


7-1-2012

Postmodern Trickster Strands in Shamanic Worlds

Jürgen W. Kremer
Santa Rosa Junior College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.ciis.edu/ijts-transpersonalstudies>

 Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Philosophy Commons](#), [Psychology Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kremer, J. W. (2012). Kremer, J. W. (2012). Postmodern trickster strands in shamanic worlds. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 31(2), 63–71.. *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, 31 (2). <http://dx.doi.org/10.24972/ijts.2012.31.2.63>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#). This Special Topic Article is brought to you for free and open access by International Journal of Transpersonal Studies. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Transpersonal Studies by an authorized administrator. For more information, please contact the editors.

Postmodern Trickster Strands in Shamanic Worlds

Jürgen Werner Kremer

Santa Rosa Junior College

Santa Rosa, CA, USA

This essay explores socio-philosophical meanings of shamanic cultures and practices and their affirmation and revival. What is their potential significance for humanity's future? I argue that shamanism engages humans in practices that put us potentially at the center of our creativity and creative visioning. The trickster figure, a pervasive indigenous presence, so often seems pivotal in this process and this pervasively male figure plays an important part in this regenerative interpretation of postmodernism; in fact, postmodernism can be understood as trickster. Just like the trickster, the nature of postmodernism is ambiguous. I explore this ambiguity and suggest that shamanic practices and paradigms may inspire a way out of our contemporary conundra with trickster help. This essay is concerned with paradigmatic issues, it presents broad brush strokes rather than ethnographic details. Its form attempts to honor trickster storytelling.

Keywords: *Shamanism, postmodernity, trickster, modernity, mythology, indigenous mind, transpersonal, participatory knowing, self, criar y dejarse criar, différance, narrative change, participatory concourse*

I. An Important Story, This One

At the time of beginnings Raven was bored, so he decided to find out what was inside the mysterious house over the hill. Eagle advised against it, but there was no stopping Raven. He had observed a young woman coming and going from the house, appearing on various sides, yet he had never been able to find an entrance. He knew she would need to fetch water sooner or later. So Raven turned himself into a pine needle and floated down the river just as the young woman immer-sed her vessel into the water. She swallowed the pine needle as she drank and became pregnant with Raven. As it turned out, Raven was quite an unusual baby given to insistent complaining. He became expert at getting the woman's father to release the gifts he had been given to take care of. So whenever Ravenchild's complaining would reach a paroxysm he would open one of the boxes to first release the stars and the northern lights, then the moon, and, finally, the sun. With the sun up in the sky the world turned green and changed into the world we know. (Retold Northwest Coast story; see Bringhurst, 1999 for Haida translations and discussion.)

II. Another Important Story, This One Too

Loki [the trickster of the Old Norse] was interested in things because he was interested in them, and in the way they were in the world, and worked in the world. He was neither kind nor gentle, not anyway when he inhabited the world of myth. In the world of folktales he was a fire demon, mostly benign, providing warmth for hearths and ovens. In

the world of Asgard [the home of the Old Norse gods] he was smiling and reckless, a forest fire devouring what stood in its path. ...

He studied, most of all, fire and water. Fire was his element but he also changed himself into a great salmon and treaded his way swiftly through the crash of the waterfall, across the eddies of the deep pool, over its lip into the rushing river, which parted round a great stone, and joined again, twisting and bubbling. ...

Loki wanted to learn from it—not exactly to master fire or water, but to map them. But beyond the curiosity there was delight. Chaos pleased him. He liked things to get more and more furious, more wild, more ungraspable, he was at home in turbulence. He would provoke turbulence to please himself and tried to understand it in order to make more of it.

He was reckless and cunning, both. ... (Byatt, 2011, pp. 113-115)

III. The Postmodern in the Premodern Or: The Significance of Trickster

Cree playwright Highway talks about the significance of the trickster in Native American traditions: “In the same sense that Jesus Christ stands at the very centre of Christian mythology, we have a character in our mythological universe, in our dreamlife as a people, who stands at the very centre of that universe, and that character is the Trickster” (Ryan, 1999, p. 3). The Native American scholar, poet, and novelist

Gerald Vizenor asserted that “the postmodern opened in tribal imagination; oral cultures have never been without a postmodern condition that enlivens stories and ceremonies, or without trickster signatures and discourse on narrative chance—a comic utterance and adventure to be heard or read” (1989, p. x). I am emphatic of tricksters and clowns, whether in the tradition of the Plains Indian *heyokah* or the Pueblo Indian *koshare* or any other, unsettles what has settled and threatens stability and premature closure and certainty; they are tricksters at work. Vizenor associated the postmodern and the trickster—postmodernity is a trickster figure. The trickster puts one at the center of creation and creativity through his prankster moves. Postmodernity is the trickster’s push for renewal in the face of habit and tradition. It is the potential for renewal and the achievement of new stabilities, temporary as they may be.

Indigenous or shamanic worlds are probably best understood as narrative universes, worlds of stories. “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (King 2003, p. 2). It is not that modern worlds are not narrative universes, but here the awareness of creative narratives and oral storytelling have given way to scientism and denials of the storied nature of our worlds (Kremer, 1986, 1992a,b). In contrast, shamanic worlds can be seen as worlds in which phenomena are intentionally co-created between humans and whatever it is humans interact with. Each shamanic world is not only constituted by way of narratives and through narrative knowing, but the educated participants in this world (the shamans, medicine people, storytellers, wisdomkeepers) are acutely conscious of this participatory narrative process of cultural world creation and understanding. Shamanic rituals, whether concerned with the healing of individuals or the larger scope of cultural balance, centrally constitute the aware practice of co-creation. Shamanic traditions are exemplars of ritual world maintenance that includes immanent trans/personal events (the slash is inserted to indicate this immanent, rather than transcendental, framework). The shaman as intermediary travels and engages with the different qualities of cultural worlds in which spirits are as accessible or inaccessible as one’s next door neighbors. Ferrer (2002, p. 121) stated that

transpersonal events engage human beings in a participatory, connected, and often passionate knowing that can involve not only the opening

of the mind, but also of the body, the heart, and the soul...[The relation to participatory events] is not one of appropriation, possession, or passive representation of knowledge, but of communion and cocreative participation. ... Human beings are ... always participating in the selfdisclosure of Spirit by virtue of their very existence. This participatory predicament is not only the ontological foundation of the other forms of participation, but also the epistemic anchor of spiritual knowledge claims and the moral source of responsible action. (italics in original)

Stories seem to be an eminent ancient way of coming to grips with this co-creative participation, something Western psychology, for example, is only gradually acknowledging through the incorporation of narrative knowledge as its paradigm expands (beginning with the examples of Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988; and Sarbin, 1986). The remembrance of stories like the ones in the first two sections above can guide one to the co-creative center of what so often is labeled as transpersonal or mystic or transcendental, but in indigenous traditions this co-creative center is a natural part of the personal and of the cultural world individuals live in, hence my use of trans/personal. In the Peruvian Andean traditions this is called *criar y dejarse criar*, which can be translated as nurturing conversation which includes the landscape as much as the spirits inhabiting it (Apffel-Marglin, 1998). The trickster presence serves to liberate the self, being or presence, and knowing (Kremer, 1992a,b) from the bondage of mental moves that attempt to restrain the healing potential of the imaginal, a potential that may arise from somatic presence and visionary evocation (for discussion see Bringhurst, 1999). Stories of shamanic worlds aim at communal embodiments of vision in rituals and ceremonies of radical, imaginal presence (Kremer, 2002; Beyman et al., 2001).

Vizenor, writing from his own Anishinabee tradition, affirmed an understanding of the trickster figure that is distinct from Western interpretations:

Naanabozho, the compassionate woodland trickster, wanders in mythic time and transformational space between tribal experiences and dreams. The trickster is related to plants and animals and trees; he is a teacher and healer in various personalities who, as numerous stories reveal, explains the values

of healing plants, wild rice, maple sugar, basswood, and birch bark to woodland tribal people. More than a magnanimous teacher and transformer, the trickster is capable of violence, deceptions, and cruelties: the realities of human imperfections. The woodland trickster is an existential shaman in the comic mode, not an isolated and sentimental tragic hero in conflict with nature. (Vizenor, 1984, pp. 3-4)

This description captures the actions of the trickster as catalyst intent on keeping the comedy going. Trickster transmotion (Vizenor, 1998), or trancemotion, facilitates the escape from structures that restrain aliveness, both in its light (as teacher and transformer) and its dark form (as deceptive and violent, even cruel agent of change). In a sense, the trickster is an ongoing initiatory motion that seeks vibrancy of reasoning, that is, participatory events that are inciting and inspiring passions and renew knowing.

At times the trickster figure is equated with the devil, which is a misunderstanding. As the literature indicates (Dumezil, 1959; Hyde, 1999; Radin, 1956; Ryan, 1999; Vizenor, 1989, 2005), the trickster can arguably be seen as instrumental to the exploration, evocation, and cocreation of potential (in contrast to the preservation of established structures).

The overwhelming majority of all so-called tricker myths in North America give an account of the creation of the earth, or at least the transforming of the world, and 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" (Radin, 1956, p. 155).

In mythologies, tricksters move between the above and below, heaven and earth; they are on the road and reign the inbetween; they are the spirits of the threshold, the liminal. The stories of their exploits are used to teach about appropriate behavior and attitudes. Tricksters guide souls and are messengers of the gods and spirits. They step into action where the portals between the worlds (e.g., above and below, conscious and unconscious) are closed and they may become thieves on these occasions (as when Raven steals water and daylight). Tricksters may manifest as creative idiot, as wise fool, as grayhaired baby, as crossdresser, as speaker of sacred profanities; they may appear in many roles and they have many names: Loki,

Hermes, Coyote, Raven, Krishna, Eshu, Legba, Monkey King, and so forth (in mythologies tricksters are generally male). Pablo Picasso, Marcel Duchamp, Allen Ginsburg, Maxine Hong Kingston, John Cage, and Bob Dylan can be seen as recent trickster appearances. They roam in the place of ambiguity, ambivalence, doubleness, duplicity, contradiction, and paradox. Thus they live at boundaries, move them, cross them, erase them, and even create them.

From a Jungian perspective and with focus on the inner psychic experience, the trickster is "the wild card of human existence, who can play any role, high to low, with the power to reverse and change the direction of our journey. Thus this figure is greeted with delight and anxiety, powerful when on our side, baffling when not, an untrustworthy but altogether necessary part of humanity" (Hopcke, 1992, p. 122). Transformation and change result from the presence of the trickster archetype. Jung (1959) also asserted that the trickster's "universality is co-extensive ... with that of shamanism" (p. 256).

Tricksters are consummate survivors, always slippery and able to wiggle free, always willing to abandon a position or invert a situation; levity and speed win out over suffering and seriousness. Tricksters are creators and destroyers, givers and negators, neither good nor evil (yet responsible for both), without values, yet all values come into being through their actions, as Radin (1956) declared. Tricksters are the presence, spirit, and archetype that attack all archetypes, suspicious of everything eternal they drag it into the time-haunted earthly to see how it fares. Tricksters are so often lascivious presences disrupting imagination so that new imagination may arise, treating asocial or antisocial characters as part of the sacred so that the social world can be renewed and inspired, and evoking shadow material so that individual growth may be triggered. As the opposite of "appropriation, possession, or passive representation of knowledge" the trickster is an instrumental and inevitable ingredient, in the "communion and cocreative participation" in knowledge, to use Ferrer's (2002, p. 121) language—a "doing" (Vizenor, 1989).

The postmodern elements in shamanism have been and are tricksterish. Stability and continuity of indigenous cultures are enabled by the trickster. Tradition as well as aliveness and change within tradition are both conditioned upon trickster presence. Only under the conditions of colonialism and genocide does this presence recede and give way to closures which threaten the ongoing natural changes and renewals in tradition.

Yet, even in the face of these ongoing threats, the trickster asserts itself for the sake of cultural persistence, renewal, and healing. In the academic arena one finds Gerald Vizenor as one of the preeminent postmodern tricksters in Native American traditions; Thomas King is another.

IV. Participatory Worldview: Shamanic Concourse

Given my description of indigenous shamanism as a fluid world held within a tradition in which things are kept in flux by postmodern elements invoked in ritual trances and through trickster presence, how is one to understand “truth” in such a narrative universe? How is one to understand “truth” when native people do the work of recovery of traditions that have receded under the onslaught of modernization and colonial history? Or, even more challenging: How is one to understand “truth” when non-indigenous people, who have been disconnected for centuries from their own shamanic traditions, begin the work of recovering indigenous mind and shamanic practices? What epistemological practices generate culturally acceptable knowledge? What are epistemological implications of shamanic worldviews for the contemporary understanding of one’s world?

Habermas (1994) has developed a discourse model of truth that represents the acme and virtue, in the Aristotelian sense, of modernity. Adding to his model those processes of truth seeking in shamanic traditions that are facilitated by integrative modes of consciousness (trances and meditations; Winkelman, 2010) required an extension of his framework. How can one think about storytelling, embodied rituals, or pilgrimages to sacred places, and so forth, in terms of truth? I have suggested the notion of “shamanic or participatory concourse” to include qualities of indigenous knowing (Kremer, 1992a,b). It is an idealized philosophical exemplar of shamanic practices designed to capture a potential for our evolution as species. Such con-course (*concurrere*) is a shamanic coming together in a circle in which truths are unfolded and refolded. Here communal reality creation and maintenance is reviewed through talking as well as ritualistic embodiment. This circle has space for silence, humor, theater, dance, and all the other arts (which may assume a trickster position at any point); well-reasoned claims to truth need to rub shoulders with other aspects of human reality as they all struggle to align with each other. Concurrence includes the play of the trickster. This is a practice of world creation and maintenance, a practice of care for the narrative universe

we live in. Knowing is a practice of living. Living is the practice of knowing—beingknowing (to create a Heideggerian term). Such conversation in participatory concourse requires “exact imagination,” Adorno’s *exakte Phantasie* (cf. Adorno 1980; Nicholson 1997; Vizenor 2003, pp. 36-37); the contextualizing processes of the right hemisphere (imagination, etc.) may now rub shoulders with the focused analytical capacities of the left hemisphere and vice versa, one supporting the other (see Kremer 2012 for further discussion). The trickster element in the form of somatic sense, ritualistic action, intuitive imagination, etc. comes face to face with the certainties reason tries to establish. When reason deteriorates into (one-dimensional) rationality (Marcuse, 1964) the trickster may be compelled to outrageous action and enter the house of Truths to steal sun, moon, and stars out of the box of tightly wrapped arguments. Participatory or shamanic concourse facilitates an ever-unfolding process of knowing as a practice of living in multiplicity.

In this concursive model of truths, in this world of shamanic ritual and mythic stories where trickster roams, evolving understanding and knowledge cannot find its point of alignment without vision (alignment of rational, emotional, and spiritual dimensions within a person and alignment with the social body and place). Truths cannot be achieved by means of the rational mind alone. The knowing of the body, the knowing of the heart, the knowing which comes from states of shifted awareness all need to inform agreed upon truths, they all need to align. Every consensus, temporary as it may be, has to withstand the challenges posed in verbal, rational discourse, yet such resolutions also have to withstand the challenges emerging from somatic, sexual, emotional, and spiritual experiences as the present embraces ancestral past, history, and ecological presence. Somatic knowing, intuition, and visionary insight need to see the light of the rational mind, while the mind needs to see the light that comes from other realms. This is not an easy task, obviously.

Humans will always remain challenged to reflect our resolutions, our truths in language, yet language is not the sole arbiter of truths in this process. This way we may appreciate scientific achievements not just abstractly or for the promise of their technological value, but also by connecting them to what our hearts know and what gender differences tell us or to what we have learned from myth and history. And we may appreciate them

by connecting them to our somatic knowing and what they may look like in the face of visions across past and future generations. I have also called this alternately the practice of participation or the nurturing conversation (Beyman et al., 2001). It is the work of preventing (or healing) dissociation from various aspects of life and of healing splits that have occurred (disembodiment, one-dimensional rationality, etc.). Its opposite is the social practice of normative dissociation (Kremer, 1994), the socially enforced splits from aspects of life that are integral to Indigenous presence. One might say that concursive social and personal practices open us to rhizomatics, to use the terminology of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), a theory and practice of “nomadic thought” that opposes totalizing and disciplining forms of theory and practice (“state thought”). “It is only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, “multiplicity,” that it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world” (p. 8). Concursive practices facilitate the richness of individual and cultural diversity and the validating appreciation of differences and their socio-ecological grounding as the trickster participates in the circle and makes his moves to keep the nurturing conversation going.

The tragedy of the Western mind is the conviction that closure, Truth, and certainty are possible and desirable goals. Viewed from a distance this appears to be not only a loss of wonder, presence, and comedy, but an altogether ludicrous folly in view of the historical realities human beings have been engaged with. The quest for ultimate scientific truths is so often blinkered and fails to recognize the comedy it is a part of. Sullivan (1982, p. 239) discussed

what Trickster’s play reveals: how ludicrous is every vision of life constructed of hierarchies without ironic wholeness or formal communication between one form and another. He reveals how static is the vision of life built on earthly corporeality without passage to sacred spirit of metamorphosis. (p. 239)

The fact that we have increasing evidence that the vast majority of the brain’s actions are unconscious and that thinking and reasoning are necessarily steeped in emotions (Damasio, 1994; LeDoux, 1998) does not seem to have impacted the nature or quality of our scientific quests in any significant way. The dualistic dance of the Apollonian and Dionysiac, as explored in Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, may receive some integrative facilitation

Postmodern Trickster Strands

from the depth of our physiological understanding as it cycles forth to the psych-spiritual and socio-cultural levels and back in tricksterish reverberations. A multi-layered map of rhizomes map have the capacity to both envision and embody the creativity and generativity of our human inquiries.

V. The Trickster at Work:

Ambiguous Postmodernity

The achievements of modernity, while hardly uncontested, are extraordinary. McGilchrist (2009), based on his extensive review of the literature, makes the persuasive case that these achievements have come at a significant price (as far as brain capacities are concerned). If find his argument particularly relevant, since it relates to a physiological understanding of trance states (see Kremer, in press). In an “ideal world” the two hemispheres, the two qualities of the brain, work in tandem; one excelling in attending to the details of reasoning and pragmatics, the other at contextualizing the findings of analytical thinking, with images of central importance in the process. Such integrative back and forth, one has to assume, can only be beneficial for survival and evolution. However, as McGilchrist points out, in modernity the master, the contextualizing right hemisphere, has become enslaved by its emissary, the left hemisphere. Instead of reason and the use of images as portals to understanding and self understanding, Marcuse’s one-dimensional rationality now seems to hold sway and represents a loss of imagination (see Omer & Kremer, 2003 for a longer discussion). This shift has been central to the making of the “Western world.” Instead of the left hemisphere serving the integrative power of the right hemisphere, it has usurped power, largely dismissed the importance of the right hemisphere, and created a hall of mirrors (where we know more of what we know about what we know) from which it not only has difficulty escaping, but even the desire for such an escape and balancing of the brain hemispheres has receded (all this notwithstanding the flourishing of the arts in modernity).

It is at this juncture that the trickster by the name of postmodernity makes an appearance.

The characteristics of postmodern trends emergent in the second half of the 20th century are prefigured by such philosophers as Nietzsche and Heidegger and embodied by Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard, and Foucault, among many others. They can be described as the breakdown of the hope for

singular Truths and the remembrance of the qualities of narrative realities as descriptions of participatory events. This is the time period when the trickster has made his entry. Spretnak (1999) distinguished between deconstructionist and ecological postmodernism. While the former is characterized by extreme relativism and fragmentation, the latter emphasized cosmological unfolding, experientialism, community, trust in the body, and process. Whether the cynical deconstructive or the ecological reconstructive side will win out remains to be seen. Violence may prove to be a helpmate or embodiment of the trickster—there are no guarantees in the his presence other than the promise of movement. Postmodern trends are ambiguous in their responses to the grand narratives of progress and control (Lyotard, 1984). Where the deconstruction of scientism and objectivism might lead is an unanswered question. The participatory concourse sketched above provides for a balancing process of grounded multiplicity.

Raven and coyote do not care; they care about getting things moving and shattering the halls of modernity, that is all. At times their stories have a constructive ending, at times disaster and violence are par for the course.

Derrida's central term *différance* opens the door out of the hall of mirrors. He saw the verb *a-venir*, in the a of *différance*, as the arrival of that which comes from outside the conceptual realms staked out by the conceptualizable, the thinkable of modernity (2005; Spivak, 2005). At the beginning of the movie Derrida (Dick & Kofman, 2002) the philosopher talked about potential or the space that trickster opens:

In general, I try to distinguish between what one calls the future and "l'avenir." The future is that which—tomorrow, later, next century—will be. There's a future which is predictable, programmed, scheduled, foreseeable. But there is a future, *l'avenir* (to come) which refers to someone who comes, whose arrival is totally unexpected. For me, that is the real future. That which is totally unpredictable. The Other who comes without me being able to anticipate their arrival. So, if there is a real future beyond this other known future, it's *l'avenir*, the coming of the Other when I am completely unable to foresee their arrival.

The unexpected, the unpredictable, the Other is embodied by the trickster. The trickster disturbs

programs and does not hesitate to throw one into the fertile void of the Old Norse Ginnungagap, the place of co-dependent arising. Or the richness of Buddhist Nibbana.

It is my suggestion that a part of this indigenous condition facilitated by integrative modes of consciousness and unlearning is the ever-unfolding narrative instability and chance within their specific cultural containers. The process of co-dependent arising of phenomenal worlds now can re-enter the awareness of modern peoples.

Baudrillard (1993) has ventured an interesting prophecy that describes the return of shamanic knowledge through the openings postmodern thinkers have created:

It is not even remotely a matter of rehabilitating the Aboriginals, or finding them a place in the chorus of human rights, for their revenge lies elsewhere. It lies in their power to destabilize Western rule. It lies in their phantom presence, their viral, spectral presence in the synapses of our brains, in the circuitry of our rocketship, as 'Alien'; in the way in which the Whites have caught the virus of origins, of Indianness, of Aboriginality, of Patagonicity. We murdered all this, but now it infects our blood, into which it has been inexorably transfused and infiltrated ... Revenge may be seen in the way in which the Whites have been mysteriously made aware of the disarray of their own culture, the way in which they have been overwhelmed by an ancestral torpor and are now succumbing little by little to the grip of 'dreamtime.' ... It is now becoming clear that everything we once thought dead and buried, everything we thought left behind forever by the ineluctable march of universal progress, is not dead at all, but on the contrary likely to return – not as some archaic or nostalgic vestige ... but with a vehemence and virulence that are modern in every sense. (pp. 137-138)

Baudrillard anticipated the work of the trickster on behalf of humanity's remembrance of indigenous or shamanic roots. So what is the return he hails all about? Returning to Derrida one might answer: What is not only different but deferred in *différance*, the non-name of things, is the realm toward which imagination reaches and from which imagination arises. The trickster is evoked to balance conceptual reifications and

universalizations as these are revealed not only as traces, but also as tracks that enable intercourse with the farthest reaches of our imagination where reason finds its accuracy in the liberative embodiment of its multiple destinies, an escape from the modern hall of mirrors that is reflective as well as self-reflective; it is an evocation of participatory presence and knowing. The deferral in the multiplicity of *différance* is neither the future arrival of Truth nor a Savior nor the emergence of the True Self, but the communal attempts at embodiment of discerning visions and visions discerned that presence the unforeseeable and embody participatory conceptions in narrative play. This is the difference between a universalizing or essentializing approach to the transpersonal and the praxis of transpersonal inquiries in a participatory paradigm.

As virtual realities and an abundance of information begin to triumph, as bureaucracies grow (together with an increase in rules and surveillance), as the image of reality fragments further, resentment and fear are rising. The modern self now engages in the play of social media and becomes a terminal of multiple electronic connections. Interestingly, the postmodern breakdown or breakthrough has similarities with indigenous times; Vizenor (1989) stressed the possibility that native peoples' oral cultures "have never been without a postmodern condition that enlivens stories and ceremonies" (p. x). It is my suggestion that a part of this indigenous condition facilitated by integrative modes of consciousness and unlearning is the ever-unfolding narrative instability and chance within their specific cultural containers. The process of co-dependent arising of phenomenal worlds now can re-enter the awareness of modern peoples.

The postmodernists have created lesions in the narrative universe of modernity through which an older way of being in the world can be remembered for the future. Shamanic practices appear to be one potential avenue to shatter the hall of mirrors in which modernity has ensconced itself. It is an ancient potential that the trickster of postmodernity may help us to actualize for the sake of our future.

VI. Yet Another Important Story, This One Too¹

One day the trickster Loki goes to the theater. Theater is one of his current loves. A play by the Spanish playwright Arrabal is featured. As Loki enters the foyer, much to his surprise, Fernando Arrabal grabs his arm and swiftly leads him back stage and then on to the stage. The

playwright challenges Loki to a game of pinball to prove the existence of the spirit of shamanism. It takes one million points for the proof. With the ironic gesture of a magician pulling a rabbit out of the hat, Arrabal hands Loki an iPad. It is projected on a large screen at the back of the stage. The words WILD WEST, JAIL, INDIAN VILLAGE, KILL DIRTY HARRY, SHERIFF show in large letters. Loki is, of course, not one to turn down a challenge and an opportunity to create mischief. "Once I reach one million points, that's proof of the existence of the spirit of shamanism." Arrabal affirms: "Yes, that's how the game is played, that's what is at stake." Loki gets impatient. The existence of the spirit of shamanism was all in his hands. He was bound and determined to end the reign of modernity and get the trickster fully into the game. He would shatter the hall of mirrors modernity had built. He was going to demonstrate his powers. He would provide definitive proof of the spirit of shamanism, something modernity had failed to accomplish. No better way than a game of chance! The manuals of mythology and shamanism would have to be rewritten to honor his name. Loki plays with great skill and excitement as the ball rolls through the Wild West pinball setting. The ball stays in the game, bounces through the Indian Village, Dirty Harry gets killed, the ball rolls through the bank twice, 950,000 points, 960,000, 962,000 ... The stagehands gather around him to get a close-up look. Loki pushes the buttons on the iPad screen with unnecessary force, shakes the tablet wildly, his thumbs in constant action, 980,000 and the ball is still up. It accelerates on the train tracks traversing the Wild West, hits the closed bank, almost enters the Indian Village, 982,000, 984,000. The ball obeys Loki's intense interventions, it submits to his trickster force. He only needs one million points. How could he lose now? 996,000, 998,000, 999,000. Loki goes crazy inside. The spirit of shamanism had chosen him to prove his existence. What a trick. 999,200, 999,600, 999,800, 999,900. At that moment the iPad goes dark and the LCD projector shows a blue screen with "no signal." Arrabal breaks into a big belly laugh and belts Derrida's deconstructive, yet optimistic, "l'avenir, l'avenir, l'avenir" to the tune of Beethoven's Figaro. Finally he shouts: "Vive la *différance*!" puts on a top hat, and bows to the audience.

References

- Adorno, Th. W. (1980). *Minima moralia (Gesammelte Schriften 4)*. Frankfurt, Germany: Suhrkamp Verlag.
- Apffel-Marglin, F. (1998). *The spirit of regeneration: Andean culture confronting Western notions of development*. London, UK: ZED Books.
- Arrabal. (1969). *The architect and the emperor of Assyria*. NY: Grove.
- Baudrillard, J. (1993). *Evil*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Beyman, R., Kremer, J. W., Sartor, L., Whitmore, J., & Wildwood, A. (2001). Coming to presence. In: *Proceedings of the 18th International Conference on the Study of Shamanism and Alternate Modes of Healing* (pp. 23-241). Berkeley, CA: Independent Scholars of Asia.
- Bringhurst, R. (1999). *A story as sharp as a knife*. Lincoln, NE: Bison Books.
- Bruner, J. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Byatt, A. S. (2011). *Ragnarök: The end of the gods*. New York, NY: Canongate.
- Damasio, A. R. (1994). *Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (2005). *Rogues: Two essays on reason* (P.-A. Brault & M. Naas, Trans.). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dumezil, G. (1959). *Loki*. Darmstadt, Germany: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Ferrer, J. N. (2002). *Revisioning transpersonal theory*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Habermas, J. (1994). *Legitimation crisis*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Hopcke, R. H. (1992). *A guided tour of the collected works of C. G. Jung*. Boston, MA: Shambhala.
- Hyde, L. (1999). *Trickster makes this world: Mischief, myth, and art*. New York, NY: North Point Press.
- Jung, C. G. (1959). On the psychology of the trickster figure. In *The collected works of C. G. Jung* (Vol. 9, Part 1, *The archetypes and the collective unconscious*, pp. 255-274). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- King, T. (2003). *The truth about stories*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kofman, A. Z. (Producer), & Dick, K. (Director). (2002). *Derrida* [Motion picture]. NY: Zeitgeist Video.
- Kremer, J. W. (1986). The human science approach as discourse. *Saybrook Review*, 6(1), 65-105.
- Kremer, J. W. (1992a). The dark night of the scholar. *ReVision*, Spring 1992, 14(4), 169-178.
- Kremer, J. W. (1992b). Whither dark night of the scholar? *ReVision*, Summer 1992, 15(1), 4-12.
- Kremer, J. W. (1994). *Looking for Dame Yggdrasil*. Red Bluff, CA: Falkenflug Press.
- Kremer, J. W. (2002). Radical presence. *ReVision*, 24(3), 11-20.
- Kremer, J. W. (2012). (Post)modern brain—shaman's brain: Evolutionary perspectives on shamanic processes and potentials. In D. Eigner, *Transformations of consciousness: Potentials for our future*. Vienna, Austria: Peter Lang.
- LeDoux, J. (1998). *The emotional brain*. London, UK: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Liotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-dimensional man*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- McGilchrist, I. (2009). *The master and his emissary*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Nicholsen, S. W. (1997). *Exact imagination, late work*. Boston, MA: MIT Press.
- Omer, A., & Kremer, J. W. (2003). Between Columbine and the twin towers: Fundamentalist culture as a failure of imagination. *ReVision*, 26(2), 37-40.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Radin, P. (1956). *The trickster*. New York, NY: Schocken.
- Ryan, A. J. (1999). *The trickster shift*. Vancouver, Canada: UBC Press.
- Sarbin, T. R. (Ed.). (1986). *Narrative psychology: The storied nature of human conduct*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Spivak, G. C. (2005). Class individual: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on Jacques Derrida. *Artforum International*, 43(7), 49-52.
- Spretnak, C. (1999). *The resurgence of the real*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Sullivan, L. (1982). Multiple levels of religious meaning in culture: A new look at Winnebago sacred texts. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 2(2), 221-247.
- Vizenor, G. (1984). *The people named the Chippewa: Narrative histories*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- Vizenor, G. (1989). A postmodern introduction. In G. Vizenor (Ed.), *Narrative chance* (pp. 3-16). Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.
- Vizenor, G. (1998). *Fugitive poses*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Vizenor, G. (2003). *Hiroshima Bugi*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.
- Vizenor, G. (2005). *The trickster of liberty*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Winkelman, M. (2010). *Shamanism*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

About the Author

Jürgen Werner Kremer, PhD, is a tenured faculty member at the Santa Rosa Junior College and also teaches at Saybrook University. He has published recent articles about the trickster and fundamental issues in the conception of transpersonal psychology, mythic storytelling, ethnoautobiography, and radical presence. He is the editor of *ReVision*, a journal of consciousness and transformation. He presently is involved with the preparations for the 30th International Conference on the Study of Shamanism and Alternative Modes of Healing, which convenes annually on Labor Day outside of San Francisco.

About the Journal

The *International Journal of Transpersonal Studies* is a peer-reviewed academic journal in print since 1981. It is published by Floragrades Foundation, and serves as the official publication of the International Transpersonal Association. The journal is available online at www.transpersonalstudies.org, and in print through www.lulu.com (search for IJTS).