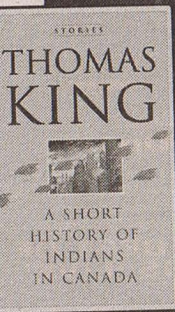
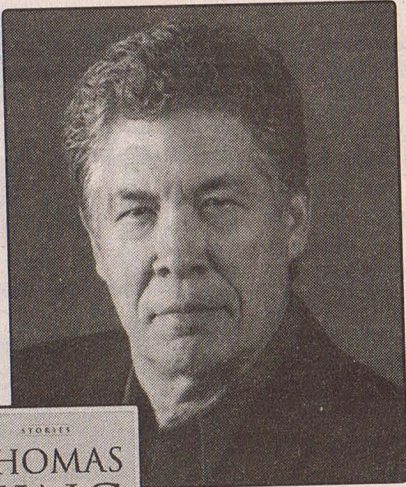


Resistance Is Fertile

Leave it to noted author Thomas King to compare aboriginal assimilation with the Borg



Tenth-grader Milton Friendlybear discovers that early Canadian settlers were really the Borg from *Star Trek*, working to assimilate the Indians. Joe and Mason try to escape the Seniors Game Preserve, where anyone over the age of 55 is used as prey in organized hunts. A naked pregnant woman falls from the sky, looking for the turtle that will help her re-create the earth. Strange? You bet. But those are just some of the weird and wonderful plots you'll find in Thomas King's newest story collec-

tion, *A Short History of Indians in Canada*.

While King's stories vary from the fantastic to the more realistic, one thing they never are is ordinary; many take rather serious ideas and reveal them in an odd, almost perversely comic tale. And while some can be laugh-out-loud funny, underneath the joke is a rather somber view or image. (It's easy to almost feel guilty for finding something so serious so humorous.) Is this what King had in mind while writing? "I just use comedy as the strategy for telling the story," he explains. "What makes a story disturbing is that there's that underlying bedrock of tragedy. I just sugar-coat it with humour so you don't notice until it's too late."

Take "Where the Borg Are," for example. Young Milton's search for the Borg in Canadian history is damn funny—but King also draws some scary comparisons between the 1875 Indian Act and the Borg's philosophy. "Resistance is futile, you will be assimilated," King quotes. "That is very

much like Canadian and U.S. Indian policy. I was struck by that when I first saw an episode of the Borg."

It's a scary possibility to think that we almost had to do without the extraordinary stories that have become King's trademark (including the likes of *Green Grass*, *Running Water* and *One Good Story, That One*). He claims that when he was younger, he was a miserable fiction writer. "My grandmother even told me not to quit my day job," King jokes. "And she loved me." Fortunately for all of us lovers of literature, he decided to give writing one more go. What inspired him? Why, a woman, of course. After hearing that a particular lady liked writers, King tried his hand at the craft one more time. Being told that the tale "wasn't bad," he then wrote another. And another. "It was like a light switch had turned on," King remembers. "All of a sudden, I could write." And our national bookshelves are the better for it.

A Short History will definitely confront your imagination and challenge you with some difficult questions. Though to King, he'll just be happy if you enjoy them. Anything else is a bonus. "What's important to me in a story isn't important to a lot of the readers," King says. "Everybody reads the stories differently and they all take different things away from it. Stories are there to entertain and stimulate the imagination. If they can do that, then they're successful."

—Sarah Gignac

Thomas King
7:30 pm Friday, October 21
St. Ann's Academy Auditorium,
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