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Duck Watch

Trickster Counting

My plan for the first volume of this journal was to have four issues of about four articles in each issue. Not only was the number quiet doable, the quaternary of it all seemed appropriate for my notions of Trickster as a holistic creative function. Well needless to say, Trickster will have his own way and Trickster will count in her own sequence. Health problems with authors and the editor delayed the production of some essays and the publication of the third issue. I was faced with a short third issue that would be slightly late or switching to a three-issue volume with the third issue being somewhat long. I have wrestled back and forth with this trying to figure what is the best policy, and I have decided to go ahead with a third short issue because I want this journal to be, not only peer reviewed, but also to be prompt with the publishing of author's essays.

This numerical difference with trickster research should be telling. We all use numbers to control and order the universe, and when we talk of numbers we talk of them as though their semiotic content was stripped down to monovalent count status to, of course, be used with any set of objects. Some even believe that the universe itself is a numeric construction whose mathematical description is not only the most accurate process of describing the universe, but that somehow numerical truth and mathematical formula are written into the very fabric of the universe. We metaphorize numbers into the very thoughts of the Mind of God, and make the Creator the great Geometer, or we make mathematics into the secret code of the universe that mankind, the great counter, can manipulate.

However, despite such numeric idolatry and despite our cultural pretensions that numbers are somehow are not really “semiotic” like other signs, numbers really are just another set of signs and, I think, just as subject to Trickster’s semiotic play as any other sign. If Trickster is the enemy of order, surely the cultural control feature of numeric operations would be something where Trickster plays. Such constructs as mathematical monsters, fractals, or irrational numbers play recursive disruption of the established orders. The specter of numeric worship, as it appears in gambling delusions, lotto fantasies (corporate, governmental, commercial or individual), numerological scams, and the whole bizzare dance of recursive mathematical operation continually stretches and challenges of the boundaries established by the control measures of numeration. Gematria, letter counting, and even Jungian symbolic use of numbers become devices which Trickster uses to challenge the more limited notions of quantification.

So the problems I, as editor, have with quantifying articles and issues of the first volume of this journal have become prime ground for Trickster to play with disordering numbers. Given the abuses of “bottom line” thinking, or the innumeracy of the educated public, or the awe in which we hold statistical predictions or calculus proved theories, perhaps it is just as well that schemes and notions of numeric consistency might be garbaged by Trickster.

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