cow-boys defeating armies of primitive and somehow weird Indians:

“How about it?” I ask Soldier. “Indians or cartoons?”

It’s not a good western. It’s all about some white guy who wants to be an Indian. All the regular Indians put him through a ceremony where they force sticks through his chest and make him run around this pole dragging a couple of buffalo skulls behind him. [...] The guy staggers through the ceremony without passing out or throwing up and gets to marry the chief’s daughter. There’s some nice scenery and some okay music. (111)

The question “Indians or cartoons?” may trigger one’s suspicion, for one can sense the voice of the author ironically putting Indians on the same level as childish forms of entertainment. The author’s irony becomes more and more apparent as Tecumseh accumulates hackneyed stereotypes about Indians. Moreover, the narrator compares this movie with other westerns he watched in the past, and the demonstratives in “some white guy” and “this pole” indicate details Tecumseh has spotted innumerable times in movies. However, the author’s irony contrasts with Tecumseh’s equal tone, for he seems to take for granted old eurocentric clichés—especially his vision of “regular Indians.”

Similarly, the numerous paintings Monroe restored tend to reflect another sort of European appropriation: depictions of the American landscape. As a “famous Indian artist,” he travelled around the world and says that “what [he] was really good at was restoration” (129):

“Nineteenth-century landscape were my specialty. [...] Have you ever seen a nineteenth-century landscape?”

“Maybe on television.”

“They all look alike. Craggy mountains, foreboding trees, sublime valleys with rivers running through them. [...] A primeval paradise. Peaceful. Quiet. Snow on the mountains. Luminous clouds in the sky. The rivers tumbling over dark rocks. Blah, blah, blah.” (129)

Monroe is actually parodying (stereo)typical European representations of the American landscape as an either tame, tranquil, Edenic, English-like place or as a wild, “sublime,” breathtaking environment. He ignores Tecumseh’s answer, for the narrator does not seem aware that television is as treacherous a medium as paintings. A series of

gerundives, paratactic noun sentences and adjectives enhances the ironic accumulation of clichés. It culminates in the repetition of the interjection “blah”—an ironic way of saying that he could ramble on and on about these clichés he heard a thousand times.

In parallel, this endless enumeration increasingly enhances what has been left out of the painting—human presence, or, more precisely, Native presence. As a result, Monroe goes on telling the story of a particular painting he had to restore, entitled *Sunrise on Little Turtle Lake*;

“One day, the Smithsonian called me in to handle a particularly difficult painting. It was a painting of a lake at dawn, and everything was fine except that the paint along the shore had begun to fade, and images that weren’t in the original painting were beginning to bleed through. [...] But something went wrong.”

“You messed up?”

“The new paint wouldn’t hold. Almost as soon as I finished, the images began to bleed through again.”

“So you had to paint it over.”

“You know what they were?” says Monroe.

“What?”

“Indians, says Monroe. “There was an old Indian village on the lake, slowly coming through the layers of paint. Clear as day.” (131)

Monroe thus interpretes the visual damages done to the painting, seeing “an old village” slowly reappearing in the place where it originally belonged. Yet, it is the painting—and not Monroe—which seems to be at the origin of these actions: “the paint wouldn’t hold.” This personification thus implies a change of perspective leading on to the field of magic realism. Paint and colours are preparing an uncanny rejection of the reality of colonization to the profit of an alternative remembrance of Native history. Indeed, the double appearance of the verb “to bleed through” conveys an extremely physical and vivid image which denounces the violence of dispossessions and exterminations, literally “erasing” the Natives from the landscape. As a consequence, Monroe decides to “paint[...] the village and the Indians back into the painting” (133).

In fact, the name of “Little Turtle” and the “old Indian village” actually hints to another event in Native history: the Battle of Wabash, which took place on November 4, 1791. Although “little is known” about this battle, it is yet considered “the worst disaster experienced by the U.S. Army at the hands of Native Americans.”⁹⁷ Indeed, Little Turtle was a Miami Indian chief who rebelled against the American government with the

⁹⁷ National Museum of the United States Army Website: “The Battle of the Wabash: The Forgotten Disaster of the Indian Wars.” <<https://armyhistory.org/the-battle-of-the-wabash-the-forgotten-disaster-of-the-indian-wars/>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

encouragements of the British, thus betraying the peace treaty which was ratified two years before, at the end of the Revolutionary War. The US government sent troops led by Major General Arthur St. Clair in order to confront the rebellion. The battle made numerous casualties on the American side, eventually forcing St. Clair to retreat. The soldiers who were unable to flee “were scalped, tortured, and murdered, including women and children.”⁹⁸

As a consequence, not only does the signifier “Little Turtle” refer to an important embedded episode of Native history, but it also hints at the colonizers’ habit of distorting reality or glossing over certain episodes to their advantage. By extension, the “blood” disrupts the peacefulness of the landscape, signalling it as a subjective representation and reminding the viewer of the slaughters that happened over the Native land in the past.

To conclude, Monroe uses irony in order to express the Natives’ feeling of entrapment into a eurocentrically-constructed history.

In-Betweenness: The Voluntary Marginalization of Native People from their Original Culture

Leroy Little Bear explains that different cultures equal different worldviews, values and religions. Since colonialism “tries to maintain a singular social order by means of force and law,” it creates “oppression and discrimination” for the colonized.⁹⁹ What is more, Little Bear argues that in the case of North American colonization, the colonizer’s and the colonized’s cultures stood in such a sharp opposition that it is no wonder that the Natives were plunged into a deep confusion, with different aspects of different cultures intermingling in their minds:

Colonization created a fragmentary worldview among Aboriginal peoples. By force, terror, and educational policy, it attempted to destroy the Aboriginal worldview—but failed. Instead, colonization left a heritage of jagged worldviews among Indigenous peoples. They no longer had an Aboriginal worldview, nor did they adopt a Eurocentric worldview. Their consciousness became a random puzzle, a jigsaw puzzle that each person has to attempt to understand. Many collective views of the world competed for control of their behaviour, and since none was dominant modern Aboriginal people had to make guesses or choices about everything. Aboriginal consciousness became a site of overlapping, contentious, fragmented, competing desires and values.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Leroy Little Bear, “Jagged Worldviews Colliding.” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000: 77.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*: 84-85.

This statement may explain in great part the fragmented notion of a Native community in King's novel. Indeed, *Little Bear* stresses the importance of culture for both social and individual cohesion, for "the individual's worldview has its roots in the culture—that is, in the society's shared philosophy, values and customs."¹⁰¹

Moreover, this process of "jagged worldviews" occurred simultaneously with the appearance of the first anthropological accounts by European colonizers since, according to King, "Columbus' arrival marked the beginning of a permanent European presence in North America. And the beginning of the stories the Europeans would tell about Native people."¹⁰² Hence the second step to the colonization of North America, or how language led to systematic reification and essentialization of the Natives. Indeed, King reproduces the type of discourse Columbus "is supposed to have written in his journal:"

These people are very poor in everything [...]. They all go quite naked as their mothers bore them... They bear no arms, no know thereof, for I showed them swords and they grasped them by the blade and cut themselves through ignorance... They are generally fairly tall and good-looking, well-built... They ought to be good servants and of good skill, for I see that they repeat very quickly whatever is said to them. I believe that they could easily be made Christians, because it seemed to me that they belonged to no religion.¹⁰³

Racism filters vividly through this example of colonizer discourse. The contemptuous look people like Columbus bore on the Natives shows their misunderstanding of—or indifference to—the "Other's" perspective on reality. In his essay "The Precession of Simulacra," Jean Baudrillard tackles the eurocentric need for a common field of knowledge where every human, animal or object would fit into concrete categories. Stating that the field of ethnology had once characterized Indian American people exclusively, he adds that one's systematic essentialization of the Natives played a tremendous role in the crafting of a distorted, stereotypical image of the Natives. As a consequence, ethnology led to the discursive reification, or "museification," of the Natives:

The Indian thus returned to the ghetto, in the glass coffin of the virgin forest, again becomes the model of simulation of all the possible Indians from before ethnology. This model thus grants itself the luxury to incarnate itself beyond itself in the "brute" reality of these Indians it has entirely reinvented [...]. Of course, these particular Savages are posthumous: frozen, cryogenized, sterilized, protected to

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*: 77.

¹⁰² Thomas King, "Let Me Entertain You." *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 69-70.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*: 70.

death, they have become referential simulacra, and science itself has become pure simulation.¹⁰⁴

In other words, science is responsible for creating a treacherous, static image of the Indian, which has been nevertheless accepted as true and is now deeply anchored within everyone's unconscious. As a result, it has now become impossible to distinguish between historical facts about Indians on the one hand, and invention in the other hand. This example thus illustrates the political use of language turned into an efficient political instrument of power and domination. Even worse, it enhances the vision of the Indian as a being belonging to the past, without any possibility of an evolution. Indeed, King stresses that from the middle of the eighteenth-century,

according to popular perception, Indians were dying. Everywhere you looked Indians were vanishing, swept away by disease, war, and the advance of civilization. Not a thing anyone could do about it, of course, simply the workings of a natural law that decreed that superior cultures should replace inferior cultures.¹⁰⁵

In continuation, King states that the anthropologists' language was so potent in hammering this constructed myth of a "disappearing race" that it eventually persuaded "Native people [themselves] that they had no future as Indians." King takes the example of Lakota Indian Charles Eastman, who was raised according to white principles and became not only convinced that "Christianity and White culture were the wave of the future," but also that "there was no chance for Indians to maintain their former, simple lives, that they would have to either assimilate or die."¹⁰⁶ In addition, according to James Y. Henderson,

In Canadian universities and colleges, academic curricula support Eurocentric contexts [...] and ignore Aboriginal worldviews, knowledge, and thought. For most Aboriginal students, the realization of their invisibility is similar to looking into a still lake and not seeing their images. [...] [T]his realization strips Aboriginal students from their heritage and identity. It gives them an awareness of their annihilation.¹⁰⁷

As a consequence, the Natives in *Truth and Bright Water* must be haunted by this prediction; they must have unconsciously understood that they should either assimilate into white society or disappear from the surface of the Earth. They are also perfectly aware that

¹⁰⁴ Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner. Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford, GB: Blackwell, 2001: 459.

¹⁰⁵ Thomas King, "Let Me Entertain You." *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 83.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*: 84-85.

¹⁰⁷ James (Sakéj) Youngblood Henderson, "Post-colonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism." "Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000: 59.

white people treat them as if they were already extinct—that, technically, anthropologists consider they belong to “the drawer,” to museums and the field of anthropological studies. Besides, the drawer appears in both its literal and figurative meaning at the end of King’s novel, when Monroe explains how it “[t]ook [him] years to collect [the bones of Indian children]” in “lots of museums” around the world:

“I found them in drawers and boxes and stuck away on dusty shelves. Indian children.”

[...] “Happens all the time,” says Monroe. “Anthropologists and archaeologists dig the kids up, clean them off, and stick them in drawers. Every ten years or so, some bright graduate student opens the drawer, takes a look, writes a paper, and shuts the drawer. [...] So I rescued them.”

[...] “[...] I’d find them no matter where they had been hidden away. Sometimes these idiots had even forgotten where they had put them.”

“And you brought them back here.”

Monroe picks up the skull. “Look around you,” he says. “This is the centre of the universe. Where else would I bring them? Where else would they want to be?” (250-251).

The semantic field of storage pervades the text. Indeed, the mention of “boxes,” “shelves” and the anaphora of the noun “drawer” intermingles with a variety of verbs referring to distance and concealment: “stuck away,” “stick them in drawers,” “shuts the drawer,” “hidden away.” Even the adjective “dusty” reinforces the sense of something old and secret which has come into the open. As a consequence, the metaphor of the drawer represents in some sort Freud’s theories of the uncanny. After all, the drawers of the colonizer’s mind are full of skeletons. These bones are hidden away, until they return to haunt the mind of their “possessors” with former memories. This interpretation is even more significant since this passage is actually another indirect attack to the world-famous Smithsonian Museum. In her 2011 article, Brenda Norrell states that “[t]oday, while the Smithsonian capitalizes on American Indian history and culture in the promotion of its museums, particularly on the romantic aspects of Native American culture, [it] delays for years the return of American Indian remains.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the Smithsonian is reluctant to comply to a United States law called the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The Smithsonian Institution is meant to return twenty thousand American Indians bones to their former tribes in order for them to be celebrated and buried according to their people’s

¹⁰⁸ The Narcosphere: “Smithsonian’s Morbid Collection of Indian Skulls.” <<http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/brenda-norrell/2011/06/smithsonians-morbid-collection-indian-skulls-0>> Last consulted on May 20, 2017.

customs. Moreover, it “avoided publicity of its collection of skulls” in order to conduct a number of experiments quietly, but admitted the bones “were obtained by executions.”¹⁰⁹

As a consequence, Monroe’s irony is directed to this subliminally haunting event for the Natives. He mocks anthropologists through the oxymoron of the adjectives “bright” and “idiot[s]” which both refer to students. This idea was evoked sooner in the novel:

“You know what they keep in museums?”
“Old stuff from the past?”
“That’s what they want you to think.” (133)

In fact, Monroe is also pointing out that researchers defend it as their—illegitimate—property, whereas they make but minimal use of them. The “dusty” skulls are used “every ten years or so,” before being forgotten again. Monroe thus brought them back to the place where they belonged, “the centre of the universe” (251), *Truth and Bright Water*, in order to be properly celebrated and buried.

The systematic marginalization of the Natives is reflected in another representative “story,” presented under the form of a newspaper:

It is a story about a research team from the University of Toronto travelling around Canada and the States, collecting blood from Indian people. There’s a picture, too, of a doctor holding up a vial of blood and looking at it the way you see people looking at glasses of wine in those old black and white movies on late-night television. The project has something to do with genes and DNA.
[...] “Guy on the radio this morning calls it the Vampire Project,” says Sherman.
“Sure as hell wouldn’t let them do that to me,” says Miles.
“Bleeding people should come natural to you,” says Skee.
[...] “They’re trying to find out where Indians came from,” says Miles.
“Don’t need a blood test to see that,” says Gabriel.
Miles [...] pulls at the corners of his eyes so they slant back, and all of us have a good laugh. (166-167)

In this example, King is writing back to white supremacy, which systematically casts the Native as the “Other” and subjects of experiment on the same level as dinosaurs and other distinct species of unknown origin. Nevertheless, as Gabriel points out, they “[d]on’t need a blood test” to “find out where Indians came from:” he is suggesting that the Natives’ origin can be found in their people’s creation stories—although the said creation stories are devalued and not taken into account in modern society.

Moreover, the picture of the satisfied doctor can be compared with an image of propaganda boasting the benefits of scientific research, and yet the appearance of the signifier “Vampire” creates an unsettling rupture. Echoing the three nouns “blood” and the

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

verb “to bleed,” it points at the “truth” of scientific research, something one prefers to keep secret: scientists are vampirizing Natives, emptying them of their substance, for the so-called benefits of science—this is why, on the following page, Miles Deardorf states that these “research boys” “sound like blood-thirsty savages” (168). This ironic paradox, combined with the Natives’ reaction to the article, cannot but set one thinking. Although it reminds them of the haunting prediction that they will disappear from the surface of the Earth, the characters try to deal with their unconscious wounds through laughter. The narrative is actually pervaded by black humour referring to colonization, Indian massacres, the current status of Indians in North America or even stereotypes about Indians, suggesting the Natives have chosen to deal with this haunting past through comedy rather than tragedy: “You know why Indians smoke? [...] ’Cause we like getting burned” (105), or ““We don’t need a job anyway.’ ‘That’s right,’ says Eddie. ‘We’re indigenous’” (190).

Moreover, in a sense, these jokes referring to white domination and Indian stereotypes mirror the detrimental solution the Native characters decided to adopt in order to survive in the contemporary world—that of performing Indianness, or “playing Indian.”

The Performance of Indianness as the Only Way to Survive in the Contemporary World

Well aware that they had no future in modern society, forced to cope with their gradual “disappearance,” the Natives decided to organize their survival by “performing Indianness” according to a common white assumption. In the “Introduction” to *All My Relations*, King explains what “Indian-ness” means—adding an ironic hyphen between the noun “Indian” and its suffix “-ness” in order to insist on the artificiality of this concept. It is actually nothing more than

a nebulous term that implies a set of expectations that are used to mark out that which is Indian and that which is not.
Of course there is no such standard [...].¹¹⁰

In *Truth and Bright Water*, King bears an ironical look on his characters who appropriate the whole paraphernalia of Native clichés and folklore in a lucrative way. The huge Indian Days gathering, meant to show what Indian everyday life looks like in a Native reserve, actually becomes a celebration of the Hollywood Indian:

¹¹⁰ Thomas King, “Introduction,” *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990: xv.

The tourists who show up for Indian Days can get almost anything they want. Beaded belt buckles, acrylic paintings of the mountains, drawings of old-time Indians on horseback, deer-horn knives, bone chokers, T-shirts that say things like “Indian and Proud,” and “Indian Affairs are the Best.” And all of it, according to the signs that everyone puts up, is “authentic” and “traditional.” Fenton Bull Runner and his wife Maureen make dream catchers out of willow shoots and fishing line. Edna Baton runs a frybread stand. Lucille Rain and her sister Teresa do beadwork. Jimmy Hunt and his family sell cassettes of old-time powwow songs. My father brings whatever thing he's working on at the time. (209)

As a consequence, performing Indianness corresponds to a new ideological colonization of North America. Indeed, the main objective of Indian Days is to please the tourists with all the simulacra they can imagine—totem poles, tipis, buffalo hunt, tribal dancing, etc. Every object, attitude or detail is carefully prepared in order to match the tourists’ expectations.

Moreover, King also bears an ironical look on tourists—especially German tourists—themselves, presenting their naive reactions to Indianness. For instance, after Edna Baton put on her “Indian face,” “came up with a small drum and start[ed] singing a round dance,” the German tourist the performance was intended for “is suddenly all smiles and he can’t get his hand into his pocket fast enough” (211). His satisfaction is echoed by Lucy’s gloomy statement that there is “[N]o room left for the Indians” (221). And while saying this, an unsettling metonymy focuses the reader’s attention on her lips which look “pale and cold” (221). As she “eases her way back into the crowd [...] and disappears” (221), the play on perspective represents Lucy as embodying the ghostly Indian slowly erased from the American landscape.

In fact, Lucy’s bitter feeling at needing to perform Indianness reverberates throughout the narrative. Indeed, the characters often sacrifice their genuine pride to the romantic and stereotypical image of the poor disappearing and misplaced Indian. Hence Elvin’s attitude whenever he needs to cross the American/Canadian border:

A couple of guards come out of the truck and ask us all about liquor and cigarettes, and my father shakes his head and smiles and talks like the Indians you see in the westerns on television. [...]

“Welcome to Canada,” the guard tells us. “Have a nice day.”

As we clear the border, my father looks at me. “They love that dumb Indian routine. You see how friendly these assholes were.” (86)

Since Elvin is extremely good at cheating and smuggling, he always manages to bring strange unidentified loads across the border by proving smarter than authorities. The presence of the adjective “all” is actually an ironic indication of the guards’ expectations and prejudices about Indians. Since the Natives are by nature untrustworthy, drunkards and

smugglers, they are asked more questions about “liquor and cigarettes” than white people. The whole irony of the situation comes from the fact that Elvin paradoxically manages to get “grass” (85) and “booze” (85) across the border by adopting a stereotypical Indian’s attitude. King creates a trochaic rhythm accentuated by the conjunction “and” in order to reflect Elvin’s smooth lying ability: he “shakes his head and smiles and talks like the Indians.” Moreover, the repetition of the definite article “the” without antecedent in “the Indians” and “the westerns” shows the fixity of stereotypes about Indians.

In fact, by extension, the expression “going Indian” is also a synonym of “Indianness” since it refers to one’s voluntary adoption of “typical” Indian behaviours. The characters often try to “go Indian” because they try to reconnect with a former identity they have definitively lost. At some point, Tecumseh adopts a typical television Indian attitude as he tries to follow Soldier who has disappeared in the prairies:

I have no difficulty following his trail. Every so often, I stop and listen just in case I can hear him ahead of me. It’s kind of fun tracking Soldier, and as I make my way down the side of the coulee, I begin to imagine that I’m an old-time tracker on the trail of game. I take off my shirt and rub dirt on my body to kill my scent and to help me blend in with the landscape, and I get low to the ground and move through the grass as quickly and silently as I can.
I lose Soldier’s trail almost immediately [...]. (195)

This passage reflects the paradox of Indianness, since although Tecumseh keeps repeating stereotypical attitudes he saw on television, he actually underlines the artificiality of this concept leading to inanity. The narrator’s attempts at tracking Soldier constantly converge towards a dead end. He proves unreliable from the start since, despite his statement that he has “no difficulty following his trail,” he cannot “hear” his dog, signalling Soldier has already disappeared. The author’s irony can be sensed in his description of Tecumseh’s increasingly ridiculous attitudes. His attempt at finding his dog turns into a game, signalled by the familiar expression “It’s kind of fun.” His getting carried away by his imagination is paired with a quick, hypotactic rhythm created by the succession of verbs of action combined with the anaphora of the conjunction “and.” Nevertheless, the accumulation of stereotypes and the rupture caused by the next paragraph signals that Tecumseh’s moving “quickly” and “silently” and being a successful “old-time tracker” is the pure product of his imagination. King’s ironical and brutal indication that he “lose[s] Soldier’s trail almost immediately” definitively shows that his attempt at blending with the landscape is met with failure.

In *Truth and Bright Water*, “Going Indian” thus supposes one’s immediate realization of the concept’s limitations and detrimental character. Lum, who is beaten by

his father, cannot find his place in modern society. He thus finds refuge in nature and tries to live like former Indians. He eventually adopts the look of a stereotypical Indian:

Lum has cut his hair. It's short and uneven, as if it's been hacked off with a chain saw. And he's painted his face. Red on one side. Black on the other. He looks weird.

[...] Lum is naked to the waist. He has a red circle on his chest and long black marks on his arms. He looks like the Indians you see at the Saturday matinee. (225)

In fact, the passage reflects Lum's attempt—and eventual failure—to exist in modern society as the mythic Indian warrior figure he tries to emulate. Nevertheless, the precise descriptions of the shapes and colours he painted on his body stand as visual echoes to his fragmented identity. The anaphora of the adjective “black” symbolizes erasure, absence, emptiness, while the anaphora of the adjective “red” draws links to blood and physicality, and to Lum's extremely violent treatment of his body. A few moments before his final suicide, Lum takes a piece of rebar and “whips it across his chest” until “[Tecumseh] can see blood” (256). In fact, the way Lum has cut his hair in a short and uneven way suggests his haphazardly violent gestures verging on madness. King's insertion of a visual comparison formed of a phrasal verb and a horror-movie “weapon”—“hacked off with a chain saw”—completes the horror of the situation.

To conclude, this passage demonstrates how Lum's adoption of an outdated stereotypical image in order to resist the assumption of Indians as a “disappearing race” leads him to hurt himself badly before eventually committing suicide by jumping off a bridge.

This chapter has revealed in what measure a second, Native version of the “return of the repressed” haunts the narrative, illustrating the confrontation between contemporary Native characters and the spectres of colonization. In fact, the setting is gradually prepared for a community healing called the Ghost Dance Teaching. After all, as Derrida said, not only are we living with ghosts, but we also need to learn *from* them.

Chapter Three

Truth and Bright Water: *a Ghost Dance Teaching, or a Revival in the Art of Telling Stories*



Part One—Purpose and Outcomes of the Ghost Dance Teaching in *Truth and Bright Water*

The Ghost Dance Teaching: a Dauntless Art of Revival

The Indian Ghost Dance is a famous historical and cultural manifestation of Native ghosts. It originated in the 1880s among the Plains tribes and gradually transformed into a pan-Indian movement that spread across North America. Everything started with a vision: Northern Paiute Wowoka—also known as Jack Wilson—entered the spirit world and was taught a sacred dance. The said dance was to be performed by Indian people on a regular basis, and aimed at an eventual renewal of the land by releasing the Native ancestral spirits while transporting White people back to the land where they came from in a non-violent way. For these reasons, Wowoka is often called the “Indian Messiah” and was revered by the Indians.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, the US government resented these Native ghosts, fearing that the Ghost Dance would end up in a massive rebellion movement. Hence the massacre of some three hundred Indians which took place at Wounded Knee on December the 29th of 1890.

The popularity of the Ghost Dance is due to its being a major agent for change in the Indians’ life. In other words, it was considered an answering back to colonization and eurocentrism. The Indians were tired of the government’s repeated failures to fulfil its promises towards the Indians, as well as with their poor living conditions. Moreover, the movement also embodies, in Warren Cariou’s words, “a mass act of mourning for the loss

¹¹¹ Michael A. Elliott, “Ethnography, Reform, and the Problem of the Real: James Mooney’s Ghost Dance Religion.” *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998): 17-18.

of traditional ways of life that had been pushed aside by settlement.”¹¹² As a consequence, Cariou explains, it can probably be called “the first truly postcolonial religion of the Americas, envisaging a state that would literally come after the colonial project was erased,”¹¹³ a religion that aimed at the reappropriation of the American land and the reassertion of former traditions and values, an attempt at both cultural memory and cultural revival. To conclude, the Ghost Dance is not a random religious manifestation of primitive peoples, but a genuine act of resistance.

One can thus draw a parallel between the Ghost Dance and the contemporary Native version of the ghost story. Indeed, many authors such as David Murray or Warren Cariou compare the theme of hauntology in contemporary Native American literature with a “metaphorical healing” directly inherited from the historical ghostly manifestation. This is also the reason why the outcomes of colonization often go hand in hand with the semantic field of illnesses. For instance, James Y. Henderson tackles the issue of “[d]iagnosing European colonialism” in an article called “Diagnosing Colonialism: Haunting as an Illness.”¹¹⁴

As a consequence, the Native ghosts transcending the ages are neither necessarily frightening or uncanny, but they are, on the contrary, major agents for change:

They might be malevolent beings [...], but they may also be figures of healing, ceremony, or political action. Or they may simply be ancestors. And while many such spirits do seem to address the transgressions of the colonial past, they usually do so as part of a call for some kind of redress or change in the present.¹¹⁵

Paying attention to these “dead voices,”¹¹⁶ or creating a presence out of an absence, restores a sense of community, reconciles past and present into a sense of spatial continuity and brings cultural awareness to future Native generations. In this sense, Native ghosts play a part which is similar to Monroe the trickster in *Truth and Bright Water*.

¹¹² Warren Cariou, “*Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal 'Ghosts' and the Spectres of Settlement.*” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 730-731.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*: 732.

¹¹⁴ See Bibliography: James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson. “Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism.” *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 730.

¹¹⁶ The oxymoron “dead voices” is actually a reference to the title of an essay written by Gerald Vizenor.

Truth and Bright Water as a Ghost Dance Teaching

These previous statements about the Ghost Dance provide a starting point for this analysis of *Truth and Bright Water* as a *mise en abyme* of the Ghost Dance Teaching. More precisely, we will examine to what extent King's novel corresponds to both, in David Murray's words, "a backward-looking attempt to summon up the dead" and an eminent cornerstone of "a revitalizing movement."¹¹⁷ Nevertheless, in order to operate the said "metaphorical healing," King launches his alter ego at an intra-diegetic level. The second step of this whole writing back to eurocentrism enterprise consists in mastering the Western techniques of linguistic and cultural estrangement before being able to write back to them. Indeed, as Youngblood puts it, "[p]art of the renewal is understanding the colonizer's strategy of Eurocentrism, epistemological diffusionism, universality, and enforcement of differences."¹¹⁸ Then—and only then—can King's and Monroe's magic operate.

Monroe uses the medium of his art in order to create and recreate different visions of reality. Indeed, the famous Indian artist learnt to master a diversity of Western techniques while travelling around the world: "I went everywhere," he tells the narrator. "Paris, Berlin, New York, London, Moscow, Madrid, Rome" (129). While abroad, he specialized as a restoration artist and painted Indians back into nineteenth-century paintings. He also stole the bones of Indian children and brought them back to Truth, where he paints the old Methodist church in such a way that it completely "blends in with the prairies and the sky" (43). Moreover, as an installation artist, Monroe builds a green platform which is supposed to "[t]each[...] the Grass About Green" (43), a blue kite meant to "[t]each[...] the Sky About Blue" (49) and a black kite which would "[t]each[...] the Night About Dark" (49). Finally, he disseminates iron buffalo throughout the prairies, claiming that "before [he and Tecumseh are] done, the buffalo will return" (135).

At first, Monroe's project appears foolish and completely useless, even in the narrator's opinion. This is the very reason why passages about restoration always work hand in hand with the magic realist mode: King must bring the reader to believe in magic

¹¹⁷ David Murray, "Cultural Sovereignty and the Hauntology of American Identity." *Mirror Writing: (Re-) Constructions of Native American Identity*. Edited by Thomas Claviez and Maria Ross. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2000: 240.

¹¹⁸ James (Sakéj) Youngblood Henderson, "Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000: 58.

in order to make the trickster's work effective. For this reason, Monroe is always presented as a magician: people who saw his work think "[h]is brushes [are] magic" (129), and the trickster himself claims that "[his] trade and [his] art is living" (132). For this reason, Monroe takes his task very seriously: "Serious. This is serious," he says, "low and hard," after Tecumseh told him their task "[is] actually sort of fun" (135). And as Monroe achieves his work, elements of former white settlement make room for the restoration of the former American landscape:

Monroe sits on the tailgate of the truck and looks back the way we've come. You can't see the church, and you can't see the bridge, and you can't see Truth and Bright Water.

"Look at that," says Monroe. Just like in the old days."

I look, but I don't see much of anything. Besides the river, there is only the land and the sky.

"As far as the eye can see." (134-135)

To conclude, in this passage, the outcome of Monroe's restoration project corresponds exactly to the purpose of the Ghost Dance as phrased by Michael Elliott: "Ghost Dance adherents preached that the return of the buffalo, the return of the Indian dead, and the restoration of Indian land were imminent."¹¹⁹ In this sense, Monroe's restoration work can be considered a reflection of the Ghost Dance Teaching. In fact, both the novel and Monroe's "restoration project" reach a climax with the reference to what auntie Cassie calls a huge "giveaway" in Chapter Thirty. At the beginning of the novel, Monroe tells to the narrator his intention to prepare a massive but mysterious event: "Don't tell anyone you saw me. [...] It's a surprise. [...] I want the whole thing to be a surprise." The pronoun "it," the vague expression "the whole thing" and the anaphora of the noun "surprise" seem to announce some tremendous event. This much is true, since the reader eventually realizes that the word "restoration" is a syllepsis referring to both the act of restoring what has disappeared into the landscape, but also the whole of Monroe's project on a more massive scale.

Firstly, this event celebrates the trickster's success at re-appropriating the landscape. Chapter Thirty opens on Tecumseh and Soldier trying to find Monroe's "invisible" church, and come across numerous "piece[s] of cut poplar" (236). "It's a little weird to find firewood scattered around on the prairies" (237), the narrator comments,

¹¹⁹ Michael A. Elliott, "Ethnography, Reform, and the Problem of the Real: James Mooney's Ghost-Dance Religion." *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998): 211.

unvoluntarily pointing at a mysterious, sudden and magic—trickster-like—appearance. It is thus no wonder that these unexpected pieces of wood lead directly to a huge bonfire:

Below us, someone has cleared a large circle of grass in the middle of the prairies, and at the centre of the circle is a pile of firewood. From the top of the rise, the pile of wood looks large enough, but it is only after we walk down and stand beside it that we realize how enormous it really is. (237)

The narrator uses the preposition “in the middle of” as well as an anaphora of the word “circle” in order to insist on the centrality of this bonfire entirely made out of natural elements. Apart from symbolizing perfection and infinity, the circle can be understood here as a threshold to another world, a trickster time and space Tecumseh and Soldier are about to enter. Although focalization is static and descriptive in the first sentence—a technique creating a surprise effect with the voluntary rhematization of the noun syntagm “a pile of firewood”—perspective changes as the characters approach the fire. The sudden change of focalization is symbolized by the gradation between the anaphora of the adjective “large” and the hyperbolic structure combining the adverb “how,” the adjective “enormous” and the adverb “really,” which resembles more a free direct speech exclamative sentence than an assertion.

The woodpile dominates the landscape in such a way that “[y]ou can see it all the way from Bright Water” (243), just like the church. Therefore, the woodpile is a mark of Monroe’s successful reconquest of the prairies since, when the trickster eventually appears, he “stomps through the grass, swinging his arms as if there is marching music playing in his head” (239). The comparison of Monroe’s gait with a soldier’s walking along with the music echoes the comparison of the tourists with “an army on the march” (230) made a dozen pages before. Besides, the alliteration in “m” in “marching music,” and the assonance of the “hard” sounds “t,” “p,” “s” and “g”—which are especially present in the first segment—seem to imitate the strength of Monroe’s soldier-like determination.

In addition, King’s choice to juxtapose the contradictory events of Indian Days and the giveaway ceremony may symbolize the resistance of the Natives against assimilation. As a consequence, Monroe’s giveaway symbolizes a discreet but significant victory of the Indians since the trickster succeeds in restoring a sense of cohesion in this fragmented community. Gathering people around a huge fire seems a good starting point. Indeed, as a provider of light and heat, fire has been an important element of social life since times immemorial. Besides, lighting the fire relies on a great part on teamwork: Soldier begins “passing pieces [of wood] [...] to Monroe” (237) before helping the trickster and the narrator to move the furniture and objects out of the church and arranging them on the

prairies. When the fire is lit, King creates an all-encompassing personification effect which puts everyone and everything—be they a (crazy) trickster, an animal, a human being or a natural element—on an equal footing. Indeed, while “the flares set the woodpile on fire” and “the sparks leap into the night,” Monroe, Tecumseh and Soldier “race around the fire like madmen, shouting, barking, chasing comets into the night” (242). The enumeration of a variety of verbs of movement, the ternary rhythm created by the gerundive and the comparison of sparks with “comets” reflect the enthusiastic, joyful and almost superrealistic aspect of the scene. While Monroe’s magic begins to expand throughout the prairies, the fire is compared with “a spaceship ready to explode into the sky” (241), mimicking the huge power of the final act of Monroe’s restoration, a power which can be compared with a gigantic explosion. It has such tremendous an appeal that “[i]n no time all, most of the people in Truth and Bright Water are standing around the fire or sitting on the furniture or lying around in the grass” (243), as if drawn to the campsite by some mysterious force. Everyone begins to talk and behave as if the community had never been fragmented. Monroe—who had been living as an outcast until then—meets his old friend Skee Gardipeau who invites him to take a free meal to his café some time. Helen accepts to talk to Elvin and wraps her precious quilt around Cassie’s shoulders in a comforting gesture.

All in all, “[b]efore long, everyone is standing around the fire, talking and joking and having a good time. [...] The kids run around the fire, darting in and out of the fog” (243). The fog is another discreet but omnipresent “character” in the passage: shortly before the giveaway begins, it starts “to form on the river,” looking “serious” (241). Although the fog acts as an uncanny presence throughout the novel, it now plays the role of a reassuring sentinel guarding the camp, a treshold to another world which is entirely centered around the fire. “The fog has closed in tight,” Tecumseh comments. “I can still see part of the bridge, but Truth and Bright Water have all but vanished” (242). As a trickster-like phenomenon, the fog casts a ghostly light upon the giveaway. Indeed, Tecumseh uses the semantic field of the ghost to describe the characters’ arrival and departure. Indeed, the narrator cannot perceive newcomers before they “come out of the fog.” “More cars and trucks arrive, sliding out of the fog like ghosts” (242). The association of the metonymies “cars” and “trucks” with “ghosts” is apparently due to the way they move. Since to “slide” means “[to] move along a smooth surface [...] while

maintaining continuous contact with it,”¹²⁰ it echoes an almost immaterial and imperceptible movement, the movement of an object which is so light it is almost floating. The vehicles thus seem to have a consciousness of their own while they “deliver” the characters right on the giveaway stage. When the ceremony is over, the characters “back up into the fog and disappear” (244).

What is more, the giveaway scene is also haunted by the ghosts of those who are absent: Tecumseh cannot help thinking about his cousin Lum when he finds “an Indian running alongside an elk” (243) while Cassie cannot stop thinking about her daughter. Besides, the chapter closes on a strange scene where the ghost of baby Mia seems to appear:

Auntie Cassie opens the suitcase, takes out a small shirt, and holds it up to the light. Against the heat of the fire, the shirt looks soft and golden, and even though I am watching, I almost miss it, the motion is so quick and casual. In the end, all I really do see is the shirt spread out and floating, bright against the night. It settles onto the embers, lies there in the fire for the longest time, and then slowly curls up at the edges, glows briefly, and is gone. (246)

This is probably the first time one can feel Mia’s presence so vividly. The little girl’s body seems to inhabit this “small shirt” and give it a shape. In other words, her immaterial presence is unveiled by her wearing a physical piece of cloth. The boundaries between the physical and the immaterial seem abolished as Cassie elevates the ghost “up to the light,” as if presenting her painful memory of Mia to the fire. After a synaesthesia where the fire light and heat seem to take possession of the soft, golden shirt, Cassie suddenly let go of the object. What does “the motion” refer to? Did Cassie decide to throw it into the fire? Did the fire take it from her? Or did the ghost itself decide to disappear into the flames? Once more, King’s evasive style denies such crucial information to the reader, who is forced to settle for a supernatural explanation. As for Tecumseh, he can only express what he does see—a close-up image on the ghostly shirt in slow motion. King may have intentionally included an intertextual reference to the first two lines of William Blake’s *The Tyger* in the consonance of “bright” and “night.” Indeed, Blake’s poem starts with the lines “Tyger! Tyger! burning bright / In the forests of the night” and depicts a fearsome and ghostly tiger associated with the lexical field of fire. This parallel with an eminent piece of English literature reinforces the magistral impact of King’s powerful image. In continuation, the rhythm accelerates again as two duration verbs—“settle” and “lie”—describe the shirt’s actions as if it were comfortably settling onto a bed of flames.

¹²⁰ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, “to slide, v.:

Moreover, the shirt stays there “for the longest time”—and not “for a very long time” as if to insist on the unending character of the action. The piece of cloth eventually “curls up” like a newborn in its mother’s arms, as if it belonged in the fire. The use of the present tense implies a pause on each of the actions, before the shirt eventually disappears. It was there an instant ago, and now “it is gone.”

This passage is representative of the power of the ceremony to heal people, by invoking as well as freeing people from the ghosts who haunt them. Cassie’s healing is metaphorized by a strange combination of events which force her to let go of Mia.

In conclusion, one can say that Monroe’s giveaway sheds a temporary positive or appeasing light on every single element which was previously considered problematic, painful or uncanny within the narrative. Moreover, Monroe becomes Wowoka’s *alter ego* in the sense that he erased all traces of former white settlement and restored the landscape and community relationships back to pre-colonial times. He also conducts the giveaway in such a way that all the Natives receive an object that corresponds to their personality or their needs. For example, Elvin carves wood for a living and receives a beautiful bentwood box, while Cassie is given “an Inuit sculpture of a woman with a child on her back” (244).

Nevertheless, although Monroe’s presence had a much positive impact in Truth and Bright Water, Lum’s suicide, which directly follows the passage, signals that much work remains to be done in order to achieve the sense of cohesion the community needs so desperately. Yet, the narrative ends on a positive note which contrasts with the tragic atmosphere which pervades the novel: after she received many bunches of flowers throughout the narrative, Helen was eventually offered “fragran[t]” (266) freesias by a mysterious admirer. Contrary to the narrator, the reader knows these flowers were sent by Monroe, and the message is all the more significant that freesias are the symbol of “thoughtfulness and trust” and that their purple colour symbolizes “passion.”¹²¹ And even though people think that “love lasts as long as cut flowers” (113), Helen cuts and trims her freesias in such a way that one day, the stems will turn into flowers again.

The Other Side of the Mirror: a Diversity of Truths

Monroe’s restoration project—or Ghost Dance—mirrors King’s enterprise on a larger scale. In other words, the author appropriates the uncanny and writes back to the

¹²¹ Flower Meaning: “The Freesia Meaning: Its Meanings and Symbolism.” <<http://www.flowermeaning.com/freesia-flower-meaning/>> Last consulted on May 05, 2017.

eurocentric version of “truth” in order to have both his reader and his Native characters consider reality in a variety of ways, ways one had not *imagined* yet. Indeed, it is via Monroe that King teaches Tecumseh and the reader to rely on the power of imagination, which stands in direct continuity to his use of magic realist writing, or tricking one into accepting the existence of something yet too strange to believe. In this sense, King’s own “restoration project” directly relies on a play on perspective which appears simultaneously with the trickster’s presence or deeds. In the following quote, Tecumseh is standing near the church, looking alternatively at the side which has been painted and to the side which has been left intact:

I stand on the platform, close my eyes to a squint, and stare at the church from different angles to see if I can figure out how Monroe has managed the trick. It must have something to do with the paint and the way the colours of the land and the sky carry over into the wood. (49)

The modal “must” indicates that after looking “the trick” “from different angles,” Tecumseh understands this play of perspective. Moreover, the “paint” as well as “the colours of the land and the sky” are personified to such an extent that one tends to believe *they* are the ones reappropriating the church.

In continuation, Tecumseh learns to use his imagination in all sorts of situations. One of these episodes is particularly meaningful, for King is drawing parallel with his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*, published in 1994. In the following passage, Tecumseh and his father are coming back from a trip on the other side of the border:

We get to Blossom just before noon and pull into a parking lot. There’s a big red sign on a long, low building that says “Lionel’s Home Entertainment Barn.” “Indian guy owns this,” says my father. “White guy went bankrupt a few years back and had to sell it. Now that’s funny [...]. Not many times you see that happen.” Inside the store, there are rows and rows of stereos and VCRs and disc players. One wall is nothing but televisions all stacked up on each other. If you look hard and use your imagination, it looks like a map of North America. My father talks to an Indian guy who looks sort of like John Wayne, only not as heavy. (87).

An attentive reader may draw a parallel between this “heavy” salesman and one of the protagonists of *Green Grass, Running Water*. Indeed, Lionel Red Dog is an overweight “Indian guy” who is constantly made fun of because of his selling televisions in Bill Bursum’s Home Entertainment Barn. Bill Bursum is a White character whose main purpose is to serve as a parody of God. Indeed, he filled one of his store’s walls with a “magnificent, spectacular, genius,” huge arrangement of two hundred television sets,

which create “a sense of space and great emptiness”¹²² and serves as a metaphor or metonymy of North America. Indeed, as Tecumseh rightly puts it, it is a map—or *mise en abyme*—“[o]f Canada and the United States.” The narrator uses his imagination and thus understands the significance of the Map, which is in fact a contemporary reflection of colonization. Indeed, by constantly showing Westerns—and thus perpetuating stereotypes about Indians—“the unifying metaphor or the cultural impact”¹²³ of the Map is meant to reinforce the Whites’ supremacy over North America. As the creator of this gigantic map, Bill Bursum/God has an access to the whole world and is able to manipulate people by perpetuating the vision of reality he chose himself: “It was like having the universe there on the wall, being able to see everything, being in control.”¹²⁴

The thought-provoking presence of the Map and the embedded narrative actually convey King’s ironical scope. Indeed, the fact that Tecumseh was able to draw a parallel between the shape of the television tower and a map of North America is an achievement in itself, since Bill Bursum contemptuously stated that “[p]ower and control—the essences of effective advertising, were [...] outside the range of the Indian imagination.”¹²⁵ Moreover, Lionel’s appearance in *Truth and Bright Water* symbolizes that Monroe’s and King’s restoration project will eventually be crowned with success. Indeed, one figures out Bill Bursum went bankrupt, leaving Lionel—an “*Indian* guy” at the head of the shop, and, by extension, of the Map. This metaphor may very well signify that Native people are now re-appropriating the North American land and are able to show their own conception of “truth.” The binary vision of dominant and dominated is thus finally abolished.

Therefore, adopting the trickster vision implies realizing that there is much more to reality than meets the eye. This statement is mirrored at an intra-diegetic level, for from the moment when Tecumseh adopts Monroe’s vision—or “tr[ies] to see what he sees” (135)—he is enabled to believe that the trickster really succeeded in restoring the landscape “just like the old days” (134). All that is needed is a change of perspective, yet, one has to accept to lose one’s bearings for the anamorphosis effect to work.

This conception of King’s novel as a gigantic anamorphosis triumphs—symbolically, or maybe paradoxically—during Indian Days. Tecumseh has copied Cassie’s tattoo and written the letters “AIM” on his knuckles. He then “squeeze[s] [his] fist so that

¹²² Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water*. New York, USA: Bantam Books, 1994: 137-138.

¹²³ *Ibid.*: 140.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*: 141.

the letters stand out” (233) as if by a magnifying effect, and looks at it in a mirror of an undefined shape—“like a coyote or a wolf or a fox” (233), which is even more interesting since the coyote has just been described as “a trickster” (231). The trickster effect operates almost immediately, for the narrator realizes the word “AIM” is in fact a palindrome which can also be read as “MIA:”

I don't know why I don't see it right away, but it's only when I look a second time that I notice. MIA. It's supposed to say AIM, but what it says in the mirror is MIA. (233)

The narrator then “pull[s] [his] hand back and turn[s] it around,” “look[s] at his knuckles again,” and concludes, “now I can see what happened” (233). This most revealing passage thus unveils one of the numerous mirror and anamorphosis effects taking place in *Truth and Bright Water*. Even more interesting, it mirrors the confrontation between two different heterotopias.

Michel Foucault defines as “heterotopia” a utopian, unreal counter-space—a representation or reflection “in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.”¹²⁶ One can say that the numerous spaces represented in *Truth and Bright Water*—the railroad town and the reserve, the prairies, the church, the bridge, the Indian Days camp, etc.—are inspired from real places, but since they are devoid of their primary function or significance, they become stages where meaningful changes can happen. They are reflections leading to the transformation of reality through imagination.

As a consequence, the “AIM” anamorphosis effect is all the more significant that it happens during Indian Days. Indeed, in this episode, the mirror acts as a device suggesting a counter-discourse to the reality Tecumseh took for granted until then. Therefore, the narrator learns the symbolic message of viewing reality through another perspective right in the middle of a huge festival celebrating artificial stereotypes and clichés. As a consequence, the reflection becomes a “utopia,” a “fundamentally unreal space,” presenting society “turned upside down.”¹²⁷ Michel Foucault adds that the precise device uniting utopias and heterotopias into “a joint experience” is indeed the mirror:

The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow [...] that enables me to see myself there where I am absent [...]. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as

¹²⁶ Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces.” Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.¹²⁸

As a consequence, the mirror appears as a troubling and uncanny device since it reveals a presence in the absence. Reflections cause the spectators' to hesitate between what is true or mere reflection, their mind wandering back and forth to decide what exists and what is unreal. This back and forth movement also proves unsettling from the moment when one spots in the mirror the reflection of a ghostly, duplicated self. The previous "AIM" example caused the same sort of confusion since it revealed the possibility of another interpretation of reality, the ghostly presence of what was there before but that remained invisible, and that can be discovered only through the device of the mirror. In this sense, the text conveys the message that one's representation of reality only depends on one's personal interpretation and on the perspective one chooses to adopt. In fact, Cassie's revelation that she "did [her tattoo] in a mirror" while she was drunk (229) indicates that she initially intended to write "MIA" instead of "AIM." Reflection thus proves more truthful than "reality," but one needs to accept to be open-minded and plunged into constant hesitation in order to accept it.

Like utopias, heterotopias and mirror effects, Monroe's restoration of the landscape back to pre-colonial times is also an attempt at suggesting another reality. When it comes to adopting a different perspective, one may draw a parallel between Foucault's theory and Bakhtin's concept of the "chronotope"—literally, "time space"—in other words, "the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space):"

In the literary and artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*: 4.

¹²⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination—Four Essays*. Minneapolis: Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982: 84.

In other words, in *Truth and Bright Water*, the literary/artistic creation of a new chronotope—that of pre-colonial time and landscape—is intricately linked with magic realism. At an intra-diegetic level, Monroe's art triggers a sort of uncanny revengeful reaction on the part of the landscape. That is to say, as the boundary between past and present becomes increasingly blurred, the land seems to literally remember the wrongs and injuries perpetrated by white colonizers in the course of time. As a consequence, since "it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time,"¹³⁰ the uncanny attacks of the natural over the artificial, white supremacy, tourists become the theme par excellence of the novel. As a matter of fact, this strange invisible force pervading the landscape cannot be defined by "nature's voice" only, but by the reappearance of a variety of voices which have been muted or omitted over time.

Indeed, magic realism and the establishment of a new chronotope enables King to invoke figures of the past and offer them chances to communicate with present characters and the reader. In an interview about *Green Grass, Running Water*, King explains that his narrative contains "a number of Canadian allusions, and there are a number of US allusions, and not everybody's going to get all of them."¹³¹ This is pretty much the case in *Truth and Bright Water*, where the narrator may very well recognize the name of Christopher Columbus behind the quasi-anagram "Carleton Coombs," but miss the significance of such important Native names as Rebecca Neugin's which discreetly pervade the narrative. As a consequence, a close study of numerous terms and expressions, floating around the narrative and waiting to unveil their discreetly embedded meaning, is necessary to understand the full scope of King's novel.

For example, Cassie calls her nephew "Tecumseh," and although this name appears only once in the narrative (52), be it the narrator's real name or a mere surname, it invokes the ghost of an eminent Shawnee and Cherokee warrior and leader figure. Tecumseh was a great orator known for his failed attempt at forming a Native confederacy against White invasion of Indian lands. His warriors fought alongside with the British in the War of 1812

¹³⁰ *Ibid*: 85.

¹³¹ Peter Gzowski, "Peter Gzowski Interviews Thomas King on *Green Grass, Running Water*." *Canadian Literature* 161.2 (Summer–Autumn 1999): 68.

against the Americans. Tecumseh died on October 5, 1813, and his troops were eventually defeated.¹³²

Moreover, Soldier's name stands as short for another theme which pervades the narrative—that of Dog Soldiers. Indeed, the Cousins and especially Soldier bear much resemblance to these dogs which “helped to guard the [Native] camp” (39) in pre-colonial times. Nevertheless, according to Elvin, these Dog Soldiers were actually human beings: “They were the bravest men in the tribe [...]. The ones who stayed behind and protected the people from attack” (185). This effect of interchangeability between animals and human beings reinforces Soldier's surprisingly personified—almost “human”—appearance and behaviour. Since he was already considered “tough” and “good-sized” (184) as a puppy, he must have become a sturdy, strong dog. Moreover, he is as watchful and brave as a Dog Soldier. As Tecumseh's guardian, he literally “save[s]” (185) the narrator from Lum's and Elvin's aggressive behaviour. “Each night,” the narrator tells, “Soldier would crawl under my bed and settle into the corner. [...] And each morning, I would find him at the edge of my bed, watching and waiting for me to wake” (186).

But there is another side to Soldier. “Dog's a hell lot smarter than either of us” (183), Elvin tells his son, suggesting Soldier actually possesses a form of intelligence which enables him to cross the threshold to another—trickster-like—world. He is indeed *the* character mostly associated with the terms “appearance” and “disappearance,” and spends his time vanishing into the prairies only to re-emerge out of the blue. The truth is, Soldier is often “on a mission” (254), fulfilling a role which has been assigned to Dog Soldiers since pre-colonial times: “‘Ghosts,’ sa[ys] [Tecumseh's] grandmother. ‘They watched out for ghosts’” (39). Indeed, Soldier possesses this trickster-like quality which enables him to get along with both Monroe and Rebecca Neugin's ghost. A little before their second encounter with Monroe, Tecumseh asks Soldier to “[f]ind the [church's] door,” but his companion has “other things on his mind” (122), and he suddenly disappears into the grass. The narrator “can't see him” and has to rely on his sense of hearing to follow him: “I hear Soldier bark. It's not a worried bark. It's an excited bark, and it sounds as if he's found something interesting” (122). The full stops, which impose a break in one's reading, seem to mimic the pauses taken by the narrator as he tries to interpret Soldier's barking. The antithesis of “worried” and “excited” and the brisk passage from a paratactic to a

¹³² Native Heritage Project Website: “Tecumseh—Shooting Star—Panther Across the Sky.” <<https://nativeheritageproject.com/2012/04/29/tecumseh-shooting-star-panther-across-the-sky/>> Last consulted on May 03, 2017.

hypotactic rhythm foreshadows a happy encounter, until, suddenly, “the barking stops” (122). This passage from a gradual to a brutal disappearance may appear disquieting and even uncanny, yet there is actually no need to worry: Soldier reappears beside his friend Monroe, “in a large semicircle” of grass (123) symbolising the entrance to the trickster world.

On the other hand, Soldier is also able to feel the arrival of Rebecca’s ghost and to dialogue with her. After an uncommunicative dialogue with Rebecca where the narrator remains deaf to the numerous allusions to the Trail of Tears, he tells how “Rebecca kneels and looks at Soldier, as if she is trying to find something in his eyes, as if the two of them have a secret that they’re not going to share with anyone else” (197). As their two looks lock up, the reader has the feeling that Soldier is particularly sensitive to Rebecca’s suffering.

Moreover, Soldier often acts as Lum’s indirect protector because Tecumseh’s cousin embodies a famous Native ghost. Indeed, as an incredibly fast long-distance runner, Lum considers himself “as good as Tom Longboat already” (5). He thus places his project to be consecrated “[t]he Indian Days long-distance champion” (4) under good auspices. Indeed, Tom Longboat (1887-1949) was an Onondaga long-distance runner who became “one of the most celebrated pre-WWI athletes” “[b]ecause of his ability to dominate any race and his spectacular finishing sprints.”¹³³ On the other hand, one may also consider Lum as an indirect reference to the character of Geronimo (1829-1909), an Apache chief who kept fighting against White people during his whole life.¹³⁴

Perhaps due to this heavy legacy, Lum stands as the most tormented character in the novel. His tendency to suicide finally leads him to fall off a bridge. Nevertheless, the passage is written in such a way that Lum, who is often compared with a bird, eventually seems to take off:

[Lum’s] first steps are heavy and taken in pain. He carries himself tight and pulled off to one side, his feet hitting the planks out of rhythm. But as he picks up speed, his body uncoils and stretches out.

[...] Lum is moving easily now. He glides along the naked girders gracefully, Soldier hard on his knees and closing, until the curve of the bridge begins its descent into Bright Water and Lum and Soldier disappear over the edge.

¹³³ The Canadian Encyclopedia: “Tom Longboat.” <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tom-longboat/>> Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

¹³⁴ Medarus: “Geronimo—Goyathlay 1829-1909.” <http://medarus.org/NM/NMPersonnages/NM_10_03_Biog_Natives/nm_10_03_geronimo.htm> Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

At each step Lum takes, his painful, heavy and tight body becomes lighter and changes shape. The disharmonious rhythm of his steps turns into an easy and graceful movement as he begins to “glid[e]” (258) towards the top of the bridge. After their disappearance, the narrator finds it impossible to find traces of their fall: “all I can see below me is the fog. And all I hear is the wind and the faint strains of the piano rising out of the land with the sun” (258). The presence of natural elements and the soft music played by Monroe thus accompany Lum in his final attainment for freedom. Maybe Soldier led him not to his death, but towards a trickster dimension...

As a consequence, although they appear in uncanny conditions, the Native ghosts are anything but negative or frightening. They are, instead, figures of remembrance led to freedom thanks to Monroe, Soldier and a diversity of other trickster characters. Besides, Monroe Swimmer’s name stands out from the others, since it combines the antithetic references to two major XIXth century figures. According to Robin Ridington, the name of “Monroe” evokes the US President James Monroe and his famous “Monroe Doctrine” which allowed the United States to be more independent from American decisions and was in some way responsible for the displacement of numerous Indians from their homeland.¹³⁵ As for Swimmer, he was “a Cherokee healer who in 1887 showed anthropologist James Mooney a book of sacred formulas written in the sillabary devised by Sequoyah (also known as George Guess) in 1821.”¹³⁶ In fact, George Guess’ name also appears on page 102 in *Truth and Bright Water*—he is one of the characters accompanying Rebecca Neugin.

King’s transformation of *Truth and Bright Water* into a Ghost Dance Teaching is a first step towards remembrance and healing. In continuation, one notices an increasing similarity between the reappearance of these ghosts whose voices have been muted and a variety of stories, be they past or present, personal or communal. As a consequence, King’s novel teaches one the right way to tell a story.



¹³⁵ Robin Ridington. “Narrative Technology, Pizza and Contemporary Performance Genres.” *Anthropologica* XLII (2001): 226.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

Part Two—Ghosts as the Art of Telling Stories

A Modern Revival in the Art of Telling Stories

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a “story” as “[a]n oral or written narrative account of events that occurred or are believed to have occurred in the past; a narrative account accepted as true by virtue of great age or long tradition.”¹³⁷ This definition implies that anyone reading a story stands in constant hesitation between the realistic and the mythical. Homer’s *Odyssey* is considered one of the two most ancient poems and combines realistic events—the Trojan War and Ulysses’ return to Ithaca—with mythical creatures such as Cyclops Polyphemus and the Sirens.¹³⁸ Moreover, the *Odyssey* stands as a reminder of an originally oral way of telling stories—a way which has more or less disappeared from Western societies nowadays but which remained predominant in Indian cultures until the appearance of Sequoyah’s first Native alphabet in the XIXth century.

Moreover, a story is often “composed for the entertainment of the listener or reader.”¹³⁹ As a matter of fact, many Native and non-Native authors state that one of the first purposes of contemporary Native literature is to entertain.¹⁴⁰ We saw in the preceding chapters that humour—especially black humour and irony—pervades *Truth and Bright Water* and blends seamlessly with King’s political treatment of serious matters. It is the same sort of humour that pervades *Green Grass, Running Water* and that Eric McCormack commented upon:

As a non-Native, I must say that King's humour is absolutely vital for a book that deals with some heavy stuff. [...] The quality that prevents *Green Grass, Running Water* from being an exercise in breast-beating or masochism, on the part of the non-Native reader, is King's kindly humour. It makes his satiric comments [...] not only palatable, but persuasive.¹⁴¹

In addition, the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition implies that the storyteller has a predominant role in perpetuating and telling a story, and that a story depends on one’s particular and subjective version of events. Moreover, in *The Truth About Stories*, King insists on the participatory role of the audience, that is to say, on the listener’s capacity to

¹³⁷ Oxford English Dictionary, “story, n.” Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

¹³⁸ Ancient Literature: “Ancient Greece—Homer—The Odyssey.” <http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_homer_odyssey.html> Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

¹³⁹ Oxford English Dictionary, “story, n.” Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

¹⁴⁰ Margaret Atwood, “A Double-Bladed Knife.” *Canadian Literature: Native Writers and Canadian Writing*, 124-125 (Spring–Summer 1990): 244; Daniel David Moses, “The Trickster’s Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore.” *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (Winter–Spring 2004): 108-109.

¹⁴¹ Eric Mc Cormack, “Coyote Goes Slapstick.” *Books in Canada* 22.3 (1993): 40-41.

use his imagination and picture the stories he or she is told.¹⁴² Besides, this close dynamic relationship between the storyteller and the audience echoes the quote from Leroy Little Bear which was previously mentioned in Chapter 2, stressing that although everyone has one's own worldview, "the individual's worldview has its roots in the culture—that is, in the society's shared philosophy, values and customs."¹⁴³ Stories convey both the history of a people as well as an ideological message one can interpret personally. Moreover, stories originally perpetuated a sense of community in Native tribes by reminding one of one's own roots. In *The Truth About Stories*, King explains that "[t]he truth about stories is that that's all we are."¹⁴⁴ In other words, since an individual is defined by a number of personal and collective stories, these stories can haunt one just like ghosts. As a consequence, to live means coping with the weight of one's personal and collective stories:

I tell the stories not to play on your sympathies but to suggest how stories can control our lives, for there is a part of me that has never been able to move past these stories, a part of me that will be chained to these stories as long as I live.¹⁴⁵

As a consequence, King is willing to share his own personal stories with the reader. We saw in Chapter One that a number of the author's autobiographical data discreetly pervade the narrative—his father abandoned his family and Thomas King spent his childhood in a warehouse without windows where his mother held a hairdresser's shop. Nevertheless, *Truth and Bright Water* stands as a much huger concentration of a great number of intermingled personal and communal stories—not only the author's, but also the Native characters', the readers', the Native ancestors', the first colonizers', etc.

The "Pervasiveness of Storytelling"

Eric McCormack states that the "the pervasiveness of storytelling" is central in King's writing.¹⁴⁶ According to Teresa Gibert, King has a "lifelong interest in oral storytelling:"

He recalls that he was a boy who particularly liked to listen to stories when he was growing up in a small town in Northern California, within a mixed community of

¹⁴² Thomas King. "'You'll Never Believe What Happened' is Always a Great Way to Start." *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 1-30. In this very first essay, King quotes a sentence from his partner Helen Hoy: "Don't show them your mind. Show them your imagination" (26).

¹⁴³ Leroy Little Bear, "Jagged Worldviews Colliding." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000: 77.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*: 9.

¹⁴⁶ Eric Mc Cormack, "Coyote Goes Slapstick." *Books in Canada* 22.3 (1993): 40-41.

Cherokees, Greeks and Italians, all of whom have ancient storytelling traditions [...]. Much later, he would also listen to Blackfoot and Cree storytellers [...].¹⁴⁷

Gibert nuances that, although oral Native storytelling became “his main field of expertise,” King’s “chief influence [...] does not come from actually listening to spoken words, but from reading a transcription, a printed text.”¹⁴⁸ Indeed, in 1989, ethnographer Judith Wickwire published the book *Write It on Your Heart*, a “transcription” of stories told in English by Okanagan elder Harry Robinson. King considers that Robinson’s work is “*inspirational*”¹⁴⁹ and attempted to adapt Robinson’s “written orality”¹⁵⁰ to his own work:

I was working on what I like to call “voice pieces,” where I was trying to recreate the sense of an oral storytelling voice in a written form. And I was having some success, but not much [...]. Wendy Wickwire, who worked with Robinson, sent me out some of Robinson’s stories, and when I saw those things I was just blown away. I couldn’t believe the power and the skill with which Robinson could work up a story—in English: they weren’t translated, they were simply transcribed—and how well he understood the power of the oral word in a written piece.¹⁵¹

King was actually so “blown away” that one year later, in trying to define Native writing as “tribal, interfusional, polemical, and associational”¹⁵² he stated that Harry Robinson’s *Write It On Your Heart* is “the only complete example we have of interfusional literature”—interfusional literature being “a blending of oral literature and written literature.”¹⁵³ The fact is, conciliating the so-called antithetic written and oral forms enables King to write back to assumptions considering that

written literature [...] has an inherent sophistication that oral literature lacks, that oral literature is a primitive form of written literature, a precursor to written literature, and as we move from the cave to the condo, we slough off the oral and leave it behind.¹⁵⁴

In other words, instead of considering orality as a primitive, outdated, belonging to “an old animistic view of the universe” one has surmounted, King puts it on the same level as

¹⁴⁷ Teresa Gibert, “Written Orality in Thomas King’s Short Fiction.” *Journal of the Short Story in English* 47 (Autumn 2006): 98.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*: 98-99.

¹⁴⁹ Peter Gzowski, “Peter Gzowski Interviews Thomas King on *Green Grass, Running Water*.” *Canadian Literature* 161.2 (Summer–Autumn 1999): 72. Italics in original.

¹⁵⁰ The expression “written orality” has been coined by Teresa Gibert in her article “Written Orality in Thomas King’s Short Fiction.”

¹⁵¹ Peter Gzowski, “Peter Gzowski Interviews Thomas King on *Green Grass, Running Water*.” *Canadian Literature* 161.2 (Summer–Autumn 1999): 72.

¹⁵² Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 185.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*: 186.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 100.

written literature. In fact, King defends a “written oral literature,” showing how interdependent, coexistent and intricately linked both forms are:

[One assumes] that stories, in order to be complete, must be written down, an easy error to make, an ethnocentric stumble that imagines all literature in the Americas to have been oral, when in fact, pictographic systems (petroglyphs, pictographs, and hieroglyphics) were used by a great many tribes to commemorate events and to record stories, while in the valley of Mexico, the Aztecs maintained a large library of written works that may well have been the rival of the Royal Library at Alexandria. Written and oral. Side by side.¹⁵⁵

King argues in favor of the coexistence of something which was doomed diametrically opposed. He concludes a few pages later:

The point I wanted to make was that the advent of Native written literature did not, in any way, mark the passing of Native oral literature. In fact, they occupy the same space, the same time. And, if you know where to stand, you can hear the two of them talking to each other.¹⁵⁶

Truth and Bright Water stands as an example of a “voice piece” conciliating the oral and the written, thus belonging to these “contemporary examples that suggest the nature of interfusional literature.”¹⁵⁷

Firstly, the narrative is told by a young first-person narrator whose use of the English tongue often corresponds more to oral usage than written usage. Contracted forms such as “I’d” (4) or “didn’t” (5) pervade Tecumseh’s free direct speech. Moreover, the use of the present tense conveys an impression of simultaneity between the narrator’s thought and perception and the moment of utterance, hence the emphasis on perception and sensations illustrated by previous examples. As a consequence, Tecumseh’s discourse is constructed in a “stream of consciousness” sort of way. The following passage presents an example of transition between free direct speech and direct speech:

I knew that the doll was expensive, but I wasn’t sure what I was supposed to do with it.

“What am I supposed to do with it?” (117)

The comic passage from assertion to question illustrates the quasi-simultaneity between Tecumseh’s perception or thought and his reaction to it. In addition, Gibert enumerates a few of King’s stylistic strategies to create the oral into the written—strategies which have already been mentioned and exemplified in the course of this research project:

The narrator [adopts] a Native presentation which is meant to render on the page the specific nuances of the Native storytellers’ common verbal rhythms. As a result,

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*: 98.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 102.

¹⁵⁷ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial,” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 30, n° 2 (1990): 186.

his rhetorical strategies include intentional digressions, lists and repetitions [...], frequent pauses and hesitations [...], expressions of laughter[...], elision of verbs, extremely brief sentences, punctuation and line breaks that echo storytelling cadences, together with parataxis, illustrated by a striking proliferation of juxtaposed declarative statements in contrast with an almost complete absence of subordination. This narrative mimicking is intended to reproduce a sense of the syntax, tone and diction that characterizes the English speech of Natives¹⁵⁸

and, to conclude, convey a certain sense of the vernacular.

Nevertheless, King also gives a great importance to silences, which are sometimes much more eloquent than words, like in the following passage:

“How long you going to stay?”

“Long as it takes,” says auntie Cassie, and she gives me a big smile.

“For what?”

“Now wouldn’t you like to know,” says auntie Cassie.

“I suppose this is about Mia,” says my grandmother.

Things go quiet then as if somebody has done something rude and no one wants to admit that they did it. Auntie Cassie looks at the floor. My mother closes her eyes and rocks herself ever so slightly.

“Another life,” says Cassie. “Another time.” (54-55).

This passage presents two forms of “eloquent silences.” It opens on an uncommunicative dialogue between Tecumseh and his aunt, for all the narrator’s questions are met with evasive answers. More precisely, one may be tempted to read between the lines and decipher the unsaid information these cues provide—Cassie returned to her birthplace because she has a secret she is not willing to share with the narrator. Actually, she merely smiles—the same smile she gives Tecumseh a few lines further, and which has already been analyzed in Chapter One:¹⁵⁹ it is a fake, joyless smile, a smile that betrays her suffering.

As a consequence, the grandmother’s brutal mention of Mia provides the answer to what the reader may have been suspecting—Cassie’s problem has something to do with her dead baby daughter. Truth thus erupts like an intruder in this passage, for it immediately causes another type of unsettling silence—the silence provoked by something that should have “remain[ed] secret and hidden and has come into the open.”¹⁶⁰ Tecumseh’s comparison between the present situation and the quietness after “somebody has done something rude” implies that the narrator has once more been unreceptive to the

¹⁵⁸ Teresa Gibert, “Written Orality in Thomas King’s Short Fiction.” *Journal of the Short Story in English* 47 (Autumn 2006): 100.

¹⁵⁹ See page seventeen in this research project.

¹⁶⁰ Sigmund Freud. “The Uncanny.” *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003: 132.

“truth” hidden behind the meaning of the grandmother’s revelation. His grandmother has *been* rude, and even cruel, by invoking a ghost Cassie tried to keep hidden. In continuation, Tecumseh is asked to go out, and as he leans against the window, hoping to hear bits of dialogue, one gets the feeling that the conversation seems to go on under the form of both words and silences: “[m]ostly there are long breaks when no one talks, and I wonder if my grandmother knows that I’m listening and is aiming her voice low so only her daughters can hear her” (58).

Moreover, a great number of the previous analyses revealed how poetic sonorities pervade the discourse. As a consequence, numerous episodes come to resemble prose or even verse poems:

“We met at nine.”
“We met at eight.”
“They were on time.”
“No, they were late.” (95)

A smooth and euphonious rhythm is created by the rimes, the parallelism of construction and the four tetrameters. This passage resembles a playful and pleasant little lullaby inserted within the narrative.

Moreover, a great number of onomatopoeias and interjections pervade the narrative, such as “[y]ummy yummy” (67), “Yahoo!” (103), “Aha” (123) or “Hmmmmm” (239). King sometimes includes typographical modifications in order to reinforce the impact of the sounds. The use of capital letters in “UUUUUWHHEEEEE!” (105) comically emphasizes Elvin’s cry of joy as well as “the roar of the truck” (104) as he drives extremely close to Franklin’s dear motorcycles. To conclude, not only do these onomatopoeias convey humour, but they are considered forms of orality *par excellence* in a discourse. An onomatopoeia is “the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named”¹⁶¹—in other words, it is the interdependency between the form of the letters and the sounds they produce.

As a consequence, more than a written or even oral narrative, *Truth and Bright Water* proves to be an aural narrative, a story “relating to the ear and the sense of earing,”¹⁶² a novel one is tempted to read out loud in order to better appreciate the system of sonorities embedded within the discourse.

¹⁶¹ Concise Oxford English Dictionary, “onomatopoeia, n.,” 999.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*: “aural, adj.,” 86.

Moreover, King takes advantage of this “written orality” in order to reconcile and intermingle a variety of familiar and foreign, oral and written traditions. For instance, the narrative perpetuates the Native oral tradition by making several allusions to the Native oral tradition and songs. For instance, numerous parallels are drawn to Native myths of creation. In *The Truth About Stories*, King expresses his predilection for these myths, since “contained within these creation stories are relationships that help to define the nature of the universe and how cultures understand the world in which they exist.”¹⁶³ King then goes on to tell the story of Charm, a woman who fell from the sky in a time when the earth was covered with nothing but water. When they saw her arriving at full speed, the water animals helped Charm for her landing. Later, they tried to dive down to the bottom of the ocean and bring mud in order to prepare a piece of dry land for Charm, and the only animal which succeeded was Otter.

Numerous allusions are drawn to this creation story in *Truth and Bright Water*, especially during Rebecca Neugin’s appearances:

“Some people think a duck is a silly thing,” says the girl. “But it was a duck who helped to create the world.”

[...]

“When the world was new and the woman fell out of the sky, it was a duck who dove down to the bottom of the ocean and brought up the mud for the dry land.”

“Great.”

“Some people think it was a muskrat or an otter.” [...] “But it wasn’t.” (102)

With the anaphora of “[s]ome people,” Rebecca signals that there are many variations to the same story, and that each person can interpret a story differently. For instance, Tecumseh presents the story of the woman on the Horns as a sort of rewriting of the Native creation myth. In Chapter One, “the woman appears to float on the air, her body stretched out and arched, as if she’s decided to ride the warm currents that rise off the river and sail all the way to Bright Water” (10). The presence of the woman, the verb “float” and the theme of water seem to indicate that Bright Water is going to be the place for a new creation story. Moreover, a reader aware of the Native references embedded within the narrative may associate the theme of the “floating” woman on the Horns with Native creation myths rather than with an uncanny, frightening ghostly appearance. Once more, this depends on the way one decides to interpret and imagine the narrative. Similarly, the theme of water may appear an uncanny and rather treacherous one, yet, King uses it as a

¹⁶³ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 10.

Native trickster device. Indeed, the theme of water pervades the narrative as a personified reminder that the land was once covered with nothing but water. Before taking the “ferry,” Helen comments that the river has “been here since the beginning of time” (52), and as they cross the river, a strange transformation takes place:

the fog rises off the Shield, thick and low, and by the time we get to the middle, the river is gone and it feels as though we’re floating above the clouds and that if we were to fall, we’d fall for years before we’d find the water (51).

The personified fog acts here as a trickster instrument causing a progressive change of perspective. The move from animism—“rises off”—to a vague passive form—“the river is gone—draws one’s attention on the cause and effect relationship between the fog’s appearance and the river’s disappearance. The fog thus acts as a strange force which may be considered uncanny at first: the expression “thick and low” conveys its slyly transforming the river into an abyss. In continuation, the two modal expressions “it feels as though” and “if we were to fall” convey Tecumseh’s uncertainty as he gradually uses his imagination to change his perspective on “reality.” Besides, the presence of the verb of sensation “feels” indicates that the narrator accepts to lose his sense of vision—to become blind, in some sort, for he cannot see the river anymore—and to rely on another sense in order to interpret this experience. An evolution takes place simultaneously from the uncanny to the mythical, from the frightening experience of crossing a bottomless abyss to a familiar Native myth of origins. To conclude, the verb “floating” and the reference to an endless fall from sky to water may be a reference to the myth of the Woman Who Fell From the Sky. After all, Tecumseh regularly compares the sublime experience of finding himself on a high spot, looking down towards the river and imagining what an endless fall my look like:

I stand on the edge of the Horns for a long time and look down. The water here is deep and black, and I wonder how it would feel to plunge such a great distance and have nothing to break your fall. (262)

In addition, the theme of water symbolizes the progressive return of the land to the mythical time of stories. The prairies are often described with the lexical field of water, as if the landscape were gradually returning to its initial ocean state: “The prairies can fool you. They look flat, when in fact they really roll along like an ocean. One moment you’re on the top of a wave and the next you’re at the bottom” (237). The prairies and other natural elements are personified as if they were the initiators of this progressive abolition of the boundary between land and water: “all I see is the prairies and the late morning colours that pool up and flood the land” (148). The interchangeability between land and

water reaches a climax when Tecumseh discovers Monroe wearing a bathing suit and literally swimming in the middle of the prairies (123-124).

Likewise, in the novel, stories represent different worldviews that need to be exchanged in order to perpetuate a social bond and thus reunite the fragmented community: “If you’re a guest, we have to feed you, and you have to tell us all about the Cherokee” (219), Tecumseh’s grandmother tells Rebecca Neugin during Indian Days. Moreover, the story is to be told in Cherokee, which, according to Tecumseh, is not spoken by his Blackfoot tribe:

“Gha! Sge!” says Rebecca [...]. “Hila hiyuh i u’:sgwanighsdi ge:sv:’i...”
“Ah,” I hear my grandmother say. “A creation story. Those ones are my favourites.” (220)

One may find a magic realist interpretation to this scene, for the audience seems to understand clearly what Rebecca says. This passage seems to convey the idea that it is less the words than the sounds they provoke that guarantees understanding. Hence the grandmother’s surprising statement that there is “[m]ore to a story than just the words” (219). Hence, too, the importance of an aural reading, for, like the characters, the reader does not understand Cherokee, and yet, he is invited to appreciate these sounds and give an interpretation to them by using the power of his imagination. Tecumseh’s grandmother, for example, imagines that she is listening to a “creation story.”

Moreover, the whole passage emphasizes the impact of words, which can be both negative and positive. After all, according to King, “stories [are] medicine, [...] a story told one way could cure, [...] the same story told another way could injure” (92). In the following passage, Rebecca intermingles the negative, injuring impact of her own experience of colonization and the healing power of stories:

Rebecca nods, and for the first time, she doesn’t look unhappy. “Before the soldiers came, we used to live near Dahlenoga in a really nice house,” she says. “Maybe I’ll start there.” (220)

Although Rebecca’s story begins *in medias res*, the probability expressed by the adverb “maybe” signals that she has not stopped her choice on the proper beginning yet. It also echoes King’s permanent search for the right way of beginning a story in his essay “‘You’ll Never Believe What Happened’ is always a great way to start.”¹⁶⁴ But the good effects of the narrative soon reverberate on her, for “she does not look unhappy” and “now her voice sounds better, too” (220).

¹⁶⁴ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 1-29.

As a matter of fact, the whole community is literally passionate about storytelling. For instance, Chapter Three is entirely structured around stories about Monroe—in the form of rumours or gossip—that each character rekindles. They consist in a list of features a variety of characters “remember” or “figure out” about Monroe. Nevertheless, numerous modal expressions indicate that these stories may be false: “might” (26), “probably” (26) or “if you believed everything Miles said” (27). Moreover, although “Miles never knew [Monroe],” “no one came up with more stories about Monroe than [him]” (26). “[His] stories were pretty lively and full of energy, and when he got to telling them, everyone who was listening would nod and say yes, that sounded like Monroe all right” (27). Later in the narrative, Monroe himself tries to follow the “oral tradition” (194). He asks Tecumseh to be his personal “minstrel,” which is “a medieval term to describe someone who sings songs and recite poetry” (192).

To conclude, the creation of “voice pieces” implies King’s ability to abolish a variety of borders, even between elements which were until then considered as opposed as written and oral forms. The conciliation of a variety of worldviews thus enables the author to include numerous Native symbols and stories within the discourse. Water, the duck, stories, the verb “to float,” and a variety of other themes implicitly convey Native references embedded within the discourse. To conclude, the narrative does not seem uncanny at this stage—it resembles more a metaphor of healing.

Perpetuating the Native Ghost Story in Order to Give a Future to Native People

In *The Truth About Stories*, King points out that the appearance of Native stories in a written form triggered a major reversal at the end of the 1960s: “Native writers began to use the Native present as a way to resurrect a Native past and to imagine a Native future. To create, in words, as it were, a Native universe.”¹⁶⁵ Therefore, their enterprise is both an attempt at bringing the past into the present, and a way of bringing progress and awareness in the contemporary world. They thus began to suggest “new ways of imagining the world, ways that do not depend so much on oppositions as they do on co-operations.”¹⁶⁶ “Written literature has allowed us to come to you,”¹⁶⁷ King states. As a consequence, the

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*: 106.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*: 110.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*: 114.

multiplicity of ghosts or voices pervading *Truth and Bright Water* actually belong to Native authors and people trying to assert their point of view and write back to the conceptions of reality which are considered “‘authentic’ and ‘traditional’” (209). Furthermore, in his article *Godzilla Versus Post-Colonial*, King tries to define the range of Native literature, and the term “associational” may best qualify *Truth and Bright Water*:

Associational literature, most often, describes a Native community. [...] [I]t avoids centring the story on the non-Native community or on a conflict between the two cultures, concentrating instead on the daily activities and intricacies of Native life and organising the elements of plot on a rather flat narrative line that ignores the ubiquitous climaxes and resolutions that are so valued in non-Native literature.¹⁶⁸

In fact, Daniel David Moses’ definition of Native literature looks like a rewriting of King’s *Godzilla Versus Post-Colonial*. Firstly, both state that writing associational literature implies dealing with the concept of Indianness. Indeed, one should “resist the temptation of trying to define a Native.” On the one hand, the word “Indian” is totally devoid of meaning,¹⁶⁹ and refers to nothing but “the literary Indian, the dying Indian, the imaginative construct.”¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, “[h]ow can you be taken as a human being or an artist if people think you are heroic or stoic or romantic or a problem?”¹⁷¹ This is the very reason why, King explains in *The Truth About Stories*, direct address is doomed to failure for Native people. Indeed, the incensed and complaining Indian is immediately associated with the romantic stereotype of the poor Native incapable of finding his place in nowadays’ society—that is to say, a “caricature of protest,” or entertainment, triggering sympathy or lament but no direct action.¹⁷²

Secondly, King and Moses both consider the trickster as a key figure for associational literature.¹⁷³ Indeed, the trickster character or stylistic device is “shifty” and

¹⁶⁸ Thomas King, “Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 187.

¹⁶⁹ “Introduction.” *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990: xi.

¹⁷⁰ Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 34.

¹⁷¹ Daniel David Moses, “The Trickster’s Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore.” *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (Winter–Spring 2004): 109.

¹⁷² Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005: 67-69.

¹⁷³ Thomas King, “Introduction.” *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990: xiii; Daniel David Moses, “The Trickster’s Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore.” *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (Winter–Spring 2004): 109.

“true enough” at the same time to “get [Native writers] beyond the scientific attention span” and “open up a space for a little bit of the strange but true about [Indians].”¹⁷⁴

Thirdly, King, Moses, and a variety of other Native and non-Native writers such as Margaret Atwood state that “humour” is an eminent keyword characterizing associational literature. Margaret Atwood considers that the arrival of Native literature in a written form revealed a central aspect about Indians which had been until then omitted from Western texts. Indeed, by being both “vulgar and hilarious,”

[Natives] ambush the reader. They get the knife in, not by whacking you over the head with their moral righteousness, but by being funny. Humour can be aggressive and oppressive [...]. But it can also be a subversive weapon, as it has often been for people who find themselves in a fairly tight spot without other, more physical, weapons.¹⁷⁵

To conclude, *Truth and Bright Water* represents one of the numerous associational strategies to write back to white domination and “truths” while perpetuating at the same time the healing power of telling stories. Indeed, stories prove a form of *catharsis* for anyone suffering from a crisis of identity.

With the help of his intra-diegetic *alter ego* Monroe Swimmer, King reproduces the literary equivalent of a ghost dance teaching, inviting the reader and characters to remember but also exorcise the ghosts or stories haunting them. By suggesting a counter-reality by restoring the landscape to pre-colonial times, Monroe is only reflecting what King is doing at an extra-diegetic level—using his art in order to express a counter-discourse. King’s own “voice piece” aims at triggering one’s imagination and restore a dialogic relationship where figures of the present are invited to dialogue with voices of the past. King thus uses uncanny themes in a Native way in order to restore an equal footing relationship between white and Native people—and does so by using humour and orality.

To conclude, in his “Introduction” to *All My Relations*, King encourages Native authors to perpetuate the “Native ghost story” and to keep finding new possibilities for “written orality.” Moreover, associational literature also aims at resolving the Natives’ crisis of identity in the contemporary world. It thus suggests major changes by abolishing the fallacious stereotype of the “disappearing race” and restoring a future for Indians.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Daniel David Moses, “The Trickster’s Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore.” *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (Winter–Spring 2004): 109.

¹⁷⁵ Margaret Atwood, “A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King.” *Canadian Literature: Native Writers and Canadian Writing*, 124-125 (Spring–Summer 1990): 244.

¹⁷⁶ Thomas King. “Introduction.” *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990.

Conclusion

The ghost motif, the theme of hauntology, and King's whole novel is based on intricate webs of mirror effects and plays of perspective. Indeed, an uncanny linguistic ghost pervades the landscape of *Truth and Bright Water*, attempting to act upon one's unconscious and symbolizing a form of return of the repressed. This strange force works at abolishing the boundaries between such so-called incompatible domains as the familiar and unfamiliar or the oral and the written. As a consequence, the reader may experience a loss of bearings paired with a feeling of remembrance. Indeed, the linguistic spectres originate from a diversity of voices and stories which have been repressed or omitted over time. By linking a variety of visual and literary arts, King brings back a past long buried and forgotten which reverberates in the present. Monroe's magic brushes and installation art gradually unveil five hundred years of colonization, of white supremacy and of stories. While the landscape gradually transforms into a mirror image of pre-colonial times nature, the narrator meets a variety of ghostly reflections of past Native figures ready to share their individual stories.

"Crossing the mirror" thus implies using one's imagination in order to literally "picture" a variety of representations of reality—or stories. King disseminates in the text a variety of verbs of sensation in order to enable one to achieve a cognitive representation of the text in the same way as if one were part of the action. As a consequence, art, intertextuality and intermediality are instruments put to the service of a Ghost Dance Teaching performance, abolishing in-betweenness and white supremacy and putting everyone—be they Native characters, the white reader, ancestors or the author—on an equal level suited for a dialogic relationship.

All these themes are actually reflected in the final passage of *Truth and Bright Water*, where the whole Blackfoot community is united around a huge theatre performance of the world-famous European story *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*—with Indians playing the role of dwarves (20). This episode can actually be considered a *mise en abyme* of the whole novel, for, like King, Carol Millerfeather uses her art, intertextuality and intermediality in order to suggest a counter-discourse to common representations of reality.

Indeed, the characters quickly realize that the play they are attending “sure as hell’s not *Snow White*” (265). It is, instead, “supposed to be a political satire about the federal government and Indians” (265). As a consequence, instead of staging Indians as figures of entertainment, one is actually—maybe unwillingly—confronted to an unexpected, different, political story. In other words, Carol Millerfeather transformed traditional and rather hackneyed representations of *Snow White* and of Indians in order to suggest a new, “modern version” (158). As a consequence, comedy is used as a pervasive and efficient “ingredient” in both Carol’s play and King’s narrative. Indeed, laughter both unites a community while questioning what was considered “reality” until then. “Dying on stage can be funny, and most people would rather laugh than cry” (265), Tecumseh points out. As a consequence, Carol’s talent for conciliating the “antithetic” categories of tragedy and comedy mirrors King’s own project. Indeed, the author both mirrors and debunks reality in a political aim—that of uniting white and Native people into a dialogic relationship and of offering Indians a future. In any case, Carol’s political satire is crowned with success, since “[w]hen the curtain comes down, everyone in the theatre jumps to their feet and claps” (265). As for Helen, she enjoys her moment of glory: “Standing there in the lights, smiling at the applause, my mother looks like an actress. She really does.” The narrator suggests she eventually succeeded to go out of the vicious circle she was trapped into and became “a real actress” (138).

Moreover, this passage also reveals that changing one’s representation of reality is thus both a personal and communal matter. Indeed, there is more to reality than meets the eye, and what is asserted or perceived is neither necessarily true nor written in stone. In this respect, like Carol Millerfeather, one needs to use one’s “weird imagination” (265) in order to adopt a variety of different perspectives on reality. This theme is mirrored in the passage where the characters choose their seats according to the angle of vision they wish to watch the play from. “Monroe is sitting in the front row, right in the middle,” while Elvin “gets [...] seats in the tenth row” and asserts that “[a]isle seats are always the best” (265). “There’s a post that’s sort of in the way,” the narrator comments, “but if you lean out and look around it, you can see fine” (265). In fact, the presence of a troublesome post obstructing Tecumseh’s vision is not fortuitous, for the narrator is in some sort obliged to view the stage from a different, indirect angle. Moreover, the presence of the pole—which may remind one of the Native symbol of the totem pole—also indicates that vision can be treacherous. One may thus learn to perceive reality through one’s alternative senses—touch, smell, taste and hearing.

Therefore, mirror effects, plays on perspective, the five senses and art may very well be four key expressions to sum up the magic at work in *Truth and Bright Water*. They act as permanent reminders that there is “[m]ore to a story than just the words” (219) and that “[t]here are no truths [...]. Only stories.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁷ Thomas King, *Green Grass, Running Water*. New York, USA: Bantam Books, 1994: 432.

Bibliography

Primary Source

KING, Thomas. *Truth and Bright Water*. Toronto: Harper Perennial Canada, 1999.

Secondary Sources

A Native Way of Writing Back to the Western Gothic

CARIOU, Warren. "Haunted Prairie: Aboriginal 'Ghosts' and the Spectres of Settlement." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 727-734.

CASTRICIANO, Jodey. "Learning to Talk with Ghosts: Canadian Gothic and the Poetics of Haunting in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 801-813.

DERRIDA, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York and Oxon (UK): Routledge, 2012.

EDWARDS, Justin. *Gothic Canada: Reading the Spectre of a National Literature*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2005.

- FINDLAY, Len M. "Spectres of Canada: Image, Text, Aura, Nation." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 656-672.
- FREUD, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *The Uncanny*. Translated by David McLintock. London: Penguin Classics, 2003. 123-162.
- JAMES, Henry. *The Turn of the Screw*. London: Penguin Classics, 2011.
- MURRAY, David. "Cultural Sovereignty and the Hauntology of American Identity." *Mirror Writing: (Re-)Constructions of Native American Identity*. Edited by Thomas Claviez and Maria Ross. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Galda and Wilch Verlag, 2000. 237-256.
- NORTHEY, Margot. *The Haunted Wilderness: the Gothic and Grotesque in Canadian Fiction*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976.
- WEST, Benjamin. *Portrait of Colonel Guy Johnson and Karonghyontye (Captain David Hill)*. Oil on canvas, 202x138 cm. Courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1776.

The Ghost Dance Teaching, or a Native Revival in the Art of Telling Stories

- ELLIOTT, Michael A. "Ethnography, Reform, and the Problem of the Real: James Mooney's Ghost-Dance Religion." *American Quarterly* 50.2 (1998): 201-233.
- GZOWSKI, Peter. "Peter Gzowski Interviews Thomas King on *Green Grass, Running Water*." *Canadian Literature* 161.2 (Summer–Autumn 1999): 65-76.
- KING, Thomas. "Godzilla vs. Post-Colonial." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: World Literature Written in English* 30.2 (1990): 10-16.
- KING, Thomas. *The Truth About Stories: a Native Narrative*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.
- KING, Thomas. "Introduction." *All My Relations: an Anthology of Contemporary Canadian Native Fiction*. Edited by Thomas King. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990. ix-xvi.

MC CORMACK, Eric. "Coyote Goes Slapstick." *Books in Canada* 22.3 (1993): 40-1.

VIZENOR, Gerald. "Native American Indian Literature: Critical Metaphors of the Ghost Dance." *World Literature Today* 66.2 (Spring 1992): 223-227.

WILSON, Jordan. "Another Interview With Thomas King." October 8, 2009. <<https://canlit.ca/another-interview-with-thomas-king-october-2009/>> Last consulted on January 15, 2017.

Transgressing Physical and Metaphorical Borders

ADAMS, Rachel and Sarah PHILIPS CASTEEL. "Introduction: Canada and the Americas." *Comparative American Studies—An International Journal* 3.1 (2005): 5-13.

ANDREWS, Jennifer and Priscilla L. WALTON. "Rethinking Canadian and American Nationality: Indigeneity and the 49th Parallel in Thomas King." *American Literary History* 18.3 (Autumn 2006): 600-617.

DAVIDSON, Arnold E., Priscilla L. WALTON and Jennifer ANDREWS. *Border Crossings: Thomas King's Cultural Inversions*. Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003.

FOUCAULT, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." Translated by Jay Miskowiec. *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22-27.

GOLDMAN, Marlene and Joanne SAUL. "Talking with Ghosts: Haunting in Canadian Cultural Production." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 645-655.

SCHWIEGER, Florian. "A Map to the Truth: Sacred Geographies and Spaces of Resistance in King's *Truth and Bright Water*." *South Atlantic Review* 76.2 (Spring 2011): 29-44.

SÖDERLIND, Sylvia. "Ghost-National Arguments." *University of Toronto Quarterly* 75.2 (Spring 2006): 673-692.

ZAMORA, Lois Parkinson and Wendy B. FARIS (eds.). "Introduction." *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*. Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1995. 1-11.

Orality and Dialogue Versus Indianness and Eurocentric Monologues

BAKHTIN, Mikhail. "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel." *The Dialogic Imagination—Four Essays*. Minneapolis: Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982. 84-258.

BAUDRILLARD, Jean. "The Precession of Simulacra." *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*. Edited by Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner. Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford, GB: Blackwell, 2001. 458-460.

COLE, Thomas. "Essay on American Scenery." *American Monthly Magazine* 1 (January 1836): 1-12

GIBERT, Teresa. "Written Orality in Thomas King's Short Fiction." *Journal of the Short Story in English* 47 (Autumn 2006): 97-109.

HENDERSON, James (Sakéj) Youngblood. "Postcolonial Ghost Dancing: Diagnosing European Colonialism." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000. 57-76.

LITTLE BEAR, Leroy. "Jagged Worldviews Colliding." *Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision*. Edited by Marie Battiste. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000. 77-85.

RIDINGTON, Robin. "Coyote's Cannon: Sharing Stories with Thomas King." *American Indian Quarterly* 22.3 (Summer 1998): 343-362.

RIDINGTON, Robin. "Narrative Technology, Pizza and Contemporary Performance Genres." *Anthropologica* XLII (2001): 225-228.

RIDINGTON, Robin. "Voice, Representation, and Dialogue: The Poetics of Native American Spiritual Traditions." *American Indian Quarterly* 20.3/4 (Summer–Autumn 1996): 467-488.

SCHORCHT, Blanca. "The Storied World of Harry Robinson: Emerging Dialogues." *BC Studies* 135 (Autumn 2002): 145-162.

Healing Comedy and Trickster Discourse

ATWOOD, Margaret. "A Double-Bladed Knife: Subversive Laughter in Two Stories by Thomas King." *Canadian Literature: Native Writers and Canadian Writing*, 124-125 (Spring–Summer 1990): 243-250.

JUNG, Carl Gustav. "On the Psychology of the Trickster-Figure," 1954. <[http://www.the16types.info/vbulletin/content.php/211-On-the-Psychology-of-the-Trickster-Figure Jung?s=912c4a0359bc8f2b312e07335a77b235](http://www.the16types.info/vbulletin/content.php/211-On-the-Psychology-of-the-Trickster-Figure-Jung?s=912c4a0359bc8f2b312e07335a77b235)> Last consulted on April 12, 2016.

MOSES, Daniel David. "The Trickster's Laugh: My Meeting with Tomson and Lenore." *American Indian Quarterly* 28.1/2 (Winter–Spring 2004): 107-111.

OWENS, Louis. "'Ecstatic Strategies,' Gerald Vizenor's Trickster Narratives." *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992. 225-254.

SALAITA, Steven. "Humor and Resistance in Modern Native Nonfiction." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 31 (2011): 133-153.

VELIE, Alan. "The Trickster Novel." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Literatures*. Edited by Gerald Vizenor. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. 121-139.

VIZENOR, Gerald. "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games." *Narrative Chance: Postmodern Discourse on Native American Literatures*. Edited by Gerald Vizenor. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. 187-212.

Ghost Dance Literature

CAMPBELL, Maria. *Halfbreed*. Lincoln, USA: University of Nebraska Press, 1982.

HIGHWAY, Tomson. *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1999.

KING, Thomas. *One Good Story, That One*. Toronto: Harper Perennial Canada, 1993.

KING, Thomas. *Green Grass, Running Water*. New York, USA: Bantam Books, 1994.

KING, Thomas. "A Short History of Indians in Canada." *A Short History of Indians in Canada*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013. 1-4.

ROBINSON, Harry. *Write It on Your Heart: the Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2004.

Other Sources

Dictionaries

Concise Oxford English Dictionary. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Oxford English Dictionary. Web. <<http://www.oed.com/>>

Websites

American Indian Movement:

“A Brief History of the American Indian Movement.” <<https://www.aimovement.org/ggc/history.html>> Last consulted on May 05, 2017.

Ancient Literature:

“Ancient Greece—Homer—The Odyssey.” <http://www.ancient-literature.com/greece_homer_odyssey.html> Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

Canadian Encyclopedia (The):

“Residential School.” <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/residential-schools/>> Last consulted on March 15, 2017.

“Tom Longboat.” <<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/tom-longboat/>> Last consulted on May 9, 2017.

« La chasse au bison ». <<http://thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/fr/article/chasse-au-bison/>> Last consulted on May 15, 2017.

Flower Meaning:

“The Freesia Meaning: Its Meanings and Symbolism.” <<http://www.flowermeaning.com/freesia-flower-meaning/>> Last consulted on May 05, 2017.

History.com:

“*Oklahoma!* premieres on Broadway.” <<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/oklahoma-premieres-on-broadway>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

“Andrew Jackson’s Controversial Decisions.” <<http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.

Indian Country Today:

“Native History: Custer Attacks Peaceful Cheyenne in Oklahoma.” <<https://indiancountrymedianetwork.com/history/events/native-history-custer-attacks-peaceful-cheyenne-in-oklahoma/>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

Legends of America:

“Native American Legends—Chief John Ross of the Cherokee Nation.” <<http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-johnross.html>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.

Medarus:

“Geronimo—Goyathlay 1829-1909.” <http://medarus.org/NM/NMPersonnages/NM_10_03_Biog_Natives/nm_10_03_geronimo.htm> Last consulted on May 09, 2017.

Narcosphere (The):

“Smithsonian’s Morbid Collection of Indian Skulls.” <<http://narcosphere.narconews.com/notebook/brenda-norrell/2011/06/smithsonians-morbid-collection-indian-skulls-0>> Last consulted on May 20, 2017.

National Gallery of Canada:

“Shelley Niro.” <<https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artist.php?iaartistid=24542>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

National Museum of the United States Army Website:

“The Battle of the Wabash: The Forgotten Disaster of the Indian Wars.” <<https://armyhistory.org/the-battle-of-the-wabash-the-forgotten-disaster-of-the-indian-wars/>> Last consulted on May 21, 2017.

Native Heritage Project:

“Tecumseh—Shooting Star—Panther Across the Sky.” <<https://nativeheritageproject.com/2012/04/29/tecumseh-shooting-star-panther-across-the-sky/>> Last consulted on May 03, 2017.

Teaching History.com:

“A Trail of 4,000 Tears.” <<http://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/25652>> Last consulted on May 24, 2017.