"How do you politely explain to someone that you had always believed him a moron as well as a fool?" – Marginality, Transformations and Identity in Robin Hobb's Beloved

University of Tampere
School of Language, Translation and Literary Studies
English Language and Literature
Master's Thesis
Heidi Räsänen
May 2016

Tutkielmassa tarkastellaan yhdysvaltalaisen fantasia- ja tieteiskirjailija Robin Hobbin henkilöhahmoa Beloved, joka esiintyy narrina hänen kolmessa fantasiakirjatrilogiassaan *The Farseer* (1995–1997)*, The Liveship Traders* (1998–2000) ja *The Tawny Man* (2001–2003). Beloved on salaperäinen hahmo, joka kirjasarjojen aikana esiintyy useassa, erilaisessa persoonassa joilla jokaisella on toisistaan erillinen elämä ja sukupuoli-identiteetti. Belovedin hahmossa on monia yhtäläisyyksiä kujeilija-hahmoihin sekä niiden modernimpiin muotoihin, narreihin, joita esiintyy läpi kirjallisuushistorian. Narrien tavoin Beloved rikkoo ja ylittää rajoja, sillä useiden persooniensa ansiosta hänellä on kokemusta elämästä yhteiskunnan eri tasoilla, syrjitystä hylkiöstä ihailtuun aateliseen. Beloved myös käsittelee huumorin keinoin arkoja ja vaikeita aiheita, muuttaa tarinan edetessä muotoaan useammallakin eri tavalla ja näkee omien sanojensa mukaan tulevaisuuteen. Tarkoitus on siis tutkia, voiko Belovedin lukea mukaan narreihin ja jos voi, niin mistä syystä. Kuinka Beloved toteuttaa ja ilmentää mahdollista narriuttaan, ja mitkä ovat ne aiheet ja asiat, joita hänen hahmonsa kommentoi?

Kujeilija -hahmon historiaa selvitetään pääasiassa Lewis Hyden *Trickster Makes This World* -teoksen pohjalta. Myöhempien, länsimaisten narrihahmojen historiaa avataan Sandra Billingtonin ja Faye Ranin narritutkimusta avuksi käyttäen. Marginaalisuus, muodonmuutokset sekä sukupuoli- ja identiteettikysymykset ovat teemoja, jotka usein liitetään kujeilijoihin ja narreihin, ja nämä teemat muodostavat puitteet tutkielmalle. Myös narrien marginaalisuutta käsiteltäessä Faye Ranin narritutkimus on keskeisessä osassa, mutta sen lisäksi tukena käytetään myös Ashley Tobiasin ajatuksia narreista toiseuden edustajina. Kai Mikkosen ajatuksia metamorfoosista lainataan narreihin liittyviä muodonmuutoksia käsiteltäessä, ja erityisesti sukupuolen muutoksien osalta tukeudutaan Judith Butlerin performatiivisuuden ajatukseen Gill Jaggerin teoksen *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative* kautta. Identiteettiä koskeva teoria pohjataan suurimmaksi osaksi Peter Burken ja Jan E. Stetsin teokseen *Identity Theory*.

Edellä mainittujen lähdeteosten kautta analysoidaan Belovedin yhteiskunnallista asemaa, ruumiin ja mielen muutoksia, sekä hänen eri persooniensa rakentumista ja sukupuoli-identiteettiä. Narrit ovat usein ulkopuolisia, ja ilmentävät piirteitä, jotka nähdään valtavirrasta poikkeavina tai jopa vieroksuttuina. Myös Beloved on jokaisessa persoonassaan ulkopuolinen, ja hänen ulkopuolisuutensa ilmentyminen vaihtelee syrjinnästä sokeaan ihannoimiseen. Beloved myös käy tarinan aikana läpi monia muodonmuutoksia, muun muassa identiteetistä toiseen.

Tutkielman aikana selviää, että Beloved ilmentää narriutta kokonaisuudessaan, eikä vain ollessaan Fool. Älykkyytensä turvin hän käyttää edeltäjiensä tapaan hyväkseen marginaalisuuttaan ja itseensä kohdistuvia ennakkoluuloja edetäkseen profeetan tiellään. Kuten narrit usein, hän myös käyttäytyy antisosiaalisesti, mutta samalla, paradoksaalisesti, hänen antisosiaaliset tekonsa tuovat mukanaan usein myönteisiä vaikutuksia.

Avainsanat: narri, marginaalisuus, metamorfoosi, sukupuoli, identiteetti, Robin Hobb

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

In the ever-changing world of literature, drama and art, there are certain character types that keep appearing throughout centuries, and indeed even throughout millennia. One of these is the trickster. Known by many names, tricksters appear as clowns, jesters, lords of misrule, vices and fools, and they can be found in most cultures and their mythologies and folklore.

Modern examples of the continuum of this character type, and among the most well-known, include Shakespeare's Feste from *Twelfth Night* and Falstaff from *Henry V*, and Samuel Beckett's Clov from *Endgame*. In popular culture, among many others there are the Joker from *Batman* and Homer Simpson, who can be considered as a modern version of the "country bumpkin", an ignorant and entertaining, yet still socially disruptive clown. As the mediums of cultural expression change, so does the clown mutate, but it is nevertheless always there (Robb 2007, 1), sometimes establishing and maintaining, at other times questioning, testing and even destroying social norms, rules and traditions and human nature itself. They also work as "truth tellers" by exposing the folly and pretentions of the society and the usual inaccuracy of generally accepted truths. What allows them to do this is their societal station; they simultaneously live as outsiders in the margins of the society yet right in the midst of it, which provides them with the unique position of being able to freely manoeuvre around it while not being restricted by its expectations and norms. Seeing and knowing the society from top to bottom and inside out, then, allows a fool to assume a perspective that is, if not all-encompassing, then at least much broader than that of those who are restricted by it.

Connected to the idea of the instability of the nature of fool characters is the concept of *metamorphosis,* which "indicates a marked, more or less abrupt change of one thing or form to another, and evokes the possibility of a complete alteration" (Mikkonen 1997, 1). Of this, good examples in the framework of fool characters would be the many shape shifting tricksters found in various mythologies such as the trickster god Loki in Norse mythology and the Japanese *kitsune,* a spirit fox capable of changing its form. In Beloved's case the idea of transformation, then, is very relevant because the changes from one identity into another are a clear case of shape shifting.

Margaret Astrid Lindholm Ogden, though more often known by a pen name, Robin Hobb, is an American author writing mostly contemporary fantasy fiction appreciated by both readers and critics alike.

Riddled with fantasy elements from dragons to magic, Hobb's fantasy can be considered a textbook case of high fantasy. However, in the ever expanding fantasy market her books have been noticed, I believe, for the reason that even though she uses tropes, themes and an overall framework typical for most books of the genre, she does so with her own, unique style and her characters and worlds are carefully constructed and believable. As such, her writing is a good example of the idea that it is not important what one tells about, but how one tells it.

While Hobb is good at creating worlds and environments which seem real and lived in despite their fantastic features, in my opinion her strongest point lies in building characters and relationships between them. In addition, her characters are built as full and round with their own backgrounds, motives and experiences that shape them into the persons we are introduced to and throughout the story. A good example of this is the target of my analysis. Beloved is a very ambiguous character, whose nature is ever changing since, in addition to the base identity of Beloved, they have three different identities called the Fool, Amber and Lord Golden, and their sex, background and even true name are left mostly ambiguous. Because the unconfirmed status of their sex, I will refer to both the base identity of Beloved and the identity of the Fool using the singular *they*, as it expresses best the elusiveness of this character and the overall shifting nature of trickster, and using the binary *s/he* or *she/he* would suggest that they belong to either of the two sexes when it does not appear to be the case. However, when referring to Lord Golden, whose gender is male, and to Amber, the female identity, I will use respectively the conventional *he* and *she*. Moreover, from here on I will refer to Beloved by the capital B. This is to prevent confusion in places where the singular *they* might easily be confused with the plural *they* when referring to B.

The fact that B is only seen through the eyes of the other characters creates an additional layer of ambiguity. B is never in the position of the narrator themselves and thus they are always described and defined largely by someone else. As such, as an outsider and often also an outcast, B is a good example of the marginality and otherness which often mark fool characters. In addition, they consider themselves a prophet, which further connects them to fools and tricksters.

The goal of this thesis therefore is to examine whether B can actually be considered belonging among the descendants of tricksters, and if so, what is their focus of criticism or commentary and how do they conduct this criticism or commenting. First I will concentrate on defining fools and their history, then give a short account of the world of the books and B themselves before finally moving on to the analysis itself.

The world of the stories B appears in is known as *the Realm of the Elderlings*, and expands through three trilogies published between 1997 and 2003; *The Farseer, The Tawny Man* and *The Liveship Traders*.

Academic research on the subject of clowns and fools is plentiful, but as most of it concentrates on real fools in history and in different cultures and societies, famous fool characters in theatre or in the classics of western literature, there is relatively little research done on fools in contemporary fiction, and even less so on the fools of fantasy literature.

However, as the otherness, marginality and the constantly changing nature of fool characters is well researched in the scope of culture overall, it provides me with a good context and background to begin my research and the analysis of B.

2. Fools

As a character type that has long roots burrowing deep into the history of mankind, fools have their origin in ancient myths and tales that have carried on from one century, or even millennia, to another, perhaps changing somewhat along the way, but still staying essentially the same. As such, it is necessary to first perform a closer examination of these roots and the origin of all fools, clowns and jesters: the *trickster*. After this I will embark to study the concept of the fool itself, what factors in history have contributed to the development of its contemporary form, and what kind of examples of actual fools can be found from medieval England.

2.1. Trickster – the Ancient Ancestor

When discussing fools and clowns, it is necessary to also speak about the roots of the character type. Tricksters are constantly mobile "lords of in-between" found in almost every mythology (Hyde 1998, 6). A few of the most famous examples would be Loki, the shape shifting Norse god of mischief; Hermes, the Greek god of boundaries and transitions; Isis, the Egyptian trickster goddess and protector of the dead who associated with slaves, sinners, the downtrodden and aristocrats, the wealthy and rulers alike; Krishna, the eighth incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu who is often depicted as a prankster and a thief; Eshu, a trickster god from the West African Yoruba religion and the cunning Raven and Coyote from several native American cultures (Hyde 1998, 8–10). Tricksters are figures of in-between because they never assume one, fixed perspective, role or position for long, but instead are constantly mobile and only pass by every place they come across, that is, they are perpetually in the

stage of transition. They stay only for a while enlivening places with mischief (Hyde 1998, 6), disruption and mayhem, but their goal is not just to cause trouble to others, but also to give them the opportunity to see and think things from views they had not previously even thought possible. As such, they can be considered as a manner of temporary guides: tricksters depart as suddenly as they arrive, often leaving those affected by them confused, but, having rattled their stagnant views and opinions, at the same time more enlightened than they were before (Hyde 1998, 6). The actions of a trickster should not, however, be taken merely as temporary inconveniences because they always leave traces of their passing, and their effect on the society or the whole world is always a major, more permanent one.

In tales from different mythologies, the descriptions and roles of tricksters are various and often contradictory: they are greedy and their appetite is what initially drives their wanderings while they simultaneously educate others about the perils of greed, they are shameless, drawn to dirt, profanities, untruth and theft, intelligent and wise, yet often also steal themselves and can be hopelessly stupid and clueless. However, despite the fact that they have an inclination to engage in behaviour that is often judged by the rest of the society as harmful, disgusting or otherwise disruptive, they are also regularly honoured as creators of culture (Hyde 1998, 8) and consequently dubbed as "hero-tricksters" (Carlyon 2002, 14). A concrete example of this would be that they are often depicted as stealing essential goods from gods, but surprisingly while not keeping the stolen boons themselves, they bring their spoils to earth for the enjoyment and assistance of the mortals. Such is the case with Prometheus, a Titan from Greek mythology who stole fire from the heavens and introduced humans to the new, powerful and helpful element for their benefit. Hermes helped mankind by stealing the heavenly cattle from Zeus and bringing it to earth as a source of food and hides for humans, so it is not a coincidence that he is, among other things, the protector of both thieves and shepherds.

The Raven from the native American Haida culture also embodies all the contradictory attributes mentioned above. The fact that his actions not only bring forth the sun's light upon the world, but that he is also the immortal creator of mankind and responsible for the separation of sexes speaks for his divine origin. Yet, in the stories of the Haidan mythology we find him stealing food, light, and affection, most often accomplishing his thefts by changing into anything that best suits the situation. He steals the sun's light from an old man guarding it by turning into a human child in the belly of the man's daughter to eventually become his grandson and gain his trust. In order to seduce a fisherman's wife, he changes into the fisherman; when the fisherman and his friends, upon discovering his deed, beat him into a

pulp and toss him into the sea, he changes into a salmon to prevent sinking deeper and escapes. In one story, we also meet this great divine creature in the bottom of an oft-used latrine after having once more been caught in a misdeed and violently attacked by his victims (Reid and Bringhurts, 48). Tricksters are, then, essentially antisocial figures, but the results of their actions are often paradoxically beneficial to society. Raven might have stolen sun's light from its' owner, but upon carrying it away he bestowed it on the whole world for the enjoyment of all creatures.

This contradiction in their behaviour is something that is in the essence of the character type and a vital part of their nature in-so-much that they can with good reason be called *the embodiment of paradox*. They are simultaneously creators and destroyers, givers and thieves, those who benefit from the gullibility of others but who are also often tricked themselves. They do not stand on the side of either good or evil but are responsible for both, have no values or morals, but through their actions they bring both good and evil as well as values and morals into being (Radin in Hyde 1998, 10). This happens, I believe, because when engaging into antisocial and amoral behaviour, they contrast themselves with what is perceived as good and moral and thus participate in its creation. This, in turn, is a good example of the side of tricksters that maintains the society and its values. By testing the values, morals and structures of society with their seemingly antisocial behaviour, they serve as challengers whose constant friction with it keeps it flexible and endurable. The side that disrupts the set values and morals, on the other hand, is expressed when a trickster presents an idea from the outside or from the margins that contradicts with the dominant ideas in the centre. By doing this the trickster collapses the cultural pattern, makes it senseless and "reveals the material whose exclusion created the order in the first place, and its illusion of purity" (Radin in Hyde 1998, 8). This "excluded material" could be anything from the margins, the experience of those discriminated by society for their ethnicity, nationality, physical and/ or mental condition, gender, sex or their sexual preference. They thrive on the flaws, fissures and fault-lines in society, and exploit the weaknesses, fears and longings that are intensified by the imbalances and inadequacies in the society they live in (Wood 2010, 72).

Other that the idea of contradiction, there is another concept very essential when regarding the trickster: *lack.* As Hyde puts it, the trickster seems to have "no way, no nature, no knowledge" (1998, 43); they are devoid of any instinct and wit, which means that, if they desire to have any skills or attributes at all, they must resort to imitation. This desire is, in turn, born from the need to fill the void with a skill or knowledge demanded by any given situation. This is, in a way, linked with the unstopping nature of the character; they must

constantly be on the move, not only spatially but also on the level of personal identity, from one way, state of being and a set of skills to another in order to survive. Because of this, the trickster could be described as a skill-less, empty void which assumes ways, natures, knowledge and skills always from the outside, but is unable to form any on its own accord.

Being in a position such as this, having to always rely on someone or something else to survive, could be considered as a very weak and dependent one. However, in a true trickster fashion of turning the tables, the character turns the weakness of having no innate skills into an advantage because imitation in itself is a skill, and a very powerful one; having no other skills than imitation gives the trickster the access to any and every set of skills imaginable. In short, they need no other skills than imitation, which then becomes a part of their power (Hyde 1998, 43). Still, if we state that tricksters are essentially voids, the implications of this statement should be addressed. According to our understanding so far, everything has to have an origin, even voids that are basically nothing. And if a trickster is a void, what inspires its everlasting quest to assume new skills, and where does this inspiration generate from and reside? As tricksters are driven by hunger, greed and lust, can we then gather that it is desire, an unstoppably strong will which drives them on and which lies in the centre of all their actions?

Void is a space devoid of matter, a vacuum, and stays empty as long as there is no matter to draw in. However, when there is matter available, the void begins to suck it in. Therefore, it might be said that emptiness is in the constant state of attempting to fill itself. Applying this thought to tricksters, one could say that being voids, they are content with their empty state as long as there is nothing to take influence from, but as soon as a potential target approaches, they start taking in their attributes and skills to fill their innate emptiness.

Being able to change their repertoire of ways at will, the trickster can adapt according to the situation and the need caused by the changing world. This is, perhaps, why in so many folktales the role of trickster is assigned to a creature of notable adaptability, such as coyote, fox, hare, monkey or Corvidae birds. Trickster-like qualities other than adaptability are also connected to these animals. In most cultures where they have a culturally significant role, coyotes and foxes are considered highly intelligent, cunning, stealthy and deceitful, but also often dumb and easily tricked. In addition to cunning, hares are connected to good fortune due to their almost miraculous fertility, which as such suggests active sexual drive that is not unfamiliar to the members of the trickster family. In most places where monkeys and humans live side by side, monkeys practice theft to sustain themselves and thus qualities such as opportunism and unscrupulousness are connected to them. Crows and ravens are deemed

among the most intelligent animals on earth, known for their skilful, acrobatic flying, playfulness and ability to adapt into their surroundings.

To continue with the theme of imitation, it is essential to note that a character who can change their nature and shape into another and "can encrypt his own image, distort it, cover it up" (Hyde 1998, 51), entails the idea of changing identity. And if the trickster can change their shape from within and out at will, can an original identity be found? Does an original Loki, Eshu, or Coyote even exist? Hyde also contemplates on this by aptly asking, who is the Real Loki? (Hyde 1998, 53) With all its different identities, it would be convenient to compare the trickster to an actor who can change roles at any time. I do not think that this comparison could hold on closer inspection, however, because an actor has, in the end, his or her own, basic identity that remains in the background even when s/he is playing a role. The original self might be subdued during the process of acting, but it is still there. An actor also reverts back to that basic identity, to the original self, when the day is done and the curtain falls. It is difficult to imagine a person without any original identity because we feel that there must be some form of basic person in every human being, that it is a part of human nature to have one and deviation from it, such as multiple personality disorder, is considered an abnormality. Hyde seems to agree with this because he remarks that it is a habit to imagine a true self behind the images, but it is sometimes "difficult to know if that self is really there, or just the product of our imaginings" (Hyde 1998, 53).

As stated above, tricksters often command great power like imitation, and are granted divine freedom such as being able to travel between different realms, but there is one more power that can be added into the list of their potency; as tricksters might, by bringing into the light alternative truths and revealing material that is excluded from the dominant centre, help someone to see into the heart of things. Thus they can have a touch of prophet about them (Hyde 1998, 283). This idea of having prophetic powers does not mean that the trickster can see into the future or suggest the ability to grasp the one and only truth about the world; rather than spelling out eternal truths the prophecy of the trickster topples the centre and the conventional beliefs, and reveals the plenitude and complexity of the world (Hyde 1998, 289). This is the case with the thief Krishna, who, after all the pranks he makes, disappears and therefore in a fashion, "steals himself away" leaving the target of his pranks perplexed and confused. In this way, he does not give explanation as to his motivations for his pranks, nor reveals whatever goals he might have had for making them, and thus by leaving them completely open for interpretation, reveals to his victims the world of plurality of meaning (Hyde 1998, 290).

Another facet of the trickster's prophetic power is exposing lies, and this has to do with their insatiable appetite. In the Greek mythology, the oracles of Hermes are the so-called Bee Maidens whose prophecies depend on whether their bellies are full or empty, because when they are full of special honey, food of the gods, they like to tell the truth, but if they go hungry, they "buzz about and tell lies" (Hyde 1998, 291). As divine authorities far above mortals, gods are seen as the divine rulers according to whose rules the mortals should behave, and thus the givers of the seemingly constant, unchanging truths. This makes them and their laws the centre of any religion. When the bee-maidens eat the food meant for gods, they are granted a morsel of the gods' power and hence satisfied. Satisfied as they are, they are content with repeating the eternal truth of the gods. But if they go hungry, they instead take a stance against the authority and begin telling different prophecies, different truths. This is not to say that the "lies" they tell if hungry are indiscriminately the real truths or more accurate than the eternal truths, but they are lies only from the perspective of the gods and their "eternal" wisdom. Hyde points out that there is a connection between full, satisfied, bellies and speaking the truth, and I agree, because when one has their needs satisfied, they do not feel the need to start questioning the conditions that allow them to be satisfied and thus gladly speak for those prevailing conditions. However, when one's hunger is not satisfied, and extending this to the social level, has their needs neglected and their rights denied from them, they would naturally want to voice their own, alternative truths like the bee-maidens their supposed "lies" that go against the truths that are generally accepted. However, these "lies" are only lies from the perspective of the prevailing system of ideology and values. As Hyde puts it:

> When the well fed speak the truth, they are passing the artifice of their situation off as an eternal verity. In that case, the lies that come from empty stomachs serve to strip the "eternal" from the "verity", exposing it for what it is, a human creation subject to change.
> (292)

Through his oracles, Hermes's prophecies reveal "the hidden joints holding an old world together" (Hyde 1998, 292), and give the opportunity for the alternative, local truths to reveal themselves. This is why trickster characters are often, for example in African American literature, used to show how one can fight a system of oppression from within. Because of their prominence in postcolonial literature, they are well studied in this framework.

Especially after the 1950s, tricksters were begun to be extensively studied, partly because they matched the spirit of the age which was beginning to stand up against oppression and established norms on many fronts: racism, gender roles, the model of heteronormative nuclear family, for instance. This happened to such a great degree that some researchers and critics in the field of literary studies begun to see the attention given and the importance granted to them as excessive and the trope as overrated. Carlyon even calls the decades of this research height as a "love affair" (2002, 14) with the glorified trickster, and discusses what to him is very problematic regarding the trope. His first argument for the trickster being overrated as a target of study comes from the assumption that the definition of the trope is neutral and hazy enough to include anyone that is inclined to resist the authority in one way or another: "Anyone who looked cross-eyed at authority became a hero-trickster" (ibid.). In addition, he criticizes the way the term trickster has become often applied without constraint to any comic figure, were it fictional or real (such as real-life comedians) who seemingly snide at authority through comedy.

Considering how the trickster can indeed take part in both challenging authority and status-quo and upholding them, therefore completely contradicting itself, Carlyon's criticism is not far-fetched and his frustration at anyone even slightly anarchistic being labelled as a trickster is very understandable. To count anyone who offers their criticism cloaked in comedy a trickster, jester or a fool would be easy, and a great part of the problem comes from the very vagueness of the definition of the character. Even those who have done research on the character do not clearly agree about what should and should not be included into the definition. But does this make the character so vaguely defined that it prevents fruitful discussion? As vague as the definition may seem, it should be kept in mind that it is in the very nature of tricksters to be contradictory, and thus accusing them for being something that is ingrained in their nature and then dismissing them because of it seems only to prevent from thinking tricksters any further. As contradiction personified, why could they not have the ability to both sustain *and* harm the system? Tricksters do not always do these two things simultaneously, but only on a case-to-case basis and therefore they are not contradicting themselves and their agenda right then and there. In addition, tricksters and their descendants do differ in their behaviour even though they do share an abundance of similarities, and this is what Carlyon seems to be missing in his article. He talks about comedians as real-life jesters, and how they, regardless their jokes that at first seem to criticize those in power, actually more often maintains that power (17). Still, this is possible for a trickster as we have seen above, and not really a great exception within their behaviour.

As vague as the definition of trickster may seem and Carlyon's worry about it being too easy a figure to praise for its anarchy that is easy to see anywhere understandable, as it is very easy to assign any comic relief or a comedian into this group, tricksters do have some clearly defined qualities as will be seen, and not each and every anarchist or comedian who joke and jest at the expense of those in power can be included into their midst.

As we have seen above, the trickster is a character that lives in the periphery, occasionally charging into the centre, shaking the conventional beliefs and thought patterns sometimes enforcing them, and other times breaking them down to reveal the world of possibilities beyond before vanishing once again. However, this interaction is not only one-sided, the trickster does not simply charge in by force at any time it desires, but is actually let in by us because they are a way to deal with issues and difficult topics that we know we need to address and discuss even though we might feel uncomfortable and even afraid to do so. We invite them in because it is a part of the human nature to ponder all aspects of its existence, even the subjects considered taboo, and this is where the trickster comes to play as a safe, outsourced way to deal with them because then it is not directly us discussing the difficult topics, it is the character of the trickster, that is, someone else. We might not welcome them in with the door fully open and with open arms, but feigning forgetfulness we do not close the door completely and leave it ajar just enough for the fox or the hare to slip through.

Tricksters change their form and alter their stance when the situation so demands, and because of their ability to move from realm to realm and therefore see things from many different perspectives, they can speak prophecies that reveal the complexity and ambiguity of the world and meaning as well as expose the artifice of the established truths. These are all qualities that still prevail in the modern fool character, and I will now proceed to examine exactly how.

2.2. Defining Fools

Before proceeding to talk about the character trope as it appears in history, culture and literature, it is in order to first establish its definition and the specific member of the fool family I will be concentrating on. It is also necessary to state at this point that as the paradigm concerning the trope I have chosen the Western one, since the character of the Fool follows the Western fool tradition closely, and the world they reside in resembles medieval England to a great extent.

Ranging from the motley-wearing court jesters, circus clowns, mime-clowns and wise fools to the rascally picaros, buffoons, the simple country bumpkins, silent film clowns and ritual clowns, the family residing under the umbrella term "trickster" is vast and plentiful. This is much due to its long history which has enabled its members to effectively procreate and change whenever there has been a pressure for it by the society and culture, this is not a straightforward task. To confuse things even further, most scholars who have concerned themselves about this topic and this particular character group seem to have their own ideas about what the members of the family should be like, how to categorize them, and what kinds of attributes should be appointed to a given category. Whereas David Robb uses the term *clown* as the epitome of the trope, whose extended family all fools, jesters, picaros, vices and tricksters are, to Sandra Billington and Faye Ran the decisive, primary archetype is *the fool*, which then branches out to all the other types.

Because it is the term given to the parent character type of all of the mentioned types, one must admit that it would be tempting to employ the term trickster to function as the main term, but as it is usually associated with the character found in historical manifestations of culture such as mythologies and folktales, and as such refers to the ancient ancestor of the family and one whose powers are much greater than its modern offspring, the same term would not apply very well here.

It would seem that the term used for the contemporary characters of the trope is usually either *fool* or *clown*. Still, the types called by these two terms seem to have interchangeable qualities, which greatly blurs whatever boundary that might exist between them. Ran describes the fool as a person who is both ridiculous and inferior, represents the failure and its consequences, who does not function according to given social values and standards and represents values that are rejected by the group (2007, 26). She further notes that fool portrayals often "include detailed descriptions of physical uniqueness or deformity and psychic or behavioural deviation", insomuch that they ultimately violate the human image,

and turn that violation into a show (ibid). Similar description of psychical, emotional and bodily deviation is given by Ashley Tobias, according to whom clowns are characters whose "bodies, psyche, memory, emotion, desire, motivation and language are all in a state of ever increasing, grotesque degeneration" (2007, 39). This, as they are thus unable to take part in the normal function of the society, makes them social outcasts that often assume a marginal position in relation to society.

As taking into account all fool and clown types in one thesis is impossible, rather than trying to grasp the essence of every type of fool that has ever existed, the type mainly relevant here is the Western, contemporary one who are "frequently poetic and reflective, and their performance not necessarily funny but designed to stimulate meaningful contemplation" (Tobias 2007, 37). This definition comes close to the Shakespearean wise fool, for example Feste or Falstaff, who seem to know and understand much more about the world than the other characters of the play, and often point out their follies and shatter their illusions of concepts such as religion, power and love. Sharing the quality of being creatures of transitions with the trickster-ancestor, modern fools also often seem to be very mobile even to the point of belonging nowhere. In *Twelfth Night* Feste is told to have been absent from his master Olivia's household for a long time, and it is implied that he is a very restless a spirit, often embarking on travels and freelance fooling near and far. Clov in *Endgame* is the sole character with the ability to move about, while his master is paralyzed and bound to a chair, and Nagg and Nell crammed into trash cans in which they remain for the duration the play. Possessing his own disability, Clov is unable to sit and is thus forced to endlessly walk about (not unlike the Raven who is forced to endlessly wander ushered by his inability to resist his hunger) obeying, or not, Hamm's orders.

Albeit the words *fool* and *clown* are often used interchangeably, when we narrow down the scope of examination to discuss the Shakespearean fool rather than the character type as a whole, the crucial difference between the two concepts emerges (Rampaul, 2012).

In Shakespeare, the fool is more of a professional entertainer, a jester whose wisdom comes from life-experience as well as the knowledge and understanding of human nature, while the clown is rather a common rustic or a country bumpkin whose simple, Forrest Gump-like, wisdom arises from ignorance and/or innocence. Regarding the topic of my thesis, the most important variation of the fool is the Shakespearean wise fool, and therefore I will use this type to guide my analysis when approaching the person of B in the analysis sections.

2.3. Historical Origins of the Western Fool

As I am attempting to draw a more comprehensive picture of what a fool, and particularly the Western fool is, next I will concentrate on the historical celebrations and events associated with fools and see how they have contributed to the development of the character. The origins of the contemporary Western fool character can be traced back to the actual fools, fool-games and fool traditions of medieval England. Even though the word "fool" is usually used today as an abusive word for someone who behaves or speaks in a manner that lacks intelligence or good judgment, in medieval England it referred to much more than just a foolish individual. In those times, it conjured up a very specific image of a figure in cap and bell (Billington 1984, 1), with a multi-coloured or black and white hose and a tunic, possibly also carrying a sceptre with an animal head decorating its tip, who behaved in an inappropriate manner either unwittingly or on purpose. Still, regardless that usually one associates the iconic, motley wearing court jester engaged in entertaining its audience with both cuttingly witty wordplay and finely skilled acrobatics with the courts of the medieval England, it was in France where the fool, or *sot*, first begun to truly flourish as the leader of carnival entertainment. In England the church's own ecclesiastical Feast of Fools, originally a Roman festival at the beginning of the year celebrated by the whole society regardless of one's social status (Harris 2011, 12) which later spread all over Europe, was subdued in England by the fourteenth century. Meanwhile in France, regardless of active attempts of suppression, the feast, however, continued to be embraced by the lower clergy until the sixteenth century (Billington 1987, 2).

Although being subdued in England, the Feast still managed to survive since it could not be completely oppressed, and later divided into several celebrations scattered around the year. These feasts were marked by a selected lord of misrule leading people in singing "wanton and diabolical" songs through the night, participating in ring dancing and other games and general foolish behaviour such as stripping naked (Billington 1987, 2). In addition to the lord of misrule, a fool to lead and guide the celebration and fool-games, all the feasts had one specific characteristic in common around which they concentrated. Taking place in the feasts was the inversion of power and status, and thus a brief revolution in which the low and meek became powerful, the powerful lost their social influence and were humbled, the idiot was crowned a king, and normally honoured practices such as sermons, hymns and prayers were ridiculed and parodied. Later the practice of mockery during the feast spread to other official practices outside the church including grammars and legal texts (Haikka 2005, 12). Thus the feasts

allowed everyone to drop the social roles and masks, and for a brief moment, act in a true, anarchic fool fashion and forget rational, civil behaviour in favour of folly.

As said above, even though the Feast of Fools and fool practices were strongly subdued in England, the fool still survived, as references to fools and descriptions of foolish behaviour in festivals and rural settings can be found from writings throughout the medieval period. In the rural form, the fool was meeker in their appearance and rougher in their features than the colourful, often showy, court jester. This suggests that even though fool behaviour was disapproved of, it was still seen as an unavoidable part of medieval life, and when they could not entirely stifle it, the higher clergy and the intellectuals merely ignored it (Billington 1987, 13).

Taking into account the strong influence and the great role the church had in the medieval England, it is perhaps surprising that even with all its power, it could not put an end to fool feasts regardless the active attempts of doing so. This might partly be explained by the fact that also some members of the church, especially those of the lover clergy, did support the feasts by celebrating them along with common people. Still, the survival of the fool might have more to do with the fact that people need, and have always needed, a counterpart to social propriety and rational behaviour, a way to vent the need for, once in a while, behave in a ridiculous manner. The fool, then, embodies the desires and longings that lurk beneath the rational, logical thinking, and works as a convenient, safe way of not only surfacing those desires but also bringing them under inspection. As the trickster has its foundations in mythology, so does every fool, and what Campbell says of mythology can be applied also to fools; mythology is symptomatic of archetypal urges within the depths of the human psyche, and a traditional vehicle of man's profoundest metaphysical insights (1949, 222).

While trickster and fools belong to the same lineage, the trickster is a part of the very core of mythological imagery which, according to Frye, constructs the grammar of literary archetypes (1971, 135). This is why the trickster behaves for what they are, like an archetype and a trope, thus possessing abilities and powers akin to gods. In myths they can literally change their form as they wish, go anywhere they want and so forth without much difficulty. The fool, in its modern form and no longer the kind of archetype Frye discusses, is but one of several evolutionary variations of the trickster, but does often possess these same abilities albeit in a subtler, metaphorical manner. Unlike Loki who changed from a human into a mare (a change in both species and sex) in a very concrete way, a modern fool might change their appearance by clothes or make-up to mark an outward change in their gender, for example, or leave people wondering and confused due to their androgyny. While Hermes quite literally

travelled between the realm of humans and the realm of gods, thus gaining insight to the lives of both parties, a fool in more recent literature might be depicted in a position or occupation, such as that of a servant, which allows them to get acquainted with people from several layers of society, and as such, become familiar with different "realms".

What Frye says about the often very stylized (that is, exaggerated and far from natural) Egyptian art and myths, giving an example of a tale from where a younger brother prays the god Ra help from escaping the angered older one to which Ra answers by placing a large lake full of crocodiles between him and his pursuer, applies also to myths from elsewhere:

> This is the kind of thing that happens only in stories. The Egyptian tale has acquired, then, in this mythical episode, an abstractly literary quality; and, as the story-teller could just as easily have solved his little problem in a more "realistic" way, it appears that literature in Egypt, like other arts, preferred a certain degree of stylization.
> (Frye 1971, 135)

As such, as the myths of old were stylized and therefore often utilized unrealistic solutions to problems and characters with powers far beyond normal humans exemplified well by tricksters, the trickster could be called an archetype, a stylized trope from which the modern fools differ greatly. The modern fools are often quite realistic and lack other powers save for the power of their wits and knowledge. In other words, the descendants of tricksters do not need supernatural powers to perform the same function as their ancestors.

Fools have not been only a literal category, as examples of various kinds of fools can be found from history. Next I will move on to examining these real fools and their place in society.

2.4. Real fools – Natural and Artificial Fools

The real fools found in the society, households and courts of the medieval England can be roughly divided into two categories: the natural fool and the artificial fool. Some of the same characteristics can be found from both categories, but the essential dividing factor seems to lie in the intelligence and the general condition of the mind.

The natural fool was often someone with mutations, deformities or other physical or mental handicaps kept by the wealthy and powerful for the purpose of entertainment. The mutations might include missing essential features, or on the contrary possessing additional features, or being a hybrid such as a hermaphrodite (Ran 2007, 28). Due to their *perceived* natural lack of intelligence, they were not held accountable for their own behaviour or words, and were thus allowed a greater freedom to speak their mind without the threat of consequences. They were often shown notable solicitude as household fools. This might be due to respect of the kind of wisdom that originates from madness, and the complete lucidity of one whose mind is seemingly impenetrable has existed in many places all over the world (Otto 2001). In addition, being child-like and watching the world through innocent eyes and mind, because of their seemingly limited capacity of understanding, they were thought to be able to see the world as it is and consequently their perception and speech free from deception and falsehood.

While natural fools gained their status by simply being born with certain attributes, artificial fools were professional fools such as court jesters often employed in courts and households of the rich. They had a license to act foolishly for the purpose of entertainment, but they also regularly had a very important role as counsellors because they could, in the safe guise of entertainment and feigned madness, give critique of the actions and decisions of their employers and thus subtly offer guidance. Shakespeare's Feste from *Twelfth Night* describes aptly not only himself but also this type of a fool in general by stating that: "I wear no motley in my brain" (1.5. 51–52) meaning that he is in full possession of his wit and fool only profession-wise, hence an "artificial", constructed fool. In the construction of the idea of the artificial fool, Robert Armin, a famous actor in the late 1600th century and the beginning of 1700th century, played a key role. Robert Armin is most well known for having been one of Shakespeare's most trusted comic actors, often chosen to play the role of fool or clown in plays such as *As You Like it, Twelfth Night, King Lear* and *All's Well That Ends Well* (Henze 2013, 219). He is also a prime example of a fool-actor, a professional type of artificial fool who impersonates folly for entertainment or personal gain (Ran 2007, 28). As such, the

essential quality of this type of fool is that they have both the wit and the skill to plausibly impersonate a fool, but can, at any given moment, "revert back to an original self" (Ran 2007, 28).

Being a trusted supporter of a ruler or an otherwise influential person, this type of fool often had a close relationship with their master and their function extending far further than a mere entertainer, as they were a confidant, adviser and critic as well (Otto 2001). This serves as a good example of how a fool might actually be a supporting force who maintains the social status quo by not seeking to overthrow the ruler, but instead reasserting them through pointing out their faults which they then can correct. Leinwand takes this idea of fool, and specifically a court jester, as a social stabilizer even further by arguing that such a fool is not in the margins at all, toppling the distinctions of wisdom and folly, good and evil, right and wrong, but instead very much in the midst, insisting on these distinctions to "warn those who fail to mark them" (1987, 220–221). Such a fool champions for a stabilized world against the forces that would question the prevailing conservative values and morals, and vouches for normalcy and peace.

The court jester, then, gives a curious contrast to the anarchic, authority-toppling fool of the medieval celebrations, but both still belong under the umbrella of the same character type which goes to show that, as individual fool types might have contradicting characteristics, the influence of the trickster, the parent that embodies contradiction, is still ever present.

When it comes to natural and artificial fools, even though they differ greatly in their intelligence, wit as well as their function in the household they reside in, they are very similar in some respects. They both have considerate freedom and allowances that are denied from the regular adult members of the society, while simultaneously being kept in the margins. For the other, the freedom, as well as marginalization, comes through natural handicaps and for the other through professionally feigned madness and the versatile skills in entertaining combined with high intelligence and the ability to read people well. Both the natural and artificial fools behave capriciously, eccentrically, provocatively, and sometimes more rationally than one might care to admit (Ran 2007, 29).

Like their real counterparts, fools in fiction and as a character type are allowed much more freedom than other character types. They are not expected to behave in a certain way, and one is prepared to expect almost anything from them. Their position in the hero-villain continuum is also often very ambiguous to the point that it might even seem that in their case, the question about where they stand in relation to the moral of the story is irrelevant; they might point out the folly of the other characters, but stay neutral as to what is ultimately right or

wrong. This has to do with the inconstant nature inherited from the trickster, for as mentioned above, the trickster can change their nature and skill-sets at will, allowing them to become almost anything they desire. Accordingly, they are free from the expectations that burden the other character types, but can still take part in the same functions already assigned to them.

Now that the definition of a fool, as well as its different variants, are made clear, it is time to move on to discussing the theoretical framework that will be used when analysing B.

3. Theoretical Framework

In relation to fools, three themes that are relevant have been chosen to exemplify how B interacts with and how they perform in relation to each, what kind of questions they rise or what alternatives they offer. These themes are *marginality, metamorphosis* and *identity*. While handled separately, all these themes are interconnected as they are all related to one-another and furthermore to fools. When discussing marginality, the binary pairs *subject* and *object* and *centre* and *other* are inseparable, as they are in the discussion of identity and its construction. In metamorphosis, there is an implication to marginality as change that might lead to a completely new, strange state of being in which a subject might not share the attributes of its older self which formerly tied it to the centre, and has thus moved from the centre into the margins. Identity in itself contains the idea of change, since it could be argued that identities are not stable but instead in a constant process of change.

Next I will explain the theoretical framework for each theme, as well as the theories and concepts I will be applying to the analysis.

3.1. Marginality

Tricksters are from the very onset put into the margins of every society because they fail to behave and function according to the social rules and standards that define the lives and roles of the other society members. One might even go as far as to ask whether they are a part of the society at all, or only visitors who, when the circumstances call for it, stop their endless wandering for a while to offer people guidance and alternate perspective. Their modern equivalents, however, live very much within their societies and distribute, either consciously or unconsciously, their wisdom from within.

Fools have the power to both keep up and shake the foundations of the prevailing order, but they do this from the margins in ways that are not in accordance with the normal rules and

codes of behaviour of their society; even the fools seeking to fortify the order do so in an antisocial manner by mocking and making fun of the ruling entity and their decisions. However, even if they are antisocial, they have to belong in the society for their behaviour to have an effect on it. This is one of the dualities of the fool nature:

> Folly and non-folly and order and disorder are always simultaneously implied in the person and behaviour of the fool. This duality operates as negative example, an object lesson or symbol. When we judge a fool to be inappropriate, we are, *ipso facto,* acknowledging normative standards and effectively criticizing subversive or deviant behaviour. […] the duality of the fool is also evinced by his/her marginal position, his/her simultaneous power and powerlessness, and the ambivalent reactions he or she evokes.
> (Ran 2007, 27)

Tobias notes of clowns that they often assume a marginal position in society, which makes them outsiders who "perceive, understand and act in a manner very different from the normal order of things" (2007, 38). Similarly Ran ruminates that fools represent what is rejected by the society: a fool is a person who is "both ridiculous and inferior, one who represents the failure, and consequences of failure, of the individual who does not internalize or function according to given social values and standards" (2007, 26). Yet, she also considers the idea of the necessity of fools, as she quotes Orin Klapp from his paper *The Fool as a Social Type*:

> Fool-making is a social process; it is safe to say that every group must have a fool […] the fool represents values which are rejected by the group; causes that are lost, incompetence, failure and fiasco. So that, in a sense, fool-making might be called a process of history.
> (Klapp in Ran 2007, 26)

In this sense, even though marginal in, for instance, their behaviour and the fact that they fail to meet social requirements or otherwise distort them, they are a part of the social group were it a smaller group of friends (the clown of the group), occupational group (the office clown) or a group in the grander scale of society (comedians), and an important one. Fools allow us to vent our fears and frustrations were it through a sense of superiority or a sense of relatability; we may feel that at least we are better composed than them or see our own failures reflected in theirs, while we laugh at them we can also safely laugh at ourselves, relieving the ever piling anxieties of being human. As Robert Cheesemond points out when discussing news reports in Britain in October and November 2003 that accounted of alarmingly several works of vandalism executed by young people who had no discernible

reason for their behaviour other than "just for laughs": "Neither, I would suggest, do they have clowns, and so they 'clown around' themselves (2007, 21).

Their endless transition from one societal position into another, from one identity into another and from one role into another binds fools into the marginality from which they cannot be separated. Fools also share close ties with madness, and according to Michael Foucault, "madness was allowed a voice" in the medieval era and into the Renaissance through those who exercised seemingly suspect occupations such as alchemists, astrologers, magicians, prophets and miracle workers (Boyne 1990, 42). Among these, whose unreasonable existence made clear the limitations of reason, was the character of the mad fool (ibid). Considered insane, they all nevertheless had their own stories and secrets, which offered alternatives to the established order and laws of Christianity and science and countered the "self-sufficiency of the rational mind" (ibid.). They offered their own histories and accounts on existence as alternative truths that differed greatly from the truths of the rational centre.

As Hänninen remarks, one way of forming an identity is to compare oneself to others; by deciding what we are not, and then reflect it onto others (2013, 9). This is one way national or cultural identities are formed; I am not German, or Russian, or Swedish, or Japanese, but I am Finnish. By determining what we are and what we are not, we also simultaneously build boundaries between *us* and *them*, the *centre* and the *other*. A concept essential when discussing the relationship between marginality, otherness and the dominant centre is that the ones in the centre are the ones who define what is to be put into the margins, what the other is and who belong outside. Therefore, they dictate the position of those excluded from the centre and in the process, in a sense, take away their subjectivity. This is accomplished through dictating that the excluded possess certain qualities that make them separate from the ones in the centre, and deciding that those qualities are somehow wrong or unwanted consequently justifying the discrimination of the individuals with those qualities. Similarly, the lack of certain qualities can be used as a reason for exclusion. Drawing an example from antiquity, in ancient Greek those who had the right to fully participate in society, politics and decision-making were free adult male Greek citizens. Compared to this norm, women, children, slaves and individuals outside the Greek culture were marginalized, and "othered" (Hänninen 2013, 12). A more modern example and a very current one can be found in the topic of sexualities other than heterosexuality.

Homosexuality was thought to be a disease and an abomination far into the late twentieth century, and therefore something that could be "cured" or changed. It was also often thought

of as a choice, sin or mental deviation resulting from childhood trauma, all attitudes that can still be found. These claims belittle and even deny the experience of homosexuals themselves by labelling them as sick in an attempt to define and dictate what is and what is not normal and healthy. In short, when a person identifies as a homosexual, experiences being born as one and expresses as much, they are confronted by denial of their statement and told: "No, you're not. You're just sick and have to be cured." It is then the local, subjective stories that are often left untold or are otherwise devalued. It is these excluded stories, often those of ethnicity, culture, sexuality and gender, that tricksters and fools bring into light and provide an alternative to the dominant stories of the centre.

As said above about the prophets of Hermes, fools then can be compared to the hungry state of the prophets, which makes them tell "the other truth" to challenge the truth of the centre. They are the representation and manifestations of the other in the world, of the different and strange, and from their marginal position they can see the "underside and falseness of every situation" (Tobias 2007, 38). There are several ways in which they do, and reasons why they are able accomplish this. Firstly, because they are not in the centre and hence not directly affected by its issues, they are far enough from it to have no personal attachments to it, and thus can inspect it freely from several different points of view. It also has to do with their ability to endlessly assume new skills and identities; being able to live the life, if they so choose, of several persons from different parts of the society, they gain valuable insight and understanding of many different ways of experiencing the world and the society and ways through which different people are treated within it which is not usually possible for a regular person who is a part of that society and lives by its norms.

Their attribute of being able to freely inspect the society allows fools to engage in critical practice, which is not only critical towards the accepted social norms and values, but also critical in the sense that it initiates change at "critical phases" during social development (Tobias 2007, 38). However, free as they seem to be to roam about the world in addition to the freedom given by their marginality, fools need the society because if they did not have a society to criticize, they could not live out their purpose as cultural reformers. As Tobias puts it, if they do not have a society to censor, they cannot initiate change at critical moments in social development which effectively negates their critical practice (2007, 39). Just as the concept of the other needs a centre to have any relevance, so do fools need a society whose other to represent to be able to perform their task of giving voice to the alternative truths and thus as social and cultural reformers. They are then at the same time both free and dependent

from the society, just like their ancestor is both free of all ready-set skills and attributes, but very much dependent of the target of their mimicry.

Concerning B, in the storyworld they are a person most outside the society they reside in at any given time. In all their identities, what we learn about them is based on what the other characters think, talk, know (or think they know) and feel about the Fool, Amber or Lord Golden. B's otherness is brought even to the level of the narrative itself, because even though they are one of the most essential characters in all three trilogies, they are never given the position of the narrator nor the focalizer.

One might ponder, however, on the nature of B's externality. Is it simply an attribute they were born with because they are so different from all other beings living in the Realm of the Elderlings and experience life and the world in a way which is vastly apart from those of other people? Is it something imposed on them by others who often see them as nothing more than a freak? Could it be a self-chosen state which enables B to work towards their goal by any means necessary while not being restricted by norms and rules?

What also significantly contributes to the marginality of tricksters and fools is their irregular nature, that is, the ability to change their physical form as well as their mental identity allowed by the idea that they have no original self to begin with, or that self being extremely malleable.

3.2. Metamorphosis

Like tricksters, also fools embody change, irregularity, transitions and break from conventions, so the concept of *metamorphosis* is very relevant in this discussion, and furthermore in the discussion of B themselves with their several, changing, identities.

In its core, metamorphosis implies a relatively abrupt change from one entity or form into another, and even suggests a possibility of a complete change (Mikkonen 1997, 1). The idea of metamorphosis is one of the cornerstones of not only the human experience but life in general, and such changes appear abundantly in modes of cultural expression such as popular culture (Alice's transformations in Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), mythologies (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, shape shifting, disguises), stories and fairy tales (werewolves, vampires), religions (reincarnation, resurrection, a deity becoming a mortal, several trinities in several religions), literature (Kafka's *the Metamorphosis*, Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*) and visual art (the famous young woman – old woman illustrations, M.C. Escher's *Relativity*). Mikkonen also supports this idea when he remarks that the nature of

metamorphosis is both cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary (ibid.); it is a concept used and studied in most fields of science from natural sciences to cultural ones including biology (zoology and botany), geology and the study of literature and art.

Mythologies contain the most influential and fascinating transformations of which the aforementioned Ovid's *Metamorphoses* offer several instances. This poetic work by the Roman poet Ovid contains over 250 myths recounting the tales and undertakings of a multitude of Greece and Roman deities, often in the form of stories nested within other stories many of which describe various kinds of metamorphoses. These transformations range from human to inanimate objects and vice versa, from human to animal and from animal to human, to from one sex to another or their merging. In the tale of Myrrha, a girl who has fallen in love with her own father whom she tricks into intercourse with her, is transformed by gods into a myrrh tree to escape her father's wrath upon him learning the truth. An example of an inanimate object becoming animate is the story of Pygmalion, in which the sculptor Pygmalion becomes so infatuated with a woman sculpture of his own creation that he prays to gods for a woman exactly like the sculpture. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, then bring the statue to life so that Pygmalion can marry her. Closer to gender ambiguity comes the tale of Hermaphroditus, where the water nymph Salmacis falls in love with the boy Hermaphroditus, only to be rejected by him. The desperate Salmacis succeeds in surprising the boy while he bathes, latches onto him and prays the gods for them to be united forever. The gods grant her the wish and transform the two into one androgynous entity that is simultaneously a woman and a man, a hermaphrodite (or intersex).

While transformations from human to animal, or half-animal such as werewolves are famous throughout the world, also several examples of sex transformation can be found from mythological tales, and especially those of Greece aside from the tale of Hermaphroditus. Still, perhaps the most well-known modern abrupt sex change can be attributed to Virginia Woolf in her *Orlando: A Biography*, where a young man changes into a woman. Moreover, she/he does not seem very distressed or even surprised over the occurrence, but takes it in a stride as if not placing much importance on which body her or his mind resides. Overall, *Orlando* is a work that toys with gender binaries as well as racial and religious boundaries (Caputi and Daileader 2013, 67), aligning well with the discussion of tricksters and fools.

The famous quote from Heraclitus, "the only thing that is constant is change" well expresses the importance and power of change and transformations. Without change, the kind of life familiar to us could not exist, as it is integral in keeping everything in motion. As an ultimate form of transformation, metamorphosis addresses some of the key elements of the

human experience: birth, death, aging, the changes in both the body and the mind, identity and sexuality, language and culture. In contemporary literature more specifically, it especially "engages a wide range of questions concerning identity in the face of changes in temporal, cultural or mental perspective, or with regard to age, ethnicity, sexuality and gender" (Mikkonen 1997, 26). Following this, one of the powers of the trickster comes from the ability to perform such a complete change as metamorphosis, were it physical (form), mental (identity, personality) or existential (for example, a change between divinity and mortality) which makes it a very powerful ability because it concerns the very essence of human experience and the most fundamental questions of life. The same applies to both "natural" and "artificial" modern fools since they both have elements of contradiction, duality and self-division, and this may appear in different forms as "a partial, incomplete or split self, to a schizoid, double, severed or twin self" (Ran 2007, 34). Ran continues that this conflict within the fool's own self might be the result of a metamorphic substitution, self-conscious regression, mystical transformation or masochistic displacement (ibid.).

Going back to the discussion of tricksters, the concept of *void* was introduced in section 2 in connection to whether a trickster can ever even have an original identity if they are like voids that can transform into anything by assuming abilities from others, the onset of the change, however, being in some inherent emptiness. If this truly is the case and there is no original self, then can it be safely assumed that for tricksters, the existence of an unlimited number of possible identities is a natural state, and lacking an original self would mean that there truly exists an endless number of possible identities side by side, none of which is truer than the other? If this is the case with tricksters, then I think that this is where B possibly differs most from them and while I do not think that they can be considered a "true" identity, it indeed does seem that the person named *Beloved* precedes all the other identities, even in the possible case where each of them is truly their own, complete person.

In discussing transformations when it comes to B, the most essential element of transformation for them lies in the change of identity and self to a whole different self. This transformation usually includes a physical change (changing the appearance, clothes and makeup), but it works only as a marker for the more important, inner change to have taken place, and the superficial change does not always accompany the inner one.

As said above, even though fools differ from actors in that an actor always has an original self while fools necessarily do not, what often connects them is the element of disguise, of masquerade which allows fools like B to contradict self with itself or to become another self in an instant, and as such produce a psychological "double take" (Ran 2007, 29) for those who

might be witnessing the transformation. As such, while the change in appearance is not the most essential factor in the metamorphosis B undergoes, it is an important one which helps them to fully immerse in the other self and its life that completely differs from the life of the other selves. It is also the part of the transformation that is visible to the outside world and one that then, after the transformation is complete, interacts with the other characters, so the superficial change is the key in the success and functions of the other self and how it is taken and reacted to by the outside world. After all, who would take Lord Golden seriously and give them the respect they command if they were dressed like the humble bead maker Amber, or in the motley of a court fool? And if Amber were to wear Lord Golden's extravagant apparel, they would not be able to walk unnoticed in the crowds and gather intelligence of anything and everything. In B, also a more profound metamorphosis is at work aside from changing from one identity into another that expands throughout their lifespan. This will also be taken into account. Accordingly, in my analysis of the character, both the superficial and the inner transformations will be inspected, but the focus will be kept on the more important inner one.

3.3. Gender and Gender Change – Butler and Performativity

In the discussion of metamorphosis in B's case, gender identity should also be taken into consideration as B has both a clear female identity and a clear male identity without, however, any clear indication of them belonging biologically to either sex. Concerning gender change and identity, I will draw heavily on Judith Butler's notion of gender as performative.

By a dictionary definition, (gender) identity involves two contradictory ideas which are the absolute sameness and a lasting distinctiveness, which can be exemplified by the sentence "I am a man and I'm not a woman" (Craib 1997, 4). One classifies oneself with one group rather than the other, and through this, one's identity as a man or a woman is fortified by the act of identifying with the other and simultaneously disassociating oneself from the other generally accepted sex. But what happens when one does not feel that they fit into either of these two sexes or genders? Or when one feels a contradiction between one's biological sex and one's gender, the social construction of sex (Eckert 1989, 306)? When fools enter into this discussion, they bring their own twist to this question by asking: why not be both, or either.

Until the early 1990s, the attitude towards gender in gender study was unitary (ibid.) in the way that one's gender identity was seen as being in accordance with one's biological sex, and clearly defined female and male as different genders with their own, distinct qualities and attributes. Gender was begun to be seen as a social construction of the biological sex rather

than something innate and based on biology, and therefore an artificial category which had little to do with one's actual sex.

As Gill Jagger discusses in her book *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative,* in her theory of gender, Butler is especially concerned with the body and the significatory process through which we have come to understand the biological body as the basis for the human experience and especially (gender) identity. She proposes an alternative for the approach stating that the corporeal is the starting point from which the notion of heterosexuality as the norm and the binary of the sexes rightfully and indisputably arise; to her, the body is first and foremost a historical and cultural construction and identities born in discourse and interaction, being therefore *performative*.

Butler's notion of gender as a performance and performative emphasizes (gender) identity categories as fictional products rather than natural effects of the body, conjured up by "compulsory heterosexuality" which is "a regime of power/discourse" (Jagger 2008, 17). What this means is that identity categories do not pre-exist this regime of power/discourse, but are produced by it (ibid.), for example, identity categories are formed *through* discourse and language rather than naturally existing *before* discourse. She then seeks to show that heterosexuality and its' binary system of sexual difference are compulsory, but at the same time unstable and unnatural (ibid.). Butler's account of the performativity is based on a poststructuralist understanding of the subject, according to which the substantive "I" of the humanist subject is an illusion and an artificial product of the grammatical structure of language (Jagger 2008, 18). "I" therefore is not a coherent, unified being that linguistic categories simply represent, and identity categories are not properties of individuals but merely performative effects of language and signification (ibid.).

It is important to separate Butler's account of performance from theatrical performance, because in theatrical performance a doer or actor chooses a script to follow and then proceeds to act out a role, and when applied to gender and sex, would make them voluntary in that a subject would be free to choose their gender, sex and even body. Butler does not support this notion, as what she means by gender as performative is not "performative in theatrical sense", but performative in the sense that it is performed in and through speech acts which are repetitions of socially accepted meanings (Jagger 2008, 26). Subjects act out their gender through an ongoing process of continual repetition of sustained social performances in a "stylized repetition of acts" which includes movements and gestures that are aligned with "a cultural field of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality" (ibid.). For Butler, then, the "enactment of gender is socially approved and politically regulated rather than dictated by

some kind of internal nature" and is thus a fabrication manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (Jagger 2008, 26–27). There is no intentional "doer" behind the act that originates it, but is rather constituted within the act, the subject is not formed universally and transcendentally, but rather historically and culturally (Jagger 2008, 36). In this way, gender within a subject is not a universal act, but a historical and cultural construction. "It also provides an account of the intractability of identity categories and a way of understanding their role in the materialization of the body, whilst at the same time revealing their roots in social and political regulation rather than anatomy and nature" (Jagger 2008, 140).

Gender (identity) is constructed through relations of power that establish gender norms over time (Jagger 2008, 36). This "ritualized repetition" produces and regulates bodily beings which in turn strengthen (gender) norms (ibid.). However, to Butler, it lies precisely in these repetitive rituals where change can find opportunity. Thinking back to the medieval fool rituals where the roles of the high and the low were subverted, the participants used the rituals of Christianity and medieval society for their advantage by turning them upside down; the fool became the head of the congregation or the kingdom, and hymns were turned into brash parodies by changing their praising words into mocking songs. By the means of parody, here change found an opportunity precisely in the very same rituals and conventions that normally separated people and established inequality by means of a strict social hierarchy. It is worth mentioning, however, that this subversion lasted only for the duration of the feast and the parodies they offered, and did not result in any lasting change in the structure of the society. The means of parody did nevertheless suggest a challenge to the prevailing social hierarchy and order.

According to Jagger, Butler offers a similar example by implying that ritualized gender norms offer a similar possibility for change, which is best seen through gender parodies. Therefore, gender norms offer conditions of possibility for subversive repetitions and thus agency (Jagger 2008, 36); in Butler's account on performativity the subject cannot "be separated from the discursive conventions through which we are constituted, the possibility of opposing and reworking them is crucial to it" (ibid.).

Butler's notion of gender as performative thus implies that practices such as impersonations, cross-dressing and parody, which all have an element of transformation in them and are very much utilized by tricksters and fools, have an essential part in revealing that gender norms are indeed artificial fabrications sustained by social performances, corporeal signs and speech acts.

Downplaying the body as the base for (gender) identities, Butler has gained much criticism from feminist, queer and non-feminist critics alike since her notion seems to completely exclude the corporeal body from the identity formation process and undermine the *experience* of the body that is seen as quintessential for, for example, transsexual individuals whose very essence of inner conflict is the feeling of having been born into a wrong body. Critics have also stated that her account erases any possible sexual difference and disposes of any possibility of identification to any gender, including female, that is at the heart of many a feminist theory. However, as Jagger states, Butler's theory and the included refusal to "accord bodies any status outside their cultural articulations" do not suggest that bodies are immaterial, but rather seeks to "emphasize the materiality of significations (of gender) and regulative frameworks through which bodies come into being and embodied subjects achieve cultural intelligibility" (2008, 143).

Concerning transsexuality, what I understand Butler is implying is that rather than desiring to "come home" to the body of the opposite sex, their desire is rather based on the desire to move from one circle of the specific cultural significations denoting a specific gender that have been tied to a certain kind of body into another such circle denoting the other. Within Butler's theory, this would explain why some consider transsexual people to reaffirm gender categories rather than altering from them, as some transsexual people display gender categories in stereotypical ways, for example a transsexual woman might emphasize her femininity by, for example, overly feminine clothing choices and behaviour; it is not the body itself they are expressing, but rather the cultural significations and gender rituals. This in turn raises the question: What makes a gender? When transsexual people feel like they are born into a wrong body, and modifying their body according to that of the desired sex feel that their biological sex and mental gender are in harmony at last, for them the gender is very much connected to the corporeal body and various significations denoting a specific gender. For example, having gone through reassignment surgery, a male to female transsexual has attained the secondary gender attributes of a woman and is able to wear clothing and other apparel traditionally denoted to women with other people's social approval, therefore *having become* a woman.

Within Butler's theory, although they cannot be straightforwardly connected with each other or compared, drag, cross-dressing, gender parody, gender impersonations and to some extend transsexuality all centre around and enforce the cultural, artificial significations of gender. Nevertheless, there is duality to be found in this, since what brings these artificial

constructions forth and utilizes them (for example by subversion as in drag performances), also opens them up for closer inspection by emphasizing the accepted attributes and boundaries between different sexes thus exposing their ritualistic nature and artificiality. What Butler suggests as an alternative for the established gender significations and the heteronormative view on gender and differences between sexes is a remapping of sexual difference and moving its framework from binary to non-binary (Jagger 2008, 157).

As an old character type, tricksters have been questioning the clear distinction between sexes and genders for as long as they have been around. They transcend gender boundaries, sometimes even giving a glimpse of something outside the binary framework, which might be the case with B. This tendency was very prominent in the mythological trickster exemplified by Loki, to whom any sex was available due to the ability to shape-shift and who, for example, turned from a man into a mare, mated with a stallion and consequently gave birth to the six-legged foal Sleipnir. In short, they could change their biological sex at will, and though this ability is not found among us real humans, examples like these can usher us to think about sex, gender, biology and their relation.

Regarding more modern descendants of tricksters, especially in the postmodern variety of clowns and fools the dimension of gender ambiguity is prominent. They are often part of the process where conventional notions of gender and sexuality are deconstructed and alternatives reconstructed (Tobias 2007, 42). This is often achieved through androgyny both in appearance and manner, cross dressing, and presenting alternatives to the conventional heterosexual relationships (Tobias 2007, 45). Most of these apply to B, as their manner is often in stark contrast with what are conventionally considered as distinct traits and behaviour of men and women, as they are, among other things, often said to be very graceful in their movement, very caring and even nurturing towards those they care about and avoid aggression, which are typically considered feminine traits, but also possessing a tall, lanky body without much curves, and a great amount of physical strength and endurance which would hint toward physical masculinity.

While it is likely that B does not practice cross-dressing, because that would require a confirmed sex against which one goes by dressing in the manner typical for the opposite sex, all their identities do wear clothes and apparel that are not clearly, even in the storyworld, meant specifically for either sex. It is, then, each of the identities' behaviour from where any possible implication to a gender can be found.

3.4. Identity – Identity Theory

The question of identity and self often go hand-in-hand with fools and tricksters due to the inconsistency of their nature discussed above: if Loki can change form at will, which form is the true one, if any? Representing the matter "excluded" from the centre or the mainstream and the idea that there are alternatives to generally accepted "truths", what and who do they identify with, how do they construct their identity or identities and self?

Before modern psychology, the concept of personal identity was extensively discussed in the field of philosophy, especially in the 16th and 17th centuries when John Locke and later David Hume formed their respective principles of identity. For Locke, personal identity was inseparably connected to consciousness and memory, which, within one body, create the continuous experience of being when the consciousness accumulates experiences throughout their life, and as far as a consciousness' memory of themselves can reach, so does its identity reach. The personal identity is, then the sameness of a rational, conscious being see (Locke 1687). David Hume, on the other hand, was sceptical about the notion of there being one identity that is constructed through the experiences that a conscious, self-aware consciousness attains throughout their life. Hume's theory of identity consists of the idea that "an original identity structure includes an object plus a pair of distinctive objects outside the single object, and the relation between each of the distinct objects and the single object" (Perry 2009, 414). What is essential to Hume, however, is not the single object itself, but only the fleeting impressions of that object formed by the object itself on one hand, and by the outside objects on the other (415). To briefly sum this up: because all ideas are only impressions, also our ideas of the self are impressions and since impressions are only fleeting and subject to change, there is no "self" that, in its core, continues to exist as a continuum over time.

Adam Smith, whose precursors both Locke and Hume were, also formed a theory of how identity is formed (Jerrold 2005, 139). Going further than either, his theory of the self centred around the idea of self-command akin to that of the Greek Stoics (140). Unlike the Stoics, however, in Smith's thinking self-command is not the result of philosophical training but is rather born naturally out of everyday interaction with fellow human beings where sympathy (self-love that extends to others) urges us to put ourselves in the place of those around us. In this process we recognize in others the same passions and feelings we ourselves have, and realize that we are a part of a greater whole that is formed out of beings very much like us (ibid.). This then initiates the desire to govern ourselves and our passions as we realize that we cannot always do as we please because sometimes it will infringe the desire of others with

which we can well identify, thus learning to control our feelings and urges. Smith comes close to Hume in this then because he suggests that, in this way, individuals are not only formed by causal relationships with others, but also learn to command themselves through these relations (Jerrold 2005, 141). From this we can form a simple conclusion that, in accordance with what Smith's contemporaries called *sentimentalism*, feelings are what lie in the centre of Smith's theory of the self: "selfhood had to be understood as a transformation of passion, set in motion when self-concern came up against basic human need for society with others" (ibid.). In other words, humans are mirrors to each other against which everyone gauge and measure themselves to assess who they are, and to keep themselves in check and in accordance with society. Later also Samuel Taylor Coleridge built his theory of the self upon the idea that the self was essentially reflective, obtaining the essence, inner conflicts and the potential for wholeness from being able to "hold a mirror up to the world and to itself" (428).

Seeking secession from the reflective and society-centred concepts of identity of the former centuries, the identity of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was instead to be found from seclusion, rising above the rest of mankind and the ability to subdue the impact of life's hurdles to our inner peace. To many philosophers of the time the kernel of identity was the idea of *will*, a force that endlessly motivates the universe forward. First to Kant, then to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, will was the key concept of the self. However, rather than something residing within individuals, the will is a cosmic power at the centre of the universe which works as a "motive force of all experience and history" (Jerrold 2005, 538). Still, according to Schopenhauer, there is also will that can be found inside us, in the immediate realm of our bodies, which motivates the desires we perceive to be individually our own. The first, cosmic form of will has no goal, it exists only for itself and not in relation to any external aim, but the latter form residing within us relates itself to the external world, making our goals dependent of external entities. To Schopenhauer this explains why we are so often disappointed in our attempts in reaching the goals we set for ourselves; it is the cause of the discord between the independent will of the universe and the dependent individual will within us. The will that moves through the world does not operate in harmony with our individual goals (Jerrold 2005, 542).

In later twentieth century Derrida and Foucault, among others, continued somewhat in the same vein, and in the post-modernist spirit of the age, by declaring the dissolution of the self, disappearance of the human subject and the death of the author (Jerrold 2005, 603). Their philosophy of the self held contradictory thoughts of the human self as strongly formed and constricted by culture while simultaneously being open to unlimited possibilities (ibid.). In yet

more recent times, the study of identity and consequently of self has focused on the idea of the self comprising of several different identities, called *role identities*, which is a concept central in *identity theory*. This is what will mostly be used as a theoretical framework for the analysis of B's identity.

"The self originates from the mind and is that which characterizes an individual's consciousness of his or her own being or identity" (Burke and Stets 2007, 9). In this process, the self is formed by the mind when it interacts with the world outside, its basic intention to guarantee and sustain the survival of the person that holds it (ibid.). Within the self exist the role identities, that is all the different roles an individual assumes during their lifetime which are born from and moulded by interaction with the environment and other people. It was William James who, in the nineteenth century, first presented this thought in the form "we have as many 'selves' as we have others with whom we interact" (Burke and Stets 2007, 130). This phenomenon requires the context of a complex society in which there are multiple possible positions available, and "multiple selves" are born when we occupy these different positions and the mind reflects this differentiation into components, or multiple selves (10). Each of these smaller selves exists within the overall self, and are referred to as identities. Another key notion in identity theory is the "looking-glass self" by Charles Horton Cooley: people see themselves reflected in others' reactions to them, and these reflective appraisals is one of the main ways we come to understand who we are (Burke and Stets 2007, 24). We compare others' reaction to us to the self-image we have, and resulting from whether the reactions confirm our self-image or not, we might feel elated, powerful and competent, or upset, bitter and betrayed.

Though nowadays in identity theory the "selves" have been replaced by "identities", these ideas are still relevant in the modern study of self and identity. According to Mead, "the self is embedded in society and developed through communication and interaction with others", and in this process the mind's ability to recognize the self and treat it as an object like any other object is especially important (in Burke and Stets 2007, 19). The mind is able to, then, reflect upon itself, assess itself, and even "discuss" with itself like it could with any outside person, and from this rises the awareness, the recognition, of oneself not only as an object, but as a subject and an individual as well. We take on identities such as a student, a teacher, a friend, a sister, a son, a neighbour and so on, in any given context which describe our relationship with other people and our position towards them. This being the case, we assume different identities as our life progresses, and as such we may have many different identities at any given time that could be activated (Burke and Stets 2007, 130). This also means that these

identities may overlap, and consequently be in disagreement with or support each other. For example, a person's identities of a son and a friend may be activated in the same situation if the person's parents and peers are present at the same time. In this way, we all have several identities. All these identities have a system of hierarchy, the most prominent identity occupying the highest ladder in the hierarchy, while the more minor occupy the descending ladders.

In society, people also label one-another in terms of these positions, and this is done through shared meanings and expectations with regard to each other's behaviour in any given position such as a teacher, police or a judge (Burke and Stets 2007, 26). However, as the self is reflective, we also label ourselves just like others label us; we identify with the positional designation of, for example a student, and take it as a part of the self. In this way, we *are* a student (ibid.). These positions in society are relational and the meanings and expectations for each position are tied to the meanings and expectations of other positions; teacher is tied to student, employee is tied to employer, brother is tied to brother or sister and so forth. (ibid.). As such, they tie us together as we derive the meaning of each of our personal position from their relation to other peoples' positions. A student knows what is expected of him, and that relates to what is expected of the teacher; the concept of a student would not exist without the concept of a teacher and vice versa.

Within identity theory there are, however, conflicting thoughts about the nature of these identities. Identity theory grew out of *symbolic interaction*, of which there are two strands; *traditional symbolic interaction* and *structural symbolic interaction* (Burke and Stets 2007, 33). Both strands agree on the thought that social behaviour can best be understood by "focusing on individuals' definitions and interpretations of themselves, others and their situations" (ibid.), but there is a significant difference in how they view the society and its' structure. In traditional symbolic interaction, on the one hand, the society is continuously in a state of flux, being created and recreated through individuals' interpretations, definitions and actions in situations (ibid.). Accordingly, any social structure that can be identified is only temporary and situational; there is no general, established structure to society because any social structure is formed in the interaction between individuals in a situation, and disassembled once the situation is over. We cannot therefore predict or measure social behaviour because to form theories that explain society, the society would have to be stable and consistent and consequently researchable. This also means that identities are not stable either, but are likewise constructed and reconstructed in every interaction.

Structural symbolic interaction, on the other hand, focuses on the role of the social structure in social life. Rather than seeing society as a constantly fluctuating entity, the structuralists view it as stable and durable, which is concretely demonstrated by the patterned behaviour within and between individuals (Burke and Stets 2007, 34). The social structure therefore pre-exists the person, as we are born into an ongoing, organized social world about which we learn through socialization with others (ibid.). Social structure and society by large are then stable enough to study, predict and form theories about. Manford Kuhn supported this form of symbolic interactionism, stating that individuals possess a stable, core self unlike the ever changing self of traditional symbolic interactionism (Burke and Stets 2007, 37). Regarding the impact on identity research, structural symbolic interactionism has evidently contributed more than its counterpart, as its view on society as sufficiently stable has allowed the development of theories since reliable and meaningful data needed to form them can be gathered (ibid.). A such, "scientific procedure can be applied to an analysis of social life", and so identity theory has been highly successful in social research (ibid.). Nevertheless, when structuralists state that the society is sufficiently stable, patterned and predictable, it does not imply that it is rigidly so, as change does indeed exist; there is change, both in society and in individuals, but rather than taking place in every single situation and interaction, it expands over time guided by the patterns and structures present in any given society.

Drawing on what was earlier discussed about Butler and her notion of gender as performative, it is curious to notice certain similarities between identity theory and her theory of how (gender) identities are formed. In both cases identities are born out of interaction, the difference being that to Butler, no original "I" exists outside discourse and interaction, whereas in identity theory there is the base self that works as a vessel for all identities. At first glance Butler seems to argue against any original subject or original self by stating that there is no "doer behind the deed" which contradicts with the notion of a base self in identity theory. However, her account on resistance and change does involve a notion of active agency where the subject could still be a source of action and resistance even if there if there is no "doer behind the deed" (Jagger 2007, 35). Even though we are formed by cultural discourse, we can become aware of the ways in which culture constructs and regulates our behaviour by observing instances where normative behaviour is stereotypically emphasized or subverted, such as parody. This then opens a window for rethinking the naturalness of these behaviours, offering a possibility for alternatives.

Concerning gender identities, identity theory raises an interesting question. As the thought of both internal *and* external influence being essential for the birth and sustaining an identity

are in the core of identity theory, then what happens to an identity that does not receive validation trough these both channels? What is implied in identity theory is that in such a case, an identity weakens without support. This might present a problem when it comes to defining, for example, one's own gender. If a woman identifies as a man, but no-one else is willing to identify her as one, does it mean (in identity theory) that her identification is not valid because it is not socially validated? In such a case, however, the woman might still maintain her identity of a man despite the opposition of the society, and fight for her right for a sex reassignment surgery and becoming the person she feels inside.

Going back to tricksters, as shape shifters and masters of mimicry they challenge the idea of a fixed base self, identity and gender identity and thus approach the post-modernist conception of identity as lacking clear boundaries and even open to unlimited possibilities. As such, they also conflict with structural symbolic interactionism that implies a self that is at least somewhat stable and predictable, and not changeable at will. However, even though identity theory in Burke's account is heavily leaning on the self as it is described in structural symbolic interactionism, it does contain support for multiple identities.

3.5. Multiple Identities

As mentioned above, in identity theory, the self contains several identities that activate in any interactive situation with others relevant to any given identity. For example, a person's teacher identity activates when interacting with students, a daughter identity activates when interacting with one's parents, and a soccer player identity activates when training with other players or in a game. In addition, all these identities activate when a person talks about events and occurrences related to these identities. The identities are not equal, however, and how important an individual experiences an identity to be determines how much power it has, how often it activates and how subservient to it the other identities are. For someone, the gender identity of a male might be the highest identity and parent identity the lower. As such the parent identity is controlled by the male identity and cooperates with it; how the parent identity is established depends on the nature of the male identity, since being a male provides a different set of meanings for the parent identity than if one is a female (Burke and Stets 2007, 136). Thus, the higher male identity that values "traditional" male qualities might assign the meanings of *protector*, *disciplinarian* and *teacher* to the lower parent identity, whereas a higher female identity that values "traditional" female qualities might assign the meanings of *caretaker who gives unconditional love*, *boundary setter* and *consoler* to the

lower parent identity. This is how all lower-level identities "serve" the higher-level identity or identities in coordination.

All identities also work together in sharing information and resources (Burke and Stets144). For example, an identity that receives information that is not necessarily relevant to itself but is relevant for another identity, might store it away for the other identity to use later on. Such a situation might be a teacher identity, while conversing with colleagues, hearing about a movie that has no interest to the teacher identity, nevertheless storing the information away for the spouse identity to use after work to go and watch the movie with their significant other. Likewise, the identities affect each other. For example, one's work identity might be affected and performance suffer if their spouse identity have problems at home (ibid.).

These examples of how multiple identities within ourselves manifest in interaction are examples of different identities, not wholly different selves. They all share the same platform, the self that contains all the different facets but are not independent of each other.

Now that the theoretical framework has been introduced, I will shortly tell about the world of the books, and give a more detailed introduction of B.

4. A Brief Introduction to Realm of the Elderlings and Beloved

As the target of my analysis is going to be a character from several book series, it is necessary to supply a short explanation of the world, characters, creatures and phenomena that will inevitably appear in connection with B, as well as those that are essential in understanding the world of the books.

The Realm of the Elderlings is the universe created by the fantasy author Robin Hobb, in which four of her fantasy series take place: *The Farseer, The Liveship Traders, The Tawny Man* and *The Rain Wild Chronicles*. In addition to these, she has also written several novels located in the mentioned universe. While this world is a round planet much like ours, the events concentrate on a continent along whose coastline, expanding from the arctic northern region to the tropical southern region, all the regions and cities mentioned in the books can be found.

The most prominent area in the *The Farseer* and *The the Tawny Man* series is the Six Duchies. Each duchy is subservient to the king of the Farseer bloodline reigning from the Buckkeep in the first duchy, the Buck. Other notable cities and places are Bingtown, a trading city-state south of the Six Duchies where the events of *The Liveship Traders* are mostly unfold; the theocratic empire Jamaillia also to the far south of Six Duchies and is regarded as, especially by Jamaillians themselves, the cradle of culture, knowledge and civilization; a warlike state Chalced bordering the Six Duchies that thrives on slave-trade: Outislands (or God Runes, as named by those who live there), a group of northern islands inhabited by strong, vital and matriarchal folk who are scattered in small towns around the habitable parts of the islands; Rain Wilds, a mysterious, boggy forest area near Chalced and Bingtown through which runs the Rain Wild River, a river whose water is mildly acidic and cannot be sailed in by normal ships and which is rumoured to have been a breeding ground of the seemingly extinct dragons.

While the majority of the inhabitants of the known Realm of the Elderlings are normal humans, there also exists sentient species different from them including Others, frog-like people who are suggested to be the offspring of dragons who spent too much time associating with humans and thus assumed some human characteristics; the mythical Elderlings who were originally humans but, maintaining extended contact with dragons, took upon several dragon characteristics; Pecksies who are small, fairy-like creatures of unknown origin and mythical reputation; Whites, an ancient race of pale skinned, long-living people rumoured to have been able to tell the future, and from which the white prophets are told to descend; liveships, ships

constructed from dragon cocoons and brought to life by infusing them with the consciousnesses of the family members who own them. There are also other fantastic creatures, most notable species being dragons and sea serpents (juvenile dragons that have yet to reach the cocooning stage of their development).

Like in most fantasy worlds, in the Realm of the Elderlings there is magic present. While different variations of magic are multiple, the two major varieties are *the Skill* and *the Wit*. The Skill is hereditary magic, which is often strongly exhibited in the members of the Farseer line. This magic allows one to feel people, their moods, thoughts and emotions, to mentally influence others, and it enables individuals possessing it to discuss mentally with each other across long distances, and even see and hear through each other's eyes and ears. In addition, it can be used to heal or hurt physically. The Farseer rulers have used this magic in defence of their kingdom in times of war by influencing the minds of their enemies by blurring their thoughts and weakening their morale. While a person might be gifted in the Skill, to properly use it and to realize one's full Skill potential, one has to hone it through a variety of mental exercises under the instruction of a person who themselves have mastered it. This means that many Skill gifted never learn to fully use their magic, and may never even realize they possess any at all. The downside of the magic is that it is consuming and addictive. A person gifted in Skill feels a longing for it, and an active Skill user is in danger of having their mind swept away by its current which will result in a state not unlike coma. In addition to humans, the Skill also appears in dragons, but unlike in humans among which the ability to utilize it is somewhat rare, for dragons it is a normal way to communicate not only with each other, but with all other creatures.

The Wit, on the other hand, is the ability to feel the network consisting of all life, and telepathically converse with other species. While it is suggested that all humans are able to feel this network on some level and thus have a touch of the Wit in them, individuals strongly gifted in Wit will have the capacity to utilize it more fully and understand other animals more deeply than those without it. Such individuals can also form Wit-bonds with animals. A wit-bond is meant to be formed between a voluntary witted individual and an animal who also has voluntarily chosen the particular human as Wit-partner, and usually remains strong throughout the lives of both parties. While the Wit-bond is sometimes compared to the concept of marriage much because, I believe, that when forming a Wit-bond, both the animal and the human are to stay loyal to each other, that is not forming other similar, strong wit-bonds with any other creature, this comparison would give a wrong impression of the bond. While it is based on mutual affinity, love, affection and trust, the bond lacks the physical

dimension usually present in marriage or in other romantic relationships, and if the bond is healthy for both members, it does not inhibit them from expressing the natural behaviour of their own species and fulfilling the need to find a mate among one's own kind or forming a family.

While the Skill is revered as the magic of kings, the Wit is generally loathed and thought of as "dirty beast-magic", even by some who themselves are witted. This is due to misunderstandings because those who do not possess it, often do not understand (and sometimes do not even want to understand) the full nature of it, but instead couple it with harmful witchcraft and even bestiality. Because of the fearful attitude towards the magic has become the general opinion, most witted hide and are ashamed of their tendency, consequently not following its calling.

In this vast world also resides a creature who is exceptional even according to the standards of this fantastic world, called Beloved.

The origin of B is only slightly touched upon in the books, and what we learn about their past remains only on a very general level. They are mysterious, ambiguous and elusive, and love to utilize verbal acrobatics and riddles. They only tell that they are from a small village somewhere in the south located in a region called Clerres, where they were raised by a family which included a mother, two fathers as is the custom of the land, and a sister. Their original name seems to be Beloved, since this is the only name by which their mother and family used to call them and that is why I am referring to their assumed original identity by this name. While B was born from normal humans, it is told that at tumultuous points in history an exceptional white child with prophetic powers and a longer lifespan will be born to act as a guide to the world. Furthermore, it is implied that Whites, as their kind is called, are a species different from humans and that the whites being contemporarily born are the result of a union of a white and a human that took place a long time ago. The inheritance of whites then emerges occasionally in humans. Thus, B is consequently denoted as a white prophet. B also differs from normal humans by not being linked into the network of life shared by all other beings, and consequently cannot use or be felt with the Wit, nor smelled or sensed even by creatures with an exceptionally developed sense of smell such as canines. By their appearance, B is tall with delicate and long limbs, thin, long haired and androgynous. Even though appearing physically very weak, they are noted possessing a surprising amount of bodily strength which they only use when there is no other choice.

White prophets are special individuals that are supposed to see different futures and the ways to reach them. B remarks, however, that their insights of the future are not clear, but

rather based on unclear visions, which is often a great source of anxiety to B due to not knowing which would lead the world into a better, more stable future, if any. This power causes them further distress because in the process of trying to nudge the world into the right direction, they will more than likely end up bringing harm to other people and even to those who they might care about. The only hint white prophets have as to whether they might be taking the right path are, as it is theorized by Prilkop, a white prophet who caused an earlier cataclysm, the bouts of physical sickness the Whites experience involving strong nausea, weakness and peeling off the lighter skin revealing a slightly darker one after each time having done something significant to change the future. The physical change is considered to be the mark of a prophet going towards the right future because they connect their own change with the changing of the world; to gradually change from completely white to completely black is the mark of success, but to maintain their original paleness throughout the years would mean that they have not been able to change the future in any significant way, and thus have failed as prophets.

While a white prophet is the one who holds the visions of possible futures, they themselves can do little to actually initiate any concrete change in the world. For this they always need a Catalyst, a person who is in a position to change the world through their actions, whom the prophet then tries to influence to act in a way beneficial to the future they are trying to achieve. To put it bluntly, the Catalyst is a tool used by the prophet to reach their own ends. To B this Catalyst is Fitz, the illegitimate son of a Six Duchies prince and the protagonist of *the Farseer* and *the Tawny Man* trilogies. Even though B uses him like any other white prophet would use their catalyst, B and Fitz also share a deep friendship which often makes B hesitate in agony whenever they have to make Fitz take action which might have harmful ramifications to him.

As a white prophet, the goal of B, to state it simply, is to see dragons and consequently elderlings, or humans that have been transformed because of dragon influence and become a connection between the two species, returned to the world. The world has been without dragons for a long time, and as an adaptable, curious, intelligent and tenacious species without notable challengers, humans have spread over much of the world and claimed it as their own to use as they wish. The way B sees this is that the results have been catastrophic to the world because there is nothing to challenge the negative human traits of greed, selfishness, excessive pride and sense of entitlement, tendency to senseless violence and so forth. Thus the balance of the world has been disrupted and Beloved is attempting to restore the dragon species and to renew the lost balance by providing the humans a mirror of their own darker

tendencies. Without dragons humans are wandering in the dark, blind to the harm they are causing to each other and the rest of the world and unable to recognize their own flaws and lacks while roaming the world unchecked. As a species possessing arrogance akin to that of humans, dragons would offer humans a natural challenge and reflection of their own nature, which would result in the recognition of their own flaws and accordingly lead to further growth and maturation for both species.

As a white prophet B cannot affect the world directly. They do not possess any supernatural powers save for the visions, have not been born in a noble family with much influence or in another powerful position. Their power lies instead in their intelligence, wit, charm and the cheeky way of joking much like that of tricksters and jesters:

> Are you his physician, then, to make such judgements? […] For surely, you would be an excellent one. You physic me merely with your looks, and your words dispel your wind as well as mine. How physicked then must our dear king be, who languishes all day in your presence?
> (*The Royal Assassin,* 154)

B can only try to influence others and convince them to do what they want, and through it, influence the world. In addition to intelligence, knowledge is key to their success, for if they desire to compel others to think, act and behave in ways useful for them, they must possess deep knowledge and understanding not only of the world, but also different societies and the inner workings of the human mind and nature. This is where the different identities of B come into play.

B can be considered to have three distinct identities which all have their own lives and personalities. In addition, one of them is a man and one a woman, while the gender of the third is unclear. The Fool is the identity most present throughout *The Farseer* and *The Tawny Man* trilogies. The first is the Fool, a witty, sharp-tongued court jester of king Shrewd of Six Duchies, either feared or despised by most principally because they are physically so different from others and because their jests more often than not hit the mark. The Fool's insights of others are, after all, often painfully accurate. The Fool's ambiguity regarding their gender also causes much uneasiness in most they meet. Because of this, the Fool has few close affiliations aside from their best friend, the protagonist Fitz (who regards them as clearly male), and king Shrewd, to whom the Fool is not only a counsellor, but a confidant as well. It should also be noted here that to B, the friendship they develop with Fitz during the time they spend as the Fool is more than just a close affiliation of those who have shared a childhood; B romantically

loves Fitz as well, but knowing that he could not reciprocate love in this form, has never confessed.

The second known identity of B is Amber, found in *The Liveship Traders* trilogy. She is a humble beadworker who owns a small shop in Bingtown. In a stark contrast to Lord Golden's gaudiness, Amber is a quiet, modest artisan whose choice of clothing reflects her personality as she tends to wear simple, beige tunics, her only jewellery being the few colourful earrings she sports. While her demeanour and appearance may be humble, her skill in wood carving is not, and she has become very famous throughout Bingtown for her unique products both among the commoners and the wealthy nobles. She is also mentioned to have a special air about her that expects equality, regardless of the company: "But this bead-woman (Amber) made her uneasy. Perhaps it was the way the woman assumed equality, no matter what company she was in" (*The Mad Ship*, 430). The only time B has ever admitted their feelings for Fitz to anyone is during the time B lived as Amber. Then, they revealed it to a close female friend named Jek. I believe this is because as a woman, it was easier for Beloved to open up to another woman about their feelings towards a man, and because at the time they were very far away from Fitz and their past life as a jester in Buckkeep. It seems B felt safe to openly talk about their love, thinking that Jek and Fitz would probably never meet. However, later, in *The Tawny Man* trilogy, this will severely backfire on B since they do not seem to be prepared for the possibility of the separate worlds of the different identities colliding.

The identity which only appears in *The Tawny Man* trilogy is Lord Golden. Lord Golden is an extravagant, foppish, vain and incredibly wealthy aristocrat apparently in his early twenties hailing from Jamaillia, who enjoys expensive luxuries from outrageously expensive clothes to exotic intoxicants. In personality he is talkative, with a heavy Jamaillian accent, charming and has an air of superiority about him. While he is thought of as just as exotic and eccentric as his homeland, he is still regarded as nothing more than another visiting foreign lord in Buckkeep, which enables him to wander around the keep and associate with other nobles and gather information without attracting too much, and too curious, attention.

Now, as the concept of fools as well as Realm of the Elderlings have been introduced, it is time to begin the analysis itself.

5. Analysis

For purposes of analysis, I have chosen three key concepts often connected with fools that I think are especially relevant when it comes to B: marginality, metamorphosis and gender change, and identity. The purpose of the analysis is to find out whether B can take a place among the progeny of tricksters, what kind of a fool they are, what the things are they criticize and question, and how they accomplish this. In addition to analysing B as they appear in all three trilogies and in their different identities, for each section I have chosen scenes to discuss from the books. Each chosen scene most appropriately relates, in my opinion, to the concept in question.

 As B is a character of not only fiction but of high fantasy fiction, I believe I will find that their ways of realizing the possible essence of a fool are more extensive than that of a fool in realistic fiction because they are already living in a world filled with magic and other fantastic phenomena that reality lacks. While fantasy literature is diverse in subgenres each of which have their own rules and attributes, and each fantasy world works within their own rules and framework, what unites them all is the term *fantasy*, which by definition means *imagination*. Fantasy, then, is fiction for which only imagination sets boundaries, and more specifically high fantasy is fantasy set in invented worlds "where magic really works" (Mandala 2010, 2). Therefore, it is not implausible for B in the context of their world to be, for example, able to see visions of the future allowing them to make prophecies, or to be able to carve wood not guided by imagination, but by knowledge of what a particular piece of wood is "destined" to be, or have longer lifespans than normal people thus possibly gaining more experience and wisdom than regular people. This in turn allows them to perform their fooling more fantastically, which seems to make them stand somewhere between the ancient, almighty trickster and the modern, more mundane and subdued fool. In addition, in a fantasy world that closely resembles the medieval Europe as is usual in high fantasy, a fool character resembling the medieval court jester and the Shakespearean fool seems to be right at home.

5.1. A Case Study of Marginality and Otherness: "I had discovered one denizen of the keep who was at least as alone as I was"

As there will be a few other characters besides B mentioned in this section, they will now be briefly introduced.

King Shrewd is the ruler of Six Duchies, a country steadily veering towards civil war, and has three sons (from oldest to youngest); princes Chivalry, Verity and Regal. While Shrewd is old, he seems to be in a good health in the beginning of the first trilogy, but is slowly deprived of his health during the second book until his eventual death. In the beginning of the trilogy prince Chivalry is the first in line to inherit his father's throne, but when it comes to light that he has had an affair and a son (FitzChivalry Farseer) outside wedlock, he renounces his position and goes into exile. Prince Verity then inherits the position of the next king. Verity arguably seems to be best suited to be a king out of the three, as he is sensitive to the needs of his people and the dukes of the Six Duchies and is dedicated to the well-being of the country. However, he is naïve; too honest and slightly gullible, at least when it comes to his family which he trusts completely. The failing health of king Shrewd is due to the power hungry and self-serving prince Regal who secretly poisons him and saps him of his life, all the while pretending that the herbs and tonics he provides for his failing father are meant to heal. Eventually Regal succeeds in becoming a king and framing Fitz for the king's murder. His reign is very brief, however, since ultimately Fitz, B and Verity are able to overthrow Regal at the end of the first trilogy. Afterwards Fitz leaves his old life and self behind to live a solitarily life as Tom Badgerlock in wilderness, his only company being Nighteyes, his wit-partner wolf, and Hap, an adopted son. B likewise leaves Buckkeep to find the places where their prophetic visions lead them next.

The Pale Woman is, like B, a white prophet and the main antagonist of the third trilogy, *Tawny Man*. She was born prior to B and had already embarked on her journey to change the world when B embarked on theirs. Seeing herself as the true prophet and B as her rival, she has settled on the arctic Outislands to guide the world towards the direction she has envisioned. Obsessed by making her vision come true, she is prepared to kill her rival if necessary. The Pale Woman's catalyst is a man named Kebal Rawbread, but unlike B who has befriended their catalyst and shares a deep connection with him, Pale Woman has enslaved and imprisoned Kebal, controlling him through fear and forcing. Her plan is to keep dragons extinct and cause continuous conflict in the world. Across her lifespan, her colour has remained the same which is a strong indication of her, despite her efforts, not having been successful in changing the world in a profound way.

Prilkop the Black Man was a white prophet decades prior to the events of the books and is far older than either B or the Pale Woman. As he succeeded in bringing his vision to reality and caused the extinction of dragons and elderlings, his skin has turned completely onyx-black. In the ending of the third trilogy Fitz and B meet him in Outislands before confronting the Pale Woman, as he has been waiting for them there for decades to aid them and thus complete his own, last vision where he will help B to realize their final vision.

As said above, one of the most defining characteristics of tricksters and fools is that they represent the other that lives either in the margins of the society or completely outside. Their behaviour often fails to meet the requirements of the normal, acceptable standard. More often than not they do not closely belong to any one group of people, but instead are watching from the outside or the outskirts into the centre and moving between groups. Much like what Tobias said above about fools and their ability of freely inspecting society from different angles which comes especially important because they initiate change at "critical phases" of social development, also applies to white prophets such as B. White prophets are, after all, born at tumultuous and critical times in history.

The theme of being an outcast and shunned is a major one especially in *The Farseer* and *The Tawny Man* trilogies as the books centre around the protagonist Fitz, the illegitimate son of a king-in-waiting prince Chivalry of Six Duchies. Once Fitz's existence becomes public, the prince decides to denounce his position as the next king of Six Duchies and embark on a self-inflicted exile to slowly fade away from the consciousness of his people and from the face of history. Fitz is then left completely alone to be raised by the stable master of the keep, secretly being taught in the trade of an assassin, while no-one recognizes his rights as a son of a prince. He is not, after all, a "true" member of the royal family. Even the decision of apprenticing him as an assassin is a way to make him usable to the throne, to make sure that he will be an asset rather than a threat to his family.

For Fitz this leads to a lonely boyhood full of contempt from the rest of the court, stigmatization for being a bastard and constant fear of attracting too much attention to himself lest someone interpret it as having aspirations towards power and therefore becoming a threat to Chivalry's two prince brothers Verity and Regal and the whole royal family. In addition to being given a name that blatantly indicates his origins, as *Fitz* might mean both *the son of* and *a bastard,* as a child Fitz is made to carry a certain sigil. The sigil differs only a hint from that of the official sigil of the Farseer family. The difference is very slight, but it is common knowledge what it means; the carrier of the sigil has not been legitimately born into the family. Fitz is, then, strongly marked as an outsider from early on and as an illegitimate son

he has little choice regarding his future other than keeping himself hidden away from attention and as unthreatening as possible. Considering this offset, it is not a surprise that he later becomes friends with another denizen of the keep that is at least as alone as he is and who is also regarded more through status, assumptions, rumours and the feeling of superiority by most they meet rather than through true knowledge of them as a person. B themselves aptly summarize this much later when B and Fitz reminisce about their youth in the keep: "They never saw me in the first place. They saw only a jester and a freak. […] They heard my jokes and saw my capers, but they never really saw *me*" (*Fool's Errand,* 229).

A concept in connection to marginality that was already mentioned when discussing tricksters, fools and clowns was that they represent the ultimate *other,* those that are as far from the centre of society as possible, the "excluded matter". This should be kept in mind while regarding B, as B and their identities each represent "excluded matter" in one form or another.

The keep and court of Buckkeep is an essential scenery in the first and third trilogies, and the court is the society that both the Fool and Lord Golden are designed to function in and thus have a lot to play in their otherness. Therefore, a brief introduction of it would be in order. The coastal Buckkeep itself resembles more a medieval stone castle than, for example, the later and more ornate French palaces, and has been built with practicality in mind rather than for a dwelling matching the status of its royal residents. It was originally built as a keep to oversee the trade of the coast of Six Duchies and the Buck River flowing past it. As a federation of duchies whose main trade is agriculture, Six Duchies is mentioned to be somewhat backward from the perspective of the more "civilized" Jamaillia and Bingtown. The keep reflects its origins and its' royal family's practical ideology in its ascetic and simple appearance and furnishing. Still, the court of Buckkeep is extensive, and consists of a king and a queen, their royal family and a multitude of aristocratic representatives from each duchy as well as from foreign nations in addition to the staff who keep the place running. The everyday life of the keep is enlivened by the vivid power-play between the duchy representatives and other nobles which compete over the king's attention, each of who advocate their own political agendas.

B is very much a complete outsider throughout the books, no matter in which society they reside in any given trilogy. Next I will examine why this is and what it is that makes them an outsider in the margins.

In *The Farseer* trilogy, we first meet the young B when they have assumed the identity of the Fool, and positioned as a court jester in the court of king Shrewd. Here it is easy to say

that they fill the requirements of being a fool simply by being employed as one, that they truly are a professional fool. True enough, they wear a jester's motley, colourful or black and white depending on the season and carry a comedy sceptre with a rat's head on top. He makes riddles, obscene jokes and deliver barbs of verbal jest to the people of the court, and act as a confidant to the king, often giving their guidance cloaked in humour even when no one else is present. Still, regardless their position as an actual court jester and even without it, I believe they could be regarded as a fool character. One of fools' major qualities is being an outsider and this is a feature that is strongly present in B in every identity.

Excluding the king, the only other companions of the Fool in the court are Fitz and possibly a young servant girl with whom they, however, rarely interact. Other than these people, The Fool does not seem to have other acquaintances or friends in the court and because of this and other things that are learned about them, the story paints a picture of a very solitary person, very much within the business and plotting of the court but simultaneously very alone and isolated.

While B is solitary, it could be that this is due to their own choice since it seems that they intentionally protect their privacy very carefully in every identity. Rumours of them abound and everyone seems to know "facts" about them as is seen when Fitz meets them for the first time face-to-face:

> But the Fool was alone. And outside, in the daylight! […] It was common knowledge in the keep that the King's fool could not abide the light of day. Common knowledge. Yet, despite what every page and kitchen maid nattered knowingly, there stood the Fool, pale hair floating in the light breeze.
> (*Assassin's Apprentice,* 131)

Several versions of the story of the Fool's origin has arisen throughout the years they have been employed in king Shrewd's court, and B themselves certainly are not trying to stifle or correct the rumours and stories circling around. This might well be because the mixture of the reality and the imaginary serves the Fool in that it helps in maintaining the veil of mystery, and when no-one knows anything tangible or factual about them, they are ultimately very difficult to harm or have power over. At times the Fool then seems nearly a mythological creature even within the storyworld and somehow detached from the rest of their world.

Another dimension to their marginality gives the fact that during their time as a jester, they live in a tower room in the servant's wing of the castle where, in addition to servants, live those that are in one way or another shunned by the rest of the court, such as Fitz. The Fool's

friendship with Fitz, who is also an outcast in the court, further isolates them because it is seen as very improper to associate in any way with the illegitimate, and therefore a shameful, son of prince Chivalry. And while they do not show friendship openly, in the public the Fool seems to torment Fitz with his jokes less than most and this can be seen as the Fool favouring the boy somehow. This is why the two, at one stage where it is important that no-one thinks them as friends, agree on that the Fool should, in public, torment him just as much as anyone else.

Consequently, the Fool functions from the margins, effecting the court from beyond the mask of differentness and strangeness and using them as a barrier between themselves and the rest of the court. This allows the Fool to keep themselves at a distance and protect themselves by not letting anyone too close.

Due to their appearance, the Fool is an oddity within the society of the Buckkeep as well as, in a larger scale, within the part of the world they operate in the books. In the first trilogy, their skin and hair are completely pale, and while many believe that the paleness of their face is due to the usual jester habit of painting their face white, it is the natural colour of their skin. Their eyes are also white, save for a slight shade of blue if looked closely enough, and their body is scrawny to the point of deformation while seemingly very weak. In addition, their limbs are notably agile to an almost inhuman extent, and their bones seem to have an almost bird-like lightness to them. While the complexion and hair of the general population of Six Duchies is dark, the milk-white Fool stands out wherever they go.

Tricksters are creatures of transition and boundaries, and this is exemplified well by the Fool. As they are the court jester, they are simultaneously in the lowest ladder of the court's hierarchy, *and* the closest any person, including the princes, can get to king Shrewd and therefore the only person allowed to see them at their most vulnerable. In essence, the king trusts the Fool as their counsellor and often seeks their advice, making it possible for them to influence the king to an extent. This is why the Fool is possibly the second most powerful, if not the most powerful, person in the court. Albeit this is not to say that the king is swayed by the Fool's every suggestion. Due to this ambivalence of their position in the hierarchy, the Fool can move freely about the court without much restriction; some fear the king's reaction if they tried to restrict the movements of the beloved jester, but most do not pay much attention to them for they are, after all, only a simple fool. This gives them the liberty to gain knowledge of gossip that is the lifeblood of the court, were it about a servant's grievances towards the whims of their lord or a scandalous affair within the royalty or the disagreements between the dukes of the Six Duchies that might threaten the country's integrity. They also

gain the possibility to be the king's eyes and ears wherever the king himself cannot freely go, as contradictory as it may seem; in this sense they are much freer and if knowledge is power, more powerful than the one on top of the hierarchy.

Here we can also see an essential wise fool attribute at work, that of using knowledge and wit as a way of survival, commenting indirectly on the actions of other people and influencing them. This is a contradictory attribute, however; while knowledge is the very thing the Fool thrives on and is protected by, partly because it makes them very useful to the king who then ensures their wellbeing, it is also the very thing that separates them from the rest and makes them a possible threat to others. Being young and still physically weak they also have to rely on their wit to defend themselves from those who would harm them either physically or verbally. This is done, for example, by confusing people with riddles and making them unsure of how to answer to the foolish wit, or knowing just when not to take a joke any further lest it angers the target more than is healthy. Knowledge might be power indeed, but, at least in the setting of a court, this only rises from the fact that there are several parties that might gain from learning each other's secrets and that wield power as a tool or a weapon to gain better foothold and leverage within the court. To rephrase, the vast amount of knowledge the Fool possesses would not be of much use if there was no-one whom he could pass this knowledge on, who then could actually influence things in the world and in the society based on that knowledge. As tricksters are dependent of others to be able to use their ability to mimic, so does the Fool need someone to help them actualize the power of knowledge into power that can truly impact the world. This is the Fool's greatest weakness and takes away the fallacy of omnipotence that is easy to bestow on tricksters and their descendants. It seems as though their otherness, which prevents them from functioning in the society as a full member, is one of the sources of their weakness. This someone is Fitz, a Catalyst to B's White Prophet, because though seemingly powerless himself, he is the future Royal Assassin and thus in the centre of events in the court.

From a social point of view, also the Fool's isolation could be interpreted as a disadvantage. Though we do not learn about their whole past, save for the few rumours that might or might not be true, and as they have several identities that we know of, then they very well might have several others we do not. Still, at the time and place they are employed as a jester, their connections and acquaintances surely seem few. In the first trilogy B is described as young, like an adolescent boy and this is certainly how Fitz sees B. However, as we later learn their lifespan is in fact far longer than that of normal humans and that they show few signs of aging (*Assassin's Apprentice*, 155). Even though they seem young it might well be

that they have already been alive a number of years that would indicate adulthood among normal humans. They do mention that they were cherished and beloved by their family, but once they were recognized as a white prophet, they had to leave early on to attend a school meant for such persons to be educated accordingly. The school is also the place where the knowledge white prophets gather during their travels is stored.

Friends from B's childhood are never mentioned if there were any, probably much because there are not supposed to be several such prophets at the same time and thus one could imagine there were few students in the school, and the readers are led to believe that their time in the school was marked with loneliness and suffering. B was not well understood by their instructors, and thus B often clashed with them over differences in perspective. While B was recognized as *a* white prophet by the teachers, they reckoned that B was meant to activate only at a later age as there was already another white prophet presently at work. However, B themselves firmly believed to be *the* White Prophet of the age, despite there already being someone who claimed the title. This then lead to B leaving the school, in secret, to actualize their own prophetic visions.

Before B's arrival there was another White studying at the school. She is far older than B and eventually came to be known as the Pale Woman. The strong belief of B's people is that there can never be two rightful white prophets at work at once, so if there are several born in the same age then one of them must be false. It would not be out of the question therefore to imagine that B caused dismay in her, and it is indeed later stated that she began to strongly disdain him due to fear of losing her status as the White Prophet. While the two never attended the school at the same time, it is told that they met at some point, and that the Pale Woman's fear grew because of the assumed rivalry, likely because B's visions indicated a future world opposite to hers, and therefore rivalled the one she saw in her own. It is also curiously mentioned that the Pale Woman's face is a near counterpart to B's, though the possible reason is never discussed further.

It is interesting to notice that the other current white prophet is so clearly identified as a woman, as this raises even more questions about why B would then be sexless if not because of the fact that he shares the same lineage. What somehow provides a clarity to this is that it is told that B is an anomaly even within their own kind. As B is an anomaly even within the white folk, who themselves are already an oddity within the human species, which sets them further apart from the rest of the world and makes one wonder if B truly is not completely unique. After all, B states that "But I am no more White than I am human […] I am an anomaly, even among those who share my mixed lineage" (*Assassin's Quest,* 559). In

frustration, B admits to Fitz, when he queries about the illnesses and if B will continue to gain colour if the bouts continue; "Perhaps. I don't know." (ibid.), and proceeds to explain how B was raised by humans and has never met anyone else like themselves, that is someone who is not exactly a human nor a White. Consequently, B does not even know what to expect in regards of the length of life or changes that might happen in their body as they age.

Exactly how B is an anomaly within the white folk is never stated, but in addition to being an anomaly in the sense that B became into existence when there already was another white prophet at work, one possibility is that this anomaly might include not having a fixed biological sex. Support for this could be found from the depictions of other, historical and current white prophets of whose biological sex there does not seem to be any dispute. Prilkop the Black Man is always regarded as male with little consideration to any other possibility, and the Pale Woman is clearly a female. The Pale Woman's sex is furthermore confirmed in the last book of the third trilogy; when she attempts to seduce Fitz by baring her body and showing what she would be willing to share if he became her Catalyst instead of B's. Being almost an exact counterpart to B's appearance, she would offer Fitz the possibility to love her as completely as he does B. Moreover, taking advantage of Fitz's love for B and the confusion he sometimes seems to feel regarding their friendship, she offers him even more: adding in the physical level that he has, she assumes, denied himself in regards of B, and eventually a child he could call his own.

Considering all this, B was likely very alone and lonely during the first years of their life, ran away from the school and left their place of birth alone early on to seek a way to fulfil their prophetic visions, and led by their visions arrived in king Shrewd's court to a lonely wait for the person, their Catalyst, whom B would need to actualize the prophetic visions and set the world on to the right track. While B is not strictly human, they are human enough to have the same basic needs as normal humans of being connected, being known and appreciated, but in their position as a white prophet and as the jester of the court, they are in a way imprisoned by their position and cannot afford to let anyone get close to be able to keep up the enigmatic image vital for their aspirations. Even those they are close to in private and outside their jester's frolicking they seem to keep at an arm's length likely because they do not allow themselves to ever wander too far away from the task of being a prophet. The prophetic task *does* require them to use these people, and strongly attaching themselves to others would only bring pain and make things more difficult.

How the Fool is treated by the majority of the people in the court reflects well their status as an outcast. They are, in short, regarded with disdain by most from lords to servants, are

ridiculed and gossiped about and sometimes even physically threatened. This, I believe, is mostly because they are feared due to their keen insight of the goings-on of the court and its people. The lords and ladies are aware f the possibility of the Fool knowing much about their lives and plotting, and because the Fool is close to the king, the jester might be able to destroy their reputation in the eyes of the ruler and the rest of the court if they so willed. Even though many think of the Fool as a simpleton, a true clown providing the court with entertainment, their closeness to the king is also common knowledge and therefore the possible threat this may imply is likewise well known. This is in the very essence of what it is to be a fool; appearing silly and even stupid, yet making people uneasy with their surprisingly insightful remarks and the possibility of being able to topple the order.

As said above, B is an outsider in all of their identities and this also holds regarding Amber, the female identity. B assumes this identity in the second trilogy, where they have been traveling for a while after the events of the first trilogy, king Shrewd's death and the following competition over the throne of his sons where prince Regal, who would have wasted the kingdom's finances on his and his supporter's self-indulgence was killed by the new royal assassin Fitz for the benefit of prince Verity who then became king, however, dying shortly after his brother. After this, his fiancé became the queen of the Six Duchies. As B succeeded in nudging the fate into the direction they had foreseen, they left the Duchies to look for new opportunities to affect the occurrences of the world and new clues as to how to realize their prophecy. B's visions led them south to Bingtown, a trader society which is governed over by Old Trader families each of which owns a living, sentient ship. As B feels that in Bingtown they are one step closer to their goal, they settle down as a foreign woodworker.

I do not think that the identity they chose at this time was randomly selected or that B just drifted into the role of a foreign female artisan, but instead carefully thought out to best suit the situation that, once again, requires subtlety and a position from which to easily observe.

Bingtown is a society with strong traditions and rules, and there is a clear hierarchy on top of which are the Old Trader families, the founders of the city, and clear lines between genders and their tasks: daughters are to be wed to other trader families to strengthen alliances between families, and the first sons are to be the captains of their family's ship or leaders of their family household. Other sons are freer as they often can decide for themselves what they want to become, which trade to assume for themselves. As such, B would have gained more from being a man in a society where men have more freedom and possibilities, so why did they choose to become a woman? In a society where women mostly rank lower than men, it is

assumed that a woman has less power, has less desire to claim more power and thus is more unassuming. Considering this it would make sense for B to choose the gender. While women have less freedom and power to influence the matters of the society in Bingtown, less of anything that might hint towards wanting to gain power and influence is expected of them and thus they are considered a lesser threat or influence than men are. This can also be imagined, then, to be the case especially when it comes to a foreign one that is not considered truly to be an integral part of the society in the first place.

As B is skilful in playing with people's expectations, they are also doing so here. Who would expect that a foreign woman has any aspiration in influencing their society, or interest towards their liveships? Even when Amber's interest in purchasing the abandoned liveship Paragon from the Ludluck Old Trader family becomes clear, she is not considered a threat to the Old Trader rule as she is, after all, a woman. A woman in Bingtown would not be likely to claim the captain's position of a ship even if she owned one, or attempt to overthrow or weaken any Old Trader family by becoming a serious competitor in the field of trade. Being a woman also makes them more easily approachable to both women and men alike and more likely to make people lower their guard and talk to them more freely, which fits B's goals of gathering information from gossip to important political secrets very well. As B explains this to Fitz:

> 'I became Amber because she most suited my purpose and needs in Bingtown. I walked amongst them as a foreigner and a woman, unthreatening and without power. In that guise, all felt free to speak to me, slave and Trader, man and woman. That role suited my needs, Fitz. Just as Lord Golden fulfils them now.' (*Golden Fool*, 401)

In addition of explaining B's need for different identities, this excerpt also contains interesting information about how B thinks and feels about the identities, and places under question the idea that each of these identities are separate and different, and not only a role to play. According to the excerpt, it indeed does seem that B has consciously constructed each as a role that can be assumed when needed rather than as separate identities. The case is trickier, however, and this topic will be further discussed later with the theme of identity.

A polar opposite to Amber's humble, soft spoken and mature person is offered by the unbelievably wealthy, venal, witty and pompous dandy noble Lord Golden. If Amber assumed equality no matter the company (*The Mad Ship,* 430), Lord Golden automatically commands superiority over most, even over other nobles of the Buckkeep. As Fitz remarks,

"his air of petulant command mimed perfectly that of a foppish dandy of the noble class" (*Fool's Errand,* 227). As Lord Golden appears in the third trilogy, *The Tawny Man,* this is after B's time as Amber and we now see the scale of esteem she enjoyed as a woodcarver; Lord Golden's wealth is the outcome of her artisan career in Bingtown. This makes it easy for B to take on the identity of a rich noble when their visions eventually lead them back to Buckkeep several years later in *The Tawny Man* trilogy. By now the middle-aged Fitz is acting as Tom Badgerlock, their servant, because to appear as they once were is not an option; it is vital for both B and Fitz not to rekindle the memories in the keep as the former king's jester and the king's grandchild. The Fool is believed to have disappeared after their master's death, and Fitz is remembered as a criminal who passed away in a prison when prince Regal had framed him as a power hungry traitor who murdered his own grandfather.

Outwardly, Lord Golden is the perfect caricature of a hedonistic noble. His clothes are colourful and lavish, sometimes even to the point of ridiculousness as he pays no mind to the amount of wealth he uses to fill his wardrobe, and for celebrations he paints his face with outlandish patterns and colours, often using the motif of scales (which could be interpreted as allowing something of B to show through, as close to their heart as dragons are). He is a great appreciator of gambling, wine and recreational herbs, and has a reputation of an active and successful womanizer, though, so rumours say, he does not always reserve his seductive charm solely to women. Those he sees as lesser in status, and especially servants, he treats with a blatantly dismissive manner, which is reflected in his treatment of his servant Fitz-as-Tom Badgerlock: even though he is fantastically wealthy, the room he has reserved for Tom is ridiculously small. However, it is not to say that he is needlessly cruel towards those he deems lower than him or purposefully harm them, but rather treats them as valuable tools: their natural place in life is to serve nobles like him and facilitate their master's or mistress's daily life.

The Fool was thought of as a freak and an imbecile, and had to defend themselves with barbed humour to create a protecting and isolating barrier between them and the rest of the court. Taking this into consideration, Lord Golden seems almost like a way of compensating that time and how hurtful and unpleasant it might have actually been to B to be loathed by most and having the rest pity them as a poor, deformed creature as the Fool. It is as if being Lord Golden, not needing to hide or downplay themselves anymore, B is able to fully use their social intelligence and personal charisma. The darkening of the skin when aging makes the transformation even easier; no-one would connect the tan-hued, golden haired and – eyed

young noble with the pallid, pasty-skinned jester of the past. Fitz contemplates on this apparent contrast between Lord Golden and the Fool he knew as a child:

> Reality reordered itself around me. Lord Golden, I suddenly realized, was every bit as complete and real a person the Fool had been. The Fool had been a colourless little freak, jeering and sharp-tongued, who tended either to rouse unquestioning affection or abhorrence and fear in those who knew him. I had been among those who befriended King Shrewd's jester, and had valued his friendship as the truest bond two boys could share. Those who had feared his wickedly barbed jests and been repulsed by his pallid skin and colorless eyes had been vast majority of the castle folk. But just now an intelligent and, I must admit, very attractive young woman had chosen Lord Golden's companionship over mine.
> (*Fool's Errand,* 335)

The wealth and reputation of Lord Golden creates a whole new barrier though, and even though Lord Golden is adored unlike the Fool was, found pleasant company and has a large circle of admirers, he is not truly integrated into the court but instead seems to be taken as a fascinating, foreign curiosity, albeit in a different way than the Fool was. However, idealization and admiration can also be a part of the process of othering (Hänninen 2013, 10). Because it is a common belief that Lord Golden hails originally from Jamaillia, this alone predisposes people to some extend as to what can be expected of him. As Jamaillians herald their region as the cradle of wealth, culture, wisdom and knowledge, Lord Golden's air of superiority is something easily expected from a person such as him. Showing off their wealth and appreciation to the most financially valuable things in life also fits this image, as does his seemingly broader perspective on sexuality which contrasts with what seems a more heteronormative society of Six Duchies.

As Amber utilized expectations towards a foreign female artisan in a society where men are the ones holding most of influential power and turned those expectations into benefits, so does Lord Golden make use of the stereotype of Jamaillians. People know what to expect of him and as he matches those expectations, it makes people less likely to deliberately seek things that do not fit into that image. This creates yet another cover for him behind which to work towards his goal, and distances him from the Buckkeep nobility. So, even though Lord Golden is well-liked and welcome, he is still an outsider in the court of Buckkeep like the Fool was, without real power yet with similar access to information and rumours of the court. As Lord Golden is seen more like a fantastical, elegant creature from afar gracing them temporarily with his presence and less like a true member of the court, the nobles might

therefore be less careful of what they talk about around him. They might even be willing to disclose information to a curious, charming foreigner than they would to a fellow Six Duchian noble. This fits very well especially for one of his goals of seeking information about the recent disappearance of Verity's son, prince Dutiful of Six Duchies who happens to be witted. As Lord Golden suspects that the prince has been kidnapped by a Duchian noble family to use his "dirty" beast magic as leverage in blackmailing the royal family, Lord Golden then works well in gaining the family's trust which leads him and Fitz closer to finding Dutiful.

When talking about marginality in relation to B, perhaps the strongest indication of how truly different B is from the world around them is the fact that they cannot be sensed with the Wit. Fitz, strong in Wit himself, describes this:

> He (B) was undetectable to my Wit-sense. Sensitive as I was to the presence of other living beings, he alone had the ability to take me completely by surprise. He knew it, and I think he enjoyed it.
> (*Fool's Fate*, 54)

As the Wit is magic based on the extensive network of life shared by all creatures and plant life in the world of the books, the fact that B does not seem to be a part of it creates curious implications and is a strong connection between B and tricksters.

Downplaying another's experience on the grounds that it is too strange, too foreign and unbelievable is also a part of othering. By holding one's own conception as the measure of what is right and correct means for dismissing other, different conceptions that one might not understand or not be willing to understand. This was already referred to when discussing attitudes towards homosexuality. Similar dismissal of another's experience of themselves also appears between Fitz and B. There is a scene in *Golden Fool* in which Fitz discovers that B has multiple identities. Following the discovery Fitz hastily draws the conclusion that B has not been honest with him. Because at first glance B's different identities do seem mere roles, they are easy to take as such. This misunderstanding is the root of Fitz and B's argument over whether Fitz has ever been allowed to see the real B, thinking that the Fool he knew was only a ruse. To Fitz, who so strongly believes that a person has one, true self, the thought of having multiple selves seems deception and not something one person can possibly have. Fitz attempts to squeeze B into a certain frame that is easier for him to understand as he cannot fathom that to B, all the identities are a fact of the self. He blames B for not letting him know the real B, only showing him a role named the Fool whereas B experiences that Fitz knows more about them than anyone, and that B has usually been honest with Fitz, only Fitz has

refused to acknowledge or accept the honesty. Indeed, from the days of the Fool, B has on several occasions openly told Fitz that they love him, and "set no boundaries" to that love (*Golden Fool,* 403), but Fitz has always taken it as a jest, or interpreted it rather as an expression of deep friendship than anything more. When things build up and they finally cannot avoid having a discussion over the topic, Fitz is initially disgusted by what he sees as B's improper love and "unnatural desires" (404), because as he sees it, love that has no boundaries equals intimate physical interaction which to him, taking place between two men, is an unpleasant thought. Admittedly to B on the other hand, the first might *involve* the latter, but does not equal it. However, knowing Fitz's stance in the matter, B has never acted on the desire or tried to force it upon Fitz. Admittedly, similarly B refuses to accept Fitz's point of view and feelings over the matter, which shows in B becoming infuriated when facing Fitz's feelings of discomfort towards what B identifies as.

Still, even the thought of B harbouring such feelings toward Fitz seems too much to him, and indeed the complex relationship between these two might be a topic for another paper. Suffice to say here that on many occasions throughout the first and the third trilogies, there are hints of Fitz actually having been aware of B's feelings even if only on subconscious level: "He (B) turned his head as he spoke to me (Fitz). The openness of that golden gaze combined with the bond between us, gold and silver twining. I recognized and rejected a truth I did not want to know" (*Fool's Errand,* 153). Instances similar to this one can be found throughout the books. They might imply that Fitz does share the feeling of a deep love, but is too afraid of what such feelings toward a perceived fellow man might tell about him. Some have even suggested, and such reading is very plausible, that Fitz's refusal to accept his feelings towards B reveal his own attitudes and expectations of what such feelings between men might imply, and that he is experiencing homophobia because it is inconceivable for him to acknowledge them as a part of himself.

Fitz evidently has a very difficult time dealing with the discovery of B's multiple selves and accepting that B is very different from what he has always imagined, trying to hold on to the image he has of B, the image of the Fool from his childhood. Through this, he is in a way stunting B's experience of themselves by initially refusing to acknowledge it.

In the discussion of B's difference with everything else in the storyworld, one also has to inspect the level of narrative in all three trilogies, as a curious detail will then be noticed. In *The Farseer* and *The Tawny Man* trilogies, the narrator is Fitz as he reminiscences his life and his path from a shunned child to a royal assassin. Inner focalization is then used in both of the trilogies, as Fitz is the focalizer and every scene is told through his consciousness. Unlike

in the other two trilogies, the narrator of *The Liveship Traders* trilogy is an external third-person narrator, who sometimes allows the characters themselves to be focalizers. However, as everything in the two trilogies mentioned first is told through Fitz, we never get to know other characters' thoughts and feelings except when they expose them to him, and even then we are dependent of Fitz's experience and interpretation of the situation. Therefore, only Fitz works as the focalizer through these two trilogies. All we know about the world and other characters, including B, the Fool and Lord Golden, comes from Fitz.

In the second trilogy, the focalizer changes from scene to scene. Usually the five most significant characters, Althea Vestrit, Brashen Trell, Kennit Ludluck, Wintrow Vestrit and Paragon perform as focalizers, but Amber never seems to. She is always described through other characters' perspectives and we do not get to know her thoughts and feelings except what is assumed and interpreted by others. Neither do we witness a scene where she is completely by herself, without some other person interacting with her. This raises the curious notion that B, as a character, is constructed completely through the interaction with other characters. This would mean that B also is at the mercy, so to speak, of all other characters when it comes to B's image that is offered to the reader, and does not have their own voice in the matter of how B comes across. This emphasises B's place as an outsider, the ultimate *other* outside everything; B has a subjective story to tell, but is not offered means to directly express it. On the one hand, this could be seen as a drawback and as learning about B's own way of experiencing the storyworld would surely enrich the story by offering an alternate perspective to the perspectives of the other characters. In addition, it might even feel discriminatory against the character as while other characters are allowed their share of disclosure, B seems mostly ignored in this sense. On the other hand, being able to know B's thoughts might lessen the impact of the character, to suppress the depiction of marginalization B and all their identities exemplify. In addition, knowing about B's concern over their privacy that borders on obsession, not giving readers the access to B's mind might be seen as complying with their strong need for solitude and secrecy which is an inseparable part of the character.

As we have seen, each of these identities is very different from each other. Exactly how different is revealed when we witness a scene where Fitz sees B changing from Lord Golden to Amber in an instant. This scene will be further discussed with the concept of metamorphosis, as it is the clearest example of a sudden change in B's identity.

As different from each other and even opposing as they may seem, there is a common factor between all these identities. Each of them is in one way or another an outcast, or else

not completely accepted as a part of any of the societies they visit. As the Fool B is thought by most to be little else than a simple, idiotic and malformed creature who is unable to comprehend what is acceptable and what is not and thus has little other value than entertaining the rest of the court. As Amber B is a foreign artisan woman in a very multicultural yet strictly hierarchical and gender-biased Bingtown society, respected for the quality of their art but having next to no power to influence any issues within the society, at least on their own and without friends within the ruling Old Trader families. As an eccentric foreigner, Lord Golden's exoticness seems to be what charms most, making him a fascinating curiosity. Still, he is ultimately only a visiting guest in Buckkeep, never truly establishing a position within its society. Each of the identities uses expectations for their advantage, and they are in several ways misaligned with the society around them.

All the identities also display how fools are constantly on the move and able to cross (social) boundaries to gain access to the lives of people from several different social positions. This is especially relevant when comparing Lord Golden and Amber, as they are in many ways each other's opposites, most notably in their social position. Lord Golden is a rich noble, caring little of the lives of those lower than him, and telling his own stories of a wealthy life dedicated to pleasure. He also tells of the downsides of such gluttonous life; the relentless search for the next pleasure in form of food and alcohol, inability to follow one's own desires if they conflict with what is expected from nobility, and addictions to gambling and dangerous substances to numb the dullness of a life too abundant. Taking this to the extreme, in the third and last trilogy Lord Golden makes himself disappear by concentrating furiously on gambling and overindulgence, eventually losing all his wealth and vanishing from the circles of nobility. Amber, on the other hand, starts as a foreign, poor bead-maker which in Bingtown makes her social status akin to that of street merchants, servants and slaves; as she gets acquainted with these people, she tells stories of their experiences as a vital yet disregarded part of society, in addition to her own. Despite the adversity of the Bingtown attitudes toward foreigners, and her work being initially looked down upon because her jewellery is "just" wood, she manages to turn her story from an unappreciated merchant to greatly appreciated and successful entrepreneur.

The several identities of B entail the thought of transformation, as it has to occur at some point when B changes from one into another. Moreover, B goes through other kinds of changes as well apart from identity change. Transformation and the multiple ways the phenomenon is present in B are to be discussed in the next section.

5.2. A Case Study of Metamorphosis: "Amber bore no resemblance to Lord Golden or the Fool. The change was that complete"

The characters essential to this section, in addition to the already familiar Fitz, are Althea Vestrit, Brashen Trell, Paragon and Jek, all of whom appear in *The Liveship Traders* trilogy.

Althea Vestrit is a tomboyish daughter of an Old Trader family in her late teens and early twenties in the books. Having exceptionally been able to, since childhood, familiarize with life on board a ship as her father used to take her with him on voyages, she dreams of following in her father's footsteps and becoming the next captain of Vivacia, the Vestrit family liveship. Amber befriends her, becoming somewhat of an elder sister figure to her.

As a rash, disobedient son of the Old Trader family Trell in his early twenties, Brashen Trell has been disowned by his family due to his behaviour. As a skilled sailor he has since made a living as the first mate aboard Vivacia, under the command of Althea's father. A longtime friend to Althea, the two also harbour deeper feelings toward one another.

Paragon is a liveship, and as previously mentioned in the introduction of the storyworld, liveships are sentient ships exclusive to Bingtown carved from the shells of unhatched dragon eggs. They sail unconscious until they have consumed enough consciousnesses of the members of the Old Trader family that owns them. This is done by a ritual conducted every time a captain dies a peaceful death on their decks, which means that bringing a ship to life might take several generations. In a sense Paragon is a "broken" liveship: he was brought to awareness by consuming the consciousnesses of his former captain and the captain's small son when, prior to the trilogy's events, they both died a horrible death in a storm on his decks. Because of this, Paragon's self is a chaotic merging of a grown man and a child. The side dominating him most is the child, however, and his strong emotions of insecurity, fear, jealousy and mistrust. Furthermore, because his human consciousnesses have failed to provide him with a coherent self, also the dragon part of his consciousness goes unchecked and competes over his control. Inability to control his emotions and the chaotic self has, in a few occasions, made him lose his mind under great stress and drown his crew earning him the nicknames "the Mad Ship" and "Pariah". His family has thus abandoned him shipwrecked on a remote shore, and the abandonment coupled with his violent awakening has left his grasp on sanity very weak. Amber eventually finds him, feels sympathy for him and befriends him, wishing to make the ship seaworthy again as she is certain that if treated well and cared for, Paragon will eventually be able to overcome his fears, gain the control of himself and in the

process, mature. With her help, Paragon ultimately learns to control himself and becomes significantly more stable and calm, once again able to sail the seas and reliably carry a crew.

Jek is Amber's friend she first meets while living in Bingtown, initially hired as a bodyguard to Amber and a guard to her shop. It seems she has since become the closest female friend Amber, or any of the identities, has ever had. Befitting her trade of a sailor and contrasting with Amber's seemingly demure personality, she is athletic and physically capable, outspoken and is known to be brash. She supports Amber and helps her in her efforts of buying Paragon from his owning family, and accompanies the artisan in her travels around the Bingtown coast and nearby islands.

With the essential characters introduced, we can focus on the analysis itself. B resembles an actor in their skilful manipulation of their appearance and manner in creating any given identity. This is a self-evident external mark of their change and enhances the differences between each one, and indeed there is little resemblance between them when it comes to how they look and behave. Fitz himself describes the great change in B when B comes to visit Fitz-as-Tom in his cottage after B's Amber period and fifteen years after they last saw each other and when B was still the Fool:

> It was hard to believe he no longer was the impish jester who had both served and protected King Shrewd for all those years. His body had not changed, save the coloring. His graceful, long-fingered hands dangled off the arms of the chair. His hair, once as pale and airy as dandelion fluff, was now bound back from his face and confined to a golden queue. […] His present grand clothes might recall his old winter motley of black and white, but I wagered he would never again wear bells and ribbons and carry a rat-headed scepter. His lively wit and sharp tongue no longer influenced the course of political events.
> (*Golden Fool,* 117)

Desiring not to attract needless attention towards herself, Amber comes across a reserved person in her looks and behaviour. She wears earthly hues of brown, using bright colours only in her jewellery, and wears her hair in one long, simple braid. Lord Golden, then, comes a bit closer to the Fool in that he seems to enjoy colours just as much as the jester, but uses them in a more refined and matching way whereas the Fool, in a true jester spirit, mixes multiple bright colours in their motley without caring about colour coordination. The Fool and Lord Golden both also let their locks flow free unlike the self-contained Amber. Lord Golden's wardrobe consists of, as is befitting his status as a Jamaillian noble, clothes made of extravagant and outrageously expensive fabrics and materials.

As told above, the Fool uses their long and nimble limbs to caper, skulk and move in other comical and amusing ways: "Behind his chair, the Fool turned back-flips across the room, and then cartwheeled back, to stand as attentively behind him as if he had never moved" (*The Royal Assassin,* 425). Their gestures and facial expressions are also often exaggerated like a circus clown's would be: "The Fool grinned and simpered at me, then capered over to Shrewd's bedside […] The Fools stood at his elbow, alternately beaming at me, and making terrible faces at Verity's page" (*The Royal Assassin,* 419-421). This makes them a very physical character, expressing themselves strongly through their body. While evidently possessing more or less the same slender physique as the Fool, though a more mature version of it, Amber differs from this starkly and the way she is described, it is hard to imagine her peaceful character sticking her tongue out in the middle of a conversation, turn and bend over in an insult or leap and dance through the streets of Bingtown:

> The rich brown of her draped gown pointed up the gold of her skin and hair and eyes. Her bare feet peeped from the bottom of her long skirts. She watched the street with a cat's wide unblinking stare. […] Amber's expression never changed nor faltered from her emotionless regard of the disheveled girl in the street.
> (*Ship of Magic,* 195-196)

Physically she seems more placid than any of the other identities, and expresses herself rather through subtle head movements, eyes and what appears a quiet, strong voice and ambiguous tones:

> 'You wished to see me?' she (Amber) asked quietly.
> 'No,' Althea exclaimed both truthfully and reflexively. Then she made an effort to recover, saying haughtily, 'I was but curious to see this wooden jewellery that I had heard so much about.'
> 'You being such a connoisseur of fine wood,' Amber nodded.
> There was almost no inflection to Amber's words. A threat. A sarcasm. A simple observation. Althea could not decide.
> (*Ship of Magic,* 508)

> 'I think I've changed my mind.' The woman's (Amber) voice was low. Paragon couldn't decide what emotion she was repressing. Disgust? Fear? He could not be sure. 'I don't think I want anything to do with this.'
> (*Ship of Magic,* 509)

Lord Golden again resembles the Fool more in his grandiloquence, but while the Fool's intention was to create comical effects with exaggerated gestures and movements, Lord Golden rather utilizes such manners as a way of gracefully claiming space and attention as his own, as if to mark the very air around him among his personal belongings, and expressing the idleness and indifference of a true noble: "We entered through the Great Hall, Lord Golden striding imperiously along while I hastened, eyes down, at his heels" (*Golden Fool*, 231). Elsewhere, we read: "Lord Golden smiled fondly on them all, waving a languid valediction with a graceful hand as he strode up to me" (317) and "Lord Golden had already set his horse in motion with a noble disregard for the doings of servants" (*Fool's Errand,* 320).

Considering the change from one identity into another, in *Golden Fool* of *the Tawny Man* series there is a scene where a change from one identity into another happens very abruptly and unexpectedly. This scene was already referred to earlier when introducing Amber. In the scene Fitz-as-Tom encounters Jek who has come visit her business associate Lord Golden whom she has never before met face-to-face, without sending a word of her arrival in advance. Jek is Amber's friend from the time B lived as Amber in Bingtown in *the Liveship Traders* trilogy, and as B has apparently been keeping contact with her throughout the years. Amber has apparently told Jek that she is currently visiting Amber's old friend Lord Golden and is now living in Buckeep also. Thus, Jek thinks that she can conveniently meet both her business associate and her friend on the same visit. Much to her surprise, when first visiting Lord Golden she encounters the astonished and panicking B (or to Jek, Amber, as it is the only identity she knows so far) and the confused Fitz instead. Jek, at first equally confused, quickly recognizes Fitz from Amber's stories about him, and hastily gathers that "Lord Golden and his servant Tom Badgerlock" must be a ruse created by Amber for hiding the amorous relationship she imagines Amber and Fitz to have. She then wonders aloud why the ruse would be necessary, and why could not Amber and Fitz be together openly, much to B's horror and Fitz's utter dismay. B then dismisses Fitz in a hurry, rigidly and breathlessly commanding them to leave the room with "Tom Badgerlock, I have no further need of your services today. You are dismissed." (*Golden Fool*, 313). Confused and trying to prevent the worlds of the two identities colliding any further, B seems reluctant to speak aloud with both Fitz and Jek in the room at the same time. B cannot be both Amber and Lord Golden at the same time.

Shocked, Fitz then leaves the room but leaves the door ajar to eavesdrop the two. Friends as they have been for decades, Fitz still finds B very mysterious and feels that they are not disclosing as much about themselves as Fitz has, and as one would think as strong a

friendship as theirs would require. Further offended by Jek's assumption that he and the man he has known since childhood are lovers, he feels that he has the right to know what B has been telling about him and why a woman he has never met before knows him. From behind the door he hears how B desperately tries to convince Jek that the "ruse" is vital but cannot give a full explanation of it for now and pleads for her trust. Like Fitz, Jek also feels hurt that all this time her old friend Amber has deceived her by pretending to be a man called Lord Golden with whom Jek does business, and not trusting her enough to have revealed to her that the wealthy lord is in fact an alter ego of Amber herself.

What next happens is an instant, though outwardly incomplete, metamorphosis: a change from Lord Golden to Amber, from the male identity to the female one. Fitz hears Jek demanding whether Amber has purposefully deceived her and, having kept such a significant secret from her, whether she even trusts Jek, and Amber answers:

> 'I did not set out to do either,' said *someone* (emphasis added). And the hair on the back of my (Fitz's) neck rose, for the voice was neither Lord Golden's nor the Fool's. This voice was lighter and devoid of any Jamaillian accent. Amber's voice, I surmised. Yet another façade for the person I thought I knew.
> (*Golden Fool*, 315)

Following this, Amber continues convincing Jek that they truly are friends, that both Amber and Jek must trust their friendship to be strong enough to endure the fact that she simply cannot explain the matter to her any further, at least for now. Jek is somewhat placated and the two women carry on talking about Fitz and the goings-on of Bingtown and Amber's friends there. From this conversation we can also gather some details about Amber's manner, as she is told to give "a small sound, a little cough of laughter" when Jek comments on Fitz's looks, and "a pretty little sigh" (316). This supports the image she gives of herself in *the Liveship Traders*: her voice is subdued and she is self-contained, here carefully controlling her voice and emotions by letting out only a small, even slightly embarrassed, chuckle. She also takes "a woman's delight" in the news of a friend's pregnancy when she and Jek go on with the discussion, "gossiping together like good wives at a market" (ibid).

This is all from Fitz's point of view, but what can be understood from his reaction to Amber is that Amber is a whole new person and a completely convincing woman. If Fitz didn't know about Lord Golden and would accidentally happen upon Amber and Jek's conversation, he would think that there truly were two women, strangers to him, in the room. He "would not have guessed" who was in the room if he did not know any better (ibid.). Fitz

is the person B has known the longest, and the one B has opened up most to about their past (though evidently that has not been very much), so to be able to fool even Fitz by changing the voice and manner tells how completely B is able to change their behaviour.

The sudden change also causes Fitz to mentally flinch, as he experiences a "psychological double-take" (Ran 2007, 29): one moment B, his friend for ages, is there, and the next gone, replaced by a stranger. This is also something often attributed to fools due to their ability to drastically change behaviour and even form. From what we are told, after realizing that the person in the room is not his friend anymore but someone completely different, he begins to question if he has ever known the person after all. The sudden change then alienates him from his friend, as he is unable to look B the same anymore: whom he now sees and hears is a complete stranger.

It was previously discussed in section 4 how B is an anomaly even within their own kind, and how that anomaly might include not having a distinct sex or even having the ability to change their physical sex during the course of the periodic illnesses. This method of change would mean, however, that the shift of their sex is rather slow, expanding over several days. This, in turn, seems to contradict with the notion of B possessing the ability to spontaneously physically change from male to female implied in this scene. However, judging from this scene and B's surprised and panicky behaviour, it is very likely that B is not used to a situation that requires a sudden change from one identity into another and thus it cannot be concluded that this is something B has done before. It indeed is the only example of such a situation throughout all three trilogies and it is not implied that B has experienced anything like it before. In addition, as Amber was an identity "born" before Lord Golden, Amber and her behaviour are already very familiar to B and within their array of possible identities, which is the reason B is so suddenly able to change into her here. Even if B's physical sex here would be that of a male, B would then be able to assume the female identity anyway, without a physical change. If this is indeed the case, it arouses interesting questions about the relation between the different identities and B's possible physical sex, and would support the idea that each identity is indeed independent of any physical sex B might possess because B is able to assume an identity without simultaneously changing their sex. Consequently, even if it is the case that B truly is physically sexless and that the bouts do not cause a change in sex, the ability to abruptly switch between personas with different gender identities becomes even more effortless to B and more plausible to us, as the gender identity of any given identity then becomes a matter of the mind rather than that of the body.

However, the change between the different identities is not the only metamorphosis B goes through. It could be said that they are in a constant state of change, since as mentioned above, B's people change their skin-color when aging, providing that they succeed in impacting the world in a profound manner during their lifetime. Periodically, B experiences bouts of fever, nausea and weakness which render B bed-ridden for several days every time, and after each bout, the skin appears to have darkened just a hint. According to B's own words, what takes place during those days is a complete peeling of the surface layer of the skin, revealing a darker pigment underneath which, to B's belief, is a sign of succeeding in following the path of their visions. All in all, B speaks little of these strong bouts, leaving the reader to wonder what else might happen during the bouts. Is it possible that the change they set in motion is an even more profound one and reaches much deeper than the skin alone? Considering the nature of B's species, which seems to be change personified as their role is to alter the course of the very world, I do not think that the possibility of a deeper biological change would be out of question. In the end of *Fool's Fate*, the last book of the third trilogy, B and Fitz finally succeed in realizing B's vision which also unfortunately entails B's death. However, what Fitz notices when he attempts to call B back from death with Skill, is that B is, in their biology and consciousness, as different from a human as a wolf would be, for example. Being so different, it is likely that they possess abilities that humans do not. After all, we can find examples of species that are able to change their physical traits such as colour and even sex in our own world.

One might ask that if this was possible, and that if B truly is so different from humans, then how can B pass as a human to most or be able to converse with them as one of their kind. However, it is implied in the books that in the storyworld humans are not very different from other species, that their minds are not different enough to prevent understanding and communication. In this world the primary obstacle to interspecies communication seems to be the fact that no human can produce sounds close enough to any other animals' to be able be understood, or vice versa. Admittedly, every species does have their own unique way of experiencing the world and may have traits that do differentiate them from others, but none of the differences is great enough to make any species completely alien to others. The Wit, then, offers a bridge over the communication gap to the witted because they can converse directly from mind to mind with other species. One of the main themes of the books then seems to be the idea that all creatures born in the same world possess far more similarities than differences. Interaction between species need not be based on the assumption of some profound and insurmountable disparity.

In several instance it is noted that B, when looked at closely and as human as they appear, seems to have something slightly off in their physique and manner. They are, for example, observed to have the placement of their joints slightly different and having the habit of sometimes jerkily moving their head, resembling the head movements of birds or lizards. Another connection to birds is also made when Fitz-as-Tom visits a charm-making hedge witch to collect Lord Golden's charm order. The witch explains enthusiastically: "He bought no less than six of them (charms). Six! One for sweet dreams, one for light spirits, another to attract birds—oh, and he seemed quite entranced with that one, as if he were a bird himself" (*Fool's Errand,* 269). However, because B can outwardly pass as a human and is able to communicate with them, regardless often rousing in people a vague sense of something uncanny, B is ultimately a human being to others as long as no-one gets a chance to know what they are truly like in their inner physique, and few ever do.

Still, when Paragon, as a liveship and thus capable of using the Skill to explore the minds of other creatures, touches Amber's mind much as Fitz will once do to B when he attempts to resurrect them, the ship remarks how "Her humanity sang in him" (*Ship of Magic*, 513), implying that B is still very much human. Here it would also be topical to note that the Skill is a magic from which those who are themselves not able to use it cannot hide from or defend against, which implies that no matter what secrets a person keeps, someone with the command of the Skill will be able to discover them. B themselves possess no ability to use the Skill, aside from a weak, residual ability in their fingers after having touched, in the end of the first trilogy, prince Verity's Skill-soaked hands. This residual ability allows B to touch something and instantly understand the past of both the item and the material it is made of. However, this being only a fragment of what the Skill is capable of, B cannot truly use the magic at will. Certainly not to the same extend as those born and trained with it, to touch people's minds or defend B's own mind against other Skill-users. Then, one would think that Paragon, having free access to her mind at that moment, would notice if Amber was hiding the fact that that her sex is something else than she claims it to be, and even considers her a woman when it is told, from his narrative point-of-view, that it was *"her* humanity" that he so strongly feels. This could be taken as supporting the idea of the fever-bouts bringing upon a change that goes far deeper than the surface, a true physical metamorphosis. Does B actually change their sex during the bouts, perhaps even to fit the identity that is necessary to assume next? Perhaps B experienced one before coming to Bingtown, changing from the androgynous Fool to a woman named Amber in the process, then later to a man named Lord Golden when returning to Six Duchies.

Considering again the transformation scene, it is almost unavoidable to regard B from psychological perspective. Indeed, albeit being a dweller of a fictional fantasy universe where the scope of possibilities seems far wider than in the real world, B with their multiple identities might well make the reader raise an eyebrow at the implications about the mental state of the character. B's behaviour seems akin to con artists', people who among other things impersonate various identities for personal gain, and this is certainly close to how Fitz initially reacts to the multiple identities of his friend. He is, after all, infuriated by the thought that B always transforms into what people need the most, and so in a way takes advantage of others through, for example, their trust, loneliness or need of guidance. Might it not then be possible that B has a mental disorder that produces multiple personalities, in addition to delusional notions of being a prophet? Alternately, perhaps B is a highly intelligent psychopath with an extraordinary skill at manipulating people, a trait often connected to con artists? To readers, B's medicalization could seem tempting and it is admittedly fascinating to muse over different possibilities, but in the storyworld itself this does not happen; albeit other characters certainly have strong opinions about and judge each other, they do not diagnose or label one another with terms such as *a psychopath*. In high fantasy in general, this does not tend to happen probably due to high fantasy worlds usually mimicking medieval Europe to some degree where such terms did not exist yet, and as such helps with immersion. Still, this is interesting to consider, as fools have been closely associated with madness and mental discord and certainly also B raises related questions.

In a later scene where Fitz confronts B about the incident, Fitz asks B if the Fool he knew from boyhood was also a ruse, used by B to become what best suited B's purposes. He continues with "What was your purpose? To gain a doddering king's trust? To befriend a royal bastard? Did you become what we most needed in order to get close to us?" (*Golden Fool*, 401). B's reply is short but reveals a gaping chasm between B's mindset and thoughts toward the matter of identity and Fitz's: "Of course I did. Make of that what you will" (ibid.). To Fitz's straightforward persona, the only interpretation of the revelation is that B has fooled and betrayed him, never showing him their true self, all for B's own personal gain. And that B has done this to many other people as well. To him the thought of multiple, completely different, identities seems so alien that it has to be something concocted by a somehow twisted mind, possibly even accompanied by malicious intents. Nevertheless, to B, the identities are not a ruse or mere roles to play, but a fact of the self. As this approaches the topic of the next section, it will be examined later with the concept of identity.

The other notable transformation taking place in B's body already mentioned earlier, is that of the darkening of the skin. To provide a brief summary of this process, Whites start off with a completely white complexion and hair which darken as they age and proceed in their prophetic path, eventually becoming entirely onyx-black. There is more to this however, since the darkening does not happen automatically, but instead is considered to be tied to how strongly a prophet has been able to affect history. It has thus become to be seen as the hallmark of how successfully an individual prophet has followed the path of their visions; changes in the skin are in accordance with the changes in the world. The significance of the change, or its' absence, is curiously different to different prophets and even sometimes opposite from the general understanding of the phenomenon. The Pale Woman has remained white her whole life, and considers this as proof of her being the true White Prophet and her future the right future, whereas Prilkop considers himself a failed prophet in that his visions lead to what he himself considers a catastrophe in the past, of which his onyx-black skin is the proof.

Among others, the question of whether there even is a "right" future, does rise from this. However, if the gauge of a "right" future within the storyworld is whether the future an individual prophet tries to usher in is harmonious or conflict-ridden, B's future can be said to seem the more agreeable one: B's visions show a world where humans and dragons challenge, accompany, teach and balance each other out for the benefit of the whole world, while the Pale Woman envisions a world without dragons, consumed by conflicting humans that draw the whole world into war. An analogy of stagnation versus motion could be then drawn here: the Pale Woman ultimately succeeds in changing very little, much as she tries, and never puts herself on the line when attempting to materialize her visions. Like B, also the Pale Woman uses other people as tools, but there is a crucial difference between how each is going about accomplishing this. The Pale Woman, a prophet as she is, sees that she is entitled in subjugating others to her will which she interprets as the will of the universe. She has even, rather than befriending Kebal Rawbread or becoming his advisor, made her catalyst a servant to her and her cause, willing to injure and even exhaust him in the process. In this sense she is seemingly very active, forcing others to follow her visions and actively attempting to change the course of history by trying to wage war between Six Duchies and Outislands. On the contrary, B most often only seems to observe and wait the events unfold, only rarely nudging or persuading Fitz, or others crucial to the visions, to the other direction if they seem to be taking the wrong one. On the outside, then, the Pale Woman is very active while by contrast B quite passive. However, beneath the active exterior of the Pale Woman lies a stagnant interior.

Like B, the Pale Woman is completely sure of being the White Prophet, but unlike B, she never questions the directions and actions she is taking, nor the moral implications of her actions. She has such a monumental belief in herself that nothing, not even seeing how her own catalyst suffers due to her, is able to thwart it. She does not change herself, but instead works to change the people and the outside world. This invasive approach creates only shallow change, much of it causing opposition in other people and the world, ultimately leading her downfall without her having been able to change much. Consequently, her skin remains completely white.

While seemingly more passive, suggesting rather than forcing change, B is much more agile and versatile in their approach to prophethood, the identity transformations being a good example of this, and perhaps this is why B is ultimately more successful in fulfilling the duties of the prophet. B changes themselves according to the needs of the world and people, does not take violent action and keeps themselves and their agenda mostly hidden. B's approach is then much demurer but arguably still more powerful at the same time. The effect of subtle persuasion and gentle shaping is more positive to the one being persuaded or shaped than violent forcing, and more likely to make them compliant and agreeable. For this, B succeeds in changing much and even taking their visions into full completion, their skin thus darkening in the process. Like other fools, B's endless movement and constant process of change also keeps the world in motion and B's actions ultimately, despite the "antisocial ways" of using others, benefit the world.

Another notable metamorphosis appears at the end of *Fool's Fate*, when B reaches the end of the visions and, accomplishing the final vision, dies by the Pale Woman's torture. It was mentioned before that resurrection belongs in the realm of metamorphosis; it is a transformation from one physical, or metaphysical, form to another, from being dead to being alive again. It is also an attribute of many a trickster character, as the hunger of both the Raven and the Coyote drive them into life-threatening situations, most often of their own doing, and consequently die only to resurrect themselves later. By Fitz's hand, B comes back to life again having completed the duty of a white prophet, but this is something B never saw, in any of the visions. After once again drawing breath, B mentions being out of their time, now, and feeling like a blind person, not knowing what to do or who they are anymore. Does this mean that the death of B the prophet allows B the individual to have a chance at life? Do Amber, Lord Golden and the Fool exist anymore, is this the end of the transformations or an opportunity for yet another, new identity to emerge?

When inspecting B's various transformations especially the gender transformation already briefly discussed above should be given a closer inspection alongside their gender identity. As has been mentioned multiple times so far, B's gender identity also changes when they change identities. As mentioned above when discussing marginality, B uses people's expectations to their advantage, as is seen in B's respective female and male identities. Whether or not B's physical body has a definite sex is left completely open in all three trilogies, and it is as great a mystery to the readers as it is to the other characters. The lack of evidence indicating any specific sex, or rather the multitude of conflicting evidence, has not refrained readers from forming their own ideas about B's physical state and debating over it. Moreover, it seems that readers are often actively trying to find evidence of B being physically either a woman or a man as the topic has intrigued many ever since the release of the first book of the first trilogy in 1995. Few seem content to settle on the thought that B is neither, both, or even something entirely different. The author is likely aware of this, as the way B and the various identities are introduced, constructed and connected in the books encourage asking what B is and how and why B is the way they are. As B appears as a woman in one trilogy and a man in another, readers are made to re-evaluate their initial reactions to and judgements of the character in later trilogies, and ponder what exactly was it that initially made them see B in the way they did in the beginning and question their own assumptions.

The Fool with his alien appearance and regularly changing colourful motleys leave people uncomfortable and perplexed, and in the court of Buckkeep they are even regarded somehow mystical and even mythological. For most they are only a creature vaguely resembling a human being rather than a full person or an individual, and so to most, the question of their personality, individuality, gender and possible sexuality is unimportant. Still, Fitz seems to see behind the rumours and assumptions the individual underneath. There are others who also know the Fool on some deeper level, and although the Fool is referred to as "him" throughout the first trilogy, there are those who do regard the Fool otherwise. The tendency to refer to the Fool as "him", however, tells more about how people react to their androgyny than about their possible true sex, and use the pronoun only in generic sense rather than as a marker of any actual sex or gender. Despite this, the Fool is regarded either as a man or a woman by some, the most evident example being Fitz to whom the Fool is someone with whom he shared a boyhood, and who experiences their friendship a friendship between two men. On the other hand, the minstrel Starling denotes the Fool as a woman, and has admitted as much (*Assassin's Quest,* 569). In the original trilogy, the Fool is described as what could be considered "effeminate", and certainly sometimes blatantly behaves accordingly, for example

by high-pitched giggling and blowing kisses while batting eyelashes. Though it should be noted that these displays are often deliberately exaggerated gestures rather than genuine expressions of one's gender identity. The Fool is also told not being "a man like other men" (ibid.). Moreover, descriptions of the Fool's body as slender and nimble, and the facial structure as tender and soft can be found.

Amber on the other hand, is undoubtedly denoted as a woman in the beginning of *the Liveship Traders* trilogy, when one of the main protagonists, Althea Vestrit, meets her in a street in Bingtown:

> The golden woman was dressed in a long simple robe the color of a ripe acorn, and her hair was bound down her back in a single shining plait. The fabric of the robe fell in pleats from her shoulders to the hem, concealing every line of her body. Her hands were gloved, to conceal the scars and callouses of an artisan's fingers in the guise of a gentlewoman's hands. Amidst the hustle and bustle of the busy dock, she stood still, as unaffected by all of it as if she were enclosed in a glass bubble. […] There was something other-worldly about her. All around her, folk came and went on their business, but where she stood there was stillness and focus.
> (*Ship of Magic,* 257)

Amber is then continued to be referred to as a woman and "she" throughout the trilogy. That is also what she identifies as, and identified as by others, and so, within the framework of identity theory, the gender identity of Amber is that of a woman because identity needs both internal and external validation to sustain itself. Amber seems convincingly knowledgeable what it is like to be a woman, even to the extent of teaching Althea how to hide or dispose of any evidence of her womanhood prior to Althea having to pretend to be a young man for an extended period of time aboard a ship that only accepts men as crewmembers. Among other things, Amber schools Althea at how to keep her periods hidden, how to make her voice lower by speaking from her stomach and how to bind her breasts convincingly, appearing to possess detailed insight on how to pass off as a male as if she herself has done so before. Amber being a woman is never questioned upfront in the trilogy, however she is told to possess some slightly masculine: "Amber had taken to binding her honey-coloured hair back in a tail. It was not a flattering change; the bones of her cheeks and the line of her nose were too sharp to be feminine" (*The Mad Ship*, 502), "She (Amber) was taller than Althea had expected. Not pretty, much less beautiful, there was still something arresting about her" (*Ship of Magic*, 301).

As certainly as Amber is seen a woman, so is Lord Golden as certainly as a man. The gender identity of this identity is that of a man, he identifies as a man and is identified as one by others. Nevertheless, like there are instances where Amber seems more masculine than feminine, so is Lord Golden sometimes described as slightly androgynous and effeminate, despite there being no dispute over him being a man. Especially in Amber this tendency is evident, as she does not often follow the expectations women are assigned with in Bingtown society. Her speech is determined, lacking marks of hesitation, uncertainty and the need of the speaking partner's approval or affirmation. She is also usually the one assertively giving advice to others and even straightforwardly criticizing their decision and folly, and calling a person out if she thinks that they are behaving unwisely, even to the point of scolding them like a parent. She might be seen scoffing over Althea's tangled love life and pointing out all the ways Althea herself has contributed to it, upright telling Brashen to stop feeling sorry for himself and using his hurtful past as an excuse to bail out of all opportunities life throws his way and scolding Paragon when he lets his immature side control him.

It was mentioned earlier how B is an anomaly even among their own kind which might suggest that they are so also physically, and how there is no dispute over the sex of the other two white prophets appearing in the books. The Pale Woman is a woman, and Prilkop the Black Man is a man. This might support the idea that like humans, the white folk are usually born as either one, despite the coincidental individuals like B, if it was not for the fact that the two other prophets are far, far older than B, perhaps even by centuries. Given the much longer lifespan and what we know of their species, it could be that the individuals of this species slowly develop into their ultimate physical sex as they mature, and are thus able to experience the life of different sexes in the process until settling for a specific one. This would then mean that also the Pale Woman and Prilkop have experienced life as both sexes. Furthermore, as catalyst and their white prophet are usually of the opposite sex, so perhaps what determines a white prophet's ultimate sex is that of the catalyst's, and that B, for example, will eventually physically establish as a woman. This in turn might lead to a broader view on sex and gender, as it would be likely that a species whose individuals have access to the experience of both sexes would, as a whole, understand more deeply the nature of sex and gender and the possible ways they are connected.

Certainly to B themselves, physical sex matters little and as discussed in 3.3. according to Jagger the body and physical sex also matter little to Butler in gender formation. "There is one thing that in all my years among your folk I have never become accustomed to. The great importance that you attach to what gender one is" the Fool admits to Fitz, and upon him

stuttering that it *is* important the jester continues: "Mere plumbing, when all is said and done. Why is it important?" (*Assassin's Quest,* 573) to which Fitz fails to think of an answer. Admittedly to Fitz, to be left speechless is an experience far from foreign, but as he leaves the question hang unanswered in the air, so is the reader prompted to ask themselves, why indeed.

This scene is quite revealing, since it does indeed suggest that B might truly not have physical sex at this point of life, and might be what initially spurs them to find an answer to this question by experiencing the life of different sexes. It would also explain B's deep insight of the life of both sexes, as this might have lead B to extensively seek knowledge of the human life, experience and anatomy. Gender and sex are not important to B because they might well be foreign concepts to them still. It might also be that, truly being one of a kind since not completely human nor White, they have no representatives of their species to compare themselves to, no culturally and socially formed ideas of how any gender within their species should be represented or how to identify with them. Does gender exist if there is only one representative of a species, is gender identity constructed only through the process of comparison by identifying with the physical traits one does and does not possess compared to another? If so, it would indeed mean that gender on the other hand truly is socially constructed and born out of intercourse and interaction, and is thus a cultural and historical product.

When it comes to B's gender identities, to them gender does only seem to become relevant when B takes part in a human society as Amber and later as Lord Golden. As the Fool B was an androgynous outcast, only marginally participating in the society of Buckkeep, and the above mentioned scene suggests that gender did not likely belong within their field of experience. Taking part in human societies, B starts repeating social performances within those societies, and using corporeal signs and other discursive means to denote their gender(identity). By assuming the identity of a woman named Amber, B starts constructing her as a woman. Amber's gender is a performance, yes, but not in the sense of a theatrical performance and a role. Likewise, the gender of Amber is removed from the possible biological sex, or the lack thereof, of B's body.

With their ever changing identities, sometimes even spontaneously changing from one to another if needed, B is endlessly in the state of transition physically, psychologically and socially, crossing boundaries wherever they go. Going back to the scene, the different speech and manner are, of course, only an outward evidence that there is a metamorphosis taking place, and the one evident to other people. This also means that the change described in the scene is only partial. Only a change in behaviour, however stark, or in B's case, the gradual

change of the skin does not mean that a person has had a complete inward change from one person to another or that they experience now to be a whole different person that is separate from the one they were just a moment ago, or before their skin changed. After all, people may mimic, they may act, they may change their manner according to their moods (which in some people admittedly is such a great change that they might seem like a whole different person). Physical changes can also spontaneously occur. But this does not mean, of course, that a person has become an altogether different person. The question here is, then, whether B truly inwardly identifies with the person they have claimed to change into. If they do not, then their change from one character to another is a mere act, a role they play. But if they do, then it can be said that their different identities truly are separate, perhaps even autonomous. The question of identity, then, is the topic of the next section.

5.3. A Case Study of Identity: "Lord Golden, I realized, was every bit as complete a person as the Fool had been"

As with earlier analysis sections, I will first introduce a few characters that will be mentioned in this section.

Molly Chandler, or Molly Nosebleed as she is known as a child in the first trilogy due to her passionate nature drawn to fights, is Fitz's childhood friend and first and greatest love. Having her mother die when she was very young and being left as the sole caretaker of her alcoholic father, she grows up to be independent and stern, continuing in her mother's profession of chandler. Due to events that lead to Fitz's death and being pregnant with Fitz's child, she escapes from Buckkeep to raise the child far from the dangers of the court.

Chade Fallstar is Fitz's great-uncle and assassin teacher whose existence is unknown to all but the royal family. A half-brother to king Shrewd, he, like Fitz, became the Royal Assassin to help and support his brother's reign. Chade had his face severely burned when he was young, which is one of the reasons he never shows in public but prefers the hidden, secret chambers of Buckkeep instead. As he is a Farseer, he has the Skill but it is weak in him, a fact about which he is bitter. In the third trilogy he has taken the role of the royal adviser, improved his Skill enough to have been able to heal some of his damaged face, and once again enjoys public life.

Hap, or Mishap, is an orphan boy with mismatching eyes. Before the beginning of the third trilogy, Fitz's minstrel friend Starling brings the boy for him to raise, partly because she knows that Fitz will be a reliable caretaker and partly because she is worried that the prolonged isolation of the cottage Fitz has retreated to will be bad for him in the long run. Fitz

comes to care about the boy a great deal, raising him like Hap was his own. Hap only knows Fitz's Tom identity, and has no clue of his past as the Royal Assassin. During the events of the third trilogy, the adolescent Hap and Fitz butt heads on several occasions over Hap's future and relationship troubles, however eventually reaching an understanding and Fitz allowing Hap to follow his calling and become a minstrel.

In the beginning of *Fool's Errand*, the first book of the third trilogy, upon being reunited with B after B's time as Amber in Bingtown and several years of no contact, Fitz asks his friend "You are not the Fool anymore. What do they call you these days?" B retorts in a "baiting tone" with, "What does who call me when?" (117) Albeit partially joking at Fitz's expense, in their answer B expresses the truth that they indeed have been called by many different names in many different times. This retort alone, however, does not yet argue for the idea that B has had several *distinct* identities during lifetime or what the nature of these different persons are; after all, what B actually identifies with is more significant than what others have thought them to be and by what names B has been called. Nevertheless, it does make a good gateway to proceed on to discussing the final questions that have been implied to on several occasions and that are in the core of the contradictory nature of tricksters, fools and consequently B: is there an original identity? If there is, are all the others mere roles? If there is not, from where do all the identities originate? Who is the real Beloved?

All three trilogies raise questions about identity, the self, different roles, facets of personality and facades, and indeed even the main character of both *The Farseer* and *The Tawny Man* trilogies is not as immaculate and straightforward in how he presents himself to different people as he sometimes seems to believe. In his life also Fitz has lived several different lives, since his position as an illegitimate son of a prince *and* the royal assassin has called for it. In his childhood is Fitz "the bastard" who, as far as his first love Molly Chandler and the regular folk in the Buckkeep court and town know, started as the stable boy later to be taught as a future scribe; in his youth Fitz the assassin's apprentice known only by his assassin master Chade and king Shrewd. In his adulthood he is mostly known as Tom Badgerlock, a former servant, now a hermit who Lord Golden "discovers" and persuades to return to his trade and become his servant in Buckkeep. Tom Badgerlock is also the only name Fitz's adopted son Hap knows him by, and the boy does not know anything about his past as Fitz. Fitz, then, has also had a multitude of different "selves" and only few people aside from B know about them all. This implies that Fitz, too, has twisted the truth about himself to many who think of him as a close friend, including his greatest love Molly, and his son Hap. Or else, he has invented wholly different selves. Indeed, Fitz and Tom share little

resemblance with each other. Therefore, little in common as Fitz and B seem to have, in the subject of identity and self they can be placed on the same page. That is why it is appropriate, here, to take a closer look at Fitz's persona as well before delving into the matter of B's identities.

Following the scene discussed in section 5.2., where Fitz has witnessed Lord Golden turning into Amber in a blink of an eye, like Jek he is hurt by the thought that B has had different lives of which he is not aware. Still, what he seems to be hurt most by is the thought of B having allowed people to assume that their friendship goes beyond the "normal" fellowship between two men (*Golden Fool,* 403-405).

The realization of B's different lives leaves Fitz to questions whether he even knows the person he has always felt closest to and who knows essentially everything about *his* life, including most of his secrets, and consequently whether he can trust B at all. Fitz then confronts B about this, the situation escalating into a fight that leaves their friendship shattered and seemingly incurable for a long time. In the midst of the fight B remarks that Fitz also has had different selves and lives, but Fitz does not see the similarity between what he thinks as B's dishonest play and his own "selves" which have been dictated by necessity. What is said during the fight reveals what B truly thinks about their own different selves, and it is the first time B has ever, in the duration of the three trilogies, disclosed such information to anyone.

As alike as they at first may seem, Fitz's "selves" do differ from B's "selves" in a crucial way. Fitz took the name Tom Badgerlock after the first trilogy to resign from his profession as an assassin as he hoped that, away from politics, court plotting and being used as a tool by the royal family, he could finally live *his own* life. As he has done everything, and far more, a loyal servant and supporter of the royal family would for his whole life, Fitz's family allows him to retire in silence. This ensures that no-one, aside from a selected few, knows the truth about what became of Fitz ChivalryFarseer. In conclusion he spends fifteen years as Tom (while B lives as Amber in Bingtown) in a remote cottage living the simple life of a farmer and a huntsman, raising Hap and chronicling the history of Six Duchies at his leisure. During this time, he is told to have some visitors, and while only one of them knows his true name, to Hap and others he is simply Tom Badgerlock.

Having spent fifteen years as Tom, as a person with a backstory that differs so much from Fitz's true past, one would think that he had to adapt to the role well and came to identify with it at least on some level. Still, at the end of the day, to Fitz and by his own words Tom is a façade, "a mask I wore daily" (*Fool's Fate,* 56). He muses how he has never truly felt himself

comfortable being Tom because to him, a side-identity seems a lie and admits that he has always had misgivings about deceiving undeserving people, such as Hap, in such a way (ibid.). Adding to this doubt, he feels that he has never been able to form true friendships as Tom, that the role creates a barrier between him and everyone else. Even in his youth as Fitz in Buckkeep he disliked the necessity of living two different lives, that of a normal boy and a scribe's apprentice by day and that of an assassin's apprentice by night, not being able to reveal his whole self to anyone.

Clearly the way Fitz sees it, there is a true Fitz somewhere beneath all the different roles and names, none of which alone feel quite whole and real to him. This perspective can be perhaps attributed to Fitz's straightforward personality drawn strongly towards honesty, and while his true profession alone is enough to make him lead a life of deception, he has never been comfortable with its necessary lies and facades and those of the court life.

Later when B and Fitz have managed to stich their friendship together enough to converse again, they have a more civilized conversation over the matter where they attempt to understand each other's perspectives in the matter, and B explaining how they experience their selves:

> When I show myself in a different light, I do not make a pretense. Rather I bare a different aspect to the world than they have seen before. Truly, there is a place in my heart where I am forever the Fool and your playfellow. And within me there is genuine Lord Golden, fond of good drink and well-prepared food and elegant clothing and witty speech. […]
> "And Amber?" I asked quietly. Then I wondered I dared venture the question.
> He met my eyes levelly. "She is a facet of me. No more than that. And no less."
> (*Fool's Fate,* 57)

This is evidently where B's and Fitz's thinking notably diverges, and also might provide a reason why the nature of their "selves" are likewise not similar, mere façades as both cases may seem. Fitz is a person who is not comfortable with anything he considers dishonest. This may be due to his history in court where he was the quiet, often overlooked boy who witnessed the pretense that the court seemed to live off of. A silent, intelligent observer himself, he saw the bigger picture of society that flourished on facades and power-play, and perhaps for this reason developed a distaste for it. Dictated by powers "above" him, he was then reluctantly lead to take part in it if he was to survive. Consequently, learning to disregard his own desires, his life became to be defined by his relations to others and their needs.

In B's case, what little we know of B's past tells of a different kind of onset for relating to the self and the world. The mention of B's past and family where he was dearly loved is a brief one, but nonetheless an important. Unlike Fitz who grew up abandoned and emotionally neglected, B had a family where the child was treasured, likely providing a good, solid base for the self, or selves, to develop. However, B also learned at a young age that for a white prophet, life was not meant for fulfilling personal needs, but those of the world and age they were born into, and that they would often have to do things contrary to their preferred choices and desires. In addition, when B was born with pearl-white skin and pale blue eyes, everyone knew what B was and what their role in the world would be; B's looks differed so greatly from any other human and everyone knew B was "special", that B was likely treated differently from other children, and learned that they were indeed somehow distinct from others. This way from a very early on, B was vulnerable and just as subservient to external powers as Fitz. Fitz was to be the tool of the king, B the tool of the white prophet's title and consequently the world; he would become whatever the position of the white prophet and the world required, shaping themselves accordingly. Fitz accuses B for taking advantage of people by becoming what they most needed and through it, affecting them. Admittedly, it cannot be denied that B truly does use other people, but as they form themselves according to other people's needs, B is also simultaneously offering themselves to be used by them. How could one develop a solid base for the self, if from the beginning one is lead to understand that their life is not their own, that they would always have to adapt not only to surroundings, but among people in societies that would be very unlike one another. One way would be to do what Fitz did; adapting, however reluctantly, allowing personal disappointments and stunting of own desires gather into unacknowledged bitterness that would later take the shape of profound mistrust not only towards other people, but towards himself as well (the latter due to not having given the opportunity to familiarize with oneself as a child, never learning to truly know oneself). In Schopenhauer's words, this is having one's inner subjective will in conflict with the cosmic will.

Taking into consideration Butler's idea of the self, which accounts that the "doer" (self) is produced in and by the act, not the other way around, and does not stand outside the act (Jagger 2008, 22), B's selves could be studied along the same lines. B's different identities would be explained then by the notion that the act itself, here B's act of becoming Amber, Lord Golden or the Fool, would bring them into existence and each time B turns from one into another, they truly become to life as unique identities solely due to the act itself. This would imply that each of them is completely voluntary, easily changed at will. However, as

critics of this idea of the self have asked, so it might also be asked here: from where does the act itself emerge if there indeed is no original, pre-existing doer or self who "does the deed" and brings the act about? (33) What brings B's identities into existence?

To B, the process of becoming a tool for someone else took a different route than Fitz's. Considering B's past, the life they have lead since embarking on their journey and what we learn about the different identities and how B sees these identities, I have come to support supporting the thought that B does have, if not one base identity, then at least some stable pieces to their self which allow the construction of all of the identities. Unlike Fitz who has always been reluctant to follow the role given to him by others, B embraced their position as a prophet, took it as a part of themselves and internalized change as a constant in their life. B identified with the change, took it as a piece of the jigsaw puzzle of the self and began to live by it. B seems to be almost unfaltering in their belief of being the white prophet, even though there are moments when B debates with themselves whether the path they have taken is in accordance with their visions, and doubts whether they are even able to competently interpret the visions. Only once does B question whether they truly are the White Prophet, and whether the people who raised B truly were right in raising B as one. After the event leading to the death of king Shrewd and Regal's usurpation, B also believed Fitz to have died in Regal's prison (before discovering that Fitz had, barely, escaped); with a dead catalyst, a white prophet is not a white prophet at all. Having reunited with Fitz again, B's faith in themselves renewed becoming stronger than ever. The Pale Woman should be mentioned here, since in her we can see yet another way of assuming the role of a tool to an external force, here "fate". As mentioned, B fully internalized the role of fate's tool, the embodiment of change and cast aside personal desires and the possibility of any other kind of life for themselves. Conversely the Pale Woman took the title as an assurance of power, and in her eyes the ability to see the future was, in addition to granting the possibility to change the future, a possibility for personal power. Rather than *becoming change* itself like B, she attempted to become a power above change, its *wielder*.

In this sense and despite its diversity, B's self can be said to contain stable parts, and this is why their self or selves seem to have a solid base. The certainty of being the White Prophet of their time works as an anchor to B's self. It is the central pillar from whose needs all the identities expand from and around which all of them are formed. The meaning of their existence is to assist the desire to fulfil the purpose of a white prophet. Indeed, B tells Fitz in the beginning of *Assassin's Quest* when they finally meet again that thinking Fitz was dead and consequently B then not truly the White Prophet, B lost themselves and their purpose. B

even went as far as contemplating if they actually are only a delusional lunatic caught up in their self-woven fantasy of being some great prophet (300).

As such, there is more to B's base of self than solely the conviction of being the White Prophet, as great a part of the self as it might be. The relationship between B and Fitz cannot be disregarded when discussing the natures of B's selves. Neither can B's relationship with other people. In B's own words, "Your (Fitz's) life was more than half of mine, you see. It was in the interweaving of our doings that I existed" (300). What is more, when we think back about B's past as a certified white prophet from the very instant of B's birth, and that B has seen visions of Fitz throughout their entire life, we can see that Fitz has been a considerable part of B's life from the very start. For a long time, B had constructed a life which Fitz would be an inseparable part of. This even before B truly came to know Fitz at all. "Alone, I made my way to Buckkeep, to seek the catalyst only I would recognize. And I found you, and I knew you, though you did not know yourself." (*Assassin's Quest,* 380) B recollects, and here we can see that the motivation that brought B to Buckkeep in the first place was to discover Fitz and begin to direct both of their lives towards B's visions. Or rather to observe how events would unfold around Fitz, who B always saw as "the pebble that shifted that great wheel from its ancient path" (380), and try to nudge Fitz into the right direction whenever fate seemed to allow it.

Considering this and the fact that they always become what other people need the most, it does seem that other people are an inseparable part of the process by which B's identities are formed and what might have initially started the diverging of identities. It has been much through external pressure by which the identities have been shaped. In Buckkeep, B became the Fool, a confidant to a king in the need of one and a friend to a lonely boy; in Bingtown, a female friend and a sister figure to a rebellious young girl shunned by her family and without close friends, and a guide and hope to a lost and immature liveship whom all had abandoned. Likewise, B was told time and again by B's own people that they were *the* White Prophet vital to the wellbeing of the world. In a young mind this could create an enormous pressure and sense of responsibility; B was the key to the possible flourishing future of the world, and consequently the lives of their own people and family depended on B's success as a prophet. So B became a prophet, and in a sense a servant ready to answer the needs of the world. Applying Nietzsche's notion of overcoming one's own self and ascending above one's personal desires, B ignored, even stifled, their own desires for the benefit of their task. When seeing Fitz again after many years in *Fool's Errand,* B reminisces of their life as the Fool,

responding to Fitz's comment of B not looking a day older than fifteen years ago when they had last met, with:

> 'It's the way of my kind. Our lives are longer, so we progress through them more slowly. I've changed, Fitz, even if all you see is the color of my flesh. When last you saw me, I was just approaching adulthood. All sorts of new feelings and ideas were blossoming in me, so many that I scarce could keep my mind on the task at hand. When I recall how I behaved, well, even I am scandalized. Now, I assure you, I am far more mature. I know that there is a time and place for everything, and that *what I am destined to do must take full precedent over anything I might long to do for myself.'*
> (*Fool's Errand,* 179, emphasis added))

Driven by the desire to fulfil the duty of a white prophet, the different selves branched out from the need to adapt and gain a positions that offered the best opportunities to influence the people crucial to B's purpose at any given place and time. The individual selves, from their first emergence on, built different lives with completely different occupations and separate relationships.

According to identity theory, there are two instances that are needed in forming an identity: identity needs identification and internalization of some position by an individual, but what is also needed is that others identify the person in that position (Burke and Stats 2007, 38). An identity is then born from both internal and external identification.

How does this relate to B then, whose identities seem completely different selves? If we look at the structure of self in identity theory, the basic idea is that the self is a platform and a container for all the different role identities that are born as we progress through life and come in contact with different people. Within the container of the self the identities are in hierarchical order from the most salient identity to the least salient, and more salience an identity has leads to increased odds of that identity activating in any given situation. This also means that the more salient an identity, the more an individual identifies with it. For someone, the identity of a father might be the most salient identity and all other identities, such as those of an office worker, a member of a cycling club and a brother, are lower in the hierarchy. A person such as this might bring up the topic of his children and family life very frequently on coffee breaks with co-workers, when engaging in his hobby with other members of the club or while talking with his siblings. Therefore, the most salient identity strongly influences all other identities.

When we look at B's identities, the way they seem to be structured allows for examining them along these lines, and through the idea of a hierarchy between identities. While B's identities cannot be inclusively compared to role identities, because, to be more specific, they seem more like role identities taken to extreme, identity theory can help theorize how B's identities have been formed and how they are structured.

As was discussed before, relationships with others is in the core of B's identities and how they have been formed. In identity theory, a key notion is that identities are formed by internal *and* external influence, that is we construct identities also through other people's reactions to us. In other words, "a person's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself" (Stone in Burke and Stats 2007, 38). It seems that the same process has been strongly present when B initially constructed their prophet identity.

As B was born into the role of the White Prophet, and from the start was treated accordingly. What we learn about whites from the books, they are usually born in a certain southern part of the world, as at least the three prophets we know most about originate from there. In this region also exists the school all known whites are to be send to learn about the prophets of the past and their duties as one. It is also implied that once a prophet reaches to the end of their visions, whether they succeeded to fulfil them or not, they are to return to their homeland and the school to share all the knowledge they have gathered as prophets so it could be passed down to future prophets. This system might be called an organized institution that creates white prophets, educates them and sends them off into the world. White prophets indeed experience their prophetic visions regardless of having attended the school or not, but the school and the culture of the region do produce prophets in the sense that they provide (or impose on) a title and a "fate" for such individuals and harness the visions into a task in the instant of their birth, while the individuals themselves have little say in the matter.

B was esteemed from birth as the White Prophet and treated as one, so from early on the prophet identity was strongly supported. In addition, differing outwardly from others and people knowing that B was the esteemed White Prophet, B was likely treated differently by them as they reacted to B through the title of a prophet. This must have affected B's self-image and contributed to the strong faith in themselves as the White Prophet and the commitment to and the internalization of the role. Perhaps even into the extent of forming their self-worth and existence around the role, as B does lose the sense of purpose and "self" when thinking that their catalyst is dead, making it the core of the self and accordingly the base self.

Then how about the identities that seem separate, individual selves? As mentioned, in identity theory *self* is the base for all possible identities one might have during their lifetime, and if B's base self is the white child named Beloved, then what is the nature of the other identities? If this truly is B's base self, does it not make the other identities mere roles and not actual individual identities?

In identity theory the self is the container that carries all role identities, which are in hierarchical order from the most salient to the least. B's nature also seems to follow this pattern to an extent, but there is a difference. In identity theory "the person is the common nexus of multiple identities" (Burke and Stats 2007, 144), but for B the common nexus is B the prophet, inside which all the sub-nexuses, the Fool, Amber and Lord Golden exist. All the nexuses then possess their own range of role identities that are in hierarchical order.

First and foremost, B is a prophet, identifying strongly as one and identified in childhood as one by others. B's self seems then equal to the role of a prophet, which is the base self. Within this base self of a prophet called Beloved exists the selves of the Fool, Amber and Lord Golden, all of whom have their own sets of different role identities. They are all initially born out of B's desire to create them, but are further refined and constructed by living their own lives and interacting with different people becoming different, well-rounded selves. Because they all share a base self, these selves do not live in their own, completely separate spaces and so they do know of each other and can share knowledge and resources to further the goals of the base self of a prophet. For example, Lord Golden lives off of Amber's wealth which Amber has created by utilizing the woodcarving skills the Fool honed in their spare time during the events of the first trilogy. What B learns about dragons as the Fool during the first trilogy is passed on to for Amber to use when later on encountering sea serpents, or adolescent dragons.

In this sense they do resemble role identities because, as it was mentioned before, different role identities can interact with each other, influence one another and share knowledge and resources. However, even though B themselves remark that the Fool, Amber and Lord Golden are all "facets" of one person, an indication that might make them resemble role identities, there are details that separate B's different identities from role identities and mere facets.

The role identities of an individual can activate in any situation with any people, though the salience of an identity does influence the likelihood of the activation. This is because they exist in the same individual, and the relationships an individual has formed is shared by them all. For example, a teacher identity of an individual is the identity mostly activated in the school or workplace setting, but might also activate in home setting if a spouse asks how their

day at work went. The teacher identity then activates alongside the spouse identity and the person goes on to recount the happenings of the day at school. The spouse, however, understands that the person they are talking to still remains the same even when they have assumed the teacher identity in front of them. The person's *self* does not change, only the *identity* changes.

In B's case the identities, though inwardly occupying the same space in B's mind and being aware of each other, never activate simultaneously. They exist simultaneously only in B's mind but never in the world outside and in interaction with other people. For example, the Fool never activates simultaneously with Amber, and Amber never activates with Lord Golden. In addition, it could be said that the Fool exists prior to Amber, who in turn exists prior to Lord Golden, and we never meet the frolicking Fool after the first trilogy, nor the self-contained Amber after the second trilogy except for an instant in the third trilogy, when Amber's and Lord Golden's worlds collide. Even then though, Amber and Lord Golden do not exist simultaneously, but instead Lord Golden changes into Amber for a short time, which then creates an alienating effect in Fitz who cannot recognize the person B suddenly changes into.

The different selves do not share sets of role identities either, each having their own. The Fool has role identities such as a jester, a confidant and protector to King Shrewd, a friend (to Fitz) and so on. Among Amber's role identities there are an artisan, a big sister figure to Althea and a friend (to Jek, Althea and Paragon). Examples of Lord Golden's role identities are a Jamaillian noble, a master to Tom, an avid gambler and a friend (to, among others, Lord Capable and Lady Heliotrope). These sets of role identities do not mix, as Amber might be a friend to Jek, while Fitz does not even know her, and the Fool might be a friend to Fitz, but Jek does not know the jester. Similarly, Lady Heliotrope knows only her gambling fellow Lord Golden. Therefore, Amber does not exist to Fitz, the Fool does not exist to Jek, Althea, Paragon or any other person from B's Amber period, and the Fool or Amber do not exist to Lady Heliotrope. Moreover, Lord Golden is never a friend to Fitz-as-Tom, always a master.

Why has B created these identities in the first place? As argued when gender identity and change were discussed above, the possibilities B's kind provides might be what have inspired B to experience different selves. Firstly, the evident longer lifespan of Whites that lasts several human ones might well tempt to try out different ways of living and different perspectives from which to experience it, which then brings about the deep insight and wisdom of the human life B seems to possess. Secondly, if B's kind truly begins sexless, they

have no biological boundaries as to which gender to experience so they have the freedom to try out different gender identities until settling on a certain one.

To conclude that B's identities are autonomous would be an exaggeration. After all, they share knowledge and resources, and are all determined to further the cause of the main prophet identity, that is, to fulfil the prophetic visions and bring about a certain change in the world. The onset that began the development of different identities then resides in the desire of the prophet self to succeed, and therefore they adapted accordingly by constructing completely different identities for each of the very different cultures it was necessary for B to visit. Still, even if the identities are not truly autonomous, we have seen that they are still separate, individual and each leads a life very different from the others. In addition, they behave and express themselves individually; the Fool is an intelligent and witty outcast, riddling and frolicking about Buckkeep, Amber is demure and values solitude, yet she is very determined and assertive in interpersonal interaction, and Lord Golden an unashamedly arrogant and pompous hedonist, yet still charming and quick-witted with people constantly flocking around him.

6. Conclusion

Tracing back to tricksters found in various mythologies around the world, fools and clowns are more recent manifestations of the character. They, however, express similar qualities of trespassing boundaries, exposing folly and pretensions, questioning assumptions and the givenness of general truths as their predecessor. Progressing through this thesis, my intention has been to examine if and how Robin Hobb's character B can be considered as a part of the lineage of fool characters, what kind of fool they are and what are the topics or issues this character can be seen commenting on and how. In addition, I examined how their anomalous way of possessing multiple selves and even different gender identities within one person relate to their role as a fool, and how these identities are structured within B. For this task I chose three themes closely related to usual fool attributes, through which B would then be analysed; marginality, metamorphosis and gender change, and identity. These themes relate closely to fools; more than mere entertainers, fools are often outsiders and outcasts in marginal social positions, personifications of contradiction and taboos. They represent otherness and bring forth the subjective and local stories of those outside the centre. Often ambiguous in sexuality and gender, they are also shapeshifters with possibility for multiple selves and identities.

Starting off with examining the history of fools, I first concentrated on tricksters who can be considered their ancestors. By introducing tricksters such as the native American Raven and Coyote, Loki from Norse mythology, Hermes from Greek mythology and the Indian Krishna and discussing the ways they collide and contrast with the world around them, I represented an outline of where the origins of fools and their role as cultural reformers and manifestations of paradox lie. The divine trickster often possessed supernatural powers and could, quite literally, change their form at will, but the representatives of their modern progeny are subtler and more realistic, transforming through, for example, cross dressing and changing behaviour. After this, the history of the Western fool was discussed, as well as real fools that were usually either artificial and allowed, or natural. The conclusion was that tricksters and fools are characters that allow us to discuss difficult and uncomfortable issues through humour, help us laugh at ourselves, and are paradoxically able to simultaneously support and oppose social order. In addition, they are paradoxically bringing about beneficial changes through antisocial actions of, for example, stealing, cheating and manipulating others.

The theoretical background for fools and *marginality* I found especially from Faye Ran and Ashley Tobias. Ran introduces the idea of duality that is ever present in fools; pairs such as folly and non-folly, and order and disorder are simultaneous qualities in fools, as when we recognize a fool's behaviour as negative or foolish, we also acknowledge the normative standards we hold. The fool is a marginal character through whose abnormal behaviour we expose social norms and power structures in society. Tobias joins the discussion by pointing out that, being in the margins of society and able to move about and examine it more or less freely, they gather "the other truths" throughout their wandering, and as these truths account the experiences of the marginalized, they thus challenge the dominant norms, attitudes and rules of the centre.

Because of tricksters' and fools' tendency to engage in transformations utilizing, for example shapeshifting, cross dressing, impersonations and disguises, as well as B's multiple identities and other transformations they go through, I regard the concept of *metamorphosis* essential to this thesis. Regarding the theory of metamorphosis, I borrowed Kai Mikkonen's account of the theme of metamorphosis addressing key elements in the human experience such as birth, death, aging, identity and sexuality. Connected to metamorphosis is also *gender change*, and Gill Jagger's account of Judith Butler's idea of (gender) identity as performative was used to examine B's transformation from a male identity into a female one.

Concerning identity, I relied heavily on *identity theory* as Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets have accounted it. Within their book they have gathered a sociological social psychology theory of how identities are formed and sustained, which I have then used as a guideline for formulating a theory of how B's multiple identities have come about and how they are structured.

As for my findings, during my examination of B's character I found that they do strongly demonstrate the trait of being an outsider and marginalized in all their identities. However, each identity uses the marginalized position to their advantage, especially in gathering information vital to their goal as a prophet from various sources from all ladders of social hierarchy. As the Fool B is somewhere between a natural fool and an allowed fool. Appearance-wise the Fool is anomalous and to some even "malformed" due to the outlandishly white skin, pale eyes and exceptionally scrawny body. Partly because of this, the jester is thought of as a simple freak by most. This would imply a status of a natural fool, who often were either physically or psychologically different; stunted in growth, simple, or otherwise childlike. Regardless of their looks, the Fool's appearance hides an intelligent and witty person, who sees much more than most others and whom few ever get to truly know. B

can then be just as well considered an allowed fool, as they are employed as one by king Shrewd, whom they protect, guide and assist as intelligence and knowledge as their only tools. Amber is a foreign artisan in the very hierarchical and gender-biased society of Bingtown, and though she eventually gains respect for her skills and art, as a foreigner and a woman she herself is powerless to influence the politics within the society. Lord Golden, while being a popular foreign noble, is not truly integrated into the society of Buckkeep and cannot participate in the power play between the Six Duchian nobles. Rather a fascinating foreign curiosity to the native Six Duchian nobles, he flaunts his wealth attracting other nobles while extracting from them information needed to further his goals. All these different identities with both high and low social statuses represent how B is able to cross social boundaries and see life from a multitude of different perspectives, an essential trait in tricksters and fools. Further B's marginality and a role as an outsider is emphasised by the fact that within the storyworld, they are not connected to the rest of the living world as they cannot be sensed by Wit, a magic formed by the network of all living things. Even on the narrative level B is left as an outsider because they are never allowed to be the focalizer, and therefore are never able to directly express their own thoughts and feelings. What we learn of B is always filtered through someone else.

Related to boundary-crossing is also the concept of metamorphosis, as it denotes a change from one state of being into another. B experiences several kinds of transformations during the books: maturation, the darkening of the skin, from one (gender) identity into another and even from life to death, and to life again. In this way, B is in a constant state of transition physically, psychologically and socially. Concerning sex, I have found it likely that B does not have a set sex, at least not originally, but they might develop one eventually. B only assumes gender identities once they do take part in the human society as Amber and Lord Golden, which would mean that their gender in each case is a performance, created using the norms and modes of behaviour denoted to women and men. However, at the same time both Amber and Lord Golden display behaviour that deviates from what is stereotypically seen as feminine and masculine. While demure and even somewhat passive, Amber acts very assertively when interacting with others, sometimes even assuming authority over them by scolding others over foolish behaviour and telling them how they should live their lives. Moreover, with her lanky body she is described sometimes as masculine in appearance. While possessing the identity of a man, Lord Golden is vain, materialistic, excessively neat, fussy and beautiful rather than handsome. Fond of jewellery and makeup, it is often hard to tell

whether he is male or female. Therefore, it can be concluded that B is very androgynous even when in Amber's or Lord Golden's identity, and even more so as the Fool.

When starting this thesis, I claimed that it is likely that, more than mere roles, B's identities are separate despite sharing a common origin and purpose in B. Sharing this common origin all the identities are able to share resources and knowledge, but have completely different lives with completely different social circles that almost without exception do not mix. I concluded that, having been born into the role of a white prophet and knowing their purpose in life since childhood, the title became what majorly defined B's self and around which all the different identities formed, each however serving and furthering the goal of the prophetic self. The relationship with Fitz, whom they consider their Catalyst and the tool needed to truly change the world, is also a defining part of B. The relationship is so powerful because in the storyworld, a White Prophet always needs a Catalyst, or else they are not a prophet at all. Without Fits, B is nothing. This dependence also connects B to tricksters and fools, as they often use skills mimicked from someone else. This is not to say that B straightforwardly mimics and steals other people's skills like a trickster might, but they do alter themselves to be what others need them to be, including Fitz, assuming people's hopes and desires and becoming someone who can fulfil them, which could be seen as a similar deception. Tricksters often engage in antisocial practices and so does B, but just like the actions of tricksters paradoxically bring about positive consequences, so does B's; ultimately B succeeds in realizing their vision and setting the world to a more peaceful, if not easier, path.

To conclude, I do think that B can well be considered as a fool character, and not only in the identity of the Fool, but in their entirety. To be more precise B is a wise fool because they employ vast knowledge of the world and human experience brought by the dual attributes of being the outsider and thus able to observe other people and society from afar, but being still able to wander into the society and witness life in various stages of the social hierarchy. Aside from discrimination in its many forms, as the target of their commentary B takes especially the concept of sex and gender, and our still very limited understanding of how gender works, if it even exists at all. B makes readers think and perhaps even question their own assumptions and attitudes about sex and gender by, for example, rousing in them uneasiness because of their androgyny. Why do we feel this uneasiness caused by not knowing which sex they are? Why does it matter which they are and why do we feel the need to assign B as either male or female? Would it affect our reading and interpretation of this character if we definitely knew which category they belonged to? Some have said that they want to see B as a

man because them being a woman would alter their whole understanding of the character as well as B's relationship with Fitz. To them, if B was revealed to be physically female, the relationship between B and Fitz would change from a tragic, larger-than-life, deep and beautiful connection to a woman pining after a man she cannot have. As in this example, the play on B's sex, gender and identities exposes our own attitudes towards these concepts whether we like it or not, therefore essentially continuing the task of bringing attitudes, follies and pretensions into light. With this, B participates in the current discussion about the large variety of sexualities recognized today and our view on gender and gender identity that is continuously expanding.

Primary Sources

The Farseer:
Hobb, Robin.1995. *Assassin's Apprentice.* New York: Bantam Books
Hobb, Robin. 1996. *Royal Assassin.* New York: Bantam Books
Hobb, Robin. 1997. *Assassin's Quest.* New York: Bantam Books

The Liveship Traders:
Hobb, Robin. 1999. *Ship of Magic.* London: Voyager
Hobb, Robin. 2000. *The Mad Ship.* London: Voyager
Hobb, Robin. 2001. *Ship of Destiny.* New York: Bantam Books

The Tawny Man:
Hobb, Robin. 2002. *Fool's Errand.* New York: Bantam Books
Hobb, Robin. 2003. *Golden Fool.* New York. Bantam Books
Hobb, Robin. 2004. *Fool's Fate.* New York: Bantam Books

Bibliography

Billington, Sandra. 1984. *A Social History of the Fool.* Sussex: The Harvester Press Limited.

Boyne, Roy. 1990. *Foucault and Madness.* London: Unwin Hyman Ltd.

Burke, Peter and Stets, Jan E. 2009. *Identity Theory.* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Caputi Daileader, Celia R. 2013. "Othello's Sister: Racial Hermaphroditism and Appropriation in Virginia Woolf's Orlando." *Studies in the Novel* 45, 1: 56–79.

Carlyon, David. 2002. "The Trickster as Academic Comfort Food." *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 25, 1–2: 14–18.

Campbell, Joseph. 1949. *The Hero With a Thousand Faces.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Cheesemond, Robert. 2007. "Where the Antics Sit." *Clowns, Fools and Picaros*: *Popular Forms in Theatre, Fiction and Film.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Craib, Ian. 1997. *Social Theory: Experiencing Identity*. London: SAGE Publications.

Eckert, Penelope. 1989. *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Frye, Northrop. 1971. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Haikka, Tiina. 2005. *Jesters or Truth-Tellers – a Study in Three Shakespearean Wise Fools: Touchstone from As You Like It, Feste from Twelfth Night, and King Lear's Unnamed Fool.* University of Tampere.

Henze, A. Catherine. 2013. "Wise Enough to Play the Fool": Robert Armin and Shakespeare's Sung Songs of Scripted Improvisation." *Comparative Drama* 47, 4: 419–449.

Hyde, Lewis. 1998. *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth and Art.* Edinburgh: Canongate Books Ltd.

Hänninen, Marja-Leena. 2013. *Vieras, Outo, Vihollinen: Toiseus Antiikista Uuden Ajan Alkuun.* Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

Jagger, Gill. 2008. *Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative.* New York: Routledge.

Leinwand, Theodore B. 1987. "Conservative Fools in James' Court and Shakespeare's Plays." *Shakespeare Studies*. 19: 219–234.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* Available from https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/l/locke/john/l81u/B2.27.html
[Accessed 4 May 2016]

Mandala, Susan. 2010. *The Language of Science Fiction and Fantasy.* London: Continuum.

Mikkonen, Kai. 1997. *The Writer's Metamorphosis: Tropes of Literary Reflection and Revision.* Tampere: Tampere University Press.

Otto, Beatrice K. 2001. "Fools Are Everywhere." *History Today*. 51, 6.

Perry, John. 2009. "Hume and Frege on Identity." *Philosophical Studies.* 146, 3: 413–423.

Rampaul, Giselle. 2012. "Playing the Fool with Shakespeare: Festivity Falsity, and Feste in Twelfth Night and King of the Masquerade." *Borrowers and Lenders: The Journal of Shakespeare and Appropriation.* 7, 1. Available from http://www.borrowers.uga.edu/783056/display
[Accessed 4 May 2016]

Ran, Faye. 2007. "Modern Tragicomedy and the Fool." *Clowns, Fools and Picaros*: *Popular Forms in Theatre, Fiction and Film*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Robb, David, ed. 2007. *Clowns, Fools and Picaros: Popular Forms in Theatre, Fiction and Film.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Seigel, Jarrold. 2005. *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tobias, Ashley. 2007. "The Postmodern Theatre Clown." *Clowns, Fools and Picaros: Popular Forms in Theatre, Fiction and Film.* Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Wood, Felicity. 2010. "The Shape-Shifter on the Borderlands: A Comparative Study of the Trickster Figure in African Orality and in Oral Narratives Concerning one South African Trickster, Khotso Sethuntsa." *English in Africa.* 37, 2: 71–90.