

INTERPLAY OF REFLECTIONS: THE TRICKSTER AUTHOR AND THE DIVINE

TRUTH

by

LEJLA MARIJAM

(Under the Direction of Katarzyna Jerzak)

ABSTRACT

Many mythologies and literatures have within their lore some form of the Trickster figure: one who, in the process of satisfying his insatiable appetite, challenges the established cultural system, and who in doing so casts a light on the too easily forgotten matter of free choice. The character of the Trickster artist is connected to the divine and satanic powers, showing the way in which the Trickster figure encompasses all aspects of the human psyche. In this paper, I discuss the Trickster authors Nabokov, Samokovlija and Jergović, and the Trickster characters in their works: *Pale Fire*, *Hanka*, and *Walnut Manor*, focusing on whether or not these Trickster artists and characters are able to induce a necessary change in the context of their society, or if they serve to reinvigorate the existing social system.

INDEX WORDS: Trickster, Art, Jung, Jesus, Satan, Lilith, Virgin Mary, Nabokov, Pale Fire, Samokovlija, Tales of Old Sarajevo, Hanka, Jergović, Walnut Manor.

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To Mustafa & Melita Marijam, and Izudin Ibrahimbegović.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
Jungian Trickster Characteristics	1
Male vs. Female Trickster Figure.....	4
Trickster’s Connection to Divine Powers	8
Jesus Christ and Satan: The Masculine Side of the Trickster Archetype.....	9
Virgin Mary and Lilith: The Feminine Side of the Trickster Archetype	16
The Trickster in 20 th Century Literature.....	21
2 THE TRICKSTER IN NABOKOV AND HIS WORK: JESUS/SATAN	24
Nabokov as a Trickster Author	24
<i>Pale Fire</i>	26
3 THE TRICKSTER IN JERGOVIC AND HIS WORK: VIRGIN MARY	38
Jergović as a Trickster Author.....	38
<i>Walnut Manor</i>	40
4 THE TRICKSTER IN SAMOKOVLJA AND HIS WORK: LILITH	54
Samokovlija as a Trickster Author	54
“Hanka”	57
5 CONCLUSION.....	73

REFERENCES76

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In both mythology and literature there are Trickster figures; the ones who, in the process of satisfying their insatiable appetite, challenge the established cultural system and in doing so cast a light on that too easily forgotten matter of free choice. Pointing to alternate possibilities, Tricksters “preside over moments of passage, rupture and transformation” (Tannen 7). In *The Trickster*, Radin asserts the predictable characteristics of any Trickster figure: he is “always a wanderer, always hungry, and usually oversexed” (44). This is where the similarities end—Tricksters from different cultures appear in various forms, operate for various motives, and have different levels of awareness of the way in which their actions affect the world around them. Some are easily recognizable as Tricksters because they use tricks to change their circumstances for the better, and some use their very existence and art as a trick in itself.

JUNGIAN TRICKSTER CHARACTERISTICS

Jung saw the Trickster as an ancient archetypal entity—a “psychologem” (Jung 165). He bases his opinion on the prevalence of the Trickster figure in the mythologies of different cultures and time periods, as some form of the Trickster is present “in picaresque tales, in carnivals and revels, in sacred and magical rites, in man’s religious fears and exaltations” (Jung 165). By tapping into the magical and the sacred, the public sphere of the cities’ festivals and the private sphere of one’s personal choices, the Trickster opposes categorization. He is characterized as a shape shifter due to his ability

to represent different truths to different audiences according to different situations. Jung attributes to him the characteristics of God, man and animal, indicating the ever-active psychic energy that is able to assume and represent opposing views of the world. Because of his dual divine and animal nature, the Trickster is seen as having the potential to be either superior or inferior to man. In his divine aspect, the Trickster acts as a Creator: he represents both genders as he can “turn himself into a woman and bear children;” in some Native American and African tales he uses parts of his body to assist in the creation of the world, and his psychological influence on a culture is meant to be regenerative (Jung 169). The Trickster’s unconsciousness allows him to act free from predispositions, and he generally seems to be in touch with a higher order of the cosmos. This is perhaps the reason why Jung calls him a “forerunner of the savior,” because the Western world’s savior acts under divine guidance and against the instincts and prejudices of men. The main difference between the two is the level of consciousness that each figure possesses about their destiny and function, and this is where the Trickster, in his “unconsciousness and unrelatedness,” might wrongly appear to be evil and to stand in opposition to the savior’s goodness (Jung 170). Jung focuses on the division between the Trickster and the savior on the lines of consciousness, and I would argue that the system of assigned values—the good and the evil—has at its base the same psychological structure where conflict is simply an expression of psyche’s polarity, and is “dependent on the tension of opposites” (176). Accepting that the Christian savior represents the Good and the light, and that Satan is a representation of the Evil and the dark, I posit that the shadowy Trickster is above that duality. Jung calls the Trickster a “collective shadow figure,” (176) a representation of the inferior nature in humans, but he places within the archetype

“the seed of an enantiodromia, of a conversion into its opposite” (179). Furthermore, Jung compares Yahweh depicted in the Old Testament to the Trickster, citing his “pointless orgies of destruction and his self-appointed suffering, together with the same gradual development into a savior and his simultaneous humanization” (161) as the characteristics that the two have in common. The Trickster figure is capable of representing the opposites of good and evil, life and death, and of generating a new worldview out of those dualities; he is a symbol for the force of creation of the cosmos. In *The Black Madonna*, Gustafson describes God using Trickster characteristics:

Theologically, it is very difficult to accept that God has both a light and dark side, that He carries both masculine and feminine energies, and that He is the director of both creative and destructive forces. Such a view clashes head-on with Judeo-Christian theology. Yet psychologically, such a view is a partially recognized admission of the dual nature of the psyche, namely, not only that which gives but also that which takes, not only the known but also the unknown, not just what is under our conscious control but also what comes from other areas of the psyche. (37)

If we posit that the cosmic energy system is one way of understanding and qualifying God, and this idea is a direct reflection of God’s characterization in Christianity as an entity that created our world and that continues to exist as omnipresent, omniscient, timeless and genderless in relation to us, then the character of the Trickster would be God’s representation on Earth: a miniature edition of a powerful force whose motives are unclear but vaguely benevolent, and whose presence reiterates the blurred boundaries between Creator and its Creation.

MALE VS. FEMALE TRICKSTER FIGURE

In order to come to an understanding of the Trickster figure, scholars generally begin by characterizing it in terms of gender, mode and motive of action, shape-shifting, number of tricks, etc. In *Trickster Makes This World*, Hyde finds Tricksters in “Native American winter story-telling, in Chinese street theater, in Hindu festivals celebrating Krishna the Butter Thief, in West African Divination ceremonies” (9). Different forms of the Trickster figure exist, and a rough sketch of the figure can be seen in the character of the picaro and the picara, which is present in the 17th and 18th century European picaresque novel. This rogue character lives on the margins of the society, necessarily relying on his wit and ability to perform tricks in order to survive; in that respect, he considerably differs from the Trickster whose tricks serve the survival and regeneration of his community as well. In *The Picara*, Kaler describes the picaro as a wanderer with a “tenacious, satiric, clamorous, humorous, and impudent demand to be heard” (8); traits that I will further explore in the context of Nabokov as an author. In opposition to the male picaro, Kaler describes the picara as a woman who is single-mindedly interested in her physical survival and autonomy, sacrificing the spiritual aspect of her femininity tied to motherhood. Instead of nursing her children, the picara nurses her tricks: “her tricks serve as her creative outlet; she is too busy surviving to contemplate her sins; her repentance is always suspiciously self serving; she never reconciles with her society or her nature; she is trapped in survival mode, struggling for an autonomy neither her nature nor her society will grant her” (Kaler 2). In my discussion of the characters of Hanka and Regina, I will show that this quest for autonomy that cannot be realized is a vital part of their character, though they complement it with other Trickster characteristics.

Most Trickster stories present a male Trickster figure, presumably due to the patriarchal influence, since the character of the Trickster is antithetical to the women's role as a mother. Recent scholarship addresses the need to unearth and explore what is perceived as the neglected female Trickster. To define the female Trickster figure, which she calls Trickstar, Jurich identifies the Trickstar characteristics of Scheherazade. Scheherazade is described as desperate and intelligent, using tricks via storytelling in order "not to master her husband or anyone, not to experience the exaltation of self," but to save the young girls and women from the megalomaniac ruler who is set on decimating his own people. Jurich sets the following Scheherazade's characteristics as basis for future recognition of Trickstars:

She behaves placidly, acts neither in haste nor out of ill will; for the storyteller must take her time and refrain from judgment to allow sufficient time for her words to reach the listener. While Scheherazade tells her story, she is her *own* story. She is a Trickstar, one who slyly conceals her motives from the individual she means to use or transform. At the same time, she gauges her actions to effect this transformation.

(Jurich xvii)

Jurich sees the Trickstar as changeable depending on the circumstances and her character—some are malicious and self-serving, some are amusing and cunning, and some act for the benefit of others. She notes how only recently the scholars have started paying attention to the female Trickster in terms of her archetypal value, and affirms that the Trickstar is a "vital force—her appearance is as prevalent as other identifiable female characters (such as passive virgin or pernicious witch)" (28). Jurich sets the Trickstar as a

separate archetype, but she fails to note that the Trickstar is based on the duality and the tension that exists between the archetypes of the witch and the virgin. While the witch is the force of darkness and evil and the virgin is the source of goodness and light, the Trickstar is a combination of the two. Jurich writes that the Trickstar “can be both passive or powerful—as either trait serves *her* need” (230), and this statement supports my argument that the Trickstar has the ability to transform from one extreme to the other, embodying both at all times.

Praising the achievements of the Trickstar, and perhaps wishing to underline the difference between the *picara* and the Trickstar, Jurich argues: “when *women* use the trick, the trick often restores” (2). In their efforts to empower the feminine, scholars such as Jurich and Kaler tend to reinforce the idea that there exists a fundamental difference between the masculine and the feminine, some going as far as to say that a much needed revolution should and will shift that power dynamic so that the feminine energy can save the world. I believe that the Trickster figure is too important to be approached in fragments—there is evidence to suggest that gender is irrelevant and does not affect the significance of the Trickster figure, nor should it dictate its value.

The Trickster is generally considered a character that points out the truth about the world and culture, which is difficult to recognize if one is firmly identified with his position as part of that society. For example, Jurich claims that the Trickster character in folklore points to alternative values within a culture that were previously suppressed. This function does not depend on gender but on the Trickster’s marginal position in society, which allows him to know his culture without being defined by it as he “comes to occupy two worlds at one time” (Jurich 34). As I mentioned before, the Trickster’s

gender is not necessarily fixed—the Native American Coyote, for example, appears as male or female, and this fluidity testifies to the Trickster’s overarching human non-gendered identity.

In his study of the Winnebago Trickster, Radin writes the following:

The symbol which Trickster embodies is not a static one. It contains within itself the promise of differentiation, the promise of god and man....he represents not only undifferentiated and distant past, but likewise the undifferentiated present within every individual....And so he became and remained everything to every man—god, animal, human being, hero, buffoon, he was before good and evil, denier, affirmer, destroyer and creator....What happens to him, happens to us. (Radin 168)

In order for the Trickster to be worthy of his name, he has to be relatable to everyone—man, woman and child. Though he does appear generally as male due to societal standards of the times past, the Trickster is a holistic representation of the duality of human nature, physical and spiritual. Jurich seconds this stance when she writes that the Trickster “is *all of us*, male and female” (43). Tannen exposes the need of patriarchal society to form and support gender divisions, which they indulge in out of human weakness and inability to overcome the “ambivalence and anxiety of subjectivity and sexual identity” (51). At the beginning of the 21st century, the Trickster is increasingly seen as the one archetype that can confront the world’s cultures with a realistic account of their past failures and future hopes. According to Jurich, the Trickster’s biggest trick is “the way out of gender oppression and the path to gender—more decisively—*human*

empowerment” (196) which is only achievable if we render insignificant the limitations of gender identity within the very character of the Trickster artist.

TRICKSTER’S CONNECTION TO DIVINE POWERS

The Trickster is consistently described as being a part of two different worlds—the world of humans and the world of gods. His importance is expressed most clearly in the fact that he is pervasive in mythology of most cultures as a link between those two worlds, keeping the passage for communication open. Though most critics talk about the Trickster’s role as a messenger, such as Hermes’ in Greek mythology and Coyote’s in Native American Trickster stories, I would argue that the western world is much more familiar with the Trickster in their lives than they realize. In their study of the Trickster, Hynes and Doty describe him as a “border-breaker *extraordinaire*...constantly shuttling back and forth between such counterposed sectors as sacred and profane, culture and nature, life and death...outside or across *all* borders, classifications, and categories” (161), and these boundaries and oppositions are the foundation of Christianity which the sacred and demonic figures constantly negotiate. Christianity has shaped Western civilization for thousands of years, bringing the dichotomy of good and evil at the foreground of cultural thought. Jesus Christ, the redeemer of believers and the Son of God, represents the pure goodness in man, acting as a counterpart of the evil fallen angel, Satan. Similarly, Mary Mother of God is the epitome of good in a woman, and her purity is counterbalanced by the dark feminine, which, though suppressed as a nonentity by Christianity, is present in the Hebrew and other oral traditions, and which harkens back to the Snake in the Garden of Eden and Adam’s first wife, Lilith. These dualities of light and dark, good and evil, and male and female, exist to show to the careful observer that

the cycle of life and death—the cycle of creation—necessitates all these elements in equal measure, and that human nature draws from all of these in order to establish itself as an independent agent in the game of life. The trick that these figures are involved in is establishing themselves as independent from each other, while the truth is that Jesus and Satan complete the masculine side of the proverbial coin, while the other side is composed of the archetypal feminine side: Mary and Lilith. Let this coin be our Trickster artist—it may fall on either the masculine or the feminine side, but it consists of both.

JESUS CHRIST AND SATAN: THE MASCULINE SIDE OF THE TRICKSTER ARCHETYPE

JESUS CHRIST

The Trickster is defined as “more than human and less than divine”, and according to Christian belief in the Hypostatic union, Jesus is both human and divine in nature at the same time (Hynes & Doty 84). Being a Son of God, Jesus is a divine being, while he inherits his physical being from his human Mother. In *The Black Madonna*, Gustafson supports Jung’s view of Jesus as “a symbol of the Self, or the center of the psyche symbolizing psychic wholeness,” and he uses it to reinstate the importance of understanding Jesus’ duality inherited from his “father/conscious/light side” and his “mother/unconscious/dark side” (48). Not only do both Jesus and Trickster inhabit two realms—the human and the divine, they have access to both the feminine and the masculine spirit and psyche: Jesus through his Father and Mother, and the Trickster through his hermaphroditic shape shifting.

Access to these opposing worlds is enough to draw a parallel between the Trickster figure and Jesus, but their designation as a scapegoat underlines the similarities.

Just as Jesus serves as a scapegoat by taking on humanity's sins and enduring crucifixion in order to redeem those who carried the cross of original sin, the Trickster is cast out of his society so that his actions and adventures can offer the people a new start. By singling out the Trickster as the source of unrest and confusion, the people let go of their own emotions and behaviors that threaten the stability of their community: the Trickster as an outcast is a symbol of a culture that longs to be purged of sins in the old fashioned way, by thrusting its evil tendencies along with a scapegoat into the desert. Though those who rely on them for salvation sacrifice both Jesus and the Trickster, they also venerate and cherish them as indispensable cultural figures. Hynes and Doty clearly explain this Trickster characteristic, drawing a symbolic parallel with Jesus' redemptive powers:

The asocial character of the taboo violation explains how the Trickster, represented as the friend of humans, he who struggles with gods in order to ameliorate the human lot, may also be represented as an asocial being, he who ends up being banished from the community. Because he takes upon himself the greatest of social faults—breaking the rules upon which the social order depends—the Trickster incarnates embryonically the expiatory being who will take upon himself the sins of humanity and set humans free, by virtue of the familiar process of redemption. The seemingly poorly motivated sentiments of esteem, gratitude, affection, and veneration towards the Trickster are thus explained in the same way as the physical misfortunes, the insults and the ridicule that he undergoes and by which he begins to make atonement. (Hynes & Doty 83)

Just as the Trickster is seen as acting against gods for the benefit of humans, so Jesus' purpose is to allow God to punish him for the sins of humanity. Mark states that Jesus' purpose was to "give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:4). In her discussion of the Trickster, Jurich mentions Shelley's play in which Prometheus is identified as a Trickster because he shows how "pity and forgiveness, the giving power of love, overcome the power to tyrannize....he embodies the higher form of man" (237). Similarly, Jesus represents a higher man, a man-god who preaches compassion and forgiveness. Because Jesus' forgiveness stands in high contrast to Yahweh's wrath and the punishment he devises for the Original Sin, Jesus can be seen as the "antagonist to the Creator"—a designation which Jurich gives the Trickster figure (33). Discussing Prometheus, Jurich states that Trickster can act as the antagonist not only to the Creator, but also in extension to the social establishment. This behavior necessarily instigates the previously discussed position of the Trickster and Jesus as scapegoats: "perceived as a threat to the foundations of his community, this character is treated as an outcast, even a scapegoat" (Jurich 33). Interestingly, though Jurich identifies Moses as a Trickster because of his delivering message for the Israelites and his Biblical ability to perform miracles, she does not make a connection between Jesus and the Trickster figure.

Jung states that Trickster makes the world out of his own body and thus acts as a creator. This trick is similar to Jesus making his body and blood available for consummation by proxy of bread and wine, as part of his mission to create a Kingdom of God in this world. Luke's Gospel describes the origins of this sacrament at the Last Supper: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the

cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:19-20). As people partake of the bread and wine in the context of Holy Communion, they are receiving into themselves the whole of Jesus Christ, because Jesus is believed to have reunited with his body after resurrection. This union assures the continuation of the struggle for the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth, in honor of the memory of Jesus and his sacrifice.

Another Trickster characteristic that Jesus used are verbal tricks. Thatcher suggests that Jesus used parables as riddles, to “challenge us to realign our conceptual categories and redefine key terms” (82). In *Jesus the Riddler*, Thatcher states that riddles Jesus used can be dangerous as they “often confuse, and sometimes offend, people by playing with social taboos and absurd paradoxes” (83). He discusses Crossan’s view of Jesus as a social activist with an agenda of radical itinerancy; Jesus broke down the existing social order by introducing egalitarianism and traveling to different places in order to show that his message is available to anyone, regardless of their social position. Performing his miracle healings, Jesus attacked the social stigma related to disease by touching those that others ostracized, thus breaking down the barrier between the disenfranchised individuals and the rest of society. In attacking these social boundaries Jesus acts as a Trickster; according to Thatcher, Jesus did not merely play with boundaries, but he “completely erased boundaries by disabling the polar oppositions that support the very notion of ‘mental categories’” (139). Reversing the way opposites such as white and black are understood and defined, Jesus’ teaching continually forces his audience to “develop a new perspective” (139). This method of operation is identical with the Trickster’s as he also uses unconventional acts and speeches to challenge those

around him and instigate change. Scheherazade, for example, devises a plan to get close to the king in order to challenge his convictions and change his actions by telling stories. Jesus's radical teaching breaks down the connection between wealth and salvation; by affirming that this concept is "a-temporal and a-geographical, located not in any specific future time or place but rather in the lives of those who could understand him," Jesus brings the Kingdom of God to everyone (Thatcher, 138).

SATAN

The word 'evil' is generally understood as describing malicious and immoral actions that in psychological terms are a result of asocial thoughts and behaviors. However, 'evil' can be attributed to actions that simply defy the general consensus on what is appropriate or socially acceptable. A more passive example of perceived evil is in people who lack faith in Jesus Christ as the Savior—a sin for which many dogmatic Christians believe that one is going to burn in Hell, delegated to the same fate as any more 'typical' evil doer and sinner. In *Pedigree of Devil*, Hall writes that evil can be summed up in one word: "opposition," and just as evil "only exists in relation to Good" so the Trickster only exists in opposition and relation to societal norms (15). In his study *The Devil*, Stanford writes: "Satan lives on as a way of dealing with what would otherwise be unspeakable, unimaginable or intangible" (276). The stories of the devil may serve to help people make sense of unimaginable and shocking acts of violence, but they are also a warning and a lesson about the social taboos. Many of us were scared into obedience as children by the use of stories of devils and witches and hell-fires which will surely consume us if we...touch the cake before it is brought out to the table, or if we refuse to share our favorite toy with a guest. The grown-ups understand that these stories

are tactics, but do not consider themselves manipulated in a similar way by religious rules, such as the Ten Commandments. Though these rules serve a valid purpose for the benefit of the community, they are formed by identifying an opposition to the norm and by attaching the domain of the devil to them. In his own way, the Trickster serves as an example of ‘bad behavior’ and a warning of the consequences one can expect if one defies rules. Hyde states that Tricksters “teach people how to behave,” bringing up an example from Native American tradition where the misfortunes that the Trickster undergoes teach him and in extension others to “have proper humility...to have a proper respect for his body” (12).

The Trickster has often been identified with the Devil. However, one must not understand this statement as a direct comparison between the Christian immoral Satan and the Trickster, but rather as a recognition of the same forces at work in shaping these archetypes: Satan has some Trickster characteristics. Hall makes a point that many devils from different religions and mythologies, such as Lucifer and Loki, have at some point been gods, and have since “fallen from Heaven” (132). The duality in their very nature points to a Trickster character, and in his work *Trickster Makes This World* Hyde treats Loki, the Norse mythological figure, as a Trickster rather than a devil. Stanford claims that the devil “could be anybody or nobody” (3) because he is not easily recognizable—he is a shape shifter just like the archetypical Trickster.

In the Age of Romanticism, the Devil is regarded as the rebel who is heroic in his decision to oppose God’s tyranny. As such, the Devil serves as an instigator of a better future for humanity by showing how one has the option to stand up to authority if the

stakes are high enough. Stanford states that those who feel oppressed relate to the Devil's rebellious nature:

The marginalized, the disturbed and the sick, those who feel for whatever reason excluded from or at odds with contemporary society also feel an affinity with the Prince of Darkness. He was the first rebel in the cosmos and has become the symbol of their rebellion against the society that excludes them. (275)

Stanford describes William Blake's painting 'Christ Tempted by Satan to Turn the Stones into Bread,' as a work in which the Devil is depicted as "a kindly elderly man, a character more usually associated with depictions of God himself" (202). Stanford also says that the way in which the figures of the Devil and of Christ relate to each other appears "as if they are performing a strange dance together, each mirroring and complimenting the other's movements" (202). These two figures represent a choice offered to every human being, and the possibilities of good and evil in every one of us. In fact, if this choice was erased and if one figure was consistently stronger, there would be no civilization to speak of. In Bulgakov's 1938 novel *The Master and Margarita*, the devil comes to Moscow by the name of Woland and is treated as a likeable super-star who is surprisingly lucid when it comes to understanding the world and interacting with citizens. One of the most eloquent statements on the necessity of good and evil comes from Woland, when he attacks the desire of an angel sent by Jesus "to strip the earth of all the trees and living things just because of your fantasy of enjoying naked light" (305). Satan is as necessary for the understanding of the human condition as Jesus, and together they complete the masculine aspect of human nature—one face of the Trickster artist.

VIRGINA MARY AND LILITH: THE FEMININE SIDE OF THE TRICKSTER ARCHETYPE

VIRGIN MARY

Virgin Mary is a woman who becomes a mother of God and thus represents both the human and the divine realm. In the Christian faith she intercedes with Jesus for the individual sinners' salvation and thus acts as a messenger, further developing her character as that of a Trickster artist. It is difficult to begin characterizing Virgin Mary as a Trickster figure, mainly because she seems to embody the exact opposite of free choice. However, though pigeonholed by religion, Mary has managed to extract from her position as mother of Jesus the power of an ancient goddess that is focused and stems from motherhood in itself.

Mary is considered an embodiment of purity and goodness and a model for women because she committed no sins during her lifetime, because she was herself conceived without sin, and because she gave birth to Jesus while remaining a virgin. In *Empress and Handmaid*, Boss offers less glorious views of the Annunciation, or the announcement to Mary by angel Gabriel that she is to give birth to Christ. In her work *Empress and Handmaiden*, Boss discusses Daly's understanding of Virgin Mary's reaction as that of a passive rape victim, emphasizing that her meekness and submission to God offer a disturbing image of a woman so obsessed with following the rules of her society and religion that she is unable to make decisions not only about her destiny, but her body as well. This view is countered by the belief that the Holy Spirit, instead of impregnating her actively, simply fulfilled Mary's potential to bring forth a God, and thus answered the deepest desires of her heart. However one looks at the immaculate

conception, Virgin Mary is generally recognized as removed from sexuality and the original sin which is passed on from Adam and Eve to their progeny. In her book on Lilith, Pereira discusses Mary as a White Goddess who is devoid of the dark aspect of the feminine, as she “accepted Yahweh’s will completely and happily....carried his holy seed, gave birth to his son, raised him and watched him die” (156). Mary is sharply contrasted with Lilith, Adam’s first wife whose character I will discuss in detail later on. Demanding equality with Adam in sexual relations and having it denied, Lilith flew into the air and to the wilderness to escape subjugation by man, and further opposed God’s will when she refused to return.

The image of Mary is not static, though; over the years she has been depicted as the almighty Queen of Heaven, the Black Madonna and the Meek Virgin. In the Middle Ages, Christians predominantly saw Mary as a powerful Queen, and they felt her presence as a force in their own lives. Boss discusses this attitude in terms of the society’s dependence on their environment, stating that they continued their subservient role in their relation to Mary, as she was “the bearer of God incarnate” and therefore had control over their lives (15). It is important to note, however, that though Mary was powerful, even at the height of her authority she depended on Jesus to approve and realize her wishes: this is evident in Jurich’s commentary on Mary’s relationship with the believers: “Virgin Mary listens to the prayers of all persons; and while she cannot grant that these prayers be fulfilled, she does intercede with her son. Virtually, then, all these requests are answered; for ‘the powers of mediation attributed to her throughout Christianity are considered sovereign; the son can refuse his mother nothing’” (69). As a woman, Mary’s only path to action is through establishing emotional and relational ties to

Jesus. In *Sacred Prostitute*, Qualls-Corbett affirms that Mary's "primary association is with her son, who is sacrificed; Mary's role as a wife is negligible" (152). Qualls-Corbett continues to present Mary as one-dimensional, embodying the "maternal aspect of the feminine—static and protective" at the expense of the "dynamic, transforming aspect, related to the passion, sexuality and fertility of the love goddesses" (152). Mary has from the very beginning relinquished her separate identity for the sake of serving the Lord, and it is therefore not surprising that her womanhood is not fully developed and that her regal qualities diminished over time, as civilization grasped a better hold on nature and as men prevailed in the public sphere. Boss states that the increased valuing of 'male' intellect over 'female' nature through history allowed for the feminine to be "cast as profane and suitable for subjugation," and that this development in turn led to Mary's loss of power (15). Similarly, by distancing himself from our responsibility for nature and the world around us, Boss believes that the modern man is distancing himself from Mary as the force of Creation, and subsequently from God.

Today, the Virgin is increasingly taking shape as "a humble young girl at prayer," but regardless of the systematic whitewashing by Christianity, some of her relevant power and presence is still felt in the form of the Black Madonna (Boss 15). Pereira attributes to the Black Madonna "powers of healing and regeneration....with the dark, rich, moist fertile ground that is both 'womb and tomb'" (157). In his study of the Black Madonna of Einsiedeln, Gustafson reveals the Virgin's dark femininity in terms of its creative transformational power for individuals as well as the collective. Gustafson acknowledges the division that has been made between archetypal light and the archetypal dark feminine, and while he sees Virgin Mary as the light, he seeks to explore

the archetypal dark feminine in the Black Madonna: “The Virgin Mary is one side of the life principle, a light feminine side of the psyche; but the Black Madonna picks up another side of this life principle” (115). Nonetheless, this analysis is incomplete because the Black Madonna still revolves around motherhood, nurturing and healing. Pereira is right to state that “Mary, who is both part of the mortal and divine realm, is a passive energy which when combined with the active Lilith again makes a complete psychological being” (165)—it is Lilith, not the Black aspect of the Madonna, that completes the feminine face of the Trickster artist by complementing the woman’s role as a Mother with her role as an independent agent, in control of her actions and sexuality.

LILITH

Lilith is the representation of the dark feminine, persisting as a force in the Judaic tradition as well as that of the Middle East and some parts of Europe. According to Durdin-Robertson’s *Goddesses of Chaldea, Syria and Egypt*, Lilith holds several titles: “Storm-Goddess...Demoness...Goddess of the Night, Goddess of Death, The Holy Lady, Moon Goddess, The Enticing Sourceress...The Bird-Footed Queen” (96). Lilith can be recognized in Jung’s description of the terrible aspect of the mother archetype, as she does embody “...anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces, that poisons, that is terrifying and inescapable like fate” (15). In *Lilith—the First Eve*, Hurwitz writes that she is a combination of the mother and the anima archetype, which represents a duality similar to that of the Trickster character. In her role as a mother, Lilith gives birth to demons and kills newborn children, while in her role as anima she is a seductress and destroyer of men. Pereira establishes Lilith as an entity that belongs to three realms; the human, the demonic and the divine. “by virtue of

her three roles as the mistress of the god Yahweh (heaven), first wife of Adam (earth), and Queen of the Underworld”, which places her in a Trickster position of a negotiator and messenger (ix).

The myth of Lilith originates in Mesopotamia, where she is known as the storm demon. Hall described the storm clouds and the lightning they bring as sources of enormous divine power in the minds of people, even more so than the power of the sun which is constant and tame in its daily tread across the sky. Lilith, as a demon and storm goddess, can be said to represent that “ideal of gods of power and independent action” (Hall 175). She is thought to be the first wife of Adam, but she rejected his attempts to establish himself as superior and fled to the wilderness, refusing to return. Hall calls her the rival of Eve with “a woman’s body and a serpent’s tail,” (120) and she is believed by Pereira to be the serpent from the Garden of Eden, which tempted Eve and instigated the Original Sin.

Pereira states that Lilith is connected to the image of the serpent since Neolithic time, and Durdin-Robertson affirms that Lilith is the one and the same Serpent from the Hebrew book of Genesis. Jung associates dragons and serpents with evil, and Lilith can also be seen as a personification of Freudian life and death drive, as she constantly brings forth demon offspring who have to die as the price of her freedom, and she is said to be responsible for sleeping men’s involuntary orgasms. This connection between evil and sexuality is described in Kaballah literature as the dark side of human character, and stands in opposition to the light and holy side just as Lilith stands in position to Virgin Mary. Pereira states that Lilith has been “split and separated from the ‘holy’ (the light or bright) side of the feminine,” (x) and this understanding of Lilith is further validated in

Lilith's connection to night and darkness through her name's Proto-Semitic root 'lyl' which means "night," and the symbol of an owl that she is depicted with. Lilith and Mary together create a feminine whole; while Gustafson describes the Virgin Mother's association with the moon, Pereira cites astrologers who believed that Lilith is the "second, dark moon orbiting the earth" (Pereira xi). It is interesting to note that Lilith and Mary are both created as women who turn into a demon and a divinity, and that the former's open sexuality results in demon offspring while the latter's perpetual virginity in the birth of the Son of God.

Pereira claims that eventually, the dualism inherent in the division between good and evil, masculine and feminine will be erased and displaced by a reunion with the force of creation. Gustafson similarly holds that the dark aspect is necessary in order to accept and understand one's "whole nature as a human being" (49). Trickster figures remind us of the possibilities ahead and of our point of origin. Combining the domain of the night and the moon as feminine, and the day and the sun as masculine—the end result is the light of creation, Trickster or God himself.

THE TRICKSTER IN 20TH CENTURY LITERATURE

Discussing the relationship between the Trickster and the civilized man, Jung states that the civilized man has lost a clear understanding of his own psyche's ability to enter the shadow regions and that he has placed responsibility on society for his own fate: "his code of ethics is replaced by a knowledge of what is permitted or forbidden or ordered" (174). This state of mind can be altered by the presence of a Trickster, who in Freudian terms represents the choice between the id and the superego, as he "constantly oscillates back and forth between self-gratification and cultural heroism" (Hynes & Doty 209). By

realizing that one has the ability to change his circumstance for better or for worse, one achieves the kind of personal freedom which is necessary for a reinvigoration of any culture—for the kind of activity which will allow that culture to survive the changing times. Trickster’s inherent duality between consciousness and unconsciousness creates a conflict that, according to Gustafson, brings with it “the possibility of a new insight, a higher wisdom, a renewal of life in its fullest sense” (60). In order to achieve this state, an individual must recognize and accept that the greatest life responsibility one can have is a responsibility towards the gift of free choice, and towards the promise of wholeness that it presents.

To demonstrate the effect of the Trickster figure on the society exposed to it, I will discuss several different forms in which it appears. Firstly, I will discuss Nabokov as a Trickster figure himself, and discuss the Trickster represented in *Pale Fire* by the Jesus-like figure of the poet and the Satan-like figure of the madman. The poet is killed at the end of the novel, but his spiritual death is questionable, whereas the madman lives on in his physical body but his identity is lost and he exists in a state of limbo in which he constantly awaits a figure of death to bring forth his final demise. Next, I will discuss the character of Hanka in Samokovlija’s short story collection *Tales From Old Sarajevo*. Hanka is a liminal figure whose primary characteristic is a Lilith-like focus on seduction, sexual passion and revenge. Betrayed by her lover, she fakes a pregnancy and leads him into madness and murder of both herself, and their non-existent unborn child, assuming in this self-sacrifice an aspect of the Virgin. Finally, I will discuss Jergovic’s character Regina, from *Walnut Manor*, focusing on her degeneration from the Christian Queen of Heaven to the base figure of a dark Trickster with supernatural strength, fondness for

excrement and power to render miserable the lives of those good Samaritans that kill and survive her.

CHAPTER 2.

THE TRICKSTER IN NABOKOV AND HIS WORK: JESUS/SATAN

NABOKOV AS A TRICKSTER AUTHOR

In his early writings, Nabokov wrote under the pseudonym Sirin, which is a name of a Russian mythological creature described by Rose in her work on folklore as “having the body of a bright-plumaged bird but the head of a beautiful woman” (336). Rose writes that Sirin would appear as a heaven-sent gift to the blessed people, who would listen to its melodies, forget everything connected to their earthly existence and then die. This divine inspiration is overwhelming for mortal souls, but for the soul of the artist it is its very substance. Jurich, for example, writes that such a manipulation of realms and boundaries is a characteristic of the Trickster: “[T]ricks are frequently also beneficial to the trickster...for devising a trick tests mental acumen and imagination. With the trick, the trickster is challenged to become new and different” (3). In the form of Sirin we can also see the connection with the Trickster Lilith, who is depicted in a Talmudic passage as “a demoness who has a human face and has wings” (Pereira 77). In the spirit of the Trickster, Nabokov challenges the nature of time and reality in his works; in *Nabokov's Deceptive World*, Rowe writes that Nabokov considered imagination a form of memory. In his essay “Parasitism and Pale Fire 's Camouflage: the King-Bot, the Crown Jewels and the Man in the Brown Macintosh,” Ramey mentions Nabokov’s comments in which he likens “the deceptiveness of his novel to the deceptiveness of nature: ‘all art is deception and so is Nature.’” This attitude signals that for Nabokov, the creator of art acts

in similar ways as the creator of life—the author is a Trickster who sheds his earth-bound identity and assumes God-like status in relation to his work.

Rowe suggests that the playful deceptiveness which Nabokov indulges in is a result of the illusion he creates in weaving the real and the unreal elements together, so that: “‘reality’ assumes for the reader an elusive quality of circular timelessness,” but I will argue that the artist can be seen as a Trickster precisely because the timelessness he creates is not circular, and that the end result in this case is greater than the sum of the parts (75). *Pale Fire*'s Kinbote comments on a painter's ignoble trickery when “among his decorations of wood or wool, gold or velvet, he would insert one which was really made of the material elsewhere imitated by paint” (130). Nabokov thus establishes a connection between ‘real life’ and art, or lived experience and perceived experience. In *Pale Fire* Nabokov attempts to create art with its own parameters, which is therefore resistant to interpretation.

Based on Nabokov's reflections in *Speak, Memory* his ‘reality’ assumes the shape of a spiral rather than a circle: “a spiritualized circle...uncoiled, unwound,” on that “has ceased to be vicious; it has been set free” (277). The spiral is mathematically defined as a curve emanating from a central point, moving progressively farther from the origin as it revolves around it, and this description mirrors the dilemma of the mystics when faced with the need to locate the central point from a standpoint of someone who has only a faint recollection of its lines at their disposal. Nabokov transforms the spiral into an elaborate metaphysical question regarding the possibility of other, noncyclical worlds hidden behind our understanding of reality, and in doing so he responds to the definition of the Trickster established by Hynes: “[I]f we are the myths we myth, the Trickster myth

beckons us toward innovation; he is a psychic guide or hermeneut leading us on through the thickets of personal and social signifiers toward invention of the self and society” (211). Nabokov will lead us on just such a journey in *Pale Fire*.

PALE FIRE

Describing *Pale Fire*, Nabokov writes that the text is “completely divorced from any so-called faith or religion, gods, God, Heaven, Folklore, etc....[M]y creature’s quest is centered in the problem of heretofore and hereafter, and it is I may say beautifully solved” (212). Nabokov’s text is suspended on the margin of readers’ ability to decipher its meaning due to the intricate psychological game that it presents in the context of an unassuming structure: Kinbote’s foreword to the poem *Pale Fire*, Shade’s poem, Kinbote’s commentary to the poem, and Kinbote’s index. Though the text presents us with two authors, the poet Shade and the mad commentator Kinbote, by succumbing to allusion and incongruence within the text a reader might be compelled to reduce these voices to one. Most critics established two camps supporting either the poet or the madman, but I will suggest that in endorsing one we must unquestionably support the other as they are both masters of the same game and possess the same secret hidden in the text. I will offer an alternative way of approaching these characters as two faces of the same coin: the resurrected poet as the Christ figure and the manipulative madman as the figure of the devil, who manipulate the same light of creation: “good and evil....are not separate forces, but a spectrum as reflected by the two lights with the same source” (Pereira 109). I draw my conclusion by examining Nabokov’s art in *Pale Fire* as well as his opinions on art, and by consulting the studies on the Trickster figure as well as Certeau’s philosophy on mystic speech and the utterance of the Other. These sources are

relevant if we take into account the literary lore that draws parallels between madmen's communication with the spirits and poets' communication with the muses, both of which signify border crossings. As I will prove in my argument, *Pale Fire* is concerned with the problem that arises once the tie between humankind and God is broken, and with the possibility of re-establishing or re-creating that communication through the spirit of the Trickster.

In their desperate quest to "discern in our earthly, fallen language the now inaudible Word of God" the mystics attempt to decipher God's message by establishing a unitary reference in "a sacral hierarchy of power, of which the king remains the symbol" (Certeau 87-8). Mystic poetry is defined by the relationship between the speaker and the message; it is "contemporaneous to the act of creation," it can "create the world as text," and it is constituted "outside the fields of knowledge" (Certeau 89). Bearing in mind that the madman of *Pale Fire* is also its king, Charles Xavier the Beloved, and combining his voice with the voice of the poet, the text presents the subjects for divine communication. All that is left is to establish what ineffable message these inter-textual authors are attempting to relate, what this has to do with Nabokov's role as a Trickster artist, and whether or not we as readers can trust that the "crown jewels" that we are presented with as a reward for our efforts are not results of trickery, burning indolently with pale fire.

THE QUESTION OF LIGHT

In *Pedigree of the Devil* Hall writes that there is evidence of a connection between the act of human acquisition of fire and the acquisition of knowledge that resulted from eating the forbidden fruit. This knowledge is the basis for *Pale Fire*, as fire is the corner stone of civilization and a destructive force as well: a "consuming element" (Hall 179).

Gustafson writes about the meaning of fire in the development of individual consciousness, and describes it as a link that connects us to the force of creation:

...the discovery of fire was metaphorically a discovery of one's inner divine spark as well, thus pointing toward not only the wonder of the external fire but also of its equivalent symbolic form within the psyche. The giving of fire...strongly reminds us that fire, that is, psychic energy, has been bestowed in a most beneficial way and that, in the end, it is not our sole or full possession, but a property of our total personality which comes from a source far beyond our conscious understanding. (16)

According to the King James Version of the Bible, Jesus says that he is the "light of the world," and that those who follow him will "not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life," and in that sense people are offered a guidance towards salvation: they learn what needs to be done in order to reach heaven (John 8:12). However, the element of fire simultaneously guides people's actions by acting on an instinctual level, as Hall writes that the impure fire is "the real point of contact between the element of fire and the ideal devil:—the fire of passion, wrath and lust...it is the hell which setteth on fire the whole curse of Nature, and incites to all kinds of lust and crime" (184). In order to trick the one-dimensional understanding of world, be it through Jesus or the devil, Nabokov creates two characters that start as seeming opposites, the Jesus figure and the devil figure, but who manipulate their way through art to become nearly indistinguishable. This merging of identities is evident in the very title *Pale Fire*, which is 'stolen' from Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*' discussion of the sun and its role as a thief as well as the injured party:

I'll example you with thievery;
The sun's a thief, and with his great attraction
Robs the vast sea; the moon's an arrant thief,
And her pale fire she snatches from the sun (Timon of Athens 4.3.435-40).

In *The Book of Lilith*, Koltuv discusses the Kabbalistic work in which God creates two lights of equal force, male and female, and after their dispute demands that the female light diminish herself. From then on, the male governs the Sun and the dominion of the day, while female governs the Moon and the dominion of the night, and “[F]rom that time she has had no light of her own, but derives her light from the sun” (2). In *Black Madonna*, Gustafson writes that the sun is a masculine representation of consciousness, while the moon is a feminine representation of unconsciousness and instinct. In questioning the Sun's central role Nabokov re-examines the origin of creation, and finds it in the interplay of the good and evil, masculine and feminine. This relationship is aptly represented in the solar eclipse, during which Gustafson writes that the “sun and moon come together in a symbolic marriage...this relationship reveals their antithetical nature, for the moon blocks the brilliance of the sun. The masculine and feminine principles of life, Logos and Eros, meet in a dramatic embrace” (59). However, within the primary differentiation of masculine and feminine there is a division between good and evil. For example, though the feminine is the domain of the night and the moon, the moon is connected to the good in Virgin Mary¹, while night is connected to the evil in Lilith. Similarly, masculine is the domain of light and the sun, but though light and the sun are

¹ Gustafson, *The Black Madonna*, p. 94.

connected to the good in Jesus Christ², they have an impure form in the representation of the fires of hell and are connected to the evil in the devil.

Pale Fire communicates Nabokov's values that identify true art as power of creation of timeless realities, tied to the power of the Trickster as it cannot be pinned down, compromised or copied. True art thus becomes a concept that escapes our understanding and ultimately harkens to the work of God, the first great Trickster artist. Rowe identifies the Trickster's signature in *Pale Fire* as a "vivid display accorded human perception...controlled by some alien and disturbingly playful Force" (86). The Force in this case rests in the hands of Nabokov, who describes the creation of a novel as "in a fit of lucid madness...with the zest of a deity building a live world from the most unlikely ingredients" (*Speak, Memory* 291), but it is reflected in both Shade and Kinbote, who do the same with their creative projects within the novel.

The concept of the "otherworld" is central in Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, and I suggest we think of the "otherworld" as a world always available to its creator. Kinbote's musings that he might "cook up a state play...a lunatic who intends to kill an imaginary king, another lunatic who imagines himself to be that king, and a distinguished old poet who stumbles by chance into the line of fire" are a direct reflection of his creation in *Pale Fire* (301). I would argue that the awareness he has of his ability to create alternative realities identifies him as a true Trickster artist, alongside Shade and Nabokov himself. Correlated pattern in Kinbote's commentary between Gradus' approach and Shade's composition of the poem is evidence of Kinbote playing God with the text. In a way, Kinbote creates Shade and his reality within the commentary to *Pale Fire*: "without my

² Ibid.

notes Shade's text simply has no human reality at all," (28) even as he asks of Shade to create his Zembla in the text of the poem *Pale Fire*: "Once transmuted by you into poetry, the stuff will be true, and the people will come alive" (214). Though his understanding of their roles is flawed since Kinbote succeeds in creating Zembla himself while Shade takes responsibility for creating his reality, Kinbote's aptitude shows that he as a madman is the poet's equal. The views of the Zemblan theologians, and therefore Kinbote's, regarding madmen clearly show that they are not bound by time, and that they are in fact immortal: "Even the most demented mind still contains within its diseased mass a sane basic particle that survives death and suddenly expands, bursts out as it were, in peals of healthy and triumphant laughter when the world of timorous fools...has fallen away far behind" (237). Kinbote mirrors this imagery when he asks Shade to "accept God's presence—...a pale light in the dimness of bodily life, and a dazzling radiance after it" (27) positing the madman's metamorphosis as a change in one's perception of God, before and after not death, but "bodily life." In approaching God through poetry or madness, Kinbote and Shade assume their Trickster identities and "bring something across this line from the gods to humans—be it a message, punishment, an essential cultural power, or even life itself" (Hynes & Doty 40).

THE POET AS A CHRIST FIGURE: SHADE

Shade writes *Pale Fire*, a 999-line poem in couplets, to come to terms with his understanding of life and death, of the loss of his daughter Hazel and of art behind the beautiful mysteries of nature; he is in a sense concerned with the idea of offering salvation through his poetry, and in the end must die in order to provide a passage for his vision and create an alternate reality. His path is in that sense similar to the path of Jesus,

who is born on this Earth to free the believers from sin and offer them salvation through his own death and resurrection. As Shade finishes his life's work and comes to a conclusion:

And if my private universe scans right,
So does the verse of galaxies divine
Which I suspect is in iambic line.
I'm reasonably sure that we survive
And that my darling somewhere is alive,
As I am reasonably sure that I
Shall wake at six tomorrow, on July... II. 974-980

he relinquishes the belief in the existence of a superior being and establishes a universe of his own creation, in which Hazel is not dead, and in which he does not die the next day. Shade's idea of the great chain of being does not include an omnipotent God whose reality he feels he has the "right to deny" (225), but as he attempts to make sense of life and death he comes to the same conclusion as Kinbote: that death is a passage to another reality of his making and that God is his own alter ego. Shade becomes a Trickster himself, acting as "a psychopomp, a mediator who crosses and resets the lines between life and death" (Hynes & Doty 40).

Shade's self-imposed task in life is to "explore and fight/The foul, the inadmissible abyss" (II. 167-1; p.39) and he does so with his poetry. By believing that he found "Some kind of link-and-bobolink, some kind/Of correlated pattern in the game," (II. 812-13; p. 63) he indicates that he is able to reproduce 'reality' and mimic it. He recognizes that "a person who deliberately peels off a drab and unhappy past and replaces

it with a brilliant invention” deserves to be recognized as a Trickster artist (*Pale Fire* 238). His death is not final because he refuses to follow the logical conclusion to his unhappy days—the description of his dead eyes staring at the azure sky is paralleled by the first lines of his poem in which, after the waxwing has been slain by flying into the “false azure,” Shade as her shadow “lived on, flew on in the reflected sky” (I. 1-4; p. 33). By writing this poem, he is resurrected as he creates a reality in which he can take refuge after the confrontation with the “psychopompos around the corner” (*Pale Fire* 226), and in which he is reunited with his daughter.

THE MADMAN AS THE DEVIL: KINBOTE

Kinbote is concerned with the act of creation as he writes a commentary to Shade’s poem, but his creation is impure as it feeds on the creative energy of another, and manipulates the poem into the text of *Pale Fire* in order to bring his imagination to life. The trace of the absent last line of the poem is the key to the poem’s narrative, and though Kinbote believes that he can complete it by repeating the first line due to the poem’s ‘mirror structure,’ the spiral of the poem actually culminates with Shade’s crossing over into his alternate reality, and thus escapes his grasp. However, Kinbote exhibits a similar power of creation as Shade when he compromises his relationship with God by creating an alternate reality of his own. The belief that he is committing regicide by living in exile and thus removing the king from the chain of being indicates his need to supplant God with the figure of a Trickster. The incomplete ‘regicide’ allows Kinbote to recreate the king and the kingdom of Zembla within the commentary that he writes to *Pale Fire*, establishing himself as author of a universe in which he is both the king and Shade’s muse.

Kinbote describes Shade's process of re-creating reality in detail: "Shade, perceiving and transforming the world...recombining the elements in the very process of storing them so as to produce ...a line of verse" (*Pale Fire* 27). He witnesses Shade's creation of an "organic" world and realizes that Shade has discovered the secret to alternate realities, a secret of Trickster genius that the poet and the madman share. His comment "we all are, in a sense, poets" (*Pale Fire* 238) underlines his belief that he shares Shade's Trickster identity. Kinbote's note to line 137 in which he discusses what he claims to be Shade's trivial use of a meaningless world becomes important in considering his motives. Kinbote had to know that the word "lemniscate" signifies the infinity sign because he had his dictionary's definition available. His insincerity draws attention to the issue and begs the reader to come to an independent conclusion about the significance of the words discussed—the reader is to interpret this word as a work of art. Once we do so, we realize that Kinbote controls the meaning of all information that relates to Zembla, and that the word "coramen" probably means "choral and sculptured beauty," though he so vehemently denies it the meaning he finds most suitable (*Pale Fire* 136). The parallel between the words "lemniscates" and "coramen" rests in the importance that the poet and the madman give them. Shade admits to never envying anything save "The miracle of a lemniscate left/Upon wet sand by nonchalantly deft/Bicycle tires" (I. 187-90), and Kinbote is extremely protective of the secret hiding place of the crown jewels throughout the novel. Kinbote's linking of the words betrays that the meaning of *Pale Fire's* message has to do with the secret of creating alternate realities as means of erasing the boundaries between the real and the imagined. If Shade lost Hazel in the 'real' world, she is still alive in another reality that he creates in his poem, and if Kinbote did lose his

Kingdom, Meyer suggests that he can still keep his spiritual kingdom within the text of the commentary. Nabokov's *Pale Fire* itself then becomes the coveted crown jewel and path to infinite new worlds. This renders Nabokov Kinbote's "more competent Gradus" (*Pale Fire* 301), who pushes the novel into its final form and publication and presents it to the 'real' world, implicating the readers in its spiraling realities.

CONCLUSION

The role of God is usurped by both Shade and Kinbote, who use their authorship to become the focus of the universe of their creation, the mystical text of *Pale Fire*. According to Certeau, "the literature of mysticism provides a path for those who 'ask the way to get lost...It teaches 'how not to return'" (80). This understanding of the text implies that it cannot convey a clear message to the readers because it is not an object of knowledge; it instead allows the reader to escape the conventional understanding of reality by losing a form of knowledge, part of which is one's identity. The words of Foucault: "I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" (Certeau 193), reveal the itinerant practices through which an author, even a fictional one, can achieve immortality by creating textual paths to alternate realities. According to Certeau, identity adheres to an order and is in that regard what Nabokov would surely call a coiled, wound, vicious circle, which one can only break in the creation of art: "To think, on the contrary, is to pass through" (Certeau 194). The Trickster negates the divine ruler over the universe, and recreates realities according to his vision, losing the self and becoming the more powerful Other: "I is an other' – that is the secret told by the mystics" (Certeau 96), whose work of art escapes criticism. In *Ambigere*, Ballinger affirms this view when he writes:

Like subatomic particles, Tricksters never allow a final definition of time, place and character. They never settle or shape themselves so as to allow closure, either fictional or moral. We may believe that we have somehow secured a Trickster in place at one moment, but if we look from another angle, he is gone. If we ask a different question, we get a different answer, which—we must confess—is coterminous with the first....At most we can say only that Tricksters are, in fact, neither/nor, either/and, and both.

(Ballinger 30)

The text of *Pale Fire* is “always less than what comes through it and allows a genesis...connected to the nothing that opens the future, the time to come” (de Certeau 100). In creating such a text Nabokov opens a spiral and never-ending process of attempts to decipher its meaning. The text becomes a Trickster work in itself, always teasing out possibilities for a new narrative out of the snapshots provided: “[M]y left hand is half raised—not to pat Shade on the shoulder as seems to be the intention, but to remove my sunglasses which, however, it never reached in *that* life, the life of the picture” (26). Kinbote points out that the narrative of this photograph can easily be misconstrued based on the evidence provided, and this proves true for the text as a whole. No linear meaning is possible, and one can either choose to believe that art has the power to create new worlds, or not.

Throughout the novel the crown jewels represent something valuable that has to be hidden well lest it be stolen from its rightful owner. They represent the quest for and ultimate creation of an alternate reality in which tragic losses of a daughter or a kingdom, however fictional they may be, are erased. Alexander notes: “even if Kinbote’s story is

some sort of an elaborate compensation for profound unhappiness in his mundane existence, the artistic nature of his fantastic construct grants it a form of validity that is far from negligible” (192) and this analysis applies to Shade as well. The madman and the poet become God-like Tricksters, and since their art “creates its own special reality having nothings to do with the average ‘reality’ perceived by the communal eye” (*Pale Fire* 130), it functions in the parameters whose validity we as readers cannot judge unless we allow the trickster text to influence our own understanding of the worlds around us. In bringing their realities to life via mystical discourse, a slippage of meaning occurs and the artists are unable to describe their ineffable experience without incurring a loss.

Discussing poetry de Certeau states: “It is by taking words seriously, a life and death game in the body of language, that the secret of what they give is torn from them...to do that is to make them confess their secret of their ‘impotence,’ of what they cannot ‘give’” (de Certeau 100). Both Shade and Kinbote embody the Jungian figure of the Trickster as “the devil, a redeeming psychopomp, an evasive Trickster, and God’s reflection is physical nature” (Tannen 7). When Kinbote confides that he will “divulge to you an ultimate truth, an extraordinary secret, that will put your mind completely at rest,” (*Pale Fire* 215) he is not quite being sincere; he will not and cannot tell us the secret because the nature of it is ineffable: “true art is above false honor” (*Pale Fire* 214), and the Trickster artists owe the truth to no one, even if they could express it.

CHAPTER 3.

THE TRICKSTER IN JERGOVIĆ AND HIS WORK: VIRGIN MARY

JERGOVIĆ AS A TRICKSTER AUTHOR

Miljenko Jergović was born in Sarajevo and now lives in Croatia. His works focus on the history and the people of ex-Yugoslavia, and in her review of *Dvori od Oraha*, which I will translate as *Walnut Manor*, Vidan describes Jergović's prose as a "realistic yet emotionally charged presentation of the fates of common people caught up in the whirlwind of history." Vidan notes that though Jergović focuses on Dubrovnik in this particular novel, many characters that appear in the narrative by entering the lives of protagonists serve to cast a light on the life across the Balkans.

In an article on the Balkan identity, "The Ideal Yugoslavian," Jergović states clearly: "I myself have no homeland." Discussing his family history, from which he draws heavily in constructing the themes and developments of his novels, Jergović shows his understanding of the proverbial cross that the people in the Balkans bear: their proximity to each other's various national and religious backgrounds, and their inability to let go of a need for a specific and defined national identity, which is always necessarily a function of perceiving those around you as different, as other. Jergović understands that "hatred in a multinational community is the same thing as self-hatred," and this is the truth that he portrays in *Walnut Manor* as he describes generations that have experienced a failure in their attempts to free themselves from the ugliness of the past by describing in detail the

process that leads to a complete disillusionment and breaking of the spirit of one member of the family, Regina Delavale.

Jergović offers his readers an invitation to look objectively at those cornerstones of our lives that we blindly accept as vital for our wellbeing and happiness, and to judge them. His message is unpleasant, but from a point of view of someone who left Croatia for fear of never having the opportunity to leave again, I can see how Jergović is right to reveal the negative face of belonging to a homeland. He is a Trickster author, revealing these new nations' futures in the architecture of their past. Whether he is aware of it or not, he describes himself as a Trickster artist: breaking boundaries and seeking to disclose the truth:

At peace with what we are, and with a sense of what we are not, we represent identities that no word, no passport, no identity card or permit can define. The masses know what they are from their coat of arms, flag and name, and then they chant it out, while we are left with our long, confusing explanations, novels and movies, stories both fictional and not...we are left with blurred memories, the feeling that we are one thing today and another tomorrow, that our hymns and state borders keep slipping away from us, we are left with remorse, a long and painful sense of guilt because our relative lived and died as an enemy and that makes us a bit of an enemy ourselves, we are left with faith in what we hide behind our language, with the truth that our **homeland is no more**, and maybe it never even existed, because for us every inch of land is a foreign country. ("The Ideal Yugoslavian")

WALNUT MANOR

Walnut Manor is a chronologically reversed novel that follows the events that start with Regina Delavale's tragic death to the moment of her birth. Regina is portrayed as a Trickster whose life has the power to explain the psychological burdens of the people who inhabit the territory of ex-Yugoslavia in the twentieth century. As Monsma notes in *Divine Aporia*, "trickster narratives both define values and reveal points at which value systems become static and the authoritative institutions supporting them become repressive," and Jergović's insistence for the reader to read the novel backwards alerts us to the fact that we might be repeating her history on our own accord, in our own time (159). We are stuck with Regina, piecing together her life as much as our understanding of our world. Regina is not present in the first or final chapter of the novel, indicating a self-renewing life cycle inherited by Regina's daughter, whom we are introduced to in the first chapter as Regina dies, from Regina's mother, present in the final chapter of the novel as Regina is born. The inverted story line, from its end to its beginning, serves to validate the inherent insurmountable fear that direct the actions the female protagonists—the fear of entrapment which the novel suggests might never be resolved because it is all too real and so embedded in the psychology of the people that they have lost the agency required to make a change, regardless of their desire for escape. On the first page of the novel, we hear Diana say of her mother: "[B]ut as of three months ago she was no longer herself. The devil possessed her!" (5), as she describes Regina's outbursts of rage during which the old woman spreads her waste all over the apartment and breaks anything that comes to hand. Jergović writes that the reason Regina lived to ninety-seven is because her soul and body experienced a misunderstanding, and that people either die "at peace

with a lost life” or go insane (57). Since Regina never came to terms with her life, she is a personification of revolt, defying death in order to bring attention to the suffering of the living.

In the first chapter, Diana indulges in explaining the circumstances of Regina’s death to Marija, an accountant at the police station. Marija is the only woman who has the time to listen to Diana and therefore the one whose understanding is least needed.

Though Marija attempts to clear up the confusion about her insignificant role, we are struck with a sense that reason and logic have nothing to do with Diana’s actions: she feels guilty and is willing to trick her sense of guilt with any semblance of an action, so that she can put it to rest and continue on with her existence, dreaming of a change that should miraculously come from outside of herself. Marija’s life is an important case study that Jergović presents in order to make evident the kind of entrapment that the characters live in by default; simply by being a part of their society. She is a personification of her times and, terrified of being branded by Diana’s shame by proxy, she decides to dissuade Diana from action by advising her to let things follow their natural course of development, thus diluting personal responsibility. She is successful in psychologically paralyzing Diana, and her thoughts complete the chapter: “If you don’t know that which you don’t need to know and which does not fall on your head, yours and your loved ones’—if you have any, a lot of bad things simply pass you by” (17). That is exactly what the fate of Jergović’s characters seems to be: patient waiting for life to pass one by, with impotent bursts of madness and rage.

Throughout the novel, Jergović repeats the fear of gossip: the words and stories that bind one to the place of her ancestors, that document every transgression from the

beginning of the family's history to the present day and thus weave the indestructible fabric of life in Dubrovnik. As Diana commits her mother to the hospital, she walks around the city as if it is the last day when she can be treated as a normal human being, because as soon as Regina wakes up from the sedative the stories will start circulating about her insanity, prolonging the dying spasms of the city by injecting its decaying spirit with the artificial blood flow of gossip: "And then the people will start to mouth wash with her name, and this will last for years and forever, to outlive crazy Manda and Diana and to become a lasting addition to the family surname, harder than the city walls and stronger than the powers of the protector saints" (24). The head doctor is an example of ruined hopes resulting in the fortification of the bitterness with which the culture mistakenly hopes to project its future out of the rut that he present is in. The doctor wanted to escape his city and go abroad, but as he was not able to do so he became hateful, seeing the people around him as eternal liars, thieves, and cheaters who "think they will cheat death as well" (33). He sees through Diana's deception—Regina is insane and not physically ill. By ordering for Regina not to be tied up, he forces the young doctor Vlahović to keep sedating her in order to stop her destructive behavior as Regina showed "incredible physical strength and vitality, not only unimaginable for her age, but her sex as well" (39). Vlahović's action saves Diana, as he makes the decision for her and thus ends her misery, and he offers himself as a scapegoat for the city which immediately crucifies him: "what was reason for praise yesterday, today was the source of the greatest condemnations" (39). Regina thus destroys another's hopes and lives at the end of her life. Her madness is contagious because her evil lives on: "Three people...will remember

her until their own end, and they will carry her evil in their souls to give it to others if they lose all hope, and in doing so render the curse of crazy Manda immortal” (42).

These first two chapters are sufficient to show how Jergović explores the meaning of entrapment and fear in the confines of the culture that his characters inhabit. Jergović describes conflict as always lurking in the shadows in the Balkans: “[M]asacres are always forgiven in our areas, but never forgotten. And each forgiveness has an inscribed expiration date. Someone is forgiven for ten, someone for fifty and a hundred years, but no one remembers anyone being forgiven anything, any crime, real or imagined, for all time” (173). In the further exploration of Regina’s character and fate, we will come to an understanding of whether there is any hope left for the future, and I will attempt to prove that hope might lie in the character of a Trickster artist, one who would shock the society back to its senses and to the present day struggle and set it free from the bonds of its past.

REGINA: TIES OF HERITAGE AND RELIGION

Though God and Catholicism are vital to Dubrovnik’s people, there is a sense that the relationship continues out of habit, and that faith has ceased to play a role. Regina’s mother Kata, for example, “despised the Lord—if he even existed! But everything she thought and felt was arranged and imagined as if he exists” (508). Kata also felt the need to escape her fate, which is exemplified in her fascination with the American actress Isabel Duncan. As salvation is no longer linked with religion it is even more elusive, because the characters lack strength to give up what they do not believe in and make a new life for themselves. Furthermore, their environment is such that it attempts to extinguish any semblance of individuality by cruelly punishing the offenders who defy the norm, whether the ‘crime’ is homosexuality, or simply a joyous and optimistic

outlook on life. Jergović treats that mentality as a curse, a legacy that follows even the male characters who decide to break all bonds with the homeland, and that seems to assert itself through their bizarre deaths. Jergović writes that everything originating in the Balkans is driven by an ancient curse, which is constantly revived as the violence continues and the victims curse the attackers, who become the next victims, and so on: “Even if there was no curse, everything transpired according to its logic” (422).

Jergović addresses Dubrovnik’s ambivalent attitude towards religion as he describes Kata dying while kneading dough on Christmas Eve and cursing God. As neighbors gather to stare at Kate’s dead body, they do not dwell on the happy prospect of Kate in heaven, but instead note that Kate’s eyes seem to stare at the ceiling where a spider weaved his web and think that perhaps “fate weaved a destiny of misfortune over this home, and that the worse is only yet to happen” (489). They are in fact projecting misfortune on what is left of Kate’s household: her five children, and by this point in the novel Jergović has shown us that all of Kate’s children indeed come to a violent end—whether in madness, exile or execution. Since God is not present other than formulaically, the people’s morbid fascination with physical or psychological death and decay reigns supreme without hope of recovery for the future. Regina feels her helplessness in not being able to drive the neighbors away, and her paralysis will grow stronger and more life consuming as she grows older.

The main flaw in Regina, her mother, her daughter and granddaughter lies in their passive detachment from their bodies and identities that allows them to continue on without ever truly attempting to break free. Kata, for example, gives up her children but she does so secretly and while preserving the lie of a peaceful and normal existence. As a

symbol of her detachment from her children she keeps the image of Duncan in the chest with the family valuables: “she no longer loved them with that pure love of the Blessed Virgin gazing upon her child” (511). Jergović figuratively winks at the reader, stating that Kata’s greatest life sin, the cessation of her belief in Christmas as the “most touching of holy stories,” is justified because Christ did turn Mary into just another mother, devouring her own identity as a woman (511).

As Regina observes her dead mother, “[S]he was not sure whether she felt pity for that woman, whether she was hurt by the fact that she will forever stay under her feet, or if she is happy to not have around the woman whose measures were to dictate the making of her own world” (493). The death of her mother, coinciding with the birth of Jesus, is described as the greatest holiday in Regina’s life as it brings the siblings closer together for that one night. For Regina, salvation is to come from the freedom to form her own character and develop as an individual. However, she is left with no means of escape from the city, which propagates one role for Regina, the same that is offered to all other women—that of a wife and a mother. She attempts to resist her fate by waiting for the right man to save her: “was it fear or pride, it is hard to say, but she was afraid of letting go....she would take a step and give up, just to find out or discover later, for herself more than for others’ sake, everything that was wrong with the man she was supposed to jump for” (450-1), but her approach is doomed from the start. Regina has no confidence in her own powers of redemption and in looking outward for help she is perpetually disappointed and betrayed.

Regina’s relationship with Aris singles her out as different from the other women in Dubrovnik: “the women found in themselves a common reason for jealousy and

hatred, which will follow Regina from that day forward until the day she dies” (468), but it does not bring her the freedom that she longs for and offers nothing but a fleeting happiness. Jergović writes that Regina was “in love in a way that was extremely rare with human beings. Like the male praying mantis. In full faith and with a pure heart he surrenders to death, convinced that nothing better exists on earth. When such a love happens to people, as a rule they survive it, but something in them dies nevertheless” (477). Regina is devastated for years after Aris leaves her, and Jergović connects this intimate experience to the Hindenburg disaster in which a German airship burns down at landing. This event is developed into a symbol of the destructive, vain and empty desire of the modern man to rise above his limitations. Regina wanted to have a better life, but she had to fail—after all, she is burdened by her psychological and spiritual inheritance. This idea is a part of the Dalmatian mindset painfully familiar to all Dalmatians through the well known and loved song “Dalmatino, povišću pritrujena!” (Dalmatia, Worn Out by History) which discusses the burdens of history and culture that Dalmatians bear and is laden with the same sense of weariness and a stubborn acceptance of fate.

Regina attempts to rebel against her fate, but if her first attempt was unsuccessful, her second one seems doomed from the beginning. As Regina equates the fall of the aircraft to her own failure in life, she decides to take action and accept Ivo Delavale in an artificial attempt to restore meaning: “[A]nd what else was there for her to do but to surrender herself to the one she did not have faith in, and to build a faith in him as she welcomes him back. And this faith, of course, was not a faith of love, but a faith of fear” (482). Regina’s faith is a parody since she replaces the idea of God with faith in man, another inadequate agent: “[H]ope replaced God because God did not live to see the

Twentieth century“ (483). Jergović uses Regina to comment on the dangers of such faith when it is fostered in men who engage in warfare, claiming that Regina only destroys herself while the soldiers destroy nations. However, I would argue that as the feminine energy is destroyed in Regina, the future generations suffer even more thoroughly than in the aftermath of war. As Gustafson writes in *Black Madonna*, “. . .the dark feminine energy of any person or culture, with all its potential for healing, creativity and renewal, can through neglect become the same energy that sickens, uproots and destroys the best intents of individuals and nations. Humanity in the end pays the price for this neglect” (114). In *Walnut Manor* war itself is seen as a continuation and crystallization of an ancient curse that originates and is perpetuated by women. Until the feminine, personified in this novel in Regina, is saved and able to provide love and guidance to the nations, the world will continue to suffer. Regina loses faith in Ivo when she learns that, under his direction, she unwittingly named her child after Ivo’s lover, Diana Vichedemonni. Jergović writes that at that moment “a great life rage that won’t let the heart stop beating” was born in Regina, and she lost her ability for love (305). As she is freed from the chains of affection and duty, Regina begins to find freedom in her madness and point her finger at the ugly truth that people face daily and continuously attempt to deny. Contrary to the accepted behavioral norms, she buries Ivo in the tin coffee box that his ashes came in. Tearing away the handkerchief that the priest placed over it, Regina starts to tear through social norms and confront everyone with what they fear most: their misguided sense of shame and their inability to assume personal responsibility for their destinies.

Regina, her mother, daughter and granddaughter raise their children without the presence of a father figure, and in that sense have the power to direct their lives. The

presence of husbands in the lives of these women progressively diminishes as time goes on: Kata's husband is present but silenced, Regina's is aware of his role as a husband and father but does not fulfill it as he is abroad, Diana's husband dies on the same day as Tito, and before he finds out that she is pregnant, and Mirna never marries the man who impregnates her. As these women explore their relationship with their children they realize that they are detached from any sense of responsibility for these children's wellbeing. Just as Regina's mother psychologically distanced herself from her children thinking that they somehow infringed on her life, Regina stops caring for her daughter after she finds out that she is named after Ivo's mistress: "[S]he did not love her with the love that she imagined while she was pregnant..." (266). The time of Diana's pregnancy coincides with the time of Tito's death, and the end of a historic period—the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia—allows for a passage of time that paralyses Diana's decision-making ability, and she ends up giving birth simply because she was too distracted to decide otherwise.

What follows in Regina's family is a slow reevaluation of what it means to be a woman, a lover and a mother—one that will be studded by costly mistakes and that will take generations to be of any value in the women's attempts to find happiness. This development is most obvious through the women's relationship with their children: unlike Virgin Mary's relationship to Jesus, these women do not receive salvation and hope from their children: they are a burden, maturing into a personified accusation for the mistakes seem just as fated and outside of the realm of free choice as Mary's immaculate birth. In the following chapter, I will further explore the relationship between Regina and the light and dark aspects of the Virgin Mary.

SALVE REGINA (“HAIL HOLY QUEEN”)

In *Walnut Manor*, Regina’s hometown is the city of Dubrovnik, named after the vast woods that encircled it—dubrava. The physical landscape emphasizes the heroine’s role in the novel. In his work *Black Madonna*, Gustafson affirms Jungian view of the forest as the metaphor for the unknown and the unconscious, and discusses its use as “the starting point of a hero’s adventures” (5). Dubrovnik was an independent republic until the early nineteenth century, and it prided itself on its Catholicism. Regina’s name is therefore laden with meaning, as it is a form of the Virgin Mary’s name addressing her as the Queen of Heaven, and used in an ancient hymn *Salve Regina*. Gustafson calls the hymn “foremost in the collective consciousness...bearing both the agony and pain of human existence, as well as hope” (73). Regina’s connection to Dubrovnik is ambivalent, as on the one hand she is tragically bound to its walls and customs, but on the other hand she represents the potential for renewal of the energy of its people. In describing the Virgin as she is presented in the hymn, Gustafson writes that she represents the drama of life which encompasses both the suffering and the salvation, thus forming the environment in which humanity can struggle and thrive: “[T]his hymn is an appeal for life’s energy to move on within the valley of tears in such a way that meaning and value can be given to the senseless suffering of mankind. It is not, nor should it be, an appeal for release” (74). In a way, Regina’s trials are a vital part of the process of establishing a change in the mindset of the people.

Not only is Regina tied to the woods via the city, but via the miniature walnut manor carved out of sacral walnut wood and presented to her at her birth. A famous wood worker August is commissioned by Regina’s grandfather to carve out a toy in honor of

her birth. He builds Regina's walnut manor out of wood that serves the sacral purposes in building altars and saint relics. Wood as a symbol is relevant in terms of Jungian analysis, where the forest is the source of both the positive, nurturing aspect of a woman or her maternal nature, but at the same time it represents death and decay as "part of a natural life cycle" (Gustafson 6). August, nostalgic about his age that was so driven by violence, decides to build a toy home based on the vision of the homes of the future, of the year 1950 at which point man will have hopefully fulfilled his potential. Spanning the period of a hundred years that covers most of the twentieth century, Jergović slyly implies that man has come nowhere close to fulfilling his dreams of the future, since the 1950s in the aftermath of World War II were far removed from August's idyllic vision. The walnut manor is a representation of both the light aspect of the feminine in the Virgin Mary, represented by the hope for the future, and in the dark aspect in the forms of the Black Madonna as well as in its original form—that of the demon Lilith.

In *Lilith—The First Eve*, Hurwitz discusses the Sumerian version of the Gilgamesh epic from 40th ct B.C., in which the demon Lilith is described as having built her house in the trunk of the "huluppu" tree that the goddess Inanna wanted to make her throne out of. When attempts were made to chase Lilith away, she "tore down her house and fled into the wilderness" (Hurwitz 49). A similar course of events takes place in *Walnut Mansion*, as the mansion is made out of wood that traditionally serves to build art and regal structures and that has by a twist of fate been turned into a toy house for an unborn child. Jergović's description of Regina's birth ties her further with the Virgin: "[E]verything that talks, walks and feels on Earth stopped in the moment of the child's birth. It is not possible! It is not possible! Yelled out the people when they heard. But

how can they know what is, and is not possible? How, when they were not present? August, on the other hand, knew” (686). Regina’s miraculous birth in 1905 requires a touch of faith, just as the birth of the new century does.

When Regina was born, August engraved “Walnut Manor” over the gate of the home, tying the traditional wood with the futuristic idea of the space it represents. By placing the little wooden figurine of a girl in front of the gate to remain “forever happy,” August is entrusting Regina with the mission to balance the traditional and the modern mindsets’ conflict that the twentieth century undoubtedly brings, and to find a way to deliver the future from pain (687). However, while the wooden figurine can stay motionless in her eternal happiness, human life requires drama to develop the strength to conquer such tasks. As Regina grows up, she comes to inhabit this symbolic house, and is then cast out of in the process of maturing and losing her illusions. She is cast out of the promise that was given her at her birth, and into the wilderness that eventually renders her more a wild beast than a woman. Regina mirrors the degenerative effect of the tradition that banishes her from her hopeful home by falling psychologically and physically into darkness, but conversely her darkness and insanity bear the seeds of change.

REGINA AS A TRICKSTER FIGURE

In his work *The Trickster*, Radin writes that the Trickster “possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being” (xxiv). When the reader is first introduced to Regina, she acts on the id drives for violence and sex, swearing, cursing and showing her naked body to the neighbors, asking whether they want some milk from her breasts, or urinating to

demonstrate the meaning of womanhood. Regina uses her physical body to communicate her anger at the boundaries that women of her time are faced with. She spreads her waste all over the apartment, engulfing her household, the neighbors and the city in her trauma.

In *Mythical Trickster Figures*, Hynes writes:

The logic of order and convergence, that is, logos-centrism, or logocentrism, is challenged by another path, the random and divergent trail taken by that profane metaplayer, the Trickster. On this trail, all creative inventions are ultimately excreta. Like the mystic who constantly reminds us that no words or doctrinal constructs can express adequately the ineffable nature of God, the Trickster reminds us that no one creative ordering can capture life. (Hynes & Doty, 216)

Regina breaks down the apartment as the symbol of her confinement, as well as the social norms that guided her existence and those of her ancestors and progeny. Swinging an axe and tearing to pieces the heavy walnut armoire, an extension of the toy walnut manor and a hundred years old just as her, Regina destroys the unrealistic expectations that marked and guided her life. The future cannot be built with the same materials and mindsets used to construct the past, if that future is to be any different. Like Jurich's Trickster Pandora, Regina is a "victim of her own heredity...who must victimize others" (197). Jergović comments on the ways in which the cyclical nature of people's relationships brings them to ruin: "[H]eliocentric systems of misfortune are renewed cyclically. They are the only living history, a history that is never extinguished but inherited from generation to generation and from times to times" (326-7). By detaching herself completely from her daughter and grandchildren, Regina attempts to make a break

in this cycle of misfortune. Gustafson calls insanity such as hers a result of ‘dismembered consciousness,’ which can “break into a thousand pieces, leaving a person with a sense of emptiness and despair—a true black night of the soul....It seems that the unconscious seeks healing, restoration, a new life” (91). As her environment triumphs over her own ability to dictate her fate, Regina resorts to madness to reveal the truth behind her existence. Jergović writes in reference to Diana’s attempt of suicide: “[R]eality is pale and bears a double meaning, and insanity is bright and true. There is no greater truth than insanity” (80). Through her own insanity, Regina discloses the truth about her lost hopes, and the apparent curse that plagues the women of her family and that is representative of the nation as a whole. Instead of attempting to hide her misery, she revels in it and shares it with the city, and through her death gives the living an opportunity to break free from their own past and move on into the future.

CHAPTER 4.

THE TRICKSTER IN SAMOKOVLJA AND HIS WORK: LILITH

SAMOKOVLJA AS A TRICKSTER AUTHOR

Isak Samokovlija is a Trickster artist in his own right, being immersed in different cultures of his native city, working as both a physical and emotional healer, and having experiences both with discrimination and fame in his lifetime. Born into a Sephardic Jewish family in Sarajevo, Bosnia, he studied medicine in Vienna and came back to his hometown as a medical doctor. Two years following his return, he started publishing literary stories and books; balancing his medicinal practice with his writing and editing for the “Jewish Life” cultural journal. His experience as a doctor brought him into intimate contact with many different people and cultures that lived in Sarajevo of his time, the 1930s, and those people and their lives proved to be an inspiration for Samokovlija. In an interview he stated his feelings and relationship with his patients and characters: “I had topics, I had people, so I wanted to give those people, to say something about them in a story” (Remembrance). His importance, unfortunately, lies not only in his exceptional gift as a writer, but in the fact that in the aftermath of World War II, his stories act as the last link to the life and ways of a community of Sephard Jews in Bosnia. His stories rely on the most sacred of literature’s goals—to preserve and bring back to life worlds and people that are gone forever. Samokovlija was keenly aware of his responsibility. Imprisoned during the war, he spent some time at a refugee camp at the Alipasha Bridge, treating those affected with typhus fever as the only doctor available.

Though he and his family survived, his Sarajevo community was unrecognizable after the war—the population was decimated. He commented that he was grateful his mother died before the War broke out: “I’m happy that she died before the war and did not experience the horrors to which we have been witnesses”(Selimovic). Ironically, in 1948 the Yugoslav government that could not protect its people during the war showed its appreciation for the work Samokovlija did in preserving their memory, and bestowed upon him the Committee for Culture and Art of Yugoslavia Literary Prize (Komitet za Kulturu i Umjetnost Vlade FNRJ).

Palavestra describes Samokovlija’s work as marking the “real beginning of modern Jewish literature in the Serbo-Croatian language,” combining and unifying Jewish spiritualism with Serbo-Croatian prose story and Bosnian literary tradition. Samokovlija as a writer is invaluable for his access and precise insight into the Sephardic culture as it existed in the unique setting of early 20th century Bosnia, where the Sephardic community members were intimately tied to their Muslim, Christian, and Gypsy neighbors in the business of everyday life. According to Palavestra, “critics have defined the drama of the enclosed Jewish society as the drama of life ‘in a cul de sac,’ as the drama of a society that ‘bore a stigma,’ which sought and preserved in itself its own identity, while being dispersed in its surroundings and in history.” Though all these different groups coexisted relatively peacefully until the World War II, the divisions between them were jealously guarded in the name of preserving their unique cultural identities: this proximity to the various Others served as a factor of fear, because through close contact there came the danger of making comparisons and independent individual judgments of one’s own cultural values. Samokovlija was able to take that leap of

imagination, breaking boundaries between these communities and revealing the common psychological forces that guided their actions. He focused on “psychological naturalism, obsession with sex, the dregs of society, outcasts, the deformed, the sick, and the eccentrics,” in order to juxtapose the similarity of their position in relation to their respective communities—these outcasts break the illusion of a safe and working order, pointing to the commonality of human experience (Palavestra). One of Samokovlija’s stories, *From Spring to Spring*, documents the case of Luna, a Jewish wife who abandoned her husband for a Muslim man, and whose decision involves a renunciation of her community and her identity as a Jewish woman so that she can start life over in the Muslim community. Due to the invisible lines drawn between the cultures sharing one space, her sin is never hers alone: the decisions about her life are for her community to make, and the thought of the consequences she would face if she were caught epitomizes the walls that are built to prevent any member from endangering the unalterable stability of the community’s identity: “All of them, so peaceful and serious now, would raise their hands against her and beat her without mercy....the women would pull and push her towards the iron door in the stone wall around the big temple” (Samokovlija, 41.) Samokovlija discusses a similar issue in *The Blond Jewess*, where the escape from the bounds of tradition is impossible and the love between a Christian man and a Jewish girl Miriam ends tragically in her suicide.

Though Samokovlija’s work is of universal value because it surpasses “historical, social, cultural and ethnical boundaries” and because he accurately portrays human existential drama, he still remains and should be regarded as primarily a voice of the Jewish people, their history and specific situation in Bosnia (Palavestra). In this way,

Samokovlija crosses the boundaries from the specific and intimate account of one community, a micro-narrative, to the macro-narrative. His Trickster attitude can best be summed up in an anecdote, in which he discusses the process of writing a story on the gypsy girl Hanka. Finci, a little boy at the time, is fascinated by Hanka's fate and asks Samokovlija a series of questions:

I asked about the time and place of the murder, and whether the doctor had known them before ("I didn't". "And how did you know then, what happened to them before? You haven't made it all up, have you?" Laughter: "No, I haven't. A writer does not make things up, he only imagines how things could have happened"). (Finci)

Samokovlija takes ownership of his characters and their destinies, and tells the truth that only he has access to. As he presents and breaks down the purely logical and detached means of acquiring knowledge and understanding, he changes our own world, word by word.

"HANKA"

The difference in the driving forces that determine the destiny of the protagonist in "Hanka" as opposed to that of Samokovlija's other characters is startling: religion and ethnicity not only do not function as factors but the story cannot be approached in those terms. Hanka is a gypsy, and as such she is bound to no particular ideology or nationality. In *On the Origins of Gypsies* Crawford states that "the gypsies, when above four centuries ago they first appeared in Western Europe, were already composed of a mixture of many different races" (36). The gypsies in "Hanka" coexist with the various ethnic groups in Bosnia and instead of guarding against their influence, relax into the lifestyle

that works best under the circumstances. As a gypsy girl, Hanka in particular allows her instincts and love of life to guide her actions. Hanka is best described as an embodiment of a Sevdah song, a song formed out of diverse Oriental and Slavic influences to embody the essence of what can be considered a Bosnian mentality, one based on the rich cultural heritage of various groups living in Bosnia (Rizvić). Samokovlija often connects her with song: she sings “songs of passion,” “she would wake the whole Zvornik with her songs and laughter,” “sang her whole inner being, her soul, her heart, her pulse” (Samokovlija, 114-5). She is a Trickster character, inhabiting a liminal space on several different fronts: as a Gypsy among Bosnians (Jewish, Muslim and Christian), as a woman, and as a voice that relates her story to the author in her death. Hanka is shown as crossing these boundaries and refusing to settle into any one role—she accepts the influences of her heritage and surroundings freely, as she embodies the Sevdah, she places herself on equal gender grounds as Seido in terms of their sexuality, and she finds new life in death.

Hanka makes a profound impact on the doctor and narrator, even though she is dead when he first sees her. As he examines her heart and the stab wound that punctured it, Samokovlija contemplates its living force so recently extinguished and imagines the events that led to Hanka’s death. He sees her as a woman who offered her body and soul for human dissection and judgment, giving her life universal meaning. As he examines her and as the onlookers watch, the doctor imagines her exposing her “lovely breasts...breathless and with glowing cheeks, her eyes shining” to offer a target to her lover who confronted her with murderous intentions. Thus the moment and circumstance of her death are strangely amplified in this new setting, where she impacts not only the life of one man who dared betray her, but the whole community and ultimately us as

readers. Hanka confronted Seido, her body confronted Samokovlija and now her story confronts us. Samokovlija sees and imagines her as a powerful challenger: “how her eyes must have shone then if they were as bright as this in death!” (110) Contemplating her happy smile, he begins to communicate with the dead girl: ”Why, Hanka, speak?” (110) and she leads him to a powerful conclusion: “Perhaps it is good to die passionately, to love the forbidden, but freely and openly and to offer one’s breast to the knife” (110). What is the forbidden, and why? What pleasures and truths lie beyond our reach, in that one rotten apple that fascinates Hanka, and through her Samokovlija?

THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT

Samokovlija begins the story with an account of his observation of a rotten apple. This apple leads him to contemplate its journey: its beginning as one of the pink apple tree blossoms, its ripening throughout the summer, and its fate to be one of the few who “were gnawed by worms, and their hearts were eaten away” (Samokovlija, 108). In describing the rotten apple, Samokovlija makes a direct comparison to Hanka stating that this apple with the worm in it is Hanka’s heart: “This is her heart, Hanka’s...a kind of joy whispered in me....I saw her smiling and happy.... stretched out on boards” (108). The fact that the apple falls apparently of its own accord alludes to Hanka’s internal drive and the containment of her desire in her own heart.

The first time Hanka runs away from Seido she passes by Rifa, who advises her to keep running because she had an ominous dream about Hanka. In her dream, Hanka is a young unmarried girl and she is climbing an apple tree. Everyone tells her that she is climbing too high and that she will fall, but Hanka desires a specific, beautiful red apple, and she pays them no heed. Rifa warns her that this apple is worm-eaten, but Hanka

refuses to believe it. As she stretches out her hand for it, a snake appears, “stretches its head, thrusts out its thin, forked tongue,” and slips into Hanka’s bosom, after which Hanka screams and falls (124-5). The snake bites Hanka’s heart just as worms drill through the apple that she desired. Samokovlija describes the apple trees as fertile, bearing so much fruit that “it seemed that the very trunks were groaning under their weight” (108). While the trees carry the burden of their fruit, Hanka is light as air as she runs from Seido, initiating her final free fall. She feels as if she is flying because she is not weighed down by the life that has matured inside of her: it is not a child she is nurturing in her breast but a serpent, just like the apple nurtures the worm. This serpent, though eating away at her body and soul, gives her the strength to face the knowledge of her own nature and destiny.

When discussing an apple tree and a serpent, one cannot but discuss the Biblical story of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and the origin of man’s fortunate fall. Hanka’s desire for the apple is similar to Eve’s in that they both entail a serpent as the mediator and in that the result is a fall—death for Hanka, and banishment from Eden for Eve. However the crucial difference is in the relationship between the women and the serpent; in Hanka’s case, the serpent is a manifestation of her agency as she is seen as dwelling within her heart from the beginning of the story, while in Eve’s case the serpent is described as the outside force that somehow tricks her into action. While Hanka manifests her knowledge in the fall, Eve is only just initiated into knowing. Hanka’s decisive break with her life and the man that betrayed her more resembles Lilith’s flight from Adam as it is an action taken in full awareness of the consequences. Like Lilith, Hanka is a Trickster in the realm of the dark feminine.

SERPENT SYMBOLISM: SIGNS OF THE TRICKSTER

In the discussion on Lilith I have established a connection between her and the Serpent on the Tree of Knowledge, but the symbol connecting the serpent and the tree dates back to early Sumerian beliefs. According to Mason, early Sumerian artifacts represent a tree as the ‘axis mundi’ with a snake or a pair of snakes intertwined around it. These artifacts mark the beginnings of a symbol which later becomes a part of Greek mythology as well as Christian and Jewish scripture, and is now universally used to represent medicine: the caduceus. The caduceus, according to Mason and Tyson, is connected with Hermes, the Greek messenger god and god of healing whom Hyde identifies as a Trickster in *Trickster Makes This World*. Tyson further notes that the intertwined snakes symbolize the peace that Hermes brings as a messenger, which is sometimes understood as the peace offered by death. The ambiguity of the symbol throughout its use reflects the Trickster element in “Hanka”. Mason discusses Jung’s views of the serpent as the manifestation of the latent unconscious, which is pregnant with the wisdom of the collective unconscious and therefore linked to supernatural powers. Samokovlija’s description of Hanka’s death directly corresponds to Rifa’s prophetic dream of the serpent: “Something warm spilled in her. It seemed that something living was sliding down her back, she straightened up, breathing deeply, collected herself to say something, but her body slumped forwards” (127). The description literally describes Hanka’s blood flowing out of her body, but at the same time suggests the motion and weight of the serpent that rather than falling into her bosom emerges out of it as a manifestation of Hanka’s power to bring about a peace that she desires: “She fell slowly, her eyes half-open as though she was falling into a deep, long

awaited sleep” (127). The serpent becomes a representation of the regenerative dark feminine force that connects Hanka to Lilith.

Mason states that the serpent or the dragon, both of which are representations of Lilith, are seen among Sumerian, Semitic and Indo-European peoples as symbols of chaos. As such, the serpent has to be overcome for people to maintain order, but at the same time the Tricksters who wish to re-examine the existing order resort to the serpent and its chaos, which is full of potential for new life. As the serpent sheds its skin and thus renews itself, it becomes the key to the secret of the cycle of life and death and acts as the counterpart to the moon as the established symbol of feminine regenerative energy.

Mason complements previously cited critics on the subject of the demonization of the serpent, stating that the Biblical story resulted from the “pre-Judaic polytheistic traditions in which a divine and omniscient serpent, representing the female creative nature, was pitted against the created order of a male oriented divinity,” but that negative view of the serpent is countered by its connection to wisdom, healing, energy and life. Mason suggests that serpent “saves humanity by putting it in touch with nature,” and as death is part of human nature, knowing death becomes a necessary component of new life. Hanka is not afraid of death, because her death leads to peace for her, an eternal tie to Seido, and a possibility of change for her community.

There are many references to the serpent in this short story, but one serpent characteristic in particular relates to Hanka and the critical lie that she tells which marks her destiny, and which her last words identify as the truth. This ambivalence is reminiscent of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden, who is regarded by believers as a deceiving temptress but who on further inspection can be seen as telling the truth.

Burston discusses the role of the serpent in his article “Freud, the Serpent and the Sexual Enlightenment of Children,” stating that instead of lying to Eve, the serpent actually revealed that God was deceitful in his quest to keep the pair away from the Tree of Knowledge:

In Genesis 2: 17, God warns Adam not to eat of the tree for his own good, 'For the moment you eat of it, you shall be doomed to death'. In repudiating this warning, the serpent implies that God is engaging in a deliberate infantilization of the human species. And this proves to be true. For when Adam and Eve eat the forbidden fruit, they do not die, but are exiled from Eden and live remarkably long lives, despite the misery and toil that God ordains as punishment for hearkening to the serpent's 'temptation'. (Burston 2)

Burston supports his argument that the serpent enticed Eve's rebellion based on a truth by citing Gnostic thinkers and Hegel, who see the serpent as an emancipator, a messenger from the “a-cosmic God.” More importantly, Burton cites Fromm's “You Shall Be As Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament,” in which Fromm compares the serpent to the Trickster figure Prometheus who acts against irrational Zeus' authority to bring people fire, and through fire, civilization.

Hanka lies about her pregnancy only in the physical sense, as she is not growing a child in her womb. However, she is pregnant with knowledge of her situation; the apple she was dealt was rotten on the inside, and by biting into it she sentenced herself to death. She now offers this rotten apple, this knowledge of pain and passion to Seido, and she instigates their removal from Eden or their state before the betrayal. Though her death is

a direct result of her lie about her pregnancy, Hanka as the Trickster turns that lie into truth—the serpent that nested in her bosom was often portrayed in Sumerian legends “above the belly of a pregnant woman,” and if we accept the symbol as true to its origins there only remains the matter of interpreting it correctly (Mason). Hanka is pregnant with the knowledge that she carries inside of her, the fruit of her passion and the hidden jewel that she succeeds in protecting until her death: “Her mouth was slightly open as well, and a smile was caught around it. Joyful, happy” (109). In order to understand her joy, we must first take a look at the meaning of her secret.

THE SECRETED KNOWLEDGE: HIDDEN JEWELS IN “HANKA”

In his article *The Dragon on the Treasure*, Nilsson establishes the origin of the word dragon in the Greek and Latin ‘draco,’ which means ‘snake.’ Nilsson also discusses the connection between dragons as treasure guardians from ancient times, in particular in the beliefs of the Greek cult of Asclepius, whose followers in some cases identified the snake as their god rather than just a representation of god, and revered the snake’s healing power. He mentions the symbol of caduceus with two snakes and a bronze ornament between them signifying snakes’ position as guardians of treasure and sacred spaces. This treasure is related to the knowledge of life, death and regeneration, and can clearly be connected with the treasure in the form of the apple from the Tree of Knowledge. As the serpent offers the apple to Eve, she identifies the human pair as the rightful owner of the knowledge of Good and Evil and acts similarly to the Trickster Prometheus, who gave people fire to allow them to develop culturally and intellectually. Biting into the apple, Eve realizes that she is free to make independent choices and critically evaluate herself and the world around her. Reaching for the worm-infested apple, Hanka proves that she is

ready to embrace the dark side of human knowledge, the one connected not in new life of hardship and trials, but potent death that brings a promise of immortality through Seido, and “Hanka,” the story. Hanka embraces her connection with Lilith and allows the serpent within to take over her actions, planning a different kind of fortunate fall, taking the liberty not only to live in knowledge but die as well. In *But the Serpent did not Lie*, Anderson-Irwin states that “the serpent expresses one side of the truth of spirit, that freedom makes human beings like God, makes them able to distinguish between themselves and the order of nature.” The story of Hanka’s life and death testifies to her status as a free human being who could not perceive the diverse world around her as a threat just as she could not perceive Seido’s knife as a threat. Hanka sees Seido’s knife as a thing of beauty: he sharpens it and carves its wooden handle, flashes it in front of her at which point she comes closer to him in fascination.

Samokovlija’s word choice leads the reader to conclude that Hanka possesses something precious and valuable: she and her surroundings are described as glowing like jewels, ready to be unearthed. As the doctor breaks the apple that caught his attention at the beginning of the story, he sees “from its hollowed heart, stretched a fattened worm, with tiny wrinkles....it looked like mother-of-pearl....a little pearly, wrinkled worm” (108). Though this worm caused the premature fall of the apple and hollowed its flesh, Samokovlija describes it as a thing of beauty, a precious jewel hidden in its heart. Similarly, as he describes Hanka’s dead body lying in the mid-day sun, he mentions that “green flies buzzed above her, glinting in the sun” (108). The flies gather in order to feed on Hanka’s flesh and breed in her, continuing the image of worms infesting Hanka’s body, but the doctor sees and portrays them as ephemeral emeralds, jewels in disguise.

Hanka is strangely adorned by her own blood which laces around her beaded necklace: she has a strain of dried blood running “from her mouth to her breast...cheap beads round her neck were bloody as well” (109). Samokovlija makes several references to Hanka’s eyes, which he first sees in her death and is taken aback by their shine. The explanation for their almost supernatural gleam that persists in death is given as her ritual of washing them regularly in the river Mlava, believing that when girls wash their eyes in the river “the water gives their eyes a pearly gleam” (111). Hanka is thus described as having a special tie to nature and its gifts, and as able to use nature to bring her ideas and beliefs to life. Nature around Hanka is described as precious, transformed under her gaze: “Hanka looked at the large drops of shiny dew on the grass, the long thin threads of cobwebs waving in the air. Tiny droplets were glistening on them as well” (123). As she learns of Seido’s betrayal, Hanka decides to orchestrate a spectacular ending to their love, playing the part of the heroine and the dramatist, arranging the events, scenery and action that will lead to her desired outcome. Hanka sees death at his hands as closest she can come to an eternal connection with Seido and to a deserving statement of her own power, and Samokovlija described the instrument of her death in terms of its value as a sacred and precious object. Seido spends several nights preparing his knife, transforming and readying it: “he sharpened it, he kept feeling the blade and the point...held it towards the fire. The blade gleamed as though made of silver” (118). He first contemplates the use of the knife, then announces it to Hanka, threatens her with it and finally uses it, performing a ritual that culminates in Hanka’s sacrifice. Considering that Hanka foresaw her end because she made it her mission to fall at his hands, we can make a parallel between Hanka and Jesus as willing scapegoats. This idea is strengthened by the fact that Seido

projects onto Hanka the suffering that he feels in himself: “a thin blade of jealousy tore at his heart” (118) in the same way as he tears Hanka’s heart with a thin blade of his knife. Just as Jesus is later proven to be innocent, Hanka is proven to be innocent as well, as she is not carrying Mushan’s baby. Before Hanka is killed, Rifa advises Seido to leave Hanka and the city, and gives him a prophetic speech: “Blood is like strong drink, and when it throbs in your head, you lose your mind.... You don’t leave a woman....And so it goes on, in a circle, until the knife hits home in the right place” (121). Rifa’s role is to speak for the Gypsies and their customs, and Seido’s actions serve to reinforce the Gypsy’s way of life. Hanka’s sacrifice becomes necessary in order to shed light on the violent and demeaning behavior that Seido engages in, and her death brings a new understanding of his actions for him and the people who hear Hanka’s story.

HANKA AS A TRICKSTER FIGURE

Though for a moment Samokovlija doubts Hanka, thinking that her Gypsy ‘tramp’ identity is compromising her truth, particularly in the context of the non-existing fetus that the old woman claims Hanka felt. But this doubt does not last. In a few lines, as the doctor further examined the heart he “suddenly gave a start: what was I seeking? Nothing” (111). Far from finding nothing, this is the moment in which Samokovlija is transformed. In the grotesque moments that follow the old woman proceeds with her own examination of Hanka’s body to ensure that Hanka was in fact not pregnant, and she establishes that Hanka has lied to her and everyone else. Samokovlija, however, is just now ready to tell the world “the truth about her, about Hanka” (111).

Hynes would define Hanka as a Trickster in the category of “situation inverters:” she converts death into deliverance, uses the story of a new life in her in order to bring

her own demise and confronts her world with in order to establish and reinforce the rule Rifa explains to Seido—a man does not leave his woman. Ballinger would classify her behavior as structure-defining by establishing the antistructure in rule-breaking—Hanka tempts, rejects, lies and provokes Seido in order to bring about her death, the culmination of anti-structure, and by her deaths she paradoxically re-establishes the main passion of her life, her uninterrupted and intimate connection with Seido. When Hanka learned that her husband Seido spent two seasons working in another city and living with another woman, Aikuna, she shifts the loci of her life's desire from love to hatred, from nurturance to revenge. In the process, she successfully confronts her community, implicating them in her scheme by playing on their weaknesses and predicting their actions. Hanka also points to the reality that the Gypsies are unwilling to face. As she threatens to marry an older and uglier man than Seido, she is inverting the situation and pointing to the fact that he lived with an older woman while away, and that he expects to be back and continue their relationship without consequences, as sanctioned by their community. As the people try to dissuade her from leaving Seido by calling Mushan a tramp, she turns back at them and says: “so what...so am I and so are you” (Samokovlija, 110). The rest of her actions serves to prove this statement, as everyone but Rifa will stand by and watch as the drama unfolds, bearing witness to her physical suicide/Seido's murder and later her post-mortem and Seido's psychological suicide/murder by life-long guilt, which eats away at him like a worm at an apple.

Just as Samokovlija decides to tell us Hanka's story, Hanka confesses to those around her: “And I'll tell you too, all of you” (125). As I will explain in further detail, though she literally lies about being pregnant with Mushan's child, her words bring to life

a greater truth: everyone hears what they have believed already, and what they have with that belief brought to life. The Gypsies seem always to be ready for some entertainment, be it the dancing bears or Hanka's second wedding; as she gives out sweets throwing them in the air, she invites them all to celebrate with her and runs along the river to the city: "Come with me, if you want to come to the wedding" (125). However, she is not about to marry another man, but all of them—and the consummation will be in the sharing of truth rather than body. Seido runs after her and asks her several times to tell him the truth: "Tell me" (126). But he is not now, nor has he ever been willing to hear the truth because the truth did not concern Hanka, but himself. Hanka understands that and starts smiling the smile of victory, the one that caught Samokovlija's attention on her dead body: "Her eyes flashed, and a smile spread over her face" (126). Hanka proceeds to tell Seido that she has told him everything there is to say, that she loved him, and that she is pregnant with another man's child. As Seido reaches for his knife, Hanka begs him to wait in order to establish eye contact; in this moment, as she "took hold of his shoulder, and looked into his eyes," the communication of truth begins and a "smile appeared on her face, light and happy....'I'm not lying, I'm not lying...'" (126). Believing her, Seido takes the bait and appears to decide their fate by drawing his knife, but it was really Hanka who handed him the knife and the motive, directing his actions.

HANKA'S CONNECTION TO LILITH AND THE DARK FEMININE

The first information that the reader is presented about Hanka is that she is dead, and that she was married, but never bore a child. The "old witch" who is divulging this information believes that Hanka was pregnant for the first time at the time of her death, and that she felt the baby quicken on the day of Christian celebration of Saint Elias—a

Christian replacement of the old Serbian thunder and storm god Perun (Lujić). During the celebration of the summer storm, which, terrifying in its intensity, still brings hope for a good harvest, Hanka decides to initiate her pregnancy. The spirit of the Trickster Lilith, a storm demon, awakens in Hanka and she becomes the dangerous seductress as well, using all the magic and power that she can tap into.

When Seido comes back to her, as she knew he would, Hanka taunts him about his relations with Aikuna, in order to establish a recognition of her pain. She withholds herself sexually and emotionally, but flaunts her young and beautiful body on any available occasion, evoking jealousy by associating with an older musician. Hanka accepts the jewelry that Seido brings her as offerings, she wears the string of cheap pearls that Seido brings her from Zvornik, and is delighted at receiving a silver bracelet from him, but these gifts do not sway her. Hanka is associated with the night, just as Lilith, as she remembers the nights she spent with Seido at the riverbank, and the nights she walked through the fields while waiting for him to come back, eating pears and imagining “offering it to him to take the first bite” (114). During that time of separation, Hanka would “gaze for a long time at the sky and the stars, making spells with words and gestures whenever a star could be seen falling across the dark sky into infinity” (114), but her spells were not enough; Aikuna fed Seido dried meat from an uncastrated billy goat and won him over while he was in Zvornik. When Hanka realizes that she was betrayed, she starts contemplating revenge “as though a fire was flaring in her” (115). She begins her transformation into a Trickster figure, letting Seido know that he is set against her supernatural ability to interpret nature, and foreshadowing his loss when she tells him that she was sorry she did not “catch sight of someone dear to me through its [bat’s] wing”

(116). Hanka also invents a prophetic dream by which she manipulates Seido into believing that she was unfaithful; in the dream she attempts to prevent his betrayal by burning a lock of her hair over his sleeping body, “so that no other could enchant” Seido, but she is prevented by the appearance of Mushan, the man whose baby she supposedly carries (117). Hanka thus successfully inverts the situation, countering his real betrayal with her imagined one. She knows the outcome of their conflict and her words to Seido are ominous: “I won’t let you leave me any more, I won’t!” (122). Though he might think that he is in control, Hanka has set everything in motion. While Seido looks for her in the settlement, she waits for him in his tent, truly appearing like the bitch in heat as she “crawled out of the tent on all fours....turned into two black eyes, large and shining....he could see her white teeth” (122). The dark feminine energy that drives her transforms Hanka into a literal representation of Lilith, as she comes in the middle of the night and uses her sex appeal to cast a spell on Seido, whispering his name “Seido... Seido....Seido...” (122).

Hanka’s final victory leads to her death, as Seido falls under her spell and fulfills her wish to stab her in the heart. In her final moments, just as Lilith flew away from the oppressive Adam, Hanka runs and feels as if she is “flying, not touching the ground” (127). At this point her mission is accomplished, and she is further established as a Trickster figure when we learn that her imagined words, written by Samokovlija: “I’ll run, Rifa, I will, but let him give me back what he owes me first...!” actually came true outside the scope of the story (125). Hanka wanted to keep Seido forever, and she did so in different ways: through the story and through the bond she established with him by allowing him to kill her over a transgression she did not commit. Seido is forever tied to

Hanka in his guilt, in his guilt he is doing right by her in not forgetting her. Reading Finci's notes on his acquaintance with Samokovlija, we see Hanka's Seido drastically changed from an arrogant alpha male to a recluse, shy and nervous. In discussing the encounter between Samokovlija and Seido, Finci reveals that they learned that Seido "hasn't spoken a word ever since. He fell silent from the day he killed her" (Finci). Several years after that encounter, Finci goes on his own to inquire about Seido, and at that time he learns that Seido disappeared one day, not having said a word for years, and that no-one knows whether he is still alive. Finci also finds that the Gypsies "talk about him day and night," showing that Hanka has an impact on their lives years after her death. Finci states that Seido acts "like a literary character" who retreats into his story, and in a way he is right: though Seido survives, the only place he is still alive is in the context of the story about Hanka.

The story of Hanka shows her control over her own destiny as she manipulates Seido, the old witch, and others into orchestrating her triumphant death. Death, for Hanka, is but a necessary part of life, and those are the only sacred terms that she recognizes and glorifies through her attitude and actions: she lives her life in song and at the moment of her death she is "flying, not touching the ground" (Samokovlija, 127). This freedom from the restraints of the body is comparable to the freedom from the restraints of societal and religious standards, which explains Samokovlija's doctor's joy as a natural reaction to witnessing the end of a beautiful story of a rare specimen—a free woman and a Trickster.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSION

The three authors whose works I discussed all have one thing in common, which allows them to reach a similar understanding of the Trickster characters they bring to life in their works. That one vital commonality is the fluidity of their identity, which arose and was nourished by their respective life situations. Nabokov was a Russian in exile from his homeland during the Russian Revolution, and living in Western Europe and the United States for the rest of his life. He saw a dynasty collapse and a new government form in Russia, and during the Second World War he had to flee Europe to escape the Nazis. Samokovlija had similar experiences as a Jewish man growing up in a multicultural city of Sarajevo, and surviving the Second World War with all the atrocities that came with it. Samokovlija grew up in an environment where various cultures coexisted and worked together, and he lived to see the world of his people shattered. As a Bosnian man living and working in Croatia, Jergović has a similar burden to carry as he writes about these nations in the aftermath of the 1990s Yugoslav war. Not only do these authors understand the meaning behind artificially constructed boundaries of nationality, religion and gender, but they also understand the borders between the past and the future, the living and the dead. They intuitively assume the role of the Trickster, as Hynes describes it in *Mythical Trickster Figures*:

...the Trickster reminds us that every construct is constructed. Not only is someone not confined to a single construct or system of order, she is not

confined to a choice among alternative constructs. The hermenaut puts us in contact with the sources of creativity from which we can be empowered to construct our own construct. The Trickster's constant chatterings and antics remind us that life is endlessly narrative, prolific and open-ended.

(212)

The symbolism of the spiral is interwoven with the role of the Trickster figure, which opens paths to a renewed understanding of life to those who fall under his influence. In that respect, the Trickster can be said to offer the truth of the individual, the community and of reality. In *Divine Serpent*, Mason writes that snake and its representation in the spiral are common elements found on the artifacts of the Neolithic man. According to Mason, the snake was considered "the symbol of energy, spontaneous, creative energy, and of immortality" since the dawn of humanity. Samokovlija's Hanka is bitten by the snake in a Gypsy woman's prophetic dream, and she experiences an individual rebirth in embracing her death. Jergović discusses the perseverance and the spiraling force of the Balkan curse, which engulfs generation after generation until it instigates a rebellion in Regina. Nabokov frees the modern man from the confines of his world by offering alternate spiraling realities based on his vision. The end result of these authors' play with the Trickster figure is ambiguous at best for the protagonists. One could argue that there is no hope in the trick: Hanka practically commits suicide, Regina goes insane, Shade dies as a victim of mistaken identity and Kinbote is a madman, and none of their destinies seem to have changed the world. However, Mason claims that the spiral, or the coiled snake, was considered a symbol of "superhuman life" that defies a simplistic definition. With that in mind, I argue that every death carries with it the weight

of new life, though it be as grotesque as the worm feeding off of the apple that is Hanka's heart, or as Kinbote, the parasitic king-botfly, feeding off of Shade's life's work. The truth that these authors' works convey to the readers is transformative as the words gnaw on our own understanding of the world: these literary works render the work of the Trickster immortal.

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