

Introduction

I knew I wanted to teach *Green Grass, Running Water* but didn't think first-year students could really handle it, so the first year it came out in paper, I put it on a second-year course in Canadian literature. One of my students came up to me and said "I took this book last year." I said, "In hard cover?" She said yes, and did I want the notes. Her professor in Arts One, Robin Ridington, had these notes, and if I liked, she would give me a copy. Of course I said yes, and shortly after, she returned with the notes, which explained things an Anthropology professor would know, but that an English professor would not, such as who Changing Woman was. I called Robin Ridington to thank him and he said did I want a tape of a *Morningside* interview with King. Well of course I did (we thank Peter Gzowski and Thomas King for permission to publish a transcription of this interview here). Things began to escalate—I showed the notes to Jane Flick, another colleague who was teaching the novel, who had her own set of notes and she had a look at them and said well these are pretty good, but he's got Babo wrong. (Robin hadn't been sure about Babo, but had guessed "the foaming cleanser" in a spirit of cheerful optimism.) Jane said Babo was a character in Herman Melville's "Benito Cereno." Jane kept improving the notes. I began to act as impresario for Jane's notes. Pretty soon we heard they had been seen in Australia, presumably hitchhiking to Uluru. Jane and I wrote a paper about the way *Green Grass, Running Water* drives its readers to the library to look at obscure books by aging Hollywood actors, accounts of the Cherokee syllabary, and histories of the West, and we gave the paper

at the Association for Canadian Studies in the United States conference in Seattle in November 1995. Duplicating the notes had by now become a minor publishing venture, and we realized we wanted to stop, or at least, to duplicate them in a more definitive way, if not once and for all, which we do at the end of this issue (and watch for them on our website—additions welcome)—preceded by the paper about why *Green Grass, Running Water* generates huge sets of notes.

It also generates good papers, as you will see. Marlene Goldman's examination of the Fort Marion ledger art and its connection to Bill Bursum's map begins to take apart stereotyped notions of the distinction between orality and literacy. As we know from Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams*, different cultures have different concepts of the map, where it comes from, what it shows and what it is used for. Maps are a form of writing. The ledger art is one culture's version of a map, thus of writing, while Bursum's map made out of televisions is another. The ledger art records the Plains Indians' use of the horse as a military technology as well as the foundation for a whole way of life, while Bursum's map symbolizes the connections between television, advertising, media and conquest, and a way of life built on communications technology. Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan would approve. (Probably no accident that Tom King's "Dead Dog Cafe Comedy Hour" on CBC is on radio, not television.)

Blanca Chester looks at how and why oral storyteller Harry Robinson and literary theorist Northrop Frye end up in the same novel; two men of the same generation whose lives played out in what appear to be wildly different ways. Robinson learned to read when he was twenty-two. But he began to learn stories sitting on his grandmother's lap and could tell many more than the hundred recorded by Wendy Wickwire, a selection of which is published in *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller and Nature Power*. He told Wickwire that he "could tell stories for 'twenty-one hours or more' when he got started. 'Kinda hard to believe,' he continued, 'but I do, because this is my job. I'm a storyteller'" (*Write It* 13-14). He had not always been a story-teller, having spent most of his life as a rancher: "I feed stock from January 2, 1917 until 1972—over fifty years I feed cattle without missing a day in feeding season, rain or shine, snow or blizzards, Sundays, holidays and funerals" (13). This seems very different from Frye's brilliant academic career which included the publication of 32 books and monographs and over a hundred articles. However, both men produced

texts that implied an imagined universe, a universe that was not simply personal, but that encompassed the beliefs of whole cultures. King's bringing them together in one work of fiction is a profoundly important syncretic move, one that dramatically reconfigures literary history in Canada.

With Margaret Atwood's publication of *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* in 1970, a new figure took her place at the constructed beginning of Canadian literature (replacing Thomas Haliburton in most accounts). Students who took Canadian literature in the courses that began to burgeon in the 1970s invariably read *Roughing it in the Bush*. As someone who taught it to them (I taught my first class in Canadian literature as a PhD student at the University of Toronto in 1975), I don't recall paying much attention to Moodie's serene assumption that the various properties she lived on were hers, nor to the ways Native people are depicted in her work. I was more interested in the Yankee squatters she despised so much. Neither Moodie, nor I, nor my students were ready to see ourselves as squatters. Florence Stratton's account of the ways in which maps operate in both King and Moodie highlights the persistence of her mindset in Canadians and shows how King undermines it.

Herbert Wylie examines the ways in which King's stories and novels unsettle the notions of Aboriginality and multiculturalism that are already starting to become fixed in discourses of Canadianness. As he points out, King doesn't fit easily into categories, either in his person or as a writer: "Not only is 'Native' less than an exhaustive description of King as a writer, but those looking for a contained, homogeneous cultural community for which King serves as a representative are going to have a hard time." All the articles maintain an awareness of how King's varied perspectives, as a writer and academic of mixed European and Native ancestry, as American-born Canadian, to mention only the obvious ones, have meant that he himself has had to cross many borders in constructing a place from which to write. One of the ways this border crossing has been facilitated is through the figure of Coyote, who manages to trick his way through, past and around difficulties, all the while learning to tell new stories.

WORK CITED

Robinson, Harry. *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*. Comp. and ed. Wendy Wickwire. Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1989.