

NATIVE CULTURAL IDENTITY CONFIGURATIONS: A STUDY OF TRUTH AND BRIGHT WATER

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ABSTRACT

Known for his poetic comedy and tragic humour, Thomas King is an award-winning Canadian author. "Thomas King has quietly and elegantly done it again," according to Newsday. During a summer spent in Truth, Montana, and the Bright Water Reserve, Alberta, two young Native American cousins, Tecumseh and Lum reminisce on their experiences. An enigmatic woman throws rubbish into a river before leaping in, which sets the tone for the entire film. Her disappearance is being investigated by Tecumseh and Lum, who are on their way. To Tecumseh, it's a mystery as to whether his mother will take him back; if his rolling-stone aunt is home to stay; and why no one is there to shield Lum from his rages. While working with an artist (Bright Water's most famous son) on a life-changing project later in his life. As they prepare for the Indian Days event, Truth and Bright Water's secrets come together in a tragic climax. The guys witness a woman jumping into the river one night. After discovering a child's skull, Tecumseh begins to inquire. That being said, Truth and Bright Water isn't really a mystery. It's all about a delicate balancing act: leaving, returning, giving away, and reclaiming. Truth and Bright Water is an edgy, bitter, brilliant elegy that triumphs in its small-scale repatriation scheme. Every character in this book has an idea about what's wrong with the world: all the reasons are different, and all are true. But the unfinished bridge between the communities of Truth and Bright Water proves that most of them are thinking too small.

Keywords:- Aboriginal, Discourse, Commercialization, Inability

Author, novelist, short-story writer, essayist, screenwriter, and photographer Thomas King, aka Hartley GoodWeather, was born on April 24, 1943, in Roseville, California. He is a member of the Order of Canada and a nominee for the Governor General's Awards. Many consider him to be one of North America's greatest modern Aboriginal authors. He began writing serious fiction around this time period. CBC developed a film adaptation of his debut novel, *Medicine River* (1990), which earned high reviews from critics. A Commonwealth Writers' Prize runner-up, the book was published in 1991. Nominations for a Governor General's Award were made in 1992 for *A Coyote Columbus Story* and in 1993 for *Green Grass, Running Water*. The latter won a Canadian Authors Award for fiction in 1994. In *One Good Story, That One* (1993), King's "The One About Coyote Going West" is included in a collection of ten short stories. There were two more books for kids in 1998, *Coyote sings to the moon*, and *Truth and Bright Water* in 1999.

In the novel, 'Truth and Bright Water,' the author aims to reshape nineteenth-century India's social and political systems through cultural representation. A variety of deception discourses used by the author to disrupt, change and even invert the themes of Indian tragedy and permanence are examples of historical intertext used by King. This privilege allows King to make use of trickster discourse to back up cultural authority figures. As a result of the novel's characters and events, the historical intertext—a historical account of Indian history—is given a fresh imaginative spin. Consequently, Vizenor's testimony on the persistence of cheaters in literature and how this power may be used to overturn stories of sorrow and closure that have been perpetuated over time is strengthened. Tribal imagination, experience, and memory all play a role in shaping this Associative Literature's environments.

Journalism claims that "Indians comprise the majority of Canada's prison population in terms of density." But Lum breaks up the conversation by bouncing his cranium in protest. For museum and scientific purposes, King emphasizes the unavoidable ramifications of colonial bone collection, which are detailed below. For Daniel Francis, a Canadian historian, "the ethnological museum opened at the same time as the government was trying to eliminate the last vestiges of traditional aboriginal culture from day-to-day existence" (21). It is possible to read about culture in a confined and digestible way in a museum. "A museological construction of the natives as being on the verge of extinction"(21) allows their bodies to be examined in a controlled context outside of their natural environment, such as a museum, by keeping the bones of the Children of the First Nation as artifacts." They are left to fend for themselves in the absence of human involvement or acknowledgment of the requisite living culture. Native American culture has been commercialized, and Monroe uses a creative act to fight this commercialization. When he's near the large pile of wood, he'll execute the gift rite. He ignites a fire towards the end of the book. Those attending Bright Water's annual Indian Days festival across the river drive across the river to see the show, as he causes the flames to erupt to such a height. After all that talking and laughing, they find themselves "sitting around the fire." In addition to having a blast, the room's couches and chairs are home to several senior residents. "The children flit in and out of the fog as they race around the fire" (257). However, the significance of the giving away ceremony lies less in what each individual receives and more in what their presence around the fire symbolizes. Monroe's "home-fire," which symbolizes warmth and life for the individuals who come from the two communities of Truth and Bright Water at the time of the ritual, is the only circular and ceremonial community Monroe has established. The legality or invalidity of the ceremonies is not the most important consideration. Most likely, one is re-inventing or creating new rituals. Bringing skulls back to one's house is a way of honouring one's ancestors who had their remains desecrated. Even more importantly, he or she may be able to revive interest in traditional, non-commercial approaches to Indian culture by giving alternatives to his or her existing "Ceremonies" of Indian Days. When it comes to preserving the past, the decontextualized skull gets infected with the hopes and anxieties of today so that the community can move forward into a future that is bright and wealthy. "Indian-origin children" (CHI) (265). To complete the rite, he "rescues"(265) the bones from anthropological relic status and "throws them in the river"(266) (266). Despite Lum's displeasure, the results were satisfactory. It's Monroe's firm belief that the skull was first buried in the region because it was taken from a museum and buried in a distant part of the surrounding area. As a result, he feels that the skull should have been interred in the immediate vicinity from the start. Monroe believes that during colonial assimilation and elimination, the return of the bones is vital to their sense of self as a people and a form of soothing cultural loss. This is where everything begins and ends, according to Monroe. Where else could I possibly take them?' I'd like to know. You could think, "Where else would they prefer to be?". (265). For the deceased to rest in peace, they must be acknowledged by those who still live. A trickster magician, he claims that the story isn't over and the buffalo aren't dead after all to alleviate the effects of his people's dark and oppressive past. Tecumseh learns to recognize Swimmer's enchantment over time and is no longer surprised when he encounters wire buffalos that have traveled far from their original spots. There are buffalos on the Coulees, and he's thinking about them. "I can see them," he says plainly. A handful of them have escaped and are not where they are supposed to be, but most of them have remained where they are (262). Painting and buffalo herd restorations by Swimmer suggest a synthesis of aesthetics and politics in social participation. As a trickster, his role allows him to orchestrate several amusing investments that will take place in the story. Even though the trickster's antics are frequently comical, it's crucial to remember that while their appearances may be deceiving, their underlying meanings are serious. Author Stephen King has stated that he uses humorous trickster characters in his fiction "as a strategy for the reader in some ways to grasp that something is going to happen, that these individuals aren't simply there for a joke."

When it comes to changing and rearranging tribal narratives in mainstream literature, the trickster plays a crucial role: "The trickster is the funny liberator in a narrative, and it is this symbol that resists social scientific discourse" (196). Rather than being a rigidly defined trickster, Swimmer's persona is changeable, malleable, and malleable.

To understand who he is as a person, he must first understand his own cultural and familial background: A discussion of the manual is carried out by Alcott. According to Castell, identity is "a generative source of meaning, inherently collective rather than the individual."

People in India place a lot of importance on their looks. Because of the persecution, he suffered as an outcast, his name influences Lum's physical appearance. Lum has "painted his face scarlet on one side and black on the other," and he has "trimmed his hair as if it had been hacked with a chainsaw." Upon his arrival at Lum's camp, Tecumseh is surprised to see that Lum has "painted his face scarlet on one side and black on the other," as the legend has it (238). On top of that, Lum has a red circle tattooed on his naked chest and long black marks over his arms. He resembles the Saturday matinee Indians in terms of appearance (238). Lum is staring at a woman he believes to be his mother and who has "come home" (in reality, it's Monroe wearing a wig). (239). In addition to grooming and painting his hair, Lum also takes care of his face, chest, and arms. Most of his acts resemble those of a beaten child who has been subjected to physical abuse by his father and has been disfigured as a

result. However, it's also possible to see this as an attempt to integrate into the Indian community. The act of cutting his hair may be a way for him to express his grief over the disappearance of his sense of community. If he paints half of his face red and half black, it may symbolize the opposites of life and death, showing that he is at a crossroads in his life and beginning to understand the absurdity of his predicament. If Lum is trying to play the militant Indian who has trained for battle and is trying to twist the problems of life into something heroic because of Tecumseh's remark that Lum looked similar to the Indians one sees on Saturday mornings, this is plausible. There are major consequences to being caught between two cultures, as Lum's purposeful deformation of himself illustrates. Lum is a powerful symbol of the destruction perpetrated on Indian culture by European colonial control. There is more to the bridge than merely a divide between Indian and European communities. Another possible analogy could be the buffalo carcass currently rotting on the plains. The death of Lum could be seen as a warning to others. There are no easy answers for Indians who live in a world dominated by white people. They could also look into ceremonial approaches to Indian cultures, such as those presented by Monroe Swimmer, who has a wealth of knowledge and experience to share with the community. Statues are Monroe's way to remind people of their ceremonial ties that connect them to the earth and all living things.

Additionally, the assistant is both a protagonist and an artist who is hindered by concerns about the commercialization of Indian culture as he attempts to recreate the ceremony in the community. Other people's innovations of things with Indian design motifs and community events that mimic, if not a parody, Indian culture symbolize the commercialization of Indian culture. Tecumseh and Monroe Swimmer work together to bring the Indian Ceremony back to the community in this film, which has a more intricate story structure than the previous one. In this novel, some characters appear to be better off as a result of their rituals, while others appear to be healing despite the terrible impact of the capitalist culture of consumption. There is a distinct difference between Monroe Swimmer, who briefly leaves and returns to the community, and the bulk of the people. As a famous artist and an assistant, Monroe seeks to restore society to its ceremonial roots. "Monroe is the prodigal son who abandons his people, only to return as a famous artist and as an assistant." To some extent, the Monroe ceremonies are seen as an attempt to make up for commercial capitalism's heinous assault on Indian culture. Throughout *King*, the protagonists and Native Americans, in general, must reconcile their ties to the past and present while also innovating new rituals and healing practices to ensure their long-term health and well-being.

Since its didactic perspective, in which an Indian is better off living in his own culture, is the same as that of two previous novels, this novel does not have a major impact on the lives of the characters. If an Indian is trapped in his section of the form problem, returning home may not always be the greatest solution, according to King. After returning to their normal lives, the majority of the individuals are still presented with the same problem, which in most cases has catastrophic and terrible consequences. The novel's protagonists are only able to overcome their prejudices about Indian and white culture because the artist constructs different depictions of the two cultures. With this story, King hopes to persuade his readers that returning to Indian culture is essential for the well-being of themselves and their families. Some people have never left the Indian Community; this movement doesn't take into account, nor does it say anything about.

Swimmer, a "world-famous Indian artist," returns to the united town and buys and moves into an abandoned church on a hilltop, upsetting the lives of various individuals in the process. Traditional means of coping with grief or a lack of ceremonial culture are demonstrated by Swimmer to Tecumseh and other community members through his subversive art. There is a great deal of admiration from Tecumseh and the rest of the community. Monroe is also a teacher, a mentor, and a wise old man.

It is essential to their work that Truth and Bright Water adhere to the paradoxes between speaking and writing. This aspect of the book receives little critical attention in King's research because of its legendary connection to epic-scale family conflicts. There are many ways in which people have been able to learn about Greek mythology, from oral transmission to written works, including plays that combine both written and spoken language. As the "talking cure," psychoanalysis utilizes the conflicts shown in these myths and games to construct family theories as well as the individual psyches of participants. King's commitment to this long, complex work connects the conflicts between fathers and mothers with the structural difficulties that exist between oral and written communication. By denaturalizing the mother/father dichotomy, we will examine how King believes that a rejection of binary thinking is vital to oral culture's preservation by emphasizing the discretion of terms such as oral and written culture. On several occasions, King employs the border theme to successfully break down binary categories. Robin Ridington's significant contribution to King

Bright Water's ability to bring stories to life through its lyrics. Ridington points out that Helen and Cassie's "high context" communication "assumes that the communicants share knowledge and mutual understanding" between them (106). On the phone with his aunt, Tecumseh says, "Every so often, when I get home from work, I'll call my aunt and tell her how much I love her." King points out that such contact has been culturally linked with

Hierarchical conceptions of gender, ethnicity, and nation, which are based on convention paradigms, are vulnerable to a trickster discouragement that deconstructs them" (157).

In *Truth and Bright Water*, it is shown that art and intellectualism may have a positive impact on people's lives. Monroe Swimmer has taken Tecumseh under his wing, and despite the atrocities he has experienced or suffered, we have a strong sense that all will be well in the end. Monroe is a world traveler, a restorer of indigenous antiquities, and a liberator of indigenous artifacts in addition to being a creator of tacky tourist items. Tecumseh isn't a crazy artist after all, and he may be the only person in this book who genuinely understands the political, historical, and economic reasons that have brought his community, as personified by Tecumseh, to the hazardous position they're currently in. He may have selected Tecumseh because of his relationship with his mother or because he was the right age at the right time to be there. Although Tecumseh is shown to be recuperating and stabilizing at the end of the novel, he does so with the help of music lessons. As a result, Monroe has joined as a supporter and promoter of the event.

Art and music are the only things that seem to be offered in a particularly Tecumseh manner from among Tecumseh's many "Positive" inspirations. Weapons like this can make the difference between a person's future and those of his or her neighbours in the here and now. Even though they don't seem "traditional," we get the idea that Tecumseh is deeply committed to the "civilizing" effects of art and, to be honest, Western music. Before getting the piano, Tecumseh appeared to have little interest in art or artistic expression. Instead of figuring out how to "be himself," he was figuring out how to medicate himself with marijuana.

Tecumseh's mother Helen teaches him about indigenous mythology, which takes place in the luminiferous world between life and death. King upholds the oral storytelling tradition of the locals and the high regard that native culture has for comedic productions (Gruber 39).

To illustrate his thesis, King used the case of a German tourist who pretended to be a native.

After revisiting "Grey Owl Syndrome," Susan Jackel points out that indigenous mythology persists in Canada (102). Karl Pray Syndrome in Germany, for example, is illuminated by this concept (Georgi-Findlay 98). Both occurrences are featured in *Truth and Bright Water*. There is a mention of Adolf Hungry Wolf, an ex-German soldier who now lives in an aboriginal style in Canada and speaks Blackfoot, in a conversation between Lucy and Helen (202). (202). In a scene from the film, King depicts German visitors dressed in local attire as they visit Indian Days. An important part of the festival's appeal to visitors is its cultural significance. India Day organizers say the visitors can get "almost anything they desire" during the event (209). To entice visitors, the vendor touts the souvenirs and crafts as "authentic" and "traditional" (209). Something to do with this.

The truth is important to the characters in this book. Browning, Missoula, and Flathead Lake have vendors who also work on the other side of the border. Indian Days are a great chance for both economic benefit and for individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to meet and interact. About the hope that German tourists will bring in some cash, the locals joke that "Lucille and Teresa are hoping for the Germans" (72).

For their economic heft, Germans and Japanese guests are sought during Indian Days. Despite some tourists' outrageous behaviour, Tecumseh welcomes visitors. Visitors contribute to fostering a sense of community and pride in one's heritage among the locals. The people of Germany, France, and Japan interrogated, grinned, and asked the types of questions that made you feel guilty and important at the same time, all at once (101).

In King's comments, which also reference the bridge and the river, the value of bones is hinted at. The river and water serve as continuing metaphors. Clouds appear to be being "carried along the river" by the wind's currents, according to observers (49).

"The skull is the problem," Tecumseh said (69). To avoid the obvious, he muses, "Perhaps it isn't a child's skull after all." " (71). However, the skull appears clean, which rules out the notion that it is prehistoric or a burial site specimen. Inside and out, it's stunning. When we find it in the grass, it looks as though someone has taken the effort to clean and polish it " (74). This suggests that the cranium has made up its mind. It is very clean because it was removed from a museum and returned to its rightful owner. Westerners and museum curators view it as a work of art worthy of display in their respective mausoleums. Throughout his career, Monroe was involved in museum restoration initiatives. "It seemed like I was being sought out by every institution in the United States. A well-known Indian artist. Someone like this could fix anything!" (251). He owns a collection of bones from Indian children. In a bentwood box, they will be restored to their motherland (250). Finally, Monroe arranges for the return of the bones recovered in the river with a ceremony (251).

Tecumseh and Lum uncovered a cranium that has connections to Shakespeare. His "barrel of a rifle and raises it, like a flag," like Lum is waving the skull around (14). This is the scene.

Has the same grasp on its head as Hamlet's father's skull. There are many parallels between Hamlet's character and Lum in that both have been persecuted for the murder of a father and both are people in conflict who have had experiences with ghosts or the ghostly. In *Truth and Bright Water*, the skull serves as a symbol of Native culture and as a way to honor the ancestors. Because of its criticisms of traditional approaches to anthropology and the display of Native American artifacts in museums, it has become a powerful icon of the past.

It is built around a series of disappearances, some of which are sudden and unresolved until the item of loss reappears, if it occurs at all, across the course of the novel. An unidentified man "comes and suddenly vanishes" at the opening of the story, leaving "no sound, no waves in the water and nothing that marks his fall."

A complex relationship between appearance and reality is a struggle that the characters in this story are grappling with, and Lum is the most abused of them all. No matter how badly his father beats him or how dark purple and black his bruises are (as described by the author), the public is unaware of his abuse because of his father's inability to conceal it.

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