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Abstract

Discusses the Trickster and Fool figure in world folklore and mythology as well as selected fantasy literature.

Additional Keywords

The Fool in literature; Tar Baby motif; Trickster figures

Devil, Trickster and Fool

Tim Callahan

Fool, shaman, mage, culture-hero, devil, demiurge; lying at the crossroads of so many characters, themselves often archetypal, the Trickster is hard to define. One seeks a fixed point from which to begin. Yet the central characteristic of the Trickster is that he (usually, although sometimes she) has no fixed nature. Just when we've decided he's a villain, he does something heroic. Just when we're sure he's a fool, he does something intelligent. His one constant characteristic is appetite. He is governed by a desire to immediately satisfy his bodily urges, both gastric and sexual. Often, therefore, he is a phallic deity. This characteristic is common to both the Olympian Hermes and the Winnebago Trickster, Waktjungkaga, who keeps his incredibly long penis rolled up in a box he carries on his back. And yet Waktjungkaga at one point turns himself into a woman, marries a chief's son and bears him children. Loki, the Norse Trickster, turns himself into a mare to lure away a giant's stallion. Likewise, in Japan, the fox, a trickster in the Orient as well as Europe, is fond of taking the form of a beautiful young woman. The fox-women lead men into sexual liaisons that can be anything from a mischievous hoodwinking to a vampire-like draining of the victim's vitality.

Though the Trickster is a trouble maker and often cruel, his behavior is naive rather than mean. His cruelty is that of a child, quite alarming at times, but not based on systematic viciousness. It is helpful, when trying to understand the Trickster, to keep the image of the child in mind. Jung considered him a representation of an undeveloped, as yet unsocialized individual, someone with immense potential and vast energies who has not yet learned to focus or master his great gifts. As such, he, in his naivete, does what others would never dare, blithely committing sacrilege and violating taboos. This aspect of the Trickster is the source of such fool-heroes as Parsival.

Both sides of the Trickster's personality show through in many creation stories. He is the helper who actually fashions the details of the world the Creator has imbued with life and energy. In the process he usually does a few things wrong; thus the world is less than perfect. His understanding is flawed and his selfish jealousy interferes with his handiwork. The Demiurge of the Gnostics, thinking himself the true Creator, when he is in reality only the agent of creation, is another example of this aspect of the Trickster's persona, as is Lucifer.

Yet in mythic systems throughout the world, it is the Trickster who steals fire from jealous, selfish guardians and shares it with all. For his transgressions he is often bound and tormented. Loki, for causing the death of

Baldur, is bound beneath the earth and writhes in agony, causing earthquakes when the venom of a serpent drips on his face. This image is strikingly like that of Satan cast into the pit. But the fire-bringer Prometheus is also bound and tormented for his much more noble transgression. That he suffers for the sake of humanity, interposing himself between mortals and the wrath of the gods, makes him a Christ-figure. Thus both savior and destroyer spring from the Trickster's personality. Often, this dichotomy is a strain on the thinking of people intolerant of those aspects of divinity which refuse to conform to a neatly rationalized world. One way of dealing with the strain is to separate the incongruous aspects of the Trickster into two different personalities and make them twins. Prometheus, whose name means "forethought," is the twin of Epimetheus, meaning "afterthought." Prometheus carried the functions of culture-hero and savior, while Epimetheus was the fool. This division of the Trickster's personality may suit those who can't tolerate ambiguity in their gods.

The Trickster, as an aspect of deity, does make it hard to view the divine entirely in terms of worshipful awe. His behavior is often too much that of the fool for those of us raised in a Judeo-Christian culture to in any way equate with any sort of god. He talks to the parts of his body as though they were separate entities. Waktjungkaga tells his anus to guard his recent kill while he sleeps. The anus tries to wake him up by breaking wind when a fox steals the food, but Waktjungkaga sleeps through it. When he does wake to find his food gone, he punishes his anus by burning it.

As one can see from this story, scatological jokes tend to accrue to the Trickster. Common to many Amerindian tribes is the story of the laxative bulb. Trickster comes upon a talking bulb that says, "Whoever eats me will defecate." Trickster thinks this is nonsense and eats the bulb. Not long after, he begins to break wind. At first he makes light of this, but his flatulence becomes so powerful that each blast propels him several feet. Finally, the bulb's prophecy comes true and Trickster is buried in his own excrement. Even the kitsune, the elegant and bewitching fox-women of Japan, are not above this crude level of behavior. Upon having their deceptions discovered and their true form revealed, they often break wind as they make their escape.

Fortunately for him, the Trickster's ability to come back from the dead saves him from suffering the full consequences of his folly. When, in a Sioux story, Coyote is flattened by a boulder he has offended and is mistaken for

a rug by a white rancher, he spends the night puffing himself up into shape again. The next morning the man's wife tells him, "I saw your rug running away." This sounds like a cartoon, and, indeed, cartoon characters such as Wiley Coyote and Bugs Bunny are modern day Tricksters.

Often Trickster stories have two parts in which he is by turns crafty and foolish. Either he does something clever to gain an advantage then does something stupid to lose it, or he does something stupid, gets himself in a fix, and can only get out of it by a clever trick. The story of Wakdjunkaga burning his anus is an example of the former. Earlier in the tale he had killed several ducks through trickery.

For an example of the later type of tale, consider the Skidi Pawnee story of Big Turtle's war party. At the beginning of the story, Big Turtle, having decided to go on the warpath, spurns the services of such formidable warriors as the fox and the hawk. Instead he chooses a number of unlikely comrades-in-arms, including a hairbrush, a flint knife and an owl. Predictably, his raid on an Indian village fails miserably, and he is captured. Now the Indians try to decide how they are going to dispose of their captive. One says to throw him into the fire. "Fine," says Big Turtle, "then I'll kick burning coals on everyone." The Indians decide that won't do. One of them suggests throwing him in a cauldron of boiling water. "Fine," says Big Turtle, "then I'll splash scalding water on everyone." So the villagers try to think of something else. Someone says, "Let's throw him in the river." Big Turtle cries out that he is afraid of the water and begs them not to. His captors gleefully toss him into the river, and he swims away.

A similar story is told by the Ilocono tribe of the Philippines. In it, a monkey and a turtle take turns tricking each other until the turtle finally kills the monkey, chops him into small pieces, cooks them and sells the meat to the monkey's kin. After they have eaten, the turtle can't resist telling them what they have dined on. The outraged monkeys capture him and threaten to take a hatchet to him. The turtle laughs at them and says that his shell is proof against that. One of the monkeys suggests throwing him in a river. The turtle feigns terror and escapes, as he did in the Pawnee tale.

The identical ruse the turtle¹ uses to escape in tales told by tribes as widely separated as the Pawnee and the Ilocono is evidence not only of the universality of the archetype, but of the ancient origin of these folktales. The turtle's ruse is, of course, the same one used by Brer Rabbit to escape into the briar patch after having gotten himself stuck to the Tar Baby. The Tar Baby story is one of the great universal Trickster tales. According to Aarne Antrim's *The Types of Folktale*, Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature* and Funk & Wagnalls *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, Tar Baby stories are found in several localities in Europe (among them Spain, Latvia and Iceland), in India, the Philippines and Japan, as well as

Africa and the Americas. In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Campbell alludes to some 267 versions of the Tar Baby story.

In one variant of the story there is a drought. The animals get together and decide to dig a well. Rabbit refuses to help, saying that he can lick the dew off the ground. The animals dig the well without him and strike water. Each morning, however, they find it dry. Someone is stealing their water. So they decide on a stratagem to catch the thief. They make an image out of tree sap (pine tar, rubber tree sap etc.) and set it by the well. The next night Rabbit, who is of course the thief, comes upon the image and asks it what it's doing there. Its failure to answer enrages him. He punches and kicks it and is found stuck fast in the morning. After giving him a drubbing and a warning, the other animals let him go. This variant is told by both the Yoruba of Nigeria and the Cherokee. In a similar story, Anansi, spider Trickster of the Ashanti, is caught and humiliated after stealing nuts from the king's orchard.

The Tar Baby story of the Biloxi Indians of Mississippi is a great deal like the Uncle Remus tale. In it, the well belongs to the Frenchman (white men often being the butt of the joke in Indian Trickster tales). Having caught Rabbit, the Frenchman considers what he will do to him. Rabbit begs his captor to do anything but throw him into the briar patch.

In another common variant, Trickster escapes by duping another animal into taking his place. This variant occurs in an Angolan story as well as tales told by the Muskogean Creek, the White Mountain Apache and the Mayans.

As we see in the Cherokee, Yoruba and Ashanti tales, the tar baby motif doesn't always fit the pattern of foolishness redeemed by cleverness. In some cases the story is only how a thief is humbled. A story told by the Kawaiisu of South-Central California is a good deal more grim than is usual for tar baby tales. Coyote hears the pinon pine call him by name. Angered that his name is known by the pine (who thus has power over him), he tries to kill it, is stuck to its pitch and held fast until he dies. Both this story and the Angolan tale, in which the rabbit is stuck to an image not ordinarily sticky but enchanted by a witch doctor's spell, put one in mind of Theseus stuck to the Chair of Forgetfulness in Hades until Heracles tore him free — minus much of his backside.

What is the meaning of the Tar Baby story and why is it so important in Trickster lore for so many peoples? Possibly it's just an amusing tale, but I believe that the Trickster's failure to distinguish between an image and a real person is a cautionary story for all of us. He fails to see beyond the facade, is taken in by a manikin. This is what happens to Wentworth in Charles Williams' *Descent into Hell*. The crude automaton Simon Magus fashions to hold the souls of Lester Fumival and Evelyn Mercer in *All*

Hallows' Eve also has a Tar Baby quality. It is intended as a material trap and has the appearance of a doll made of India rubber. In the Yoruba and Ashanti tar baby stories the image that snares the Trickster is a woman made of rubber tree sap. In tar baby stories, the failure of discernment that snares souls in the two Williams novels, leads to an entanglement with scatological overtones. Trickster's failure to look beyond style and see the substance leads him to be mired in it, much as the soul of Evelyn is mired in the automaton. It's clear that Evelyn's willingness to settle for this parody of a body involves a degradation. Likewise, in the Tar Baby stories, Trickster's entanglement is not only dangerous, but humiliating.

Given such an impressive and specific universality of motif and folklore, one is faced with the question of why this unsavory character is so persistent and popular. Summing up the general nature of the archetype, Joseph L. Henderson, in C. G. Jung's *Man and his Symbols*, writes:

Trickster is a figure whose physical appetites dominate his behavior; he has the mentality of an infant. Lacking any purpose beyond the gratification of his primary needs, he is cruel, cynical and unfeeling.²

Dr. Paul Radin, who studied the hero cycles of the Winnebago Indians extensively, found four stages of the development of the hero. Starting with the Trickster cycle, the heroes of each succeeding cycle are less infantile and more heroic. Rabbit succeeds Trickster and is himself succeeded by Red Horn and the Twins. Since the Trickster is an early, undeveloped hero, and since he has since been superseded by heroes who are far more sophisticated and noble, why does he persist? Who needs this fool, this scoundrel? Well, the answer to that question is: all of us. The Trickster has several very important functions that make him indispensable to societies everywhere throughout the ages.

These functions will become more clear as we consider some human Trickster-heroes such as Odysseus, Till Eulenspiegel, Robin Hood and the many fools or jesters of myth and literature. At first, one may question classing someone as calculating as Odysseus with the likes of Wadkunkaga and Coyote. But Odysseus, in his adventure with Cyclops, fits the motif of cleverness undone by foolishness that is so characteristic of Native American tricksters. Having blinded the Cyclops and having hidden his men under the sheep to make their escape, Odysseus can't help gloating. As Cyclops hurls boulders at his ship, the hero calls out, "Cyclops, if any mortal asks you who put out your eye, tell him it was Odysseus, sacker of cities." Polyphemus, now in possession of his tormentor's name, calls upon his father, Poseidon, to avenge his loss, and the rest is epic.

Like all Tricksters, Odysseus is a liar. In fact, he takes a particular delight in lying. When the Phaeacians have put him ashore on Ithaca and he meets Athena, who is disguised as a shepherd boy, he improvises a whole new persona and life story for her benefit. Athena laughs,

caresses his cheek fondly and tells him what a wonderful liar he is. Yes, the Trickster does charm us, even when we know he's lying. When I was in the Navy, I had a friend who was in many ways a prime representative of the archetype. He told plausible lies extemporaneously. His best lie by far involved a car he bought for one hundred dollars and decided to keep on the base. To keep a car on base for an extended period, one was supposed to have proof of ownership, a valid California driver's license and car insurance. Having none of these, my friend kept thinking of new and ingenious ways to keep the car on base for a year and a half on temporary, ten day passes. True to the Trickster's tendency to push things too far, he went to get one last pass just four days before he was to be discharged. That, of course, was when he was caught. The officer who caught him was stern in passing judgment. "All right, buddy," he said, "this is your last ten day pass!"

My friend's ability to twit the military bureaucracy with relative impunity is one key to the Trickster's appeal. Like Till Eulenspiegel, he showed up pompous officials to be fools. Like Robin Hood, he bested those far more powerful than he. This is the role of the clown and the jester, indeed the role of humor in general. The child who cries out in honest innocence that the emperor is naked also fills this role. Being a child, he is allowed to be honest. So too was Lear's fool. Likewise, the fool in Pushkin's *Boris Goudimov* is allowed to publicly accuse the Czar of regicide and is the only one who can see that the triumph of the false Dimitri at the head of his Polish troops spells disaster for Russia. The Russian fool, the yurodivy or "fool-in-Christ," was not so much a jester as a madman, another type who is traditionally allowed to tell truths that would be death on anyone else's lips.³

Another reason for the persistence of the archetype is as a personification of the apparent capriciousness of nature or God. In his introduction to *The Trickster* by Paul Radin, Stanley Diamond compares the Book of Job and an African tale of a woman whose family is arbitrarily destroyed by Leza, god of the Baila of Zambia. Vainly searching for Leza to make him tell her the meaning of his actions, she travels the world bemoaning her fate. The only response she gets from the people she meets is that everyone has problems. Leza, the Besetting-One "sits on the back of everyone," they say, "and we cannot shake him off!" The woman never finds God and eventually dies of a broken heart. The point of the story is that failure to accept the hard realities of the world results in a destruction of the spirit.

To primitive peoples, whose world view did not include the idea that the behavior of a deity should conform to human concepts of justice, this story and its moral made perfect sense. God was most likely a Trickster. Certainly the world wasn't in any way just, or, for that matter, even comprehensible.

Yahweh, as conceived of before the Babylonian Captivity, is certainly capricious. This is particularly true of his behavior in the Book of Job. His destruction of Job's

possessions, family and health for the sake of what amounts to a wager is on the same level as the acts of Leza in the African tale. But the societies from which the two stories sprang were far different in outlook. To a people whose world view is that God is good, simply accepting the caprice of a Trickster is unthinkable. Job, like the old woman, demands an answer of Heaven, but the expectation of an ethically based belief system is that Job is right to think that the world is comprehensible and that even God has to do the right thing. Although Yahweh does speak to Job, he gives no answer that is comprehensible in human terms. God's response to Job's demand is poetic and majestic, but consists mainly of contrasting Job's insignificance with God's greatness. There really is no justification of Job's sufferings at the hand of God, but in the awe inspiring vastness of the cosmos, the whole affair is too minor to matter. Thus, the idea that we are too finite to comprehend the whole picture puts us in much the same position as the old woman in the African story. If we can't accept a Trickster role for God, then we will be broken in our attempt to make the universe fit neatly inside our minds.

In a way, the Trickster functions as a primitive society's analogue to modern science's chaos theory. And again this serves the purpose of pricking the balloon of self-satisfied arrogance. For chaos theory says specifically that if there are too many variables, one may understand a basic pattern of such natural phenomena as weather, for example, but one cannot predict it with unerring accuracy. In other words we aren't great enough to put the universe into a neat and comprehensible little box.

There is one more function that the Trickster fulfills, that of shaman, or walker between worlds. This is particularly true of Raven, Trickster of the Northwestern tribes. To the degree that the shaman functions in a mental state somewhat skewed from that which is normal, he shares certain traits with madmen and fools. It is often the function of the Shaman to jolt those being initiated into the mysteries out of their normal level of consciousness and to force them to look face to face at the spirit world. This direct look at the cosmos is incompatible with logical, day-to-day life. To break through the dullness of consciousness that usually protects people from intrusions of wonder, the shaman often used disruptive pranks and intimidation. By upsetting and overthrowing mundane orderliness, the shaman keeps the spirit from stultifying. He is not so different from a jester whose satire keeps us from buying into a smug and narrow world. The Trickster disrupts our lives and won't let us settle into a routine that, however comfortable it might be, is really a rut.⁴

The role of provocateur and disrupter gives the Trickster an important place not only in mythology, but in modern fantasy and science fiction as well. Wagner's *Ring of the Nibelung* is something of a bridge between mythology and modern fantasy. In this 19th century synthesis of Teutonic epic, there are three major characters who repre-

sent aspects of the Trickster archetype. They are Loge, the jester-thief, Wotan, the mage and demiurge, and Siegfried, the fool-hero.⁵

Outwardly similar to Wotan in his wanderer aspect, Gandalf is, of course, a much wiser and far less arrogant mage. Through *The Lord of the Rings* he is much too wise and heroic to fit the role of Trickster. However, at the beginning of *The Hobbit*, he fills the same role the shaman did in the initiation rites of primitive societies: disrupting and intimidating the initiates, forcing them to experience a world too great for their childhood to contain.

However reluctant these initiates may have been, they were at least willing to accept the ordeal. Bilbo Baggins is far less interested, and his smug, insular attitude is ripe for disrupting. When he first meets Gandalf, his opinion of adventures is, "Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!" And again: "Sorry! I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today. Good morning!" He does clearly see both the danger and the attraction when he realizes whom he's speaking to:

Not the Gandalf who was responsible for so many quiet lads and lasses going off into the Blue for mad adventures, anything from climbing trees to visiting Elves—or sailing in ships, sailing to other shores! Bless me, life used to be quite interesting—I mean, you used to upset things badly in these parts once upon a time.

Gandalf scratches the rune for "thief" on Bilbo's door, and, despite himself, the hobbit becomes a fair trickster in his own right. He bests Gollum at the riddling game, baits giant spiders, becomes a thief and gets over-bold when talking to a dragon. The riddling game is particularly noteworthy, since, like the riddling in Siegfried, it was based on the Eddic poem, *Vafthrútnismál*. In the poem, Odin wins by asking the giant, Vafthrútnir, what Odin whispered into Baldur's ear just before he lit his funeral pyre. Like "What have I got in my pocket?", it's a question his opponent can't possibly answer.

A mainstream film set in 1960 might seem an unlikely place to find a shaman with links to Gandalf and Odin, but an incident in *Dead Poets Society* is a perfect illustration of shamanic inspiration. John Keating, English professor at an elite boys' prep school, tells his students they must write a poem by the next day. As he's leaving the room, he says with a smile to a shy boy named Todd Anderson, "Don't think, Mr. Anderson, that I don't know that this assignment scares the hell out of you." Scaring the hell out of Todd, along with a fine poem, is precisely what Mr. Keating does the next day. That sequence is as fine a piece of shamanism as a modern city dweller is likely to see. Its tie to Odin is particularly striking since Odin's name is related to the Old Norse *óðr*, meaning poetry.

The aspect of the Trickster as Fool was used by Charles Williams in *The Greater Trumps*, where the Fool from the Tarot becomes a powerful figure of redemption. He also represents the central mystery of the universe. When Nancy first sees the Fool card in the Tarot deck and asks

Henry what it signifies, he tells her that it's the unknown factor. Among the dancing images, he alone is still in their midst, as though they are in orbit around him. Yet Sybil sees him moving everywhere, almost too fast to perceive, as if he were the very soul of their dance. At the end of the novel he is described as "all reconciling and perfect."

In his book on the Tarot, Alfred Douglas describes the Fool as a madman carrying the seeds of genius, one despised by society, yet who is the catalyst to transform it. Lacking proper knowledge of human society, he seems at a disadvantage. In reality he is unbiased and open to unusual experiences denied to ordinary men. This description fits all three functions of the Trickster and links the Fool of the Tarot with the Foretellers in Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*. This holy order eschews knowledge in favor of uncluttered ignorance. When the hero, Genly Ai confesses to an acolyte of the order, that he is exceedingly ignorant, the acolyte bows, congratulates him and says, "I've lived here three years, but haven't yet acquired enough ignorance to be worth mentioning."

Le Guin's work aside, science fiction might seem less likely than fantasy to welcome such an atavistic character as the Trickster. However, one notable instance comes to mind. Science fiction is filled with authoritarian dystopias. Often the hero who overthrows them is a stalwart rebel or someone who rises to the occasion, a "Little Tailor" type of hero. In his short story, "Repent Harlequin," said the Ticktockman," Harlan Ellison uses a Till Eulenspiegel type of Trickster, Harlequin, who disrupts a clockwork society by such deeds as dumping millions of jelly beans on commuters as they ride a motorized walk-way. Though he is ultimately betrayed, captured and brainwashed, he succeeds in corrupting the ultimate embodiment of the dystopia's power structure, the Ticktockman.

Being the disruptive force that he is, the Trickster isn't always appealing as a hero. He is ideal, however, as a pivotal character. This is the person, often the villain, who pushes the hero into action. The plot actually pivots on his or her deeds. In the John Hughes film, *The Breakfast Club*, the pivotal character, John Bender, is pure Trickster. The ensemble of central characters in this mainstream film are all representatives of what we might call "high school archetypes." They are five teenagers in Saturday detention who include a jock, a brain, a princess, an artist / basket-case and a juvenile delinquent — John Bender. Through the course of the film, the archetypal masks fall away, and the young people become friends or even lovers. All of them participate, but it is Bender who prods and provokes to get things moving. From the beginning he is an irritant. His behavior calls to mind that of Loki in *Lokasenna*. He insults the jock and the princess with crude sexual innuendoes and bullies the brain, calling him "a parent's wet dream." When he's not engaged in harassing his fellow detainees, he indulges in acts of petty vandalism, ripping pages out of library books and mis-arranging the reference cards in the card catalogue system. The pointless destruc-

tiveness of his acts put one in mind of the possessed Weston in *Perelandra*. Yet it is Bender who sacrifices himself that the others might escape when they've violated the rules of their detention and, as the source of the marijuana that first serves to break down the barriers between the kids, he is much like the initiatory shaman.

That this inherently primitive archetype in its many aspects can be a driving force in a mainstream film is an indication of the power it still possesses in our civilized age. The Trickster then, though he may be difficult to deal with, still has much to teach us. Modern fantasy could be both enriched and enlivened if more Tricksters were inserted into its pages to upset things. We must always remember to give him his due, for we ignore the Trickster at our own peril.

Notes

1. The turtle appears as an occasional Trickster in North America, Asia, Africa and Europe. In South America his place is taken by the frog. This is another part of the universality of the Trickster motif: the animal chosen to represent him. Rabbit Tricksters are found in both North and South America and Africa. The fox is Trickster in Europe, Asia and South America. In Africa his place is taken by the jackal and in North America by the coyote. The monkey is Asia's greatest Trickster and also shows up in Africa. Anansi, the African spider Trickster, is paralleled by Iktome, spider Trickster of the Lakota Sioux. Among the Northwestern Amerind tribes and among the Eskimos, the raven, or sometimes the jay, is Trickster. On the other side of the Bering strait, the Koryaks, a Siberian tribe much like the Eskimo, have a crow Trickster. Since the crow shows up as Trickster in an Australian aborigine story, the raven/crow Trickster may be the oldest. In South America, the raven's place is taken by the long legged vulture-hawk.
2. Consider as examples of this behavior not only the many malicious pranks of Loki, but the Havasupai story of why women menstruate. Coyote, having killed a deer, is ostensibly going to share his kill with his sister. But when she bends down to skin the deer, he flips blood up between her thighs and says, "Oh, sister, you are menstruating. Now you cannot eat meat until you are clean, after four days have passed. From now on it will happen like this to you once every month." Rabbit, culture hero of the Winnebago, plays the same dirty trick on his grandmother, the Earth.
3. As a sign of how deep is society's need to periodically express this desire to overturn vested authority, consider the medieval Feast of Fools. Despite the enmity of the church hierarchy and the pleas of popes; the people, the deaconate and the lower clergy for centuries indulged in mockery of the mass, the pope and all things sacred on or near New Year's Day. People brayed like jack-asses at a fool's mass; a boy-pope was elected and celebrated the reign of misrule, and a stench filled the church as it was censured with burning manure or old shoe leather.
4. In North America, the antics perpetrated in the Feast of Fools were paralleled in the rituals of the Koshare and other clown societies of the various Pueblo Indian tribes. The Feast of Fools is no longer with us, but in carnivals as varied as Mardi Gras and Halloween, there is an element of the triumph of nonsensical delight in the face of thin-lipped respectability. It is no coincidence that the Doo-Dah Parade, which began as a parody of the Tournament of Roses Parade, has become an institution in staid Pasadena, California.
5. Yet the temptation to banish the Trickster clearly exists. To a great degree, by the time of the Hellenistic period, Classical Greece and Rome had yielded to this temptation, not only with respect to such phallic Trickster deities as Pan and Priapus, but with other gods who represented the dark, non-rational side of life. Hecate, the terrifying hag aspect of the Triple Goddess, was denied a role in the Olympian Synthesis, while other aspects of the goddess were allowed on Olym-

pus only after they had been trivialized, domesticated and even, in the case of Athena, turned into active supporters of male dominated society. In such a system, the Trickster too was digested and domesticated. His functions were divided between Prometheus, Hermes and Dionysus. The gradual sanitizing of the Classical pantheon eventually resulted in a sterile state religion that fulfilled no human needs and was easily overthrown by Christianity. In rural areas, where the peasants still hung on to Tricksters, horned gods and the likes of Hecate, the conversion of the population to Christianity was slow, difficult and often accomplished only by force. Likewise, among American Indians, where the Trickster was still powerful, resistance to Christianity ran strong. Radin stated that members of the Peyote Rite were reluctant to give up Rabbit until his character became merged with that of Christ. Some of them argued that they had no need of Christ, since they already had Rabbit.

5. The most obvious of these is Loge, a fusion of the fire-spirit (Loge) and the Norse Trickster, Loki. In *Das Rheingold* he first tricks the gods as they begin to age with the loss of Freia, then tricks Alberich so he can be captured by Wotan. In the end, he is the only one of the divine company not basking in self-congratulatory arrogance. As the gods cross the Rainbow Bridge to Valhalla to the "Arrogance of Power" leitmotif he says with a court jester's wisdom: "To their end they even now haste, while esteeming their strength overwhelming."

In Siegfried, Wotan, as the Wanderer, acts out a Trickster/Mage role by luring Mime into the riddling game. Yet, for all his seeming craftiness and control, he is beaten by another Trickster aspect, the fool-hero, Siegfried himself. Siegfried enters the opera full of brash mischief, loosing a bear on Mime and inadvertently awakening Fafner with a horn call named, appropriately, "Siegfried the Impetuous." Yet his apparent "foolishness" serves him well. Ignoring Mime's instructions on how the sword Wotan thought to be repaired, he sees clearly that it must be made anew, not merely mended. By grinding it to filings and recasting it, he makes Nothing his sword. Originally the gift of Wotan and subject to his power, the sword had broken on Wotan's spear. When Siegfried and Wotan clash near the end of the opera, it is the spear that breaks.

Wotan's spear is an interesting ingredient in the other Trickster aspect he epitomizes, that of demigurge. Throughout the first three operas he seems a stern, but honorable judge, binding the forces of chaos to the treaties inscribed on his spear, which is imbued with the power of the World Ash-Tree from which it was carved. In the prologue to *Götterdämmerung*, however, the three Norns tell how Wotan, in hacking off a limb of the World Ash-Tree from which to carve his spear, inflicted on it a cankerous wound, which caused it to wither and die. Thus, Wotan usurped the natural order of the World Tree to create an artificial power structure based on legalistic treaties.

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Continued on page 36

And Bitter Was Their Parting That Should Endure Beyond the Ends of the World

When the feast was over, those who were to go took leave of King Eomer. Aragorn and his knights, and the people of Lorien and of Rivendell, made ready to ride; but Farimar and Imrahil remained at Edoras; and Arwen Evenstar remained also, and she said farewell to her brethren. None saw her last meeting with Elrond her father, for they went up into the hills and there spoke long together, and bitter was their parting that should endure beyond the ends of the world. — *The Return of the King*

This is a scene that I have long wanted to draw. Three years ago, I found the perfect photo reference that I felt would allow me to capture the scene the way I imagined it. But I had no desire to attempt this piece as an ink illustration. Drawing in ink has always been a tedious chore for me — it is very much like "fighting the long defeat" (as Galadriel would say). My work in *Mythlore* has continually been compromised by my lack of skill with an ink pen. So I put the idea for this subject on the back burner and went on to other things, until, at last, I decided to stop torturing myself and switched over to my favorite medium — pencil. (Since I buy my own half-tone negative screens — which are needed to print a pencil drawing — I couldn't make the switch until I could afford to do so.)

This drawing has no oblique or mysterious symbolism, no hidden meaning, and no fancy dancing in regards to composition. It simply is what it is: a painful farewell between a father and a daughter. If I were to give it an alternate title, I would call it *The Stillness of Memory*, because, in this quiet moment that will end all too quickly, Elrond and Arwen must try to reconcile the sum and meaning of their long lives together with the unbearable thought that they shall never see each other again. I believe grief finds its true depth in silence, and this is the feeling I tried to achieve when I put pencil to paper.

If Elrond seems to be missing the trademark "star" on his brow, it is for a very specific reason. Several times I lightly sketched in a slender diadem, but for some unknown reason I remained unhappy with it, and kept erasing. I could not put my finger on the problem. After sketching it in yet another time, I finally realized what bothered me about it: Elrond's diamond and silver band was *distracting*. It drew my eyes away from the faces of the characters. It simply didn't work in the overall scheme of things. Once I realized the problem, the diadem was history. I don't miss it at all now. Removing it was, artistically speaking, the right thing to do.

— Paula DiSante



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Devil, Trickster and Fool

Continued from page 34

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