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CYCLICAL TIME AND LINEAR TIME IN THOMAS KING'S GREEN GRASS, RUNNING WATER

Keywords: *mythical/historical time, orality, centre-margin relationship, stereotypes, deconstruction, Judaeo/Christian and Amerindian archetypes, parody, postmodernist.*

Abstract: *Starting from Mircea Eliade's and Paul Ricoeur's description of time, the paper sets out to analyse Thomas King's recuperation of mythical time, the heritage of his native Amerindian spirituality. In Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return (1954), Eliade shows that archaic and religious humanity perceives time as heterogenous, that is as divided between profane time (linear), and sacred time (cyclical and reactualizable), whereas modern non-religious humanity perceives time as a homogenous, linear, and unrepeatable medium. In his novel Green Grass, Running Water (1993) King deconstructs white stereotypes of Native culture on the one hand and also decentres the dominant culture by a play of literary archetypes in a parodic postmodernist way that recalls the trickster's techniques, on the other. The trickster holds a central figure in native mythology and its oral culture with its essentially story-telling literary tradition. The novel is made up of several interconnected stories, the end of one story being the beginning of another, which suggests the ongoing process of existence but also the cyclical intervention of Coyote, the trickster. Illustrating the Native vision of the world the stories occur on two levels of existence – the spiritual and the material - weaving a postmodernist text that combines comedy and fabulation, parody and realist discourse.*