

Symbols that Transform: Trickster Nature in Detective Fiction

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Introduction: Symbols of Transformation

C. G. Jung's 1911 volume finds a home in the English edition of his *Collected Works* as Volume 5: *Symbols of Transformation* (1956). This paper will argue that Jung here offers insight into symbolism that can augment and expand his notion of symbol and myth as engines of psychic transformation. While *Symbols of Transformation's* subtitle, "An Analysis of the Prelude to a Case of Schizophrenia," indicates a clinical approach, my paper will develop Jungian symbols and myth in a popular cultural form, detective fiction. It will show how detective fiction adopts the ancient trickster myth to generate symbols that re-shape modern consciousness in its relation to non-human nature.

The trickster myth itself has a possible antecedent in humans evolving through and with, the practice of hunting. For the modern urban person, detective fiction supplies the hunt and here the Jungian symbol demonstrates its potency for realigning both human nature, and humans *and* nature. As well as Jung, this paper draws on Lewis Hyde's remarkable *Trickster Makes This World* (1998) and offers case studies of two novels overtly attuned to hunting through the figure of the dog. These novels are Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902) and a recent creative response to it in Nevada Barr's *Winter Study* (2008) set among mythical and actual wolves.

Symbols of Transformation and the Relationship of Symbol to Myth

Jung has a distinctive notion of the "symbol," which has been relatively neglected by cultural and literary studies to their own detriment. He categorizes imaginative images, which includes words, into two types: signs and symbols. To Jung, a sign relates to a known thing or idea. A symbol is by contrast imbued with unconscious creativity that in essence connects the human imagination to non-human nature through its fleshly embodiment and also its structuring properties. Symbols are therefore "of the body" because the unconscious psyche has a bodily instinctual pole. Yet the body to Jung is a creative contributor to symbolic meaning making, not an over arching or limiting framework. What is vital to this notion of

the body as a dimension of symbolization is that Jung regards the unconscious as an autonomous source of potential meaning feeling and value.

The unconscious is governed neither by human biology nor by social ideas, culture or history, although all these factors too, intervene in making images. Rather, Jung hypothesizes that the existence of inherited evolutionary structuring elements in the psyche he called “archetypes.” These effectively parallel inherited instincts in animals and patternings in plants. Where archetypes participate in generating images, these same motifs acquire numinous power. They become symbols in dreams and art. When symbols constellate thematically in a group they are typically understood narratively. A Jungian symbolic narrative is a myth. Conversely, a myth is *made* out of symbolic imagery, for myth, to Jung, is a narrative form capable of shaping consciousness.

Symbols of Transformation is explicit about the psychic substance and dynamism of symbol and myth. Here Jung insists that psychically, symbols work in mythical narrative as agents of *process*, are dynamic and protean rather than serving as icons of static signifying.

The essential thing in the mythical drama is not the concreteness of the figures, nor is it important what sort of animal is sacrificed or what sort of god it represents; what alone is important is that an act of sacrifice takes place, that a process of transformation is going on in the unconscious whose dynamism, whose contents and whose subject are themselves unknown but become visible indirectly to the conscious mind by stimulating the imaginative material at its disposal, clothing themselves in it like the dancers who clothe themselves in the skins of animals or the priests in the skins of their human victims. (CW5, par. 669)

Here is Jung the structuralist who argues that psychologically, the important factor is that a sacrifice occurs, not the actuality and precise details of its cultural expression. A trickster is important for his tricks, and not so much for the specific culture or personification in which he does them. On the other hand, Jung does insist that conscious experience of culture and history will deeply affect the way in which archetypes are manifested. In the following quotation we have the definition of symbolic art as knitted from archetypal *images*, which channel the numinous and shaping power of the archetype yet construct signifying from social context. Archetypal images are always partly transcendent of culture and partly dependent upon it.

The symbols it creates are always grounded in the unconscious archetype, but their manifest forms are moulded by the ideas acquired by the conscious mind. The archetypes are the numinous, structural elements of the psyche and possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract, out of the conscious mind, those contents which are best suited to themselves. The symbols act as *transformers*, their function being to convert libido from a “lower” to a “higher” form. This function is so important that feeling accords it the highest values. The

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symbol works by suggestion; that is to say, it carries conviction and at the same time expresses the content of that conviction. It is able to do this because of the numen, the specific energy stored up in the archetype. (CW5, par. 344)

Here *Symbols of Transformation* is unusually detailed about how symbols and myth work and what they are psychologically *for*. Symbols and myth convert psychic energy. They structure consciousness. Crucially symbols and myth are the means by which consciousness changes, evolves, heals and interacts with the “other.” Symbols are operative whether that “other” comes in the form of other people, cultures, nonhuman nature or “other” forms of psyche that we call the unconscious. Symbols and myths are dynamic; their signifying is *work*, the creative force in the world of psyche, body, and nature.

Myth, Consciousness, and Cultural Forms

I am suggesting that the arts where the imagination is released, in whatever culture and whatever form, use the psychic resources that Jung terms “symbol” and “myth” in developing image and narrative. Hence there is a cross-cultural or perhaps *pan*-cultural argument about the function of symbolic forms that draw on a sense of mystery, of unknown or unknowable depths of being. However, there are also large “stories” or narrative forms that shape the consciousnesses of specific cultural traditions. At this level, Jung's work belongs to the Western philosophical and religious heritage that is deeply monotheistic and therefore reliant upon dualistic structure. Monotheism is a dependence upon One God. It thereby erects dualism in the necessity of dividing off from the divine all matter that is “other” to it. Jung's work is in part dependent upon this dualism and in part an attempt to realign it, as I shall now describe.

Myths are stories with perspective-shaping powers. They organize knowledge through narratively demarcating our relations with what we deem “other” to ourselves. The “other” shaped through myth may be other people, other types of creature, the supernatural or even those bits of us that we want to call “other” such as the abode of dreams. Myths divide up spaces and make them comprehensible. Myths shape what we call nature and what we call culture.

Archeological evidence such as ancient fertility statues suggests that very early myths centre on an earth mother. One of the most comprehensive studies of the mother goddess, *The Myth of the Goddess* (1991), by Ann Baring and Jules Cashford, outlines how *two* creation myths dominate the structuring of Western modernity. In the original myth of the earth goddess, “she” is not female. This is not matriarchy in the sense of women as in control; rather, “she” is prior to the division of female and male. The earth as goddess gives birth to all life including humans as the siblings of all life. “She” receives us back again in death. The goddess also mates with a son-lover, who is dismembered, then re-membered by her. Hence sexuality and the body have sacred functions and, moreover, there is no

basis for the domination of one sex by the other. The ethos of self is through *connection to the other*.

A second creation myth burst upon the ancient world when patriarchal peoples invaded the Mediterranean region. Here the god is a sky father. By contrast he is gendered. He is male, since he is based upon *separation from the other*. Although the sky father came to dominate in the form of monotheism, where God made nature outside of himself, the earth mother is never entirely eradicated in Western heritage. Even the Book of Genesis retains many hints of the earth goddess in the sacred garden, and the (wise) serpent, a goddess symbol of regeneration. However, ways of reading in a patriarchal culture reinforced ideas of a masculine deity who created and then retreated from nature, leaving it as subordinate and bereft of divine spirit. The rest is the familiar story of distancing and disenchantment.

One point should be stressed in these founding myths in that we cannot avoid the influence of myths that operate as deep cultural structures. These myths are not so much intuitively known stories as ways of being. These creation stories are not the distant legends. Rather they are the technology making human consciousness in Western society today. The kind of modern people we are is based upon the privileging of sky father consciousness that enshrines separation from the other. From this (ultimately religious and Christian refined) myth we get the real benefits of the types of consciousness long privileged. Sky father sponsors objectivity, discrimination, reason, individualism, and an ego designed to be “separate” from the unconscious as other.

However, arguably, many of the problems of Western modernity stem from the devaluing of the “other” myth of consciousness, which we similarly cannot do without. For earth mother consciousness never disappeared. Based upon relating, the body, “working” with nature as animated, her way of being found one home in alchemy. It found another in poetry and the arts, another in witchcraft and in many of the heretical movements in organized religion.

The problem modernity faces is not that one creation myth of being is intrinsically better than the other. The problem is that human culture seems to require both types of consciousness: earth mother consciousness based on connecting (Eros), sky father consciousness, based on separating (Logos). The world today suffers from an imbalance between the two. Hence we come to an era of ecology and psychoanalysis.

The development of psychoanalysis was yet another attempt to re-negotiate the creation myths founding Western consciousness. The earth mother lives again as the origin and *matter* of being in the unconscious as it is theorized prior to the development of the ego in early childhood. Like the goddess, the psychoanalytic entity is prior to the division of genders. While not fully articulating the painful *matter* of one creation myth repressing the “other”, Jung regards modernity as sick because of this repression. In his writing he developed a number of ways to re-create father god of separation and mother goddess of entanglement, as

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complementary to each other. He aims to rebalance the relationship between these two bodies of myth.

So Jung sees human nature as rooted in nature from our mother; which is, in turn, part of a continuum of Mother Nature, the earth goddess. It is therefore unsurprising that Jung downplays the necessity of repressing the unconscious and advocates a positive relationship with it. Healthy subjectivity means “individuation”, becoming more and more individual by *living out both creation myths*. In this paper, I suggest that detective fiction is a surprisingly complex reseeded of archaic and modern symbolic and mythical forms. These serve to rebalance the creation myths and reorient us to the nonhuman other as nature. Indeed, through the genres of detective fiction, myths are nature speaking to culture.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (1902)

It is incredible, impossible, that it should be really outside the ordinary laws of Nature. A spectral hound which leaves material footmarks and fills the air with its howling is surely not to be thought of.

(The Hound of the Baskervilles etext)

A stranger then is still dogging us, just as a stranger had dogged us in London.

(The Hound of the Baskervilles etext)

Dr Watson’s narration of the spooky tale of his and Holmes’s protection of Sir Henry Baskerville shows him to be no trickster. Watson is aghast at the possibility of a creature beyond rational scientific “laws”. His horrified consciousness enables the reader to engage with the possibility that modern science does not encompass the full powers of nature. Later discovery of a human villain enables Watson to return to a world ordered according to his conventional assumptions. The criminal has already tricked and terrified Sir Charles Baskerville to his death and nearly murdered Sir Henry. For a relieved Watson the spectral hound proves to be a large ill-treated dog. Watson endures for the reader a classic Gothic tale: he witnesses horrors apparently inexplicable to science, which are then clawed back to within its reassuring paradigms.

And yet, the question of hunting and dogs in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is not so straightforward. “Dogged” is a word repeated in the story to indicate human hunting human. A disguised man, “dogs” Holmes and Watson in London. Watson and Sir Henry are “dogged” by a creature Watson imaginatively calls the “spirit” of the “terrible” haunted moor (62). While Watson bravely protects his charge in the teeth of an escaped human killer, as well as from the howling dog-fiend, a mysterious stranger figure “dogs” his footsteps.

In fact, the “dog” in the tale is narratively augmented into a symbol that stands for the act of hunting on more than a human level. Gothic qualities expand what we are taught to place in the diminished category of “animal”, or “dog”; the creature becomes something with more than natural or supernatural powers.

Hence, two humans “dog” other humans, in the sense of hunting them. Of course, when all is revealed, the “dog” is also a trickster and doubly so. The actual dogging, or tracking, involves trickery. Secondly, Watson's reasonable assumption that this “human dog” is the same person twice encountered is a trick of the Gothic narrative. The London hunter-hound is Stapleton, the villain, while the terrible spirit of the moor is Sherlock Holmes himself.

In inhabiting an-other world of nature, in order to trap an equally trickster-like villain, here the trickster-like detective becomes a shaman. As composed by Watson, Holmes himself has to become spectral in the consciousness of the story. Ultimately it is the story, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, that trickily activates the reader's psyche. The story is the trickster. By the generic tricks of detective fiction it breaks down enough of our separate categories of animal and human, science and imagination, for a symbol to be made. This symbol of the dog is monster, trickster, sleuth, and villain, animal-human. Such a symbol bodily connects us to nature in the Jungian embodied consciousness. By producing the impact of supernature, the spectral hound, natural human, and occult become one undifferentiated and terrifying imaginative region. This is a moor indeed! A place resistant to human culture and cultivation as practiced by Western modernity. Trickster narrative as myth takes the psyche to the untamed region where human, natural, and supernatural are not artificially divided from each other.

At the very end of the tale, Holmes appears to reestablish his lofty insouciance by inviting Watson out to a London restaurant (110). The irony of ending the “dogged hunting” story with eating is even more pointed when we recall the near identical fate of villain and detective. Stapleton turns from trickster to quarry. He is forced onto dangerous ground, “the dark quivering mire” (Doyle 1902: etext). Falling into the bog, he is presumed dead, although no body is recovered. Likewise, Holmes falls into the mire and has to be rescued lest he, too, be eaten. Self-sufficient Holmes is finally tricked by the moor, or perhaps falls victim to the last wiles of his human prey.

Certainly, in almost sharing the villain's fate, Holmes reminds us of the trickster nature of the detective genre in its refusal to reliably distinguish hunter and hunted. Moreover, this trope of the land “eating” cultivated matter, be it a dog, or pony, or fleeing person, establishes that there remain “grounds” of experience not under Holmes's ratiocinative control. Is Stapleton really dead? Without a body, surely something remains to be fully or securely known? Also, the danger of being eaten returns us to the hunting roots of the trickster myth. Do we still hunt in a world in which we ourselves are hunted? Detective fiction may have a deep psychic and cultural task in mythically invoking our archaic being where consciousness was built through hunting.

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In the past we were psychically “cultivated” by learning the ways of the trickster in order to avoid being prey. Today, if we need to reengage with nature that is also our human nature, we are in this detective fiction returned to psyche linked to appetite, food for body, and an embodied mind. If even Sherlock Holmes is in danger of being eaten, then there is something still potent in the “monster” he defeats.

WINTER STUDY (2008)

Anna laid her bare hand on the fur. In the Western world's collective unconscious, wolves symbolized hunger, danger, vicious cunning and cold-blooded slaughter. The flip side was, they were the embodiment of the wild; like the wind they went where they would, did as they pleased, then vanished into the woods.

Touching a wolf – even a dead wolf – Anna thrilled to the echo of primitive, amoral freedom.

(*Winter Study* 62)

This powerful novel has a fascinating relationship to the genre of detective fiction, the literary Gothic, trickster, and hunting. In the first place, it is set in an actual ongoing scientific study of wolves in Isle Royale National Park (ibid.: xi) The novel’s author, Nevada Barr, worked with researchers dedicated to a study that has been continuous for over fifty years. One result of *Winter Study* is the convincing details of scientific procedures that are the backbone of a complex crime story. The novel is focalized through Park Ranger Anna Pigeon, a determined and experienced law officer who accompanies the wolf researchers to the frozen isolated island for their winter study.

By linking Anna’s role of scrutinizing a human crime to scientists tracking wolves, the novel traces a pattern whereby science is revealed to be the partial inheritor of hunting as well as law enforcement. Moreover, just as detectives encounter the trickster in criminals and themselves, so scientists also – significantly reluctantly – ultimately have to be tricksters as well as shamans. Here scientists are shamans in their meticulous rituals of gathering evidence and weighing it. Of course, they believe that they will produce non-shaman-like (because abstract) truth. Then the rules of the game suddenly change. Some inexplicable disturbance in the wolves causes the scientists to become tricksters in trapping them. Later this disruption to natural rhythms proves to have a human cause.

Arguably, *Winter Study* tries very hard to protect the purity of modern science from the tricksters assailing it. Unfortunately, these tricksters lurk in the human psyche, as well as in harsh nonhuman environments. It is only after human trickiness has led to death and disaster that the incorruptible scientist admits to doubts about his calling. Decades of study have produced mountains of evidence about wolf habits, and yet they still know almost nothing about them (283). The

trickster again does his work in challenging the shaman-like scientists' claims to have infallible rituals leading to higher truth. Here trickster inhabits the very processes of knowledge: the ability of science as well as policing, to detect and read signs. Although the scientists have any number of clues in wolf remains and observations, they do not know how to read these tracks or signs for a satisfying narrative.

Apart from the shamanic and trickster dimension of modern science, *Winter Study* marshals a wealth of cultural motifs as the ways in which humans have tried to come to terms with the "other" represented by the wolf. From Western fairytales to indigenous myths to the persistence of fears that wolves will eat humans, Anna begins the trip ready to discard all this cultural baggage in favor of supporting clean, objective science. Unfortunately, the controlled rituals of the winter study are disturbed by what seem to be two further human cultural factors. These are much later revealed (tricksterishly) to be one.

Fears of the greater framework of crime as terrorism threaten to shut down the winter study so that the park can be policed more intensely. For this reason, dedicated researcher Katherine is accompanied by her doctoral supervisor, Bob Menechinn. He is officially an evaluating representative from Homeland Security. Then, almost as soon as the party arrives, strange signs and symbols disrupt the scientific program. The text that most informs this aspect of *Winter Study* is none other than *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

From a low-flying plane, Anna sees the dark shape of a gigantic wolf. Huge paw prints are discovered. Then a dead wolf is found savaged by some unknown, larger beast. Now the scientists have to stop hunting for knowledge in their ritual way and turn trickster in trying to trap this unknown creature. Attempting to do so, Anna is lured onto thin ice and nearly drowns. Although scientists have found that wolves rarely kill people, unless rabid or provoked, Katherine, the scientist who passionately loves wolves, is torn to pieces by them. So what has happened to nature itself?

To Anna, what she sees as the reality of the wild is "magical, mysterious" (41). She believes that she requires no cultural baggage, no stories of "ghosts, demons, fairies and angels" (ibid.). Yet on the island, the wild other is mixed up with human trickery and human predation. The results, Anna discovers, cannot be even thought of, let alone managed, without help from legends, works such as *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and beasts drawn from popular films. Anna's embodied intuition of the magic of the wild is validated by the novel: she finds enchantment in the unknowable complexity of nature. While deeply respectful of modern science as semi-shamanic and ritual, *Winter Study* nevertheless reveals what this "objective" discourse leaves out. In its so-called objectivity, science omits *connection* in Katherine's adoration, Anna's "magic" (which is also her unknowable creative Jungian unconscious), and the pilot Jonah's willingness to accept nature as intimately and meaningfully interconnected. For example, on seeing a raven

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leaving a moose's carcass, Jonah says that the bird will tell the wolves about it, and Anna believes him (26).

In *Winter Study*, modern science is partially shamanic but lacks a shaman's unconscious or spiritual connection to the wild. Perhaps this is why the scientists are easy prey for a trickster suggesting to them the existence of a large savage creature. To them, the monster must be "Frankenstein", illegitimate science, an illegal hybrid probably bred from the unstable combination of dog and wolf. This particular incarnation of Coyote is most effectively a trickster in that he does not exist.

Another psychic quality not fully accommodated by "pure" science is the passion it inspires, quite apart from connection to the wild. Two of the scientists in the tight-knit group are tricking their coworkers in an attempt to get rid of the threat from Homeland Security. They are prepared to corrupt data in order to preserve the overall project. One culprit, Robin, is a young woman whom Anna comes to love for her innocence and dedication, including her well-meaning trickster deceptions. The other internal spy, Adam, has darker motives. For he has been savaged by a dark trickster long ago and cannot recover.

Recalling *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, trickster techniques are employed for what come to be seen as sympathetic ends. Robin really wants to protect the wolf study for pure unselfish motives. Yet trickster cannot be unleashed amongst the unstable mixture of wolves and people and then easily controlled. Stemming from what is intended as relatively harmless deception, the first "murder" as Anna terms it, is of a wolf (362). Then the substance used to manipulate the wolves is mistakenly left with wounded Katherine, alone in the snow at night. She confidently expects Bob Menechinn either to rescue her or send help. Fatally, she has recently confronted him about his drugged rape of her. Coward in the face of wolves and angry women, Bob ignores Katherine's phone call. Bleeding and stinking of material irresistible to wolves, Katherine is literally torn to pieces. Even the wolves are tricked.

The child-like scientist conspirators discover that the trickster is more deadly than they realized. Bob, by contrast, is a demonic trickster and hunter of women, drugging, raping and continuing to humiliate his victims. Adam joins the more benignly motivated tricksters because he is embarked upon a deadly hunt to avenge his wife, who committed suicide after Bob's predations. Anna tries to stick to her police principles and rescue Bob from Adam, and then Adam from suicide. Adam tricks Anna and dies. Bob, now himself drugged and crazed, starts to hunt Anna because she knows too much.

Anna, alone and wounded in the snow, in order to stay alive at last turns trickster. She sets a trap with herself as bait (407). On the snowmobile with herself driving and Bob trying to kill her, the machine is a "dying moose – trying to bash

the wolf from its flanks” (413). Finally, Anna tricks Bob and kills him. She is then rescued by the more “innocent” tricksters, Robin and her beloved Gavin. She returns to the two other men who are ignorant of the plots within the study group. Ridley the chief scientist, and Jonah the elderly pilot, are faced with a challenge outside scientific and legal conventions.

This time, Anna, who believes in carrying out the law, convinces Ridley, the incorruptible scientist, and faithful Jonah, to become tricksters. They will lie to protect Robin and Gavin. The law would severely punish them, Anna argues. While the dead Bob, who would probably escape posthumous conviction for rape, is the truly guilty one. Law and justice will not work together here if proper “scientific objectivity”, or legal detachment, is maintained about events. Ridley and Jonah agree to be tricksters, not scientists. Anna herself has been forced into the role of a trickster and out of police officer. I am using Anna's social role as an “officer of the law” because she remains a literary detective for whom the trickster is a possible, although not a consistent, role.

The novel ends with the articulation of the metaphysical dimension of the trickster myth.

“So we play God?” Jonah asked.

“People always play God,” Anna said. “There's nobody else to do it.” (456)

As Lewis Hyde puts it, trickster makes *this* world, and is an unreliable guide to the presence of any other. In employing the trickster to supply the justice she sees emanating from nowhere else, Anna is a poor police officer but a fine literary detective. Of course what is most paradoxically trickster-like about this ending is that it is the shamanic trustworthiness of the ultimate scientist, Ridley, which will enable *this* manifestation of the trickster to be benign.

The survivors plan to trick the incoming law officers to protect the relative innocence of Robin and Gavin. The alternative would be Robin and Gavin in prison, portrayed as a terrible violation of essentially innocent lovers. Only Coyote can prevent Coyote. Only by mingling shamanic and trickster qualities can the trickster's chaotic tendencies be ameliorated.

Pursuit of Signs: Detective Fiction, Hunting, and the Trickster Myth

The literary detective is the modern urban mode of the hunter in nature. My argument is that via symbolic narrative, detective fiction re-creates a nuanced and creative relationship to the other, including the other as nature. It is therefore no accident that detective fiction arises in modernity at a time when populations begin to be predominantly city dwellers and not laborers on the land.

Of course, detective fiction shares with hunting a venerable history. Stories of trapping rogues go back to ancient Greece. On the other hand, the arrival in fiction of an actual “detective” is very much a feature of the modern age. The literary detective is characterized by solving apparently puzzling crimes by tracking clues.

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He begins as masculine, erupting in the prose of Edgar Allen Poe (1808 – 1849). When, in 1887, Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) creates Sherlock Holmes, the detective fires the public imagination. It is indicative that modernity, when significantly alienated from “nature”, needed to (re)create the hunter in the fictional detective. The detective emerges both to embody and investigate anxiety about the state of modern consciousness.

What the much longer history of crime fiction indicates is that one of the key mythical tropes of the detective as hunter is the trickster. In the West, this figure borrows robes from the classical trickster and god, Hermes. He is amoral, sly, shape-shifting and impulsive. The trickster is driven by carnal and bodily appetite. He incarnates some of the qualities that later solidify into the figure of the detective. After all, the trickster reminds us that the hunter can so easily become the hunted. Radically protean, the trickster is found in myths across the world and magnificently explored in Lewis Hyde’s *Trickster Makes This World* (1998).

Here the title expresses Hyde’s thesis that the trickster makes *this* world; one that is partly chaotic, contingent, death-haunted, and full of unreliable signs. Whether there is *another* world, the sacred, a realm of higher truth, or “Truth” and “Justice”, is uncertain in the trickster's domain. This unreliable rogue cannot be counted on, either to guide us there or to portray its verity. Hence, the trickster may at first seem more closely allied to the villain of detective fiction, the one who tricks both detective and reader.

Arguably, it is the detective novel *genre* that most closely identifies with the trickster in the puzzling of the reader. Indeed, the trickster proves to be both detective and quarry. As I shall show, in order to hunt out truth in a trickster-made world, the detective has to develop capacities of two related figures: the trickster and the shaman. Becoming trickster, the detective reveals his shocking intimacy with the malefactor. The trickster *is* that indivisibility between virtue and crime. He is never more a violator of proper boundaries than his omnipresence in diverse cultures indicates.

The trickster, as Hyde demonstrates, is a figure neither of consistent heroism nor of nihilistic despair. Too coherent to be wholly and solely trickster, the literary detective may suffer deeply from his/her inability to bring justice. Yet not all detectives end their quests for justice in states of depression. In another part of the genre, the sleuth may inhabit such an artificial, cozy realm that complete triumph accompanies the solution of the crime. Here the detective succeeds in recreating a perfect world. Unfortunately for social optimism, this subdivision of the genre works by presenting the world as a self-conscious fiction. Paradise is regained only if we know it to be untrue.

Before continuing with the trickster and hunting, I should mention the trickster’s mythical origin in creation stories. Trickster has plenty of corporeal appetites. Jung’s own description gives a vital clue as to “his” identity.

Even [the trickster's] sex is optional despite its phallic qualities: he can turn himself into a woman and bear children... This is a reference to his original nature as a Creator, for the world is made from the body of a god.
(CW9i, par. 472)

The trickster is a particularly dynamic animation of the earth mother goddess who created everything *out of her body*. We remember that she is neither female nor male, but has the potentials of both. Why does this creation myth of consciousness take the meddlesome form of the trickster who is neither animal nor divine nor human, and yet is all of them? One answer may be the importance of hunting for the evolution of consciousness. This trickster, perhaps, is still helping us evolve. He is still at work in our literature of detective fiction showing that we *still hunt*, tracking signs in this tricky world. As hunters we remain embodied beings mythically embedded in the environment.

So in this paper I am arguing that the trickster myth is a particularly dynamic and imaginative part of our on-going psychic evolution. He helped our Paleolithic ancestors survive through refining hunting practices. Today he hunts with us in detective fiction. What he hunts are the signs of nature: the writing of the “other” that can re-inscribe us back into a conscious relationship with the nonhuman. So we need to know when to be a trickster and when not to be.

Trickster as Hunter and Detective

Trickster stories, even when they clearly have much more complicated cultural meanings, preserve a set of images, from the days when what mattered above all else was hunting.
(Hyde, 18)

As a hunter, the trickster is not a hero. His stories are not about stupendous bravery, nor does he fight a monster to the death. Rather he is the sponsor of a weak, slow animal (*Homo sapiens*) in making a relationship to a world crammed with dangers. When you cannot beat the game, you change the rules. Hence, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when Sherlock Holmes is unable to protect a client by heroically asserting his ordering presence, he instead melts into mists and mysterious shadows. Likewise, when Anna Pigeon, in *Winter Study*, is faced with a drug crazed and cunning criminal who has crippled her, only changing the terms of their encounter by trickery will save her life and protect society from him.

Hyde also refers to the work of Max Linscott Ricketts, who argues that the trickster myths were situated in opposition to the figure of the shaman (ibid. 293). Together these two figures represent two different reactions to a threatening and awe-inspiring world. The way of the shaman is to submit to overwhelming forces and negotiate a relationship with them, while the way of the trickster is to laugh at higher powers, deny their divinity, and outwit fateful events. No doubt something of a trickster himself, Hyde seeks to undermine this either/or argument. Straightforward alternatives are so “foreign” to the trickster as Hyde sees him. So

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while accepting Ricketts's position that the trickster tends to parody a shaman, Hyde places this figure of fascinating unreliability *within* the operative system of the shaman. Shamans sometimes use tricks to gain their proper ends, so that trickster is not *outside* the world of shamans as wholly other (293-95).

At a deeper level, trickster is *the trickiness of signs*, or trickster is the tricky spirit inhabiting signs. Here, by signs we mean items, objects, symbols that are used to reveal meaning, to *signify*. Signs are words, gestures and language. Some of the earliest sign reading by humans is surely that of animal tracks in the hunt.

What the trickster shows in his embodied engagement with non-human nature is, above all, ingenuity. Trickster is a creature of appetites, very often pure and simple hunger. The myth animates the body. Especially the myth animates the body that works indivisibly with the psyche. In this, trickster again betrays his origins in earth mother consciousness. Hyde puts this very concretely. The trickster tells us that what modernity prizes about human beings, the development of the capacity to think, is derived from trickily securing meat. In other words, the trickster myth activates us as embodied, nature-saturated, carnal creatures.

These myths suggest that blending natural history and mental phenomena is not an unthinking conflation but on the contrary, an accurate description of the ways things are. To learn about intelligence from the meat-thief, Coyote, is to know that we are embodied thinkers. If the brain has cunning, it has it as a consequence of appetite; the blood that lights the mind gets its sugars from the gut. (Hyde, 57)

So the trickster frustrates our ideals and hopes of ultimate order in the universe. On the other hand, the trickster refuses to be properly and aesthetically "tragic" and declare that there is no meaning at all in the cosmos. Trickster will keep us in a state of uncertainty. So detective fiction is truly trickster-like in discovering and uncovering the earth goddess as the bleeding corpse of the modern world. Fortunately a goddess can be revived by reconnecting the making of meaning with the carnal body. Detective fiction does this.

Put another way, the trickster is both the creative unconscious embedded in nature and a myth for coming to terms with it. The trickster enables humans to be more hunters than hunted. As a *techne*, an art for working *with* nature, the trickster does not go away. Detective fiction is one cultural space where the trickster continues to cultivate human nature. And the trickster remains a figure mediating our relation to the non-human. He/she lives in the spiraling evolution of detective genres as one of our most archetypal symbols of transformation.

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