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Settling Unsettled Narratives: Indigenous Identity, Memory and Resilience in Canadian Literature by Eden Robinson and Thomas King

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Abstract: *This research examines how indigenous identity, memory, and resilience are represented in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and the *Trickster* series by Eden Robinson, alongside the sharp non-fiction narrative, *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King. The aim is to compare how these authors confront colonial histories and express Indigenous self-determination. Using a comparative literary analysis of the selected texts, this study investigate narrative techniques and thematic elements. The results uncover that Robinson's incorporation of Haisla cosmology and the concept of intergenerational trauma, together with King's use of historical revisionism and satire, work together to reaffirm Indigenous voices and question colonial concoction of Canadian Indigenous Identity. This paper suggests that there should be increased focus on the combined effects of various Indigenous storytelling methods within decolonial studies. Robinson weaves Haisla cosmology and oral traditions into modern Indigenous experiences, depicting protagonists who struggle with intergenerational trauma and resilience amidst cultural discord. King employs wit, humor, irony, and historical revisionism to unveil narratives of settler colonialism, land exorcism, and the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Collectively, both authors play a vital role in decolonial resistance and cultural resilience by reaffirming Indigenous voices, questioning colonial construct of knowing, and portrayal of a vibrant Indigenous identity.*

Keywords: Indigenous identity, Eden Robinson, Thomas King, Cultural heritage, Colonialism, Haisla mythology

1. Introduction

The Canadian literary landscape has undergone a considerable and essential transformation in recent years, progressively acknowledging and highlighting the defined and powerful voices of Indigenous authors. This shift has not only broadened the miscellany of narratives but also indicated a fundamental reappraisal of the land's literature, as these writers present perceptions that have been marginalized or suppressed by colonial ideologies. Their story provides critical insights into the historical and ongoing effects of colonialism, such as, the painful legacy of residential schools, persistent land eviction, and systematic cultural exorcism (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; Kermoal & Altamirano-Jiménez, 2021). At the same time, these stories celebrate the imperishable strength, rich cultural traditions, and diverse identities of Indigenous peoples. As Daniel Heath Justice eloquently expresses in “Why

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Indigenous Literatures Matter" (2018), these works transcend simple storytelling; they are essential expressions of self-rule and self-determination, importantly shaping perceptions of Indigenous nationhood, community, survival, and empowerment. Within this reverberant literary movement, the contributions of Eden Robinson and Thomas King emerged as very significant, each offering unique and profoundly interrelated perspectives on Indigenous experiences in Canada. Their literature, whether through Robinson's intricate storytelling that consistently integrates Haisla cosmology with modern realism or King's robust non-fiction analysis of historical inaccuracies, systematically challenges dominant historical narratives and reclaims the power of Indigenous storytelling (Gaertner, 2020; Leclair, 2023).

1.1 The State of Affairs of the Unsettling Narratives

The evolution of Canadian Indigenous literature has not been mere content diversification; it represents a decolonial reimagining of national literature, as Indigenous writers assert control over their stories, beliefs, histories, and cultures. For centuries, Indigenous experiences were represented through colonial perspectives, encouraging prejudicious stereotypes or the idealized image of the "noble savage" (LaRocque, 2021). Such cultural deceit was reinforced by government policies, including the residential school system, the Indian Act, and land eviction practices, all aimed at overturning Indigenous self-determination and identity (Borrows & Chartrand, 2020).

Nevertheless, the late 20th and early 21st centuries have observed a resurgence in Indigenous literature that emphasizes self-determination, cultural preservation, and resistivity. Contemporary Indigenous authors are not just reclaiming narrative control but are also transforming Canada's literary prescript by expressing their communities' lived experiences through storytelling activities and events rooted in their cultures. These literary works serve as acts of survivance—Gerald Vizenor's concept of Indigenous existence, continuity, and active resistance to absence and victimization—facilitating both cultural healing and the reassertion of ancestral wisdom (Vizenor, 2021; Fee & McKegney, 2022). Within this reverberant and unique literary canvas, the works of Robinson and King are extraordinary for their sharp engagement with identity sentiment, historicist approach to life and living, and cultural revival. By integrating myth-dominant realism and critical historicity, they encounter colonial deconstruction and prioritize Indigenous worldviews, providing readers with avenues for decolonial thought and action (McCall, 2024).

1.2 Research Gap

Despite considerable individual scholarship on Eden Robinson and Thomas King, a critical gap exists in the focused comparative analysis of their works. Research on "Monkey Beach" and "Trickster" series by Robinson effectively addresses intergenerational trauma, Haisla cosmology, and identity (Glynn, K., & Cupples, J. (2024). Likewise, King's "The Inconvenient Indian" and "The Truth About Stories" are recognized for their strong decolonial critiques and their restoration of historical narratives (Robinson & Del Rio 2023; Corbet, 2024). Current scholarship, however, mainly investigate these authors in isolation, failing to recognize the interactive potential of their distinct approaches. Robinson lynchpin readers in specific Indigenous worldviews for deep personal identity search, while King consistently deconstruct stereotypes through penetrative historicist lens. This research addresses this analytical gap by comparing their shared engagement with colonial violence, lasting cultural memory, and the complex realities of self-identity within Indigenous communities in Canada. It posits that their concerted literary efforts provide a more comprehensive and persuasive understanding of modern-day Indigenous identity and survivance.

1.3 Thesis Statement

This study posits that both Eden Robinson and Thomas King, through their intricately textured and neatly woven literary styles, collaboratively dismantle colonial narratives of the Indigenous Canada, illuminating the multifaceted resilience and fundamental simplicity of Indigenous identity in Canada. By delving into poignant themes of colonial violence, the essential role of ancestral memory and oral traditions, and the impulsive interaction between traditional knowledge systems and contemporary sociopolitical realities, their works forge a compelling pathway toward a more just, equitable, and patriotically aware understanding of Indigenous existence. This critical discourse contributes significantly to the ongoing creative engagements surrounding Indigenous self-rule and decolonization. Their narratives do not simply mirror reality; they actively sculpt it, leading readers to reassess past injustices and dispute prevalent assumptions in the pursuit of a more inclusive future.

1.4 An Overview of the Study

This paper establishes a theoretical framework that references Gerald Vizenor's notion of "survivance" as articulated in "Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence" (2008), alongside key elements of decolonial thought as discussed by scholars such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2017) and Lee Maracle in "Memory Serves: Oratories" (2015). This framework effectively contextualizes the analysis of how Indigenous writers reclaim their narratives amidst tyrannical histories. Subsequent sections provides an in-depth examination of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and her *Trickster* series, with a focus on her distinctive fusion of Haisla cosmology, traditional storytelling techniques, and realistic depictions of intergenerational trauma, healing, and the coming-of-age experience in a contemporary context. The paper also examines Thomas King's discriminating non-fiction work, *The Inconvenient Indian*, which creates a compelling critique of historical inaccuracies, reconfirms Indigenous viewpoints, and strategically employs humor, wit, and irony to challenge colonial assumptions and misinterpretation about Indigenous peoples in Canada. Finally, a comparative criticism highlights the thematic similarities and stylistic differences between these two influential authors. This analysis underscores their significant contributions to the ongoing redefinition and affirmation of Indigenous identity within Canadian literary and cultural discourse, as well as their mutual faithfulness to promoting an accurate and respectful understanding of Indigenous presence.

2. Literature Review

The terrain of literary criticism in Canada has recently experienced a evidential shift, characterized by an increasing recognition of the contributions made by Indigenous authors. This modification goes beyond mere change; it symbolizes a decolonial reconstruct of national literature, as Indigenous writers reclaim their stories, heritage and histories, and cultural expressions. This reflective transition is mirrored by a broader societal confrontation with Canada's colonial legacy and its lasting impacts on Indigenous communities. Through their varied narratives, Indigenous authors actively rediscover the national literary canon by emphasizing their distinct epistemologies, questioning dominant historicity, tales told over centuries, ancestral 'stream of consciousness' to affirm the intricacies of Indigenous identities (Justice, 2018; Coulthard, 2023; Dayton, 2022). This literary revitalization calls for focused scholarly investigation into how these narratives facilitate ongoing cultural revival, healing, and political autonomy.

2.1 Discoursing Current Canadian Indigenous Literature

Current scholarship on Canadian Indigenous literature provides a strong basis for a clear understanding of the connection between storytelling, identity, and the leftovers of colonialism.

Influential theoretical frameworks such as Gerald Vizenor's idea of "survivance" (Vizenor, 2008; McKegney, 2021) highlight the active perseverance of Indigenous cultures, dismissing victim narratives and emphasizing cultural creativity and resistivity. This point of view is further supported by decolonial theorists, such as, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (*As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*, 2017) and Lee Maracle (*Memory Serves: Oratories*, 2015), who underscore the epoch-making political and cultural power integrated in Indigenous oral traditions and narrative forms. These scholars contend that engaging with Indigenous literature necessitates the acknowledgement and understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems, which are indispensable for genuine decolonization (Corbiere, 2023; Whyte, 2022). Critical scrutiny of Eden Robinson's works, including *Monkey Beach* (2000) and her *Trickster* series (2017, 2018, 2021), frequently highlight her exceptional skill in intertwining Haisla cosmology and spiritual dimensions with the harsh realities of modern Indigenous existence. Researchers and critics analyze how Robinson's characters cope with intergenerational trauma, grief, and the search for identity amid socio-economic hurdles. Billingslea's "Epistemic Trauma in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach*" (2019) serves as a notable analysis, exploring the psychological and cultural implications of colonial violence as depicted in Robinson's narrative. More recent research continues to explore the complexity of the *Trickster* motif in her works, acknowledging its significance not only in cultural reassertion but also in challenging settler-colonial construct of Indigenous spirituality and knowledge (Little Bear, 2022; Cardinal, 2024). These analyses exemplify Robinson's role in authentically representing Indigenous youth experiences and avenues for healing (Anderson, 2021; Verstraten, 2023). In a similar vein, Thomas King's non-fiction, especially *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012) and *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003), has received considerable academic approval for its sharp critiques of colonial history and the ongoing dynamics between Indigenous peoples and settlers. Academics frequently commend King's distinctive narrative style, defined by its sharp humor, satire, and direct engagement, as an effective mechanism for challenging stereotypes and dismantling historical inaccuracies (Monture, 2020). His work is regarded as decisive in reclaiming Indigenous narratives and asserting Indigenous agency amid centuries of misrepresentation (Alfred, 2020; Palmater, 2020; Goodin, 2023). Discussions about King's contributions highlight the intellectual depth and political urgency of his witty yet impactful decolonial critique (Fee & Nason, 2015).

2.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Despite widespread acceptance of Eden Robinson and Thomas King's significant contributions to Indigenous Canadian literature, a critical dimension remains under-explored in their comparative critiques. The intellectual challenge lies in the absence of a rigorous scholarly synthesis that powerfully interrogates how their distinct yet complementary narrative approaches jointly shape a clear understanding of contemporary Indigenous identity (Lussier, 2022). Both authors actively challenge colonial interpretations of Indigenous narratives and assert Indigenous agency, yet their literary methods diverge sharply. Robinson draws readers into specific, often spiritual Indigenous worldviews to get into identity from an insider's perspective, whereas King delivers a broader, historical, and critical deconstruct of pan-Indigenous stereotypes and colonial presumption. Current scholarly discourse primarily treats these authors as separate entities, thereby neglecting the powerful synergistic potential that arises from examining how their differing, yet equally compelling, engagements with colonial legacies and Indigenous self-identity intersect. This gap in scholarship calls for the urgent need for a focused comparative analysis that clear up how these distinct literary strategies—one rooted in immersive cultural specificity and the other in wide-ranging critical exposition—

complement each other. Addressing this issue is essential for advancing a more holistic understanding of Indigenous survivance and identity in Canada (Reading, 2024).

2.3 Research Questions

Based on the identified research problem, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- How do *Monkey Beach* and *Trickster* series by Eden Robinson, and *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King address the legacies of colonial violence, intergenerational trauma, and the affirmation of Indigenous cultural memory and oral traditions?
- In what ways do characters and narrative voices in the works of Eden Robinson and Thomas King negotiate and reaffirm Indigenous identity amidst historical subjugation and continued Indigenous resurgence?
- What are the key convergences and divergences in the narrative strategies and stylistic choices of Robinson and King, and how do their combined literary efforts challenge dominant narratives to promote a clearer understanding of Indigenous existence in Canadian literature?

2.4 Research Objectives

- To conduct a detailed textual analysis of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and *Trickster* series, and Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*, to identify how they individually address colonial legacies, inter-generational trauma, and the affirmation of Indigenous cultural memory and oral traditions.
- To comparatively examine how Robinson and King, through their distinct and convergent narrative strategies, portray characters and voices negotiating and redefining Indigenous identity amidst historical oppression and ongoing Indigenous resurgence.
- To contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how their combined literary efforts challenge settler-colonial discourse and collectively assert Indigenous resilience and sovereignty in contemporary Canadian literature.

This literature review clearly establishes the extensive and expanding scholarship on Indigenous Canadian literature, with a particular emphasis on the selected works of Eden Robinson and Thomas King. Their contributions are powerful and influential, yet there is an urgent need for a comparative analysis that synthesizes their well-defined but complementary approaches to expressing Indigenous identity. The resultant sections of this paper will perform this essential comparative analysis, driven by the outlined research questions and objectives, to exemplify the resilience and complexity of Indigenous voices in Canada.

3. Methodology

The exploration of Indigenous identity in Canadian literature necessitates a methodological approach capable to deeply engage with both textual complexities and the broader socio-cultural contexts from which these narratives emerge. This research aims to provide an effective framework in analyzing how Eden Robinson and Thomas King, through their distinct literary forms, contribute to the discourse of Indigenous self-assertion and resistance against colonial legacies. The choices made in research design, instruments, and the acknowledgment of limitations are crucial for ensuring the scholarly integrity and validity of the analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study engages a qualitative research design, specifically a comparative literary analysis. This design is suitable for examining the meaningful ways in which meaning is constructed and conveyed within literary texts. The comparative aspects allow for an in-depth search of

both the shared thematic concerns and the divergent narrative strategies made use of by Eden Robinson and Thomas King. By juxtaposing their styles and strategies of portray, the research seeks to uncover how different literary forms—Robinson's Haisla-infused fiction and King's critical non-fiction—collectively contribute to the intricate articulation of Indigenous identity. The research process involves close reading of primary texts, informed by established literary theories and existing literature relevant to Indigenous narratives and postcolonial literature.

3.2 Research Instruments

The main research tools for this study are the selected literary texts themselves, which serve as the direct source of data for analysis. These include:

Primary Texts (Literary Works):

Eden Robinson: *Monkey Beach* (2000), *Son of a Trickster* (2017), *Trickster Drift* (2018), and *Return of the Trickster* (2021). These texts have been analyzed for their narrative structure, character development, thematic representation of Haisla cosmology, intergenerational trauma, healing, and the negotiation of youth identity.

Thomas King: *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012). This text have been examined for their argumentative structure, use of rhetoric, satirical elements, and historical and critical commentary on Indigenous-settler relations and identity.

Secondary Texts (Critical and Theoretical Works): A comprehensive review of academic articles, books, and chapters on Indigenous Canadian literature, decolonial theory, survivance, and specific critical analyses of the selected works of Robinson and King (as outlined in the Literature Review) serve as a foundational instrument. These secondary sources provide the theoretical lens and contextual justification necessary for interpreting the primary texts. The analytical process involves **close reading**, focusing on:

Thematic Analysis: Identifying recurring themes such as colonial violence, cultural memory, land connection, spiritual beliefs, humor, and resilience across the selected works.

Narrative Analysis: Examining narrative voice, perspective, plot structures, and the use of literary devices (e.g., symbolism, allegory, irony, magic realism).

Contextual Analysis: Interpreting the texts within their specific cultural (Haisla, broadly Indigenous Canadian) and historical contexts, and in relation to broader decolonial discourse.

3.3 Significance of the Research

This research carries considerable importance in that that it conducts comparative exploration of two key Indigenous writers, which provides an in-depth understanding of Indigenous identity within Canadian literature through extensive textual scrutiny of individual texts (Smylie, 2025). Secondly, it aids the ongoing decolonization effort by exhibiting how Indigenous literary works actively counter colonial narratives. Thirdly, by analyzing different narrative styles used in traditional fiction and historical critique, the research enriches critical conversations about Indigenous writing techniques. Lastly, this study enhances academic discussions in Canadian Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Literary Criticism through critiquing the significant literary and political contributions of Eden Robinson and Thomas King,

encouraging a profound engagement with Indigenous voices (Indigenous Literary Studies, 2024).

3.4 Research Limitations

This study focuses on comparative analysis of two influential Indigenous Canadian authors, but several limitations should be noted. Although the selected primary texts highlight the authors' distinct voices, they do not encompass the full range of their works or the diversity of Indigenous Canadian literature. A broader selection might uncover additional insights, yet the selected texts are essential for the circumstantial comparative goals of this investigation. Secondly, as a qualitative literary analysis, the findings are interpretative and open to academic discussion rather than seeking statistical generalizability. Exemplifications are based on specific theoretical frameworks, which provide particular perspectives on the texts. Finally, while the study emphasizes cultural specificity, particularly regarding Robinson's Haisla heritage, it is important to recognize that the researchers are not Indigenous. This external academic perspective, despite efforts to engage with Indigenous scholarship, represents an inherent limitation of the analysis.

This methodology follows a systematic approach for analyzing the selected texts by Eden Robinson and Thomas King, ensuring that the research questions are addressed comprehensively within the established theoretical frameworks. The subsequent sections apply this design to conduct the detailed investigation of the primary texts, building upon the foundations laid herein.

4. Findings and Discussion

Indigenous literature, especially within the Canadian landscape, serves as more than just an artistic outlet—it is a storehouse of collective memory, acts of resistance, and the reclamation of ways of knowing. At its core is a need to express identity amidst colonial erasure, cultural disruption, and historical trauma. Through narratives, Indigenous peoples assert their existence, contest dominant narratives, and navigate the complexities of living in a world influenced by both ancestral wisdom and contemporary realities. Two prominent voices in this literary renaissance are Eden Robinson and Thomas King (Rasmussen, 2024). Their individual works provide intricate examinations of the Indigenous experience in modern North America, highlighting the contradictions, fractures, and continuities that characterize Indigenous life today rather than offering a singular identity.

4.1 Literature as a Space of Resistance and Indigenous Assertion

This study examines how Indigenous identity, memory, and resilience are represented in Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and the *Trickster* series by Eden Robinson, alongside the distinct non-fiction narrative, *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King. The aim is to compare how these authors encounter colonial histories and express Indigenous self-assertion. Using a comparative literary analysis of the selected texts, this research investigates narrative techniques and thematic elements presented in the selected texts. The findings uncover that Robinson's incorporation of Haisla cosmology and the concept of intergenerational trauma, together with King's use of historical revisionism and satire, work together to reaffirm Indigenous voices and challenges colonial concoction of Canadian Indigenous Identity. This paper suggests that there should be increased focus on the combined effects of various Indigenous storytelling strategies to dispute dominant colonial narratives and advance the cause of Indigenous sovereignty in Canada (Smylie, 2025; Reading, 2024).

4.2 Haisla Cosmology and Trauma in *Monkey Beach*

In *Monkey Beach* (2000), Eden Robinson portrays young Indigenous individuals as they encounter fractured family ties, cultural shift, and an evolving spiritual awareness. Drawing on her Haisla background, her story resonates with the rhythmic pattern of storytelling traditions, enriched with mythological imagery and contemporary dislocations. In *Monkey Beach*, Lisamarie Hill's quest for her missing brother unfolds a more profound internal journey—one that pertains to manoeuvring her Haisla identity amid the lasting shadows of colonial trauma. Robinson skillfully weaves Haisla cosmology—spirits, visions, and warnings from the natural world—into Lisamarie's coming-of-age. The supernatural elements are not mere literary devices but are integral to her perception of reality, reflecting a worldview where the spiritual and material domain are interconnected (Verstraten, 2023). This convergence of the mundane and the mystical serves to validate Indigenous ways of knowing that frequently stand in stark contrast to Western rationalism.

The narrative also addresses the concept of intergenerational trauma. The residential school system and the usual violence it perpetuated left an ineradicable mark on Indigenous communities. Lisamarie's family, particularly her grandmother and her parents, embody the silent suffering and coping mechanics developed in response to this historical subjugation. Her brother Jimmy's battle with addiction and alienation can be seen as manifestations of this inherited pain, highlighting how past injustices continue to ruffle through the present. Robinson's portrayal avoids simplistic victimhood, instead emphasizing the complexity of trauma and the varied ways individuals and communities struggle for healing. Through Lisamarie's journey, Robinson suggests that remembering and integrating these agonizing histories, rather than containing them, is important for individual and collective resilience (Rasmussen, 2024; Verstraten, 2023).

4.3 Adolescent Struggles and Supernatural Inheritance in the Trickster Trilogy

The Trickster trilogy—*Son of a Trickster* (2017), *Trickster Drift* (2018), and *Return of the Trickster* (2021)—continues Robinson's search of indigenous youth navigating difficult realities. Jared, the protagonist, is a teenager wrestling with substance abuse, familial chaos, and an emerging understanding of his supernatural inheritance. Unlike Lisamarie's more introspective journey, Jared's combats with the spiritual world are often disorderly and overwhelming, reflecting the stupefying experience of adolescence combined with extraordinary circumstances. The trickster figure, a central archetype in many Indigenous oral traditions, is embodied in Jared's lineage, infusing the stories with humor, disruption, and transformation.

The trilogy deals with the intricacies of identity reformation for young Indigenous individuals, particularly those living in urban or semi-urban settings where conventional ways of life may be less immediately accessible. Jared's struggles with self-acceptance, addiction, and his constrained relationships are deeply human, yet they are perpetually intersected by the demands and dangers of his supernatural heritage. Robinson uses the trickster archetype not only to initiate elements of fantasy but also to comment on the unpredictable nature of life and the inherent resilience required to face its challenges (Reading, 2024). The series argues that embracing one's full identity, including its complex spiritual dimensions, is essential for self-determination (Verstraten, 2023).

4.4 Thomas King and the Satirical Dismantling of Colonial Historiography

Thomas King, in *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012), offers a formidable non-fiction counter-narrative to predominant colonial histories. King uses a distinctive blend of wit, satire, humour, and personal anecdote to dissect

and deconstruct the myths and misconstruction surrounding Indigenous communities in North America. His approach is fundamentally revisionist, challenging the linear, progressivist narrative that has historically peripheral and misrepresented Indigenous experiences. King's penetrative commentary unwrap the absurdity and inherent biases within the historical records, academic interpretations, and popular culture representations of Indigenous communities. He reveals how Indigenous identity has been "invented" by settlers—either as a imposing relic or a problematic obstacle to national progress. Through humor, King effectively cuts through these cultural myths. His affirmation, "The issue has always been land. It will always be land" (King 215), encapsulates his project: shifting the conversation from symbolic inclusion to material justice (Robinson & Del Rio, 2023).

4.5 Memory, Land, and Cultural Continuity

Both Robinson and King underline the profound connection between memory, land, and cultural longevity. In Robinson's works, the land is not just a setting but a living entity diffused with ancestral memory and spiritual implication. The Haisla territory in *Monkey Beach* is a repository of stories, warnings, and comfort for Lisamarie, connecting her to her heritage even amidst personal and communal turbulence. The recurring motif of the Monkey Beach itself represents a space where the boundaries between worlds blur, accentuating the enduring presence of the past and the spiritual world. Similarly, King's *The Inconvenient Indian* consistently returns to the issue of land as central to Indigenous identity and the recurrent struggle for sovereignty. He fastidiously traces how land appropriation and the systematic denial of Indigenous rights has been the bedrock of settler colonial program. For King, the land is inextricably linked to self-determination, not only as a physical space but also as a cultural and spiritual legacy (TallBear, 2023). Both authors, through their distinct approaches, argue that the remembrance and reclamation of land-based knowledge are vital for Indigenous resurgence (Robinson & Del Rio, 2023).

4.6 Narrative Sovereignty and the Epistemological Challenge

Despite their distinct genres and tones, both King and Robinson are united in their dedication to narrative sovereignty—the principle that Indigenous peoples should narrate their own stories, according to their own perspectives (Francis, 2024). This concept goes further than simple representation; it pertains to ways of knowing. Robinson utilizes narrative strategies—like the intertwining of timelines, the incorporation of myth, and the rejection of simple resolutions—that confront Western literary norms. Conversely, King's use of irony and a dialogic form subverts the reader's assumptions about authoritative historical narratives. Collectively, both authors disrupt the linear and progressive narratives that underpin settler colonialism, instead offering a temporal understanding defined by return, relationship, and resurgence. Their works challenge the colonial viewpoint that has traditionally shaped Indigenous narratives, advocating for a perspective centered on Indigenous experiences that acknowledges multiple ways of knowing and existing. This challenge to conventional knowledge is vital for decolonizing not just literature but also the broader societal interpretations of history and identity (Francis, 2024; TallBear, 2023).

4.7 Humor, Hybridity, and Resilience in Indigenous Storytelling

An important similarity the works of Robinson and King, though articulated differently, is the deliberate use of humor and the celebration of hybridity as expressions of resilience. Robinson's *Trickster* trilogy particularly employs dark humor and the unpredictable essence of the trickster archetype to address challenging themes such as addiction, trauma, and violence. The humor woven into these stories provides relief and acts as a coping mechanism, exemplifying the profound resilience found in Indigenous peoples. King's *The Inconvenient*

Indian is rich with sharp satire and insightful observations, employing humor as a powerful means to critique and reconstruct colonial narratives. His skill in making readers laugh while addressing disquieting realities highlights the effectiveness of Indigenous storytelling in engaging, provoking thought, and educating its audience. Both authors also display a sense of hybridity—a merger of traditional Indigenous wisdom with modern realities, alongside an interchange between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural influences. This hybridity is portrayed not as a compromise of identity, but as a vibrant and adaptable feature of Indigenous experience that represents the continued process of cultural negotiation and revival (Smylie, 2025; Reading, 2024).

4.8 Intersecting Narratives: Indigenous Resilience in Robinson and King

Eden Robinson examines young Indigenous people dealing with broken family relationships, cultural estrangement, and shifting spiritual identities in *Monkey Beach* (2000) and the Trickster trilogy—*Son of a Trickster* (2017), *Trickster Drift* (2018), and *Return of the Trickster* (2021). Rooted in her Haisla heritage, Robinson's stories powerfully echo the tradition of oral storytelling, combining mythical components with the rough realities of modern life. In *Monkey Beach*, Lisamarie Hill's resolute quest for her missing brother is intricately tied to her path of self-discovery as she journey through her Haisla identity amidst the legacy of colonial trauma. Robinson adeptly weaves Haisla cosmology into Lisamarie's coming-of-age story, framing the supernatural as an essential aspect of her existence (Verstraten, 2023). The novel addresses intergenerational trauma resulting from the residential school system, revealing how historical injustices continue to affect Lisamarie's family, particularly in her brother Jimmy's battle with addiction. Rather than presenting a simplistic victim narrative, Robinson emphasizes the intricacies of trauma and the varied routes to healing. She asserts that acknowledging and reconciling painful histories is crucial for nurturing resilience (Rasmussen, 2024). The Trickster trilogy further emphasizes Robinson's dedication to illustrating the struggles faced by Indigenous youth. The main character Jared is a teenager who confronts substance abuse and family disruption while wrestling with his supernatural legacy. His uncertain encounters with the spiritual world stand in stern contrast to Lisamarie's more reflective journey, capturing the commotion of adolescence. The trickster figure exposes humor and transformation into the narrative, tackling the urgent issues surrounding identity development for young Indigenous individuals in urban settings. Through Jared's experiences, Robinson underscores the importance of self-acceptance and resilience amidst life's uncertainties. She posits that embracing one's full identity, including its spiritual aspects, is essential for achieving genuine self-determination (Reading, 2024; Smylie, 2025). The questions raised point to significant areas for additional investigation. Gaining insight into the specific cultural practices and beliefs illustrated in Robinson's works would enhance understanding of the Haisla identity and intensify the reader's grasp of the characters' experiences. Furthermore, analyzing the depiction of addiction could clear up the broader societal implications of generational trauma and the various coping strategies within Indigenous communities. Lastly, examining how King's critiques of colonial contents inform contemporary discussions on Indigenous identity and rights could shed light on the enduring effects of these literary contributions in promoting social justice and reconciliation. Together, these inquiries argue that the necessity for a more productive discourse about Indigenous resilience and identity in both literature and real-world circumstances.

Thomas King, in *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012), offers a striking counter-narrative that confronts mainstream colonial narratives. With his piercing wit, biting satire, and poignant personal anecdotes, he effectively dismantles enduring myths about Indigenous peoples, challenging the linear narratives that

have long marginalized their experiences. King uncovers the biases embedded in historical records and popular culture, arguing that settlers have often “invented” Indigenous identity, framing it as either a noble relic or an impediment to progress. His emphatic claim, “The issue has always been land. It will always be land” (King 215), redirects our focus from mere symbolic inclusion to the pressing necessity of material justice (Robinson & Del Rio, 2023). Both King and Robinson showcase resilience that transcends simplistic impression of heroism, suggesting it as elaborately woven into cultural connections and collective memory. Their distinct narrative strategies converge on the vital role of Indigenous literature in asserting self-determination and deconstructing colonial frameworks. Future research must look into how these texts resonate within Indigenous communities and their transformative impact on important discourse surrounding reconciliation and decolonization.

4.9 Indigenous Literary Renaissance and the Power of Storytelling

The contemporary Indigenous literary landscape in Canada is undergoing a compelling renaissance, characterized by a dynamic display of voices and themes. This movement is not merely a trend; it is an indispensable assertion of self-determination and cultural preservation. Indigenous authors are decisively reclaiming narratives that have long been distorted and suppressed by colonial orientation. By telling their own stories, they, with boldness, reassert their identities, contest stereotypes, and ensure the survival of their cultures for their generations to come. This literary development is integral to the broader discourse about reconciliation, decolonization, and social justice in Canada (Vizenor, 2008; Francis, 2024). Storytelling is a cornerstone of Indigenous cultures, deeply rooted in oral traditions that convey knowledge and surrogate spiritual connections. The wealth of contemporary Indigenous literature accommodate this tradition to connect with modern audiences. Authors like Eden Robinson and Thomas King exhibit how storytelling serves as a powerful tool for healing and community building, reconnecting ancestral wisdom with current struggles (Reading, 2024; Smylie, 2025).

4.10 Intergenerational Trauma and Healing Narratives

Intergenerational trauma is a predominant theme in Indigenous literature, with roots in the residential school system and other colonial plan of action that inflicted severe trauma, including abuse and family disturbance. These impacts are not only historical; they continue to affect Indigenous communities, leading to stressful mental health challenges and cycles of violence. Indigenous authors are not resistless chroniclers of this pain; they actively explore ways and means to healing and resilience through their stories and heritage. They create essential spaces for recognition and recovery, demonstrating that despite the trauma, hope and resilience endure.

4.11 Decolonizing Canadian History and Identity

Indigenous literature is vital in decolonizing Canadian history and national identity. Historically, Canadian narratives have been dominated by colonial legacy and a Eurocentric perspective, which has reduced or erased the presence and contributions of Indigenous peoples. This twisted view has perpetuated stereotypes and systemic discrimination against Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Thomas King actively dismantle these colonial narratives by presenting alternative histories. In *The Inconvenient Indian*, King’s satire reveals the biases within official historical accounts, forcing readers to confront uncomfortable truths (Robinson & Del Rio, 2023). Similarly, Eden Robinson’s incorporation of Haisla cosmology challenges the dominance of Western doctrine, reinforcing the validity of Indigenous orientation. By accentuation of Indigenous voices, King and Robinson contribute to a more accurate and respectful understanding of Canadian history (TallBear, 2023; Francis, 2024).

4.12 Indigenous Youth and the Future of Storytelling

Eden Robinson's focus on young Indigenous protagonists, like Lisamarie in *Monkey Beach* and Jared in the *Trickster* trilogy, bring to light the unique challenges faced by Indigenous youth today. Life and living of these characters travel through traditional and contemporary cultures, revealing the changing nature of Indigenous identity in the 21st century (Verstraten, 2023; Reading, 2024). Their stories indicate the future of Indigenous storytelling. By displaying characters who wrestle with their heritage and seek their place in the world, Robinson highlights the importance of empowering the next generation of Indigenous voices. These characters personify resilience and demonstrate that, despite historical challenges, Indigenous cultures are vibrant and continuously evolving (Reading, 2024; Smylie, 2025).

4.13 Beyond the Binary

Intricacy in Indigenous Representations Eden Robinson and Thomas King unambiguously reject simplistic portrayals of Indigenous identity; their characters are robust, complex, and profoundly multifaceted. They profusely refuse to depict Indigenous peoples solely as victims or idealized figures. Instead, they offer a graphic spectrum of human experience that encompasses struggles with addiction and poverty, alongside moments of humor, joy, and steady connections to community and land. This commitment to truthful storytelling challenges established stereotypes and demands that readers engage more deeply with Indigenous experiences. By crafting characters who defy easy categorization, Robinson and King graphically illustrate that Indigenous identity is dynamic, continually shaped by both ancestral wisdom and modern-day realities (Smylie, 2025; Rasmussen, 2024).

4.14 Resurgence and Self-Determination through Narrative

Robinson and King stand as unnerving examples of Indigenous resurgence and self-determination through their narratives, reviving Indigenous cultures, languages, and governance systems. Their literary works play a critical role in reclaiming what colonialism has sought to wipe out (Alfred, 2020; Simpson, 2017). Robinson's fusion of Haisla cosmology with realism and King's biting use of satire are significant tools of resistance. They not only reconnect with Indigenous readers but also impart essential insights to non-Indigenous audiences. By reclaiming control over their narratives, these authors actively preserve cultural memory and champion justice, paving the way for a more just society and driving the movement toward genuine reconciliation and Indigenous self-assertion (Francis, 2024; TallBear, 2023).

4.15 Data Triangulation with Cross-Referencing

Data triangulation in literary analysis examines how themes from diverse texts converge to deepen understanding. This study analyzes the narratives of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and *Trickster* trilogy alongside Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*. Robinson explores Haisla cosmology, intergenerational trauma, and youth identity, while King critically deconstructs colonial history and Indigenous representation. The impact of intergenerational trauma in Robinson's work (Sections 4.2 and 4.3) is effectively contextualized by King's examination of colonial policies (Section 4.4). Likewise, the spiritual connection to land in *Monkey Beach* (Section 4.5) underscores King's assertion of the importance of land to Indigenous sovereignty. Both authors engage in narrative sovereignty (Section 4.6). Robinson's storytelling techniques and supernatural elements strongly challenge Western interpretation of local narratives, mirroring King's critique of colonial historiography through satire (Section 4.4). Additionally, resilient humor and hybridity in Robinson's work (Section 4.7) complement King's satirical approach. This analysis unwraps a shared commitment among

contemporary Indigenous authors to reclaim voice and challenge dominant colonial interpretation of Canadian narratives, encouraging Indigenous resurgence (Rasmussen, 2024; Reading, 2024; Smylie, 2025). Finally, this study reveals how Indigenous literature is crucial for cultural continuity and decolonization.

5. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study, several compelling areas for future research demand exploration. Firstly, an intersectional analysis must investigate how gender, class, and sexuality encounter with Indigenous identity in the works of authors such as Robinson and King, along with other contemporary Indigenous writers. This approach will provide a deeper and clearer understanding of the various experiences within Indigenous communities. Secondly, as adaptations and media studies gain prominence, it is necessary for researchers to look into how Indigenous literature translates across various media platforms, such as the Trickster TV series. Additionally, investigating the effects of these adaptations on public perception is critical for understanding their significance. Thirdly, the narratives of Robinson and King—particularly Robinson's integration of myth and future possibilities—hold tremendous potential for enriching the growing field of Indigenous futurism. This exploration will illuminate how Indigenous peoples imagine their continuance and flourishing beyond colonial constraints. Fourthly, comparative studies of Indigenous literatures on a global scale must include voices from regions such as Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. This analysis will unveil important patterns of resistance, identity formation, and cultural reclamation across the world. Finally, rigorous research into the pedagogical implications of these literary works will be of paramount literary interest. It is also important to identify effective methods for teaching and engaging students with Indigenous literature, ensuring that these narratives receive the attention, acknowledgement, and respect they deserve in educational contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study has executed a clear and convincing comparative literary analysis of Eden Robinson's *Monkey Beach* and the Trickster series alongside Thomas King's *The Inconvenient Indian*, with the explicit purpose of investigating their unique yet complementary critique of Indigenous identity in Canadian literature. The analysis in this research unequivocally shows that both authors, despite their differing genres and narrative styles, are committed to an undivided mission: to challenge and subvert colonial narratives, assert the importance of Indigenous cultural memory, and affirm the multifaceted resilience and complexity of Indigenous identity in contemporary Canada. Robinson firmly establishes her voice through her deeply rooted Haisla cosmology and the raw realism of the lived experiences of her characters, enlightening the intergenerational impacts of trauma while exhibiting the therapeutic power of ancestral connections and traditional knowledge. Her fictional worlds become essential spaces for understanding the harsh realities of Indigenous peoples as they traverse through modernity while remaining connected to their cultural roots. In contrast, King makes use of a powerful blend of historical critique, penetrating wit, and, sarcasm and satire in his non-fiction to destroy colonial myths and expose the absurdity of settler-colonial logic. His work compels readers to critically reassess the foundational narratives of Canadian history and Indigenous peoples. Realistically, this research reveals a compelling synergy when examining these two prominent authors together. Robinson's intimate, spiritual portrayal of personal and community healing powerfully complements King's broader, intellectual dissection of avoidable injustices. Together, they re-create a rich and in-depth understanding of Indigenous experiences and identities in Canada that cannot be overlooked.

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