

PARADISE REVISITED: IMAGES OF THE FIRST WOMAN IN THE  
POETRY OF JOY KOGAWA AND THE FICTION OF THOMAS KING

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ABSTRACT

The article offers a comparative analysis of a poem by Joy Kogawa entitled *A song of Lilith*, and the chosen texts by Thomas King, namely his short-story "One good story, that one" and his novel *Green grass, running water*. Despite being rooted in their respective cultures, these two Canadian writers are interested in the *Book of Genesis*. Kogawa, of Japanese origin, and King, of Cherokee and Greek origin, rewrite the story of the first woman by deconstructing the images of femininity from Old and New Testaments. King's and Kogawa's interpretations communicate much about the authors' status within the Canadian mainstream.

The respective backgrounds of the two Canadian authors mentioned in the title of this article invite parallels, since Joy Kogawa (b. 1935) is a descendant of Japanese immigrants to Vancouver (Stevens 1997: 605), while Thomas King (b. 1943), of Cherokee and Greek origin, was raised in California (Murray 1997: 595). Apart from being connected with the West Coast of North America, both writers have published poetry and fiction in which they question and rewrite the biblical heritage of the white culture they embraced. The focus of this article is the revisionary reading of *Genesis* 1-3 in *A song of Lilith* by Kogawa and in two texts by King, namely, his short story "One good story, that one", and his novel *Green grass, running water*. Interestingly, both Canadian writers focus on the first woman, whose identity must be retrieved from stereotypes. Kogawa's and King's concern with the story of creation makes them similar to scholars whom Clines terms "feminist visitors to the Garden of Eden" (1990: 25). The interest in the biblical metanarrative places the two writers within the mainstream of Anglophone Canadian tradition, next to the authors of different generations, to mention only Northrop Frye, Rudy Wiebe, Margaret Laurence, Timothy Findley, Margaret Atwood, Aritha van Herk etc.

Published in the year 2000, *A song of Lilith* was termed “feminist *Paradise Lost*” by another Canadian writer, Daphne Marlatt.<sup>1</sup> The legend of Lilith is said to have come into being as an attempt to reconcile the two stories of creation in the Bible, namely the Priestly version in Gen. 1,1-2,4a, and the Yahwist version in Gen. 2,4b-3,24 (Adamiak 2006: 223).<sup>2</sup> Whether these two really clash, has been a moot point in biblical criticism. While Clines questions Tribble’s attempt to depatriarchalize *Genesis* (Clines 1990: 26-48), Bal argues against the androcentrism of the whole creation narrative, and sees the sexist comments on Eve as a result of “retrospective fallacy” (Bal 1985: 319) that was first of all due to “Paul”’s biased interpretation in *1 Tim.* 2:11-14 (Bal 1985: 317).<sup>3</sup> My goal is not to take sides with the arguments of either party, but to analyze the different ways in which Kogawa and King deal with the sexism in *Genesis*, or in the interpretations of creation story.

Kogawa certainly became familiar with feminist theology before she set out to create her Lilith. A Christian by education and choice (Redekop 1990: 94, 96), this Japanese writer had already made the language of the Bible an important aspect of her first novel entitled *Obasan* (Redekop 1990: 97; Gottlieb 1986: 42, 49-50). Though Kogawa’s interest in Lilith resulted from her friend’s persuasion, her text feeds into the feminist concern with that marginal and forgotten character (Kogawa 2000: XII, XVI-XX). *A song of Lilith* is a result of the author’s collaboration with the visual artist Lilian Broca, who provided the artwork for the poetic rendition of the legend.

Before analyzing *A song of Lilith*, it is essential to recall the background of the legendary female figure. Significantly, her traces are often “lost in translation”. Though she is known to exist in verse 34: 14 of Isaiah, her name is not mentioned (Nathanson 1996: 435). Desolation following the divine wrath is thus rendered in *King James version*: “The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest” (*Holy Bible. King James version* 1980: 648). The same passage has been translated in one of the twentieth century Bibles in the following way: “Wild animals will roam there, and demons will call to each other. The night monster will come there looking for a place to rest” (*Good News Bible. Today’s English version* 1979: 695). As specified in a footnote below the text, “[t]he night monster” is “[a] female demon, believed to live in desolate places”. Disguised as “a screech

<sup>1</sup> Information from the back cover in Kogawa (2000).

<sup>2</sup> For the distinction between Priestly and Yahwist versions see: Synowiec (1987: 29, 39, 115-201).

<sup>3</sup> Bal recognises the fact that the identity of the author of *The first epistle to Timothy* is “dubious”, but she refers to him as Paul in agreement with prevalent, probably faulty custom. The fact that the letter must have been written by someone else is a well-known point in biblical studies. See: Langhammer (1990: 197-198).

owl” in *King James version*, Lilith surfaces as a female demon roaming the wilderness in the company of her kin. According to the sources that are responsible for the legend, Lilith was Adam’s first wife, who demanded an equal status with that of her mate. Unable to achieve this, she fled to the wilderness. Three angels were dispatched in order to make her return to her husband, but she refused. Ginzberg recounts the legend in its particularly misogynist version. In his story the glorification of Adam is offset by the vilification of Eve. Her inferiority is due to the fact that she was literally created from Adam’s bone rather than from “the dust of the ground”, which had been used to make Adam and Lilith (Ginzberg 1997: 59-60).

Kogawa’s poem starts with the creation of: “Earth’s first and elemental woman/ Made like man from dust/ And fleshed in mortality/ Not from woman born/ Nor yet from man/ But from earth’s crust” (Kogawa 2000: 5). Lilith is clearly contrasted with Eve, who was “born of man”. Both Adam and Lilith are made simultaneously, which corresponds to Bal’s reading of the *Genesis* narrative, where the first woman is not created from the man’s rib, but from “the side” of “the earth being” that had been neither male nor female, and was sexed only when it was divided into woman and man (Bal 1985: 320-323).

If the creation of Adam and Lilith in Kogawa’s book can be said to mirror Bal’s argument eliminating the contradiction between the Priestly and Yahwist versions of creation, the poem and the article part ways in the descriptions of the original sin. Kogawa depicts it thus: “Into their holy communion/ Creeps the primal temptation/ The tentative pleasure of the chase/ And Adam veers aside . . . He lunges at his mate./ In that one action . . . The bond of equality severed/ Is become the whip of domination” (Kogawa 2000: 10-11). Kogawa’s reading of the fall comes close to the feminist view of “[s]in as distorted relationship” (Ruether 1998: 71). Interestingly, the sexually specific discussion of women’s sins includes “passivity” and “failure to develop an autonomous self” (Ruether 1998: 72). These are exactly the sins that Kogawa’s Lilith refuses to commit as she “wakens to treachery and entrapment” (Kogawa 2000: 16). Since her choice is to act, she summons Ruah, which, as the biblical scholars have demonstrated, is marked by the feminine gender in the first creation narrative.<sup>4</sup> In her agony Lilith hears the question that Jesus asked Mary Magdalene upon his resurrection: “Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou?” (*St. John* 20:15).<sup>5</sup>

By introducing a quotation from *The gospel according to St. John*, Kogawa alerts the reader to her strategy, which is rooted in typological tradition whose goal consisted in demonstrating that people and events in the Gospels had been

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Professor Paulin Sotowski from the Franciscan Seminary at Łagiewniki in Łódź for pointing this out. See also: Adamiak (2006: 276).

<sup>5</sup> *Holy Bible. King James version* (1980: 119); Kogawa (2000: 17).

prefigured in the Old Testament.<sup>6</sup> Like metaphysical poets, Kogawa brings together Paradise, Gethsemane and the place of Christ's burial (Filipczak 1992: 112). Thus Eden becomes the setting of treachery, where the first woman is betrayed by the first man into imprisonment.

When Christ spoke to Mary Magdalene, she mistook him for the gardener. Typologically, the gardener stands for the founder of Eden. His message makes it possible for Kogawa's Lilith to exchange the bondage of Adam's domination for the bond of love that connects her with the Creator. In Kogawa's typological game Lilith soars from darkness into light, much like Christ after his resurrection. The comparison of her enclosure to the grave is reinforced by the image of "the One who is with us/ In the gardens of the world/ Where Love lies entombed" (Kogawa 2000: 20). Thus the garden is Eden, where the traces of Lilith are buried under misogynist interpretations of the first woman's role. Significantly, Lilith is granted wings, by means of which she flees her entrapment and her treacherous mate, and becomes the custodian of "Our mother tongue", expressing "[r]elatedness".

Book Two in the poem by Kogawa ends with the message: "Through Lilith, through Magdala/ Through woman" (Kogawa 2000: 25). Magdala as the birthplace of Mary Magdalene (Overman 1996: 499) emphasizes Kogawa's typological construction, in which Lilith prefigures the woman who is first condemned and then redeemed because of her desire. At the same time the author combines her Christian faith with the approach of Jewish feminists, who have been seeking to reclaim Lilith as a powerful foremother (Sawyer 1999: 185-187).

In the next part of her poem Kogawa describes Lilith as the one who "with the Creator, creates/ Names, re-names/ Shapes and re-shapes/ The warp and the woof/ And the nature of flight" (Kogawa 2000: 32). Her association with the Creator and creativity immediately brings to mind the portrayal of wisdom personified as female in the Old Testament. Świderkówna compares the praise of wisdom to the pagan hymn where goddess Isis praises herself for goodness, justice and creative powers (1998: 138-140). According to the scholar, the Old Testament wisdom literature may have resulted from an effort to counteract the widespread worship of Isis in the Hellenic world. By identifying Lilith with wisdom, Kogawa retrieves the female component buried in the biblical vision of creation, where God's activities are described by means of verbs referring to a male artisan or artist (Synowiec 1987: 154-155). In *A song of Lilith* the power of naming and shaping is no longer the exclusive attribute of God or Adam.

At this stage Kogawa returns to the typological connection between Lilith and Christ that was present in the comparison of Lilith imprisoned in Eden, to

<sup>6</sup> On the role of typology see: Kelly (1988: 58-65).

love entombed in the garden. Transforming the legend of Lilith, the author confronts her protagonist with three tempters. They resemble the serpent that is conspicuously missing from Kogawa's Eden. The successive temptations echo Christ's ordeal in the wilderness, as described in *St. Matthew* (4:3-10). Scholars stress the fact that the description of Christ tempted in the desert is made to reflect the temptation of the first couple in Eden (Mauser 1996: 426-427). Christ, who is a new Adam, does not allow himself to be misled by the devil, and his triumph offers a contrast to the fall of the first human couple. The tempters who address Lilith in Kogawa's text try to make her return to Adam by accepting the very thing that made her flee, that is, his unchallenged domination over her. The first one asks her to turn the rocks of her anger into bread and "selflessness" which will nourish Adam. Thus he alludes to the first temptation of Christ, who was encouraged to turn stones into bread. Lilith is not misled by the tempter's manipulation which shows the male rule as "nature's way". Like Satan, who encouraged Christ to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple, the second tempter tries to make Lilith plunge down into Adam's embrace, but she remains adamant in her refusal to fall back into enslavement. Finally, the third tempter flatters her and asks her to bow to Mammon and declare that money is everything. Christ refused to bow to Satan; Lilith rejects the offer of wealth, and counters the third temptation with a message: "Love is All". Paradoxically, the victory of her moral integrity is declared the failure of the test.

When the demons leave Lilith, the reader attends with them to the birth of "a more compliant creature". Born from Adam's rib, Eve is "a sleeping beauty", who depends on "the kiss of her prince". An illustration by Broca shows her with her head covered in agreement with Pauline injunction in *1 Cor.* 11:5, while the words on the picture are "Ave Eva" (Kogawa 2000: 64). In her book *Alone of all her sex*, Warner notes that "the greeting of the angel – Ave – neatly reversed the curse of Eve" (2000: 60), and thus fitted in with the typological identification of Mary as the second Eve, the mother of all reborn through grace. Kogawa and Broca's book equates Mary with Eve completely. Both are connected with "selflessness", and remain circumscribed by the patriarchal distribution of roles. Kogawa shows Eve "With head covered in shawls/ Face covered in veils/ Forgoing all public life" (Kogawa 2000: 65). Commenting on the position of women in the early Christian church, Ranke-Heinemann enumerates instances in the texts of church fathers where they urged women to be veiled not only in public but also at home, so as not to lead men astray. The attempt to make the female body invisible reflected the obliteration of women as speaking subjects (Ranke-Heinemann 1991: 27-28).

Kogawa's text seeks to explain the attitude that was responsible for demonization of Lilith. Haunted by the image of female strength, Eve attributes to Lilith the features that are stereotypically projected on women who do not repress

their sexuality. Lilith's alleged promiscuity is associated with lethal power, since the maternal woman is supposed to suppress her sexual desire. An outcast from collective imagination, Lilith embodies the qualities that God-fearing women renounce for their own benefit.

Lilith's ability to recognise and reject Adam's domination enabled her to resist other temptations, whereas Eve remains a victim of her compliant nature. Unable to say "no", she can only watch the disasters that affect her children. "Eve's crime is not/ That she wills to harm/ But that she sleeps/ While the demons rage" (Kogawa 2000: 81).

The last part of the poem describes the return of Lilith "[a]fter forty days and forty nights/ After forty thousand wretched units of time" (Kogawa 2000: 84). The number alerts the reader to the amount of time spent by Christ in the wilderness, which, in turn, echoes the time spent by Israel in the desert before the entry into the Promised Land (Mauser 1996: 427). Armed with divine attributes from Psalms, Lilith returns with lightning and thunderbolt "singing us to the place/ Of beginnings" (Kogawa 2000: 87). The ending of the poem restates its beginning, since the rebirth of Lilith is shown in the imagery that was used to describe her creation by God.

Lilith turns out to be a component of the first woman that was suppressed by misogynist tradition: "Eve and Lilith/ Two weeping as one/ And sung to new song/ By the Holy One who does no wrong" (Kogawa 2000: 89). Female "emptiness" that was enforced by the masochistic ethos of self-effacement and renunciation is shown to contain "the Great Surprise", like the empty tomb visited by Mary Magdalene after Christ's resurrection. The words uttered by Christ to Mary Magdalene mark the fulfillment of female quest for love that cannot be dissociated from autonomy. Like risen Christ, Lilith steps through the walls, and causes women to return "Under the banner/ Of our true and original name" (Kogawa 2000: 96). The process in which women recognise Lilith as the one who springs from "the Ground of our Being" is compared to homecoming, that is, the return to Eden, as the space of woman's inner harmony. In the coda to the poem Lilith is described as "dancing delight", the word delight echoing the image of divine wisdom that was God's "delight, rejoicing always before him" (*Proverbs* 8: 30).

Interviewed by Magdalene Redekop, Kogawa called Christianity the deepest layer of herself (Redekop 1990: 96), and this is evident in *A song of Lilith*, which transforms Lilith into the servant of love. At the same time Lilith remains a moving portrait of otherness, be it connected with gender, race or status. Kogawa must have experienced racism, like her immigrant family, for she confesses in an interview that there were times when she would have given anything to be white. Thus her Lilith is also a figure of the ethnic other roaming the peripheries of the WASP society. Perhaps in *A song of Lilith* Kogawa reinte-

grates with the white community, and she comes home again in the adopted country of her parents.

In her commentary on Kogawa's novel *Obasan*, Brandt talks about the condition of the Japanese in Canada during the Second World War, and quotes from Said's *Orientalism* in order to stress the fact that Orient represented "the underground self" for the West (Brandt 1993: 111). Kogawa's narrative about the absent mother in *Obasan* contrasts the privileged position of the mainstream white culture and the inferior status of the Japanese who became the scapegoat of racial tensions in wartime Canada. Brandt also notes a parallel between the condition of the Japanese and that of the Amerindians in Kogawa's novel (Brandt 1993: 111). This allows me to turn to the fiction of King, where Eden is reinterpreted from the point of view of Native inhabitants.

Among the elements shared by King's novel *Green grass, running water* and his story cycle *One good story, that one* (both published in 1993), the status of the first woman certainly claims attention. "One good story, that one", which gave the title to the collection, had first appeared in a magazine, attracting the attention of Atwood, who called it "a hilarious version of the Book of Genesis" (Atwood 1992: 248). In the text three anthropologists visit an Indian in order to listen to a Native story, but what they get is "a white-folk story played back to them in an Indian key, with the narrator's own commentary" (Atwood 1992: 248). Parodying the strategy of white writers who "hijack"<sup>7</sup> and transform Indian myths, King does the same with the myth of Eden. Changing the names in a comic way, the Native storyteller describes Ah-damn and Evening; of the latter he says: "she be Indian woman, I guess" (King 1993a: 8). Evening is also the name of the garden; thus the first woman is identified with North America, conceptualised as the Promised Land by the white people who used the biblical language in order to "spawn and spur the colonial enterprise" (Weaver 1996: 159).

Evening is described as "curious" and imaginative. On seeing a tree with good things, "she gets hungry. Make a meal in her head" (King 1993a: 7). When she shares the meal with Ah-damn, "god" intrudes on their privacy, and makes a loud claim to the tree and the garden: "that one says that Evening and Ah-damn better leave that good place, garden, Evening's garden, go somewhere else. Just like Indian today" (King 1993a: 8). The Indian idea of sharing is replaced by the European concept of property. The fall is changed into unjust eviction. Instead of the blame that is heaped on Eve in traditional misogynist commentaries, the narrator offers praise, for Evening is not only smarter than Ah-damn, but she can also feed and heal him. Ah-damn, who tried to ingratiate himself with god, ends up as a pathetic character. The same goes for the snake: "That one try to get friendly with Evening so she stick a mee-so in his mouth,

<sup>7</sup> An expression used by Moses (1998: xxiii).

that one" (King 1993a: 8). While the Christian tradition used Eve to eliminate a woman of action as a model to identify with, King's story restores her to a rightful status. Evening is the one who acts, speaks her mind, and makes her own choices, while Ah-damn is preoccupied with misnaming the creatures around him.

King revisits Eden in his postmodern novel *Green grass, running water*, where he plays subversively with *Genesis* 1-3. This time the story is juxtaposed against a Native creation myth, or, to be more precise, Christian God is shown intruding on the Native myth just like he intruded on Evening's garden in "One good story, that one". The clash between two traditions that are alien to each other results in "relativizing absolutist Western claims to epistemological and ontological authority" (Scott 2001: xix). It is through Eve, the old-time scapegoat of patriarchal anger that King deconstructs the biblical story of creation:

So, in that Sky World is a woman. Big woman. Strong woman.

First Woman.

First Woman walks around, says, straighten up, and she says, mind your relations, and she walks around that world with her head in the trees, looking off in the distances, looking for things that are bent and need fixing. So that one walks off the edge of the world.

So that one starts falling.

Oh, oh, First Woman says, looks like a new adventure. And she is right

(King 1993c: 39).

"First Woman" resembles Kogawa's Lilith in several things. She is not weak; nor is she in need of care or control. Her solid body might be illustrated by Broca's image of a "physically fit" (Broca 2000: viii) and beautiful woman, a far cry from the anorectic ideal set up as a model for imitation for contemporary women. As in the earlier story, and in *A song of Lilith*, her body houses a resilient spirit. The message of First Woman emphasizes the importance of family, while her actions focus on healing and nurturing, just like those of Evening in "One good story, that one". Her message: "Mind your relations" resembles Lilith's concern with "relatedness". Unlike Lilith, First Woman does not initially have a partner. It is only later that she sets up her garden, and lives there with Ahdamn, of whom the narrator says: "I don't know where he comes from. Things like that happen, you know" (King 1993c: 40).<sup>8</sup> Most importantly, the fall of First Woman is shown as a result of her curiosity in exploring the world, whose limit she is not afraid to test. Her attitude might be summed up by the words referring to Lilith, "the mother [o]f those who leap over edges/ All who fly against the gravitational pull/ Of comfort, convention and the established ways" (Kogawa 2000: 32).

It is in the description of the fall that Kogawa's and King's texts differ most.

<sup>8</sup> In the novel King spells Adam as Ahdamn, while in the short story he hyphenates it as Ah-damn.

In Kogawa's poem Lilith's rebellion against Adam is caused by his violence. It undermines man-made concept of authority that involves physical or discursive oppression. It is a rewriting of Lucifer's rebellion against God in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Lilith prefers to reside alone in the wilderness rather than remain dominated in Paradise. She turns the wilderness into a room of her own, and does not leave it, even when the demons test her integrity. King's First Woman falls from the sky as a result of her exploratory venture, and her next stage is the creation of the land which she later shares with Ahdamn. In the course of her fall First Woman lands on grandmother Turtle, which illustrates human reliance on the animal world. Far from being dominated by people, as is the case in *Genesis*, animals communicate with human beings and provide support. First Woman and grandmother Turtle mould the land out of mud. The garden founded by First Woman contains the much discussed tree, but its role is different now:

she doesn't see that Tree. So that tree doesn't see her. So they bump into each other.

Pardon me, says that Tree, maybe you would like something to eat.

That would be nice, says First Woman, and all sorts of good things to eat fall out of that Tree

(King 1993c: 40).

The perfect harmony between First Woman, Tree and Ahdamn is interrupted by the intrusion of "that GOD", who jumps into the garden. In both narratives by King "GOD" is described as an aggressive trespasser on somebody else's land. Like Adam in *A song of Lilith*, King's "GOD" is a bully. In "One good story, that one", the Native storyteller compares him to a man who beats his wife. In *Green grass, running water* First Woman rebukes him for having bad manners and refusing to share food. King parodies an anthropomorphic image of God in *Genesis* 1-3. He also exposes the colonial undertone of having "dominion" over the whole earth.

"First Woman" from King's novel is a shape-shifter just like trickster animals in Amerindian traditions. In another passage she is called Changing Woman; in still other, she becomes Thought Woman. She is consistent in defying patriarchal labels that are imposed on her by men wielding authority. Nowhere is this clearer than in King's parody of Annunciation, whose protagonist, i.e. Thought Woman is connected with First Woman, just like Mary – with Eve. A. A. Gabriel from Canadian Security and Intelligence Service arrives with a file of documents and a map, which he wants to use in order to show Thought Woman the birthplace of her future baby, but she is not willing to get pregnant. While "Ave Eva" in Kogawa and Broca's book reduces Eve and Mary to the woman who is passive and open to manipulation, King achieves the same

through different means. First Woman and Thought Woman refuse to take the respective roles a fallen woman and of an adored one. Thus they offer a contrast to their biblical counterparts.

Though Gabriel meant to offer Thought Woman a document called virgin verification form, by mistake he showed her a treaty used by white people in order to manipulate Indians into giving up their territory. Literalizing the story of Annunciation, King describes Gabriel as a man willing to procreate at "God"'s order, but Thought Woman rejects his offer. Her "no" is not anticipated in the divine scenario, so, like Lilith, she is severely criticised. Undaunted, she floats away in the water. Refusing to become impregnated, Thought Woman also refuses the lay of the land.

King makes an ironic connection between *The gospel according to St. Luke*, and God's famous words to the serpent in *Genesis*: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (*Gen.* 3:15). Comically enough, at the beginning of the scene Gabriel tries to make Thought Woman stand next to the snake. It turns out, however, that Thought Woman is standing on the head of Old Coyote. The coyote, whom Gabriel mistakes for the biblical serpent, symbolizes the world of creation controlled by anthropocentric view. It also embodies the Native mythology, whose major element is a trickster animal, a combination of human and animal characteristics that resist separation.

*Genesis* is just one of the intertexts in King's novel. *Green grass, running water* alludes to *Benito Cereno*, *Moby Dick*, *Robinson Crusoe* and other classics. While the richness and depth of the book merit a separate and detailed study, I would like to conclude my article with an analysis of an episode involving Changing Woman and an overt allusion to *Not wanted on the voyage*, a novel by another famous Canadian, Timothy Findley.

The scene in question is a variation on the motif of the fall. Changing Woman falls from the sky and lands on a coyote in a canoe full of animals. Noah, described as "the little man", asks her whether she is "any relation to Eve", whose sin was the reason for his voyage. When Changing Woman reveals to him that she has fallen from the sky, Noah begins to chase her, for he thinks she is God's gift for him, but she spurns his advances. Eventually Noah gives up the chase, and makes the following statement: "This is a Christian ship . . . And if you can't follow our Christian rules, then you're not wanted on the voyage" (King 1993c: 148).

Like King, Findley is concerned with *Genesis*, but he focuses on the deluge. His revisionary interpretation privileges the victims of the inevitable selection as a result of which the elect were granted the right to survive at the cost of the damned. In Findley's novel Noah's Ark turns from a vessel of salvation into that of oppression, supervised by Dr. Noyes, whose power, as his surname sug-

gests, consists in the right to say "yes" or "no". His criteria of choice involve discrimination against all those who have been othered because of their sex, appearance, disease or mere difference of opinion. Interestingly, Mrs. Noyes is one of the passengers who subvert the authority of the leader. While Dr. Noyes creates his canon of purity out of selected animals, his wife subverts it, for she smuggles her favourite cat, an unwanted passenger, on board the ark. In King's intertextual allusion to Findley, Noah's late wife and children were responsible for the survival of the coyote and other animals that Noah wanted to throw overboard. Coyote, the trickster, certainly subverts the rules, and so does Changing Woman.

It is not surprising that King chose to align himself with Findley, whose novel is preceded by the words: "Against despair", and by a passage from the poetry of Phyllis Webb: "And you, are you still here/ tilting in this stranded ark/ blind and seeing in the dark" (as quoted in Findley 1996: ix). Findley provides his readers with an insight into the "stranded ark", a symbol of racial, religious or literary canon. He also focuses on those outside, restoring them to dignity. Kogawa and King follow suit by creating alternative stories about the first woman, an outcast from Eden, and man-made sacred space. In both cases her story may be read as an attempt to come to terms with eviction or outsiderdom that the authors and their families experienced in America.

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