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Reading tricksters or Tricksters reading?

**An examination of various roles of reading
in Thomas King's
*Green Grass, Running Water***

by

**Doris Mary O'Brien ©
HBA, Lakehead University, 1996**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This thesis explores the integrative storytelling methods which Thomas King employs in his novel *Green Grass, Running Water*. This novel includes and focusses on oral storytelling methods concerning listener participation, and also on literary allusions and symbolism, to prompt the reader into an interactive trickster role to make things happen in discourse.

In order for the reader to understand that he/she has an interactive role, King must give many different examples of reading and roles of reading and storytelling. I explore four main roles and character groups in this thesis. The first are the four old Indians, who exemplify and set the standard for storytelling in this novel; the second is Coyote, who is a reckless participant, but more importantly a student with whom the reader can identify; the third group are the characters, Eli, Lionel, and Bursom, who are realistic readers in relation to the reader's position - they are most like a reader; and lastly, the narrator, whose role as a voyeur and non-directive teacher to Coyote and the reader is consistent throughout the novel. Each of these roles demonstrates the various levels of oral storytelling and implies a great amount of power to the reader in his/her role as interpreter and trickster of discourse. To further demonstrate each of the groups' roles, King has loosely separated the four levels of narrative that each of these groups inhabit. I am using Genette's and Rimmon-Kenan's terminology to examine the various levels of diegesis and to deconstruct and delineate how the various characters' powers in crossing the diegetic boundaries in this novel prompt the reader into self-awareness and push him/her towards a transformative and interactive reading experience.

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**I can only say that I dedicate
this work to those who find the darkness
a place of solace when it seems like
a dream is the most illusive goal**

**and so for my brother, Patrick,
whose spirit inspires me
when he does not even know.**

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INTRODUCTION

FINDING AN APPROACH

"Oral narrative is not greatly concerned with exact sequential parallelism between the sequence in the narrative and the sequence in the extra-narrative referents. Such a parallelism becomes a major objective only when the mind interiorizes literacy" (Ong 147).

"That's the way it happens in oral stories," I says.

"Hmmm," says Coyote. "All this water imagery must mean something"(King 352).

My thesis is a paradox. I am going to argue that King uses oral storytelling methods within a literary context to teach the reader how to read in the same way as a listener participates within the oral storytelling context. How can anyone use something oral in a literary context without changing it into something literary? Ultimately, this novel is, of course, literary. But, I will argue that there are enough stylistic residues in *Green Grass, Running Water* to recognise the oral elements in this novel, which make reading this novel a hybridic oral/literary experience.

King uses oral traditions of storytelling to teach the reader to read. The most obvious oral method is that the story is spoken. It is a very difficult trick to establish the

written word as spoken dialogue as it is experienced in person. One of the best examples of the integration of the oral to the literary is Harry Robinson's storytelling. King reviewed Harry Robinson's book, *Write it on your Heart* in the *Globe and Mail* in 1990 and comments, "it is that in reading Robinson, one is virtually forced to read the story out loud, thereby closing the circle, the oral becoming the written become the oral". David Latham describes Robinson's interfusional style as the combination of the oral and written "in a manner that makes the written word become the spoken word by insisting through the use of such devices as rhythm, repetition, and revision that the story be read aloud"(184). Robinson's stories were, in fact, told orally to Wendy Wickwire who transcribed them in such a way as to retain most of the oral elements which Latham describes above(Robinson 15). Further, King, himself, has stated in an interview with Jace Weaver for *Native Journal*(1993) that Robinson's storytelling style has greatly influenced his own writing(21). Another element to orality is the cultural practice of non-directive teaching. Ruby Farrell (who is also known as the author Ruby Slipperjack) notes in her Master's Thesis "Native Teaching Methods: An Exploration of the Use of Traditional Practical Knowledge in the Classroom" that among Native students, "direct questioning is seen as inappropriate, impolite, and intrusive, since it interferes with the students' personal autonomy"(17). Although her discussion is concerned with Native students in the classroom setting, the ideas are relevant to orality and literature. Direct forms of teaching are not successful because many Native cultures allow for learning through observation and exemplary stories. Indirect and non-intrusive teaching is welcomed and inspires confidence, which in turn stimulates

individual learning. Oral stories allow listeners to create their own meanings from the stories.

Walter Ong notes that in oral cultures, the word is a passing event. Further, most oral peoples “consider words to have magical potency [which] is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven”(32). Ong lists various characteristics of orality. He starts off by noting that “[o]ral peoples commonly think of names(one kind of words) as conveying power over things”(33). He states that “Oral expression...carries a load of epithets and other formulary baggage which high literacy rejects as cumbersome”(38). Further, the “[r]edundancy, repetition of the just-said, keeps both speaker and hearer surely on track”(40). Also, “In oral tradition, there will be as many minor variants of a myth as there are repetitions of it, and the number of repetitions can be increased indefinitely” (42). Another important element is that “oral cultures know few statistics or facts divorced from human or quasi-human activity”(43). “By keeping knowledge embedded in the human lifeworld, orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle. Proverbs and riddles are not used simply to store knowledge but to engage others in verbal and intellectual combat”(44). Oral cultures are also very involved with the present, and any memories which are no longer applicable are lost(46). It follows then that “learning or knowing means achieving close, empathetic, communal identification with the known”(45). Walter Ong argues that the oral mind’s capability to hold onto the narratives is more stable than the literary mind which reads a text. It is plausible. A reader would have to memorise an entire text in order to pass on the text the way in which it was read. There is no need for the reader to retell an entire text; the reader

may simply recommend the text to another person to read for him/herself. And that is one of the distinctions between orality and the literary. Oral stories are told in order for the listener to eventually pass on the story. Literary stories are meant to be read by as many people as possible, but in most cases that text remains autonomous. It is not retold by the reader in the same context that it was read. And King uses the repetition of stories in this novel to teach a reader how to be a participating listener which means to interact with the text. In order to accomplish his goal of an integrated reader, King also uses literary methods to hook the reader into the stories.

Instead of oral practices, such as epithets, which help define a character through the communal knowledge which is shared between teller and listener(s), the use of such literary devices as allusion and symbolic imagery develop characters and create meaning in the text. The paradox remains that anything within this novel is literary, as it is artistically written and expressed with written words. The literary devices used emphasize King's novel as a novel, while at the same time the integration of oral methods, as I have mentioned above, give testament to the fact that this novel is not exclusively a literary experience. The various oral and literary elements which I choose to illustrate my points will become obvious as you read this thesis: I focus on King's design for oral interaction with the text and also on literary symbolic allusions.

Although King uses many literary devices in the novel, the oral elements suggest a sharing dependant upon the listener's participation: the literary is often an enclosed text which can be studied(such as this thesis studies King's novel). Although I am, indeed, analysing King's text using many literary techniques, I have learned through my analysis that King's text is a hybrid of oral and literary devices and practices. The words

on the page are often literary devices(the use of water imagery throughout the novel emphasizes the importance of the dam and its destruction), but King's methods are more often oral(the narrator and Coyote's interactive storytelling lessons while they are watching the four old Indians' storytelling is the best example). It is important to note how the storyteller's role in the various stories which go on throughout this novel is focussed on the teaching role. Although the narrator implies vast amounts of knowledge, as do the four old Indians, that knowledge is not shared, but implied to Coyote and the reader. Thus, the interaction between the reader and the storytelling becomes the focus of the novel and of this thesis.

Dee Horne describes quite well the hybridic nature of this novel in her article, "To Know the Difference: Mimicry, Satire, and Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*"(255). Horne argues that although the Native is forced to use the language of the settler(in this case, English), Native authors can "re-present(rather than repeat) the settlers and their discourse"(256). Horne's argument hinges on the difference between "two modes of hybridity: the first is the colonial mimicry that is a destructive form of hybridity, and the second is the metamorphosis of colonial mimicry into a subversive, *creative hybridity*"(257). The first occurs when the Natives try to imitate the settlers, but can never quite 'get there' because they are, after all, different. The attempts at colonial mimicry are a form of assimilation, which is the negation of the self to try to become 'the other', or rather an attempt to not be 'the other' from the settler. In contrast, the creative hybridic text subverts the settlers' otherness by recognition of the difference, not to eliminate the boundaries between cultures, but to illuminate the interaction between the

cultures.

Horne states that King's novel "is an example of creative hybridity. Thomas King metamorphoses mimicry into satire, subverting the very discourse and settler cultural modes of production that he employs"(259). I agree, as Horne gives many convincing examples of how King subverts and re-presents settlers and Natives in his discourse. For example, giving the four old Indians the names of settler icons in white storytelling, the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye, allows King to undermine these imaginary icons by re-presenting the four old Indians as "more compassionate and sane than the society that incarcerates them" in Fort Marion in each telling of the story(266).

Laura Donaldson also argues in "Noah Meets Old Coyote, or Singing in the Rain: Intertextuality in Thomas King's *Green Grass, Running Water*"(27) that King uses intertextuality as a means to destabilize the colonizing sign systems and stories which came over with the Europeans(28), and that King's subversion of the Noah flood myth is one version in a long line of intertextual rewritings of a flood story(28-9). Donaldson's research further shows that the Noah story is a mixing of even older Mediterranean myths.

Donaldson states that King's rewriting subverts patriarchal imperialism when Changing Woman rejects Noah and also when Changing Woman leaves Ahab to travel with Moby-Jane, the great black whale(37-8). Donaldson's focus on intertextual elements delineates quite well how King uses the biblical story of Noah to redirect discourse and add to a Native voice in the ongoing story and dialogue. King subverts the stories which were told by the colonisers, and were imposed upon the Native's

stories at contact, by rewriting the stories on his own satiric terms.

Although King performs literary actions similar of those of the colonisers, that is, he transforms the available stories to subvert and change the existing beliefs concerning those stories, his actions are not acts of domination, but of resistance. Donaldson notes that the clear distinctions and boundaries which are prized by the Christian ideologies (like man having dominion over all on earth) are humorously avoided and/or unrecognizable to the characters in King's novel who are challenged by these boundaries in the creation stories. Changing Woman still talks to animals and would much rather spend her time with Moby-Jane the great black whale than with the lecherous Noah(38). Donaldson's focus in her article is on King's subversive capabilities in his novel to produce a voice in the continuing dialogue that is storytelling and literature. My focus is aimed towards the artistic interplay rather than the political. But I do agree with Donaldson in her assertion that King rewrites stories in order to subvert established and perhaps stale and stalled stories. Further, I assert that King has attempted - and succeeded - in creating a hybridic text which not only allows but encourages the reader to make his/her own interpretation based upon his/her own reading experiences, and also to learn from this text how he/she can change his/her own reading practices while involved with *Green Grass, Running Water*.

Both of these articles are argued well and interesting to read. *Green Grass, Running Water* includes a wide spectrum of material which all allow scholars to shape and inform their own understanding of this novel. Donaldson focusses on the intertextual elements which transforms the traditions which King is using - in this article

they are the flood myths. Horne's focus on a creative hybrid text does not limit her analysis to one aspect within the text, as she gives many examples of colonial resistance and subversion throughout the novel. I choose to study the storytelling which takes place in its many forms throughout the novel. Instead of choosing an approach which focusses on critical methodologies involving political concerns, as both Donaldson and Home have done, I am more concerned with the literary(which includes oral methods) process through which King engages readers to participate in throughout the novel. And of course, I acknowledge that changing a reader's practices is a political act. But my analysis is more focussed on the how rather than the consequences of King's methodologies.

CHAPTER ONE

ASSUMING READER DISGUISES

-- How to find a reader in a haystack --

"One of the roles of the trickster is to try to set the world right...." King tells Constance Rooke in an interview in 1990, for *World Literature Written in English*(68). They are discussing the role of Harlen in *Medicine River*(1990), King's first novel. Harlen is an ambiguous character who tries to fix the problems of the community. He is ambiguous because no one really knows how he makes his living, and no one really questions it. Harlen just *is*. Harlen is compared to a "spider on a web. Every so often, someone would come along and tear off a piece of the web or poke a hole in it, and Harlen would come scuttling along and throw out filament after filament until the damage was repaired"(31). There are numerous tricksters in King's second novel, *Green Grass Running Water*. In this novel, the role of the trickster is not only defined by his or her ability to fix up the world, but also by his or her ability to listen, understand, read, and eventually tell a story. In many cases, it is the trickster's storytelling which changes and fixes the world. The tricksters in this novel are storytellers, listeners of stories, readers of books, watchers of movies, and voyeurs of narratives, who all participate in the storytelling which goes on in the novel.

The character, Coyote, in the novel is a compilation of the trickster figure in Native cultures across North America, but most specifically the Cherokee tradition. Anthropologists, writers, poets, Native and Non-Native, all agree that the trickster figure is hard to pin down to a single definition, but that the trickster is a recognizable figure when present. William Bright, an anthropologist, observes in his book, *A Coyote Reader*, that the trickster "is an insatiable glutton, a gross lecher, an inveterate thief, liar and outlaw, a prankster whose schemes regularly backfire"(18). Bright also notes that "he is no altruist; he acts out of impulse, or appetite, or for the pure joy of trickery"(18). Salish/Metis author, Lee Maracle, chooses to look at how the trickster is involved in storytelling, not merely as a character within a story. She asserts in her preface to *Sojourner's Truth* that listeners and readers become tricksters when they are involved in the act of reading or listening. She declares that a reader becomes "the trickster, the architect of great social transformation at whatever level [he/she] choose[s]"(13). A trickster makes things happen. A reader then, has to make things happen in discourse. Anishnabe writer and critic, Gerald Vizenor, also does not believe that the trickster can be so easily defined with labels and characteristics, but he does agree that the reader is involved in the storytelling process, albeit for different reasons. He writes in his essay, "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games",

[t]he trickster is a sign, a communal signification that cannot be separated or understood in isolation; the signifiers are acoustic images...and the signified, or the concept the signifier locates in language and social experience, is a narrative event or a

translation. The listeners and readers become the trickster, a sign, and semiotic being in discourse”(189).

Every time a word is uttered, its meaning is different in that the reader creates the trickster in his/her own mind once the name is uttered. The verbalisation of the words make things happen - whether that be in the listener's consciousness, the storyteller's, or both at the same time. Thus, the knowledge and experience of the reader are essential to the trickster and his/her role in discourse. If the listener and storyteller have different ideas of what the trickster represents, then there will be more than one story taking place. Vizenor further states that the “trickster is never the same in oral and translated narratives; however, these differences are resolved in comic holotropes and discourse in modern literature”(189). By “holotropes” Vizenor means metaphors which are shared through communal experience and knowledge. Accordingly, “the trickster is not a presence [n]or a real person but a semiotic sign in a language game”(204) in which the reader is engaged. “The trickster summons agonistic imagination in a narrative, a language game, and livens chaos”(188). The writer or teller creates the trickster ‘sign’ when he/she is telling, but the reader/listener then recreates the sign when he/she reads/listens. Both are essential to the storytelling.

In *Green Grass, Running Water, Coyote*, as a trickster, exemplifies oral interaction between a reader and a teller by taking on the role of the listener in the novel. Monika Fludernik lists features of the listener which are present in oral narratives in her book *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*(1996). She notes that there is

...a constant interaction between interlocutors...Listeners...may get

very involved in the story, supplying their own ideas...And of course, they continually interrupt to ask questions, and register their surprise, solidarity, empathetic anger, etc...(64)

Coyote, performs many of these functions in *Green Grass Running Water*.

He asks the narrator, "Is this a puzzle?...Are there any clues?"(100). Coyote unknowingly points out to the reader, what the narrator keeps telling Coyote, "pay attention"(100). The implication is that neither Coyote, nor the reader, should read or listen passively. The narrator also tells Coyote, "Use your imagination"(105). Coyote, and the reader, must fill in the gaps on their own. The listener must not only avoid passivity, but actively contribute to the story, in order for the story to progress.

Once Coyote's role as listener is established, the reader is interpolated into the story. The first interpolation occurs when

... "Changing Woman has landed on Old Coyote."

"Yes, yes," I says. "Everybody knows that by now. And here's what happened(144).

The 'Everybody' referred to are the readers. The narrator places the reader in the same position as Coyote, as a listener to the story. The second interpolation occurs when Coyote is ready to listen to the story again:

"Okay," says Coyote. "Tell me a story."

"Okay," I says. "You remember Old Woman? You remember that big hole and Young Man Walking On Water? You remember any of this at all?"

"Sure," says Coyote. "I remember all of it."

"I wasn't talking to you," I says.

"Who else is here?" says Coyote(391).

The reader is 'here'. The reader's interpolation demonstrates the connection between Coyote and the reader: Coyote is unaware of the reader, just as the characters in the story are unaware of Coyote. The reader takes on the privileged position which Coyote enjoys throughout the novel. The characters in the story are affected by Coyote's imagination and participation, as I will discuss further in Chapter Two. Coyote himself exists within the reader's imagination while the reader is reading the novel. But the narrator establishes his awareness of the reader, by interpolating him/her. In effect the reader will be shaken because it is implied that the reader exists within the imagination of the narrator. The narrator's interpolation of the reader acts as a signpost for the reader to read as Coyote reads, that is, to participate as Coyote participates in the listening to and interacting with the stories that are told in the novel.

The reader must learn that one of the tropes for discourse within the novel is singing. It is an apt choice by King since song is very important to Native cultures and has the power of creation(Beck et al 42). Coyote sings and there is a huge earthquake. The earthquake disrupts the balance of the story, and the Grand Baleen Dam bursts. The effects of this earthquake are positive for the Blackfoot community in the story. The colonizing elements within the story are halted. The traditional home(the Stands Alone cabin) of the Blackfoot is washed away, but Norma, Alberta, Latisha, and Lionel gather together to start rebuilding(424). They would not have been able to rebuild if the cabin was washed away by an active and open dam. Thus, Coyote's song allows the story to advance in a positive manner for the Blackfoot characters within the realistic narrative.

Coyote can accept the earthquake which destroyed the dam, because he created it. When there is another earthquake in the novel, he is frightened:

"Earthquake! Earthquake!" yells Coyote.

"Calm down," I says.

"But it's another earthquake," says Coyote.

"Yes," I says. "These things happen."

"But we've already had one earthquake in this story," says Coyote.

"And you never know when something like this is going to happen again," I says.

"Wow!" says, Coyote. "Wow!"(418).

Although Coyote is a listener and participating in the story, he is not the only one; therefore, there can be many earthquakes and unpredictable discourses. Coyote does not hear the song which creates the earthquake, but it must be there. At this point in the novel, both Coyote and the reader are uninformed; this is the only moment where the reader is not in a privileged position over Coyote. It is implied that another reader/listener has sung a song which created the earthquake. The narrator, who is familiar with many songs and the rules of storytelling, is not surprised and provides a somewhat calming effect for Coyote and the reader.

Ultimately, the reader becomes implicated by reading the conversations between Coyote and the narrator. From beginning to end Coyote is being taught storytelling by the narrator. The reader is learning about storytelling as it exists in the novel by Coyote's example. It is Coyote who sings and/or dances and creates an earthquake in

the story. Coyote demonstrates that the listener must be an active listener/trickster in storytelling to make the story active. Coyote literally shook up the story. The reader also must become a trickster to make things happen. If there is no audience in storytelling, there is no story being told - it is stalled. If there is not a reader, the story will not be read.

Every act of reading involves interpretation, which in turn, is tricking. The situatedness of the reader determines how 'developed' his/her 'tricking' capabilities are, or even if he/she will accept his/her role as a trickster. It is not a question of whether or not tricks are good or bad, but that tricks and interpretations 'happen'. It is the aware trickster who can control his/her own tricking in a positive manner as established by various conventions for each interpretive community.

There are many levels of expertise when it comes to storytelling in this novel: the four old Indians are expert storytellers; Coyote is a chaotic storyteller who is trying to learn through listening; Eli, an English professor, still has to learn his role in the communal storytelling of his Blackfoot relations; Lionel is a reluctant listener, who does not acknowledge the storytelling that goes on in the novel until the end; and of course, the narrator implies incredible amounts of storytelling knowledge which is imparted to Coyote in conversations while the two of them are eavesdropping on the stories. Each of these characters illustrates to readers the various roles involved in storytelling (in most cases it is in dialogue as oral storytelling).

In a lot of ways, this novel is a didactic text on reading practices. I am making this assertion after having read the novel and have myself learned how to read and have discovered that there are indeed paths which King has drawn in order for readers to

follow which lead to specific interpretations. The example which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three is the reading of the Western in the novel. King definitely wants readers to perceive Eli's and Lionel's reinterpretation of the Western more positively than Bursom's who incidentally refuses to change his reading.

In order to teach a reader anything, King must make some assumptions about the reader(s) who are going to read this novel. Robin Rabinowitz writes in *Before Reading* that "readers ha[ve] always posed a problem for writers....An author has...no firm knowledge of the actual readers who will pick up his or her book. Yet he or she cannot begin to fill up a blank page without making assumptions about the readers' beliefs, knowledge, and familiarity with conventions"(21). In accordance, "an actual reader's interpretation of a specific text is at least in part a product of the assumptions with which he or she approaches it, including assumptions about the rules appropriate for transforming it"(174). A reader cannot step out of his or her reading experiences. It is these reading experiences which determine how a reader will approach a text: a reader's experiences and assumptions shape the reading, and the reading creates meaning. Jonathan Culler posits, "if the reader's experience is an experience of interpretation, then one is better placed to make the further claim that the experience is the meaning"(40). But what is the balance between the reader's presuppositions and the reader's reading of this novel? It is up to King to make the reader's presuppositions and location meet the novel so that there will be an understanding between them.

Rooke asked King whether or not he considers his audience when he is writing.

He responds,

When I do my Native material, I'm writing particularly for a Native

community...It's a real irony because as I see my audience out there, and as I think about that Native audience and how much I hope they'll enjoy the book and the kind of storytelling that goes on in the book [*Medicine River*], I'm also reminded that the book costs twenty-five bucks for the hard copy. And you know, not a great many Native people are going to want or have twenty-five extra bucks to put out on the book. So the audience that I write for in some ways almost becomes a lost audience...Nonetheless, it sustains my writing to keep that audience in mind(72-3).

As a Native person, I think that he is writing for me. My placement as a reader who is Native, and with experience in various Native cultures, may allow me insight to some references to Native culture which many readers, who do not have experience of Native culture, do not pick up on. The example which King gives to Rooke for a reading which utilizes subject matter drawn from Native culture is the scene in *Medicine River* when Will agrees to take a photograph of Joyce Bluehorn and her family. She tells him, "I got a big family". King relates that when he is reading to a predominantly Native audience people start snickering and they are ready for the humorous situation ahead. When he is reading to a predominantly non-Native audience, King comments that there is silence at this point. The listeners, who are unfamiliar with the role of the Native extended family do not foresee the large family gathering coming for the photo shoot(Rooke 74). Upon reading this, I placed myself as a reader familiar with Native material and culture. I, too, giggled when I was reading this passage. My knowledge

and experience of Native cultures allows me, as a reader, a privileged insight to the words presented before me when it relates to Native culture. I may not be familiar with every aspect of every Native culture, but in this instance, I am familiar with the humour that is presented by this example.

But *Green Grass Running Water* does not exclusively draw from Native traditions and ideas: there are many allusions to Western literary culture. King alludes to three works by Herman Melville, ("Benito Cereno", *Moby Dick*, "Bartleby the Scrivener") which are just as fundamental in the explication of the novel as is Native culture. The use of these literary works denotes King's expectations of his readers, which is to have at least some familiarity with the codes and conventions of literary study as it exists in universities today. The wide range of material in this novel is enormous.

There are two possibilities for King's enormous diversity: the reader becomes aware of his/her situatedness while encountering various subject matter within this novel; and the reader, if paying attention, will learn how to read. King uses the Cherokee language and text to situate the reader, along with the use of various characters from Melville's stories (there are many more instances of placement, of course, I have just chosen these two for demonstration). We know that King considers a Native audience while he is writing, but as he is not even sure if they will read it, King assumes that 'other' readers are going to read his novel, and he writes for this general audience as well. Rabinowitz notes that,

authors are forced to guess; they design their books rhetorically for some more or less specific hypothetical audience, which I call the

authorial audience. Artistic choices are based upon these assumptions - conscious or unconscious - about readers, and to a certain extent, artistic success depends on their shrewdness, on the degree to which actual and authorial audience overlap(21).

Although King's ideal reader would be a reader who understands the world just as he does, King does not limit himself or his text just to please his authorial audience. King has expectations that his readers will understand both the significance of Coyote, and of the character, Babo, within the text. King's ability as a writer is tested by the various mixing of oral and literary allusions within the text. The reader's abilities and experiences as a reader are manipulated by King. If a reader does not understand why Babo and the four old Indians get along, then King is not making his novel work as an interactive text.

It is also important to think of a reader's assumptions because a reader does not come to the text 'clean'. Rabinowitz argues in *Before Reading*, that even within an interpretive community, "interpretation depends radically on the reader's starting point, which will influence (although not necessarily determine) his or her reading experience. And the proper starting point is always, as I have suggested, presupposed by the text, not contained within it"(37). Any reader of *Green Grass Running Water* is challenged by the novel when it comes to his/her starting point. The diverse material in the novel can be interpreted in different ways.

Native American novelist, Louis Owens, states in his introduction to *Other Destinies: Understanding the American Indian Novel*, that "[t]raditionally, a[n oral]

storyteller's audience consisted of tribe or clan members who could be counted on to contribute a wealth of intimate knowledge to the telling of any story, to thus actively participate in the dynamics of the story's creation"(13). Thus, when King opens the novel with Coyote, those readers who are familiar with Native stories will easily accept the unpredictability of a trickster story - that Coyote's dream can escape the boundaries of Coyote's mind and imagination, and that Coyote is awoken by a new and noisy outside force which came from him in the following example:

So, that Coyote is dreaming and pretty soon, one of those dreams gets loose and runs around. Makes a lot of noise.

Hooray, says that silly Dream, Coyote Dream. I'm in charge of the world. And then that dream see all that water...

..."Who is making all that noise and waking me up?" says Coyote.

"It's that noisy dream of yours," I says. "It thinks it is in charge of the world"(1)

Other readers may find it unsettling that Coyote is disturbed by his dream and later converses with his dream. Perhaps he or she will determine that Coyote has a multiple personality disorder in which Coyote's Dream, the narrator, and Coyote each have a voice. Either interpretation will be based upon the reader's starting point.

And how does a critic explain a reader's starting point? How can King or a reader relate his/her reading experiences to reading this novel? All reading and personal experiences make up individual starting points. Literary scholarship calls these experiences 'intertextual' when contained within the confines of a text, that is, material which the reader has read before, when read again, is read in the new context with the

old context in mind. Laura Donaldson, whom I have mentioned in my introduction, approaches intertextuality as a rewriting:

Intertextuality - literally, "between textness" - is one of the most important semiotic concepts to emerge in the last several decades. As originally articulated by French theorist Julia Kristeva, it describes the transposition of one sign system into another in order to exchange or to alter it: a gesture implying the displacement of the earlier system by the later and the condensation of the later system onto the earlier(28).

Donaldson argues that "King attempts to displace and counteract the Christian transposition of aboriginal sign systems by rewriting one of its foundational narratives"(28). Intertextuality is used in this text as a strategy in which a rewriting of material is integral to a creation of meaning. But Donaldson also notes that she "will follow a fundamental truth of oral tradition - that every story elicits another story - and will produce [her] own intertextual narrative about Turtle Island's ongoing contest for meaning"(29). Turtle Island, of course, is North America, as it is known to many Native tribes.

The two-fold definition of intertextuality - rewriting and creating - exemplifies the dual nature within King's text. King plays on various reading experiences. Every intertextual element acts as a marker for the reader for his/her own self-awareness, and also for the critic to determine what King's assumptions are and who he is writing for, since King must assume that a reader will understand the conventions and experiences he writes in the novel. But King's styles also allow for the reader to learn various

conventions that are employed within this novel.

King creates a hybrid text using materials drawn from both the oral and literary traditions to teach the reader how to 'read' this novel. 'Reading' may be either listening closely to a storyteller, watching a movie, or reading a novel. The cyclical nature of orality is translated to storytelling, both written and oral in this novel. Coyote's role as a listener is a trope for the reader's role in reading. It is an interactive role. The reader of this text to has an opportunity to become tricksters of discourse much in the same way that Lee Maracle, as we have seen, expects her readers to become tricksters. Coyote is learning the storytelling process in the novel from the narrator, and also by the examples of the four old Indians. The four old Indians have rules and a 'proper' procedure, which they are very conscious of and dedicated to, while they are 'telling'. The four old Indians represent the traditions of storytelling and are present to ensure that the reader will learn the codes and conventions to 'proper' storytelling. Coyote is the chaotic reader who demonstrates, through his misdirected enthusiasm, the effects that a listener/reader can have on a story.

The assumptions which King has about his reader designate how and where he places the reader using the subject matter in this novel. The presuppositions of the reader will determine how she or he will deal with the text that she/he is reading. An examination of a conversation within the text between Babo and Delano will demonstrate quite clearly three possible reading levels in the novel, and will also demonstrate how complex it is when one is trying to determine how a reader interprets a text, or how a reader can be 'tricky' with a text.

King uses characters and themes from Melville's "Benito Cereno". The story is a

search for meaning on literal and tropological plains, or seas, as it were. King's use of these characters implies that there is also a search for meaning in *Green Grass Running Water*. The levels of meaning inferred by the reader are again dependent upon his/her knowledge of this story. Thus, meaning will be determined only by that knowledge, and the irony created by these characters is understood exclusively by those readers who have read Melville's story.

"Benito Cereno" is a fictionalized story about a slave ship that has been taken over by the slaves, and a passing ship's captain's visit: it is a story of subversions of appearances and stories. The slaves and remaining Spaniards must act as if they are still a slave ship. The search for meaning by Captain Delano is central to the drama. Delano knows that something is not quite right, but he cannot untie the complicated knot that is set before him (Melville 131-209). The search for meaning is not only Delano's. The reader of Melville's story is only given the story through Captain Delano's perspective. Thus, both Delano and the reader are trying to figure out what is unusual about this ship and why. But the reader is given an advantage because he/she can see that Delano is witnessing something strange and trying to figure it out; consequently, the reader is trying to determine why Delano feels that there is something amiss, and yet cannot ascertain what it is, at the same time the reader is trying to solve mystery of the ship. Melville manipulates the reader as he/she is presented with the story's inconsistencies in small doses and hints. For example,

By way of keeping his mind out of mischief till the boat should arrive, he tried to occupy it with turning over and over, in a purely

speculative sort of way, some lesser peculiarities of the captain and crew. Among others, four curious points recurred:

First, the affair of the Spanish lad assailed with a knife by the slave boy: an act winked at by Don Benito. Second, the tyranny in Don Benito's treatment of Atufal, the black: as if a child should lead a bull of the Nile by the ring in his nose. Third, the trampling of the sailor by the two negroes; a piece of insolence passed over without so much as a reprimand. Fourth, the cringing submission to their master, of all the ship's underlings, mostly blacks; as if by the least inadvertence they feared to draw down his despotic displeasure.

Coupling these points, they seemed somewhat contradictory(166).

The reader of Melville's story will definitely see the contradiction, but is not allowed to see why that contradiction exists. The reader is also allowed to see Delano trying to figure out through his sense and understanding of the world, what is happening, if anything, on the ship, San Dominick. The reader's search for meaning in Melville's story is a given. But for the reader of King's novel, the search for meaning depends upon his/her previous reading experiences.

In *Green Grass, Running Water* King presents a conversation between Babo, and the patrolman, Jimmy Delano. Babo works at the government mental hospital as a janitor. She was the person who discovered that the four old Indians were missing from the F-Wing that morning. Delano has been ordered to take over the interview with Babo to get the information about the four old Indians' disappearance. Instead, Babo tells

him, "My great-great-grandfather was a barber on a ship. Sailed all over the place, cutting hair, shaving people....Now my great-great-grandfather could handle a blade. Have I got stories - "(King 92).

The reader who has not read "Benito Cereno" will read this in the context of *Green Grass, Running Water*. He/she will read this information that Babo is giving as part of her family history. Perhaps the reader may think that it might be a play on African American barbers, or servants. Babo's nonchalant attitude and playful avoidance of the questions which are posed to her will be read as part of her character. The extent of the figurative interpretation, or even if there will be one, is dependent upon this reader's energy and enthusiasm. In any case, the reader is restricted to Babo's words within this novel.

The reader who has read Melville's story will read irony in Babo's statements. The character, Babo, in "Benito Cereno" is a male slave who has led a revolt on a slave ship and is consequently in charge of the ship, when the American Captain, Delano, arrives. Everyone on the ship has to make the appearance that everything is as it should be - the Spaniards in charge, and the slaves are slaves. Babo acts as if he is Don Benito Cereno's special servant who accompanies Cereno in all of his activities. The most intense scene in Melville's story occurs when Babo shaves Cereno in the afternoon. Delano thinks that it is strange that Cereno is taking a shave in the middle of the day but accepts it. He does not completely comprehend or grasp the intense power struggle which is happening before his eyes, but he does sense something is happening:

Setting down his basin, the Negro searched among the razors, as

for the sharpest, and having found it, gave it an additional edge by expertly stropping it on the firm, smooth, oily skin of his open palm: he then made a gesture as if to begin, but midway stood suspended for an instant, one hand elevating the razor, the other professionally dabbling among the bubbling suds on the Spaniard's lank neck. Not unaffected by the close sight of the gleaming steel, Don Benito nervously shuddered; his usual ghastliness was heightened by the lather, which lather again, was intensified in its hue by the contrasting sootiness of the Negro's body. Altogether the scene was somewhat peculiar, at least to Captain Delano, nor, as he saw the two thus postured, could he resist the vagary that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best-regulated mind is not always free(Melville 173).

There is irony in this scene itself. Delano does not see what is really happening before him. He senses the hostility, but he passes it off as an 'antic conceit'. The reader who is familiar with the power of this scene will see the irony in King's character, Babo, whose family maintains the tradition of barbering. It is not barbering that she is maintaining, but the power games. She is playing with Jimmy Delano when she tells him of her family. Delano is supposed to be acquiring her statement concerning the missing patients(the four old Indians) from the F-wing, but she is controlling the conversation the entire time(King 91-3). Instead of answering Delano's questions concerning the four old

Indians, she talks of her own lineage.

King's replaying of Babo as a conductor of a story, and Delano as an unknowing participant, is imperative to the explication of his novel. King reiterates the storytelling power that Babo has in Melville's story. Babo creates the idea for the illusion which is maintained on the San Dominick. In King's novel, Babo's continual focus on her own stories, and elusive meandering away from the story which Delano wants to hear, mirrors Melville's Babo who refuses to acknowledge the story at hand - slavery.

King diverges from Melville's story when he creates Sergeant Cereno. When Babo is telling Cereno stories while he is questioning her, Cereno tells Delano to take over, "Enough of this dog and pony show"(King 54). In King's text, Cereno will not play along, as in the original, but in King's story, Cereno has the power to stop listening to Babo's storytelling. King subverts Melville's text, by allowing Cereno a voice in *Green Grass, Running Water*. Cereno's strength demonstrates that although things have changed, there are still power relations between the races. King places Cereno as a Sergeant. Cereno is still involved in a hierarchical organisation which controls, or at least mediates, communities. It is ironic that Cereno represents a man who is supposed to keep the peace. In Melville's story Cereno is a man who can take advantage of black peoples and is self-serving.

The second interpretation is a vastly different reading from that of the unaware reader. The first reader may see that Babo is controlling the conversation, but she/he will miss the underlying irony and significance of Babo's familial literary legacy which the second reader may understand.

The reader who has not only read "Benito Cereno" but is also familiar with scholarly articles concerning the story's genesis and historical significance will find even more irony than the second reader. "Benito Cereno" has been called "one of the most important works of fiction of the nineteenth century"(ix) by James Nagel, the General Editor of *Critical Essays on Herman Melville's Benito Cereno*, which contains over twenty essays on the story. As one of the most important works of fiction, there are many different perspectives and analyses that have developed since the story was written in 1850. I would like to emphasize for this third reading that the story's historical significance is important to King's use of the characters from "Benito Cereno". Melville's story is based on events which happened in a bay of what is now Haiti, and "antislavery though it may be, contains no invocation of noble savagery and no such hope about the fruitful merging of cultures"(Sundquist 154). Gloria Horsley - Meachum notes that

The New World market for African captives developed during the reign of the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella and Charles the Fifth, an era when ecclesiastics were exceedingly influential. The Jeronymite Fathers, who for a time virtually governed Santo Domingo, advocated importing African slaves to replace the rapidly diminishing indigenous peoples *compelled* to work on the sugar plantations and in the gold mines(my emphasis 95).

The reader will understand that the history behind the story's genesis is significant on many levels. First, King, as an academic, is aware of the discussions surrounding "Benito Cereno". The ambiguity of Melville's text can be used to show that

the power relations between races and cultures still exists today. When Babo speaks of her heritage, she invokes the past, and the struggle that the Africans faced when they were brought to the Americas. Babo's ancestor rebelled and controlled Don Benito Cereno, and there is a suggestion that Babo is aware of this history, as she has some stories which she could tell. The second level of significance is that the Africans were brought to the Americas because the indigenous peoples were dying off, and the colonizers needed workers. Thus, the struggles of two peoples are joined in King's text. The general public does not usually associate the African slave trade with the original inhabitants of the Americas, and King deftly unites them in the *Green Grass Running Water*. It is Babo who understands the four old Indians' activities, and she is also the only one who is not disturbed by all of the strange and surreal happenings, such as her car disappearing from the parking lot and reappearing floating on the dam. She just says, "Well, isn't that the trick"(King 406).

Further, Delano's and Melville's reader's search for meaning through the story's progression reflect King's readers' search for understanding and coherence in *Green Grass, Running Water*. King's use of exemplary readers allows a guided tour for King's readers. The fact that Babo is the only character in the realistic narrative who easily accepts the supernatural (storytelling) 'tricks' affirms Babo's role in "Benito Cereno" as the conductor of the assumed reality on the ship San Dominick. In both stories, Babo is a participant in the telling of a story which he/she wants to tell. Whether that story is true or not is irrelevant, as the narrator of *Green Grass, Running Water* tells Coyote, "There are no truths...Only stories"(391).

This last reading is certainly different from the first. There is no sense of irony or awareness of actual events that have taken place in the history of this continent in the first reading. But, the three readings are not the only readings possible. Every reader has his/her own reading experiences which make up his/her presuppositions and starting point concerning history, literature, culture, etc.. Thus, every intertextual element within the novel, and there are many, has multi-levelled possibilities for interpretation depending upon the reader's knowledge and previous experiences. The implications are immense: there will be as many interpretations as there are readers. Interpretive communities which are determined by their consensual conventions will agree on which meaning is relevant to them. King's awareness of interpretive communities makes creating a definitive meaning in this text difficult. King is challenging the communities by making a reader aware of his/her own presuppositions, which in effect makes the reader question the conventions and interpretive communities with which he/she is reading. It is a paradox, since as Stanley Fish notes,

a normal context [for reading] is just the special context you happen to be in. Although it will not be recognized as special because so long as you are in it whatever it permits you to see will seem obvious and inescapable"(1207).

The reader's presuppositions are made up of the reader's context and previous reading experiences. King's rhetorical strategy is to disembowel the reader's assumptions and context, if need be, and to teach him/her an interactive process for reading. I think it works in many ways for different readers. A reader who does not have knowledge of Native culture may learn more about Native culture, or a reader who

has little or no knowledge of Melville may feel compelled to read *Moby Dick* or "Benito Cereno", but only if she/he recognises that these allusions are allusions to Melville's texts. There are readers, no doubt, who will not even pick up on Babo's intertextual existence. Whether the reader is questioning his/her experiences as a Native person, or a person of European descent, or even both, the effect should be the same: a questioning of his/her reading practices.

In order for the reader to understand the various levels of reading, King must give many examples. Chapters Two and Three of this thesis will discuss four different levels of reading: Chapter Two will include the four old Indians as storytellers, and Coyote as a learner of listening and participating roles in storytelling; and in Chapter Three, the characters Eli, Lionel, and Bursom represent 'realistic' readers of books and a Western movie, and the narrator as a voyeuristic teller and teacher of storytelling for Coyote and readers. Each of these examples is dependent upon what each character can 'do' in the novel. For example, the four old Indians can travel from one narrative level to another. The novel is made up of four narrative styles/levels within which the various stories run concurrently throughout the novel. When characters, like Coyote, cross the boundaries between the narratives, it becomes necessary to define each narrative because the character's power in storytelling is directly related to his/her power to cross these narrative boundaries. Again, it must be noted that not all readers will need to have such definitions or deconstructive methods to understand the power of storytelling in the novel. I will use Gerard Genette's and Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan's terminology to discuss clearly the characters' powers of storytelling within the novel as demonstrated by their boundary crossings between the narratives.

I will begin with the basic idea of a story. Rimmon-Kenan describes a story as follows, from *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*:

Far from seeing story as a raw, undifferentiated material, this study stresses its structured character, its being made of separable components, and hence having the potential of forming networks of internal relations. Such a view justifies attempts to disengage a *form* from the substance of the narrated content, a specific narrative form. The theoretical possibility of abstracting story-form probably corresponds to the intuitive skill of users in processing stories: being able to retell them, to recognize variants of the same story, to identify the same story in another medium, and so on(7).

When I refer to a story in the novel, I am referring to story as a structured language act which can be learned both by characters within the novel and readers of the novel.

There are many stories which take place in the novel which occur on different levels of narration. I will use Genette's term 'diegesis' to designate "the universe of the first narrative"(228). King problematizes such analysis because there are two diegetic narratives which run concurrently and are not related in any obvious way with each other. In any case, the diegetic level of narrative is the narrative of story in which action takes place. The first diegetic level in the novel is what I will refer to as the realistic narrative. The characters within the realistic narrative are 'real' characters. That is, the narrative follows 'formal realism', which is "a full and authentic report of human

experience....and allows a more immediate imitation of individual experience set in its temporal and spatial environment"(Watt 32). The other parallel diegetic level contains what Vizenor has coined as 'mythic time'. The stories told within this narrative are Native American creation stories, and as such, "they take place in an age before ours,....It is a world not only separated by years, but in a different sort of time, long past and inaccessible....In tribal tales animals not only spoke, but were brothers to men, and spirits or manidos appeared constantly to humans"(Velie 124). These narratives exist in their own diegetic level and are on parallel tracks in the novel which do not intersect. It should be noted that not all creation stories are distinctly mythical in character, and not all realistic narratives are written in linear time,¹ but King's novel allows for such a distinction between the two narratives, although this distinction is never absolute.

The four old Indians and their narrative exist on an extra-diegetic level to both of the narratives. The extra-diegetic level refers to the level 'above' the diegetic. "Narration is always at a higher narrative level than the story it narrates. Thus the diegetic level is narrated by an extra-diegetic narrator"(Rimmon-Kenan 91-2). When the four old Indians begin their storytelling, they create the diegetic level of the creation stories. It is each her own narrative. When the four old Indians enter the realistic narrative, they become characters within that diegetic level. Further, when there is an embedded story within the diegetic level, it is called 'hypo-diegetic'(92). And when the four old Indians change the hypo-diegetic narrative that is the Western, they become intra-diegetic participants. The distinction between extra- and intra-diegetic participants refers to the relation of the character to the diegetic level. Intra-diegetic refers to a narrator of an embedded narrative in the diegetic narrative(92). Since the four old

Indians enter one diegetic level, and also narrate the other diegetic level within the novel, they can be both extra-and intra-diegetic participants.

The narrator of the novel is an extra-diegetic narrator. The narrator acts as a voyeur to the realistic and creation narratives in the novel, in addition to the mythic space of the four old Indians as extra-diegetic narrators, hence the narrator is extra-diegetic.

Coyote is also extra-diegetic because he is in the same space as the narrator. Again, this extra-diegetic narrative is in a mythic time and space. As an extra-diegetic character, Coyote problematizes extra-, intra-, and diegetic levels of narrative. Coyote, like the four old Indians, can cross the diegetic boundaries. Coyote begins with the narrator in the extra-diegetic level, creates action within the creation narrative as an extra-diegetic narrator, then moves to the realistic narrative to become a character and creates an earthquake as an intra-diegetic participant. When Coyote sings with the four old Indians to change the hypo-diegetic narrative of the Western, he becomes again an intra-diegetic narrator once again. Coyote crosses all of these diegetic distinctions with ease.

The reader(s) are placed outside of the text, but are still, in the tradition of oral storytelling which makes up this novel, participants; therefore, they become extra-extra-diegetic participants in all the levels of diegesis.

My thesis will determine how the reader is a participant, and how the characters' power in storytelling relates to crossing these diegetic boundaries, and, consequently, how the reader is implicated by the crossing of storytelling boundaries.

CHAPTER TWO

RUNNING WITH THE FOUR OLD INDIANS AND COYOTE

One of the strategies which King uses to teach readers how to read is to create four narrative levels in *Green Grass, Running Water*. These diegetic levels are crossed by those characters in the novel who are involved in storytelling. I will demonstrate how King creates the four old Indians as expert storytellers to teach Coyote and extra-textual readers how to read and participate 'properly'. I will then illustrate how chaotic and yet productive Coyote can be in this novel as a listener/participant of storytelling.

-- Listening to the Elders --

King uses the four old Indians to represent the standard for 'good' storytelling in the novel. Each of the four old Indians tells a story in the novel. It is the same story, but as each storyteller is different, the story is slightly different. The story is told four times to ensure that Coyote has learned the story. It is significant for King to use the number four. In many Native cultures four is almost always a teaching number. The medicine wheel is used as a tool to teach concepts, such as the four directions, the four gifts, the four colours, etc. (Bopp et al 9-13). Each set of four has significance to human experience. For example there are four parts to a person which makes one whole: the

physical, the mental, the emotional, and the spiritual(12). A person should be in touch with all of these aspects to be a whole and healthy person. King uses the symbolic nature of the number four to teach: the reader who is familiar with these Native teachings will immediately grasp the symbolic significance of the *four* old Indians as teachers; the reader who is unfamiliar with the teachings of Native cultures will have a chance to learn as he/she reads.

The stories which each old Indian tells happen in the creation diegetic level, which I have designated as such because the stories are reminiscent of creation stories. Once each story begins, the four old Indians become hetero-diegetic narrators who do not participate within the creation narrative(Genette 255-6). They actually become absentee tellers and it is the narrator, Coyote and readers who are witnesses to each story's action.

Before I begin my analysis of their storytelling abilities, it is necessary to emphasize that King has created these characters very carefully. King does not waste any space for teaching. I am referring to the four old Indians' names. King does not limit the four old Indians' function in the novel to their stories alone. The four old Indians' names express figuratively significant aspects of storytelling.

In oral stories, names are very important. The names usually tell the listener what the character is all about. Harry Robinson, an oral storyteller from the Okanagan Valley, explains how names are important when he relates how Coyote in the Okanagan tradition received his name. In this story, the Big Chief tells all of the old creatures, before this world is as we know it, that they should all meet to receive their names. Coyote is late and so there are only two names left. The Big Chief explains,

If you take the name of KWEELSH-tin,

...That's the Sweathouse.

You can only be in the one place at all time,

...If you take the name Shin-KLEEP,

you going to be named Shin-KLEEP

and I can give you power

and you'll have the power from me.

Then you can go all over the place(Robinson 62).

And so Coyote chose to be Shin-KLEEP because he wanted to travel and go places to do strange and wonderful deeds. Shin-KLEEP's role as a trickster was defined by his choice of a name.

The four old Indians' names with which they are introduced are just as significant for two reasons. The first is that the four old Indians appropriate their names. The second is that the four old Indian's original names are representative of a life cycle.

The four old Indians are introduced to readers as the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye. As each creation story unfolds, the main character, a woman, takes the aforementioned name for her own. The story begins with the Lone Ranger, and follows in the order that they have been named. Their naming is significant because their first names are not recognized by readers until they receive their second name. The Lone Ranger tells the story of First Woman. At the end of the story she is assumed to be the Lone Ranger by other characters in the story, and so she takes the name to be her own(King 100); Ishmael's story is about Changing Woman, who defiantly takes on the name Ishmael(225); Robinson Crusoe's story is about Thought Woman

who also takes her new name, Robinson Crusoe(324); and finally, Hawkeye's story is about Old Woman who takes on the name Hawkeye at the end of the story(396). It is interesting that these characters/storytellers give themselves these names which are part of the stories that they tell. These characters affirm an identity from the story as their own, despite the fact that they were not supposed to have these names. In essence, they are each rewriting the story to suit their experiences as tellers. In an interview with Peter Gzowski on Morning Side on CBC radio, King tells Gzowski that the four old Indians assume this role which history and literature has placed upon them, "and so that is what they call themselves". Gzowski notes that it is not wise to trust King as he can be tricky, like Coyote. And so I defer to Dee Home, who posits that "King satirizes these settler icons [the Lone Ranger, Ishmael, Robinson Crusoe, and Hawkeye] and suggests that the values they represent have contributed to the mistakes that settlers have made"(266).

The four old Indians' original names also represent the life cycle. There is First, Changing, Thought and Old Woman. This is the cycle of life; a beginning, an experience which constitutes change, the reflection of that change or life, and finally the wisdom which at the end of life is represented in the elderly. The significance of this cycle emphasizes experiential learning.

The four old Indians are exemplary storytellers, from them the reader can determine the standards for storytelling, as it is posed by their activities. During their storytelling, they display respect and a sense of responsibility(they will fix and refix their telling) for storytelling that implies its serious nature. They will not begin the story unless everything and everyone is ready:

THIS ACCORDING TO THE LONE RANGER:

"Okay," said the Lone Ranger, "is everybody ready?"

"Hawkeye doesn't have a nice shirt," said Ishmael.

"He can have one of mine," said Robinson Crusoe.

"The red one?"

"Yes."

"The one with the palm trees?"

"Yes."

"Don't forget the jacket," said Ishmael.

"I won't."

"You forgot it last time."

"Did I?"

"What about the light?" said Robinson Crusoe.

"We'll turn it on later," said Ishmael.

"And the apology?" said Hawkeye.

"Coyote can do that," said the Lone Ranger. "Okay, are we ready now?"(King 9)

The four old Indians are experienced storytellers. They have learned from their previous mistakes: Ishmael points out that the Lone Ranger forgot the jacket in their last storytelling expedition. They have a list of things which they need to start their storytelling, and will not begin until everything is in order. Every item has significance to the story which they are going to tell, and it is implied that they know which items they need because of their own experiential learning(they have made mistakes). The items

which they need, in fact, determine which story they will tell. The jacket is important because they are going to tell the story which helps Lionel realise his identity as a Blackfoot man. Hawkeye also realises that there will have to be an apology because while storytelling, it is necessary to shake up foundations of stories. And the Lone Ranger already knows that Coyote will do the shaking and so Coyote will have to do the apologizing.

The fact that they take storytelling seriously is further illustrated when they will not begin the story until it is the 'right' story for this particular storytelling session. The Lone Ranger has a bit of trouble starting the correct story. First she says, "*Once upon a time...*"(11) There is confusion among the other storytellers. It doesn't sound like the correct story. She tries again, "*A long time ago in a faraway land...*"(12) Now chastised, the Lone Ranger begins again, "*Many moons comechucka...hahahahahahahahahahaha*" (13). They threaten to take away the Lone Ranger's turn. She tries again, "*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void: and darkness was upon the face of the deep-*"(14). It is the wrong story. "Everybody makes mistakes," said the Lone Ranger. And Ishmael replies, "Best not to make them with stories"(14).

As storytellers, the four old Indians are inseparable, and they must all agree on which story is to be told. The Lone Ranger must adhere to their conventions of storytelling. When she is having trouble, they threaten to take away her turn. King demonstrates to the reader that the story about to be told is not a fairytale, nor a story created out of the biblical Judeo-Christian mythologies. When the Lone Ranger gets

silly and mimics the stereotypical voice of an 'Indian' who has a mystical tone and voice, the rest of the old Indians are not amused. The Lone Ranger's laughter implies just how silly that stereotypical voice is to actual Natives, such as herself. Finally, the Lone Ranger begins properly:

"Gha!" said the Lone Ranger. "Higayv:lige:i."

"That's better," said Hawkeye. "Tsane:hlanv:hi."

"Listen," said Robinson Crusoe. "Hade:loho:sgi."

"It is beginning," said Ishmael. "Dagvya:dhv:dv:hni."

"It is begun well," said the Lone Ranger. "Tsada:hno:nedi
niga:v duyughodv: o:sdv"(15).

The four old Indians will not allow the story to begin until it is the 'correct' story - in this case, a Cherokee story. The story is in part defined as the correct story by their list of things they need before they begin and also by the Cherokee language. These two aspects together assure the four old Indians that they are telling the story which they want to tell to fix up the world and to help Lionel. Because storytelling is very important, the Lone Ranger becomes serious and begins with "Gha!". The rest of the old Indians contribute to the ceremonial beginning.

Before I go further with my analysis of their stories, I would just like to comment on the use of Cherokee language at this point in the novel and also on the Cherokee text (Cherokee syllabics) which separates the novel into four sections. King affirms that it is Cherokee to Gzowski in their radio interview. King states that he had the choice between using a real Native language or one that he would make up. He thought that if he made one up in this instance, he might have to deal with questions of authenticity.

Consequently, he chose to use the language of his father to show respect to the Cherokee people which he in part comes from. He and his colleague, Chris Costello, who is also Cherokee, wrote up the language. King states that he hopes that he got it right. King's hopes at this point are directed to those people who speak and write Cherokee: he does not want to offend them in his usage of the language ("Interview"). The rest of the readers who do not know the Cherokee language are faced with problems of their own.

Readers may read the Cherokee words and note that this book is not intelligible to them and put it back where they got it. Other readers may take the language above in an optimistic way, and read the book to see if they will learn what the words mean - readers never find out in the novel. Other readers may decide that it is important to find out and learn enough Cherokee to translate the words, or find someone who can translate the words for them. Whatever the case may be, and these are only three possible reactions, the readers will be 'placed' by the language. King uses this tool to make readers aware of who they are, and what they are reading. What they are reading is in part defined by the Cherokee language. Who they are is defined by their ability to recognize and make sense of what is presented to them in the text. At this point in the novel, readers are subtly informed to expect a Cherokee story.

The four old Indians tell each story to suit their own Cherokee storytelling tradition. Louis Owens points out that in oral storytelling, "each story originates with and serves to define the people as a whole"(9). The communal aspect of their story explains why the essentials of each situation in each story told by the four old Indians are basically the same:

- (1) The story is begun ceremoniously
- (2) The Woman is located in Skyworld which is above water world
- (3) She walks off Skyworld and falls into water world
- (4) There is a confrontation between _____ Woman and a man from Western Culture
- (5) Rules are brought to light and _____ Woman will not follow
- (6) She appropriates the new name and departs on water
- (7) She ends up in the Florida jail and then departs with her three companions

These activities constitute a cycle of movement. Although each _____ Woman experiences the events in different ways, the experiences are similar at the core(as seen in the listing above). Coyote, and the reader, have four chances to learn this story. Coyote is learning so that he may retell the story(as I will discuss in the second half of this chapter), and the reader is learning to read and interpret the novel. The fact that the story is told four times in the novel not only emphasizes the essentials of the story, but also familiarizes Coyote and the reader with the codes and conventions of storytelling involved in telling this story. Rabinowitz notes that the reader must be familiar with the literary conventions in which the story is told in order to make sense of the story(21). And accordingly, Native American author Paula Gunn Allen states that in relation to the retelling of oral stories that "we may alter singular elements in particular ways, but their meaningfulness will only be apparent because of their connection to one another within a previously known or assumed pattern"(567).

Once the story has begun, the four old Indians become heterodiegetic narrators.

That is, they start the story, and then they move directly into the other diegetic level - the realistic narrative - and the creation narrative moves along seemingly without them. The four old Indians' stories in the creation narrative are established as theirs in the second telling by Ishmael on page 104. The words "THIS ACCORDING TO ISHMAEL" precede the commencement of the story which follows two lines down, "All right. In the beginning there was nothing. Just the water. Everywhere you looked, that's where the water was. It was pretty water, too".

While each story is told, the four old Indians concurrently instigate action within the realistic narrative with their entrance. For example, the Lone Ranger creates the environment for their storytelling expedition:

THE LONE RANGER LOOKED DOWN THE ROAD AGAIN. It ran out on a straight line and disappeared in the distance.

"Are we waiting for something?" said Ishmael.

"A ride," said the Lone Ranger.

"How long do we have to wait?" said Robinson Crusoe.

"Not long," said the Lone Ranger.

"Are you being omniscient again?" asked Hawkeye.

"I think so," said the Lone Ranger(49).

It turns out that they are waiting within the realistic narrative for Lionel to pick them up(121). Their role as extra-diegetic narrators is made fun of by the Lone Ranger, who 'thinks' that she is being omniscient - which is a term that is used to describe a specific type of literary narrator - one who knows everything. Her nonchalant attitude towards omniscience is ironic because, as a storyteller, she does know what is going to

happen in her story.

As previously stated, each of the four old Indians takes a turn telling the story. Robinson Crusoe (Thought Woman) wants to do everything right when it is her turn to tell her story. She starts it 'properly' in the Cherokee language. Her companions reply,

"We've done that already," said Ishmael.

"Have we?" said Robinson Crusoe.

"Yes," said the Lone Ranger. "Page fifteen."

"Oh."

"See. Top of page fifteen."

"How embarrassing" (234).

How very confusing for the reader! How can these characters know of this 'literary' process? Although the four old Indians are extra-diegetic narrators, the Lone Ranger violates the diegetic boundaries, and indeed the book's boundaries, as well. Robinson Crusoe learns of their literariness from Ishmael, who even shows her the page. The four old Indians point out that their storytelling is taking place in this book on page fifteen and two hundred thirty-four. As extra-diegetic narrators, the four old Indians can and do affect the various diegetic levels, which is further complicated the levels by their awareness of the storytelling that is the book. Once a reader is made aware of this level of telling, action, and awareness, there will be an infinite regress of stories. That is, if the four old Indians can cross and create boundaries which they are traditionally bound to adhere to, how can a reader interpret his/her role in the novel? How does a reader distinguish between his/her reading reality, and the storyteller's reality? A reader can put the book down to make that distinction, but in order to do so, he/she will have to

make a choice to make the distinction between his/her reading and reality. In the interview with Gzowski, King states that the

line that we think is so firm between reality and fantasy is not that firm at all, that there's a great deal of play...,and that the line itself is an imaginary line and that you have these...historical and literary characters who sort of float across time, in and out of this novel, to affect the present, or at least to be part of the present("Interview").

This novel shows that this distinction between reality and fantasy is not so clear. By taking the action against reading, a reader is still participating in reading. He/she is negating the reading. When he/she picks up the book, the story will resume. A reader has just as much responsibility to keep the story going as do the tellers. The reader will demonstrate his/her responsibility only to him/herself by finishing the book, thereby completing the storytelling experience and process. The four old Indians demonstrate their responsibility to the story and storytelling when they enter the realistic narrative to fix up the 'world'(the realistic narrative).

When the four old Indians enter the realistic narrative, they point out certain aspects in Lionel's life that may need changing. They bring him a birthday present: a leather jacket that belongs to a white man who will easily, and without conscience, exploit Lionel's traditions. It is the jacket that Ishmael reminded the Lone Ranger to bring at the beginning of the storytelling session. The jacket, implicitly Custer's, is a leather fringed jacket(302). The jacket itself is made up of two things: the style is indicative of European coats, and the leather and fringes are Native touches. These jackets came about when the colonizers started to adapt their clothes to what was available to them

on this continent. Characters in North American culture, such as those John Wayne played in the movies, often wore this style of jacket to emphasize their frontier ruggedness. This point is highlighted when Eli tells Lionel, "You know, you look a little like John Wayne"(303). As the story progresses, "Lionel felt completely out of place, standing there in the jacket and slacks and dress wing tips"(365). The jacket represents exactly who he is not, but wants to be - a white man. When he wears this jacket to the Sun Dance, "Lionel felt as if the jacket was suffocating him. Worse, the jacket had begun to smell"(382). The four old Indians lead Lionel to Latisha and her estranged white husband, George. Incidentally, Lionel is wearing this jacket and George tells him, "I think you should probably give me *my* jacket back"(my emphasis 384). And to demonstrate how wrong that jacket is for Lionel, George, who owns the jacket and identity, shows his disrespect for Blackfoot tradition by taking pictures of the Sun Dance. Lionel has to take action to affirm his identity. He takes George's film away as it is not appropriate to take pictures at the Sun Dance(King reinforces the sacred nature of the Sun Dance by relating the social activities of the Sun Dance, but not the Sun Dance itself in the novel). George again asks for his jacket, and the Lone Ranger says, "That's a good idea. It's time he got his jacket back"(385). When Lionel gives George his jacket, Lionel sheds the John Wayne identity that he always wanted as a child(83) and becomes the Blackfoot man who the four old Indians thought that he should be. The four old Indians set out from the beginning to help Lionel find his identity. They are trying to fix up the world one person at a time - one story at a time.

The four old Indians tell Lionel when they meet him that they are trying to fix up the world, "But we're going to start small," said Ishmael. "And once we get the hang of

it,...we'll move on to bigger jobs" said Hawkeye(125). The four old Indians fix up the world as intra-diegetic narrators. That is, they enter the realistic diegetic level as characters and affect change in the realistic narrative through their storytelling (Rimmon-Kenan 95). Just as the reader and Coyote are learning slowly by the four old Indians' example, the four old Indians are learning as they go.

The reader can see the four old Indians' power as storytellers at the climax in the novel which occurs in Bursom's Home Entertainment Barn. As I mentioned in Chapter One, one of the tropes for discourse in the novel is singing. Because oral storytelling is by its nature interactive, reading and singing are two sides of the activity which literary scholars call reading. Further, the reading of the Western by various characters within the novel provides the climax for the novel. The four old Indians sing a song which changes the outcome of the hypo-diegetic level of the Western. The Western is an embedded narrative in the realistic narrative(95). The four old Indians realise that they have fixed this story before, but that they must do it again. They do not shrink from their duties as storytellers, and even ask Coyote to help them sing the song. They all make the Indians win a battle against an army of white settlers on screen(321). Their song changes the movie as they are all watching it. Eli, Lionel, Charlie, and Bursom, do not have any idea that it is the four old Indians and Coyote who have changed the outcome of the Western which they are all watching. It is the reader who is allowed to witness the power of storytelling at this vital point in the novel. Although this scene changes the lives of Eli and Lionel, which will be discussed in greater detail later in Chapter Three, it is orchestrated for the benefit of the reader and listeners, such as Coyote, to learn how storytelling and reading can make a difference, and to demonstrate how any reader can

be a trickster to make things happen.

The storytelling by the four old Indians also links the various diegetic levels in the novel. The four old Indians are identified as those whom Dr. Hovaugh had under his care and are presently missing from the mental hospital - which takes place in the realistic narrative. Dr. Hovaugh tells his friend, John Eliot, that they have recorded the disappearance of the four old Indians thirty-seven times. With each disappearance a major occurrence in the 'world' took place:

"It's in the book," said Dr. Hovaugh. "I didn't make it up.

The Indians disappeared on July eighteenth, 1988."

"Yes," said Eliot, "but that doesn't prove anything."

"By the end of the month, Yellowstone was in flames."

"Coincidence."

"Mount Saint Helens. They disappeared on May fifteenth, 1980, and on the eighteenth, Saint Helens explodes"(46).

These events take place beyond the book's environment. These events happened in the reader's world, supposedly our reality. Consequently, this narrative strategy implies that there is a relationship between the realities that are created in storytelling and the reader's/listener's reality. The reader is placed as an extra-extra-diegetic participant in storytelling. This reveals a didactic tendency within storytelling where the reader is a part of the story. It is the four old Indians and Coyote who reveal the relevance and importance of crossing boundaries, and even question whether these boundaries exist. When the four old Indians cross the diegetic boundaries through their storytelling, King demonstrates how storytelling can affect reading. It is the travelling

that is associated with storytelling which becomes important. How do the four old Indians travel? They start their trip by starting to tell a story. Their words create their world. It cannot be difficult to cross boundaries which are created by words. All one (or four) has to do is talk her way across into another narrative, or world. And why do the four old Indians travel? To fix up the world through storytelling.

The four old Indians do in fact move to the realistic narrative, but they retain their supernatural qualities as extra-diegetic narrators. Lionel states that they look really old, and Dr. Hovaugh reveals that they were ancient when *he* was young, and Babo confirms this by stating they were "four, five hundred years..."(51). (Just to show how subtle King is, the character, Dr. J. Hovaugh, is Jehovah, and King places the creation stories of the four old Indians, and the four old Indians, at a time *before* the Christian creation stories through Dr. Hovaugh's words).

The four old Indians can also make transitions between mythical and real time - the two diegetic levels in the novel. As previously stated, they tell their stories in the creation narrative, which are mythical in nature; and also continue their storytelling in real time, the realistic narrative, to help Lionel. The reader cannot simply lean back and read to allow the story to entertain his/her mind. The reader has to engage the text and figure out how these narratives are connected. Rabinowitz calls this engaging process the "rules of notice" which "tell us where to concentrate our attention". These are "features of a text which are rich or evocative, others are strange, others surprising, others climactic"(53). The reader is forced to look at these unusual characters who are present in various narratives and generate change and continuity within the novel.

The reader is privileged over characters within the book. The reader knows that it is not probable that the four old Indians have wreaked the havoc which Dr. Hovaugh attests occurs during their absence. The reader knows, as I will discuss in the second half of this chapter, that it is Coyote who is reckless with storytelling and is learning the proper way to tell a story and his recklessness is the cause of these natural 'disasters'. Dr. Hovaugh's discussion of the four old Indians' disappearance details to the reader how reckless readers can wreak havoc on a story. If the reader is paying attention, it will be made clear that the reader must read carefully and interpret carefully or a dam will burst, or an earthquake will shake the foundation of the story.

A few minutes before the dam bursts in the novel, the four old Indians visit Eli at his mother's house below the dam. Afterwards, the four old Indians return to the mental hospital. It is at first miraculous, as Eli, who is at the very least hundreds of years younger than they are, dies, and they survive. It is possible because they are storytellers. They are back where they started before the storytelling began. If the dam bursting is a part of a story which they are contributing to, how can they perish? They exist beyond the story's boundaries. Unfortunately for Eli, this story is his reality, and he must follow the physics of his world, and he drowns.

When they are back in the hospital, Hawkeye tells Babo that maybe the next time they venture out to fix the world, they will help Dr. Hovaugh. Babo thinks it is a great idea. "We could start in the garden," said the Lone Ranger. Babo smiled and rubbed her shoulder. "Now, wouldn't that be the trick," she said. "Wouldn't that just be the trick"(428). The reader is immediately reminded of the repetitive nature of storytelling because the first of their stories told in the novel included a garden, which is in fact the

garden of eden(40).

-- Dances with Coyotes --

Coyote is also with the four old Indians and Eli at the bottom of the dam when it bursts. Shortly after this event, Coyote shows up in the extra-diegetic level with the narrator, "covered with mud" and "all wet". And of course Coyote says, "It wasn't my fault...It wasn't my fault"(429). And of course it was. The four old Indians aim to fix the world and effect change on individuals, and it is Coyote who makes things happen, which are considered natural disasters by Dr. Hovaugh. Unfortunately for the four old Indians they are blamed for Coyote's adventurous and sometimes reckless participation in storytelling.

The four old Indians are very aware of Coyote, as a trickster, and his role in the storytelling in the novel. They treat him as a child and are patient and watchful:

"COYOTE, COYOTE," I says. "Get back here. Things are happening."

"Just a minute," says Coyote. "I got to finish my dance."

"You've done enough dancing already," I says.

"Looks like I've got to go," Coyote says to the old Indians.

"But I'll be back."

"It's okay, Coyote," said the Lone Ranger. "We won't start without you"(293).

The four old Indians will not start without Coyote because they could use his help,

and they don't want him to interrupt and try to help. Mistakes happen when there is not enough understanding, or when someone is not paying attention. Although the four old Indians are expert storytellers, they do need Coyote in the novel. Taken as metaphors, the four old Indians represent the storytellers, and Coyote represents the listener. Both are essential to storytelling. The listener's input is just as important as we shall see, as is the teller's voice. True to their word, they wait for Coyote,

"Boy," says Coyote, "this is a lot of running back and forth. Has anything happened?"

"Nope," said the Lone Ranger. "We didn't want to start without you."

"Yes," said Ishmael. "We always feel better knowing where you are."

"Nothing to worry about," says Coyote. "I'm right here"(357).

Although Coyote is satisfied that they want him near them, he does not fully comprehend their apprehension at his presence. The four old Indians travel the 'world' by telling stories to fix it up, and Coyote is the one who follows them and sings or dances a 'disaster' into existence in the realistic - and sometimes even in the creation - narrative. The four old Indians are only too aware of this, and even at the beginning of their storytelling, when they are listing all that they need, Hawkeye realises that there will have to be an apology, and already knows that Coyote will make it, as Coyote is usually the one to cause the damage. And it is implied by their repetitive storytelling that this story was told many times before. I would argue that the stories told in the creation narrative are the same as those which Eli and especially Lionel experience in the

realistic narrative. All of these stories concern themselves with a reader learning to read a situation and determining his/her own place within that story, followed by his/her self-identification. I will discuss Eli and Lionel's self-identification in Chapter Three.

Coyote may mess things up because he is not fully aware of the power of storytelling. He is still clumsy and learning. It is the interaction between the narrator and Coyote which exemplifies active storytelling in the novel. The narrator and Coyote are listening to the four old Indians' stories, and the narrator is trying to teach Coyote about storytelling by pointing out aspects of their stories. It is important that Coyote be taught the ins and outs of storytelling because as a listener/participant on both the extra-diegetic and diegetic levels, Coyote affects the story. If he does not know what he is doing, he will make mistakes. And he does. King uses many strategies to show readers how Coyote is involved in storytelling.

The novel begins with Coyote. Coyote is introduced when he is unconscious, but still active. Coyote is depicted as supernatural as his dream "gets loose and runs around", and "[w]hen that Coyote dreams, anything can happen"(1). Coyote is a trickster who makes things happen, and his thoughts and words create action in the story. For example, Coyote's dream gets loose and is named, dog, but dog changes his name to god and becomes a 'contrary'. When Coyote makes fun of god by calling him "cute", god is upset and wants to be capitalized God. He shouts until Coyote transforms him:

"What a noise," says Coyote. "This dog has no manners."

Big one!

"Okay, okay," says Coyote. "Just stop shouting."

There, says that GOD. That's better(2).

The precedent is set to illustrate Coyote's power with language. Coyote has the power with his thoughts, and his words, "okay", to change god's stature within the story. This action is exemplified through written language, and is expressed as spoken dialogue. The reader reads what Coyote did by the capitalized word, GOD, and also by GOD's affirmation of his metamorphosis.

The storytelling lessons begin right away. After GOD receives the stature he thinks that he deserves, he asks

Where did all that water come from?...

"Take it easy," says Coyote. "Sit down. Relax. Watch some television."

But there is water everywhere, says that GOD.

"Hmmm," says Coyote. "So there is."

..."That's true," I says. "And here's how it happened."(3)

"I" is the narrator who begins the lesson. Coyote constantly interrupts to make comments and ask questions, which illustrates the interactive nature of storytelling.

"Boy," says Coyote, "that silly dream has everything mixed up."

"That's what happens when you don't pay attention to what you're doing," I says(68).

All throughout the storytelling process, Coyote is reminded to pay attention, and when he does not, they have to start the story all over again:

"But what happens to First Woman?"

"Oh boy," I says. "You must have been sitting on those ears. No wonder this world has problems."

"Is this a puzzle?" says Coyote. "Are there any clues?"

"We are going to have to do this again. We are going to have to get it right."

"Okay," says Coyote, "I can do that."

"All right," I says, "pay attention. In the beginning there was nothing. Just the water"(100).

Because Coyote has not paid attention, the story is told again. Coyote needs to figure out how the story is put together. Until Coyote does so, the story will have to be told again and again, until he understands. The implication is that neither Coyote, nor the reader, can read or listen passively. In order for Coyote and the reader to be able to 'fix' the world by telling stories, they must participate and learn the conventions of storytelling.

Coyote is not a very good listener. But like a good participant, he tries to understand, and when he does not, he asks questions. The story begins again and Coyote interrupts,

"If she leans out any farther," says Coyote, "she is going to fall."

"Of course she's going to fall," I tell Coyote...

..."Does Changing Woman get hurt?"

"Nope," I tell Coyote. "She lands on something soft."

"Water is soft. Does she land in water like First Woman?"

"No," I tell Coyote. "She lands on a canoe."

"A canoe!" says Coyote. "Where did the canoe come from?"

"Use your imagination," I says(105).

Not all of the answers are given to Coyote in the story. The narrator teaches Coyote that he must use his imagination to fill in the gaps. Accordingly, the listener must not only avoid passivity, but actively contribute imaginative designs to fill in the gaps in order for the story to progress, as I will later demonstrate with Thought Woman's story.

Once Coyote's role as listener is established, the reader is interpolated into the story:

"OH, NO!" says Coyote. "Changing Woman has landed on Old Coyote."

"Yes, yes," I says. "Everybody knows that by now. And here's what happened(144).

The 'Everybody' referred to are the readers. Thus, the narrator places the reader in the same position as Coyote, as a listener to the story. After the narrator makes the reader think about his/her own reading of the story, Coyote takes the role of the listener one step further to make things happen in the story, thereby demonstrating the role that a 'trickster' has as a listener and participant.

"Look out! Look out!" shouts Coyote. "It's Moby-Jane, the Great Black Whale. Run for your lives."

"That's wasn't very nice," I says. "Now look what you've done."

"Hee-hee, hee-hee," says Coyote(196).

The characters within the story scurry about the deck of their ship scared silly. Coyote's extra-diegetic words create action in the diegetic level of story. Coyote learns

that he can make a difference in the story. At the same time King demonstrates to the reader that a reader/listener is allowed and encouraged to have fun while he/she is reading. Thus both Coyote and the reader are learning that they can interact with the story.

As a result, Coyote begins to feel confident and tries to tell the story. In Native storytelling it is only natural that at some point a listener will want to tell the story:

"OKAY," says Coyote. "Let's see if I have this right. First, Thought Woman floats off the edge of the world and into the sky."

"I'm very impressed," I tell Coyote. "Pretty soon you can tell this story."

"And then she falls into the ocean," says Coyote.

"Hooray!" I says. "Hooray!"

"Did I get it right?" says Coyote.

"Not exactly," I says(269).

As the narrator says, pretty soon Coyote can tell the story. It is expected that Coyote will eventually tell the story. But the narrator is not willing to relinquish control until Coyote can do it 'right'. And even though Coyote creates action in the story, he still has not learned to tell the story 'properly' and the story begins again. Even at the end of the novel, the story must be told again to Coyote:

"OKAY, OKAY," says Coyote. "I got it!"

"Well it's about time," I says.

"Okay, okay, here goes," says Coyote. "In the beginning there was nothing."

"Nothing?"

"That's right," says Coyote. "Nothing."

"No," I says. "In the beginning, there was just the water."

"Water?" says Coyote.

"Yes," I says. "Water."

"Hmmm," says Coyote. "Are you sure?"

"Yes," I says, "I'm sure."

"Okay," says Coyote, "if you say so. But where did all the water come from?"

"Sit down," I says to Coyote.

"But there is water everywhere," says Coyote.

"That's true," I says. "And here is how it happened"(431).

The novel does not end conclusively. The reader is led to believe that the storytelling will continue as each telling was preceded by the phrase, "And here is how it happened". Coyote still has not learned all the protocols and so the lesson continues beyond the book. The final lesson which the reader learns is that the diegetic reality of the story becomes the extra-diegetic teller's reality as he/she tells it. When the narrator says that there is water everywhere, the narrator and Coyote are surrounded by water. It is questionable whether a reader of the text have this same power of storytelling while he/she is reading, but King uses the characters/readers from the realistic narrative to delineate the reader's powers, as I will discuss in Chapter Three.

It is important for the reader to notice Coyote's developing ability to cross the diegetic levels in this novel. Coyote is not limited to his conversations with the narrator

in the extra-diegetic level of narrative. When Coyote enters the realistic narrative, he can only be seen by the four old Indians(298). Even though Coyote is supernatural by nature, Coyote's invisibility demonstrates the storytelling process at hand. In their narrative, the four old Indians are storytellers. The four old Indians can see Coyote because they recognize that he is another extra-diegetic participant in the storytelling. Conversely, the characters within the realistic narrative cannot see Coyote because they are oblivious to the fact that they are just characters within a story. The four old Indians are masters of storytelling and so they allow themselves to enter the story. Coyote, who is still an amateur, does not have such control. When Coyote attempts to communicate to the characters, his words fall on deaf ears:

Lionel felt as though he was anchored in one spot, and that if he didn't do something soon, he was going to have to stand there all day and listen to Eli and Bursom and the old Indians exchange greeting.

"Somebody ask me how I am," says Coyote. "Go ahead, ask me."

"Uncles are pretty important," says the Lone Ranger.

"I hope you listen to your uncle."

"You bet," said Lionel. "All the time."

"I'm fine," says Coyote. "That's how I am"(298).

After Coyote helps the four old Indians sing the song to change the hypo-diegetic Western, he crosses the diegetic boundaries to return to the narrator:

"YOO-HOO," says Coyote. "I'm back."

"About time," I says.

"Did you see that movie?" says Coyote.

"Forget the movie," I says. "We have work to do"

"Where's Thought Woman?" says Coyote.

"Floating," I says.

"Still floating?" says Coyote. "Say, is there something

I'm missing?"(323)

Obviously Coyote is missing something, but what? Thought Woman is still floating around because Coyote is fixated on other events in other narratives; hence, Coyote is not actively participating in this particular story. Coyote demonstrates to the reader through his inactions that the listener is integral to the story that is being told. Coyote, in his cross border travelling, has forgotten to contribute his imaginative designs and Thought Woman is left in an ocean which does not even have a storm to occupy her time. King demonstrates through Coyote's inactions how reading/listening must be active in order for the story to progress, just as there must be a teller to tell the story.

A further example of the listener's importance in storytelling occurs after Thought Woman's story begins again. Thought Woman is creating a pros and cons list. She says, "Under the bad points, I have no friends to share my travels with. Under the good points...there are no Coyotes"(323). Coyote is very sensitive and her comment stings his pride. He says, "Under the bad points...there are soldiers waiting on the shore to capture Thought Woman. How do you like that?"(324) Of course the soldiers appear on the shore to take Thought Woman to the Fort Marion prison(384). Coyote's participation is shown to be necessary to the story. In each telling of the story - which

takes place four times in the novel - each _____ Woman meets up with the soldiers, and in this particular telling it is Coyote who makes it happen. Coyote as listener and participant on the extra-diegetic level affects the action and outcome of a story.

Although Coyote is a chaotic listener/reader, who at this point acts out of vengeance, his actions still affect the story's progression, and also shows that he is learning the story - both First and Changing Woman had already been taken to Fort Marion. King demonstrates that good or bad interaction(which may be interpretation) will still advance the story. King is in dialogue with his reader; if the reader shares his/her reading and interpretation(s), the dialogue of the story advances and continues. Each interpretation would be a retelling of the story in the novel, and, as such, the reader will take on the role of a teller when sharing his/her reading of the novel.

King also uses supernatural events to demonstrate how Coyote affects change in a story. Coyote makes it rain. Coyote finds Ishmael practising a dance and Coyote wants to show how good he is and dances too. "Yoo-hoo...You may not believe this, but I know that dance. I can do that dance"(273). Once he starts, "[t]o the west, clouds ran in low against the land with thunder at their backs, and in the distances, the world rolled up dark and alive with lightning"(273). The four old Indians realise that it is not the right dance and they try to get him to stop, but it is already too late. "That wasn't my fault' says Coyote as the rain begins to fall"(274). Coyote's actions seem chaotic at this point because there does not seem to be any reason for the rain. King illustrates the difference between a responsible participant and a reckless one. Ishmael, and the rest of the old Indians, know when to dance, and when to practice. Coyote works on impulse and just dances without any thought for his actions and their consequences.

King demonstrates through Coyote that every action has consequences, and that there is a difference between those who know what they are doing and those who are in a hurry to prove that they know something. The reader, in his/her privileged position, can ascertain for him/herself the difference between practising and dancing by Coyote's and Ishmael's examples.

The distinction between a responsible and a reckless participant is made further when the story resumes and Coyote again joins the four old Indians in the realistic narrative when they are on their way to the Sun Dance. King demonstrates that Coyote as trickster must be at least told the rules of society before he enters the arena where action takes place:

“...you can't take any pictures,” said Ishmael.

“I wouldn't do that,” says Coyote.

“And you can't make any rude noises,” said Robinson Crusoe.

“You mean like burping and farting?” says Coyote.

“And you can't do any more dancing,” says Hawkeye.

“Okay,” says Coyote. “I won't do any of that stuff.”

...“This is a lot of fun,” Coyote says to himself quietly.

“I feel like...singing.”(332-3)

Coyote knows what he is not supposed to do, and so he does what they forgot to tell him not to do, sing. When Coyote sings and dances in the novel, it rains and there is an earthquake(274, 411). The reader is in a privileged position over the characters in the realistic narrative knowing that it is Coyote who has made the rain fall and the earth shake with his intra-diegetic actions. The earthquake is a huge intrusion on Coyote's

part to this narrative, and it is just as necessary as his calling in the soldiers. The earthquake destroys the foundation of the dam which bursts to renew the community. The earthquake also represents Coyote as listener/trickster in the novel. Coyote demonstrates that the listener's input is important: a voice in song can drastically change the action in the story. It should be noted that each song will have a different effect, just as each word will make different things happens. But at the same time songs are shared interpretations.

What would not have happened if Coyote was not involved in the story as he was? The story would have stalled just as poor Thought Woman was left floating around for 60 pages while Coyote played in the realistic narrative. Although Coyote's actions seem reckless and without thought, King demonstrates that change is positive in stories. Coyote's enthusiasm adds to the story, and makes fresh changes in the realistic narrative. In many stories, tricksters are seen as careless, or even selfish, and listeners are encouraged to not be like the trickster. For example, in many versions of the shut-eye dance story, the listener is shown the trickster's ridiculousness and selfishness. The trickster's behaviour is an illustration of what not to do. In King's version of the shut-eye dance in the last part of the story "The One About Coyote Going West", Coyote's mistake and the ducks are not fooled by Coyote's dance and attempts to eat the ducks. Coyote's selfishness does not reap the rewards(209). Coyote's role as trickster in this novel is a lot more ambivalent for the reader. Although Coyote is reckless with his storytelling, his actions become positive effects for the realistic and creation narratives. In effect, Coyote demonstrates through his recklessness the power of the listener within storytelling, even though he does not think or take responsibility for

his actions.

King demonstrates how reading can be earth-shaking. Earthquakes in this context are positive. It is important that Coyote is acting without thought and evading the rules which were presented to him. The four old Indians set the standard for storytelling, and Coyote breaks rules and crosses boundaries. These two levels of storytelling and practices follow each other in a cycle of storytelling. The four old Indians are needed to set the conventions which a listener/reader can follow and learn; and Coyote, as reckless as he is, keeps the story vibrant. In other words, the four old Indians teach readers the essentials of storytelling, and Coyote demonstrates the fluidity of storytelling by washing the story with the reservoir water and also by making it rain.

Coyote is further shown to be integral to making change in the novel when the four old Indians' first attempt at changing the Western fails to stick, and they have to sing again in the Home Entertainment Barn. The Lone Ranger tells Coyote, "You can help, too"(320).

The text implies that it is not only Coyote who can do this. When there is another earthquake in the novel, Coyote is frightened:

"Earthquake! Earthquake!" yells Coyote.

"Calm down," I says.

"But it's another earthquake," says Coyote.

"Yes," I says. "These things happen."

"But we've already had one earthquake in this story," says Coyote.

"And you never know when something like this is going to

happen again," I says.

"Wow!" says, Coyote. "Wow!"(418).

Coyote is not the only listener and participant in the story. The reader is given similar responsibilities as Coyote as a trickster/listener to shake up and wash the story. No one, apparently not even the narrator, knows who sang the song to create this earthquake.

Just in case the reader does pick up on his/her being implicated in the story at this point, the narrator interpolates him/her once again when Coyote returns from another adventure in discourse, or, as the narrator sees, a delusion of grandeur:

"I GOT BACK AS SOON AS I COULD," says Coyote. I was busy being a hero."

"That's unlikely," I says.

"No, no," says Coyote. "It's the truth."

"There are no truths, Coyote," I says. "Only stories."

"Okay," says Coyote. "Tell me a story."

"Okay," I says. "You remember Old Woman? You remember that big hole and Young Man Walking On Water? You remember any of this at all?"

"Sure," says Coyote. "I remember all of it."

"I wasn't talking to you," I says.

"Who else is here?" says Coyote(391).

Of course, as stated in Chapter One, it is the reader who is 'here'. The reader has been with Coyote and the narrator all throughout the story and storytelling on both

the extra-diegetic and diegetic levels of narrative. The reader observes all levels of diegesis. And at this instance the reader's presence beside Coyote in the novel is made explicit.

The roles which the four old Indians and Coyote play in the novel are those of storytellers directly involved in storytelling. The four old Indians have a goal, to fix up the world. To do this, they narrate on two diegetic levels. Their stories exist as 'proper' stories. Coyote, on the other hand, is a chaotic listener in the storytelling which goes on in the novel. King uses Coyote as a character who is learning the process of storytelling. The benefits of having a character enrolled in a learning activity is that the reader can be placed beside Coyote in the classroom and learn while he is learning. The lessons which Coyote learns are due to his recklessness. Coyote is supposed to learn from his mistakes. More importantly, King can illustrate quite clearly and largely, the role of the listener in storytelling. Coyote's exaggerated and supernatural participation highlights any influence that any reader may have while reading a text.

CHAPTER THREE

READERS AND TEACHERS

In this chapter I will discuss the role of characters from the realistic narrative and the role of the extra-diegetic narrator in the novel. The characters are learning readers. The narrator is the most learned of storytellers. King uses the non-directive method of teaching to educate the reader on the essentials of storytelling through both the characters and the narrator.

The characters within the realistic narrative are, perhaps, the most familiar to the reader. That is, the reader will be able to identify with their humanity and experiences a lot easier than with Coyote, or even the four old Indians. The characters within the realistic narrative are natural, as opposed to supernatural. It is the reader's identification which allows King to work his magic.

Eli, Lionel and Bursom are all readers of the embedded narrative of the Western in the novel. Eli and Lionel are not very good readers at the beginning of the novel, but as the story progresses they are transformed readers. Bursom is the closed-minded obvious reader to whom Eli and Lionel can be compared. King places Eli's and Lionel's transformative readings in such a way as to suggest to the reader to read like Eli and Lionel. King presents the reader with many examples of how Eli and Lionel have formed their reading practices. And when the four old Indians as intra-diegetic narrators change

the hypo-diegetic narrative of the Western, Eli and Lionel are ready to learn how to read again.

The narrator in the novel already knows how to read. The narrator patiently answers Coyote's many questions, as we have already seen in the previous chapter. But the narrator's role goes farther than just patience. The narrator does transform Coyote's reading, although we are doubtful as to how much. But the narrator is important for the reader because the narrator interpolates the reader into the story three times, as I shall discuss near the end of this chapter. The narrator is the only character to address the reader, and perhaps the narrator is King's best tool to teach the reader how to read.

In this chapter, I will show the various readings by the characters of the Western theme that runs through the novel. Each character reads the Western in a slightly different way, and their reaction to the changed Western depends upon the teachings they have received throughout their lives(stories). I will also demonstrate that the narrator does not directly affect the stories that are told in the novel, but certainly affects the readings.

-- Characteristic Readings --

There are many instances where *Eli Stands Alone* may learn how to read. Eli learns the repetitive nature of oral storytelling from his mother, who tells Eli and his partner, Karen, their family history and "[e]ach one was a story, and Eli's mother told

them slowly, repeating parts as she went, resting at points so that nothing was lost or confused. And then she would go on"(205).

Karen also tries to influence and direct Eli's reading when they are courting:

Most of the books that Karen brought were about Indians.

Histories, autobiographies, memoirs of writers who had gone west or who had lived with a particular tribe, romances of one sort or another. Eli tried to hint that he had no objection to a Western or another New Woman novel, and Karen would laugh and pull another book out of her bag. Magic...What amazed Eli was that there were so many(162).

Karen assumes that because Eli is Blackfoot he would be interested in Native topics. She does not take him seriously when he hints at a Western. King allows readers to see that Eli is well-versed in Native literature, but he still chooses to read Westerns.

When Eli meets Karen's father, he finds that he has the same taste in books - Westerns.

Herb was an avid reader. The cottage was stuffed with books.

Most of them were mysteries and Westerns.

"Maryanne indulges me. I mean, this stuff is junk, but, well, what the hell, I love it. You read Westerns?"

"You bet."

"Those sleazy little cowboy and Indian shoot-'em-ups?"

"Yes," Eli admitted. "Those are the ones."

Herb went to a shelf and took down a book. "Here, I'll bet you haven't read this one yet"(166).

Eli is an interesting reader because he knows that the Westerns are not 'good' reading. They are historically inaccurate and perpetuate stereotypes of the settlers and the Indians. But Eli bonds with Karen's father because of Westerns and later on in his life, he reiterates what Herb had to say about their worth.

The book that Eli reads within this novel is described as follows,

The cover featured a beautiful blond woman, her hands raised in surrender, watching horrified as a fearsome Indian with a lance rode her down. There was a banner stamped across the front that said, "Based on the award-winning movie"(160).

"It was junk and he knew it, but he liked Westerns. It was like...eating potato chips. They weren't good for you, but no one said they were"(163). Eli understands that the codes of the Western are not 'right', but he chooses to read them anyway. He does not read them to challenge them, either; he reads to go along with the codes of the Western - which is highly romantic but also includes the massacre of Natives.

The title of the award-winning movie is not given, nor is there a title for the book that Eli proceeds to read. This parallel implies that it is the same movie and plot line that is mentioned earlier in the novel, and is also playing on television in the novel. When Eli turns to Chapter Twenty-Six(204), the narratives shift and Charlie is looking at Channel Twenty-Six which is playing the movie(207).

As a reader, "ELI OPENED THE BOOK AND CLOSED HIS EYES. He didn't have to read the pages to know what was going to happen". Eli's experiential reading of

Westerns and his knowledge as an English Professor inform him that the genre will not change. But as every text holds the possibility of subversion, he opens his eyes, "[t]hen again, this one might be different"(199). Eli demonstrates why a person would continue to read(or watch). Eli is curious and likes to be entertained. But Eli's words also foreshadow a change.

Before I continue with Eli's story and experience with reading within in the novel, I would like to shift to his nephew, Lionel, in order to demonstrate concurrently Lionel's reading experiences and the significance of the Western theme for Lionel's character. The first reference to the Western in the novel occurs when Charlie has come to show off his new Porsche to Lionel at the Home Entertainment Barn. Charlie calls Lionel 'John Wayne'. "And as [Lionel] came back through the darkness and into the light, he caught a glimpse of his own reflection in the glass"(84). The text does not describe what Lionel sees in himself. The reader is left to ponder what Lionel may see. The line is the last line in this narrative section. It is up to the reader to fill in this gap, as Lionel's feelings are indeterminate.

As a child Lionel wanted to be John Wayne. It is a strange dream considering that he is Blackfoot. "Not the actor, but the character. Not the man, but the hero...The John Wayne who shot guns out of the hands of outlaws. The John Wayne who saved the stage coaches and wagon trains from Indian attacks"(241). John Wayne is the metaphorical representation of the man who would have shot down Lionel's grandfather. But that is who Lionel wanted to be. Because of this strange dream, perhaps Lionel's description of his reflection is not described. The reader is not allowed to see what he sees simply because Lionel has not yet found his *own* reflection in the glass.

The reader must question why Lionel would want to be a hero who would have been an enemy to Native peoples. There is an irony in Lionel's character, but also a sadness at his internalized racism. In Westerns, the white men are the heroes. Lionel's reading of Westerns places his own self as the bad guy. It is understandable that as a child Lionel would want to be the good guy. And in Westerns, John Wayne is portrayed as the good guy. Lionel does not seem to understand, as Eli does, that the Western is an interpretation and not a reality. It is Lionel's inability to read which is the root to his problems.

Lionel has made three mistakes in his life which are due to his inability to read the situation properly, and to his desire to be someone else. The first occurs when, as a young boy, he wanted to get his tonsils removed. A girl named Lois had her tonsils out, and "[w]hat Lionel noticed most about Lois' tonsils was that she got to stay home from school for over two weeks, and you couldn't even tell she had had an operation. Then, too, the teachers treated her like she was royalty or something. Mrs. Grove brought Lois a sucker....Green, Lionel's favorite"(30). Lionel does not realise that there was a painful operation. Lionel can only see that Lois is treated like a princess, and Lionel, too, wants to be special. When Lionel is taken to the hospital, he plays along with the nurse who says, "You must be the lucky young man who won the free plane ride"(34). They send Lionel to Toronto to have heart surgery(36). Of course they figure out that Lionel is not the boy with the heart problem before they open him up. Lionel was acting out his need to be someone else, and fails to read the other people's reality - Lois had a painful operation, and the boy with the heart condition had serious health problems. Lionel does not read that his situation, his life, is fine. The second mistake Lionel makes

occurs when he is sent to Salt Lake City as a representative of the Department of Indian Affairs. Lionel ends up in a van on its way to supply Wounded Knee with supplies and arms. Lionel is arrested and loses his job. He did not know that the van was going to Wounded Knee or that it was against the law, despite the supplies which he was sitting on(59). The pro-Native movement and feeling seem to have eluded Lionel at this juncture. The third mistake that Lionel makes is taking the salesman job at Bursom's Entertainment Barn. Lionel's decision to work at the Barn put off his plans to attend university for eight years. Lionel's position of selling televisions and stereos distances him from his culture, as it keeps him busy and away from the duties involved in the Sun Dance, or just spending time with his father and mother(82).

As the novel and stories advance, both Lionel and Eli learn how to change their individual readings of their own story, and the story which they both read in the novel, the Western.

The Western is an embedded narrative within the realistic narrative. The other Native characters within the realistic narrative subvert the embedded narratives when they are confronted with the Western on television. Alberta is settling in at the Lodge, and the only thing on TV is an old Western. "Alberta hit the Off button. Enough. The last thing in the world she needed to do was to watch some stupid Western. Teaching Western history was trial enough without having to watch what the movie makers had made out of it"(214). Alberta as a teacher becomes an intra-diegetic narrator of Western history and stops her reading of the hypo-diegetic Western on television. Charlie, who is in the same Lodge, also turns on the TV and sees the Western. This leads to a time shift to when Charlie's father would watch any Western that was on TV,

and Charlie would have to sit and watch it with him. Charlie has seen them all and does not like them(181). "It was standard stuff, but Charlie found himself watching the romantic tension that was building and wishing that Alberta were here in the room with him tonight"(207). Another character who did not like watching Westerns is Latisha. She discusses the rules of the Western to her kids who want the Indians to win. She states, "if the Indians won, it probably wouldn't be a Western". Her son, named Christian, says, "Not much point in watching it then"(193). From their perspectives as Native people, there certainly is no point in watching it. They would be watching continuous representations of the subjugation of Natives. Both Latisha and her son understand that the Western is a negative interpretation of Western history, and will not contribute to reading it.

Lionel also turns on the TV and sees the Western. He closed his eyes just as, "On the bank, four old Indians waved their lances. One of them was wearing a red Hawaiian shirt"(216). He misses seeing Hawkeye and her friends on television as they enter the hypo-diegetic level of narrative.

When Eli reaches Chapter Twenty-Six, he flips through the pages and then tosses "the book on the table, rolled up on his side against the cushions, and went to sleep"(218). The Native characters up to this point have turned off the Western: they do not want to continue reading the codes and conventions of the Western which portrays Indians as a dying race. Their inaction is a form of protest in the novel.

It is Bursom who keeps the Western going in the novel. Bursom is willing to believe the representations within the Western, as they are analogous to how he perceives Native and non-Native relations and history(187-8). Bursom reads along with

the codes and conventions of the Western. The climax within the novel occurs at Bursom's Home Entertainment Barn. Bursom, Eli, Lionel, Charlie, the four old Indians, and even Coyote, are watching the Western on all of the televisions on the wall.

Bursom explains, "The director spent almost a month on this one scene before he felt it was right". The Lone Ranger replies, "He didn't get it right the first time", and Hawkeye adds, "But we fixed it for him"(317).

As the scene takes place, the Western is integrated within the realistic narrative without the regular space breaks between segments. It becomes a part of the realistic narrative. That is, the hypo-diegetic and diegetic meet and join on the diegetic level. This movement is possible because it is the new narrative which the four old Indians are creating with their reinterpreting of the Western. Charlie realises that it "was the same movie he had seen last night on television"(318). The four old Indians see the massacre of Indians about to happen, and Hawkeye asks, "Isn't this the one we fixed?"(223). But the Indians are still getting killed, so they proceed to fix it again. The reader is placed in a privileged position to see that the storytellers can change the outcome of a story that has already been told. When the soldiers disappear and there is a good fair fight in the screen Charlie hisses, "Get 'em, Dad"(322), as if the movie was happening at that moment. And of course it is, because the four old Indians and Coyote are recreating it. Eli also talks this way. He says, "Boy...they're going to have to shoot better than that"(321) of the white heroes whose guns are shooting blanks. Eli shows the expectations that he carries concerning Westerns. It takes him a while to realise that the white soldiers are not going to win this time. When Eli realises that the Indians are going to win, he changes his reading and accepts the new reading where the Indians

win. Of course, Bursom is furious. He does not like what he is seeing and stabs the remote to try and change it(322). Bursom is not willing to accept the new reading or interpretation of the Western.

When the four old Indians make the change, it is brought to light through colour. Eli says to Bursom, "I thought that it was supposed to be in black and white"(322). The Native and settler cultural lines were demonstrated clearly in black and white, but when the four old Indians change the Western, the cultural lines are not so clear, as they are in full colour.

The reactions of the characters to the change in the Western are similar all around. It is shocking, but they all pass it off as a technical error. Bursom continually tries the remote. He rewinds the tape to see if the result will show up again - and it does. Lionel states, "Probably just some weird problem with the tape"(341). Another employee of Bursom's asks him if all the Westerns are going to have the same problem. And she states, "it could be a computer virus. You can make a virus do anything"(359). And she is right, a reader can make a story do anything.

Later on in the narrative, Eli takes on the role of teaching Lionel storytelling. Eli wants to teach Lionel something about life: he wants to tell Lionel about his own life. Lionel, who does not connect with his own 'nativity' yet, asks for a direct answer. Eli replies, "Can't just tell you that straight out. Wouldn't make any sense. Wouldn't be much of a story"(361). Eli fulfills his role as a reader within the Native storytelling tradition which the four old Indians are perpetuating as he passes his story on to Lionel.

It is not until Lionel goes to the Sun Dance that he affirms his identity as a Blackfoot man. He does this in part with the help of the four old Indians and their gift of

the jacket. But it is important to note that Lionel must first see Natives in a positive light as heroes. The four old Indians came to help Lionel, and so they had to fix the Western in order for Lionel to become whole. After Lionel reads the changed Western he is able to discard the John Wayne identity and give it to George Morningstar. Lionel is then able to affirm his cultural identity and kicks George out of the Sun Dance area and stops him from taking any pictures.

Eli's and Lionel's transformation as readers is due to the intra-diegetic activities of the four old Indians and Coyote. As readers, Eli and Lionel are the most familiar characters to any reader of the novel. As readers, Eli and Lionel reflect what an actual reader can do with the knowledge of reading which he/she may learn from this novel. That is, a reader is more likely to be able to change his/her own reading, as opposed to Coyote, who can perform supernatural tricks(interpretations). But, the most important teacher for the actual reader of this novel is the character who addresses the reader and brings the reader into the novel's storytelling process.

-- Conversing with a narrator --

The narrator writes to the reader as if they are in conversation. The narrator continually says, "I says"(146), as if he is telling a story to someone - a someone who is not in the novel. He, and I say he, because the representation of the narrator inclines us to identify him with King, is relating the conversations which he and Coyote are having. Further, when the narrator interpolates the reader, Coyote, as I mention in Chapter Two, is not privy to the reader's existence.

It is implied right from the beginning that the narrator is a voyeuristic heterodiegetic narrator who watches stories, but does not affect change within them, and who has knowledge of how the stories in the novel 'work'. On the first page, the story begins with Coyote's dream getting loose and Coyote asks, "Who is making all that noise and waking me up?" The narrator replies, "It's that dream of yours...It thinks its in charge of the world"(1). The narrator is a commentator rather than a director of discourse. The narrator and Coyote eavesdrop, and the narrator tries to teach Coyote in an indirect manner how to tell a story. It is so indirect that at first, the narrator just wants Coyote to listen to the story. The non-directive approach is indicative of oral teachings, and is King's best tool in teaching the reader how to read in the oral storytelling tradition. Each time the reader is told to 'pay attention' he/she is 'told' that there is something to pay attention to in the story.

The narrator is trying to teach Coyote how to tell the story. At the beginning, the narrator is trying to quiet Coyote, as his outbursts may affect the story:

"Boy is he going to be surprised," says Coyote.

"We're going to have to sit on that mouth of yours." I says.

"I didn't say anything." says Coyote(147).

...

"My favorite month is April," says Coyote.

"That's nice," I says.

"I also like July," says Coyote.

"We can't hear what's happening if you keep talking," I says.

"I don't care much for November," says Coyote.

"Forget November," I says. "Pay attention"(195).

Because the reader had learned at the beginning of the novel that Coyote has transformative power with his words, the narrator's admonitions to Coyote's reckless musings are signposts for the reader to learn that words are power within storytelling when the listener is an active participant, but that it is very important to pay attention to the story so that you know what you are doing.

Coyote is not a fast learner, but the narrator is very patient. When Coyote is worried because "Changing Woman is stuck on the island all by herself. Is that the end of the story?" The narrator replies, "Silly Coyote,...This story is just beginning"(148). The narrator already knows the essentials of the story that is being told.

The narrator is involved, for the most part, in the witnessing of the creation stories' narrative. The narrator seems preoccupied with the creation stories. When Coyote is concerned with eating, the narrator tells Coyote, "We can eat later...Right now, we got to catch up with First Woman and Ahdamn"(70). The narrator and Coyote are active in their listening to the stories, but the stories go on without them. The narrator's extra-diegetic role as listener does not affect the diegetic level. But the narrator is extremely knowledgeable of the stories. When Coyote has questions about what is happening in the story, the narrator usually gives Coyote an answer:

"What's beastiality?" says Coyote.

"Sleeping with animals," I says.

"What's wrong with that?" says Coyote.

"It's against the rules," I says.

"But he doesn't mean Coyotes," says Coyote(146)

The rules which they are talking about are the ones presented to *Changing Woman* by Noah. Rules such as "Thou Shalt Have Big Breasts"(147). The narrator's knowledge of the rules(of reading)for the Christian, Noah, demonstrates that the narrator is familiar with many conventions of storytelling.

When Coyote is given a chance to tell the story, and he begins to tell stories from the Bible, the narrator says, "Forget the book,...We've got a story to tell. And here is how it goes"(349). The narrator makes a distinction between reading and rewriting a literary story, as opposed to 'telling' an oral story. Thus, the narrator privileges oral stories.

Shortly after this privileging, Coyote says, "All this floating imagery must mean something." And the narrator replies, "That's the way it happens in oral stories"(352). King juxtaposes the use of a literary device with the oral tradition. The narrator states that this is an oral story, but the reader knows that he/she is reading something literary. Thus, the oral and the literary are clearly brought together. The boundaries that the narrator and Coyote cross are implied by their activities and statements to be an oral practice.

There are also other aspects within the stories which the narrator privileges:

"Wait, wait!" says Coyote. "Who shot Nasty Bumpo?"

"Who cares?" I says.

"Maybe Old Coyote shot him," says Coyote.

"Anything's possible," I says.

"Maybe there was more than one gunman," says Coyote.

"Anything's possible," I says.

"Maybe," says Coyote, "it was a conspiracy"(395).

The narrator's indifference for certain characters and stories reveals that King has a preferred story to tell. Although the shooting of Nasty Bumpo saves Old Woman's life, as soon as Nasty Bumpo is dead, Old Woman and Nasty Bumpo's association in the story is finished.

The narrator also acts as a subversive force in the novel. The narrator's comments, which do not affect the diegetic narrative, affect the reading of the novel.

For example:

"She means Moby-Dick," says Coyote. "I read the book. It's Moby-Dick, the great white whale who destroys the Pequod."

"You haven't been reading your history," I tell Coyote. "It's English colonists who destroys the Pequots"

"But there isn't any Moby-Jane."

"Sure there is," I says. "Just look over there. What do you see?"

"Well...I'll be," says Coyote(196).

The narrator teaches Coyote that any reading is possible in a story, and that history is just another story, and as such, stories can get mixed up. The narrator points out to Coyote than any reading is possible, and Moby-Jane enters the story. Moby-Jane does not enter because the narrator has brought her there, but because the narrator has shown Coyote how to see, or read, Moby-Jane's presence.

In keeping with the teachings of the story, the narrator continually returns to the same old story line which is presented to them. The narrator does not tire of the story, nor of teaching it to Coyote:

"That sounds like Fort Marion," says Coyote.

"Yes it does," I says.

"So that's what happened," says Coyote.

"That's what always happens," I says(397).

The narrator does not tire, even when Coyote asks, "Am I missing something?", the narrator says, "Think about it, Coyote,...Just think about it"(417). The narrator's continued non-directive approach leaves it to Coyote and to the reader to figure out storytelling.

Near the end of the novel, Coyote thinks that he understands, but does not quite:

"So," I says, "that's what happens."

"What?" says Coyote.

"The Lone Ranger and Ishmael and Robinson Crusoe and Hawkeye keep walking until they get here," I says.

"Oh," says Coyote. "I can see that."

"Good," I says.

"But I don't get it," says Coyote(419).

Because the four old Indians are also extra-diegetic narrators in the realistic and creation narratives, and are involved as intra-diegetic narrators, the narrator implies that they will end up in the same storytelling 'space', where he and Coyote are located as extra-diegetic participants. Coyote, who is able to cross the diegetic boundaries with a natural ease, does not understand. It would be like trying to explain the intricacies of breathing to a child who does not understand scientific or medical terminology. The ideas of inspiration and expiration may not become clear, but the child will still be able to

breathe.

When Coyote made the earthquake happen with his song, the narrator questions him,

"So," I says, "what happened?"

"It wasn't my fault," says Coyote. "It wasn't my fault."

"Oh, boy," I says. "It looks like we got to do this all over again(429).

I do not think that the narrator is asking what happened because he did not know. There is evidence throughout the entire novel that the narrator is aware of all activities and storytelling - even if he does not know how that second earthquake may have happened: he is certainly aware of the possibilities in storytelling which can create earthquakes - and he is aware of Coyote's mistakes. When Coyote refuses to acknowledge his own storytelling power, then the story has to be told again so that Coyote can learn that he has power in these stories, and that it is alright to take responsibility for his actions. When Coyote asks, "How many more times do we have to do this?" The narrator replies, "Until we get it right"(232).

The narrator and Coyote enter the realistic narrative and demonstrate that the narrator is also aware of the realistic narrative. It is a fairly late and unusual intrusion of the narrator and Coyote's conversational segment. This narrative is reflective of 'realistic' experiences, and their escapade disrupts readerly expectations for this narrative. Not only do they disrupt the reading of this narrative, Coyote disrupts the character's expectations of reality. Dr. Hovaugh and Babo have just entered Canada and the narrative breaks,

"Hey," says Coyote, "look who's back."

"Just ignore him," I says.

"But maybe they'll give us a ride," says Coyote.

"No time for that," I says. "We got get back to the other story"(237).

Dr.Hovaugh and Babo seem to be a part of the realistic narrativel. As stated, this voyeuristic intrusion is unusual, thus the reader is forced to pay attention. Accordingly Coyote points out "look who's back", which implies that they have seen *him* before in one of the stories which Coyote and the narrator are eavesdropping. Because it is the narrator and Coyote's first 'excursion' into the realistic narrative, readers must work to find out how the narrator and Coyote know Dr.Hovaugh. It is his name. Dr. J. Hovaugh is 'jehovah', who is also known as god. He is GOD. Thus, when the narrator and Coyote meet GOD again, the realistic and creation narratives are confused. There is no explanation as to how Dr. Hovaugh has traversed the boundaries. Nor is there any description of how the narrator and Coyote 'travelled' to this narrative, but the narrator does say that they have to "get back to the other story". The narrator points out to Coyote and the reader that they are participating in 'stories'.

Before they leave this realistic narrative Coyote allows himself to be seen by both Dr. Hovaugh and Babo, thereby creating his presence as a character within the realistic narrative:

"Get your head down," I says. "He's going to see you."

"Here I am," says Coyote. "Here I am." And that one dances around and jumps around and stands around. "Here I am," says

that standing-around Coyote.

"You are one silly Coyote," I says. "No wonder this world is a mess."

Dr. Hovaugh blinked his eyes and looked through the binoculars again.

"Well?" said Babo. "What do you see?"

"Well..." said Dr. Hovaugh, letting the binoculars rest against his chest, "I...thought -"

"Let me look," said Babo. Babo slipped the strap over her neck and looked through the lenses at the light in the distance. "Well, now," she said, "isn't that the trick"(238).

Babo is not asking a question, she is making a statement. Babo accepts Coyote on the horizon as a trick. In Vizenor's definition, Coyote is a holotrope in a communal event of reading. When Coyote joins the characters, he becomes a metaphor for the story's interactive listener/reader who must create the tricks within the story, i.e., reading. Babo, who understands the mysteries of storytelling, accepts Coyote's intrusion. The narrator still posits the idea that the extra-diegetic narrator should not make his/her presence known within the narrative, and so he tells Coyote to get down. Further, the narrator blames Coyote's silliness, which is his thoughtless participation and revealing presence in the story, for the world's(the realistic narrative) problems. That is, the realistic narrative is chaotic because of participants like Coyote who are silly and dance around for no reason, except their own amusement.

The last intrusion which the narrator makes with Coyote into the realistic narrative follows shortly after Coyote allows himself to be seen. They are waiting outside of the Home Entertainment Barn. Coyote scratches on the back door to make Bursom come and open it. And of course, Bursom does not see anyone because they are hiding(266). Once again Coyote is being silly and having fun with the characters on the diegetic level.

Without an explanation of any sort, the narrator and Coyote are back in the creation narrative. There is no reference to travelling back to this story at all. Because this creation narrative is, as you recall, composed of mythic time, it runs concurrently. The two diegetic levels do not 'happen' at the same 'time': the realistic narrative occurs in linear time; and the creation narrative in mythic time - which has no time; therefore, the narrator and Coyote can be in two places at once.

A little while later, the narrator leaves Coyote in the realistic narrative and returns to his own extra- diegetic level from which he watches the creation narrative. When he thinks that Coyote is gone too long, he calls after him,

"COYOTE, COYOTE," I says. "Get back here. Things are happening."

"Just a minute," says Coyote. "I got to finish my dance."

"You've done enough dancing already," I says.

"Looks like I've got to go," Coyote says to the old Indians. "But I'll be back."

"It's okay, Coyote," said the Lone Ranger. "We won't start without you."

"Great," says Coyote. And that one dances back into this story.

"About time," I says. "Thought Woman can't float around forever, you know."

"Hey," says Coyote, "where did that island come from?"

"That's what happens when you don't pay attention," I says(293).

This is the first instance where the narrator addresses Coyote when there are other characters present. Although the four old Indians do not acknowledge the dialogue between the narrator and Coyote, they are not disturbed by it, nor is the narrator trying to hide from the four old Indians. He did not whisper, 'psst!' like I would assume King would put in his mouth, if King wanted the reader to know that the narrator did not want his presence known to the four old Indians. In any case, the narrator contradicts himself when talking to Coyote. The narrator states that things are happening and that is why Coyote must return to the story. Yet when Coyote does return to the extra-diegetic level, the narrator implies that Thought Woman can't float around forever, which is what she would do, if Coyote stayed away. And I have argued in Chapter Two that Coyote is needed to advance Thought Woman's story. I can only say that the narrator needed to get Coyote back into the extra-diegetic level so that Coyote would be present to continue the creation story, and would use any means necessary. I would also like to point out that the travelling between the narrative levels is achieved through dancing. Dancing is also Coyote's power to create change within the realistic narrative. He dances and it rains(274). Thus, dancing and singing constitute movements of discourse within this novel. Singing adds to the discourse or storytelling, and dancing allows easy crossing of boundaries and makes it rain.

The narrator also plays with Coyote. The narrator cleverly reverses their roles

when Coyote calls from the Home Entertainment Barn:

Coyote dials the number several times. Busy. So that Coyote dials that number again.

"Hello," I says. "First Nation's Pizza."

"Hello, Friday," says Coyote. "Hee-hee, hee-hee."

"Hello, Coyote," I says.

"Don't hello me," says Coyote. "What's happening with Thought Woman?"

"Who?" I says.

"Stop that," says Coyote. "It's mean stuff like that that makes this world so silly"(300).

This is the only instance in the novel where the narrator is playing the trickster role. Coyote throws back at the narrator what the narrator has been saying to him, i.e. pranks are making the world a chaotic and silly place. The reversal of roles instigates a maturing of Coyote. When Coyote says that the narrator is making the world silly, he is recognizing that silly acts have consequences. To further emphasize how tricksters can be overwhelming, the narrator does not hide the truth from Coyote:

"But there is only one Thought Woman," says Coyote.

"That's right," I says.

"And there is only one Coyote," says Coyote.

"No," I says. "The world is full of Coyotes."

"Well," says Coyote, "that's frightening."

"Yes it is," I says. "Yes it is"(272).

As a non-directive teacher, the narrator allows Coyote to make his own conclusions - that the idea of many Coyotes(tricksters) is frightening. Many Coyotes implies that there are many characters/readers just like Coyote who will dance and make their own presence felt and seen by the characters in the novel, and thus, disrupt the story.

A different kind of disruption occurs when the narrator interpolates the other potential tricksters in the novel, the readers:

"I'm not very ticklish," says Coyote.

"Can we get on with this?"

"Except for feathers on my toes," says Coyote.

"It's getting late," I says.

"Then I'm ticklish," says Coyote.

"And people want to go home," I says.

Just who these people are is any reader's guess. I assume that the people are the readers. Just where home is, I do not know. Perhaps the narrator's extra-diegetic position places these readers as extra-extra-diegetic participants. The reality of the readers' situation comes into the novel. The narrator acts as if the readers have other things to do besides read this book, and so the story must continue so that it may finish, or at least this telling, must be complete.

The narrator is the only one who interpolates the reader. It also happens in two earlier instances as I have mentioned previously in both Chapters One and Two. To reiterate the first is on page 144, when he tells Coyote "Everybody knows that by now". The narrator makes the reader sound very aware and alert. The second interpolation

occurs when it appears as if the narrator asks Coyote if he remembers the particulars of the story. But then Coyote says, "Sure,...I remember all of it." and the narrator says, "I wasn't talking to you." And Coyote asks, "Who else is here?"(391). The who is the reader. And this time, the narrator's question implies that the narrator does not have full confidence in the reader's listening practices, and so metaphorically asks the reader what he will continually say to Coyote, "pay attention". The narrator wants the reader to be aware and open to the storytelling that is going on in this novel.

The idea of place is important to the reading of this novel. The narrator and Coyote continually converse on stories which they are 'reading'. The narrator and Coyote are not a part of the story, but they are a part of the novel. The reader is placed in many areas in the novel, and because of his/her privileged positions over all levels of diegesis, the reader has a perspective which even the narrator does not have, even though the narrator knows that the reader is there and makes three references to him/her in this novel. Because the narrator does not know who created the second earthquake which scares Coyote, he does not know who is reading the novel. But the narrator calms Coyote because the narrator is aware of the storytelling process which can create unpredictable discourse. In the end, it is the narrator's knowledge of the process of storytelling which demonstrates his role in the novel as a teacher.

As the narrator implies, the reader is everywhere in the novel. And yet depending upon his/her presupposed positions, the reader may or may not understand how significant that positioning is. And where does King place the reader throughout the

text? Obviously as learners with Coyote, and as readers with Eli and Lionel. Because the reader is not supernatural, King creates characters/readers like Eli and Lionel to demonstrate how the 'supernatural' storytelling which happens in the novel can be applied to the actual reader's experiences. The individual reading experiences of Eli and Lionel also demonstrate how a reader can change his/her reading. Their readings also show how important interpretation is to reading. Eli assumes others' interpretations of Western history and stories, but eventually asserts that 'Western' stories are not applicable to his life stories. Lionel struggles in his life because of these interpretations of Native and settler stereotypes, which he accepts as truths. It is not until Lionel is shown a new interpretation that he may realise the power of his own interpretation for his own life. Both of these characters develop their reading abilities. King demonstrates how interpretations can be open to change, as long as a reader is open to read them, or to even re-create them.

CONCLUSION

EITHER YOU GET IT, OR YOU DON'T

So, are we reading tricksters or are we tricksters reading? I think most readers begin by reading tricksters in the novel. And those readers who allow themselves to be transformed by this text, become tricksters reading.

The many levels of reading which are possible are due to the individual experiences of readers before they even approach this text. My reading was certainly influenced by my placement before I read the text. My knowledge of oral storytelling traditions allowed me to see how King put this novel together in the vein of orality. My focus on oral storytelling methods (most particularly interactive participation between tellers and listeners) which exists between the four old Indians, Coyote, and the narrator demonstrates how integrated the oral and the literary are in this text. Accordingly, my knowledge of literary practices and theory also allowed me to recognise many literary allusions in the text, and to appreciate the implications of placing readers in a text in specific ways. The realistic characters demonstrate how 'reading' and 'interpreting' can be changed, whether that be in a literary, oral, or other genres such as watching a movie.

The reader who is already familiar, as I am, with oral storytelling will most likely pick up on King's style and clues in this text. Accordingly, as Louis Owens notes, the

reader who is participating in storytelling is already expected to bring a wealth of knowledge to the story, which the storyteller will not have to supply, but just imply. And if I may quote Rabinowitz again, "an actual reader's interpretation of a specific text is at least in part a product of the assumptions with which he or she approaches it, *including assumptions about the rules for transforming it*"(my emphasis 174). Thus the reader who is familiar, will have interacted as a trickster with this text, as the conventions of oral storytelling are already familiar to him/her. The reader who is not so familiar, has many chances to learn the interactive rules of storytelling while reading this novel, as long as he/she is open to it.

Although King does expect such knowledge from all of his readers, he also allows those readers who are not familiar the opportunity to learn. Orality proposes non-directive learning, and readers may learn through the extra-diegetic characters, who travel easily across the diegetic levels and boundaries, the fluidity of storytelling. For example, Coyote's song breaks the dam and is central to the drama in the story. The song is a trope for the reading which happens in and of the novel. The reader may not break a dam with his/her reading, but he/she can certainly learn, like Eli and Lionel, how to listen and tell a story of the reading.

The character Babo may also teach the reader his/her role in this novel. Because Babo easily accepts the supernatural events which take place in the novel, such as seeing Coyote dancing on the horizon after he turned on the light, and attributes the actions as 'tricks', she clearly defines the activities as tricks. The reader, who is in a privileged position, knows that Coyote's actions are indeed tricks, but also knows that Coyote is a participant in storytelling. What Babo accepts as 'tricks' are actually events

which take place during the storytelling activity. It is Babo who, as a conductor of stories, knows how these stories are working in the novel, and does not question how the impossible may be possible.

King does not overwhelm the reader by telling the reader how to read. King allows the reader to maintain his/her own sense of self while reading. In any case, as I have asserted, a reader cannot step out of his/her reading practices. The only thing that a reader can do, is expand his/her experience.

The various characters in the novel contribute to the reader's learning. The four old Indians represent the codes and conventions of storytelling as unobtrusively as they can. All they do is practice storytelling. Coyote represents the chaotic element to storytelling as the listener. Because Coyote begins the story with little knowledge of storytelling, King is able to portray Coyote as a learner, thereby allowing the reader to learn vicariously through Coyote's experiences. The reader learns the most from Coyote's recklessness and the huge consequences of his storytelling activities in the novel. And when the four old Indians and Coyote sing the song to change the Western, it becomes clear that both the tellers and listeners need to participate for the story to continue and change. And change the story must. The listener's role in storytelling is particularly important because that listener will eventually be a teller who will infuse the story with his/her own flavour and energy. This energy is demonstrated by Coyote's recklessness. Although King does not posit that readers act exactly as Coyote (Coyote is definitely portrayed as silly and unpredictable), King does show how important Coyote's participation and tricking are to the novel. It is Coyote's singing which bursts the dam, and also contributes to the changing of the Western: it is shown that when the

four old Indians try to change the Western on their own it does not stick; therefore, they need Coyote to join their song to make the transformation successful. Further, the various characters in the realistic narrative allow the reader a more down to earth understanding of how he/she as a reader may participate in storytelling. Eli and Lionel play the roles of the reader with closed eyes. That is, they do not really think about themselves as active readers. They accept what is presented to them and do not think that they have the power to change the interpretation of the story. Of course they learn that stories which seem set can be changed when the Western is changed and thus open their eyes. Bill Bursom's role in the novel is to show a resistant reader. Bursom does not want to accept the new interpretation and codes of the new Western. He wants to revert back to the original interpretation of the Western because it suits his ideas and comfort levels concerning Native people. Finally, the narrator, who is the teacher to Coyote in the extra-diegetic level, makes sure that Coyote and the reader learn something from the stories being told. What they learn is not clearly directed, as the narrator just tells Coyote to pay attention, but it is important that the narrator make sure that Coyote is paying attention. The narrator also makes sure that the reader pays attention when he interpolates him/her into the text.

As both participants are essential to storytelling - a teller and a listener - the reader must recognise that he/she is a listener/reader and participant in a process. A process in which, sooner or later, he/she will re-tell, or interpret, and share the story that King is telling.

Notes

1. Harry Robinson's stories in *Write in on My Heart* often did not distinguish time. That is, he could be telling a creation story which was contemporary. Thomas King also does not distinguish between old time and new time in "The One About Coyote Going West" where Coyote's mistake recreates the world ordering 'stuff' from a catalogue.

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