

Trickster Dialogics:
A Method For Articulating Cultural Archetypes From 'Q' To Performance Art

by

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ABSTRACT

Simultaneously culture heroes and stumbling buffoons, Tricksters bring cultural tools to the people and make the world more habitable. There are common themes in these figures that remain fruitful for the advancement of culture, theory, and critical praxis. This dissertation develops a method for opening a dialogue with Trickster figures. It draws from established literature to present a newly conceived and more flexible Trickster archetype. This archetype is more than a collection of traits; it builds on itself processually to form a method for analysis.

The critical Trickster archetype includes the fundamental act of crossing borders; the twin ontologies of ambiguity and liminality; the particular tactics of humor, duplicity, and shape shifting; and the overarching cultural roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Running parallel to each archetypal element, though, are Trickster's overarching critical spirit of Quixotic utopianism and underlying telos of manipulating human relationships. The character 'Q' from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* is used to demonstrate the critical Trickster archetype.

To be more useful for critical cultural studies, Trickster figures must also be connected to their socio-cultural and historical contexts. Thus, this dissertation offers a second set of analytics, a dialogical method that connects Tricksters to the worlds they make more habitable. This dialogical method, developed from the work of M. M. Bakhtin and others, consists of three analytical tools: utterance, intertextuality, and chronotope. Utterance bounds the text for analysis. Intertextuality connects the utterance, the text, to its context. Chronotope suggests particular spatio-temporal relationships that help reveal the cultural significance of a dialogical performance. Performance artists Andre Stitt,

Ann Liv Young, and Steven Leyba are used to demonstrate the method of Trickster dialogics.

A concluding discussion of Trickster's unique chronotope reveals its contributions to conceptions of utopia and futurity. This dissertation offers theoretical advancements about the significance and tactics of subversive communication practices. It offers a new and unique method for cultural and performative analyses that can be expanded into different kinds of dialogics. Trickster dialogics can also be used generatively to direct and guide the further development of performative praxis.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Mr. Marley Chevrette, may your light forever brighten our way.

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PREFACE

Coyote Brer Rabbit Eshu Loki Hermes Hare Raven Monkey Legba Bugs Bunny Guizer: all perform Trickster – and there are many more. Trickster figures into so many different mythological systems that Carl Jung considered it a part of the collective unconscious, a powerful symbol of the commonalities of human experience (1969).¹ As the tales reveal, Trickster’s most common role is to upset dominant orders, reshaping hostile physical and social environments to make them more habitable for humanity. This imbues Trickster with a peculiar spirit, a unique kind of performative critical consciousness that warrants further exploration.

Trickster has much to offer communication theory and practice, especially through the lens of performance studies. Dwight Conquergood even suggests that Trickster may be the ‘guru’ of performance studies (Carlson, 1996, p. 206). As a quintessential border-crosser, it is fundamentally invested in challenging hierarchical norms through performative practices and facilitating the movement of cultural critique through cycles of praxis. As such, Trickster offers a useful metaphor for helping performance studies and other critical scholarship to “pull the pin on the binary opposition between theory and practice” (Conquergood, 2002, p. 145). Since Tricksters also assume the twin roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon, they are said to reveal dualities in human nature (Hyde, 1998; Jung, 1969; Radin, 1972). Yet those two roles are

¹ Regarding the use of gender-neutral language: as Salinas (in-press) suggests, Trickster’s ambiguity includes its gender. Using gendered pronouns perpetuates unnecessarily patriarchal linguistic groundings and diminishes Trickster’s ability to unhinge binary patterns. Such ambiguity encourages a writing style that attempts to exclude generalized gendered pronouns in favor of either pluralistic or gender neutral language choices, except when quoting from other work.

not oppositional or dialectical; rather, they are mutually constitutive and dialogical. In other words, Trickster is culture hero *because* it is stumbling buffoon; the roles speak to each other. Yet like the social processes that they drive, neither role is totally stable. Contrary, they are inherently unstable. Trickster exploits those instabilities to reshape the world.

So where can Tricksters be found in actual communicative practice? Moreover, what does it mean to perform Trickster in the contemporary cultural environment? Addressing these deceptively simple questions has much to offer critical cultural theory, communication and performance studies. Despite their endurance and longevity as cultural archetypes and objects of mytho-literary analyses, Trickster figures remain ambiguous. There have been so many re/figurations and re/constructions that the role has come to entail a wide variety of characters and cultural practices. As an object of critical analysis, theorization, application and appropriation, Trickster is relatively common. Critical cultural theorists from Giorgio Agamben² to Slavoj Žižek³ have either written about or been called Tricksters themselves. In one way, this fits with the idea of Trickster. A necessarily amorphous and ambiguous character, it resists easy definition and continually casts itself anew.

Many contemporary treatments of Trickster have been reductionist. In such accounts Trickster becomes little more than a simple liar or a deceiver, a character that plays ‘tricks’ on others. This is evident in analyses and applications that merely focus on ‘trickiness’ while ignoring Trickster’s inherent critical faculty. There is much more to

² <http://www.rhizomes.net/issue15/dickinson.html>

³ <http://libcom.org/library/against-human-rights-zizek>

Trickster than its typological characteristics, though. There must also be a kind of critical purpose, a restructuring of social normativity that acts as a kind of liberatory agent, freeing the subjugated from artificial and culturally imposed constraints of behavior and positionality. For Trickster to fit with its populist mythological roots, which remain remarkably consistent across globe and eon, its actions must mean more than profiting at the expense of others. Tricksters are not just greedy and hedonistic models of how not to behave, they serve important cultural functions. The purpose of this dissertation is to determine and explore in depth those some of those cultural functions through classical and contemporary Trickster performances.

In order to begin analyzing how Trickster, an archetypal figure of social subversion, may affect contemporary discourse and communicative practice we must first suggest a clear and usable conception of what Trickster may be and how the role can be performed. The first chapter of this dissertation, “The Quixotic Utopian,” sets out to create such a usable conception with an emphasis on its critical spirit. I will introduce the Trickster role according to its most common characteristics and, in the process, begin problematizing and expanding its extant academic readings. The archetypal figuration is important, though, because it will help to identify, clarify, and critique some common mis/conceptions and mis/appropriations. Although Trickster has been a productive and important cultural figure, it remains to be sufficiently applied to contemporary critical cultural and communication research. Although Trickster has been mentioned as a formative and informative figure for performance studies, discussions of it have largely stagnated since the germinal scholarship. This chapter of the dissertation, then, briefly reviews the foundational scholarship on Trickster before turning to more contemporary

uses. Describing how Trickster has been used in the past sets the stage for expanding our understanding of how it can be used in the future.

In order to explore how and why the Trickster role remains valuable to critical cultural theory, communication and performance studies, we must make deeper connections between its mythological groundings and their potential for affecting cultural processes. The second chapter of this dissertation, “Anti-Hero of 1000 Faces,” will concentrate on making those deeper connections. In one sense, typological categorizations violate Trickster’s ambiguous nature. If the role is fundamentally ambiguous then forcing it into rigid categorical boxes denies its capacity for subversive transformation. Still, such definitional arguments are necessary if for no other reason than revealing boundaries for Trickster to violate. Meanwhile, a critical Trickster archetype means little if relegated to the realm of theory. Therefore, the third chapter of this dissertation, “Star TreQ: A Mass Mediated TriQster,” will show how the Trickster metaphor can be used as a tool of cultural critique. This chapter uses a running example, the character ‘Q’ played by John De Lancie in the contemporary *Star Trek* franchise, to show the complexity of making the world more habitable.

Clear conceptions of Trickster and its potential application as a critical tool are also necessary to help guide the methodological approach for this dissertation. It is not enough to identify a site of analysis or a particular kind of cultural performance and determine whether it exhibits traces of Trickster. If Tricksters do have a critical spirit, if they restructure the world to be more habitable, then their interactions with their worlds must be methodically addressed; the critical Trickster must be connected with its cultural context. The dialogical paradigm, suggested by M. M. Bakhtin (1980; 1984; 1986),

codified by Julia Kristeva (1986), and further explained or extended by Tzvetan Todorov (1984), Michael Holquist (1990), Graham Allen (2000), and others offers a ground from which to figure a method that aligns with Trickster's unique characteristics while leaving room for expansion into different dialogical forms.

A dialogical method includes its own paradigmatic assumptions and particular methodological moves. In short, it assumes that all social processes may be seen as a dialogue (Holquist, 1990). This basic assumption has profound implications for studying communication and social processes. Communication often finds itself borrowing paradigmatic assumptions from other disciplines. As an inherently communicative paradigm, dialogics has the potential to reverse that dynamic in helping to bring communicative understandings to other disciplines. Like other paradigms for social research, dialogics offers room for various contextually contingent analytics. The fourth chapter of this dissertation, "Trickster Dialogics," will explain dialogics in more detail, including how it may be construed as a paradigm for social research before turning to one possible way that the dialogical paradigm may be constructed as a specific method. Conjoining a usable conception of Trickster with a dialogical paradigm and method forms the basis of Trickster dialogics. Trickster dialogics, as will be shown, is a particular kind of critical discourse that reflects Trickster's unique archetypal qualities. Part of that position is Trickster's function as a relational agent. One of its most useful tools for reshaping the world is reconfiguring the manifold relationships of social being.

After establishing the foundations of Trickster, expanding them into a critical Trickster archetype, and explaining the paradigm and method for this study, we turn to actual performative practices. The overall site of analysis for this dissertation is

performance art, or what Amelia Jones (1998b) calls ‘body art.’ Despite some claims to the contrary, art has always been loaded with political value, even if that value is not properly or academically ‘critical.’ Furthermore, since art operates at a higher level of abstraction and interpretation than many other forms of communication, it offers an ideal site for Trickster’s “language games” (Lyotard, 1984; Wittgenstein, 1965; Vizenor 1993a). Thus, the fifth chapter of this dissertation, “TrickstArt: Trickster Performances,” discusses the work of three different artists to show how Trickster can wend its way into performative discourse. Those artists are André Stitt, Ann Liv Young, and Steven Johnson Leyba. The suggestion will not be that any one of those artists actually is Trickster. Rather, the focus will be on whether and how they reflect Trickster’s characteristics. Considering these performance artists in conjunction with the Trickster role leads to the overarching research question of this dissertation: How is the Trickster role manifested in performance art?

It would be unsatisfying to end this dissertation with a simple summary of the analyses and conclusions drawn about where the Trickster role may be found in contemporary discourse. Thus, the sixth and final chapter of this dissertation, titled “In/Conclusive: Tricking Futurity,” will suggest what the Trickster role continues to offer critical cultural and performance theory as well as other possible sites of analysis and dialogical forms. This discussion will be couched in the terms of utopia and performativity raised in the second chapter. Utopia, and its seeming impossibility, has long been a focus of critical theory, especially the capitalized ‘Critical Theory’ of Frankfurt School theorists like Ernst Bloch (1995). It is important for critical cultural theorists to discuss their analyses in terms of futurity. However slightly, improving the

future is the whole purpose of critical cultural work. After all, it is not the past, or even the present, that we intend to improve. Still, the past is where we must begin.

Chapter 1

THE QUIXOTIC UTOPIAN

An Exemplary Story

Perhaps the best way to introduce Trickster is to tell an exemplary story. I take the term ‘exemplary story’ from the title of Miguel de Cervantes’ collection of shorts.

Translator Lesley Lipson (1998) explains that

As if anticipating our problem with the word ‘exemplary’, [Cervantes] playfully announces that if he did not wish to labour the point he would explain precisely what sort of ‘wholesome fruit’ is to be gathered from each individual story as well as the collection as a whole. Could a master of irony be more provocative? The responsibility lies with the reader to extract the moral lesson; the author himself refuses to be prescriptive. (p. xv)

Trickster tales also refuse to be prescriptive. And the mythologies have no ‘true’ author, at least in the obvious sense of the term. They are open stories with open endings, endless retellings, and variable meanings. Yet, paradoxically, Trickster tales retain the capacity to create meaning and, moreover, to inspire cultural change. By showing that multiplicity of meaning does not, in the end, deny its possibility or even its potential truth-value (as measured by influence on actual human behavior), Trickster tales – as ancient as they are modern, as culturally specific as they are global, as simple as they are complicated – reveal the complexity of contemporary culture and the ongoing need for social subversion. It is with this in mind that I present the following exemplary story taken from the collection compiled by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (1984).

Coyote was out hunting and he found a dead deer. One of the deer's rib bones looked just like a big dentalia shell, and Coyote picked it up and took it with him. He went up to see the frog people. The frog people had all the water. When anyone wanted any water to drink or cook with or wash, they had to go and get it from the frog people.

Coyote came up. "Hey frog people, I have a big dentalia shell. I want a big drink of water – I want to drink for a long time."

"Give us that shell," said the frog people, "and you can drink all you want."

Coyote gave them the shell and began drinking. The water was behind a large dam where Coyote drank. "I'm going to keep my head down for a long time," said Coyote, "because I'm really thirsty. Don't worry about me."

"Okay, we won't worry," said the frog people.

Coyote began drinking. He drank for a long time. Finally one of the frog people said, "Hey Coyote, you sure are drinking a lot of water there. What are you doing that for?"

Coyote brought his head up out of the water. "I'm thirsty."

"Oh."

After a while one of the frog people said, "Coyote, you sure are drinking a lot. Maybe you better give us another shell."

"Just let me finish this drink," Coyote said, putting his head back under water.

The frog people wondered how a person could drink so much water. They didn't like this. They thought Coyote might be doing something.

Coyote was digging out under the dam all the time he had his head under water. When he was finished, he stood up and said, "That was a good drink. That was just what I needed."

Then the dam collapsed, and the water went out into the valley and made the creeks and rivers and waterfalls. The frog people were very angry. "You have taken all the water, Coyote!"

"It's not right that one people have all the water. Now it is where everyone can have it."

Coyote did that. Now anyone can go down to the river and get a drink of water or some water to cook with, or just swim around. (pp. 355-356)

Coyote is one of the most recognizable iterations of Native American Trickster figures. It is represented well in the preceding story. Lewis Hyde (1998) explains that the most elementary figurations of Trickster involve the ostensibly opposing roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Both roles are present here: Coyote is culture hero because it returns the possession of water to everyone. Coyote is also stumbling buffoon because it uses a kind of hedonistic trickery to accomplish its goal. The roles are intrinsically related because Coyote appears to drink water to excess while actually subverting a physical structure of metaphorical dominance.

This tale also reveals the critical power of crossing boundaries. Coyote crosses the social boundary of propriety to destroy the physical boundary of the dam for what appears to be the selfish end of satiating its thirst but which actually serves the interests,

needs and desires of all people – except maybe the frogs in power. Still, the frogs were not really harmed; they were only tricked out of their domineering greed and must now share what was once theirs alone. Coyote’s border-crossing buffoonery, reflected in its excess consumption, is its path toward cultural heroism. It is also important to note that Coyote did not take all the water for himself; rather, it liberated the water for all living creatures. Only a base and literal reading would take this tale as being about water alone. It is more about what contemporary critical theory would call ‘democratizing’ resources. In this story, water is more than a tool for life; it is a tool for work, for livability, and even for simple pleasures like just swimming around.

Water is not the only tool for life. This Coyote tale makes the metonymic leap from water to other cultural tools, other necessities for survival and even pleasant lives; lives free of desperate needs created by a social class profiting at the expense of others. Such is the function of Trickster tales. Trickster figures and their tales need not be consciously created to perform that function. Contrary, they may be most efficacious when they reflect a critical *unconsciousness*, an embodied desire to do what is ‘right’ regardless of theoretical groundings or even potential consequences. Furthermore, Coyote is not the only Trickster. Some of the most significant ones may be hiding in plain sight.

Trickster tales are performative embodiments of critical theory. They are performative because, as Searle (1989) explains of all performatives, they do something in the world; they serve a function or accomplish a goal. They are also performative in a more literal sense. Every retelling of a tale is a new iteration, a new version whose meaning has the capacity for dramatic changes depending on context. This contextual contingency hints toward the dialogical function of Trickster tales: different contexts

reflect different interrelationships between storyteller and audience, between audience and socio-cultural surroundings, between socio-cultural surroundings and storyteller. The overarching message of Trickster tales is that culture and the tools for livable lives belong to *all* people. This is why Tricksters are culture heroes. This also reveals a crucial but often unstated axiological assumption of critical cultural work: those who would hoard for themselves things that everyone needs deserve to be subverted. This is not limited to physical resources like water, fire, food, tobacco, or even life. It also includes freedom from monsters, from social domination, from domineering cultural normativity, from oppressive hierarchies and repressed desire.

Despite its tendency to challenge social norms, Tricksters can also reinforce certain borders of normativity. The complexity in Trickster's relationship to power is one of its most important characteristics and it informs the entirety of this dissertation. Thus, to continue introducing the Trickster role I must present a clear idea of who Trickster is and what it means to perform the role from a critical perspective. Such a conception will be created through reviewing the literature about Trickster and making connections to appropriate academic theories. This quasi-definitional exploration is not intended to create static boundaries around a figure that inherently denies them. Instead, creating such a definition is intended to suggest a usable conception of Trickster's characteristics, to establish the facets of a critical Trickster archetype, to facilitate the establishment of a dialogical method informed by that archetype, and to preempt claims of relativistic solipsism.

The following review of academic Trickster literature is divided into two parts. The first part offers a basic review of both germinal and contemporary scholarship. This

review allows for briefly discussing critical theory and performance studies with an emphasis on their connections to Trickster. Following those two sections, I will return to discuss Trickster in more depth. This latter discussion of Trickster will outline the critical archetype that grounds the subsequent analyses and case studies of Trickster performances.

Pleased To Meet You – Hope You Guess My Name⁴

Trickster figures have been conjured under countless different names. And the “tale of the trickster, picaro, or rogue is one of the oldest and most persistent cultural pattern[s] of negation and one of the oldest narrative forms” (Babcock-Abrahams, 1975, p. 158). Even Gautama Buddha has been accused of performing Trickster (McClintock, 2011). Meanwhile, Abrahamic mythology begins with a serpent serving wisdom at a price and is driven by an antithesis serving as a collective shadow. Most broadly conceived, Trickster’s “anti-mythological” (Turner, 1986, p. 31) task is to enact difference in established orders. While those differences often appear ambivalent, lacking in clear positive or negative value, they ultimately act in the service of humanity (Kamberelis, 2003). Or, as Hyde (1998) suggests, “Trickster makes the world, gives it sunlight, fish, and berries, but he makes it ‘as it is,’ a world of constant need, work, limitation, and death” (p. 27). The verb tense is important, Trickster did not ‘make’ this world; that is the job of ‘creators.’ Instead, Trickster ‘makes’ this world in an active and ongoing process. This constant and ongoing activity makes Trickster a continually relevant cultural figure. Where creators step out of the picture after their work is codified

⁴ Rolling Stones, “Sympathy for the Devil.”

in mythology, Trickster's work is never done; it is constantly reshaping the world, in ways both subtle and gross.

Contemporary scholarship on Trickster is often grounded in Paul Radin's 1956 study of the Winnebago Trickster 'cycle.' According to Radin, "Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself" (1972, p. xxiii). In his afterward to Radin's book, also published in his discussion of cultural archetypes or figures of the collective unconscious, Jung reinforces Trickster's ostensible dualism: "The conflict between the two dimensions of consciousness is simply an expression of the polaristic structure of the psyche, which like any other energetic system is dependent on the tension of opposites" (1969, p. 149). Yet Trickster may not be so simple. Ballinger rightly challenges that bifurcation, suggesting that the polarizing view offered by Radin, Jung, and their progenitors "is askew because it is too governed by Euro-American categorization, too reliant on dualistic perception to present a really accurate image of American Indian tricksters" (2004, p. 21). Privileging dialogical relationships over dialectical oppositions helps to maintain the accuracy of that image.

Trickster is commonly ascribed two interrelated roles: culture hero and selfish buffoon (Carroll, 1984). Trickster is culture hero because it provides necessary tools for social and physical survival. It is selfish buffoon because it usually reveals those tools through its own comic folly, misadventures, and hedonistic appetites. Yet those two roles may not be dialectical oppositions, as they are often presented. They may also be seen as having a dialogical relationship grounded in the more primary function of crossing borders.

One of the more commonly used depictions of the Trickster role in contemporary scholarship comes from William Hynes. He offers a six-point typology that suggests without categorically defining the role, these are: “(1) the fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous personality of the trickster. Flowing from this are such other features as (2) deceiver/trick player, (3) shape-shifter, (4) situation-inverter, (5) messenger/imitator of the gods, and (6) sacred/lewd bricoleur” (1993, p. 34). These facets of the Trickster role are presented as heuristics that may or may not be present in any particular Trickster performance. Indeed, anything that takes ambiguity as the primary characteristic from which its others are derived already resists such rigid positivistic categorization.

Positivistic models deny Trickster’s capacity for transformation. Gerald Vizenor has successfully written Trickster into both academic theory and popular literature. His novels (1991; 2005) explore the behavior of various fictional Trickster characters while his theoretical discussions (1993a; 1993b) generally hinge on Trickster’s resistance to ‘paracolonial’ classificatory schema. In discussing its intuitive postmodernism, Vizenor explains that “trickster is dead in models and mock tragedies in the same way that a comic sign or metaphor is dead when overused, overrun and isolated in a monologue with science” (1993a, p. 206). He also emphasizes the power of comedy and chance to act as tools of ‘semiotic resistance.’ Like Bakhtin’s depiction of carnival and the Rabelasian chronotope (1981; 1984), comedy serves as a release valve for stresses incurred under hierarchical social structures. Trickster’s language games, its various uses of comically duplicitous language to resist categorization and capture, are metaphors for remaining free of spirit and, importantly, for sharing that freedom with others. Gates (1980; 1988) explains similar language games as ‘signifying,’ a distinctly African-American style of

discourse that draws from and builds on the African Tricksters Esu and Legba to perform resistance and maintain hope against the horrors of American slavery and racism.

Positivistic models also overlook Trickster's status as an archetype. Truly understanding what it means to perform Trickster is contingent on maintaining its archetypal nature. Moreover, it is this archetypal nature that allows the figure to retain a consistent spirit across different iterations. Jung (1969) explains that archetypes are *idealized* figures and that there can be no perfect representation of an archetype, much the same way that dreams cannot be perfectly recalled after the dreamer has awoken. "The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear" (p. 5). This has implications at both societal and individual levels. Jung explains that individual consciousness rests upon a deeper collective unconsciousness "which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn" (p. 3). It is questionable whether or not the collective unconscious is really inborn. To insist on that point marks a kind of essentialism that contemporary advancements in critical theory would deny. Therefore, it may be more accurate to say that archetypes are socially programmed by the culture, the collective, in which the individual begins to gain its consciousness.

Frentz and Rushing (1991) attempt to reconcile contemporary critical and ideological perspectives with Jung's universalist approach, creating what they call a 'cultural unconscious' that allows for innate unconscious content to be altered by its material conditioning. In either case, archetypes operate beneath the level of individual awareness, becoming inevitably altered upon entrance into conscious thought. What this

means is that there can never be a perfect archetypal representation. But this does not damage the utility of archetypal figures. It makes them even more important because variances in archetypal performances reflect cultural particularities that can be better understood through analysis.

Archetypes are an impossible standard against which individual iterations may be assessed not only for adherence to the archetypal characteristics but also for culturally contingent deviations. Hynes' (1993) six-point typology, for instance, is not a categorical definition but an archetypal standard. Each point will inevitably vary across individual Trickster performances. Those variations are what allow different Trickster figures to have their own personalities and characteristics while remaining part of the same archetypal pattern. It is in individual iterations that the 'colour' of an archetype may be seen. And it is that color which reveals the socio-cultural influence of the collective upon the individual. Archetypal analyses are not an attempt to force individual ideas into a positivistic model. They are designed to probe for differences between archetype and iteration, thus offering critics a standard of relational or dialogical comparison.

Radin, Hynes, Vizenor, Jung, and Gates offer the ground from which most contemporary discussions of Trickster have been figured. Yet the easy uptake of Trickster into critical cultural scholarship is not without risk. Ballinger (1989) cautions against letting the metaphor run too wild, suggesting "some ways that our most popular critical metaphors obscure social themes in the Trickster stories" (p. 27). His contention is that focusing solely on Trickster's individualistic and hedonistic behavior denies Native Americans' communal spirit and that the tales must be contextualized as examples of positive creative liberatory practice as much as negative examples of ill-behaved

selfishness. Yet our Trickster is an archetype, not a single figure rent from its culturally specific habitat. Like cultural critique, it does not merely deconstruct social norms, it points toward recreating norms that help liberate the objectified subject, ones that release instead of restricting human agency. The most useful contemporary Trickster scholarship engages this nuance.

Contemporary Trickster Scholarship

Contemporary discussions of Trickster have ranged across science, social science, and the humanities. Not even the human genome has escaped Trickster's transformative manipulations (Nakayashi, 2011). Before turning to more specific discussions of performativity, utopianism, and the Quixotic, the following review concentrates on two persistent threads of Trickster performances: Trickster as a vehicle for cultural critique and as a generative tool for qualitative research.

One of the most common academic uses of Trickster is as a metric for cultural criticism: Trickster's characteristics are used as an archetypal or definitional standard against which discursive artifacts are compared. For instance, Smith (2005) discusses blues music in terms of the 'Signifying Monkey' (Gates, 1980; Gates, 1988). Blues singers are said to draw on duplicitous language, and performative transformations. Their close associations with crossroads, boundaries, and borderlands are construed as part of a discursive formation providing freedom in the face of slavery and racism. Arthos (2001) also uses signifying to illustrate the duplicitous rhetoric of Louis Farrakhan's Million Man March. The pledge of atonement offered by Farrakhan and his marchers served a critical function of misdirecting attention away from subversive messages that challenged white authority and dominance. As a means of 'gittin ovuh' on the oppressive dominance

of white America, Farrakhan fed the ‘master’ what he wanted to hear and was thus able to transmit hidden messages to his audience, to say one thing to those with power while meaning another thing to those without, to obscure dissent behind a veneer of consent.

Trickster is a potent metaphor of dissent. Ivie (2005) explains that “[m]etaphor understood as a basic heuristic for democratic dissent is the master trope for rhetorical critique, a trickster’s view of a vast and various trove...of techniques [that] helps political actors to avoid being driven into a corner” (p. 284). The “shifting shapes of the trickster” help to inform resistant rhetorical practices by showing that Burkean identification and consubstantiality are not totalizing and disparate interests can indeed “inhabit common ground without sacrificing their separate identities” (p. 286). Such multiplicity reinforces the relationship between archetypal standards and individual iterations thus making Trickster’s techniques of dissent valuable across different subject positions and forms of communication. Cai (2008) connects Trickster to feminist rhetoric in particular.

Concentrating on Maxine Hong Kingston’s novel *The Woman Warrior* (1975), Cai explains that “Kingston needs a new narrative form that enables her to transcend human differences by creating new systems of meanings such as human interdependence and communal spirit” (p. 276). Trickster discourse provides that form. In conjunction with feminist texts it “can contribute to the theorizing of the feminist social change agenda” (p. 277) while broadening “the feminist marginality theory” (p. 286).

Beyond music, activism, and literature, Tricksters are also found in modern film. Ashton (2009) connects Trickster to the Coen Brothers’ 1998 film *The Big Lebowski*, suggesting that the film’s protagonists use deception to unmask deception. Yet to claim that since deception, foolishness, and broken boundaries are pervasive in the film then so

is Trickster is to overlook the critical depth and relational function of the role. This exemplifies a shallow methodological approach that simply attempts to fit ‘Trickster discourse’ Vizenor (1993a) into a definitional, as opposed to archetypal, standard. Merely identifying common characteristics between Trickster and any communicative artifact overlooks crucial aspects of Trickster’s critical spirit. In other words, just because someone or something exhibits elements of deception, or any of Trickster’s other archetypal characteristics, does not necessitate its presence. Such reasoning suffers from a sort of ‘metonymic’ or ‘synecdochical’ fallacy that substitutes a part for the whole. Conversely, it would also suggest that if a facet is missing then the archetype is not present either. Clearly this is not the case with a properly applied consideration of archetype. As Jung (1969) suggests, archetypes cannot be perfectly represented in any discursive artifact.

Much like Lacan’s conception of ‘the Real’ (1977), as soon as an archetype leaves the realm of the unconscious it becomes distorted. Its presence in conscious thought demands some sort of alteration that omits the possibility of perfect representation. Therefore, to conflate categorical arguments with archetypal standards diminishes our ability to understand how the archetype functions, which is as often a matter of difference from as it is adherence to the standard.

Meyer (2009) discusses Trickster and other shadow archetypes (Jung, 1969) in the 2002 version of *Spider-Man*. Noting that “prominent archetypal forms like the shadow, trickster, or sage” have been sublimated to the hero archetype and remain “under-explored and under-theorized” (p. 520), Meyer suggests that antagonists like Spider-Man’s nemesis the Green Goblin reflect a present-absent dialectic that pervades larger

structures of myth and narrative. While Meyer quickly abandons Trickster in favor of a complex discussion of shadow archetypes overall, the Jungian perspective remains a valuable and potentially productive framework for engaging Trickster performances.⁵

Trickster has also been found on television. Dorsey (2002) sees it operating behind the scenes of *The X-Files*. The show's antagonist, called the "Cigarette Smoking Man," is presented as a complex anti-villain that uses secretive and conspiratorial deception to support governmental power. Dorsey also finds traces of Trickster in the show's main character Agent Fox Mulder, suggesting that his "anomalous behavior" and search for 'truth' "marks him as an anti-hero, a trickster" (p. 459). Yet, as with Ashton (2009), it remains questionable as to whether people perform Trickster simply because they use non-traditional tactics, struggle with internal conflicts, or show concern for the populace. In addition, Mulder's search for 'truth' rather than manipulation of it points further away than toward the Trickster archetype. Green's (2007) depiction of breakfast cereal mascots as Tricksters also suffers from the kind of categorizations that Vizenor (1993a) cautions against; suggesting that because some mascots play 'tricks' to satisfy their appetites, and thus those of the audience, then they perform Trickster. This rends Trickster away from its role as a social subversive while forcing it into the service of a domineering and exploitative capitalist economy. So even though Agent Mulder and The Cigarette Smoking Man, Tony the Tiger and the Trix Rabbit use what can be read as Trickster tactics, it may be more accurate to say that they perform caricatures of Trickster

⁵ Post-Jungian criticism as described by Baumlin, Baumlin, and Jensen (2004) has attempted to reconcile Jung's insights with less biased, patriarchal, or Euro-centric understandings of subjectivity.

which ultimately overlook Trickster's critical telos to reinforce American authoritarianism and "the banal essence of consumerism" (Vizenor, 1993b, p. 7).

The editorial cartoons of Native Canadian Everett Soop are more representative of an archetypal Trickster actively functioning to positively transform the socio-cultural environment. Robertson (2008) suggests that Soop performs Trickster by using cartoons to question Canadian "political policies and colonial power" and that "Soop's visual commentary functions as a counterpoint to mainstream representations of the ongoing structures of Canada's colonial political authority" (p. 73).⁶ Robertson concludes that Soop's satirical cartoons challenge readers to question official governmental policies toward First Peoples and that the "intertextuality of [his] drawings reveals the artist's Trickster role of challenging and teaching in ironic ways" (p. 88). Like 'signifying,' irony is another one of Trickster's language games. But instead of a double voice that speaks differently to different audiences, irony can carry subversive messages located precisely in between its conflicting messages. This subtle nuance is one of the archetypal variations that color different iterations of Trickster. Those contrasting forms of semiotic resistance mark cultural variations between the African-American mode of signifying and a Native-American mode of irony that is further reinforced in Vizenor's literary and academic work.

Connections have also been drawn between Trickster and other forms of resistance such as computer hacking, outlaw discourse, and even critical pedagogy. Nikitina (2010) suggests that computer hackers perform Trickster by redefining digital culture. Using dumpster-diving 'freegans,' glib corporate advertisements, and critical

⁶ For further reference, these cartoons are reprinted in the Robertson article.

consumer reconstructions of corporate commercials as examples, VanSlette and Boyd (2011) draw parallels between Sloop and Ono's 'outlaw discourse' and Trickster's tactics of subversion. They conclude that Trickster is valuable to discussions of outlaw discourse because it valorizes and legitimates 'frivolous' voices that would otherwise be ignored. Trickster, then, "enriches the study of outlaw discourse because it demonstrates the creative and destructive tensions that can exist in these voices that reshape societal values" (p. 594). Expanding on Pineau's (1994) discussion of performing Trickster as pedagogical tool, both Garrison (2009) and Davis and Weeden (2009) shift Trickster from an analytical tool to a generative one; each suggesting that societal values can be reshaped at a fundamental level by reconfiguring teaching practices to privilege the heuristics of showing over the didacticism of telling.

Trickster has also been turned toward generative practices in qualitative research, albeit less commonly than it is used as an analytic. Kamberelis (2003) calls it a "premodern avatar of postmodern research" that parallels contemporary developments in qualitative inquiry. Both Trickster and postmodernism can be seen as a "response to the triple crises of representation, evaluation, and praxis" (p. 674). Trickster's embodiment of praxis "has enormous productive potential" and even though its ends "are almost always communal and democratic" (p. 675), it is always wrought with the chance for failure and unintended consequences. Trickster's multiplicity is also reflected in a "methodological syncretism" that deprivileges singular approaches and attempts to use any and all available tactics to produce the best possible research (p. 675). Like postmodern research, Trickster is invested in non-representational texts. "In fact, Trickster may be read as an almost pure embodiment of cultural creativity, dynamism, and multiplicity" that

facilitates a return to “more embodied, organic, participatory, and communal ways of thinking (p. 676). Trickster’s reflection of postmodern research practices “offers us tools not for accepting and representing our cultural imaginaries but for producing them” (p. 691). Such a turn toward ‘producing’ opens a path for using Trickster as more than a metaphor; it can also be a generative standard, one that empowers both cultural practitioners and cultural critics. Poulous (2010) deploys those tactics in producing what he calls “accidental ethnography” but ultimately concludes that he is less reflective of Coyote the Trickster or Wolf the aggressor than of the more refined and “fully evolved version of the genus, the ordinary domestic dog” (p. 55). It is not a failure on Poulous’ part to fully embody the Trickster archetype, even while using it as a standard for comparison. Rather, it is a nuanced reflection on the meaning of archetypal standards themselves. Poulous uses the archetypal standard to develop a different kind of archetype. Instead of forcing himself into the role of Coyote, he finds that his differences from the standard suggest a different, new, archetype: the domestic dog with which he has a greater affinity and connection.

Amongst the most compelling applications of Trickster is in its ability to act analytically and generatively at the same time, as it does in the recent work of Thomas Frenzt. He expands on Donna Haraway’s “brief account” (2009, p. 821) of Tricksters as harbingers of ‘situated knowledge’ through his experience with the medical establishment during a hip replacement surgery, noting that he has “discovered how to destabilize the rigid hierarchical structures of the medical profession by inviting health care providers to ‘play’ with” him on equal footing (p. 823). Much of that discovery is detailed in Frenzt’s autoethnography *Trickster in Tweed* (2008). In that work, he explores different facets of

his personality – the aggressive wolf, the passive sheep, the guiding shepherd, the tricky Coyote – and considers how they have influenced his personal and professional development. Frenzt uses the Trickster role as tool for reflection, or analysis, as well as a generative guideline for consciously directing his relational communication. In so doing, he reveals the value and complexity of performing Trickster in everyday life and “all who have an acute awareness of the rigidity that infects tradition-bound perspectives, and the arrogance of some in maintaining those perspectives in the face of a need to expand our horizons, will profit from his story” (McKerrow & Turner, 2009, pp. 322-323). From this perspective, Frenzt subtly performs Trickster by artfully placing readers in his own liminal state, reminding them that being is a process of change and challenge while emphasizing that their reactions to those challenges have a direct relationship to their quality of life.

Critical Theory

Quality of life is also a central concern of critical theory. But before continuing to connect critical theory with utopianism, performativity, the Quixotic, and the Trickster archetype, a clarification should be made. On one hand, the term refers to a very specific tradition of inquiry pioneered by the Frankfurt School theorists. On the other hand, it refers to a theoretical canon that seeks to address and, importantly, help ameliorate social injustice. In this way, the Frankfurt School is a significant part of critical theory without being its entirety and it prefigures, or more accurately, postfigures Trickster’s utopian impulse. The first generation of this school included Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and, slightly later, Herbert Marcuse. The most notable figure in the second generation of this school is Jürgen Habermas. While each of these authors made invaluable individual

contributions to social research, they do have a common thread: analyzing and understanding the replication and dissemination of systems of domination, particularly at the hands of capitalist economic relationships. David Macey (2000) offers a clear and concise description: “Critical theory often takes the form of a CRITIQUE of ideology (*Ideologiekritik*) that seeks to explain why social agents accept or consent to systems of collective representations that do not serve their objective interests but legitimate the existing power structure” (p. 75). The Frankfurt School’s concentration on capitalism as the source of social injustice does, though, create blind spots in its ability to address forms of domination that are not specifically or immediately reducible to the production of labor. Thus, the wider scope of critical theory, which includes post-colonial, feminist and queer, post-structural, postmodern, and race based perspectives, should be differentiated from the particular form of Frankfurt School criticism.

Following a common convention explained by Bohman (2012), the phrase “Critical Theory” will be capitalized when used in specific reference to the Frankfurt School and its constituents. The phrase “critical theory” in lower case letters will refer to the broader conception of addressing various different forms of social injustice, which can include but is not limited to the Marxist critiques exemplified by the Frankfurt School theorists.

Critical theory, in the broader sense, is often couched in Michel Foucault’s discussions of power (1980; 1986; 1988; 1990; 1994; 1995). The overall thrust of Foucault’s corpus is that all social relationships are imbued with power. Biesecker (1992) explains Gayatri Spivak’s assertion that power should be taken in the sense that Foucault most likely intended with the French word ‘pouvoir,’ which implies a sense of ‘being

able' more than the impositional force suggested by the English translation. The degree to which this power creates social injustice or is oppressive varies depending on how it is used. For Foucault, power can be related to normativity, or the creation of social norms that valorize certain subject positions at the expense of others. For this reason, Foucault's discussions of power have been enormously productive for several different lines of critical inquiry. The creation of social norms is one of the more interesting and engaging sites for contemporary critical theory and it offers a direct connection to the kind of normative reconfigurations exemplified in the frog story.

Trickster tales and their protagonists both challenge and reinforce normativity. If critical theory strives to rectify social injustices then it does so not to annihilate normativity but to replace oppressive norms with liberatory ones that work toward creating greater individual freedom. In this way, both critical theory and Trickster tales offer utopian visions of a society that may be but is not yet. And even though Trickster does enact those worlds in its tales, they remain in the realm of mythology until they are manifested in reality.

Trickster tales are more ambiguous, complex, contradictory, and fluid than those of critical theory. Where critical theory often attempts to set out specific goals and aims for addressing what its adherents perceive to be social injustice, Trickster operates metaphorically. Critical theory is a comparatively literal construction that often considers itself scientific, objective, and empirical in nature. This is reflected in the name of the school that the Frankfurt School theorists founded through Columbia University in New York City: *The New School For Social Research* (since truncated to simply *The New School*). Trickster's school, though, may be more accurately described as what Gerald

Vizenor (1988) calls *The New School of Socioacupuncture*. He explains that this school, “aroused under colonial psalms on the reservation and nurtured in wild panic holes on the baronage, is an active word war with a comic temper” (p. 51). Clearly this is a metaphor for Trickster’s ability to reconfigure the world through seriously comic language or what Jean-François Lyotard (1984), following Ludwig Wittgenstein (1965), calls ‘language games.’ The term “colonial psalms” is also informative here. Vizenor is creating a direct contrast between Critical Theory and Trickster’s spirit; he is mocking the colonialist empiricism of a form of social research that takes ‘scientific’ models and categorizations as gospel. Yet most forms of utopian thought, at least in western philosophy, are direct descendents of Frankfurt School theorists, particularly Ernst Bloch. As far as language games are Trickster’s means, its ends are nothing less than utopian – and in this, Critical Theory, Trickster, and critical theory are aligned. Focusing on Trickster’s utopianism, calling it a Quixotic Utopian, requires a deeper explanation of that alignment and of the role of futurity in critical theory.

Critically Utopian

Futurity and utopia are amongst the most powerful motivators for critical theory. Utopia is a long-standing idea in western thought. While Sir Thomas More (1997) was the first to use the word ‘utopia,’ literally meaning ‘no place,’ philosophical descriptions of ostensibly perfect social organizations reach back at least as far as Plato’s *Republic*. In that work, Plato set out the foundations of an ideal Greek society. In the process, he also set out basic plans of the hierarchical social divisions that would come to dominate western philosophy and governance. The purpose of Plato’s ideal society was to provide justice for all people. Yet his conception of justice was not quite what the word has come

to mean in an era still profoundly under the influence of postmodernism. For Plato, justice meant that people stayed in their assigned stations, that they did not dissent, and that they all worked in their own ways for an inchoate common good that ultimately benefitted elite classes at the expense of everyone else. Plato famously goes so far as to suggest banning poetry and certain musical modes or scale structures for their propensity to ignite the passions and thus to upset the extant order.

Since Plato, the idea of justice has paradoxically become easier to conceptualize and more difficult to practice. First, the relatively easy part: although it varies and is still up for debate, justice has since come to generally mean something like fair treatment; that all humans are treated the same in the eyes of the law and society; that all people are truly equal; that no people are, as George Orwell describes in *Animal Farm* (1996), more equal than others. Importantly, this means that all people have access, at least theoretically, to the same resources for living fulfilling lives free of desperate material want or repressed desire. For our purposes, then, the concept of a utopian society remains similar to what Plato suggested, one that provides justice for the people. But social organizations and hierarchies have since become far more complex.

While the concept of justice remains at the core of the critical utopian impulse (Bloch, 1996; Jameson, 2007), exactly how that justice may be actualized has become far more fractured and slippery, especially since the rise of a postmodernist episteme that has broken the easy definition and categorization of grand narratives (Lyotard, 1984) like ‘common good.’ In other words, while justice and the common good are intuitively easy to conceive, their practice has become increasingly difficult to achieve. For instance, Jameson’s (1981) particular brand of utopia reflects the classically Marxist drive of a

classless society. Yet this classless society is based on archaic forms of social organization that no longer exist and, most likely, will never return. In this way, Jameson and others' utopian vision is an archetype in itself, an impossible standard toward which we may still strive. What remains after this postmodern fracturing are the twin concepts of hope and futurity, both of which are central to contemporary conceptions of utopianism as well as Trickster's critical spirit.

Ernest Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* (1996) has been fundamental to current discussions of utopia, hope and futurity, especially as they are applied through the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School – of which Bloch was an important early figure – and subsequently to the broader praxis of a more generalized critical theory. A line of utopian thought can be drawn directly from Bloch through the twentieth century to Frederic Jameson, who explains that “Bloch posits a Utopian impulse governing everything future-oriented in life and culture; and encompassing everything from games to patent medicines, from myths to mass entertainment, from iconography to technology, from architecture to eros, from tourism to jokes and the unconscious” (2007, p. 2). Clearly this dissertation is couched in the myth and mass entertainment clause of that utopian impulse. Those particular sites of analysis are further reinforced by Jameson's subsequent claim that “Bloch's interpretive principle is most effective when it reveals the operation of the utopian impulse in unsuspected places, where it is concealed or repressed” (p. 3). It is in the concealed and unsuspected that Trickster may make the most dramatic reconfigurations of social hierarchies and repressed desires. This is the place where visions of a better future are most c/overtly realized. This is why Coyote hides, pretending to drink, while digging out behind the dam so that all may have water, so that

all may have equal access to lives free of material need and repressed desire. Coyote digs out the dam not to improve the past, not even really to right previous wrongs, but to create a condition of justice for the future. In this way, Trickster is a quintessential figure of utopian futurity.

Futurity is not free of potential problems or criticisms. Lee Edelman (2004) suggests that as a concept, futurity is built on a heteronormative assumption of child bearing. The main reason, he suggests, for maintaining hope in the face of adversity is to provide a better future for the children, even if that hope is implicit. He claims that politics,

however radical the means by which specific constituencies attempt to produce a more desirable social order, remains, at its core, conservative insofar as it works to affirm an structure, to *authenticate* a social order which it then intends to transmit to the future in the form of its inner child. (p. 3)

Yet Edelman's psychoanalytic stance is built on questionable, perhaps even outmoded, foundations of Freudian sexuality. Despite the significant insights of Freud, Lacan, and their progenitors like pop philosopher Slavoj Žižek, there are other ways of conceiving the future that do not necessarily build themselves on the lives of children, even the nascent and metaphorical inner child represented by western psychoanalysis.

The future does not have to orient itself around children; it may just as easily orient itself around 'self' and 'other' without that conceptual baggage. Perhaps one wants to maintain hope for a better future in terms of pure self-interest. While this may, in the purview of psychoanalysis, ultimately mean the inner-child, it loses its efficacy as soon as we leave that frame and attempt to conceive of society, and particularly human

sexuality, outside of what Deleuze and Guattari (1997) call ‘the tyranny of Oedipus.’ Trickster’s totally fluid sexuality also operates beyond the psychoanalytic frame and thus helps to unseat the foundations of Edelman’s call for *No Future*. Trickster subverts the tyranny of Oedipus by ignoring the tragedy altogether, by practicing its own form of irrepressible eros without regard to the Freudian and post-Freudian framework, a kind of corporeal privileging that will help inform the Trickster archetype to be constructed for critical analysis.

Sara Ahmed (2010) offers a countering view to Edelman (2004). She suggests that there is a value to unhappiness and that the condition of utopianism is dissatisfaction with the present state of affairs. In this way, unhappiness or dissatisfaction is a crucial aspect of working toward improving the human condition. She also suggests that

In response to Edelman’s polemic, I want to take seriously the question whether all forms of political hope, all forms of optimism as well as utopianism, all dreams of some ‘more perfect order,’ can be described as performing the logic of futurism, which would in turn require negativity to be located in those who cannot inherit this future. (p. 161)

In contrast to Edelman, Ahmed offers a less nihilistic vision of social and political activism. Still, Ahmed’s response is contingent on denying the futurity of utopian thought. She simply replaces Edelman’s deployment of Freud’s ‘death drive’ with the idea of dissatisfaction. For Ahmed, dissatisfaction is inherently productive because it inspires change, both radical and banal. Both Ahmed and Edelman deny futurity, just through different critical heuristics. While Ahmed’s figuration of utopian thought is ultimately more positive than Edelman’s, both neglect to account for the possibility that

the future does not necessarily mean children or that an escape from the tyranny of Oedipus allows for different and equally valid conceptions of futurity, hope, and utopia.

Muñoz (1998) suggests that Bloch's utopian impulse has much to offer critical, and in his case, queer theory. For Muñoz,

Bloch's utility has much to do with the way he theorizes utopia. He makes a critical distinction between abstract utopias and concrete utopias, valuing abstract utopias only insofar as they pose a critique function that fuels a critical and potentially transformative political imagination. (KL 147⁷)

Where Bloch valorizes 'concrete' utopias, or those put into actual practice as part of a liberatory struggle or program, Muñoz suggests that there is a value to abstract utopias, to utopian wishful thinking. After all, utopian practice is predicated on utopian hope. Muñoz continues to state that "[c]oncrete utopias may also be daydreamlike, but they are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many" (KL 147). Muñoz's verbiage is strikingly similar to Jung's in this regard. As an archetype, as a myth, as a figure of the cultural unconscious, Trickster is exactly that solitary oddball. As a utopian figuration, Trickster is the one who dreams for the many.

Muñoz concentrates his efforts on real spaces of utopian yearning, like the free sexuality of certain New York bathhouses, where the utopian impulse becomes concretized. While Bloch and Muñoz may valorize actual utopian practices, those practices may not be actualized without the underlying impulse of hope. Muñoz's

⁷ The non-standard reference is an unfortunate result of using the Kindle edition of this text. The KL stands for "Kindle Location" and the number is the location itself. Such references will only be used where absolutely necessary.

“approach to hope as a critical methodology can best be described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision” (KL 180). This clear and succinct depiction of critical utopian hope belies Bloch’s insistence on the differences between concrete and abstract utopias. It reveals their close interrelationship and the fact that concrete utopias are built on intractable abstractions. This is not to belittle or even to argue against the extreme importance of concrete utopias or putting abstraction into practice. It is, though, an attempt to emphasize for social theory the value of abstraction, of metaphor, metonymy and synecdoche, of wishful thinking and maintaining unrealized or even impossible dreams.

That a truly utopian society may be forever out of reach is no reason to abandon the search, as Sally Kitch (2000) suggests in claiming that if she has done her work properly, utopia lies in “tiny glittering pieces” at her feet (p. 259). Rather, such impossibility only means that we should try harder. Furthermore, and to elaborate on her own metaphor, if utopia lies in tiny glittering pieces, then it has only become many smaller utopias, perhaps a heterotopia (Foucault, 1986; Jameson, 2007), each reflecting a different utopian vision back at her. To give up reshaping society for the better in the face of an ostensible impossibility is defeatist, conciliatory, and ultimately dismissive of radical thought. It suggests that social transformation is limited to working from within extant power structures. Trickster, though, strives to redistribute that power, to return it to the people so it may be more equitably shared. This is the reason that we may read the water that Coyote liberates as a metaphor for power. Such metaphorical readings are also one of the most powerful aspects of Trickster myths.

Myth is always metaphorical (Campbell, 2008). The hero is never just Odysseus or James Bond. S/he is a microcosm for humanity. That Trickster myths use water, tobacco, and other cultural tools while critical theory speaks of power and domination is simply a difference in the vehicle but not the tenor of the metaphor. It follows, then, that Trickster's cultural heroism also operates metonymically, where the small instances of subversion featured in its tales stand in for larger structures of power, domination, and domineering normativity.

Performing 'culture hero,' Trickster provides the tools of culture and of life to all, even if through its own apparent selfishness (which could easily be tied to Ahmed's utopian dissatisfaction). As such, it is a quintessential figure of hope and futurity. The Trickster spirit is utopian. Even if its manipulations are ambivalent, as is often suggested, it retains a populist spirit that operates in the service of humanity (Kamberelis, 2005). Therefore, Trickster has the crucial critical function of lifting repressive normativity, of shattering the extant order and putting the pieces back together in a way that contributes to, instead of taking away from, equal access to justice and self-determination.

Trickster has another common role, though: 'stumbling buffoon.' As both culture-hero and stumbling buffoon, Trickster reveals the complexity of social being. The two roles are not dialectically opposed and they do not cancel each other out. Rather, the terms are dialogical: they speak to each other, they inform each other, they are mutually constitutive. Dialogics, then, is a crucial concept for addressing the cultural function of Trickster figures. It forms the basis for the methodology that grounds this dissertation, to which we will return in more detail below. For the moment, considering the stumbling

buffoon element of Trickster's cultural role in conjunction with its utopian leanings leads to a discussion of Quixotic performativity, which is grounded in performance studies.

Performance Studies

I have not chosen to discuss Trickster's role as culture hero in conjunction with critical utopianism and its role as stumbling buffoon in conjunction with Quixotic performance to create static delineations. Rather, I have chosen to do so because critical theory is cultural and cognitive while performance is embodied and corporeal. In other words, critical theory aligns well with the culture hero role in so far as Trickster attempts to subvert the pathological imposition of oppressive social norms. Performance, on the other hand, aligns well with the corporeality suggested by the role of stumbling buffoon. Or, as Dwight Conquergood suggests, "Performance privileges threshold-crossing, shape-shifting, and boundary violating figures such as shamans, tricksters, and jokers, who value the carnivalesque over the canonical, the transformative over the normative, the mobile over the monumental" (1995, p. 138). This is not to call performance buffoonery, even if it often is; it is to say that buffoonery is performative. There are few buffoons as well known as Alonso Quijano, better known as Don Quixote de la Mancha.

To discuss Quixotic performativity, we should begin with performance studies. Performance studies is not a new discipline. It could be said that our studies of performance reach as far back as the Ancient Greek sophists, predating even the commonly accepted 'fathers' of western philosophy, Plato and Aristotle. As far as the sophists taught the best available means of *performing* arguments, such an assessment would seem accurate. Yet the contemporary academic iteration of performance studies has more nuance and complexity than rhetorical efficacy. Actually, our current use of the

term performance studies is significantly informed by rhetoric, and even by sophistry, but cannot be reduced to either. Conquergood (1992) explains that performance studies is the borderlands terrain between rhetoric and ethnography that is being vigorously explored and developed from both perspectives. Performance studies is the new frontier for staking joint claims to poetics and persuasion, pleasure and power, in the interests of community and critique, solidarity and resistance. (p. 80)

Stemming from Wallace Bacon's influential engagements with oral interpretation as its own epistemology, performance studies began as means of gaining greater understandings of a text and its meanings through its theatrical, or quasi-theatrical presentation on the 'proscenium stage' (Coonfield & Rose, 2012). Bacon (1980) saw embodying a text and relating that embodiment to an audience as a direct line of access to that text's hidden meanings.

Dwight Conquergood, Victor Turner, Richard Schechner, and others applied Bacon's understandings of performativity to their anthropological and ethnographic fieldwork. Theatrically staging their research was seen as a means of better understanding social issues as they are actually experienced by communities. It also had the benefit of making scholarship accessible to audiences beyond the academy, ones that were otherwise excluded from access to that knowledge. Further complicating the process, performance has since developed into its own distinct epistemology, one that exceeds the limitations of traditional academic research in means, ends, and presentation. In short, performance is both a means of understanding research and a means of sharing that research beyond traditional academic channels. Thus, performance studies is even more than Conquergood claims. It should not be restricted to the intersection of anthropology

(or ethnography) and rhetoric. Indeed, as its absorption of other disciplines and academic research becomes more expansive, we see performance wending its way into many different kinds of social engagement.

Performance studies moves in at least two different directions. In one direction it is the staging of ethnographic research, which is a rhetorical act in itself. In another direction, performance entails the rhetorical aspects of our everyday performances, the roles of our lives and our beings in the world. This is the direction pioneered by Erving Goffman in discussing *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). If those presentations are considered to be performances, which Goffman's depiction clearly suggests, then they imbued with rhetorical meaning. Further complicating the performance metaphor, rather than using ethnographic data to create new understandings of rhetorical phenomena, I will be using rhetorical data to elucidate performative phenomena. Put differently, I will be using cultural texts, particularly Trickster myths, media artifacts, and performance art documentations to shed light on how the Trickster role remains a valuable metaphor for social transformation. Trickster's buffoonery is a performance. Just as Goffman discusses the performance of a restaurant server, Trickster performs a particular version of itself that is informed by but not totally reducible to its archetypal standard.

Trickster can be culture hero at the same time that it can be selfish buffoon because it is, at root, a border crosser. If performance studies is also a border crosser that overlaps multiple disciplines, then Trickster offers a natural connection. Carlson (2004) explains that

singular and stable cultures, coherent structures and stable identities ha[ve] been largely replaced by a concept of identity and culture as constructed, relational, and in constant flux, with the porous or contested borders replacing centers as the focus of interest, because it is at these borders that meaning is continually being created and negotiated. (p. 206)

Performance studies, then, is preoccupied with contestation of meaning over its categorical definition. It lives in the borderlands, the liminal spaces where meaning is not and cannot be permanent. It is for this reason that Joseph Roach refers to performance studies as an “anti-discipline” (Carlson, 2004, p. 206). It is also for this reason that Dwight Conquergood suggests Trickster may be “the ‘guru’ of this anti-discipline” (Carlson, 2004, p. 206).

Diana Taylor (2003) clearly sums up the contemporary development of this anti-discipline for whom Trickster may be the guru. “Performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called ‘twice-behaved’ behavior” (pp. 2-3). The transmission of cultural knowledge is also a central tenet of mythologies. It is through myth and story that embodied knowledge has traveled and maintained relevance over time. Taylor continues to suggest that “performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events *as* performance” (p. 3). Myth itself has a cultural function, it performs a role in helping to shape and form our understanding of human behavior. By providing heuristic narratives or stories that we may learn from, myth helps to guide the behavior that it seeks to understand. This is why archetypes may be more accurately seen as forms of cultural conditioning than as innate,

essentialized, internalized, or universalized figures as Jung suggests. The distortions that occur when they are rent out of the cultural unconscious, the social dream, profoundly affect how they are then understood and thus how they function as performatives or things that act upon the world.

A crucial example of the degree to which myth has shaped our understandings of human behavior while shaping behavior to come is Sophocles' play *Oedipus The King*. *Oedipus* presented the tale of an Ancient Greek king fallen from grace due to his own avariciousness and lust. In this sense Sophocles offers an understanding of the operations of power and desire. Yet the play also came to be one of the foundational texts of Sigmund Freud's formulation of psychoanalysis, particularly in its expression of repressed sexuality and maternal attraction. The influence of Freud and his progenitors Carl Jung and Jacques Lacan on contemporary social thought is vast. Suffice it to say here that western understandings of human behavior, especially desire and sexuality, in the early decades of the twenty-first century remain grounded in Sophocles' ancient text. Even when scholars attempt to move away from the Oedipal metaphor, they must do so against the Oedipal background. Deleuze and Guattari (1977; 1987) attempt to undo what they call the 'tyranny of Oedipus' but mostly succeed in creating a beautifully arcane text that still depends on the Oedipal metaphor. Thus, *Oedipus* is amongst the most performative texts. It has acted upon the world in ways profound and simple for two and a half millennia.

Considering *Oedipus* as a performative artifact reinforces Taylor's (2003) claim that "performance also functions as an epistemology. Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing" (p. 3). The tight

connections between performance and knowledge, then, are particularly rich in considering the communicative function of mythologies. Myths travel over time, seeming to leave what Taylor calls the repertoire – or active performance, and entering the archive – where cultural memory dynamically retains the knowledge created through the repertoire. Yet since myths are re/appropriated and re/created with every new reading, they challenge Taylor’s delineation between archive and repertoire. For mythology, archive and repertoire are mutually constitutive. The repertoire draws on archived stores of knowledge only to become the archive itself before becoming the repertoire anew. This process reflects Trickster’s time travels, its means of crossing the borders between old and new, between archive and repertoire. Thus, Trickster aligns with performance studies while offering its own theoretical and practical complications. Meanwhile, both are aligned with the Quixotic spirit.

Quixotic Performativity

Like critical utopianism, to be ‘Quixotic’ means more than just tilting at windmills and dreaming impossible dreams. Drawn from the protagonist of the novel *Don Quixote*, who famously mistook a windmill for a medieval giant and took after it with a homemade lance, nearly killing himself in the process, the Quixotic is a deceptively simple idea. In this way, it is similar to the idea of Trickster, about which every different critic offers a unique, sometimes solipsistic, interpretation. Depictions of the Quixotic are often much like Ruth El Saffar’s (1987) explanation of the Trickster role in *Don Quixote*. She states:

For the purposes of literary study, it is enough to grant that certain terms have achieved sufficient common currency to be useful in discussing specific texts. The

objective reality of the referents of such terms is a matter that must be taken up elsewhere. The term that will be called into service for the present study is “trickster,” a term much more frequently used by anthropologists and psychologists than by students of literature, though it has crept into critical texts from time to time. (p. 151)

‘Quixotic’ is another term, an adjective this time, that has seemingly gained enough common currency to be useful without clear definition or further discussion. Yet Trickster is not so easily defined and the commonness of its currency has, in many ways, stripped the role of its critical utility. The Quixotic has suffered a similar fate. In general usage it has come to mean something like persistence in the face of an obfuscated or hidden hopelessness or, put differently, to pursue causes that one does not know, realize, or admit may be already lost.

Paradoxically, tautologically, and fitting in its connection to Trickster, pursuing a definition of the Quixotic is quintessentially Quixotic. This is to say that since there are so many differing interpretations and since so little literature has attempted to outline what is meant by the term, that earnestly pursuing a usable conception may be little more than tilting at windmills. Yet a clear conception must be created in order to justify calling Trickster a Quixotic Utopian.

Perhaps the best conception of the Quixotic is what Ortega y Gasset calls the ‘revolutionary spirit,’ meaning

not only an urge to improve – which is always excellent and noble – but also an impulse to believe that one has a limitless ability to be what one is not, that one has only to think of the best possible order or condition of society or the world in

order to attain it and make it real; not seeing that both society and the world have structures which are in essence beyond change. (1960, p. 104).

There is a clear connection to critical utopianism in Ortega y Gasset's revolutionary spirit. Moreover, it precisely describes the motivation behind Alonso Quijano's transformation into Don Quixote. Seeing a world that no longer suits his needs or desires and strongly influenced by the delusions of his chivalric romance books, Quijano takes on the persona of a knight errant determined to return chivalry, grace, and gallantry to a Spain that he believes is in decline. Crafting his own implements of knight errantry from common household goods like the colander he uses for a helmet, Quijano becomes Quixote, mounts his decrepit nag Rocinante the magnificent steed, and sets out to return his vision of justice into the world. Failing miserably at every turn and remaining persistent nonetheless, Quixote's vision exceeds all limits of being. He sees the world as an object of manipulation, something that he has the power to change according to his vision. He does not see, or more accurately, chooses not to see the potentially repressive structures of society and the world, the forces that would prevent his victory. Quixote neatly represents Ortega y Gasset's revolutionary spirit. And since the revolutionary spirit is a kind of utopian hope that persists in the face of failure, risk and adversity, it reflects Quixote.

In Quixote, Cervantes gave life to one of the greatest western literary figures and one of the most powerful and least understood metaphors for social action. Quixote is not Trickster, though. Rather, it is Quijano that subtly performs the Trickster role. It is Quijano that sets the process in motion and it is he who's obsession with books, his contemporary mythologies, created Quixote and turned him loose upon the world with an

admirably reckless abandon. Performativity is a sanctioning agent for the transformation between Quijano and Quixote. It allows Quijano's dreams of knight errantry to run amok in Quixote's performative delusions. Even though Quijano dies in the end, Quixote is immortal.

Utopianism and Quixoticism are clearly interrelated. Utopian thinking is a Quixotic practice because it opens space for social agents to exceed societal boundaries, to strive for critical cultural transformations that attempt to improve the human condition, and to keep trying no matter how often their endeavors may fail or how hopeless they may seem. Trickster's overarching critical spirit is Quixotic Utopianism because it attempts to create better worlds by violating restrictive social structures. Whether they succeed or not, Tricksters continue to try.

Trickster and the Quixotic also share another important trait, one that links them to performance studies as a discipline. Like Trickster and like Quixote, performance studies is delusional. It traffics in appearances. Or, more accurately, it traffics in the relationships between appearances and realities. Trickster uses language games and border crossing duplicity to reconfigure the world. Quijano is transformed into Quixote through classical literature and Romantic ideas. Performance studies presents its vision of reality, insofar as academic research represents aspects of reality, through artistic and abstract presentations. Those representations, commonly although not solely offered in a theatrical setting, are nothing less than delusions. But like Trickster and Quixote, they are productive delusions. They encourage social transformation by presenting a delusion every bit as important and heuristically valuable as the reality that it distorts. Also like Trickster and Quixote, performance studies has a critical telos. Its most general program

is creating awareness about social issues, improving people's lives, and pursuing utopian ideals regardless of how impossible the dreams may seem. Finally, Trickster, Quixote, and performance studies all share a sense of corporeality; they each strive to *embody* the critical ideas that derive from their utopian hope.

Trickster is fundamentally connected to both critical theory and performance studies. Quixotic utopianism is an ideal/ized representation of Trickster's critical spirit, one that deeply informs the critical Trickster archetype. Thus far, I have presented a basic conception of Trickster built on the related roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon to help figure and reinforce its critical spirit, its Quixotic utopianism. It remains to suggest a more detailed critical Trickster archetype that can be used as an analytic tool for its dialogical performances. To that end, I will present the archetype before using its elements to discuss a unique mass-mediated Trickster, the character 'Q' from the contemporary *Star Trek* franchise.

Chapter 2

ANTI-HERO OF 1000 FACES

From Trickster Typology To Critical Archetype

Western characters as ancient as the Greek Hermes have been accused of performing Trickster (Doty, 1993; Kerényi, 1972). Tricksters in Native American traditions are at least equally ancient, and possibly more so. The Native American Trickster traditions are particularly rich, with different figures appearing all over the northern continent. The most obvious example is Coyote, who has been recently treated as a generalized metaphor for Tricksters in general. But there are also Hare, Raven, Rabbit, Spider or Iktomi and several other figures sharing the common roles of culture-hero and stumbling buffoon. Tricksters in Meso-America (Tlaloc, Tezcatlipoca, Ah Bolon Dzacab) are often and interestingly related to smoke and mirrors, archetypal tools of trickery. In the eastern hemisphere, mythological Trickster figures stretch from Turkey (Nasreddin) through India (Shiva) across China (the Monkey King) to Japan (Susa-No-O) and Polynesia (Maui). There are European Tricksters in Scandinavia (Loki), France (Reynard the Fox), and Germany (Till Eulenspiegel). Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988) explains how African Tricksters (Esu and Legba) were imported across the Atlantic with the slave trade to be reconfigured as the distinctly African-American iteration of the Signifying Monkey. Joseph Campbell (2008) explained his conception of the ‘monomyth’ as the common connecting factors in hero myths, thus his well-known title *Hero Of 1000 Faces*. Trickster has just as many faces. Instead of being a savior it is an anti-hero that helps shape our understanding of humanity in different but equally complex ways as the heroic monomyth.

There are a number of common traits that bind Tricksters together; a necessarily flexible sort of rubric that places them all, in their own unique and culturally contingent ways, into the role. Hynes (1993) has created one of the more usable, concise, and commonly referenced typologies. He suggests the following characteristics: ambiguity, deception or duplicity, transformation or shape shifting, situation inverting, couriering for or imitating the gods, and sacred or lewd bricolage (1993, p. 34). Hynes does not suggest that those characteristics are present in all Trickster performances. Rather, they are generalizations that are often but not necessarily found in Trickster tales. Hynes' typology functions well for understanding how Tricksters operate in some mythologies. But using that typology alone as an archetypal standard would overlook the importance of crossing borders as well as the twin roles of culture-hero and stumbling buffoon. It also lacks the elements of humor and the critical spirit, the Quixotic utopianism. Therefore, rather than simply amend Hynes' typology it is necessary to rebuild the archetype in a way that accounts more completely for those missing elements.

The following elements of the Trickster role constitute a *Critical Trickster Archetype*. The critical Trickster archetype is informed by, builds on, and ultimately expands the characteristics described by Hynes (1993), Jung (1969), Radin (1972), Gates (1980; 1988), Hyde (1993) and Vizenor (1993a; 1993b). This archetype, though, differs from more traditional archetypal schema. Unlike, for instance, Hynes' typology, Radin's classifications, or Vizenor's characteristics, the critical Trickster archetype is not limited to what are probably best referred to as *tactics* of subversion. Instead, there is a processual flow that runs through the individual elements, marking different stages in

development while suggesting a consistent pattern for analysis. This methodological process should be explained before expanding the individual elements in further detail.

Border crossing is an act. Instead of ambiguity, as Hynes (1993) suggests, crossing borders is the fundamental behavior of Trickster figures. By crossing borders, Tricksters expose their presence as well as the fact that they are socially constructed and therefore subject to reevaluation, if not always their total abandonment. Yet simply crossing borders does not necessitate the presence of a Trickster figure: all Tricksters cross borders but not all border crossings demand a Trickster. So in order to begin determining if a Trickster is really present, it is necessary to identify the borders being crossed. But this must be tied to Trickster's critical spirit, which is also connected to its manipulation of human relationships. Indeed, each element of the critical Trickster archetype should be connected to those underlying and overarching concepts during the process of analysis. This serves two purposes. First, it helps to ensure against falling into a metonymic fallacy in which the presence of certain behaviors, acts, or actions is said to necessitate the presence of a Trickster figure. Second, it forces the critic to consider Trickster's cultural functions at each stage of analysis.

Trickster reveals its twin ontologies of ambiguity and liminality through crossing borders. Ambiguity is a resistance to categorical definition while liminality is the movement between states of being. If the movement between states of being denies the totalizing power of categorical definitions then ambiguity and liminality are intrinsically related. Ambiguity and liminality are not only parts of Trickster's own ontology; they extend into culture itself. So to determine if a Trickster figure is really present, we must look beyond the figure. What Trickster reveals in its ambiguous liminality is the nature of

culture. Cultures are both ambiguous and liminal. Their borders are never clearly delineated and they are always in a process of becoming, of growing, of changing. So in order to continue assessing the presence of a Trickster it is necessary to look beyond their own corporeal boundaries to see how ambiguity and liminality are being fostered in the culture at large.

After determining the borders being crossed as well as the deployment of ambiguity and liminality to facilitate social transformation, we may turn to Trickster's particular tactics of subversion: humor, duplicity, and shape shifting. These three concepts are relatively easy to discover in a discursive artifact or cultural character. Yet it is only after there is a strong indication that a Trickster is really present (and not just its individual behaviors) that we can determine their function in reshaping society, in making the world more habitable. This may seem methodologically counter-intuitive. It may seem easier to look for humor, duplicity, and shape-shifting first and then determine how they contribute to Trickster's border crossing and its twin ontologies of ambiguity and liminality. The danger in following that logic is that privileging these three behaviors can lead to shallow applications that indicate just because something is funny, because something changes shape, or because something uses duplicitous language games then a Trickster must be present. This is clearly not the case. So it is better to first determine whether or not a Trickster is present through its critical spirit, fundamental behavior, and ontologies before assessing how the particular tactics contribute to its subversive performance and, of course, how that performance manipulates human relationships.

Only after carefully following the process of determining a proposed Trickster's behavior, ontologies, and tactics may we turn to the twin roles of culture-hero and

stumbling buffoon, the final two elements of the critical Trickster archetype. It should be emphasized that culture hero and stumbling buffoon are *roles*, not behaviors, ontologies, or tactics. It is not that these roles can only be uncovered after going through the process of determining the prior elements of the critical Trickster archetype; it is, though, that these roles are most meaningful after having gone through the process of building them up through the archetypal process suggested here. The first six elements of the critical Trickster archetype are the building blocks of these last two roles; they are the raw material from which Trickster's social functions are constructed.

To summarize, the eight elements of the critical Trickster archetype are the fundamental behavior of border crossing; the ontological states of ambiguity and liminality; the particular tactics of duplicity, shape shifting, and humor; and the twin roles of stumbling buffoon and culture hero. These eight elements move processually from a foundational act that reveals Trickster's intractable ontologies through specific tactics of subversion and, finally, into Trickster's roles in society. Yet none of those elements are complete without the spirit of Quixotic utopianism and Trickster's relational manipulations.

Rather than being archetypal characteristics themselves, the spirit of Quixotic utopianism and Trickster's relational function ground each of the other archetypal elements. Therefore, these two grounding factors should be considered and reconciled at each stage of analysis. To demonstrate the process of determining Trickster's presence, role, and function as a cultural agent, each characteristic will be discussed individually and in more detail before tying them back together through a particularly rich media example: the character 'Q' from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*.

Border Crossing

Trickster's fundamental act is crossing borders. This is not always related to literal or physical borders. The boundaries that Trickster permeates in the tales are just as often socially constructed standards of behavior or other forms of normativity that may be considered under the general rubric of 'propriety.' For instance, in the story about the frog people, Coyote crosses several boundaries at once. Where the frogs had established a social norm of charging for access to water, Coyote decided that the arrangement was unfair. It then duped the frogs by playing on their greed for shells to rectify what it saw as an injustice. But, as Hyde (1998) emphasizes, border crossing is as much an act of creating boundaries as it is of violating them. This reflects the complexity of normativity. Not all normativity is pathological. Contrary, some norms are necessary for society to function at all. Some norms are necessary to help pursue and maintain social justice. Without such norms, there would be no ethical standard for critics to use in identifying, let alone rectifying, injustice. If the frogs were to rebuild a dam, one could rest assured that Coyote would find a way to undermine it again. In this way, the repressive norm is replaced with a potentially liberating one.

Showing the complexity of what Hyde (1998) calls border work, Trickster can even become the border. Consider the following West African Yoruba tale about the Trickster Esu presented by Henry Louis Gates Jr. (1988).

Everyone knows the story of the two friends who were thwarted in their friendship by Esu. They took vows of eternal friendship to one another but neither took Esu into consideration. Esu took note of their actions and decided to do something about them.

When the time was ripe, Esu decided to put their friendship to his own little test. He made a cloth cap. The right side was black, the left side was white.

The two friends were out in the fields, tilling their land. One was hoeing on the right side, the other was clearing the bushes to the left. Esu came by on a horse, riding between the two men. The one on the right saw the black side of his hat. The friend on the left noticed the sheer whiteness of Esu's cap.

The two friends took a break for lunch under the cool shade of the trees. Said one friend, "Did you see the man with a white cap who greeted us as we were working? He was very pleasant wasn't he?"

"Yes, he was charming, but it was a man in a black cap that I recall, not a white one."

"It was a white cap. The man was riding a magnificently caparisoned horse."

"Then it must be the same man. I tell you, his cap was dark – black."

"You must be fatigued or blinded by the hot rays of the sun to take a white cap for a black one."

"I tell you it was a black cap and I am not mistaken. I remember him distinctly."

The two friends fell to fighting. The neighbors came running but the fight was so intense that the neighbors could not stop it. In the midst of this uproar, Esu returned, looking very calm and pretending not to know what was going on.

"What is the cause of all the hullabaloo?" He demanded sternly.

“Two close friends are fighting,” was the answer. “They seem intent on killing each other and neither would stop or tell us the reason for the fight. Please do something before they destroy each other.”

Esu promptly stopped the fight. “Why do you two lifelong friends make a public spectacle of yourselves in this manner?”

“A man rode through the farm, greeting us as he went by,” said the first friend. “He was wearing a black cap, but my friend tells me it was a white cap and that I must have been tired or blind or both.”

The second friend insisted that the man had been wearing a white cap. One of them must be mistaken, but it was not he.

“Both of you are right,” said Esu.

“How can that be?”

“I am the man who paid the visit over which you now quarrel, and here is the cap that caused the dissension.” Esu put his hand in his pocket and brought out the two-colored cap saying, “As you can see, one side is white and the other is black. You each saw one side and are therefore right about what you saw. Are you not the two friends who made vows of friendship? When you vowed to be friends always, to be faithful and true to each other, did you reckon with Esu? Do you know that he who does not put Esu first in all his doings is himself to blame if things misfire?”

And so it is said,

“Esu do not undo me,

Do not falsify the words of my mouth,

Do not misguide the movements of my feet.

You who translates yesterday's words

Into novel utterances,

Do not undo me,

I bear you sacrifices. (pp. 34-35)

The obvious moral of this story is to always account for possible contingencies or situational changes. The Esu and Coyote stories are representative examples of Trickster's border play.

But Trickster does not violate borders just for the sake of it. Rather, as both tales reveal, there is a cultural significance to those violations. In the tale about the Frog People, Coyote crosses the boundary of social propriety as well as appearing to cross a corporeal boundary in its appearance of excess consumption. Those boundaries are crossed with a greater purpose of eliminating the more oppressive and harmful boundary that the Frogs had both literally and figuratively created around the water. Through this process, Coyote creates another norm of equal access to resources that reflects its critical spirit. Thus, the tale of Coyote and the Frog People reveals that oppressive and repressive social boundaries should be subverted.

The Esu story, on the other hand, more directly suggests Trickster's role in creating boundaries. Painting a hat two different colors is a metaphorical representation of such creation. And the purpose of that 'trick' was not to violate a social norm but to remind the farmers in the story, and, importantly the recipients or audience of the tale, that some social norms must be upheld – lest one unleash Esu's wrath. Still, the Esu tale does more than that.

There is a reason that Esu should be considered when making vows of eternal friendship, or any universal vow for that matter. Social being is never certain and considering Esu reminds people of that fact. Furthermore, it is important that – like many other mythological Tricksters, Esu is credited with bringing language and therefore dialogue to the world. Even if the dialogue created in this tale begins with an argument that leads to a fistfight it ultimately ends in reconciliation and a new perspective on the kinds of contingencies that inevitably affect social relationships. In this way, Esu provides a reminder that social relationships are never perfect, that they must always be considered as works in progress. Social relationships require work and effort to remain productive and positive. When people forget about Esu, when they take their relationships for granted, when they vow eternal friendship without accounting for the instability of social life, they open themselves to subversion and can then blame no one else for their failures.

Playing in the boundaries of normativity is not inherently liberatory. The stumbling buffoon role can often be read as a negative case, an example of things not to do. For instance, several Coyote tales describe its failed attempts at shape shifting, at being something that it is not. As negative cases, these sorts of failures would seem to reinforce social boundaries by suggesting that people should remain true to their own nature. Such failure, though, can also be read positively through the spirit of Quixotic utopianism. No matter how often Coyote fails it continues to try. One critically utopian value in those efforts lies in encouraging people to retain hope in the face of failure, to keep striving for other conditions of being even if those conditions violate extant social standards.

Trickster is both an agent of normativity and one of subversion, depending on how its tales are read. For that reason Trickster is often misinterpreted as an ambivalent figure, one lacking a clear and concise valence. It would be more accurate, though, to replace the idea of ambivalence with that of polyvalence. Trickster does suggest clear values; they just vary depending on the perspective from which it is seen. Critical theory is similarly polyvalent; it assumes an arguable ethical standard as part of its telos. Much of the conversation about critical theory revolves around the establishment of that ethical standard and whether critical cultural work succeeds in achieving its goals, what its valence may actually be. Critical theory remains normative because it attempts to subvert social injustices or harmful norms and to establish in their place new and different norms that inspire resistance and change. Douglas Kellner (2007) explains that

Crossing borders inevitably pushes one to the boundaries and borders of class, gender, race, and the other constituents that differentiate individuals from each other and through which people construct their identities... Transdisciplinary cultural studies thus draw on a disparate range of discourses and fields to theorize the complexity and contradictions of the multiple effects of a vast range of cultural forms in our lives and, differentially, demonstrate how those forces serve as instruments of domination, but also offer resources for resistance and change.
(pp. 63-64)

So crossing borders entails both the violation and the creation of boundaries. As the central act in Trickster tales it suggests the primary archetypal element of Trickster performances. For a character to perform Trickster there must be some kind of border

work. Crossing borders also informs the connection between ambiguity and liminality, which should be taken together.

Ambiguous Liminality ⇔ Liminal Ambiguity

Grounded in the act of crossing borders, ambiguity and liminality are ontological states that inform, guide, and help to interpret Trickster performances. Ambiguity is important because social structures are not fixed. By even the smallest of measures, cultures and the people that constitute them are in perpetual motion. This does not necessitate a movement forward or the achievement of any ostensibly 'progressive' goals. Like Trickster, ambiguity and liminality are polyvalent.

Ambiguity does not necessitate absurdity, as De Beauvoir explains. "To declare that existence is absurd is to deny that it can ever be given a meaning; to say that it is ambiguous is to assert that its meaning is never fixed, that it must be constantly won" (1976, p. 129). Like Esu, ambiguity's polyvalence requires constant consideration and active attention. Meanwhile, Trickster's language games help win meaning by destabilizing rigid categorizations, making them open to "pleasurable misreadings" (Vizenor, 1993a, p. 5) and "creative understandings" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7). In other words, Trickster opens the space for meanings to remain unfixed. In this way, ambiguity offers a way "out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking...to divergent thinking" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 101). Habitual formations are tools of domineering hegemonies. They are the means by which ideologies become internalized and reified and therefore they are among the 'meanings' that Tricksters constantly interrupt.

Tricksters interrupt meaning by actively exploiting ambiguity, by playing language games, by speaking with the double voice of 'signifying' (Gates, 1980; Gates,

1988). This creates states of liminality, where meanings are continually in the process of change. Ambiguity also reveals a fundamental paradox of boundary play: crossing boundaries requires boundaries. It would be disingenuous to claim that crossing boundaries makes them somehow magically disappear or that Trickster's boundary play could only be read as a profoundly liberatory act. Trickster's boundary play is more complex than that. It is more reflective of archetype than it is of definition. One of Trickster's most important behaviors is to show that definitions are most meaningful in the places where they are the least stable. Categorical definitions reflect a positivistic approach to meaning. They depend on rigid claims to truth. Trickster's boundary play reminds us that such claims to truth can always be subverted, that things are not always as they seem, and that to truly understand something depends on knowing where its categorical definitions break down. Tricksters do this not only by being ambiguous themselves but also by showing that all things are ambiguous and uncertain, to varying degrees.

Trickster is an archetype because, as Vizenor (1993a) explains, its fundamental ambiguity denies categorical definition. As an archetype, the most productive discussions of its meaning and role in society center on variations in the archetypal standard, in violations and extensions of typological boundaries. As Bakhtin suggests,

In our enthusiasm for specification we have ignored questions of the interconnection and interdependence of various areas of culture; we have frequently forgotten that the boundaries of these areas are not absolute...the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries and not in

places where these areas have become enclosed in their own specificity (1986, p. 2).

Trickster penetrates boundaries to show that dialogical relationships exist between the ostensibly opposing sides. It exploits ambiguity not to destroy normativity but to reshape it. And it is the permeability of boundaries that allows Trickster to foster liminality.

Trickster is a liminal entity because it lives in the borderlands. Through its tales, it shows that cultures are in an ongoing process of ‘becoming’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) and that to consider cultures as static and rigid entities is to ignore Esu, thus inviting destabilization. Turner explains that “[l]iminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, and ceremonial” (2007, p. 89). While there are liminal stages that mark movement in and out of transitional periods, there is also an implicit stability of consciousness at either end. Trickster challenges this stability by showing that liminal states do not necessarily end. McKenzie notes that “the persistent use of this concept within the field [of performance studies] *has made liminality into something of a norm.*” He continues to state that “the valorization of liminal transgression or resistance itself becomes normative – at which point theorization of such a norm may become subversive” (2007, p. 27). Trickster reflects this paradox, as a native of borderlands it can be seen as an embodiment of the liminal norm and a possible agent of its own subversion. But this does not negate its populist spirit, its Quixotic utopianism. Rather, it makes maintaining the integrity of that spirit all the more important.

Ambiguity and liminality are discussed together here because they are mutually constitutive, circular, and inseparable – they are interdependent, interconnected, and

dialogical. Reinforcing this dialogical relationship, Turner states: “The attributes of liminality or liminal *personae* (‘threshold people’) are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (2007, p. 89). Tricksters are just such liminal personae and they are inherently playful.

Play is an important aspect of liminality that clearly articulates with Trickster figures. Play is an aspect of liminality because it can help mark transitions between states of being. Tricksters are playful characters. Their particular kind of play corroborates Bateson’s (2007) suggestion that play can carry both the meta-message “this is play” and the question “is this play?” (p. 144). Tricksters often appear to be playing because their actions are so out of the ordinary that they carry the implicit message of “this is play.” At the same time, though, Tricksters are not simply playing around, which raises the question “is this play?” The answer is complex. Their behavior is certainly playful, as shown by their total disregard for serious discourses. But their critical, populist spirit maintains an undertone of seriousness that denies a reduction to playing alone. In other words, even though Trickster’s play appears to lack seriousness, it still has the relatively serious effect of helping to transform social structures and hierarchies. According to Huizinga (1950), in “play there is something ‘at play’ which transcends to immediate needs of life and imparts meaning to the action. All play means something” (p. 1). Trickster adds meaning to the process of play, so even though it can appear as doing little more than playing around, that play still has significant meaning for social processes.

Like Trickster, liminality is also open to chance. Carlson (1996) describes chance as intrinsic to *liminoid* states or “sites where conventional structure is no longer honored

but, being more playful and more open to chance, they are also much more likely to be subversive, consciously or by accident introducing or exploring different structures that may develop into real alternatives to the status quo” (p. 13). Chance is as important to liminality as it is to Trickster’s playful manipulations. Indeed, Trickster’s manipulations of chance to create transformational spaces are among its most potentially subversive practices.

Performance studies is also inherently liminal. Conquergood (2002) explains: “The constitutive liminality of performance studies lies in its capacity to bridge segregated and differently valued knowledges, drawing together legitimated as well as subjugated modes of inquiry” (pp. 151-152). Performing Trickster himself, Conquergood exposes the boundaries between modes of inquiry, between theory and practice, so that they may be used to liberate thought from domineering forms of dialectical rationality. While liminal stages may be impermanent, while their outcomes may return stability to individual actors and communities (Bateson, 2007), this precludes neither the inevitable forthcoming liminal stage nor the overall motion of culture. The state of culture may then be seen as a consecutive string of ritual acts, a series of interlocking liminal stages, chains of consciousness infinitely renewed. If cultures are forever changing then they are inherently liminal. If the outcomes of cultural processes cannot be predetermined then they are at least partially ambiguous. And since cultures are ambiguously liminal, they are vulnerable to Trickster’s duplicity and shape shifting.

Duplicity and Shape Shifting

Duplicity is a particular kind of deception and one of Trickster’s more useful tools of disruption. Where deception suggests making others believe something that is not true,

the kind of duplicity employed by Trickster suggests a kind of double-dealing, of speaking with one voice and meaning with another. Such duplicity is tightly bound to Quixotic utopianism. So for our purposes, we will make a distinction between the practice of common deception and Trickster's practice of duplicity, which also helps to construct Trickster's archetypal foundation for critical analysis. While the tactics of common deception and Trickster duplicity are often similar, their intent is different. For instance, a lying Trickster is attempting to reconfigure a social order, to enact some kind of human freedom. It claims to be drinking water but is really digging out the dam. Lacking this critical intent, lying becomes mere deception. A company that lies about possible health implications of a product is only attempting to benefit itself and is therefore merely being deceptive, not duplicitous. Indeed, the word duplicity itself suggests a manifold voice with the potential to say one thing to some people while meaning something else to others. Such a double voice is not necessarily liberatory. But in conjunction with Trickster's critical spirit, it can become so. Outright deception, on the other hand, lacks that double voice. To complete the analogy, a malevolently lying corporation is only speaking for itself and its own greedy pursuits.

Trickster's unparalleled skill in duplicity allows it to interrupt naturalized and taken-for-granted cosmic orders. As Erdoes & Ortiz (1998) explain, "Coyote is the trickiest fellow alive. He is the master at cheating at all kinds of games" (p. 18). Moreover, in order to be an effective cheater one must know the rules of the game, the boundaries of play, inside and out. Meanwhile, if Foucault is to be believed, some of the most important games for establishing, maintaining, and promulgating systems of power

are embedded in discourse. Wittgenstein (1965) called those discursive structures ‘language games.’

What [Wittgenstein] means by this term is that each of the various categories of utterance can be defined in terms of rules specifying their properties and the uses to which they can be put – in exactly the same way as the game of chess is defined by a set of rules determining the properties of each of the pieces.

(Lyotard, 1984, p. 10)

Rules, then, are boundaries; they direct and define the moves that can be made in any given communicative, cultural, or social situation, even in language. If such rules are seen as a kind of power, then breaking them with critical intent is a kind of resistance. Furthermore, if being truthful is a commonly accepted rule of using language then being untruthful is also a kind of resistance.

Yet we cannot simply accept resistance as inherently liberatory. For resistance to take on that larger cultural function, it must exist as part of a larger discourse, a larger relational structure, in which it can actualize its radical potential. This is the reason for qualifying Trickster’s duplicity as different than simple deception. Since Trickster has a critical spirit, its use of duplicity should also have a resistant character. As a tactic for reconfiguring social relationships, duplicitous language games can perform a critical function. Signifying, for instance, is a kind of language game specifically designed to speak with a double voice and thus to perform the critical function of returning a measure of power to the subjugated. By hiding meaning in plain sight, signifying subverts dominant hegemonic systems. But signifying is only one of the duplicitous language games at Trickster’s disposal; another is outright lying.

Lying can be an effective means of reconfiguring power relationships. Coyote blatantly lies to the Frog people in order to liberate water for all. Such behavior does not destroy the boundary between truth and falsehood. Rather, Trickster duplicity reconfigures the use-value of truth and falsehood; the ‘truth’ of a socially constructed boundary becomes a tool of oppression while lying becomes a tool of critical praxis and human freedom.

In actual practice, people like The Yes Men lie in order to dismantle and expose domineering power relationships. One of The Yes Men’s most significant hoaxes, or what they call ‘hijinks,’⁸ was designed to expose the corporate malfeasance of Dow Chemical and its handling of the Bhopal chemical disaster in India. By creating an ambiguous URL, “dowethics.com,” that resembled an official website for Dow, The Yes Men were able to acquire an interview with the BBC that aired to 300 million people in 2004. In this broadcast, Yes Man Andy Bichlbaum took on the persona of corporate spokesperson Jude Finisterra. Once on the show, he explained that Dow was prepared to offer full restitution to victims of the 1984 disaster. This was a blatant lie. But it was one imbued with a liberatory intent, with Trickster’s critical spirit. Although Dow quickly disavowed the hoax, their stock was almost immediately devalued by billions of dollars, which it quickly recovered. More importantly, the hoax raised awareness of a disaster that was being quickly forgotten and exposed a fundamental flaw in contemporary global capitalism: that people’s lives were second to profit streams and stock values. In this way, The Yes Men’s lying becomes a case of Trickster duplicity. They also perform Trickster

⁸ <http://theyesmen.org/hijinks>

by taking on a different form, by shifting shape from performance artists to corporate representatives.

Shape shifting is one of Trickster's most established archetypal elements. Changing appearances is another form of duplicity; it conceals 'truth' behind a veneer of 'falsehood.' Still, shape shifting is important enough on its own to warrant discussion and treatment as a distinct archetypal element. Many Trickster tales involve some kind of shape shifting. Indeed, it is one of the most common means for Trickster figures to reconfigure extant orders. Shape shifting is oriented around appearances. While full corporeal transformations are common in Trickster tales, equally important is its ability to manipulate perception in smaller ways. For instance, Esu's two-colored cap can be considered as a kind of shape shifting. Even though Esu did not actually change form, he presented himself in two different ways to two different people. He consciously manipulated their perceptions in order to make a broader point.

Trickster traffics in shifting perceptions. Its ultimate end of lifting repressive social norms is contingent entirely on perception. One of the first steps in recreating the social world is to change how it is perceived. Only when the perception of a norm is reconfigured from necessary to unnecessary, from a tool of regulation to one of oppression, from a boundary that facilitates social being to one that restricts agency and freedom, does it become a candidate for change. Thus, altering perception is a crucial tactic of resistance. The most obvious means of altering perceptions is to change form or the perception of form. It is also important to keep in mind that Trickster transformations are not only aimed at the external world. Transformative efforts often have the ironic

effect of forcing Tricksters to reconsider their own being in the world, their own functionality, and even their own selves.

Once Coyote was walking through the forest and saw Rabbit juggling its eyeballs. It was impressed and convinced Rabbit to teach it the trick. Rabbit did so with the qualification that Coyote not do it more than four times a day. But Coyote was so taken with its new ability that it juggled them a fifth time, at which point the eyeballs suspended themselves out of reach. It was then forced to borrow an eyeball from a mouse and another from a moose, resulting in a wildly mismatched and ill-fitting pair of eyes. Upon returning home, Coyote's wife simply concludes that looking stupid is a just punishment for showing off (Erdoes and Ortiz, 1987). This tale reveals the kind of corporeal humor often shown in Trickster tales but it also has a more important and complex critical function. Primarily, it shows Trickster's capacity for exceeding its own boundaries, for pulling its eyeballs out of its head and juggling them for fun. Such a transformation can be read in two different, although not necessarily contradicting, ways.

The failure can be read as a message for Coyote to stay in its place, that exceeding its corporeal form only results in catastrophe. This reading reinforces the potentially normative nature of Trickster tales, the establishment of behavioral norms being shown in Coyote's inability to follow Rabbit's directions. Reading in the spirit of Quixotic utopianism suggests a different kind of border play. With this spirit, Coyote refuses to abide by the boundaries established for him, choosing instead to explore in its own way the borders of being. This is a profoundly liberating reading. It does not necessarily contradict the former one because it does not deny that there are boundaries to being. Rather, it takes those boundaries as mere suggestions and not definitive rules. Despite

Coyote's failure and its subsequent humiliation it continues to be Coyote, meaning that it will continue attempting to exceed social norms regardless of the potential consequences.

Shape shifting allows Trickster to undermine normative social power based on stable identities. Success is less important than effort here. Appropriately, such efforts can take endless forms. Coyote juggles its eyeballs. The Yes Men shift shapes by pretending to be people that they are not. Esu exploits the ambiguity of a dual colored cap. While Esu does not literally change shape, he does intentionally create the conditions for his appearance to be misinterpreted. Creating the condition for misinterpretation is a more complex form of shape shifting that is intrinsically related to Trickster duplicity. Misperceptions are often at the root of Trickster's humor.

Humor

Not all Trickster tales are outright knee-slapping funny, at least in the contemporary sense of the term. Still, there is an element of humor that runs beneath them that remains important to their efficacy as tools of subversion. This is for two reasons. First, humor has the ability to disarm even the most serious situations. John Fire Lame Deer summarizes this power nicely. Erdoes and Ortiz quote him as saying that "Coyote, Iktomi, and all their kind are sacred. A people that have so much to weep about as we Indians also need their laughter to survive" (1987, pp. xxii-xxiii). Vizenor (1993a) reinforces this idea by suggesting that "[s]erious attention to cultural hyperrealities is an invitation to trickster discourse, an imaginative liberation in comic narratives... In trickster discourse the trickster is a comic trope, a chance separation in a narrative" (p. 9). In other words, the mere existence of serious attention to social realities is an open invitation, a perfect chance, for subversive comedy.

Second, the humor in Trickster tales often comes at the expense of domineering power structures. When it is not humiliating authority figures, Trickster is often comically debasing itself. Consciously performing the Trickster role during his struggle with cancer, Thomas Frentz (2008) uses humor to disarm a stoically serious oncologist named Thaddeus. He refers to an impending catheter as a ‘bio-port’ akin to those in the 1999 David Cronenberg film *eXistenZ*. Even though Thaddeus is not familiar with the film and does not appear to be amused, he writes “install bio-port” on the medical chart. “I did it!” Frentz exclaims. “I induced Thaddeus out of his professional world and into some mega-bizarre movie context with a weirder-than-weird professor, and he actually played along, at least a little. It was a trickster moment I was not about to forget” (p. 98). In this subtle and clever interaction Frentz performs Trickster for Thaddeus. In the process, he reconfigures his relationship with the medical establishment, reclaims a modicum of power in a seemingly powerless situation, and even helps to engender a minor transformation in his otherwise authoritarian oncologist.

Humor offers one of the clearest connections between Trickster and Bakhtin’s dialogics. As the tales reveal and the Frentz example shows, Trickster’s humor is often oriented around bodies and bodily functions. This is a direct reflection of what Bakhtin (1984) calls grotesque realism. For Bakhtin, grotesque realism is a subversive sort of comedy that calls attention to taboo body parts, or the ‘lower bodily strata’ – including social bodies. Focusing on excretory and sexual functions highlights the social construction of taboo subjects. Frank discussions of those themes may be grotesque but they are not vulgar. They do not strive to be needlessly gross or offensive. But they do function to restructure assumed senses of propriety. This is a crucial act because propriety

and normativity are so closely linked. It could even be said that propriety is a hidden pillar of normativity.

Changing how people think of propriety or how they conceive of what is appropriate or inappropriate in any given context has the potential to undermine the very foundations of repressive normativity. This is another way that Trickster performs both culture hero and stumbling buffoon. To summarize thus far, border crossing is Trickster's fundamental act. Border crossing engenders the ontologies of ambiguity and liminality. From them arise the particular Trickster tactics of duplicity, shape shifting, and humor. Taken together, these archetypal characteristics inform Trickster's social roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon.

Culture-Hero ⇔ Stumbling buffoon

Overlooking the more primary role of border-crosser, Joseph Campbell explains that the "ambiguous, curiously fascinating figure of the trickster appears to have been the chief mythological character of the Paleolithic world of story. A fool, and a cruel, lecherous cheat, an epitome of the principle of disorder, he is nevertheless the culture-bringer" (1969, p. 272). Campbell refers to the culture hero role as culture-bringer and his assertions of disorder epitome, fool, cruel and lecherous cheat suggest stumbling buffoon. I have chosen to discuss these two roles together because they are intrinsically related. If Trickster's cultural heroism is a result of its stumbling buffoonery then the twin roles cannot be separated.

Trickster is culture hero because it provides the tools for life. It is not a 'creator' of the world. Trickster manipulates a world that already exists. It rids the world of monsters, it brings water and fire, death and tobacco, it colors the birds and defecates

solid ground in a sea of liquid nothing. Trickster is a corrective for ‘creators’ and other domineering authoritarian figures claiming sole access to truth, knowledge, and power. According to Lewis Hyde, “[w]hether they bring death into the world, steal fire, or embarrass a modest creator, in their first deeds tricksters upset the old cosmos and create (or reveal) the lines of demarcation that shape the new one, this world” (p. 281). ‘This world’ is *our* world. It is the one that we live in now, one that is shaped and guided by Trickster’s continuing story, even if that story is hidden beneath layers of socially constructed normativity and ideological distortion. As subjects of embedded western values we are not supposed to value the Trickster role or its archetypal characteristics: we are conditioned to value categorical definition over ambiguity; to valorize stasis and stability over liminal transitions; to always tell the truth and never to lie; to be who we are supposed to be and never to extend our ontological restrictions; to laugh only at the officially sanctioned jokes. Such a restrictive climate may be a direct result of an entrenched western morality that begs to be reconfigured.

Consider fire. In both the Ancient Greek and Native American traditions fire was a tool kept from the people by greedy gods. It was Prometheus in the Ancient Greek mythologies that shaped humanity from clay and stole fire. An act for which the titan was condemned to having his liver forever plucked out by vultures. Despite the value of fire to humanity, Prometheus is eternally punished. A surface moral of the Prometheus story is to be obedient to the gods, to stay in one’s place, to sublimate one’s self to external orders. Only when Prometheus is read as a Trickster does his tale suggest either liberatory resistance or Quixotic utopianism. Imposing Trickster’s critical spirit on the

Prometheus myth is not false appropriation. It is a necessary rereading that exceeds established and needlessly restrictive moral boundaries.

Like Prometheus, Coyote is also credited with creating humanity and stealing fire from the gods. The latter tale is illustrative here. Coyote decides that people also deserve to use the fire being hoarded by Thunder. It then cheats Thunder at a game of dice and tricks him into breaking the rock of fire into pieces that the people could collect and use (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1998). The theft of fire is exemplary of Trickster's cunning in providing tools for survival in a hostile environment and it is not insignificant that Coyote also liberates water from a different set of selfish and greedy hoarders. One of the most significant differences between the Prometheus and Coyote myths is that only Prometheus is gruesomely punished. The Greek story, one of the many that form the basis and inform the subsequent development of western thought, attempts to foreclose any further Trickster behavior while the Native American tale implicitly encourages more. Even though different moral structures are revealed through these two similar stories, we can reconcile their meanings if we apply the Trickster archetype and interpret both Coyote and Prometheus as culture heroes. Maintaining that framework also allows us to interpret both as stumbling buffoons since vultures devour Prometheus' liver for eternity and Coyote achieves his victory through duplicity or cheating.

So Trickster is also stumbling buffoon. This role is revealed in the numerous tales wherein it falls victim to its own pranks, its own selfishness, vanity, and greed. Even as its own victim, though, Trickster still manages to reshape the world. One illustrative tale tells how Coyote became brown. Initially, it was bright green and jealous of Bluebird's bright plumage. Bluebird reveals the secret to its color as a swim in the water. Coyote

follows Bluebird's instructions and upon emerging is so taken with its new color that it trips and becomes covered in dust, which is why it is now the color of dirt (Erdoes & Ortiz, 1984). This sort of comic misadventure is often the vehicle by which Trickster brings the tools of culture.

Trickster can be culture-hero *because* it is stumbling buffoon. The two roles are not exclusive or contradictory, negating or transcendent. Instead, they are mutually constitutive. This relationship calls into question the dualistic nature of the culture hero / selfish buffoon dichotomy. It would seem that such a dichotomy is more an ascription of a westernized viewpoint than it is a revelation of dualism in Trickster's persona. This is to say that the culture hero / stumbling buffoon dichotomy that grounds many discussions of Trickster is ultimately false; the roles are not dialectical or oppositional, they are dialogical and they speak to each other. They do not counteract, nullify, or transcend themselves as a dialectical framework would demand. Rather, they are interrelated elements of a complicated persona that more nearly resembles the inherent disorder of social being/s, a disorder that Tricksters like Q from *Star Trek* foment for the express purpose of reshaping the universe, of making the world more habitable.

Critical Trickster Archetype

I have identified each of the above characteristics as elements of a critical Trickster archetype. To reiterate, they are the fundamental behavior of border crossing; the ontological states of ambiguity and liminality; the particular tactics of duplicity, humor, and shape shifting; and the twin roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon (see Figure 1). I am figuring this variant of the Trickster archetype as *critical* to highlight its potential for social liberation as well as its potential as an analytical tool. Even though it

is often interpreted as such, Trickster does not demand a critical reading in and of itself. This is one of the reasons that Trickster is best seen as an archetype. Archetypes do not exist in ‘reality.’ They are patterns of behavior that are present to varying degrees in discursive artifacts. As Jung (1969) suggests, their ‘color’ is determined by the cultural (or personal) context in which they appear. Variation and deviation from archetypal patterns allows for greater understanding of cultural contexts. The figuration of archetype used here is unique because it forms the structure of an analytical process. When read in the spirit of Quixotic utopianism and with an eye toward the manipulation of human relationships, Trickster reveals an underlying critical potential that can be found in real-world practices like radical performance art and even mass media. These different expressions of the Trickster archetype highlight potential strategies of resistance to pathological normativity that may otherwise remain obscured.

Before engaging the manifold connections between Trickster and performance art, though, I must first codify and exemplify the critical Trickster archetype, and its analytical process, through a consistent and accessible example. Then I will outline the dialogical method to be used for engaging, exploring, and explaining those connections.

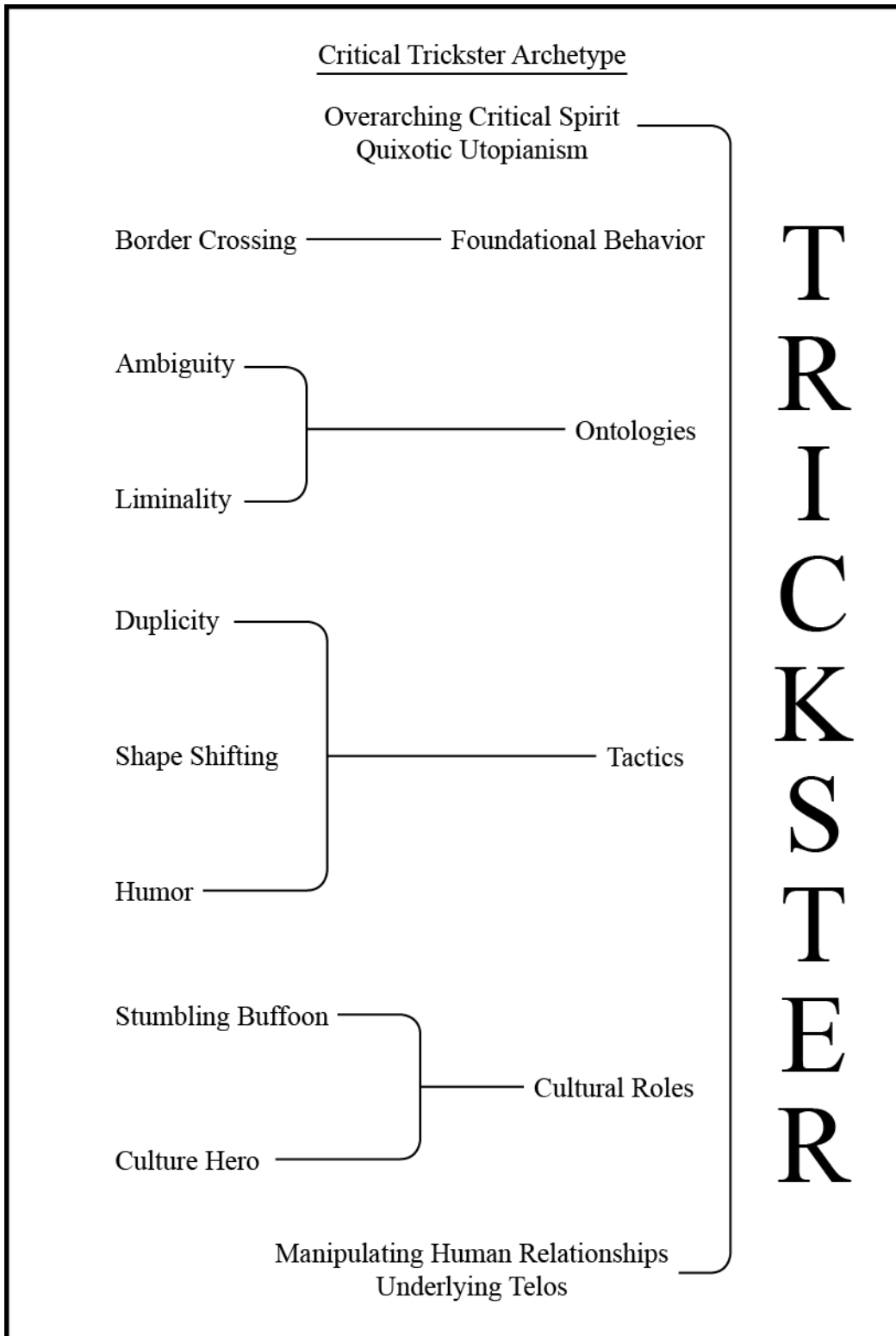


Figure 1. Critical Trickster Archetype

Chapter 3

STAR TREK: A MASS MEDIATED TRICKSTER

Q

Before explaining how Q fits the Trickster role, it is necessary to outline his involvement in the contemporary *Star Trek* franchise. Q only appears in eight episodes of *The Next Generation (TNG)*, one episode of *Deep Space 9 (DS9)*, and three episodes of *Voyager*. While the character takes a smaller role in the latter two series, he is a driving force behind *TNG*. Q is a member of something called The Continuum; a place beyond the bounds of space and time where other members, also called Q, spend eternity. In the latter two series, Q's role turns away from developing humanity and toward changes in The Continuum itself. While it would be interesting to include those developments, this brief discussion will suffice with *TNG* alone. It is enough to say here that Q's fascination with humanity begins to change his own viewpoint and he becomes a revolutionary, facilitating a transformation in The Continuum that brings them more human qualities. The following descriptions of Q's interactions with the crew of The Enterprise will be subsequently used to illuminate how Q performs Trickster. Page numbers cited refer to the scripts as published in *The Star Trek Scriptbooks. Volume 1: The Q Chronicles* (1998). This book contains the collected scripts of each episode in which Q appears. In the case of discrepancies between the published script and the dialogue as aired, I have used the latter but maintained the cited page number.

The pilot episode of *TNG* is titled "Encounter at Farpoint." It begins with Q, played by John De Lancie, who appears in human form but is an omniscient and omnipotent being with nearly total control over space, time and matter, telling Captain

Picard, played by Patrick Stewart, and his crew that they have penetrated too far into the galaxy and that they must return to their own space or face destruction. Following a half-hearted suggestion from the captain, Q puts the crew on trial for the crimes of humanity, forcing them to prove that they are not “a dangerous, savage, child race” (p. 10) before allowing them to continue on their journey. Picard admits that humanity’s past is painted with blood and senseless brutality but insists that the race has grown beyond such violence. Q initiates a test by releasing them to their destination, Farpoint Station, where they are to pick up First Officer Commander William Riker, played by Jonathan Frakes.

Picard and the Enterprise crew discover that the space station is actually an enormous space alien with the ability to manifest humanoid desires. The planet’s citizens had actually trapped the alien and kept it prisoner to profit from its abilities. When the alien’s mate arrives to destroy its captors, Picard finds a way to release the captive, saving the lives of everyone involved. The aliens lovingly rejoin, thank the crew in a grand display of late eighties pastel light, and leave into space. Following this clever act of selfless kindness, Q determines that Picard may be right and that humanity might not pose the universal threat that he and The Continuum had first thought. Q gives them another chance and sends the Enterprise on its way.

At the beginning of episode 11, titled “Hide and Q,” Q’s disembodied voice appears on the bridge. He says: Humans, I thought you would have scampered back to your own little star system...We of the Q have studied our recent contact with you and are impressed. We have much to discuss, including, perhaps, the realization of your most impossible dreams” (p. 128). This episode revolves around Q’s offer of omnipotence to Commander Riker. Giving Riker the opportunity to join The Continuum presents the Q

with a chance to get more familiar with humanity and its ethics of compassion, something that for all their power they still seem to lack. Riker is given the power of Q and is tempted to keep it. His decision hinges on his ability to share gifts with his crewmates and make them happy. Only one example is necessary here. Riker offers Lieutenant Data, an android played by Brent Spiner, the chance to be human. Data, who wants nothing more than to be human, denies the gift on the grounds that he “never wanted to compound one illusion with another. It might seem real to Q, even you [Riker], but it would not be so to me” (p. 171). In these moments Riker realizes that even as an omnipotent being, one with all the power of the universe at his fingertips, he cannot force his companions to be happy. Riker then denies the power of the Q and accepts his previous capacities as a mere human.

In episode 42, titled “Q Who?” Q introduces humanity to something completely its opposite: the Borg. Appearing on the Enterprise, his offer to Riker having failed, Q offers to join the crew. He claims to have been tossed out of The Continuum for violating an earlier promise to leave the Enterprise alone. He is now wandering aimlessly throughout the universe, a fate of which Q is dreadfully bored. Picard declines Q, stating that “we don’t trust you.” Q becomes annoyed and offers a warning: “Oh, you may not trust me, but you do need me. You’re not prepared for what awaits you” (p. 201). After more arguments, Q hurls the Enterprise into deep space where they encounter the Borg and are nearly destroyed.

The Borg are an important metaphor here. They are a technologically advanced ‘collective’ of hybrid cyborgs.⁹ The Borg are a threat to humanity because they squash all individuality beneath their collective mind and hive mentality. At the end of the episode, the Enterprise is nearly destroyed and has little chance of escape. Picard admits his arrogance to Q and pleads with him to return the Enterprise to its own space. Q obliges, but not without interjection. “That was a difficult admission,” he says. “Another man would be humiliated to say those words. Another man would die before asking for help.” Picard responds angrily: “I understand what you have done here Q but the lesson could have been learned without the loss of eighteen members of my crew.” Q parts with these words: “If you can’t take a little bloody nose maybe you had better go back home and crawl under your bed. It’s not safe out here. It’s wondrous, with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross, but it is not for the timid” (pp. 233-234). This episode is also important because it introduces humanity to the Borg, not just their antagonists but their total antithesis. Another character, Guinan, played by Whoopi Goldberg, tells Picard that the Borg will be coming. Picard replies with the final words of the episode: “Q might have done the right thing for the wrong reasons...perhaps we needed a kick in our complacency to get us ready for what’s ahead” (p. 235).

In episode 61, titled “Deja Q,” Q appears on the bridge of the Enterprise naked and fully human. This episode revolves around Q having been stripped of his powers for further violating his promise to leave the Enterprise alone. His hurling of the Enterprise into deep space and into contact with the Borg was his undoing. Given the choice of

⁹ This vision of cyborg hybridity is quite the opposite of what Donna Haraway describes in her *Manifesto For Cyborgs* (2008).

mortal forms to take, Q chose life as a human on the Enterprise. The important part of this episode is that Q is being pursued by a cosmic entity that he had previously wronged somehow. The entity threatens the ship and its crew in its effort to exact revenge on Q. So Q leaves the ship to sacrifice himself. It is that act of compassion that allows him to enter back into The Continuum and to regain his powers. As Q departs from this episode, he makes good on a promise that Commander Riker could not keep when he had the power of Q himself. Q gives Data the gift of laughter. As the episode closes, Data begins laughing hysterically, something that he had always wanted to do, before Geordie Laforge, played by Levar Burton, interrupts him to ask “what are you laughing at?” Data stops laughing and replies, “I do not know. But it was a wonderful... *feeling*” (p. 300).

Q’s connection with corporeality and love is presented in episode 94, “Qpid.” In this episode Q wants to repay Picard for helping him regain his status and powers as a Q. Meanwhile, Picard is struggling with a love interest named Vash (pronounced Vāsh), played by Jennifer Hetrick, that deals in possibly stolen grey and black market archaeological artifacts. Picard rebuffs Vash on the grounds that her morality is not up to his standards, that his position as a starship captain precludes a relationship, and, implicitly, that he has feelings which he cannot admit for the ship’s medical doctor, Beverly Crusher, played by Gates McFadden. Regardless, Q takes it as his mission to unite the two. He transports the Enterprise’s bridge crew to Sherwood Forest where they are to play out the Robin Hood legend. Vash becomes Maid Marian, Picard becomes Robin Hood, and the other members of the crew take on the remaining roles. Q’s plan is to let the story play out and for the two to become more deeply involved.

Of course it does not work out that way. Q has allowed the story a life of its own, which means that he cannot control its outcome and that life and death in the story are as real as they are anywhere else. Furthermore, Vash's powerful sense of self-interest leads her to accept Sir Guy's proposal of marriage. She even causes the captain's capture. As the pair is about to be executed they are saved by rest of the bridge crew. Q tells Picard: "My compliments, Captain. I doubt Robin Hood himself could have done better." Q explains that his game revealed how much Picard really cared for Vash to have risked the lives of his crew, claiming, "my debt to you is paid Picard, if you have learned how weak and vulnerable you really are, if you can finally see how 'love' brought out the worst in you." Vash interjects, "nonsense, you're absolutely wrong. It brought out the best in him. His nobility, courage, self-sacrifice. His tenderness" (p. 366). At this Q transports Picard back to the Enterprise, alone. Vash appears moments later to wish Picard farewell. But she is not merely leaving the ship. She is leaving with Q to gallivant about the universe. Picard makes Q promise that Vash will not be harmed and absolves Q of his debt. To be glib, Q stole Picard's girlfriend.

Episode 132, "True Q" features a young woman, Amanda, played by Olivia d'Abo, who is sent to the Enterprise as a medical intern. As the episode begins we learn that she has developed the power of Q. She was the ostensibly human offspring of two members of The Continuum that had vowed to refrain from using their powers in order to live 'human' lives. They bore a child but were killed by The Continuum because they could not uphold their promise to live powerless. There is a question as to whether Amanda is human or Q and Q has been assigned to determine whether the child should be put to death or absorbed into The Continuum. Either way she cannot be allowed to let her

powers reign unchecked and free. Interestingly, it is exactly this spirit of freedom that makes Q such a tricky character himself. Amanda is given a choice. She can be stripped of her power and become fully human or she can return to The Continuum where she may join the other Q. At first she chooses the former. But as a series of events occur in which she feels the need to use her power in order to help and save people, she decides to accept Q's offer to join The Continuum.

Q's games of choice and chance reach their zenith in episode 141, "Tapestry," his last episode before the series finale. In this episode Picard is killed by an energy discharge that disrupts his artificial heart. He arrives in a room of white light. Q appears dressed in vaguely God-like white and gold robes and offers Picard another chance at life. As a brash young officer, Picard had received the artificial heart after being stabbed in a senseless bar fight with an aggressive alien. A real heart would have been able to withstand the energy blast that would eventually kill him. Q's offer is to transport Picard back to just before the stabbing incident. If Picard can avoid being stabbed, Q will return him to the present still alive and with a real heart. Picard accepts the offer and spends the episode disavowing his youthful arrogance, alienating his friends, and avoiding the blade. Q returns Picard to the present. But there is a problem. The Picard that did not get stabbed was not a starship captain but a low ranking science officer. His lack of arrogance, playfulness, and guts led to a life in which he always took the safe route. Never taking any chances with anything, Picard was "never noticed by anyone" (p. 498).

Picard is returned to the Enterprise as a subordinate to his officers. He becomes frustrated and exclaims: "Are you having a good laugh now, Q? Does it amuse you to think of me living out the rest of my life as a dreary man in a tedious job?" (p. 496).

Picard appears again in the white room. Q replies: "I gave you something most mortals never experience, a second chance at life. And now all you can do is complain?" Picard explains: "I can't live out my life as that person. That man is bereft of passion and imagination. That's not who I am." Q responds: "Au contraire. He's the person you wanted to be, one who was less arrogant and undisciplined as a youth. One who was less like me." Picard realizes that Q is right: "You gave me the chance to change and I took that opportunity. But I freely admit that it was a mistake." Q glares at Picard, "are you asking for something, Jean-Luc?" Picard answers, "Yes. Give me a chance to put things back to they way they were before." Q replies: "Before, you died in sickbay. Is that what you want?" Picard responds, "I would rather die as the man I was than live the life I just saw" (pp. 497-498). Q gives the captain yet a third chance and transports him back to the past, just as the bar fight was about to break out. He steps in to protect a friend and is stabbed through the chest. He falls to his knees and laughs. Back in the present and still alive, Picard survives on the operating table. In explaining his experience to Riker, he mentions that if indeed it was Q that had set the events in motion that allowed him to continue living as the man he is, then he owes "him a debt of gratitude" (p. 501).

In the final episode of the series, Captain Picard becomes 'unstuck' in time – similar to Billy Pilgrim in Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse 5* (1999). Picard bounces back and forth between the present, a past that is hours before embarking for Farpoint Station, and a future where he is infirm and frail. Through the episode, it is revealed that Captain Picard had unwittingly set into motion a series of events that resulted in the destruction of humanity in an 'anti-time' explosion that ran backward from the future to the past. Left unchecked, this anti-time anomaly would have prevented humanity from

ever taking hold on Earth, thus altering the course of history. Humanity would have never even existed. Picard comes to discover that it is Q who facilitates his movement through the three different time periods, giving Picard the chance to save humanity although, importantly, not quite doing it for him. Rather, Q creates the conditions for Picard to save humanity after having already created the condition for its destruction.

In their last exchange, Picard asks Q why he has all but saved humanity himself. Q explains that the anti-time explosion was a “directive from The Continuum” (p. 834); yet another test to see if humanity had the ability to see beyond its confines of thought and reason, to become something more. Appearing back in the same courtroom where Q initially put the Enterprise crew on trial, Picard states: “I sincerely hope this is the last time I’ll find myself here.” To which Q replies: “You just don’t get it, do you, Jean-Luc. The trial never ends. We wanted to see if you had the ability to expand your mind and horizons and for one brief moment, you did.” Picard notes: “When I realized the paradox.” Q continues: “Exactly. For that one fraction of a second, you were open to options you’d never considered. That’s the exploration that awaits you, not mapping stars and studying nebulae but charting the unknowable possibilities of existence.” Q leaves Picard with these flourishing words of encouragement: “See you...out there” (p. 835).

This final scene of *TNG* reveals that the test of humanity initiated at the beginning of the series was inconclusive. The entire story arc of the series, then, can be seen as a compendium of tests designed to evaluate how well humanity may have progressed beyond its violent and brutish beginnings. Seen this way, it is evident that Q and his Continuum companions are the driving force behind humanity’s exploration of the

universe. Moreover, Q initiates a period of human growth, facilitating its potential transition from corporeal beings to something much more, something more like the Q.

The other two series in the *Star Trek* franchise, *Deep Space 9* and *Voyager*, also have episodes featuring Q. He appears in a single episode of *DS9* towards the beginning of the series. In this episode, appropriately titled “Q-Less,” Commander Sisko and Q get into a fistfight. Sisko punches Q in the face. Q exclaims, “Picard never did that!” and leaves, never to return in the series. This suggests that the problems presented in *DS9* are not those of human exploration, which is reinforced by the fact that it is about a relatively static space station. Q’s three appearances in *Voyager* are more significant. In those episodes, the focus is on his role in the Q Continuum. While it would be interesting to explore the development of his role in further depth, only in *TNG* is he consequential to the story arc of the series and to the development of humanity itself. Thus, we will have to be content to focus our attention there – for the time being. Having described Q’s actions in *TNG*, it remains to explain them in terms of the critical Trickster archetype.

Qritical TriQster ArQetype

Having described Q’s character and behavior in *Star Trek: TNG*, the question remains: how does Q perform Trickster? Answering this question requires connecting the critical Trickster archetype with Q’s behavior. To reiterate, these archetypal characteristics are: border crossing, ambiguity, liminality, duplicity, shape shifting, humor, stumbling buffoon, and culture-hero. It also requires considering how each of those elements operate as relational functions and the degree to which Q reflects the spirit of Quixotic utopianism.

Methodically connecting Q to the Trickster archetype required watching each applicable program. The first time through the series, conducted for entertainment as opposed to research purposes, was a period of realizing that Q did indeed perform Trickster. Then I watched the applicable episodes again with closer attention to Q's Trickster characteristics. Then I watched the episodes again and wrote down the dialogue and behavior that suggested Q's potential as a Trickster figure. Luckily, during my last (but not final) run through the Q episodes, I was able to watch while reading the scripts as published in *The Star Trek Scriptbooks. Book One: The Q Chronicles* (1998). This book contains the scripts for each of the episodes in which Q appears.

Although the published script and the dialogue that made it to air were not always identical, the differences were insubstantial. There were also a small number of scenes in the script book that were omitted from the final broadcasts. Less frequently the scene order was changed. While these differences were also insubstantial, I should note that the descriptions above, which inform the discussion below, are based on the program as broadcast. I made margin notes in the script book about potential Trickster behavior during this final viewing. Each note was intended to mark a point of action or dialogue in which Q reflected an element of the Trickster archetype. I simultaneously corrected several dialogue errors in the script book. During this last viewing, I reached what I considered to be a saturation point with my 'data.' At this point I felt that I had identified enough written raw material between my initial notes and the margin notes in the script book to form a comprehensive analysis. It should also be noted that dialogue in the following discussion is quoted directly from the script book except where I made corrections to reflect the show as broadcast, in which case the corrected dialogue is used.

Page number citations are provided in reference to the script book. I will, however, maintain clarity as to which episode is being discussed. While the following discussion is generally organized according to Trickster's archetypal process, it begins by discussing Q's connections with Quixotic utopianism. These underlying ideas will be used as a references point against which each Trickster characteristic will be discussed.

Spirit Of Q

Like other members of The Continuum, Q is a seemingly eternal and omnipotent being. Still, the Q that we come to know through *TNG* is notably different than his counterparts, also named Q. So it is best to start this discussion of Q's Trickster performance by comparing him to the other Q. We learn in the first double episode, "Encounter at Farpoint," that Q is not acting entirely of his own volition. He was directed by The Continuum to challenge humanity, specifically, to prevent the crew of The Enterprise from exploring space beyond an arbitrary boundary. But it is Q's playful nature that compels him to have a 'game' in which Picard and three other members of the bridge crew, Data, Counselor Troi and security officer Tasha Yar, stand trial for the crimes of humanity. Indeed, it was Picard himself who suggested the idea of a trial, albeit indirectly. During their first meeting, shortly after Q indicts humanity for being a "dangerous, savage child-race" (p. 10), Picard claims that "the most dangerous 'same old story' is the one we're meeting now! Those who go on misinformation, half-information, *self-righteous* life-forms who are eager to *not* to learn but to *prosecute*, to *judge* anything they don't understand or can't tolerate." To which Q replies, "What an interesting idea. *Prosecute* and *judge*." (pp. 11-12). Shortly after this exchange, Picard and his

crewmembers are transported to the kangaroo courtroom and the trial is held. In so doing, Q gives Picard exactly what he suggested.

Through this exchange, our first introduction to Q, we see the character in contrast to The Continuum. Where he had been told simply to stop the expansion of humanity, he invents a playful but no less potentially deadly game that tests a number of human qualities such as inventiveness, open-mindedness, and most importantly for these purposes – compassion. For it is the lack of compassion that Q uses as evidence for the savage brutality of the human race and the potential danger it poses for the rest of the universe. Of course Picard and his crew pass Q's test by realizing that Farpoint station was actually a very powerful but wounded life form and then providing the assistance it needed to claim its freedom from its captors. This exhibits inventive thinking as well as a sense of compassion that is supposed to show how far humanity has come from its brutally aggressive past. As a result, Q fails in his directive. He does not prevent the expansion of humanity, as he was supposed to, but rather loses his wager and is defeated in trial. He departs saying, "I do not promise never to appear again" (p. 116). The trial of humanity raises an important point that should be briefly addressed before continuing.

Picard and the Enterprise crew function in this first episode and the remainder of the series as a metonym for the whole of humanity. Picard and his crew are the ones being tested but the subject of judgment is humanity as a whole. Clearly it is problematic to use a straight white male as the primary symbol of humanity's development, evolution, and enlightenment. The show's producers compensate for this a little by including two women in the trial group. But it is also significant that one of those two women, Counselor Troi, is only half human, the other half being a telepathic species called

Betazoid. Like Picard, security officer Tahsa Yar is a model Anglo, thin, aquiline, blond, and blue-eyed. The fourth member of the crew in the courtroom, Data, is not human at all but an android. From the standpoint of a critical media scholar, this kind of representational politics would suggest an untenable omission that denies the validity of subject positions beyond straight white people.

By using Picard as the primary, although not the only, metonym for humanity *TNG* valorizes that subject position, the straight white (European) male, over others. Since representational politics are not the subject of this discussion, though, it is enough to have noted that Picard's metonymic function is critically problematic and deserves further attention in another forum. Lastly, while it could be said that the choice of a straight white (American) male to portray Q is equally problematic, we should also recall that Q only appears as such because that is the most intelligible form available. He even states in a later episode that if he had known to what lengths Picard would go to protect a woman that he should have appeared in a female form. While that raises a number of other critical problems, for Q arbitrary gender boundaries are irrelevant.

In this first episode we learn that Q does not always behave according to the standards set by his peers in *The Continuum*. This becomes important in his second and third appearances when he promises to leave humanity alone and after failing to do so is ejected from *The Continuum* before taking shelter on *The Enterprise*. Q does not conform to human standards of behavior either. Q's relational interactions with Picard and *The Enterprise* establish his role as a Trickster. It is not enough for a character to exhibit the archetypal characteristics of performing Trickster. Those actions are meaningless without the critical spirit and the end result of reconfiguring relationships. Trickster is, at root, a

relational character. Indeed, without other people to play its particular ‘tricks’ on, the role becomes meaningless. Thus, in order for Q to perform Trickster, he must perform at least some of the archetypal characteristics while maintaining the spirit of Quixotic utopianism and manipulating human relationships for the better.

On the surface, Q does not appear to be either Quixotic or utopian. Instead, it seems as if he is merely toying with humanity. In the ‘making of’ program that follows the end of the series, Jonathan Frakes (Commander Riker) goes so far as to call Q a villain. But, like most other Trickster performances, we must look below the surface to uncover his critical telos. We learn in his second appearance that Q and The Continuum have taken interest in humanity not because of its potential for savage brutality but because its inquisitive curiosity and intrepid fearlessness reveal a potential to be much more.

The trial in the first episode was merely a ruse to determine humanity’s capabilities. Were Q and The Continuum truly intent on preventing Picard and The Enterprise from venturing further into space, they surely could have stopped them without any fuss. They are, after all, omnipotent. Instead, Q initiates a game in which humanity must show its capacity for compassion, mental expansion, and development. It is significant that Q does not create this condition. Rather, he simply allows an existing chain of events to continue playing out. The ship was already on its way to Farpoint station when Q intervened. His only real interference was turning the mission into a larger and more meaningful challenge. Q’s utopianism is not applicable to himself but to humanity. (This utopian spirit does, though, become applicable to The Continuum in the Voyager episodes when Q becomes a radical and a revolutionary.) In our first encounter

with him he is not trying to improve his own conditions, which can be safely assumed to be ideal. Rather, Q is interested in the progress of humanity, which becomes clearer as the series continues.

Q's interest in human progress is revealed in his second appearance when he offers Commander Riker the power of the Q. He admits to doing so because he sees something in humanity that suggests its ability for powerful mental expansion. He and The Continuum want to learn more about this species with such infinite curiosity and capacity for growth. This is the reason that Q offers Riker infinite power. Yet he does so in the context of another potentially deadly game that forces Riker to actually use his power to save his imperiled crewmates. While Riker succeeds in saving them, he fails at another and more important level. He cannot provide gifts that truly satisfy his friends. He is still too limited of mind to understand that the gifts he offers take away as much as they provide. Thus, Riker proves that humanity is not ready for such power and still needs to mature before it can truly expand in the way suggested in the final episode.

Q's other interactions with The Enterprise follow a similar pattern; he creates some kind of challenge to test humanity's limits. He does this because he acknowledges the potential for humanity to become as powerful, or even more so, than the Q. In his appearance after failing to convince Riker to join The Continuum, Q makes another attempt to study human potential, this time offering to join the crew of The Enterprise. Picard balks at his offer and Q flings the Enterprise into its first encounter with the Borg to show that humanity is not prepared to meet the challenges ahead. When Riker asks Q why he has moved the ship so far, Q responds, "Why? Why to give you a taste of your future. This is a preview of things to come, because if you continue at this rate of

exploration – very soon you will reach this part of the galaxy” (p. 203). Picard is deeply humbled by his near destruction and is forced to beg Q to save the ship, admitting that “Q might have done the right thing for the wrong reason...Perhaps we needed a kick in our complacency to prepare us for what lies ahead” (p. 235). This does not just apply to future encounters with the Borg; it applies to all human endeavors. While more examples could be offered, it should suffice to briefly discuss Q’s final dealing with Picard before explaining how these interactions fit into the spirit of Quixotic utopianism.

In their last encounter, Q creates a final test for Picard and the potential of human growth. As described above, this test involves forcing Picard to think in unique and innovative ways, literally backwards from how he would normally think so that he can realize the reversed temporality of the anomaly that threatens human existence. Upon Picard passing this test, Q remarks, “The Continuum didn’t think you had it in you, Jean-Luc...but I knew you could” (p. 833). Shortly after, Picard thanks Q for his help in getting him out of the temporal paradox. Q replies, “I was the one who got you *into* it Jean-Luc. That was the directive from The Continuum. The part about the helping hand...was my idea.” Picard then remarks that he hopes never to be in Q’s kangaroo courtroom again. To which Q replies,

You just don’t get it, do you, Jean-Luc. The trial never ends. We wanted to see if you had the ability to expand your mind and your horizons...and for one brief moment, you did...For that one fraction of a second you were open to options you’d never considered, *That’s* the exploration that awaits you...not mapping stars and studying nebulae...but charting the unknown possibilities of existence...See you, *out there.*” (pp. 834-835)

This expansion was the driving force behind the entire series. Not only does the trial never end, it had been happening all along. All of Q's interactions were designed to ferret out and help Picard and humanity develop the potential to be something more, something that exceeds corporeal limitations, that expands social boundaries, that further develops an inherent curiosity to explore not the external conditions of the universe but the internal conditions of existence. Q, then, exhibits a utopian drive to expand and improve the state of humanity. Yet he knows that such a journey is wrought with peril and possible failure, so he is also Quixotic in his utopianism. So even though Jonathan Frakes calls Q a villain, he is more of an anti-hero – quite literally one of 1000 faces. He uses Trickster tactics to maximize human potential and to release humanity from its bonds of traditional thinking, of vulgar rationality, of limiting social mores, thus creating a new vision of human (and alien) interrelationships.

Border Crosser

One of the most important Trickster tactics at Q's disposal is crossing borders. Q is clearly a border crosser. More accurately, he ignores borders altogether. With total control over space, time and matter, Q is not limited by social or physical boundaries. He whisks Enterprise crewmembers across the galaxy at will. He transports them to places that do not even exist, like the courtroom where he holds his 'trial.' He hurls the starship across the universe and back with a simple hand gesture. Nor does Q pay any heed to human propriety or social boundaries. The systems of normativity that Picard claims have allowed humanity to advance beyond its brutish beginnings are still primitive and backwards in Q's eyes. Yet humanity also exhibits deep senses of compassion and caring as well as exploration and adventure that Q and The Continuum alternately find

intriguing and threatening. The infinite possibility created at the intersection of compassion and exploration are what attract Q to humanity. As Q explains, there is a potential in humanity to become something greater than it is, something more like Q. In other words, Q is not only a boundary breaker himself but he literally teases humanity into breaking its own boundaries. This is most clear in the two instances when he manipulates time to directly change the course of Picard's life.

In both of those instances Q violates a fundamental human assumption: the progression of a linear time. There are several instances in which the crew of the Enterprise travels time. Inadvertent time travel is one of the major plot devices of the series. But only with Q does time travel have a critical purpose. In the first instance, when Q offers Picard a chance to relive his brash younger days, the purpose is to show just how much Q's characteristics, the impulsive arrogance, a concentration on the present over the future, the irrepressible need to advance, mean to Picard. Without those qualities, Picard is a shell of his former self and he pleads with Q to take back the changes, to make him as he was before, even if that means dying on the operating table. Giving Picard exactly what he asked for is a duplicitous trick. It shows without telling the importance of being like Q and creates common ground between him and Picard. Neither can tolerate being bereft of imagination and passion.

Q also violates time in the final episode of the series when he facilitates Picard's movement between three different time periods, giving him the chance to save humanity from the explosion of 'anti-time.' Of course it was The Continuum that created the time 'anomaly' in the first place. But it was Picard who realized the Bergsonian paradox of linear time: that all times are intrinsically linked and that the past, present, and future are

merely different perspectives on the same phenomena. This concentration on paradox is also an important Trickster quality. It requires complex thinking to deal with paradoxes, especially those that arise from violating what appears to be a fundamental aspect of being. It is this complexity that Q and The Continuum wanted to draw out of humanity. But they could only do it in Trickster fashion; by creating the conditions for the destruction of the species and if Picard is too dull to figure it out, well, then humanity has no place evolving further. Q does not break boundaries for the sake it, he does so with the underlying utopian purpose of showing Picard the vast potential of human thought and new possibilities for being.

Crossing borders allows Q to foster dynamic and challenging relationships with Picard, The Enterprise, and humanity. It is utopian because it reveals his desire to help humanity mature and grow, even if that desire takes all seven seasons of the series to fully develop. Q's Quixoticism is revealed in the fact that he never predetermines the outcome of his interactions. Despite the fact that he could simply wave his hand and force everything around him to bend to his will, he allows his stories 'a life of their own,' a life who's outcome and ontology remain both liminal and ambiguous.

Q's Ambiguity

The act of crossing borders is intrinsically related to the ontological state of ambiguity. Borders exist for the sole purpose of delimiting sides. Violating borders necessarily resists such rigid classification. The paradox of violating borders, that violating borders requires borders, challenges another basic principle of western philosophy: non-contradiction. From a traditionally rational standpoint, contradictions are difficult to understand because they deny classification. Villain or anti-hero, Q is an

ambiguous character. Not only does he change shape and situation at will, but he also creates conditions of ambiguity and even states of existential crisis. In all of his interactions, Q forces Picard and the others to question their existence and potential, their place in the grand order, their pasts and their futures. Q does this by creating situations that have no clear outcome. For instance, allowing Picard to change his past creates an unexpected outcome that forces him to realize the value of Q's Trickster qualities, and thus his own need for those same qualities.

In their first meetings, Picard holds Q's playful duplicity and goading of humanity in high contempt. Yet when Q forces him to reconsider his younger days, Picard realizes that he and Q share some significant similarities. For instance, as Picard and Q discuss the dreadful man that Picard had become after having a chance to correct his youthful indiscretions Q states, "I gave you something most mortals never experience... a second chance at life. And now all you can do is complain?" To which Picard responds emotionally, "I can't live out my days as that person. That man is bereft of passion and imagination. That's not who I am." Q then reminds Picard, "Au contraire. He's the person you wanted to be... one who was less arrogant and undisciplined as a youth. One who was less like me" (p. 497). This exchange reveals that Picard and Q are not as different as Picard would like to think. Actually, Picard's Q-like qualities are what made him the person he ultimately became. Not only does this reflect the developing relationship between Q and Picard, it also reveals that arrogance and a lack of discipline are not necessarily the poor qualities that Picard had first assumed them to be. The value of Picard's past is thus called into question, made ambiguous. What he had assumed to be erratic behavior was actually an integral part of his development into a person brimming

with passion and imagination. The value of humility and discipline are also made ambiguous. Qualities that Picard, and humanity, had assumed to be inherently positive or negative become polyvalent. Their value shifts depending on the context in which they are deployed and the outcomes that they engender.

This pattern of fostering ambiguity recurs in all of Q's appearances. It is most important, though, in the final episode of the series. Q points Picard toward new possible directions for humanity but does not say what they are. He opens the space for transformation without demanding its occurrence. Whether humanity survives is left open to chance occurrences and Picard's ability to untangle the temporal paradox. Chance is crucial to ambiguity. Tricksters take advantage of chance opportunities to reshape the world. Yet they cannot always predict or control the outcomes. This is also shown in the episode where Q attempts to ignite a spark of passion between Vash and Picard. By creating a world that he cannot control and staging the players as characters in a drama, Q leaves the outcome open to chance. He is surprised by Vash's duplicity and seeming willingness to sell out Picard. So much so that when he realizes that the romance between Picard and Vash is lost, he takes her on his own journey of discovery.

Q exhibits ambiguity in several ways. While Picard believes otherwise, he is never quite sure of Q's intentions. Picard's certainty about Q's aims is regularly undermined. What appears to be cruel malfeasance is ultimately shown to have an underlying intent of caring for humanity as it progresses in its outward journeys of exploration and inward journeys of self-discovery. In that way, Q deploys ambiguity as a critical heuristic. By refusing to behave according to human standards of propriety, he reveals possible paths for humanity to follow. Q's ambiguity clearly exhibits an

underlying utopianism. It is also a powerful relational tool. It keeps Picard and his crew guessing, thinking and learning about what may come next. At the same time it helps to engender liminality.

Q's Liminality

The ambiguity that Q fosters about the future of humanity reveals its liminality. This is manifested in two different ways. First and most obviously is that Q creates the condition for humanity to grow, to transform into something greater, something more like the members of The Continuum. Second, and more important, Q highlights the fact that humanity has been and always will be in a state of transition. In the first episode of the series, Picard must prove to Q and The Continuum that humanity has progressed to the point where it can explore the universe without wreaking havoc. Picard succeeds but, as the last episode reveals, the trial never actually ends, least of all after the series finale. Rather, it continues on with every new event, every new encounter with a different species, every new development in human ability and consciousness.

At its most basic, liminality suggests a state of transition. But it is more than that. Performing Trickster, Q shows that transitional processes are endless and that whenever one seemingly stable state of being is achieved another one takes its place. Even the Q are vulnerable to transitional states. This is shown in the episode where Q is transformed into an ordinary human as punishment for breaking his promise not to interfere with the Enterprise. Stripped of his powers, Q becomes as helpless as any other corporeal being. During this time he learns a measure of compassion and humility from Picard and the crew.

By selflessly attempting to sacrifice himself to save the ship, Q grows as a 'person.' Due to this growth, The Continuum restores his power. From this point forward in the series, we see a slightly different Q, one that seems to have more appreciation for humanity and its foibles. This represents a new stage in the relationship between Q, The Continuum, and the Enterprise. No longer is humanity a threat to be studied and possibly stopped. It is a species of advancement, exploration, and importantly, of compassion. It is not always right and it often makes grand errors of judgment but those are points of growth and learning, not cosmic crimes to be punished.

Liminality is a necessarily unstable ontological state that Q actively fosters in Picard and humanity. It bears a deep connection to the spirit of Quixotic utopianism. Liminality, in itself, does not necessitate a change for the better. Privileging liminality only suggests that being is never certain. While it appears that Q's particular brand of liminality is turned solely toward increasing the distance from 'dangerous, savage child-race' to something more like the members of The Continuum, it is also important to recognize that Q's fascination with humanity has implications for the Q. The Q have something to gain from humanity. If humanity has the power to develop into something like the Q, as Q clearly suggests, then not only would that development teach the Q something about their own process of progression but they would have a vested interest in making sure that humanity does not get out of control. This interest is shown in the episode with the young human and nascent Q, Amanda. Q explains that were Amanda's power to remain unchecked, she could inadvertently destroy the universe. If humanity is similarly considered, then it should also be properly nurtured through the transition.

While it is never clearly stated, it would be reasonable to guess that this is the ultimate reason that The Continuum sets Q upon humanity in the first place. So the liminality that Q fosters reveals an underlying, although not entirely altruistic, utopian impulse. This impulse is also Quixotic because it does not foreclose any possibilities of being. Even though failure lurks at every turn of events, even though they easily could if they so desired, neither Q nor The Continuum make any real effort to determine humanity's direction outright. Instead they develop a dynamic relationship, establish ambiguous conditions of possibility, and let liminal transformations play out on their own. Through this process we begin to see the critical Trickster archetype taking shape in Q. Q's border crossing leads to ambiguous and liminal ontologies. Duplicity plays a role in that dynamic relationship.

Q's Duplicity

Duplicity is one of Q's most common tactics of 'trickery.' He regularly uses the ambiguity of language to say one thing while meaning another. At the same time, Q rarely if ever actually lies outright. When he does fail to keep his word, continuing to toy with Picard and the Enterprise after promising not to, he is severely punished by The Continuum.

Q's characteristic duplicity takes the unique form of literal truth. He gives people exactly what they ask for, knowing that the ambiguity of language allows for so many possible interpretations that he can manipulate the outcomes to his will. For instance, Q gives Picard a second chance at youth only to have that reconfiguration change his life into something dull and tedious. Q offers Riker omnipotence only to have that power backfire in his offers to his crewmates thus creating the realization that even absolute

power has its limitations. Q attempts to create a love connection between Vash and Picard only to steal her away himself. He gives the young Q Amanda the opportunity to relinquish her powers and to be the human that she so desires. Yet, to maintain the morals that she learned during her upbringing as a human, Amanda must use her power to save an entire planet of people thus paradoxically denying her own humanity. In each instance, Q creates a situation in which people are offered exactly what they want only to discover that those desires are not as they appear. This form of duplicity is unique to Q's Trickster performance, offering an interesting addition to the archetypal tactic of duplicity.

Like other Trickster figures, Q's duplicity serves crucial and related relational functions. Most obviously, it prevents Picard and the Enterprise crew from trusting him. This is important because trust suggests a stable relationship. Q cannot have a stable relationship with Picard and the Enterprise crew or he would lose his ability to manipulate them. One of Trickster's specialties, if not one of its specific functions, is keeping humanity on its toes, reminding us that certainty means rigidity, rigidity means calcification, and calcification is the necessary enemy of liminality. Q's duplicity also means that his relationship with humanity is in constant negotiation. This is important because all human relationships are also in constant negotiation. Just as in the Esu story, appearances of relational stability are illusory, a fact of which humanity must be continually reminded.

While on the surface duplicity appears to be a kind of malicious malfeasance, it can actually serve a deeper critical function. This is not to say that the ends justify the means. But it is to say that simply assuming a means like duplicity to lack value without considering its ultimate function is both short sighted and limiting. Q and his Trickster

analogues do not show that lying is always the right thing to do. Instead, they show that traditional conceptions of truth may be fundamentally flawed. Thus, Q's duplicity serves a pair of related utopian ends. First, it shows that relationships are always unstable and should be continually examined to remain positive and productive. Second, it reveals a crack in the façade of rationality through which we may glimpse other possible modes of thinking, such as the reversed temporality of the 'anti-time' anomaly in the final episode.

Q's Shape Shifting

Q's shape shifting is as complex as his duplicity. Only once does he appear as anything other than 'human.' He generally appears human because it is the most intelligible form for Picard and his crew. Q usually changes outfits instead of literally changing shape. In the first episode, he appears in various military uniforms to reflect the fact that human authority has been intrinsically related to violence and armed might throughout its history. Reinforcing this, also in the first episode, Q appears as a judge from a particularly violent period in human history resulting from a third world war. He does this expressly to show the depths to which humanity descended in its development from a "dangerous, savage, child-race" (p. 10) to what Picard and the Enterprise crew represent in the 24th century. In the episode where he offers Riker infinite power, Q sets the stage by appearing as a Napoleonic battlefield general. Q also often appears as a Starfleet admiral in order to reinforce his stance of authority over Picard and his crew. Q brings his shape shifting full circle in the final episode, appearing again as the judge. This reinforces the fact that the trial of humanity is not over, that it will never be over, and that for the species to continue its development it must remain aware that nothing can be taken at face value.

Q's shape shifting is somewhat restricted by the television show format. Only certain forms can be read and accepted by contemporary audiences. Yet even in the 24th century only certain forms remain intelligible to humanity, and it is notable that the most intelligible form imaginable in 1987 when the show premiered remains a straight white male. Reading Q in the spirit of Quixotic utopianism can offer an exit from this problem. Perhaps such intelligibility is exactly what Q's shape shifting attempts to dismantle. A limitation of form exists in that Q must remain the same actor in order for audiences to understand his presence. At the same time, his continual changing of outfit challenges the perception of a totally static identity. Such an unstable subject, especially in conjunction with Q's overall role in the series, reveals that existence is also uncertain, that meaning, as Beauvoir (1976) suggests, must be constantly won. Thus, Q's shape shifting retains a utopian underpinning, one that is wrought with a twisted sense of humor.

Q's Humor

Q's twisted sense of humor is also in the service of humanity. Even though he seems to truly delight in tormenting Picard and the crew of the Enterprise, he remains a guide on their interstellar intrapersonal journey. Q's humor is pervasive throughout his appearances but his gift of laughter to Data is particularly illustrative. Coming two episodes after Data denies Riker's gift of humanity, Q expresses gratitude to Picard and the Enterprise crew for saving his life after he had been stripped of his power and for helping him to regain those powers. Picard suggests that it is enough for him to simply leave them alone but as Q departs he imparts on Data the gift of laughter in exchange for his insight on the nature of humanity. Data had been helping Q understand human behavior. So Q knew that Data wanted to experience things as a human would, but unlike

Riker, who simply assumed that making Data human would fulfill that desire, Q offers a deeply human and humanizing experience that doesn't erase Data's existing identity.

Even though Picard and his crew do not find Q's interjections to be funny, Q certainly does. There is a wry cleverness that grounds everything he does in the series and in which he delights. By giving Data the gift of laughter he further reinforces the importance of levity and the power of humor in creating, maintaining, and reconfiguring relationships. So it is important to take Q's sense of humor in context. He is not simply toying with humanity for the sake of it. He uses humor to show us our potential. Despite the dangerous games that he plays, Q really does have a genuine utopian interest in the fate of Picard, the Enterprise, and humanity in general.

Much like the Quixotic humor in Cervantes' novel, Q's humor simultaneously debases and valorizes utopian thought. It reminds us that taking one's self too seriously is an invitation for disaster, as in the episode when he allows Picard to relive his life. It also reminds us that being able to laugh is a kind of power in itself. Q's humor is evident from the beginning of the series to the end when it becomes clear that he has acted as both stumbling buffoon and culture hero.

Stumbling Buffoon and Culture Hero

Bringing our archetypal process to a close, Q performs stumbling buffoon through his shape shifting comic duplicity. Yet stumbling buffoonery is only really meaningful in relationship to cultural heroism. Q performs all elements of the Trickster archetype, but he does so to reveal new directions for human development, to blaze the path toward a new era of human enlightenment, to foster improvement in the human condition, and to make the universe more habitable. Q is an anti-hero because he helps usher in a new era

in human development through means that violate standard hero tropes. Q never rides in on high to save Picard and the Enterprise. Instead he creates or facilitates dangerous and potentially deadly situations in which humanity must realize the potential that it already has. Q's buffoonery makes it possible for humanity to develop beyond its savage childhood, allowing it to mature and gain the insight necessary to usher in its forthcoming development with grace and aplomb. Such is the role of this mass-mediated TriQster: to trick humanity with duplicity, comedy, shape shifting, liminality, and ambiguity, into becoming greater than it could ever imagine. Q performs Trickster by giving humanity the tools to chart "the unknowable possibilities of existence" (p. 835).

Q exemplifies a complex utopianism that extends the possibilities suggested by earlier utopian thought. Frankfurt School and subsequent utopianism concentrates on conditions of equality. Yet creating conditions of total equality is not enough. It will be useful at this point to consider the overall *Star Trek* universe. The Enterprise is the flagship of an organization called Starfleet, which is the scientific (meaning military) arm of The United Federation of Planets or simply, The Federation. The Federation is supposed to be humanity's ultimate utopian achievement. Indeed, at numerous points in the series it is explicitly mentioned that The Federation is an egalitarian organization, that oppression no longer exists, that all Federation subjects human and otherwise have truly equal opportunity. The Federation has already achieved the utopian state that most critical theory demands, at least on the surface. Yet Q's Trickster performance shows that utopia is not the end of being. There will always be room for expansion and growth.

Achieving utopia, as shown by The Federation, is not the end of history. It is only the beginning of an inward journey, an exploration of the possibilities of existence; the

journey that Q initiates with Picard. Such is the nature of liminality, like Q's trial, it never ends. Such is also Q's cultural heroism, his contribution to the expansion of humanity. While he appears to be a stumbling buffoon, he is actually deploying subversive Trickster tactics to light the way for human expansion and improvement. At the same time, those tactics create the appearance of a stumbling buffoon, a shape shifting cosmic comic with no clear form. This buffoonery is inherently Quixotic. It takes its beatings and failures as indications to try harder, not to give up. Or, as Q says himself, "if you can't take a little bloody nose – maybe you had better go back home and crawl under your bed. It's not safe out here. It's wondrous – with treasures to satiate desires both subtle and gross. But it's not for the timid" (p. 234). In this statement, Q shows that Trickster's twin roles of culture-hero and stumbling buffoon are not at all distinct. While it is heuristically valuable to separate the two roles for purposes of analysis, this should always be done with the understanding that they are intrinsically related, mutually constitutive, interdependent, and focused on relationships.

Q's Relationships

Trickster is a relational figure. Without another party, even if that other party is a divided aspect of the self, Trickster cannot exist. One of the most important borders that Trickster violates is that between self and other. This is clearly revealed when Q offers Picard a second chance at life. Picard comes to realize that no matter how different from Q he believes himself to be, the Q-like qualities that he sacrifices were an important part of his being. But he did not, perhaps could not, realize that without Q's duplicitous trickery. Still, Q is not totally altruistic. He has something to gain from the relationship. He begins to learn about the human qualities of compassion and exploration that he felt

were missing from *The Continuum*. Thus, despite the dramatic difference between humanity and the Q, or the seeming antipathy between Q and Picard, they are still bound into a mutually beneficial relationship.

Relationships are one of Trickster's primary targets of social reconfiguration. Q's relationship to Picard and humanity clearly changes throughout the series. The commonality between all of the different kinds of relationships created, fostered, configured, and reconfigured by Q is that they are dialogical; they are not just relationships but *interrelationships*, built on exchange and reciprocity. Most obviously in *TNG*, Q changes the romantic relationship between Picard and Vash. He also changes the relationship of humanity to the galaxy that it explores. For instance, at the end of the first episode, Riker asks Picard if all forthcoming missions were going to be so unusual. To which Picard responds, "Oh no, Number One, I'm sure they will be much more interesting" (p. 117). This reveals that Q's interference had already begun to alter the way that humanity can perceive its environment, thus shifting humanity's role in the cosmic order.

Perhaps the most important relationship that Q reconfigures is humanity's relationship to itself. Indeed, this may be the single most important relationship in all Trickster tales. Clearly revealed in the final episode, Q forces Picard to reconsider his own capacities for thought and existence. This is the inward exploration that Q refers to in his final words. This is also a part of the inward exploration outwardly expressed in performance art.

From Mass Mediated Myth To Performance Art

Considering the Trickster archetype as a critical figuration, as I have done here, leads to a deeper engagement with the metaphor. To be truly meaningful for critical and performative theory and practice, Trickster must leave the realm of myth, even of mass mediated myths like Q. Trickster is an archetype. But it is also a role to be performed. So to explore the value of performing Trickster, we should address different ways that it can be manifested in the so-called real world. I have chosen to use performance art, or what Amelia Jones (1998b) calls 'body art,' as a vehicle for this exploration because it, too, functions as a powerful metaphor for the critical reshaping of society. Yet before addressing the artists that constitute the case studies for this dissertation, we should discuss the dialogical method of analysis and its corresponding paradigm.

Chapter 4

TRICKSTER DIALOGICS

A Dialogical Paradigm

Dialogics can be seen as a method with specific directives for analysis as well as an overarching paradigm with its own conceptions of communicative processes. While it is mainly drawn from the proto-postmodern thought of M.M. Bakhtin, other authors have expanded on his initial and sometimes vague descriptions. Michael Holquist explains that “dialogism is itself not a systematic philosophy” (1990, p. 16). Just as deconstruction exceeds the limits of literary discourse and dialectics exceeds the limits of Socratic debate and even material history, dialogics reaches beyond its literary origins to be a useful analytic for various different cultural processes. That, compounded by Holquist’s emphasis that Bakhtin himself never actually used the term dialogism, is why I have chosen to use the term *dialogics*. This is not to call counter Holquist in calling dialogics a systematic philosophy. It is to say that dialogics has a distinct philosophical standpoint that can be expanded into paradigm for social theory as well as distilled into a particular analytical method.

Dialogics may represent a dramatic epistemological turn in latter twentieth century thought. Julia Kristeva (1986) goes so far as to say that more “than binarism, dialogism may well become the basis of our time’s intellectual structure” (p. 59). If dialectics are a reflection of the binary and dualistic framework of western philosophy, dialogism offers not just an alternative mode of thinking but a necessary counterpart. Kristeva further suggests that dialogics “stands against Aristotelian logic. From within the very interior of formal logic, even while skirting it, Menippean dialogism contradicts

it and points it towards other forms of thought” (p. 55). Challenges to domineering formal logics then become acts of semiotic resistance by denying the monologic voices of texts and interpretations. Beyond asserting that all social processes are structured like a dialogue, dialogics also suggests that all discourse is polyphonic. Through what Bakhtin calls “creative understandings” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7), which is powerfully echoed in Vizenor’s Trickster informed “pleasurable misreadings” (1993a, p. 5), the multiplicity of voices under a dialogical framework offers a chance to escape from rigid and domineering interpretational schema.

At least two related forms of semiotic resistance exist in this framework. First is the empowerment of resistant readings. Bakhtin and Vizenor both use adjectives that emphasize individual interpretive agency. The term ‘creative understanding’ suggests that readers, audiences, and consumers have the ability to interpret texts according to their personal proclivities; that they may do with the text what they will and are not necessarily limited to domineering conceptions of authorial intent or even cultural coding. The term ‘pleasurable misreading’ works similarly but with the added suggestion that misinterpretation can be a pleasurable process. Misinterpretation is more than misunderstanding, it allows for agency in the interpretive process. Once readers and audiences have been empowered to interpret texts as they please, they can turn that interpretive process to their advantage. For instance, while it could be said that a television franchise like *Star Trek* reinforces hegemonic modes of scientific rationality, militarism, and even a futuristic sort of manifest destiny, reading it in Trickster terms, as I have done above, can offer a liberatory counterpoint to those readings. The openness of the dialogical framework creates space for resistant readings.

Drawing from Bakhtin (1981; 1984; 1986), dialogics assumes that all social processes can be described in terms of dialogue. Kristeva insinuates that this is a kind of ‘dynamic structuralism’ (1986, p. 36). Dramatism does not necessarily suggest that all social processes are dramas but rather that the dramatistic and performative metaphors are fruitful and powerful means of engaging motives for action (Burke, 1969), everyday life (Goffman, 1959), subjectivity (Butler, 1990), cultural memory (Taylor, 2003), and much more. Dialogics is similarly applicable. It is not a replacement but an augmentation of the performative and dramatistic metaphors for communicative processes. The paradigmatic assumptions are parsimonious; “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva, 1986, p. 37). There are dialogical relationships between everything. But they are not necessarily stable. It is their instability that opens them up to Trickster’s subversion, its creative understandings, its pleasurable misreadings.

Dialogical relationships are imbued with the kind of semiotic slippage that Derrida describes as ‘differance’ (2008). But they do not just move down a chain of signification. They also move back up, cut diagonally across, intersecting, violating and challenging the uni-dimensional fixity of syntagmatic axes. Challenging fixed meaning has been one of Trickster’s more significant contributions to social subversion. For example, the ancient Greek demigod Hermes is one of the primary and most enduring western Trickster figures. It was he who brought meaning into the world, he who made the connections between signs and meaning, and he who showed that those connections are ephemeral and unstable. His impact on western thought and conceptions of what it means to understand something can be easily demonstrated by the field of inquiry that

still bears his name: hermeneutics. But Hermes is also a figure of misunderstanding. It may even be misunderstanding that allows the greatest advancements in communication theory. Perfect communication requires no research. Complete understanding requires no communication. Understanding is radically contingent on a prior state of misunderstanding. And what better figure for fostering confusion and misunderstanding than Trickster?

Dialogics can be seen as a meta-theory, a means of creating connections between things not to dis/prove some ephemeral empirical causality but to create new mis/understandings that provide infinitely variable social orders. This is why dialogics may be productively considered as a theoretical and methodological paradigm for communication studies, particularly in its performative iteration – and perhaps even other forms of social theory. Dialogics is not a means of creating categorical definitions and then testing them for veracity. It is a framework for engaging discursive relationships; a hermeneutical endeavor with implications for how communication creates, reifies, and reinforces social processes.

Synthesizing dialogics and Trickster is a matter of seeing how Trickster's characteristics create and challenge the dialogues that shape our discursive world, and subsequently our actual realities. It is an inherently critical project because it seeks to liberate subjects from the needless imposition of harmful norms while simultaneously suggesting other norms intended to improve and enhance human agency. Trickster is, in the end, both a creator and destroyer of boundaries.

Trickster dialogics aligns with the performative and dramatic metaphors of communication and social action. Augmenting dialectics, it offers a different

paradigmatic assumption, that the world is a dialogical process, much as Lacanian psychoanalysis suggests that the unconscious is structured like a language. If we accept that the unconscious is so formed, then it follows that there are dialogues, both internal and external, shaping how that language operates. Meanwhile, Trickster is an agent for reshaping both consciousness and relationships. It seeks the borders of definitions, of subjectivity, of categorizations, of in and out, of power and resistance, not to nihilistically and magically make them disappear but to expose them and their social functions.

Trickster Dialogics has a number of direct connections to the study of communication. At a fundamental level, Trickster figures are said to bring language, communication, and understanding into the social world – as the tales of Hermes and Legba explain. Tricksters are also embodied mythomorphs of semiotic instability; they not only create communicative practices, they actively reshape them to their needs and desires. Misunderstanding and meaning are not oppositional ideas. Trickster creates both at the same time. In addition, as their duplicity reveals, Tricksters use mis/communication to their advantage. To engage how communication can be employed to a liberatory end is a less cynical vision of critical cultural theory than was often exhibited in some twentieth century thought, particularly the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory. Too often communication is conceived of as a simple matter of information transmission. While this relatively limited conception has undergone some radical alterations in the latter part of the twentieth century, it remains a dominant metaphor. Adding noise and feedback into transmissional models of communication does little to expand our understanding of relationships, let alone possibilities of resistance. Rather than envisioning communicative practices, especially in popular culture, as simple reifications of domineering normativity,

Trickster Dialogics allows us to uncover otherwise hidden strategies of resistance. Yet to determine how those strategies of semiotic resistance function in actual practice, we need case studies and systematic analyses.

A Dialogical Method

It would be relatively simple to identify the elements of Trickster performances, as they are described above, and then apply them to different artifacts. Even though such an archetypal analysis would go far toward helping identify which artifacts reflect Trickster performances, it would do little to further our understandings of either how Trickster functions as an embodiment of social critique or how those artifacts more generally contribute to larger discourses and dialogues of social liberation. So while running characters and artifacts through the critical Trickster archetype is a necessary and useful preliminary step for the ‘Trickster’ part of *Trickster Dialogics*, the remaining methodological moves of this dissertation must offer a deeper interrogation. The specific elements of the dialogical method proposed here are drawn from and extend upon Bakhtin’s work: they are the utterance, chronotope, and intertextuality.

Keeping with the post-structural bent of this dissertation, the dialogical method described below reflects elements of Derridean deconstruction – particularly in terms of difference, Foucauldian conceptions of power and resistance, and the paradoxically cohesive fragmentation of schizoanalysis described by Deleuze and Guattari. For future work, such a dialogical methodology offers an inherently flexible framework for systematically applying its three tenets. Furthermore, as a possible paradigm for communication studies, dialogics operates as a counterpart to the well established, often discussed, and sometimes maligned constellation of dialectical methods.

Frederic Jameson makes the connections between dialectics and dialogics explicit. He suggests that the “normal form of the dialogical is essentially an antagonistic one, and that the dialogue of class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code” (1981, KL 1304). While this may be true for discourses focused around class struggle, or those that bury their class struggles underneath layers of ideological distortion, the metaphor of antagonism more accurately describes the dialectical method Jameson valorizes and applies as the grounding of his political unconscious. Later in the same work, Jameson suggests that “we need a more complex model of what Bakhtin called ‘dialogical speech’ to understand a situation in which such expression can be grasped as something like a language of the Other” (KL 3287). Trickster is a quintessential Other and thus a natural metaphor for the dialogical complexity that Jameson requests. Holquist goes further in relating dialogics to otherness, stating that it is “not merely a dialectical alienation on its way to a sublation that will endow it with a unifying identity in higher consciousness. On the contrary: in dialogism consciousness is otherness. More accurately, it is the differential relation between a center and all that is not center” (1990, p. 18). Since Trickster is a permanently marginal figure, it helps to create and then to reveal those differential relationships.

The method proposed here is an effort to help create a more complex dialogical model, one that builds on Bakhtin’s insights while deprivileging without abandoning the antagonisms of dialectical class struggle. Dialogics, as they are proposed here, do not have to be antagonistic. As a method, dialogics privileges relationships between discursive formations and utterances over the negations and reconciliations implicit in dialectical models and analyses. Even if Bakhtin did originally intend to ground his

conception of dialogics in class antagonisms, that is not reason enough to leave it there. Indeed, striving for a “creative understanding” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7) may encourage efforts toward different dialogical loci, such as Martin Buber’s (1958) I/It and I/Thou relationships, which take human relationships with various senses of ‘Otherness’ as their point of dialogical departure.

Like dialectics, though, a dialogical method is overtly critical. But dialogics is critical in a slightly different way than dialectics: by making its project to explicitly show how domineering discourses create the condition for resistant ones, not to negate them, not even to reconcile them, but to make meaningful connections between them. A dialogical method can thus be a tool for undoing oppressive discourses, for decoupling ‘categorical’ from ‘definition’ in the service of liberating Derrida’s speaking subject, Lacan’s ‘Real,’ Gadamer’s and Buber’s I and Thou alike, from the forced imposition of subjectivity, from the oppression of static meanings, from the repression of desire.

Unlike many other critical figurations, Trickster does not actively attack the extant order. Unlike political pundits or others hiding behind the veil of ostensible expertise, it does not point fingers, hurl epithets, or even offer clear solutions. Unlike critical scholarship, it does not elevate itself through arcane language, circular referentiality, or dense philological arguments. Rather, Trickster’s critical utility lies precisely in its ability to subvert and reconfigure those discursive structures as they have been created and handed down by the gods of social science, authors, and empirical rationality. Such a critical modality is especially important because it is available to all cultural practitioners, to anyone invested in social subversion and cultural reconfiguration.

Trickster and dialogics are bound from their very beginnings. They are both means of addressing and challenging power relationships. They both exhibit unique forms of critical consciousness. Reflecting Foucault's conception of ubiquitous power / knowledge relationships, Hyde (1998) states that Trickster "needs at least a relationship to other powers, to people and institutions that can manage the odd double attitude of both insisting that their boundaries be respected and recognizing that in the long run their liveliness depends on having those boundaries regularly violated" (p. 13). If critical cultural theory takes as its most general project the exposure of hidden ideologies and ideological distortions that function to restrict agency, to oppress and repress, to subjugate and sublimate, to perform power,¹⁰ then it acts in much the same way as Trickster. Trickster can be seen as an agent of the critical consciousness. Yet this also overlooks, or more accurately smooths over, at least one important distinction between Trickster's subversive performances and critical theory's active efforts at rectifying injustice. This difference can be described, somewhat reductively, as the difference between critical *consciousness* and critical *unconsciousness*.

In general, critical theorists identify injustice, seek its causes, and work toward its rectification. Causes of injustice are generally found to be discursively created inequalities in social systems, means of privileging certain subject positions at the expense of others. For instance, the concept of hegemony identifies ways by which subordinate classes are discursively relegated to intellectual and ideological domination.

¹⁰ It is important in this context to take the word power the more complex French sense that Foucault likely intended. The word "pouvoir," as Biesecker (1992) explains, has a different nuance than the English usage of the word "power." Pouvoir more accurately means 'being able' than the necessary imposition subjectivity, subjugation or ideology – which, amongst other things, are included under the rubric of 'being able.'

Interrogating the failure of Marxist economic systems and ideas, Gramsci refers to hegemony as the intellectual and moral leadership of dominant interests (2002). Hegemony, and its emphasis on ideology, has informed the subsequent canon of critical theory. Ideology, according to Althusser, is “the imaginary representation of the subject’s relationship to his or her real conditions of existence” (quoted in Jameson, 1981, KL 2935). Critical analyses actively seek to reveal the hidden ideologies in hegemonic discourse, thus creating critical *consciousness*.

Trickster is an opportunistic character. It takes advantage of chance occurrences like finding a useful bone that can be passed off as the Frog’s shell currency. But Trickster does not actively seek out injustice in the way that critical theorists would. Rather, its opportunism serves to *unconsciously* destabilize social normativity, to call social systems into question, to problematize everything that we take for granted. In other words, Trickster is merely being itself, stumbling along its twisted and circuitous life path while playfully, joyfully, twisting the world to suit its needs and desires. It lacks the overt meta-level thinking that drives critical theory and consciousness.

Jung describes Trickster as an archetypal figure of the collective unconscious. “The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear” (1969, p. 5). Trickster is a special archetypal figure because it alters both itself and everything else around it. This is why Hyde refers to it as not a creator but a *shaper* of a world that already exists. Trickster acts according to its own needs and desires, completely disregarding social normativity while showing that power is culturally constructed and subject to change.

What appears as self-serving hedonism can thus become a complex critical figuration. Trickster's hedonism is an act of resistance to the c/overt operations of power and normativity. It simply does not care whether or not it fits into society at large. It reveals fissures in the façade of normativity just by 'doing its own thing' and not by taking on some grand critical project. Perhaps this represents an even stronger sense of the term critical. Maybe Trickster can be more critical than critical. While it often works toward a liberatory end, it makes no claim to superior knowledge or understanding. It simply performs resistance without pontificating about it or trying to make any grandiose points. It is heuristic and not didactic, which is why it is more reflective of a critical unconscious than a critical consciousness.

The critical unconscious reflects a resistance to the repression of desire. It is a deeply embedded embodied need to liberate desire from the constraints of repression, no matter its particular conditions. Subjugation is limitation of desire, a normative creation of subjectivity beyond the will of the individual or group. Queer and feminist theories attempt to liberate the sexual subject, although in different ways. Postcolonial theory attempts to liberate the colonized subject. As far as they are critical responses to hegemonic capitalism, which is arguable, post-structuralism and postmodernism attempt to liberate the 'producing' subject. In each case repression represents a limitation of desire or the discursive imposition of social normativity.

The appetite that impels Trickster's actions does not mean simply food, sex, pretty things, and powers not its own. It is a powerful metaphor for releasing human agency from repressive normative constraints. Trickster performances are not necessarily active strategies of political resistance; they are satiations of appetite and fulfillments of

desire. That these satisfactions completely disregard normativity is what turns them into strategies of resistance. But it takes a more active and analytical critical consciousness to identify them as such, to make the transference between the mythology and the everyday practices of subjectivity and subjugation. Identifying Trickster as an agent of the critical unconscious reinforces the need to use conscious critical terminologies and analytical methods to engage and understand its unique role in cultural production. So it is to those terminologies and methods that we now turn.¹¹ We begin with the basic unit of analysis.

Utterance

Dialogical analyses begin at the level of the utterance: in “order to understand, it is first of all necessary to establish the principal and clear-cut boundaries of the utterance” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 112). Bakhtin further explains that any “utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (p. 69). The utterance, then, is the basic unit of analysis. But it is a complex idea. On one level it calls forth images of grunts, gesticulations, and awkwardly drunken romantic advances which could very well be usable units for research on relational or interpersonal communication. At the literary or novelistic level in which Bakhtin operates, though, the utterance is more of a reference to story. Bakhtin uses the utterance to address particular genres of literature, noting how different narratives relate to generic conventions that allow for classification while contributing to wider patterns of cultural production. At the level of critical performance, in which this study is couched, the utterance will be taken as a communicative act. This is

¹¹ The following methodological discussion builds on Bakhtin’s ideas. But they are notoriously difficult to pin down and often directly contradictory. Therefore, as much as Bakhtin himself, I will also employ clarifying insights and suggestions from Michael Holquist (1990), Tzvetan Todorov (1984), and Julia Kristeva (1986).

an important consideration because it helps delimit boundaries of the artifacts being analyzed. Within this consideration, there are also different kinds of utterances. So not only does considering the utterance suggest different types of artifacts, it allows for addressing different kinds of smaller communicative acts.

The utterance is not only a link in a complex chain of other utterances, it is a complex idea in itself. In this way, it resembles Derrida's conception of *differance*. The *differance* is that Derrida suggests meaning slips deeper and deeper down the chain of signification, forever escaping our grasp, while Bakhtin suggests that meaning can only be created in context with other meanings. Derrida takes a more linear approach while Bakhtin takes what is more of a 'rhizomatic' approach (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977), where meaning is made more complex by an infinitely expanding multiplicity of connections to other meanings and contextual factors. A rhizomatic approach to dialogical analysis sees a discursive artifact as a locus of these network connections. How an utterance is figured in its network of relationships will then affect how it can be analyzed and understood. Generalized research questions for the utterance regard its limits in a particular context. Simply answering the question, "what are the utterances in this communicative act?" can be revealing. It would require the critic to address and at least tentatively define both the utterance and the communicative act. Identifying and critiquing an utterance is just the beginning of a dialogical analysis. To reveal ideologies and strategies of semiotic resistance, we will employ another pair of terms taken from Bakhtin: *chronotope* and *intertextuality*.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality forms the bridge between an utterance and its context. Tzvetan Todorov (1984) explains: “every utterance is also related to previous utterances, thus creating *intertextual* (or dialogical) relations” (p. 48). Intertextuality is a system of relationships, a scheme of references and revisionary repetitions. Kristeva (1986) makes explicit the interconnection between Bakhtin, intertextuality, subjectivity, and communication: “Bakhtinian dialogism identifies writing as both subjectivity and communication, or better, as intertextuality” (p. 39). This suggests that utterances cannot escape their intertextual dimension. Further, it suggests that utterances exist in at least two different dimensions: the historical conditions of cultural production and referentiality to other texts – even if they are not explicitly, obviously, or intentionally connected.

Generalized research questions for this second step of a dialogical analysis address the observable connections and relationships between utterances, their precursors, their cousins, and their descendents. Something as simple as “what are the intertextual relationships observable in this particular utterance?” would help critics understand how certain texts, or even textual fragments, relate to others in the two possible dimensions of historicity and referentiality. This line of interrogation expands on the utterance as a node in a network of discursive relationships. Yet to stop at intertextuality would fail to fully achieve dialogics’ critical potential. Therefore, we need another of Bakhtin’s ideas, the chronotope, to take us one step further. Where intertextuality helps identify the contextual conditions of an utterance, chronotope helps us understand them in terms of normativity and power.

Chronotope

Chronotope refers to distinct spatio-temporal situations and orientations, both within and beyond the utterance. It suggests that artifacts and their meanings do not exist in a single time and place. Rather, they have a unique spatio-temporal trajectory, variably situated pasts, presents and futures. Bakhtin explains the chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (1981, p. 84). As Holquist (1990), Todorov (1984), and Kristeva (1986) make clear, chronotope should not be strictly limited to novelistic or literary discourse; it can be applied to any form of utterance and its intertextual connections.

Holquist explains that at the first level of application, chronotope “seems to have something like the status of ‘motifs’ or ‘functions’ in Structuralist analyses” (1990, p. 110). This is supported by Bakhtin’s use of the idea to discuss generic conventions and even to delineate the particular tenets of chronotopes in genres like Greek Romance and the Bildungsroman. Consider what Bakhtin calls ‘adventure-time;’

moments of adventuristic time occur at those points when the normal course of events, the normal, intended or purposeful sequence of life’s events is interrupted. These points provide an opening for the intrusion of nonhuman forces – fate, gods, villains – and it is precisely these forces, and not the heroes, who in adventure-time take all the initiative. (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 95)

It is significant that another non/human actor, Trickster, is the focus of study here. Indeed, without describing Trickster itself, Bakhtin (1984) goes so far as to describe its characteristics and, importantly, its subversive or critical potential in the various chronotopes of folklore (p. 146), Rabelais (p. 206), and the rogue, clown, and fool (p.

159). Trickster stories are often called picaresque, about which Bakhtin states: the “picaresque novel by and large works within the chronotope of the everyday-adventure novel – by means of a road that winds through one’s native territory” (p. 165). These intertextual relationships have much to reveal about the critical potential of Trickster’s unique behavior. Taking Bakhtin’s insights at this elementary level will lead the conclusion of this study to the creation of a Trickster chronotope, a way of being in the world, of relating to other people, of navigating complex discursive figurations while resisting domineering hegemonic normativity.

Therefore, creating a particular or context specific chronotope is a culminating step in this final part of the dialogical method. For our purposes it will be a Trickster chronotope, for other analyses different appropriate chronotopes should be developed. It is at this point in an analysis that various different kinds of dialogics become apparent and applicable. Bakhtin himself states that “such work will in its further development eventually supplement, and perhaps substantially correct, the characteristics of novelistic chronotopes offered by us here” (1981, p. 85). It is a secondary hope of the method employed in this dissertation to contribute to that dialogue, to supplement Bakhtin and provide a template for future uses of a critical Trickster archetype as well as for different dialogical figurations.

Moving beyond the first level of chronotope leads to broader engagements with cultural production. Holquist (1990) moves us to this second level:

Art and life are two different registers of a dialogue that can be conceived only in dialogue. They are both forms of representation; therefore they are different aspects of the same imperative to mediate that defines all human experience....

When conceived as more than a narrowly technical narrative device, then, the chronotope provides a means to explore the complex, indirect, and always mediated relation between art and life. (p. 111)

Thus, in order to figure the chronotope as a device for critical analysis, we must move to a broader cultural level that includes the potential for the utterance to create or otherwise influence the manifold subjectivities of audience and performer. This also includes the possibility of liberatory readings.

It is not enough to simply address and explain internal spatio-temporal relations. Those relationships should then be connected to contexts of cultural production. Such connections are “a means for studying the relation *between* any text and its times, and thus as a fundamental tool for a broader social and historical analysis” (Holquist, 1990, p. 113). Generalized research questions for this part of a dialogical analysis engage the relationships of a text to its external or contextual conditions. A research question like “what internal and external (or primary and secondary) chronotopes are revealed in the artifact?” can help critics reveal otherwise hidden forms of power, normativity, and ideological distortion.

Trickster Dialogics

The dialogical method proposed here employs three critical analytics: utterance, intertextuality, and chronotope (see figure 2). Defining the utterance determines the discursive limits of the artifact at hand, its edges, its margins and marginality. This is important because it is at the margins of discourse that cultural production becomes most productive. Or, as Bakhtin states, “the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries of its individual areas and not in places where these areas have

become enclosed in their own specificity” (1986, p. 2). Determining the utterance gives insight into values because, “every utterance makes a claim to justice, sincerity, beauty, and truthfulness (a model utterance), and so forth” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 123). But merely determining the generic conventions, boundaries, and potential violations of an utterance does not go far enough toward unpacking the critical potential of discursive artifacts.

Addressing intertextuality, then, takes the critic further down the path of determining the socio-cultural functions and meanings of utterances through the two dimensions of historicity and referentiality. By observing the network of rhizomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977) relationships revealed in an utterance we may be able to situate it both into its historical context, which includes but is not limited to conditions of material production or consumption, and to its contemporary context.

Intertextuality and utterance alone still do not reveal deeper structures of relational and normative power. Thus, the final step of a dialogical analysis addresses the chronotope in two possible dimensions. The first determines the ‘elementary’ system of relationships in an utterance or artifact and compares them to external contexts. The second step, then, expands on the first to make broader connections between the relationships revealed in the utterance and more general relationships between the artifact and its potential cultural impact, or what it may reveal about the cultures that create, promulgate, and consume those kinds of utterances. It is at this final step that explicit connections should be made between primary analytic terms, Trickster in this case, and the chronotope. It should come as no surprise that with all this border definition and violation, the establishment and deconstruction of social normativity, all this discussion of manifold relationships, that the dialogical method bears a natural affinity with

Trickster performances and that we will be developing a Trickster chronotope through the case studies below.

There is also the possibility of other kinds of dialogics. Such analyses would use a different construct, not necessarily an archetype – although having some sort of established framework to reference would be helpful – as a preliminary term for the dialogical analysis. This is why I have chosen to keep discussions of the Trickster archetype and the dialogical method relatively distinct. There are certainly as many different kinds of dialogics as there are imaginable points of reference for dialogical relationships. Moreover, in this case and in others that may follow these guidelines, the synthesis occurs as much within the analysis, particularly in discussing the chronotope, as it does in the methodological discussion.

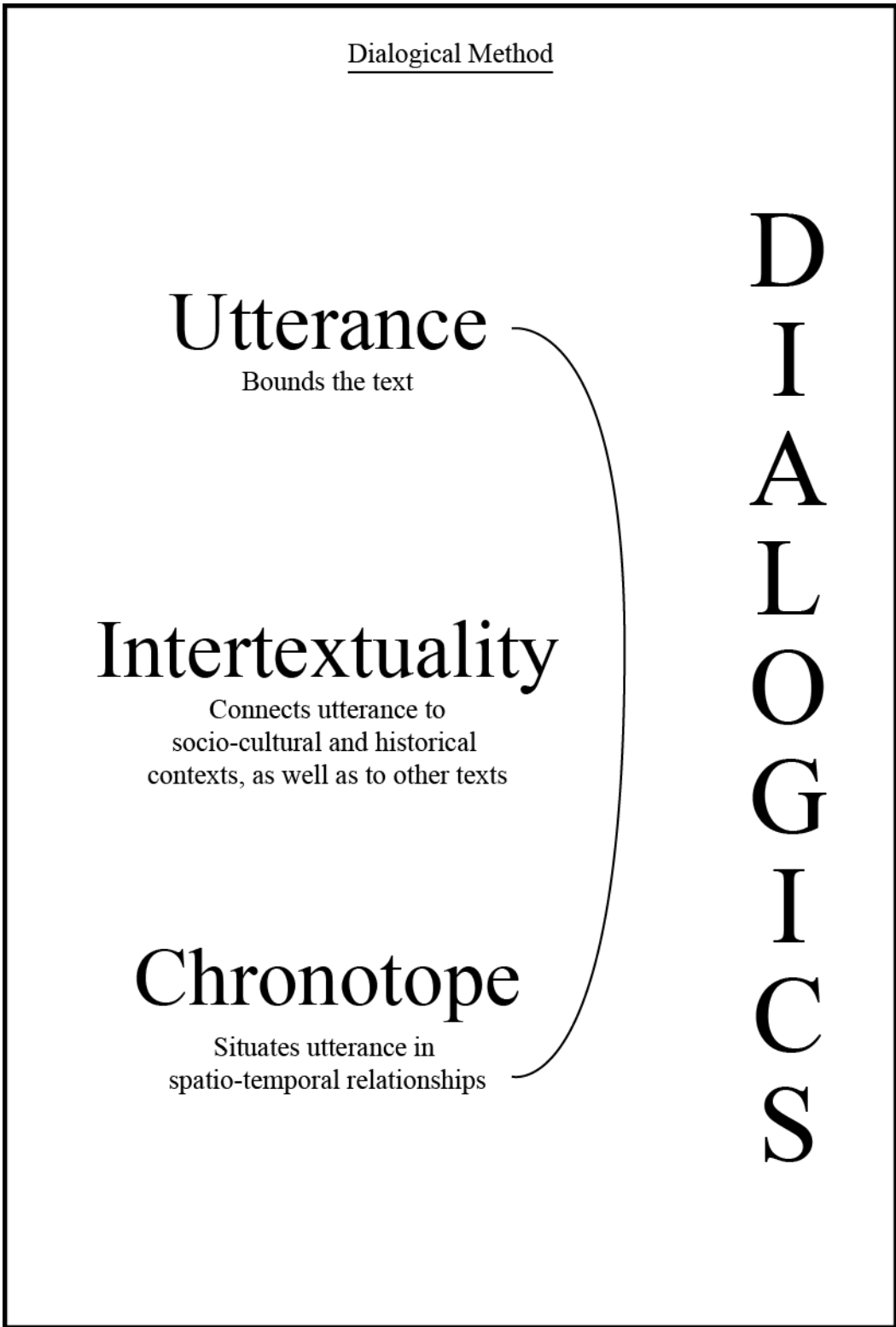


Figure 2. Dialogical Method

Chapter 5

TRICKSTART: TRICKSTER PERFORMANCES

Trickster and Performance Art

Before analyzing the dialogical connections between Trickster and the discipline of performance art, it is necessary to briefly discuss performance art in general. In her history of the practice, Goldberg (2001) suggests that performance art “defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Any stricter definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself” (p. 9). While we will remain within the milieu of art, the term performance has also become applicable to more than art and artists. Academic studies of performance range from Butler’s discussions of gender performativity (1990) to architecture and more. “This relatively new scrutiny of performance material by a burgeoning group of researchers, has moved performance art from the margins of art history, towards the centre of a broader intellectual discourse” (Goldberg, 2001, p. 226). This means that performance art, as a practice that grounds contemporary discussions of performativity, is not only important to the disciplines of art history and criticism but is also important to the overall development of cultural criticism and theory.

Carlson (2004) addresses the manifold intersections of performance and cultural theory, claiming that “[p]erformance implies not just doing or even re-doing, but a self-consciousness about doing and re-doing on the part of both performers and spectators” (p. ix). This means that performative practices, which includes but is not limited to ‘artistic’ expression by ‘artists,’ are both reflective and generative of cultural practices. It remains important, though, that our understandings of performative practices have their bases in

just that ‘artistic’ expression. So even though the current academic study of performance exceeds artistic representations, those representations remain crucial to critical cultural theory. It is the inclusion of the body as an art object that allows for the extension of performance art into performative practices overall; both rely on an abundance of creative energy.

Trickster is rife with creative energy; it flows in varying degrees through each element of the critical Trickster archetype but is most apparent in its particular tactics of subversion. Trickster must ‘trick’ because it lacks the superior ‘physical’ strength of dogmatic and domineering hegemonic discourses. Trickster cannot force its will on others. Thus it resembles what James C. Scott (1985) refers to as a ‘weapon of the weak.’ Rather than overpowering oppressive and repressive social structures, the marginalized must find other ways to subvert domineering authority. While Scott focuses on particular labor practices, Trickster’s social manipulations are equally important.

Lewis Hyde (1998) is one of the few authors to directly connect Trickster’s inherent creativity specifically to artistic practices. He suggests that Tricksters must be creative and flexible to effectively combat what they see as social injustice. It is creativity that allows Tricksters to turn deception into duplicity, ambiguity into liminality, shape into shape, and tragedy into comedy. Hyde describes Trickster as a kind of ‘artus-worker’ – something that artfully slips in between cracks in the façade of cultural formations and thus loosens the joints between different realms of being, forms of thought, and even subject positions. Reflecting Trickster’s crucial relational function, such artus-work extends beyond Trickster itself. As Hyde suggests the “audience listening to a trickster tale undergoes a kind of inner *artus*-work, then, a loosening and breathing of psychic

boundaries” (p. 267). Such psychic boundaries also exist between audience and performer in performance art.

One of the most significant outcomes of contemporary developments in performance art, and performative interpretations of plastic and visual arts, is breaking down the boundary between audience and performer. In discussing performative interpretations of plastic arts, Amelia Jones (1998a) suggests that

if we acknowledge the performativity of meaning production – opening ourselves to visual art works as fully embodied sensuous experiences rather than closing them down through reified models of aesthetic or political judgment, fixing them in a matrix of predetermined values, we will find ourselves in a different and more productive relationship with visual culture. (p. 46)

Such a performative framework is equally productive when engaging performance art. It contributes to “a specifically feminist, phenomenological model of reading [that] fundamentally asserts an *intersubjective* engagement among and between objects and subjects and a coextensiveness of body and mind” (p. 46). So one consequence of the turn toward performative art practices is the breaking down of boundaries between subject and object or audience and performer. This mirrors Trickster’s relational function.

Carl Jung (1969) claims that Trickster acts as a mirror in which modern society can observe its premodern self. In some cases Trickster may be just such a mirror. In other cases, such as performance art, it may be more of a distorted fun house mirror in which the pathologies of modernity are narcissistically reflected back exaggerated and grotesque. Such narcissism can be liberating as Jones (1998b) explains:

The fundamentally narcissistic imaginary by which the subject constitutes itself, paradoxically in relation to others through a fixation on itself, *turns the subject inside out* (via a relation of reversibility), producing the body / imago as the imago of the other (hence its threat to conservative culture theorists). (p. 49)

Performance art is an arena in which the subject or the performer not only constitutes itself but also constitutes the object or the audience. While this is not unique to performance art and can also be found in performative readings or interpretations of plastic and visual arts, it is in performance art that the breakdown between subject positions becomes most apparent.

The breakdown between subject and object, between audience and performer, is directly related to the ‘liveness’ (Auslander, 1999) of performance art. It is the immediate presence of *bodies in action* that asks audiences to metonymically insert themselves into the performer’s space, into the performer’s body, and – if the Cartesian dichotomy between mind and body is to be thoroughly discarded – into the performer’s mind. It is precisely this liveness that acts as a Lacanian mirror through which audiences come to realizations about themselves, their cultures or societies, and, importantly, their place in those symbolic orders.

The mirror relationship between performance art/ist and audience is one of the reasons that Lacanian psychoanalysis has become a useful framework for the interpretation of performance art. Both Peggy Phelan (1993) and Anthony Howell (1999) use Lacan to extend the power of performativity. Howell suggests that the Lacanian framework can be used both analytically and generatively for performance art. That is to say psychoanalytic concepts like repetition and the other (Lacan’s *la petit objet a*) can be

used not only to interpret performance art but also to inform actual practices. Like Bakhtin's creative understandings and Vizenor's pleasurable misreadings, Howell's is a "*creative psychoanalysis*, tailored to the use to which [he] can put it in the field of performance art" (p. xv). Phelan echoes Walter Benjamin in claiming that an aura of authenticity surrounds the 'live' body that cannot be captured in media. Auslander (1999) counters Phelan's claim by suggesting that both live and mediatized performance are ontologically identical and therefore subject to the same considerations. Yet Auslander's assessment is built on the flawed premise that ontological difference is primary difference and that since live performance and mediatized performance are ontologically similar then their processes and outcomes are indistinguishable. In other words, Auslander uses specious ontological comparisons to address epistemological outcomes.

Despite Auslander's claims, Diana Taylor's (2003) conceptions of 'the archive and the repertoire' offer a framework that can reconcile the differences between the live and the mediatized, while also revealing an important border for Trickster figures to cross. For Taylor, performance constitutes its own epistemology, its own way of embodied knowing that attempts to deprivilege the written as the sole vehicle of cultural knowledge. Deprivileging the written also fits with Jones' (1998a; 1998b) schema of denying Kantian aesthetics their claim of sole access to critical validity. Taylor posits that the repertoire, consisting of actual performative practices, is intrinsically related to the repertoire, or the storehouse of cultural knowledge, generated through performance. Still, Taylor remains somewhat limited to a dichotomous framework in which archive and repertoire remain effectively separated.

Trickster's border crossing telos can help rectify these considerations of archive and repertoire, live and mediatized, immediate and indirect. What considering Trickster shows us here is that distinctions between these seemingly opposing or dialectical ideas are not totalizing. The indirect only exists as a response to the immediate. The mediatized only exists as a remnant of the live. The archive cannot exist without the antecedent repertoire. The border can be crossed in the other direction as well. The archive is reinvigorated and inexorably altered in its transition back into the repertoire. The live builds on and expands the mediatized. The indirect has repercussions on new iterations of the immediate. As a border crosser Trickster stands in between these oppositions, it is the mirror through which each can recognize and reconcile with the other.

As its own kind of mirror, Trickster has virtually identical investments and therefore has a natural affinity with performance art as a discipline. Within that discipline, it is clear that not all performance art manifests Trickster. So to begin addressing Trickster's presence in performance art we must begin with the archetypal process described above before moving to the second dialogical stage of analysis. But in order to do this effectively we must use real-world examples of performance artists exhibiting varying degrees of Trickster's archetypal elements. Thus, the following case studies concentrate on performance artists that use the body in unique, often violent, ways that push the boundaries of performance art as a form of expression as well as the boundaries of normativity. It is in these 'radical' performances that Trickster dialogics may be most easily discerned and used as a tool for cultural criticism. The first case study is André Stitt. It is followed by case studies of Ann Liv Young and Steven Johnson Leyba.

André Stitt: 'Akshun Man! Trickster!'

This first case study in Trickster dialogics addresses two different works from a single artist. As documented in his book *Small Time Life* (2001), André Stitt came out of art school in 1976 and immediately began a series of works under the title *Art Is Not A Mirror It Is A Fucking Hammer*. According to Stitt, this series of works consisted of “simple graffiti on walls around” his home of Belfast, Ireland (p. 15). This series was designed to address Stitt’s upbringing during ‘the troubles’ that characterized the conflict between loyalist and nationalist forces in Northern Ireland. Exemplary of these small performative actions is the word “BORING” which Stitt painted, signed, and dated. His stated intention was to create a “spectacle, an intrusion into normal day-to-day reality” (p. 15).

The day-to-day reality of life in Northern Ireland in 1976 was conditioned by a conflict commonly referred to as ‘the troubles.’ Northern Ireland was the first, and remains the last, of England’s global colonial intrusions. The term ‘the troubles’ refers to a violent sectarian conflict between the generally Protestant community loyal to England and the generally Catholic resistance exemplified by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and its political wing Sinn Fein. The IRA would become well known as a so-called ‘terrorist’ organization linked to bombings and murders throughout the colony. This violence was intended to expedite the expulsion of the English and their loyalists from the nation, allowing for Irish reunification. Although this conflict has since become much quieter, the English remain in control of Northern Ireland.

Against this violent backdrop, Stitt’s spectacular intervention culminated in the title work where he burned all of his existing paintings in front of the art school that he

attended. This early work reveals an affinity with Trickster's border crossing because, as he states, there "was a movement from the institution out into public space" (p. 15). This movement is crucial to understanding Stitt's subsequent transition into consciously embodying the Trickster role. Proclaiming one's self to be a Trickster, though, does not necessarily mean that one is really performing the role. To make that determination we must run through the methodological steps of Trickster dialogics; first to see if Trickster is really present and second to see how that performance functions as a critical formation.

Taking art out of the institution and into the public space serves a critical function that sets the stage for Stitt's later, specifically Trickster informed work. We will concentrate for the moment, though, on *Art Is Not A Mirror*. Fitting with our primary methodological step of addressing the critical Trickster archetype, Stitt's interventionist foray breaks several boundaries. First and perhaps most obvious is the liberation of art from the confines of the gallery. As Foucault (1994) suggests, institutions are spaces of normativity. People and things within institutions are, quite literally, institutionalized; they are required to conform to institutional standards or face censure. Moving art beyond those borders has a radical potential. It can liberate expression from rules that legitimize certain forms while disregarding others. Although he does not explicitly say so, this is why Stitt burns his paintings. In so doing, he denies the normative power of officially sanctioned art while privileging the more radical and embodied work that he would begin to produce.

Stitt's denial of sanctioned spaces for art is both Quixotic and utopian. It is utopian because it enacts a vision of a better world, one in which art is free to roam the streets, free to affect people who do not visit galleries, free to work its transformative

potential unfettered. This is also Quixotic, though, because there is no guarantee that radical change will actually occur. Like Quijano's library, Stitt sets his artwork loose on the world without regard for its possible success or failure. Furthermore, getting out into the public space complicates his relationship to his own artwork as well as the public at large.

By moving into public space, Stitt breaks the boundary between himself and the public. Foreshadowing the Trickster tactic of shape shifting, he effectively transforms his body from a private entity to a public one. This transformation blurs the boundaries between public and private spaces, turning Stitt from a private body into a piece of public art and thus changing his relationship not from object to subject but from object to object *within* subject. Subject / object relationships have long been within the purview of art critics and historians, not to mention philosophers. Much of the contemporary discourse regarding that relationship has centered on the distancing created by Kantian aesthetics. Jones (1998a) argues convincingly against this distance, especially in regards to performance art and performative readings of plastic and visual arts. Jones suggests that the fragmented postmodern episteme denies singular or monolithic interpretations of art. In terms of borders, Jones' argument effectively breaks down the relationship between subject and object. By denying singular interpretations, the work is opened to a vast multiplicity of readings. Being open to those readings brings individual audience members or viewers into closer contact with the work; the work becomes a part of the viewer. Since viewers also have agency in their readings they insert a part of themselves into the art.

Stitt's boundary breaking also extends into the realm of the art itself. Calling simple graffiti and the corporeal body works of art challenges the very notion of what art can be. While these are important borders to cross and they are deeply significant for art criticism, our focus here is on cultural criticism. So we should remain within our own boundaries (a necessary and necessarily delimiting move) for the time being and return to the boundary Stitt breaks between gallery and public space, as well as that between Stitt and the public at large.

Here we have an interesting start to following through with the remainder of the Trickster part of Trickster dialogics. Note that both of the boundaries in question delimit Stitt's relationship to the public. In moving art out of the gallery, effectively deinstitutionalizing it, Stitt creates a new relationship between himself and his audience. He interpellates or constructs an entirely new audience. In burning his paintings, Stitt makes the statement that the audience for his work is no longer restricted to those with the ability to enter or 'appreciate' the gallery. In Shakespearean terms, the world becomes his stage. This is further reinforced by Stitt's body becoming the art; not only is the work of art liberated from its normative restrictions, so is Stitt himself. As a result of this boundary breaking, Stitt attempts to enact a radically egalitarian politics of consumption – a Quixotically utopian formation in which the work of art becomes available to all, regardless of any potential consequences.

As Stitt's career progressed, he became more infatuated with the idea of Trickster and with reconfiguring his performances as 'akshuns.' In his words, by

1979 I had started to identify with the humour within my work and the nature of the fool or, more aptly, the Trickster: an archetypal persona in most cultures, the

fool whose madness gives him license to speak a wisdom that not all may want to hear. The Trickster has a core ethic of wanting to strategically re-structure the nature of reality. (p. 18)

Such restructuring calls forth Trickster's ontologies, and the second step in its archetypal process. We turn now toward the later work in which he consciously takes on the Trickster role. In 1980, as the conflict in Ireland became increasingly well known throughout the world, Stitt began a series of work in collaboration with another artist named Tara Babel that he called the *Akshun Man Trickster Cycle*, clearly referencing the Winnebago Trickster cycle discussed by Paul Radin (1972). Of the several works in this series, one stands out as a challenging but illuminating example.

Centered text at the bottom of the flyer for the 1981 performance *Dogs In Heat* reads:

They stop us and search us,
they give us lip, but we can't
answer back. They treat us like
animals, as long as they're
wearing a uniform, they think they
can do anything.

Stitt describes the piece as

a key performance within the *Akshun Man Trickster Cycle* [which is delineated with a slash on the flyer: "AKSHUN MAN / TRICKSTER CYCLE"]. There were a lot of ritualized elements, very highly structured, and it was the first performance that I felt was successful structurally – in terms of aligning sound

with akshuns and negotiating a path through the akshuns. Projected visuals of Tara and I wrestling in a forest were juxtaposed with images of a Belfast ‘Peace Line’ – a wall that separated Catholic and Protestant communities. As in *The Larynx* I adopted the Trickster / Dog persona, crawling around a white sheet covered in red, white and blue pigment, smeared with dog shit, accompanied by an audio track of barking hyenas. My legs were bound. I wore paramilitary and surgical clothes. I applied semen and oils onto my body. The akshun was, like all my works, ‘in process’; it wasn’t necessary to understand what was happening in advance, only to approach such a state in retrospect as part of an experimental process. (p. 31)

During that experimental process, Stitt creates an ontological, perhaps even existential, crisis that reveals ambiguous and liminal ontologies.

Beginning with its surface meanings, the flyer for *Dogs In Heat* reveals a clear resistance to the militarization of Northern Ireland that carries through most of Stitt’s early works. So while Stitt claims the work to be ‘in progress,’ and therefore ambiguous – even to himself, there remains a clear message about what the audience would experience during the performance. Hiding beneath the themes of violence revealed in the images of wrestling, the ‘peace line,’ and the paramilitary clothing is a deeper and more unsettling question of identity and control.

The proverbial ‘they’ on the flyer should not simply be taken at face value of either the British military or their Irish Republican Army (IRA) opponents. Both forces engaged in heinous actions that clearly form the primary, denotative reference of the text. At a connotative level we can see beyond the immediate context of ‘the troubles’ to take

the proverbial ‘they’ as any prohibitive forces of oppression and control. Moreover, those institutional forces have a direct impact on the identity formation of their subjects. This is the identity that Stitt questions during this piece. So even though the text on the flyer appears to offer a relatively static and didactic message of resistance to militarization (and possibly British colonialism in general) the piece itself raises more complex considerations. The connecting thread between the flyer and the actual piece is in the figure of the dog; Stitt is effectively saying ‘if they are going to treat us like dogs (animals) then we might as well act like dogs.’ While this would fit with Q’s duplicitous tactic of giving exactly what people ask for, it also asks for further interrogation.

Perhaps a more complex reading would take the questions of violence and militarization as givens and turn toward the messier and more difficult question of identity formation, a process wrought with both ambiguity and liminality. The question of identity is raised on the flyer but only comes to fruition in the performance itself. The flyer states “they treat us like animals” but it is only in the performance that the audience discovers their existence as ‘dogs’ in particular. By transforming himself into a dog, by taking on the persona assigned to him, Stitt tells the audience that it too has been subjectified by institutional violence. Completing the transition is a literal embodiment of exactly what those authorities want. Yet, in typical Trickster fashion, giving people exactly what they want can be a duplicitous act of subversion.

Stitt’s transformation into a dog tells the audience that it, too, suffers under the repressive imposition of state violence; they, too, are dogs to be beaten, harassed, and used as a dump site for society’s waste – thus the pigment and dog feces that Stitt smears himself with during the show. So it is here that ambiguity and liminality become most

clear in this particular work. Stitt radically deconstructs his own identity to show how he has been conditioned by state (and anti-state) violence. In so doing he raises a crucial critical question of identity control: is he an autonomous subject or a victim of the state? This is a rhetorical question, a heuristic device, with the power to stimulate audiences into thinking about their own complicity in the system that Stitt is resisting. Deconstructing one's identity in a work of performance art thus reveals a foundational ontology of ambiguity intended to instill the same question in others. It has another consequence of instilling liminality.

Deconstructing one's identity, and that of audiences, does not stop at the end of ambiguity. It continues on to reconstruct itself, thus marking a transition between states of being. Stitt transforms from self to dog at the beginning of the performance, and even though the audience is not necessarily privy to it, he implicitly transforms back at the end. The performance stage becomes a liminal space in which the ambiguity of identity is explored in order to engender a deeper state of liminality. Stitt is right, it is only in retrospect that his performance can be understood. *Dogs In Heat* reveals a thread of ambiguity, in this case of identity, that reveals another fundamental ontology of liminality. These ontologies are not limited to Stitt. If one purpose of art is to impart ideas unto other people, if it is truly a relational endeavor, Stitt's performance transfers his own ambiguous identity and liminal transformations to the audience as well as the culture at large.

It is at this cultural level that we can most clearly see both the spirit of Quixotic utopianism and Trickster's relational function in Stitt's ambiguous liminality. His critical spirit is utopian in its attempt not to directly change systems of authority and violence in

Northern Ireland but to quietly erode their foundations. It is an effort to show that despite the innate violence of the Northern Irish struggle for independence; people still have a measure of agency in retaking their processes of identity. Rather than accept the cultural conditioning of colonial rule and the violent resistance it inevitably creates, people can resist, they can condition themselves in the face of that violence to achieve a new kind of peace, one that is not enforced by a divisive 'peace line.'

Stitt offers a binary construction of identity. Either one can accept the violence and become the dog, beaten, humiliated and smeared with shit, or they can wash themselves clean and work toward reconciliation without violence. This is also a Quixotic endeavor, not least in the aspect of Stitt taking on the sacrificial role of a narcissistic "primitive warrior type" (p. 31). *Dogs In Heat* and *Art Is Not A Mirror* are Quixotic because they work toward utopian ends without regard for success or failure. It is revealing that Stitt finds this performance successful mostly in structure, as opposed to concept or the less measurable end of changing attitudes. For Stitt, the potential outcome of social change does not even warrant mention.

Having revealed the borders that Stitt crosses and the way that his performances embody the ontologies of ambiguity and liminality, as well as their resultant relational manipulations, we can now turn to the particular tactics of Trickster subversion: duplicity, humor, and shape shifting. The duplicity that Stitt employs in his work is little more than that which all performance artists, and it could even be argued all artists in general, also use. Duplicity is a factor in the discipline of performance art because it always has an element of manipulating appearances. But Stitt does not use a particularly significant double voice. Contrary, Stitt's work in both of these pieces is relatively direct,

honest, and earnest. Indeed, he describes no works in his book that could clearly reflect the active deployment of duplicity. Nor does he discuss using duplicity as a relational tool.

Humor is similarly absent from Stitt's performances, regardless of his claim of attempting to embody Trickster because of its innate humor. It is difficult to imagine any audience member, no matter how twisted or sociopathic, laughing at any of Stitt's performances as if it were a comedy show. This is not to say that Stitt himself did not identify, and identify with, some humorous elements of his work or that he does not navigate his performance landscape with a grin on his face. It is to say, though, that in archetypal terms Stitt's humor falls short. Lacking duplicity and humor, though, does not eliminate Stitt from consideration as a Trickster. It merely means that he does not conform to all of the archetypal elements.

Stitt's shape shifting, on the other hand, is obvious. In *Art Is Not A Mirror*, Stitt transforms the authority, the shape, of the gallery institution. In *Dogs In Heat* it is the process of changing shapes, of transforming into a dog, that reveals the fundamental Trickster ontologies of ambiguity and liminality. Shape shifting is implicit in all transformations between states. It is also important to recognize that the ultimate end of Stitt's transformation is to encourage similar changes in others, which serves not just to change his relationship with the audience but also to change the audience's relationship to society. It is in this changing relationship that Stitt begins to reveal the archetypal roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon.

Stitt performs stumbling buffoon in an interestingly Burkean fashion. By transforming into a dog, he takes on the role of scapegoat. His being covered with shit

and pigment reinforces the idea that he is taking upon himself and then transferring to the audience the guilt associated with institutional violence. He literally becomes covered with waste, which makes the metaphorical connection between that waste and the shit that was forced on the people of Northern Ireland by both loyalists and nationalists.

While it could be argued that Burkean scapegoating has a presence in all performative works that either metaphorically or literally damage the body, it is particularly apparent in *Dogs In Heat*. This buffoonery then leads to Stitt's concurrent role as culture hero.

Stitt performs culture hero through his role as stumbling buffoon. This is clearly revealed in his attempt to reclaim agency for himself and others in the face of Northern Ireland's 'troubles.' Agency is a tool of culture. Where Trickster tales reveal cultural tools like fire, water and language, we must now consider different tools. Agency, the ability to act, to have choice, and to be free of repressive restrictions is a crucial tool of resistance. Stitt provides that agency by showing the audience that they also have the ability to recreate themselves. But it is up to them as to *how* that recreation occurs. While Stitt would clearly prefer that the audience recreate itself in a manner that turns away from 'the troubles' and toward a new era of peace, there is also the possibility that the audience could choose to recreate itself in the image provided for them by the state.

The relationships that Stitt creates and sanctions between performer and audience, between different aspects of the self, between self and society (or self and other) each reflect the spirit of Quixotic utopianism; they work toward a new vision of society, one in which people have the ability to create themselves free of state interference, free of violence, and importantly, free of repressive boundaries. In their place, Stitt creates a new

set of boundaries, a different kind of normativity that works toward human freedom and liberation.

As revealed through both *Art Is Not A Mirror* and *Dogs In Heat*, André Stitt performs Trickster. Even though both performances lack the duplicity and humor that form part of the critical Trickster archetype he still breaks boundaries, expresses (and attempts to transfer) the fundamental ontologies of ambiguity and liminality, changes shapes, and in the end takes on both roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. In *Art Is Not A Mirror*, Stitt breaks the boundaries of institutional spaces and shifts the shape of his physical surroundings in an effort to engender a greater critical transformation. In *Dogs In Heat*, he breaks the boundaries of his own being, transforming himself into something less than human. But in so doing, he attempts to bring humanity back into the violent conditioning of ‘the troubles.’ Trickster’s relational manipulations and critical spirit permeate all of the work described in Stitt’s book, not just these two instances.

This only completes the first step of two in Trickster dialogics. Even though we have determined that Stitt does perform Trickster in his own unique way and that his performance of the role has a certain critical utility, we must still turn toward dialogics to make wider assessments of Stitt’s work and the value of performing Trickster.

Having established Stitt’s performance as a Trickster, it remains to discuss his work as a cultural formation. It is important to move beyond the artist and even the immediate audience if we are to make determinations about what it means to perform Trickster in contemporary culture. To that end, we turn to dialogics. Stitt clearly performs Trickster, although not quite in the way that he claims for himself. Still, there is more to his performances, his ‘akshuns,’ than can be extracted from his Trickster performance

alone. We must interrogate further in order to place his Trickster performance into a wider socio-cultural context. Dialogics offers an ideal framework for this contextual extension. There are three basic steps to a dialogical method: utterance, intertextuality, and chronotope provide a ground for that interrogation. We begin with the utterance.

Delineating the utterance will shape and guide the subsequent steps. So it is crucial to clearly explain and justify why a particular form of utterance is used. Stitt has provided an ideal figuration of the utterance in his own terms: they are his ‘akshuns.’ According to Stitt’s book, the first performance, *Art Is Not A Mirror It, Is A Fucking Hammer* predates his use of the term ‘akshun.’ Yet we may still retroactively apply that term to consider both that series of performances and *Dogs In Heat* as unique but related ‘akshuns.’ Utterance is a flexible construct. Critics may reach deep into a text to extract its granular aspects or they can pause anywhere on the continuum to taking an entire work as an utterance unto itself. I have chosen to take the latter approach in this discussion because we are reaching across two different representative examples of Stitt’s work. To briefly mention, a more granular approach could engage each distinct element of a text or performance as its own utterance.

Of the two akshuns, the two utterances in question here, *Art Is Not A Mirror, It Is A Fucking Hammer* fits most clearly into the frame of the art world. Stitt was not merely offering a statement about the institutionalization of art; he was entering into and extending an existing conversation. While *Dogs In Heat* indirectly continues that dialogue, it more directly enters into a conversation about ‘the troubles.’ At the level of utterance, it is enough to establish these two contextual factors. In order to thoroughly unpack their meanings, though, we need to continue the dialogical process. Addressing

intertextuality will help determine exactly where and how these utterances fit into those conversations.

Intertextuality requires a tighter focus than the utterance. It asks critics to place individual aspects of a text into an internal conversation with the overall work while externally contextualizing it with other texts. There are two general considerations to make at the level of intertextuality: historical conditions of production and referentiality to other texts. *Art Is Not A Mirror* was produced as a response to Stitt's training in art school. The series works to challenge the institutionalization of art. Bringing 'art' out of the gallery or even officially sanctioned performance space and then burning his paintings is an effort toward 'democratization,' toward giving access to his art to everyone – whether they like it or not. In the process, Stitt also challenges the very rules of what art is. Similar to Duchamp's *The Fountain*, Stitt's basic graffiti work counters traditional conceptions of what counts as art. Prefiguring a later trend toward placing text on gallery walls as art works, Stitt's graffiti does not appear, on the surface, to be 'art' per se. Yet when he calls it art, when he signs and dates it as if it were a fine painting, it takes on the character of a serious work. Doing so destabilizes the institutional authority of officially sanctioned channels of expression.

So at an intertextual level, *Art Is Not A Hammer*, draws in elements of both the official art world as well as the 'street art' represented by graffiti, something that in most other contexts would be considered vandalism and destruction. Gallery spaces only sanction certain acceptable forms of art. Even if the definition of acceptable changes over time and place, the gallery (or museum) remains the ultimate institutional authority. Using an unsanctioned art form while breaking out of the gallery has the potential to

reconfigure the world at large as an art space unto itself. Taking this view, especially in light of Stitt's insistence that much of his work was 'in process,' reveals not just the instability of art as a representational form but the primary and overarching ontological states of ambiguity and liminality. The world, as Stitt's art reveals, is always 'in process,' it is never complete and therefore always subject to reconfiguration.

The external intertextuality of *Dogs In Heat* is a direct conversation with 'the troubles.' While *Art Is Not A Mirror* had an indirect reference to the domineering violence of the times, particularly in words like "BORING" which constituted a thinly veiled attack on seemingly endless repetitive acts of violence and oppression, *Dogs In Heat* offers a much more direct critique of the same forces. If we were art historians we could address each individual element of the performance – a process that could constitute an entire dissertation unto itself. For cultural criticism (especially in terms of Trickster), the single aspect of 'becoming-animal' is especially compelling. In characteristically opaque terms, Deleuze and Guattari state:

Do not imitate a dog, but make your organism enter into a composition with *something else* in such a way that the particles emitted from the aggregate thus composed will be canine as a function of the relationship of movement and rest, or of molecular proximity, into which they can enter. (1977, p. 274)

This suggests that not only should one *draw in* the various aspects of a dog but that one should outwardly express that 'dogness' in such a way that one truly becomes canine in the eyes of others.

Stitt's becoming-animal is complicated by his historical context. He is not necessarily drawing in a pure canine persona. Rather, he is drawing in – or more

accurately completely accepting – his own social conditioning, his interpellation into a symbolic order in which people are treated as animals. Thus, the second intertextual dimension of *Dogs In Heat* reaches beyond internal references to other art works in favor of references to Stitt's historical context, which then calls forth the third step of a dialogical analysis: chronotope.

Chronotope is the culminating step in a dialogical analysis. It is in this step that conclusions drawn from utterance and intertextuality are recontextualized in terms of time and space, which articulates with power and normativity. Again we have two things to consider and connect under the rubric of chronotope: internal and external dynamics.

There is a common thread of 'liveness' that connects the internal and external dynamics of *Art Is Not A Mirror*. It is in this liveness that dialogical relationships between archive and repertoire are most fully revealed. On one hand we can figure the static aspects of the series as individual pieces of visual art. But doing so would devalue its performativity, especially if those individual pieces are considered alongside other works in the series and its culmination in burning the paintings. So a more productive approach would be to move to the other end of the spectrum and consider the graffiti as performance in its own right. Such a transition also fits with overarching considerations of performance as *performative*, in the sense suggested by Searle. In other words, even though the graffiti exists as a relatively static entity it still acts as a performative, it still attempts to do something in the world, to affect some kind of change, however small, in the viewer.

Considering Stitt's graffiti as a performance complicates the idea of spatio-temporal context. Graffiti does not move. It is effectively locked into its own spatial grid.

What does change, though (at least at a surface level), is its temporality. It is important for the graffiti aspect of *Art Is Not A Mirror* to have a relatively static position in space and a variable position in time. Stitt is engaged in a conversation with the twin tyrannies of the gallery and ‘the troubles.’ Both of those conversations revolve around space in different ways. Stitt’s graffiti is appropriate as a spatially static performative because the sites it intends to challenge do not physically change. What does change, though, is the temporal context. So it is not just space but time that Stitt addresses; or, more accurately, the time within the space. Stitt uses a static image to reveal the procession of time and the possibility of progress. He uses that changing temporal context as a critical formation to demand a situational improvement over time.

Taking a similarly dynamic view of spatial context, we clearly see that creating art beyond the gallery is a manipulation of space. It functions less to change the gallery than the world beyond its institutional walls. This is an outright manipulation of power and normativity. It denies the sanctioning power of the institution and its normative implications. Stitt is effectively saying that the gallery no longer controls what art can be. At the same time, Stitt is establishing another kind of normativity; one that echoes the postmodern episteme in saying that art does not have to be sanctioned. In other words, Stitt manipulates space to reclaim and democratize artistic expression.

In terms of ‘the troubles,’ we have a different spatio-temporal dynamic. The use of a static work, as suggested above, reveals that Stitt is also manipulating time. This is to say that since the work remains in place (for however long it does), it is the world that changes around the work. This is an important consideration for any similarly static artwork because it reveals the power of temporal context in interpretation. The word

“BORING” painted on a wall, for instance, has a rich meaning during times of violent conflict. It takes on a much different character, though, in other contexts. This is also important because it leaves interpretation open to viewers bringing in their own spatio-temporal input and understandings.

So we see how considering the two overarching aspects of *Art Is Not A Mirror* and *Dogs In Heat*, the gallery and ‘the troubles,’ leads to different constructions of space and time, of chronotope, and how those constructions then relate to power and normativity. We have a direct connection between internal and external chronotopes, between the manipulation of space and time within this one text and its two external contexts; thus revealing a clever manipulation of space and time that exceeds the boundaries of the work to form a larger cultural critique of institutional violence, subjectivity, control, and normativity.

To summarize our discussion of André Stitt, we have determined that he performs Trickster because he crosses borders with the critical purpose of instilling ambiguity and liminality as ontological states. He may not deploy humor and duplicity, at least not very well, but he does use the tactic of shape shifting also with a critical purpose. He performs the twin roles of stumbling buffoon and culture hero by acting as a Burkean scapegoat, taking on the ‘shit’ created by ‘the troubles’ in Northern Ireland as well as institutional restrictions on the place and value of art. In that process he democratizes access to art and agency. He provides those cultural tools through his own foolish self-sacrifice.

As a Trickster, Stitt reconfigures the dialogical relationships between himself and his cultural context. To that end his basic utterances are his ‘akshuns.’ Although that is not the only possible way to figure the utterance, it is effective for these purposes. Stitt’s

intertextuality draws in external elements of street art or graffiti as well as the treatment of Northern Irish people at the hands of authoritarian power structures, ‘the troubles,’ to create new possibilities of being and becoming. He uses that intertextuality to challenge systems of power and, moreover, to offer new possibilities of normativity that disregard the oppressive social contexts of both the gallery and ‘the troubles’ thus returning, at least metaphorically, a measure of agency to the people affected by institutional violence. In this way, spatio-temporal relationships, chronotopes, become critical tools for Stitt’s cultural production as well as our analysis.

Stitt performs Trickster but dialogics helps to reveal and explain the function of the role. There are other ways to perform Trickster and other dialogics to address. So we turn now to another artist and a slightly different kind of performance: Ann Liv Young (and her ‘dance company’).

Ann Liv Young Burns Brooklyn

Ann Liv Young does not consciously take on the Trickster role the way that André Stitt does. But she does exhibit enough traces of the critical Trickster archetype to suggest an analysis in terms of Trickster dialogics. For this artist, we will concentrate on a single infamous performance. Where Stitt’s body of work (and his fortuitous career documentation in *Small Time Life*) allows for a more expansive approach that covers multiple works, we will concentrate our attention to Young on her performance during an event titled “Brooklyn Is Burning” at New York’s MoMA PS1 space in the month of February, 2010. During this performance, Young took on an alter ego named Sherry.

Young has posted video of the entire performance to her Facebook page¹². Young's performance, though, actually begins with Georgia Sagri, who had preceded Young on the stage

pretending that she (Sagri) was unable to make it to the event, and was being replaced by a strange, slinky character named Jane (but who was actually Sagri).

She strutted around repeating mysteriously that she had an announcement to make and that her name was Jane. (Oldham, 2010)

During this performance, Sagri broke some glass that was not cleaned up before Young took the stage.

Young began her performance as her own alter ego named "Sherry." She had intended to focus her performance around urinating in a pan and auctioning it off to protest the fact that the institution had barred her from selling DVDs at the show (Davis, 2010). While Young did indeed pee in the pan, her performance took on a completely different character just as it began. As Young entered the stage, she immediately began berating Sagri for the quality of her performance. As audible in the video, amongst her first words in the performance were: "that sucked." In a clear reference to Sagri, Young continues on to ask the audience what they thought of "this performance art thing," receiving the words 'repetitive, clever, and raw' in response. To which Young responds, "I am confused, 'cuz I thought it was just plain terrible. First of all, I don't give a fuck where Jane or Georgia are. So what was going on there? Seriously, I'm confused" One

¹² Video of the performance is available at:

<https://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=361038361563&subj=570296563>

Also available on Young's Facebook page is a 'reconstruction' of the performance:

<https://www.facebook.com/video/video.php?v=386538586563>

audience member responds “Art!” To which she replies, “it’s art, that’s a great answer.” Another voice in the audience shouts, “you better be good.” To which Young replies, “I’m not, that’s why I insult people!” She then offers an apology for her behavior and claims that she “is just trying to get the energy going, have a quick dialogue.” At this point Young appears to enter into her normal performance mode, asking her assistant to pick up her coat and asking the audience what they “think about the whale,” meaning as becomes clear shortly after, the killer “whale at Sea Word” who had recently killed a woman.

Also at this point, Sagri’s girlfriend (at least according to the captioning in the video) yells, “eat my pussy, bitch,” drawing out the vowel in the final syllable for effect. They exchange “fuck you” and Young continues asking the audience about the whale. She pushes on the question, receiving rowdy and random answers from the crowd. Young exclaims, “you guys are a wild bunch here tonight so instead of talking to y’all, I’m just going to go ahead and get on with my thing.” Throughout this period of the performance there is a fair amount of audience interaction, which might be called heckling, that Young seems to have incited with her own aggressive behavior. The core action of the performance then becomes apparent as Young lets the audience know that she has a urinary tract infection before hiking up her dress and squatting over a dish.

She says, “I am just going to empty my bladder right here.” She assuages whatever crew is present that she will not get pee on their precious equipment and continues the same aggressive interaction with the crowd, although much of this is unintelligible in the video. After emptying her bladder, Young stands, reaches toward a laptop, and starts the backing track to an R&B song, Kanye West’s “Amazing,” that she

proceeds to poorly sing. After complaining about the lack of volume, she starts the song again and begins complaining about the microphone and lack of monitors. At this point, Sagri's girlfriend begins shouting "oh shit, oh shit." Young turns rapidly and responds, "oh shit. Look at you girl. You wanna fight? 'Cause I'll rip your bloody ass right in half in front of everybody and we'll have big blood splattered walls. Wouldn't that be some art for PS 1? Wouldn't that? Don't fuck with me girlfriend, I'm in a bad mood today."

Young turns back toward her performance space and asks her assistant, "would you just keep her away for me? I'm serious." Then she begins the song again. She only makes it a few bars before stopping and noting that "this song doesn't work very well without the monitors. So I'm gonna improvise and try and be a little creative. Inspired by y'all. Okay? That's okay. Express yourself. That's what an art gallery is about. Freedom of expression. And you know what, it doesn't seem obvious because I feel like everybody. You know what...you guys really inspired me. I'm gonna do this. This is fabulous." As Young turns around to start a different song, Sagri calls out "you're shit." Young responds, "That's okay. I don't mind if you call me shit. You know I really don't. I really don't. As a matter of fact, excuse me." Here Young begins to remove her frumpy turquoise dress a couple of feet in front of the crowd. The song becomes clear, it is Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas is You." Young, completely naked save her blonde wig, lays back on the ground and as the song moves past the introduction, as the beat begins, she spreads her legs and begins masturbating furiously while singing along. This only lasts a few seconds.

Another body briefly writhes with Young on the floor and she stands, still singing, to bop around the space. She quickly stops and yells "bring me my shoes." We

find out later that she has been cut from the broken glass left on the floor from the previous performer. Young keeps up the act, singing a couple more bars before stopping the song. Young believes that Sagri is no longer present and says, “I hurt her feelings. She left? I didn’t mean to upset her that much. She left. Okay. I didn’t mean to do that. I didn’t mean to upset her that much. Alright, so let me just put my coat back on real quick” which she does, leaving her lower half uncovered. “How much time do we have” she asks her assistant, “5 minutes. Okay. Great. Okay so that wasn't my intention. That was rude of me.” The audience responds with giggles and laughter. Then Sagri yells with an increasingly agitated tone, “you’re so fucking easy. You bitch. So easy, easy. You fucking bitch. Easy. Easy. Easy. Fuck you!” Young responds, “Listen. Listen. Listen, sweetie.” Sagri yells, “fuck you you skank. Shit. Shit. Shit.” Young offers a calmer voice, “listen. Deep breath. Deep breath. This is an art museum. It is really about freedom of expression. Okay. I have blood on my leg. Aren’t you happy? I have injured myself. I pay 80 dollars a week for therapy. Maybe she should, she should, ah, look into that.”

Young is still walking around naked from the waist down, sporting a faux fur coat from the waist up. She asks, “T. Can you hand me my shoes? And where my, where my clothes go? Hey, mind handing me that? Just toss it. Gimme one sec. I’m’a finish up.” A man in the audience asks a predictably vulgar question, “did you come?” To which Young blithely responds, “I did not.” As the audience begins to laugh the room goes dark and the microphone is cut.

Young calls out without amplification, “excuse me, what just happened.” A male voice, likely the same from moments before, shouts, “Hey! Turn the lights back on!” Young exclaims, “you guys are really trying to mess me up. I don’t give a flying fuck if

the lights are off. You guys are trying to sabotage my show. Well it ain't possible. It just ain't possible. Go on and bleep your, go ahead and bleep your poonanny. Okay. Last feature." Young continues performing in the darkened room. "Give me my mic, I need my mic. Okay. Come on sound guy. We've only got five minutes left." The crowd shouts and jeers. Young asks, "Come on, seriously, is there something wrong?" There is some hemming and hawing as someone tells Young, "there's no power." She replies, "Um, there's no power. That's okay. That little, that little European girl went and pulled the plug. Didn't she? That's okay, though. 'Cause you know what? We can withstand the pain. Because you know what? Art is sometimes about confronting women and other people that are not as strong as me and you. Okay. You know that's right. So what I'm gonna say is that she needs an attitude adjustment. Just because her show wasn't as developed as mine is doesn't mean she's gotta get all angry with me. Okay. I've had people attack me before in a show. I was kinda waitin for that from her. I was kinda waiting for that from her. I was kinda hoping she'd hit me 'cause then I could take her with a lawsuit. Right? 'Cause she's got money to get over here from Europe. Ain't that right? So listen. We were gonna try and sell DVDs today here but they said we couldn't. Please be quiet. I'm almost done. If you guys want to buy a DVD, Thomas will be outside on the corner. Which streets?"

She figures out the streets and names them before stating, "now thank God I don't have my address on my website. 'Cause that European twit she probably come after my booty. Right? And I got a kid! Okay listen. Thank y'all for coming here tonight. I definitely have a bad cut on my foot and my leg and I poked myself in my vagina with my nail. So I would think she would be feeling good right now. Okay. If you have any

questions or concerns or criticism or feedback about my work for me and Thomas please email us 'cause we take everything into consideration. Y'all have been fabulous today. I'm sorry I could not do my full show for you 'cause it would have been a lot better than this lazy mess. You guys can come see us in Sweden March 20th through March 25th. Okay. Thank y'all so much."

The crowd begins to cheer and applaud. Young yells out again, "wait. One more thing y'all. One more thing. This." She holds up the dish with her urine in it. "This is for sale. 1000 dollars. Does anybody want it?" The video goes dark as the camera appears to be aimed toward the wall or the ceiling. Then there is a smacking sound of the dish bumping into something and spilling urine. The crowd responds with emphatic cries of 'oohh.' Young and Thomas leave the room with the video still running behind them. Only once they are in the hallway does it become more visible. Young asks Thomas whether he thinks Sagri might really attack her. The video ends.

On the surface, it may not seem entirely fair to use "Brooklyn is Burning" as a measure for Young's performance as Trickster. But there is a good reason for doing so. It should be clear by now that I am not attempting or claiming to make judgments about quality of art or even, to a large extent, its success or failure. We are, on the other hand, trying to explore the communicative value of the work, particularly in terms of both Trickster and dialogics. To that end this incomplete performance, wildly out of everyone's control, offers an ideal site for analysis. Once the performance began to spin out of control, which happens the moment it begins, we have a crack in the façade of performativity. Instead of her planned actions, we get Young here in her rawest performative state; improvising, working with and against the crowd, interacting with the

prior performer, and still attempting to express her main points and ideas. This reveals a kind of ingrained performativity that exceeds the relatively scripted boundaries of much performance art.

In Trickster terms, the script is the first boundary that Young breaks. Had the performer before her not been there, she would not have started with the same visceral aggression. This break from the scripted nature of performance also reveals the second boundary that Young breaks: politically correct artistic courtesy or put differently, propriety. Whether her actions were appropriate or not did not concern Young. She felt the need to offer her own scathing critique of Sagri as an entrance into her own performance. In the process she completely disregarded the implicit norms of a performance space, upset Sagri (and her girlfriend), and set the tone for the remainder of her piece.

Where Stitt breaks out of the gallery space and effectively turns the world of Northern Irish violence into his own stage, Young concentrates on the gallery as a space of ‘freedom of expression,’ a refrain which she repeats throughout the performance. While she has subsequently also challenged the boundaries of the gallery by creating what she calls ‘The Sherry Truck,’ a mobile art space, at this point Young remains locked into the institutional frame. Rather than disregarding the gallery, she uses the space as a forum for her own radical expression. While the same could be said of all performance art that happens in similarly sanctioned spaces, Young’s violent aggression stands apart from most other performance artists. So Young breaks at least two boundaries that could contribute to her performance as a Trickster: the script and the implicit norms of the museum institution.

By breaking those boundaries Young offers a two-fold critique of what freedom of expression actually means. First, she reveals what might be called the tyranny of the script. This is different than the idea of breaking the fourth wall. Even though Young diverges from the script, she still completes her main goal of peeing in the dish and trying to sell it as art. At the same time, she allows improvisation and situational awareness to begin guiding her behavior. Thus, the script becomes of secondary importance to the meaning that Young creates in the performance. It is precisely that loosening of the script that allows her to break the other boundary of propriety.

Like Stitt and others, Young has made a career of breaking the boundaries of propriety. Instead of simply challenging norms of subjectivity or things like identity formation, Young takes aim at institutional limits on behavior. Within those limits, one simply does not begin a performance by telling the previous performer that she sucked. In doing exactly that, Young dislodges the norm. This creates a tension unique to performance. If, for instance, a visual artist were to offer a critique (even one as virulent as Young's) of another visual artist's work, it would be considered somewhat normal, petty perhaps, but still normal. Indeed, critique is a crucial part of the artistic process. Yet when a performance artist engages in essentially the same act it becomes offensive and potentially subversive. So in breaking this boundary of propriety, Young reveals a hidden restriction of voice. Critique is only acceptable under certain institutionally sanctioned conditions. Beyond those conditions, the voice of critique is effectively silenced.

The question remains whether Young's border breaking carries the Trickster spirit. Clearly the entire performance became focused on manipulating her relationship to the previous performer, to the audience on hand, and to the gallery space. Yet it does not

seem as if Young expresses, even implicitly, Trickster's Quixotic utopianism. Her boundary breaking only offers a relatively tired critique of the gallery space, continuing a long trend in western art that we also see in André Stitt nearly forty years prior. In short, Young does not reach beyond the gallery space to address wider systems of injustice and therefore does not exhibit the utopianism that grounds Trickster figures. Her entire critique is focused on the art world and her own place within it. While this is an imminently valuable exercise for the progression of art, it does little to address oppression and injustice beyond the institutional legitimization of voice.

With this in mind, it will still be valuable to discuss Young through the remaining elements of the Trickster archetype to see where else she may fit and where she may not. In terms of ambiguity and liminality, Young's use of an alternate persona does create an interesting ontological question. Like Stitt, taking on a different persona challenges the stability of identity. Unlike Stitt, Young does not offer any sort of reconciliation. Stitt directly questions how institutional forces guide and control subjectivity. Young, on the other hand, appears to use Sherry as a shield, protecting her from the audience and the institution. This also reveals a lack of liminality. Young's transition into Sherry does not challenge the stability of identity; it is an extra layer of protection behind which Young can hide. Furthermore, it is Sherry that becomes revealed throughout the performance. It is Sherry who masturbates, who bleeds, who hurls insults and threats while Young remains safe behind her protective veneer. Young's appearance as Sherry does not carry over into the audience. Whatever liminality does occur in the transition from Young to Sherry and back remains within Young's own corporeal boundaries.

Regarding the particular tactics of performing Trickster, Young exhibits shape shifting in taking on an alternate persona. There is also some humor in her performance, although it is more the kind of humor that results from an uncomfortable situation, the giggle that masks the gasp. Yet this is not the kind of self-deprecating humor commonly shown in Trickster tales. Contrary, Young's humor comes almost entirely at the expense of another performer and never at herself. She even turns her injuries into vocal complaints, missing the opportunity for some better jokes. Duplicity is also absent. Young does not speak with one voice and mean with another. Instead, she is relatively didactic, both in her criticism of Sagri and in her approach to the sale of her DVDs. Her attempt to sell the urination dish is intended to be a critique of restrictions placed on artist sales at the event. But it is a relatively forced statement that doesn't draw the audience in as much as it beats them over the head. Moreover, such a statement is concentrated on the self. Rather than addressing the situation of others, Young's act concentrates on her own ability to profit from the show. While that could be metonymically extended to other artists, Young denies such a reading by insulting the other performer. So even though Young offers a salient and important critique of the museum establishment, she does not offer liberation to either the other artists in the same situation or to the audience.

Turning to the cultural roles performed by Trickster figures, Young appears to be both culture hero and stumbling buffoon. She almost literally performs stumbling buffoon; she uses and damages her body, she humiliates other people, and in the process goes far toward humiliating herself. Meanwhile, Young is also culture hero because she forces the audience, the museum, and ultimately the art world to reconsider the boundaries of propriety from within officially sanctioned spaces. But it stops there.

Young does not exhibit a critical concern for any wider systems of injustice than the restriction of her DVD sales. So even though Young can be read as breaking boundaries and as performing Trickster's overarching cultural roles, she does not perform Trickster. Rather, she performs a caricature of Trickster that exhibits similar qualities but ultimately offers no critical utility. This should not be taken as a criticism of the quality of her art or her message. It is merely to say that she does not fit well into this critical cultural role. Turning to a dialogical analysis, without the Trickster complication, still offers a useful standpoint for criticism.

Like Stitt, we will take the overall performance as the utterance. Young clearly intends to initiate a conversation. She says exactly that at the beginning of her performance. What's particularly interesting about the conversation, though, is that she seems to want it to stop. She says that's she's just getting warmed up by insulting Sagri and tries to move on. Yet by releasing her utterance to the audience it quickly escapes her control. She tries repeatedly throughout the performance to regain that control but never quite seems to get a handle on it until the power is shut off.

It is telling that Young regains control over her performance precisely when it totally escapes her. For it is only after the lights go out that she gets a handle on the rowdy audience and they pay her closer attention. Also telling is that she again loses control, offering a firm conclusion but then trying to add "one more thing" in putting the dish up for sale. Selling the dish was supposed to be the purpose of her performance, making a statement against the restriction on artist sales (Davis, 2010). Yet this final point gets lost in her having released the audience from the performance with her 'closing' words. Because of this incompleteness, the bowl of urine appears gratuitous. This

may be just what Young wanted. She, perhaps unintentionally, began her performance by relinquishing control over the conversation that she started. While there were other mitigating factors, like the technical difficulties, she could only regain control over the ‘dialogue’ after the power was cut, after her control was completely lost.

In considering Young’s performance as an utterance unto itself, we can learn something about control over dialogue and, by extension, control over voice. Clearly Young does not consciously intend to relinquish control over the dialogue, which is proven by her repeated attempts to regain it. At a different level, relinquishing control fits within her overall intention. If her point really was to protest the restriction on artist sales, a form of institutional control and a needless restriction of voice and freedom of expression, then a complex way to make that statement is to completely lose control within the performance space. This also extends to Young. She not only loses control over the audience but she loses control over herself; she is unintentionally cut by left over broken glass, she threatens to beat up Sagri’s girlfriend, she doesn’t even get to have an orgasm.

Young’s performance represents a challenge to both the institutional voice and equally important, the individual voice. Where Stitt questioned the formation of identity, Young questioned the power to speak, the conditions under which voice can be had, and the conditioning of that voice – all by creating the conditions for her voice to be lost. Since voice does not exist in solipsistic isolation, it raises the next dialogical step of intertextuality.

There are two different ways that we may figure the intertextuality present in Young’s performance. The internal approach would discuss individual aspects of the

performance, the urine, the Mariah Carey song, the masturbation, and tie them to previous notable performers like André Stitt or Annie Sprinkle. While that would be extremely valuable for art criticism or art history, there is another way to figure Young's intertextuality for cultural criticism, one that requires a bit of boundary breaking on our own part. Rather than limit our consideration of intertextuality to particular aspects of this text, we may extend our limits to include the immediate space and the audience. That is to say, instead of simply considering connections to other existing communicative artifacts or artworks, we may also consider the intertextuality of the performance space itself, the historical conditions of production. There is an intertextuality in the performance that creates manifold dialogical connections between Young, Sagri, the audience, and the museum.

Beginning with Sagri, we see Young entering into a conversation about the quality of her art. Regardless of any intrinsic value to the work, Young explains that she simply did not like it (Davis, 2010). Such virulent distaste reveals a vested interest in creating and maintaining a dialogue about freedom of expression overall, particularly within institutional borders. As David Velasco explains:

In making trouble, Sherry ostensibly gets to choose the style of trouble she's in, and an insult from her, in this sense, is simultaneously instigation and investigation, its illocutionary force functioning as a test (as a child tests a parent). All feedback to the Sherry system simply engorges it, makes it louder and stronger. (2010, p. 2)

Sagri played into Young's "critical Sherry trap" (Velasco, 2010, p. 1), her visceral and verbally abusive response fueled Young's expressive vehicle. Rather than turning that

dialogue toward the repressive forces that were preventing her from maximizing her profit (a somewhat problematic telos in the first place), the entire performance became focused on Young's critique of Sagri.

Velasco (2010) mentions that it is difficult to tell when and where Sherry's failures are designed or at least semi-intentional. Her difficulties with the monitors do appear somewhat disingenuous while watching the video. Whether that is the case or not, though, Young's interaction with Sagri clearly takes a wrong turn. So much so that the power was cut. The question then becomes whether or not that turn was really 'wrong.' Perhaps the interaction makes exactly the right turn, one during which Young gets the opportunity to have her cake and eat it, too – where she can criticize another artist and simultaneously transform the ensuing chaos to her advantage.

Even if at the surface level of the utterance we have a performance spinning out of control, when we take into account the intertextuality of drawing in Sagri's performance we may come to a different conclusion; that there can be a measure of control even within something that appears so far out of hand. Young can be seen as intentionally driving her performance out of control in order to make a larger point about voice within the institution. Such a reconciliation is not a dialectical synthesis. That would suggest too much of a fortuitous confluence of moving parts. Instead, we have a dialogical process in which different moving parts, Young, Sagri (and her girlfriend), audience, and the museum, collide, interact, and remain in a dialogical tension without ever coming to a proper dialectical synthesis.

Similar dialogical processes occur between Young and the audience as well as the museum institution. There is a constant dialogue with the audience throughout the

performance. Young questions audience members directly, asking what they think about Sagri and the homicidal Sea World orca. Furthermore, she doesn't let the audience 'heckling' go unanswered. Contrary, she responds to nearly every audible audience remark in her own characteristically aggressive manner. Again, this interaction does not result in a dialectical synthesis; audience and performer do not transcend the gap of 'otherness.' They remain locked into a dialogical interaction from the time she enters to the time Young leaves the performance space. In terms of intertextuality, the audience literally became part of Young's performance. She drew in their random remarks, repurposed them to her own ends, and venomously spit them back.

Young's dialogue with the museum is less concrete. If her performance does aim to critique needless restrictions on freedom of expression (as manifested in barring DVD sales) then cutting the power puts a clear end to the dialogue. Even if the power was cut, as was claimed, either for audience safety or to prevent interference with a simultaneous Marina Abramovic book signing (Johnson, 2010) does not particularly matter. The end result was an effort to silence Young. Where Young uses her interaction with the audience to her advantage; her dialogue with the museum becomes an underlying guide for the entire performance. Having discussed how Young's performance forms an utterance and how that utterance brings in the external elements of Sagri, the audience, and the museum to create a unique sort of intertextuality, it remains to connect those conclusions to wider cultural patterns through the final dialogical step of chronotope.

Internally, from within the utterance, Young manipulates time and space like most other performance artists. Both Young and Stitt make different uses of the institutional space. Where Stitt turns away from the institutionalization of artwork altogether, Young

radicalizes its inner workings. Still, both disregard normative institutional imposition. They turn their performance spaces into dialogical experiments wherein dramatically different kinds of conversations can be broached and sustained. At the same time, their spaces remain bounded within their temporal contexts.

Turning to the chronotope of her performance, perhaps it is Young's misfortune to not live in a situation akin to 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland. Such a dramatically violent period of history begs for complex artistic responses. It is not that there are no critical issues for Young to address; it is that she chooses to focus this particular performance mostly on the subject of her personal relationship to the art world and not on wider critical issues. Nor is this to say that Young lacks critical facility or utility. It is to say that in consideration of its internal elements, this particular performance remains locked in a relatively limited or insular discourse.

If we look beyond the internal chronotope we may come to some different conclusions. As mentioned in terms of the utterance, Young's performance raises a much broader and more critically oriented question of voice and access. In line with Foucault (1994), institutions like the museum or gallery that purport to provide access to art and free expression can often function to limit that expression. By acting, even implicitly, as gatekeepers and sanctioning agents such institutions strictly control cultural production. In this context, Young expertly manipulates those sanctioning agents. The result is both liberatory and restrictive.

By criticizing Sagri, Young steals away the sanctioning power of the institution for herself, turning herself into the arbiter of 'good' versus 'bad' art. This could be seen as a profoundly liberating act. It pilfers authority. But it falls short because Young (unlike

Stitt) does not complete the transference of that authority to the audience, physical or metaphorical. So rather than truly challenge institutional power, Young simply adds another layer, further restricting access to 'free expression.' Even though she feints in the other direction by asking the audience what they think of Sagri's performance, she does not truly enter a dialogue. Instead she uses both the time and space available to her as her own critical platform. Still, this may not be a foregone conclusion because the performance started a firestorm in the art community about whether or not her performance was appropriate. So even though the internal chronotope of Young's performance remains restrictive, the consequences of that performance created a wider discussion. It is in this wider discussion that we can see the external chronotope emerging.

Looking beyond the internal workings of her performance, Young reveals a surprisingly conservative and conservatizing message. On the surface, she appears to liberate both expression and critique from institutional constraints. But at the same time she recreates her own kind of normativity. While recreating normativity has long been a primary goal of critical theory and grounds the behavior of Trickster figures, the new normativity that Young creates mainly serves to sanction her own self; it fails to sanction the opinions and input of others. In a unique reversal of Trickster's duplicity, Young obscures consent behind a veneer of dissent. She manipulates the postmodern episteme of democratized resources and expanded voice to position herself as a new authority figure, one whose claim to authority is purchased through shallow appearances of radicalism. Thus, if we take the postmodern episteme as the external condition of historical production, of chronotope in the largest sense, we see in Young a deeply reactionary

response that fails to expand voice and access in favor of invectives like “go ahead and bleep your poonanny.”

To summarize Young’s performance in terms of Trickster Dialogics, we have determined that she does not perform Trickster because she lacks a connection to systems of injustice beyond her ability to profit from her performance. Like Stitt, the utterance is the performance itself. Young’s intertextuality mainly draws in discourses from the immediate context of the gallery, especially Georgia Sagri’s performance that had preceded Young’s. She also draws in the gallery’s restriction of voice and DVD sales as a form of expressive freedom. Her chronotope relates to a complication of the postmodern episteme. Instead of democratizing resources, especially things like freedom of expression, Young positions herself as the arbiter of quality in art. Her insistence on free expression is belied by her attempt to denigrate Sagri. Even as they use many of the same performative devices, Young and Stitt reveal dramatically different means and ends of performativity. To further complicate, and simultaneously complete, our case studies of Trickster dialogics, we turn to one more artist, one who bridges the gap between Young and Stitt, one who exemplifies performing Trickster.

Steven Leyba Curses The Nation

In 1997 an artist named Steven Johnson Leyba and his ‘musical’ group USAF (United Satanic Apache Front) was invited to perform at the otherwise private 50th birthday party of a high profile San Francisco political advisor named Jack Davis. Perhaps it was a joke. Or perhaps it was a vindictive maneuver on the part of some jilted staff member. In either case, the subsequent performance would reach the cover of the

New York Times and challenge, or perhaps establish, the limits of radical performance art.

In attendance at this party were a number of political figures, including then Mayor Willie Brown, the district attorney, and the county Sheriff as well as several members of the San Francisco 49ers football team. Much has been written about this performance in the popular media, including CNN, the Washington Post, and the London Times (Leyba, 2001, p. 120). Most of that discussion focuses around the boundaries of propriety in the context of a political event. Journalists and critics were openly questioning the depths of depravity to which the San Francisco political establishment had descended. It is not my intention to enter into this discussion. What we are concerned with here is whether Leyba performs Trickster in this particular work and how we may then conduct a dialogical analysis.

Video of this performance is readily available on YouTube.¹³ It consists of two related parts. First is what Leyba called the *Invocation To Curse The Nation*. During this portion of the performance, Leyba, who is of Apache descent, entered the stage in a self-made headdress. After he turned his back to the audience, a dominatrix named Mistress Izabella cut a four-pointed Apache star into it with a scalpel. She then urinated on the open wound and collected the mixture of blood and urine in a bowl. Leyba drank the mixture before reciting an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence and then a curse on the United States. He claims in his book *Coyote Satan America* (2001) that he “cursed the United States and the politicians and the [San Francisco 49ers new] stadium deal in

¹³ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvEZOQa4Kdg> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nnSe77tveNw>

the name of my ancestors and Satan” (p. 120). Like Young, Leyba’s microphone was cut in the middle of the speech and he was asked to leave the stage. Leyba then found Jack Davis and convinced him to let the performance continue. Leyba explains:

I wasn’t about to finish with the ‘Apache Whisky Rite’ without explaining why I get sodomized with a whisky bottle. I said, ‘Alcohol has fucked up my family for seven generations – my father, his father and so on. Old number seven, the Apache Whisky Rite. If alcohol is going to fuck me, it’s going to fuck me in the ass. (p. 120)

At that point he handed a bottle of Jack Daniels to a poet named Danielle Williams. She put it in a strap-on type dildo harness that Leyba made expressly for this purpose and sodomized him with it. It is only a little ironic that one of the most salient media critiques of this event came from Saturday Night Live’s regular sketch titled “Headline News.” They noted that “San Francisco was shocked – when they found out the bottle was not recycled” (Leyba, 2001, p. 20).

Clearly the borders of propriety are being crossed in this performance. More accurately, those borders are shattered. Not only does Leyba’s performance push the limits of bodily presence but it also literally pushes the limits of political accountability. As he explains, several San Francisco politicians would deny having anything to do with Leyba, who was participating actively to defeat a ballot measure that would fund a new stadium for the 49ers with taxpayer dollars on contested and possibly Indian land (2001, p. 120). Stitt and Young have given us the opportunity to discuss the boundaries of propriety in detail. Continuing in that vein would reveal similar results. So a more productive border to consider here is that between art and politics.

Even though there are explicit political currents in Stitt's work and implicit ones in Young's, neither goes so far as to use art in such a directly political way. Not only does Leyba actually curse the United States for its abhorrent treatment of Native Americans but he even addresses specific municipal ballot measures. He then goes on address one well-known means of keeping Indian populations marginalized: alcohol. This differs from most performance art, which, when it attempts direct political statements, does so in more artful and less blatant terms. Yet didacticism is an effective device for this particular performance. Being cut and urinated on, for instance, is an obvious metaphor for the treatment of Native Americans at the hands of Anglo-European invaders and colonialists. It is a direct representation of the damage caused by the ideology of manifest destiny. It is important to recall here that manifest destiny suggested that God had given the United States to Anglo-Europeans and that Native Americans were a pest to be exterminated with extreme prejudice. It is for that reason, amongst others, that Leyba's curse is specifically Satanic; it is an immediate form of resistance to the religious colonialism that preceded and followed the physical invasion of what is now the United States of America.

So Leyba's curse is an explicitly political act that breaches the boundaries of purely artistic expression. Leyba does not allow the audience to come to its own conclusions; his point is too important to be left open to chance interpretations. It is not that he crosses the boundary between art and politics as much as he smashes the two discursive forms together. Art becomes an explicitly political statement while politics becomes a target of artistic expression. Such an explicit message challenges the Trickster element of ambiguity. Leyba does not take on a different persona like Stitt or Young. He

is on stage as himself, as a Satanic Apache, a fact for which he makes no apologies. He does not hide behind his persona like Young. Nor does he take on the character of anything beyond himself as Stitt does. Instead, he stands naked and bloody on the stage, reflecting back to the high profile audience members their complicity in systems of injustice, their guilt. In that way, Leyba does instill a peculiar kind of ontological ambiguity, one that differs from the kind instilled by Stitt. Rather than calling into question the very identity of audience members, Leyba is attempting to force audience members (and let's remember that we are not talking about an average gallery or museum audience) to think about their guilt in perpetuating the exploitation not just of Native Americans but the citizens of San Francisco and the nation as a whole.

Whatever ambiguity there is in Leyba's performance is subtle but still critical in nature; and he accomplishes this critical aim precisely by not being ambiguous himself. The liminality present in this performance is similarly subtle. Leyba does not turn liminality inward in an effort to engender it beyond his self. Rather, he literally yells for change – straight to the faces of the political establishment. We also find another useful complication of liminality in this overtly political act. In terms of the stadium deal, Leyba is calling for no physical change at all. He is demanding that the stadium not be built, that no transformation be made. In order to achieve that physical stasis there must be a change in attitude. It should be mentioned here that the ballot measures did pass and the stadium was supposed to be built but never actually was. According to Leyba, “whether you believe in art, magic or curses is beside the point, [the curse] worked” (p. 121). Even though the success of that curse does not demand any sort of liminal transformation, we are still left with a trace of liminality in the effort to change attitudes.

Ambiguity and liminality are present in Leyba's performance but they are not as obvious as Stitt makes them. Still, they reveal a critical spirit, a Quixotic utopianism which extends to the changing relationships between San Francisco's citizens and politicians. Even if Leyba does not directly address the citizens, his overt transformation of the performance space into a political platform reveals a desire to reconfigure the relationships between citizen and representative, as well as between artist and politician.

Turning to Trickster's particular tactics of subversion, we again have relatively shallow expressions of humor, duplicity, and shape shifting. Indeed, there is no notable shape shifting present at all. We could, perhaps, consider the cutting and the headdress as part of a physical transformation. But such a reading would be forced. Humor is similarly absent in Leyba's performance. There is nothing terribly funny about it at all. As with Stitt's *Dogs In Heat*, it is hard to imagine an audience, no matter how twisted, finding humor in so much performative violence. There remains a measure of deeply dark humor to be found in the overall situation, the writers on Saturday Night Live clearly did. But like shape shifting, making that claim for this performance would not only be specious but unnecessary.

There is a hint of duplicity in the whisky bottle part of the performance. When Leyba exclaims that alcohol has destroyed his family relationships he is directly indicting the audience in perpetuating that injustice. Yet he turns that metaphorical fucking into a literal one. In so doing, Leyba reclaims power from the American establishment. He turns the damage caused by alcohol into an ostensible act of pleasure. This could be read the other way as well. The sodomy could be seen as an analogy for rape, which would also support the same critical message but with a different degree of agency. The former

reading takes power away from the forces of American imperialism and oppression while the latter capitulates to it. Thus, in keeping with the overall critical spirit of this performance, it would be better to accept the former reading while acknowledging the possibility of the latter.

Conjoining these elements of the Trickster archetype again culminates in the overarching roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Leyba's performance can be reconciled with the role of stumbling buffoon if we consider both its innate corporeality and overall critical intent. The corporeality of the performance reaches beyond mere inclusion of the body. For Leyba, corporeality is oriented around actively damaging the body. This damage is then metonymically transferred to the audience. Looking at it this way reveals that the damage of imperialism and oppression is not limited to the self, it is not even limited to the Native American community, it damages the entire social body. This is the critical spirit that Young lacks and which turns her performance away from the Trickster role. This is also the point at which Leyba's performance of stumbling buffoon becomes a performance of culture hero.

Unlike Stitt, Leyba does not attempt to provide his audience with the tools of identity formation and agency. Contrary, Leyba's viscerally vicious critique of his immediate audience attempts to deconstruct their identities as politicians. Leyba, then, takes the opposite approach from Stitt. He is culture hero not because he attempts to provide the tools of culture to the people but because he tries to take those tools away from politicians. In this way, Leyba clearly performs the Trickster role.

To summarize Leyba's performance as Trickster, we have the foundational act of crossing borders within the spirit of Quixotic utopianism. Also within that spirit is his

fostering of a unique kind of negative liminality. And even though ambiguity is somewhat lacking in his performance, that only reveals the flexibility of archetypes, as opposed to eliminating him from the canon of Trickster figures. Similarly, Leyba's performance reveals relatively shallow connections to humor and shape shifting. Humor is more present but not as overt as it often is in Trickster tales. Taken as a whole, as a complete utterance, Leyba's performance does take on the twin roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Importantly, there is also an implicit sense of Quixotic utopianism and relationship manipulation throughout the work that exemplifies how Trickster figures attempt to make the world more habitable.

Having established Leyba as a Trickster figure, it remains to situate his performance in terms of dialogics. Like Stitt and Young, we will take the performance as a whole as the utterance. We could, if we so desired, divide its two aspects to take them separately or we could even get more granular and address each individual act. But for the purpose at hand, it would be best to consider the performance as an undivided whole, which we will collapse together under the single name *Apache Whisky Rite*. Doing so allows us to figure the performance as a distinct and unique communicative act, one that can be reduced to its overall message while still allowing discussion of its individual tenets. This will also allow for a continuation of the comparisons between the three different case studies discussed here.

Apache Whisky Rite is not just an act of performance art; it is Leyba's grand entrance to the political stage, an explicitly political act that transcends the boundaries of art. It is his voice in a multifaceted conversation, a response to systems of injustice explicitly perpetuated by the immediate audience and implicitly by the indirect audience,

American society at large. Figuring the utterance in this way allows us to consider the performance as more than an act of resistance to domineering normativity. It is also an act of freedom. Contrast this with Young's performance. Where Young emphasizes freedom of expression and capitalizes on the voice she is offered as an artist, she simultaneously functions to foreclose that freedom, at least for Sagri. Leyba, on the other hand, takes that freedom back. Like Young, he violates the boundaries of propriety, but in so doing he attempts to reclaim the power of voice for himself and for all marginalized people. This is why *Apache Whisky Rite* is such a significant critical performance. It is an explicitly political statement about the treatment of Native Americans and all people marginalized by American society and religious dogma. That he does this within the context of a political soiree attended by members of the political establishment is crucial.

Like all art, the *Apache Whisky Rite* relies on context. The Jack Davis party was not the only time Leyba performed the piece. He also did it at Burning Man in 1996. And while the Burning Man performance was significant, it had vastly different connotations under the auspices of a so-called 'art-festival' being held on Paiute Indian land. At Burning Man this same performance carries an implicit message of disrupting power, domination, colonial malfeasance, and crass consumerism. At the Jack Davis party this same message becomes a virulent and violent accusation of guilt. It is important that both Leyba and Young had the power cut in the middle of their performances. Both utterances are so disturbing to the respective institutions in which they are held that they were literally silenced.

Leyba's accusations also reveal the intertextuality of his performance. Like Stitt and Young, we will not concentrate so much on what elements Leyba brings in from

other artistic discourses. Instead, we should concentrate on how he draws in elements of existing critical conversations as well as the situation at hand. At this point it would be useful to consider the ‘Satanic’ aspect of *Apache Whisky Rite*. In using a Satanic curse, Leyba attacks not just the United States but its implicit religious groundings. Even though America is not an explicitly Christian nation, there is no ambiguity regarding the Christian nature of manifest destiny and the use of that religious institution to justify horrific crimes committed against Native Americans, not to mention the other forms of oppression rooted in dogmas of belief.

The Satanic element of the curse is not just a shock tactic. It is a profound statement against a hidden ideology of American oppression. At the same time, such a dramatic statement has the real potential of falling into a kind of novelty trap that could immediately foreclose any serious consideration of Leyba’s ideas. By using such a controversial symbol Leyba runs the risk of audiences discounting his message before it is even received, of marginalizing himself into the ghettos of extremist discourses. Yet this would also mark a kind of Quixoticism that aligns well with the Trickster role. Indeed, Leyba self-identifies as a Trickster in his book, using Coyote as a metaphor for radical creativity and putting that metaphor into actual critical praxis.

There is a significant connection between Trickster figures and Satan that becomes clear in the intertextual dimension of the *Apache Whisky Rite*. As the bible reveals, Satan can be read as a Trickster figure. It is he, after all, that attempts to persuade people into abandoning God’s path in favor of more worldly, more bodily, pleasures and pursuits. This is the reason that Satan makes an effective metaphor for resistance. Leyba is not trying to turn people into Satanists, he is certainly not proselytizing, but he is using

the antithesis of Christianity, literally the Anti-Christ, as a weapon – or as Stitt might say, a hammer – against systems of oppression that have very real roots in Christian dogma. Looking deeper into the Satanic element of Leyba’s performance reveals a critical sensibility that is intrinsically related to his Indian identification. This also leads us to his chronotope.

Chronotope extends beyond the immediate context of the utterance and its intertextual dimension to couch a discursive artifact in its wider socio-cultural context. It draws on the prior steps to offer a more complete analysis of both a text’s meaning and its place in culture. Leyba’s internal chronotope mirrors that of Stitt and Young. He manipulates the time and space of the performance space to convey a message. In each of these different performances, though, we have different external chronotopes. It is here, at this analytical level that we can make more sweeping judgments about the meaning of a text. The different chronotopes evident in the performances from Stitt, Young, and Leyba address different historical conditions of production. Leyba is not just attacking the San Francisco political establishment: he is attacking the entire American way of life and its hidden spiritual justification.

Leyba’s critique clearly extends beyond his immediate audience. It would not be overstating the matter to say that he turns his own body into a sweeping critical formation, one that addresses multiple sources of injustice and oppression but that can all be conveniently subsumed under the heading of The American Way. While Leyba’s chronotope articulates with American colonialism, consumerism and spiritual domination, it specifically reflects the historical context of the 49er’s stadium bill and Leyba’s own experiences with the alcoholism that he suggests was thrust upon Native

Americans as a system of control. This has implications for the Trickster role itself. Hyde (1998) suggests that the way of Trickster, the way of Coyote, is a way of no way. For Tricksters, there cannot be an American Way because that would immediately define a preferred mode of behavior at the expense of all others. It would immediately squash all creativity of living and force people into predefined paths of normativity and pathological homogeneity.

The way of no way denies such predefined paths. We can now start coming to some conclusions about a Trickster chronotope. At least one aspect of a Trickster chronotope is that of no chronotope. This is to say that critiques of injustice are timeless, placeless, and always relevant. This also calls forth the reasons that Young's performance does not live up to the Trickster standard (without making any other judgments about the quality or meaning of her work). Young does not address injustice beyond the art world. Her chronotope in the "Brooklyn Is Burning" performance is very specific. While there is room for interpretation, her attack on the museum institution is overwhelmingly oriented around her self.

To summarize the dialogics of *Apache Whisky Rite*, the utterance is the sum total of the performance. Using the performance as the basis of the utterance allows for addressing the overall message and meaning of the performance while still allowing granular discussions of its internal machinations. While it is not the only way to figure intertextuality, considering the Satanic element of the curse on America allows us to read the performance as a particularly virulent and violent attack on the American Way, its manifold systems of oppression, and its spiritual groundings. This works to open Leyba's

critique beyond its immediate and obvious political context to the very foundations of a western culture that has historically exploited and oppressed everyone it could.

The internal chronotope of the performance is similar to Stitt's and Young's; manipulating the performance space and their related institutions. Externally, Leyba levels a scathing accusation of guilt toward all systems of injustice. Yet he does so in a much different way than most other critical formations. Alongside the accusations, Leyba internalizes that same guilt, taking on the punishment of domineering hegemonies and turning it into an act of pleasure. In this way, Leyba's Trickster dialogics offer a complex and profound critique of his socio-historical contexts, including American society, western cultures, and the complicity of all people in reifying and supporting systematic oppression.

Chapter 6

IN/CONCLUSIVE: TRICKING FUTURITY

Trickster Chronotope

As we have seen, Tricksters can be found in several different communicative contexts. The first three chapters of this dissertation reveal that Tricksters can be found from the inter and intrapersonal communication described by Thomas Frenzt (2008; 2009) to the mass mediated communication exemplified by Q. Falling within that continuum is the discipline of performance art, which includes the individual performance artists that I have used as case studies. Through those case studies we have discovered an important fact about performing the Trickster role: simply performing certain aspects of the Trickster role does not demand its presence. The archetypal elements are heuristic guides for preliminary determinations about whether someone or something performs the role. However, without the critical spirit of Quixotic utopianism and the underlying telos of manipulating human relationships, the elements of the archetype do not necessitate a Trickster's presence. This is the reason that Ann Liv Young can be said to represent most of the archetypal elements while still falling short of performing Trickster herself. This is also the reason that André Stitt and Steven Leyba perform Trickster even in the absence of certain archetypal elements.

Two complications in my determination of who performs Trickster should be addressed before continuing. First is the gendered dimension of my assessment. It will be noted that Young, who I determine does not perform Trickster, is also the only female case study. This should not be taken to mean that performing Trickster is limited to masculine figures. Young does not perform Trickster because she lacks a critical spirit

that articulates with systems of injustice beyond the gallery institution. While Stitt also addresses the institutionalization of art, his work serves to provide greater access to the cultural tools of artistic expression. Young, on the other hand, appears to restrict that access. Rather than democratizing power, she concentrates it in her own hands. So it should be emphasized here that Trickster's border crossing ambiguity includes its gendered dimension and that corralling it into a binary gender system violates the critical spirit. For example, Scheherazade performs Trickster in literature by using duplicity to escape her relegation to a patriarchal social structure. In actual practice, Audre Lorde has been implicated as a Trickster precisely because of her ability to unhinge binary gender patterns (Provost, 1995).

The second complication is about self-identification. Both Stitt and Leyba self identify as Tricksters. The question could be asked, then, whether or not people who claim to be Tricksters can truly embody the role. They can, as long as they remain subject to the same archetypal elements and critical spirit as other, less conscious, Tricksters. For instance, Thomas Frenz (2008; 2009) consciously employs Trickster characteristics in his relational communication. Indeed, it is this same allowance for self-identification that opens space for Trickster to be used generatively. Restricting Trickster to the realm of the unconscious would not only force it into another pathological box, it would also replicate categorically binary patterns of un/consciousness.

Trickster's presence can be determined by methodically applying its archetypal elements in conjunction with its overall spirit of Quixotic utopianism and underlying telos of manipulating relationships to a cultural artifact. The archetypal elements are the foundational behavior of crossing borders; the twin ontologies of ambiguity and

liminality; the particular tactics of duplicity, shape shifting, and humor; and the interconnected cultural roles of stumbling buffoon and culture hero. In the process of analysis, each element expands from the previous step to construct (or deny) that particular Trickster performance. The most important aspect of this process is the continual connection and reconnection of the archetypal elements to the critical spirit and relational telos. Lacking those connections, the archetypal elements do not contribute to a figuration of Trickster.

We have discussed here two contexts in which Tricksters may be found, mass media and performance art. Within those contexts, we have discovered Q to be the closest to the archetypal pattern. This is because of his mediated presence. Q is free to operate in a climate ideal/ized for his antics. Like the mythologies, Q is a totally fictional character. He lacks all physical restrictions, disregards all social mores, and, importantly, lives in a universe free of the kinds of oppression, repression, and domineering normativity that condition the performance artists that we have also discussed.

Stitt and Leyba reveal the complexity of performing Trickster in the ‘real-world.’ They are unavoidably conditioned by external circumstances that Q lacks. They address concrete issues of oppression and injustice with which they have direct experience. In the process, their performances can be addressed through a dialogical framework that connects internal aspects of the performances to wider critical discourses. This is where Young falls short of the Trickster archetype. Her performance does not connect to wider systems of injustice and oppression. This does not mean that her work is any less meaningful or important. It simply means that she does not reflect the Trickster role in

the performance discussed here. It is possible that another, much deeper discussion of Young's various different works could reveal different results.

It is also possible to reconcile Young's performance with wider critical discourses by making some metaphorical stretches. We could, for instance, suggest that her abuse of Sagri and attempt to sell the urine bowl represent extreme dissatisfaction with the sanctioned art world, particularly as it is institutionalized by museum and gallery spaces. Such dissatisfaction could fit into Ahmed's (2010) framework of utopian discontent. It could also be Quixotic in the fact that her performance spins wildly out of control. Yet even after making those moves, we would still be left with a relatively conservative and conservatizing message against the postmodern episteme. In contrast, Stitt expresses the exact same dissatisfaction with the institutionalization of art but responds by returning it to the people, democratizing both art and its appreciation. In so doing, Stitt provides cultural tools to people beyond the institution. Young, on the other hand, configures her own self as the final arbiter of art. Rather than providing the tools for expression and art appreciation to less privileged others, she grabs hold of them and hangs on tightly, refusing to share.

Even though Young does not perform Trickster, the dialogical framework still provides a useful method for addressing the conversation that she enters and maintains. This leads to the meaning of performing Trickster in the contemporary cultural environment. To address Trickster's cultural meaning, we must first consider the overall role. To perform Trickster means using the archetypal elements to reconfigure the social environment with the critical intent of improving, if not ameliorating or even outright demolishing conditions of injustice and repressive social restrictions. Put differently,

performing Trickster means using some or all of the archetypal elements to instigate social transformation. But this answer is broad and ambiguous. For a more succinct answer, we must narrow and specify our terms to a particular context. So we turn now to how Trickster is manifested in performance art.

It warrants repeating that I have chosen performance art as a site of analysis for at least two reasons. First, perhaps even more so than the plastic arts, performance art operates at a higher level of abstraction than other forms of communication. This higher level of abstraction stems from the second reason for this site of analysis: performance art is radically embodied. Live bodies are an intrinsic part of the performance art milieu. Indeed, bodies are the lowest common denominator of performance or 'live' art (Jones, 1998a). Without bodies, there can be performativity but no performance; there can be no 'liveness' (Auslander, 1999), no repertoire to balance the archive (Taylor, 2003). Tricksters are similarly embodied. They are not only nearly pure embodiments of 'praxis,' as Kamberelis (2003) suggests, they are also nearly pure embodiments of critical theory, utopianism, and futurity.

Performance art aligns neatly with the Trickster archetype, a fact that is not lost on either André Stitt or Steven Leyba who each consciously embody the Trickster role. It should be emphasized that conscious embodiment is not the most significant difference between Stitt and Leyba and Young. The Trickster role need not be consciously created; it must only fit with the archetype, spirit, and telos of Trickster figures. Since there is such a clear alignment, performance art is a natural site for Trickster dialogical analyses.

Trickster is manifested in performance artists who address systems of injustice. Stitt and Leyba both perform Trickster by crossing borders; by instilling ambiguously

liminal ontologies; by deploying one or even none of the tactics of shape shifting, duplicity, and humor; and by ultimately taking on the twin roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Stitt and Leyba do this in their own ways that address unique and contextually contingent issues. Since chronotopes are the culminating step in a dialogical method, it is through that notion that we can concentrate on making connections between Trickster performances and the culture at large. We can do this by following Bakhtin's model, if not exactly his process, and inventing a chronotope, a space-time relationship unique to the discourses at hand. Therefore, we will continue addressing the meaning of performing Trickster as well as the manifestation of Trickster in performance art by creating a relevant chronotope. In appropriate degrees, I will use the three case studies, as well as the discussion of Q, to construct a Trickster chronotope.

The mythologies reveal a figure of transformation. Wherever Trickster appears, wherever it is conjured, we see a change in the social order. Amongst other things, Coyote brings water, fire, food, pretty colors, and even death into the world. Hermes brings language and duplicity. The Signifying Monkey brings resistance to oppression. Esu and Legba bring functional dis/order. If we consider Trickster as a conglomeration of those things then we can construct a cultural archetype that appears to foment disorder and chaos but is really providing necessary tools for survival.

It may be a particularly impatient sort of mindset that sees Trickster as an agent of chaos. Trickster's chaos is not chaos at all. It is our imposition, our ascription of chaos onto the figure that makes it appear as if it simply creates disorder. Such a view is short-sighted and overlooks the fact that order can only be created from disorder. Disorder is the condition of order. Even if Trickster's only function were to foment disorder, it would

do so for new orders to be created from the reconstructed remnants of deconstructed social organizations.

This is Trickster's ultimate function, its meaning in the contemporary cultural environment: to shake up everything that we have taken for granted, to unseat our assumptions, to challenge our everything not so that it all becomes meaningless but so that meaning can be continually recreated. As Beauvoir (1976) suggests, meaning must be constantly won. For meaning to be *meaningful* it must be won in a way that enhances human agency; that improves the human condition; that attempts to lift the layered veils of ideological distortion that repress, oppress, objectify, and subjectify. Trickster helps us win that meaning by denying the stability of categorical definitions, by destabilizing social orders. This is one of the reasons that it is so important to consider Trickster as an archetype; it prevents critics and others from trapping inherent instability in a cage of concretization. Trickster's broadest cultural function is to create that instability.

André Stitt intentionally let *Dogs In Heat* get out of control. He did not need to "understand what was happening in advance" (2001, p. 31). His performance embodies the Trickster spirit by allowing that kind of 'chaos' to ensue without predetermining the outcome. Young's "Brooklyn Is Burning" performance creates a complication here. She also let the performance get out of control but she does not do so with the underlying critical intent that Stitt so clearly exhibits. This is why Stitt performs Trickster and Young does not. Like the worlds that Q creates, both performances are allowed a life of their own. Lacking the critical spirit, Young's performance comes across as more self-serving than socially liberating. Leyba's performance reveals a divided and paradoxical sense of control. On one hand, he remains entirely in control over the performance space. Even

though the power is cut and certain audience members like Mayor Willie Brown ran for the exits, he manages to complete his performance and convey his message, including his still-standing curse on the San Francisco 49ers football team. On the other hand, he does this by relinquishing control over his body to external agents. It is another person that cuts his back and another still that sodomizes him with the whiskey bottle.

Leyba's performance complicates the intersections of control and power. The control, or lack thereof, exhibited in all three case studies here is directly related to manipulations of personal and societal power structures. Because of their inherent abstraction, each of those artistic representations of power connect to their embodied subjects through processes of control. By relinquishing control to external agents, these artists create paradoxical situations of total freedom and potential personal power. Each performance creates conditions under which the artist is *free* to give their bodies over to others, thus creating order out of disorder. Disorder then becomes an orderly process, even if that order is not easily intelligible. Stitt did not attempt to foreclose the development of his artistic process. He allowed his audience to become part of its production of meaning. Leyba maintains a relatively strict handle on his performance situation while relinquishing control and power over his body to convey a critical message about American hegemony. Young, though, uses her lack of control as a means of self-aggrandizement. She turns her transformative potential inward and thus misses a crucial critical opportunity.

With this grounding we can begin constructing a unique chronotope, a particular way of being in the world that expands our understanding of Trickster's communicative processes. We will proceed by establishing the general precepts of freedom (and its

relationship to power), otherness, and paradox. These precepts will contribute to a more properly 'space-time' orientation of chance and synchronicity, which will then lead to an often overlooked but crucial aspect of Trickster's transformative efforts: improvisation.

The question of control leads to deeper questions of power, path, and freedom. The ability to choose one's path is as much a kind of power as the ability to deviate from predetermined paths is a kind of resistance. In these terms, freedom lies in having or taking the power to both adhere to and deviate from predetermined paths of behavior and subjectivity. Trickster will do either whenever suitable. This is because Trickster's way is that of no way (Hyde, 1998). Erdoes and Ortiz (1998) note of American Indian Trickster tales that

time and place are evoked "Indian Way." What happens in them is not measured in miles or hours in any conventional European way. A place can be "a hundred sleeps away," or "a thousand paces afar." A story does not begin with "Once upon a time" but with "Sunday is coming along" or "Coyote is walking about." The events in the story have just happened, or are even still going on. In this way the world of Indian legend is more "real" than that of white men's fairy tales. (KL 271)

While Erdoes and Ortiz limit their discussion to American Indian Trickster tales, the same could be said of most Trickster mythologies.

Trickster does not adhere to 'rational' conceptions of time and space. Everything is variable, malleable, and flexible in Trickster's world. This is the reason that Tricksters are such efficacious characters for world reconfiguration. As André Stitt, Steven Leyba, and Q reveal, Tricksters set things in motion without really demanding any

predetermined or foregone conclusions. This does not deny a *preferred* conclusion but it does suggest that such a preference is not and cannot be perfectly predetermined. So the first quality of a Trickster chronotope is total, unrestricted freedom.

Total freedom also brings us into contact with Bakhtin's chronotopes of the rogue, clown, and fool (1981, p. 158). Bakhtin explains that some of the most significant medieval literary characters, ones that eventually lay the foundations of European literature (including *Don Quixote*) connect to those three archetypal figures. There are at least two direct connections between Trickster and rogues, clowns, and fools that contribute to the Trickster chronotope. First is "the right to be 'other' in this world, the right not to make common cause with any single one of the existing categories that life makes available" (p. 159). Trickster is a quintessential 'other.' It stands outside of all symbolic orders. As a result it helps to reveal the boundaries of those orders. Leyba's performance clearly exhibits this complex and paradoxical boundary play. By violating all rules of propriety he reveals what those rules may be and thus exposes the machinations of normativity.

The second connection to Bakhtin's rogue, clown, and fool is embedded in Trickster's shape shifting. Bakhtin discusses the buffoonery triplets in terms of masks. Their "masks are not invented: they are rooted deep in the folk. They are linked with the folk through the fool's time-honored privilege not to participate in life, and by the time-honored bluntness of the fool's language" (p. 161). The masks of the fool are analogous to Trickster's shape shifting. Since Trickster's masks remove it from the order of easy intelligibility it is exorcised out of the orders that it helps to define. This is one of the reasons that Trickster's manifold manifestations can be so difficult to discern. For it is

here, in the places where meaning becomes fluid that we encounter one of Trickster's most subversive and deeply hidden masks: the mirror.

Tricksters reveal the underlying 'truths' of being while offering tools for improving human existence and experience. So a crucial function of Trickster's chronotope, of its being-in-the-world, of its quintessential otherness, is to reflect social structures back at the people who constitute them. Only after those structures are revealed can they be addressed and potentially improved. As mirrors, Tricksters dismantle our assumptions about identity and subjectivity. On one hand, they appear to reflect and thus reveal who we are as members of society. On the other hand, the mirror image is a necessarily reversed and therefore intractably distorted representation.

Trickster's mirroring masks reveal that all images are distorted; reflections and representations, critical theory and domineering hegemonies, mediated characters and real world practices alike. The practical outcome is replacing prima facie truth with a relative, functional truth. Such a conception of truth can avoid the shallow anti-postmodernist critique of total relativism by allowing for truth-value to take the place of categorical truth. This is to say that even if there are no categorical truths, no universal meanings, that truth can still be assessed by the degree to which it affects actual behavior. Truth is only true as far as one believes it to be. As far as Trickster's subjects are concerned, the masks that they are presented with are 'true' images. They react to those distorted images as if they were 'really' true no matter what any underlying 'reality' may be. This differential is crucial. For Trickster, the question is about more than simply unveiling the relative nature of ir/rational truth and its consequents of categorical definitions and positivistic certainty. It is also about consciously manipulating images and

representations to a liberatory end. Trickster, like Picasso's vision of art, is "a lie that tells the truth" (Hyde, 1998, p. 13). Such a subversive form of power is risky and Quixotic. It can be easily turned against itself. But it is a necessary risk that shows the importance of resistance to domineering hegemonies regardless of consequence.

Tricksters stand squarely within variable conceptions of truth without being subject to their rule. They are in truth but not of truth, which aligns with Bakhtin's suggestion that representations of the rogue, clown, and fool "portray the mode of existence of a man who is in life but not of it" (p. 161). Being in life but not of it marks a reflective otherness that paradoxically defines while challenging subjectivity. It also highlights the importance of paradox.

Paradox is most evident in Trickster's language games. Indeed, paradox is embedded in the very idea of language games, in the dialogical relationship between the presence and the lack of rules. Establishing rules requires social agreement. Trickster shows that rules are made to be broken no matter how deeply they are hidden in tradition, custom, ritual, ceremony, or certainty. The paradox exists in the fact that in order to break rules, there must be rules. The critical outcome of this paradox is the revelation that rules are both socially constructed and continually subject to change. By breaking rules, Trickster exercises freedom. In so doing, it also reflects their necessity and inherent instability.

Chance is an important agent of change. It binds Trickster's freedom, otherness, and paradox together into a particular spatio-temporal relationship that neatly encapsulates Trickster's cultural function. Chance clearly relates to control; and releasing control is a paradoxical act of freedom. Stitt and Q both release control over the worlds

that they create. Leyba, though, relinquishes control over himself while retaining control over his overall performance. In each of these cases we see the Quixotic risk of putting one's self, one's fate, one's meaning into the hands of others. It takes a chance of losing control over the outcomes of social processes. At the same time such chances reflect practices of freedom. It may seem counter-intuitive for relinquishing control to be an act of freedom. Yet in order to consciously relinquish control (as opposed to having it stolen away by domineering hegemonies) one must not only have it in the first place but must also have the power to choose to give it up.

Relinquishing control turns fate over to chance, which is then free to work through its synchronistic web of relationships. The happenstance of whoever or whatever may be around at that particular moment in time becomes part of the process of creating meaning in that environment. Jung calls this process of happenstance meaning construction as synchronicity. Trickster and synchronicity are tightly bound through their chance manipulations (Combs & Holland, 2001). For Jung, synchronicity helps to fill the gaps in scientific rationality by ascribing meaning to chance occurrences. He states: "There is no rule that is true under all circumstances, for this is not a real and statistical world...we need a complementary principle for a complete description of and explanation of nature" (2011, p. 61). Synchronicity offers an opportunity to ascribe meaning to events that have no other 'scientific' connection. Whether such a connection is rational, valid or accurate is beside the point. The point is that people ascribe meaning, and therefore truth-value, to seemingly chance occurrences whether it is warranted or not.

Even though Jung discusses the Trickster archetype and synchronicity in different texts, he does not connect the two himself. Combs and Holland (2001) do make the

connection but their argument is rather weak. Trickster's relationship to synchronicity is more complex than its possible role as an 'unknown' variable or an agent of disorder, as the authors suggest. Trickster can also be seen as an active consciousness or a mythomorph of meaningful disorder. This is to say that the chance occurrences to which meaning can be ascribed can be taken out of the order of coincidence and placed into an order of conscious Trickster manipulations. Creating chance then becomes the purview of Trickster figures and not just a confluence of external factors.

At another level, Tricksters consciously take advantage of external factors not to ascribe but to actually manufacture meaning. This suggests that Tricksters may choose which masks to wear in order to advantageously manipulate conditions of happenstance. It is the happenstance connection between time and space that directs how Tricksters can manipulate their environments and the social relationships therein. Another name for this process is improvisation.

Improvisation is more than simply making things up. It is a deeply embedded and embodied response to chance conditions. Improvising is as much a function of listening as it is of playing. Revealing the importance of self-reflexivity in cultural processes, listening crucially includes listening to one's own self. An improvised performance is built on the chance synchronicity of space and time, of text and context, of identity and otherness. Improvisation is a profound manipulation of space-time dialogical interrelationships, of chronotope, that operates in immediate contexts to create long-term consequences. It is immediate in its reaction to contextual factors. It requires cultural knowledge so deeply embodied that planning is no longer necessary. Whatever 'planning' that is manifested in improvisation is a reflection of that deep embodiment.

For Trickster this means a deeply embedded critical spirit that still reflects a longer-term mindset of utopian futurity.

It is not just that Tricksters go around inventing things; they actually react and respond to external conditions in order to improve the socio-cultural environment. This is why Trickster improvisations are such important cultural tools. It is up to Tricksters, to conscious manipulators of chance through improvisation, to choose which masks might be most effective and when. This is Trickster's genius. They may often speak for the powerless but they are not powerless beings. Rather, they exercise a different kind of power than the forceful and violent physical and normative impositions related with the term. Tricksters know that they cannot win by force alone. So instead of physically fighting structures of oppression they foster and manage synchronicity, improvising against a background of chance occurrences to subvert domineering normativity from within.

The Trickster chronotope constructed here has five qualities. The first three are total freedom, quintessential otherness, and paradox. The fourth quality, chance, is what binds the others together. Chance is imbued with a paradoxical kind of freedom that helps direct how Trickster may perform its role of manipulating social structures and normativity. It also offers the direct connection between space and time that grounds the Trickster chronotope as a spatio-temporal phenomenon. Chance culminates in improvisation. Each of those qualities is dialogically related and inextricably interconnected with the others.

Trickster's particular way in the world, its spatio-temporal existence, its chronotope, culminates in a necessarily distorted but enormously productive metaphor for

total freedom. Q exercises his freedom to start humanity down a path of growth and inner exploration. André Stitt exercises freedom to reveal the slavery of identity. Steven Leyba exercises freedom to dismantle the domineering hegemony of American neo-colonialism and political hypocrisy. Neither of those Trickster performances goes so far as to reconstruct the worlds they deconstruct. Instead, they leave the future open to chance, suggesting without dictating infinitely variable futures.

Futurity is a chance configuration. The future cannot be predetermined. It can only be imperfectly guided. It is unquestionably conditioned and disciplined by extant social processes. But it is not and cannot be a foregone conclusion. Futurity is a cognitive framework that privileges what may come over what already is. Since what may come is relatively unpredictable, it is open to Trickster's freely improvised manipulations of chance, mask, and paradox.

For Trickster's freedom to be liberatory it must also carry the critical spirit of Quixotic utopianism in manipulating human interrelationships. Trickster's distinct contribution to utopian futurity builds on that spirit, deploys the archetypal elements in various degrees, and exhibits the qualities of the Trickster chronotope. Taken together, this all culminates in a sense of utopia that denies deterministic visions of what the future should be in favor of what the future could be, one that actively exploits synchronistic chances to dismantle domineering normativity in favor of social liberation, one that emphasizes the importance of futurity while paradoxically destabilizing its very foundations.

Trickster's ultimate function, its meaning in the contemporary socio-cultural environment, is to reveal the infinite potential of better futures. Whenever humanity has

the gall to demand certainty in social and cultural processes, Tricksters are un/consciously conjured.

The Trickster chronotope that I have constructed here is open to revision and expansion. Like Bakhtin (1981) suggests, such discussions are never, and never should be complete. A figure that lives as Trickster does, under constant transformation and manipulation, should not be so foreclosed. Yet this does not prevent us from coming to heuristic in/conclusions that open avenues for further dialogue.

In/Conclusive

Trickster dialogics offers a unique and robust framework for cultural analysis. It draws on the critical Trickster archetype as well as Bakhtinian dialogics to create a programmatic but not deterministic methodology that can suggest whether or not a text or a discursive artifact reveals the work of a Trickster while couching the role in wider social, cultural, and historical contexts. The critical Trickster archetype that I have designed and employed here also alludes to another form of archetypal analysis. Instead of identifying and seeking out the traits and tactics of a particular archetypal construct, the different elements of an archetype can be constructed to build on and expand each other. This process then forms a series of methodological steps that help both to determine the presence of an archetypal construct and its function as a cultural formation. Dialogics, then, helps to bring archetypal constructs out of their individual contexts to connect with the culture at large.

Since the fundamental behavior of Trickster is to cross borders, the process of analysis begins there. Once the borders being crossed are determined, we may turn to the ontological states of ambiguity and liminality. Then we turn to Trickster's common

tactics, duplicity, humor, and shape shifting. Only after those constructs have been discussed can they be subsumed under the roles of stumbling buffoon and culture-hero. It is this last stage of analysis that reflects a Trickster's cultural function. Yet at each stage in the process we must reconcile those archetypal elements with two underlying ideas that must be present in a Trickster performance: the critical spirit of Quixotic utopianism and the manipulation of human relationships. Even though archetypes are an inherently flexible formation and even though they are not intended to make categorical definitions out of anything, Trickster performances must exhibit these latter two mitigating factors. This is the reason that they are crucial to while remaining apart from the archetypal elements.

After determining whether or not Trickster or another kind of dialogic is present, it remains to complete the dialogical part of the analysis. At this stage we use the constructs of utterance, intertextuality, and chronotope to couch the text or performance in its socio-cultural and historical contexts. Utterance is a means of bounding the text but it leads to discussions of context. Intertextuality can address the ways that a text relates to other texts. It can also address immediate context or how a performance draws in and critiques or comments on its immediate surroundings. So the final step of a dialogical analysis is chronotope, which connects text and context to wider social, cultural, and historical conditions. It is in this latter step that we also find connections to our primary term, in this case Trickster, to create a particular kind of chronotope and thus a particular kind of *dialogics* that reveals deeper socio-cultural operations in terms of spatio-temporal interrelationships.

There are potentially endless types of dialogics. I have opted to keep the two methodological stages relatively discreet in order to keep that possibility open. If, for instance, one wanted to create a punk rock dialogics the first step would be to determine a punk rock archetype or another kind of standard, it would not necessarily have to be *processual* – although that would be helpful, and then connect that with the dialogical framework as I have done here with the Trickster archetype.

Tricksters reconfigure the world by performing the roles of culture hero and stumbling buffoon. Dialogics helps to determine how those roles act as agents of transformation. Bringing this analysis full circle, it becomes apparent that the tenets of a primary term in a dialogical analysis are related to the elements of that particular chronotope. This is not to conflate archetype with chronotope, they are not the same thing. But together they can help determine and elucidate conventions that can be applied, reapplied, used and misused to a critic's advantage. Such a flexible and in/conclusive framework is, I believe, exactly how Trickster would have it.

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