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Tricking for change: Establishing the literary trickster in the western tradition

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Tricking for Change:
Establishing the Literary Trickster in the Western Tradition
by
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Abstract

This thesis proposes a new category for literary analysis called the literary trickster figure. Over the last few centuries, the trickster figure has been reduced from a cultural hero to a dubious character. If we trace the trickster's western roots back to Hermes, Mercury, and Loki and take global trickster scholarship into consideration, criteria can be established and the role of the literary trickster can be assessed. The literary trickster's role is to undermine the established order (social and political hierarchies), create disorder and bring awareness to systemic issues in order to bring about change. Once the literary trickster category is established, an analysis of two characters—Petyr Baelish from *A Song of Ice and Fire* and Pandarus from *Troilus and Criseyde*—will demonstrate how the literary trickster functions.

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Introduction

In literature studies, scholars are always trying to classify characters, relationships, novels, and authors. Genres of narratives are broken down into several classifications based on setting, characters, narrative structure, and prominent themes. Archetypal criticism, based on Carl Jung's work on archetypes, made classifications easier based on "persistent images, figures, and story patterns" (Murfin and Ray 29). Jung's archetypal figures have been adapted by literary critics to name reoccurring patterns in characters, such as the mother, hero, devil, and trickster. Although these categories are useful for a broad analysis, they risk oversimplification of complex characters and issues, especially characters that are deemed "other." When discussing the other in a text, a critic must be cautious of how the character(s) are interpreted. Based in psychoanalytic criticism, the other "defines and limits the subject, or self, and from which the subject seeks confirmation of its existence and agency" (Murfin and Ray 359). In other words, the other refers to anyone or anything that is different from the dominant social group regarding race, class, gender, etc. When discussing alterity (otherness), the non-conforming character of the trickster stands out.

The trickster figure has appeared in most oral and written cultures across the world, both in mythology and works of fiction. Kathleen Roberts sees the trickster "at once primordial and adaptable, timeless and timely" (172). The trickster figure is undeniably important to all cultures for comic relief, discussing difficult social taboos and restraints, and works well as a cultural hero, but he¹ is also greatly misunderstood. Roberts writes: "The Trickster narrative type is often misunderstood or misappropriated. Any remotely ambiguous or complex figure, it seems, has lately been labeled a Trickster" (172). Roberts and I share the same goal: to develop clear criteria

¹ Most tricksters, mythical, cultural, and literary, are identified as male, or at least take on the sexual markers of male, which is why I will be using the pronoun "he" when referencing the trickster.

to define what the trickster is. However, her primary focus is on narrative studies, which I do not believe does enough to define the complexity of the trickster. For this reason, I have set out to establish a specific analytical category that I am calling the “literary trickster.”

The literary trickster is a specific type of trickster figure that meets six definitive criteria and uses both rhetoric and play in order to create disorder in the society in which they reside. The literary trickster is based in scholarship on the western tradition tricksters, Hermes, Mercury, and Loki, but is more grounded in literature instead of strictly the customs of society. The criteria of the literary trickster, which will be explored in depth in chapter 1, are as follows: Ambiguous and Anomalous, Deceiver and Trick Player, Situation-Inventor, Divine Messenger, Bricoleur, and Consumer. These named criteria are based in the scholarship on trickster studies conducted by Paul Radin, William Hynes, William Doty, and Kathleen Roberts, which are justified through multiple studies on the cultural occurrences of the trickster. In order to prove the existence, criteria, and purpose of the literary trickster, I will conduct case studies on a medieval romance from the early 1380s (*Troilus and Criseyde*) and a contemporary high fantasy series first published in 1996 (*A Song of Ice and Fire*). Both of these texts exist in the western tradition and their literary tricksters are very similar.

The case study conducted in chapter 2 is on George R. R. Martin’s popular series *A Song of Ice and Fire*, which debuted in 1996 with the first installment, *A Game of Thrones*. Martin’s high fantasy series focuses primarily on the nobles of well-established families in Westeros dealing with espionage, assassinations, war, religious extremism, rebellions, and a war against mankind. Although many hands have contributed to the turmoil of the realm, the character that I identify as the literary trickster, Petyr “Littlefinger” Baelish, has set most of the major plot points in motion unbeknownst to nearly every other character. HBO popularized the series in 2011 with

its adaptation named after the first book, which highlights the political intrigue aspect of the story in the capital city of the Westerosi empire known as the Seven Kingdoms. In the book series, Petyr Baelish is an opportunistic sub-character, who uses his literary trickster qualities to create disorder in the empire to destroy the long-standing noble houses that maintain power in the realm. His mastery of exchange and rhetoric breaks the illusions of the power structure allowing for lower born citizens to engage in a form of social mobility that rewards citizens for their efforts. Since the series is still being written, I speculate on where the literary trickster is heading and what the end result of his tricks will be. Nevertheless, between the scholarship on tricksters and the use of narrative studies, Petyr Baelish is undoubtedly a literary trickster.

The case study conducted in chapter 3 is on Geoffrey Chaucer's medieval romance, *Troilus and Criseyde*, which scholars believe was published in the early 1380s. The story follows the youngest prince of Troy—Troilus—and his desperate attempt to woo the daughter of the traitor Calchas—Criseyde—which is a retelling of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. One of the most notable changes is to Troilus's best friend Pandarus, who is also Criseyde's uncle. Pandarus is the intermediary between the two main characters. He delivers messages and arranges meetings between the two, all while manipulating their words and actions through the rules of courtly love. Pandarus, like Petyr Baelish, is easily classified as a literary trickster since he performs each of the six criteria throughout the romance. There are several references in the romance that indicate Pandarus as a literary trickster, both through narration and action. His masterful use of rhetoric and understanding of play and game mechanics allows him to perform the role of the literary trickster.

Although the stories are radically different, Petyr Baelish and Pandarus are very similar. Both characters are ambiguous figures as a result of the readers not being given backstories to

them or their families, their social positions are not explicitly declared, and their motives are obscure. They are also both sub-characters in their respective stories, but a strong case can be made that both of them are the most important to the storylines they occupy. Baelish and Pandarus are both important messengers in the story, the former brokers alliances for the crown and the latter is the intermediary between the two main characters of the romance. As with the trickster tradition, both characters are playful in respect to serious situations, but they also use gaming principles to manipulate other characters in their respective stories. Both literary tricksters use rhetoric in a far superior way, more than any other characters that surround them, allowing Baelish and Pandarus to influence and control situations. Both characters implement disorder and change in their social structures by way of their thorough understanding of their systems. Finally, they both further their social positions through their actions. If both characters were charted side-by-side, they would both perform in nearly identical ways.

The literary trickster's capacity to dismantle a social system is contingent on the ability to fully understand a complex, rule-based social system that is oppressive. Trickster scholarship alludes to this understanding. However, not all scholars believe the trickster always dismantles systems but possibly only brings attention to a social issue. To completely understand the literary trickster's role and how he breaks down the system, I believe rhetoric, play, and game studies must be introduced into this scholarship. Understanding the social structure and the active moves to send it into disorder through the lens of a game, explained by Miguel Sicart and Astrid Ensslin, affords analysis by breaking down structures into rules and characters into identifiable players. Play as a concept "triggers creativity and innovation, subversive activities that may lead to the (temporary) reversal of power, and cultural forms of expression" (Ensslin 19). When discussing work play, Ensslin references Friedrich Nietzsche, who rooted his understanding of

play in the “Dionysian impulse, the purely self-interested will to power that has the capacity to both create and destroy entire civilizations” (21). The literary trickster is able to facilitate play because, according to Nietzsche, it is “superior to reason and ethics” which “incorporates destructive indeterminacy” (21). Nietzsche saw the world as “an illusion rather than something based on scientific principles of truth” (21). The literary trickster can see through the illusions that the ruling system has in play and manipulate the structure and the “players” that inhabit it. Baelish engages in the “game of thrones” in Westeros and Pandarus establishes a game based on the love traditions of courtly games. By using this lens, the methods of the literary trickster are easily discernable.

In chapter 1, I will survey the intellectual tradition of the trickster of mythology and religion in the western tradition. This review will establish the need for a literary trickster category of analysis, as well as define it through scholarship on trickster figures conducted by Paul Radin, William Hynes, and William Doty. Using their principles of study, I will also engage with Jungian psychoanalytic understandings of the trickster and the archetypal figures he established to discern the purpose and importance of the trickster in both a cultural and global need. Then, after surveying the western tricksters, Hermes, Mercury, and Loki, I will establish six primary criteria—Ambiguous and Anomalous, Deceiver and Trick Player, Situation-Inventor, Divine Messenger, Bricoleur, and Consumer—in order to identify the literary trickster in a text. Rhetoric and play studies will be used to explain how the trickster performs in his role; rhetoric as the means of manipulation and persuasion and play as the rule-based system in which the performance is conducted.

Petyr “Littlefinger” Baelish, from George R. R. Martin’s series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, and the HBO adaptation *A Game of Thrones*, will be the focus of chapter 2. Baelish, the crown’s

Master of Coin, will be analyzed through the lens of Homi Bhabha's work on mimicry, Michel Foucault's theory of exchange, Fredrick Nietzsche's work on truth and lies, as well as mythic and folkloric symbolism. The disorder that is caused in the empire by Baelish, as well as his acquisition of power, will be analyzed both through rhetoric and play studies. This comprehensive analysis of what is called "the game of thrones" will shed light on how the literary trickster functions to implement disorder in the empire, as well as establish a more contemporary understanding of the need for such a figure to provide social commentary on an established system, such as the feudal power hierarchy. This chapter will set up a close rhetorical and play analysis of the literary trickster in chapter 3.

Pandarus, from Geoffrey Chaucer's romance *Troilus and Criseyde*, will be the focus of chapter 3. Pandarus's ambiguous backstory, but active role in the text, allows for a close analysis of his character using the six criteria outlined in chapter 1. I will analyze Pandarus further through the work of John Poulakos on Sophistic rhetoric, Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman's work with medieval patronage, and John Stevens's work on the Tudor court. I then apply play studies to the text using Olga Costopoulos-Almon's thesis on Pandarus as an architect of the narrative along with Miguel Sicart's concepts of game design in order to show how Pandarus uses the courtly principles to show the foolish illusion of love and courtly contracts. By conducting a close reading of *Troilus and Criseyde* using these different principles, it exemplifies how the literary trickster can be used in literature to provide social commentary on a cultural institution.

Chapter 1—The Contested Trickster Type

[The trickster] always breaks in, just as the unconscious does, to trip up the rational situations. He's both a fool and someone who's beyond the system. And the trickster hero represents all those possibilities of life that your mind hasn't decided it wants to deal with. The mind structures a lifestyle, and the fool or trickster represents another whole range of possibilities. He doesn't respect the values that you've set up for yourself, and smashes them. (Campbell 39)

The mythical, or cultural, trickster in the western tradition has changed over time, starting in the oral tradition based in consumption, chaos, and need and evolving into a literary one focusing on moral integrity and social change. The trickster is a kaleidoscopic figure, appearing across all cultures in similar representations but for different purposes. In a sampling of trickster-centric stories, William J. Hynes and William G. Doty describe the trickster figure as “[an] Animal-Person, Anti-Hero, Boundary Figure, Bungling Host, Clever Hero, Clown, Culture Hero, Confidence Person, Demiurge, Lord of the Animals, Numskull, Old Man, Picaro, Selfish Buffoon, Selfish Deceiver, Swindler, Transformer” (24). This list seems contradictory and chaotic, much like the trickster itself, but there is a trend of deviousness, performance, and taking action. The term “trickster” has not been around as long as the figures in mythology, and the identification of the character archetype is even more contemporary. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, “trickster” was first used in 1711 to describe a person who uses trickery or is a “rogue, cheat, knave” (“trickster”). The term evolved into a slanderous one against politicians or dubious characters, but this definition is more of a description of what pop culture deems to be “tricksterish” qualities, not the mythical trickster type. The tricksterish qualities of being deceitful or a cheat are gross oversimplifications of the function of the trickster and betray the

purpose of the trickster's actions. Though the earlier iterations of the trickster have larger cultural significance than an outsider can, the western tradition's trickster serves a distinct purpose in the realms of politics and social change, something early anthropological articulations fail to account for. For this exact reason, I propose a new analytical category called the "literary trickster."

The literary trickster is a specific character in literature that functions as a conduit for political and social change based on character traits of the western tradition's trickster. Building on early and contemporary scholarship of the mythical trickster, I ground the literary trickster in common traits established by Hynes and Doty but focus more heavily on the role the trickster plays in the story, as well as how it achieves its ultimate objective of political and social change. This chapter's purpose is to outline trickster scholarship based in the western tradition while taking issue with Carl Jung's psychoanalytic approach to tricksters. Through this historical outline I will be defining characteristics I see the literary trickster retaining from the oral and mythological figures and describing how the literary trickster uses them to accomplish his objective(s). After establishing these characteristics, first, I will expand on how the literary trickster uses rhetoric. Then I will discuss how they use principles of play in order to implement political and social change.

Radin: The First Comprehensive Study

To start the analysis of the western tradition, it is important to talk about the famous folklorist and anthropologist Paul Radin's 1956 book, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, since it has been cited by other trickster scholars as the first comprehensive study of the trickster traditions (Hynes and Doty; Scheub; Bassil-Morozow; Hyde; Williams). Although Radin's work is on the North American native tribes' trickster cycles, which are quite different

than those found in the European tradition, he raises important questions about the cycles and comes to general attributes that are also present in the figures I will be analyzing. Radin started his study of the Winnebago Trickster Cycle, often referred to as *wakdjunkaga*, meaning the tricky one, in 1912. He had his “principal informant” Sam Blowsnake record the sacred oral myths of the Winnebago tribes as narrated by an elder under the “proper conditions” of the tradition (111-12). In addition to the Winnebago Cycle, he also did a cross analysis of other renowned trickster stories in North America from the Assiniboine and Tlingit Cycles to come to an understanding of the purpose of the trickster figure, which he claims to be the “earliest and most archaic” character type, which “is at one time creator and destroyer, giver and negator...who dupes others and who is always duped himself” (xxiii). After recounting and summarizing the trickster cycles, he catalogued universal traits common to the trickster figures.

The Winebago narrative tradition was split into two types, the *waikan*, or “what-is-sacred,” and the *worak*, or “what-is-recounted” (Radin 118). *Waikan* stories were primarily told during the summer (when the snakes were above ground) and established a hero that was a spirit or deity during a time that was “irretrievably gone and which belonged to the realm of things no longer possible or attainable by man or spirits” (118). The trickster tales were deemed *waikan* because, in most cases, they had to do with an immortal being characterized as a shape-shifter that was thought of as a hero, anti-hero, and/or fool. The trickster cycle often dealt with stories of nature, coming of age, biological education, or creation. In the strict cultures of the Native Americans, the trickster was often breaking taboos, especially those associated with war, but “he does not as yet accept responsibility for his actions...he holds other people, the world outside of himself, as compelling him to behave as he does” (135). Radin, admitting it was the analysis of an outsider, posited that the Wakdjunkaga cycle was a satire on man, an important observation

that links the Native American traditions with the European traditions. Radin's approach also found the trickster involved in creation stories of the earth, a being playing or falling for tricks, who is also highly sexed (155). These characteristics are attributes that many scholars now associate with the North American tricksters, but these qualities are often glossed over and deemed tricksterish by the standard of the western trickster type. However, many of the traits Radin observed, such as breaking taboos and playing tricks, are key components of the literary trickster due to their importance to political and social change. Radin observed that being a successful warrior was the ideal for the Winnebago culture and the ritual of obtaining a guardian spirit was considered a passage into adulthood. These two pillars were the most important to the Winnebago, so Radin believed it was of psychological and cultural significance "that the Winnebago trickster myth should begin with what is essentially a satire on the warburidle ritual. The same significance attaches to the fact that of all Winnebago religious beliefs and practices the only one mentioned in the trickster myth, and satirized, is the acquisition of a guardian spirit" (117). The sanitization in the stories involving the trickster made Radin shift his interpretation of the trickster figure from mere entertainment to a figure of change.

Paul Radin opens his case study with an overview of the trickster but makes mention of the complexities that surround the figure. Before he details his methods of interpretation, he poses several questions:

How do we interpret this amazing figure? Are we dealing here with the workings of the mythopoeic imagination, common to all mankind, which, at a certain period in man's history, gives us his picture of the world and of himself? Is this a *speculum mentis* wherein is depicted man's struggle with himself and with a world into which he had been thrust without his volition and consent? Is this the answer, or the adumbration of an

answer, to questions forced upon him, consciously or unconsciously, since his appearance on earth? (xxiv)

Radin is alluding to the work of R. G. Collingwood, a British historian and philosopher, who wrote *Speculum Mentis*, in which he proposed a culture was a unity of the mind, structured around “five forms of experience-art, religion, science, history, and philosophy” (“R.G. Collingwood”). Due to the commonality of the trickster motif across cultures, Radin tried to reason, based on the principles of Jungian psychoanalysis, that the human mind is part of a collective unconscious, which would make the trickster figure a *speculum mentis*. He posited that the problem of the trickster must be viewed as both universal and culturally specific in order to understand it completely but focused on the collective unconscious in order to explain the cross-cultural reoccurrence of the trickster. To further the understanding of this nuanced idea of the collective unconscious, Radin asked Carl Gustav Jung to write an essay about the trickster at the end of his book, which developed into an analysis of the trickster’s role, focusing mostly on the western tradition and the importance of trickster’s connection to the carnivalesque.

The Jungian Perspective

Preceding the publication of Carl Gustav Jung’s essay in Radin’s book, he published work on the fundamentals of the collective unconscious. Within the collective unconscious, he observed reoccurring ideas across cultures, which he termed archetypal images, or primordial images. According to Jung, the archetype is a strong, primarily observable presence in the individual but also in the analyses of entire cultures, which is what Paul Radin was alluding to with his reference to *speculum mentis*. The observer, like Radin observing the Winnebago tribe, is in the opportune space to see the influences of art, religion, science, history, and philosophy. The archetypal images are detailed projections of individual iterations of the self, most often

depicted as character types, which appear across cultures in literature and the arts (“On the Relation” 552). More specifically, the trickster is a representation of what Jung calls the shadow, the darker side of the public persona typically projected upon enemies or villains (*The Essential Jung* 91). These projections are crucial to the altering of the status quo in narratives of both oral and written storytelling because the more consistent and vivid the projections, “the harder it is for the ego to see through its illusions” (*The Essential Jung* 92). If the shadow, or the trickster, makes the less desirable aspects of society more prominent and obvious, then the issue can be publically scrutinized and changes can be made.

Jung’s analysis of the trickster in the carnival bridges the mythological trickster with cultural and literary tricksters I discuss in chapters 2 and 3. He saw the “European analogy of the carnival in the mediaeval Church, with its reversal of the hierarchic order,” as a direct correlation between the collective unconscious and the need for the shadow’s visibility as a form of stress relief at the least and a change to the status quo at the most (“On the Psychology” 195). The trickster is the inverter of society and, much like Jung’s shadow, represents the “repressed tendencies” of the individual as well as the collective unconscious, also referenced by Radin in his case studies (*The Essential Jung* 90). The repressed tendencies are not necessarily evil, but instead “merely somewhat inferior, primitive, unadapted, and awkward; not wholly bad. It even contains childish or primitive qualities which would in a way vitalize and embellish human existence” (*The Essential Jung* 90). It is this state of unconsciousness that the trickster inhabits that makes him a powerful archetypal image. Although Jung’s assertion that all humans are connected in a seemingly supernatural way is controversial, when his work is applied to literature, and his archetypal images become the characters, the satire or author’s commentary on

society becomes readily apparent. Jung sees the importance of the trickster figure in performance but believes the trickster and his role go woefully unrecognized, even by the trickster himself:

He is a forerunner of the saviour, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being, whose chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness. Because of it he is deserted by his (evidently human) companions, which seems to indicate that he has fallen below their level of consciousness. (“On the Psychology” 203)

Jung argues that the trickster is unconscious of his classification as trickster, but also as deity or creator. In extension of this unconsciousness, he is unaware of his role to society and the story that contains him, which leads to unexplainable supernatural actions and representations. Jung’s classification of all tricksters as deities that have inhuman power is an oversimplification of the trickster, grounded purely in assumption of mythology and his conception of the collective unconscious. An overall analysis of the trickster in literature and the western traditions proves this to be simply untrue, which will be demonstrated in later sections and proven in chapters 2 and 3.

The inner conflict of the trickster represents the greater conflicts portrayed in the satirical stories Radin analyzed in his case study. Upon further analysis, if the intricacy of the trickster is studied alongside the deeds, troubles, and tribulations of the likes of Loki and Hermes, a highly complex figure that has a superior understanding of humanity and the “human” psyche becomes obvious. I argue that since the literary trickster was created for the purpose of deceptions and manipulations to bring awareness to issues in social construction, he easily eludes detection of the characters around him in both action and purpose. If the shadow archetype is difficult to keep in check due to the conflicting conscious and subconscious, as described by Jung, the literary

trickster is fully aware of the collective unconscious and what it means to be in control of both the outward personality—transcribed actions—and the subconscious—prescribed role.

Jung makes the argument that the trickster and the shadow archetype are similar in that they became acknowledged by society once humans became more sophisticated. He explains how humanity once had a “primitive or barbarous” picture of itself at an “earlier level of development” (“On the Psychology” 200). The shadow was made up of lingering barbarous and hateful attitudes, even as the mind became highly developed, which is a reminder that humanity has darkness hidden in the unconscious “whose dangerousness exceeds [humanity’s] wildest dreams” (“On the Psychology” 206). Jung found that contemporary conceptions of the trickster gradually shifted away from manifestations of evil and simplicity due to what he calls the “devaluation of [the trickster’s] earlier unconsciousness” (“On the Psychology” 206). The trickster started based purely in the shadow archetype but evolved to a more complex figure that was neither all good, nor all bad, taking on other aspects of the human psyche. He attributes this to the movement to higher cognitive awareness by the people telling the story, but this does not mean the shadow is being completely repressed:

If the conscious should find itself in a critical or doubtful situation, then it soon becomes apparent that the shadow has not dissolved into nothing but is only waiting for a favourable opportunity to reappear as a projection upon one's neighbour. If this *trick* is successful, then immediately there is created between them that world of primordial darkness where everything that is characteristic of the trickster can happen—even on the highest plane of civilization. (“On the Psychology” 206, my emphasis)

The key is for the shadow to appear dormant, as if society is working without disruption, but it is when the literary trickster is introduced that the trick can be successfully played, disordering then

reordering the hierarchy of power. It is this key characteristic of the trickster tradition in western society that allows for the creation of the literary trickster and the performance of the trick to be analyzed. Using the groundwork and analysis of both Radin and Jung's work, it creates a foundation for isolating the purpose and need of the literary trickster in the western tradition, which will be further identified in chapter 2 using George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and in chapter 3 using Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. However, before the trick can be analyzed, it is important to define the characteristics that make a character a literary trickster.

The Hynes and Doty Heuristic

Inspired by Paul Radin's book, William J. Hynes and William G. Doty set out on their own analysis of the trickster tradition nearly 40 years after Radin published his. Their book, *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, takes issue with Radin's study because they think he "[views] the trickster as representing an important but very *primitive* state in the progressive or evolutionary development of mankind" (8-9, their emphasis). The primary differences between the two case studies is the scope and methodology. Radin's book primarily focused on the Winnebago tribe, but Hynes and Doty ventured out and tried to include every largely practiced religion or mythology across all cultures. Although there is a focus on some of the more famous Tricksters such as Hermes/Mercury and Coyote, their study also goes into detail about the African Ananse, Eshu, and Legba; other Western Tricksters such as Saint Peter and Herschel; Native American figures Wakdjunkaga and Manabozo; and Asian tricksters Susano-o, Sun Wuk'ung, Agu Tampa, and Horangi (Hynes and Doty 2). The scope of their book is obviously broad because they "do not argue for archetypal roots in a transcendental human psyche, and [they] are less interested in origins than in cultural manifestations;" essentially

absent of Jungian psychology (2). Their approach is interdisciplinary “toward human phenomena and literary texts rather than any one specialized perspective” in order to sample cultures from around the world to find trends in the manifestations of the trickster as well as their purpose (8).

Hynes and Doty both agree that there should be a heuristic guide to understand and differentiate the trickster from other character types without falling into the realm of oversimplification and overgeneralization. Assigning criteria to a figure represented across cultures can be limiting and generalizing, but they stress that their outlined characteristics serve “as a modest map, heuristic guide, and common language for the more complex individual studies of particular tricksters within specific belief systems that follow” (33). I am also apprehensive about calling the characteristics criteria since it is reductive to the trickster across all cultures by stating *all* tricksters, from *all* cultures, must meet and maintain specific criteria to fit the classification. However, when discussing the literary trickster category, a specific character type, a criterion must be formed in order for it to be identifiable. They established six characteristics after analyzing tricksters across cultures and noticed shared characteristics in description, action, and role they play in the story. Their cautious and culturally sensitive approach to the trickster allows them to come up with similarities instead of creating a matrix of commonality that links all tricksters together. They admit that “not every trickster necessarily has all of these characteristics. Still, more times than not, a specific trickster will exhibit many of these similarities” (34). Their six established characteristics, which I will analyze in depth, are as follows: 1) Ambiguous and Anomalous, 2) Deceiver and Trick-Player, 3) Shape-Shifter, 4) Situation-Invertor, 5) Messenger and Imitator of the Gods, and finally, 6) Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur. It is important to note that for my analysis of the literary trickster, these must be explained in detail, but they will be criticized more closely and revised in a later section.

Ambiguous and Anomalous

As already discussed, the trickster is a complex, anomalous character, difficult to figure out and categorize. Hynes and Doty explain that the trickster's "cosmic interplay engages unceasing sets of counterpoised sectors, such as sacred and profane, life and death, culture and nature, order and chaos, fertility and impotence" (34). In many respects, the trickster is contradictory, but not entirely, otherwise he would not be an effective narrative tool. The trickster does not deal in absolutes or binaries, instead he "appears on the edge or just beyond existing borders, classifications, and categories" (34). He is always in transit, constantly moving about, in between and through "all realms marginal and liminal" (35). Through this constant movement, he is notoriously a figure of disorder and disassembling, a key characteristic of the trickster, as it leads to the trick to be played.

Deceiver and Trick Player

As the name implies, the trickster needs to be a trick player and must have the ability to deceive others. The trickster has several roles in a narrative, but as I will expand on, trick playing is the key objective of the trickster and, more importantly, the literary trickster. In the narrative he "acts as the *prima causa* of disruptions and disorders, misfortunes and improprieties" (Hynes and Doty 35). The trickster disrupts the social order, one of the many steps to create change. There are many deceptions and small tricks that lead up to the change in the narrative, an ongoing process in order for change to be set in motion. However, "once initiated, a trick can exhibit an internal motion all its own. Thus a trick can gather such momentum as to exceed any control exercised by its originator and may even turn back upon the head of the trickster so the trick-player is also trickster-tricked," (35) an aspect that will be analyzed at length in chapter

2. Though the audience can usually identify the trickster in mythology, and can see the deceptions, the other characters of the story rarely do until it is too late.

Shape-Shifter

In association with the trick-playing, the trickster is distinguished from the fool and those classified as tricksterish by its ability to change form. The trickster has the ability to “alter his shape or bodily appearance in order to facilitate deception. Not even the boundaries of species or sexuality are safe” (Hynes and Doty 36). Sometimes the trickster changes shape to escape capture, e.g., Hermes changing into mist, or he may change shape to enable a trick, e.g., Coyote changing into a tree to catch birds (37).

Situation-Invertor

If the main role of the trickster is to create disorder in order to facilitate change, then one of his tools is situation inversion. This ability allows for the trickster to overturn any situation, which can refer to “any person, place, or belief, no matter how prestigious” (Hynes and Doty 37). One of the reasons for the popularity of the trickster across cultures, as displayed in the carnival, is for this very characteristic. The trickster can invert the power of the aristocracy, challenge the facilitators of war, or even bring down a dynasty by inverting the hierarchy of power. When it comes to the narrative role of the trickster, “there is no 'too much' for this figure. No order is too rooted, no taboo too sacred, no god too high, no profanity too scatological that it cannot be broached or inverted. What prevails is toppled” (37). Whether for entertainment or release of tension, the trickster is used to invert the painful reality of the audience, though, as I will argue for the literary trickster, it can also promote a lasting change.

Messenger and Imitator of the Gods

The trickster slips between the “sacred and the profane with ease,” often bringing something divine to the humans, such as “a message, punishment, an essential cultural power, or even life itself” (Hynes and Doty 40). Hynes and Doty also refer to the trickster as a psychopomp, moving between the lines of life and death, whether it be the messenger of death or the guide. This occupation of the space between messenger and god can aid the human and divert punishment or can be subject to parody of other common stories.

Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur

Bricoleur, as used by Claude Levi-Straus, is a “tinker or fix-it person, noted for his ingenuity in transforming anything at hand in order to form a creative solution” (Hynes and Doty 42). Due to the trickster breaking all classifications, he doesn’t look at objects as having a single purpose. Hynes and Doty note that the trickster acknowledges that “these items can be put to whatever inventive purpose is necessary,” whether it be using his penis to attack a chipmunk (Winnebago tradition) or violating taboos which are “sexual, gastronomic, or scatological” (42). They stress that it is through “process of the search [or creation] and not its fulfillment” that the trickster gains pleasure (42).

These characteristics, as Hynes and Doty reiterate, are a heuristic guide to determining if a figure is a trickster or simple acting tricksterish, but it is by no means the definitive guide in doing so. However, for this project, I believe the characteristics must be analyzed critically and revised in order to be applied more rigorously to characters of literature in order to establish the literary trickster with confidence. Hynes and Doty admit that these six qualities are not the final authority on the trickster figure. However, they look at their list as comprising the attributes “most common to the trickster figure and probably are most central to his identity. While many

specific trickster figures appear to have most of these characteristics, a particular figure may occasionally have only one or two” (45). Again, Hynes and Doty did a study across all trickster cycles, so this list is a heuristic map to perform “more complex individual studies of particular tricksters within specific belief systems” (33). What they fail to mention in their discussion about western tricksters is how they perform nearly every characteristic in their respective stories. Now, using their six characteristics as a heuristic guide, I want to examine the western trickster to fine tune these qualities even further in order to establish a more definitive list of characteristics before analyzing the literary trickster.

The Western Tradition

The western trickster tradition, more specifically Hermes/Mercury² and Loki, has great influence over western writers and the trickster archetypes they use in their stories. Despite the cultural similarities in the western tradition, Hynes and Doty stress a primary difference in the way the United States is less tolerant of humor. They call this American trait the “American religiosity,” which summarizes how Americans don’t approve of comedic and deceptive representations of serious and important cultural information (28). The stories of both Hermes and Loki have a significant amount of humor, as do both narratives outlined in chapters 2 and 3, but Hynes and Doty don’t explicitly argue that the comedic and the deceitful are used didactically to address serious issues in western culture, such as hubris and exceptionalism. The introduction of humor, subtle or explicit, is a common occurrence with the trickster of all cultures, but the humor is often represented as child-like. Most tricksters in western stories are divine and are usually represented as adults, with some exceptions, such as Hermes, which leads to greater ambiguity concerning sincerity due to his lewd behavior. The trickster, being both a

² The Romans called Hermes Mercury and adapted the figure from Greece for their own cultural needs; because Hermes is the older figure, that is the name I will be using here.

sacred and a *lewd* bricoleur, creates unease for scholars, especially when they want to categorize the trickster type as a cultural hero (Hynes and Doty 23). Religious sentiments that no good could come from evil and no order from chaos hinder the acceptance of the western trickster as a positive figure for social change, which makes the literary trickster an important category for analysis. Jung, Hynes, and Doty all reference the carnivalesque, but they don't acknowledge that laughter can be seen as both tension relief and tension creation. The ambiguous nature of the trickster complicates his seriousness not only through their actions (sometimes deemed as funny) but also through their use of rhetorical principles (such as timing and appropriateness). The trickster "bears the gift of laughter, but it is tied to another level, linked to another gift, one that evokes insight and enlightenment" (Hynes and Doty 206). The useful, and sometimes humorous, trickery the trickster deploys can be found in Native American mythology as with the devious hunter or in Greek mythology as with the exquisite tactician, but Hynes and Doty argue that these qualities are no longer considered noble in the modern western tradition (Hynes and Doty 28).

Before the trickster figure was acknowledged as a character type, the fool was an important classification in medieval culture and embodies specific characteristics that have been exploited in literature, as Peter Tokofsky explains: "basic to the fool role is actual or performed madness or idiocy. Due to a mental deficiency and consequent inability to function in ordinary society, the fool occupies the margins of culture. Here, the fool gains license to speak freely and to reflect on the foibles of others" (576). It would be difficult to classify the entire category of literary tricksters as manic, but, like fools, they often occupy the margin and speak freely, mostly on the foibles of others, as we will see with Petyr Baelish in chapter 2 and Pandarus in chapter 3. This is one of the primary distinctions between the fool and trickster; one is manic or an idiot,

while the latter is articulate but still marginalized in his classification. Tokofsky acknowledges that fools see society from a different perspective due to the marginalization and “to remain isolated from the mainstream invests the fool with considerable ambiguity, which is sometimes believed to afford this individual divine or clairvoyant powers,” which harkens back to Jung’s analysis of the shadow archetype (576). Tokofsky, reinforcing the categories outlined by Hynes and Doty, sees the common traits of the fools and Tricksters shared: “Inversion, antiauthoritarianism, parody, sexuality, ambiguity, and earthiness are essential to fools, tricksters, shamans, and clowns” (576). As the similarities between the medieval fool and the carnival trickster are made apparent, resulting in a pop culture fusion of the two categories, such as Petyr Baelish in chapter 2, it is also important to understand the differences, primarily through status and purpose.

Tricksters are rarer and higher forms of the fool with the intended purpose of highlighting issues of their society, which is why they are often represented as divine. Tokofsky explains the carnivalesque trickster as a figure that appears during “certain calendrical festivals, such as carnival or the Feast of Fools...[which has] given rise to special groups of fools...that perform their antics in public. Unlike professional fools, these actors do not take their roles because of their physical or mental disabilities but rather because of the license provided them” (578). The difference between the two types of fools is an important distinction to make because the professional fools focus on “inversion of the ordinary by constructing entire worlds in the mirror image of the normal, thus criticizing and satirizing ordinary society and engaging in licentious behavior. These fools do not provide an ongoing voice opposed to the mainstream but rather engage themselves and their audiences in a *periodic release* of the tensions of the everyday and offer alternative visions of social organization” (Tokofsky 579, emphasis mine). The reason why

I highlight *periodic* is because the trickster cannot be a mainstay in a story; otherwise the world would remain inverted and balance could not be restored—all tricksters must eventually leave the audience, in performance, or other characters, in literature, to deal with the disorder.

Most of the allegorical stories that feature a trickster figure paint him as the evildoer due to the disorder that is left in their wake. Although they can be seen as deities, negative light is systematically cast on the trickster in western traditions, but a close analysis of the stories shows he is the facilitator of political and social change. Hynes and Doty found in their research that the trickster’s “ability [was] to function as a vent through which pressures engendered by a system of beliefs and behaviors can be dissipated,” but I argue that the literary trickster also leaves the option for a new order to be instated (206). These pressures can include harsh working conditions, social hierarchy, hunger, poverty, or religious ceremony. Even when the majority population converted to monotheistic religions, the pagan tricksters were still prevalent in carnival revelry because of the strong relationship the trickster had to the common people. Doty speaks to this comparison at length in his chapter on Hermes, “A Lifetime of Trouble-Making: Hermes as Trickster”:

The polytheism of the Greeks was an open-textured religiosity honoring various experiences of power made concrete by different members of the divine family. Its concern was not so much the definition or abstract identification of divine essences so much as providing a practical religion that connected humans with the relevant sources of power and clarified behaviors appropriate for human beings. (50)

This representation exemplifies the divine aspect of the trickster, affording him the titles of divine protector or protector of the people. It is important to discuss both Hermes and Loki with respect to this project as the two case studies I present in chapters 2 and 3 align well with the two

tricksters. Chapter 2 focuses on Petyr Baelish, who shares many similarities with Hermes in regards to humor, creativity, and his use of rhetoric, whereas chapter 3 focuses on Pandarus, who, like Loki, uses rhetoric and creative problem solving to accomplish his tasks.

Some Greek mythological stories, especially those with Hermes, are allegorical in nature and often used to speak directly to ethical behavior. These stories were used to bridge the “gap between what comes to us through history and fate or *luck*, and [shows] what we can learn through ethical and cultural training, or *education*” (Hynes and Doty 50, original emphasis). The Greek trickster god Hermes, or Mercury in the Roman tradition, is the oldest written Western trickster and an important figure for the trickster type, but not only because of his allegorical role. Hermes embodies multiplicity, paradoxicality, as well as liminality, conflicting identifiers that illustrate the complexity of the trickster. When Hermes’ appears in stories, especially in Lucian’s *Dialogues of the Gods* and Homer’s *Hymns*, he is an important focus of ethical lessons, mostly to humble the older gods or to teach them to respect, and possibly fear, creativity.

As is the case with all tricksters, Hermes’ deceitfulness is in direct correlation with a moral message or social change. Doty comes up with six primary characteristics Hermes possesses throughout the multitude of stories he is in. Many of these qualities fall into the six main characteristics of the trickster, but he admits there are dozens of other qualities with which Hermes could be identified, such as Multiplex Marginality and Paradoxicality, The Divine Connector, Creator-Restorer-Healer, The Shameless One, Comedian and Wit, and The Hermeneut (messenger). He claims that Hermes is one of the more complex tricksters when compared to other cultures. Hermes, unlike other western tricksters, is often represented as a newborn baby with the abilities of an adult, befuddling Apollo and Zeus in Hermes’s more popular Greek stories. This representation of Hermes seems to amplify the trickster elements of

the story, instantly calling attention to inversion and trickery but also the humor and child-like nature of many cultural trickster representations. To reinforce the six characteristics and their significance, I want to explain Hermes's stories through a couple of the Hermes-specific characteristics Doty calls attention to.

Doty's idea of Hermes having Multiplex Marginality and Paradoxicality is seen in the Homeric Hymn "Hermes' Birth" (4a) where Hermes is Zeus' son born to a nymph, Maia, the daughter of Atlas. Even though he is marginalized due to his mother's status, he is still recognized as a god, something that Doty found characteristic of the Greek trickster: "there is something intriguing about the Greek spirit that could divinize such a figure of marginality and paradox, polyvalence and multiplicity, as easily as it idolized the sharp clear focus of a Zeus or Hera" (50). Through this marginality, Hermes represents those that are not of the elite, being the god of heralds, travelers, thieves, and shepherds, and ultimately becoming the guide for transitions between boundaries. The role of The Divine Connector also ties in with the marginality of Hermes, who has a hand in the "fostering of associations and relationships, a collecting of people for commerce or for political action (the herald's task) or for education or athletics," something not often associated with a trickster (Doty 53). This characteristic is mapped onto three of the characteristics Hynes and Doty established for all tricksters:

Ambiguous and Anomalous, Situation-Invertor, and Messenger and Imitator of the Gods.

Through the role of the Creator-Restorer-Healer in his stories, Hermes takes on key characteristics of the trickster. As per the creator function, Hermes is dubbed the "culture-bringer" where he is often seen bringing new functions to society, such as writing and the alphabet, astronomy, hunting, weights and measures, as well as commerce (Doty 54-55). This characteristic also highlights creating relationships between people through transgressing social

boundaries or “[realigning] military or political power” (56). These tasks are often times accomplished through mortals in the stories instead of divine intervention. Hermes empowers the people to accomplish their own feats, but the story still requires analysis and interpretation through the lens of trickster studies in order to understand the full message. These categories are represented in the following overall characteristics of the trickster established by Hynes and Doty: Messenger and Imitator of the Gods as well as a Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur.

The last characteristics can be grouped together because they all have to do with the use of language: The Shameless One, Comedian and Wit, and The Hermeneut (messenger). In the *Dialogues of the Gods* by Lucian, Hermes is looked upon by Apollo and Hephaestus, and as Hephaestus explains how cute Hermes looks, Apollo tells him to check his tools because Hermes is a thief. After total disbelief, he finds his pincers are missing. This is just one of the many instances where Hermes is seen as being devious and a thief, but he is also seen humanizing the gods or heroes both through his actions and speech. June Singer, a psychoanalyst, talks about the important role Hermes plays in these morality tales: “He symbolizes that aspect of our own nature which is always nearby, ready to bring us down when we get inflated, or to humanize us when we become pompous. He is the satirist par excellence, whose trenchant wit points out the flaws in our haughty ambitions, and makes us laugh though we feel like crying” (qtd. in Hynes and Doty 47). The use of deceit, trickery, and thievery are the most common associations with tricksters across all cultures, but it is the combination of his use of language and didactic intentions that make him more complex than other tricksters. These stories and characteristics highlight significant aspects of the trickster Hynes and Doty have created: Deceiver and Trick-Player, Situation-Invertor, Messenger and Imitator of the Gods, and finally the Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur.

Hermes' use of laughter and language are iconic with his tradition. The fourth *Homeric Hymn*, "To Hermes," is one of the most well-known stories of Hermes. After Hermes steals the cows and is caught by Apollo, he declares himself a god and is eventually brought before Zeus to answer for his crimes. After Hermes sabotages Apollo in front of their father by mocking and taunting him, Hermes is finally allowed to speak. He debates the details of Apollo's story, even outright lying to Zeus, but then the narrator says, "So spoke the Cyllenian, the Slayer of Argos, and he winked, keeping his blanket on his arm, not casting it down. But Zeus laughed aloud at the sight of his evil-witted child, so well and wittily he pled denial about the cows" (Homer 194). Humor is a key component of the trickster, often a marker of a trick being played, and Hermes is able to make Zeus laugh. Zeus forgives the child god and Apollo makes amends with Hermes, but a key exchange happens between Zeus and the trickster when Hermes admits he will never tell the whole truth. The rhetoric that Hermes uses marks him as a trickster, but he points out the flaws of the gods and humans, much as Loki does in his stories.

Loki is a marginal figure in Norse mythology, but Loki is not born from the king of the gods like Hermes, but through the relationship between a god and giant (Farbauti and Laufey). Loki shows up most prominently in *The Poetic Edda* and is prophesied in "Seeress's Prophecy" to bring an end to the gods along with his "monstrous brood will all the raveners" during Ragnarok (51). Due to the prophecy and Loki's deceitful nature, he is often called evil or mistrustful, treated far more negatively than Hermes. Loki shares many of the same qualities as Hermes, though his ability to shape-shift and his masterful use of rhetoric to both tell the truth and agitate other gods are his most prominent characteristics. In the poem "Loki's Quarrel," Loki is chased out of the drinking hall only to come back to throw more insults, eventually incurring the wrath of Thor. At the very start of the story, Loki exchanges jabs with a servant: "You know,

Eldir, that if you and I should / contend with wounding words, / I'd be rich in replies" (5). Before the real exchange even begins, Loki calls attention to his great skill for rhetorical exchanges. The interaction with Loki and the other gods ranges from petty jabs at honor, "“Why are you so silent, you arrogant gods, / are you unable to speak?”" (7) to critiques of Odin's leadership, "Be silent, Odin, you never know how to / apportion honour in war among men" (22). Loki is found to be the articulate one when Thor only resorts to violent threats and repetition, eventually driving Loki out. Loki then uses his shape-shifting abilities to listen in on the conversation in the hall but is found, tied up, and placed below a venomous snake which drips acid onto his head causing him to writhe in pain for eternity.

Loki's relationship with the other gods, as well as his social position, is complex, but he is also sought after for advice. Loki's use of manipulation, whether it be his skills with words or his ability to deceive through shape-shifting, stems from being a bricoleur. His crafted replies to the gods and warriors in the drinking hall shows his ability to twist words, as Hermes is able to do to Apollo and Zeus. The trickster is also keen on imitation and mimicry, whether it be words, mannerisms, actions, or physical shape. Loki uses this to his advantage in "Thrym's Poem" when Thor asks for his help in getting his hammer, Mjölfnir, back from the giants. Loki acts as the intermediary, relaying to Thor the giant king's demand to marry Freyja in exchange for Mjölfnir. Thor is ready to give up, but it is Loki that influences him to concede to Heildallr's laughable but effective plan: to dress Thor up as the bride Freyja. Thor is defiant, but Loki silences him with reason: "Then said Loki, son of Laufey: / 'Be quiet, Thor, don't speak these words! / The giants will be settling in Asgard / unless you get your hammer back'" (18). Loki, continuing to be the intermediary, uses his skills to both save Freyja from marriage and get Thor's hammer back without ruin. The importance of this scene is the use of humor for a serious matter that has

cultural symbolism, such as marriage and war, much like what Pandarus does in chapter 3. Like Hermes, it is the imagination and complexity of the trickster juxtaposed with the traditional one dimensional characters that makes the trickster stand out and stay with the audience.

Defining the Literary Trickster

Now that we have a detailed understanding of the western trickster tradition through Hynes and Doty's characteristics and have reinforced them with the examples of the mythical tricksters Hermes and Loki, I want to propose the criteria for what I have been calling the "literary trickster." As I have already outlined, Paul Radin's understanding of the trickster is primarily based in the Native American tradition and focuses more on the "cultural hero," but his study on satirical stories and the role the trickster plays is the groundwork for the literary trickster. Jung's understanding of the social inversion through the carnivalesque and the purpose of the shadow archetype is important in discussing the "trick" that is played. Hynes and Doty's characteristics were a pivotal turning point in the scholarship of the trickster, but even their categories speak in broad terms that are not clearly reflected in literature. They proclaim they do not want to overgeneralize, but for an analysis of the literary trickster category, specific criteria must be established in order to isolate the character of the text. In the following section I propose a revised list of the characteristics, based on the aforementioned six, which pertains to the literary trickster, influenced by Radin, Jung, Hynes, and Doty as well as observations I've made in about both mythology as well as the texts I will be focusing on in chapters 2 and 3: George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and Geoffrey Chaucer's romance *Troilus and Criseyde*. Though there are many other characteristics the literary trickster takes on, these six are of the utmost importance.

Ambiguous and Anomalous

Hynes and Doty listed this as their first characteristic, and I believe rightly so, because when a trickster is introduced, there are usually more questions about their character than answers. The literary trickster must be ambiguous, as all tricksters are, but their ambiguity is key in infiltrating the system they are disrupting. As Hermes' identity as human or god, child or adult is ambiguous, this allows him to move between social and divine spaces. Unlike Hynes and Doty, I believe this focus is not just on constant opposition and breaking binaries but more literally applies to the character himself. The literary trickster's social class, allegiance to a cause, and intentions are key ambiguous moments in a larger plot.³ Liminal characters, or those evading definite understanding, to use a phrase from Kathleen Roberts, "are considered powerful to the point of danger" in narratives⁴ (174). What Roberts explains about ambiguity is that the trickster opposes social constructions and enables free choice by enmeshing good and evil (179). Though I agree with her conclusion, she doesn't talk about the other characters' inability to control the trickster, which in turn allows him to move freely without restraint *because* he understands the social constructions so well. This, for obvious reasons, moves the trickster into an *authoritative* role—becoming author to his own story. In both case studies from chapters 2 and 3, the literary tricksters' actions are what drive the story while subliminally subverting societal constructions.

It is also important to acknowledge the shape-shifting characteristic under this criterion. I believe this characteristic belongs to the ambiguous and anomalous criteria because shape-

³ Helena Bassil-Morozow expresses this by stating "the trickster's task in narratives is to drag protagonists through a series of transformations," but I believe the Trickster transforms both characters in the text as well as highlighting specific aspects of a hierarchical structure to the audience, which will be a primary focus of chapters 2 and 3 (29).

⁴ Kathleen Roberts's defines criteria of the trickster from a narrative perspective instead of strictly character studies. In doing so, she focuses more heavily on the folkloric, inventive, and liminal aspects of the trickster.

shifting is a component of the anomalous characteristic. Shape-shifting is a quality that is integral to the trickster tradition, which is why Hynes and Doty assign it as a criterion. However, in their assessment of the trickster, Hynes and Doty focus, as do other scholars, on the folkloric or mythological trickster who commonly changes his form into that of animals, plants, humans, or a different state (i.e., water or mist) (Hynes and Doty 36; Roberts 173; Bassil-Morozow 42). In the case of the literary trickster, the act of metamorphosis can be demystified if the definition is expanded to identity and interpreted in a less than literal way. The literary trickster may not change form, but he can change clothing and appearance to allude and deceive, as well as invoke social mobility through mimicry and exchange. Not only does this facilitate deception, this act disorders and disassembles society, allowing the literary trickster to earn the title “masked disassembler of the cosmic order” (Hynes and Doty 35).

Deceiver and Trick Player

As illustrated by both Hermes and Loki, the trickster does not trick or deceive without purpose. The literary trickster plans for social change, so the procession of deceptions and tricks lead to possibility and reform for the characters in the story and/or the audience. As previously mentioned in their characteristics, Hynes and Doty claim the trick is an ongoing process that can gain momentum to where the trickster is no longer needed (35). Roberts, Bassil-Morozow, and Radin all explain how the trickster is a fool that always deceives until the trick turns on himself, but this is not the case for the literary trickster. The inward humor of the carnivalesque or mythology can oversimplify the trickster to the point of fool or jester, but that takes the complexity of the trickster and creates an aura of unsophistication and foolhardiness. The literary trickster may get caught up in his own schemes, or even poke fun of himself, but the literary

trickster is a formidable foe to the power structures of their story, who unbalances the system through his tricks.

Deception and trick playing may seem inherently bad or evil, so audiences often consider the tricksters evil, but the deceptions are required to overcome hierarchical power, especially through mimicry. Roberts expresses this sentiment by explaining the duality as “taking on aspects of evil in order to achieve good (or, at least, to avert a greater evil)” (179). Her narrative studies focus on the actions of the trickster as being evil, but achieving good, but this statement is contradictory to the ambiguity principle that she and other scholars focus on by assessing the trickster in a binary system. Roberts does not think the trickster always does “what is right” but instead follows “his own narrative ethic that textures his usefulness as a metaphor for positive intercultural interaction” (179-80). It is important to acknowledge that the trickster’s behavior is based on “his own narrative ethic,” but to classify his actions within a binary is counterintuitive to his anomalous outlook. Instead of using the binary to describe his tricks and deceptions, it should be expressed as the trickster doing what is necessary to accomplish his task. The audience is sometimes aware of the literary trickster’s intentions, often upon in-depth analysis, but the surrounding characters are definitely not. Once they find out, there can be swift and decisive action against the trickster, which is precisely why the trickster must “disappear” through death or upon their own volition once the trick is played.⁵

Situation-Invertor

Due to the popularity of the carnivalesque celebrations as well as the use of absurdity to release tensions in folklore and mythology, situation inversion became a popular criterion for the

⁵ Bassil-Morozow explains how the trickster must die after “the creative, chaotic unconscious energy has been woken up” or the trick has been played. The method of death differs based on the genre, but she gives the examples of suicide, murder, or physically disappearing (37).

trickster. The common person wants to experience a release of tension, or to be entertained, and profaning what the culture deems sacred or important is an effective way of doing that. Beyond the elements of humor for entertainment, the tension could be frustration over treatment or a controversy, which is when the trickster enables power inversions in power structures. These inversions are challenges to the status quo, making the trickster a “revolutionary hero” to those that want change (Roberts 180). The literary trickster is given power through his deceptions, eventually diverting power to the oppressed group to command it. Through the inversion, princes can become subservient and reliant on someone of lower status and an empire can fall into complete disorder due to someone of the merchant class. Though the inversion doesn’t work as cleanly as a binary system, e.g., up becomes down, this action by the literary trickster creates vulnerability where there was none.

Divine Messenger

Hynes and Doty’s characteristic called “messenger and imitator of the gods” spills over into the “ambiguous and anomalous” and “shape-shifting” characteristics. I have shortened the name to “divine messenger” to better fit the literary trickster and to emphasize the messenger aspect of the category. First, the divine aspect of the messenger is in direct correlation with ambiguity and being anomalous, slipping across borders with impunity and without the notice of those around him. The reason for crossing these borders is often times associated with the role of messenger. The message changes based on the narrative, but it can be a traditional “message, punishment, an essential cultural power, or even life itself” (Hynes and Doty 40). I have found that scholarship fails to mention the ability of the trickster to manipulate the message, often tied to their mastery of rhetoric and the next criteria of bricoleur. This aspect is important to the

divine nature of the messenger, as is shown with Hermes, where lying and manipulation are key components to the narratives.

Bricoleur

In what Hynes and Doty call the “Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur,” the term bricoleur is derived from “bricolage,” which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as “Construction or (esp. literary or artistic) creation from a diverse range of materials or sources” (“bricolage”). Reflecting back on the aforementioned criteria of the literary trickster, the figure engages in creative problem solving by engaging it from multiple perspectives and coming to a solution using an indirect method. Across the trickster tradition, many of the tricksters use sexual and biological processes to create lewd acts or objects, and the literary trickster is not beyond this, but the inventiveness is often towards reform or the way in which he delivers a message. Once the literary trickster possesses a tool, he can then manipulate or repurpose it for his own needs; his use of imagination is what makes it so powerful. The way language is used at the hands of the literary trickster confounds characters in his path because he is a master rhetorician, but more than simply using language effectively, the trickster embodies what Roberts refers to as “the rhetoric of possibility” (175). Roberts further explains this as the trickster “captur[ing] the audience's imagination because he never closes off the option of freedom; he espouses the rhetoric of possibility and perhaps he even inspires it in his listeners” (176). This idea of possibility is the embodiment of the literary trickster, for his manipulations and persuasions often deal with the future and the unknown. As his role in social change demonstrates, he is trying to get the audience to approach the status quo differently.

Consumer

In addition to the qualities Hynes and Doty set into characteristics, I propose the consumer as one of the criteria for the literary trickster. The trickster has been represented as a consumer across most trickster traditions, but this quality is rarely one to come up when scholars attempt to establish mainstay characteristics. Paul Radin says trickster stories “have a hero who is always wandering, who is always hungry, who is not guided by normal conceptions of good or evil, who is either playing tricks on people or having them played on him and who is highly sexed” (155). Although it is a common description of the cultural trickster tradition, having a sexual appetite does not define the literary trickster. Lewis Hyde explains: “The trickster myth derives creative intelligence from appetite... Trickster starts out hungry, but before long he is master of the kind of creative deception that, according to a long tradition, is a prerequisite for art” (17). The trickster is in a constant need of fulfillment, both mentally and physically, and hungers for power, disruption, advancement, and change. The trick is never played to leave the trickster content, it is played to his satisfaction and then he moves onto another trick in another place. Without this constant need, the trickster would be a passive figure instead of the active type I have been outlining. The literary trickster must be aggressive in his need for change, otherwise the stagnation would ruin him and his trick’s momentum. This criterion, unlike the others, is a unique character trait that cannot be ignored due to its significance in both the tradition and character archetype.

Now that the criteria are specific to the literary trickster, a character analysis can be conducted to see whether a character fits into the literary trickster character or not. It is important to identify the character quickly in order to analyze how the trickster functions in the text and how he accomplishes his primary objective of creating disorder in a power structure, such as politics or social hierarchies. A literary trickster has many tools at his disposal, truly embracing

the bricoleur criteria of the character, but there are two masteries that I will highlight in this chapter, which are key components of the arguments I will make in chapters 2 and 3 for the two literary tricksters. First, I will discuss the mastery of rhetoric that the trickster uses in his communication both through the rhetorics of possibility and persuasion. Then, I will discuss the mastery of play through principles of playfulness and game design.

Rhetorical Master: The Sophistic Tradition

The literary trickster's rhetorical ability is what enables him to perform within the six criteria. As Kathleen Roberts has already alluded to with her "rhetorics of possibility," rhetoric is the heart of the trickster and what makes him a master bricoleur. In many case studies on tricksters, scholars recount moments where tricksters use language in order to deceive, persuade, educate, or gain power. As we saw with Hermes, he used language to elude punishment from both Apollo and Zeus, while also humbling Apollo. Roberts is the only scholar that explicitly references rhetorical principles in her work, although many allude to it with the discussion around the use of language. However, without the introduction of rhetorical language, I find the explanations to be lacking, blurring the mastery of language into deviousness or one of the many aspects that make the trickster a bricoleur. The literary trickster's use of rhetoric is so important to his function that it needs to be explored more thoroughly with the terminology of rhetorical studies. The best place to start this exploration is with the Sophists.

The Sophists, commonly referred to as the wandering teachers of Greece, were rhetoricians who traveled around to teach commoners how to verbally defend themselves or become free thinkers. The Sophists were shunned by many of the aristocracy for being knaves and cheats because they would teach people to use language in manipulative ways. John Poulakos explains that the Sophists "found themselves free to experiment playfully with form

and style and to fashion their words in the Greek spirit of excellence. Aware of the human limitations in the acquisition of knowledge, they sought to ground the abstract notions of their predecessors in the actuality of everydayness” (26). Sophists enjoyed language and knew how powerful it could be if wielded correctly. According to Poulakos, the Sophistic definition of rhetoric is “the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible” (26). Poulakos explains how rhetoricians have the obligation of an “artistic undertaking,” concerned with the “how, the when, and the what of expression and understands the why of purpose” (26). Poulakos sees Sophistic rhetoric focusing on timing of speech which connects this view of rhetoric to the trickster’s use of language.

The trickster is opportunistic, whether because he sees an opportunity and seizes it or creates the opportunity through language. Sophists were interested in the timing of speech, much like the trickster, focusing in on three aspects of timing: “*kairos* (the opportune moment), *to prepon* (the appropriate), and *to dynaton* (the possible)” (Poulakos 26, his emphasis). The trickster values and represents *dynaton*, the possible, but he must know that all speech values the time in which it is said, and how it is said. Speech, especially in dialogic conversation, is timely and situational, and therefore, a great deal of planning must be done for someone to optimize the outcome of the conversation. What makes the trickster an exceptional rhetorician is that not only does he plan a conversation and its outcomes, but he also plans out his dynamic story with branches of possibilities because he is a bricoleur. Poulakos reiterates *kairos*, juxtaposing the planned speech against the impromptu: “That addressing the present requires courage and involves the taking of a risk is apparent in the compromise of extemporaneous speaking, the kind which literally occurs out of time” (28). *Kairos*, *to prepon*, and *to dynaton* all combine at the

opportune moment to accomplish a task. The trickster looks for the appropriate moment, often times when a character desires something, and pursues his own agenda at their expense.

Most narratives involving tricksters illustrate the human desire for change, exploiting the notion that no human is ever content with their current position or situation in life. The trickster looks beyond the current situation and sees possibility and potential, so when he comes upon a character that longs for change, but the actions are beyond them, the trickster steps in. Poulakos explains this longing in the following passage:

Consideration of the possible affirms in man the desire to be at another place or at another time and takes him away from the world of actuality and transports him in that of potentiality. Moreover, it intensifies in him the awareness that actuality is hostile to what he wishes and, as such, denies its existence. Finally, it refines his wishes and shows him how to apply them, what to ask, and whom to reach... Even though he functions daily in the world of actuality, he often finds himself concerned with his situation not as it is here-and-now but as it could be there-and-then. Thus, he participates at once in two worlds each of which opposes the other (30).

To drive a plot, there must always be a conflict, and that conflict is often fulfilled by the longing for something that a character cannot have. A particular woman's hand in marriage or the throne of a kingdom often seems unattainable without the help of a greater power. The trickster, using his mastery of rhetoric, fills this void, allowing characters to see past their limitations:

By exploiting people's proclivity to perceive themselves in the future and their readiness to thrust themselves into unknown regions, the rhetorician tells them what they could be, brings out in them futuristic versions of themselves, and sets before them both goals and the directions which lead to those goals. All this he does by creating and presenting to

them that which has the potential to be, but is not. Thus it is no paradox to say that rhetoric strives to create and labors to put forth, to propose that which is not (30).

Rhetoric, like the trickster, strives to create and shape our reality. Just by voicing what is possible, the trickster creates a new world that is accessible in the character's head, which then helps the trickster succeed in his overall objective in the story. This idea will be furthered in chapter 2 with Petyr Baelish's suggestions for new alliances and in chapter 3 with Pandarus showing Criseyde the advantages of being united with Troilus.

Mastering Play: Playfulness and Game Design

To fully understand how and why the trickster creates disorder to bring about change, studies in playfulness and game design need to be considered. When analyzing the trickster, it is sometimes difficult to understand his purpose, especially as an outsider, as Paul Radin experienced when trying to understand the Winnebago tricksters, but using the lens of play can be fruitful to the study. Hynes and Doty touched upon this briefly when they were explaining the outside knowledge the trickster has on the narrative through their situation-inversion criteria, called metaplay, which “probes and disassembles the most serious rules of 'normal' social behavior. The deconstruction is not pursued out of careless spite, but in order to reaffirm for the onlooker a necessary social centrism, a centering not short-circuited or bypassed by the immediate or ethnocentric, but creatively opened up to 'the other' and the transrational” (30). Play and rhetoric have a symbiotic relationship which allows us to shape our perception of reality and transcend boundaries through the realm of possibilities. While engaging in play, we see the connections between the possible and our reality.

Sicart's view of play as a way to enhance our understanding of the context of life, or the nodes and connections that create our everyday, is an important way to look at the trickster and

his purpose in a narrative. Similar to the carnivalesque, play “appropriates events, structures, and institutions to mock them and trivialize them, or make them deadly serious...[it] takes control of the world and gives it to the players for them to explore, challenge, or subvert” (Sicart 3-4). The trickster is always exploring, challenging, and subverting the world in order to create disorder without impunity, which guides us through the narrative to view possibilities of change. As we play through the world, “we construct it and we destroy it, and we explore who we are and what we can say. Play frees us from moral conventions but makes them still present, so we are aware of their weight, presence, and importance” (Sicart 5). Play allows us to view values and practices that are usually shrouded behind everyday life. While play is a commentary, it is also a destructive and reordering force that “can also disruptively reveal our conventions, assumptions, biases, and dislikes. In disrupting the normal state of affairs by being playful, we can go beyond fun when we appropriate a context with the intention of playing with and within it. And in that move, we reveal the inner workings of the context that we inhabit” (Sicart 15). The trickster explores the destructive nature of play in a fictional world for us to experience as an audience. The trickster moves through a narrative as a sentient being with characters that are unaware of the play, simulating the everyday with the desired disruptions.

In addition to studying the elements of playfulness, it is also important to apply game studies to the trickster in a way that sees him as an architect of the world—a game designer. Sicart notes that “play resides in the tension between control and chaos,” and playing with the tension is a play with the very form of the story and “the pleasure comes from the appropriation of those forms, breaking and deforming them to play with them” (83). The form of the story moves beyond just the genre that the story is categorized as but also the societal constraints and political hierarchy that is represented. The trickster is able to recognize the forms which can then

“be communicated, transmitted, fixed and polished, and adapted and modified” to the game designer’s purpose (83). The disruptiveness of the trickster with the use of game design principles can be used to “shock, alarm, and challenge conventions” (15). Hynes and Doty believe in the importance of challenging the conventions: “trickster myths can be a powerful teaching device utilizing deeply humorous negative examples that reveal and reinforce the societal values that are being broken” (207). Sicart’s explanation of play helps us see the usefulness of the trickster in the imagined social change society desires. In chapter 2, I will explain how Petyr Baelish uses the social norms and power hierarchies in order to become one of the nobles and challenge authority and relationships through playfulness. In chapter 3, I will explain how Pandarus is the co-architect of the narrative and uses the courtly love structure to manipulate both Troilus and Criseyde.

In the following two chapters, I will use the six criteria I have established to prove the existence of the literary trickster in both George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. Both texts use literary tricksters for similar purposes and use rhetoric and play principles in order to bring about disorder in their respective texts. The goal of each chapter is to show how the heuristic guide for the literary trickster category is performed and why it is important in understanding the narrative. Since the criteria form more of a checklist of sorts for determining the existence of the literary trickster, most of each chapter will be dedicated to how rhetoric and play are used by the respective tricksters and the lasting effects they have on the narratives.

Chapter 2—“It was Petyr all the while”: Petyr Baelish in *A Song of Ice and Fire*

Chaos isn't a pit. Chaos is a ladder. Many who try to climb it fail, and never get to try it again. The fall breaks them. And some are given a chance to climb but they refuse. They cling to the realm, or gods or love. Illusions. Only the ladder is real. The climb is all there is (“The Climb”).

Petyr “Littlefinger” Baelish, a notable sub-character in George R. R. Martin’s *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, is an infamous character. He sits on the King’s Council as the Master of Coin, but he is also a prominent entrepreneur in the capital city of King’s Landing both as a trader of goods as well as the owner of several high-end brothels. His success comes from being a “deceptive” and “talented liar” (Duval 253) who is also “selfish” (Littmann 7), “devious” (Jacoby 238), and “cunning” (Schulzke 41) with “advantages proffered by secrets and spycraft...whose power resides in [the] ability to broker information to more prominent players” (Duval 257). Political philosophers have observed how Baelish is the “story’s most distinctly Machiavellian [figure],” who lacks military power, but “holds great influence over the court” (Schulzke 43), which was reiterated by Martin in an interview about Machiavelli (Beaton 199). His manipulations allow him to play “all sides” to hide his true motives (Schulzke 44). Schulzke says Baelish is one of those characters who can be “excellent foxes and they can sometimes be lions” (44). Taking this metaphor further, Daniel Haas calls him a “ruthless [killer] willing to squash any opponent,” but who is subtle in the manner in which he does it (170). There is no argument over whether Petyr Baelish is manipulative, but there is much speculation as to what his motivation is and how he is so good at what he does. If we understand Baelish as a literary trickster, his motivation and process can be explained.

After studying Petyr Baelish's character in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* book series (1996–), specifically the first four books, and two episodes in the HBO adaptation *Game of Thrones* (2011–), I propose that Baelish is a literary trickster figure, who uses mimicry and the rules of exchange, rhetoric, and game design to dismantle the aristocratic, feudal system in Westeros. First, it is important to understand how I am using the term literary trickster figure as outlined in chapter 1. Once he is situated as a literary trickster, I will then explain how he operates, using mimicry and exchange to engage with the aristocracy. Then, I will show how Baelish uses rhetoric and game design principles to dismantle the aristocracy. Finally, I will discuss the implications of recognizing the literary trickster in Martin's work and his greater role in the text.

As explained in chapter 1, the literary trickster is the shadow of a society, a tool to dismantle the power hierarchy and create disorder. Under this definition, Petyr Baelish is the opposite of normativity in George R. R. Martin's Westeros. The trickster's complexity allows Baelish to oppose the Westerosi societal values, while assimilating into its high society. He both stabilizes the fragile state the kingdom is in, supporting the centralized monarchy, as well as undermines it by exploiting the power of exchange, becoming vital to the economy and well-being of the capital city and ruling class. His rise through the social class into the position of Master of Coin makes him a necessity to the operation and stability of the government, giving him the opportune position to craft his deceptions and perform machinations. His offenses against the ruling powers of Westeros are both slight and severe due to his ambiguous and anomalous nature. He is also a constant threat to the nobility because he appears to assimilate into their culture performed through mimicry, but his legacy and means set him apart from those around him. Baelish is essential to the coveted Iron Throne, taking the role of Master of Coin and

sitting on the king's small council, but his accumulation of wealth and power through deception and exploitation is unsettling to the older houses of the realm. The Westerosi pride themselves on tradition, the king and the Stark family often claim their lineage to the legendary First Men, as Ned Stark says to his son Bran, "The blood of the First Men still flows in the veins of the Starks" (*A Game of Thrones* 14). Those who focus completely on tradition are claimed as victims of the rolling tide of change that Petyr Baelish brings to the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. The more progressive thinkers in the realm are often non-traditional before they gain power, i.e., Tyrion Lannister is a dwarf, Jon Snow is a bastard, and Davos Seaworth is a smuggler. Although there are multiple characters in the series who implement radical changes to tradition, it is the role of the literary trickster to engage in social disorder to effectively bring about a long-lasting change to the realm because he can go virtually undetected.

Petyr Baelish is undoubtedly a trickster figure in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, as he generously fits into each of the six criteria outlined in the first chapter: Ambiguous and Anomalous, Deceiver and Trick Player, Situation-Invertor, Divine Messenger, Bricoleur, and Consumer. Baelish's background is virtually unknown by most of the realm and by the audience until the third book, *A Storm of Swords*, but there are begrudging whispers of his noble birth, lineage and heraldry, as well as his complicated status in King's Landing and beyond among highborns and commoners alike, classifying him as both ambiguous and anomalous. Petyr is presented to the readers as a deceiver and trick player from the first meeting, as he is making jokes, deceiving the parties around him, and having fun by playing tricks. Due to the fact that he is not a highborn like the rest, his very presence on the king's small council makes him a situation-invertor, but his actions throughout the series invert the societal norms as well. Baelish is often used, sometimes voluntarily, as the king's envoy, but he also serves as a messenger and

intermediary between high nobles. Baelish is first and foremost a bricoleur, as he is the source of inventive ideas and strategic play in order to subvert societal norms. Finally, he is a consumer of wealth, food, and indulgences, often through gambling, but his name is synonymous with his luxurious appearance and his ownership of a number of lavish brothels in King's Landing.

In addition to the six literary trickster criteria, there are many symbolic references to the western tradition of tricksters through his name, appearance, and actions. Petyr Baelish's very nickname, Littlefinger, is a direct symbolic link to the Roman god Mercury. Petyr was given his nickname because of his family's estate on the smallest piece of land on the small northwest peninsulas called "the Fingers"; also, astrologers used to recall the names of the gods by naming each finger as a different god, and the pinky, referred to as the "little finger," was the designation for Hermes/Mercury (Leach and Fried 380). The fingers are also used across cultures to "cross out the wickedness of lying" and deception (Leach and Fried 379). Baelish is often called Littlefinger by the nobles out of derision, but most importantly, usually when Baelish is being deceptive or using rhetoric to manipulate a situation.⁶ Proper names and nicknames are important to the world Martin has created, due to the emphasis on lineage, but Baelish transcends this binary by living as two different people. Sansa sees Baelish differently than most, which leads to this struggle of identity later on:

Sometimes it seemed to her that the Lord Protector was two people. . . . He was Petyr, her protector, warm and funny and gentle . . . but he was also Littlefinger, the lord she'd known at King's Landing, smiling slyly and stroking his beard as he whispered in Queen

⁶ The first mention of Littlefinger is by Jaime Lannister when they are discussing his ambition: "The king might as easily have named...Littlefinger, gods help us. Give me honorable enemies rather than ambitious ones, and I'll sleep more easily by night" (*A Game of Thrones* 69). When Catelyn Stark reminisces about Baelish from her childhood she calls him Petyr: "Petyr challenged for the right to my hand. It was madness" (*A Game of Thrones* 141).

Cersei's ear. And Littlefinger was no friend of hers. When Joff had her beaten, the Imp defended her, not Littlefinger. When the mob sought to rape her, the Hound carried her to safety, not Littlefinger. When the Lannisters wed her to Tyrion against her will, Ser Garlan the Gallant gave her comfort, not Littlefinger. Littlefinger never lifted so much as his little finger for her. Except to get me out. He did that for me. I thought it was Ser Dontos, my poor old drunken Florian, but it was Petyr all the while. Littlefinger was only a mask he had to wear. Only sometimes Sansa found it hard to tell where the man ended and the mask began. Littlefinger and Lord Petyr looked so very much alike. (*A Feast for Crows* 210)

I quote this passage at length due to the many examples and instances Sansa calls attention to. This also exhibits the use of Littlefinger juxtaposed with the noble representations of Baelish, which is complicated to say the least. However, to understand how the literary trickster fits into the narrative and social structure of Westeros, I must first outline the values and traditions of the society Baelish lives in.

Westerosi Tradition and the Baelish Exception

The Westerosi political structure has been an unchanged feudal system with a centralized monarchy for over 300 years. Often referred to as the Seven Kingdoms, Westeros has been ruled primarily by the Targaryen dynasty, until a rebellion established the Baratheon/Lannister dynasty 15 years before the start of *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. The kingdom is divided into seven territories which are governed by seven noble, long standing families and their sworn bannermen. The hierarchy is designed to maintain the power of the noble houses and to maintain allegiance to the king and keep legacy of the family names alive. Daenerys Targaryen aptly describes the noble houses' relation to the empire, in the episode "Hardhome," as "just spokes on

a wheel...on and on it spins, crushing those on the ground” (“Hardhome“). The society values the name and the noble affiliation it offers, often represented through the house words or mottos such as the famous words of House Stark, “Winter is coming.”⁷ To emphasize the importance of the nobles to Westeros, George R. R. Martin currently, as of his fifth book, *A Dance of Dragons*, has 31 character perspectives, all but four of which are of nobles or those who have risen to elite positions in society (the other four perspectives are in prologues or epilogues). It is important to note that not even Petyr Baelish is one of the 31 perspectives; his story is only told through other perspectives. Most of the perspectives neglect to mention the commoners unless in an aside or in a dehumanizing way.

Petyr Baelish proves to be an exception to most of the social rules of Westeros, allowing him to transcend boundaries more easily than any other character. With the emphasis on tradition and the ruling class, social mobility is nearly nonexistent. The reader is privileged to see very few instances of social mobility, outside of knighthoods being earned for heroic deeds.⁸ However, many nobles or relatives of nobles are jostled around to different positions and honors based on alliances, brokered deals, and the traditions of a vassal system. The mobility through appointments, marriages, and alliances is primarily motivated by maintaining the prestige and power for their house. A steadfast example of this is how House Tyrell becomes vastly wealthy and paramount to the success of the realm during the War of the Five Kings due to their food stores and the marriage of their only daughter to King Joffrey Baratheon. The Freys also become

⁷ Caitlyn Stark reflects on the noble houses’ words in *A Game of Thrones*: “Every noble house had its words. Family mottoes, touchstones, prayers of sorts, they boasted of honor and glory, promised loyalty and truth, swore faith and courage. All but the Starks. Winter is coming, said the Stark words” (*A Game of Thrones* 19-20). Many of the boasts were only representative of the house leaders.

⁸ Tyrion’s personal bodyguard Bronn was knighted “Bronn of the Blackwater” after his role in the Battle of the Blackwater. However, Podrick is not awarded a knighthood for saving Tyrion’s life during the same battle (*A Clash of Kings* 941).

a powerful family in Westeros by switching allegiances to the king's family, instead of their traditional liege lord, and carrying out a Lannister-authorized mass slaughter of the Starks and their army at the "Red Wedding." Disgraced members of houses, forgotten bloodlines, and the common folk have nearly no chance at social mobility, except in times of hardship or for less than noble deeds which confer temporary and limited status.

Due to the unlikelihood of social mobility, most people in Westeros, nobles and commoners alike, see social status as rigid with strict boundaries. Petyr Baelish, enacting the ambiguous and anomalous aspect of the literary trickster, sees through the illusion and uses his understanding of exchange and mimicry in order to elevate his own social status through a protocapitalist process which undermines the social hierarchy because Westeros's feudal system does not recognize it. He is also able to use this understanding to create instances of upward and downward mobility for those around him, if they are willing to break tradition. His upward mobility breaks the illusion of the rigid social status, creating disorder among the court as they strive to stay relevant and important in light of Baelish's accomplishments. It is through this disorder that many houses find their positions to be less favorable than they imagined, forcing them to come out from behind the curtain of tradition to work to maintain their house's position or else suffer downward mobility and the disadvantages that come along with it. Baelish's social mobility proves to be transgressive to the aristocracy since it forces reformation of the traditional feudal structure that has governed Westeros for centuries.

Petyr is often treated with derision by the nobles of King's Landing due to his lowborn status, adding to his cultural hero classification. He is the third generation Baelish in Westeros, but the Baelish house is only recognized as a small holding in the Vale, loyal to both the Arryns and the Tullies. Petyr's grandfather proved himself in battle, leading to his knighthood and the

acquisition of a small estate on the Fingers. Through a relationship between his father and Lord Tully, Petyr was taken in as a ward at Riverrun, the seat of House Tully. After Petyr challenged Brandon Stark for Catelyn's hand in marriage, he was severely wounded and eventually banished from Riverrun without ever being able to say his goodbyes (*A Game of Thrones* 367).⁹ Years after Petyr's banishment from Riverrun, he is appointed by Jon Arryn, at the request of Lysa Arryn, "a minor sinecure in customs," in which he rose quickly after showing a talent for exchange and money (*A Clash of Kings* 271). His rise through the ranks, and appointment as Master of Coin, is in large part due to his personal wealth but also his superior work for the crown. His personal wealth came from his investments into brothels and his economic success and rhetorical ability, which will be discussed in a later section, has allowed him some comfort and ability to pass as noble. However, there is a key factor to this assimilation: mimicry.

The ambiguous and anomalous nature of the literary trickster is important to Baelish's character. The ruling class treats Baelish with derision, unless they require his services, because he exposes the fragility of the noble construct. Through mimicry, he exploits that construct through the performance of the aristocracy. Outside of the most prestigious houses of King's Landing, he is more often than not treated with respect and authority, especially when acting as the king's emissary. His wealth provides the means for the performance. The first time he meets with Sansa Stark, she describes him in the following manner: "The man wore a heavy cloak with a fur collar, fastened with a silver mockingbird, and he had the effortless manner of a high lord" (*A Game of Thrones* 249). The mockingbird, whose symbolism will be discussed in a later section, is a fairly explicit commentary on the mimicking nature of the literary trickster and how Baelish conducts himself among nobles, most of all in dress. On another occasion, Tyrion

⁹ It is also later discovered in *A Storm of Kings* that Baelish was also banished because Hoster Tully discovered that he slept with Lysa and got her pregnant (1111).

comments on how elegant he looked, and Baelish responds, “I’m wounded. I strive to look elegant every day” (*A Clash of Kings* 270). Baelish is always concerned with his outward appearance, due to the thin line he is walking between the elegance of nobles and the materiality of class.

Petyr Baelish has become the master of mimicry in King’s Landing, not just because of his elegance in dress, but also in his understanding and mimicking of the superficial constructs the nobles have established. Homi Bhabha explains that “mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (86, emphasis in original). Baelish is a walking reminder of the fragility of the ruling class, because not only does he master the outward appearance and mannerisms of the nobility, but he also proves that social mobility exists. He is not rising from the lowest rung of the social structure, but he is as a great disadvantage. Through his mobility, he proves that commoners can have great skill in finances, language, and politics. In a sense, he is an improvement on the noble class because he is not out of touch with the lower classes and the greater needs of the people. His presence represents the fear of the destruction of tradition that most of the nobles are fighting to maintain. His mimicry of the ruling class “articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical differences that menace the narcissistic demand of [ruling] authority” (Bhabha 88). As the story progresses, Baelish not only mimics the ruling class, but transcends it by seeing through the social paradigm’s deceptions.

A key component of the everyday life of the nobility that sets it apart from that of the lower classes is gross consumption. Several of the houses are known for their money or trade, granting them great wealth and power, but every character has their vice. Petyr Baelish, due in part to his involvement in the trade of pleasures, has been able to play the role of lavish

consumer without partaking in all aspects of the name, especially sensual pleasures, which will be discussed further in a later section on exchange. As a literary trickster, he is in an endless need for consumption, but pleasures, such as food, sex, and wealth, are used as tools for his tricks as well as personal fulfillment. There are several references to him eating in the text, such as casually eating an apple almost out of mockery or derision while waiting for Ned Stark to cross a rocky path. There are also two references to him dining with Lady Tanda with the prospects of marrying her daughter. However, he confides in Ned, “I’d sooner marry the pig, but don’t tell her. I do love lamprey pie” (*A Game of Thrones* 299). Not only is he able to indulge in his favorite dish, but he is also keeping Lady Tanda Stokeworth in his close company in case he is in need of a favor. Later, when he is debating helping Tyrion, Harrenhal is referenced as “one of the richest plums in the Seven Kingdoms” (*A Clash of Kings* 274). His gambling is referenced several times, though only one instance of it is specifically shown, in *A Game of Thrones*. At a tournament, Baelish bets with Lord Renly, who takes the wager. He then taunts Renly with “I wonder how I ought to spend your money,” but ultimately loses with a smile (*A Game of Thrones* 262). The money is inconsequential to the established nobles, but they feel they are putting Baelish in his place by taking his coin. However, Baelish is mimicking the nobles and undermining their status.

In Baelish’s representation as a literary trickster, he destabilizes the order of the realm through deceit and intrigue. In the scene from the television show that is quoted in the epigraph of this chapter, Baelish is in conversation with Varys, the king’s spymaster, discussing one another’s plans in an ambiguous way, playing a game of wit. After Varys says “I did it for the good of the realm,” Baelish refers to the realm as a “story that we agree to tell each other, over, and over, until we forget that it’s a lie” (“The Climb”). The realm is a story of the strong, perfect

social and political structure that is in place in both King's Landing as well as all of Westeros. Varys's fear is that if the lie is abandoned, chaos would engulf the empire, but Baelish sees the chaos as opportunity. This conversation is exclusive to the television show,¹⁰ likely due to the fact that neither Varys nor Baelish have their own perspectives in the book series, but I believe this conversation is a pivotal moment in the game Baelish has established for two reasons: he tells the audience that he is fighting for a restructuring of the social hierarchy and is explicitly calling attention to the currency of truths (which will be explored further in the next section as well as in chapter 3). This conversation is much more definitive of the game of thrones they are playing than the previously mentioned conversation between Daenerys and Tyrion about the noble houses being "just spokes on a wheel," another one of the television show's exclusive conversation ("Hardhome"). Daenerys says she is going to break the wheel, and the audience is supposed to feel the gravity of this statement, but even the heavy ominous music after she states this doesn't have the same effect that Baelish's words do. This is because Daenerys believes that she is breaking the wheel, but she is just replacing it with different spokes, or even worse, turning Westeros into a totalitarian regime without vassals. This would create chaos, indeed, but Baelish isn't exclusively looking for chaos; he is looking for disorder to lead to reformation. It is partially through the mimicry that the disorder of the realm becomes highlighted by revealing the narcissistic, selfish attitude of the nobles. The "chaos" Varys is referring to is a result of Baelish's transgression of class hierarchy through physical and symbolic exchange, the system which is exploited by the literary trickster.

¹⁰ George R. R. Martin is the co-executive producer to the HBO show and has written four episodes for the series. He made a statement in 2015 that he will not write anymore episodes but will remain as a producer. Ultimately, the show's scripts are up to the show's primary writers, David Benioff and D.B. Weiss ("Not a Blog").

A Master of Exchange

The literary trickster, as a situation-inventor, trick player, and bricoleur, is a master of exchange in a number of ways. Petyr Baelish, working with exchange, is often defined by his two professions: brothel entrepreneur and Master of Coin. These two professions, and Baelish's other duties, are steeped heavily in three modes of exchange: exchange of objects, desire, and symbolic capital. These modes of exchange are not unique to Baelish, as will be discussed in chapter 3 with Pandarus and the courtly exchanges he engages in. Baelish is defined by his professions and duties, which makes his exchanges explicit. His duties as the Master of Coin are quite simple; he is in charge of the capital's capital, but his expertise lies more with movement and exchange than simply balancing the debts and incomes of King's Landing. Michel Foucault explains how objects serve as markers of exchange, which makes for an unpredictable exchange: "any object, even one that has no price, can serve as money; but it must, nevertheless, possess peculiar properties of representation and capacities for analysis that will permit it to establish relations of equality and difference between different kinds of wealth" (191-2). Foucault emphasizes an object in an agreement for exchange, but he makes it clear that anything can be exchanged as long as there is a perceived value. Baelish is able to see value in all manners of things, whether it be people, desires, services, or information.

The principles of exchange are of paramount importance to the literary trickster, because without it, he would not be able to engage in deception and manipulations. Friedrich Nietzsche explored the meaning of truth, stating that it is "A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding" (1174). If we read Nietzsche's truths as wealth,

considering Foucault's definition of wealth, we can see wealth's identification as inflated and fragile in its determination. Baelish is able to exploit the system of exchange by using rhetoric to sell his services which are eventually accepted as the standard. Nietzsche continues: "Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, *coins* which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer coins" (1174, emphasis my own). As Master of Coin, and by extension, master of exchange, Baelish exploits the illusion and elaborates on it to his advantage, which makes him a successful entrepreneur and politician in *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Through mercantilism, Baelish has amassed great wealth for the capital by buying, trading, and exchanging goods, which grants him a certain prestige that his birth has not afforded him. Baelish is able to generate his wealth through a system of protocapitalism; exchange and active engagement with politics and business, instead of the older, inherited, land-based forms of wealth.

As much as the exchange of objects, desire, and symbolic capital defines Baelish, it also defines Westerosi society. In a feudal society that is structured around honor and tradition, Baelish shows that, underneath the pledges of loyalty, oaths of fealty, etc., is simple, carnal exchange of value. He knows this, exposes this, and is hated for it by the nobles, but he becomes a necessity to the crown because he is so good at it. In this honor-bound empire, Ned Stark is the exact opposite of Baelish, imagining a world of pure loyalty untainted by exchange, but he ultimately dies due to the deception of Baelish, who implements new structures of exchange to implement changes to their system. To demonstrate this, I will explain how Baelish exploits these exchanges to create disorder among the nobles. First, his appointed position as Master of Coin, his seat on the king's small council, as well as his personal entrepreneurship, is an ongoing

exchange of goods or wealth for coin and pleasure. Second, he manages the loyalty of those who surround him with both coin and desire. Lastly, through his negotiations and brokering of alliances, he earns titles, lands, and castles. Each exchange differs in product, but all relate through the creation of value. According to Foucault, “Value is created, or increased, not by production, but by consumption—whether it be that of the worker in order to subsist, that of the entrepreneur taking his profit, or that of the non-worker who buys” (210). It is important to mention how in tune Baelish is with consumption, both in consuming “products” himself but also in the nature of other’s needs for consumption. Among these different modes of exchange, the product differs, but all items are exchangeable to the literary trickster.

The first mode of exchange is a more traditional form of exchange residing in mercantile system. Baelish’s experience with the mercantile system is what elevated his position beyond a sinecure of customs when he first arrived to King’s Landing. His position as a sinecure was a title position with very little work; however, he soon made a name for himself by “bringing in three times as much as any of the king’s other collectors” (*A Clash of Kings* 271). At this point of time, due to the lavish lifestyle of King Robert Baratheon, those that were skilled in the arts of exchange were important to the realm, regardless of birth. Within the three years he was in the capital, he rose to the Master of Coin on the king’s small council, but it wasn’t just the increase in revenues that got the attention of the realm. Baelish made it his duty to become the master of exchange. When Tyrion starts to recount Baelish’s history in the capital, he called attention to this exchange:

He did not simply collect the gold and lock it in a treasure vault, no. He paid the king’s debts in promises, and put the king’s gold to work. He bought wagons, shops, ships, houses. He bought grain when it was plentiful and sold bread when it was scarce. He

bought wool from the north and linen from the south and lace from Lys, stored it, moved it, dyed it, sold it. The golden dragons bred and multiplied, and Littlefinger lent them out and brought them home with hatchlings. (*A Clash of Kings* 271-72)

As a bricoleur, one of the most important criteria of the literary trickster, he was skilled in creative problem solving; supply and demand was a simple set of rules to learn and didn't require as much creativity as other types of exchange. The vast consumption of the crown also required Baelish to exchange debt for coin through a long and convoluted process, to the admiration and perplexity of those in the realm. When discussing the Baelish's skill as Master of Coin, Tyrion states, "He is our wizard of coin, and we have no one to replace him" (*A Storm of Swords* 259). This sentiment is not one that is argued, except by Baelish, when he responds: "All I do is count coppers, as King Robert used to say. Any clever tradesman could do as well" (*A Storm of Swords* 259). Baelish answers with a smile, knowing that most of the nobles don't understand the complexity of trade and exchange, as he has come to learn. By devaluing what he does to the nobles around him, he reinforces the illusion of their superiority all while challenging their positions.

The position of Master of Coin does not seem complicated on the surface, but it took Tyrion, arguably the benchmark for intelligence in the realm, a long time to understand this process of exchange. When the others at the king's council are debating the process and value of the position, Tyrion explains, "A coin is as dangerous as a sword in the wrong hands.... Littlefinger's gold is made from thin air, with a snap of his fingers" (*A Storm of Swords* 264). Tyrion eventually peruses Baelish's books to learn the craft of balancing the finances of the realm, but is overwhelmed when he finds how many small debts the crown owes to families all over the realm, as well as a great deal of debt to Baelish himself. These exchanges are not merely

an issue of balancing debt-to-income ratios, but the obligations that come with the debt. The debt is only as valuable as the expectation that one can pay it and for a fee, but by using the crown's authority, Baelish exploits the system by inflating value of debts owed to himself and other families to maintain alliances and partnerships. As a literary trickster, he makes his identity convoluted and ambiguous behind the veil of the crown and the position he holds while he advances his position and agenda, accumulating more wealth than most families by engaging the market, instead of simply passively collecting incomes. This put him in the position to employ the lower class and monopolize trade in a protocapitalist system the nobles are not familiar with, taking away power and wealth from the aristocracy.

In addition to the exchange of goods for coin, Baelish also trades pleasure for coin at his brothels. In Westeros, the exchange of flesh for coin is conducted in two ways, pleasure and loyalty. Baelish treats the women in his brothels as investments, or a luxury good, never partaking in his own wares. The literary trickster, unlike the cultural trickster, is not highly-sexed, which allows him to use desire for sensual pleasure in bricolage. Baelish is a businessman, and a professional and ruthless one, but he profits from the exchange of his luxury goods from the very nobles that belittle him for his trades in two ways: by manipulating desire and by commodifying it. Although the business is looked down upon, as Foucault explains, "from the point of view of wealth, there is no difference between need, comfort, and pleasure" (216). Baelish is able to accumulate wealth out of the needs afforded to supply and demand, but the brothels exploit the comfort and pleasure principles of wealth. Baelish uses this exploitation to manipulate men and women of importance to the crown. By having a control over his own desires, he sells illusions and possibility through sensual desire. Even though he is looked down upon for owning the brothels, Baelish is able to invert the situation by inflating the value of a

product, pleasure from the prostitute, through a renewable source—labor. Foucault explains how services function within exchange in respect to “work function[ing] as an expenditure: it turns the subsistence which it has itself consumed into a price” (211). The person accumulating most of the wealth in this exchange is removed from the participation in the event, but is the owner of the space, procurer of the perversion, and employer of the prostitute who also guarantees secrecy and comfort within his walls. Baelish, at the top of the power structure in this situation, is no different than any other lord that benefits from workers below him. However, Baelish exploits the hypocrisy of putting more value or honor on certain types of wealth. The nobles profit from taxes on brothels and alehouses and supplying stores of weapons, armor, and food for war, but they look down upon Baelish for owning the brothel.

In another form of labor exchange that is deemed “honorless” by the nobles is that of paying for loyalty. One of the most well-known instances of this is exchange is between Tyrion and Bronn, a mercenary who saved his life, but their relationship never becomes more complicated than the contract of a typical “sword for hire,” as Bronn reiterates that they are not friends, stating, “I sell my sword, I don’t give it away” (*A Storm of Swords* 899). There are several other iterations of the mercenary in *A Song of Ice and Fire*, though most of them are used only for combat either in the War of the Five Kings, or in Essos with Daenerys. Baelish complicates the role of the mercenary once he leaves King’s Landing for the Vale, surrounding himself with loyal servants that act more as bodyguards than men at arms. Baelish doesn’t just pay coin for loyalty, but he also counts on other desires, perversions, or needs as payment. Again, Foucault explains the service “as an expenditure” which is “consumed into a price” (211). The work that Baelish is paying for is not always as clear as a simple exchange, as with the brothel. He surrounds himself with “hungry knights” at the Eyrie because, as he explains to

Sansa, “I thought it best that we have a few more swords about us. The times grow ever more interesting, my sweet, and when the times are interesting you can never have too many swords” (*A Feast for Crows* 891). He does not explain the nature of the contract with these knights, but the importance is that he refers to them as “knights” and not sell swords or mercenaries. A knight is a position of political power, as they are from noble families and have honors associated with them, but for Baelish to be surrounded by them without being their liege lord is an offense against the exchange of loyalty. Baelish also establishes an elaborate plan in order for him to control the Eyrie, but it is his hidden agreement with Ser Lyn that complicates the nature of loyalty: “With gold and boys and promises, of course. Ser Lyn is a man of simple tastes...All he likes is gold and boys and killing” (*A Feast for Crows* 489). Loyalty of a noble knight is not supposed to be something that can be exchanged for services, let alone for pleasures and coin, but Baelish understands exchanging for needs, pleasures, and desires. It is through this exchange that Baelish upends the feudal system in Westeros, where mercenaries are looked down upon by the nobles, and shows a more practical and reliable approach to protection as an exchange for service instead of pure obligation. These men are not forced to fight for a cause they do not believe in. Instead, they are paid for a service and are bound through a contract, a system that many of the nobles don’t understand.

Lastly, Petyr Baelish uses the principles of exchange to trade his expertise in negotiations and brokering deals in exchange for alliances, titles, lands, and castles. Though this is an exchange of service, the process results in a bartering of one item or service for another with a payment to Baelish for brokering such an exchange. Foucault explains that this is only possible “if each of the two parties concerned recognizes a value in what the other possesses” (206-07). Baelish never does anything for free, always expecting to be rewarded for his duties. For

singlehandedly aligning the Tyrells with the Lannisters, and ultimately saving King's Landing from a siege, he was given Harrenhal and made lord of the Trident. In the moment of the prospects of this acquisition, Tyrion describes his demeanor as that of "a boy who had just taken a furtive bite from a honeycomb. He was trying to watch for bees, but the honey was so sweet" (*A Clash of Kings* 275). This is one of the few moments where Baelish is seen possibly being blinded by his need of consumption, but the offer shows the importance of the brokering of the alliance and of the payment for services that Baelish so desires. The largest exchange for titles occurs after Baelish leaves King's Landing to acquire Lysa Arryn's hand in marriage to control the Eyrie but must relieve himself of the Master of Coin position. In doing so, Baelish is able to move beyond King's Landing and extend his deceptions and manipulations beyond the city, furthering his power. Although those at King's Landing are unaware of his plots, he is once again rewarded through titles and lands.

Baelish is able to inflate the worth of his service and gains lands and titles, some of the most lucrative and defensible lands in the realm. He is able to sell his services at a premium price no other character is able to get, without impunity, especially without physical action on his part. Through the inflation of his worth, Baelish is able to expose the ruling family's unchecked power, the futility of titles, and the acquisition of land outside of a house's birthright. An example of this is when Baelish orchestrates Janos Slynt's betrayal of Ned Stark by passing information to Cersei Lannister, which earns Slynt a lordship. However, Baelish also orchestrates his downfall, which results in the loss of his lordship and titles, and he is sent to the Night's Watch for the rest of his life. Much like Pandarus is able to show the controlling power and gaps in the court's power in chapter 3, Baelish, acts as a tool to disrupt the norm of his society while also exposing the unchecked power of the ruling class. Through manipulation and

inflating his own worth, these specific deals have granted him the means to potentially become “one of the greatest lords in the realm” (*A Clash of Kings* 275). House Baelish has engaged in exchanges for services since its creation, but Petyr has been able to exploit the system in ways no other character has been able to do. Although the literary trickster is ambiguous and anomalous, there are many signs and indicators for tricks being played.

All Signs Point to Baelish

As previously mentioned, the affiliation with noble names and ancient houses is of the utmost importance in Westeros. One of the most prized possessions of a house is its sigil. Throughout the series, the reader’s attention is called to the legacy of a house, often starting with the heraldry and house words. The sigil becomes the standard by which the members of the noble house are measured or with which they are associated. The Starks each take on a direwolf pup in the beginning of *A Game of Thrones*, thinking it is a sign based on their direwolf house sigil. The Greyjoys embrace their naval capabilities, embodying their Kraken house sigil as the fiercest warriors on the sea. The Boltons are known to flay their victims alive, not hiding it but rather flaunting it on their house sigil of a flayed man. When a person of low birth is made noble, they have the opportunity to create their own house sigil.¹¹ In the case of the Baelish family, his grandfather chose the titan’s head with flaming eyes to signify his status as a Braavosi warrior.¹²

The titan figure has multiple meanings both in Greek mythology—the Titans preceded the Olympian gods—and in folklore. The Titans descended from Gaia, mother of Earth, and

¹¹ Davos Seaworth chose a silhouette of a ship with a white onion due to the smuggling that earned him his nobility. Bronn chose a flaming chain to symbolize his role in the Battle of Blackwater.

¹² The Braavosi are known for their warriors and for the giant titan statue at the entrance to the islands. The symbol of the titan is invoked all over the world representing great power: *The Titan of Braavos* at the entrance to the city of Braavos; the Titan’s Bastard (the head of the commander of the Second Sons); and the *Titan’s Daughter* (the ship Arya Stark takes to Braavos). The titan is looked on with pride by the Braavosi and fear by those that are unaccustomed to it, which is the importance of the figure.

Uranus, father of sky, and were represented as ruthless giants (Apollodorus 17). Aside from the mythical figures, the titan symbol represents origin and fatherhood in folklore, invoking the creation of House Baelish and the ambiguous origins of where Petyr came from (Leach and Fried 1114). The titan also symbolizes “one of great size and strength, who is arrogant, lawless, powerful, violent” (1577). The titan on the sigil also has fiery eyes like *The Titan of Braavos*. Fire is incredibly important to the series; it appears as part of the name of the series, it is associated with a powerful god, the only known weapons that kill the Others is dragonglass (obsidian), and it is a feared weapon in combat. Semiotics shows that fire is often associated with power and warriors, typically associated with gods of war (Julien 150). Fire is also used to represent a visible destructive force and provokes panic (Julien 152). These aspects of the mythological titan represent the *Titan of Braavos* well, as well as the sell sword that Petyr’s grandfather was, but not Petyr. As I already mentioned, the literary trickster is ambiguous, and this house sigil is anything but ambiguous to the history of his house. However, Petyr made significant changes.

Changing a house sigil is extremely rare in Westeros, but House Baelish was a relatively unknown house until Petyr made a name for himself in King’s Landing. Changing a house sigil is synonymous with changing the family’s name; it is a legacy of the bloodline. King Robert Baratheon attempts to establish a lasting dynasty with a slight alteration to House Baratheon’s sigil by adding a crown atop the stag’s head. Other house sigils slightly change throughout the series with cadet branches after house altering events occur, such as unity of sigils from marriage, as well as shifts in religion like the inclusion of a flaming heart around a crowned stag for Stannis Baratheon. These changes are usually very slight, maintaining continuity with the past and tradition of their house. However, Petyr Baelish changed his house’s sigil entirely.

House Baelish's sigil changed from the head of a titan with fiery eyes on a field of green to a field of silver mockingbirds on a green field. This change, though seemingly small, represents a shift in character from his lineage, ambiguity, as well as identifying with his role as a literary trickster in Westeros. The shift to the silver mockingbird shows a shift in intention and purpose from brute force to political intrigue. The change to green is important because green is often associated with Baelish's appearance; his eyes are always referenced as green and much of his clothing is as well. Green is a color associated with the Roman god Mercury, the mischievousness of pixies, money, and intrigue (Jobes 687-88). Baelish represents all these qualities well, which is another direct identifier that Martin was creating a trickster.

The mockingbird, which has become synonymous with Baelish's character, is an American bird that is "well known as a mimic" and "vigorously defends its territory" and that "thrives in suburban areas ("mockingbird"). There have been many pop culture references to the mockingbird, both in folk songs and mainstream music, but it is the literary references that are striking. It has also surfaced in the Marvel comics as a superhero that is both a secret agent (specializing in infiltration) as well as a charismatic doctor ("Mockingbird Character Bio"). The *Hunger Games* series also made the mockingbird the center of attention with the famed "mockingjay," a genetically altered hybrid, became the icon of rebellion. In an interview, Suzanne Collins, the author of *The Hunger Games*, explains the history of the mockingjay: "they were never meant to be created. They were not a part of the Capitol's design. So here's this creature that the Capitol never meant to exist, and through the will of survival, this creature exists" (Margolis). The ruling class creates the perfect mimic by mistake, which, like Baelish in Westeros, becomes the bane of their existence. In mythology and folklore, birds are commonly symbols of warning, advice, truth, and knowledge. Birds also have a dualistic nature, as they can

be seen as indications of mythical villains, traitors, or wrong-doers. (Leach and Fried 141; Julien 37). The flight of the bird is often a symbol of “the capacity to rise above material obstacles and commune with the heavenly world” (Julien 28). Baelish’s mockingbird is often seen as a silver pin, which symbolizes “wounded pride,” a reference to his lost duel and banishment from Riverrun (Jobes 1273). The symbolism of the mockingbird on a pin is the material embodiment of the literary trickster and what he stands for. His ability to mimic, as explained through Bhabha, and his resiliency are the main characteristics of Baelish’s character.

Similar to the mockingbird, Baelish is often associated with silver, not only because it is part of his heraldry, but because of the connotations silver possesses. We see silver appear through payments in silver coins, silver accents in clothing and his hair, as well as his infamous silver mockingbird pin. When Catelyn sees Baelish for the first time in the series, she remarks that “Even as a child, he had always loved his silver” (*A Game of Thrones* 145). When Baelish’s Valyrian dagger is discovered after an assassination attempt, men find “ninety silver stags in a leather bag” among the possessions of the assassin, but no connection is ever made between the coin and Baelish (*A Game of Thrones* 112). Baelish even helped orchestrate the murder of King Joffrey Baratheon with a “silver hair net” given to Sansa Stark (*A Storm of Swords* 934). These deceptions—the dagger, in a commoner’s hand, would indicate a person of wealth, and the silver hair net would pass as ornate jewelry—are creative inventions by Baelish, but the complex planning and execution could not be carried out by anyone but a literary trickster, especially because of the ambiguity that surrounds the ownership of these items. In addition to material deception, he also admitted to Sansa that he had his men influence the Tyrells to join the Lannisters by “slip[ing] a few silvers to Lord Tyrell’s army of singers” (*A Storm of Swords* 935). In Greek mythology the “second age of the world was called the Silver Age, when men ceased to

revere the gods and fell to killing each other. After death, these men became the good spirits of the earth,” which is comparable with the War of Five Kings, which Baelish has helped orchestrate through his social mobility, but more importantly, his deceptions and cloak and dagger tactics in Westeros (Leach and Fried 1012). In other associations, silver often symbolizes “the corruptibility of man who must constantly fight his negative tendencies” if he wishes to both succeed and improve upon their state of being (Julien 379). Baelish, throughout his dealings, is seen to embody all of these different characteristics nearly simultaneously. However, it is the juxtaposition of his silver and Lannister gold that makes these features stand out.

The Lannisters are often associated with gold, yellow, and wealth, and even have an unofficial house motto of, “A Lannister always pays his debts” (*A Game of Thrones* 276). The family is known for their gold mines in several areas of the Westerlands, making them the richest house in the kingdom. Gold is symbolic of “extreme wealth and prestige” as well as authority and nobility (Leach and Fried 488; Jobs 671). Their unofficial motto demands a certain reliability and exactness in their wealth and debt paying ability. They are required to uphold their part of a deal, or debt, which is helpful in brokering deals. However, when juxtaposed with silver, and Baelish, there is a stark symbolic difference in their uses and meaning. Baelish is associated with deception, new wealth and trade mostly dealt in silver, whereas the Lannisters are associated with old wealth, nobility, and authority who deal mostly in gold. Baelish states that the crown is indebted to the Lannisters by three million gold pieces, but he doesn’t disclose how much he has personally lent to the crown (*A Game of Thrones* 163). The Lannisters know the crown owes their family a great deal of coin, and they know they will collect this debt in one way or another. Baelish, however, as performing as the literary trickster, is much more ambiguous, deceptive, and creative about his debt, which makes him a dangerous business

partner. As a master of exchange, he makes sure he doesn't owe any family anything, which puts him in a different position of power. As Baelish acquires and distributes more wealth and power, the Lannisters are losing wealth and power. The disorder in society that Baelish is implementing as the literary trickster is represented well within this currency exchange.

The Game of Thrones: Mastered Play

Arguably the most important skills the literary trickster possesses is the ability to understand systems and games as well as having the ability to use rhetoric to effectively engage in conversation. The first book of the series and the television series, are named *Game of Thrones* due to the discourse the nobles engage in throughout the series. This idea of playing the “game of thrones,” originally said by Ser Jorah Mormont (*A Game of Thrones* 196), is also referenced throughout the series but is rarely defined or explained, with the exception of Petyr Baelish and Tyrion Lannister. If the political discourse that is used in Westeros is depicted as a game, where there are systems (rules), players, and outcomes, the literary trickster stands out as the best player. As a trickster, explained in chapter 1 with play studies, he can see beyond the game and see the past, present, and future with variable outcomes. Using rhetoric to his advantage, by means of the sophistic principles outlined previously, *kairos* (the opportune moment), *prepon* (appropriateness), and *dynaton* (the possible), Baelish cannot be beaten because he understands the human condition and how to manipulate and use deception. Baelish is able to see the systems in play which allows him to create or anticipate a *kairotic* moment to act upon. He also balances *prepon*, like all literary tricksters, both in a dialogic manner (humor), as well as in action. Most importantly in relation to play, he engages in rhetorics of possibility (*dynaton*) in an anticipatory defense and a method of manipulation of those around him by letting his targets see desired possibilities. The literary trickster can step into the realm of play

and change the world as if moving pieces on a board. The rest of this chapter will explore how Baelish uses principles of play and rhetoric in order to attain the outcome he desires—disorder. The best players in the game are those who can see dynamic actions that lead to variable outcomes, are deceptive and intelligent, and typically are not those that are very physical, i.e., not warriors. Cersei Lannister famously says to Ned Stark in *A Game of Thrones*, “When you play the game of thrones, you win or you die. There is no middle ground” (408). This moment marks a misstep by Ned and is an indication that Cersei will make the next move, ultimately leading to Ned’s imprisonment and ultimate death. This discourse that Cersei is alluding to is not just the discourse of nobles but more specifically the political intrigue that personifies King’s Landing through a vast network of deceptions and other players. Ned Stark is an honor-bound knight who physically confronts issues, which makes him a poor player of the game. However, Cersei is not as skilled in the discourse as she thinks, as Baelish points out: “I might have to remove her from the game sooner than I’d planned. Provided she does not remove herself first...In the game of thrones, even the humblest pieces can have wills of their own. Sometimes they refuse to make the moves you’ve planned for them. Mark that well, Alayne. It’s a lesson that Cersei Lannister still has yet to learn. Now, don’t you have some duties to perform?” (*A Feast for Crows* 477). Baelish, as this passage alludes to, is a master of play and uses all six criteria in order to make the game his own through subversion, border-breaking, deception, and creativity.

Baelish’s actions in the game remain unknown to many of the other players, allowing for him to create new holes in the social system illusion and continue to play with impunity. Other prominent players, Tyrion, Varys, and Cersei, see his power but are powerless to do anything about it alone. The infamous Valyrian steel dagger that was used in the assassination attempt of

Brandon Stark is the quintessential symbolic object of discourse in the text. At first sight, its ornate craftsmanship gives it the appearance of nobility, but it is the power of the actor behind the dagger that goes unnoticed. The way the dagger is described and brought up in conversation makes it an important piece in the discourse of the game of thrones. Ned Stark describes the dagger as “mocking him” (*A Game of Thrones* 167), and it is first described by Ser Rodric as being out of place for a common man: “It seemed to me that it was altogether too fine a weapon for such a man, so I looked at it long and hard. The blade is Valyrian steel, the hilt dragonbone. A weapon like that has no business being in the hands of such as him” (*A Game of Thrones* 113). This statement from Ser Rodric can be read as the nobles’ point of view of new wealth and class distinction in Westeros; the dagger (or ability to engage in discourse) does not belong with a commoner or low born, but should be reserved for the upper class.

The discovery of the dagger leads Catelyn to King’s Landing which ultimately leads to the start of the breaking down of noble houses through the War of Five Kings and the fallout which results in social inversion. The truth behind the dagger is still up for speculation, but it was undoubtedly in Baelish’s possession first. As bricoleur, the literary trickster is known “for his ingenuity in transforming anything at hand in order to form a creative solution”; Baelish turns a lost item in a bet to the object at the center of societal change (Hynes and Doty 42). Many of the players in the game of thrones have been bred or trained in this discourse, but Baelish, like the dagger, are a subtle and sharp inclusion in the game with unknown origins that make both of them ambiguous and therefore dangerous to the status quo. After Baelish convinces Lysa Arryn to poison her husband Jon Arryn, King Robert Baratheon is forced to travel north to ask Ned Stark to be the new hand of the king, once again reuniting two of the most powerful houses in Westeros. Once the assassination attempt is foiled, Catelyn Stark is forced to travel to the capital

in secrecy, but Baelish intercepts her and gains the loyalty of Catelyn and Ned Stark, which ultimately ends in the betrayal of Ned and the start of the War of the Five Kings. The dagger also results in the blaming and capture of Tyrion Lannister by Catelyn, pitting houses Lannister and Stark against one another. Once the other major houses enter the war, houses rise and fall and the Seven Kingdoms end up in complete disorder. Baelish was able to complete this, and more, by passing along an iconic dagger and spinning a story that unravels the realm.

Baelish shows his skilled use of rhetoric throughout the series, but the way he handles the blade is symbolic to this discourse. Baelish is not a physical man and has never trained or showed interest in a physical fight. However, he handles the dagger like a professional, “He grasped the blade between thumb and forefinger, drew it back over his shoulder, and threw it across the room with a practiced flick of his wrist” (*A Game of Thrones* 147). This delicate and precise maneuver is juxtaposed with the clumsy handling of the blade of the men around him, even Ned Stark and Varys. He clearly has the upper hand in the game in this scene, not only because they are in his brothel, but also through the use of joking, deceptions, and quips that lighten a dark situation. His witty replies and the uses of deception Baelish uses to get them there are handled with grace, as he did with the dagger. By opening himself up entirely to the game of thrones, he realizes that play gives him individuality and power, allowing him to “explore, challenge, [and] subvert” the realm and the players (Sicart 4). This analysis Baelish conducts is what Miguel Sicart sees as “appropriate[ing] a context with the intention of playing with and within it” (15). Through this play, the inner workings of the rules are revealed and the player can then manipulate or even break the rules to change the meaning of the game. Baelish learns the rules of this discourse and acknowledges the player types that are around him. He becomes the expert player, creating false opportunities for the other players around him.

The more adept players in the game, such as Tyrion and Varys, see Baelish as a threat but feel powerless to do anything about it. Tyrion, while he is acting Hand of the King, sees the dagger and recognizes it as the discourse of the game, but he comments how Baelish taunts him outright with the infamous dagger: “*He knows and he knows that I know, and he thinks that I cannot touch him.* If ever truly a man had armored himself in gold, it was Petyr Baelish, not Jaime Lannister. Jaime’s famous armor was but gilded steel, but Littlefinger, ah ... Tyrion had learned a few things about sweet Petyr, to his growing disquiet” (*A Clash of Kings* 271, emphasis in original). As players enter the game of thrones with Baelish, the game subtly shifts unbeknownst to many of the players, and this is what Tyrion is growing weary of. Baelish also feigns ignorance—”He drew the knife and glanced at it casually, as if he had never seen it before”—but it is this ignorance that keeps Baelish out of the spotlight of the game (*A Clash of Kings* 271). Baelish is able to analyze the rhetorical situation he is walking into in specific scenes, but it is his careful planning of his actions that allows him to take control of the game and seal the realms fate of disorder.

Unlike what Pandarus does in chapter 3, Baelish is not creating the game but playing within it. By looking at the dynamic decisions that can play out by the other players, he uses appropriateness, opportune timing, and the possible to influence other players’ moves to go his way. The best example of this is when Baelish hosts the top lords and lady of the Vale after the death of Lysa Arryn. This moment serves as a sort of trial for Baelish surrounding the suspicious death of Lysa soon after their secret and hasty marriage. After he and Sansa, as Alayne, are able to convince the lords and lady that it was the singer who killed her, Baelish uses the kairotic moment to win over the most important Lord Royce. Baelish presents to him a sealed roll of parchment that grants House Royce the title of “Keepers of the Gates of the Moon,” a great

honor that will be contested in the future, but Baelish made sure he protected his and the realm's future by signing the order himself, by passing off the request as Lysa Arryn's (*A Feast for Crows* 222). The arrangement keeps the peace, protects Baelish from rebellion of the other lords, and he gained a fierce ally that proclaims, "by the gods, I earned this!" (*A Feast for Crows* 222). Later, when Sansa asks about that moment, Baelish responds, "You see the wonders that can be worked with lies and Arbor gold?" (*A Feast for Crows* 222). When he is asked if they were all lies, he says, "Not *all*. Lysa often called Lord Nestor a rock, though do I do not think she meant it as a compliment.... he is overproud and prickly. Had I asked him his price, he would have swelled up like an angry toad at the slight upon his honor.... the lies I served him were sweeter than the truth" (*A Feast for Crows* 222-23, emphasis in original). Baelish understands the lords he is surrounded by, and understands that this was the precise moment to use his lies to protect his future. He knew when to act, what was appropriate to get what he needed, and used the possible to gain a lifelong ally. His mastering of discourse without being boisterous about it allows Baelish to move about as he wants, but remains in the need of the crown for diplomatic issues.

Petyr "Littlefinger" Baelish is undoubtedly a literary trickster figure in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, but since the story is still not completely written, there are many questions that still remain. Although most plans that are spoken of in the series by other characters are destined to fail due to unforeseeable circumstances, Petyr Baelish's plans always go as scheduled. Even the setbacks and intrusions are quickly and elegantly dealt with in the moment because he understands the players, rules, and discourse of the game. As he continues to rid the realm of strong noble lines by acquiring new titles and lands, he is changing the power structures of Westeros through values of exchange, as well as political intrigue under the mask of non-

threatening new wealth and charisma. The importance of Baelish to the changing structure of Westeros is undeniable, but has the trick gained enough momentum for him to step aside? As discussed in chapter 1, an important aspect of the literary trickster is that he must take leave of the story once disorder is created so that it can be restructured into a new social system to implement reform. Since Baelish is still planning ahead and accumulating more power through the loss of noble houses, his end is still not in sight, since two more books are scheduled to be released for the series.

Baelish has created a disorder that seems difficult to recover from, but his subversions have created a space for real reform without the presence of the literary trickster. It is important to note that Baelish is a master of exchange and production, but he has yet to engage in sexual reproduction. In a society that relies heavily on lineage and the passing of power through bloodlines, Baelish has yet to produce an heir to his growing empire. However, an important figure in the text that learns from his machinations first-hand and is privileged to his future plans is Sansa Stark. The literary trickster is more concerned with disorder and consumption than reproduction, another way in which he is a shadow of the society, but the trickster is absolutely concerned with the passing of power and the continuation of the game. Whether he is preparing Sansa to take over his empire, or she is just another pawn in his game remains to be seen, but his attachment to her is unlike any other relationship he possesses. There is a shift in their understanding for one another after she lies to the nobles of the Vale about Baelish murdering her aunt in order to protect him, which results in a tutelage of the skills needed to play the game of thrones. This is an important question that remains for this text, but the relationship between the literary trickster and the players in his game will be made clearer in the following chapter regarding Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The trickster implements disorder in order

to create social change. However, there has to be someone to maintain that change, which will be a focus of my conclusion.

Chapter 3—“lord of thise foles alle”: Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde*

Pandarus, a main character in Geoffrey Chaucer’s romance *Troilus and Criseyde*, has been the topic of debate for some time. His role in the text is often depicted as a “negotiator” (Rushton 148), a “confidant and advisor” to Troilus, and an “ally and advisor” to Criseyde (Gaylord 242). He is also unquestionably “insistent” and “impassioned” (Behrman 320), self-assured and confident (Costopoulos-Almon 68), and “manipulative” (Nair 48); however, he could also be seen as a “pedantic, middle-aged busy-body (Freiwald 121) or “obtrusive” in his actions (Dinshaw 64). His role as the intermediary between Troilus, the Trojan prince, and Criseyde, a widow whose father is a traitor to Troy, makes him an important figure. He is the friend of Troilus, which we are constantly reminded of, and is desperately trying to help his love-sick prince woo Criseyde, his niece. He conducts his business through “machinations” and “garrulity” (Fradenburg 210), carefully crafted moments of playful conversations, meetings, and occurrences. Some scholars see him as “a dubious angel on the score of militancy as well as messengering” (Fradenburg 223), where others see an “effete court jester” who “assumes the role of a fool, making jokes and frolicking about,” all while acting as “Troilus’s ambassador” (Behrman 320). Some see Pandarus’s insistence on the consummation between Troilus and Criseyde as him living “vicariously through Troilus for his niece” (Rushton 148; Dinshaw 64). The contradicting scholarship makes Pandarus an enigma.

Pandarus’s history as a character in multiple texts adds a greater level of complexity to this conversation. As Leah Rieber Freiwald describes in her article “Swych Love of Frenedes: Pandarus and Troilus,” Chaucer adapted the story from Boccaccio and made several interesting changes, such as “making him older, Criseyde’s uncle, and a chronically inept lover” which makes him inferior to Troilus “who is his political and social superior” (123). These changes, as

well as the sections that are near complete translations, are deliberate on Chaucer's behalf, but they further the mystery of Pandarus. Making the intermediary between Troilus and Criseyde's love affair an older, inept lover who is related to one of the parties raises more questions than it answers, especially with the sexual commentary on Pandarus living vicariously through Troilus, as well as his physical and voyeuristic involvement in the consummation scene (Rushton 148; Dinshaw 64; Freiwald 123; Costopoulos-Almon 100).

After studying Pandarus's character in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the enigma surrounding him, I want to propose that Pandarus is a trickster figure, acting as game designer of the courtly love game who shows the complicated societal expectations and assumptions in the aristocracy. First, it is important to understand how I am using the figure of the trickster and how it maps onto Pandarus. Once I establish that Pandarus is a literary trickster, then I will explain how he operates as a game designer, using courtly love and the medieval understanding of patronage to change the dynamics of the social institution of the court. Finally, I will discuss the implications of the trickster role in Chaucer's romance.

Finding Class(ification) in Pandarus

Chaucer's romance is situated in a carnival state, where there are inconsistencies and abnormalities in the narration as well as the performance of the characters. The narrator invokes the muses (II.9, III.1809), discusses both pagan and Christian traditions, and obstructs the narrative with candid interjections about the source of the story, the content of the correspondence, and the actions of certain characters. The flexibility of the narrative allows for Pandarus, as a trickster, to take on the role of "co-architect" (Costopoulos-Almon) and build a game that appears to be a courtly affair, but which in fact transcends the societal norms and makes the absurdity of these norms explicit. The story already makes a well-known Roman

trickster, Mercury, visible to the audience, both in form of prayer and narration (III.729; V.321, 1827). The significance of his presence in the story is based on the trickster's divine messenger characteristic, both as psychopomp and deliverer of messages. The reference to Mercury is a clear indicator of the trickster, Pandarus, and the forewarning that Chaucer's romance is working in multiple levels of multiple narratives.

As already discussed in chapter one, the literary trickster is established through six primary characterizations: Ambiguous and Anomalous, Deceiver and Trick Player, Situation-Inventor, Divine Messenger, Bricoleur, and Consumer. Pandarus's identity is cloaked in ambiguity; the only real description about his status or place in Troy is "A frend of [Troilus]" that has "In wrong and right iloved the al my lyve" and that he is the uncle of Criseyde (I.548, I.594). Pandarus's mobility under different guises allows him to enter the female space of Criseyde's home, in council with King Priam, and in close proximity of the princes and noble company of Troy. Pandarus and the game he establishes are at the center of the story. There is even a moment in the romance where Pandarus explicitly asks Criseyde to "pleye" (II.121) along with him. The situation inventor and bricoleur traits are represented well when Criseyde is staying at his house and he fabricates a story to establish Criseyde's infidelity to arrange an impromptu meeting between her and Troilus that ultimately results in their consummation. Pandarus also embodies the role of the divine messenger to further the narrative, even going as far as playfully placing himself on the same level as the gods: "And for the love of God, and ek of me, / Cache it anon, les aventure slake" (II, 290-91). Finally, consumption becomes most obvious when he expresses his desire to continue the feast with Sarpedon after Criseyde leaves Troy, but more subtly through his voyeuristic gaze during several key scenes: Criseyde's reading

scene (II.84), observing Troilus from the window (II.1184), and the consummation scene (III.978).

The trickster's rhetorical ability enables him to manipulate, influence, and produce inside their social space—Pandarus is no different. We can assume the original audience would have understood the power of rhetoric, especially because the narrator explicitly comments on Pandarus's rhetorical ability: "This Pandarus gan newe his tong affile, / And al hire cas reherce, and that anon" (II.1681-1682). With Pandarus's many proverbs and ability to influence the characters around him, his speech becomes iconic to the character.¹³ Timothy O'Brien explores the ambiguity and duality of word usage in the romance, commenting that the text "assumes an audience alert to wordplay, even trained in it, and open to the inherent ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning in words" (280). This indicates that the text is composed in a way to have multiple meanings and different interpretations based on what meanings are applied, adding to the complexity of the characters that are introduced. There is no doubt that there is an intentionality in the choice of words Pandarus is using in order to leave ideas and actions open for interpretation, as the trickster engages in the rhetorics of possibility.

Pandarus influences both Troilus and Criseyde by using potentiality in his rhetoric coupled with imagined fear. Kathleen Roberts's concept of the rhetoric of possibility illuminates how the trickster "captures the audience's imagination because he never closes off the option of freedom; he espouses the rhetoric of possibility and perhaps he even inspires it in his listeners" (176). John Poulakos explains in his article, "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric," that "rhetoric is an artistic undertaking which concerns itself with the how, the when, and the what of

¹³ "The wise seith, 'Wo hym that is alone, / For, and he falle, he hath non helpe to ryse'" (I, 694-695) and "Ek wostow how it fareth of som servixe, / As plaunte a tree or herbe, in sondry wyse, / And on the morwe pull it up as blyve!" (I, 963-965) to show two examples.

expression and understands the why of purpose. Further, this definition links rhetoric to a movement originating in the sphere of actuality and striving to attain a place in that of potentiality” (26). Rhetoric is a complex system of balances between authority, reason, emotion, actuality, and potentiality as well as the timing of the delivery. Pandarus’s understanding of *kairos* (the opportune moment), to *prepon* (the appropriate), and to *dynaton* (the possible) grants him the ability to instill fear and unease into the characters around him (Poulakos 36). Pandarus knowing the precise moment to act, *kairos*, and what is appropriate to say or do at that moment, *prepon*, is expertly demonstrated in the narrator’s description of Pandarus going to task for Troilus:

From Torilus, and ek his grete emprise;
And caste and knew in good plit was the moone
To doon viage, and took his way ful soone
Unto his neces palays ther biside.
Now Janus, god of entrée, thow hym gyde! (II.73-77)

Although this invocation is from the narrator’s voice, it indicates the *kairos* and *prepon* that Pandarus is acting upon. The timeliness and appropriateness of “in good plit was the moone” exhibits purpose, but the invocation of Janus is especially important when discussing Pandarus as a trickster, for Janus is most often associated with having two faces. Knowing which “door” to take requires an apt skill for reading a rhetorical situation, which is prominent in the discussions of both *kairos* and *prepon*; however, *Dynaton* is most important to the trickster, as it allows for misdirection and redirection.

Pandarus sees *dynaton* as opportunity, especially with the state that Troilus is in at the start of the romance. Poulakos’s understanding of the realm of possibility shows that men often

do not want to be in their current situation, but once they see the potentiality of a situation, they become obsessive and long for the possible. The possible “refines his wishes and shows him how to apply them, what to ask, and whom to reach...Even though he functions daily in the world of actuality, he often finds himself concerned with his situation not as it is here-and-now but as it could be there-and-then. Thus, he participates at once in two worlds each of which opposes the other” (30). After Troilus is shot with Cupid’s arrow and sees the potential of love with Criseyde, “as it could be there-and-then,” he obsesses and longs for the potential relationship with Criseyde. Although he must still fight in the daily battles outside of Troy’s walls, his mind is in two places. Pandarus is able to direct that longing through the courtly love game, making it Troilus’s daily reality. Poulakos continues by linking the rhetorician to the man living in the realm of the possible: “By exploiting people's proclivity to perceive themselves in the future and their readiness to thrust themselves into unknown regions, the rhetorician tells them what they could be, brings out in them futuristic versions of themselves, and sets before them both goals and the directions which lead to those goals” (30). Pandarus exploits both Troilus and Criseyde by exploring the possible.

Pandarus pushes the limits of his dialogues with Troilus and Criseyde, and then he explores *dynaton*, usually by reiterating the possibility of death or failure. Timothy O’Brien explores the text’s use of “fere” and “daunger” and the rhetoric of possibility that Pandarus uses: “Pandarus attempts to make Troilus and Criseyde *feres* by dealing in the currency of fear, particularly Criseyde's fundamental anxiety and Troilus's more stereotypical sense of *daunger*, the allegorical expression of risk and fear in love...Underlying the *self-deceptions* Pandarus promotes in Troilus and Criseyde are the skeletal stories of these key words” (282-3, emphasis mine). The emphasis on “self-deceptions” is important to the identification of Pandarus as a

literary trickster because he is using his targets' own fears and the conventions of courtly love in order to manipulate their perceptions of reality and a possible future that will not come to be. The fear of the possibility stews in Troilus and Criseyde in different respects, but it tends to come back to the public's opinion of them. Olga Costopoulos-Almon in her thesis, "Chaucer and Pandarus: Co-Architects of the Troilus," explores how Troilus's audience, like Chaucer's audience, "becomes another segment in the hermeneutical circle, forms a silent but powerful external force controlling the characters' actions. Not even Pandarus can control the beast that is the public" (72). Pandarus's control paralyzes Troilus and Criseyde, making them rely heavily on the dealings of Pandarus to operate in Troy.

Pandarus's commanding use of rhetoric is one of the shifts away from Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, and it calls attention more to the social structures in play in Troy. Olga Costopoulos-Almon calls Pandarus's manipulations "psychological manipulation," but she also points out the use of rhetoric by both Pandarus and the narrator (70). Pandarus is hyper-aware of the rhetorical situations that occur, mostly because he is the exigence of the narrative situation; he is the one to prompt Troilus and Criseyde to act. However, he also reflects back to previous moments in the romance, as well as his storied past, which Kelly Myers argues to be very important to predicting behaviors and outcomes through learnable trends and techniques (12). She discusses the importance of incorporating "intellectual lessons learned outside of the moment" and how "A person must be fully present as the moment unfolds, feeling his or her way through the elements of each situation, but he or she must also reflect on past/practiced skill, wisdom, and foresight" (12). In order to have situational awareness, according to Myers, there must be persistent training and experience (skill) as well as observations in the moment (intuition). This "strategic navigation" of a moment with a balance of "skill and intuition" is what Myers refers to as *metis*

(12). We, as the audience, need to read Pandarus, and by extension the trickster, as having *metis*, the ability to look fluidly through time to analyze the situation in order to act in the most effective way. As “Pandarus is practicing his rhetorical art on [Troilus and Criseyde], we become aware, by his mention of the technique, of Chaucer practicing his art on us, through Pandarus” (Costopoulos-Almon 85).

Manipulating Systems: Courtly Love and Patronage

Troilus and Criseyde, with Pandarus at the center, is a text that is in constant transaction of communication and bodies through a form of patronage. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman describe patronage as “private erotic relationships with love as the medium for the distribution, exchange, and circulation of wealth” (480). Patronage embodied the core values of the court and was a system of contracts between two people looking to enhance their own interests. Due to primogeniture and contracts of service in the courts, “patronage created elaborate networks of male-male relations that emphasized discontinuity, change, and mobility” (Finke and Shichtman 481). Michel Foucault characterizes such exchange as a practice in which “any object, even one that has no price, can serve as money; but it must, nevertheless, possess peculiar properties of representation and capacities for analysis that will permit it to establish relations of equality and difference between different kinds of wealth” (Foucault 191-2). Finke and Shichtman explain that patronage is not comprised of “one-time exchanges, but involve long-term obligation and credit” (484). The informal, non-binding contracts frequently seen in the patron culture are “particularistic” and draw the two participants together, strengthening their bond and relationship, but they remain unequal in their obligations (484). Furthermore, the voluntary nature of the patronage, as we will see with Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde, can

become a game of cloak and dagger, as the patron is typically engaged with multiple clients surrounding the same issue, creating a complex web of obligations.

Pandarus, within the confines of the world Chaucer creates, engages with this complex web of obligations within the proposed courtly affair outlined in the first stanzas after the prologue of book I. Chaucer adapts Boccaccio's love story, creating a different set of restraints for himself, his narrator, and Pandarus. Olga Costopoulos-Almon explains this dynamic: "No matter how hard he works, Pandarus's 'bisynesse' is no match for the chance events which Chaucer has inherited from Boccaccio or created himself, the poetry of a song, the written word, or even the very energy of love itself. Chaucer is interested in those things which inspire people to love" (89). "Those things" are the objects of exchange that Pandarus exploits in the romance. In the complex network of patronage, as Finke and Shichtman explain, the exchanges were often, "intangible, but no less vital, resources such as prestige, influence, and status. What facilitated the exchange of these different kinds of resources was symbolic capital" (484-5). This formulation offers us an important insight into the text. However, the audience would be remiss to believe that Pandarus is after prestige, influence, and status, something that will be explored in a later section.

Symbolic capital is important to any playful affair, and the game of courtly love is no exception. In John Stevens's book, *Music & Poetry in the Early Tudor Court*, he describes courtly love as the "gospel of leisure and pleasure" which told man of "his salvation, of his duties and responsibilities" (155). The poetry and music that was read and played at court described proper etiquette in social spaces, such as "whether [a man] might pare his nails at a table, kiss a lady when he met her, or write a love-song" (Stevens 155). In the unpredictable, chaotic world of the court, courtly love was one of the established games. Stevens argues that

“all social life is in some sense a fiction, a ‘game’ ...courtly games] may provide us with a refuge and release from our more complicated selves; they may give us an outlet, a channel, a form, for certain emotions and desires” (154). After Troilus is struck by Cupid’s arrow, the narrator explains: “Withinne the temple he wente hym forth pleyinge” (I.267). The act of searching for the right female to begin the affair is seen as a game, sport, or play. Stevens says the “court serves the God of Love” (164) and “this attitude was a social rather than a moral one. It must not be confused with a respect for personality. It is rather a respect for *personages*. The ‘game of love’ was a way of behaving in a way befitting your own and others’ dignity” (194, emphasis in original). The idea of personage is vastly important to the courtly games, especially in *Troilus and Criseyde*, since schemes, plays, and letters are all carefully crafted within the confines of the courtly paradigm. Within this courtly game, “issues of economics become issues of courtly love” which are embodied in the personas of the participating parties, using desire as symbolic capital in the game (Finke and Shichtman 489).

The currency of the court becomes the “discourses of desire” where “exchange is erotic in the sense that it involves attraction, union, and affection that binds individuals” (Finke and Shichtman 490). The narrator discusses the lasting effects of courtly love in the first book: “And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed, / And worthi fold maad worthier of name, / and causeth moost to dreden vice and shame” (I, 250-252). This exchange eroticizes and commodifies the body, both for the male and female in the exchange. However, only the female is always made out to be a spectacle. The first time Troilus gazes upon Criseyde, he views her as such, calling out to God, “O mercy, God...wher hastow woned, / that art so feyr and goodly to devise” (I, 276-277). Victoria Warren calls attention to the role Criseyde plays as object of affection or prize in the courtly game that Pandarus and Troilus are playing, saying “she is further dehumanized: she is

an item to bargain about, not an individual with whom to interact” (4). The woman is the prized object in the courtly game because “the courtly love tradition views the woman from the male perspective: the male gaze sees her as object” (Warren 11). Criseyde is described as “nat with the leste of hire stature, / But alle hire lymes so wel answeyng / Weren to wommanhod” (I, 281-283) that no woman was ever “lesse mannyshh in semyng” (I, 284). What is valued by Troilus in this game, and by the rest of the court, is a feminine physical beauty bordering perfection, which is reiterated later when Troilus says, “his brestez ye, / Was ay on hire, that fairer was no sene / Than evere were Eleyne or Polizene” (I, 453-455). The comparison to the beautiful Helen and Polyzena, two women known for their beauty above all else, shows the objectification of Criseyde.

Although the courtly game focuses on the woman as an object in the exchange, Pandarus, in accordance with the courtly games, also subjects himself and Troilus to objectification to further the exchange. After Troilus falls to Cupid’s spell and he declares he will fight through the despair of not having Criseyde, the narrator describes him in a masculine and appealing way: “Wo was that Grek that with hym mette a-day! / And in the town his manere tho forth ay / So goodly was, and gat hym so n grace, / that ecch hym loved that looked on his face” (I, 1075-1078). Troilus is depicted as a grand warrior that is fighting for his city, but also a man of the people, which is especially important since he is a prince of Troy. The symbolic capital shifts for the man in the courtly affair. When Troilus is first brought up to Criseyde as a prospective lover, Pandarus’ first description of him states, “In whom that alle vertu list habounde, / As alle trouthe and alle gentillesse, / Wisdom, honour, freedom, and worthinesse” (I, 159-161). Where the woman must be obedient, beautiful, and please, the man is expected to be hyper-masculine in fulfilling his knightly duties, but also gentle and kind to the people. Pandarus ensures Troilus is

seen in this light when they construct a plan for Criseyde to gaze upon Troilus in book II, “Worth thow upon a courser right anon -- / Ye, hardily, right in thi beste gere -- / And ryd forth by the place, as nought ne were” (II, 1011-1013). Later, when Pandarus is meeting with Criseyde, they gaze out the window and Troilus is described as “God woot wher he was lik a manly knight!” (II, 1263). These examples of objectification are important to the romance, not just to appeal to the courtly exchange, but also to ensure the audience sees these characters as pieces in a game.

Pandarus: Medieval Architect and Game Designer

The argument has been made for Pandarus as the architect of the text. However, I am proposing the contemporary paradigm of the game designer, a combination of author-architect and trickster-bricoleur. In a peculiar passage at the end of book I, the narrator speaks to the audience about Pandarus once he says his final farewell to Troilus and reassures him he will help with Criseyde:

For everi wight that hath an hous to founde
Ne rennet naught the werk for to bygynne
With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
And sende his hertes line out fro withinne
Aldirfirst his purpose for to wynne.
Al this Pandare in his herte thought,
And caste his werk ful wisely or he wraughte. (I,1065-1071)

The above lines closely recapitulate what Geoffrey of Vinsauf wrote in the *Poetria nova* which references a common expression of the poet as an architect/builder (Benson 1030). This passage is the crux of the argument Olga Costopoulos-Almon makes in her thesis—Pandarus as co-architect. She cites this passage as the moment “Chaucer, by quoting Geoffrey of Vinsauf, is

demonstrating his knowledge of literary theory and rhetorical practice; Pandarus, by thinking those same thoughts, demonstrates his knowledge of the need to plan” (Costopoulos-Almon 78). As a trickster, Pandarus is a masterful bricoleur and understands the psyche of those around him, but assessing the author/character relationship becomes highly problematic when making the claim that the character is acting beyond the author’s intention. Costopoulos-Almon explains the co-architect as an important role when creating a text as complex as *Troilus and Criseyde*, in which Chaucer is commenting on societal norms and religion within a historical context. She explains the relationship: “Pandarus as co-architect within the poem is much more susceptible to intense involvement than the poet, who remains paradoxically visible but aloof, behind the narrator” (Costopoulos-Almon 92). Chaucer seemingly removes himself from the complexity behind the guise of his created narrator and trickster character. Costopoulos-Almon suggests that Chaucer’s changes from the *Filostato* had the intention of making Pandarus more like Chaucer since Pandarus was elevated to about the same age as Chaucer at the time he wrote the text, as well as both being “remarkably energetic, humorous, observant, and interested in the psychology of their fellow beings, although not knowledgeable to the same degree. Both are also deceptively simple in manner, outlook, and speech. Both are very concerned with literary precedent and authority, and very respectful of the tradition” (69). Though I take issue with the simplification of Pandarus, I agree that both are creators.

Costopoulos-Almon’s understanding of the role Pandarus plays in alliance with Chaucer helps build the argument for the trickster to be considered a bricoleur, especially in respect to the role of game designer. She outlines the relationship between the author and character in the following manner:

Chaucer is creating the whole poem, of which Pandarus is a part. And Pandarus in turn is creating the love story, according to his preconceived ideas about love and romance. The important difference between the two is that Chaucer, as he keeps reminding us, is constructing a literary structure from the foundation of old poems or stories; Pandarus is also constructing a romance, but in his sphere, the building materials are real people. (69)

Pandarus's unique position, both as designer and patron, allows him to design and exploit a romance using the symbolic capital in the courtly game. It is important for the narrator to establish this dynamic at the end of the first book to put the entire romance into perspective. As a co-architect, the scenario for the game was already set in motion before Pandarus even hears that Criseyde is the other player, as he agrees to help Troilus and states, “‘A ha!’ quod Pandare; ‘Here bygynneth game’” (I, 868). Chaucer, influenced by the *Poetria nova* and thinking metaphorically about poets and architects, is imagining a medieval game designer in Pandarus, who is a co-creator of the world in which the narrative takes place. Through the lens of play theory and game design, Pandarus takes on an extended purpose that Chaucer was not able to see—game designer.

Pandarus takes on the role of the game designer as he implements a closed-system game in which the understood courtly love rules serve a specific purpose in order to guide the way the participants play. The trickster embodies play, which, as Miguel Sicart explains in his book *Play Matters*, “resides in the tension between control and chaos. Sometimes playing is voluntarily surrendering to form; sometimes it is being seduced into form, being appropriated by a plaything. Some other times, the pleasure comes from the appropriation of those forms, breaking and deforming them to play with them” (83). The intricate balance between control and chaos is readily apparent in *Troilus and Criseyde*, beginning with the chaotic nature of war outside the

walls of Troy, not to mention the seemingly unpredictable nature of “love” between Troilus and Criseyde, as well as the autonomy of Criseyde. Pandarus, as the game designer, has “the capacity to harness, control, steer and produce play for intended purpose—[he] is what makes [games] culturally respectable” (Sicart 86). Traditionally, a game designer is considered to be the *ultimate author* of the composition “who knows about what we access only through intuition and can materially create those experiences” (Sicart 85). Of course, Pandarus is a creation of Chaucer, so he is not viewed as the “ultimate author.” However, Pandarus is an extension of Chaucer, someone Chaucer cannot be. Olga Costopoulos-Almon calls Pandarus the co-architect in part because he is “very much a darker, perverted representation of Chaucer,” the shadow of society that the trickster typically embodies (95-96). The role of co-architect gives Pandarus an equal standing to Chaucer, creating a duality that drives the story, or, as Costopoulos-Almon explains it: “If I may extend Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s metaphor, one cannot build a house using only the services of an architect; a competent on-site superintendent and some good labourers are equally indispensable” (78). Costopoulos-Almon merely sees Pandarus as a manipulator with agency. However, the qualities she highlights are those of a trickster: “Chaucer is able to create from his own inner resources a multitude of characters. Pandarus in turn seems able to adopt a surprising number of roles for himself, and to do so very quickly” (71). This work in concordance with Chaucer instead of against is important to both the character and the motive of the text.

The trickster as game designer helps the reader understand what Sicart calls “the materiality of the artificial” and how it “interfaces with the world” (87). The designer function highlights the tricksters’ biggest strength—they understand people. Pandarus is able to use the intricate patronage system of courtly love to create a system of rules, situations, and objects that “relate to the future state of affairs encapsulated in a designed object” (Sicart 88). Pandarus, as

designer, works well with the narrator of the story to establish the rules of the game that is being played. Troilus's monologues and songs about love set the stage for the game, giving the background to the character, world, and rules in order for the audience to become invested. To establish the objective of the game, Troilus describes his devotion to Criseyde and to the gods at play: "Wherefore, lord, if my service or I / May liken yow, so beth to me benigne; / For myn estat roial I here resigne / Into hire hond, and with ful humble chere / Bicomme hir man, as to my lady dere" (I, 430-434). Pandarus takes the norms of the courtly affairs and creates the rules of a game by which Troilus, Criseyde, Hector, Diomedes, and Calchas must abide. With the blind devotion of Troilus, Pandarus understands what rules to construct in order to make all parties fall into the specific track he intends: i.e., Troilus devoting himself to Criseyde (I, 434), Pandarus explaining the advantages of engaging (II, 260), and the window gaze and first letters (II, 1184).

Pandarus engages as one of the players. However, as the game master, he is exempt from the rules and manipulates the other players to his own end. Pandarus functions as the liaison of love for both Troilus and Criseyde, but he dictates action in the game. Once the game starts, the players engage in play both inside and outside of Troy, and it is only until the player exits the game—i.e., Criseyde's exchange to the Greeks or upon Troilus's death—that the players can see the overall scheme Pandarus has created in concordance with Chaucer's plan. Criseyde is apprehensive about the game from the start; "Criseyde, which that herde hym in this wise, / Thoughte, 'I shal felen what he meneth, ywis'" (II, 386-387). She is invited to play Pandarus's game, although she sees his tricks and ploys at every turn. Upon their first meeting, Pandarus asks her to "Do wey youre book, rys up, and lat us daunce, / And lat us don to May som observaunce" (II, 111-112). The dance is viewed as the entrance to the game, representing the performance at court, the show of personage, and the following of a schema put into play.

Timothy Arner, in his article “For Goddess Love: Rhetorical Expression in Troilus and Criseyde,” views their exchanges as a tennis match: “Criseyde receives whatever Pandarus sends at her and returns it with her own spin, creating a volley of verbal exchanges that demonstrates both characters' technical skill” (445). Even though she questions and spins Pandarus’s words, she is no match for his machination, and she succumbs to the ultimate fear of her or Troilus’s death and betrayal which Pandarus alludes to. David Williams expands on Pandarus’s skill with words by relating it to the superior skill desired in the courtly games: “The male’s repertoire for courtship arts (like having a silver tongue with which to woo) stems from his subconscious desire to spread his seed” (137-38). Although I disagree that Pandarus is trying to spread his seed, the concept of the silver tongue shows that the trickster figure, through exquisite skill in rhetoric, is the most proficient courtly player because he is the architect of the game.

In order for the game to finish and the trickster’s trick to be played, Criseyde needs to be taken out of the game. There is no way of knowing for sure that Pandarus orchestrated or planned on Criseyde being traded to the Greek camp. However, as Sicart explains, “Designing for play means creating a *setting* rather than a system, a stage rather than a world, a model rather than a puzzle. Whatever is created has to be open, *flexible*, and malleable to allow players to appropriate, express, act and interact, make, and become part of the form itself” (90, emphasis mine). By setting up the model which allows for flexibility around player choice, Pandarus knew there was always a chance of death, imprisonment, or exchange due to the two players’ positions. No player, not even Hector, could stop the “prisoner” exchange from happening, which shows the symbolic capital she has in the game, but also the tangible capital she has in war: “And hem for Antenor ful the tretis go, / To bryngen hom kyng Toas and Criseyde. / And whan Priam his save-garde sente” (IV, 137-139). After she leaves the game, Troilus is still privy to one final

letter, but the indication that the game is over is in Pandarus's response to Troilus, "My brother deer, I may do the namore" (V, 1740).

If we think of Pandarus as the master of play, we can see how the subversive nature of ludic behavior correlates with the actions and intentions of the trickster. In Astrid Ensslin's book, *Literary Gaming*, she explains how play "triggers creativity and innovation, subversive activities that may lead to the (temporary) reversal of power, and cultural forms of expression" (19). The playfulness of the trickster disrupts the illusion of a stable reality by redesigning the rules of the societal norm—as detailed above—into a new narrative. Pandarus, established as an exemplary rhetor, is the prime manipulator of the game, because as Ensslin explains, "the game of being is rooted in and mediated by language, which is used to construct and deconstruct human reality" (Ensslin 21). This deconstruction is enacted in play "as aesthetic weapons to undermine and overcome the restrictions of mainstream policies and confront them with alternative forms of expression" (Ensslin 26). Play within a game allows the players to engage in the typical mechanics of play: rules, challenges, actions, risks, and rewards. At any given time, each player is given an illusion of a plurality of choices; however, it is the careful construction of situations and the rhetorical mastery of Pandarus that allows for him to influence the outcomes and push the narrative he desires.

Checkmate: Pandarus's Final Move

There is some debate over what the climax of the *Troilus and Criseyde* story arc is, which depends on how the reader views the text. In narrative focused games, much like stories that follow a conventional story arc, the climax is when the tension of the story comes to a head. Some scholars see the trade of Criseyde to be the climax of the story. However, following the trickster narrative and the game Pandarus has created, I argue that the consummation scene is the

climax. Throughout the first two books, we see Pandarus moving between both Troilus and Criseyde, scheming to get the two to consummate Troilus's professed love through different uses of persuasion within the limits of the courtly game he created. He finally moves the players into their final positions where it seems Troilus's life is on the line, as Troilus says: "God wood that of this game, / Whan al is wist, than am I thought to blame" (III.1084-85). Troilus swoons and Pandarus must again come to the rescue and physically start to disrobe Troilus and lay him next to Criseyde for her to comfort him into awakening. Every subtle and drastic move Pandarus has made culminates into a constructed romance and consummation where he watches over them: "And with that word he drew hym to the feere, / and took a light, and fond his contenance, / As for to looke upon an old romaunce" (III.978-80). Chaucer and his trickster, the co-architects of the story, sit by the fire and take in the romance they created. In the few lines before Pandarus leaves the room, his elation, that the players have finally come together, the story has finally been written, and the trick played, is rhetorical, spoken out loud or aside as if confiding in the narrator/co-architect. The climax of the story has come to a head.

The consummation and the conversations around it in book III have drawn debate and criticism over the ambiguity. Carolyn Dinshaw reads the scene as the objectification of Criseyde and Pandarus's viewing near the fireplace as admiration for his "own erotic satisfaction" (48). It is undeniable that this is a moment of intense satisfaction for Pandarus, but most of book III and especially the moments preceding the consummation are much more about the exploitation of courtly love than the exploitation of Criseyde. Olga Costopoulos-Almon views the first part of the consummation scene as "wholly Pandarus's creation" as it is not present in other source materials (95). She admits that "it is all his careful planning and manipulating that have brought things along to this point" (95). However, she believes Pandarus to be a failed architect because

of the sloppy, forced consummation and the resulting fallout in book IV. Without the lens of the trickster, she only sees Pandarus as a written character performing the role of architect, but then in the last two books, “we perceive Pandarus more as [just] another character” (99). There is an obvious shift in character for Pandarus after the consummation, but that is because he no longer has to ensure the players are playing through the constructed narrative, as the objective of the game has been fulfilled.

After Pandarus returns to Criseyde after the consummation, she is both angry and elated over the turn of events. Their conversation starts with a statement about Pandarus’s character that has been hinted at by others but not as bluntly as Criseyde’s words: “God help me so, ye caused al this fare, / Trowe I,’ quod she, ‘for al youre words white. / O, whoso seeth you knoweth yow ful lite’ (III.1566-68). What sounds like an accusation is followed by Criseyde covering her blushing face with the sheet and Pandarus responding rhetorically with, “Nece, if that I shal be ded, / Have here a swerd and smyteth of myn hed!” (1572-73). Instead of Criseyde falling back on her words and agreeing to terms set by Pandarus, like in book II, he slides his arm under her and kisses her and the narrator continues on:

I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye.

What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so

Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye,

For other cause was ther noon than so.

But of this thing right to the effect to go:

Than type was, hom til here hous she wente,

And Pandarus hath fully his entente. (III.1576-82)

The reason why I quote this stanza at length is because the conversation is unlike any other in the romance. Criseyde and Pandarus share a private moment where “with here uncle gan to pleye” after a seemingly serious exchange calling attention to Pandarus’s deviousness. However, the situation is inverted and the audience is not privileged to the details of the scene. This moment is one of the more controversial and debated scenes in the romance where some claim there are undertones of Pandarus raping Criseyde, but the explanatory notes in *The Riverside Chaucer* state that this claim is “baseless and absurd” (Benson 1043). This moment, which is also not in Boccaccio’s text, can have another reading: the trickster explains his game and intention. With this reading, it clarifies Troilus and Pandarus’s conversation after this scene since Pandarus’s overzealous positivity toward their love shifts into a less hopeful ending (III.1618-24). Pandarus clearly knows what lies beyond this moment.

The narrator closes book III with a farewell to the gods and love, and starts book IV with two foreboding lines: “But al to litel, weylaway the whyle, / Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune” (IV.1-2). Book IV turns the romance on its head and Pandarus shifts from the enthusiastic manipulator to the realist with “harsh diction” (Costopoulos-Almon 93). With the trade of Criseyde and Troilus’s fall into despair, Olga Costopoulos-Almon describes this shift as Pandarus’s failure:

The romance he has constructed is being destroyed, and he is powerless against fortune. He has been able to create a romance from a base of Troilus’s attraction to Criseyde, and with some help from Criseyde, circumstances and fate. But he is unable to maintain or rebuild; *his creativity, perhaps because it is falsely based, in the courtly tradition, and because it has promised a false felicity, cannot be ultimately successful.* (98-99, emphasis mine)

I disagree with Costopoulos-Almon's reading of this "failure," but her emphasis of "his creativity, perhaps because it is falsely based, in the courtly tradition, and because it has promised a false felicity" is the point of Pandarus's design and trick—playing with the ideals of love through the courtly tradition mocks the institution of the aristocracy. Costopoulos-Almon describes Pandarus's failure further by saying Pandarus was given "real people" by Chaucer and he could not "fit people to his conception of the form of a romance" (99). I'm not sure if Costopoulos-Almon intended her thesis to end on the following note, but it shows exactly what Pandarus as the trickster demonstrates in Chaucer's story: "Chaucer has proven the ineffectiveness of such a tradition if it is applied to real people. It must remain a quaint literary convention, and not a formula for real love" (Costopoulos-Almon 99). Courtly love's rules and guidelines established through the literary convention have resulted in a dismal relationship sealed by the closing, mysterious laugh of Troilus after he falls to Achilles in battle (V.1821).

New Games, New Possibility

The trade of Criseyde for Antenor is best summarized by the narrator: "For cloude of error let hem to discerne / What best is" (IV.200-201). The cloud of error goes beyond just the decision to trade Criseyde, but the courtly and patron traditions of objectification and contracts. The narrator explains the decision as hasty: "For he was after traitour to the town / Of Troye" (IV.204-205). The traitor, foreseen by Calchas, Criseyde's father, which is reiterated to Criseyde by Diomedes when he is trying to court her: "When ye youre wise fader wolde / Han yeven Antenor for yow anon, / If he ne wiste that the cite shoulde / Destroyed ben" (V.904-07). The importance of this trade is not just a ploy by the architects to end the relationship, which is blamed on Fortuna, but as an exchange of tricksters. It is important to note the order of events that led to all parties knowing about the trade: Calchas hears of the truce in the Greek camp and

pleads for the trade of Criseyde and Antenor (IV.71); the news is brought to Priam and the parliament where Troilus is present (IV.148); the audience finds out Pandarus overheard in parliament as well (IV.344); and finally, it reaches Criseyde's ears through gossip (IV.666). Starting with Criseyde's father, a seer who foretold the fall of Troy through Antenor, to Troilus and Pandarus in parliament, and then to Criseyde through gossip highlights the players in the trade, but not just a prisoner's trade. If the situation is further analyzed with tricksters and the war in mind, there are three realms in the story: Troy (political), the battlefield (cosmic), and the Greek Camp (relational). Now that the game is played and the fall of Troy is imminent, the "tricksters" need to disperse to continue their tricks and be the architects to new games at the start of book V.

At the start of book V, Criseyde leaves the city and crosses paths with Antenor at the center of the battlefield past Troilus. Antenor left the Greek camp and went toward Troy where "every wight/Was of it glad, and seyde he was welcome" (V.72-3). Criseyde is welcomed by a Greek prince, Diomedes, where she recognizes his courtly actions, but she resists the favor from the Greek prince until she comes to the realization that she could never return to Troy. Once she grasps she is no longer a pawn in Pandarus's game, she understands the power she has as an architect/trickster and is able to reestablish the courtly game previously established in Troy. This continuation exhibits the relational game that Pandarus created between the three players, Pandarus included, though the roles are greatly changed. Criseyde assumes the role of Pandarus, but she is still in a similar position as she was in Troy, though the status of her father in the Greek camp may elevate her. Diomedes, understanding the rules of the game, is much more assertive and articulate. However, he is bound by the rules of the game, providing her with the courtly structure needed to control her outcome. Mary Behrman recognizes Criseyde's shift at

the Greek camp, especially after “Her decision to accept Diomedes’s overtures shatters the rules of courtly love,” which establishes her as outside the control of Pandarus, Troilus, Calchas, and Diomedes (317). Since courtly love relies on the complacency or pawn-like nature of woman, this version of the game is different because the way it is played and the outcome is controlled by Criseyde. Her carefully crafted letter to Troilus and her rebuttals to both Calchas and Diomedes show her expertise in rhetoric, which were only seen in glimpses of self-awareness in Troy but are now ever present.

After the trade, Troilus returns to his bedchamber and calls out, “and god Mercurye, of me now, woful wrecche, / the soule gyde, and whan the liste, it fecche” (V, 321-22). Mercury, later seen as a psychopomp to Troilus—“And forth he went, shortly for to telle, / Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle” (V.1826-7)—can also be seen as a provocation not only to death, but also to Pandarus, whose trick has finally been made clear. Pandarus’s goal, to expose the absurdity of the formalities of courtly love and patronage exchange, is complete, and he tells Troilus, “I kan nat sen in hym no remedie, / But lat hym worthen with his fantasie” (V.328-9). Though Pandarus stays around until Criseyde’s final letter to Troilus, it is clear his council is finished since his demeanor has drastically changed. Pandarus disappears, said to be spending more time with others in the city, until Troilus becomes bloodthirsty and hunts for Diomedes, resulting in his ultimate death. Upon his death, his soul leaves his body with the guidance of Mercury, where he can see over the absurdities he is leaving behind, laughing, “Swych fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse” (V, 1832). Mercury, the trickster and psychopomp over the battlefield holds dominion over the cosmic realm. If the *Illiad* is taken into consideration, the battlefield is also a cosmic realm where the gods fight alongside demigods and men alike. The battle transformed Troilus, as the narrator reiterates throughout the text, but it isn’t until his death that

he transcends to the cosmic and sees the truth of the realms and games being played. This revelation explains the enigmatic laugh of Troilus as he ascends to the heavens with Mercury.

Chaucer makes Antenor's intentions to end the war clear throughout book V, but the shift in Pandarus's character in relation to Antenor is also intentional. Antenor, known as the traitor of cities for his role in opening the gates for the Greeks to sack the city, is implied to be devious and ambiguous in his intentions, as all the Trojans love him but are not aware of the betrayal that is to come. Pandarus's shift takes him out of the architect role in Troy, and Antenor starts his own political game which directly results in the fall of Troy, without him uttering a word in the romance. The prisoner exchange was political, both from the point of view of the Greeks and Trojans, but the results of the politics are hidden to the Trojans until it is too late. The fall of Troy is foretold by Calchas, but it is the fall of the namesake, Troilus, that ends the romance and history, as the shift to the Christian realm signifies in the closing stanzas.

The tricksters' exploitation of the three realms, the relational, the cosmic, and the political, represents important aspects of the original game of courtly love. Troilus's love for Criseyde drove most of the story to its completion, but it was also the meticulously constructed admiration Criseyde came to have for Troilus that gave way to the possibilities Pandarus created. The cosmic realm is multi-faceted in that the story starts with a shot from Cupid, invokes muses, gods, and tricksters, but also the mythos that surrounds the Trojan War. Finally, the political was outlined in the first stanzas of the romance when Criseyde is asking for the protection of Hector. The political is also outlined through the actions of Pandarus and Criseyde, worrying about public image, protection, and power in the city of Troy. These three realms are split at the completion of Pandarus's game in order for them to continue in the respective realms in and

around Troy. The trade and resulting battle differentiated the realms and showed two of the three games played, though myth provides the background for the other game.

Pandarus's role in the romance is to break the continuity between reality and the perceived reality of the constructed world. As previously mentioned, the trickster develops a game interface and setting for the game to take place, which switches back and forth between the game (perceived reality) and the coded rules (reality). Each of the realms oscillate between realities by creating a rift when the trickster is present. The romance starts with a rift when Cupid and his arrow create a maddening desire in Troilus which Pandarus is then able to exploit. The shifts between Pandarus and Chaucer's bricoleur tinkering and the narrator's interjections break the continuity of the reality and make the realms explicit which reveals an interface with controls and commands. The trickster allows the audience to look behind the screen and see the coded rules and the flexibility of the programs set in place.

The most sudden rift is in the concluding stanzas of the final book where the narrator addresses the audience with a radical shift towards the Christian God and morals that are held dear to the court. However, this is part of the scheme. Several lines are inconsistent to the story, such as the lament of manipulating women, "N'y sey nat this al oonly for thise men,/But moost for women that bitraised be / Thorough false fold—God yeve hem sorwe, amen!" (V.1779-81), or the narrator praying for divine intervention to preserve his story: "that non miswrite the, / Ne the mysymetre for defaute of tonge" (V.1795-6). These inconsistencies call attention to the reality and perceived reality of the court, following the morals of Bible but engaging in acts of manipulation and deceit through the courtly games. Chaucer engages in the manipulation of Criseyde and rewriting Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, contradicting his own concluding thoughts. Analyzing the

ending through the trickster lens I have established alleviates confusion and gives a more concise understanding of the ending.

This rift in the realities of the story is the reveal of the motive of the literary trickster, which both Pandarus and Petyr Baelish stand testament to. The trickster maintains an intricate balance between control and chaos by taking the perceived realities of the aristocracy—courtly traditions and lofty ideals—and exploiting them to show their absurdity. Pandarus exposes the absurdity of the courtly politics by exploiting the courtly love paradigm, manipulating the social elite through the courtly constraints and concepts of patronage. Also, through the use of rhetoric, Pandarus takes a Sophistic rhetorical approach which exhibited the power of speech and action to the audience, which would not have been just those at court. The aristocratic obsession with courtly games, influenced by the literature of the period, could be exploited to show the unrealistic values that can be put on love and social interaction. Through the experience of wordplay, the conflation of mythology and religion, and courtly references, the audience would come to understand the intricate role Pandarus plays as a co-architect, game designer, and ultimately, trickster.

Conclusion

The literary trickster is an important character type that offers an insight into further analysis of a specific character as well as the whole text. Its identifiable six characteristics—Ambiguous and Anomalous, Deceiver and Trick Player, Situations-Inventor, Divine Messenger, Bricoleur, and Consumer—act as a heuristic guide to understanding the role the literary trickster plays in its text but also on the reader and society it may be commenting on. Tricksters have been an important part of cultures around the world since oral and written storytelling began, but what do we do with them once they are identified? What happens after they leave the story? How is change implemented in the text after the literary trickster has created disorder? In this conclusion, I am proposing the idea that the literary trickster passes his trickster identification onto another character in order to reform and reconstruct the social and political powers that were thrown into disorder.

As was explained in chapter 1, the literary trickster's criteria make him the perfect character to disrupt systems by seeing through the illusions that are established by the ruling class. Petyr Baelish, in George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, is able to see through the social systems the nobility has established and exploit them with his understanding of exchange and how the game of thrones is played. Pandarus, in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, is able to see the nobility's reliance on the courtly games and manipulate the characters based on the systems created by courtly love. In what I will call the disordering literary trickster, he is able to exploit and manipulate the rules of the games he is engaged, in order to disrupt the system and break the illusions the systems have established. Once there is enough disorder, as established with tricksters in chapter 1 and reiterated in chapter 3, the trickster disappears. In both trickster narratives, a female is able to see through the literary

trickster's machinations and sees the game for what it is. In the following sections, I will discuss how Sansa Stark is able to learn from Baelish, and Criseyde is able to learn from Pandarus in order to become the reformation literary trickster.

Sansa Moves into Play

Petyr Baelish's clandestine approach is what makes him so dangerous, but he does confide in Sansa Stark and helps her learn about intrigue in *A Storm of Swords*. After Baelish's intricate plan to help Sansa escape King's Landing, he starts to teach her the ways of deception and machinations, beginning nearly immediately after he has her escort killed: "He sold you for a promise of ten thousand dragons....He sold you for gold, and when he'd drunk it up he would have sold you again. A bag of dragons buys a man's silence for a while, but a well-placed quarrel buys it forever" (*A Storm of Swords* 839). When Sansa asks Baelish if all of life is a lie and deception, he answers back with, "Almost everyone. Save you and I, of course" (*A Storm of Swords* 839). As they make their way to Baelish's estate, and eventually to the Eryie, he disguises her, teaches her a new identity, explaining how "it will be like playing a game," and she becomes Alayne, Baelish's bastard daughter (*A Storm of Swords* 933). Baelish starts playing word games of intrigue, asking Sansa scenario questions which lead to examples of how it has been used in King's Landing, such as, "which is more dangerous, the dagger brandished by an enemy, or the hidden one pressed to your back by someone you never even see?" (*A Storm of Swords* 934). Baelish takes the time to explain many of his deceptions and connections to those in King's Landing, but it isn't until Sansa faces her manic aunt, Lysa Arryn, that she learns about the murder plots and history Baelish has with her aunt and mother. However, this knowledge doesn't cause her to shy away from Baelish, even after he kills Lysa, as one would expect a 13-year-old to do. Instead, she tries to learn more about the game of thrones and how it is played.

Sansa's skill at rhetoric and deceptions grow the more she is with Baelish, but it is his patience with her, lack of jokes and rash comments, that sets their relationship apart from other typical Baelish interactions. When she is asked by lords of the Vale who murdered Lysa, she lets a tear out and tells the whole scripted story, "hardly hearing the words as they spilled out of her" (*A Feast for Crows* 216). After they walk through a plan involving signatures and misdirection, Baelish turns to Sansa and says, "I am tempted to say this is no game we play...but of course it is. The game of thrones" (*A Feast for Crows* 224). Throughout *A Feast for Crows*, Sansa becomes more confident in the lies she lives every day in her disguise, but, more importantly, she starts to unfold the schemes Baelish is putting in play. In King's Landing, Baelish focused on creating complete disorder which slowly destroyed many of the prominent houses of Westeros, now, with the help of Sansa, they begin to move pieces of the game around to reform the broken kingdom, with Sansa at the forefront of their scheme.

Baelish leaves Sansa for a short time to go to a wedding and meet with the lords and ladies of the Vale. Upon his return, he slowly works through a complicated marriage betrothal to a young lord whom is a distant relation of Robin Arryn, the current heir to the Eyrie, which Sansa comes to the realization that Baelish intends on Robin dying before their plan comes to fruition. Baelish, only as Lord Protector of the Vale, can never unite the Vale in its entirety due to his reputation. However, the heir after Robin, Harrold Hardyng, is a charming warrior, which are qualities the Lord of the Vale needs to be. Baelish's plan is for Sansa to take a prominent position of power, but her identity must still remain concealed from those around her until the kingdom is once again safe. He devises a reveal for her wedding day, as he explains to Sansa: "you come out with your long auburn hair, clad in a maiden's cloak of white and grey with a direwolf emblazoned on the back . . . why, every knight in the Vale will pledge his sword to win

you back your birthright. So those are your gifts from me, my sweet Sansa . . . Harry, the Eyrie, and Winterfell” (*A Feast for Crows* 896). Sansa Stark marrying Harrold Hardyng would essentially rid the need of Baelish, as he no longer would have power over the Vale or the north. This unification of two large, powerful kingdoms in Westeros would start to reform the seven kingdoms and change the social and political structures, but it also puts Sansa into a position of respect and power that Petyr Baelish could never attain for himself.

Criseyde Continues the Game

The first interaction the audience sees between Pandarus and Criseyde is likened to a tennis match by Timothy Arner due to Criseyde’s ability to receive and return in a verbal exchange with him. Her apprehension about engaging in his game and following his lead, even in dance, exhibits a higher understanding of what is at play. Her engagement in the game, explained at length in chapter 3, is a much more active and assertive role than Troilus’s. After she is traded to the Greek camp, she becomes the new architect of the courtly game Pandarus set up in Troy. Instead of being a pawn being controlled by Pandarus, she becomes the game designer, making the game work for her in ways that were impossible before. Her interactions with both her father, Calchas, and suitor, Diomedes, are conducted under the guidelines of an altered courtly love structure that grants her authority over herself and the ability to dictate her terms without the machinations of Pandarus.

The Greek camp puts Criseyde into a more privileged position where she no longer needs to seek protection, nor does she have to engage in the patronage culture that kept her in debt to Pandarus and the Trojan aristocracy. Her new position and experience with the previous game make her more assertive, and she can be articulate without being impeded by Pandarus’s

interjections. Diomedes, thoroughly understanding the courtly game as it is properly played—without a trickster at the helm—instantly engages with Criseyde after the exchange:

This Diomedes, as he that koude his good,
Whan tyme was, gan fallen forth in speche
Ofthis and that, and axed whi she stood
In swich disese, and gan hire ek biseche
That if that he encesse myghte or eche
With any thing hire ese, that she sholde
Comaunde it hym, and seyde he don it wolde.
For troweliche he swor hire as a knight
That ther nas thing with which he myghte hire plese,
That he nolde don his peyne and al his might
To don it, for to don hire herte an ese; (V.106-16)

This passage invokes the courtly rules that Pandarus enacted in his communication with Criseyde on Troilus's behalf, but she now understands how the game works. Diomedes uses the language of the court, calling attention to his status as a knight, and that he will do anything in his power to please her. He continues to tell her that the Greeks, "O god of Love in soth we serven" (V.143), but after his long speech, the narrator tells us that she was barely listening but thanked him and said she would accept his part in the romance. The key to this conversation is that the narrator makes a quick interjection after her thanks before she greets her father: "As seyde she" (V.189). This interjection indicates a large shift from the submissive Criseyde of Troy to the commanding, strong-willed woman of Greece.

Criseyde's newfound will in the Greek camp shows the resolution of the courtly game Pandarus set up, allowing her to take ownership of her body and mind. When we first met Criseyde in Troy, she was an independent widow, possessing power in her widowhood by owning property, but the courtly affair and patronage transferred her power away from her because she became the subject and pawn of the men of the story under the courtly tradition. The narrator calls attention to this very fact in the last stanzas of the romance:

N'y sey nat this al oonly for thise men,
But moost for women that bitraised be
Thorough *false folk*—God yeve hem sorwe, amen!—
That with hire *grete wit and subtilte*
Bytraise yow. And this commeveth me
To speke, and in effect yow alle I preye,
Beth war of men, and herkneth what I seye! (V.1779-1785, emphasis mine)

The narrator asks for forgiveness of him telling the story and for Criseyde's character hurting Troilus, but the emphasis on "false folk" and "grete wit and subtilte" are direct references to the literary trickster and the disorder he created. Criseyde's shift to the literary trickster allowed her to own her trickster powers¹⁴ once again because she was no longer superseded by the disordering trickster. The courtly love game of the Greeks is more traditional and easily maneuvered, as Criseyde exploits and Diomedes exhibits, but it is not through falsity and trickery like that of Pandarus's game. Her ability to engage with the game differently allows for the social structure to balance through reforming the structure left in disorder from Pandarus.

Final Thoughts

¹⁴ She once again embraces the six criteria of the literary trickster: ambiguous and anomalous, deceiver and trick player, situations-inventor, divine messenger, bricoleur, and consumer.

The importance of the literary trickster category is that it allows for scholars to properly identify a character type that has been misidentified or overlooked in many stories. I have demonstrated new understandings of two different texts, George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, in order to use this new category as a heuristic to bring new meaning and understanding to others. This project is only a start, as there are more questions to ask the literary trickster in larger case studies. Is there a trend of the disordering literary trickster passing on his gifts to the (female) reformation literary trickster? A further study can be done on Sansa Stark once the final two books are published in the *A Song of Ice and Fires* series to see if she engages in the reformation of Westeros as I propose. Criseyde shows a more concrete shift in Chaucer's work, but her character is much more of a literary trickster already when we meet her, whereas Sansa is an innocent and naïve girl in her introduction. I propose a further study into more literary trickster to refine the criteria and the use of rhetoric and play studies. Are there female disordering literary tricksters? What does the gender shift mean for the category? Are there other mediums that show the literary trickster as well? A further analysis of this character category would be a fruitful endeavor in understanding a complex but vastly important cultural figure.

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